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Citation style: Świątkiewicz Wojciech, Górny Andrzej, Juszczak-Frelkiewicz Katarzyna. (2017). Religiousness and lifestyles : a sociological study of slovak families. Katowice : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego



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Katarzyna Juszczak-Frelkiewicz

RELIGIOUSNESS AND LIFESTYLES

A Sociological Study of Slovak Families



WYDAWNICTWO
UNIWERSYTETU ŚLĄSKIEGO
KATOWICE 2017

Religiousness and Lifestyles

A Sociological Study
of Slovak Families

Prace Naukowe



Uniwersytetu Śląskiego
w Katowicach
nr 3624

50 lat
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w Katowicach

Religiousness and Lifestyles

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Foreword

The contemporary culture as well as social changes that are fostered by (late) modern values induce profound consequences that exert a formative influence upon a plethora of social forms. These processes apply to diversified kinds of social organizations, forms of political institutions, and to the most fundamental forms of social structures, that is, the types of family. Nowadays, the dominant, or mainstream, currents of family life are oriented towards the representation and accentuation of axio-normative pluralism, structural individualism, fragmentation of societal life, and delegitimation of institutions that have been formed by forces of history. Needless to say, the aforementioned domains of transformations are reflected by changes affecting functions and aims of the family in the contemporary world.

The family, when both Polish and European cultural contexts are taken into assumption, is perceived from a perspective of radical transformations of its structure and functions affecting, on the one hand, particular, individualized family members and, on the other hand, the society in general. Crises *in* the family – as understood in terms of natural coefficients to diversified economic, cultural, political, or environmental turmoil – are being transformed into the crisis *of* the family. In this specific interpretative context, the family, needless to say, is conceived as a privileged, indispensable primary group which is currently facing a confrontation with its socially preferred and culturally legitimized alternatives.

Whichever way the transformations of family and society are being studied, one cannot turn a blind eye to the matter of generational structures and intergenerational relationships within the family. Societies have been formed on the basis of relatively stable, reproduced structures of intergenerational relations which have always paved the way for the construction of cultural communities, both regional or national. These

processes are best characterized by Margaret Mead who defines post-figurative cultures, cofigurative cultures, and prefigurative cultures in her study dedicated to the problem of social transformations affecting the sense of cultural identity (Mead, 1970). Contemporary European societies seem to lay greater stress on accentuating the role of mobile individuals who have been liberated from family-related ties and inter-generational relationships.

It is sociologically interesting and relevant to pose inquiries referring to the role of intergenerational ties within families and cultures, their transformations, and effects of the said changes on individuals and bigger social units, as well as on the formation of cultural identity. This publication is dedicated to the analysis of the aforementioned classes of sociological problems. The delineated area of research is complemented by chapters concerning the youth's expectations with respect to marriage and family, their declarations concerning preferred life projects, as well as cohabitation understood as a distinct style of living.

Methodological Note

This publication presents results of the empirical study which constitutes a part of the VEGA research project entitled “Rodinné a medzigeneračné väzby v súčasnej rodine v Nitrianskom samosprávnom kraji” (Family and Intergenerational Ties in the Contemporary Family Living in the Nitra Region) realized by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research, and Sport of the Slovak Republic (research grant no. 1/0323/13).

The research project was hosted by the Chair of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra. The project was realized by an international sociological research team working under the supervision of Professor Wojciech Świątkiewicz. The team comprised of Professor Ph.Dr. Peter Ondrejko, Dr.Sc., Professor Wojciech Świątkiewicz, Monika Strbova, Ph.D., Denis Delick, Ph.D., Mgr. Marcela Sarvajcova, Ph.D., Ph.Dr. Ruzena Valkovska, Ph.D., Mgr. Viera Stefancova, Ph.D., Mgr. Viera Zozul'akova, Ph.D., Andrzej Górny, Ph.D., Mgr. Ľubor Gal, Ph.D.

The Chair of Sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy (UCP) has been researching into the problem of family and intergenerational ties for a considerable amount of time. The Chair organized, among others, an international event “The First Sociological Colloquium in Nitra” in 2013 and “Intergenerational Relationships in the Family and Culture” (Świątkiewicz, 2012). Sociological studies concerning the family and its transformations can be regarded as an interesting research perspective from which changes affecting contemporary cultures and social structures can be observed. As early as in the times of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle was among the first to observe that the family could be considered as a kind of lens in which society's crucial problems could be examined: its affluence, poverty, successes and failures, developmental perspectives and risks (Aristotle, [2012]). Despite the significant crisis of

family affecting its social perception, structure, legal status, and social functions, one may still consider the family in terms of the Aristotelian lens that renders possible a more informed investigation into shapes of social structures, directions of cultural transformations, as well as threats or developmental chances.

The conducted empirical research aimed to analyze intergenerational relations taking place in the selected categories of family. Four main research problems were distinguished:

- the character and subjective evaluation of the respondents' relations with their closest relatives (i.e., siblings, parents, and grandparents);
- viewpoints and attitudes concerning the chosen areas of family life (i.e., spare time, occupational orientation, career, family, religiosity, morality);
- mutual relationships within the family, as well as the observed patterns and frequencies of such relationships;
- trust conceived as a family-related value, the cohesiveness of family life, patterns of social practices within families.

The population of the Nitra Region is characterized by the following socio-demographic features:

- diminishing number of residents, especially in the youngest age groups;
- increase in the number of people in post-production age, a slight prevalence of women, and the feminization of old age;
- ethnic diversity with clearly visible Hungarian and Romani communities;
- less intensified religiosity (as compared to other regions in Slovakia) and the increase in the number of residents who consider themselves atheists;
- changes affecting reproductive processes (i.e., diminishing rates referring to marriage and fertility and the increase in number of divorces);
- changes affecting structures of families and households with the concomitant increase in number of cohabiting relationships and single-person households, which is also seen as a consequence of increased mortality rate (Stefancova, M., Sarvajcova, 2014).

The sociological, questionnaire-based empirical research took place in the period of October–December 2013. The research team prepared two separate questionnaires which were closely related to each other in methodological terms. The first one was designed for adolescents taught in primary schools, whereas the second questionnaire was prepared for their parents. The questionnaires were distributed among adolescents and their parents in primary schools located in the following cities and counties: Nitra, Komarno, Levice, Nove Zamky, Topol'ciany, Sala, Zlate

Moravce. As many as 635 questionnaires qualified for further analyses. The respondents were school-age adolescents of 12–15 years of age: 13 year-olds constituted the biggest group in the surveyed subpopulation (61.7%), 14 year-olds were the second group in terms of its size (31.4%). When the group of parents is taken into account, fathers were outnumbered by mothers. Almost 83% of all questionnaires were completed by mothers. It is little wonder that, as Stefancova and Sarvajcova observe: “It is possible that the tendency will be represented as a domination of feminine viewpoint on the studied problems” (Stefancova, M., Sarvajcova, 2014, p. 43). The surveyed parents’ age was mostly concentrated among the following age groups: 36–40 years of age (38.8%), 41–45 years of age (22.0%), 31–35 years of age (18.3%).

The aforementioned research was supplemented by an empirical study conducted among students of the University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra. In this case, the relevant questionnaire was distributed among 603 university students (55.6% female students and 44.4% male students). The research was conducted among university students of the first and third year of B.A. studies (respectively 42.6% and 33.5%) and the second year of M.A. studies (23.9%). The respondents were studying majors in social sciences, that is, sociology (12.1%), pedagogy (17.6%), political sciences (18.6%), as well as the exact sciences, namely, mathematics (10.4%), physics (4.5%), computer science (20.4%), technical education/IT (4.5%), occupational safety (11.9%). The participants were also diversified with respect to the frequency of taking part in religious practices. The biggest number of them was characterized by religious absenteeism (34.5%), 31.0% of the surveyed students took part in religious practices a few times a year, once a week (21.4%), 1–2 times a month (7.6%), a few times a week (5.5%). The majority of the respondents live in the countryside (41.0%), 32.3% live in small towns, and 26.7% are residents of a big city.

3

Marriage, Cohabitation, Children The Family Lifestyles

3.1 Introduction

In the contemporary world, the family – conceived as the smallest and, at the same time, most important cell of social life – assumes a diversity of forms starting from a traditional one which is based upon a marital union, up to liberal models, such as cohabitation (Kiernan, 2002; Prioux, 2006; Thorst, 1978; Nazio, 2008; Lehotska, 2012; Mládek, J., Širočková, 2004), Living Apart Together – LAT (Duncan & Phillips, 2011), Double Income No Kids – DINK (Tydlitátová, 2001) or homosexual relationship (Slany, 2006; Szlendak, 2010). The degree of societal acceptance with reference to such alternative family models varies across countries, cultural legacies and traditions, religious beliefs, or modernization rates. Yet, at this point, an observable increase in tendencies towards popularization and social acceptance of liberal models of family should be emphasized. Many young couples are bound by cohabitation and treat it either as an introduction to marriage (i.e., prolonged engagement leading to the marital ceremony) or as a fully-blown alternative to traditional marriage (Juszczak-Frelkiewicz, 2014; Kwak, 2005; Slany, 2006). Nowadays, in some European countries (e.g., Spain, Sweden or the Netherlands) homosexual couples are allowed to legalize their relationships or enter a legitimate marital union. Concurrently, these issues are subject to heated debates and controversies in many countries of Central and Eastern Europe (e.g., Poland, Slovakia).

3.2 The Family or Non-Family Contemporary Forms of Relationship

The respondents were asked to define which of the following types of relationship can be understood in terms of the family:

- male or female homosexual couple living together and having at least one child;
- unmarried heterosexual couple with one child;
- unmarried homosexual couple with no children;
- single father or single mother having at least one child;
- marriage without children;
- marriage with at least one child.

Although some of the aforementioned relationships are essentially families, these “obvious” options have been included due to research reasons.

Our analysis indicates that the majority of the respondents declare that a married couple having at least one child can be defined as the family (more than 98.0% of all declarations provided). In this case, as Table 1 suggests, expressed views are not statistically differentiated by the respondents’ gender – $p > 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 1.671$; $p = 0.196$; $V = 0.053$).

Table 1

Views on perceiving a married couple with at least one child in terms of the family as differentiated by gender of the respondents

| Could a married couple with at least one child be seen as a family? | Gender | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Female | | Male | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Yes | 331 | 98.8 | 261 | 97.4 | 592 | 98.2 |
| No | 4 | 1.2 | 7 | 2.6 | 11 | 1.8 |
| TOTAL | 335 | 100.0 | 268 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

The willingness to perceive childless married couples as the family is, however, a different issue. The questioned group, in the main, shares an opinion emphasizing that childless marriages could be perceived as a form of family structure. This view is expressed by 67.8% (respectively by 67.8% of male respondents and 67.9% of female respondents). Yet, one in three is of different opinion and says that childless marriages cannot be seen as families. Here, as in the previous case, expressed views are still not statistically differentiated by respondents’ gender – $p > 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 0.002$; $p = 0.969$; $V = 0.002$). The detailed findings are available in Table 2.

Table 2

Views on perceiving a childless married couple in terms of the family as differentiated by gender of the respondents

| Could a childless married couple be seen as a family? | Gender | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Female | | Male | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Yes | 227 | 67.8 | 182 | 67.9 | 409 | 67.8 |
| No | 108 | 32.2 | 86 | 32.1 | 194 | 32.2 |
| TOTAL | 335 | 100.0 | 268 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

Furthermore, the surveyed were asked to declare whether an unmarried heterosexual couple having at least one child can be still defined as a family. The analysis reveals that more than 80.0% of all the respondents are willing to perceive this kind of relationship in terms of a distinct family structure. This view is expressed by 83.6% of female respondents and 81.0% of male respondents. In turn, as Table 3 presents, 19.0% of male respondents and 16.4% of female respondents are of different opinion – $p > 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 0.701$; $p = 0.402$; $V = 0.034$).

Table 3

Views on perceiving an unmarried couple having at least one child in terms of the family as differentiated by gender of the respondents

| Could an unmarried couple with at least one child be seen as a family? | Gender | | | | TOTAL | |
|--|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Female | | Male | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Yes | 280 | 83.6 | 217 | 81.0 | 497 | 82.4 |
| No | 55 | 16.4 | 51 | 19.0 | 106 | 17.6 |
| TOTAL | 335 | 100.0 | 268 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

Contrary to the aforementioned standpoints, the participants are unwilling to recognize a cohabitating couple not having their own children as a type of family structure. This view is expressed by almost 83.0% of all the respondents (respectively 84.8% of female respondents and 79.9% of male respondents). A little more than 17.0% of all the surveyed are of different view on the matter – $p > 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 2.512$; $p = 0.113$; $V = 0.065$). The detailed findings are provided in Table 4.

The majority of the surveyed (i.e., more than 63.0%) declare that the family may consist of a single mother raising at least one child. However, one-third are of different opinion and say that a single mother with a child cannot be conceived in terms of a distinct type of family structure. In this case, as can be seen in Table 5, gender is not

Table 4

Views on perceiving an unmarried couple not having children in terms of the family as differentiated by gender of the respondents

| Could an unmarried couple without children be seen as a family? | Gender | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Female | | Male | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Yes | 51 | 15.2 | 54 | 20.1 | 105 | 17.4 |
| No | 284 | 84.8 | 214 | 79.9 | 498 | 82.6 |
| TOTAL | 335 | 100.0 | 268 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

Table 5

Views perceiving a single mother having at least one child in terms of the family as differentiated by gender of the respondents

| Could a single mother having at least one child be seen as a family? | Gender | | | | TOTAL | |
|--|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Female | | Male | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Yes | 214 | 63.9 | 170 | 63.4 | 384 | 63.7 |
| No | 121 | 36.1 | 98 | 36.6 | 219 | 36.3 |
| TOTAL | 335 | 100.0 | 268 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

a factor which differentiates the obtained results – $p > 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 0.013$; $p = 0.910$; $V = 0.005$). Table 6 in turn, shows opinions expressed with reference to a single father raising at least one child – $p > 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 0.243$; $p = 0.622$; $V = 0.020$).

Table 6

Views on perceiving a single father having at least one child in terms of the family as differentiated by gender of the respondents

| Could a single father having at least one child be seen as a family? | Gender | | | | TOTAL | |
|--|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Female | | Male | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Yes | 211 | 63.0 | 174 | 64.9 | 385 | 63.8 |
| No | 124 | 37.0 | 94 | 35.1 | 218 | 36.2 |
| TOTAL | 335 | 100.0 | 268 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

This analysis indicates that the group is most visibly divided when it comes to recognizing a homosexual couple raising at least one child in terms of a family structure. The deployed statistical analysis shows statistically significant differences in this matter – $p < 0.05$ (tests for Table 7: $\chi^2 = 14.420$; $p = 0.000$; $V = 0.155$; Table 8: $\chi^2 = 4.373$; $p = 0.037$; $V = 0.085$). This particular matter is viewed more decisively by male

respondents who say that a male or female homosexual couple raising at least one child cannot be defined as a family. In turn, female respondents are almost equally divided over that matter, so that no option is represented by a decisive majority. More than 40.0% of female respondents say that such relationships can be recognized as families, which means that women tend to express more liberal views on the matter. The detailed findings are illustrated in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7

Views on perceiving a male homosexual couple having at least one child in terms of the family as differentiated by gender of the respondents

| Could a male homosexual couple with at least one child be seen as a family? | Gender | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Female | | Male | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Yes | 137 | 40.9 | 70 | 26.1 | 207 | 34.3 |
| No | 198 | 59.1 | 198 | 73.9 | 396 | 65.7 |
| TOTAL | 335 | 100.0 | 268 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

Table 8

Views on perceiving a female homosexual couple having at least one child in terms of the family as differentiated by gender of the respondents

| Could a female homosexual couple with at least one child be seen as a family? | Gender | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Female | | Male | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Yes | 143 | 42.7 | 92 | 34.3 | 235 | 39.0 |
| No | 192 | 57.3 | 176 | 65.7 | 368 | 61.0 |
| TOTAL | 335 | 100.0 | 268 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

The participants, to conclude, are willing to say that the following types of relationships can be positively defined as family structures: marriage raising a child, childless marriage, a cohabitating couple raising at least one child, single father or mother raising at least one child. Unmarried and childless couples are definitely not recognized as families. Homosexual couples raising children are not defined as families, though women tend to be more liberal in this matter and a considerable percentage of female respondents are willing to see such relationships in terms of distinct family structures.

3.3 Marriage or Cohabitation? A Preferred Model of Living Together

Since 1980 the number of marriages in Slovakia has been decreasing systematically. The marriage rate in 1980 amounted to 7.9 just to decrease to 4.7 in 2013 (Eurostat, date of entry 20.07.2015), which clearly shows three decades of decrease in the number of marital unions. The reasons of the said tendency are severalfold: liberalization of sex life, increase in the number of cohabitations, unstable financial situation, lack of prospects for proper housing, growing individualization (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), and tendency towards self-actualization in one's occupational life.

When a person is between 19 and 25 years of age, he or she reaches a period of stabilization understood in a number of physical, psychic, emotional, social, moral, and religious ways. Likewise, the period is also marked by stabilization in terms of one's attitude towards life, other people, value systems and meanings, or authorities. This is also a time when adolescents start to search for a partner in order to form a solid relationship. However, at this point a critical question is frequently posed: What types of relationships are preferred by people of that age? (Juszczuk-Frelkiewicz, 2014).

Our analysis suggests that the majority of the questioned declare marriage as a preferred type of relationship. Yet, almost one-third (29.9%) say that cohabitation would be a preferable type of relationship. Concurrently, a statistical analysis indicates that the provided declarations are significantly differentiated by the respondents' gender – $p < 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 16.510$; $p = 0.001$; $V = 0.165$) in a way that the bigger number of female respondents (67.8%) than male respondents (55.2%) claim marriage to be a preferred form of intimate relationship. At the same time, the bigger percentage of male respondents (32.5%) versus female respondents (27.8%) declare in favor of cohabitations. It may indicate that women are more frequently inclined, as compared to men, to live in an intimate relationship which is more stable, as it is in the case of marital unions. Civil partnership not entailing having a shared household is declared by mere 5.6% and a short-term relationship by 2.3% (see Table 9).

Place of residence is an independent variable which is not in a position to differentiate across the participants' preferences with respect to a type of a preferred relationship – $p > 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 7.487$; $p = 0.278$; $V = 0.111$). Marriages are slightly more often preferred by those who live in villages (64.4%) or small towns (63.1%), rather than big cities

Table 9

Declarations concerning preferred types of relationships as differentiated by gender of the respondents

| Which type of relationship do you consider as the most relevant for you? | Gender | | | | TOTAL | |
|--|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Female | | Male | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Marriage | 227 | 67.8 | 148 | 55.2 | 375 | 66.2 |
| Cohabitation (living together in a shared household without being married) | 93 | 27.8 | 87 | 32.5 | 180 | 29.9 |
| Civil partnership without living together in a shared household | 10 | 3.0 | 24 | 9.0 | 34 | 5.6 |
| Short-term relationship | 5 | 1.5 | 9 | 3.4 | 14 | 2.3 |
| TOTAL | 335 | 100.0 | 268 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

(57.8%). As Table 10 suggests, metropolitan denizens (34.2%), in turn, are more frequently in a position to indicate cohabitation as a preferred type of relationships than residents of small towns (28.7%) and villages (27.9%).

Table 10

Declarations concerning preferred types of relationships as differentiated by respondents' places of residence

| Which type of relationship do you consider as the most relevant for you? | Place of residence | | | | | | TOTAL | |
|--|--------------------|-------|------|-------|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| | City | | Town | | Village | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Marriage | 93 | 57.8 | 123 | 63.1 | 159 | 64.4 | 375 | 62.2 |
| Cohabitation (living together in a shared household without being married) | 55 | 34.2 | 56 | 28.7 | 69 | 27.9 | 180 | 29.9 |
| Civil partnership without living together in a shared household | 8 | 5.0 | 9 | 4.6 | 17 | 6.9 | 34 | 5.6 |
| Short-term relationship | 5 | 3.1 | 7 | 3.6 | 2 | 0.8 | 14 | 2.3 |
| TOTAL | 161 | 100.0 | 195 | 100.0 | 247 | 100.0 | 161 | 100.0 |

Statistically speaking, choices with respect to preferred forms of intimate relationships are significantly differentiated by the declared frequency of taking part in religious practices $p < 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 55.541$; $p = 0.000$; $V = 0.303$). The analysis paves the way for two possible interdependencies. First and foremost, it turns out that with the decrease in the frequency of participation in religious practices, the readiness to prefer marital unions also diminishes. Secondly, the decrease in the frequency of

Table 11
Declared frequency of taking part in religious practices and views concerning preferred types of relationships

| Which type of relationship do you consider as the most relevant for you? | Participation in religious practices | | | | | | | | | | | | TOTAL | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|-------|-----|-------------|----|-------|---------------|-------|-----|----------------------|-----|-------|------------------|-------|-----|---|
| | Several times a week | | | Once a week | | | 1-2 per month | | | Several times a year | | | No participation | | No. | % |
| | No. | % | | No. | % | | No. | % | | No. | % | | No. | % | | |
| Marriage | 29 | 87.9 | 105 | 81.4 | 33 | 71.7 | 104 | 55.6 | 104 | 50.0 | 104 | 50.0 | 375 | 62.2 | | |
| Cohabitation (living together in a shared household without being married) | 3 | 9.1 | 15 | 11.6 | 10 | 21.7 | 68 | 36.4 | 68 | 36.4 | 84 | 40.4 | 180 | 29.9 | | |
| Civil partnership without living together in a shared household | 1 | 3.0 | 9 | 7.0 | 2 | 4.3 | 10 | 5.3 | 10 | 5.3 | 12 | 5.8 | 34 | 5.6 | | |
| Short-term relationship | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.2 | 5 | 2.7 | 5 | 2.7 | 8 | 3.8 | 14 | 2.3 | | |
| TOTAL | 33 | 100.0 | 129 | 100.0 | 46 | 100.0 | 187 | 100.0 | 208 | 100.0 | 208 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 | | |

taking part in religious practices is represented as the increase in readiness to form relationships based upon cohabitation. The percentage of the respondents who prefer marital unions and, at the same time, declare weekly participation in Sunday mass is bigger than 80.0% (Table 11).

The surveyed, to conclude, are definitely in favor of marital unions as a preferred type of intimate relationship. A considerable number of the respondents, however, are willing to prefer cohabitation to marriage, which may be recognized as the increase in readiness to accept liberal attitudes towards family life. It is beyond doubt that a number of people who prefer cohabitation will be interested in getting married in the future in order to have a more stable foundation for their own families.

3.4 Preferred Models of Marriage

Although the study shows that the participants are decisively in favor of marriages, one may pose a question concerning the preferred distribution of roles and responsibilities in the future marriage. In order to learn about preferences in this respect, the respondents were given four forms of marriage to choose from: traditional model, reversed model, mixed model, and partnership model.

The research indicates that the respondents, as a rule, prefer marriages based upon partnership. This option is more frequently declared by women (85.7%), who expect that their partners will contribute equally to housekeeping duties due to their spouses' occupational responsibilities, than man (72.0%). In turn, the mixed model of marriage – namely, a marriage in which the spouses are occupationally active, but women are engaged in housekeeping and raising children – is more frequently chosen by male respondents (17.2%), than female respondents (9.9%). The penchant for a traditional model of marriage, in which a husband is occupationally active and a wife is confined to household duties, is more frequently declared by male respondents (9.0%) than by female respondents (3.0%). The reversed model of marriage is preferred by mere 1.5% of women and 1.9% of men (see Figure 1). These declarations are statistically differentiated in a significant way by respondents' gender – $p < 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 19.104$; $p = 0.000$; $V = 0.178$).

Preferences expressed by the surveyed group are also significantly differentiated by place of residence – $p < 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 15.593$; $p = 0.016$; $V = 0.161$). The partnership model of marriage is chosen more frequently by rural residents (84.2%) than dwellers of towns (77.4%) and cities

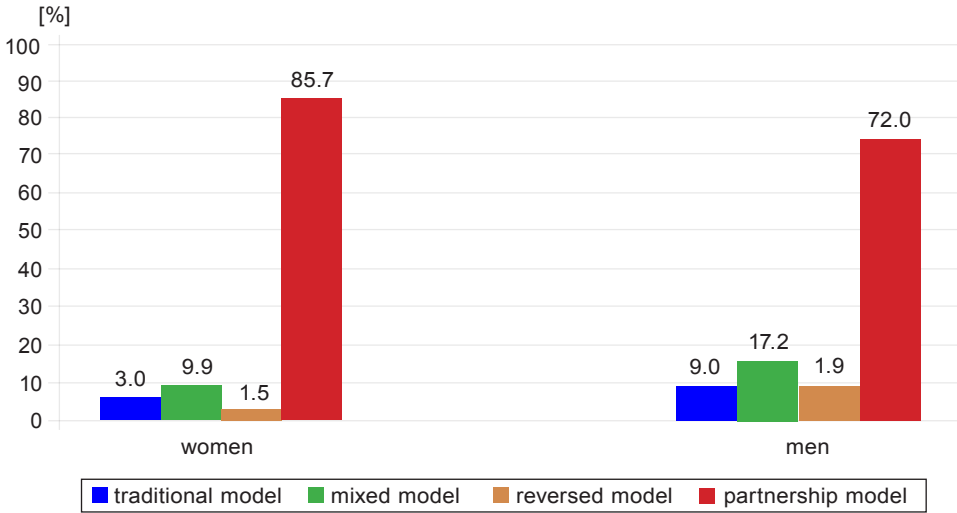


Figure 1. Preferred models of marriage as differentiated by gender of the respondents (expressed as percentage)

(75.2%). In turn, the mixed model is preferred more frequently by residents of towns (17.4%) and cities (16.1%) than those respondents who live in villages (7.7%). The detailed findings are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Preferred models of marriage as differentiated by respondents' place of residence

| Which type of relationship do you consider as the most relevant for you? | Place of residence | | | | | | TOTAL | |
|--|--------------------|-------|------|-------|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| | City | | Town | | Village | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Traditional model | 10 | 6.2 | 10 | 5.1 | 14 | 5.7 | 34 | 5.6 |
| Mixed model | 26 | 16.1 | 34 | 17.4 | 19 | 7.7 | 79 | 13.1 |
| Reversed model | 4 | 2.5 | 0 | 0.0 | 6 | 2.4 | 10 | 1.7 |
| Partnership model | 121 | 75.2 | 151 | 77.4 | 208 | 84.2 | 480 | 79.6 |
| TOTAL | 161 | 100.0 | 195 | 100.0 | 247 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

The frequency of taking part in religious practices is a factor that differentiates statistically the respondents' declarations as to the preferred models of marital union – $p > 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 12.499$; $p = 0.406$; $V = 0.144$). Those of the questioned group who often participate in religious practices (i.e., a few times a week – 78.8% or once a week – 76.0%), or who participate sporadically (i.e., once or twice a month – 80.4% or couple of times a year – 80.2%) or who do not participate at all (81.3%) all tend to indicate the partnership model of marriage. A similar number of the respondents, who participate sporadically in religious practices

or do not participate at all, point to the mixed model of marriage (see Table 13).

Table 13

Declared frequency of taking part in religious practices and views concerning preferred models of marriage

| Which model of marriage do you prefer? | Participation in religious practices | | | | | | | | | | TOTAL | |
|--|--------------------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|---------------|-------|----------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Several times a week | | Once a week | | 1-2 per month | | Several times a year | | No participation | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Traditional model | 0 | 0.0 | 12 | 9.3 | 3 | 6.5 | 11 | 5.9 | 8 | 3.8 | 34 | 5.6 |
| Mixed model | 5 | 15.2 | 18 | 14.0 | 6 | 13.0 | 22 | 11.8 | 28 | 13.5 | 79 | 13.1 |
| Reversed model | 2 | 6.1 | 1 | 0.8 | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 2.1 | 3 | 1.4 | 10 | 1.7 |
| Partnership model | 26 | 78.8 | 98 | 76.0 | 37 | 80.4 | 150 | 80.2 | 169 | 81.3 | 480 | 79.6 |
| TOTAL | 33 | 100.0 | 129 | 100.0 | 46 | 100.0 | 187 | 100.0 | 208 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

Our analysis suggests that having siblings is a factor that differentiates the respondents' preferences with regard to models of marriage – $p < 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 14.600$; $p = 0.002$; $V = 0.156$). Marriage as partnership is preferred both by those who have siblings (79.9%) and those who do not have any siblings (77.0%). In turn, the respondents who have siblings (14.0%) more frequently tend to declare preferences with respect to the mixed model of marriage, than the respondents who do not have brothers or sisters (4.9%). Concurrently, only children (14.8%) more often declare preferences with regard to the traditional model of marriage, than those having siblings (4.6%). The results are provided in Table 14.

Table 14

Declarations referring to having siblings and views concerning preferred models of marriage

| Which model of marriage do you prefer? | Do you have siblings? | | | | TOTAL | |
|--|-----------------------|-------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| | Yes | | No | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Traditional model | 25 | 4.6 | 9 | 14.8 | 34 | 5.6 |
| Mixed model | 76 | 14.0 | 3 | 4.9 | 79 | 13.1 |
| Reversed model | 8 | 1.5 | 2 | 3.3 | 10 | 1.7 |
| Partnership model | 433 | 79.9 | 47 | 77.0 | 480 | 79.6 |
| TOTAL | 542 | 100.0 | 61 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

The study shows that the respondents definitely prefer the egalitarian distribution of household duties, which is motivated by their needs, occupational activities, or willingness to share housekeeping responsibilities and raising children. The surveyed youth face a demanding social reality in which high occupational aspirations – that is, a desire to have a satisfying, well-paid job – are necessitated by taking up trainings, courses, extra schooling, internships, getting all sorts of certificates or diplomas, learning foreign languages. Such activities are conducive to an individual's self-development and career prospects by boosting their competence or education, exerting influence upon a person's intelligence and social skills. Nevertheless, these processes are temporally extended and time-consuming in terms of utilizing one's spare time (i.e., both for institutional education and learning single-handedly). It is little wonder, hence, that the realities of everyday life exert a significant pressure upon the spouses/partners' willingness to share responsibilities related to housekeeping and raising children, which is equally typical of marriages and cohabitations. In this sense, choices made with respect to the partnership model of family are to a large extent motivated by social conditions of one's existence or young people's lifestyles. The partnership model, to put it otherwise, facilitates reconciling family and occupational responsibilities by married or cohabitating couples.

3.5 An Appropriate Age to Get Married

Having assumed a family-oriented lifestyle as a starting point for our considerations, we asked the respondents to indicate age which is appropriate for being joined in marriage. Our study shows that, as declared by 82.0% of female respondents and more than 66.0% of male respondents, time span between 26 and 28 years of age is appropriate to enter into wedlock. A considerable percentage of male respondents (53.4%) are willing to point the age range of 29 and 31 as a preferable time span for marriage. At the same time, a similar number of female respondents are willing to say that age ranges of 23–25 years of age and 29–31 years of age are the most appropriate (respectively 43.9% and 45.1% of all indications provided – see Table 15). In contrast, the average age for getting married in Slovakia, according to the Infostat, amounts to 28.8 years of age [women] and 31.4 years of age [men] (Infostat). The relevant data are presented in Table 16, which shows that our findings as to the participants' preferred age for getting married are similar to the actual, statistical data.

Table 15

Gender of the respondents and declarations provided with reference to an appropriate age for getting married (since the respondents were in a position to choose more than one option, the figures are not summed to 100%)

| What is an appropriate age for getting married? | Gender | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|---|
| | Female | | Male | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Less than 20 years of age | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 0.4 | 1 | – |
| 20–22 years of age | 11 | 3.3 | 15 | 5.6 | 26 | – |
| 23–25 years of age | 147 | 43.9 | 92 | 34.3 | 239 | – |
| 26–28 years of age | 277 | 82.7 | 178 | 66.4 | 455 | – |
| 29–31 years of age | 151 | 45.1 | 143 | 53.4 | 294 | – |
| More than 32 years of age | 20 | 6.0 | 41 | 15.3 | 61 | – |
| TOTAL | 335 | 181.0 | 268 | 175.4 | 603 | – |

Table 16

Number of marriages and average ages for getting married in Slovakia (1992–2012)

| Year | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Number of marriages | 33,880 | 30,771 | 28,155 | 27,489 | 25,903 | 26,149 | 25,415 | 25,621 | 26,006 |
| Average age for getting married (males) | 24.7 | 25.1 | 25.5 | 25.9 | 28.0 | 30.0 | 31.1 | 31.4 | 31.4 |
| Average age for getting married (females) | 22.6 | 23.0 | 23.6 | 23.9 | 25.6 | 27.4 | 28.4 | 28.7 | 28.8 |

Source: Infostat, *20 rokov samostatnosti z pohľadu demografie* ČR, SR, ČSR, Bratislava 2014, p. 12.

Our study shows that the biggest number of the participants say that an appropriate age for getting married is between 26 and 28 years of age regardless of their place of residence: the declaration is expressed by 67.7% of city dwellers, 76.4% of town dwellers and 79.8% of rural residents. A considerable number of respondents from towns and big cities are willing to indicate the age range of 29 and 31 (Table 17).

Decisions as to an appropriate age for getting married are determined by the frequency of taking part in religious practices. The study shows that the increase in the frequency of taking part in religious practices is tantamount to willingness to get married earlier. Likewise, the age range of 23–25 is chosen by more than 60.0% of the surveyed who participate in religious practices a couple of times a week. In turn, the tendency to indicate the same age range by the respondents who participate in

Table 17

Respondents' places of residence and declarations provided with reference to an appropriate age for getting married (since the respondents were in a position to choose more than one option, the figures are not summed to 100%)

| What is an appropriate age for getting married? | Place of residence | | | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------------------|-------|------|-------|---------|-------|-------|---|
| | City | | Town | | Village | | No. | % |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | | |
| Less than 20 years of age | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 0.4 | 1 | – |
| 20–22 years of age | 7 | 4.3 | 8 | 4.1 | 11 | 4.5 | 26 | – |
| 23–25 years of age | 53 | 32.9 | 74 | 37.9 | 112 | 45.3 | 239 | – |
| 26–28 years of age | 109 | 67.7 | 149 | 76.4 | 197 | 79.8 | 455 | – |
| 29–31 years of age | 84 | 52.2 | 99 | 50.8 | 111 | 44.9 | 294 | – |
| More than 32 years of age | 27 | 16.8 | 17 | 8.7 | 17 | 6.9 | 61 | – |
| TOTAL | 161 | 173.9 | 195 | 177.9 | 247 | 181.8 | 603 | – |

religious practices several times a year is cut in half and amounts to 38.5%. The age range of 26–28 is chosen most frequently by those who very frequently take part in religious practices. The respective figures are: 78.8% of declarations provided by those who participate several times a week and 84.5% of declarations given by those who declare religious participation at least once a week. The relevant figures decrease concomitantly with the diminishing frequency of participation. The age range of 29–31 is chosen most frequently by those respondents who are characterized by religious absenteeism (55.8%) and by infrequent participation (i.e., several times a year) – 51.3%. The relevant data are produced in Table 18.

To conclude, a preferable age for getting married is subsumed within the age range of 26 and 28. By this time, young couples have already completed MA degree and have already gained a couple of years of occupational practice and financial stabilization needed for having a family of their own. Furthermore, this is the age range which could be characterized by the readiness to assume roles of husband and father or wife and mother.

Table 18

The frequency of taking part in religious practices and declarations provided with reference to an appropriate age for getting married (since the respondents were in a position to choose more than one option, the figures are not summed to 100%)

| Which model of marriage do you prefer? | Participation in religious practices | | | | | | | | | | TOTAL | |
|--|--------------------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|---------------|-------|----------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|---|
| | Several times a week | | Once a week | | 1–2 per month | | Several times a year | | No participation | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Less than 20 years of age | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.2 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | – |
| 20–22 years of age | 2 | 6.1 | 5 | 3.9 | 1 | 2.2 | 9 | 4.8 | 9 | 4.3 | 26 | – |
| 23–25 years of age | 20 | 60.6 | 64 | 49.6 | 21 | 45.7 | 72 | 38.5 | 62 | 29.8 | 239 | – |
| 26–28 years of age | 26 | 78.8 | 109 | 84.5 | 38 | 82.6 | 138 | 73.8 | 144 | 69.2 | 455 | – |
| 29–31 years of age | 12 | 36.4 | 52 | 40.3 | 18 | 39.1 | 96 | 51.3 | 116 | 55.8 | 294 | – |
| More than 32 years of age | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 31.0 | 3 | 6.5 | 17 | 9.1 | 37 | 17.8 | 61 | – |
| TOTAL | 33 | 181.9 | 129 | 209.3 | 46 | 178.3 | 187 | 177.5 | 208 | 176.9 | 603 | – |

3.6 An Appropriate Age to Have Children

Since 2009, a number of children born in Slovakia have been systematically decreasing, which is illustrated by a comparison of 61,217 live-born children in 2009 and 54,823 in 2013 (Eurostat, accessed 20.07.2015). Concurrently, the fertility rate has been decreasing systematically since 1960 (i.e., 3.04 in 1960 to 1.34 in 2013), which, in turn, indicates that Slovak families, in the main, raise one child (Eurostat, accessed 20.07.2015). The aforementioned data indicate that birthrate in Slovakia is decreasing, which paves the way for the lack of interchangeability of generations and ageing of society in the future. Similar tendencies are also observed in many other European countries. In 1992 and 1995, the biggest number of women delivering their first child was observed in the age range of 20–24. In 2000, an increase in the number of women in the age range of 25–29 delivering their first child was observed. In 2005, the said age range was characterized by the

biggest number of children delivered, and relevant observations pointed to the increase in the number of women in the age range of 30–34 who deliver their first child (see Table 19).

Table 19

Live births and stillbirths in Slovakia (1992–2012)

| Year | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Births (total) | 74,997 | 73,583 | 66,644 | 61,668 | 55,366 | 54,625 | 60,599 | 61,003 | 55,715 |
| Live births | 74,640 | 73,256 | 66,370 | 61,427 | 55,151 | 54,430 | 60,410 | 60,813 | 55,535 |
| Stillbirths | 357 | 327 | 274 | 241 | 215 | 195 | 189 | 190 | 180 |
| Live births out of wedlock (%) | 9.8 | 10.6 | 11.7 | 12.6 | 18.3 | 26.0 | 33.0 | 34.0 | 35.4 |
| Fertility rate | 1.99 | 1.91 | 1.64 | 1.50 | 1.29 | 1.25 | 1.40 | 1.45 | 1.34 |
| Net reproduction rate | 0.96 | 0.92 | 0.80 | 0.73 | 0.63 | 0.60 | 0.68 | 0.70 | 0.64 |
| Average age for delivering a child | 25.04 | 24.27 | 24.53 | 24.70 | 26.59 | 27.69 | 28.62 | 28.88 | 28.75 |
| Average age for delivering the first child | 22.5 | 22.6 | 22.8 | 23.0 | 24.2 | 25.7 | 27.0 | 27.5 | 26.9 |

Source: Infostat, *20 rokov samostatnosti z pohľadu demografie* ČR, SR, ČSR, Bratislava 2014, p. 36.

Relevant data (Infostat) show that the average age of women delivering a child in Slovakia amounts to a little less than 29 years of age. In turn, the average age of women delivering the first child in Slovakia amounts to a 27 years of age (approx.). At the same time, it is worth observing that the number of children born out of wedlock is also increasing, and in 2012 the relevant rate amounted to 35.4% (Table 20). Taking this demographical data into consideration and our study of preferred family types, the participants were asked to declare their preferences as to an appropriate age for having children as well as their desired number.

Our research shows that the significance of parenthood between 26–28 years of age is more frequently emphasized by female respondents (70.3%), who declare their plans to realize their potential as mother and have their first child before reaching 30 years of age, than male respondents (59.0%). A considerable number of men (43.3%) and women (29.4%) are willing to have a child a little later, namely, between 29 and 31 years of age. Almost one-fourth of female respondents (23.1%) and one-fifth of male respondents (21.8%) say that one should have children earlier, that is, between 23 and 25 years of age. A little more

than 16.0% of male respondents declare that having children should be reserved for adults between 32 and 34 years of age (see Table 21).

Table 20

Fertility rates and participation of selected age groups in the total fertility rate in Slovakia (1992–2011)

| Year | Fertility rates (per 1000 females) | | | | | Participation of selected age groups in the total fertility rate | | | | | Fertil- ity rate |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|---|-------|-------|-------|------|------------------------|
| | -19 | 20–24 | 25–29 | 30–34 | 35+ | -19 | 20–24 | 25–29 | 30–34 | 35+ | |
| 1992 | 257 | 882 | 545 | 219 | 92 | 12.9 | 44.2 | 27.3 | 11.0 | 4.6 | 1.99 |
| 1995 | 274 | 598 | 398 | 165 | 64 | 18.3 | 39.9 | 26.6 | 11.0 | 4.3 | 1.50 |
| 2000 | 119 | 421 | 438 | 220 | 95 | 9.2 | 32.5 | 33.9 | 17.0 | 7.4 | 1.29 |
| 2005 | 100 | 304 | 440 | 288 | 122 | 7.9 | 24.3 | 35.1 | 23.0 | 9.7 | 1.25 |
| 2009 | 107 | 281 | 456 | 389 | 179 | 7.6 | 19.9 | 32.3 | 27.5 | 12.7 | 1.41 |
| 2010 | 111 | 266 | 436 | 398 | 189 | 8.0 | 19.0 | 31.1 | 28.4 | 13.5 | 1.40 |
| 2011 | 106 | 261 | 447 | 429 | 207 | 7.3 | 18.0 | 30.8 | 29.6 | 14.3 | 1.45 |
| 2000/1992 | -54% | -52% | -20% | 1% | 4% | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | -35% |
| 2011/1992 | -11% | -38% | 2% | 95% | 117% | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 12% |
| 2011/1992 | -59% | -70% | -18% | 96% | 125% | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | -27% |

Source: Infostat, *20 rokov samostatnosti z pohľadu demografie ČR, SR, ČSR*, Bratislava 2014, p. 39.

Table 21

Gender of respondents and views on an appropriate age for having children (since the respondents were in a position to choose more than one option, the figures are not summed to 100%)

| What is an appropriate age for having children? | Gender | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|---|
| | Female | | Male | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Less than 20 years of age | 1 | 0.3 | 1 | 0.4 | 2 | – |
| 20–22 years of age | 5 | 15.0 | 4 | 1.5 | 9 | – |
| 23–25 years of age | 77 | 23.1 | 57 | 21.8 | 134 | – |
| 26–28 years of age | 234 | 70.3 | 154 | 59.0 | 388 | – |
| 29–31 years of age | 98 | 29.4 | 113 | 43.3 | 211 | – |
| 32–34 years of age | 22 | 6.6 | 42 | 16.1 | 64 | – |
| More than 35 years of age | 5 | 1.5 | 4 | 1.5 | 9 | – |
| TOTAL | 338 | 145.9 | 265 | 143.6 | 603 | – |

Our research shows that the majority of the surveyed, regardless of their place of residence, say that the age range of 26 and 28 is preferable time for having children – this is indicated by 61.5% of big city

dwellers, 65.5% of town dwellers, and 67.6% of village residents. In turn, when the age group of 29 and 31 is taken into consideration, the type of residential area differentiates the respondents' preferences in such a way that the bigger the area of residence, the greater number of the respondents indicates the said age range (i.e., more than 40.0% of big city dwellers agree with the provided time span for having children). Conversely, when the age group of 23 and 25 is taken into consideration, the opposite tendency is observed: the smaller the area of residence, the bigger number of participators prefer having children in the provided time span (i.e., a little more than 24.0% of villagers agree with the said preference). The detailed findings are presented in Table 22.

Table 22

Respondents' places of residence and views on an appropriate age for having children (since the respondents were in a position to choose more than one option, the figures are not summed to 100%)

| What is an appropriate age for having children? | Place of residence | | | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------------------|-------|------|-------|---------|-------|-------|---|
| | City | | Town | | Village | | No. | % |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | | |
| Less than 20 years of age | 1 | 0.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 0.4 | 2 | – |
| 20–22 years of age | 3 | 1.9 | 4 | 2.1 | 2 | 0.8 | 9 | – |
| 23–25 years of age | 34 | 21.8 | 41 | 21.1 | 59 | 24.2 | 134 | – |
| 26–28 years of age | 96 | 61.5 | 127 | 65.5 | 165 | 67.6 | 388 | – |
| 29–31 years of age | 63 | 40.4 | 69 | 35.6 | 79 | 32.4 | 211 | – |
| 32–34 years of age | 20 | 12.8 | 16 | 8.2 | 28 | 11.5 | 64 | – |
| More than 35 years of age | 4 | 2.1 | 3 | 1.9 | 2 | 0.8 | 9 | – |
| TOTAL | 156 | 140.5 | 194 | 136.3 | 244 | 137.7 | 603 | – |

The distribution of respondents' declarations as to the appropriate age for having children could be analyzed with respect to a variable indicating whether the respondents have siblings or not. The research results show that differences in this respect are revealed when the age range of 23 and 25 and 29–31 are taken into consideration. The first option is more frequently chosen by respondents having siblings (23.7%) than those who are the only children (11.9%). The breakdown of preferences concerning the second option is just the opposite (see Table 23).

The study shows only two instances in which significant differences as the participants' views on the preferred age for having children are differentiated by the frequency of taking part in religious practices. Firstly, a smaller number of the respondents who do not take part in

Table 23

Declarations referring to having siblings and views on an appropriate age for having children (since the respondents were in a position to choose more than one option, the figures are not summed to 100%)

| What is an appropriate age for having children? | Do you have siblings? | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|-----------------------|-------|-----|-------|-------|---|
| | Yes | | No | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Less than 20 years of age | 2 | 0.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | – |
| 20–22 years of age | 9 | 1.7 | 0 | 0.0 | 9 | – |
| 23–25 years of age | 127 | 23.7 | 7 | 11.9 | 134 | – |
| 26–28 years of age | 350 | 65.4 | 38 | 64.4 | 388 | – |
| 29–31 years of age | 186 | 34.8 | 25 | 42.4 | 211 | – |
| 32–34 years of age | 59 | 11.0 | 5 | 8.5 | 64 | – |
| More than 35 years of age | 7 | 11.9 | 2 | 0.4 | 9 | – |
| TOTAL | 535 | 148.9 | 59 | 127.6 | 594 | – |

religious practices (16.7%) indicate the age range of 23–25 as the most appropriate moment to have children, as compared to decisions made by those respondents who declare frequent religious participation (several times a week – 27.3%, or once a week – 24.0%), and decisions made by those respondents who participate very rarely (once or twice a month – 26.1%, or several times a year – 26.2%). Secondly, a bigger number of the respondents who participate in religious practices several times a year (41.0%) or do not participate at all (41.4%) indicate the age range of 29–31 as the most appropriate moment to have children, as compared to decisions made by those participating very frequently (several times a week – 21.2%, or once a week – 27.9%) and decisions made by those respondents who participate very rarely (once or twice a month – 19.6%). The results are illustrated in Table 24.

To conclude, the majority of the respondents indicate the age range of 26–28 as the most appropriate time for having children, which is consistent with the actual age (27) of delivering the first child by women in Slovakia (Infostat). The declared time span is, needless to say, indicative of a moment in one's life when an individual has received higher education degree and has already (or at least should have) obtained orientation in life by the very virtue of education, occupation, and willingness to achieve existential stability.

Table 24

Frequency of taking part in religious practices and views on an appropriate age for having children (since the respondents were in a position to choose more than one option, the figures are not summed to 100%)

| What is an appropriate age for having children? | Participation in religious practices | | | | | | | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|---------------|-------|----------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|---|
| | Several times a week | | Once a week | | 1–2 per month | | Several times a year | | No participation | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Less than 20 years of age | 1 | 3.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.2 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | – |
| 20–22 years of age | 1 | 3.0 | 1 | 0.8 | 1 | 2.2 | 2 | 1.1 | 4 | 2.0 | 9 | – |
| 23–25 years of age | 9 | 27.3 | 31 | 24.0 | 12 | 26.1 | 48 | 26.2 | 34 | 16.7 | 134 | – |
| 26–28 years of age | 21 | 63.6 | 92 | 71.3 | 36 | 78.3 | 112 | 61.2 | 127 | 62.6 | 388 | – |
| 29–31 years of age | 7 | 21.2 | 36 | 27.9 | 9 | 19.6 | 75 | 41.0 | 84 | 41.4 | 211 | – |
| 32–34 years of age | 3 | 9.1 | 10 | 7.8 | 3 | 6.5 | 12 | 6.6 | 36 | 17.7 | 64 | – |
| More than 35 years of age | 1 | 3.0 | 1 | 3.0 | 3 | 6.5 | 2 | 1.1 | 4 | 2.0 | 11 | – |
| TOTAL | 34 | 130.2 | 130 | 134.8 | 49 | 141.4 | 185 | 137.2 | 207 | 142.4 | 603 | – |

3.7 Respondents' Views on the Preferred Number of Children

The respondents were asked to reveal their preferences as to the number of children in the future. Our study indicates that more than 60.0% of them are willing to have two children, which is declared by a comparable number of female (61.2%) and male respondents (59.0%). At the same time, 15.0% (approx.) of women and 16.0% (approx.) of men are willing to have three children. A willingness to have one child is declared by a bigger number of female respondents (9.6%), than male respondents (4.5%). Differences motivated by a respondent's gender are also visible in the case of declarations stating "I'm willing to have as many children as we may happen to have." In this case, the majority of positive declarations are provided by male respondents (12.3%). Statisti-

cal analyses reveal that gender is a factor that significantly differentiates provided answers – $p < 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 13.736$; $p = 0.033$; $V = 0.151$). The findings are shown in Table 25.

Table 25

The preferred number of children in the future as differentiated by gender of the respondents

| How many children would you like to have in the future? | Gender | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Female | | Male | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| One | 32 | 9.6 | 12 | 4.5 | 44 | 7.3 |
| Two | 205 | 61.2 | 158 | 59.0 | 363 | 60.2 |
| Three | 49 | 14.6 | 44 | 16.4 | 93 | 15.4 |
| Four | 14 | 4.2 | 7 | 2.6 | 21 | 3.5 |
| Five and more | 3 | 0.9 | 3 | 1.1 | 6 | 1.0 |
| As many as we may happen to have | 20 | 6.0 | 33 | 12.3 | 53 | 8.8 |
| No children | 12 | 3.6 | 11 | 4.1 | 23 | 3.8 |
| TOTAL | 335 | 100.0 | 268 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

Place of residence is not an independent variable that differentiates significantly declarations provided with regard to the preferred number of children – $p > 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 15.265$; $p = 0.227$; $V = 0.159$). A similar number of respondents are willing to have two children regardless of their place of residence (see Table 26).

Table 26

The preferred number of children in the future as differentiated by respondents' place of residence

| How many children would you like to have in the future? | Place of residence | | | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------------------|-------|------|-------|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| | City | | Town | | Village | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| One | 9 | 5.6 | 14 | 7.2 | 21 | 8.5 | 44 | 7.3 |
| Two | 90 | 55.9 | 130 | 66.7 | 143 | 57.9 | 363 | 60.2 |
| Three | 27 | 16.8 | 27 | 13.8 | 39 | 15.8 | 93 | 15.4 |
| Four | 5 | 3.1 | 3 | 1.5 | 13 | 5.3 | 21 | 3.5 |
| Five and more | 3 | 1.9 | 1 | 0.5 | 2 | 0.8 | 6 | 1.0 |
| As many as we may happen to have | 17 | 10.6 | 13 | 6.7 | 23 | 9.3 | 53 | 8.8 |
| No children | 10 | 6.2 | 7 | 3.6 | 6 | 2.4 | 23 | 3.8 |
| TOTAL | 161 | 100.0 | 195 | 100.0 | 247 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

In turn, a variable that significantly differentiates the respondents' answers is the frequency of taking part in religious practices – $p < 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 82.961$; $p = 0.000$; $V = 0.371$). The analyses point to two interpretative tendencies. The willingness to have two children increases along with the decreasing frequency of participation in religious practices. The readiness to have two children is declared by more than 33.0% of the respondents who take part in religious practices several times a week, more than 68.0% of the surveyed who take part in religious practices several times a year, and 61.5% of the respondents who are characterized by religious absenteeism. The other tendency indicates that the preferred number of children increases with the growth in the frequency of participation in religious practices. This applies to more than 24.0% of the respondents who take part in religious practices several times a week, 17.1% of the surveyed who take part in religious practices several times a year, and less than 9.0% of the respondents who are characterized by religious absenteeism. More than 21.0% of the surveyed group who declare religious participation several times a week are willing to have four children and 18.2% of them declare to raise as many children as they may happen to have (see Table 27).

Table 27

The frequency of religious participation and views on the preferred number of children in the future

| How many children would you like to have in the future? | Participation in religious practices | | | | | | | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|---------------|-------|----------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Several times a week | | Once a week | | 1–2 per month | | Several times a year | | No participation | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| One | 0 | 0.0 | 8 | 6.2 | 4 | 8.7 | 11 | 5.9 | 21 | 10.1 | 44 | 7.3 |
| Two | 11 | 33.3 | 72 | 55.8 | 24 | 52.2 | 128 | 68.4 | 128 | 61.5 | 363 | 60.2 |
| Three | 8 | 24.2 | 26 | 20.2 | 9 | 19.6 | 32 | 17.1 | 18 | 8.7 | 93 | 15.4 |
| Four | 7 | 21.2 | 6 | 4.7 | 1 | 2.2 | 1 | 0.5 | 6 | 2.9 | 21 | 3.5 |
| Five and more | 1 | 3.0 | 4 | 3.1 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 0.5 | 6 | 1.0 |
| As many as we may happen to have | 6 | 18.2 | 11 | 8.5 | 6 | 13.0 | 8 | 4.3 | 22 | 10.6 | 53 | 8.8 |
| No children | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 1.6 | 2 | 4.3 | 7 | 3.7 | 12 | 5.8 | 23 | 3.8 |
| TOTAL | 33 | 100.0 | 129 | 100.0 | 46 | 100.0 | 187 | 100.0 | 208 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

3.8 Conclusions

The majority of the surveyed group are willing to enter into a wedlock when they are 26–28 years of age, and the same age range applies to their plans to have their first child. The respondents, in the main, seek self-actualization by means of occupational development, and, as a result, are predisposed to share (by means of negotiation, or discussion) housekeeping duties and responsibilities resulting from the fact of having children. This means that they wish to realize a partnership model of marital union. A smaller number of the participants would like to form a cohabitation and treat it as an introduction to a proper marriage or, conversely, as an alternative to the traditionally established forms of marital union. Our research suggests that the respondents' plans for the future entail family-oriented lifestyle which focuses upon having a relationship based upon love, reciprocal support, and wedding vows. This may lead to a conclusion that although European patterns of civil partnership have seeped into social life of Slovakia and could be recognized as the general willingness to form cohabitations, the overwhelming majority of the questioned group are going to enter into wedlock and have a traditional family. There is, of course, a plethora of variables which facilitate the realization of the said family model (e.g., patterns of family-oriented upbringing, symbolic universe of values and pro-social attitudes formed in one's family, being well-educated, having a job rendering personal satisfaction and material stabilization possible, frequent participation in religious practices), and a number of variables delaying one's decisions concerning marriage and having a traditional family life (e.g., one's low educational profile, unemployment, lack of occupational and social stabilization, lack of proper housing, working away from one's home, frequent decisions to change occupations related to a need for occupational stability, character of one's work, cultural patterns derived from one's family). The aforementioned variables may determine the respondents' choices, yet it has to be mentioned that cultural patterns derived from one's family exert, as a rule, the strongest influence upon individual decisions or choices. Such conclusions suggest that our studies should be continued in order to provide a relevant diagnosis with reference to developmental tendencies typical of these social phenomena, and to undertake a longitudinal study that would investigate into the surveyed population's future actions, their relationships or decisions concerning family life.

Cohabitation. An Informal Lifestyle

4.1 Introduction

The notion of cohabitation, as far as the definition is concerned, is conceptualized with reference to a number of its aspects. First and foremost, this is the idea of various facilitations which are related to living together. Secondly, such a relationship is defined from a perspective of its economic dimension. Thirdly, cohabitations could be discussed with respect to the partners' sex life. Fourthly, the relationship is comprehended in the context of having and raising children. Any differences in the said aspects become visible when temporal perspective is taken into consideration in which a distinction between short-term cohabitation (i.e., formed upon casual relationships) and long-term cohabitation, usually understood as an introduction to a marital union or an alternative to single life, is discussed (Rindfuss & Vandenheuvel, 1990).

Cohabitation, as Rabušić (2001) puts it, may be defined in terms of a relationship between two persons of opposite sexes who live together in a marriage-like, not legalized union for a considerable amount of time. Nowadays, this trend may take place before entering into wedlock, during the marriage, and after its duration. In a very similar fashion, they can replace marital unions. Cohabitations are becoming more and more popular. There are two approaches to this pattern of living together that are discussed most frequently. On the one hand, cohabitation is seen as an alternative to a full-fledged marital union; on the other hand, it is conceived as an introduction to a more formalized type of relationship in the future. The latter conceptualization lays stress on the idea of the partners' mutual testing, and cohabitation is a step taken towards marriage, something more than a simple engagement. Many a couple chooses cohabitation just to learn whether they match

each other (Musick, 2007). An important factor enabling recognizing whether a given form of relationship is a cohabitation is its duration which, as Krystyna Slany teaches us, should last at least several months (Slany, 2006).

When understood as living together and having children without entering into wedlock, this pattern has become very popular and started to disseminate throughout Europe. The process, however, assumes different paces and different intensities across countries (Ermisch, 2005). Pre-marital cohabitation was unacceptable in most European countries in the early 1960s (Blossfeld, 1995). It was infrequent in Sweden, which is cohabitation's country of origin (Hoem, 1995). Nowadays, this type of relationship is becoming increasingly popular, especially among the youth. Likewise, many European countries (e.g., the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, and France) have decided to change the legal status of cohabitation, and cohabiting couples are granted the same rights as marriages (Juszczak-Frelkiewicz, 2014). Legalizing this trend is still not permitted by law in Slovakia, so cohabiting couples are not granted such rights as settling taxes together or inheriting possessions. This situation has paved the way for our intention to ask numerous questions concerning the very phenomenon of cohabitation. The group of respondents consisted of students of diversified majors taught at the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. The questions concerned mostly such issues as the legalization of cohabitation in Slovakia (together with the legalization of adoption for cohabitating couples), the relationship between marriages and cohabitations, the capability of cohabiting couples to create favorable conditions for raising children, and the propensity of cohabiting relationships to form a happy family.

4.2 Cohabitation. A Competition for Marriage?

Respondents were asked to declare whether the tendencies to liberalize moral attitudes as well as the increasing acceptance of informal heterosexual relationships by many social groups can possibly pose a threat to or encourage competition for the institution of traditional marriage.

Cohabitation is a factor facilitating personal life and taking decisions concerning sex life without taking social consequences, such as children's future fate, into consideration. Moreover, cohabitation is necessitated only by the sheer declaration of love. When the said pluralization and liberalization of values are taken into account, these facilitations,

according to 53.4% of respondents (55.9% of female respondents and 50.4% of male respondents) make cohabitation a more attractive form of relationship than marriage. The number of those who totally agree that cohabitation creates competition for traditional marriages amounts to 27.0%. In turn, 26.4% of the surveyed are positive about the matter, but have their doubts, and 21.2% say that cohabitation does not pose a threat to marriages (see Table 28). The latter group of respondents shares a firm conviction that the marital traditions in Slovakia are robust and reinforced by the Christian model of morality, which renders their protection from disappearance and their subsequent replacement by informal relationships possible. A statistical analysis shows that gender is not a factor differentiating the expressed views – $p > 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 9.121$; $p = 0.058$; $V = 0.123$).

Table 28

Views concerning the competitiveness of cohabitations with respect to marriages as differentiated by gender of respondents

| Is cohabitation a competition for marriage? | Gender | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Female | | Male | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Yes | 95 | 28.4 | 68 | 25.4 | 163 | 27.0 |
| Rather yes | 92 | 27.5 | 67 | 25.0 | 159 | 26.4 |
| No | 57 | 17.0 | 71 | 26.5 | 128 | 21.2 |
| Rather no | 62 | 18.5 | 47 | 17.5 | 109 | 18.1 |
| I don't know | 29 | 8.7 | 15 | 5.6 | 44 | 7.3 |
| TOTAL | 335 | 100.0 | 268 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

Józef Baniak conducted studies among the group of Polish junior high school students concerning the competitive character of relationships which are alternative to traditional families. The results show that almost one-third (27.8%) of adolescents say that cohabitation is a serious alternative for marriages (Baniak, 2010). In this case, the percentage of respondents saying that cohabitation is a competition for marriage is smaller than it is shown in our study, which may be explained by the respondents' young age and the fact that they do not form such relationships, have no experience in the field, hence their opinions are based on information coming from a plenitude of indirect sources.

Slovak students' opinions on cohabitation are not statistically differentiated in a significant way by the frequency of their participation in religious practices – $p > 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 19.031$; $p = 0.267$; $V = 0.178$). The analysis shows that the respondents – regardless of how often they take

part in religious practices – are divided in terms of views on the degree of competition that is supposedly posed by cohabitation. Those who participate in religious practices several times a week, as a rule, are of the opinion that cohabitation does not pose any threat to marriage (39.4%), whereas those who participate in religious practices once a week claim that cohabitation poses a threat to marriages (24.0%) or may present a threat (28.7%). The respective figures for respondents who participate in religious practices once or twice a month are 21.7% and 26.1%, and for those who participate several times a year are 33.7% and 26.7%. Those of the surveyed who declare religious participation are, in the main, of the same opinion (see Table 29).

Table 29

The frequency of taking part in religious practices and views concerning the competitiveness of cohabitations with respect to marriages

| Is cohabitation a competition for marriage? | Participation in religious practices | | | | | | | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|---------------|-------|----------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Several times a week | | Once a week | | 1–2 per month | | Several times a year | | No participation | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Yes | 5 | 15.2 | 31 | 24.0 | 10 | 21.7 | 63 | 33.7 | 54 | 26.0 | 163 | 27.0 |
| Rather yes | 8 | 24.2 | 37 | 28.7 | 12 | 26.1 | 50 | 26.7 | 52 | 25.0 | 159 | 26.4 |
| No | 13 | 39.4 | 29 | 22.5 | 8 | 17.4 | 31 | 16.6 | 47 | 22.6 | 128 | 21.2 |
| Rather no | 5 | 15.2 | 23 | 17.8 | 11 | 23.9 | 27 | 14.4 | 43 | 20.7 | 109 | 18.1 |
| I don't know | 2 | 6.1 | 9 | 7.0 | 5 | 10.9 | 16 | 8.6 | 12 | 5.8 | 44 | 7.3 |
| TOTAL | 33 | 100.0 | 129 | 100.0 | 46 | 100.0 | 187 | 100.0 | 208 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

It must be emphasized that some cohabiting couples treat this form of relationship as an introduction and preparation for marriage. This opinion is shared mostly by engaged couples who share the same household before getting married. Hence cohabitation is not always an alternative with reference to marriages. Yet, ongoing modernization changes, liberalization of moral norms in the western Europe and the USA, ongoing secularization, individualization, and pluralization of various forms of social life are all conducive to perceiving cohabitation as a serious alternative to traditional marriages (Juszczak-Frelkiewicz, 2014).

4.3 The Creation of Beneficial Conditions for Raising Children by Cohabiting Couples

In the contemporary world, when an increasing number of couples decide to get divorced, the family based upon marital union is becoming a fragile and wavering social institution. In particular, the situation of divorce is traumatic for children and it exerts a significant influence upon their emotional, intellectual, and social development (Cudak, 2005). When faced by young parents, uncertain economic situations exert a negative influence upon their children's conditions of existence. That is why the creation of beneficial conditions for bringing up children is a difficult, but accomplishable task. Not only does it concern beneficial social and material conditions of existence, but it also refers to a home that is filled with love, acceptance, respect, tolerance, and understanding. The relationships among family members are also a significant element that affects the child's development and his/her relationships with peers or other individuals. Hence one may pose a question whether cohabiting couples are able to create conditions that are beneficial for raising children or, conversely, if it is possible only when a couple is married? Are cohabiting couples, despite the temporariness of their relationships and the lack of proper legal underpinnings, able to ensure that their children are given beneficial conditions for development?

The majority of the respondents claim that cohabiting couples are able to ensure that their children are given beneficial conditions for development. This statement is expressed by almost 60.0% of all the surveyed. Yet, one in five respondents are undecided in this matter (21.1%), and more than 17.0% express different opinion than the one expressed above (see Table 30). A statistical analysis shows that respond-

Table 30

Declarations concerning the possibility of creating beneficial conditions for child development by cohabiting couples as differentiated by gender of respondents

| Are cohabiting couples in a position to create beneficial conditions for child development? | Gender | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Female | | Male | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Definitely yes | 56 | 16.7 | 51 | 19.0 | 107 | 17.7 |
| Yes | 134 | 40.0 | 109 | 40.7 | 243 | 40.3 |
| Undecided | 69 | 20.6 | 58 | 21.6 | 127 | 21.1 |
| No | 64 | 19.1 | 41 | 15.3 | 105 | 17.4 |
| Definitely no | 12 | 3.6 | 9 | 3.4 | 21 | 3.5 |
| TOTAL | 335 | 100.0 | 268 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

ents' gender is not a factor differentiating the expressed views – $p > 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 0.803$; $p = 0.772$; $V = 0.055$).

The study indicates that the frequency of taking part in religious practices does not exert a statistically significant influence upon respondents' views – $p < 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 79.863$; $p = 0.000$; $V = 0.364$). Those respondents (60.7%) who frequently participate in religious practices (i.e., several times a week) say that cohabiting couples are not in a position to provide their children with beneficial conditions for their emotional, intellectual, and social development. Different opinion is expressed by the surveyed who participate in religious practices once a week ("yes": 34.1%, "definitely yes": 10.1%), once or twice a month (respectively 43.5% and 13.0%), several times a year (respectively 41.7% and 17.1%), and those who are characterized by religious absenteeism (respectively 46.2% and 26.4%). Table 31 presents the detailed findings.

Table 31

The frequency of taking part in religious practices and declarations concerning the possibility of creating beneficial conditions for child development by cohabiting couples

| Are cohabiting couples in a position to create beneficial conditions for child development? | Participation in religious practices | | | | | | | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|---------------|-------|----------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Several times a week | | Once a week | | 1–2 per month | | Several times a year | | No participation | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Definitely yes | 1 | 3.0 | 13 | 10.1 | 6 | 13.0 | 32 | 17.1 | 55 | 26.4 | 107 | 17.7 |
| Yes | 5 | 15.2 | 44 | 34.1 | 20 | 43.5 | 78 | 41.7 | 96 | 46.2 | 243 | 40.3 |
| Undecided | 7 | 21.2 | 33 | 25.6 | 7 | 15.2 | 47 | 25.1 | 33 | 15.9 | 127 | 21.1 |
| No | 15 | 45.5 | 31 | 24.0 | 12 | 26.1 | 27 | 14.4 | 20 | 9.6 | 105 | 17.4 |
| Definitely no | 5 | 15.2 | 8 | 6.2 | 1 | 2.2 | 3 | 1.6 | 4 | 1.9 | 21 | 3.5 |
| TOTAL | 33 | 100.0 | 129 | 100.0 | 46 | 100.0 | 187 | 100.0 | 208 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

Our respondents, to conclude, say that the sheer fact of legalizing a given relationship is not automatically conducive to providing children with beneficial conditions for development. Both married and cohabiting couples are able to take appropriate care of the child's development, which depends mostly on healthy relationships between the partners and the family's economic situation.

4.4 Are Cohabiting Couples Happy Families?

Happy families are characterized by parents' readiness to perceive their children's needs as more crucial than their own desires, commodities or obligations related to one's occupation, friends, or more distant relatives. Parents are ready for compromises and sacrifices for the family's sake; they take care of good relationships among family members and endow one another with love, respect, responsibility, and understanding. Could a happy family be created only by those couples who have sworn their marital vows, or could it be created by cohabiting couples as well?

The present study shows that cohabiting couples are in a position to have a happy, loving family. This view is expressed by more than 68.0% of the questioned group, including 69.0% of female respondents and 67.9% of male respondents. The opposing view is shared merely by 12.7% of all the respondents, and almost 19.0% expresses no opinion in the matter (see Table 32). Our analyses show that the respondents' gender is not a factor which significantly differentiated the obtained opinions – $p > 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 7.734$; $p = 0.102$; $V = 0.113$).

Table 32

Declarations concerning the possibility of creating happy families by cohabiting couples as differentiated by gender of respondents

| Are cohabiting couples in a position to create happy families? | Gender | | | | TOTAL | |
|--|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Female | | Male | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Definitely yes | 69 | 20.6 | 72 | 26.9 | 141 | 23.4 |
| Yes | 162 | 48.4 | 110 | 41.0 | 272 | 45.1 |
| Undecided | 68 | 20.3 | 45 | 16.8 | 113 | 18.7 |
| No | 29 | 8.7 | 34 | 12.7 | 63 | 10.4 |
| Definitely no | 7 | 2.1 | 7 | 2.6 | 14 | 2.3 |
| TOTAL | 335 | 100.0 | 268 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

In contrast, the declared frequency of taking part in religious practices is a factor that one more time exerts a statistically significant influence upon the distribution of provided answers – $p < 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 62.095$; $p = 0.000$; $V = 0.321$). The study points to two interdependencies. Firstly, with the decreasing frequency of taking part in religious practices, the number of respondents claiming that cohabiting couples may create a happy family increases. Secondly, with the decreasing frequency of

participation in religious practices, the number of respondents claiming that cohabiting couples are not in a position to create a happy family also decreases. Hence it turns out that positive attitudes towards cohabiting couples are shown by those respondents who participate very frequently – that is, once a week – (“definitely yes”: 18.6%, “yes”: 36.4%) and those who participate once or twice a month (respectively 13.0% and 52.2%). Those of the surveyed who are characterized by religious absenteeism are, as a rule, of the same opinion, and are more decisive about the whole matter (respectively 33.2% and 43.3%). The detailed findings are provided in Table 33.

Table 33

The frequency of taking part in religious practices and declarations concerning the possibility of creating happy families by cohabiting couples

| Are cohabiting couples in a position to create happy families? | Participation in religious practices | | | | | | | | | | TOTAL | |
|--|--------------------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|---------------|-------|----------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Several times a week | | Once a week | | 1–2 per month | | Several times a year | | No participation | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Definitely yes | 1 | 3.0 | 24 | 18.6 | 6 | 13.0 | 41 | 21.9 | 69 | 33.2 | 141 | 23.4 |
| Yes | 11 | 33.3 | 47 | 36.4 | 24 | 52.2 | 100 | 53.5 | 90 | 43.3 | 272 | 45.1 |
| Undecided | 8 | 24.2 | 33 | 25.6 | 10 | 21.7 | 30 | 16.0 | 32 | 15.4 | 113 | 18.7 |
| No | 10 | 30.3 | 20 | 15.5 | 6 | 13.0 | 12 | 6.4 | 15 | 7.2 | 63 | 10.4 |
| Definitely no | 3 | 9.1 | 5 | 3.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 2.1 | 2 | 1.0 | 14 | 2.3 |
| TOTAL | 33 | 100.0 | 129 | 100.0 | 46 | 100.0 | 187 | 100.0 | 208 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

The study indicates that having a formalized marital union is not necessary to create a happy, loving family in which family members support one another, are endowed with love, trust and care, and experience the atmosphere of harmony, acceptance, and understanding. At the same time, respondents seem to suggest that formalizing a relationship is not automatically related to having a happy family. Happiness depends rather on family members’ characters, personality traits, as well as problems faced in everyday life and successes in overcoming them.

4.5 A Possibility to Adopt Children by Cohabiting Couples

Having children is a desired goal for many couples, not only the married ones. The wish of self-actualization in terms of maternal and paternal roles is a magnificent experience of providing protection, support, and love for one's children. Yet, not all married and cohabiting couples can become biological parents mostly due to health problems related to infertility. When such adverse conditions are met, married couples are granted the right to adopt children. Cohabiting couples in Slovakia, on the other hand, are denied it, even if conditions for children's development are met both in material and emotional terms.

Our study comprises a question concerning the very possibility of having cohabiting couples granted with the right to adopt children when a defined set of conditions is met (Ładyżyński, 2010). Our research has shown that more than half of the respondents say that cohabiting couples should be granted with adoption rights. This view is expressed by a bigger number of female respondents ("definitely yes": 15.5% and "yes": 41.8%) than male respondents (respectively 10.8% and 31.7%), which suggests that women are more open-minded when it comes to the issue of granting cohabiting couples with adoptions rights. More than 20.0% of all the questioned are against this policy, and 27.0% have no definite opinion on the matter (see Table 34). Our analyses show that respondents' gender is a factor which significantly differentiated the obtained opinions – $p < 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 13.632$; $p = 0.009$; $V = 0.150$).

Table 34

Declarations concerning the possibility of granting cohabiting couples with adoption rights as differentiated by gender of respondents

| Should cohabiting couples be given adoption rights? | Gender | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Female | | Male | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Definitely yes | 52 | 15.5 | 29 | 10.8 | 81 | 13.4 |
| Yes | 140 | 41.8 | 85 | 31.7 | 225 | 37.3 |
| Undecided | 76 | 22.7 | 87 | 32.5 | 163 | 27.0 |
| No | 55 | 16.4 | 53 | 19.8 | 108 | 17.9 |
| Definitely no | 12 | 3.6 | 14 | 5.2 | 26 | 4.3 |
| TOTAL | 335 | 100.0 | 268 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

These views are also differentiated by the declared frequency of religious participation – $p < 0.05$ (test $\chi^2 = 41.674$; $p = 0.000$; $V = 0.263$). Those respondents who take part in religious practices several times a week are against granting cohabiting couples with adoptions rights (“no”: 42.4% and “definitely no”: 6.1%). However, with the decrease in the said frequency, the number of the respondents showing disapproval to the matter also decreases. For instance, 43.9% and 16.6% respectively, who take part in religious practices several times a year are in favor of the issue or are definitely in favor of it. For those respondents who are characterized by religious absenteeism the relevant figures are 35.6% and 18.3% (see Table 35).

Table 35

The frequency of taking part in religious practices and declarations concerning the possibility of granting cohabiting couples with adoption rights

| Should cohabiting couples be given adoption rights? | Participation in religious practices | | | | | | | | | | TOTAL | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|---------------|-------|----------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Several times a week | | Once a week | | 1–2 per month | | Several times a year | | No participation | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Definitely yes | 1 | 3.0 | 7 | 5.4 | 4 | 8.7 | 31 | 16.6 | 38 | 18.3 | 81 | 13.4 |
| Yes | 7 | 21.2 | 44 | 34.1 | 18 | 39.1 | 82 | 43.9 | 74 | 35.6 | 225 | 37.3 |
| Undecided | 9 | 27.3 | 42 | 32.0 | 13 | 28.3 | 46 | 24.6 | 53 | 25.5 | 163 | 27.0 |
| No | 14 | 42.4 | 28 | 21.0 | 9 | 19.6 | 25 | 13.4 | 32 | 15.4 | 108 | 17.9 |
| Definitely no | 2 | 6.1 | 8 | 6.2 | 2 | 4.3 | 3 | 1.6 | 11 | 5.3 | 26 | 4.3 |
| TOTAL | 33 | 100.0 | 129 | 100.0 | 46 | 100.0 | 187 | 100.0 | 208 | 100.0 | 603 | 100.0 |

4.6 Conclusions

The present study has shown that cohabiting relationships do not foster competition for traditional marriages. Each type of relationship is unique, one of its kind in terms of distinct characteristics, and is endowed with its own supporters and detractors. Our respondents say that cohabiting couples are able to create beneficial conditions for their children’s development and, consequently, a happy family. Such matters remain independent on the type of relationship (i.e., formal or informal)

and are concerned mostly with the partners' characters, economic and social situation or problems faced in everyday existence, which means that they depend on a number of factors not related to the legal status of a given relationship. Since the strength of relationship and conditions that must be met to adopt children are of prime importance, our respondents are also willing to grant cohabiting couples with adoption rights.

Trust as a Value of Family Life

5.1 Introduction

The family, all forms of family-related social behaviors, its stability and religious dimensions, have always constituted a natural, taken-for-granted form of social reality, a basic cultural form of human existence, which becomes an indispensable “symbolic reference” in cases when adults are willing to confirm or, contrariwise, to deny the formative impact of family life. Tradition, folkways, and religious norms have defined socially expected walks of life both within the family and from the perspective of the family. Divergent individual biographies have always sought redress in the consecration of religion-related social roles, individual personality dispositions, or adversity of experienced social situations (i.e., wars, calamities, epidemics, etc.). At the same time, tendencies to ignore family moralities – even those of statistically significant nature – have not paved the way for the very act of questioning the essence of the family. This is, in the main, the sense of referring to the traditional family in terms of a value.

The family is a lawfully legalized community of spouses as well as their biological or foster children. It is also a primary social group (i.e., a group based upon direct, emotional, and agential relationships) and the most significant form of social life, both for individuals and whole societies. The family functions like a lens in which most fundamental macrostructural phenomena and problems are focused. It takes part in processes of selection and interpretation of social knowledge. It could be dysfunctional or functional. The family is indispensable for giving a new life (the procreative function) and reproducing the culture of life (sexual functions, intergenerational reproduction of culture, safeguarding of material needs). The family fulfills a decisive role in the formation of an

individual's social personality (i.e., socializing, educational, emotional functions) and in the creation of bigger communities of local, regional, and national characters (in this case one may address functions related to stratification and social control).

The family, as Pavelová puts it, “teaches us the art of constructing ties with people around us; it fosters interpersonal trust by the virtue of which we form solid relationships, are sincere to one another and tolerate other people regardless of their vices” (Pavelová, 2006, p. 168). When conceived as a natural form of social environment based upon direct, agential, and emotional interpersonal ties, the family is conducive to versatile forms of personal development. It forms its members' identities and facilitates one's incorporation into society and culture. The family resembles a stronghold safeguarding its members against threats and external consequences of anomie.

When changes affecting contemporary culture are taken into consideration, one is in a position to observe that the family undergoes significant transformations and is starting to lose its privileged place within the structures of the contemporary world. The aforementioned tendencies point to a crisis of the family conceived as a fundamental unit of social life and an institution safeguarding intergenerational continuity and dynamics of social development. The meaningfulness of the family as a primary social group and institution as well as a *milieu* in which one's social personality is being developed is also undermined. At the same time, an increasing number of people hold a belief claiming that the family, when viewed in a traditional way, is no longer the most important element in their lives (for some of them it is perhaps a totally dispensable part of life). The contemporary culture is willing to place its bets on an individual, rather than on the family. Traditional rules and clues which rendered structure to interpersonal relationships are slowly ceasing to be valid. Individuals, in turn, face a necessity to choose among an infinite number of possibilities with regard to creating, amending, fixing, or dissolving their relations with other people. We live in the world of conflicting and contradictory interests associated with family, work, love, and autonomy in pursuing one's goals. A plethora of family-related functions is currently undergoing a process of delegitimization. This is especially true for these functions which families used to fulfill in order to protect their members from anomie and corresponding detrimental phenomena induced by the external environment. Likewise, a number of functions that were previously fulfilled by the family are now taken over by other social institutions: education and upbringing are organized as school activities, hospitals are responsible for health care, and social benefit organizations are concerned with helping

seniors, sick, and disabled persons. In contrast, two family-centered social functions – primary socialization and safeguarding of emotional needs – are still predominately within the repertoire of family-related functions (Plaňava, 2000, p. 18).

Jozef Matulník (2014, p. 84) comments on the current tendencies affecting the status of families in the Slovak Republic:

The diminution of the family in the Slovak Republic is a dynamic process which accelerated in the 1990s and it is still viewed as ongoing. The process is documented by statistical data representing demographical tendencies. In 1990, there were 21.9 divorces for every 100 marriages, but in 2012 the relevant figure amounted to 42.1. In 1990, the number of children born out of wedlock amounted to 7.6%, and in 2012 the relevant figure was as high as 35.4%. In 1990, the marriage rate was 7.4 for every 100 citizens just to fall to mere 4.8 in 2012.

The family is burdened by anomie, which is a result of many factors, chief among which are disturbances affecting socialization and upbringing, escalating conflicts of roles between spouses and parents, erosion processes affecting the cultural model of family, and official social policies. These processes, in turn, are conducive to the erosion of trust relationships among the family members. Concurrently, family-related trust deficits are automatically transferred to wider social relations and give rise to the culture of distrust. Having characterized the condition of contemporary Slovak families, Peter Ondrejkoivič aptly notices that “their incoherent and non-transparent character [...] leaves one with a feeling of malaise” (Ondrejkoivič, 2000, p. 347).

5.2 Trust as a Foundation of Social Life

Trust can be seen as a basis of all social interactions and the foundation of social order. It indicates normative standards of social relations taking place between individuals, social groupings, and entire organizations. In a very similar fashion, trust is evident in constellations or configurations of relationships taking place among individuals, social groups, and institutions.

Trust is an ethical category that originates in the community-wide consensus with reference to accepted values and rules of incorporating them into practices of everyday social life. Trust is endowed with consequences that are instrumental for the quality of an individual's

existence, as well as for the value of public, communal life. Trust is both an expected and a desired state of social relationships. At the same time, it may be inscribed into a group of basic social needs as a necessary supplement to the need for affiliation and social acceptance.

Trust may be conceptualized as an attitude towards other individuals, which shapes social interactions, exerts influence upon their content and, first and foremost, contributes to a quality of public life. Attitudes comprise cognitive, emotional, and volitional components which function in relation to one another in order to render form and structure to social behaviors and actions. In some interactions certain components are emphasized, while other are attenuated. Yet, it is a mistake and a gross simplification to construe human behavior as being limited to one of the said factors at the expense of other considerations and determinants. Likewise, it is a fallacy to assume stability and invariability of attitudinal components and, consequently, attribute the same set of features to all forms of social trust. Individuals are engaged in the incessant process of forming their social personalities and attitudes, which does not suggest that these features are not rooted in the sphere of cultural invariants which are experienced and affirmed in processes of primary and secondary socialization. Those cultural invariants are deposited, for instance, in religion or traditions which render legitimization to the order of social life by providing valid justifications and granting value for those social actions or attitudes that promote the virtue of trust. One may hypothetically assume that sparkles of trust evoking hopes for society's survival are observable in otherwise trustless social interactions – as it could be the case of totalitarian regimes or concentration camps – that reify human beings and reduce them to the roles of machines which automatically perform ordered tasks or prescribed actions (Herling-Grudziński, 2000). In this context it is little wonder that “trust is a value that stabilizes the society and makes all of its parts actionable” (Zich, 2013, p. 12).

Trust, as Piotr Sztompka puts it, is “a bet about the future contingent actions of others” (Sztompka, 1999, p. 25). In this sense, trust is a way of dealing with actions undertaken by other people. It is a way of coping with uncertainty and unpredictability by providing a shared plane for interaction, cooperation, and communication. Trust facilitates interpersonal communications and fosters the culture of dialogue and debate. Secondly, it provides opportunities for spontaneity, which, as a consequence, paves the way for creativity and innovation. Thirdly, trust is a societal mechanism that is necessary in order to avoid costs associated with the constant activity of controlling and monitoring of other people (Sztompka, 1999).

Sociologically speaking, the notion of trust may be regraded with reference to its three aspects.

- Aspect of performance: it is concerned with instrumental qualities of undertaken activities. In this context, one expects that their partners' actions will be regular, predictable, and will follow commonly accepted rules and regulations.
- Aspect of axiology: it is concerned with an expectation that other individuals will share our views and values, act responsibly, justly, and principally.
- Aspect of protection: it is concerned with expectations postulating that those who take care of us are driven by empathy, disinterestedness, altruism, and willingness to help (Sztompka, 2002, p. 310).

An expectation that other people will act according to generally accepted role models and their actions will be, as a rule, beneficial for us is referred to as the "culture of trust." The quality of trust culture stands in a sharp opposition to the generalized suspicion towards people and institutions, propensity for excluding certain categories of people from a community of social life or accusing them of having motives that are not conducive to common good. The condition of generalized mistrust is also manifested by continuous surveillance, incessant control motivated by somebody's *a priori* assumed penchant for abuse, deception, malfeasance, falsehood, or conspiracy (Sztompka, 2002, p. 354).

Sztompka distinguishes among a few types of trust, and some of them are useful when it comes to refer to issues that are taken up in our studies, which concern attitudes of trust towards family members and family-related social roles within the family structure.

- Personal trust, which is based upon direct interactions, mutually expressed emotions, and knowledge concerning partners to the interaction. It is beyond any doubt that personal trust is a foundation of family relations upon which family structure and patterns of fulfillment function are formed. This form of trust is definitely more important for the cohesiveness of family than formal rules and regulations defining and legitimizing family-related roles and functions. Likewise, it is also more effective than legal mechanisms of social control and social sanctions. Betraying personal trust in family relations paves the way for the destruction of roles and even the dissolution of the family in question.
- Positional trust, which is directed *a priori* towards anyone who occupies a social role requiring being trustworthy. It is granted in an anonymous way, which makes personality traits and their impact on interpersonal interaction marginalized.
- Institutional trust, whose significance gestures to formal organizations and, more indirectly, to myriads of individuals fulfilling diver-

sified roles in them. These institutions guarantee goal fulfillment by the virtue of their internal structure, achieved level of competence, or implemented procedures.

- Commercial trust, which is inherent in all business transactions and, more specifically, in decisions concerning the act of purchase when reliability and honesty of sellers are of prime importance.
- Technological trust, conceived as an expression of belief in the reliability of socio-technical systems that come to create the infrastructure of social life.
- Systemic trust whose “addressee is a whole social system and their vital participants (i.e., polity, civilization, economy)” (Sztompka, 2002, p. 131).

When directed towards other individuals, institutions or objects in social reality, the spheres of trust and distrust incorporate family life and other axiological areas in which both children and parents take part. The issue could also be expressed as either trust among members of nuclear families (family trust), or generalized trusting endowed with a greater perimeter, including members of the extended family, friends, acquaintances, or institutions, such as the Church, educational system, or the police.

5.3 Adolescents' Bets of Trust

Table 36 presents a distribution of answers referring to the question concerning family-related social roles and other entrusted social spheres.

The obtained data can be interpreted from a number of cognitive perspectives. One of them is indicated by considerations referring to environments of social trust and social roles that are typical of them. The table shows that respondents' families are undoubtedly most prominent depositories of trust. It applies mostly to school-age respondents' parents but also to their siblings and grandparents. In spite of the crisis affecting the structure and functions of contemporary families, the data show that the family is the most significant environment of trust, and parental roles are the most instrumental symbols of positively valued social interactions.

Results of our studies indicate that the downfall of family based upon marriage may exert a negative influence upon intergenerational ties.

The degree of solidarity experienced by adult children and their parents is significant, which is also confirmed by other studies (cf. Majerčíková & Bednárík, 2007). Our findings point to a detrimental tendency taking place each time when Slovakian families are weakened. (Matulník, 2014, p. 92)

Table 36

Adolescents' bets of trust and their addressees (expressed as percentage)

| Adolescents' bets of trust (addressees) | No answer | Definitely yes | Partially yes | Definitely no | Partially no | Hard to say |
|---|-----------|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| Mother | 3.2 | 67.6 | 22.9 | 1.1 | 2.0 | 3.2 |
| Father | 6.6 | 51.9 | 24.1 | 4.6 | 6.9 | 6.0 |
| Brother | 29.5 | 25.5 | 15.8 | 8.6 | 6.0 | 14.6 |
| Sister | 32.7 | 27.8 | 17.8 | 5.2 | 1.7 | 14.9 |
| Parental grandparents | 14.6 | 37.8 | 23.8 | 4.3 | 8.3 | 11.2 |
| Maternal grandparents | 11.5 | 49.6 | 22.9 | 3.2 | 4.6 | 8.3 |
| Friends from school | 6.3 | 41.8 | 36.4 | 2.6 | 5.4 | 7.4 |
| No one | 32.1 | 6.6 | 8.9 | 14.3 | 12.0 | 26.1 |

A special role in the formation and experience of trust relationships is attributed to mothers. More than 90.0% of the surveyed school-age respondents declare trust with reference to their mothers, and 76.0% are willing to perceive fathers as trustworthy persons. Since we are not inclined to treat trust in terms of a variable that may be precisely measured, or statistically quantified, we attempted at a subjective assessment with reference to intensity or, to be more precise, absoluteness of expressed commitments. When the latter perspective is assumed, it turns out that the rank occupied by respondents' parents on the scale of trust is lower when one considers the variable of full, absolute trust.

Absolute trust with reference to mothers is declared by 67.6%. In the case of respondents' fathers the relevant figure is 51.9%. In other words, more than two-thirds of girls and a little more than half of boys are willing to grant absolute trust to their parents. Hence, the obtained data seem to indicate the intensity of crisis of interpersonal relations within the surveyed families. The expressed intensity of trust is also indicative of the parents' disability to fulfill social roles or cope with processes of upbringing and socialization. The said tendency is more typical of the position of father in the structure of the family. Half of respondents are willing to award their fathers with full, absolute trust. It is a sign postulating the crisis of fatherhood in the contemporary family

and culture. At the same time, the observed deficiencies in trust may pave the way for decrease in both the strength of emotional ties and cohesiveness of family units.

The aforementioned conclusions, to a certain extent, are validated by the observed role and position of respondents' peers on the scale of social trust. More than 78.0% trust their peers, and almost 42.0% declare this trust to be absolute. In this case, trust relations go well beyond the family community and are deposited in peer groups or cliques. The family, viewed as a long-lasting, unique social group, is losing its significance as a reference group whose perspective is deployed to perceive the outside reality, learn how to name and evaluate the world outside, classify it as friendly or hostile, conceive it as being founded upon durable reservoirs of social trust additionally reinforced and legitimized by ineradicable ties of kinships. A plethora of family-related roles is now taken over by peer reference groups which are changeable and endowed with diversified duration time spans. Although peer groups are usually responsible for the development of selected facets of an individual's social personality, this very process, when conceived in isolation, is not favorable for providing stable foundations for social trust.

The third place in the declared hierarchy of social trust is reserved for respondents' grandparents who are perceived as trustworthy by 72.5% (maternal grandparents) and 61.6% (paternal grandparents). Respondents' siblings are classified in the fourth place in the hierarchy, which is declared by 45.6% of school-age respondents who invest their trust in sisters and by 41.3% of respondents who claim to trust their brothers. As it is observable in the previous cases, in this context, absolute trust is also less frequently declared (here, the relevant figures of trust towards respondents' sisters and brothers are 27.8% and 25.5%). This relatively low position of siblings in the distribution of social trust is emphasized by the high number of declarations stating that respondents are unable to express definite view in the matter.

Although it is advisable to remain reserved while interpreting the obtained data, it is difficult to avoid an impression that family ties have been attenuated in the observed population. It is especially evident when one realizes that the primary significance of relations taking place within nuclear or extended families are slowly superseded by trust invested in respondents' friends which the surveyed school-age adolescents prefer to social environments that remain external with reference to families.

The surveyed school-age adolescents' opinions unveil the following hierarchy of absolute trust evident in interpersonal relations:

1. mother,
2. father,

3. friends,
4. grandparents (matrilineal),
5. grandparents (patrilineal),
6. sister,
7. brother.

The presented hierarchy seems sufficient enough to postulate a yet another conclusion indicating that the relationships of social trust are more robust when they are of matrilineal character. Hence, one is in a position to forward an assertion postulating that women are more often “depositories” of social trust than men.

When a range of possible interpretative tendencies is taken into account, the second cognitive perspective is concerned with deficit of social trust and points to circles of exclusion from the sphere of positively valued social relations. It is noteworthy to remind that more than 15.0% of the surveyed adolescents are not willing to vest trust in any of the aforementioned social spheres. It refers equally to parents, grandparents, siblings, or respondents’ acquaintances. These declarations could be interpreted as signs of undermined, or even severed, ties within one’s family. The same applies to ties of friendship which, as it were, are naturally inclined to constitute one’s closest environment of society and culture. The research has shown that there exist deficits with respect to primary rules of social life which are defined by needs for acceptance and affiliation. At this point, one may also observe that more than one-fourth of the surveyed population (26.1%) are not willing to provide their opinion on the discussed problems. The declared lack of social trust can be interpreted as a sign of the young generation’s loneliness and loss of direction in social relations, which, concurrently, may be seen as an indicator of anomie affecting the surveyed group of adolescents.

5.4 Emotional Ties in the Family

Emotional ties could be regarded as an important manifestation of intergenerational relationships. As Leon Dyczewski teaches us:

Family ties constitute a compound of forces pulling family members together and relating them to one another, and these forces result from marriage, awareness of genetic resemblance, emotional experiences, relations of cooperation and dependence, factors of legal, religious, and

customary character, as well as similar attitudes expressed by family members towards the shared social, cultural, and economic circumstances of action. The family is, hence, a product of internal forces taking place within the family structure and external forces determining its members and the family as a whole. The said forces ravel individual members into a seamless structural fabric in which, however, individual family member retain their autonomy and individuality. Family bonds are manifested by a number of interactions, interdependencies, and attitudes. On the other hand, these interactions, interdependencies, and attitudes come to constitute a foundation of a given family and a basis of its existence, development, and quality. When assessed precisely, the said forces, their sources of origin, as well as their intensity and distribution allows one to define the intensity of bonds within individual families and whole clusters of families. Family ties are not identical in all families, and they tend to vary in different cycles of family life. Family bonds are, therefore, dynamic entities that undergo continuous transformations. As a result, some families are endowed with a considerable potential of internal cohesiveness and could be seen as being consolidated from a psychosocial point of view, which makes them attractive for their members. Other families are deprived of such virtues. Yet, each family has its own specific inner, intimate life. When a small percentage of broken families is disregarded, in this small group of people – parents, children’s grandparents or great grandparents – everyone is close and willing to cooperate with one another. This community is not disintegrated by the fact that family members take part in a plethora of social groups defined by occupational, cultural, political or – as it is very often the case – ideological or religious criteria. Likewise, it is not broken by minor or major tragedies or personal dramas taking place in the microcosm of family life due to a family member’s longer or shorter absence, illnesses or deviant tendencies typical of maturing or aging generations. (Dyczewski, 2012, p. 11)

When perceived as a type of primary social group, the family is predominately based upon emotional ties relating its members to one another. Hence it is little wonder that nowadays the safeguarding of emotional bonds and the reduction of emotional needs are two of the most widely cited functions of the family. In the context of socio-cultural changes, which result in the decrease in traditional external functions of the family (i.e., economic, productive), emotional considerations are now thought to be the salient foundation of the family comprehended as a social unit. The suppression of positive emotions relating family members to one another or even attenuation of emotional ties among them is treated as a socially accepted reason for the erosion of marital unions.

Thus, diagnoses and studies concerning family-related emotional ties are sociologically well-founded. Our research focused on the characteristics of emotional ties typical of Slovak families and groups of colleagues. Table 37 presents the distribution of answers to a question concerning respondents' subjective assessments of emotional ties that are typical of Slovak families and groups of colleagues.

Table 37

Emotional ties among adolescents (expressed as percentage)

| Degree of emotional ties with regard to one's: | No relations | Very weak | Rather weak | Neither weak nor strong | Rather strong | Very strong | No answer |
|--|--------------|-----------|-------------|-------------------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| Mother | 5.7 | 4.6 | 0.9 | 6.9 | 11.2 | 67.8 | 2.8 |
| Father | 9.2 | 6.0 | 5.5 | 10.9 | 20.4 | 43.4 | 4.6 |
| Paternal grandparents | 22.1 | 10.3 | 6.9 | 21.0 | 15.5 | 16.7 | 7.4 |
| Maternal grandparents | 12.9 | 7.8 | 7.8 | 17.5 | 21.6 | 25.6 | 6.9 |
| Brother | 36.8 | 5.7 | 4.9 | 7.2 | 9.8 | 23.6 | 12.1 |
| Sister | 37.1 | 5.2 | 4.9 | 7.8 | 13.5 | 18.7 | 12.9 |
| Friends | 12.9 | 12.9 | 11.5 | 21.8 | 22.1 | 14.1 | 4.5 |
| Other people | 56.0 | 5.7 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 3.7 | 10.1 | 19.2 |

The table presents the surveyed school-age respondents' families in the context of myriads of emotional relations that are subjectively perceived and evaluated. The obtained data can be interpreted from a number of sociological perspectives. Yet, one aspect should be emphasized, namely, the privileged portion of respondents' parents, especially mothers, in the displayed hierarchy of preferences. Although fathers are relatively less frequently chosen as depositories of positive emotions than mothers (the relevant figures are 43.4% and 67.8%), a similar conclusion can be drawn with reference to fathers who also enjoy respondents' substantial recognition within the network of provided choices. One-fourth of the adolescents are willing to ascribe a similar role to their maternal grandparents, 23.6% to their brothers, 18.7% to their sisters, 16.7% to paternal grandparents, and 14.1% to their friends.

While referring to the depicted image of robust, positive ties focused upon parental roles within the family, it is impossible not to refer to those declarations that define the said ties as "very weak." In this context, one may hypothetically assume that thus constructed images emphasize the scale of the crisis of the family as a primary social group. The biggest number of declarations referring to emotional ties as very weak are concerned with paternal grandparents (10.3%) and,

later on, with maternal grandparents (7.8%). It is worth to take notice that a bigger number of school-age respondents are willing to emphasize the weakness of their emotional relationships with fathers (6.0%) than with brothers (5.7%) or sisters (5.2%). Almost five percent of respondents wish to declare that their emotional relationships with mothers are very weak. The data put specific stress on the scale of our respondents' family dysfunctions. These conclusions are additionally validated by the number of declarations postulating the absence of emotional relationships with mother (5.7%) and father (9.2%).

Emotional bonds may be expressed by vesting fiduciary trust in other individuals who may assume a role of respondents' trustees with regard to their problems or concerns. According to the surveyed respondents' views, mothers are persons who fulfill the aforementioned function. This role is evident in declarations formulated by more than 72.0% of the asked school-age respondents who tend to turn to their mothers in order to seek support or be heard out when some problems or obstacles of everyday life are being faced. The role of trustee is also ascribed to respondents' fathers (41.8%), maternal grandfathers (27.2%), sisters (24.4%), as well as brothers (11.5%).

While referring to Table 37, one must emphasize that almost 42.0% of adolescents admit that there are no people who may assume a role of a trustee. With the absence of positive bets of trust, one may observe that those respondents, consequently, exist within the culture of distrust. When perceived as anonymous and totally emancipated from interlocutors' features of social personalities, interpersonal relations mediated by the Internet merely function as an illusory compensation for family ties that have been lost. The anonymity and impersonality of online communication becomes, in this specific context, contributive to familiarity, unrestrained possibility for voicing of one's problems, and forming of emotional closeness. Referring to studies and analyses of his own, Andrzej Górny postulates that for the youth, the Internet fulfills a distinct therapeutic function and may be, to a certain extent, beneficial for the improvement of offline intergenerational relations within the users' families. On the other hand, one is in a position to discern a whole array of opinions or views stressing that online activities may be detrimental as far as the integration of families is concerned (Górny, 2012, p. 158).

The formation of trust cultures and the construction of family-related social ties are, as it was stated earlier in the text, attributed to the generation of seniors. It is especially indicative of maternal grandparents. A detailed question concerning respondents' attitudes towards their grandparents was focused upon four statements conceived here as benchmarks describing relationships with the generation of seniors:

1. "One may learn a lot by observing grandparents";
2. "One may learn a lot by observing grandparents and, therefore, it is advisable to take care of staying in touch with them";
3. "There are no reasons for young people to keep in touch with their grandparents and communicate with them";
4. "Grandparents can only cause problems."

The surveyed school-age respondents were mostly predisposed (83.0%) to accept the first sentence as a representation of their attitudes towards the generation of seniors. A slightly smaller percentage (78.5%) admit that one may learn a lot by observing grandparents and, therefore, it is advisable to take care of keeping in touch with them. One-fifth claim that there are no reasons for young people to keep in touch with their grandparents and communicate with them. Finally, five percent have accepted an attitude of rejection by admitting that their grandparents can only cause problems. The overall characteristic of intergenerational ties cannot be deprived of an observation stating that one-fourth (approx.) are willing to declare negative attitudes towards their grandparents. Consequently, these results seem to gesture to an erosion of intergenerational dialogue as defined by the cooperation and communication of grandchildren with their grandparents. Grandparents are customary in a position to expect care and solidarity on behalf of their grandchildren. Yet, very often it is not the case. A tangible indicator of changing patterns of intergenerational relations is the normative and behavioral institutionalization of social care with respect to members of the elder generation. Their exclusion from practices of everyday life and deployment to nursing homes is becoming an expected and socially accepted pattern. This points to the fact that the youth's attitude towards the elders can be seen as a significant indicator of the condition of intergenerational ties in Slovak families, which indicates both the breakdown in the structure of intergenerational bonds, and gaps in intergenerational reproduction of culture. These processes are not deprived of consequences as far as the formation of cultural identity typical of the Slovak society is concerned. Stanislav Matulay observes that the reinforcement of intergenerational ties is necessary for the children to avoid immoral behavior towards their elderly parents in the future (Matulay, 2012, p. 166). Likewise, Martin Sumec is definitely right when he concludes that "the formation of conditions beneficial for the improvement of quality with respect to intergenerational ties is a factor exerting a positive influence upon the family's integrity, which, in the long run, reinforces the stability of social order" (Sumec, 2005, p. 219).

A similar direction of changes affecting contemporary culture as well as roles and tasks of the natural family with respect to the senior

generation is indicated by Blahoslav Kraus in his studies concerning the Czech society:

The attenuation of intergenerational ties may be seen as a consequence of ageism. The youth are not bound to the senior generation which is perceived as being unable to introduce anything constructive to social life. This negative aspect of discriminating against elderly people was most frequently indicated in studies concerning the quality of life in the Czech Republic. The said phenomenon is visible in the Czech society, though its increase in the time span of 2003–2007 cannot be seen as dramatic. In general, one may say that enquiries concerning intergenerational ties are important and current. One cannot objectively discern a significant decline in the quality of those relationships. Yet, it seems obvious that the contemporary culture is not conducive to the reinforcement of intergenerational ties and the family conceived as the salient cell of social life. (Kraus, 2014, p. 102)

5.5 Parents' Bets of Trust

A question concerning bets of trust was also prepared for the surveyed school-age respondents' parents. It aimed to show changes and continuities in the formation of trust culture from a perspective of intergenerational relations that characterize Slovak families (see Table 38).

Table 38

Intensity of trusting relations as expressed by the parents' declarations (expressed as percentage)

| Degree of trust with regard to: | No answer | Definitely strong | Rather strong | Rather weak | Definitely weak | Hard to say | Not applicable |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------|
| Mother | 7.4 | 68.1 | 14.0 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 2.1 | 7.0 |
| Father | 12.3 | 48.4 | 14.0 | 0.0 | 2.1 | 4.9 | 18.2 |
| Brother | 16.1 | 42.1 | 17.2 | 1.1 | 3.2 | 2.5 | 17.9 |
| Sister | 15.1 | 46.3 | 15.4 | 1.1 | 3.5 | 4.6 | 14.0 |
| Mother-in-law | 15.4 | 23.5 | 24.2 | 6.3 | 5.3 | 10.2 | 15.1 |
| Father-in-law | 19.8 | 17.0 | 19.4 | 2.5 | 3.9 | 10.6 | 26.9 |
| Spouse | 13.3 | 58.2 | 10.9 | 1.8 | 0.7 | 4.6 | 10.5 |
| Partner | 36.5 | 21.8 | 5.6 | 1.1 | 0.4 | 1.4 | 33.3 |
| Friend | 18.6 | 25.3 | 37.9 | 3.2 | 2.8 | 11.9 | 0.4 |
| I trust nobody | 54.4 | 5.3 | 2.5 | 12.3 | 4.2 | 8.8 | 12.6 |

It is sociologically interesting to observe the role of mothers in the constitution of trusting relations within the families. One may forward a controversial assertion suggesting that the surveyed adults tend to perceive their mothers' roles in family-related relations as more significant than their spouses' contribution. Mothers are the primary depositories and deponents of social trust evident in various interpersonal interactions. Moreover, the emphasis put on the role of women-mothers in the construction of trust culture is definitely reproduced across a range of spheres of social life. Although our studies are not sufficient enough to forward more general hypotheses, it seems that asking such questions is a valuable activity in itself.

The intensity of social trust – with no discrimination between absolute trust and conditional trust – is shown in Table 39.

Table 39

A hierarchy of parents' bets of trust
(expressed as percentage)

| Parents' bets of trust | % |
|------------------------|------|
| Mother | 82.1 |
| Spouse | 69.1 |
| Friend | 63.2 |
| Father | 62.4 |
| Sister | 61.7 |
| Brother | 59.3 |
| Mother-in-law | 47.7 |
| Father-in-law | 36.4 |
| Partner | 27.4 |

One may observe that the surveyed adult respondents are willing to ascribe the second position in the hierarchy of granted trust to their partners/spouses. Yet, at this point, one must observe that the hiatus between the perceived trustworthiness of respondents' spouses/partners and mother is as significant as 13.0 percentage points. This emphasizes the significance of mothers in the hierarchy of social trust and shows intergenerational dependencies characterizing adult respondents regardless of their status as a mature person, capable of taking full responsibility for a nuclear family. We are not willing to discuss the significance of mother's position, but our aim is to indicate a relatively lower position of the spouse with whom, after all, the community of family and marriage is collaboratively constructed. This tendency may exert a negative impact on the family's self-reliance and the ways it fulfills roles

and functions typical of the natural family. Hence the data point to a conclusion stressing the nuclear family's emotional reliance upon the spouse's mother (mother-in-law).

The remaining positions in the hierarchy of social trust are occupied by the adult respondents' friends, fathers, sisters, and brothers. As similar to adolescents' preference, the parental generation is also characterized by strong, matrilineal trusting relationships. This tendency is also observable with reference to relatively lower position of fathers-in-law in the hierarchy of social trust (mothers-in-law are relatively more frequently granted with trust than fathers-in-law). Bets of trust are granted least frequently to the respondents' partners.

Likewise, the hierarchy of absolute, unconditional trust is characterized by very similar tendencies occurring with only minor differences:

1. mother,
2. spouse,
3. father,
4. sister,
5. brother,
6. friend,
7. mother-in-law,
8. partner,
9. father-in-law.

The provided list perfectly shows the position of two-generational family and respondents' siblings. The model of trust relations comprises mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers. The remaining positions are occupied by friends and parents-in-law. The lowest place in the hierarchy is reserved for respondents' fathers-in-law.

As in the case of adolescents' declarations, the surveyed group of adults is characterized by the presence of individuals who are not willing to place any bets of trust. This kind of attitude is represented by almost 8.0% of adults, including 5.0% who are certain that nobody could be trusted upon. Similar attitudes are distributed in the surveyed group of adolescents with frequency twice as high. In this way, one may postulate that erosion of social trust is increasing when intergenerational relations are taken into consideration. Attitudes of distrust are more frequently typical of adolescents than adults. Our research cannot assess the validity of the aforementioned assertion in an unambiguous, straightforward way. Such attitudes are – to a certain extent – reproduced in the process of socialization and upbringing. Therefore, it would be sociologically challenging to undertake studies concerning the intergenerational reproduction of attitudes of trust and distrust in the family. A totally different problem refers to the scale of impact exerted

upon the expressed attitudes of trust/distrust by mass media and the related propaganda of individualism and subjectivism restraining adolescents from being voluntarily “burdened” with emotional obligations and mutual trust. The said phenomena and processes are best visible in the surveyed adolescents’ social environment but their origins are rooted deeply in attitudes and orientations expressed by their parents. This is aptly characterized by Peter Ondrejkovič:

A young person’s identity can be understood as an unbroken, active process of forming one’s self-consciousness and orientation at being autonomous in social life. This process is necessitated by the definition of one’s social role in order to keep identity intact, so that the person in question cannot be excluded from a given social group. A part of this process is social recognition of one’s status as an autonomous agent endowed with necessary cognitive and behavioral competences. This element of social recognition paves the way for the feeling of tension, uncertainty or anxiety related to searching for new existential certitudes and, on the other hand, to avoiding the impact of reality. (Ondrejkovič, 2014, pp. 22–23)

5.6 Family Ties as Perceived by the Generation of Parents

Table 38 points definitely and unambiguously to three robust spheres of emotional ties characterizing families typical of the generation of respondents’ parents, that is, child, spouse, and mother.

The data aim to present the structure of emotional ties within the family. When parental declarations are observed, one may come to a conclusion that the strongest ties are focused upon the respondents’ children. Almost three quarters of parents claim that the strongest emotional ties relate them to their children, and almost half (48.4%) are willing to ascribe positive emotions to their spouses. In the latter context, a relatively significant emotional distance is observable. Robust emotional ties that relate parents to their children create the foundations of family life. Hence one may expect that similar ties will be observable in relationships between the spouses. Yet, the observed differences may be indicative of emotional dysfunctions affecting the surveyed families that, in the long run, may lead to the dissolution of marriages.

The third position (43.2%) in the hierarchy of emotional ties is occupied by mothers. Yet, at the same time, one may observe relatively weak emotional ties relating respondents to their fathers (28.1%). Our

research, consequently, seems to uphold a hypothesis of an “absent father” who remains alienated from the sphere of robust family-related emotional ties. Strong emotional ties with sisters are declared by 22.1% of respondents, and with brothers by 15.4%.

Table 38

Emotional ties as perceived by parents (expressed as percentage)

| Addressees of strong emotional ties | No answer | Very weak | Rather weak | Neither weak nor strong | Rather strong | Very strong | No ties |
|--|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------------------------|---------------|-------------|---------|
| Son/daughter | 13.0 | 5.6 | 0.7 | 2.1 | 3.9 | 74.7 | 0.0 |
| Mother | 24.9 | 2.8 | 1.8 | 9.8 | 16.8 | 43.2 | 0.7 |
| Father | 35.4 | 2.5 | 6.0 | 5.6 | 15.4 | 28.1 | 7.0 |
| Mother-in-law | 40.8 | 12.3 | 10.2 | 17.5 | 7.4 | 4.2 | 7.7 |
| Father-in-law | 47.4 | 10.2 | 10.2 | 10.5 | 6.7 | 3.5 | 11.6 |
| Brother | 40.0 | 4.9 | 4.6 | 12.3 | 14.4 | 15.4 | 8.4 |
| Sister | 39.7 | 4.6 | 4.9 | 9.1 | 11.2 | 22.1 | 8.4 |
| Friends | 44.9 | 15.4 | 9.8 | 11.6 | 3.2 | 2.1 | 13.0 |
| Partners | 60.0 | 1.8 | 0.4 | 1.8 | 3.5 | 16.8 | 15.8 |
| Spouse | 31.2 | 4.2 | 1.8 | 3.9 | 6.3 | 48.4 | 4.2 |
| People having similar attitudes towards life | 48.8 | 9.1 | 11.9 | 12.3 | 4.6 | 2.1 | 11.2 |
| People having similar interests in life | 50.6 | 9.8 | 10.9 | 10.9 | 4.6 | 1.8 | 11.6 |
| Other | 83.5 | 0.7 | 0.4 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 1.8 | 12.3 |

The Slovak families seem to be characterized by weakness of relationships with patrilineal fathers-in-law. Whereas strong emotional ties with one’s mother are declared by more than 40.0%, emotional ties with the spouse’s parents are declared by mere 4.0%.

Respondents’ declarations stating the lack of strong emotional ties with their own children (5.6%) and spouses (4.2%) are perhaps not numerous, but noteworthy to mention. Beyond doubt, this can be interpreted in terms of the crisis of marriage and family as a primary social group. A similar problem is declared by school-age children with a greater intensity, which may be perceived as a sign of disadvantageous changes affecting the family’s emotional cohesiveness.

Mothers and spouses are most frequently declared to be trustees with reference to one’s personal problems: such declarations are provided by 63.2% of the surveyed respondents (spouses) and 57.2% (mothers). Mothers are worthy of fiduciary trust when the respondents face

financial difficulties (23.5%) and health problems (23.5%). More than one-fifth (21.4%) say that mothers are worth of fiduciary trust when difficult life situations are met. The hierarchy of respondents' choices with regard to fiduciary trustees is the following: sister (38.2%), father (30.5%), partner (21.1%), brother (19.0%), friend (16.1%), mother-in-law (13.3%), father-in-law (3.9%).

5.7 Children and Their Parents' Attitudes Towards Trust as a Value

Table 39 presents a comparison of social roles awarded with absolute trust as declared by both parents and school-age respondents.

Table 39
A hierarchy of absolute trust in interpersonal relationships

| Parents | Adolescents |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| mother | mother |
| spouse | ... |
| ... | father |
| father | maternal grandparents |
| sister | friends |
| brother | paternal grandparents |
| friend | sister |
| mother-in-law | brother |
| partner | |
| father-in-law | |

It is noteworthy to observe that the mother is at the top of hierarchy of social trust both in adults' and adolescents' declarations. School-age respondents are characterized by a tendency to marginalize the role of siblings as trustees. More than 15.0% of school-age children and 8.0% of their parents are not willing to indicate any trustworthy people and, by the same token, represent attitudes associated with the culture of distrust.

Table 40 shows a comparison of hierarchies with respect to parents' and adolescents' declarations concerning strong emotional ties.

Both hierarchies of emotional ties are characterized by the dominant presence of mothers and children. Parental preferences are also characterized by the presence of one's spouse. The parents' generation is associated with the manifestation of variegated emotional ties, whereas

adolescents are willing to indicate mother as a main focus of expressed emotions. These observations point to the weakening of emotional relations based upon direct interactions that characterize the young generation and the youth's emotional loneliness. The latter conclusion is only reinforced by the fact that almost 42.0% of school-age children say that they have nobody to whom they may turn to when problems or difficulties of everyday life are faced. In this case, the relevant figure for adult respondents is almost 16.0%.

Table 40

A hierarchy of strong intergenerational ties

| Parents | Adolescents |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| children | mother |
| spouse | |
| mother | father |
| | maternal grandparents |
| sister | brother |
| partner | sister |
| brother | parental grandparents |
| mother-in-law | friends |
| father-in-law | |

While creating society and culture and, at the same time, being dependable on them, the family has always shared the fate of civilization. Debates and wrangles over the condition of the family always end up as discussions on the condition of society and its culture. The same applies to our contemporary world. Since society nowadays experiences a plethora of crises and anxieties, and culture is subjected to axiological warpedness, the family is also not deprived of problems referring to its identity, capital of accumulated trust, durability of structures, or effectivity in terms of realizing its functions and roles. Attitudes towards elderly people and older generations are changing. Both time-consuming work and the unprecedented mobility of parents and their children (i.e., providing children with caretakers during hours of parental work, organizing extra-curriculum activities for them, spending holidays away from home, spending free time at shopping malls) have dissolved the tranquility and peaceful rhythms of family life limited to one's domesticated location. These processes have disintegrated family life across a number of topographically distant locations. Family life has also lost its natural daily routine which is now replaced by timetables superintended by nursery schools, schools, youth organizations, parental workplaces, shopping centers, or public transportation systems. In consequence, both parental roles and intergenerational relationships are

limited. Likewise, the scope of primary socialization, which is based on long-lasting and robust emotional ties, is also restricted, which is detrimental as far as the formation of safe, durable emotional commitments are concerned (Budzyńska, 2012, p. 129).

The continuity and identity of cultures is based upon the lifelong co-presence of generations. Having aspired for safeguarding their existence and retaining a necessary element of cultural identity relating the past to the anticipated future, autonomous societies will also tend to uphold their cultural legacy of institutions, norms, values, and customs by skillfully absorbing new, modern cultural patterns and protecting intergenerational social ties at the same time.

We live in a world, as Margaret Mead puts it, of “pre-figurative culture” in which cultural patterns are imposed by the younger generations. These days, children live in a world which remains obscure to their parents, and few adults could have anticipated such a situation. The development of pre-figurative cultures and intergenerational ties depend, as Mead teaches us, on the very ability to get engaged in a positive dialogue with representatives of younger generations. Likewise, the creation of the common future is necessitated by the very ability to understand the youth’s points of view and learn to deploy their perspectives in the shared, intergenerational undertakings and projects (Mead, 1970).

5.8 Conclusions

- When social relations in the generations of parents and children are taken into consideration, mothers are the most essential when it comes to forming trust relationships. Since mothers are granted the biggest capital of trust, the Slovak family is centered upon the figure of the mother.
- Parental declarations postulate that mothers are more significant actors of trust relations than the spouses.
- The decreased level of trust to fathers is observed in adolescents’ declarations and rooted in attitudes expressed by the generation of their parents, which may result in the strengthening of negative fatherhood patterns, such as the pattern of an “absent father,” in rhythms of everyday family life.
- Adolescents’ declarations point to friendship ties as dominating factors in the construction of reservoirs of social trust. The significant

role of friendship is also observable in the hierarchy of social trust characterizing the generation of parents. The family is unable to provide a satisfactory emotional protection.

- The youth are twice as much affected by deficits of social trust as compared to the generation of their parents. The youth are also three times more probable to declare not having any trustees – that is, people who may help when problems, difficult situations or conflicts are faced – at their disposal. This may be interpreted as a sign of anomie and loneliness affecting adolescents.
- The study may lead to a hypothesis suggesting that the sphere of distrust culture in which the surveyed adolescents live is relatively vast. This is represented as negative consequences for the quality of their personal life and networks of social interactions which are more concerned with being next to one another than being with one another.¹ The increase in tendencies towards individualism makes adolescents lost like a social mass facing processes of standardization (Ondrejko, 2014, p. 29).
- Slovak families are emotionally integrated around mothers. Fathers' role is considerably weaker, but it still dominates in respondents' perceptions of strong emotional ties that integrate the family. It is worth a remainder to observe a significant role of maternal grandparents in upholding emotional ties within families. This emphasizes the dominant role of the maternal model of the Slovak family in the respondents' perceptions.
- The generation of grandparents is valued for their wisdom and knowledge, and forwarding them to younger generations is perceived as a basis for intergenerational relationships. Yet, the overall characteristic of intergenerational relationships, when perceived from the grandchildren's perspective, must provide for the fact that one-fourth (approx.) of school-age respondents declare indifferent or negative attitudes towards the generation of their grandparents. This may be perceived as a significant indicator of the condition of intergenerational ties in Slovak families that points to the breakdown in the structure of family-related ties and gaps in the intergenerational reproduction of culture caused by the absence of grandparents conceived as depositories of cultural traditions. These processes are not deprived of consequences as far as the construction of the Slovak cultural identity is concerned.

¹ This is best characterized by dating patterns that are relatively widespread nowadays. Boys and girls stroll the streets holding hands, but not talking to each other. They seem to walk next to each other, each being personally absorbed by music from their headphones.

- Mothers, more frequently than fathers or respondents' siblings, assume the function of trustees with regard to their children's problems. Although maternal grandparents also assume a similar function, declarations indicating the importance of a mother's role in the process are dominant. A significant number of adolescents are not willing to declare any trustees both in the family and beyond it. In this case, the relevant figure is bigger than the number of respondents who may count on their fathers' support.
- A relatively low position in the hierarchy of social trust is ascribed to civil partnerships. Marriage, understood as a formal, legalized relationship between a man and a woman, is conducive to trust evident in social relations.

6

Religiosity An Intergenerational Perspective

6.1 Introduction

When changes affecting the contemporary culture are being observed, one may come to a conclusion that the family is experiencing significant transformations and is starting to lose its privileged position within the structures of social reality. The meaningfulness of the family viewed as a primary social group and institution, as well as a *milieu* in which one's social personality is being developed, is nowadays undermined. At the same time, an increasing number of people hold a belief claiming that the family, when conceived in a traditional way, is no longer the most important issue in their lives. The prevailing cultural patterns of day-to-day life show that marriage ceases to constitute a relevant precondition for one's sex life, and living together in a shared household is no longer a relevant criterion for the family (Świątkiewicz, 2009, pp. 66–67). The aforementioned tendencies point to a crisis of the family conceived as a fundamental unit of social life and an institution safeguarding the intergenerational continuity and dynamics of social development.

The contemporary culture is willing to place its bets on a separate individual, rather than the family. Traditional rules which rendered structure to interpersonal relationships are slowly ceasing to be valid. Individuals, in turn, face a necessity to choose among an infinite number of possibilities with regard to creating, amending, fixing, or dissolving

their relationships with other people. We live in the world of conflicting and contradictory interests associated with family, work, love, and autonomy in pursuing one's goals. These processes are accompanied by the erosion of religiosity, secularization of social life, and laicization of mentality, which consequently means that cultural patterns of family life are becoming increasingly distant from expectations formulated by doctrines of the Catholic teaching or even Christianity as such.

When referring to works published by Czech and Slovak sociologists (Možný, 2006; Plaňava, 2000; Střelec, 2007; Tamášová, 2007; Ondrejko, 2006; Pastor, 2004) one may indicate a number of general tendencies with respect to the existence of contemporary families.

The basic family is being deprived of its ritual significance. The legalization of civil partnerships is not conducive to the continuation of family life. Furthermore, the number of partnerships increases. The significant increase in social acceptance of civil partnerships is also a typical feature of contemporary times.

Intergenerational ties are being weakened and severed as the structure of family faces transformations. The number of children and extended families are diminishing and, concurrently, single-person households are increasing.

The stability of family life is decreasing. The number of divorces has increased over the last couple of decades, which is caused by objective factors (i.e., emancipation of women, marginalization of religiosity) and subjective factors (i.e., marriages based upon fragile emotional relationships). As a result, the number of children raised by single-parent families are increasing.

Social knowledge concerning contraceptives and family planning is increasing. Concurrently, the rate of unwanted pregnancies is diminishing and social acceptance of abortion is increasing. The observed increase in the significance and availability of contraceptives as a means of planned parenthood is eventually contributive to the decrease in birthrate.

Changes affecting the organization of family lifecycle are also discernible. The increasing number of older persons become parents, and children are born into marriages or civil partnerships of considerable history of existence. At the same time, the growing number of seniors, who are still vocationally active, become grandparents.

One may observe a growing number of marriages in which both spouses work and pursue their careers. The increase in the population's general penchant for education and professional qualification as well as the growth of feminine workforce are responsible for the tendency showing that less time is spent on building relationships with their own

children and other family members. These temporal deficits go hand in hand with the dysfunctional manner of spending spare time, hectic lifestyle, or the unwillingness to negotiate between professional and occupational duties and family obligations.

There is an observable increase in an individual's average life expectancy. A similar tendency refers to the average duration times of families in which children have become independent. The same applies to the time span in which children live together with their parents in a shared household. These processes are seen as being conducive to the increase in the socializing influence exerted by the younger generation upon senior family members.

Diversified processes of secularization are clearly discernible. The influence exerted by the Church upon the family has been diminished. Likewise, secular lifestyles have started to take over axio-normative spheres, and the increase in popularity of atheistic attitudes is observed. Concurrently, materialistic values are becoming more important parts of everyday social life. Similarly, one may easily observe a tendency to reach western economies in terms of material conditions of existence, and a widespread striving for having a comfortable life, privacy, and affluence.

A plethora of social institutions has acquired the functions that were previously restricted to the family. The educational system is now responsible for raising children and adolescents. The system of health care and social benefit institutions have taken over tending of senior or disabled persons. In the context of the aforementioned changes, primary socialization and taking care of an individual's emotional development have become the prevailing functions of the family.

Both religious and cultural elements are closely intertwined in the cultural tradition of the Slovak society. They have been responsible for constructing models of social life that are legitimized by Christian values. This process is predominately related to the character of family and its diversified functions. The Christian model of family has been subsumed within practices of everyday life due to socialization processes and the intergenerational reproduction of culture. The family, as far as the Catholic conceptualization is concerned, is referred to as the basic cell of social life:

It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin

to honor God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society.¹

Christianity – or, more specifically, Catholicism – treats marriage as an institution that cannot be subject to dissolution. The enduring character of the family is safeguarded by the biblical imperative “what God has joined together let no man separate.” Stanislaw Matulay, a representative of Christian sociology, postulates that the Catholic understanding of the family is currently facing a crisis in the Slovak cultural space, which is represented by the increasing divorce rate and the growing number of re-marriages. Matulay also claims that the notion of the “Slovak family,” a very popular and significant term when perceived from theoretical and empirical perspectives, now only retains its abstract meaning as a Weberian ideal-type (Matulay, 2009, p. 131). On the other hand, however, one may come to a conclusion that culturally constructed socialization patterns which are legitimized by Christian values and the Catholic family model, and the relative stability of intergenerational axiological transmission have been both instrumental in the process of formation of a family model which is characterized by a specific similarity of social features and axiological references. Although this issue goes well beyond the scope of this publication, one may still refer to Ivo Možný’s conclusions which point to diversified axiological family models as empirically valid constructs: “Catholics are less willing to get divorced than Protestants, and Protestants are still less willing to do so than atheists” (Možný, 2006, p. 224). Sociological studies unambiguously emphasize that family-centered socialization processes exert a formative and fundamental influence upon the intergenerational transmission of patterns of both religious and family life. With the increase in the family’s religiousness, as expressed in terms of attitudes and realized sacral practices, the probability that exercised patterns of family life will reproduce its normative dimension also increases. This model of family has become an instrumental inspiration for the amendment to the Slovak constitution (enacted in March 2014) which has been in force since September 2015. The constitution of the Slovak Republic states that:

Marriage is an exceptional relationship between man and woman. The Slovak Republic protects and reinforces the well-being of the relationship. Marriage, parenthood and the family are protected by law. A separate form of protection is provided for children and adolescents. Marriage is a relationship between man and woman, which is founded

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church. Available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P7T.HTM.

upon their conscious and voluntary consent to be joined in matrimony when the conditions defined by the act are met. The aim of marriage is to create a coherent, durable social unit which will provide for raising children. (The Constitution of the Slovak Republic)

At this point, one may add that the introduced changes were predated by grassroots initiatives that called for making definitions of marriage and family less ambiguous.

When contemporary cultural changes in Slovakia, especially those referring to dissolution of intergenerational transmission of religion-centered and family life patterns, are described, Tomas Pruziniec introduces a sociologically interesting category of “de-religiousness”:

It seems that the causes for the contemporary de-religiousness could be attributed to the lack of symmetry between society and religion. The isolated development of numerous forms of the contemporary society paves the way for rapid changes [...] at the same time, since 1989 Slovakia has been experiencing huge transformations and has been endowed with its own specific needs and challenges. On the other hand, it seems that Christianity, when perceived as a mature and experienced “ancient religion,” is burdened with its own histories and nostalgic memories of times of glory and, as a result, cannot be adjusted to contemporary times. This form of Christianity may be deprived of the virtue of public interest, which is manifested by situations in which Christians begin to feel alienated in their own religious environment or cease to take part in traditional religious practices. This process, in turn, may exert a detrimental influence upon traditional religiosity, especially when it is shallow. Slovak Christianity cannot respond to the contemporary challenges with modern language. Perhaps, Christianity in Slovakia has ceased to make efforts in search for updating itself to the contemporary tendencies, which could be reflected by the loss of faith, religious indifference or unwillingness to take part in religious practices. Could Christianity itself be conceived as a factor facilitating the process of de-religiousness? (Pruzinec, 2009, pp. 122–123)

6.2 Religiousness of Children

As Peter Ondrejkoivič aptly observes:

The weakening of religious faith takes place but not as a result of propaganda against religion disseminated by the former regime. The

empirical study conducted in 2012 showed that 53.6% of respondents claimed to have been religious, but merely 4.8% declared to have been deeply religious. Regular participation in religious practices was declared by 19.2%, and infrequent participation by 12.1%. Religious ceremonies, starting from baptismal ceremonies to funerals, undergo the process of secularization, and religious holidays acquire ordinary functions as normal days off. Concurrently, the quality of faith loses its significance as a definition of one's identity. In this sense, "gaps" in the lives of adolescents remain empty and vacant, which leads to a possibility of filling them up with undesired or negative phenomena. Nowadays, this process seems sufficient enough to deprive us of the sense of confidence in terms of experienced values or valuable orientations in one's life. The ethics of responsibilities and achievements, which used to be based upon diligence, discipline, courage and risk taking, ceases to be universally significant. Narcissism, hedonism and goal orientation are alternative values that have substituted the traditional ones. Goal orientation and personal happiness are presented as the ultimate instance and orientation in one's life. Open and obvious pluralization of viewpoints and contradictory values is seen as sufficient for society. Diversified systems of values, which used to be contradictory, now are all mixed up. Their efficiency is actualized with different paces and with relevance to a situation in which a young person is placed. This is, on the one hand, conducive for greater space for personal freedom and, on the other hand, can be seen as a source of depriving one's self-confidence up to the loss of identity and self-integrity. Hence, one may univocally say that the youth are confronted with the pluralism of norms and values whose significance is limited by social action undertaken in uncertain situations. (Ondrejko*vi*č, 2014, p. 19)

Three questions were designed specifically for the purpose of describing the surveyed school-age adolescents' religiosity. The questions refer to attitudes towards religious faith, respondents' confessional affiliations, and participation in religious practices (see Table 41).

Table 41

Attitudes towards religious faith (expressed as percentage)

| Attitudes towards religious faith | % |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| Deeply religious | 6.3 |
| Religious | 32.7 |
| Undecided | 12.3 |
| Indifferent | 8.3 |
| Unbeliever | 20.9 |
| Not indicated | 13.2 |

The results show that almost 40.0% of adolescents are willing to define their attitude towards religion in positive terms, including 6.3% who consider themselves as deeply religious and almost one-third who claim to be religious. Declarations with respect to one's attitude towards religion present the role and significance of religious faith in human life from an approximated perspective. The very procedure of sociological survey entails that respondents are asked to define their own attitudes towards religious faith in terms of their quantitative intensity. Hence, the difference between "deeply religious" and "religious" cannot be treated as a statistically quantifiable trait, which makes it possible to differentiate between those who are better and those worse domesticated in a given religious faith due to certain objective criteria, such as those resulting from the practiced model of churchliness. The differentiation is, thus, characterized by one's subjectively assessed religious sensitivity. A person who is sensitive in terms of religion is willing to consider the project of his/her life from the perspective of God's presence remaining in a certain relation to the world and one's individualized existence. These relations may acquire a number of forms. In the cultural and religious context of our studies, such relations are characterized by being dependent upon the prevailing institutional model of churchliness which is represented – as a number of sociological studies show – as diversified religious practices or the personal acceptance with respect to the doctrine of faith. In this sense, deep religiousness is usually conducive to more intense religious life (as measured by participation in religious practices), acceptance of the Church' teachings, de-privatization of one's own religious attitudes in areas of public life. One may, therefore, say that the individuals who declare to be deeply religious are, at the same time, more intertwined within the system of church religiosity. However, many sociological studies show that these interdependencies are far from being obvious, and personal declarations of faith are not necessarily automatically linked to participation in religious practices organized by the church. In this context, one may refer to a number of examples of "inclusive solutions"; that is, practices which are not being strictly driven by formal institutional rules.

Christian denominations are characterized by the coexistence of heterogeneous elements, both in terms of values or norms, structures or social groupings. Individuals, not institutions, are responsible for characterizing decisions and choices made with reference to religious and church-related matters, and consider themselves competent enough to define the character of the experienced intra-church bond. This process is, nevertheless, accompanied by the erosion of one's bond with

the church, loss of confessional affiliations, faithless Christianity. (Mariański, 2004, p. 131)

Sociological studies indicate that the rejection of institutional models of religiosity is discernible in many countries. It means that attitudes towards religious faith, understood as a value represented by self-declarations of one's religious sensitivity, are nowadays subjected to a plethora of different tendencies, including those of intensifying character (Hirschke, 2013, pp. 410–424).

The next category of respondents that is prevailing in the aforementioned distribution can be defined as “unbelievers.” The group amounts to more than one-fifth of the surveyed population. Likewise, 8.3% of the respondents consider themselves indifferent to religion, and 12.3% claim to be undecided. It is noteworthy to remind that a little more than 13.0% are unwilling to answer the question. This category could be added to the group of adolescents who declare not to be associated with religious faith.

It is sociologically interesting to observe that boys (8.6%) are more willing to define themselves as deeply religious than girls (4.8%). In turn, girls (37.1%) more often declare to be religious than boys (31.3%). The relevant literature in the field reveals that girls, as a rule, tend to be more identified with religious faith than boys. Similar conclusions were drawn, to provide an example, by Ondrej Stefanak and Stefan Secka in their studies concerning the Slovak social realities (Secka, 2000, p. 108; Stefanak, 2009, p. 87). It is likely that our study has revealed specific cultural and religious features of the surveyed communities, or it could point to a new qualitative tendency in changes affecting religiosity. A bigger number of undecided and non-believing respondents were observed in the group of the surveyed boys. In contrast, girls, as a rule, are more frequently willing to be indifferent to religion. When the aforementioned categories are aggregated, it turns out that both boys and girls constitute two almost identical groups of respondents (respectively 40.2% and 42.8%). Therefore, it is easy to notice that attitudes towards faith and patterns of distancing oneself from religion are similar when it comes to opinions expressed by the surveyed boys and girls. This tendency will probably result in the gradual erosion affecting the intergenerational reproduction of religion in the family whose effectiveness used to be founded upon the tendency stressing that women are more religiously engaged than men.

In the context of the Slovak society, as it is stated above, individual declarations concerning religious faith are usually related to confessional affiliations. Despite the observed processes to follow one's religious de-

votion beyond institutional churches, which is described as “invisible religion” by Thomas Luckmann (1996), the overwhelming majority of respondents, who declare to be sensitive in terms of religion, are willing to associate their declarations with confessional affiliations (see Table 42).

Table 42

Confessional affiliations of the surveyed adolescents (expressed as percentage)

| Declared confessional affiliations | % |
|------------------------------------|------|
| Roman Catholic | 50.7 |
| Orthodox | 0.6 |
| Evangelical | 8.7 |
| Reformed Protestant tradition | 3.2 |
| Jewish | 1.4 |
| Other | 2.6 |
| No affiliation/atheist | 25.5 |

A little more than a half declare their affiliation to the Roman Catholic Church. Lutheran and Calvinist reformed churches comprise the second most frequently chosen affiliation. Altogether, more than 12.0% of school-age respondents are affiliated with the enumerated protestant churches. More than 0.5% declare affiliation to the Orthodox church, 1.4% are related to Judaism, and 2.6% indicate different affiliations, such as Rastafarians, or Jehovah Witnesses. It is noteworthy to point out that more than one-fourth of the respondents define themselves as atheists. Such an attitude is more frequently declared by boys (27.0%) than girls (25.0%).

A natural consequence of religious affiliation and the declared attitude towards faith is one's participation in religious practices. Religious practices, ceremonies, and habits best render the societal dimension of religious faith which, in this case, is intertwined with a plethora of cultural traditions. These practices, furthermore, become inscribed in the culture of family life in a way that they construct it and take part in the intergenerational reproduction of its constitutive elements. Similar to language, family customs, as Leon Dyczewski aptly emphasizes, are important elements of general culture.

Family habits comprise histories, ideals, aspirations, beliefs, and social relations typical not only of the family as such, but also of

a given nation or society. That is why, observing them may be seen as constructive in terms of the continuity of national or social culture. [...] Cultivation of historically well-entrenched family-related habits is considered as a foundation and a sign of continuity of the family heritage and cultural-ethnic identity of a given society. (Dyczewski, 1994, p. 70)

Religious habits and practices combine intellectual and emotional references with respect to one's faith with a plethora of spatio-temporally diversified factors of socio-cultural descent by which individual and collective religiousness is manifested. These habits best represent the presence of religion in the history of culture and, conversely, the presence of culture in the history of religion. They are not only a model of faith, or a doctrine that has been expressed in terms of religious and social behaviors, but they also could be seen as a model for individual faith (Geertz, 1992, p. 534) facilitating the definition of one's attitude towards faith and its assessment in terms of piousness. The preservation of some religious practices and habits is not, as sociological studies emphasize, tantamount to the family's intensified religious engagement understood as a participation in churchliness. Yet, at the same time, one cannot consider *a priori* those habits as a matter of folklore, or as an "abandoned symbol" which has been disconnected from religious legitimizations.

Table 43 presents data concerning the surveyed adolescents' partaking in religious practices and the frequency of participation.

Table 43

School-age respondents' participation in religious practices (expressed as percentage)

| Participation in religious practices | % |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| Systematic participation | 14.0 |
| Non-systematic participation | 7.2 |
| Infrequent participation | 27.8 |
| Denial of participation | 22.9 |
| Not applicable | 21.5 |

First and foremost, it seems noteworthy to mention that altogether more than 44.0% of respondents are unwilling to take part in religious practices. Almost 23.0% declare no participation in religious practices, and 21.5% consider the question as irrelevant to them, which could be legitimately interpreted as remaining outside the community of believers exercising their religious faith.

More than one-fifth of surveyed school-age respondents take part in religious practices organized by their churches. Systematic participation is declared by 14.0% of respondents, occasional practicing is reported by 7.2%, and almost 28.0% declare that their practices are infrequent. In principal, the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church is exceptional in terms of both providing unambiguously strict expectations concerning the frequency of taking part in religious practices and enforcing the rule of participation by means of sanctions. This rule applies mostly to the systematic participation in the Sunday mass.

When referring to self-declarations of both faith and frequency of participation in religious practices, one must consider subjective typologies of individual religious behaviors and their relation to expectations postulated by a given institutional church. One may hypothesize that people who declare that they systematically take part in religious practices also positively respond to the relevant expectations, which practically may indicate their weekly attendance at Sunday mass. Adolescents of Catholic confession are predominantly characterized by systematic participation in religious practices. This finding could be confirmed by the correlation of declared confessional affiliation with the professed frequency with regard to taking part in religious practices. Individuals who consider themselves as “deeply religious” are more frequently inclined to partake in religious practices. At the same time, individuals who consider themselves as “religious” are willing to define their participation in religious practices as being nonsystematic. Systematic participation is more often observed among girls (16.3%) than boys (12.9%). Concurrently, occasional attendance is more often observed among boys (29.4%) than girls (26.5%).

The observed convergence between being deeply religious and willingness to exercise systematic participation in religious practices seems to validate our attempts to understand the social context of religious sensitivity by means of referring to its subjective assessments which, in turn, are considered as a yardstick of one’s pioussness.

The comparison of the results displayed in Tables 41 and 43 is sufficient enough to discern two sociologically interesting phenomena:

- A definitely bigger number of school-age respondents (39.0%) are willing to characterize themselves as religious than persons exercising their religious faith (21.2% including 14% who declare systematic participation). Sociological analyses often contain a category of “non-practicing believers,” individuals whose self-declarations of faith are not associated with taking part in religious life. This may acquire two forms: “believing without belonging” (Davie, 1994), or “invisible religion” (Luckmann, 1996) denoting forms of extra-institutional piety.

Girls are more willing to declare systematic participation in religious practices than boys.

- When the category of systematic attendance is broadened by individuals who practice infrequently (i.e., people who take part in religious practices incidentally, on the occasion of baptisms, marriage ceremonies or funerals), the percentage of practicing believers amounts to 49.0% and is bigger than the number of respondents who consider themselves as religious (though it is still lower than the rate of people who declare the Catholic confession). Hence one may forward an assertion suggesting that the participation in religious practices could be sometimes motivated by cultural traditions, assuming forms of church irreligiosity or belonging without believing (Harvieu-Leger, 2007).

Our reflections concerning religion-related attitudes and behaviors are taken into consideration in the context of intergenerational family ties. Our research question was concerned with the continuity and change of attitudes recognized from the perspective of intergenerational reproduction of culture within the family. The aforementioned sociological studies allow us to hypothesize that the intergenerational reproduction of cultural values is affected by significant changes that result in the attenuation of processes responsible for the reproduction of religious culture. Table 44 presents data that could be considered as a starting point that must be supplemented by further qualitative research.

Table 44

Views expressed with reference to piety that characterize adults and adolescents (expressed as percentage)

| Differences between views expressed by adolescents and their parents' on the following issues | The views are the same | The views are partially similar | The views are partially different | The views are completely different | I do not know | No answer |
|---|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| Ways of spending spare time | 15.8 | 39.8 | 29.2 | 8.9 | 4.9 | 1.1 |
| Occupational orientation | 15.5 | 30.7 | 13.8 | 9.5 | 22.9 | 7.7 |
| Views on the family | 40.4 | 35.5 | 7.4 | 3.7 | 7.7 | 4.9 |
| Views on religiousness | 49.6 | 5.8 | 9.5 | 8.3 | 11.2 | 5.7 |
| Views on career | 15.8 | 35.5 | 14.6 | 11.5 | 16.0 | 6.6 |
| Attitudes towards morality | 16.9 | 26.6 | 15.5 | 3.7 | 19.2 | 8.0 |

Table 44 shows that almost half of the respondents are convinced that their declarations concerning religiosity are completely convergent with their parents' declarations. Almost 6.0% state that the relevant attitudes are very similar. At the same time, when compared to the parents' declarations, more than 8.0% claim to have completely dissimilar religious attitudes, and 9.5% claim to have partially divergent attitudes. The observed dissimilarities could be interpreted by referring to the erosion of religiosity, which is, nevertheless, typical of the younger generation. More than 11.0% of school-age respondents are unwilling to provide a decisive answer to the question and almost 6.0% do not provide any answer at all. Summing up the obtained data, one may observe that the group of respondents who discern intergenerational similarities in terms of religious attitudes is more numerous (56.0% approx.) than those who deny recognizing it. Consequently, one may postulate that respondents, when faced with the necessity to assess intergenerational relationships, are willing to discern resemblances in religious cultures as being expressed by both generations.

While investigating the influence of family on religious attitudes and behaviors in the context of intergenerational reproduction of values, we posed questions referring to the respondents' relationships with their grandparents. Sociological studies frequently indicate that seniors exert a more formative influence upon the grandchildren's religiosity than their parents. This tendency is characteristic of extended families and those families in which parents take only marginal responsibility for upbringing due to their full scale engagement in occupational activities.

The received results are, however, insufficient to confirm the aforementioned theses. The percentage of respondents who are unwilling to provide any answer to the question is significant. Although the reasons for it are still unknown, one may speculate that the unwillingness to provide relevant answers is caused by the lack of direct, long-lasting relationships with representatives of grandparents' generation. This, in turn, may mean that seniors are not engaged in the process of their grandchildren's socialization and upbringing. Having interpreted the data represented in Table 45, one may observe that almost 56.0% of Slovak school-age adolescents are grateful for their grandparents' role in introducing them to the religious faith and making them familiar with religious practices, values or customs which are rooted in the religious tradition.

The data in Table 45 are sufficient enough to observe a sociologically interesting interdependency stressing that matrilineal relations are more instrumental to the process of religious socialization. Hence it seems very likely that intensified intergenerational relationships are more typical of

matrilineal ties rather than patrilineal ones. The question was a strong incentive to formulate one's assessments with respect to a plethora of situations typical of relationships with respondents' grandparents. At the same time, it is valid to justify a conclusion stating that more than 50.0% percent of Slovak school-age respondents are willing to consider religiosity as a significant value in their lives, and they are grateful for their grandparents' role in religious education.

Table 45

Gratefulness expressed for the grandparents' role in providing adolescents with religious education (expressed as percentage)

| Expression of gratefulness for the grandparents' role in the following: | Paternal grandparents | Maternal grandparents | Paternal and maternal grandparents | No answer |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Being loved | 19.2 | 28.7 | 23.2 | 26.6 |
| Religious education | 16.9 | 28.7 | 10.3 | 44.1 |
| Rules of morality | 17.5 | 28.1 | 11.2 | 43.3 |
| Knowledge of the family history | 20.3 | 27.2 | 13.5 | 39.0 |
| Traits of character: strong will, sense of responsibility, self-reliance | 17.5 | 30.9 | 12.9 | 38.7 |
| Love of the fatherland | 12.0 | 28.9 | 8.6 | 50.4 |
| Knowledge of social matters | 18.1 | 27.6 | 10.9 | 43.4 |
| Practical skills related to housekeeping duties, or taking care of other family members | 17.2 | 33.0 | 12.6 | 37.0 |
| Hobbies, interest in music, art, science, sport, etc. | 17.2 | 33.8 | 11.5 | 37.5 |
| Forwarding traditions to younger generations | 13.5 | 16.9 | 12.0 | 57.6 |
| Other | 6.3 | 6.5 | 3.4 | 83.7 |

6.3 Parents' Religiousness

Our research procedure entailed three questions that were designed specifically for the purpose of describing the surveyed adults' religiosity that characterizes them. These questions refer to attitudes towards religious faith, confessional affiliations, as well as participation in religious

practices. Table 46 presents the breakdown of received answers with reference to the adult respondents' attitudes towards religious faith:

Table 46

Attitudes towards religious faith (expressed as percentage)

| Attitudes towards religious faith | % |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| Deeply religious | 14.0 |
| Religious | 53.1 |
| Undecided | 7.3 |
| Indifferent | 4.5 |
| Unbeliever | 5.2 |
| Not indicated | 14.3 |
| No answer | 1.4 |

The study has shown that more than 67.0% of parents consider themselves as being religious and 14.0% are willing to define themselves as deeply religious. In turn, 7.3% declare to be undecided in terms of religious faith, and the percentage of non-believers is relatively low (5.2%), though it could be raised by 14.3% of parents who do not provide a relevant answer to the question, 4.5% of parents who are indifferent in terms of religion, and 1.4% of respondents who do not provide any answer at all. Having assumed the aforementioned interpretation, one may observe that the total percentage of parents who do not declare to be religious amounts to one-fourth of the surveyed sample.

Table 47 indicates that the overwhelming majority of Slovak parents (82.0%) are willing to declare affiliation to one of the Christian churches, predominately to the Roman Catholic Church (76.0%).

Table 47

Confessional affiliations of the surveyed adults (expressed as percentage)

| Declared confessional affiliations | % |
|------------------------------------|------|
| Roman Catholic | 75.9 |
| Orthodox | 1.4 |
| Evangelical | 3.1 |
| Reformed Protestant tradition | 1.4 |
| Jewish | 1.0 |
| Other | 4.5 |
| No affiliation/atheist | 12.6 |

Thirteen percent claim to be atheists, 1.0% declare affiliation to Judaism, and more than 4.0% indicate affiliation to other churches or religious denominations.

Table 48 presents data concerning the surveyed parents' participation in religious practices:

Table 48

Adult respondents' participation in religious practices
(expressed as percentage)

| Participation in religious practices | % |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| Systematic participation | 23.4 |
| Non-systematic participation | 17.1 |
| Infrequent participation | 26.2 |
| Denial of participation | 22.4 |
| Not applicable | 7.3 |
| No answer | 3.5 |

The data indicate that more than one-third of parents are not willing to take part in religious practices typical of their religious communities. Such participation is most often defined as rare (26.2%), which, for sure, may be related to one-off practices. Yet, a sociologically interesting phenomenon is noticeable, showing that more respondents declare systematic (23.4%) rather than non-systematic (17.1%) participation in religious practices. Altogether almost 57.0% consider themselves as religious persons who take part in religious practices. Having compared the data with the respondents' declarations concerning their affiliation to Christian denominations (82.0% in total), one may postulate that one-fourth of the surveyed parents constrict their religious life to a mere declaration of faith. Declared affiliations are often treated as sufficient indicators of both confessional affiliations and one's religious sensitivity. Therefore, the results may serve as an example of a sociological category which defines participants in the context of religious life as "belonging without believing" or – as one may add – "belonging and non-practicing."

Having acquired a perspective of intergenerational ties, we formulated a question concerning subjective assessment of one's piousness and its comparison to their parents' piety. The obtained results are displayed in Table 49.

It is sociologically interesting to observe that social consciousness is characterized by long-lasting convictions about intergenerational continuity of attitudes and behaviors associated with forms of religious life.

Three quarters of the surveyed parents claim that their piousness mirrors their parents' patterns of religious life. Thus, such opinions on the prevailing patterns of religious culture are dominated by beliefs stressing the intergenerational reproduction of values and behaviors typical of shared religious experiences. More than half of the respondents believe that the reproduction of religiosity patterns is complete, and one-fourth say that the said continuity is partial. The same applies to opinions expressed with reference to intergenerational continuity of attitudes with respect to views on the family life and dominant forms of morality.

Table 49

Views concerning piousness characterizing respondents' parents and grandparents (expressed as percentage)

| Differences between views expressed by adult respondents and their parents' on the following issues | The views are the same | The views are partially similar | The views are partially different | The views are completely different | I do not know | No answer |
|---|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| Ways of spending spare time | 16.5 | 38.2 | 20.7 | 17.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 |
| Occupational orientation | 14.4 | 27.4 | 17.5 | 24.9 | 6.7 | 9.1 |
| Views on the family | 41.2 | 32.4 | 12.3 | 4.9 | 1.8 | 7.4 |
| Views on religiosity | 50.0 | 25.2 | 9.1 | 6.3 | 4.2 | 4.9 |
| Views on career | 23.5 | 33.0 | 17.5 | 11.2 | 7.0 | 7.7 |
| Attitudes towards morality | 42.5 | 29.5 | 9.1 | 5.6 | 5.3 | 8.1 |

The intergenerational differences in the religion-related culture are indicated by more than 15.0% of the surveyed parents. It includes 6.0% declarations stating that the continuity has been broken. More than 4.0% of parents are ignorant with respect to intergenerational processes affecting the field of religiosity, and almost 5.0% are unwilling to present any assessment in the said matter. These answers could be treated as indicators showing the magnitude of changes affecting the Slovak society and gesturing to the secularization of public life and the laicization of social mentality.

Table 50 presents data obtained with reference to the question concerning the respondents' subjective evaluation of intergenerational relationships with respect to the dissemination of religious sensitivity.

Having taken religious culture and its heritage into consideration, less than one-third of the respondents are not willing to define their

Table 50

Gratefulness expressed for the parents' and grandparents' role in providing religious education (expressed as percentage)

| The expression of gratefulness for the parents' and grandparents' role in the following: | Parents | Grandparents | Parents and Grandparents | No answer |
|--|-------------|--------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Being loved | 55.4 | 6.3 | 21.8 | 16.5 |
| Religious education | 30.4 | 24.1 | 14.0 | 31.5 |
| Rules of morality | 55.8 | 8.8 | 14.7 | 20.7 |
| Knowledge of the family history | 28.1 | 31.2 | 12.6 | 28.1 |
| Traits of character: strong will, sense of responsibility, self-reliance | 63.2 | 5.6 | 11.0 | 19.6 |
| Love of the fatherland | 37.9 | 9.8 | 10.2 | 42.1 |
| Knowledge of social matters | 44.9 | 13.3 | 6.7 | 35.1 |
| Practical skills related to housekeeping duties, or taking care of other family members | 55.1 | 7.4 | 19.3 | 18.2 |
| Hobbies, being interested in music, art, science, sport, etc. | 51.2 | 6.3 | 8.4 | 34.0 |
| Forwarding traditions to younger generations | 22.8 | 12.3 | 9.5 | 55.1 |
| Other | 2.8 | 0.0 | 2.5 | 94.8 |

relationships with parents in positive terms. The remaining group is grateful to their parents for having been brought up in accordance with the rules and traditions of religious faith. This may be interpreted as the respondents' readiness to accept the significance of religious values and their willingness to put a specific emphasis on the role of religious traditions in the practice of everyday life. However, the study has shown that the respondents are considerably more grateful to their parents for the shaping of their character features, moral culture, being loved, forwarding practical skills, shaping their hobbies and interests, or passing on the information concerning important areas in the life of the Slovak society.

6.4 Similarities and Differences in the Religiosity of Parents and Their Children

This part of our monograph is dedicated to the presentation of similarities and differences with respect to religious attitudes and

participation in religious practices as they take place among the surveyed children and parents.

Table 51 presents a comparison of data concerning religious attitudes that characterize adolescent and adult respondents.

Table 51

A comparison of religious attitudes that characterize adolescent and adult respondents (expressed as percentage)

| Attitudes towards religious faith | Adolescents | Adults |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Deeply religious | 6.3 | 14.2 |
| Religious | 32.7 | 53.1 |
| Undecided | 12.3 | 7.3 |
| Indifferent | 8.3 | 4.5 |
| Unbeliever | 20.9 | 5.2 |
| Not indicated | 13.2 | 14.3 |
| No answer | – | 1.4 |

The obtained distribution of data unambiguously points to the direction of changes in the sphere of religiosity as they are taking place in Slovak culture or at least in the community of the Nitra Region. In the latter case, the intergenerational relationships are marked by observable changes denoting processes of laicization that apply to declared religious values. The secularization of contemporary culture as well as the laicization of mentality predominately affect the youngest generations, which is manifested by the diminished religious sensitivity (Bomba & Kacian, 2012). This is manifested, among others, by the rejection of religion understood as a value in one's life. More than one-fifth of school-age respondents define themselves as non-believers, and 13.2% are not willing to provide any answer to the question concerning declarations of religious faith. The school-age respondents are also more willing to declare indifference or indecisiveness in terms of religious faith, which may be understood as declarations of non-believing. The principal intergenerational differences are observed when the categories of believers and non-believers are taken into consideration. More than 53.0% of parents consider themselves as believers, whereas the relevant figure for their children is “merely” 32.7%. The difference amounts to 20.0 percentage points. A very similar situation is observed when non-believers' declarations are observed and compared: 20.9% of school-age children and “only” 5.2% of their parents consider themselves as non-believers. In this case, the discrepancy amounts to almost sixteen percentage

points. At the same time, the parents, more frequently than their children (6.3%), are ready to describe themselves as deeply religious persons (14.2%).

When confessional affiliations are taken into account, Table 52 illustrates similar tendencies in intergenerational changes affecting religious attitudes and patterns of behavior.

Table 52

A comparison of declared confessional affiliations (expressed as percentage)

| Declared confessional affiliations | Adolescents | Adults |
|------------------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Roman Catholic | 50.7 | 75.9 |
| Orthodox | 0.6 | 1.4 |
| Evangelical | 8.7 | 3.1 |
| Reformed Protestant tradition | 3.2 | 1.4 |
| Jewish | 1.4 | 1.0 |
| Other | 2.6 | 4.5 |
| No affiliation/atheist | 25.5 | 12.6 |

The declared religious sensitivity is observably less frequent among the surveyed school-age respondents, which results in a more limited scope of confessional affiliations. Sixty-three percent of the school-age respondents declare affiliation to one of the Christian denomination as compared to 82.0% of similar declarations formulated by their parents (for instance, three quarters of parents and merely half of their children declare their affiliation to the Roman Catholic Church). The situation is reversed in the case of affiliations vested in Protestant churches: 8.7% of the children and 3.1% of their parents declare affiliation to the Evangelical Church and 1.4% of the parents and 3.2% of their children are affiliated with the Calvinist Church.

One can easily recognize the fact that the percentage of atheists among children is twice as high as in the case of confessional declarations produced by their parents (the relevant figures are 25.5% and 12.6%). It seems that the data point to socially significant intergenerational change affecting both religious sensitivity and attitudes towards religious faith. Religious sensitivity or religion-related values are no longer taken into consideration when life activities, moral choices or one's interests are pursued. These values are becoming indiscernible and absent in human life.

The aforementioned differences in religion-based attitudes and patterns of behavior result in intergenerational discrepancies affecting the observed patterns of religious practices (see Table 53).

Table 53

A comparison of participation in religious practices (expressed as percentage)

| Participation in religious practices | Adolescents | Adults |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Systematic participation | 14.0 | 23.4 |
| Non-systematic participation | 7.2 | 17.1 |
| Infrequent participation | 27.8 | 26.2 |
| Denial of participation | 22.9 | 22.4 |
| Not applicable | 21.5 | 7.3 |

The parental participation in religious practices tends to be more frequent and systematic as compared to declarations produced by school-age respondents. Twenty-three percent of adult parents claim to take part in religious practices systematically, whereas the relevant figure for their children amounts to 14.0%. It is noteworthy to observe that both adult parents and school-age adolescents are almost equally unwilling to participate in religious practices, or define their participation as sporadic and irregular. Thus, in this specific respect, one may observe clear intergenerational continuity of attitudes and behaviors. School-age adolescents are definitely more likely to consider issues concerning their religious participation as being outside the scope of their personal interests (the relevant figures are 21.5% and 7.3%). These results may indicate that distance and indifference to religion are getting bigger, and religion as such has ceased to be an object of personal interest. Religion has been displaced beyond young generation's social consciousness, and its place is being slowly acquired by material consumption, leisure, and entertainment, which delineate individual life projects as being oriented at pleasure maximization and an easy success (Stefanak, 2013).

Tables 54 and 55 present the distributions of answers provided to the question concerning respondents' subjective evaluation of relations taking place in the intergenerational reproduction of religious culture.

Table 54

A Comparison of views on piousness as expressed by adolescent respondents and their parents (expressed as percentage)

| Views on piousness expressed by adolescent respondents and their parents | The views are the same | The views are partially similar | The views are partially different | The views are completely different | I do not know | No answer |
|--|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Adolescents | 49.6 | 5.8 | 9.5 | 8.3 | 11.2 | 5.7 |
| Adult parents | 50.0 | 25.2 | 9.1 | 6.3 | 4.2 | 4.9 |

Numerous sociological works and studies postulate that the basic foundation of religious attitudes and behaviors is mostly structured by the intergenerational transmission of religious culture. The family and religion-centered socialization play instrumental roles in this process. Until recently, one could predict that young generation's religious attitudes reflect the attitudes displayed by generations of their parents and grandparents. Nowadays, the said tendency is being undermined, and rules of religious reproduction undergo deconstruction processes resulting from a plethora of factors including structural individualism, de-institutionalization, cultural pluralism, as well as structural differentiation with the concomitant increase in social mobility. The youth are no longer in a position to be brought up in a determined and stable cultural tradition which is regarded as taken-for-granted, important, and legitimized by the authority of elders or the church. The contemporary "Weltanschauung marketplace" offers custom-made services and goods that fit any individual requirements, wishes, or needs. When understood as a consequence of structural individualism, the imperative to make choices is also concerned with the rejection of religion and religiosity understood as a foundation of one's lifestyle (Świątkiewicz, 2010, p. 58).

Table 54 points to declared similarities with respect to declarations referring to forms of religious life provided by school-age respondents and their adult parents. Half of the respondents from both groups are willing to confirm that their viewpoints in this matter are practically the same. Dissimilarities are observed when respondents formulate their statements in a less definite manner ("the views are partially similar"). In the latter case, the surveyed parents (25.2%) are more convinced that their views on religion are similar to their children's than *vice versa* (the percentage of children's declarations in the matter amounts to 5.8%).

Table 55

Gratefulness expressed for the parents' and grandparents' role in providing religious education (expressed as percentage)

| Gratefulness expressed for the parents' and grandparents' role in providing religious education | Paternal grandparents | Maternal grandparents | Paternal and maternal grandparents | No answer |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Adolescents | 16.9 | 28.7 | 10.3 | 44.1 |
| Gratefulness expressed for the parents' and grandparents' role in providing religious education | Parents | Grandparents | Parents and grandparents | No answer |
| Adult parents | 30.4 | 24.1 | 14.0 | 31.5 |

The intergenerational continuity with respect to the reproduction of religious culture is, however, far from being coherent. Observed drawbacks and shortcomings are manifested by respondents' declarations stressing that views on religion expressed by adolescents and their parents are partially different or definitely different. The differences are stressed by both groups, but it is the group of adolescents who are more inclined to voice the said discrepancies. Moreover, one may even say the scale of those differences may be actually bigger than the representation conveyed by our respondents' subjective assessments and declarations.

Table 55 presents a further insight into the respondents' evolution of the intergenerational reproduction of religious culture. In this particular case, the assessments are focused upon the generation of respondents' grandparents.

The provided data seem to confirm the aforementioned assertion suggesting the ongoing erosion of seniors' role and effort invested in the legitimization of intergenerational reproduction of religious attitudes and religion-related patterns of behavior. When compared to their adult parents, the surveyed school-age respondents are two times less probable to express gratitude to their paternal grandparents' for providing them with rules of religious culture. It is worth mentioning that the surveyed adolescents are willing to emphasize the significance of the maternal grandparents in the said process. Therefore, one may say the adolescents are more likely to discern the significance of matrilineal inheritance of religious culture.

6.5 Conclusions

School-Age respondents

- Half of the respondents (approx.) consider themselves as religious, which includes 6.0% who claim to have deep faith. School-age male respondents more often tend to describe themselves as deep believers than schoolgirls. When it comes to the observed distances to religious faith and disdaining religion, both groups of respondents are similar as far as the frequency of such declarations is concerned.
- Almost two-thirds of school-age respondents declare their affiliation to Christian denominations. The remaining confessional affiliations are mostly Protestant and Orthodox.
- More than one-fifth claim to be atheists and 45.0% declare no participation in religious practices.

- A slight majority of school-age respondents (56.0%) are willing to discern the similarity of their own religious attitudes and behaviors to their parents' religiosity.

Parents

- Three quarters (approx.) claim to be involved in religious faith and 14.0% define their involvement as profound.
- 80.0% declare their affiliation to Christian denominations. It includes 76.0% of declarations for the Roman Catholic Church.
- More than 12.0% claim to be atheists, and one-third declare not to take part in religious practices.
- One-fourth (approx.) identify their piousness with the provided indication of confessional affiliation.
- More than three quarters believe that there is a similarity between their own religious culture and their parents' one.

Adolescents and their parents

- Adolescents are definitely less religious than their parents. Likewise, the percentage of atheists is also bigger among the younger generation. These two statements may serve as a representation of the assertion about the progressive laicization of the mentality characterizing the Slovak society.
- The surveyed school-age respondents are observably more willing to declare their indifference towards the issue of religious faith.
- Confessional affiliations are more frequently declared among the group of parents (the observed difference in this respect amounts to 20.0 percentage points).
- The number of die-hard atheists is two times bigger in the group of adolescents than adults.
- The numbers of adults and adolescents whose participation in religious practices is either none or sporadic are similar. In this context, however, one may observe intergenerational continuity of religious culture.
- It is sociologically interesting to observe that both adolescents and their parents share a conviction stressing the intergenerational similarity of their religious cultures. This conviction is not, however, reinforced by the declared engagement in religious life and examined attitudes towards religious faith.
- Parents are more willing, as compared to their children, to be grateful to their parents for religious education and upbringing. School-age respondents are more inclined to stress matrilineal forwarding of religious traditions (Zozulakova, 2014, p. 179).

The obtained results seem sufficient enough to postulate that the intergenerational reproduction of religious culture in the Slovak society

is curtailed by the existence of a generation gap. Symptoms and signs of inconsistencies in the intergenerational reproduction of religious culture are discernible. The school-age adolescents are definitely less willing to participate in religious practices, declare confessional affiliations, and show less religious sensitivity than their parents' generation. This rule is broken only when intergenerational similarities in sporadic participation in religious practices and the degree of religious indifference are observed.

Both groups of respondents share a subjective conviction stressing the intergenerational continuity of religious culture, which is difficult to sustain from a perspective of our study. This imagined façade of religiosity masks the shortcomings of religious socialization and drawbacks affecting the reproduction of religious attitudes and patterns of behavior that are typical of the Slovak culture.

An important role in the formation of personal happiness is fulfilled by faith and spiritual life. J. Křivohlavý in his publication *Psychology of Health [Psychologie zdraví]* reflects upon the studies on seniors' personal happiness which were conducted in 1999 by H. G. Koenig. The conclusions point to a statement stressing that the relationship between happiness in one's life and faith is actually more significant than a relation between personal satisfaction and the level of affluence achieved due to a given position in social hierarchy. These conclusions are not surprising, especially when one observes that neither affluence nor social status can render the feeling of personal confidence. If this is the case, the achieved confidence is only temporary. True faith is able to indicate areas of danger that must be avoided when a person wishes to lead a more valuable and sustainable life (Zozulakova, 2014, p. 181).

Patterns of Everyday Life Characterizing Christian Families in the Nitra Region

7.1 Introduction The Family and Society

The family is one of the fundamental social microstructures and its relations to the remaining social structures are very strong and reciprocal. As a social group of significant importance, the family is the focus of attention of theoreticians interested in examining social life as well as individuals and institutions that are responsible for shaping diverse spheres of public life. One may observe, to refer to Marc Poster's words, that the family is subject to criticism and advocacy in the sphere of public discourse. On the one hand, the family is to blame for the oppression of women and the exploitation of children. On the other hand, the family is also praised for its role in integrating and reinforcing morality, crime prevention, upholding social order and, finally, strengthening the whole civilization. For some of us, the family, to put it otherwise, is a sphere of oppression that motivates to get disengaged from it, whereas for others it is a secure haven. For some, families are boring, confined, and unwanted; for others, they resemble oases of love, intimacy, and friendship (Poster, 1988, p. 2). These extremely divergent perspectives indicate the boundaries of discourse whose central issue is a place and role of the family in the contemporary world.

The condition of family exerts an influence upon the functioning of other systems and structures that come to constitute the totality of social life. When characterizing the role of family in the context of contemporary social systems, Wojciech Świątkiewicz postulates that the family is the most essential social structure and compares it to

a looking-glass in which a totality of social life is reflected: its wealth and poverty, virtues and vices, courage and shamefulness, culture and counter-values, civilizational progress and backwardness, rhythms of everyday life and holiday customs, modern life aspirations and inherited habits, tolerance and prejudices, as well as many other dimensions that constitute social life as understood in the macrostructural perspective (Świątkiewicz, 2009, p. 7).

The contemporary reality is an era of dynamic transformations taking place in all aspects of social life. In spite of the huge pace and intensity of social changes, the family still remains a social group which facilitates the realization of elementary functions by other social structures. It is a guarantee of social order and it safeguards the duration of whole societies in the context of permanent social changes. The theory of functionalism, as expressed by Talcott Parsons and Robert Bales, endows the nuclear family with a specific significance: it is treated as a condition for the functioning of industrial societies (Parsons and Bales, 1988). This viewpoint is not, however, isolated. Ulrich Beck perceives the nuclear family to be one of the fundamental pillars of the industrial society (Beck, 2002). It seems, furthermore, that such conceptualizations are not being deprived of their actuality in the liquid realities of late modern societies.

7.2 The Family in the Contemporary World A Dynamics of Its Roles and Functions

Although phenomena taking place in the contemporary world are conducive to changes affecting the family's role and its position in society, any theories suggesting the loss of social significance seem unjustified in the case of families. However, one must observe that the scope of influences exerted by family structures upon other social systems has been changing since the beginning of the 21st century. The said changes, in the main, refer to the decrease of the family's role in some social contexts, including education, occupational life, or patterns of spending free time. These processes are partially induced by a multitude of socially acceptable forms of relationships, which itself results in difficulties as far as attempts to construe an unambiguous, uncontroversial definition of the family are concerned (Świątkiewicz, 2009, p. 7).

One can hardly imagine a society in which structures and processes of family life are not subject to clear-cut rules and regulations.

The diffusion of cultural patterns that define shapes and functioning of social microstructures may result in the decrease in social integration of macro-systems and mezzo-systems in society, which, in turn, leads to anomie and the breakdown of social order. In this way, the existence of a whole society is put under threat.

When seen as a microstructure, the family is responsive to external influences and, simultaneously, actively exerts influence upon its own environment of action. Similarly to other social systems, the family adopts itself to changing environmental conditions, which can be observed as its internal mechanisms or the specificity of its structure. External influences can be both positive and negative. Social environment may either facilitate the integration of family structure and the fulfillment of its functions, or disintegrate family life and pave the way for the breakdown of families. These negative effects are, however, compensated for by specific “corrective mechanisms” which are formed by particular social structures (including families) in order to provide for existential stability (Szlendak, 2010, p. 99). In this case, one may, therefore, address the resilience of families to negative changes. This protective mechanism renders possible the family’s relatively stable existence and the intergenerational reproduction of its structure regardless of radical transformations within faced social contexts.

While referring to macrostructural changes affecting functioning of the family, Anna Kwak postulates that contemporary families are increasingly deprived of a capacity to take decisions that refer to their existence as a whole unit and the lives of individual family members. The same applies to the possessed capability to execute social control upon family members. Individuals spend considerable amount of time outside of their families and they take part in a number of social institutions, organizations, and informal social groups. Likewise, the degree of parental control exerted over their children’s time and financial resources is also diminishing. Despite the aforementioned tendencies, the family, in the main, remains responsible for reproduction, socialization, provision of a shared household, and forwarding wealth to younger generations. The family is still engaged in taking care of its youngest and eldest members and is responsible for the fulfillment of economic, emotional, and instrumental tasks (Kwak, 2005, p. 9).

Patterns of culture, beyond any doubt, are internalized as actions undertaken by individual social actors and as forms of micro-, mezzo- and macrostructures and processes. Systems of values orchestrating the functioning of particular social systems exert influence with regard to individuals’ life attitudes, their basic aspirations, exercised ways of satisfying needs, and rhythms of day-to-day existence.

This analysis is dedicated to rhythms of everyday existence of families in the Nitra Region. Hence, the study will pave the way for attempts to delineate cultural patterns referring to the selected aspects of social functioning of Slovak families.

When problems referring to family structures are being studied, it is worth to acknowledge a special role of Christianity in defining the family's role and place in a society. Franciszek Adamski puts a specific stress on Christianity understood as a religious system that has introduced a new order into social life and has exerted significant influence upon the formation of structures and organizations associated with the totality of family life. Due to the fundamental premises of Christianity, the marriage – which is understood in terms of the sacralized relationship between a man and a woman, endowed with an outstanding significance in the Christian doctrine – has acquired an exceptionally important social status. On the grounds of the said premises, the spouses' responsibilities are treated as equal, and the children are perceived as the most instrumental value and the center of gravity of family life (Adamski, 2002, p. 99). Adamski, furthermore, points to a specific role and status of women in Christian families. Although women are equal to men as far as their legal status in the marriage is concerned, their mission in the marriage is specific, best represented by the figure of Holy Mary who epitomizes features that should characterize all Christian mothers and wives. This particular way of referring to the role of women in the family has changed the character of this specific social group (Adamski, 2002, p. 99). The doctrine of Roman Catholicism (i.e., the dominant Christian denomination) refers to the family in terms of a natural community which is based upon the indissoluble marital union whose significance was elevated to the rank of holy sacrament by Jesus Christ himself. It is a form of spiritual community joining its members by robust emotional ties. Its salient role in the formation of social order is best represented as the reproductive function rendering possible “taking on” new members of society and the Church. The natural character of the family is founded upon the division and complementarity of sexes. The marital union is based upon spouses' strong reciprocal feelings that render possible having children who are dependable upon parental help as far as their biological existence and participation in social life are concerned. The family must constitute a stable social environment in order to fulfill the aforementioned objectives (Adamski, 2002, pp. 101–108). This stability, in turn, is achieved by means of subsuming family existence within the sphere of values representing the axiological universe typical of the Christian perception of the world order.

The contemporary world is characterized by a significant decrease in the influence exerted by traditional religions upon the formation of axiological order. When studying phenomena related to transformation of religious spheres, sociologists of religion tend to refer to a plethora of secularization theories. Jose Casanova, for instance, provides a tripartite description of the process: the emancipation of secular spheres of action from religious norms and institutions, the dissolution of religion-based beliefs and behavioral patterns, and the displacement of religion from the public sphere to the private one (Casanova, 2003, p. 410). Anthony Giddens, in turn, provides a synthesis of diversified theories and defines secularization as a process leading to the essential decrease in the influence exerted by religion upon various domains of social life (Giddens, 2004, p. 569). Regardless of what definitions are taken into consideration, it is beyond doubt that secularization processes significantly affect the functioning of the family. When seen as one of the dominant tendencies in the contemporary culture, the process of secularization becomes a cognitive category facilitating a more informed insight into transformations affecting family structures and family-centered processes. The reason for it is that secularization processes are inseparably related to transformations affecting morality. Religion is ceasing to exert influence upon the formation of individual value hierarchies. When perceived as results of displacing religion beyond the boundaries of public sphere, processes of individualization and pluralization of social life pave the way for the emancipation of individuals from external moral norms, which facilitates the search for alternative, customized existential objectives. Social norms legitimized by tradition and religion are no longer universally accepted and experienced, which means that their role in individuals' day-to-day existence is diminishing. Under these cultural circumstances, the family is being deprived of its unique, religiously legitimized character.

One may, therefore, address the issue of progressive secularization of the family. The crux of the said problem, as Józef Majka puts it, could be perceived as an effect of changes with respect to commonly accepted views on the significance of family. The erosion affecting the religious character of contemporary families is represented by social and legal institutionalization of family structures, as well as by such transformations of family functions and family members' attitudes that go well beyond the legacy of tradition. Moreover, one may observe that contemporary families have lost their deeply personal character, which results in the impediment of realizing religious functions and a loss of features typical of communities founded upon personal autonomy and love (see Adamski, 2002, p. 122).

A very similar perspective on the secularization of families is represented by Franciszek Adamski, who observes that the role of families in the formation of human spiritual life is declining. The same applies to the role of family with regard to experiencing and forwarding of supernatural values, religious cult, formation of moral attitudes, regulation of human behavior, and perfection of individuals with respect to fulfilling the vocation of the Christian family (Adamski, 2002, pp. 123–124).

The aforementioned perspective is not the sole reference point that must be taken into account when analyses concerning the functioning of families in the contemporary world are taken up. The formation of cultural patterns orchestrating everyday existence of families at the beginning of the 21st century is influenced by a plethora of factors that must be taken into account when any serious attempts to understand the unique character of family structures and processes are undertaken. An interesting research perspective is provided by Lynn Jamieson who considers the transformation of family life in terms of the movement from *the family* to *intimacy*. This transformation could be studied from two perspectives. On the one hand, one may observe that the realities of late modern society put stress on profound intimacy and close social interactions (understood in this case as the essence of one's private life), but the family based upon marital union is losing its significance as a social norm and cultural ideal. The family is being replaced by a number of "good relationships" that form the center of an individual's personal life. Couples are free to negotiate rules of their sex life which oscillate around seeking pleasure. At the same time, such relationships are more fragile and potentially more satisfying. This transformation is not necessarily related to the demise of continuous, long-lasting intimate ties (also of parental kind), but is conducive to the rise of numerous alternative styles and scenarios of family life (Jamieson, 2008, p. 118). On the other hand, Jamieson postulates that the contemporary consumption culture disseminates a radical form of individualism that is unable to provide foundations for anything but constantly changing intimate relationships, and both marriage and parenthood are now treated as dangers to such emotions and feelings as love, care, empathy, or understanding (Jamieson, 2008, p. 118). The two perspectives point to a declining role of the family in the contemporary society. In this context, one may claim that social actors in the individualized world are motivated to satisfy their own personal needs and get a form of emotional gratification that is available beyond families.

It is worth a reminder to observe that Jamieson – apart from being focused on conceptualizations indicating phenomena detrimental for families – points to a number of theories that postulate that familism

and pro-family ideology have survived in spite of the dissemination of alternative forms of family life, the increase in divorces and cohabitations, and the radical criticism aiming at the institution of family undertaken mostly by the feminist movement (Jamieson, 2008, p. 119).

A debatable and perhaps unsolvable issue gestures to a question whether we observe a severe crisis of the family or, conversely, a new stage of evolution of family structures. Yet, nowadays significant transformations in the sphere of family life undoubtedly take place. Krystyna Slany refers to individualization, which originates in the dissolution of family-based economic community, in terms of a dominant tendency in transformations affecting family life. As a consequence, the marital union has been institutionalized as an individualized life scenario, which, logically enough, lays stress on an individual, rather than a social group (Slany, 2006, p. 54).

With the dissolution of social pressures stressing the necessity to marry, and when social norms guaranteeing the inseparable character of marital unions have become obsolete, marriage and family life are becoming mere options extracted from a plenitude of life scenarios accessible to individuals. Furthermore, the very definition of marital union becomes “nebular,” which becomes evident not only when scholarly analyses are taken into account, but, first and foremost, when social awareness of the issue is concerned. Although Slany is not willing to interpret these phenomena in terms of “the demise of family,” she points to new, individualized tendencies in the area of family life. The transformations affecting relations taking place among family members with the concomitant changes in the sphere of reciprocal obligations relating them to one another pave the way for a new family structure which may be referred to as the “post-family family” (Slany, 2006, pp. 54–55).

A considerable majority of sociologists tend to share the aforementioned view, pointing our attention to particular facets of the said transformation. It is noteworthy to adduce to Manuel Castells, who observes undermining of the patriarchal family conceived as a practice and a binding social norm. Having studied transformations of contemporary societies, Castells lays a specific stress on relationships taking place between men and women. In this context, social changes have led to the repudiation of patriarchy understood as a constitutive feature of contemporary societies. The breakdown of the patriarchal model of family based upon male’s authority over women and children was made possible by transformations of labor market, facilitations in the sphere of birth control, increasing influence exerted by feminist movements, and diffusion of ideas in the global world (Castells, 2009).

Ulrich Beck is also concerned with gender relations. In this context, changes taking place in contemporary families are described as “dismantling,” and revolutionary transformations of family structures are seen as being representative of the transmutation of the whole modern society. The said transformation is orchestrated by changes affecting both the position of women in society and their consciousness. Likewise, the dissemination of education among women has given rise to the increase in opportunities for females in the labor market and, as a consequence, rendered living on their own possible. In this way, women’s social status started to be defined according to criteria that previously applied to men. Responsibilities and duties associated with upbringing and education have become a mere fraction of feminine existence: they ceased to constitute a foundation of their lifetime activities and have become superseded by professional career and work. In a very similar fashion, the development of housekeeping and birth control technologies can be seen as subsequent factors determining the position of women in the family and, consequently, in a society (Castells, 2009).

The aforementioned tendencies result in a decrease in the number of families that live according to patterns typical of the traditionally conceived family structure; namely, households with a single male breadwinner in which wives are responsible for housekeeping and family-related roles. In this way, the traditional division of social roles in which instrumental roles are restricted to males, and females are confined to fulfilling expressive functions is being undermined by the novel social order (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, pp. 90–91). It does not mean, however, that a partnership model of family, in which the spouses are equally responsible for the family’s financial condition and housekeeping, is automatically introduced. When the situation of contemporary women is being described, it turns out that observing housekeeping duties is very often referred to as “working late shift.” This terminology is deployed by Arlie Hochschild who observes that introduction of mothers and wives to the labor market was not balanced by a more profound engagement in housekeeping duties on behalf of their husbands. It turns out that men have not assumed physical and emotional responsibilities for the hearth and home. This situation, as Hochschild observes, could be interpreted in terms of women’s growing frustration with regard to the institution of marriage, which, consequently, may lead to the destabilization of family life (Hochschild, 2014).

One may, therefore, come to a conclusion that cultural patterns (i.e., action patterns associated with safeguarding of material bases of family existence and fulfilling duties related to the functioning of family

structure) orchestrating the functioning of contemporary families have changed. This change, however, is not tantamount to spouses' equality in terms of family-related roles.

7.3 Christian Families as an Object of Research A Characteristic of Empirical Material

The abovementioned selection of chosen conceptualizations concerning the role and significance of families in the contemporary society can be perceived as a theoretical framework for analyzing results of empirical studies conducted in the Nitra Region in 2013. This part of our report is concerned with chosen aspects of existence that characterize families defined as being Christian. A Christian family was conceptualized as a form of family structure in which the members are willing to define themselves as Christians. It means, hence, that the research was focused upon the interpretation of questionnaires which were completed by respondents who, when asked about their confessional declarations, provided answers pointing unambiguously to their Christian self-definition.

The collected research material is not sufficient enough to conduct valid comparative analyses taking an aspect of religious belief into consideration. Out of 286 questionnaires completed by adult respondents, 234 questionnaires were provided by members of Christian families (it includes 217 respondents who defined themselves as Roman Catholics). When the population of school-age respondents is taken into account, 219 (out of 349) questionnaires were completed by respondents who considered themselves Christians (it includes 177 questionnaires provided by school-age respondents who claimed their membership to the Roman Catholic Church¹). Due to the homogenous character of the surveyed population, a comparative analysis concerning religious self-definition was disregarded and replaced by an attempt to grasp cultural patterns describing dimensions of family life by referring to answers provided by those respondents who unambiguously identify themselves with one of the Christian denominations.

¹ The population of school-age respondents is characterized by the significant percentage of respondents who were either unwilling to provide an answer to the question concerned with their religious faith or did not identify themselves with any religious denomination.

7.4 Family Structure

Let us begin an analysis aiming to understand the aspects of functioning of Christian families by presenting the most common forms of family structures. Answers provided by adult respondents point to the dominant status of a family model that can be defined as nuclear. Almost 72.0% declare that their families consist of spouses and children. Alternative forms of family life – that is, not based on legally or religiously legitimized marriage (i.e., cohabitation) – are definitely less frequent: 13.2% declare that their families consist of a partner and a child (children). Single parenthood is even less frequently declared (9.4% of all indications). The same applies to family structures consisting of three generations of family members. This type of family structure, which includes grandparents, parents, and children, is indicated by merely 7.3% of the respondents. The presence of other people in the family household is declared by 3.8%. Most frequently, respondents are not willing to say what people they have in mind while answering the question. Indications referring to brothers and sisters cropped up only sporadically. Table 56 presents the detailed data.

Table 56

Family members living in the shared household as declared by respondents (since the respondents were in a position to choose more than one option, the figures are not summed to 100%)

| Family members living in the shared household as declared by respondents | % |
|--|------|
| Spouse and children | 71.4 |
| Partner and children | 13.2 |
| Parents and children | 7.3 |
| Children | 9.4 |
| Other people | 3.8 |

In order to acquire a better (i.e., more valid) representation of Christian family structures, the aforementioned information must be supplemented by data concerning the respondents' marital status. Relatively infrequently, adult respondents provide answers suggesting that their families are not based upon a legitimized marital union: 15.4% declare to be divorced, and 5.1% consider themselves as single. The distribution of answers to the same question provided by school-age respondents turns out to be very similar. Thirteen point two percent of adolescent respondents point to their parents' divorce, and 11.5% describe their

parents' relationships as a partnership (i.e., a relationship which is not legalized by a marital union). Moreover, 3.2% of young respondents declare having been raised in a monoparental family. It is of interest that the percentage of declarations related to having been raised in a multigenerational family (12.3% of school-age respondents live with their grandmothers and 10.0% with their grandfathers) are also head-to-head with their parents' declarations.

The data indicate the dominant status of nuclear families in a relatively unambiguous way. It means, therefore, that the traditionally viewed family – namely a family structure based upon a legitimate relationship between a man and a woman – is the most common form of relationship. This could be interpreted as a tendency induced by the Christian system of values which has been accepted by the surveyed population as a basis of their existence. One may even say that despite the progressive processes of secularization, key values and norms regulating family life are realized (and probably experienced) by the majority of residents of the Nitra Region who identify themselves with Christianity. However, one may also discern a significant category of families whose members identify with Christianity, but their families are not based upon Christian values (i.e., divorces and cohabitations). This result could be interpreted in terms of changes related to individualization and privatization of religion. In the context of cultural pluralism, the reluctance to comply to the Christian model of family and marriage is not necessarily a sign of not being identified with the remaining elements of the religious system. Thus, one may easily observe a relatively widespread readiness to define oneself as a member of a religious group on the basis of criteria selected from a whole universe of symbolic elements typical of a given denomination.

On the other hand, one must observe that disregard to religion-based standards of family life is sometimes a result of an extreme or pathological situation (i.e., marital infidelity, home abuse) which is related to experiencing psychological discomfort by an individual responsible for violating the norms in question. This situation, however, is not necessarily tantamount to withholding one's identification with reference to a group in which the aforementioned norms are seen as valid and dominant.

Despite the above signals pointing to changes in defining and evaluating family structures, it seems that Christian axiological systems are definitely instrumental when it comes to the delineation of structural foundations of family life. This, in turn, seems sufficient enough to predict that traditional, religiously legitimized family structures will be reproduced in the population of the Nitra Region. Likewise, alternative

forms of marriage and family are not common in the population which strongly identifies itself with Christian denominations.

7.5 Family Roles: Functions and Housekeeping Duties

Our analysis points to the dominant status of the nuclear family which is legitimized by means of religious and legal regulation. The family, as it is stated above, has always been fulfilling tasks that are endowed with fundamental significance for the functioning of other social structures. In spite of momentous, ongoing transformations, the family is a guarantee safeguarding the existence of mezzo- and macrostructures. However, the effectiveness of families is rendered possible when patterns delineating reciprocal duties, responsibilities, and family members' individual rights are developed. The family, to put it otherwise, must be understood as a conglomerate of complementary roles functioning like a kind of mechanism. Although the contemporary society could be characterized by disregard to strict divisions or differentiations, it does not mean that the distribution of rights and responsibilities related to the division of duties among family members has dissolved. If this was the case, the family structure would be struck by anomie, which would lead to its erosion and subsequent liquidation. Yet, the sheer character of roles within contemporary family structures is an issue open for further debates.

Our respondents were asked a question concerning the distribution of housekeeping duties in their families. Both adults and adolescents were requested to declare who is responsible for selected important areas of their families' existence. The provided answers indicate that the model of a "partnership marriage" has been disseminated, in which tasks significant for efficient functioning of families are taken up by both parents. In addition to that, the study shows relatively substantial engagement in such activities on behalf of children.

Adult respondents declare that housekeeping duties are divided relatively equally, especially when it comes to making plans for summer holidays, providing financial support, doing shopping (both everyday shopping and purchases of more substantial goods and services), and taking care of children. The group of adult respondents is characterized by a significant percentage of declarations (from 51.0% up to 64.0%) stressing that activities in the aforementioned spheres are taken in conjunction with each other (see Table 57).

Table 57

Declarations stating equal engagement of parents in the following domains of family life

| Declarations stating equal engagement of parents in the following domains of family life | % |
|--|------|
| Economic security | 58.0 |
| Taking care of the shared household | 23.5 |
| Preparing meals | 20.0 |
| Taking care of children | 56.0 |
| Doing daily shopping | 51.9 |
| Buying durable goods | 57.3 |
| Making plans for summer holidays | 63.3 |
| Religious education of children | 56.6 |

The table shows that two spheres of family life still remain unevenly distributed. A correlation analysis shows that mothers are responsible for taking care of the household and preparing meals for the family. The virtue of equal distribution of responsibilities in the given spheres of activities is declared respectively by 23.5% and 20.0% of adult respondents.

The abovementioned considerations may be completed by data obtained when female and male respondents' answers concerning the distribution of housekeeping duties are compared. Despite the over-representation of women in the sample, it is worth taking a look at the answers provided by the respondents of both sexes (see Tables 58 and 59). It comes as no surprise that both female and male respondents are

Table 58

Female respondents' declarations stating equal engagement of both parents in the following domains of family life (expressed as percentage)

| Declarations stating equal engagement of both parents in the following domains of family life | Female respondents % | Husband/partner % | Both % |
|---|----------------------|-------------------|--------|
| Economic security | 14.5 | 20.7 | 60.1 |
| Taking care of the shared household | 72.8 | 1.6 | 22.8 |
| Preparing meals | 72.8 | 2.8 | 19.4 |
| Taking care of children | 43.2 | 0.0 | 53.0 |
| Doing daily shopping | 39.6 | 7.0 | 49.7 |
| Buying durable goods | 20.6 | 18.3 | 55.6 |
| Making plans for summer holidays | 27.1 | 8.3 | 62.4 |
| Religious education of children | 34.1 | 0.0 | 55.9 |

Table 59

Male respondents' declarations stating equal engagement of both parents in the following domains of family life (expressed as percentage)

| Declarations stating equal engagement of both parents in the following domains of family life | Male respondents % | Wife/partner % | Both % |
|---|--------------------|----------------|--------|
| Economic security | 53.6 | 0.0 | 42.9 |
| Taking care of the shared household | 19.4 | 51.6 | 22.6 |
| Preparing meals | 21.4 | 50.0 | 25.0 |
| Taking care of children | 19.4 | 6.5 | 74.2 |
| Doing daily shopping | 28.6 | 7.1 | 64.3 |
| Buying durable goods | 30.0 | 3.3 | 66.7 |
| Making plans for summer holidays | 25.9 | 3.7 | 70.4 |
| Religious education of children | 23.1 | 7.7 | 61.5 |

willing to put stress on their own contribution to housekeeping duties at the expense of their partners' involvement. Those findings can be interpreted as a natural result of the "pollster effect" in which respondents are motivated to show off their better sides of their character in front of a pollster asking questions (sustaining of the positive character of one's looking-glass self). The idealization of one's own activities – which renders the sustaining of one's positive self-image possible – is equally important (in this case, the respondents are motivated to maintain a positive character of their subjective self). Despite the aforementioned objections, the accumulated data lead to interesting conclusions springing from disparities observed in answers provided by female and male respondents.

Declarations provided by the respondents show that the statement postulating that the gendered distribution of housekeeping duties is equal does not seem to be fully legitimate. Although the majority of female respondents (60.1%) claim to secure the family's financial needs with their husbands' equal contribution, the same viewpoint is expressed less frequently in the group of male respondents (42.9%), and is superseded by declarations stressing the instrumental role of men's own earnings as the family's economic foundation (53.6%). What is more, no male respondent is willing to say that their spouse's (or partner's) earnings are fundamental to the family's financial stability. At the same time, 14.5% of female respondents are willing to admit that it is the contribution of their own income that stabilizes the family finances.

Another issue concerns taking care of children. Although declarations stressing equal contribution of both parents tend to be dominant,

no female respondent says that it is her husband (or partner) who is mostly engaged in taking care of children. Concurrently, 19.4% of fathers perceive that their role in upbringing process is instrumental.

It must be emphasized that the aforementioned housekeeping duties (i.e., taking care of the shared household and preparing meals for the family members) are evaluated in the most unambiguous manner: both female and male respondents agree that mothers' contribution is essential in these aspects of family life. Likewise, only the minority of female and male respondents do provide answers suggesting equal distribution of the said activities, or fathers' dominant role in them. Another important conclusion points to the insignificant role of grandparents and a marginal role of other people (i.e., relatives, neighbors, friends) in safeguarding family-related needs. These observations validate the assertion suggesting the nuclear character of the surveyed families, that is, a type of structure which assumes autonomy, self-reliance of the family and its relative isolation from influences coming from more all-encompassing social systems.

The presented conclusions may be confirmed by observing the distribution of answers provided to the same questions by the group of school-age respondents who were also asked to refer to their families' structures in terms of responsibilities associated with given family roles. In this case, declarations provided by both groups of respondents are similar. Adolescents claim that taking care of the household and preparing meals are responsibilities assumed mostly by their mothers (respectively 53.4% and 66.7% of all indications provided). Interestingly, it turns out that adolescent respondents are willing to assess their contribution to housekeeping activities very positively: 31.1% say that they work in conjunction with their parents to deal with housekeeping. School-age respondents, as 16.0% of all declarations state, also accept responsibility for making plans concerning summer holidays. Likewise, the distribution of the provided answers shows the participation of adolescents in the preparation of meals for all family members, which is declared by 14.6% of school-age respondents.

It is noteworthy that although school-age respondents are willing to ascribe a significant role in household economy to their fathers' earnings (this is declared by 30.6%), adolescents more frequently say that both parents are equally responsible for maintaining the family (43.4%). Here, the distribution of answers can be situated half-way between assessments provided by adult male and female respondents.

When compared to adults' answers, the adolescents evaluate their mothers' role in doing daily shopping. While parents tend to place this activity in the sphere of shared activities, 41.1% of adolescents ascribe this kind of housekeeping duties only to their mothers' contribution.

Similarly to adult respondents, school-age adolescents tend to ascribe a very limited significance when it comes to assess the contribution to family functioning made by people who do not belong to the group of nuclear family. Religious education is the only aspect of family life in which the role of people not belonging to the nuclear family was perceived as relatively significant by the surveyed adolescents (11.9%). These indications probably point to the role of seniors – especially respondents’ grandmothers – whose engagement in religious socialization could be relatively significant, especially when compared to other people or institutions of religious education. The detailed data are presented in Table 60.

Table 60

School-age respondents’ opinions on their parents’ contribution to the selected domains of family life (expressed as percentage)

| Opinions on their parents’ contribution to the selected domains of family life | Father % | Mother % | Both parents % | Parents and children % | Other % |
|--|----------|----------|----------------|------------------------|---------|
| The family’s financial security | 30.6 | 15.5 | 43.4 | 0.9 | 0.0 |
| Housekeeping duties | 2.7 | 53.4 | 8.2 | 31.1 | 1.8 |
| Preparing meals | 3.7 | 66.7 | 11.9 | 14.6 | 0.0 |
| Raising children | 5.5 | 38.1 | 50.5 | 3.2 | 0.9 |
| Daily shopping | 14.6 | 41.1 | 35.2 | 1.8 | 2.3 |
| Purchasing durable goods | 21.0 | 27.4 | 42.5 | 2.3 | 1.8 |
| Making plans for summer holidays | 18.3 | 22.8 | 37.0 | 16.0 | 0.5 |

This part of our study may be concluded by referring to the models which delineate the distribution of family-related functions. Respondents were asked about their choices concerning a preferred model of marriage (Table 61). The answers unambiguously gesture to a form of marital union that can be described as a “partnership”: the overwhelming majority of adolescent respondents (63.7%) say that the equal distribution of family responsibilities between the spouses is the most beneficial form of marital union. Other marriage models are chosen significantly less frequently: 17.9% say that a preferred type of marriage assumes that the spouses equally take care of the family budget, but women are mostly engaged in housekeeping duties and bringing up children. Answers opting for a traditional family with a single male breadwinner and household responsibilities delegated for women are chosen even less frequently.

Table 61

Preferred types of marriage (expressed as percentage)

| Preferred types of marriage | % |
|--|-------|
| The father works, whereas the mother takes care only of children and household. | 12.0 |
| Both parents are occupationally engaged, and the mother is mostly responsible for raising children and housekeeping. | 17.9 |
| The mother works and her earnings are sufficient enough to provide for the family, whereas the father takes care only of children and household. | 0.9 |
| Both parents work and are equally responsible for raising children and housekeeping. | 63.7 |
| Not indicated | 5.6 |
| TOTAL | 100.0 |

An in-depth correlation analysis reveals statistically significant differences in declarations provided by female and male respondents ($p = 0.291$). Both female and male respondents share a propensity for having similar ideals delineating the major framework of their family life. Yet, one must observe that male respondents slightly more frequently tend to opt for a patriarchal family model in which the husband is the only breadwinner and his wife takes care of the household (respectively 23.3% and 11.2%). Women, in turn, more frequently tend to opt for a partnership marriage in which the spouses share equal responsibilities for the family budget and housekeeping chores (respectively 69.1% and 56.7%). However, the reversal of roles is unthinkable for all respondents: only one female respondent prefers a family model in which women are responsible for finances and husbands are delegated solely for housekeeping and bringing up children.

Our study is sufficient enough to deliver a couple of generalized conclusions referring to patterns of responsibility distribution that characterize the surveyed Christian families of the Nitra Region. The study has indicated that the model of partnership marriage is being widely disseminated, which means that the spouses are increasingly engaged in working in conjunction with each other to deal with tasks necessary for maintaining the family. It seems that the traditional family model with a single male breadwinner slowly becomes obsolete. Although the surveyed families are characterized by the equal distribution of responsibilities, women are mostly engaged in housekeeping. Women are, in the main, responsible for preparing meals and taking care of the shared household. This model, however, is not generally accepted as an ideal one: declarations made by female respondents reveal an inclination for equating the spouses' rights and responsibilities associated with

the shared family life. It is noteworthy that a significant group of male respondents see the traditional family model as an ideal one, which is declared by almost one-fourth of them. The differences taking place between male and female respondents' views are not, however, statistically significant.

The engagement of children in the family's everyday existence – which can be seen as a factor conducive to solidarity and shared responsibility within a family group – is also of interest. Finally, it must be emphasized that high correlation between answers provided by adult and adolescent respondents may point to a considerable credibility of obtained study results.

7.6 Family Ties and Mutual Aid

The foundations of family are interpersonal ties based upon intense emotions and feelings. The family can be also considered as the salient aid group helping its members each time when situations of life crises are faced. In this way, the family unveils its helping character which is not only reserved for those who cannot cope with everyday life problems due to extraordinariness of their situation (i.e., due to old age or poor health condition), but also for all people who exist in the sphere of society.

Support and aid can be defined in many ways and assume a plethora of forms. In order to understand the specificity of patterns orchestrating the everyday existence of Christian families in the Nitra Region, adult respondents were asked to describe how they offer aid and support to their children.

The relevant answers unambiguously indicate that the respondents' children may count on support assuming a plenitude of forms. Almost all adults (more than 90.0%) declare that they provide their children with help by aiding them in the organization of spare time, offering emotional support, or offering help when significant life dilemmas are faced. A slightly smaller number of adults say that their children may only count on material aid and assistance in dealing with everyday tasks (respectively 85.2% and 88.5%). The least frequently chosen forms of parental help are the acceptance of all decision undertaken by their children (40.9%) and not intervening in their private life (27.9%) (see Table 62).

Table 62

Parents' declarations concerning forms of support offered to their children (expressed as percentage)

| Parents' declarations concerning forms of support offered to their children | Yes % | No % | It's hard to say % |
|---|-------|------|--------------------|
| Material and financial aid | 85.2 | 6.9 | 7.9 |
| Spending spare time together | 90.9 | 3.2 | 5.9 |
| Dealing with everyday matters | 88.5 | 6.6 | 4.9 |
| Advising | 94.8 | 1.4 | 3.8 |
| Helping with important decisions in one's life | 96.3 | 1.4 | 2.3 |
| Emotional support | 96.7 | 1.9 | 1.4 |
| Acceptance of all decisions | 40.9 | 30.6 | 28.5 |
| Not intervening in the children's life | 27.9 | 42.2 | 29.9 |

The data may be interpreted in terms of a significant amount of responsibility that is attributed to adult respondents' perception of parenthood. Since the declarations gesture both to financial aid and care invested in their children's emotional and social development, the surveyed families are characterized by virtue of multidimensional aid which is offered to children. The provided answers are sufficient enough to postulate that children raised in Christian families may depend on support in coping with both life dilemmas and everyday duties, as well as difficulties which are faced when an individual acts within a family group, peer group, or school environment.

The aforementioned conclusions could be confirmed by the analysis of answers provided by the group of school-age respondents. Although the observed distribution of answers in particular categories is similar to the one discussed above, it is noteworthy to observe that the adolescents tend to be more critical when they refer to possibilities of obtaining parental support. This is especially observable in cases when the adolescents respond by saying "it is difficult to say" or when no relevant answer is provided. Parental advice is the most frequently indicated form of help (75.4% of all declarations). Similarly to answers provided by the adults, school-age respondents least frequently indicated such forms of help as unconditional acceptance of their decisions by parents, and not intervening in private life (see Table 63).

The data indicate that the selected families of the Nitra Region are at place to fulfill caretaking and socializing functions. Children may generally count on parental support both when problems of crucial, lifelong importance and day-to-day dilemmas are faced. Likewise,

Table 63

Adolescents' declarations concerning forms of support offered to their children (expressed as percentage)

| Adolescents' declarations concerning forms of support offered for their children | Yes % | No % | It's hard to say % |
|--|-------|------|--------------------|
| Material and financial aid | 64.3 | 11.0 | 16.9 |
| Spending spare time together | 68.5 | 17.4 | 8.6 |
| Dealing with everyday matters | 64.9 | 18.7 | 12.3 |
| Advising | 75.4 | 9.1 | 8.2 |
| Helping with important decisions in one's life | 68.9 | 9.6 | 15.1 |
| Emotional support | 39.2 | 32.9 | 21.5 |
| Acceptance of all decisions | 41.5 | 32.4 | 17.8 |
| Not intervening in the children's life | 64.3 | 11.0 | 16.9 |

declarations postulating that children should deal with their problems single-handedly are very rarely observed. Hence, it could be said that parents are interested in their children's problems and try to solve them, and the younger generation is aware of that support, which renders their tranquility possible each time when problems are faced. These observations, needless to say, are typical of efficient family structures in which relevant functions and tasks are realized.

The abovementioned issue can be supplemented by an analysis of answers received when the respondents were asked to indicate people to whom they first turn in difficult life situations. The school-age respondents were willing to indicate a couple of persons in a given category whom they perceive as trustworthy and helpful. The provided questions were frequently left unanswered, which could be interpreted in terms of difficulties with indicating trustworthy persons or, conversely, the lack of problems on behalf of the respondents. The detailed data are aggregated in Table 64.

Observations made with reference to answers provided by adolescent respondents lead to a conclusion stating the primary role of mothers, who are most frequently treated as a trustee and helper/caretaker. When those answers are compared to relevant indications focusing on the respondents' fathers, it turns out that men are not perceived as trustworthy helpers who may support their children when difficult situations are faced. The only exception to this rule are situations concerned with material support: the surveyed minors prefer their fathers to their mothers when they ask for money, though the difference is insignificant. On the contrary, when being faced with health problems, the minors

routinely turn to their mothers, and the percentage of indications pointing to the role of fathers in such cases is very limited (the difference in this respect amounts to 26.0%).

Table 64

The adolescents' trustees (expressed as percentage)

| Types of problems | The adolescents' trustees | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------|---------|----------|
| | Mother % | Father % | Paternal grandparents % | Maternal grandparents % | Siblings % | Other % | Nobody % |
| Financial problems | 12.3 | 13.2 | 0.9 | 2.3 | 1.4 | 0.5 | 7.3 |
| Educational difficulties | 16.4 | 8.2 | 0.5 | 0.9 | 5.9 | 1.4 | 5.9 |
| Problems with dealing with peers | 7.3 | 4.1 | 2.3 | 0.5 | 5.5 | 1.4 | 17.8 |
| Difficult life situations | 15.1 | 3.7 | 2.3 | 3.7 | 0.5 | 2.7 | 4.1 |
| Health problems | 27.9 | 1.8 | 1.4 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 0.0 | 1.4 |

The data can be explained by referring to the persistent patterns orchestrating the distribution of family roles. Despite the popularization of partnership marriages in which the spouses' participation in every aspect of family life is more or less equal, fathers are still more frequently responsible for the financial dimensions of family existence. Mothers, in turn, are customarily dedicated to fulfilling emotionally expressive roles. Consequently, when health problems and personality-related dilemmas or social issues must be discussed, adolescents seek motherly support. In addition to that, the received distribution of answers may be interpreted by referring to the existence of strong bonds that bind mothers, rather than fathers, to their children. This is a result of family-related socialization processes in which – despite transformations affecting contemporary families – women assume decisive roles.

Seniors are those members of families that require taking care of. The school-age respondents were asked to say who in their family is in charge of taking care of grandparents (respondents were able to refer to maternal and paternal grandparents respectively). The results (see Table 65) are sufficient enough to say the families of the Nitra Region, in the main, are fit enough to perform caretaking functions. Yet, it has to be emphasized that the asked school-age respondents very often did not provide any answer for the question (30.0–40.0% approx.), and in many cases their declarations point to the grandparents' self-reliance (36.0–40.0% approx.). Furthermore, some of respondents say that they

do not know who is responsible for taking care of the elderly members of their families (3.5–4.5% approx.). When we focus our attention on family structures, it turns out that elderly ones are taken care of mostly by members of nuclear family (15.0–22.0% approx.) and extended family (2.0–3.0% approx.). A situation in which elderly family members are deployed to specialized caretaking institutions is the least frequently met (0.5–1.5% approx.).

Table 65

Adolescents' declarations concerning individuals and institutions responsible for taking care of seniors (expressed as percentage)

| Taking care of seniors | My parents % | More distant relatives % | Representatives of health service % | Nursing home personnel % | Seniors are self-reliant % | Undecided % | No answer % |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Seniors | | | | | | | |
| Seniors (patrilineal) | 15.5 | 2.3 | 0.5 | 1.4 | 36.5 | 4.6 | 39.3 |
| Seniors (matrilineal) | 21.5 | 2.7 | 0.5 | 0.9 | 39.7 | 3.7 | 31.1 |

The analysis above refers to the families' functional stability in terms of mutual support and responsibility for those family members who require special attention. Both children and seniors may expect assistance on behalf of their relatives. The aforementioned tendency postulating that specialized institutions are taking over family functions referring to taking care of individuals in need is not visible in the surveyed population. Christian families of the Nitra Region have remained social groups which are able to provide a plethora of forms of support on behalf of their members. The discussed findings seem sufficient enough to draw conclusions that refer to family ties of relative strength which are based upon trust and solidarity expressed with regard to one's closest relatives.

7.7 Social Interactions within Families

When cultural patterns associated with the everyday existence of Christian families in the Nitra Region are being discussed, it is imperative to refer to issues concerning interpersonal interactions that bind family members into coherent structures. Both intensity and character

of such interactions, on the one hand, are indicators of family ties and, on the other hand, could be regarded as factors determining the strength of emotional relationships among family members.

Our study specifically focuses upon interactions with members of the extended family. It was assumed that the surveyed families have reached a developmental stage in which direct interactions are normal and taken-for-granted. The abovementioned declarations indicate that such an assumption is valid: our respondents' answers concerning the distribution of responsibilities in the family and scale and forms of support point to robust and intimate relationships in basic family structures.

An issue referring to a character of relationships that relate members of the surveyed nuclear families to distant relatives is open for further discussion. Respondents' declarations state that the relationships with more distant relatives are rather intensive. More than a half of respondents (50.4%) claim that they meet members of their extended families quite frequently. More than one-third, in turn, say that such interactions are mostly typical for holidays and other celebrations (36.3%). A definitely smaller number of respondents (8.1%) say that they meet their relatives only during events of a high significance for the family, such as weddings, funeral ceremonies, and baptismal ceremonies. Not seeing their distant relatives is admitted by mere 2.1% (see Table 66).

Table 66

Adult respondents' declarations concerning the frequency of meeting members of the extended family (expressed as percentage)

| The frequency of meeting members of the extended family (adults) | % |
|---|------|
| Frequently | 50.4 |
| During holidays or family celebrations | 36.3 |
| Only during such events as weddings, funerals, baptismal ceremonies | 8.1 |
| No such meetings | 2.1 |
| No answer | 3.0 |

A similar distribution characterizes answers provided by school-age respondents whose declarations also point to relatively high frequency of interactions with members of the extended family. Almost one-third (27.9%) declare to see their distant relatives every day. More than a half (52.1%) say that such encounters take place mostly during holidays and other ceremonies (it includes 3.2% who mention weddings, funeral, or baptismal ceremonies). Not seeing their distant relatives is admitted by mere 1.4% (for details see Table 67).

Table 67

Adolescent respondents' declarations concerning the frequency of meeting members of the extended family (expressed as percentage)

| The frequency of meeting members of the extended family (adolescents) | % |
|---|------|
| Frequently | 27.9 |
| During holidays or family celebrations | 52.1 |
| Only during such events as weddings, funerals, baptismal ceremonies | 3.2 |
| No such meetings | 1.4 |
| No answer | 15.5 |

The data provided are conducive to a conclusion suggesting that members of the surveyed Christian families are bound by close and intimate relationships. Although households owned by extended families (both horizontally and vertically) are rare, the declared frequency of interaction with more distant relatives may be evaluated as relatively high.

Two issues are instrumental for the search for subsequent indicators rendering the understanding of relationships within family structures possible. First of all, this is spending Christmas Eve, one of the most essential celebrations for Christians, together, as the entire family. Not only does Christmas supper have a considerable significance in religious terms, but also it constitutes a form of celebration that is firmly rooted in a number of traditions. It may be considered as an occasion which is endowed with outstanding family-related connotations. Likewise, cultural patterns that render sense to celebrating Christmas Eve are, at the same time, conducive to furnishing this event with a specific, community-related character. Christmas supper is an occasion in which family ties are manifested in the most elaborate manner, and people with whom we sit at the table are our closest partners in everyday existence. The adults were asked to indicate with whom they sat at the table during the last Christmas supper. The provided answers point unambiguously to celebrating Christmas as a community and family. Almost all respondents (98.7%) say the last Christmas Eve was spent exclusively in the family group; that is, with respondents' partners and children. One in ten respondents (10.5%) say that celebrating Christmas is shared with one's friends and acquaintances. It is worth emphasizing that nobody declares to have spent Christmas Eve alone. Answers pointing to spending Christmas Eve only with more distant relatives are sporadic and marginal (1.0% of all responses provided).

The aforementioned analysis may be supplemented by our discussion of findings that refer to patterns of spending birthdays and name days – forms of family celebrations that are endowed with far less significance

than Christmas. Although these celebrations are not as significant as those of strictly religious character, ways of spending them can tell much about the specificity of family relationships.

Declarations provided by both adolescents and adults indicate that birthdays and name days are celebrated together, with a family. Mere 10.0% of all declarations state that these celebrations are not observed, and almost 90.0% in each group (respectively 87.6% of adult respondents and 85.8% of adolescent respondents) claim to invite their closest relatives to the said celebrations. Certain differences as to inviting more distant relatives were observed. Thirty percent of adult respondents say that distant relatives are invited to their birthdays or name days, which is equal to the percentage of declarations concerning willingness to invite friends and acquaintances. Inviting neighbors to the aforementioned celebrations was declared by 13.2% (see Table 68).

Table 68

Adult respondents' declarations concerning guests invited to birthday parties or name day parties (expressed as percentage)

| Guests invited to birthday parties or name day parties (adults) | % |
|---|------|
| Members of the nuclear family – parents and children | 87.6 |
| More distant relatives | 30.8 |
| Friends and acquaintances | 30.3 |
| Neighbors | 13.2 |
| Nobody | 10.3 |

Adolescent respondents' declarations are characterized by significantly higher frequency of indications pointing to spending birthdays and name days with grandparents and more distant relatives (respectively 77.2% and 63.9% of all declarations). Spending these celebrations with school friends and other acquaintances were also frequently indicated (respectively 47.0% and 31.1%). As in the case of adult respondents' preferences, declarations of inviting neighbors to birthdays and name days were infrequent (11.9%). Table 69 presents the results.

These results may be interpreted as a presence of robust emotional relations that characterize the surveyed Christian families. Events such as religious celebrations, birthdays and name days are regarded as opportunities for family reunions. Such reunions are not only conducive to keeping in touch with members of one's closest family, but are also instrumental for the cohesiveness of larger family structures. The frequency of interactions with distant relatives could be regarded as satisfactory.

Table 69

Adolescent respondents' declarations concerning guests invited to birthday parties or name day parties (expressed as percentage)

| Guests invited to birthday parties or name day parties (adolescents) | % |
|--|------|
| Members of the nuclear family – parents and children | 85.8 |
| More distant relatives | 77.2 |
| Grandparents | 63.9 |
| School friends | 47.0 |
| Other acquaintances | 31.1 |
| Neighbors | 11.9 |
| Nobody | 8.7 |

The aforementioned considerations may be completed by the problem of how relationships with one's relatives are kept. The biggest number of declarations state that such relationships are endowed with direct, face-to-face character (82.0%). It is noteworthy that more than half of the respondents (58.4%) say that mobile phone is an important facilitation when it comes to keeping in touch with one's relatives. One-fifth (20.6%) use the Internet for the same purpose. It is important to note that digital technologies are most frequently deployed when respondents interact with their siblings. The relationships with parents or parents-in-law assume forms of direct, personalized interactions. The difference could be interpreted as an effect of diversified competences in using sophisticated communication technologies.

It seems that the significance of modern technologies for sustaining family ties will be gradually increasing. The contemporary world enforces flexibility and mobility, which may have a detrimental effect on the strength of family ties. Some researchers say that new communication media exert a disadvantageous effect on relationships among people. New technologies may cripple interpersonal interactions and alienate family members by the sheer fact of diminishing the frequency of direct interactions. Yet, one cannot forget about the role of new media in the construction of family ties. The Internet is not necessarily conducive for isolating people from one another – it may bind them. Almost unlimited, common access to the Internet and mobile communications is undoubtedly a factor facilitating interactions among family members when they are physically distant. In this way, technology has become an instrument for maintaining family ties by enabling interactions between parents and their children when physical distance is faced. Likewise, the ability to use mobile communications, email, online communicators render the intensification of interactions possible, especially

when compared to the era of traditional postal services and stationary telephones. When mediated by sophisticated technologies, communication is economical and comfortable: getting in touch with others is not hard and does not involve any exorbitant effort or expense.

These facilitations are used by family members who live separately; for instance, due to migrations. Under such circumstances the ability to maintain constant relationships is a prerequisite for the survival of family structure. It seems that such problems, at least partially, are seen in the group of the surveyed families.

Despite the dominant role of the nuclear family model, one may postulate that there exist forms of family ties that link particular microstructures into bigger social units. It seems that nuclear Christian families in the Nitra Region are not totally alienated units, but they form bigger family systems by means of relationships with elderly family members and more distant relatives running their own households. Yet, one cannot say that these bigger family systems are firmly bound by social bonds. Hence, their stability and endurance are limited to a certain extent.

7.8 Conclusions

The provided analyses pave the way for the following conclusions referring to cultural patterns that organize everyday existence of Christian families in the Nitra Region.

- Christian families of the Nitra Region comprise communities whose functioning is based upon the axiological *milieu* constituting the foundation of Christianity. The secularization of social life is not represented as patterns of everyday family life. Family structures are bound by robust ties of solidarity and trust. The family is formed on the basis of religiously sanctioned marital union whose aim is to raise children.
- Although the nuclear family constitutes the dominant form of family structure, there are relationships among those basic units that come to combine bigger social, family-related systems.
- Families function on the basis of partnership model in which both parents are equally responsible for the family budget, housekeeping duties, and raising children. This model is also seen as the most valid one. However, a strong emphasis put on the role of fathers is also observed, which is especially true when it comes to the realization of

the family's instrumental functions. Mothers, in turn, are ascribed to tasks aiming at the fulfillment of expressive family functions.

- Children are engaged into basic housekeeping activities.
- The surveyed Christian families are characterized by the realization of caretaking functions. Both the youngest and eldest family members may count on their closest relatives. Forms of support are variegated and concern a number of dimensions of family life, that is, from material existence up to issues related to one's social functioning.
- Caretaking institutions are not seen as capable of replacing families in terms of their supportive function. It refers mostly to care vested in senior family members.
- The surveyed Christian families are characterized by a relatively high frequency of interactions with more distant relatives. Such interactions are maintained mostly during religious celebrations and other events that are important for family members. More particularly, celebrations associated with the youngest members of family are opportunities for family meetings.
- Although the significance of modern communication technologies is considerable, relationships among family members are mostly based upon face-to-face interactions.

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Religiosité et style de vie Étude sociologique des familles slovaques

Résumé

Les études empiriques, dont les résultats sont partiellement présentés dans ce livre, constituent une partie d'une totalité plus vaste, réalisée en tant que projet de recherche VEGA du Ministère de l'Éducation de la République Slovaque, enregistré sous le numéro 1/0323/13 et portant le titre : *Rodinné a medzigeneračné väzby v súčasnej rodine v Nitrianskom samosprávnom kraji* (Le projet était réalisé dans la Chaire de Sociologie à la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université Constantin Le Philosophe à Nitra par un groupe international de sociologues, dirigé par le professeur Wojciech Świątkiewicz. Ce groupe se composait de: Prof. Ph.Dr. Peter Ondrejko, DrSc., Prof. zw. dr hab. Wojciech Świątkiewicz, Ph.Dr. Monika Strbova Ph.D., PaedDr. Ph.Dr. Denis Delick, Ph.D, Mgr. Marcela Sarvajcova, Ph.D., Ph.Dr. Ruzena Valkovska, Ph.Dr. Viera Stefancova, Ph.D., Mgr. Viera Zozul'akova, Ph.D., Dr. Andrzej Górny, Ph.D., Mgr. Ľubor Gal, Ph.D.). En tant que supplément de ces études, nous incluons l'élaboration des résultats des enquêtes menées auprès de plus de 600 étudiants de l'Université Constantin Le Philosophe de Nitra, effectuées dans le cadre de la bourse de Visegrád (Les études ont été effectuées dans le cadre de la bourse de Visegrád, obtenu par la docteure Katarzyna Juszczyk-Frelkiewicz pour mener des études comparatives en Pologne et en Slovaquie, intitulées: « *Cohabitation – an alternative marriage-family life form in the opinion of Polish and Slovak students. Sociological study* » / « *Cohabitation – une forme alternative de vie matrimoniale et familiale selon l'opinion des étudiants polonais et slovaques* » (numéro du stagiaire 51000500). L'analyse présentée dans cette monographie concerne les résultats des études menées auprès des étudiants slovaques.)

Le livre se compose de cinq chapitres et d'une note méthodologique.

Le premier chapitre « *Marriage, Cohabitation, Children. The Family Lifestyle* » (*Marriage, Cohabitation, Enfants. Le style de vie familial*) présente l'analyse des résultats des études empiriques relative à la vie familiale. Cette analyse consistait à indiquer par les personnes sondées les formes de vie qui constituent la famille, la forme préférée d'une relation ainsi que l'âge convenable pour contracter le mariage et avoir des enfants. Les résultats des recherches indiquent que les projets pour l'avenir des personnes sondées présentent un style de vie familial orienté vers la volonté de fonder une relation basée sur l'amour, sur le soutien mutuel et sur le serment nuptial. Les personnes sondées préféraient aussi un modèle de famille où les partenaires sont traités d'égal à égal, c'est-à-dire avec une division égalitaire de devoirs ; en ce qui concerne l'âge indiqué comme convenable pour contracter le mariage et avoir des enfants, il se place entre 26 et 28 ans.

Dans le chapitre « Cohabitation. An informal Lifestyle » (*Cohabitation. Un style de vie informel*), nous abordons le thème concernant un phénomène social qui est de plus en plus commun, c'est-à-dire la vie en cohabitation. Cette forme informelle et alternative de la vie familiale devient de plus en plus commune et de plus en plus souvent choisie, notamment par la jeune génération. Les résultats des études empiriques que l'on a menées ont démontré que selon les personnes sondées les unions de fait (sous forme de cohabitation) ne constituent pas une forme concurrentielle de vie familiale par rapport au mariage. Les personnes sondées trouvaient aussi que les couples vivant sous forme de cohabitation sont capables de créer des conditions favorables au développement de leurs enfants et, par là, à une famille heureuse. Ces personnes étaient également enclines à attribuer les droits d'adoption aux couples vivant sous forme d'unions libres.

Dans la conclusion du chapitre « Trust as a Value of Family Life » (*Confiance comme valeur de la vie familiale*), nous dirigeons notre attention entre autres sur le fait que le modèle pratique de la famille slovaque (dans le Pays de Nitra) est construit sur des relations émotionnellement fortes entre la mère et l'enfant/les enfants. Ce phénomène est déjà remarqué dans la génération des parents et, grâce à la socialisation familiale et l'éducation, il s'inscrit de façon dynamique dans les pratiques familiales de la génération des jeunes. Ce sont avant tout les femmes qui sont les dépositaires de la confiance sociale. Elles sont aussi les gardiennes de liens entre les générations et les confidentes des affaires difficiles. La culture de confiance en famille est édifée autour de la mère. La confiance a le visage de la femme.

Les résultats des études empiriques, présentés dans le chapitre « Religiosity. An Intergenerational Perspective » (*Religiosité. Une perspective intergénérationnelle*), permettent d'avancer la thèse concernant le fossé entre les générations (angl. *generation gap*), se manifestant de façon nette dans la transmission de la culture religieuse entre les générations. En plus, on observe clairement les manifestations de la rupture de la culture religieuse entre les générations. La génération des élèves participe décidément plus rarement aux pratiques religieuses, elle déclare que ses affiliations ecclésiastiques sont plus faibles et se caractérise par une sensibilité religieuse qui est moins intensive que celle de la génération de leurs parents. Les similitudes intergénérationnelles concernant les façons déclarées de participer occasionnellement à la vie des Églises (pratiques qui n'ont lieu qu'une fois), ainsi que les attitudes indiquant le retraitement individuel de la vie des communautés religieuses constituent une dérogation à ce principe. Les jeunes et les parents expriment leur conviction à propos de la continuité intergénérationnelle de la transmission de la culture religieuse, ce qui est difficile à confirmer à la lumière des résultats des recherches que l'on présente. La façade de religiosité construite et maintenue dans les visions des élèves et de leurs parents voile les fissures et les déficits existant dans le modèle de la culture slovaque – présentés dans nos études – concernant la socialisation religieuse dans la transmission intergénérationnelle d'attitudes et de comportements religieux.

Le chapitre « Patterns of Everyday Life Characterizing Christina Families in the Nitra Regions » (*Le modèle de la vie quotidienne des familles chrétiennes dans la région de Nitra*) constitue une tentative de reproduire les rythmes quotidiens de la vie des familles dans le Pays de Nitra. C'est notamment la problématique concernant les modèles culturels exprimant les aspects choisis du fonctionnement social des structures familiales qui y est particulièrement accentuée. Les familles examinées sont unies par des liens forts, fondés sur la solidarité et la confiance. Dans la majeure partie des cas, c'est le mariage religieusement sanctionné – dont le but est d'élever des enfants – qui est

leur quintessence. Les données recueillies démontrent que parmi les familles examinées domine le modèle « d'égal à égal » – les deux parents s'engagent d'une manière égale à assurer la stabilité financière de la famille et s'occupent du ménage et élèvent les enfants. C'est en même temps le modèle qui est considéré comme le meilleur par les personnes sondées.

Les études démontrent à la fois que les personnes sondées accentuent plus fortement le rôle des hommes – pères – dans le cadre de la réalisation des fonctions instrumentales, tandis qu'aux femmes – mères – on attribue le plus souvent l'exécution des tâches à caractère expressif. Les données recueillies démontrent un engagement assez considérable des enfants dans la réalisation des tâches résultant de l'existence quotidienne des familles, ce qui favorise la construction du sentiment de communion avec les proches et de la responsabilité pour eux.

Mots-clés : mariage, famille, cohabitation, religiosité, culture religieuse, styles de vie

Religiosidad y estilo de vida Estudio sociológico de familias eslovacas

Resumen

La investigación empírica cuyos resultados se presentan parcialmente en este estudio se inscribe en un conjunto más amplio, realizado como el proyecto de investigación VEGA del Ministerio de Educación de la República Eslovaca, registrado con el número 1/0323/13, bajo el título *Rodinné a medzigeneračné väzby v súčasnej rodine v Nitrianskom samosprávnom kraji*. (El proyecto fue realizado en la Cátedra de Sociología de la Facultad de Filosofía de la Universidad de Constantino el Filósofo de Nitra, por un grupo internacional de sociólogos dirigido por el profesor Wojciech Świątkiewicz. Al grupo pertenecieron: Prof. Ph.Dr. Peter Ondrejko, DrSc., Prof. zw. dr hab. Wojciech Świątkiewicz, Ph.Dr. Monika Strbova Ph.D., PaedDr. Ph.Dr. Denis Delick, Ph.D, Mgr. Marcela Sarvajcova, Ph.D., PhDr. Ruzena Valkovska, Ph.Dr. Viera Stefancova, Ph.D., Mgr. Viera Zozul'akova, Ph.D., Dr. Andrzej Górny, Ph.D., Mgr. Ľubor Gal, Ph.D). Con el objetivo de completar dicha investigación incluimos la síntesis de los resultados de las encuestas llevadas a cabo entre más de 600 estudiantes de la Universidad de Constantino el Filósofo de Nitra, realizadas en el marco de una beca Visagrád. (La beca fue concedida a la doctora Katarzyna Juszczyk-Frelkiewicz, para llevar a cabo una investigación comparativa en Polonia y en Eslovaquia, titulada "Cohabitation – an alternative marriage-family life form in the opinion of Polish and Slovak students. Sociological study" [Cohabitación: una forma alternativa de vida matrimonial-familiar, según estudiantes de Polonia y de Eslovaquia. Estudio sociológico], número del solicitante 51000500. El análisis presentado en esta monografía abarca los resultados de la investigación realizada entre estudiantes eslovacos).

El libro consta de cinco capítulos y de una nota metodológica.

El capítulo primero, "Matrimonio, cohabitación, hijos. Estilo de vida de la familia", presenta el análisis de los resultados de la investigación empírica acerca del estilo de vida familiar. Los encuestados indicaron las formas de vida que constituían, en su opinión, la familia, la forma de relación preferida por ellos, la edad adecuada para contraer matrimonio y para tener hijos. Los datos recogidos muestran que los planes de futuro de los encuestados están vinculados a un estilo de vida familiar orientado a establecer una relación basada en el amor, el apoyo mutuo y en el contracción de matrimonio. Los encuestados optaron asimismo por el modelo de familia basado en la igualdad, con un reparto igualitario de las responsabilidades, y consideraron la edad apropiada para casarse y para tener hijos entre 26 y 28 años.

En el capítulo “Cohabitación. Estilo de vida alternativo” se aborda la cuestión de un fenómeno social cada vez más común: la cohabitación. Esta forma de vida familiar, informal y alternativa, gana en popularidad, ante todo entre generaciones jóvenes. Los resultados de la investigación empírica indicaron que, en la opinión de los encuestados, la pareja de hecho no constituía una forma de vida familiar que compitiera con el matrimonio. Los encuestados afirmaban también que las parejas de hecho eran capaces de crear condiciones propicias para el desarrollo de sus hijos, es decir, para una familia feliz. Se inclinaban asimismo a conceder a las parejas que vivían en una relación informal el derecho a ser padres adoptivos.

En las conclusiones del capítulo “Confianza como el valor de la vida familiar” se llama la atención sobre el hecho de que el modelo de la familia eslovaca (vigente en la Región de Nitria) se fundamenta sobre las fuertes relaciones emocionales entre madre e hijo o hijos. La presencia del padre en el espacio de las relaciones emocionales de la familia está poco marcada. Este fenómeno se observa ya en la generación de los padres y se inscribe de un modo dinámico en las prácticas familiares de la juventud a través de los procesos de socialización familiar y de educación. La confianza social se deposita ante todo en las mujeres. Ellas son también guardianas de las relaciones intergeneracionales y confidentes de asuntos difíciles. La cultura de la confianza se construye en la familia en torno a la madre. La confianza tiene el rostro femenino.

Los resultados de la investigación empírica presentados en el capítulo “Religiosidad. Perspectiva intergeneracional” permiten aventurar la tesis de la existencia de una brecha generacional bien marcada en la sociedad eslovaca en lo que se refiere a la transmisión intergeneracional de la cultura religiosa. La continuidad en este campo se ve interrumpida. La generación de los estudiantes participa con menos frecuencia en las prácticas religiosas, declara un menor grado de afiliación a la Iglesia y se caracteriza por una menor sensibilidad religiosa en comparación con la de los padres. Una excepción de este principio la constituyen las similitudes intergeneracionales concernientes a los declarados modos de participación esporádica en la vida de la Iglesia (prácticas de una vez) y a las actitudes que señalan la exclusión de la vida de las comunidades religiosas. Los jóvenes y los padres expresan la convicción de la continuidad intergeneracional de la transmisión de la cultura religiosa, lo cual difícilmente se defiende en vista de los resultados de la investigación presentada. La fachada de la religiosidad, construida y mantenida en la mentalidad de los estudiantes y de los padres, oculta las fisuras y déficits de la socialización religiosa en lo relativo a la transmisión intergeneracional de actitudes y comportamientos religiosos, que existen en el modelo de la cultura eslovaca y que han sido revelados por nuestra investigación.

El capítulo “Modelos de la vida cotidiana de familias cristianas de la Región de Nitra” muestra ritmos cotidianos de la vida de familias de la Región de Nitra. Profundiza particularmente en el problema de los modelos culturales que abarcan los aspectos seleccionados del funcionamiento de las estructuras familiares. Las familias investigadas se caracterizan por los fuertes vínculos apoyados en la solidaridad y en la confianza. Su fundamento lo constituye, en la mayoría de los casos, un matrimonio legitimado religiosamente cuyo objetivo es criar niños. Los datos recogidos indican que entre las familias investigadas predomina el modelo basado en la igualdad: los dos padres se involucran, en igual grado, en asegurar el bienestar financiero de la familia, cuidan del hogar y de la educación de los niños. Es, además, el modelo que los encuestados consideran el mejor.

La investigación revela, sin embargo, una mayor acentuación, por parte de los investigados, del papel de los hombres –padres– en la realización de las funciones

instrumentales, mientras que a las mujeres los encuestados les adscriben con más frecuencia la realización de las tareas de carácter expresivo. Los datos reunidos muestran también la alta participación de los niños en la realización de las tareas vinculadas a la vida cotidiana de la familia, lo que facilita la creación del sentido de la unión con los familiares y del de la responsabilidad por ellos.

Palabras claves: matrimonio, familia, cohabitación, religiosidad, cultura religiosa, estilos de vida

Copy editing Gabriela Marszołek
Technical editing Małgorzata Pleśniar
Cover design Magdalena Starzyk
Proofreading Agnieszka Morawiecka
Typesetting Bogusław Chruściński

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ISSN 0208-6336
ISBN 978-83-226-3097-6
(print edition)
ISBN 978-83-226-3098-3
(digital edition)

Publisher
Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego
ul. Bankowa 12B, 40-007 Katowice
www.wydawnictwo.us.edu.pl
e-mail: wydawus@us.edu.pl

First impression. Printed sheets: 8.75. Publishing
sheets: 9.5. Offset paper grade III, 90 g
Price 20 zł (+ VAT)

Printing and binding:
"TOTEM.COM.PL Sp. z o.o." Sp.K.
ul. Jacewska 89, 88-100 Inowrocław

ISSN 0208-6336
Price 20 PLN (+ VAT)

About this book

ISBN 978-83-226-3097-6



9 788322 630976

