

Upbringing and Socialization in the Contemporary Family

DOI: 10.15804/tner.2016.46.4.03

Abstract

This article looks into the process of socialization and upbringing in contemporary families. First, it describes the contemporary family, which has gone through a major transformation, just like the whole society. The contemporary family is characterized by destabilization, democratization, and disintegration, and all these problems affect the upbringing of children and the process of socialization.

Keywords: family, socialization, upbringing, society, child

The State of the Contemporary Family

Family, directly and indirectly, reflects the state of society and the conditions that society creates for it. In the course of the last twenty years, changes have been noticed in the context of the transformation of the whole society, which were not noticed in decades before.

According to Fukuyama, all of the serious problems that accompany the transformation of society in recent years (such as individualisms, society's dynamics including the shifts in standards and values, liberalisms, consumerist style of life, etc.) have mostly affected the: a) reproduction, b) family, and c) relationships between a man and a woman (Fukuyama, 2006, p. 48). Due to the strong decrease in the legitimately based families, there is a growing trend of cohabitation without

entering into marriage. In the 1960s, 95% of children were born in marriage. Today, by contrast, over 40% of children are born outside of marriage.

Starting a family is becoming a dilemma, especially for young women. *What to put first? How to arrange everything so she can manage her professional career and functioning of the family with children simultaneously?* (Višňovský, Hroncová et al., 2010)

During the last decade, there has been a significant *democratization* in the lives of families. Overall, however, we can observe that the emancipatory efforts “went wrong” to some extent, and a great part of women are increasingly showing off their self-reliance, ability to take care of themselves, which also somewhat sends a message that they do not need men in their lives.

One of the significant impacts of the social changes in the family life is its disintegration. The living of the contemporary family is often described as “living next to each other” rather than “living together”. There is a growing number of families where the individual members only encounter, correspond, or cease to communicate with each other at all. For example, most families do not even gather for a meal. 43% of families say that they gather for dinner every day, and 15% gather only at weekends, when 45% gather even for lunch (Kraus, Jedličková, 2007, p. 302).

The problem of communication is quite fundamental for the family functioning. Our research confirms that the family bond is mostly strengthened by factors such as mutual communication, shared hobbies, and leisure time spent together. Only then follows eroticism, sexuality, etc. In our research, the most frequent answer (88%) to the question of what keeps the family together the most was “that I can count on someone, I have emotional background” (Kraus, Jedličková, 2007, p. 298).

There is another phenomenon that cannot be forgotten, which has impacted the current family, and that is the media. Livingstone (2002), in relation to the family’s lifestyle, refers to the decrease in the so-called “street culture” and the increase in the media-rich households, and states that children spend their leisure time at home instead of in the freely available places outside as they used to.

Also the socio-economic situation of families today determines their lifestyle and sometimes becomes a truly risk factor for all of their members. The importance of the socio-economic situation in the current lives of families was also confirmed by our extensive “Lifestyle of the Contemporary Czech Family” research (1307 families), which took place at the turn of 2013/14 and was carried out within the ESP project “Development and Support of the Multidisciplinary Research Team at Hradec Králové University Concerning Contemporary Family”.

The first question aiming at the mentioned issue (“*How do you picture a happy family?*”) anticipated a free answer. Most of the respondents considered the health

of all of the family members to be the most important condition for a happy family. 51.2% of all the respondents shared this opinion. They also considered the financial security and social background without debt and mortgage (43.4% of all the answers) to be almost as important for a happy family. More than a third of the respondents (36.5%) then reported a good climate in the family, based on the harmonious relationships and understanding, as another condition for a happy family. With a certain distance (22.7%), there appeared opinions associated with the need for spending leisure time together, vacations, and space for hobbies. Nearly 20% of the respondents considered mutual trust, tolerance, respect, reliability between family members to be also a condition for a happy family.

Next question: “*What do you need in order to have a happy family?*“ was included, with the intention of explaining the respondents’ opinions provided in the previous section. The dominating opinion, on the top spot with 37.4%, was material and financial security. Second was the opinion related to the lack of time spent together and the development of common interests (25.2%).

As a result of all the internal changes of the family, it is possible to observe the growing number of families that function with great difficulty, or unable to function at all. Summing up the problems in the functioning of families, a classification of the variants of types of dysfunctional families according to J. Kučírek is suggested:

1. *Asymmetrical family of type A* (a father, mother, and one child, in a coalition against the second child/children).
2. *Asymmetrical family of type B* (a father or mother in a coalition with all the children against the other parent).
3. *Generation gap* (a strong bond between the father and mother – child/children are strongly marginalized).
4. *Uncommitted family* (a family with indifferent relationships, without bonds or family cohesion).
5. *Non-integrated family* (chaotic relationships, conflicts, lack of cohesion, hostility within the family, none of the family members has responsibility).
6. *Schismatic family* (two coalitions, one child with father, the other child with mother, or father in coalition with daughter and mother with son).
7. *Family with unclear intergenerational borders* (children are being manipulated into inappropriate roles and parents temporarily pose themselves as “friends“).
8. *Externally integrated family* (immature parents who are dependent on the social and economic support of their families and social services, and also children dependent on their parents).

9. *Socially closed family* (excessive cohesion in families, disrupted contacts with the outer world because of the risks of society).
10. *Repressive family* (anxiously neurotic, perfectionistic; family who refuses to give vent to negative feelings so that they can be transformed into a variety of somatic or mental symptoms).
11. *Pseudo-democratic family* (even relationships between parents and children, generational boundaries, loss of parental authority) (Kučírek, 2014, p. 106)

The Process of Socialization in Families

Family is *the bearer of primary socialization*, and lays foundations for the child's personality. Right from birth, every person "absorbs" everything that happens around him/her that he/she perceives. It is stronger than other influences that come later (e.g., at school).

Parental autonomy can have several variations:

1. *Democratic concept* - a modification of the traditional one, it also allows for the obligation to keep to the values of parents, and gives the floor to the discussion about other values.
2. *Moderately liberal concept* - assumes the parents' right to try to make their child adopt their value system, although, parents of a reasonable age support their child to also freely acquaint with other value systems.
3. *Consistently liberal concept* of parental autonomy – the child is allowed to keep whichever value system it chooses. Parents only protect their child against the effects that might restrict the child's choice (Možný, 1999, p. 132).

The mentioned changes in family life are reflected in the socialization process. The *democratization tendencies* can be noticed not only in the relationship between spouses, but also the parents - child level. It is possible to see better partnership relationships and a much more tolerant approach to children. The question is whether this shift is unequivocally to the child's personality development benefit, and whether the "camaraderie" is not sometimes taken advantage of by the child and does not cause the child to generally stop perceiving the authorities, and therefore contribute to the destruction of any restraints in their behaviour.

The *disintegration of family life* affects mainly the children. They experience the absence of a stable background the most. Therefore, in our research, we were interested in the extent to which the family spends time together. Overall, the disintegration was confirmed, as almost 40% of the cases stated that they did not spend practically any time together. If we look at the specific activities, then

as many as 67% showed only the sport activities (17% of which stated “with the spouse or partner”, 30% “with the children”).

If, at all, the family members spend any time together, then the dominating activities are walks and trips (87.9%), and watching TV (86.2%), the least frequent joint leisure time activity in families is reading (10.8%).

Sport, as a joint leisure time activity, is preferred by 55.6% of the families regardless of the parents’ age. Statistically significant dependence was proved in the parents’ education (the higher the education the more the sports activities preferred in the joint leisure time). Also, families with both parents/partners do sport more often.

With regard to a certain commercialization of leisure time, we wondered whether families spend their joint leisure time also in the passive way (e.g., collective playing of computer games), or whether active leisure time content prevails. In the area of playing, only about 1/3 of the families play computer games in their joint leisure time (a statistically significant difference was detected with regard to the parents’ age), however, the answer “often” was reported only in less than 3%.

The way of resolving conflicts plays an important role in the socialization process in families. It has been proved that the individuals living in the family with too many open conflicts between the parents and siblings tend to have more problems in interpersonal relationships, as opposed by the children growing up in a peaceful family environment. A lot of blame, aggressive defence, irrelevant and emotional discussions often occur in their families (Snyder, Patterson, 1987).

The process of emancipation of women has brought substantial changes for women themselves, as well as for men. Over the past decade, there has been a significant equalization of the activities of both genders. Simultaneously, *the shifts in the roles*, and especially the decline in the men’s and fathers’ authority may be noted. That can also have an impact on the development of boys’ personality and upbringing and even lead to deviant behaviour.

In connection with the issue of parental roles’ organization, we find the following three models of distribution of roles within the family, as stated by Maříková, quite accurate:

1. The most common model is the one which may be described as: “*most things are up to the woman*“. Even though men engage in the child’s upbringing and care in this model, they function as helpers to women (mothers), not as equal partners. In principle, they hold the traditional view that caring for a child is primarily a matter of its mother. They take part in it only if needed, or when they want to.

2) In a part of families, there is still a fairly conservative model of child care, which might be described as: “*everything is up to the woman*“. She spends the most time with the children, the major share of the responsibility for the children’s upbringing rests on her shoulders.

Men represent *the traditional father* type, which, however, has two variants. The first type is known from the past and does not really attend to the family, even though there are no objective reasons for it. The second type is a new version of the old type, i.e. “*new traditional fathers*“ whose profession and success is most important for them (they do business, hold managerial positions). They “compensate“ their time business for a form of high financial security for the family, which allows the women not to work.

3) The least common model is the *partnership model*, where the parents’ involvement in the care for the child and its upbringing is relatively the most balanced. The men are convinced that they should actively participate in the care for the children and the running of the household, and they do so. Some of these fathers are on parental leave (Maříková, 2006, p. 86).

The issue of the family roles is distinctly affected by their previous development and the current society-wide climate. The thinking in terms of “we parents and the children” is changing into “me and maybe my partner, and alternatively the children”, or even just “me and my children”. This suggests that the process of individualization has affected even the families (Potančok, 2010).

We mentioned the high *divorce rate*. To that we must also add many breaking up couples, which do not reflect in the statistics. Thus, we should rather speak about the disintegration of this cohabitation in general. The vast majority of parents live apart after the break up. The problems of when and where will the child live arise. According to the international comparative studies, if the children are raised by only one parent (in most cases the mother), they have more psychological and health problems, worse results at school, and their overall behaviour is more risky.

Very often, there is an absence of the male behaviour model from the early childhood. Such a boy lives in a female environment at home, kindergarten, and school. At the time of coming of age, most of them realize it, and somewhat “groping”, they either really identify with the female models, which results in an increase in the number of men with effeminate behaviour, or they try to “throw the switch” onto the male track, but their model is mainly the behaviour presented by the media, which means that manliness equals presentation of power, aggression.

Another consequence of this situation is that there is a significant decrease in the manual skills of children. It used to be common for children to participate in

the housework with their parents. Especially boys do not have this opportunity today. Therefore, there are only a few of those who choose apprenticeship. In addition, many apprentices are not able to finish their apprenticeship because they are not able to manage the demands of the craft.

In the case of girls, they also lack the model of male behaviour as a model of their future partner, and there is a similar groping when the young women actually do not know how their partner should behave, what to expect from a man, and the result is a difficulty in starting new relationships.

Another complicated situation appears in the case where there is a stepfather in the family. Stepfathers are the ones who often torture and abuse the children of their partners. The process of socialization in the family is connected with the overall socio-psychological climate in the family. Cherrie uses an even broader concept and talks about a culture of the family. According to her, the culture includes four basic aspects: the family atmosphere, family cohesion, communication within the family, and process of learning (Cherrie, 2008).

The Process of Upbringing in Families

Family is not only the first and deciding factor in the process of socialization, but also in upbringing. Various styles of upbringing are being applied in the process of family upbringing. J. Hroncová states the following: *Authoritative upbringing* is based on the dominant influence of the parents and the directive effect. *Uncompromising upbringing* is a kind of intensified type where the parents place categorical demands and do not allow any exceptions. *Perfectionistic upbringing*, where the child is directed in its actions in every detail and is under constant pressure, and especially the *brutal upbringing*, based on tough upbringing methods, both involve corporal punishments.

A definite opposite of these approaches is the *liberal upbringing*, where the children are allowed everything and there are no rules. Specific types are the *mercantile upbringing* (unjustified rewarding) and the *querulous upbringing* (the parents feel that the child is constantly being treated unjustly, and that the demands placed on it are bigger compared to others and so they justify it). Another specific type is the *pathological upbringing*, which takes place in a pathological environment (alcoholism, crime, prostitution). The most appropriate is considered the *democratic upbringing*, which is based on the respect for individuality, the child's personality, and the interactive and dialogic relationship (Hroncová, 2010, p. 134).

Maccoby and Martin speak, in connection with the upbringing styles, about four basic components and their quantitative and qualitative combinations. They are the positive and negative requirements and the degrees of freedom. The decisive factor is the emotional attitude towards the child and the nature of the upbringing influence (Maccoby, Martin, 1983).

Regarding the upbringing styles, we can say that the risks from the perspective of personality shaping are always the extremes. Today, the fairly typical style is the liberal one. It is obvious, and research confirms it, that a substantial part of the risk children and youth comes from the families of this upbringing style, where the child is not used to certain rules and their observing, certain commands, prohibitions and their respecting. Such a situation occurs in the families where only the mother provides upbringing.

The opposite extreme is too strict authoritative upbringing. It has been proved that too tough discipline and aggressive manifestations of parents towards their child often lead to similar manifestations of the children. The child in such a family learns aggressiveness as an allowed kind of behaviour. This often occurs in families where the stepfather interferes in the upbringing.

However, Nolting and Paulus add that not even the authoritative style can in principle be considered harmful. They state that this style requires from the children obedience, respect for authorities, and overall reasonable behaviour corresponding with the social standards. However, everything that the parents require needs to be justified, and the child's feelings also need to be taken into consideration (Nolting, Paulus, 1992).

If upbringing is to be successful, it must be based on appropriate authority. Many parents do not realize that they cannot gain authority by creating it in an unsuitable manner. An example of that is authority based on oppression (enforcement by crying, threatening), distance (parents do not talk with their children much), moralizing (parents analyse every little thing so they can admonish), conceit (parents emphasize their own success, social status), but also authority based on excessive kindness (exaggerated expressions of love), and authority built on bribing (obedience is bought by gifts, promises, money) (Manniová, 2007, p. 36).

Covey (1999) lists four tasks that a parent needs to fulfil in order to gain authority: be a role model, give advice (to create trust), organize (to create system and order), and strengthen the positive behaviour.

There are also other problems related to the character of upbringing in the family. A common cause of children's failure and deviant behaviour is also inconsistent upbringing (one time the parents punish their child for something, the other time they do not), or upbringing interconnected by an unequal approach of the parents

(mother has different requirements than father). Again, in this context, the situation is complicated by the fact that one of the parents is often not biological, thus it is even harder to observe the required principles.

Not only does a large number of families show functioning troubles, but it is also possible to observe significant problems in upbringing, in other words *the parental role or parenthood failures*. Šulová (2004) divides them as follows:

Parents cannot take care of their child due to the disruption of the family as a whole in particular (e.g., death) or due to adverse conditions (e.g., war).

Parents are not able to take care for their child, e.g., due to their own immaturity.

Parents do not want to take care for their child and do not provide the child with necessary care. The lack of interest and even hostility is outweighing in this case, and the neglect of the children occurs.

Parents take hyper-protective (excessive) care of their child, which can result in a very spoiled individual who is not capable of self-reliance.

Currently, it may be stated that there are more and more problems in all of the cases above. In the first case, it is frequent, in the context of the mentioned socio-economic situation, particularly in such cases where there is even a disability present, whether on the child's or parents' side. In the second case, we must state that, despite all efforts, there has been no progress in the area of systematic preparation for parenting. One has to go through demanding preparation in order to be able to drive a vehicle, the managing and upbringing of one's own child, though, is still more or less intuitive. In the third case, it does not have to solely consider the antisocial cases, it can also occur in the case of two-carrier cohabitation where there is not enough time for children.

In connection with the family's participation in personality formation, it is necessary to search for the salutoprotective factors. I. Emmerová includes among them the strong emotional bond between children and parents, clear rules, adequate care, and plenty of time for the child, correct value orientation, reasonable and clear expectations of children, functioning intergenerational relationships, natural authority, parents' cooperation in upbringing, plenty of desirable models, quality interests, and a lack of socio-pathological behaviour in the family (Emmerová,).

Acknowledgements: The paper was created within the realization of the ESF project "Development and Support of the Multidisciplinary Research Team at Hradec Králové University Concerning Contemporary Family", CZ.1.07/2.3.00/20.0209.

References

- Beck, U., Beck-Gernsheim, E. (1995). *The Normal Chaos of Love*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Broderick, C.B. *Understanding family process: Basics of family systems theory*. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage, 1993.
- Covey, S.R. (1999). *Sedem zásad pre šťastný rodinný život*. Bratislava: Príroda, 1999.
- Emmerová, I. (2010). Sociálne patologické javy v slovenských rodinách. In.: VIŠŇOVSKÝ, L., Hroncová, J. a kol. *Slovenská rodina v kontexte transformačných premien*. Banská Bystrica: UMB.
- Fukuyma, F. (2006). *Velký rozvrat*. Praha: Academia.
- Cherri, H. CH.Y. (2008). *Intergenerational leasing in Hong Kong. A narrative inquiry*. / online/ University of Nottingham. Dostupné na http://etheses.nottingham.ac.uk1/Cherri_Ho_EdD_Thesis_2008.pgf.
- Kraus, B., Jedličková, I. (2007). National report from the Czech Republic, University of Hradec Králové. In.: Benkő, Z. (eds.). *Tradition and modernity in the life-style of the families of the Visegrad countries*. Szeged: SZEK J. Gyula Higher Education Publisher, pp. 267–311.
- Kučírek, J. (2014). Sociální systém rodina: geneze patologie. In: Raszková, T. (ed.). *Acta Sociopathologica I*. Hradec Králové: Gaudeamus, pp. 88–111.
- Livingstone, S. (2002). *Young People and New Media*. London: Sage.
- Maccoby, E.e., Martin, J.a. (1983) Socialization in the Context of the Family: Parent – Child Interaction. In.: *Handbook of Child Psychology IV*. New York.
- Manniová, J. (2007). Rodičovská autorita a štýly výchovy – činitele ovplyvňujúce výchovu v rodine. In.: *Pedagogická orientace*, č. 1, pp. 34–44.
- Matoušek, O. (1997). *Rodina jako instituce a jako vztahová síť*. Praha: SLON.
- Možny, I. (2006). *Rodina a společnost*. Praha: SLON.
- Nolting, H.P., Paulus, P. (1992). *Padagogische psychologie*. Stuttgart: Kolhammer.
- Potančok, J. (2010). Zmeny v chápaní úlohy otca v súčasnej rodine: zaostrené na typológiu. *Sociológia*, č. 2, pp. 113–133.
- Snyder, J., Patterson, G. (1987). Family interaction and delinquent behavior. In *Handbook of juvenile Delinquency*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Šulová, L. (2004). *Raný psychický vývoj dieťaťa*. Praha: Karolinum.
- Višňovský, L., Hroncová, J. a kol. (2010). *Slovenská rodina v kontexte transformačných premien*. Banská Bystrica: UMB.