

Restating the Family: Kinship and Care in the Czech Republic

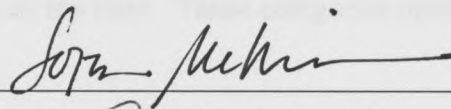
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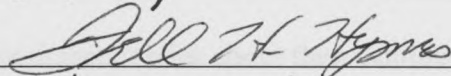
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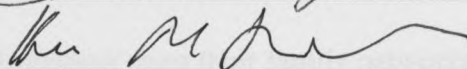
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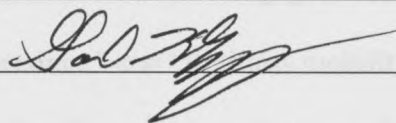
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Abstract

This dissertation explores competing meanings of the Czech family. The project is framed by social and political transformations that took place in the Czech lands during two periods: that of socialist rule (1948-1989) and that of postsocialist reform (1989-2000). Although many families embraced increased opportunities for self-realization emerging since the end of socialist rule in 1989, memories of family life during the socialist era served as a standard for family behavior in the postsocialist era. The ability to depend upon kin was, moreover, critical to definitions of self-reliance as the state reconfigured the terms of public care for Czech families. Kin networks shaped class in the postsocialist era much as they determined relations with the state during the socialist period.

The author introduces the concepts of "productive" and "unproductive" dependency. The productive dependent leaned on a range of public provisions for families, but was conceived of as deserving them. Unproductive dependents were those who Czechs called "socially weaker," and they were perceived of as unable, or unwilling, to care for their own and as entirely dependent on the state. These categories operated during the socialist and postsocialist eras.

Additionally, this dissertation argues that Czech stories about their families demystify the notion of self-care. Czechs were dependent upon their family networks or more fully on the state. Family networks influenced how Czechs engaged with discourses of transition to an "open society," "freedom," and "limitless mobility."

Ethnographic study in Prague in state offices for families and the collection of family

histories reveals that policy goals of ending paternalism and encouraging self-support often rested upon cultural assumptions about familial provisions. The family was critical to achieving a productive dependency.

Separation from the state (i.e., the realization of the state versus family opposition characterizing literature on Czech families) was made possible when family networks existed. Czechs harnessed a state versus family ideal as a critique of the “socially weaker.” Representatives of the Czech state throughout the twentieth century promoted a legacy of social provisioning for families. Yet we must consider how state ideologies of the family interact with other meanings of the family.

This project is dedicated in loving memory to my grandparents

Virginia and Lee Mays

and

Jean and William Nash

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Introduction: Czech Families, the State and “Transition”

ECCE HOMO HOMOLKA

The equally rotund Mr. and Mrs. Homolka nap on blankets like beached whales. A cry for “help!” (*pomoc!*) sounds from the distance. Mrs. Homolková stirs and wakes her snoring husband, “Someone is crying for help.” Mr. Homolka reluctantly props himself up to listen. “It’s not any of our family (*ty nejsou naši*). It’s someone else,” he responds, ducking involvement and searching for one of the beer bottles he refrigerated in the stream nearby.

Up to this point in the Czech comedy film *Ecce homo Homolka* (1969) we have followed the Homolkas and their son, daughter-in-law and twin grandsons hunting mushrooms, stripping for a swim, and dancing in what sunshine was permitted to light the floor of the Bohemian forest. “Nature is a cathedral” (*příroda je chrám*), Homolka proclaimed before easing into his afternoon sleep.

But the pleas for help persist. The voice is not one of “ours,” yet the Homolkas grow anxious. The cries have disturbed an afternoon outing. The Homolkas begin yelling themselves—for their family members to regroup at the camp. The combination of sounds force other couples, families and groups of friends to emerge from what until then appeared to be an empty wilderness. But no one is looking for the original source of noise. Nature lovers flock instead to cars parked on the woods’ outskirts. Now we see that city residents had fully occupied the forest in search of privacy and fresh air,

claiming ground invisible to other weekenders. The cries for help go on, while annoyed Czechs evacuate nature by car, bicycle and deafening motorbike.

The scene shifts to a small apartment. Three generations of Homolkas, still in outfits for a day in the country, crowd around the table for sausages, bread, boiled eggs and beer. "Home is home" (*doma je doma*), they say to each other, satisfied that they have left the congested forest, where they had been bothered by the nuisance of an unknown and disruptive stranger. It is better this way, they tell themselves, to be under our roof. And as the bickering between these couples escalates, a chorus of comedic dissatisfaction and nagging that characterizes the trilogy of Homolka movies, Grandfather Homolka states with resignation, "One should *at least* have peace at home, with the family."

DOMA JE DOMA

"You must watch *Ecce homo Homolka*, that part when there are calls for help and no one responds," my friend Dáša insisted, laughing, "that is the classic Czech family!" Dáša knew that I was in Prague to study Czech families. After seeing the film I realized why she was so eager for me to get hold of it, particularly the opening scenes I describe above. Rather than search for the person in need, Czech nature-seekers fled the possibility of entwinement in others' lives. They preferred to leave the forest instead of responding to an unseen problem and continuing to enjoy the day. Often, time spent with family in weekend houses in the country and apartments, two settings portrayed in *Ecce homo Homolka*, stood for withdrawals from work, politics, neighbors and other strains

perceived as external, unrelated and bothersome. The Homolkas' marital and generational disputes, however humorous, also remind us that families themselves are often a major source of personal concern, worry and irritation.

This dissertation explores competing meanings of the Czech family. The project is framed by the social and political transformations that took place in the Czech lands¹ during two periods: that of socialist rule (1948-1989) and that of postsocialist reform (1989-2000). During my fieldwork in 2000, I observed Czechs idealizing family life during the socialist era and expressing growing anxiety about the family's devaluation in the present. Although many families have embraced increased freedoms and opportunities for self-realization emerging since the end of socialist rule in 1989, memories of family life during the socialist era serve as a standard for family behavior in the present. The ability to depend upon kin is, moreover, critical to definitions of self-reliance as the state reconfigures the terms of public care for Czech families. I argue that the ability to draw on kin is shaping class in the postsocialist era, much as kin resources determined relations with the state during the socialist period.

I explore how a twentieth-century chronology in the telling of family stories brings together Czech family life with the life of the state. Changing state forms and their accompanying economic models define what it means to be a family according to a historical moment. Family (*rodina*) is a trope through which Czechs perceive what is happening in the world around them, just as state representatives draw on the example of family when pointing out the state's successes and failures. Czechs use expressions of *rodina* to signify the conditions of their lives, social change and state transformation.

Czech family life and kin relations mediate material hardship, bureaucratic procedures, and make the hopefulness attending two instances of revolutionary promise, 1948 and 1989, into a reality for some and a fantasy for others.

I understand family ideologies to be cultural notions about ties between family, society and the individual (Abu-Lughod 1999:32), which are shared by and influence Czechs, who frequently call state-sponsored ideologies into question. Nonetheless, official as well as everyday family ideologies played a formative role during decades of socialist redistribution. More recent family ideologies have a powerful effect on how Czechs encounter an emergent market economy.

As compatible as the institutions of family and state might appear, then, talk of them is full of opposing meanings. The Homolkas live for, and in, their family. The family also drives its members crazy. This is entertaining for Czech viewers who recognize their own lives in the cleverness, befuddlement and exasperation of the Homolkas—as an American might connect with the exaggerated humdrum in any number of family-themed situation comedies. As for the state, the socialist regime both nurtured and terrorized families. Today, Czechs claim the state both cares for some families too much and too little for others. In the Czech setting, the parameters of the family—what its members should do for one another, and what it means to be a family—have long been idealized by state proclamation; yet family policies often place unrealistic and inconsistent demands on families. These kinds of criticisms of the state define “the family” through contrast—as timeless and enduring. Because of the ways in which state

pressure has both contributed to and opposed the meaningfulness of family, this dissertation treats "the state" as an active participant in Czech family life.

"TRANSITION" AND THE CZECH FAMILY

Anthropologists working in East Central Europe since 1989 have contributed to—and often initiated—a lively interrogation of the concept of economic and political "transition" to a market economy and into western institutions such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU). Anthropologists have approached the transition from a number of angles: they have investigated, among other topics, competing meanings of the market (Kaneff 2002; Humphrey and Mandel 2002; Humphrey 2002), property, domesticity and enterprise (Verdery 1996; Creed 1998; Fehérváry 2002; Watts 2002), memory (Berdahl 1999; Ten Dyke 2000) perceptions of corruption (Altshuler 2001; Lass 1999), the body (Bunzl 2000; Verdery 1999), and gender (Gal 1994 and 2002; Gal and Kligman 2000; Kligman 1998). Anthropologists critique the homogenization of the experience of socialism and the region as a whole, they point out the progress narratives underscoring talk of a supposed evolution out of socialism and into capitalism, and they seek to bring to light how people have made sense of the undoubtedly radical state and social changes that have taken place over the past fourteen years.

This project engages in these discussions, but it is unique in its focus on the family "in transition." This is an important point because, in the Czech Republic, the family emerges as a key register of postsocialist tensions. No one looks at the importance

of family in signifying "transition" or in conceptualizing its ties to another under theorized topic, that of class.² I find this pattern surprising given the history of the family as an instrument of economic reform in twentieth-century East Central Europe, the tradition of kinship studies in anthropology, as well as the prominence of family in public and private discourses in the Czech Republic.

The family does surface in other literatures in a variety of ways, but it has not been treated as the primary analytic category. For example, some analysts approach the family as the recipient of policy, and the family appears as mirroring or responding to state actions (Čermáková et al. 2000; Hamplová 2000; Hendrychová 1998; Kalinová 1998; Kepková 1997; Možný 1994; Možný and Rabušic 1999; Večerník 1999; Wolchik 2000). As a partner to socialist state agendas, Czechoslovak academic writing on the family treated it as both a biological necessity and a social construct, which could be strengthened and controlled by social policies and public interventions (Alan 1988 and 1989; Bartošová 1978; Cilingová and Kratochvil 1971; Fišerová 1972; Šolcová 1984). Because birthrates have fallen throughout the twentieth century, demographers across both eras wrote about Czech families with alarm and consternation (Havelka 1978; Havelka et al. 1981; Horská 1994; Kučera 1978; Kučera et al. 1978; Novák and Capponiová 1988; Rychtaříková 1994; *Veřejné slyšení* 2001; Zeman 2002). Today's Czech sociologists of the family, many of whom are doing quantitative work indistinguishable from that of demographers, augment alarmist coverage of Czech families, which they often portray as economically vulnerable, "weak," and perhaps even endangered (Kuchařová and Kroupa 1999; *Veřejné slyšení* 2001). Still, Czech social

scientists often presume the inevitability of establishing families (Možný and Rabušic 1999). Statistical analyses reflect the degree to which young Czechs value marrying and raising a family as compared to patterns of behavior during the socialist era. As we will see in the following pages, this literature concludes that marriage and childbearing have simply been put off, but never rejected altogether (Kuchařová and Tuček 1999).

When the family has been touched upon more directly by qualitative sociologists and those concerned with gender, it is considered the source of women's identity or subordination (Einhorn 1993; Eisenstein 1993; Funk and Mueller 1993; Heitlinger 1993). More nuanced explorations of Czech family life emerge from Czech gender studies scholarship, much of which was published during the 1990s when residents of larger Czech cities, such as Prague and Brno, experienced growing interest in gender studies activities, programming activities for women, and feminism (Čermáková 1995; Havelková 1993a and 1993b; Šiklová 1993 and 1997). This literature affirmed much of what we see in Homolka movies: that the family was a source of security and privacy. Additionally, this literature argues that the family provided a treasured retreat under socialist rule. Authors explain that, following the invasion of Warsaw Pact forces in 1968, time spent with family became more meaningful to Czechs than to "westerners," particularly women who tended to family members during totalitarianism.

Unfortunately, little of the Czech gender studies literature written during the 1990s was based on systematic research and analysis, and no families actually emerge in this writing. The concept of the family as a site of resistance and "as an almost isolated reassuring constant in a world of social uncertainty" (Gal and Kligman 2000:69) requires

that we treat Czech gender studies scholars as participants in the circulation of family ideologies. To be sure, the more one learns about conflicts inherent in Czech family policy and everyday life in families, the less representative this early Czech gender studies work on the family becomes.

Still, what cultural anthropology that exists on the Czech Republic echoes the key point made by gender studies scholars, that family opposed influences understood as unfamiliar and threatening, particularly the state but also strangers (Holy 1996). For example, an article by Josef Kandert (1994) explores the ways in which families in rural areas misrepresented their household activities to unknown persons. Village affairs, moreover, were protected by all residents in the presence of outsiders. Small communities behaved like "one big family" in the face of perceived threats. Clearly, based on the repertoire of family-themed stories that Czechs tell about themselves, "the family" is a principal social unit in Czech society and the meaningfulness of life in the family must be treated as more than false consciousness. If Czechs universally and continually value the family (and, by extension, universally disdain the state), how could it possibly be in danger? To date, studies of Czech families have not questioned monolithic oppositions between the family and the state; they have not taken into account material differences among families and the varied relations Czechs have with representatives of the state.

This dissertation argues that the family is a signifier of social stratification in the postsocialist period as it was during the socialist era. Rather than treat the institution as an unquestionably pure entity now subject to inopportune and unwanted disruption, this

project contributes much-needed data on Czech family experiences. I emphasize how Czech interpretations of their families—which, much like those relentless cries for help in a sunny Bohemian forest, persist in being central to everyday life—indicate transforming social orders. They also offer the very conditions and terms for opposition to the state during the socialist era, as well as participation in a dramatically changed political and economic setting in the postsocialist period.

I make two related arguments. First, my material demonstrates that while all Czechs are entitled to certain family benefits, they gauge the receipt of public provisions according to a system of “relative merit,” a term used by Gal and Kligman (2000:77) in their comparative study of welfare in East Central Europe and western states. In the Czech Republic, the receipt of family provisions goes unstigmatized when persons are considered to be working hard for their families.

I draw on the concepts of “productive” and “unproductive” dependency to think about Czech ideologies of class and material circumstance. The productive dependent leans on a range of public provisions for families, but is conceived of as deserving them. Unproductive dependents are those who Czechs call “socially weaker” (*sociálně slabší*) and are perceived of as unable, or unwilling, to care for their own and as entirely dependent on the state, even when the “productive” and “unproductive” are drawing on the same state funds. While distinctions between those who work for the family emerge out of memories and discussions of hard work and self-support during the socialist era, during the postsocialist period these characterizations were put forth against the backdrop of new needs-based family awards for lower-income families.

Second, I draw on Czech stories about their families to de-mystify the notion of self-care. Czechs are largely dependent upon their family networks (networks which are integrated with access to state resources) or more fully on the state. This is an important point in terms of how families engage with discourses of transition—to an “open society,” to “freedom,” to “limitless mobility”—as well as revealing how social policy goals of ending socialist paternalism and encouraging motivation and self-support often rest on cultural assumptions about familial provisions. The family is critical to achieving a productive dependency.

AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF STATE CARE AND KINSHIP

By definition the study of Czech families involves an analysis of the state, including this project in an expanding body of work on states in cultural anthropology. The limited research done by anthropologists in East Central Europe during the socialist era always addressed the state implicitly, but, like “the family,” “the state” often appeared monolithic because of its complete opposition to social units like individual, family and society—as well as complementary geopolitical oppositions between eastern and western states (Borneman 1992; Holy 1996; Kideckel 1993; Lampland 1995; Nagengast 1991; Verdery 1991). The opening up of postsocialist Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s made the ethnographic examination of state processes more possible than ever. This access has also necessitated the rethinking of strict contrasts between state and individual, socialism and capitalism, and public and private which characterized the Cold War era

(Berdahl, Bunzl and Lampland 2000; Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Kligman 1998; Verdery 1996).

States have become less objectified in anthropological accounts from all over the world. Much like formative work on nations and nationalism, the state has emerged as an "imaginary" and as a constructed, collective individual (Anderson 1991; Handler 1988). States are also peopled by social actors, and ethnography assists in making visible the people behind, and within, them. For example, Ann Anagnost (1997) treats the Chinese nation-state as an entity with a past, its own generations and invasive tools of self-narration. Two recent studies of Turkey reveal the ubiquitous nature of the state; it is found in such seemingly unrelated topics as autobiography and sugar beet production (Alexander 2002) and is as insistent and unavoidable as compulsory military service and the media (Navaro-Yashin 2002).

In East Central Europe, personal accounts doggedly oppose the state to the people—the state is both everywhere and external to the self. In her study of women and the state, Gail Kligman (1998) shows how Romanians do not encounter the state unless forced to engage with its influences, at which point they become "duplicitous" in the state's legitimization. State ideologies also, as John Borneman illustrates as regards legal codes in East and West Germany, become part of daily life, and "citizens then carry them around (in altered form) in their very subjectivities" (1992:76). The state is thus an embodied presence made up of persons moving across contexts. My study of the Czech state in a variety of sites, both official and elusive, reveals the ways in which social difference is produced by conflicting ideologies and interpretations of the family.

Like these ethnographic studies, I approach the state as a manifestation of social relations, rather than as their sole creator and determinant. I use a range of methods to complicate the binary of family versus state, first examining state texts to see how family forms are treated as central to both socialist and postsocialist state forms. In addition to pointing out the family's role in the state's self-definition, I treat the state as a subject of cultural significance constituted by individuals. I therefore examine family histories to better understand the moments at which Czechs ambivalently reject, but also expect something of, the state. Second, following Borneman, I ask questions about how official missives regarding the family and family policies have become unquestionable and natural to Czechs. In other words, despite characterizations of the state as immoral and enemy-like, family members often absorb state principles, making them their own.

Yet, in addition to the analysis of state narratives and individual accounts of the family in relation to the state, fieldwork *in the state*, "at close range from within its daily routines and practices" (Verdery 1996:209), is critical to witnessing the combined effects of family ideologies and state policies. In order to treat the state as a set of social relations, rather than a "thing," one must sit, ideally at a desk, within it (Haney 2002). The family emerges as a signifier of social difference in state texts and family histories collected outside of public offices, but it is in those offices for families where I witnessed the lives of poorer Czechs conflicting with the ambitions of postsocialist bureaucrats charged with the transformation to a market economy. Drawing on multi-sited participant observation in three state offices for families, I demonstrate that the inability

to turn to relatives and a rhetoric shifting caring tasks from the state to kin produce the Czech category of socially weaker.

Kinship relations established in concert with the state during the socialist era, particularly those involving provisions for housing and child care, were reformulated in the postsocialist era. Much of this involved reassigning “care” (*péče*) tasks and questioning whose responsibility it is to look after close ones—who should be caring for families? These redefinitions and deliberations account for pervasive anxiety regarding the family’s survival. State influence and moral obligation to citizens coalesced in *péče*, which also translates into English as “welfare.” During the socialist era, the state proclaimed itself a member of all families. Families facilitated access to, and supplemented, official provisions such as housing and child care during the socialist era. The inability or unwillingness of some family members to provide them in the current era, however, foregrounds the presumed role of kin in guaranteeing material security. The state continues to “care” for lower-class citizens who remain within its jurisdiction. The avowed inability of these Czechs to turn to kin for help—and frustration with the state’s changed life course as regards universal care for offspring—makes it clear that utter autonomy is undesirable and risky for the individual and a drain on the state. Indeed, the ideal Czech remains embedded in, and draws support from, a dense network of family relations and resources.

This case study of postsocialist Prague contributes to recent reconfigurations of kinship studies (Franklin and McKinnon 2001; Carsten 2000). Families in the context of emergent capitalism call into question traditional analytic categorizations of kinship and

selfhood as either autonomous or relational. While, as I note above, absolute autonomy should be treated as an exaggerated understanding of transforming Czech subjectivities and personhood, the retreat of the state from caring functions has resulted in greater appreciation for self-care and "independence" from state provisions in state discourse. New state ethics regard the motivation of society and the family as necessary to ending passivity and dependence in civic and state spheres. Yet an extremist reading of this move toward independence from the state as individualism and autonomy belies the necessity of relations and ongoing frameworks of dependence.

As my fieldwork demonstrates, the Czech person who can mobilize non-state resources is still a dependent person, but he or she is a productive dependent. The Czech who cannot mobilize non-state resource is also a dependent person—dependent upon the state and unproductive. These unproductive dependents, moreover, are overwhelmingly women and single mothers. These two kinds of persons, the productive and unproductive dependents, represent the growth of class difference in postsocialist Europe. Martha Lampland has remarked upon how surprising it is, given the history of class in the region, that new articulations of class have been so little examined by western analysts (2000:213). While some might respond that there is not a recognizable "middle class" in the Czech Republic (Večerník 1999), this dissertation offers a way to think about how kinship and family shaped the boundaries of material difference in the immediate post-Cold War era.

Productive, motivated, and responsible persons are also dependents. Although they typify the potential of democratization, however, these Czechs are not what one

might otherwise recognize as "autonomous individuals," because their autonomy from the state is contingent upon sets of social relations engendered by the experience of socialism. The anxiety surrounding potential loss of the family symbolizes the critical presence of kin. My work in state offices for families illustrates the ways in which family serves as a seemingly natural resource for those in need as well as those more "able" Czechs embracing privatization. We might ask, is there such a thing as an autonomous individual? In light of the stigmatization of some, but not all, public provisions in the United States, is the autonomous self not a myth here as well?

"Network" or "dependency" is a precondition of supposed "autonomy." Several points follow from this dynamic. First, affirmations of separation from the state (i.e., a realization of an idealized state versus family opposition) is made possible when family networks exist. Second, Czechs harness a state versus family ideal as a cultural critique of the "socially weaker," who I am calling unproductive dependents. Finally, representatives of the Czech state throughout the twentieth century have promoted a legacy of social provisioning; but we must also consider how that legacy has been interpreted vis-à-vis other kinds of family discourses—by family members and employees of the state alike.

METHODS

This dissertation is based on a combined total of sixteen months of research in Prague: two months of preliminary fieldwork in the summer of 1996, one month of related research for an MA in Gender Studies at the Central European University (CEU)

in the spring of 1998, and thirteen months of research from the fall of 1999 to late 2000. During my last, lengthier stay in Prague, my focus remained on state services for families and the collection of family history interviews. All of the interviews were carried out in Czech.

The State

When I arrived in Prague for an extended stay in 1999 I sought out state offices for families where I could observe the expression of changing ideologies toward Czech households. I was lucky to find several administrators who allowed me to settle into daily and weekly routines in their workplaces: a family court, a home for mothers, and a benefits office. As promised, I do not provide any clues as to the location of these sites to protect the confidentiality of employees as well as their clients' privacy. All of the names of people and Prague neighborhoods appearing here are pseudonyms.

The Home for Mothers was an asylum house which offered long-term, though temporary, stays for mothers with children under the age of eighteen. Its staff included a director, an on-grounds psychologist, an accountant, and three experts in social work who helped process applications for residence and worked with housing offices to locate permanent housing called *sociální* for short, meaning "social welfare housing." The mothers themselves were also *sociální*, or the "socially weaker" and "social welfare recipients." The number of mothers living in the Home ranged during my stay between twenty-five and thirty-five; kids totaled approximately forty to fifty during my time there. The Home was one of several in the country established during the socialist era under the

umbrella of elaborate family services put in place in the 1960s and 1970s. Although the homes were never formally part of national family policy (I never found reference to them in my research on family policy or in propaganda materials), the resources made available for families in general allowed the director of the home where I worked to maneuver the space and funds necessary to open a home in Prague in the late 1980s, prior to the revolution of 1989. The homes have since transformed into resources for growing numbers of domestic violence organizations and family and child welfare agencies for the poor whose employees refer clients. Women also applied for apartment units on their own behalf.

I spent two days a week at the Home, where I began my study by reading case files as well as babysitting three to ten children for an hour or two (with a staff member) while their mothers attended mandatory group therapy sessions. Eventually I became friendly with the mothers, and we conducted taped interviews in their apartments. Approximately one-third of the recorded interviews were done with Romani residents, reflecting the ratio of Romani occupants in the Home. Several of the women and I visited on a regular, informal basis after preliminary interviews. I also observed consultations between the social workers and residents, staff meetings and briefings and tours for new residents. I participated in play groups for the children run by a club tied to the Home (this included a camping trip in the summer), attended and photographed birthday parties for kids and staff, and lounged with the door minders, visitors and residents in the foyer. The director made my integration possible. She was a resourceful woman, who often located available stocks of free diapers, yogurt and donated clothing

for the residents. I got the feeling sometimes that I was her free American, and that her welcome fostered my acceptance by staff and the mothers alike.

My time in the court and the benefits office also depended on the generosity of female employees of the state. Thanks to a personal referral, the judge in the family court granted an interview, and then allowed me to observe her courtroom sessions one day a week for six months, answering questions between hearings and providing background information on family law reform. Her cases concerned child custody determinations and child support amounts almost exclusively. I sat in the viewing section of the courtroom and the judge entered me into the court record from her bench. Because I attended as a guest of the judge, I was never able to speak with the parents and children who appeared in front of the court. In addition to the time spent with the judge in Prague, she and I communicated regularly about this project via email after I returned home. As is increasingly the case, the internet serves as an invaluable methodological tool for those anthropologists doing work in wired cities, towns and villages.

My third state office for families was a "Department for the Care of Children," staffed by ten women. Two kinds of employees worked there: "classic social workers" monitored neglected children, responded to local concerns about violence in families and attended divorce, custody and child support court cases on behalf of the children. The other staffers were "benefits accountants," who sat in front of large calculators and computed applicants' eligibility for receipt of living minimum benefits for families. As was the case in the court, applicants came to this office because it served their location of permanent residence. Both social workers and benefits accountants had signs on their

office doors listing the streets over which they had jurisdiction. A director supervised these employees and intervened in both types of cases if a figure of greater authority was needed; for example, if an applicant challenged the denial of state support, or if a parent or guardian violated child custody or visitation decisions.

The office director was my initial contact in the office. After an informational interview, I called to ask her if I could observe office routine one day. At the end of the first day of observation, I asked if I could return again. After the second visit, she agreed that I could come back again. When this went on for several weeks, I asked how long I could stay and she replied, *uvidíme*, or "we will see." In the end, I returned once a week for twelve months. I floated in and out of the social workers' offices but spent the majority of my time at a desk near the benefits accountants, observing consultations, the filing of paperwork by applicants, asking questions, listening to the employees gossip, worry over and critique their visitors, and joining employees during the lunch hour. As in the family court room, I had no direct contact with the clients themselves, although we often greeted one another when they came with their inquiries to the office. To them, mine were just another set of eyes evaluating their claims to state care. In addition to catching up with employees, I read policy texts, files, and newspapers when there were no visitors.

These three offices participated in a city-wide network of social services for residents of Prague's fifteen districts, and they shared in the history of a transforming relation between the state and Czech families. Their services were integrated. For example, "classic" social workers in the Department for Care sat in on court hearings on

behalf of their clients' children; they also referred clients to the Home for Mothers and other asylum houses. Residents of the Home appeared regularly in the court when seeking custody and child support decisions; they visited their respective benefits accountants every three months to verify claims to living minimum funds. I must emphasize and clarify, however, that daily routines in the three offices I worked in were unconnected to one another because they were in different parts of the city. They did not share one district. Although I was unable to speak with visitors to the court and clients in the benefits office, the residents at the Home visited identical offices in their home districts and often discussed their experiences with state employees, sharing their thoughts about state treatment of poorer Czechs. In this way, I was able to gather information on both the perspective of state employees and the Czech families they served.

To supplement this ethnographic work in the state, I spent one work day in a state support office (which, as we will observe in Chapter 1, offered family awards distinct from the care office) and another in a state family counseling center. I also conducted interviews with state and non-state employees working with families. These included a state-employed marriage counselor, several employees in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and ministry consultants, family law specialists, retired architects of socialist family policy, NGO leaders working on women's issues, children's rights and foster care, an unemployment officer, a private family therapist and members of several religious groups active in crafting family policy proposals. I also draw on historical data on socialist and postsocialist-era social policy, which I collected during archival research

in Budapest at the Open Society Archives (OSA; former Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty materials are housed at the OSA in the CEU library) in 1997 and 1998, as well as research in several Prague libraries, particularly facilities at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in 2000.

The Families

As a part of my extended fieldwork in Prague, I spent three to four days a week in the state offices I describe above. The Czechs who visited those offices, and particularly the residents of the Home for Mothers, were lower-income. Many of them were what Czechs outside of those sites called *nefunkční* families, or “non-functioning families.” When I was not in the offices, or conducting related research and interviews, I gathered family histories with Prague residents in their homes. These family history interviews offered rich material on functioning (*funkční*)—i.e., “normal”—Czech families whose members did not spend much time in state offices. Often family members told me during our interviews that theirs should not be thought of as a “normal” or typical family. I presume throughout this dissertation that there is no such thing as a typical Czech family, or a characteristic Prague family. In combination with the data from the Home for Mothers, however, the lengthy stories family members told about themselves offer information about a range of family experiences unique to the Czech lands, varying according to generation, class, housing type, and political orientation. Unfortunately, I was not able to find a “normal” Roma family willing to be interviewed. My interviews

with Roma took place in the Home for Mothers. Thus, as is too often the case, this project fully positions and associates Romani families in the folds of the state.

I collected a total of thirty-eight individual family histories, which represented fourteen family units (this number does not include interviews about family from the Home for Mothers; those totaled fifteen as well as the ongoing participant-observation I describe above). In several cases, I was only able to interview one person about his or her family. I worked, however, to gather as many versions of a family history from as many family members as possible. For example, in one case I spoke only to a never-married female pensioner about her family; in another I was able to speak with a female pensioner, her youngest son and his wife, and her ex-daughter-in-law. I compose another family history with the accumulated narratives of a male pensioner, his two daughters, his grand-daughter, and the brother of his youngest daughter's late husband.

The family histories I produce here should not be approached as univocal, or thought of as fully illustrative of a family's experiences. It is important to recognize the part that I played in cutting out large quantities of material and piecing together different perspectives into what are, hopefully, coherent accounts. When possible I point out conflicting interpretations of the same events.

My Czech research assistant, Dana, and I started our family histories in early 2000 by interviewing one elderly couple, who referred us on to some of their family friends, who referred us on to some of their friends, and so on. We established a network of Czech families, carrying us eventually to couches and chairs in apartments and houses all over the city. Czechs are often very reluctant to share their personal information, and

seldom invite people to their homes. The personal referrals were critical to our welcome. We had as many refusals to talk as we did acceptances. Sometimes we spent months pinning down interview times and commitments. Dana and I felt a rush of success when individuals agreed to meet with us and actually passed along the names and numbers of other possible interviewees. All of the interviews were conducted in family homes and were taped. We held several in weekend houses in the country; and in two cases we traveled outside the city to meet with the relatives of Prague residents who lived in more rural areas.

Interviews began with general questions about childhood. Often with older Czechs (born in the 1920s and 1930s), the extremely general opening prompt "tell us about your childhood and your parents," led to lengthy story-telling and, with very little guidance, a chronicle of life and the significant people in it. If we were meeting with a married couple, individuals usually established their own pattern of turn-taking, organizing the telling into categories such as childhood, holidays, school, work, marriage and children—they traded, shared and also contested the story-telling floor. Middle-aged (born 1940s to 1960s) and younger Czechs (the youngest was born in the 1970s) often needed more direction during the interview.

Despite the sense that pensioners had much more time to sit around with Dana and me to talk about their lives, I found that middle-aged parents, in particular, spoke with as much description and enthusiasm, and often more critically, as did their retired parents. A few times the initial question, "tell us about your childhood and your parents," opened a floodgate of tears. We stopped the tape recorder and allowed the individual to

recompose him or herself. After this happened a couple of times, we realized that the scope of the question struck people as overwhelming, particularly when parents and beloved grandparents had already passed away. Looking back over family changes and events, the importance of elders in that childhood and in the shaping of life suddenly appeared tremendous. The interviewees usually apologized, saying they were not sad, just surprised by their emotions.

I preferred not to run the interviews very strictly; although, in a few cases, men focused at great length on the finer points of work routines (such as typologies of factory machinery), and Dana and I encouraged them eventually to address the theme of family. During one memorable interview, a retired grandmother filled three-fourths of our time together with entertaining stories about her childhood, first, and then her time as a forced laborer for the Germans during World War II (taking us to age twenty), when she also met her husband. In due course, we asked that she fill in the details of the following fifty-five years, at which point it became clear that she did not want to discuss the details of her husband's death in a plane crash over China in 1960. We also pursued the topic of experiences in state offices before and after 1989, the effects and value of social provisions for families, communist party membership, the semi-official role of grandparents as care providers, housing dilemmas, residency patterns, relations among extended kin, work, education and more. In Chapter 2, I present the family histories of three of these kin groups, although I draw on the others throughout the dissertation.

THE CHAPTERS

I went to Prague to study what happens to the meaning of the family when a state stops insisting on the family's official significance. I was interested in how family relations which are codified in social policy might resonate in everyday life, particularly during a period of reform and changing state-family relations. Personal accounts often put forth an opposition between the family and the state. It is interesting to note that this opposition crystallized in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the point at which the family emerged as central to both the state and individual Czechs: there was a growing demographic agenda and urgency concerning population in state realms coinciding with the retreat of family units from public spheres of influence particularly after the Soviet invasion in 1968. Out of this came a notable focus on the family coming out of both sides of the family/state opposition.

With this dynamic in mind, I wondered, what happens when the rhetorical value of family is no longer so prominent or insistent in the postsocialist period—and when society is “open” and “free”? What happens to the previous estrangement between the state and the family when, as Václav Havel told Czechs in his New Year's address in 1990, “people, your government has returned to you”? Does the family become less important to Czechs?

Yet during my fieldwork, Czechs voiced an ongoing critique of the state in the form of questions that displaced my own. I organized my dissertation around the questions Czechs posed, such as “Why doesn't the state care about families anymore?” Or, “How can ‘socially weaker’ families possibly survive in such unstable conditions?”

Why work when you can live off of benefits? Where is the mother?" And, "Why isn't anyone having children?" Meanings of "transition" in the Czech Republic are thus closely tied to concerns about how family figures in large-scale change. I place the family at the center of my analysis and focus on the state's use of the family to articulate its agenda, and show how people use state-family relations to articulate relative class differences.

Chapter 1 examines how the authors of socialist and postsocialist state texts, particularly those creators and historians of family-related policies, referred to the family when charting desired state forms and ideals of social order. I present official "ideologies of intimacy," by which I indicate the degree of state involvement in family life. State intimacies with the family vary across eras and are revealed through the contrasting use of the family in economic progress narratives and competing ethics of social provisions/care for families. Although linear models of development characterized both eras, what the family means to states changes over time.

Chapter 2 also explores conceptions of the family, but from the perspective of families themselves. I present the family histories of three households, which differ in their material circumstances, political orientation and outlook on the postsocialist era. Recent public discourses emphasize responsibility and self-care, and I conclude that family is an ingredient of this postsocialist personhood and necessary to the experience of post-1989 opportunity and responsibility for the self. Unlike the previous era, the state has become less of a presence in the lives of some, while remaining a significant influence in lower-class households. When material need prevails and family is a source

of personal pain, Czechs often move toward domains of the state. These three family portraits also reveal that, even when Czechs draw heavily on official provisions, family networks and resources allow for a sense of perceived autonomy from state influence.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on interactions between families and state representatives to consider how official and everyday socialist ideologies of the family inform the contemporary development of class differences. Chapter 3 complicates simple categories of socialist and capitalist social policy as I examine how Czech narratives of socialist-era family behavior often complement postsocialist state turns toward self-care. In contrast, however, Czechs perceive new needs-based policies toward poor families as too generous, and as enabling novel forms of dependency. Czechs perceive the “care” benefits available to today’s lower class as contradicting ethics of hard work and self-sustenance that characterized the previous era, rather than as a continuation of the caring ethic which, as I point out in Chapter 1, underpinned socialist-era policies toward all families.

Chapter 4 examines the topic of child care, outlining Czech discussions of a range of care alternatives from state nurseries, to maternity leave, to kin—especially grandmothers. I show how, in state offices, benefits accountants seek out possible family members to serve as caring resources for clients. Their clients, however, claim the opposite: that they have no one to turn to for help. Although Czechs have long drawn on kin relations for child care and housing, benefits accountants today formalize the utility of kin networks as the state shuts down public child care facilities. Yet low-income mothers who must go to work, rather than stay home during and after lengthy parental

leave periods, often do not have the family networks on which to lean. Again, kin make it possible to pull away from the state. Family networks bring about productive dependency.

Chapter 5 studies alarmist discourses of low birthrates in the socialist and postsocialist eras. I analyze socialist-era social policy and media coverage of birthrates to demonstrate that, despite claims by demographers and many family members that 1989 signified the beginning of a fertility crisis, there has been ongoing concern and anxiety over low birthrates throughout the twentieth-century in the Czech lands. The symbols used to discuss those birthrates, however, have shifted from collectivizing metaphors (pre-1989) to tropes of deficit and market instability (post-1989). Finally, I point out that ideal Czech reproducers (those not having babies) are also preferred economic producers. Paradoxically, Czechs often cast those not having children as reasonable because they are taking advantage of postsocialist opportunities, while low-income women actually having babies face conflicting family ideologies within the state. Demographic discourses favor the un-reproductive behavior of productive dependents. In stark contrast to the Homolka family, and despite the necessity of kin to the self, young Czech citizens preferably lean on relations while not producing further generations.

VELVET FAMILIES

The Czechs I worked with were proud of their beautiful city of Prague, which western tourists have flocked to year-round since the end of the socialist era. Prague typified the end of the Cold War for many foreign observers, who followed closely the

work of dissidents opposing the regime during the socialist era and celebrated the peaceful "velvet revolution" (*sametová revoluce*) held on Prague streets in 1989. Many Czechs insisted, however, that the lives of families in Prague are not representative of the entire Czech Republic.

I have kept these warnings in mind and do not claim that this dissertation speaks for family relations throughout the country. The material herein was gathered almost entirely from Prague, and the project should be treated as an urban ethnography. Still, more rural areas and "the country" (*venkov*) hold an important place in the imaginations of city residents who often referred to their own migration to Prague following World War II, shared photos of family trips to cottages outside of the city, and referred to kin relations in the country as "real" family life. I was unable to explore the opposite process, that is, to speak with Czechs outside of Prague about what urban families symbolize to them. I hope, however, that what appears in the following pages will diversify current knowledge about this striking city, one in which many kinds of families reside.



The Socialist Family, Žižkov Monument

(photo by Raymond June, March 2001, Prague)

Chapter 1: The State of the Czech Family

IDEOLOGIES OF INTIMACY

Early one evening in August 2000 I walked with Judge Věra Friesová from her Prague courtroom to the metro stop at the main train station. Věra had invited me for dinner with her husband Ladislav. I joined her after court sessions ended, and we commuted to her apartment together. I was excited about our dinner plans. Although I was in Prague to study Czech families, it took months of living there before I was invited to family gatherings in small, private apartments. Věra's invitation was a good sign that we were becoming "friends" (*kamarádky*) and were not just going to remain "acquaintances" (*známosti*), a distinction often made in Czech when speaking of personal relationships. We both wanted to expand our ties beyond the courtroom.

Věra and I chatted, moving down *Hlavní* street, past a tram stop, newspaper and cigarette kiosks, and stepped on to a sidewalk leading to Prague's largest train station. We walked by one of many beggars, a gypsy woman holding a sleeping boy. The woman looked up, her eyes pleading, and she stretched out a hand for any coins we might spare. Věra and I kept moving, but she pointed back at the pair. "The boy is sleeping" she said, "Those mothers drug their kids, otherwise he would not be sleeping in the middle of the day like that. That would not have been allowed to happen before."

Věra's comment left an impression on me. It seemed strange that a family judge, educated and trained during the socialist era when unemployment and poverty were

pronounced morally wrong but extinct, would show such suspicion toward a poor mother and child. Věra was concerned that the woman was using the child to get money from recent arrivals at the station, such as visitors just off international express trains. Perhaps the child was not even her own. Věra expressed a widespread, unsympathetic hostility toward gypsies or "Roma." In the postsocialist era, Roma have the freedom to beg (and steal), the freedom not to work, and greater control over what happens to their children. They are visible everywhere in the center and suburbs of Prague. The state, moreover, has less authority to intervene in the service of erasing inequality or altering unpopular Romani behavior.

Still, I felt at the time that Věra was embarrassed by the woman's blatant destitution. Maybe as a family judge charged with preserving the rights of parents and their children, she felt that she was somehow connected to, maybe even responsible for, the woman's privation, particularly in front of me. In the courtroom I turned to her often to explain many cases and family law issues; eventually, we began grinning at my opening line, "I have a question..." (*Mám otázku...*). She saw herself as my liaison between families and the state. And there in our shared line of sight was a small family not being provided for. Věra's remark placed blame on the woman, but it suggested as well that the postsocialist state was not sufficiently caring for families and children. Her comment also reveals how closely Czechs tied the actions of the state to family life.

The remainder of this chapter is based on my analysis of state texts, but this experience with a state employee provides a telling introduction to the history of Czech family and state relations. Věra's comment captures competing narratives of what the

state should be doing for its citizens, and the moral significance of behavior among family members. During the twentieth century, Czech "state narrative strategies" (Borneman 1992:57-73) toward families changed with a changing state. Before moving on to my ethnographic material (Chapters 2-5), then, it is important to examine these narrative strategies, what Jane Collier, Michelle Rosaldo and Sylvia Yanagisako, in their theoretical treatment of the American state and family, have called "ideologies of intimate relationships" (Collier et al. 1992:31). I interpret these ideologies as the beliefs about family which are imbued in state materials and proclamations. These materials set forth the state's own role in family life, indicating changing degrees of "distance" and "closeness" between the family and state in David Schneider's sense (1980:25), such as the responsibility and accountability of the state to other social units, especially parents and children. As I demonstrate, changing degrees of closeness between the state and family hinge on an opposition between socialist and market-based values. In further chapters, however, I reveal how in practice these opposing ideologies often overlapped and engendered one another.

This chapter builds on Collier, Rosaldo and Yanagisako's approach to the family "not as a concrete institution designed to fulfill universal human needs, but as an ideological construct associated with the modern state" (1992:31). I examine the ways in which two modern Czech states—socialist and postsocialist—made families meaningful, forming two distinct ideologies of intimacy. I compare the eras of state-family relationships through an examination of the family's social purpose in state

literature. I ask how the two states incorporated family into models of Czech society and history.

During the socialist era, the state closely tied the family to stories it told about itself. It also used the family as a tool to distribute equality to all. During the current era, policy makers and those who work with families also treat the family as a means of establishing equality, but the terms of equality have changed. In speeches and communications, if not its policies, the postsocialist state has pulled away from families. They are no longer central to the state's self-presentation. Families have fallen out of state rhetoric and imagery, to emerge only if they are in need. The postsocialist state has "assigned new meanings" (Collier et al. 1992:46) to the family, meanings the socialist state tried to do away with, such as class distinctions and the concentration of property within particular families.

Although this chapter is based primarily on detached, non-human informants (i.e., state texts), I treat the state as a participant in social and cultural processes, rather than a deterministic and fully controlling institution. I often worked with or interviewed the authors of the texts I draw on here. In other instances, an employee of the state who worked with families, or a family member I interviewed outside of state settings, strongly recommended what they considered emblematic books and influential articles. Although "the state" sometimes appears in this chapter to have agency, a life of its own, and powerful omniscience, behind each policy proclamation and state ideal were individual policymakers, such as Věra, and readers who guided, and were affected by, the relationship between the state and family during both eras.

It is important to point out, concluding my evening walk and talk with Věra, that nowhere in old and new state texts are Romani families acknowledged. They are invisible to Czech family-state models, at least in their written form. As we will see in the remainder of this dissertation, Romani families often served as negative examples of “the Czech family.” And their presence today in public sites (state offices, the street), as Věra’s remarks point out, makes the changing nature of the state all the more apparent. The invisibility of the Roma in family literature—but their powerful influence on interpretations and applications of postsocialist social policy—points to the importance of doing ethnographic work in state sites for families when one wants to understand the meaningfulness and effects of public policy. In the context of the state, it becomes clear that textual sources on state ideologies never fully account for the evaluations and presumptions of everyday life.

SOCIALISM AND THE FAMILY

Family form in Czechoslovak socialist literature remained constant over time and unvarying within discourses of family structures and the roles of members. The family (*rodina*) was composed of a care-taking mother, a breadwinning father, and dependent children living under one roof. Additionally, grandparents, and an “older generation” of family members, serve in socialist policy and child-care literature as potentially available providers of advice and contributors of care (Švejcar 1975:17, 330-331).

We thus need to make an analytic distinction between descriptions of the family and the ways in which state texts articulated its social purpose. As I demonstrate, the

“function of the family” (*funkce rodiny*) vis-à-vis other social units does not remain as uniform within shifting social models of twentieth-century Czechoslovakia as do representations of the family’s make-up. Indeed, while the family form remained consistent, its function and its relationship to the state transformed.

In spite of calls for the radicalization of the family by socialist theory, and attempts at dramatically restructuring families during the advent of socialist rule in other parts of the socialist bloc (Goldman 1993; Verdery 1996:64; Kligman 1998:23; see Yunxiang Yan on China 2001:228-229), leaders of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR) did not overhaul family composition during the socialist era. Still, two distinct phases in the relationship between the socialist state and Czechoslovak families reveal changing state frameworks in conceiving the value of the family within the social whole (see Kornai 2001:106-108). Each of these formulations, as we will observe, also implicate women in the success or failure of both the family and economic progress. I concentrate on the second phase (mid-1950s-1989) in my analysis of the socialist era. During this period, histories of socialist social policy³ and state texts on the family foreground the family’s significance. A brief description of the earliest years of the state-family dynamic, however, is useful in understanding prolonged antagonisms and oppositions individual Czechs often pose (between state and society, between state and family, between state and individual) when discussing the influence of the state in everyday life.

During the initial and briefer of the two phases (from 1948 through the mid-1950s), the state placed an emphasis on women’s equality in the home and in the

workplace, congratulating itself on the dramatic rise in women's employment (Bartošová 1978:27n.x) and women's "liberation" (*osvobození*). Although family units were not broken down, they were not directly addressed by family law (Heitlinger 1979:136-137; Freiová 1999:8-9; Hamplová 2000:2-3). Sociologist Dana Hamplová characterizes this period of family-state relations as "anti-family" (*antirodinná*), observing that "the communist regime of the 1950s...concentrated on weakening the relationship between parents and children" (2000:1). The state, she explains, tackled conflicting loyalties between the family and the party in favor of the latter by intervening in child upbringing (through the establishment of public nurseries and kindergartens), children's after-school activities (for example, membership in the pan-Soviet young pioneers and an athletic group called *spartakiade*), and in the mass movement of women out of the home and into the workplace.

Although state planners continued developing and further elaborating these often compulsory activities and services, policy documents and party platforms eventually began to better value the socialization of children that took place within families and to assert the importance of the family. State representatives identified a number of social and political problems beginning in the mid-1950s (low birthrates primary among them) as originating, and solvable, within families and households.⁴ While continuing to demand women's paid employment, policy makers took a more cautious approach when encouraging women's work outside the home, particularly during children's earliest years. We witness a struggle to reconcile mothering and work up to the end of the socialist era. Thus began the second approach toward family, in which households and

parent-child relations emerged as the ground on which a socialist society and state stood, despite the central tenets of foundational socialist texts, which criticized the division of labor in families, identified monogamous marriage as the cause of women's subordination, and derided the historical links between family units and private property accumulation.

This predominant phase of Czechoslovak family policy—that characterized by pro-natalist, “pro-family” measures—began in the mid-1950s and proceeded without interruption following the invasion of Warsaw Pact forces in 1968 (Heitlinger 1979; Wolchik 2000), when Soviet-led troops moved into Czechoslovakia to stop growing resistance to Soviet control and the liberalization of communist rule on August twenty-first. Czechs often speak of August 1968 as the beginning of a retreat into family activities and family spaces. This withdrawal from public domains crystallized during the period of “normalization” (*normalizace*) that followed the increased deployment of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s. August 1968 also marked the end of attempts by Czechs to reform socialism “from within” and serves as the principal register for explaining why Czechs do trust neither politics nor politicians. Still, plans to expand family benefits and maternity leave, which had begun prior to the Soviet invasion, were put in place (Wolchik 2000). Thus both official and personal narratives foreground the family from the late 1960s until the end of socialist rule in 1989.

As countless researchers and theorists have observed, women's duties in the family were not transformed or redistributed during the socialist era (see ČTK 3-4-70; Fišerová 1972; Scott 1974; Heitlinger 1979; Einhorn 1993; Čermáková et al. 2000). On

top of mothering roles and the work of being a wife, work outside the home added up to what is often referred to as women's "double" and, sometimes, "triple burden" (Funk and Mueller 1993; see Creed 1998:4). State representatives and research institute employees recognized this bind. Yet as population numbers fell and women became increasingly invested in their paid labor, no formal efforts were made to encourage men to participate in running households other than frequent reminders that the state had guaranteed the equal rights of men and women at home and in the workplace. For example, the *Family Law* of 1960 declared "Men and women have the same position in family, in work and in public life" (*Ústava*, Čl. 20 cited in Bartošová 1978:98) and the *Family Code* of 1963, which addressed marital roles, made clear that "Men and women have the same rights and obligations within marriage" (§18 cited in Bartošová 1978:99; Vidláková 1978).

Women moved into the workplace in large numbers in the 1950s. Yet architects of socialist social policy simultaneously reinforced women's associations with care taking, the home and marriage. Family law identified the woman, never the man, as the primary parent. Thus, in the *Family Code*, in addition to the guarantee of equal rights and roles in marriage, we learn that: "Motherhood is women's most honorable mission..." (Čl. III cited in Bartošová 1978:99; see *Lidová demokracie* 5-22-87). Related policy mechanisms included the protection of pregnant women in labor codes, the gradual lengthening of paid and unpaid maternity leaves, a benefit for mothers remaining at home with their children, one-time-only birth awards for mothers, ages at retirement for women contingent upon the number of children raised,⁵ and (after 1968) a universal

benefit for children distributed to care takers until schooling ended. The state encouraged marriage (codified as the basis of the family) by offering loans for newlyweds (reduced with the birth of children) and tax breaks for two-parent families with children.⁶ Family-related benefits for women were increased and elaborated from the 1950s to 1989, when socialist rule ended.

Below I steer my analysis away from the nuts and bolts of the policies themselves and toward cultural forms that surface from documents setting forth family-based social planning. I examine the ways in which "the family" emerges as a social unit to be protected and preserved. I am interested in how (despite the steadfast conventions of its internal make up) state authors conceived of families as social actors and social units with great value and particular meaning to Czechoslovak socialist society, and how the position of family in these state texts articulated a model of state-family relations specific to a redistributive economy.

I have organized my study of the socialist era into three parts. The first examines how state texts established socialist families and women as a measure of socialist modernity; the second depicts socialist morality as regards social protection and provisions for families; and the third addresses socialist-era pathologization of divorce and the hazards "incomplete" (*neuplné*) families posed to a puritanical state whose existence became increasingly bound and dependent upon intimate relations.

PROGRESS, THE FAMILY AND SOCIALIST MODERNITY

Modernity, as Bruno Latour explains, points “to the passage of time. The adjective ‘modern’ designates a new regime, an acceleration, a rupture, a revolution in time” (Latour 1993:10). Modernity inhabits a progress narrative whose end result is often conceived of as within close grasp and near achievement. Latour explains that there are as many versions of the modern as there are “thinkers and journalists” (1993:10). Czechoslovak socialist planners and social engineers offered their own definition of modernity to achieve revolutionary goals (Sayer 1998:14-17); these were modeled closely on the Soviet Union and opposed to the capitalist West, as well as the patriotic modernity of the Czechoslovak interwar era (1918-1938; see Deyl 1985).

Yet because socialist modernization shared Enlightenment concerns with human mastery over the environment, becoming modern in a socialist country often resembled western meanings and processes: mass political mobilization, mass education, increased specialization in government, secularization, rationalization, and industrial development. The communist parties in each of the countries of East Central Europe coordinated these processes and, in the early years, industrialization was often aimed at developing and modernizing an “unmodern,” though imperial, Soviet Union (see Field 1976; Hoffman and Kotsonis 2000; Janos 2000).

Returning to Latour’s point that there are as many definitions of the modern as there are thinkers, though, it is important to recognize the specifically socialist terms of modernity. These placed an unparalleled emphasis on the “rational calculation of material interests” (Janos 2000:12) and, following from this, collectivization and fair

distribution of income. Planners also demanded that modernization take place quickly. Considering the massive power and drive behind modernization in the Soviet bloc, as well as the social reform agenda tied to it, Alex Inkles has argued that socialist modernization was to a considerable extent more "self-conscious" than other forms (1976:20).

I focus solely on how Czechoslovak policy makers pulled "the family" into modern progress narratives, using it to measure the speed and success of state development. This discussion will concentrate on the relationship between the recirculation and appropriation of property and wealth and family units. Authors of state literature on child upbringing, social policy, and histories of social provisions during the socialist era (Alan 1988, 1989; Bartošová 1978; Kučera et al. 1978; Matulová and Jarošová 1976; Šolcová 1984; Švejcar 1975) depicted a universal, redistributive "social policy" (*sociální politika*) as the means by which modern rights and equality for "families, women and children" (*rodiny, ženy a děti*) were delivered by the state. They often historicized the growth of socialist tenets as natural, locating the seeds of socialism in the era of the interwar "First Republic." Socialist-era authors referred to the First Republic as the "pre-Munich government" (*předmnichovská vláda*), thus recalling western complicity in the face of German aggression in 1938 and the failure of the interwar government to prevent occupation and annexation in 1939 (Bartošová 1978:11). This literature also identified emerging socialism in the underground resistance to Nazi occupation and post-war years preceding the communist takeover (Bartošová 1978:8-25). Policy makers thus depicted the care and protection of all citizens, on an equal basis, as

constitutive of Czechoslovak political culture. It was just a matter of time, it followed, before the socialist system was put into place and fully implemented. "This program essentially responded to the pressure of the people," one family specialist wrote, "who demanded that their ideas and aspirations be realized by the new government. The labor movement and masses of working people in capitalist Czechoslovakia, as well as during the second World War, had already established their goals" (Bartošová 1978:10).

Despite the ways in which party statements disavowed the interwar government and its leadership, these state texts explained that communist ideals and socialist practices had indeed been germinating during the pre-communist, interwar period. Party spokespersons looked back on the years leading up to and immediately following World War II and found the roots of socialism.⁷ The historicization of socialist social policy and its gradual realization was just one of the ways in which state representatives drew on evolutionary schemas and a template of "progress" (*pokrok*) and social transformation in legitimating party rule.

Although party spokespersons were able to incorporate the interwar period into their narratives of socialist evolution in useful ways, their portrayals of family life during pre-socialist eras were strongly critical of the extreme differences between rich and poor families. Class differences, they argued, were caused by a traditional division of labor both in the home (where women served men) and outside of it (where the poor served the wealthy). Authors portrayed the persistent effects of old-fashioned (or "backward") outlooks as having estranged many poor families from economic gain and having subordinated the family to capitalist development.

As late as 1984, some argued that traditional family life still threatened progress. Here, a party spokesperson analyzes the lasting influence patriarchal family forms had in stalling social change:

new kinds of marital and family relations have been in conflict with an old, petty bourgeois (*maloměšťácké*) morality and old values, which—along with traditional models of marriage and family—were based on exploitation....Revolutionary social changes have not automatically been reflected in individual and, therefore, family life. (Šolcová 1984:299)

The Czech word for “petty bourgeois,” *maloměšťácké*, translates into English as the adjective “middle-class,” also linked in origin to the noun for “philistine” and “narrow-mindedness” (*měšťáctví*). It was typical of propagandist literature on the family to oppose negatively “old values” (tradition, patriarchy, capitalism) to large-scale and “revolutionary social change.” Texts like this asserted that socialism hinged on equal relations within the family. And, although progressive socialist development liberated many poor families and women in all families, “narrow-minded” moralities as regards the family still threatened social change. The continuing transformation of families was the key to transforming society and to defeating lasting psychologies of backwardness.

Families, like the state, were always in the process of modernizing and improving. Authors often referred to socialist-evolutionist histories of the family’s development over time to explain society’s origins and ultimate ends (Alan 1988:2). When tracing the progressive transformation of family types in a party policy statement, author Miroslava Šolcová explored how the function of the socialist family differed from its predecessor, the monogamous family (1984). In contrast to the hierarchical organization of families under capitalism, relations between the socialist family and the

redistributive economy were based on mutual dependence, equality and reciprocity.

Authors celebrated socialism's liberation of families from the constraints of capitalism's material binds, much as they praised women's liberation within the family and the workplace.

In the following quote, Šolcová explains the connection between family forms (collective and extended vs. monogamous and restricted), ties between family and society (self-reliant families vs. property-owning families), and economic type (socialist vs. capitalist). Note that, in drawing on Frederick Engels, Šolcová seeks a return to a family form that is compatible with economic performance and output—a family form whose “germs of thought,” in Lewis Henry Morgan's sense (1985[1877]:61; see Leacock 2001:15; Engels 2001[1884]:137), existed prior to capitalism and the spread of private property:

The social division of labor and means of production resulted in the emergence of the paired, monogamous family. Its predecessor, the collective and extended family, was the manifestation of productive means based specifically on mutual economic relationships, processes that were realized in the midst of the family. But the spreading of the division of labor was a social process; it interfered with the, up to then, productive familial group. Thus grew the possibility of living in a small family of the monogamous type. The emergence of private property, as Engels demonstrates, gave further purpose to this family form. (1984:294)

Becoming modern in the socialist sense meant moving out of a social and economic system which subordinated private households to economic and political matters. This earlier socio-economic model allowed for the concentration of the means of production and surplus value in the hands of the few, the movement of male labor out of the productive family setting and into a non-familial workplace, and the subordination of

women within the home. Earlier monogamous families, it followed, had grown increasingly alienated from the capitalist means of production, and women, in particular, were further embedded and “exploited” (*vykořist'ovat*) within their own families. Only wealthier families had been able to participate in economic exchanges and the marketplace. Socialist policy makers and theorists hoped to export the “mutual economic relationships” identified in earlier family forms to socialist economic and political domains, thus allowing all families to partake in social production and reproduction.

Modernity and Women

Women's lives and rights also served as measures of modernization, and the theorization of the “position of women in society” (*postávení žen v společnosti*) was central to state progress narratives (see Dölling et al. 2000:130; Gal and Kligman 2000). One self-help book titled *Žena v dnešní rodině* (*The Woman in Today's Family*) told the story of women's hardships prior to the socialist era. Their progress replicated the transformation taking place in other social spheres (state, family) as the entire society worked for socialist liberation:

The position of rural and proletarian women in our recent past was only negligibly unlike that during the middle ages [when they were judged by their beauty and confined to the home and family], though less romantic and as equally sad and passive. Thus women, in addition to giving birth and tending to dozens of children, worked hard to feed the family and take care of the home and, later, even work in factories. And because women's work was undervalued, women received less for it than did men. On top of it all they were responsible for households and, yet, within those households they remained subordinate to men. Let's just imagine how our grandmothers and great-grandmothers gave birth six or seven times, did not have electricity, and washed laundry on boards after hand carrying water from a courtyard well. (Matulová and Jarošová 1976:16-17)

The above passage depicts pre-modern conditions, stressing both the urgency of eliminating their aftereffects in the present as well as the importance of recognizing the progress that has been made in the meantime. Modernization of the state guided the increased parity of women and men at home and in the workplace, the technological advancement of household routines and tasks, and reductions in numbers of offspring—a goal that would later haunt demographers. The authors go on to argue that, when compared to women's lives one hundred years ago, it is clear that current generations have neared full equality in the home and workplace (Matulová and Jarošová 1976:20). The improvement of women's lives provided a way to evaluate the successes of socialist modernity, guaranteed by a just state and economy which fostered less oppressive and more efficient living conditions, particularly for women.

As we can see, family specialists opposed the equality achieved in socialist families to two family types: (1) family organization in the medieval world (when women and children were property and considered innately inferior); and (2) the family of the industrial revolution (when family and work took place in separate spheres, cutting off women and poor families from the means of production). State texts drew on ideologies of both the medieval and late nineteenth-century family as negative examples when praising the socialist state's positioning of family vis-à-vis the new economy and the state. Families had progressed from feudalism to capitalism to socialism. In her study of transforming western family law, Janet Dolgin demonstrates that in the West, until the 1970s, the increased freedom and choice offered in the public, work sphere—which grew out of the industrial revolution—remained the prevailing legal reference for

public rights, but that family laws preserved the hierarchy in the family that grew out of the middle ages (1997:14-31). In contrast, socialist states claimed a monopoly on equality by "harmonizing" the family, by making relations within the family, society, and the economy equivalent and non-hierarchical. This was because the socialist family never stood alone, but "derived its function through relations with other institutions [economic, social, cultural]" (Alan 1989:4).

Thus authors of socialist self-help books always lauded the integration of state and family spheres. For example, family specialists treated public care for children as the key to balancing the strain of women's busy lives. The time to mother (thanks to maternity leave and maternity benefits during unpaid leave periods) was treated as a right, as was women's access to education and employment. According to the terms of socialist propaganda, women's complete self-realization and "emancipation" remained within close reach. Moreover, the quantification of the conditions of women's lives, as in rising statistics of women's employment and education, verified their steady advancement (Kučera 1978:6; Šolcová 1984:307-308).

Evidence of the positive effects of socialist modernization often came in the form of statistics. Improved living conditions were quantified in studies of the dramatic rise in women's employment but also health standards, such as lower infant mortality ("one of the lowest in the world" [Švejcar 1975:15]) and rising life expectancy (Kučera 1978:12). Studies on the growth of social services, such as the expansion of public child care (Bartošová 1978:27; *Praha '84* 1984; *Rudé právo* 5-31-85) and steady increases in family benefits (Bartošová 1978; Šolcová 1984), as well as rising rates of education (ČTK 1978;

Kučera 1978:12, 80) also offered evidence of progress being made in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. These kinds of accounts filled state reports, press releases and state histories, making the point to citizens and foreign observers that socialist family policy was working.

Authors of state literature and policy conceived of the family and the workplace as vehicles of women's emancipation. Yet narratives of women's progress were contradicted by the state's insistence that the family provide a social bedrock for all members and, as I demonstrate below, for the state itself. In their service to social order and the collectivity, women remained bound to families and obligated to bring up future members of society. In fact, when the state's oversight of women's education and employment shifted from a rhetoric of anti-family to pro-family sentiment in the mid-to-late 1950s, state texts made women's lives meaningful only in relation to family. As the authors of *Woman in Today's Family* recognized, women were valued primarily for "their significant social work" (Matulová and Jarošová 1976:10). Family units and households provided the arena for this. If they felt pulled in many directions, women needed to learn how best to manage double and triple burdens. They needed to appreciate that progress had been made but recognize that more work was left to be done and more sacrifices had to be made. When examining literature on intimate family relations and dynamics, the family increasingly appeared not to be evolving or advancing, but left unreformed so that women could ensure stability for society's youngest members.

MORALITY AND SOCIAL UNITS

In this section I explore the moralizing rhetoric underpinning the state's attempt to modernize families in socialist Czechoslovakia. The language of family policies demanded that families participate in their own liberation, yet the policies also clearly laid out the state's responsibilities to families in moral terms. The placement of the family at the heart of all social models resulted not simply as a consequence of applied socialist theory, but was the combined effect of pro-natalist and production-oriented policies.

State social analysis and family policy literature featured three social units: "family" (*rodina*), "society" (*společnost*) and the "state" (*stát*). These three categories were integrated into a functioning and mutually dependent social system. In the family literature, family was the primary unit in which children and future laborers were produced, society appeared next and was made up of many families working in the service of equality for the entire country; the state encompassed society and family and guaranteed the material security of all Czechs and Slovaks. In contrast to a vague "earlier time" (*dřív*) of capitalism when the monogamous family and the economy were at odds, the state-controlled economy, society and family shared the same, compatible social field.

If one were to accompany policy texts with a visual image of social organization as represented by state authors, the family would nest within society, which would in turn nest within the state's folds, much like a series of concentric circles (Figure 1.1).⁸ In this family literature, the authors produced an imagined "society" or "people" that was

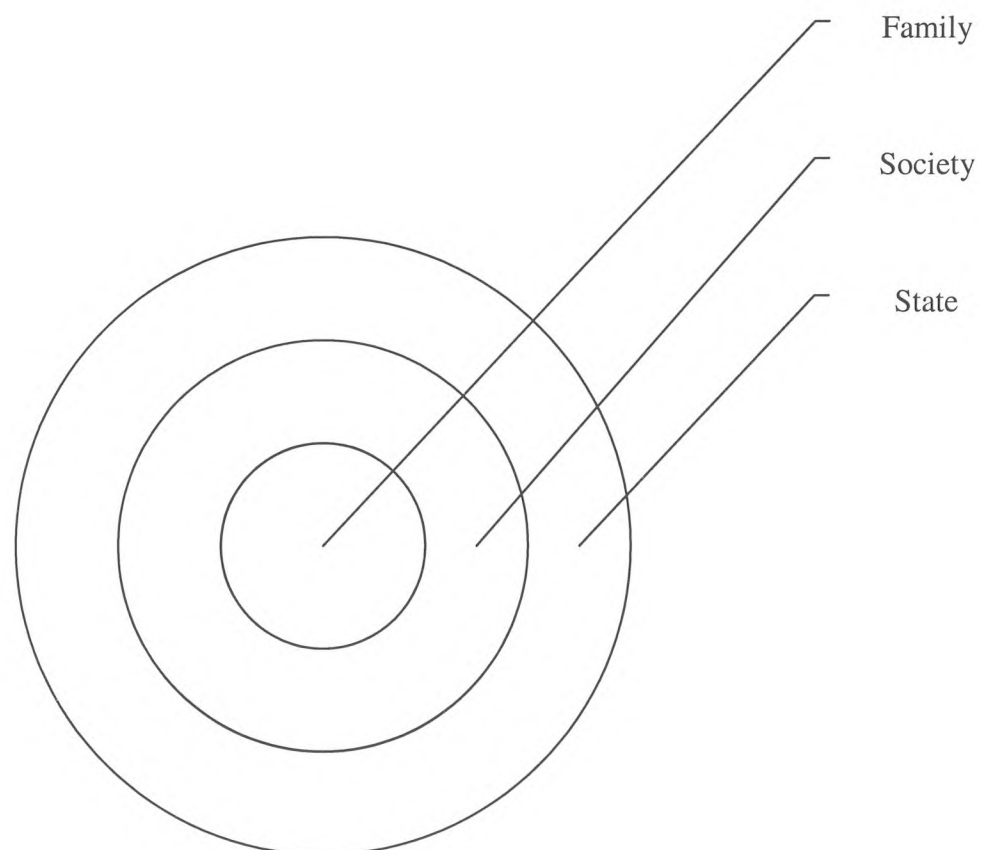


Figure 1.1: Visual Image of Social Organization, Three Social Units (Family, Society, State)

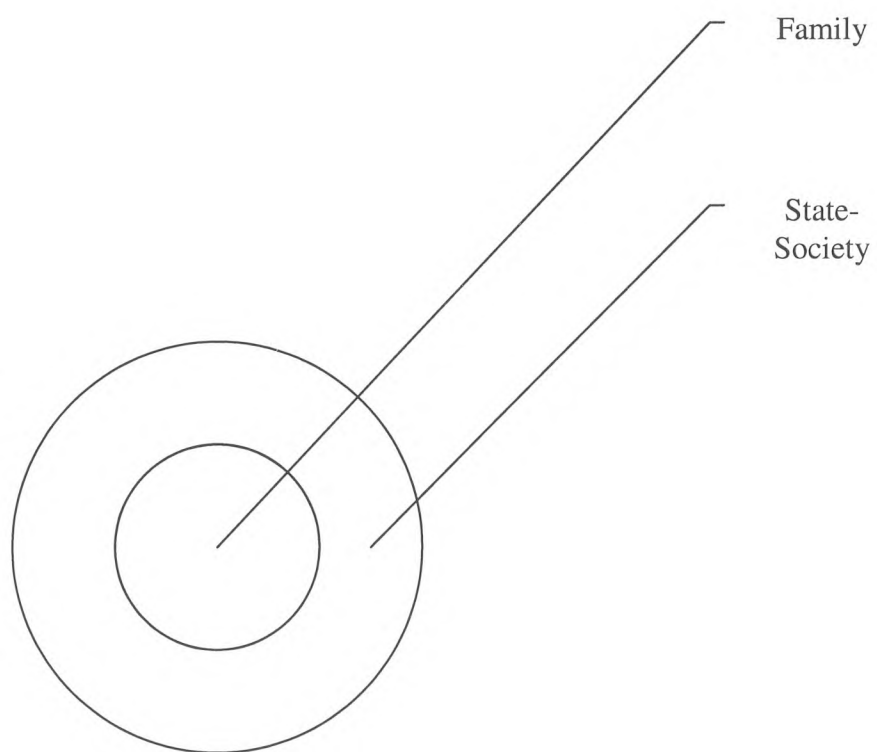


Figure 1.2: Visual Image of Social Organization, Two Social Units (Family and State-Society)

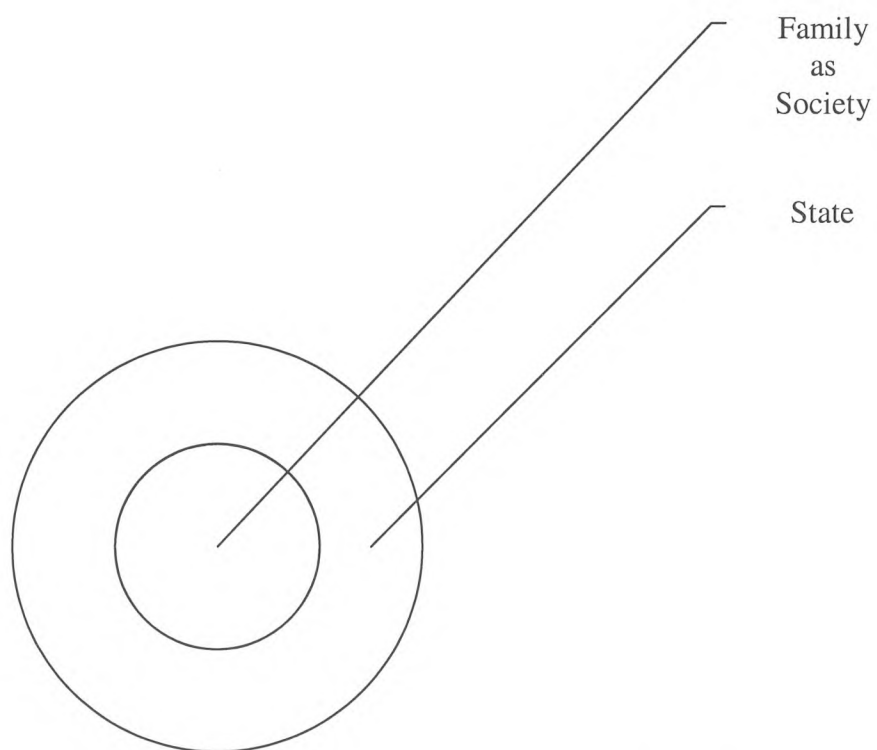


Figure 1.3: Visual Image of Social Organization, Two Social Units (Family-Society and State)

separate from both families and state rule. In some state texts (and personal reflections), however, the Czechoslovak case “state” and “society” collapsed into one, all-powerful sphere of public power and control. What the state identified as social behavior and society’s needs always fell under the state’s jurisdiction and the state’s needs (see Hann 1991:10). If one were to re-draw the visual image of socialist social organization, keeping in mind state designations of what was and was not society, family would be encompassed only by the state—now “state-society” (Figure 1.2).

We could also make the case that society and family collapsed into the same category, “family as society.” “Family does not stand in opposition to society,” one collection of authors wrote, “but is a model of social life” (Šolcová 1984:300). This would produce a third rendering of social organization (Figure 1.3). In all three versions, society mediates the relationship between the state and the family. Sometimes society acts in the interest of the state; at others the state provides for society and the needs of families. Society overlaps with domains identified as official (state) and intimate (family); and it always emerges in state texts as derived from the two other social units. For its part, the family internalizes the state and society’s “bases and principles of authority,” a process historian Yanni Kotsonis considers another “hallmark of modernity” (2000:1).

I have arranged the following section to examine this social dynamic and the mutual, morally-bound dependencies of the state and the family. First, I examine the family’s obligations and duties to larger social units (society and state). From this standpoint, the modern state and society appear to be reliant upon functioning families. I

then explore the state's role as caretaker and protector of families and society. From this perspective, families are dependent upon the social benefits and family policy mechanisms provided by the state. These two perspectives reveal the extent to which the state and family appeared as mutually contingent cultural categories, in Collier, Rosaldo and Yanagisako's terms, within official socialist texts on the family, as well as how this dependent relationship was embedded in a rhetoric of social justice and moral obligation.

The Family's Obligations: Child Care, Property and Birthrates

...parents are obligated to provide society with the general emotional and physical development of their children, and especially to bring them up such that both the family and society are strengthened

--1963 Code on the Family

cited in Milada Bartošová (1978:87)

It is impossible to speak just of what the state gives to the family; it is necessary to show the great extent to which family units contribute to the state economy....

--Points of Departure and Perspectives on Family Policy

Josef Alan (1989[pre-revolution]:15)

The state was unquestionably more controlling and powerful than families, but literature distributed by the party and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs proposed the opposite: that political and economic goals rested on healthy and functioning Czech and Slovak families (Alan 1988:1). Authors during the socialist era, as we have seen, often argued that modernization of the family led to modernization of society and the state, and was crucial to overall "development" (*vývoj*) and growth. Economic theorists

and policy makers depicted the family as necessary to the two other encompassing social units and as their major source of energy and manpower. These policy papers and child rearing guides characterized the family as the smallest and most important social unit (with the state as ultimate and all-knowing caretaker).

Family law specialists began most studies by placing the family in the center of all social organization, much as I have in figures 1.1 through 1.3. "[T]he fundamental component of society is the family," some wrote, before proceeding to an examination of family laws and measures (Havelka and Raduanová 1980-1982:288). We find this slogan repeated in numerous documents from the period, and across East Central Europe. The value of the family is expressed in biological and engineering metaphors. Authors likened the family to a "cell" (*buňka*, *Rudé právo* 9-27-86; Alan 1988:2) and a "basic/primary cell" (*základní článek*, *Zemědělské noviny* 10-14-74) within an economic and social body (see Borneman 1992:113 on East Germany; Popescu 2001 and Verdery 1996:68 on Romanian family "cells"). Elsewhere, authors explain that family is the "foundation" (*základ*) of society, society's "primary production unit" (*základní výrobní jednotka*, *Rudé právo* 11-2-84), a model of society, and a microstructure of society (Šolcová 1984:300; Alan 1988:1; *Hvězda* 11-18-89). Society starts with family cells and family foundations, and the state rests on both.

Authors of this family policy literature treated society as an actor or agent, as a "collective individual" (Dumont 1970; see Handler 1988:32-47). Society was like an individual with its own "needs" (Bartošová 1978:56). Family units were "responsible" (*odpovědné*) for meeting those needs by having, raising and educating children

(Bartošová 1978:66). Thus the family's function was straightforward: parents were raising new members of society (Švejcar 1975:19-20; *Rudé právo* 9-30-81; Alan 1988). State texts treated the family as the creator of society. Indeed, the family's obligation to have and raise children was an instance when the two categories (family, society) merged into one, particularly when accountable for self-reproduction (see Figure 1.3).

Family literature underscored expectations that the family fulfill its "responsibility" (*odpovědnost*) and "obligation/duty" (*povinnost*) to state and society. According to the *Family Code*, moreover, marriage was the basis of the family unit (*Zákon o rodině* 1963 cited in Bartošová 1978). And children needed both parents. "A great deal of evidence is at our disposition," wrote one researcher, "demonstrating that a happy childhood influences the life of the individual and that a happy childhood is more likely when both parents are there....the fact is that parents should remember their responsibility to children and their future" (*Rudé právo* 9-30-81).

Authors of *Family within the System of Social Policy* (*Rodina v systému sociální politiky*), part of an extensive policy statement distributed by the party (Šolcová 1984:292-322), outlined the origin of the family in Marxist terms. Authors explained that the family was a "concrete product of material life" (293) as opposed to a natural or biological reality. Widely-read child care expert Josef Švejcar also instructed his readership that parenting (*rodičovství*) acquired its meaning from social life and a hierarchy of values in the outside world (1975:212). These kinds of statements sound familiar to cultural anthropologists who approach social institutions such as the family (and society and the state) as cultural constructions, as opposed to self-evident or inherent

facts of life. Šolcová applied a constructivist approach to better understand women's subordination, "Social inequality is the result of the unequal position of women in society, the division of labor, and modes of production in capitalist society" (1984:296). In the socialist family literature this kind of materialist framework was of particular importance in pursuing the ongoing transformation and modernization of the family as well as in establishing the obligation and duty of parents to raise children well. By defining parenting as ultimately human and social, rather than an innate response to the "call of blood" (*hlas krve*; Švejcar 1975:212; Alan 1988:2), family experts further internalized the state and society within family life. Policy makers administrated families through a series of official mechanisms to this end.

Child Care and the Individual

Take the case of public "nurseries" (*jesle*), which local administration offices managed and built in increasing numbers to allow for and demand higher employment among women (see Chapter 4). Official pronouncements emphasized the state's moral duty to provide public facilities like the *jesle* for parents of young children. Yet child care experts conceived of the nurseries as a partnership between parents (and grandparents) and the state, as opposed to being a state obligation entirely. Parents were expected to combine private care-taking methods with public resources. "*Jesle* are not a replacement for parental care," Švejcar wrote, "but a supplement to that care" (1975:190). Child specialists urged parents to incorporate state care (*péče*) into family routines, arguing that children benefited from the nurseries' collective environments.

The language used to encourage the use of *jesle* by parents was surprisingly individualistic. Private domestic settings, Švejcar complained, did not allow children to develop their own personalities and independence as did the time spent among other children in the *jesle* (1975:198). He suggested that mothers and grandparents smothered and spoiled children, particularly “only children” (*jedínáček*), at home. Critics of socialist rule often characterize the era as overly collectivistic and unfeeling, but this child care literature claimed that group environments, such as the *jesle* for children (and the counterpart for women, the workplace) helped Czechs and Slovaks build self-confidence and discover their own interests, individual personalities and talents (Švejcar 1975:193; Matulová and Jarošová 1976:26; Vidláková 1978:25). It was parents’ obligation for the good of the family and their children, then, to draw the state into the home and to expose their children to other members of society on a regular basis. Pressure on families to use public facilities made child care a civic issue. This party line on child care helped create a domain of life called “society” (*společnost*), one that served the party’s interests and operated simultaneously as a “site of veneration of the state” (Navaro-Yashin 2002:129).

Children and the Collective

*Do you charge us with wanting to stop the
exploitation of children by their parents?
To this crime we plead guilty.*

--The Communist Manifesto
Marx and Engels (1973[1848]:35)

Despite the seeking of individual fulfillment within collective environments (the nursery, the workplace), an emphasis on absolute equality among individuals and families, and uniformity in the use of state family services, dominated state literature and policies toward the family. One way in which the state assured equality was through official restrictions on property accumulation. Beginning in 1948, party leaders altered the terms of ownership and control over "property" (*majetek*) to reorganize and redistribute wealth that had previously been concentrated in the hands of the few. Because socialist theory identified bourgeois, monogamous marriages and families as primary sites of ownership in capitalist settings, authors of family law during the socialist era reconfigured individual "right" (*právo*) to property, particularly ownership of the means of production (see Engels 2001[1884]:134-135).

Whereas, prior to the socialist era, land and money were passed down to future generations, during the socialist era, rights entailed the denial of ownership by some and the assurance of parity in living standards for all. The state treated economic security as a right. Its representatives pledged to provide universal material protection by outlawing private ownership of the means of production (Holy 1996:19; Wolchik 1992:132). Beginning in 1948, apartments were carved up and houses re-assigned, businesses were nationalized, savings were seized and revalued. The censure of property accumulation becomes especially meaningful when, with the end of socialism, we find the large-scale restitution of private property, the protection of individual ownership rights, and the differentiation of living standards reinserted into the postsocialist *Family Code* in 1994 and 1998, as well as the introduction of living minimums for low-income families.

Ladislav Holy notes that “vestiges of a private sector (in services, retail outlets, and particularly agriculture)” existed during the socialist era despite massive nationalization of the means of production (1996:19; Bartošová 1978:18). Despite these “vestiges” of private ownership, the state regulated and oversaw property and, furthermore, guaranteed married men and women full ownership rights within marriage as Engels intended (“joint ownership,” *spoluvlastnictví*). As we have already noted, the *Family Code* gave women equal rights within marriage and the family. In addition, the *Civil Code* reformed Hapsburg property rights in effect throughout the interwar period, rights which had preserved male control of all property, wives and children. In 1948 the state awarded married men and women equal authority when raising children, and equal rights to property acquired during marriage in the case of divorce or death.⁹ This included housing, household items and small service businesses (Vidláková 1978:24-30). Single mothers and children with only one parent, moreover, received equal rights under the law, and single mothers were granted lengthier maternity leaves (Heitlinger 1979:136).

Thus men and women shared parental and marital “rights and obligations” (1963 *Family Code* cited in Vidláková 1978:25). Additionally, state representatives and child specialists explained that children themselves were not the personal property of either parent. Parent-child relations had become public matters, and children could not be absorbed into, and contained by, the household on the basis of parental rights, freedom and control. As when discussing the evolution of women and the family over time, authors compared progress made during the socialist era as regards the progressiveness of

children's lives to hierarchical relations during the feudal era and other parts of the contemporary world. Švejcar wrote:

In the middle ages a father could kill or sell his child into slavery because the child was the father's to own. A child in the middle ages was not valued; childhood and the child's personal standing (*zvláštní postavení*) meant nothing, and no one gave children any attention. Those kinds of unconditional proprietary roles have become less common though they nevertheless persist today. Not until ... the more democratic organization of society were children seen otherwise. A child is no longer lesser than adults but an independent person [individual, *jedinec*] with needs and rights that are part of the framework of adult rights. (1975:212)

Thus parents were to raise children in the interest of society and as sovereign, fully social persons. By downplaying parental authority and granting dependent children full status under the law, the state became more of a participant in child rearing. Policy makers guaranteed the right of social workers, teachers, *jesle* nurses and other family service employees to intervene if children were not treated properly in the home. At the same time, by making children rights-bearers, the state reduced parental rights and decision making.

In his child rearing guides Švejcar encouraged family-oriented public servants and all Czechs and Slovaks to take care of and behave lovingly toward children, not simply their own (1975:19-20). Again we see a merging of collectivizing institutions (family services, nurseries, the equalization of parents and children in the eyes of the state) with individualistic tenets and values. Švejcar urged Czechs and Slovaks to appreciate the uniqueness of each child and to provide every child with the "individual care" (*individuální péče*) he or she demanded, yet under the auspices of a state preserving the interests of the collective (1975:17-18).

The equalization of minors with adults in Czechoslovakia can be linked to a world-wide movement to better the lives of children and the declarations that grew out of the post-World War II years (*Rudé právo* 5-31-85; Holub and Nová 2000).

Representatives from socialist Czechoslovakia attended human rights conferences and supported the efforts of international child rights campaigners. Some foreign family advocates considered Czechoslovak family policy an exemplary model of population policy because of its intensely child-oriented approach (Besemeres cited in Sokolová *ms.*:5).

Extreme examples of state involvement were children's institutes and experimental children's homes established in lieu of adoption during the socialist era (see *Radio Prague Domestic* 3-11-70), as well as policies in the early 1950s, revitalized after the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968, which discriminated against the offspring of "former political and 'exploiting' classes" (Janos 2000:250) in employment and education (Kalinová 1998:140). Thus parents and dissidents at home often did not appreciate the presence of the state in their own homes. "[H]ow easy it might be for the *Family Code* to be used as an instrument of political pressure and bullying" wrote signatories of *Charter 77*, a human rights statement issued by leading dissidents in 1977 (*Dokument* č.15/83). *Charter 77* periodically put out press releases on the regime such as this one from 1983 (published from Vienna). Parents and family members suspected state authority and the ulterior motives of the enforcement and emphasis on children's "rights," which they interpreted as a violation of privacy. The state appealed, however, for cooperation

between the state and families as it created a society in its own image (see Navarro-Yashin 2002:119, 153).

Birthrates

The literature I examine here was born of demographic alarm, including anxieties about falling birthrates and desires to achieve production quotas made possible only by a sizeable labor force (Wolchik 2000:65; Kligman 1998:44). A stable population size would establish the socialist state's "credibility as a superior society" (Janos 2000:225), by means of both border control and family-based policies. A final example of how the state reinforced its dependence on the family is one I explore in greater detail in Chapter 5: through calls for higher birthrates. Socialist policy makers and economic planners badly desired an increase, and a stabilization at the very least, in population size beginning in the mid-1950s. Low birthrates guided the development and articulation of socialist family ideology (and constant reminders that "family is the foundation of society") and related policy mechanisms such as child care facilities, lengthier maternity leaves and family benefits.

Czech sociologists have more recently interpreted the state's approach to the family when the communist party initially came to power (1948-1955) as "anti-family" because state planners did not assign a social role or function to the family. By initially devaluing and downplaying the family (or simply not paying attention to it), these critics explained, state planners did not incorporate the family directly into modernization and development schemas. The following generations of socialist demographers and

sociologists were unhappy with the omission of the family from early socialist platforms. "Dogmatism during the first half of the fifties did not allow for a thorough examination of the family's situation," wrote policy maker Milada Bartošová (1978:25, 33). The state had rushed women into the workplace before putting necessary social provisions in place. But Bartošová blamed individual citizens, as well as early policy makers, for falling birthrates.

Indeed, she explained, working-class women were unaccustomed to seeking out innovative, public resources when working and raising their families (1978:27-29). Yet once services like the *jesle*, maternity leaves, family benefits and birthing awards were put in place, it was on the shoulders of the family—especially women—to boost birthrates and participate in the reproduction of society. As we will investigate further in Chapter 5, smaller families (i.e., one to three children) often stand for a more modern state. Yet in the state literature on the family, small families were also depicted as potentially dangerous for children because they denied offspring the collective environment within which to develop their personal interests and personalities (Švejcar 1975:17). Use of the *jesle* and the birth of more children had become matters of state security. And the choice to have children became another way of measuring socialist successes.

Jaroslav Havelka was Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs and Secretary of the Government Population Commission in the 1970s. He considered it the duty of young people to put having children above their own living standards:

It goes without saying that under the social conditions, prevailing in our country, efforts must be made to influence the moral and emotional attitudes especially of the young people, to counter consumptive tendencies in their style of life and to foster a social climate encouraging natality. It

was therefore decided to wage a systematic and carefully prepared educational campaign by means of communication media, cultural institutions and voluntary organizations to induce especially the young generation to support favourable population development. (1978:41 *sic*)

Official statements such as this pressured Czechs and Slovaks to have and raise children through various systems of awards (Kučera et al. 1978; Heitlinger 1979; Wolchik 2000). Many Czechs and Slovaks placed their families at the center of their lives and felt that the state should too. During the socialist era, though, people often retreated to the family to reject state influence rather than as a capitulation to population concerns. And although socialist-era demographers characterized these policies as a move toward a pro-family/pro-natal legal framework, later critics perceived ongoing involvement as persistent “anti-family” politics (Freiová 1999). During the socialist era, policy spokespersons like Havelka continued, however, to make the population a concern of the state.

While the state designated itself a moral authority and generous protector of the family, the language of family literature put demands on how families were to live their lives as an integral part—rather than as a distinct and separate sphere—of society and the state. Socialist family ideology demanded the participation of the family, be it the delivery of children to child care facilities, the release of parental control over previously personal arenas of child welfare, or simply having and raising children. Official texts, legislation, family-related laws and medical professionals made the state a part of family life and expected families to partake in the life of the state. I now examine how, within the elaborate social provisions put in place to keep family “cells” strong and healthy, state texts articulated public obligations and duties to citizens. I inquire into how state

representatives located the official burden of providing, protecting and guiding families within an ethic of socialist morality.

The State's Obligations to the Family

Society monitors the upbringing of children and the satisfaction of their material and cultural needs, it assures their care through the provision of state organs, social organizations, schools, culture, and civic and health facilities.

--1963 Code on the Family
cited in Milada Bartošová (1978:87)

Soon after the collapse of communist rule in East Central Europe, anthropologist Chris Hann warned against asking unproductive questions about the "legitimacy" of socialist rule: "We might instead make the arguably less controversial claim that, however imperfectly, for a long time socialist political systems *worked*" (1991:12 emphasis in original; Creed 1998). Yet Hann observed that opposition to socialist rule was successful when it appropriated the moral claims of socialist governments as its own. This was the case in Czechoslovakia, where dissident and future President Václav Havel argued that the everyday capitulation of Czechs and Slovaks to state forces made them passive participants and upholders of the totalitarian system. He explained convincingly that they were all "living a lie" (Havel 1985; Hann 1991:13-14; Holy 1996:16). But until the socialist government lost power, its spokespersons staked out moral authority and "legitimacy" in terms of how well its citizens were provided for (though the quality of living conditions was always criticized). When observing the capitalist West from

socialist East Central Europe, socialism offered a compelling moral critique of liberal welfare states, one which outlasted the regimes themselves (Hann 1991:14).

State texts, such as policy statements and research studies of family life, served as constant reminders during the socialist era of this moral critique and of the state's generosity and good will. Authors of policy papers, popular books, newspaper articles and party platforms reported on how people's lives had changed for the better and been modernized thanks to a state system of "support" (*podpora*), "justice" (*spravedlnost*) and considered economic planning. Specialists explained that the benefits, family leave, services and care laid out by public officials had led to the overall development and advancement of Czechoslovak society. Authors praised the state for performing *its* duty (*povinnost*) and fulfilling *its* responsibility (*odpovědnost*) to families—and for continuing to improve services.

Socialist morality underpins these narratives of social progress and modernization. The fairness and progressiveness of the socialist era informed all efforts to improve women's lives, children's lives and family life in general. We find in official texts a constant turn to historical, evolutionist frameworks that cast the state as the liberator of Czechs and Slovaks from poverty and inequality. Bartošová, for example, tells her readers about how "socio-economic transformation during the 1950s eradicated existential insecurity, fear of unemployment and poverty, as was known during the capitalist republic" (1978:33-34). By offering citizens a secure future, the socialist state did more than address matters of material need and legislate the details of a just, redistributive

policy. Easing the minds of citizens and allowing for positive outlooks on the future was nothing short of philosophical and mental "revolution" (*revoluce*).

Bartošová claimed that poor laborers and women benefited the most from the revolution's overthrow of capitalism. As a researcher into family life, Bartošová was particularly interested in finding causal links between opportunities provided by the state and desired family behavior. For example, she explained that fertility rates were higher among working class families when the communists rose to power between 1945 and 1948 because they "expected better living conditions under the new state" (1978:18; Švejcar 1975:16-17; Šolcová 1984:312-313). The results of sociological research concluded similarly: that the "families of laborers" (*dělnických rodin*) had more children and fewer divorces because "they were oriented toward the collective when raising their children" (*Tvorba* 12-22-82). Certain families gained from the state's progressive agenda more than others, however unconscious and unaware of this relief and salvation they might have been.

We should keep in mind that, when celebrating state achievements and improvements, officials simultaneously affirmed the continuity and local roots of socialist beliefs in Czechoslovakia. The state and working-class people alike, they explained, achieved their natural identities, their true selves, when the socialist government came to power. The terms of social provisions, which redistributed resources and assured equal standards of living for families with children, were "ethical" (*mravní*). The pattern of pointing out the naturalness and righteousness of a socialist approach to family life

contrasted with one point we explored earlier: the Marxist-Leninist insistence that "the family" is a social construct.

We have observed Czechoslovak state representatives defining the family as a perpetually evolving and advancing social institution. They resisted the kinds of essentializing frameworks that bind families to a hierarchical, natural order of things and potentially prevent social change for the better. Yet state representatives leaned on the goodness of socialist policy toward families as one might a timeless faith. The ethic of socialism was a substantiating claim equal to locking the family unit in time and space (see Yanagisako and Delaney 1995). This combination of a materialist approach to the family (that is, blaming the division of labor in the home and workplace for the subordination of women and the working class) and the predestined virtue of state involvement in family life resulted in an often contradictory mix of top-down governance, which socialist transformation demanded, with moral rhetoric suggesting that equality automatically blossomed with the advent of communism. Recognizing this combination of social engineering and duty-bound superiority helps us better understand why descriptions of family membership and gender roles remained largely unaltered during the socialist era, despite the family function's active contribution to class revolution.

Women's dual position as mothers and workers provides a useful example of how moralizing tendencies often complicated the more radical effects of redistributive policies. The *Family Code* and the *Civil Code* insisted upon equal rights of women in the family, at work, in society. The movement of women from home to the workplace, the building of *jesle* and expansion of services for children helped women gain rights both in and out of

the household. Yet as I remarked earlier, lawmakers embedded women's association with all parenting tasks in family-related laws. Women embodied care for children, and the state codified maternal duties.¹⁰ Although one party spokesperson insisted that the "social inequality of men and women in the family and society is not the result of biological differences" (Šolcová 1984:296), another reminded his readers that conception and birth of a child results in "a range of innate reflexes...particularly by women" (Švejcar 1975:212). Indeed, many state texts append narratives of women's socialist emancipation with reminders that maternity and mothering are women's most valuable contribution to the family and society (Matulová and Jarošová 1976; Bartošová 1978; Havelka and Raduanová 1980-82; Pahl 1983; Alan 1988).

Critics during and following the socialist era blamed the socialist state for developing an overly paternalist, insidious policy toward families (Čermáková et al. 2000:41). Katherine Verdery argues that socialist paternalism "posited a moral tie linking subjects with the states through their rights to a share in the redistributed social product" (1996:63). Because women were the target recipients of much socialist-era family policy, however, I argue that "maternalist" is an appropriate catchword for the *moralizing* discourse of the period (particularly following increased alarm over birthrates beginning in the mid-1950s; see Haney 2000:53, 2002:91-161) while "paternalist" usefully characterizes the range of family policy initiatives that fostered the family's *dependence* on the state. Growing state "appreciation" (*oceněna*) for mothers led to the elaboration of paternalistic state care for families, but likewise singled out the significance of the mother. Thus within a steadfast, constructivist social project we find an equally powerful

emphasis on women's natural care-taking roles and the state's own natural care-taking function. The combination of a paternal state and maternal caretaker had the curious effect of excluding men and fathers from state ideologies of the family (*Večerní Praha* 8-9-73; Havelkova 1993a; Šiklová 1997; on the Romanian parent-state see also Kligman 1998; on Hungary see Goven 1993).

The state's parental role endowed public officials with the moral authority of family members. We find authors using a vocabulary otherwise limited to individuals within the family, attributing family-like feelings and sentiment to the actions of the state and society. Public concern for all members of society, they claimed, accounted for the progressiveness of socialist social policy and social advancement: "Society offers not only protection (*ochranu*), but care, particularly material support of the mother and children during the children's upbringing," outlined the *Family Code* (*Zákon o rodině* 94/1963 Čl. III, cited in Bartošová 1978:99). And the *Family Code* confirmed the state's "moral support of motherhood" while also defending the institution of marriage as well as fathers' rights to participate in children's upbringing in the case of divorce (Bartošová 1978:42), though, again, the era brought an end to his proprietary claims on children and material belongings, and fathers seldom received custody. Indeed, the state was a collective parental individual in these texts: the state "cares" (*pečuje*) for families with children, many wrote, and society "must help" (*musí pomáhat*) families, particularly in extreme cases when children are "in danger" (*ohroženo*) (Švejcar 1975:216).

Socialist state texts persisted in substantiating state involvement and care for families because of rights granted to families and children by modern socialist policies.

Bartošová explained that families had a right to protection and just living conditions (1978:86), which this particular state recognized and embraced. Thus grew a language of entitlement and “claims” (*nároky*) on the state by citizens. Family units, society and the state traded claims on each other. For example, articulation of a “claim” (*nárok*) is a way that people made demands on the state much in the way state representatives and policy makers made demands on families, society and the state itself to guarantee continued social progress.

Further in this dissertation, I demonstrate that Czechs often believed that the socialist state did not provide for them and that they had to take care of themselves—and still did—without leaning on, or “taking” (*brát*) from, the state. Yet this experience of social provisioning and an insistent ethic of state care for families, women and children has outlasted the socialist era and was often thought of as matter-of-fact or natural. Many of the family members I worked with in 2000 established boundaries between their lives and the influence of public offices and support, but they continued “to take” in many forms. While continuing to make “claims” on the state, they insisted on their autonomy and independence—and the end of the moralizing contract depicted above—brought about by the demise of socialist control in 1989.

PATHOLOGIES

Before moving on to examine the postsocialist model of the family, it is important to acknowledge the puritanism underpinning the years of “pro-family” socialist ideology. During the last decades of socialism, angst and fears of amorality accompanied a

moralizing family ideology. For example, low birthrates seemed to undermine the scientific value of low mortality rates. For all the success attributed to the family's modernization, rising divorce rates circulated within the media and state texts as a warning of society's undoing.¹¹ And women's emancipation had gone too far: high abortion rates signaled women's immaturity and irresponsibility.

Like parents, socialist state representatives laid out a simple behavioral contract. Women and men were to marry, work, raise children (ideally three or more) in full consultation with state employees and services, teach their children socialist values, and "form their child's moral profile" (*Zemědělské noviny* 10-14-74). In turn, the state was to ensure employment, housing, and financial and in-kind family provisions. Statistical indicators suggested, however, that individuals (not to mention the state) were not holding up their end of the parent-child bargain. Behavior in Czech and Slovak households was not in keeping with the state's moral standard. People were entering into short-term marriages, "infidelity/unfaithfulness" (*nevěra*) was widespread (see Figure 1.4),¹² "abortion" (*potrat, interrupce*) rates kept going up, and, after rising in the early-to-mid 1970s, birthrates fell through the late 1970s and 1980s (and thereafter). So despite remarkable social progress, family policy researcher Josef Alan regretted, "In addition to success we find manifestations of social corrosion and social pathology directly related to family life" (1988:3). Impatient with misbehavior, state communiqués judged families poorly and scolded young citizens (see Verdery 1996:66).

When targeting what they considered to be family problems, state texts and studies often drew a distinction between ideal behavior—like that set forth in the *Family*

Figure 1.4: Nuptuality in the Czech Republic and Czechoslovakia

<u>Year</u> ¹³ <u>Rates</u> ¹⁴	<u>Number of Marriages</u>	<u>Crude Marriage</u>
1999	53 523	5.2
1998	55 027	5.3
1997	57 804	5.6
1996	53 896	5.2
1995	54 956	5.3
1994	58 440	5.7
1993	66 033	6.4
1992	74 060	7.2
1991	104 692	6.7
1990	131 388	8.4
1989	117 787	7.5
1988	118 951	7.6
1987	122 168	7.8
1986	119 979	8.6
1985	119 583	7.5
1984	121 340	8.1
1983	120 547	7.6
1982	117 376	7.5
1981	116 805	8.2
1980	117 921	7.7
1979	127 134	8.3
1978	134 579	8.9
1977	137 485	9.1
1976	139 094	9.3
1975	141 208	9.5
1974	140 437	9.6
1973	141 288	9.7
1972	135 108	9.3
1971	129 952	9.0
1970	126 585	8.8
1969	125 285	8.7
1968	122 947	8.6
1967	119 896	8.4
1966	115 724	8.1
1965	112 269	7.9
1964	110 793	7.9
1963	110 777	7.9
1962	108 008	7.8

1961	105 546	7.7
1960	106 352	7.8
1959	102 848	7.6
1958	99 937	7.4
1957	91 059	6.8
1956	115 900	8.8
1955	103 079	7.9
1954	102 164	7.9
1953	98 804	7.7
1952	111 808	8.8
1951	127 036	10.1
1950	134 248	10.8
1949	130 645	9.9 ¹⁵

Source: United Nations Demographic Yearbooks. Department of International Economic and Social Affairs Statistical Office. New York.

Code, which founded the family on marital unions (see Švejcar 1975:215)—and the reality of premature marriages and childish relationships, such as those Alan presented in his research findings:

a first marriage is entered into at an extremely young age, especially by an above-average number of women who marry shortly after their eighteenth birthdays. The result of this is the concentration of pivotal life beginnings (marital, parental, employment) in a short period of time. It is common for young people to enter marriage socially, psychically and materially ill-equipped. A related motivation for marriage is pregnancy, which partners face helpless. (Alan 1988:7)

Alan's is a statement characteristic of the period beginning in the late 1970s, when Czechoslovak family policy shifted its focus from population quantity to quality-of-life issues (*Rudé právo* 11-2-84; Alan 1989; Wolchik 2000; Sokolová *ms.*). As I demonstrate in Chapter 5, resolute appeals for a larger population are often accompanied by veiled criteria limiting who should have babies and, in this case, when they should have them. During the socialist era, cries for higher rates tapered off as the average age of women at first birth dropped. My ethnographic material demonstrates similar equivocation and caution as regards Romani birthrates (typically above average) during the socialist and postsocialist periods.

Demographers and family experts concluded that high divorce trends were a major source of the birthrates problem (see Figure 1.5). Demographer Kučera made the link between non-procreation and failed marriages explicit, "high divorce rates are to a considerable extent responsible for a premature arrestation of female reproduction" (1978:14). That is to say, when a woman gives birth at a young age, divorcing promptly thereafter often keeps her from having more than one child. The tone in this literature is

Figure 1:5: Divorce in the Czech Republic and Czechoslovakia

<u>Year</u> ¹⁶ <u>Rates</u> ¹⁷	<u>Number of Divorces</u>	<u>Crude Divorce</u>
1999	23 657	2.30
1998	32 363	3.14
1997	32 465	3.15
1996	33 113	3.21
1995	31 135	3.01
1994	30 939	2.99
1993	30 227	2.92
1992	28 572	2.77
1991	37 259	2.39
1990	40 922	2.61
1989	39 680	2.54
1988	38 922	2.49
1987	39 522	2.54
1986	37 885	2.44
1985	38 289	2.47
1984	37 422	2.42
1983	36 254	2.35
1982	34 371	2.24
1981	34 595	2.26
1980	33 863	2.21
1979	32 241	2.12
1978	33 222	2.19
1977	31 223	2.08
1976	31 561	2.11
1975	32 308	2.18
1974	30 415	2.07
1973	29 458	2.02
1972	26 582	1.84
1971	28 074	1.95
1970	24 936	1.74
1969	23 936	1.66
1968	21 641	1.51
1967	19 889	1.39
1966	20 244	1.42
1965	18 702	1.32
1964	16 802	1.20
1963	17 040	1.22
1962	16 603	1.20

		78
1961	16 427	1.19
1960	15 291	1.12
1959	15 631	1.15
1958	15 870	1.18
1957	14 348	1.07
1956	14 571	1.10
1955	13 756	1.05
1954	11 280	.87
1953	11 414	.89
1952	13 326	1.05
1951	12 125	.97
1950	13 112	1.06
1949	11 257	.89 ¹⁸

Source: United Nations Demographic Yearbooks. Department of International Economic and Social Affairs Statistical Office. New York.

one of disappointment. Authors were patronizing as they tacitly asked, "After all that we have done for you, how can you people behave so disgracefully?" Policy makers and state spokespersons treated newlyweds like untrustworthy children because of their young ages at marriage, and their impulsive, careless (unmodern?) treatment of the family and the state. Thus commentary on how young Czechs were conducting intimate relations (with parents, grandparents, husbands, wives, lovers, children) partially eclipsed talk of birthrates that had earlier focused almost exclusively on numbers.

The quantification of intimate relations, however, remained a common way of demonstrating the modernization of the state as well as a favored "measurement of those facts believed to best reflect the moral tenor of a culture," be it favorable or troubling in the eyes of state spokespersons (Pinnow 2000:126). This was particularly the case with divorce. Sociologist of the family Milada Mrkosová told an interviewer in 1982 that, as in other socialist countries, divorce in Czechoslovakia was increasing: "In the last ten years in the ČSSR the divorce rate has doubled—while it was 14 per hundred marriages in 1960, it was 30 per 100 marriages in 1981" (*Tvorba* 12-22-82; rates varied according to source, see, among many, Frýbová 1973; *Czechoslovak Situation Report* 7-16-75; *Svobodné slovo* 3-14-67; *Rudé právo* 9-27-86; *Naše rodina* 9-30-87; *Hvězda* 11-2-88).¹⁹

The response was a shaking of the head, sometimes coddling, and reminders of the hard work and patience that marriage and family demanded. In one study of the speed at which young couples were getting divorced, family judge František Pávek listed a series of concerns. He blamed these couples for overflowing divorce courts, emphasizing marital and family responsibilities and youthful, and unrealistic

expectations: "Young people do not know [what they are doing]....When they leave school they are not aware of basic rights and duties in marriage....Young couples have a problem..." he repeated (Pávek 1986). As was the case in other arenas of family policy and research, state representatives continued to push for greater state involvement and oversight. As early as 1968, for example, Pávek proposed raising men's minimum age at marriage from eighteen to twenty-one, because men were not "ripe enough" at eighteen (*Česká televize* 1-4-68; see Havelková 1993a:66; see Figure 1.6).²⁰

Like today, women were almost always awarded custody of children following a divorce. The texts I examine here, and my informants in 2000, insisted that when marriages end fathers disappear from children's lives. Reports on this pattern cried out that children were losing parents: "100 divorces means the loss of a parent for 120 children," fretted one headline (*Rudé právo* 9-30-81). "Where are you, Daddy?" asked another (*Večerní Praha* 8-9-73). Think about the children, researchers pleaded. They cited studies which proved children were happier when both parents participated in upbringing, and that a greater number of juvenile delinquents came from "incomplete" (*neuplné*) families. Families were the basis of society, yet children and marriage were the basis of the family. They were "our social wealth" (*Rudé právo* 5-31-85; see *Svět Sovětů* 2-5-67). Something was going terribly wrong with the building blocks of the socialist state.

The state instead cast itself in the role of father figure while glorifying the mother and her maternal soul. Academic studies and newspaper articles blamed men for being the most childlike in marriage, for doing no housework, for continuing to stay out late at

Figure 1.6: Marriages by Age of Bridegroom and by Age of Bride
(five year intervals from 1958-1998)

<u>year</u>	<u>- 15</u>	<u>15-19</u>	<u>20-24</u>	<u>25-29</u>	<u>30-34</u>	<u>35-39</u>	<u>40-44</u>	<u>45-49</u>	<u>50-54</u>	<u>55-59</u>	<u>60+</u>
(all ages)											
1958 bride											
(99 937) -		32 481	43 221	11 334	5 170	3 100	1 408	1 471	841	500	411
groom		3 164	44 152	32 617	8 984	3 964	1 689	1 899	1 336	957	1 175
1963 bride											
(110 777) -		41 145	48 255	8 853	4 217	2 984	2 142	1 118	964	554	545
groom		5 682	59 768	24 803	8 609	4 240	2 617	1 280	1 453	1 050	1 275
1968 bride											
(122 947) -		40 267	60 998	9 757	3 390	2 418	2 107	1 710	793	714	793
groom		7 161	71 306	25 298	6 760	3 902	2 664	2 022	1 048	1 264	1 522
1973 bride											
(141 288) -		41 532	69 383	16 463	5 157	2 463	2 023	1 806	1 206	484	771
groom		7 775	78 199	32 769	8 831	4 021	3 096	2 297	1 745	936	1 619
1978 bride											
(134 579) -		36 502	63 803	17 011	7 146	3 245	2 061	1 915	1 391	765	740
groom		7 052	70 489	32 387	9 939	4 713	2 746	2 430	1 871	1 379	1 573
1983 bride											
(120 547) -		36 827	51 488	15 488	6 955	3 869	2 110	1 333	952	574	574
groom		7 955	57 807	31 379	9 955	5 104	2 782	1 822	1 439	1 038	1 266
1988 bride											
(118 951) -		34 431	52 878	13 913	6 770	4 262	2 793	1 847	950	525	582
groom		8 180	57 666	27 321	10 321	5 949	3 636	2 138	1 311	1 045	1 384
1994²¹ bride											
(58 440) -		14 614	25 609	7 568	3 263	2 229	1 998	1 583	865	344	367
groom		3 978	25 227	13 450	5 300	3 187	2 515	1 974	1 233	612	964
1998 bride											
(55 027) -		5 269	26 628	11 568	3 930	2 099	1 901	1 662	1 123	424	423
groom		1 200	19 031	16 787	6 911	3 328	2 494	2 061	1 466	784	965

Source: United Nations Demographic Yearbooks. Department of International Economic and Social Affairs Statistical Office. New York.

night drinking with friends rather than helping at home after a baby's birth, and for disappearing from their children's lives after divorce. These criticisms reinforced men's exclusion from the family.

When it came to women, researchers were most vexed by the frequency with which abortion, which was fully legalized in 1957, was used as a means of fertility control (Heitlinger 1979; Wolchik 2000).²² Though legal, lawmakers required that women seek approval for abortions from abortion commissions in their home districts. Doctors and national committee members sat on the commissions and supposedly approved the majority of cases that came across their desks (Heitlinger 1979:187). Indeed (save drops in the mid-1960s and mid-1970s) rates rose steadily from the early 1950s to 1989 (Wolchik 2000:63). Thus abortions were available during the socialist era, but population policy makers put in place elaborate eligibility criteria. Yet obstacles had the effect of neither stigmatizing abortion nor preventing them.²³ Participants in one women's radio show explained that abortions should be legal because "they gave a woman the possibility of deciding to be a mother" (*Vysílání pro ženy* 1-29-73). Informants often insisted to me that seeking an abortion was not considered morally wrong. And sociologist Alena Heitlinger reported in the mid-1970s that, according to her interviews and research, women were more troubled by having had to appear before a local abortion commission than they were by the procedure itself (1979:186).

The family policy literature faulted abortion, as it also did divorce, for low birthrates. Exasperated demographers and policy authors suspected the behavior of young citizens and society in general. For example, to some, abortion rates signaled that

women and men did not know how to use conception or to plan for having a family. The behavior of young Czechs and Slovaks, some worried, revealed a lack of self-awareness and reason (Bartošová 1978:32; Alan 1988:8-9). One report argued that without good cause, such as extenuating family, housing or health problems, seeking an abortion indicated selfishness and immaturity (*Listárna mladých* 5-25-73). Eventually, in light of record-high abortion rates in the mid-1980s, population policy makers abolished the abortion commissions in 1987.

The eponymous socialist family policy maker, Frederick Engels, called for an end to the sexual division of labor and women's subordination in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (2001[1884]). Once these steps were taken, equality in male-female relations, marital or otherwise, would follow. He wrote, "In short, proletarian marriage is monogamous in the etymological sense of the word, but not at all in its historical sense" (2001[1884]:135). Classic socialist theories of the family held radical potential, but state concern with behavior in families reinforced monogamous marriage and the sexual division of labor, which Engels had vigorously criticized, to keep families and the state intact (Plzák 1971; *Tvorba* 1982). In Chapter 2, I address the lived experience of socialist family policy and how individuals absorbed and, more often, ignored moralizing rhetoric put forth by the state. Spheres of life associated with the state and family were often in conflict in personal accounts. Yet we have seen that two distinct attitudes toward the family (venerating and celebrating a particular ideology of state/family intimacy versus criticizing, pathologizing Czech families) were also at work in state texts.

Family experts insisted upon the natural desire of families to participate in a socialist social vision; but when obligations and rules set forth by the state were not met, the parent-state became frustrated and critical. It is clear that celebratory and despondent presentations of the modern family are not mutually exclusive, nor are they unique to socialism. In the United States, for example, party platforms stressing family values are often accompanied by cries that the family is disintegrating.²⁴ In the case of socialist Czechoslovakia, worry and consternation suggest that the hopes of building socialism hinged on the family, that state planners and policy makers felt most vulnerable when they were excluded from decision-making in the family, and that families were indeed more powerful than the state.

Ending Socialism

I have presented only a fraction of Czechoslovak socialist-era writings on the family. Throughout the period, state officials authored countless studies using the family to articulate the state, and the state to articulate the family. Just prior to the end of socialist rule this literature was diversifying and expanding. In 2000 I met with the head of a foster-care NGO who worked on family policy during the late 1980s. He summed up how the family had been a way to capture and express not only the party's ambitions, but also the social work that family specialists hoped to get done. He told me, "During socialism we could not write about the economy, we could not write about politics. So we wrote about the family." So perhaps the literature on the family that appears puritanical and patronizing was, in fact, a critique by governmental staff of the state's

failures rather than of family members themselves. Beneath respectfulness toward the state and the party we find a subtle yet furious indictment, because these family researchers felt strongly that socialism was not working.

POST-SOCIALISM AND THE FAMILY

The end of one-party rule in 1989 allowed for greater space to deliberate the meaning of family to society and the state. Within state settings and discourses, the party controlling Parliament often takes the lead in talk about the family and pushes a particular approach to the family and social policy to the forefront of public discussion. Concern and interest in families has also moved increasingly to the realm of low-income social services, as well as civic and non-governmental organizations whose employees were policy makers and researchers of the family during the socialist era. As in the socialist era, though, the postsocialist era can be divided roughly into two phases of state ideologies toward the family. The phases, 1990-1997 and 1997-present, correspond to the government's makeup and leadership.

From 1990 to 1997, talk of privatization held sway. The name Václav Klaus, the first post-1989 Finance Minister and, later, Prime Minister, was synonymous with the heady promise of Thatcherite liberalism and the introduction of a market-based economy (Janos 2000:380-385; Saxonberg 1999; Večerník 1999).²⁵ David Stark and László Bruszt depict Klaus in their study of Central European economic reforms and leading personalities:

This economist-turned-politician so confidently wore the cloak of Adam Smith that he could lecture Western leaders on the virtues of free-market

liberalism and chastise them for straying from the straight and narrow. Here was a student who could pick up the chalk and correct the teacher's sums.

In the early speeches and policy pronouncements in which Klaus articulated his neoliberal vision, *privatization* was almost invariably modified by the adjectives *rapid* and *massive*, and *price liberalization* and *foreign trade liberalization* were typically preceded by *merciless*. (1998:154 emphasis in original)

Western monitors and Czechs later learned that national holdings were not privatized as aggressively under Klaus's leadership as his outspoken tone suggested. In fact, the government "pursued an active *antibankruptcy* policy" (Stark and Bruszt 1998:155 emphasis in original). Yet Klaus's Civic Democratic Party (ODS) bound the fate of the economy to risk-taking behavior. "In the words of their party platform, 'the [ODS] is a party of the talented, enterprising segment of society, whose members are willing to take risks, and responsibility for themselves, their family, municipality, and the governance of the country'" (cited in Janos 2000:381). The ODS expects individuals to take care of their families and for families to be less dependent on the state.

Here an independent state and independent families go hand-in-hand, and families did not appear as useful a tool to privatization as they had to socialist redistribution. The early postsocialist state did not set forth a grand design in which functioning families are a crucial participant. The family's absence from discussions of large-scale economic and political changes and reform suggested that people were left to fend for themselves. This is not to say, however, that this newly self-reliant postsocialist family is not part of the state's story about itself. As I will demonstrate, the family and the state have shifted in concert with a reconceptualized state and new terminologies of personal responsibility.

Family also remains an idiom and outlet for the political criticism of family activists, as it was during the socialist era.

Since 1997 the Social Democrats (ČSSD) have tenuously controlled the government. Former Minister of Labor and Social Affairs and current Prime Minister Vladimír Špidla are more willing to link the fate of the state to that of the family through official means, remaining attentive to the concerns of lower-income families as well as a supposedly causal relationship between unfavorable economic outlook and low birthrates. Perhaps Špidla's rise to power can be attributed to his party's appreciation for foundational socialist concepts, especially after growing economic insecurity in the mid-to-late 1990s.

The Social Democrats link their work to social justice, Europeanization and a carefully regulated market (ČSSD 1998:8-12). According to the party's social doctrine, family is the source of civic responsibility: "human solidarity forms and asserts itself at first in family life. It is based on the ethic of care and service which is expressed especially in the attitudes and acts of women...and is the embodiment of the most human traditions of European civilization" (ČSSD 1998:11). Additionally, Špidla's ČSSD has advocated the re-universalization of some public services for families with children that were cut in the early-to-mid 1990s. Špidla is certainly more "pro-family" than Klaus and the ODS, who—as family activists often complain—are "anti-family" because they rarely address the family at all. Yet left-leaning politicians are not the only self-proclaimed "pro-family" public representatives. The Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) and Freedom

Union (*Unie svobody*) consider a pro-marriage platform both pro-family, pro-society and pro-state.

Ideologies of the family inside and outside state settings have multiplied, each offering a distinct vision of family, society and the state. It is important to point out how a multi-party system diversifies and complicates what was previously a univocal position on the Czechoslovak family, but my focus here will not be on Parliamentary control, party platforms and the appeal of particular prime ministers. Rather, I am concerned with the significant symbolic shift in relations between the state and the family since the Czech Republic's "return to Europe" and the introduction of a market economy. Regardless of which party heads the Czech Parliament, these processes inaugurated a new state of the family, one shaped more by values associated with a free market and a European ideal than by a singular leadership agenda.

The following analysis is divided into two parts. First, I examine the ways in which "postsocialist transformation," like "socialist development," indicates the state's evolution from backward to enlightened. I examine the position of the family and women as regards this most recent progress narrative, one of Europeanization. Second, I explore changes in state involvement in family life, particularly as regards social provisions for families with children, the creation of living minimums for poor families and discourses of individual responsibility in light of a free market and "free society." I argue that, while the socialist state and family were embedded in one another, we are witnessing a growing separation of these two social units in the postsocialist era.

THE EUROPEAN FAMILY

Progress narratives were no less central to post-1989 Czechoslovakia than they were to socialist Czechoslovakia (see Gal and Kligman 2000:10). Public representatives simply re-scripted the end goal of that progress, while continuing to characterize the state as forward-looking. Rather than moving upward and onward toward socialist utopia, the language of postsocialist transformation turned the country west, toward reabsorption, rebuilding, a return, and “transformation” (*proměna* or *transformace*) “back” into Europe, democracy and the international community (Kumar 2001:71-103; Večerník and Matějů 1999).

In addition to sharing a template of progress with earlier socialist proclamations, postsocialist public representatives also referred to the interwar era (1918-1938) as the origin of the state. Socialist historians, as we have seen, argued that the seeds and roots of socialist revolution preceded World War II and the party's eventual rise to power. Postsocialist Czech and Slovak historians and the western historians who wrote history on behalf of their eastern colleagues during the Cold War also considered the interwar era the origin point of a Czechoslovak, multi-party democracy. The interwar era is unique in its usefulness to histories that often stand in contrast to one another (note, both narratives deny ties to fascism). On the one hand, local interest in socialism was growing and legal following World War I. Yet, on the other, local and foreign scholars (see Fischer-Galati 1992; Janos 2000; Radvanová and Zuklínová 1999; Wolchik 1992) often measured the potential for post-1989 democracy in the countries of East Central Europe by evaluating political behavior at the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Unlike many of its neighbors, Czechoslovakia ranked high in these accounts, while countries to the south and east scored poorly. Not only is the city of Prague located geographically to the west of the western European city of Vienna, philosopher-presidents Tomáš G. Masaryk and Václav Havel occupied the castle (also the seat of the Bohemian kingdom, then that of a foreign empire, and closed off during communist rule) from 1918-1935 and 1989-2003, respectively, and were warmly received abroad. Moreover, according to these depictions, Czechoslovakia was democratic, civilized and developed in comparison to other young nation-states following the dissolution of the Hapsburg Empire in 1918. Many predicted, therefore, that Czechoslovakia was likely to return to Europe with the least amount of headache because the groundwork had been laid at the moment of the state's birth in 1918 (Fischer-Galati 1992; Janos 2000).

The growing body of anthropology in East Central Europe has been strongly critical of this kind of "capitalist 'triumphalism,'" as Daphne Berdahl puts it, "that entails a certain linear, teleological thinking in relation to the direction of change: from socialism to dictatorship to liberal democracy, from a plan to a market economy" (2000:1; see Gal and Kligman 2000:11; Creed 1998; Verdery 1996; Burawoy and Verdery 1999:2; Wolfe 2000:197-198). In the Czech case, linear thinking guided leaders and foreign observers in conceiving of market transformation as the obvious way of putting the country back on track. The socialist era in these formulations appears as a tragic mistake, an anomaly and an interruption of inevitable democratic processes. Particularly once Slovakia (the state's less modern, less western half; see Musil 1995; Leff 1997) was gotten rid of in December 1992, the Czech Republic could more easily

join international institutions such as the OECD (1996), NATO (1999) and the European Union (anticipated 2004).

The experience of reform has been bumpier—and the linear approach to state transformation idealistic and often unproductive. President Havel, for one, voiced strong opposition to the break-up of the Czech and Slovak Republics—often referred to as, using another family metaphor to talk about the state, the “velvet divorce.” The “velvet” in velvet divorce builds on the velvet revolution of 1989. Metaphors of family relations do not stop there. For example, “[After 1989] the Czechs did not offer the Slovaks a new type of marriage and did not understand that keeping the inherited concept of federation was not an attractive prospect for Slovakia” (Musil 1995:5). Additionally, political scientists in the early 1990s often contrasted the bloodless and legalistic break-up of Czechoslovakia to the bloody and violent break-up taking place at the same time in Yugoslavia. The use of an everyday marital form of expression in the Czech and Slovak case, particularly given the frequency of divorce in Czechoslovakia, evaluates state behavior in central and northern Europe in terms of a typical falling out. By regional standards, the Czechs were found to be more peaceful, more European—as opposed to the ethnic “boiler keg” of the southern Balkans (see Todorova 1990, 1997).

President Havel was forever insisting to western audiences and Czechs themselves that when the Czech Republic joins European institutions and western organizations, those institutions will also experience a transformation and redefinition in the face of changing geopolitical concepts (see Bunzl 2000:78). Havel valued the shared goals of a common Europe, which he saw as insurance against future warfare and

continental division and reason for military intervention in Yugoslavia, which he called “the most visible testing ground for Europe” (1998[1993]:131-132). He said, “Among [the values of an integrated Europe] are respect for the uniqueness and freedom of each human being, for a democratic and pluralistic political system, for a market economy, and for the principles of civil society and the rule of law” (1998[1993]:128). These principles have powerfully shaped the new state’s definition of itself and what it has to say about the family.

The Postsocialist Family Code

In the texts I examine from the postsocialist era, such as legal course books, legislation, and state-sponsored research, many aspects of the family remain consistent with those we observed during the socialist era. Notwithstanding several (near, though failed) parliamentary attempts to legalize same-sex domestic partnerships between 1995 and 1999 (see Sokolová 2001:287n44; Bunzl 2000:79, 94n14), the family still adds up to a man, woman, their children and often a third generation of grandparents. Moreover, the family’s value to society often mirrors earlier accounts. For example, *Family Code* specialists Senta Radvanová and Michaela Zuklínová write in the introduction to a civil code textbook that “without the prevailing existence of families, society as a whole is unimaginable” (1999:v).

Despite how political parties present their agenda as regards the family, then, family experts and policy makers reaffirmed the necessity and reality of families when amending family-related legislation. The family and marriage remain codified by a

Family Code (amended in 1998). The code reads “(1) Marriage is the long-term association of a man and woman and is protected by the law. (2) The main purpose of marriage is the founding of a family and the proper upbringing of children” (Holub and Nová 2000:13). The forthright statement of what it means to get married and have a family is characteristic of continental civil law as opposed to Anglo-American common law. For example, in the United States judicial interpretation of local statutes constitutes American “family law.” In most parts of the world, however, local codes are less open to interpretation and judges base their decisions on pre-existing, formal classifications, such as the *Czech Family Code*, when issuing rulings. Věra told me that they turned to Austrian and German models when making changes in the Czech Republic. Yet adopted revisions do not dramatically depart from the socialist-era format and content, which was also a kind of civil law.²⁶

Family judges Milan Holub and Hana Nová clarify in their explication of the code that the “purpose” (*učel*) of the family remains both social and biological: “social” because man and woman join together of their own choosing in a long-term bond. Husband and wife then educate and care for children. Marriage and family are “biological” in that they, according to Holub and Nová’s analysis, provide for “the reproduction of society and the satisfaction of emotional and sexual needs” (Holub and Nová 2000:13-14). As we observed during the socialist era, in the eyes of state representatives and authors of state texts, the family remains a product of social relations, policies and influences, while it is also equally a “natural” and preordained site of human

bonding. Authors of the most recent *Family Code* worked in particular to further protect biological entitlement, parental rights and privacy within the family.

During the socialist era the family stood at the center of a complex of state services which targeted family life and integrated narratives of family life with the state's own life course. Although the current *Family Code* continues to articulate the meaning of the family, marriage, how one gets married, the rights of married partners and children, and how to get divorced, other economic and political frameworks no longer make those meanings central to state processes. The postsocialist state has not entirely erased vestiges of paternalism toward individuals and families (Radvanová and Zuklínová 1999:10-11), but in 1992 and more fully in 1998 the Ministry of Justice amended the *Family Code* in light of a changing state. The groundwork was laid for the retreat of the state from familial domains.

In contrast to the socialist era, couples now have a right to marry in either a religious ceremony or a civil ceremony, children now have formal rights to live at their parents' living standards,²⁷ language of property rights has been reinserted into the *Family Code*, and it is more difficult to obtain a divorce from an unwilling party. Additionally, greater consent is needed of "biological" (*biologické*) parents when children are put up for adoption. It is important to note that, the preservation of parental rights (in the case of adoption) and children's rights (in the case of property rights) actually elaborated, rather than reduced, state involvement and supervision of the family (see Haney 2000). The rhetoric of growing separation between family and state seems to contradict the extension of state oversight as regards adoption and parental rights.

Authors and commentators on post-1989 family codes, however, interpreted new forms of state management as a way of guaranteeing individual rights.

The key innovation in these formulations rests not on the ongoing social purpose of the family, but on the activities of the state vis-à-vis family units. Radvanová and Zuklínová explain why certain legislation *does* pay attention to the family, offering a vocabulary for the new postsocialist state-family dynamic: “to protect privacy (*soukromí*), including the autonomy of married partners, future parents and children” (1999:v). The state more clearly delimits the family, creates boundaries around family units, households and property, and endows them with self-interest.

Control over personal information is now a “fundamental human right” (*základní lidská práva*) in the Czech Republic. A policymaker told me in 2000 that “the documents state that each citizen has the right to protection of their privacy and family life, and that each has the right not to have their personal data published or abused,” as often occurred during the socialist era. Although social workers continue to intervene and protect endangered children, the state no longer considers itself an aspect of every family. European statements on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which the Czech Republic signed on to in the early 1990s, guide amendments to the *Family Code* and are measurements of the law’s appropriateness (Radvanová and Zuklínová 1999:v, 11).²⁸ In all of this, the idea of adjusting Czech codes to European standards guides state-family relations (Zuklínová 1998:14).

Western Europe serves as a measure of what it means to have enacted up-to-date family legislation. And as in the case of democratization forecasts, legal historians re-

established Czech ties to earlier European legal traditions. In their telling of the history of the Czech *Family Code*, for example, professors Radvanová and Zuklínová connect Czech family and civil codes to those established in France and the Austrian Empire (of which the Czech lands were a part) in the early nineteenth century. At the end of World War I, they continue, Czechoslovakia led Europe in the unprecedented disassociation of marriage from the influence of the Catholic Church (1999:7).

In this respect, Radvanová and Zuklínová and several other legal commentators have interpreted the reintroduction of church ceremonies in the post-1989 era as unprogressive. When making this point, Judge Brabcová during an interview likened Catholic stewardship of marriage during the Austro-Hungarian era to totalitarian control of the family during the socialist era (see Hendrychová 1998). Today, in her opinion, although one can choose to have a civil or a church ceremony, the religious option is un-European:

The majority of Europe just has civil ceremonies. Unfortunately we got the choice of church ceremonies again in 1992It is not modern, because in France they must have civil ceremonies. Germany, Sweden, Austria—they all require civil services, only we've returned to the church ones. It happened when the Slovaks were still part of the state; they are mostly Catholic. The Catholics gained political ground because they were persecuted during socialism.

Despite Judge Brabcová's frustration with the Czech Republic's "unmodern" (*nemoderní*) option, her comments are telling in their use of western European family procedures as a reference point and as solid legal ground. She also provides an example of how, in terms of family roles and behavior, Slovakia was often cast as undeveloped and as potentially holding the Czech half of the state "back" from its return to Europe.

Family legislators and civil servants were eager to explain the importance of harmonizing Czech law with international declarations and agreements, particularly in the case of parental involvement in adoption procedures and children's rights in general. As Věra told me, "We could never have gotten into the European Union with the old laws because they repressed the rights of biological parents." Another employee at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs summarized Czech obligations as a signatory to international treaties, explaining that "all international agreements on fundamental human rights, to which the Czech Republic has signed and ratified, have legal priority and are in immediate effect...our laws have got to square up with those agreements" (see Hendrych 1998:12). Thus Moscow's previous influence and control has been passed on to those monitoring and facilitating Czech accession to the European Union.

Women and Europe

As during the socialist era, women and men retain equal rights within marriage and divorce and are equally responsible for caring and contributing to their children's upbringing: "Both parents have parenting rights and duties," affirms the *Family Code* (*Zákon o rodině* cited in Kocourek 1997:20; see Holub and Nová 2000:31-35). Furthermore, the Czech Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, a companion document to the Constitution, guarantees equal opportunity and protection against discrimination in public life. Talk of shared opportunity for all citizens and gender neutrality have eclipsed women's socialist emancipation as a measure of what the state provides its citizens. State spokespersons often appeared impatient and dismissive

toward the liberating and emancipating slogans that characterized policies toward women and the family during the previous era. Both socialist and postsocialist states, however, claimed to offer "equality" (*rovnost*) for men and women, but the terms of what it means to be equal have changed (Figure 1.7).

State texts no longer simultaneously celebrate women's liberation while affirming their maternal duties. Although only women are eligible for twenty-eight weeks of "maternity leave" (*materšská dovolena*) immediately preceding and following giving birth (Holub and Nová 2000:362), in the early 1990s, a "contribution for mothers" (*materšský příspěvek*)—the receipt of which lasts for three to four years following maternity leave—was renamed "contribution for parents" (*rodičovský příspěvek*).²⁹ Either parent is eligible for a paid period at home to care for young children. The amount of the contribution is the same for all and intends to substitute income otherwise earned outside the home. Maternity leave is contingent upon employment, but the contribution for parents is not.³⁰

As was the case during the socialist era, parental obligations to children are independent of whether or not the two parents are, or ever were, married. In the case of divorce, both parents have an equal claim to custody of children during divorce proceedings. Similarly, men and women have an equal claim to property acquired jointly during the marriage should divorce occur. The *Family Code* calls these things "joint property" (*společné jmění*) rather than socialist-era "joint ownership" (*spoluvlastnictví*), a term which did not acknowledge the potential for individual claims on things/property. Both parents are also expected, within their means, to contribute to their children's upkeep (Hendrychová 1998:20-24; Holub and Nová 2000:187-202, 217-223). A reduced

Figure 1.7: Comparing the terms of equality (*rovnost*)**SOCIALIST EQUALITY****POSTSOCIALIST EQUALITY**

Interwar origins

Interwar origins

Moscow

Brussels

Development

Return, re-absorption

Redistribution

Privatization

Modes of production

Restitution

Children's rights

Parent's rights

Joint ownership

Joint property

Motherhood

Parenthood

Paternalism

Privacy

Women's emancipation

Gender neutrality

Protection

Anti-discrimination

Family

Workplace

Collective

Individual

Passivity

Motivation

Protection

Social security

State care

Civil society

Family as the cell of society

Poor families as a social risk

Morality, ethics

Freedom, opportunity

emphasis on mothers' exclusive caretaking roles through the use of "parental" rather than "maternal" modifiers, and the downplaying of women's maternal function, suggests that women are no longer automatically considered parenting and caretaking persons in the eyes of the state.

State texts from the socialist and postsocialist eras appear to share goals of emancipating women, offering men and women equal opportunities, and using legislation and state language to improve women's lives. With the changing orientation of the state and westward gaze, though, a substantially new agenda and era of women's rights has begun. Yet again, pressures from outside the Czech Republic have affected the state's treatment of women and altered the terms of measuring state "progress" vis-à-vis women. Rather than link women's rights to their roles in the *family*, Europe-inspired principles have prompted state representatives to focus primarily on women's rights in the *workplace*.

Most notably, policy makers have integrated European Union terms of equality into the Czech employment act and labor code, such as anti-discrimination policies in the workplace, policies against "sexual harassment" (*sexuální obtěžování*),³¹ and the demand of equal pay for equal work (Čermáková 2000:37-39; Seppanen Anderson 2002). The new gender equity policies are a requirement of membership in the European Union and failure to adopt them could prevent entry. Paradoxically, the targeting of women in the workplace through anti-discrimination legislation has made it clear that, in its treatment of women primarily as mothers and nurturers during the socialist era, earlier maternalist policies kept them earning less than men and working in positions of lesser authority and

prestige because they were always tied to the home. Goals for what in Czech translation is called the "positive discrimination of women" (*pozitivní diskriminace žen*) have displaced the socialist era's "protection" (*ochrana*) of women and families. Some might argue that, because of the strong desire to join the European Union among Czech state representatives, anti-discrimination and related equal protection legislation has had more of a "real" effect on women's rights than the "artificial" assurances and inconsequential talk of equality and emancipation inherited from the socialist era (see *Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí* 1998a, 1998b, 1999a). Thus, despite the continuity of state agendas, spokespersons treat the foreign voice of women's equality (heralded in the early 1990s by western feminism, unpopular precisely because it sounded like socialist-era slogans) as substantially different from the tenets of Marxist-Leninist women's liberation.

This is not to say, though, that legislators have made women's issues a priority. In fact, precisely because of the hollowness of Marxism-Leninism and the foreign voice of women's equality in the current period, state and non-state actors have strongly disapproved of the use of potentially un-neutral state language and legislation toward women, such as preventive measures against discrimination and sexual harassment. For its part, the media appeared both puzzled and amused during the months leading up to the legislation's adoption in mid-2000.³² Researchers at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs have observed along these lines that

the equal status of men and women ...is currently taken for granted as part of civic equality and as a fundamental human right guaranteed by the Constitution. These circumstances, along with the fact that communism made the equal status of men and women part of its official ideology, had

until recently made a more active assertion of the specific interests and needs of women unnecessary. (Kuchařová and Kroupa 1999:64)

Czech critics have argued, moreover, that by focusing on women exclusively, the anti-discrimination language discriminates against men, on the one hand, while codifying distinctions between men and women on the other (Watson and Lindenberg 2002:162; Havelková 1993a:67; Zeman 2002:12-13).³³

The shifting of state attention from the family to work has not had the effect of lessening women's associations with the family. For example, state nurseries have been closed in large numbers. The closings reduce the possibility of balancing work and family (UZIS ČR 2000). Critics say the state does not care about families any more. In response, state analysts counter that Czechs are not having children and nursery facilities are less in demand. If they are having children, though, women are staying at home on extended parental leaves and being pulled out of new market activities (in everyday discussions Czechs continue to use the term for "maternity," rather than parental, leave: *matěřská*). With the changing terms of family benefits and the coding of the marketplace as male, women are bound to the home and children—perhaps more than ever. Mothers surely took advantage of maternity leave during the socialist era. Today, though, they have lost their paternal partner in the state.

THE MARKET, THE FAMILY AND "THE LIMITS OF SOCIAL OBLIGATION"

The formerly paternalist and interventionist state now asks citizens to take care of themselves, to assume responsibility and show self-initiative. Changing terms of foundational social units—once collective (state/society/family), now individual (single

person/family)—are apparent in both global and local arenas and redefine personal accountability and responsibility. For example, in a visit with German President von Weizsäcker in 1990, President Havel spoke as he often did against the concept of “collective responsibility” and in favor of “individual responsibility” for immoral acts: “to accept the idea of collective guilt and collective responsibility means directly or unwittingly to weaken the guilt or responsibility of individuals” (1998[1990]:26). Havel urged Czechs to face their participation in events which have otherwise been attributed to a state self (the expulsion of millions of Germans from the Czech lands following World War II, the perpetuation of totalitarianism, “Czech” xenophobia). State spokespersons for the most part no longer locate supreme culpability, or moral currency, in a collective body.

The turn toward individual responsibility appears central to the revamping of the state in a variety of other ways. In the case of families, Czech state representatives redefined the state by changing the terms of its financial province when initiating a market economy. New social policy has effected distinctions between households, eliminating the state’s patronage of all families, requiring individual accountability, and (re)introducing the possibility of need on a case-by-case basis. Regardless of which party (neoliberal or social democrat) controls Parliament “[a]n important aspect of the social reform is the decrease in the dependency of the citizens on the government” (*Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí* 1999b:7 *sic*). The government amended and revised family care and protection, organizing the new “social safety network” (*sociální záchranné síťi*) in light of social and economic vulnerability, increased individual enterprise and the

differentiation of living standards. Those family units with persistent financial claims (*nároky*) on the state continue to engage with an elaborate system of public protection measures, but reciprocity is no longer automatic. As I demonstrate further in this dissertation, reciprocity is increasingly challenged and ethnicized. Within the framework of privatization, the meaning of remaining benefits has changed.

Equal living standards and support for all is no longer a universal, economic right. Some family-related benefits remain "universal/across-the-board" (*plošné*, including the contribution to parents, a funeral award, a birthing grant), but other payments to families are based upon household income (a monthly contribution for children, social supplements, housing subsidies, transportation subsidies for children, payments up to the living minimum for families with children). "The more unfavorable the family's living standard, the higher the benefits paid them," explains a benefits brochure available at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. It continues, "the low-income family's earnings are more greatly increased and the unfavorable living standard in which the family finds itself is watched more closely" (*Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí* 1997:17 *sic*).

Benefits legislation put in place in 1995 established a two-tiered system of provisions, which based receipt of family awards on a manifold range of criteria and material circumstances. The basic program is called social "support" (*podpora*). Local state social support offices (*státní sociální podpora*) administer both universal and income-tested awards (see Figure 1.8). These funds are "preventative" and designed to keep families from "sinking below the poverty line" (Kepková 1997:74). State employees insist that the cut-offs for support awards are so high that nearly all Czechs



Figure 1.8: State Social Support Office



Figure 1.9: Care Benefits Office

qualify for them (policy historians, benefits accountants and research studies all cite the figure 95%; see Seppanen Anderson 2002). Despite the sense among policy makers that most Czechs have a legitimate claim to these benefits, all must now file paperwork and demonstrate their eligibility.

The second set of programs is called social "assistance" or "care" (*péče*), and social policymakers designed it for those who "find themselves in situations of an absolute want of material means and, furthermore, social situations where the persons concerned are unable to meet their own basic needs" (Kepková 1997:75).³⁴ Recipients of family "care" must already draw on all "support" measures yet still live below the living minimum, a figure based on the number of people in the household and children's ages. Unemployed recipients must also be registered at an "unemployment office" (*pracák*). Local care offices provide financial and non-financial aid for families, often requiring repeated office visits by applicants (see Figure 1.9) and periodic home visits by benefits accountants. The system of care is integrated with the tasks of "classic social workers" (*klasické sociálky*), who respond to reports of family violence and child neglect.

The state once used the family to terminate class differences. The Czech Republic today, however, sets "limits on social obligation," as Michael Katz puts it, even if this means some families live better than others (1989:4). Social benefits are no longer "protection" (*ochrana*) but "security" (*bezpečnost*), signaling a transition from entitlement for all to damage control. Rather than use the family as a tool to redistribute resources (housing, access to education, employment, household goods) and to dismantle a classed society, postsocialist policies toward the family accept that distinctions among

individuals and households are inevitable. Policymakers have tried to minimize the effects of the emergent market economy, but the *recognition* of social class, social weakness, unemployment and quantifiable differences marked the end of a state that once based its future upon uniformly healthy family "cells" and a motto of just redistribution.

Nevertheless, state texts and family spokespersons do conceive of state and social identity in terms of an ethic toward the family. During my fieldwork family specialists debated bitterly the meaning and purpose of policies toward families in terms that suggested Czech humanity rests on how the state conceives of its role in family life, be it hands-off or involved. For some, such as those whom I illustrate in the following section called "Family Distortion," the emergence of "weaker" families was to be expected during economic transformation and a necessary sacrifice, though hopefully short-term. For these family experts, free enterprise, redrawn boundaries between family and state, and an end to state support of families with plenty of their own material resources is democratic and moral. For others, introduced in the section called "The Uncaring State," the visibility of poor families who cannot take care of themselves, and especially children, is inexcusable and uncivilized, never mind the economic system in place.

Family Distortion

Social support reform in the 1990s aimed to reduce individual reliance on state funds and to encourage able Czechs to work and provide for themselves. In the words of researchers at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, income-based awards were "to move [citizens] from social passivity and relying on State guarantees towards

development of capacity to master such situations with own efforts (made by citizens, family members, the community, social groups)" (Kepková 1997:73 *sic*). Policy makers were particularly concerned with not "distorting" the economy through the protracted, unmerited funding of productive persons. Pulling away from capable families—while cautiously allowing for their use of support buffers—would build "motivation for economic activity" (Kepková 1997:73-74). State specialists reduced and categorized state awards with this in mind. They aimed to invigorate the population by backing off, hoping consequentially to change the personality of the state.

The caring socialist parent-state had cared too much, this critique of socialist paternalism goes, and Czechs had taken the state for granted (Kepková 1997; MPSV 1997, 1999b). Parents were immature children having children. They did not know how to take care of their own, how to be grown-ups. And the parent-state had fostered this cycle of co-dependence. Judge Brabcová explained that the "socialist state took everything upon itself. It said, 'we are the state, we will take care of the family and children.'" She felt the socialist state destroyed all other mechanisms of care for families, such as charities, civic organizations and preventive activities, insisting foolishly that it had solved all social problems. Now, however, the family is a "private thing, people can do whatever they want." The state continues to care for citizens with social support and assistance, but only when care is sought.

"Responsibility" (*odpovědnost*) remains a keyword in the policy literature as it does in Havel's speeches, but it indicates answering to the self instead of serving as a basis for state intertwinement and oversight. Although individual agency (be it in the

form of a single person or a family unit) has displaced collective agency in state texts and speeches, some perceive individuals as having the ability to limit the social and economic progress of the entire society. Responsibility points to the need for individuals within their families to stop leaning on the state when they could pursue other forms of self-sustenance.

One of the worst offenses was the possibility of the state supporting and funding “wealthy families” (*bohaté rodiny*) who might take advantage of loopholes in social support while simultaneously earning money through private enterprise. The suggestion of overlapping family/state models—redistributive alongside private enterprise—legitimated the enforcement of an income-based system of support and care. When I inquired during family history interviews as to whom the state should be helping, family members distinguished between those who were truly poor and down on their luck and could not get by any other way, and those who tried to get as much as they could and must be refused public money. In the “care” office where I worked, the faintest suggestion by benefits recipients of unreported income insulted state employees greatly. In those interactions, the *denial* of state money by family service employees became a morally good act.

Postsocialist ideologies of the family have undertaken a new vision of social organization in which the family and state are distinct social fields which, unless the family is weak and unable to take care of itself, only interact in the realm of a growing “civil society” (*občanská společnost*; see Figure 1.10). Because the intentions of the totalitarian state were always suspect, and because the implication is that Czechs need to

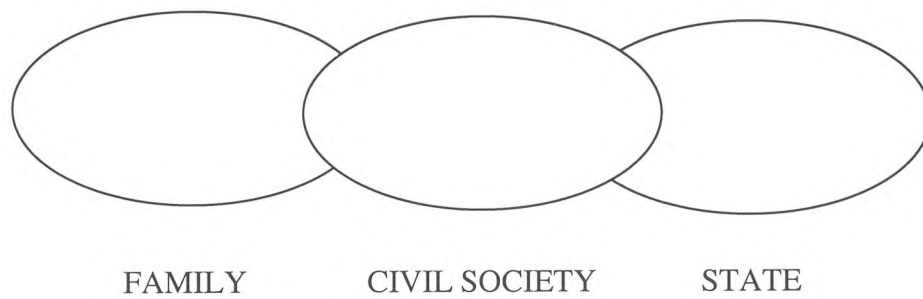


Figure 1.10: Visual Image of Postsocialist Social Organization, Three Social Units (Family, Civil Society, State)

learn how to be grown-ups, the legitimate public voice for families has shifted from state mouthpieces to civic organizations speaking on behalf of specific goals and values (anti-abortion, pro-choice, family planning, feminist, anti-feminist, pro-family, gay rights, foster care, youth, Christian, libertarian, communist, pro-social services for the family, in support of funds for disabled children, and more).³⁵ These groups cover a broad spectrum of political beliefs and increasingly participate in policy discussions to influence the direction in which Czech families are headed (see *Národní centrum pro rodinu* 2000, 2002; Kepková 1997:73).

In many cases these non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are staffed and/or advised by former state policymakers, and often "supported" by public funds. Thus civic groups continue to be associated with the state sphere. As we will see in the next chapter, this political activity and involvement in public issues and activism remain unusual and unpopular among family members, although, the former family policymakers who now work for NGOs often insist that the family, not the state, is the source of civic responsibility. And postsocialist state representatives hope that when individuals are in need they will first turn to their families, and then perhaps to these civic organizations, for support and care.

Discourses about ending individual passivity and an over-attentive redistributive state are reproduced in today's demographic discourses. Birthrates during the 1990s steadily fell, continuing the demographic unease that characterized Czechoslovakia in the 1960s-1980s. Unlike the immature, young parents of the socialist era, however, mothers and fathers in the current period are older and, in the words of demographers and social

scientists, more in touch with their reproductive decisions. The “grown-up” (*dospělé*) decision-making suggests that Czechs of childbearing age choosing not to have children are learning from the mistakes of the past. Thus, as I demonstrate in Chapter 5, despite continued concern over low birthrates and appeals by labor economists and demographers to raise the rates through public measures, lower numbers of births, lower divorce rates and lower abortion rates attest to the spread of “reasonable behavior” and greater attention to self-interest.

The Uncaring State

“The market,” Caroline Humphrey and Ruth Mandel observe, “is not experienced as a purely economic phenomenon” (2002:1). In the Czech case, “the market” stands for a range of positive and negative effects on the family. Those who have benefited from the end of a state-controlled economy welcomed their children’s new “freedoms” (*svobody*) and “opportunities” (*možnosti*), and the possibility of self-fulfillment. Concerned family specialists who work for the state saw a danger, though, in the severed bonds of state and family, and on the growing primacy of business in the affairs of the state. These specialists had worked on family policies, services and law during the socialist era and were concerned with preserving a caring ethic. As one policymaker told me, emphasizing the continuity of the state’s history of safeguarding against economic inequality, “We have always had a tradition of legal social protection for families and children.” This tradition began even as early as the end of Hapsburg rule, she insisted, and it continues today.

Other family experts disagreed that this tradition has persisted. Věra was angry about the low priority *Family Code* revisions took on in the 1990s. Family judges had to wait nine years, until 1998, to see socialist principles amended or removed from a code they continued to use everyday in court. In Věra's frustrated opinion the Ministry of Justice had "more important" things to address throughout most of the decade, indicating that the family and the economically vulnerable are of little interest. For her, work with families is deeply meaningful, and the concerns of children caught between divorcing parents, orphaned or abused were not being treated satisfactorily by the state: "the *Civil Code*, *Business Code* and those grand sorts of issues were dealt with by 1992, while the *Family Code* was put off until 1998....family law deserves more attention. In the legal hierarchy, family issues are not equivalent to other legal fields." Although Věra was worried that the left-leaning tendencies of the government in the late 1990s would "return" it to socialism, her depiction of tensions between the market and the family in the law reproduces oppositions between the economy and family that foundational socialist theory tried to dissolve. Moreover, her understanding of what is happening in Czech courtrooms offers a fearful social vision in which market concerns are not just opposed to, but overwhelm, the family (Figure 1.11; Collier et al. 1992:37).

Iva Hodrová is the chairwoman of the only official women's organization in existence during the socialist era. The organization still claims a large membership around the country. Iva used to work as a researcher in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and advised former Minister of Social Affairs Špidla (now Prime Minister) while I was doing fieldwork. She urged Špidla to reintroduce universal child allowances,

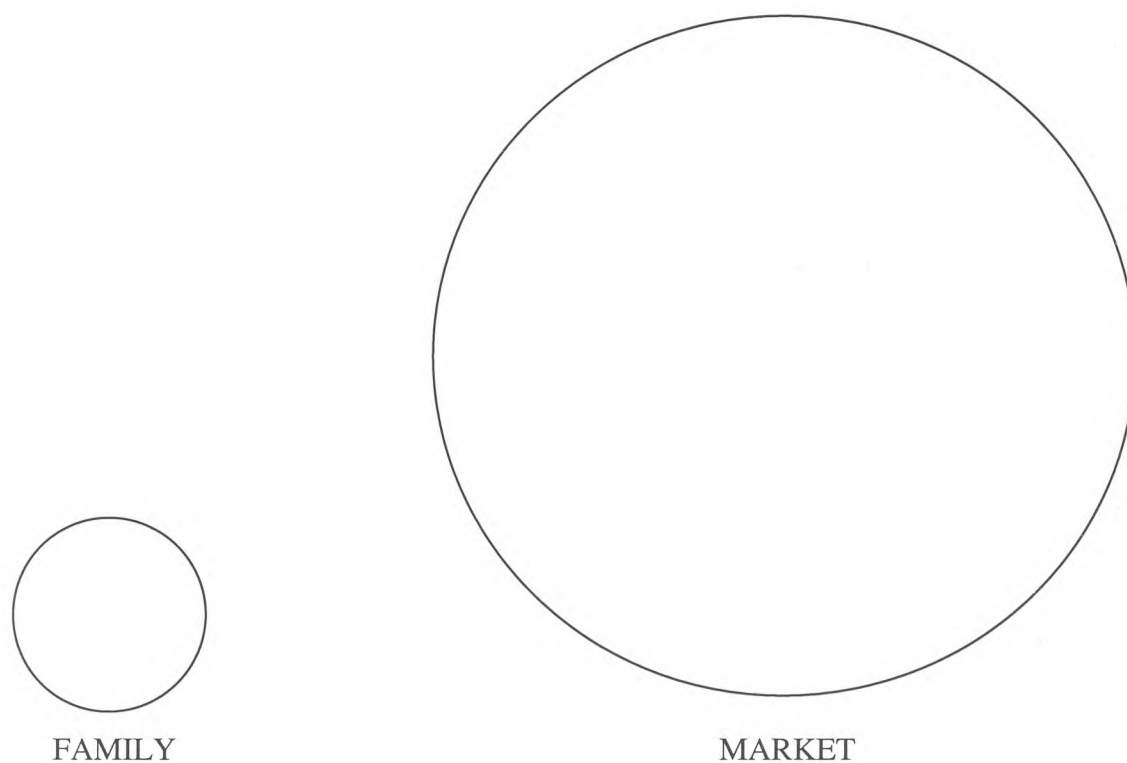


Figure 1.11: Visual Image of Postsocialist Social Organization, Two Social Units (Family and the Market)

which, she argued, are not intended for potentially undeserving parents but as income for *children*. And children are always deserving. According to Hodrová nothing has changed, because children and the family remain the “basis” or “foundation” (*základ*) of the state, and “if the state wants to be healthy it must have healthy families, it must support them.” Moreover, if people are not having children today, it’s because they have lost the guarantee of state support, in particular the shutting of nurseries and income-based children’s allowances, which allowed them to start a family during the socialist era. Social policy, it follows, should emulate the family’s critical social role by reinstituting redistributive awards.

Still, prevailing postsocialist configurations hope that “the market” will do what the state did before. The policies fully expected some families to be at risk and they safeguard against dramatic economic endangerment. Contrasts and differences among families, the policy texts admitted, were going to develop as a result of privatization. Family specialists were often angry that families were conceived of as burdens in this way, that those addressed by the state in the current period are classified as “weaker.” Today’s social policy is troubling, they said again and again, because the state treats families as a “social problem” rather than as a social solution. Those like Věra and Iva, who felt that the state should remain fully focused on families, approached market distractions critically and suspiciously. Some family activists in civic settings saw non-financial support of the family (such as a nonexistent family policy that would proclaim that people should have families, that families are the most important social unit, that families are critical to the state, to civil society, to individuals) as an inoffensive form of

“support” because it would not reduce the family to economic calculation and would separate the family from market influences.

Others tied understandings of “the marketplace” and what happens within it to the greed, immoral behavior and materialism the socialist state had worked to rid from family domains. The director of the Home for Mothers, Jitka Králová, also a state representative and a specialist in social work and social policy, saw desire for material gain as one of the things that brought mothers to the Home she ran. Like Věra in her courtroom, Jitka loved her work because she felt she was able to make a difference in the lives of women and children, many of whom had no where else to turn to for help. But she sometimes grew exasperated by the unwillingness of some to work, and with what she perceived as a desire for goods and material gain (*Lidové noviny* 6-19-91). This is another example of disdain for overlapping family models: a redistributive state and family (in the form of “taking” from the state, living off of the state) and the market/privatized family (desire for things, personal gain) combined to immoral effect. Jitka suggested in her criticism of this phenomena that *self-interest* might actually be what led the women in her Home to protracted dependency on the state. In some cases, then, “the market” evoked the opposite of its intentions.

FROM CELLS TO ATOMS

A family in isolation is a family in danger.

--The Family in Focus

Josef Zeman, National Center for the Family (2002:5)

Western European social democracies, particularly those also experiencing low birthrates, are not averse to the highly structured funding of families, including child allowances, lengthy maternity leaves and related universal programs for families. They also simultaneously encourage private enterprise and individual responsibility. The Czech Republic appears to be headed in this direction. The changing terms of Czech family policy, however, follow decades of unrelenting rhetoric about the importance of families to the state, the mutual dependence of the state and family, and the moral imperative of support for families, women and children. A reduced emphasis on families during the postsocialist era, however slight, has been perceived as both the family's liberation and its downfall.

Throughout this chapter I have demonstrated that what it means to be a family is the product of modern state ideologies and that the family is a signifier of the state. Both socialist and postsocialist state representatives formulated their projects in narratives of progress, and the family was a marker of development. As part of the two modernizing projects (scientific rationalism and, then, Europeanization), representatives drew on families and the family function to define state responsibility and the purpose of state influence. An investigation into state texts and utterances concerning the family reveals changing histories of the state and accompanying social visions. Throughout the twentieth-century these tales left family membership unaltered. But like histories of the

state, what family members are thought to provide for each other, society and the state varies.

During the socialist era, members of families were linked to the state by policies that awarded them a share in public goods and services. The state, in turn, used the family as an instrument to redistribute economic security. State policies demanded contributions by all individuals to society. In contrast to this image of a fully productive populace, the state's critics argued that Czechs and Slovaks grew lazy and immature during the socialist era, taking advantage of an over-protective, paternalist state.

In the postsocialist era, the state has re-introduced the right to own property, parents' greater authority over children, and the right to work for one's own rather than for the collective good. Those who might be perceived as "unproductive," however, are subject to the ongoing involvement of the state in family life through policies resembling those of the socialist era. Yet the "productive" are still eligible for a range of family-based awards while also emulating new terms of autonomy, responsibility and independence from the state. Some policy makers and politicians believe that growing differences in living standards among Czechs (children in particular) are immoral. Other social actors involved with family issues respond that the overbearing state is an even greater danger.

The debate continues. The above quote from family activist Josef Zeman portrays the family as dangerously cut off from formal and informal systems of support. Zeman responds negatively to state requests that families take care of themselves and that families are a burden on the state, and his work with the National Center for the Family

publicizes civic and governmental family resources (2002). Zeman wants to keep the family and the world around it integrated and mutually dependent. When exposed to statements like his, I pictured a family once fully shrouded in the cloak of a caring state now left out in the cold to its own devices. Zeman's concerns speak to my argument that, in the postsocialist era, utter autonomy and individualization are too risky and often unrealistic. While state texts increasingly venerate individual units—as they once did the collective—family relations remain significant to state representatives in their everyday work with poorer families.

Families also have a say in what it means to be a family. As I now demonstrate in Chapter 2, the perspective of some family members on the changing state-family relationship is the opposite of Zeman's. In their experiences, state influences during the socialist era closed people off from one another and the totalitarian state. This was sometimes called "atomization," not mutual dependence or harmonization. To them, the postsocialist era was, in contrast, an "opening up," and they were more involved and personally invested in public arenas (work, the market). I also demonstrate that poorer families experienced postsocialist policies as increasing, rather than minimizing, interactions with the state. Their family relationships and material circumstances, moreover, set limits on participation in postsocialist progress and promise.

Chapter 2: Narrating Families, Narrating the State

The truth is that Czechs have long lacked a clear consciousness of the continuities of their own state, because modern definitions of what it means to be Czech were formed when "the state" was a foreign monarchy and the heroes and heroines of the Czech imagination were, above all, simple people, rebels and heretics persecuted by the state, not the crowned heads of an ancient dynasty.

--Prague in Black and Gold:
Scenes from the Life of a European City
Peter Demetz (1997:65)

ANTHROPOLOGY AND FAMILY IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE

In the preceding chapter I examined the ways in which families and states participate in shared systems of meaning. Drawing on ethnographic studies of states, I argued that Czech ideas about the relation between the state and the family shifted in tandem with changing institutional (economic, political) forms. This approach contrasts with tendencies in the social sciences to (a) assign causality to state and political domains and (b) treat family as an unvarying social phenomena. My claims were based on data gathered from observations and interviews in state sites, policy texts, family law and other official publications. Here I turn to an analysis of encounters and interactions between the state and the family from the perspective of families. This chapter reinforces the argument that state ideologies and family forms share a cultural order, but I demonstrate that the two institutions symbolically struggle with one another in individual

family histories. While Chapter 1 supports Collier, Rosaldo and Yanagisako's insistence that there is no universal family form or morality by pointing out that the meanings of states and families change over time, the material I present from Czech family histories reintroduces associations between family and claims to universal truths. Indeed, Czechs often assign goodness and morality to the family, and their opposites to the state.

According to ethnographers of East Central Europe, family was the sphere in which everyday life was lived and experienced during the socialist era; in other words, a "real" world existed in the family. In contrast, the state (public sphere, government, politics, bureaucracy, the party) stood for immorality, deceit, oppression and injustice. Two patterns of the family's relationship with the state emerge from this literature. I call these configurations the "atomization" and "family network" arguments. Although they map out seemingly opposing processes (atomization and social isolation versus expansive networks), a close look at socialist-era ethnography proves that the two processes almost always shaded into each other and overlapped. They are not mutually exclusive despite competing images of the position of the family vis-à-vis the "outside" world. "Family networks," moreover, are important resources in the postsocialist era.

Authors drawing primarily on the concept of atomization depict families as the most individuated social units, alienated from the state, society and each other. István Rév's article, "The Advantages of Being Atomized" (1987), reveals the paradoxical development of extreme individualization within the collectivist economies of socialist East Central Europe. Rév's writing on Hungarian peasants stands as a trademark statement within the atomization literature by pointing out the political energy of

resistance at work within an atomized society, and the simultaneous inability of democratic opposition to harness discontent for political change: "the atomized mood of resistance blocks the formation of a democratic political structure. After long decades of extreme but successful individual, atomized resistance, it is hard to learn to act openly, to act in 'concert,' to trust one another" (1987:348; Hankiss 1990; Kideckel 1993).

Czech anthropologist Ladislav Holy (1996; and Kandert 1994 to some extent) argues that, because the government of socialist Czechoslovakia did not authorize a second economy in which the state and households participated in a shared exchange of goods (as was the case in Poland and Hungary; see Nagengast 1991 and Lampland 1995), the Czechoslovak setting offers an example of acute atomization and separation of individuals and their families from spheres of production and public domains. Holy frames his argument in terms of a strict private and public antagonism, which reached its height during the 1970s and 1980s era of "normalization" (*normalizace*) following the invasion of Warsaw Pact forces in 1968. According to this perspective a "third way" (not capitalism, not socialism) and dialogue with the government no longer appeared possible as it had during the 1960s, and individuals retreated into their family lives (private) and away from the state arena (public). Families, Holy argues, developed "a lifestyle oriented solely toward increasing material well-being and full self-realisation in the private sphere....holiday cottages, cars, and family pets rather than efforts to change the structure of society remained the priority of the overwhelming majority of the population" (1996:27-28). Authors who contribute to the atomization argument identify self-

protection and self-interest as primary movers of individuals and individuated family units, drawing clear boundaries between families and non-familial settings.

The second approach to family during the socialist era, what I refer to as the family network literature, can best be understood as the extension of atomization processes into public domains. It builds on observations that, across East Central Europe during the socialist era, individualism was widespread. This literature similarly emphasizes the importance and security that family “atoms” provided in everyday life (especially when weighed against state terror) but underscores that those networks spanned among and across households and into non-kin arenas. Gerald Creed, for example, insists upon the combined effects of atomization and personal networks. In his work in the Bulgarian village of Zamfirovo, he observes that “survival ploys involved networks beyond the family, although most coordinated in some ways with household activities” (1998:69). Self-interest remained fundamental, but families were more integrated and implicated in the state’s legitimacy. Kligman (1998) reveals how atomization occurred within family-friend networks, which—when necessary—also extended into domains associated with the police state. Families therefore involved themselves in the continued authority of the socialist regime. Indeed, private networks interacted with state sites and policies in a mutually-compensating and mutually self-interested dynamism.

Sociologist Ivo Možný offers a useful (and in the Czech Republic, highly influential) Czech contribution to the family network position. In his small book, *Why So Easy...Some Family Reasons for the Velvet Revolution* (1991), Možný argues that,

because wealth was not passed down within Czech families as it is in capitalist settings, energy was spent on securing social capital: on building and maintaining a network of alliances, goods, and access to others' goods. According to Možný there was indeed an informal economy or "market" (*trh*) in which this social capital, transmitted among families and with the full knowledge and complacency of the "governing class" (*vládnoucí třída*), far outweighed the official, financial value of available goods and services (see Mareš and Možný 1995). Možný argues that the typical Czech family adapted easily to unofficial networks during the socialist era, and that the revolution in 1989 was "so easy" because the governing class itself was eventually contained and constrained by the networks. The state, Možný contends, was no longer able to sustain and tolerate the unofficial arrangements (which until then had allowed it to remain in power) while also maintaining its superiority. In the end, officials and non-officials participated in efforts to terminate socialist rule; government representatives, dissenters, and "ordinary" Czechs joined forces to disrupt the one-party system. In his analysis, Možný insists that family networks were critical to the socialist era, its continuation and its demise.

Although families remain the primary unit of social analysis in the family network literature, they are more expansive and inter-linked than the isolated and self-interested households portrayed in the atomization argument. An exact private versus public framework like Holy's would here understate the slippery boundaries between family life and state influence because the lines between ally and enemy were no longer clear. As Gal and Kligman put it, "The nested interdependencies of work, time, and materials, as

well as the ever-present bureaucracies of state socialism, assured that everyone participated to some extent among the 'they' who ruled as well as the 'we' who suffered" (2000:51). Unlike the atomization literature, shifting definitions of public and private in the family network literature suggest that "private" families engaged with and participated in state/political affairs despite perceived state authority and control. Možný's work is useful because he indicates that the socialist state was subordinate to families, and that the weight of family networks led to its downfall.

The material I have presented in Chapter 1 also reveals a socialist state at the mercy of its families. A crude public/private dichotomy would not productively explain such interrelations; definitions of public and private and the persons associated with these domains were and are forever changing and relative (Gal 2002:77-78). As the material in this chapter demonstrates, for example, some low-income Czech families are perpetually embedded in, and accountable to, public systems of support. The tensions inherent in socialist-themed literature on atomization and network behaviors mirror the contingencies of autonomy and relationality in the postsocialist period. In the end, it is impossible to be wholly atomized, or fully autonomous, in either era.

THE FAMILIES

This chapter sets aside the analysis in Chapter 1 of what Borneman calls "state narrative strategies" (1992:57-73) in favor of individual and household remembrances and recollections. As I explained in the Introduction, during my fieldwork I collected family histories. They are similar to Borneman's "life constructions" of two generations

in east and west Berlin (which he compares to narrative strategies of the two German states; 1992) and Yanagisako's "kin biographies" of three generations of Japanese Americans (1985). I met with as many members of one household or kin group as were willing and, after gathering multiple perspectives, reconstructed a single family narrative.

Unlike Borneman and Yanagisako, however, I do not organize the family material in terms of generation, although in a number of cases we can identify a strong relationship between interpretations of events and membership in an age group (such as in the case of changing attitudes toward women and work, greater willingness among younger generations to use state child-care facilities, and stances toward divorce).

While clustering parts of this chapter according to generation might have better drawn links between period and personhood, I instead structure my presentation according to kin group and extended family networks over time (see Stacey 1991; White 2002). There are two reasons for this. First, I believe that framing these stories in terms of generational experiences would reproduce the state's history of itself, and Chapter 1 already plots a powerful narrative of the state-family life course (see Borneman 1992:74-118). Second, as we will see, membership in an age group is just one of several organizing principles or "determinants" of Czech family life. Others include class, ethnicity, gender, and political orientation. Nonetheless, the following material should be read with an eye toward the importance of relations and family ties over the course of an entire lifetime.

I introduce three families in-depth by narrating their family histories. Two of the families were among the fourteen I met with outside of state offices for families. The

third is a combined history, based on the stories of residents of the Home for Mothers.

Although I came to know several of the residents of the Home well, even my closest friends there were reluctant to discuss their families at great length or to deliver a lengthy, intimate account of their family's experiences. For this reason, I fuse the personal stories of several of the women who lived in the state home, focusing on shared "experiential tropes" (Borneman 1992). Although I incorporated many voices to bring about the third example, it is important to point out that all three family histories are "combined;" they are all composites. In each case, the accumulation of interviews produces what seems to be a coherent narrative, but which is actually the result of my editing.³⁶ If we are going to recognize my role in creating the family histories, we should also treat the "family narratives" told by the state and reproduced in Chapter 1 as composites.

I do not claim that these family histories offer a representative sample of Czech families. Here I have chosen to present these three households, or kinds of households in the case of the Home for Mothers, because they offer a range of experiences based on material resources and family relations. They point out the importance of relative strength of family networks in determining the kinds of relations and intimacies—which developed over time—between family and state. These three stories are particular to families living in Prague. Although many Czechs migrated to Prague in search of work following World War II (particularly in the case of the second family I examine here), non-urban and small town settings were sometimes idealized as more amenable to family life, fostering greater family relationships and reliability, a theme I explore at greater length when examining child care.

I conducted most of the family history interviews with my assistant Dana. We referred to a list of guiding questions when interviewing. Dana did not accompany me to the Home for Mothers, but I drew on the same list of questions when I met with residents there. All of the interviews were open ended. We tried not to interrupt or redirect the interviewee unless he or she skipped over a significant family event (such as a wedding, having children, or the division of labor at home between husband and wife). I was interested in how family members chose to tell the story of their family (where they began, where they ended). In my analysis of the interviews I paid particular attention to how people incorporated the state into personal histories, how they accepted and rejected its authority and intervention, and how the relationship between families and the state changed over time beginning from roughly the interwar era (1918-1938) in the case of pensioners, or the socialist era (1948-1989) in the case of middle-aged Czechs and their children.

I consider Czech family histories from before and after the socialist era in light of the atomization and family network approaches. We can identify numerous ways in which the stories these families tell call to mind and augment the overlapping of these frameworks, such as feelings of alienation from public spheres during the socialist period, the importance of family support, and simultaneous "duplicitous" (Kligman 1998) cooperation with the socialist regime to further family interests. When the regime changes in 1989, the meanings of atomization and network transform in concert with discourses of a more "open" society and a greater emphasis by family members on self-realization in non-kin domains, rather than within the family exclusively. Still, material

from the pre- and postsocialist eras demonstrates that Czechs cast the family as morally superior and just, while interpretations of the state and the economy in relation to the family vary over time. I focus on three patterns within these rich family histories.

First, I foreground the ways in which family members were averse or indifferent to the state and political change. The three families appearing here display a range of sympathies for socialist policies. Unlike official history and state texts, individual narratives are not always marked by the stops and starts of major state upheaval, although as we will see the families varied in how they used political changes as moments of self-reference (Berdahl 1999). A great many of my informants often told stories of kin, child care, employment and residence without remarking on tanks in the streets (1968) or the peaceful jingle of keys (1989).³⁷ Some Czechs do not worry about the state's constraints until they are confronted by them (Kligman 1998).

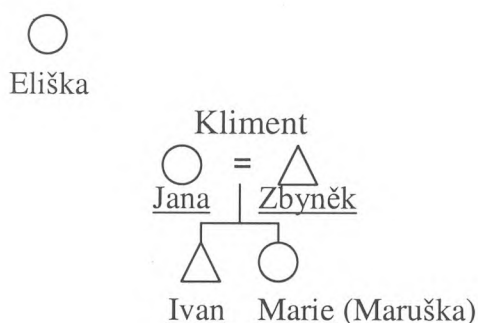
Others used the state's history to tell their own. For example, 1948 (the year of the communist coup) and 1989 (the formal end of Soviet control) were important signposts (as were 1938 and 1968—the years of German and Soviet invasion, respectively). Members of the first family I present here told their story through the lens of historical change; the second considered political transition more peripherally and less antagonistically; people represented in the third, the history of residents of the Home for Mothers, are especially critical of state policy as regards families but made little mention of large-scale regime change. Often self-described estrangement from the state corresponds to better economic conditions.

Second, I demonstrate that Czechs use child care and housing as key tropes of “relatedness” (Carsten 2000) when delimiting membership in the family. These two topics served in every family history I collected as means of narrating connections among households and as methods of affirming—and distancing—kin relations. These are substantive ties among Czechs which make them part of the same family. In Chapter 4, I further elaborate on the importance today of family members providing child care in the face of nursery closings and rising expenses associated with child care. The state responded to the child care dilemma by lengthening maternity leave, but housing remains a topic central to Czech criticisms of public welfare: little policy “progress” as regards housing has been made. Czechs refer to housing and co-residence to explain and interpret family intimacy and loyalty, family tensions and violence, low birthrates, and the failure of the state effectively to privatize the economy, on the one hand, and—through continued shortages of affordable housing—properly to take care of low-income citizens on the other (Lux 2000). In addition, Czechs who are perceived of as working hard have often been able to turn to family for child care and housing. These familial resources allowed for self-care in the presocialist, socialist and postsocialist eras

Finally, the end of socialism did not bring about the end of feelings of atomization. I show how, now, the free market is seen by many Czechs as alienating family members from society—and one another. Atomization is exclusive to neither socialism nor totalitarianism (see Arendt 1970). Thanks to family resources in the postsocialist era the first two families could distance themselves from state influence and seek a participant role in the private sector. Still, the introduction of the market—despite

its positive financial effects—is credited in both cases with altering kin roles for better and worse. In contrast, the state bureaucracy and family policies remained a continued presence and influence in the lives of those without family and family networks. In the current era, then, a family's continued engagement with state bureaucracies and estrangement from the market signifies an absence of family resources and intra-family atomization.

The Kliment: Jana, Zbyněk, Marie and Ivan³⁸



The Kliment family history provides an outline of prominent Czech national narratives, their experience of the unjust loss of family belongings and dignity at the end of World War II, and post-1989 promise, struggle, and success. I first met with Jana and Zbyněk in their Prague 2 apartment in March 2000. Later in the year, I met with their two grown children, Marie (Maruška for “short”) and Ivan, and spent time with Jana and Zbyněk in their “cottage” (*chata*) in southern Bohemia. Like many pensioners, Jana and Zbyněk were happy to sit for long stretches of time to discuss family relations and their experiences. In addition, they were eager to put me in touch with other families who they

thought would contribute to my research. In many ways, the Kliments were at the center of my own "Czech family network."

Though not public figures, the Kliments foregrounded family participation in well-known moments of Czech state and national history. Dominant state themes served as touchstones in stories the Kliments told about themselves. Indeed, their private chronicle mirrored what pervasive postsocialist narratives depict as the unfolding of the twentieth-century Czech Republic. Centerpieces of post-1989 national history included the discrediting of the socialist era through greater enthusiasm for the nineteenth-century national revival³⁹ and the interwar government, as well as renewing bonds with western allies established during World Wars I and II. These histories also served to motivate renovation of tourist sites in Prague which tell similar histories. By participating in this compelling narrative construction and positioning themselves within its unfolding, the Kliments affirmed the legitimacy of the current state as well as the value of their lineage. Borneman recognized a similar process after World War II among older generations in east and west Germany, noting that "states are successful in nation-building when they (re)create a unique group which retells its history in categories and periods congruent with those used by the state in its own accounts" (1992:32). This certainly is the case across generations in the Kliment family.

Many of the Kliments' accounts, therefore, positioned family in opposition to oppressive foreign and domestic influences which were widely understood as having constrained Czech independence, such as the Hapsburg Empire, the Germans during World War II, and later Soviet allegiances. As we will see, Jana's relatives were

involved in the “national awakening” of the nineteenth century leading to Czechoslovak independence following World War I, both her father and Zbyněk’s parents contributed to democracy building during the First Republic, they were linked to anti-German activities of World War II (1938-1945), and held anti-communist convictions from the earliest moments of communist rule to the end of the communist era (1948-1989). Indeed, in the telling of their family’s story, the Kliments and their kin were always on the right side of history, be it for (the First Republic, revolution in 1989) or against (the Empire, the Germans, the communists) the state. The Kliments saw themselves as uniquely connected to important social shifts which took place in the Czech Republic, and, as their son Ivan cautioned when I told him of my interest in Czech families, “we are not a typical Czech family.”

From *Smetanka* to Poverty

Jana was born in Prague in 1926. She was the only child of a successful lawyer. Jana’s mother was from a prestigious southern Bohemian family residing in Prague. Jana’s maternal grandfather, though originating from the village of Neopolov located near what is now the Austrian border, practiced medicine in the center of the city. When Jana’s mother and father married in the 1920s, a servant named Eliška joined them in their new household to assist Jana’s mother with her tasks as a married woman.

Jana’s mother died suddenly at the age of thirty-eight when Jana was ten years old (1936). Jana did not know very much about her mother save that she was one of few women at the time to receive an education and that older family members remembered

her as having a kind and gentle nature. After his wife died Jana's father moved the small household from Prague 1 to a large flat in Prague 2, settling around the corner from his mother and sister. He never remarried and continued his career as a lawyer until the end of World War II, assisted by Eliška and his mother and sister with the upbringing of his young daughter. As Jana explained, her father did not need to remarry because he had Eliška and help from his family as well as his in-laws. Jana did not experience the widespread poverty of the 1920s and 1930s, she said, because her family was well-situated. She did remember as a child, however, a large gap between the rich and poor of that era and seeing poverty on the streets of Prague.

Jana came from what Czechs call "crème de la crème" (*smetanka*) or an "old Prague family" (*staropražská rodina*), the upper crust of Prague society. Despite efforts by the socialist state for over forty years to abolish class distinctions, associations with leading members of late-nineteenth century and interwar high society bolstered the Kliment family's sense of worth. One criterion for belonging to *smetanka* is education. Jana attended the best Prague schools and both she and Zbyněk studied at the prestigious Philosophical Faculty of Charles University. She specialized in French and history, and her husband was a historian and classical philologist. To be sure, Jana came from a long line of well-educated Prague *smetanka*. One of her great grandfathers was an eminent geologist ("the father of Czech geology," they told me), a professor, and a member of the provincial parliament involved in national struggles in 1848. Jana and Zbyněk showed me photos of a large monument to Jana's great grandfather. His memorial rests in a

fortification wall at Vyšehrad castle, one of the earliest dynastic residences in the Czech lands and the site of the national cemetery.

During the interwar era, Jana's father was counsel to famous Prague literary figures, including Jaroslav Hašek, author of *The Good Soldier Švejk*. This lengthy tale of a hapless Habsburg soldier who cluelessly serves the emperor originally appeared in newspaper serials during the interwar era. Today, Švejk serves rather as a Prague tourist icon on magnets and other souvenirs, while his swollen figure, beer in hand, adorns pub signs. Undoubtedly, familial associations with Švejk's famous creator continued to bring the Kliments social currency. The value of doing business with Hašek was less lucrative financially, however, and Jana and Zbyněk's son Ivan informed me that Hašek never paid his bills. Jana's maternal relatives were also known to associate with contemporary artists and writers of the time.

Zbyněk's beginnings were more modest, and he and Jana placed greater weight on the role and influence of Jana's roots in their telling of family history. He spoke fondly, though, of his mother and father, both of whom were teachers. Zbyněk was born in 1921, also in Prague. He had a twin brother who died when they were six. If Jana came from an old Prague family, Zbyněk came from a "teaching family" (*učitelská rodina*). Both of his mother's parents were educators, and his mother and father were headmasters in Prague schools and the authors of required textbooks. Zbyněk's mother specialized in elementary education and children's operas, while his father was involved in children's orchestral groups. Jana and Zbyněk emphasized that during the First Republic, when Zbyněk's parents taught, education was heavily encouraged by the young

democratic government. During our discussions, Zbyněk also returned again and again to his involvement in patriotic civic organizations during childhood, such as scouts and *sokol*.⁴⁰ And, like his parents, Zbyněk was musically inclined. In fact, he often broke into song during our interviews in 2000.

World War II entered the family history in significant ways, and the Kliments emphasized their resistance to the Germans and their work on behalf of Jews living in Prague. Many of these activities were regarded as heroic in the immediate post-war era and particularly following 1989, when the state affirmed alliances with the western militaries which had also fought the Germans. Jana's father was involved in a number of illegal political organizations (*boj* for "fight" or "struggle") resisting the Germans. In addition, when Prague Jews were increasingly persecuted and limited in their movement and activities in the late 1930s, Jana's father tried to help his Jewish colleagues by running their offices, taking their court cases and handing over the earnings. However, Jana explained, when the Germans began sending Jews to the old Bohemian fortress of Terezín (a stop-over ghetto on the way to Auschwitz), he was no longer able to help his friends survive.

Meanwhile, during the war, one of Zbyněk's closest friends and all the members of the friend's family were executed by the Nazis for assisting Czech parachutists in the 1942 assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the Prague-based German protectorate. Like many of his generation, Zbyněk was forcibly sent to Berlin to work in a factory as part of the German "war mobilization" (*totální nasazení*). At the end of World War II, Zbyněk was automatically accepted by Charles University (because of

what he endured during Nazi occupation) where he met nineteen year-old Jana at a lecture in 1945. He put in just half a year of compulsory military service in 1946 (again, thanks to his generation's experience during the war), earned his doctorate, and married Jana in 1949. Zbyněk joined Jana's household in the Prague 2 flat. They have lived there ever since.

By the time Zbyněk and Jana married, the communists had come to power (1948) and their living circumstances changed dramatically. According to Jana, her father anticipated corruption by the communists and refused to practice law under the new government, saying "for me, theirs is not the law." He imagined that sooner or later he would be put in the position of upholding the new system, and refused. He liquidated his legal office before the government could get to it and went to work in 1948, as did many of his professional colleagues, in a local factory.

The communist government nationalized property in the city and, in many cases, divided large flats into several small and separate residences. For this reason, the Kliments felt lucky to have kept their entire home and their belongings, what Jana referred to as a "trousseau" or equipment (*výbava*). After Maruška was born in 1951 and Ivan was born in 1954, the household consisted of seven people: Jana's father (Bohuslav), Jana, Zbyněk, Jana's mother's aunt (*teta Jirousová*), the two children, and Eliška. Eliška remained with the family though she could no longer be employed as a housekeeper. She transformed from loyal servant to family member: *teta* (aunt) to Maruška and Ivan and eventually "granny" (*babka*) to their children. Eliška lived with the family until her death in 1994.

With the simultaneous beginnings of communist rule, marriage and parenthood, Jana and Zbyněk entered what they called the hardest period of their lives. After initial monetary reforms, Jana still had limited access to her sizeable savings. After a second reform, however, she and her father lost everything: “all the money we had was gone” (*co jsme měli peníze, to všechno šlo pryč*) and “all the money went out the chimney” (*všecky peníze vyletěly komínem*). In addition, the state took hold of great aunt Jirousová’s successful women’s clothing store located in the center of the city.

By pooling their resources (a small maternity allowance for Jana, Zbyněk’s meager salary as an archivist, her father’s income at the factory, money from Eliška’s odd jobs, and Aunt Jirousová’s pension) the family was able to survive. Jana’s father’s health deteriorated because he was unaccustomed to the hard labor and long hours at the factory. He was skillful with his hands and popular at work because of his democratic manner, Jana said, but the heavy labor destroyed him. After repeatedly getting sick and having problems with his back and his heart, he died in 1961 at the age of 68. Jana considered her father’s death premature and due solely to physical hardships endured after the communists came to power. Zbyněk’s father died in 1955, and his mother died in 1966.

Jana stayed home with the children for eight years while other household members worked outside the home. She explained that there was no choice but to tend to the children full time because, in the early-to-mid 1950s, no state “nurseries” (*jesle*) operated in their district. She felt forced to remain home because of the circumstances of the time, but also felt that it amounted to a life of “poverty” (*bída*) because they badly needed more money. She said it had never occurred to her to stay at home for so long,

that she did not want to, but there was no other choice. Because women had to work to support their families, and she personally needed the self-fulfillment, Jana went to work when Ivan was old enough to go to kindergarten.

Jana felt fortunate that when she re-entered the workplace in 1959 she had earned a good education. After several years of temporary employment (1959-1961), she eventually settled with a state publishing house. When she started working full time, Eliška and Zbyněk's mother helped take care of the kids after school. Jana was formally eligible for retirement in 1987 but stayed on for two more years because she enjoyed the work and her colleagues. After he finished his studies in the late 1940s, Zbyněk took a job for a short period in the archives of the Ministry of the Interior. He then moved to the central state archives based in Prague, where he remained until 1985. He also enjoyed his work and, until the Soviet invasion in 1968, was able to make short trips outside the Soviet bloc to do research in foreign archives. Jana, in particular, was proud of their ability to find fulfilling work despite having refused to join the communist party. Like her father, she never cooperated with the communist state, preferring to avoid its influence and the political "stupidity" which provided a backdrop to their lives.

The Family, Marriage and Politics

Maruška and Ivan went to elementary school and high school in their district of Prague, close to home. Although they spent the school year in Prague, the Kliment's remained tied to the region of southern Bohemia, and the village of Neopolov, where Jana's mother, father and Eliška grew up. Ivan explained that he had two family "roots"

(*kořen*): one in Prague, in a family with a distinguished past and above-average material circumstances, and a second in the country near land where the family originated. He coined a word in Czech for his ties to southern Bohemia: *prapuvodně*, which could be translated as “great-origins.” Although relatives still living in the area of Neopolov had since lost their land and farms, Jana, Zbyněk and the kids traveled there every summer, staying in a rented apartment.

When Maruška was ready to apply to college in the late 1960s she had no problem getting in to a medical program of her choosing. She went on to study dentistry, eventually joining a practice in the center of town. By the time Ivan was ready to go on for higher education, however, he encountered greater difficulty and was not accepted by Charles University. Soviet troops had by this time invaded and occupied Prague in 1968, and the “thaw” (*oteplení*) characterizing the late 1960s had come to an end. Although she was prohibited from traveling and studying in England as she had planned for the fall of 1968, and because she was already enrolled, Maruška did not experience the strict measures instituted in the early 1970s which would have constrained her schooling options at home. But Ivan’s class and family origins—and his parents’ refusal to join the party—prohibited him from passing entry examinations and screenings. He instead took a job with a state television station which later sponsored his university application, and he earned his bachelor’s degree in information sciences. He returned to the television station after completing his studies, working first in their archives and eventually in video production. Although Ivan encountered obstacles because of his family’s roots, Jana insisted that their stance toward the party, and their refusal to join the party, provided

more security and stability in the long run. She was unrelenting during our talks that she and Zbyněk were not members of the party and that they had always opposed the communist government.

Kliment family members held ambivalent stances toward the state and the communist regime. On the one hand, they were decidedly opposed to communist rule; and, on the other, they claimed to have no interest in politics and political events. Dissidents⁴¹ such as Havel reconciled this seeming contradiction by encouraging “anti-political politics” and the “power of the powerless” (1985; 1988), which Havel defined in his *samizdat* (illegal, informally-circulated underground writings) and overseas publications during the socialist era as a form of social consciousness and “politics from below” (1988:397-398). He spoke for the replacement of totalitarianism and alienation from bureaucratic apparatuses (note, in both socialist and capitalist settings) with human conscience: the morality of brave individuals “living within the truth” (1985:39-45). In contrast to those who perceived Czech society as hopelessly atomized, Havel and his dissenting contemporaries persisted in theorizing the possible demise of the communist regime and the import of morality from non-state domains to the state apparatus.

Bringing together morality and “politics from below,” Czechs often associate the family (seen as “below,” or the private to a public politics) with the truth and capacity for goodness and social change which Havel sought in the overthrow of totalitarianism, though not necessarily socialism.⁴² Certainly in the family histories I gathered, opposition to political corruption and temptation (for example, in the case of Jana’s father) and retreat to the family was cast as decent and honorable, in stark contrast to

activities in non-family spheres (such as the communist party during socialism and the market today).

Like Havel, Ivan Kliment proved to be an exception to the status quo of political disengagement and private complaint, sometimes carrying his condemnation of the state from circles of family and trusted friends to public settings. Although they made the choice not to join the party, Jana shied from any outwardly disapproving positions during the communist era and was fearful when Ivan got into trouble with the authorities—as he did following the 1968 invasion (at the young age of fourteen), as well as when he made some critical statements about the Soviet Union in the mid-1970s during a meeting of students and participated in anti-party events, such as the funeral of philosopher Jan Patočka in the mid-1970s.⁴³ Perhaps because of his family's success during the First Republic, its distance from the communist party, and Ivan's generation (coming of age during the 1970s *normalizace*), he was bound to appear dangerous to the state. For his part, Ivan insisted that some of his behavior was more "boyish" and immature than political. Like her mother, Maruška was not interested in politics, saying that the family remained private and "closed," and preferred not to take any risks. In contrast to her brother, Maruška explained, "I was not a rebel." Maruška and Jana presented images common to literature on atomization portraying families as close-knit and closed units, "blocking out" (*přeslechnout*) the senselessness of the period.

Maruška married at the age of twenty-nine in 1980, and she took the last name Procházková. She described herself as an older bride. As we saw in Chapter 1, women and men often married in their late teens and early twenties during the 1970s and 1980s.

Czechs explained that marrying and having children was one of the few means of self-expression during the socialist period. But Maruška said that she was not the kind of woman to have been devastated without a husband and children. Her husband Viktor, she said, "is from another world, entirely." He worked in construction and did not earn an academic degree. They had two sons in as many years, and Maruška stayed home with them for a combined four years of maternity leave and then returned to her work as a dentist. After learning of the first pregnancy, Maruška and Viktor exchanged their one-room flat (in which a great-aunt of Maruška's had previously resided) for half of a flat that had become available in Jana and Zbyněk's building. An elderly woman (whom Maruška had known since birth) lived in the other half of the flat. Maruška and Viktor helped take care of the woman in her old age, and, after she died, they occupied the entire space and were living there at the time of my fieldwork. As with Maruška and Ivan, Eliška took care of Maruška's boys between "kindergarten" (*školka*) and the end of Maruška's workday. Jana also cared for her grandchildren when she retired in the late 1980s.

Shortly after Viktor and Maruška were married, Jana learned that the family would no longer be able to rent the summer apartment they had been using in Neopolov for the past few decades. It seemed that the building was falling into extreme disrepair, and the building owners did not have the money to renovate. At Jana's urging, the Kliments purchased a plot of land and built their own "cottage" (*chata*) between 1981 and 1983 under Viktor's leadership. Jana's great fondness for her son-in-law originated during this period. She explained how he put it simply: "I will build your *chata* for

you.” But he was not alone. The entire family (including three very young grandsons) contributed two years of weekends, money, and materials (collected primarily by Maruška). As for many Prague residents, and as Holy reminded us in his depiction of the private sphere, weekend and summer escapes to the *chata* were, and continue to be, a way to “block out” everyday nuisances. In the Kliment’s case the trips were also a return to family origins.

Jana was less pleased with Ivan’s marital path(s). When he was nineteen and trying to enter university, Ivan married one of his sister’s classmates, a woman six years older than he, because they were expecting a baby. By all accounts, the couple was a bad match because of the age difference. A daughter was born, the couple was separated after two years and divorced in five. Ivan married a second time, shortly after his divorce was final. He and his wife had a son (Bohuslav, named after Jana’s father) and another daughter. They divorced in 1996. At the time of our interview, Ivan had been dating another woman for several years with no plans to remarry. He was living with his son Bohuslav in an apartment, which he was slowly purchasing from his second wife’s parents (Bohuslav’s maternal grandparents). Ivan’s two divorces upset his mother, particularly the second break-up, and she grew sad when discussing them. She explained that the risk involved in Ivan’s political dissent and, especially, his relationship problems were some of the family’s greatest trials.

The Wider Family and 1989

"I love the wider family, the extended family," Ivan said, "but not the time spent in a little marital household exclusively." He was accounting for his two divorces. Unlike his mother, Ivan's eyes were not downcast. To me, he was open and unashamed of his unsuccessful marriages. His sister, he explained, was his closest family member. Others die, kids marry and leave, but siblings have each other throughout life. "The spouse is a stranger," he insisted laughing, "marriage was not a family, plus [my wives] told me that I become evil after marrying." Ivan may or may not have been referencing a popular song by singer Michal Kocáb, "With a strange woman in a strange room" (*S cizí ženou v cizím pokoji*), about a man who bemoans his life in a miserable marriage. He realizes that the strange woman is his wife, "like walking in a harness I am with *my* wife in *my* room," but is confused about how he could have spent twenty years of hazy dissatisfaction in such a household (emphasis in original).⁴⁴ Unlike Kocáb's character, Ivan was more aware of what led to the end of his marriage: he attributed the divorce to the development of different rhythms, to different understandings of family time, to a growing divide and unfamiliarity between his wife and himself.

Maruška also appreciated having many other family members and family resources around her. For her part, she never took a liking to her sister-in-law, Slávka, Ivan's second wife, because she believed that Slávka did not contribute to the family as she should have. Maruška felt that "there was always someone to help," but that Slávka could not be counted on in times of need—for example, to exchange child care and, importantly, during the building of the family *chata*—an especially collective and family-

centered project, which Maruška's own husband spearheaded. Maruška further elaborated on the opposing "rhythms," as Ivan put it, of her brother's failed marriage. After regime change in 1989, Ivan grew more involved in his work life. Suddenly, new opportunities were available to him professionally and his wife did not share in his growing ambitions. "She was not hardworking," Maruška said. Unlike the previous period, when people without party affiliation could expect to reach limits in their careers, Ivan now had the opportunity to excel at work, and he did. By the year 2000, he had become the general director of the state television archives. According to Maruška, the end of the socialist era brought out differences between people (such as their opposing work ethics and, in some cases, competition inherent in property ownership) and the development of tensions that might not have existed when families and couples had the same, limited fate. Here we see family forms and relationships responding to new state forms. To Ivan and his sister Maruška, marital tensions and loss of family time stood for the negative effects of a market economy and competition on marital relationships. The new work environment was risky, but it also brought about positive effects like promotions and personal growth.

Maruška perceived the development of new models of work in the postsocialist period as the key to increases in family strain and divorce, while her mother Jana added that Ivan's divorce was also part of a global trend, specifically among women. As we have observed, socialist-state representatives targeted divorce as a major evil and as threatening to social order; but from the perspective of 2000, Jana remembered divorce as uncommon prior to 1989 (this despite the fact that Ivan's first marriage ended around his

twentieth-fourth birthday in the late 1970s, precisely when family policy makers were zeroing in on the frequency of divorce among young Czechs). She felt that postsocialist conditions were bringing Czechs closer to the West, where fewer people marry and more couples live together without marrying. She was reluctant to criticize Ivan and singled out changes in women's lives to understand this trend. Despite her own deep enjoyment of work and her reluctance to stay at home from 1951-1959, Jana attributed divorce in the current period to women's greater interest in career than family—to an unwillingness to try to make marriages last and the loss of social and economic stasis, which had allowed for the balancing of family and work. She recognized her own personal investment in work and the circumstances peculiar to their living situation and the era. "Women cannot reconcile work and family like they used to," she said. To Jana, care for the family rested fully with women.

Maruška provides an example of a woman more fully focused on work than she was during the socialist era. In the early 1990s she decided at great personal risk to buy a practice with a colleague and "to go into business for herself" (*podnikat*) rather than face the eventual closing of her state office. She was supported by a sizeable loan from an aunt who had emigrated to Switzerland, as well as by the encouragement of her parents, husband and sons. Maruška attributed the difference between herself and her mother's experiences with work and the family to the greater economic uncertainty of existence today, as well as the requirement that she not leave work behind at the end of the day, that she be available to deal with problems that might arise at any time. Still, she insisted, 1989 arrived just in time for her sons to make the most of travel opportunities,

open borders, contact with the world outside Prague, to take their lives into their own hands—and to allow her to focus on her new clinic. And she was thankful that her practice had just begun turning a profit. She remained entirely disinterested in and removed from politics and political events.

In terms of the positive effects of the end of the socialist era, Ivan's appraisal of 1989 sounded similar to his sister's; but, as he had as a student during the 1970s, he remained skeptical of the role of the state in everyday life. On the one hand, Ivan praised the number of choices and varieties of opinions that circulate in the Czech Republic. He saw this as meaningful to the entire society, especially younger generations. On the other hand, he saw political position as persistently immoral and unchanging. Those who play a part in public life of the state remained suspect to Ivan. Moreover, he felt that the state was making it too easy for those who do not want to work. "The state has too much power, too much of a role in social policy," he said, criticizing the elaborate social safety net of support and care that was put in place in the early-to-mid 1990s. Perhaps thinking of his sister's hard work to privatize her dental clinic during the 1990s he commented disapprovingly, "those who collect from the state make as much as those spilling their blood in new businesses."

Reprivatizing the Family

The Kliments displayed characteristics noted in both the atomization and family network literatures. They felt alienated from political processes during the socialist era; all but Ivan refused to engage in public dialogue, withdrawing into personal relationships

and family activities such as building the *chata* and returning to Neopolov each summer. The Kliment family were also in a relatively privileged class position at the end of World War II. Family assistance with child care and housing far outweighed the intended effects of state paternalist provisions, what Borneman calls state "kin policy," which would have involved the family more closely with state resources and services.

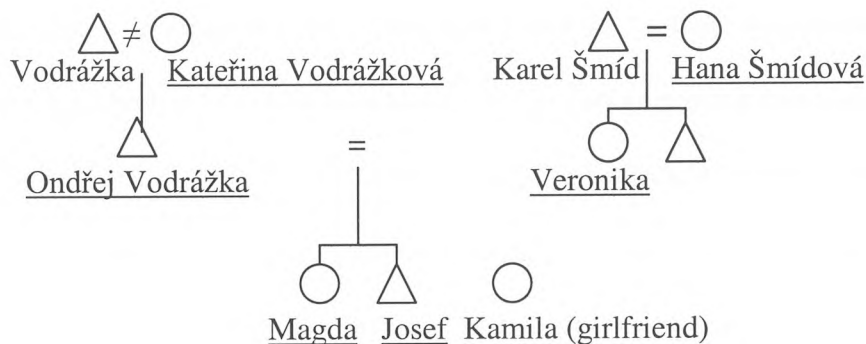
By the year 2000 the Kliment family had in fact "privatized." Ivan continued to work for state television, but the competition introduced into this setting demanded he put in long days before earning a promotion to archival director. As he hinted, and Maruška stated outright, the demands of this new work routine led to the end of his second marriage. For her part, Maruška remained available to her patients, on whom she depended to keep her private dental clinic running. New market risks made her fearful of financial vulnerability and failure, but the continuity of family support allowed for eventual rewards and financial success. Differences between hard workers (Ivan and Maruška) and those whom they described as lazy and unworthy (such as Ivan's second wife and people "who take (*berou*) from the state") reveal that perhaps for some, though not this family, transition to a market economy reconfigured the experience of drawing on public services. Czechs seem more aware of who receives social support in the current era because recipients are more targeted. They take for granted what *everyone*, including themselves, received in the past.⁴⁵

In the past few years, when oppression by the socialist state was re-historicized as a tragic mistake (despite some people's socialist leanings as regards the morality of redistributive policies), the Kliment family has been poised to prosper. They retained

significant status due to symbolic and material associations with the interwar era, which has been greatly sentimentalized since 1989 (Nash 2002; Malečková 2000), and their persistent distancings from the socialist state. As Kibria notes in the telling of family stories by Vietnamese immigrants in the United States, "immigrants draw on premigration family experiences and ideologies in their efforts to construct families within the structural context of the new society" (1993:22; see Szelenyi 1988). In the Czech case, interwar and World War II experiences, and adamant detachment from the communist party, which later came to power, worked much like "premigration family experiences" for Vietnamese Americans, as family members emphasized their associations with historical and democratic political domains and moral moments. The Kliment family drew on their activities and affiliations in the pre-socialist era to situate themselves in the postsocialist setting. And despite the terror attending Ivan's dissent, by the early 1990s, dissenters and their families greatly benefited in moral capital from regime change (see Leff 1997).

In these accounts, however, the state has not recovered moral worth. The family and state remained at odds in accounts of everyday life, "from below," as Havel might put it. As Demetz points out in the passage opening this chapter, this is a pattern historians have traced for centuries in the Czech lands, suggesting that Czechs considered "the state" a troubling institution, regardless of political current or state ideology of the family.

The Vodrážkas: Kateřina, Hana, Veronika, Ondřej, Josef and Magda



I met with three generations of the Vodrážka family during my fieldwork, including grandmothers Hana Šmídová and Kateřina Vodrážková; their married children Veronika (born Šmídová) Vodrážková and Ondřej Vodrážka; and Veronika and Ondřej's two children Josef and Magda.

The Vodrážka family story varies in a number of ways from that of the Kliment family. As we will see, the Vodrážkas do not depict their family's life course as having been rerouted by the communist state's rise and fall. In fact, in contrast to the Kliment's kin biography, the Vodrážkas do not construe their experiences vis-à-vis the state as central to the unfolding of their lives; although, similar to most discussions about the socialist era, they touched on frustrating encounters with state officials and bureaucratic procedures. Certainly, as for the Kliments, the state remains an immoral institution for the Vodrážka family. Yet, while the Kliment's twentieth-century tale is that of downfall and loss, because of their humble beginnings, the Vodrážkas were more the target recipients than the enemy of a redistributive state. Theirs is a story of stabilization and rebuilding as opposed to unjust demise.

Still, it was surprising to me that the most dramatic of state events were often not included in the stories the Vodrážkas told about themselves. Rather than a focus on the experiences of World War II, communism, and the “velvet” revolution (all of which structured the Kliment’s personal accounts as well as popular state history), I was drawn to the absence of these historical markers in the Vodrážka’s stories and the greater attention paid to maneuvering banal frustrations of the socialist period to accommodate family needs—particularly in the case of housing—as well as the challenges posed by regime change in the late 1980s (see Borneman 1992:46). Therefore, the Vodrážka’s family story reflects the complicated intersection of atomization and family network literature, providing an example of how family members took advantage of opportunities that ties to state offices offered, while simultaneously discrediting the government’s authority.

Country to City

When I interviewed Kateřina Vodrážková in early 2000 she was seventy-two years old and had been receiving a pension for twenty-five years. Her family history interview was one of the least thorough I collected during my fieldwork. Her granddaughter Magda warned me that her grandmother had had a very painful, short marriage and was emotionally ill around the time of Magda’s older brother’s birth in 1975. Because I avoided uncomfortable questions (which in this case were directly related to family history) and because Kateřina only briefly responded to the questions we did ask, I captured just a sketch of her life in her own words. My assistant Dana and I

cautiously introduced sensitive life events such as marriage, the era of her grandson's birth, and early retirement due to mental fatigue. Kateřina's silences indicated that family, contrary to arguments coming out of Czech gender studies literature in the 1990s (Čermáková 1995; Havelková 1993a, 1993b; Šiklová 1993, 1997) was not always "a reassuring constant" (Gal and Kligman 2000:69). Her son, daughter-in-law, and grandson supplemented the following account of Kateřina's life. In sharp contrast, Magda's maternal grandmother, Hana Šmídová, was a captivating and gifted storyteller and more than willing to discuss her life at length.

Kateřina was born in 1928 on a farm in northern Moravia. Her father and mother were born in 1900 and 1901, respectively. Her father was a machine operator, and her mother worked in the fields all day. Kateřina had a sister named Olga, who was born in 1945 and was seventeen years younger than Kateřina. When we asked about the large age difference, she laughed and said that, actually, her parents were not planning to have any more children after she was born. Her mother thought she was in the early stages of menopause only to discover that she was pregnant with a second child. When prompted, Kateřina touched for a moment on the ways in which World War II affected the farm. Her family was required to supply large amounts of the farm's output to the German army.

Kateřina's father inherited their farm and house from his parents. In the early 1950s, Kateřina joined a women's council, which recruited local residents into the farming cooperative at the command of newly communist-run, municipal offices. Perhaps because the setting was a rural area of Moravia, far from Prague, the communist

takeover which took place in 1948 went unobserved in Kateřina's story. It became clear, though, that her parents' land was eventually nationalized but that the house remained in the family. At the time of our interview, Kateřina's sister Olga lived in their childhood home with her husband and daughter.

Kateřina married a local man in 1954. Their son Ondřej was born in 1955. Very shortly after marrying, Kateřina wanted a divorce. Her husband was reluctant to sign the papers, and family in Prague told her that she could more easily obtain a divorce there. Kateřina left Ondřej with her mother and father and moved by herself to Prague, where she lived with the family of her mother's brother—Uncle Pavel and his wife, Aunt Soňa. Then she was indeed able to get her husband to sign divorce papers in 1957. Thereafter, he did not come up in the family's history. Ondřej has not seen him since he was a boy, and Magda and Josef have never met their paternal grandfather.

In Prague, Kateřina found work as a sales clerk with the help of her aunt and uncle. Before her early retirement in 1975, she also worked as a waitress, in the stockroom of a state construction firm, and as a ticket seller on trams.

Until early 1960, Ondřej remained in Moravia with his maternal grandparents and Aunt Olga, who was his elder by only ten years; Kateřina visited infrequently. She explained that she needed housing to be able to take him, "I didn't have a flat and when I got one he came to be with me immediately...there was the possibility of pre-school." In Moravia, Ondřej had no relations with his father's parents who lived nearby; he explained, "there were problems of a communicative character...there was not much love between the grandmothers."

Kateřina was uncertain about most dates from her personal history, but one stood out as unforgettable: December 8, 1959—the day she moved into her own apartment in a Prague 5 neighborhood called Bedra, southwest of the city center. Earlier that year a colleague of her uncle's from the "national committee" (*národní výbor*) informed her that the flats were being built and would be ready that year. She contributed a lump sum to the housing office and waited several months until the construction was completed. She lives in the same flat today. The apartment is a "two-plus-one" (two rooms plus a small kitchen) in a four-story prefabricated housing complex, called *paneláky*. In the 1950s, *paneláky* housing was highly desirable because the units were available, affordable, and at the heart of post-war Prague urban development. For many Czechs, personal connections to housing offices or building residents—such as Kateřina's through her uncle Pavel, and Maruška's through an old neighbor—were the key to establishing housing security.

Once Ondřej arrived in Prague, he was enrolled in kindergarten and a series of after-school programs while his mother worked. Conveniently located public facilities—such as the nurseries (*jesle*), kindergartens (*školka*) and elementary schools—were one of the rewards of residence in the *paneláky*, benefiting working mothers in particular. As we will see below and in Chapter 4, some parents valued the service the *jesle* offered and felt that they provided necessary social interaction with other children. Others avoided placing their children in the state institutions because children were separated from their mothers at a young age and taken care of by strangers in what many considered a cold and unloving environment. Most parents had few options but to find a place in the

institutions for their children. Unless grandparents were around to provide child care or mothers stayed home, children went to the *jesle* and *školka* from the 1950s through the 1980s.

Ondřej did not feel that his mother provided a family environment for him in Prague. When he was old enough, he did his own cooking, cleaning, ironing, got himself to school, and spent each morning and evening in his school's after-school center (*družina*). He returned for long stretches of time to his mother's parents in Moravia, who provided the closest thing to a two-parent household he knew. In addition to the attention he received from his grandparents, the parents of a boyhood friend, the Vybíral, filled in what he considered to be gaps in his childhood education. He spent evenings with the Vybíral, going home only after their son went to bed. The Vybíral read to him and introduced him to "the domain of culture," such as fairy tales and museum exhibitions. The Vybíral family later emigrated to Canada.

Kateřina and Ondřej lived on very little. Others from Kateřina's generation, such as Jana Klimentová, similarly emphasized the poverty of the first phases of state socialism. Kateřina worked long days and survived on her wages, tips when she waitressed, a small amount of child support (which her son described as "symbolic"), and the state's "child allowance" (*přídavky na děti*). She considered state contributions insubstantial: "I had to earn money. And Vodrážka [her ex-husband] had to pay child support." In addition, (grand)parental "support" in the form of child care allowed Kateřina to continue working long shifts during Ondřej's school vacations.

Ondřej and Kateřina had a strained relationship. When he was in grade school, they argued about what Ondřej should do with earnings from part-time work, his choice of clothing, and his future plans. Ondřej felt that his mother was more interested in his working than pursuing an education. While he described his ambitions in school as perseverance against the limits his mother encountered, those ambitions contributed to the stress of their relationship. In the year 2000, after having raised two of his own children, he was more sympathetic to the financial pressure his mother experienced when he was young.

Mrs. Vodrážková arranged for Ondřej to go to a technical high school in Pardubice, a town in eastern Bohemia. After high school, Ondřej planned to attend an electro-technical university in Prague. Mrs. Vodrážková wanted him to stop school and contribute to their household income. Ondřej explained:

Some problems between my mother and me arose in relation to my desire to study further and her anxiety with security and finances, she wanted my studies to come to an end so that her burden would become smaller...when high school ended I hoped to continue my studies. And toward the end of high school, my mother indicated that I should finish altogether, that it was very difficult for her; perhaps with the advantage of time she would have a different opinion, but more or less for me that was a kind of motivation...I was interested in studying in high school and in going from high school to college.

Ondřej was accepted into the university of his choice and he and his mother chose not to live together. Before returning to Prague at the end of high school, he declared his grandparent's home in Moravia as his permanent residency. For this reason, Ondřej was able to receive a much-coveted dormitory room in Prague, where housing was (and is) hard to come by. He began his undergraduate studies in October 1974.

When sketching her family history, Kateřina took for granted a number of personal links to the communist party, links that some of my other informants such as the Kliments adamantly denied, ignored or avoided in conversation. She giggled at having helped form an agriculture cooperative in her village in Moravia and then suddenly moving to Prague. And her uncle Pavel worked at a centralized national committee office (*národní výbor*) in Prague 1. He was undoubtedly a local party bureaucrat. She explained gratefully that she was able to get her new flat only through his connections at work. She was more troubled by her financial burdens and raising her son by herself in Prague; state politics and public events were unconnected to her memories of personal financial and family strains.

The Šmíds

Like Kateřina, Hana Šmídová was born in 1928 in Moravia, but in the large town of Olomouc. At the time of our interview she was 72 and a widow. Her father, Mr. Hrabal, drove a steam engine for the railway system, and her mother stayed at home with Hana and her two older sisters, Helena and Eva. Their mother died when Hana was 12 (1940). Hana was alternately raised by Eva (Helena had married and moved out) and a hired woman who joined the household to assist with Hana. Therefore, as in the case of Jana Klimentová, a woman from outside the family was brought in to take care of a widowed, unmarried father and his young daughter.

In addition, a family with small children living upstairs in railroad-employee housing, the Holub's, welcomed Hana whenever she needed comfort or wanted to play.

Hana described the atmosphere among railroad employees and their wives and children during the 1930s as "one big family" (*velká rodina*). After her mother died, the Holub's encouraged Hana to feel that she was included in their household and family life. As I mention in the introduction to this chapter, Czech anthropologist Josef Kandert has interpreted similar references to a community as "one family" (*jedna rodina*) among villagers in the then-Czechoslovakia to mean that the speaker will reveal nothing unpleasant, or representative of the actual day-to-day life of the community to outsiders, be they ethnographers or state representatives (1994:99-100). Although these two examples are drawn from different social contexts (a community of employees during the interwar era versus a tight-knit and protective village during the socialist era), it is important to consider how family (*rodina*) was used to signify relatedness, cooperation and personal aid.

Unlike Jana's father, Mr. Hrabal remarried. Hana remarked that he must have gone crazy when he chose to marry a second time, and she seemed never to have forgiven him for replacing her mother. In 1945 she and her father moved from Olomouc to a country home where the new wife lived with her sister (the woman who had helped when it was just Mr. Hrabal and Hana left at the end of the war). Hana disliked her step-mother intensely, linking their opposing personalities to a city-country divide. In her words, her step-mother was "to the letter a country woman, who didn't recognize anything but the country." She insisted those years were very hard, cruel and rough. For example, her step-mother locked the bread in the cupboard when her father worked long shifts. She found refuge with her sisters, who left Olomouc when they married. In order to escape

her step-mother, Hana also sought out opportunities to study. She eventually moved to Prague to begin nursing school in the late 1940s.

It was there that she met her husband, Mr. Šmíd, as she called him during our interview, whom she married in 1950. In 1952 their son was born, and in 1955 their daughter (Veronika). When they married, Hana and Mr. Šmíd did not share a household. She remained in a dorm for nurses and he lived in a rented flat in the city center. When their son was born they received a flat from the housing office not far from where Mr. Šmíd had been living:

After the wedding [in Moravia] we returned to Prague and lived there separately. I was in hospital housing, he was in a rented flat. Before our son was born we had filed at the national committee, earlier they were national committees (*národní výbor*), now they are municipal offices or district offices, there they had housing departments, commonly called the *byt'ak*, so at the *byt'ak* we had filed for a flat. When our son was born, we mercifully received one on [Hlavní] street...next to the post office.

Like many Prague residents during the socialist era, the Šmíd family's housing security was contingent upon, and fortunately coincided with, establishing a family: marrying first and quickly having children.

Prior to giving birth, Hana worked as a children's nurse. Then she left her job at the hospital and took the standard three-month maternity leave when her son was born. When the maternity leave ended, Mr. Šmíd refused to place his son, and later his daughter, in a *jesle* and worked two jobs to keep Hana at home with the children. When both children were old enough for kindergarten (1960), Hana found a job at the state stamp and money press, where she remained for twenty-five years. In 1963 Hana's father died in Moravia, and Hana cut off all contact with her step-mother.

Five years after Hana went to work at the press, Mr. Šmíd suffered a heart attack that his wife and daughter attributed to too much work. He was forced to go on disability leave the next year and, later, permanently retire.

Veronika's memories of childhood were of her father, Mr. Šmíd, who remained at home after she turned ten. She recalled that her mother had kept house initially because "it was father's wish, that he scramble around from morning to night so Mom could be at home with us. I know he insisted on it, that he wanted her to be with us at least until we went to school." After the first heart attack he was Veronika's primary care-giver. For reasons which were never made clear to me, Veronika and her older brother do not keep in touch, and he was almost absent entirely from her story. She described summer vacations (which get included in almost all Czech family histories) as spent almost exclusively with her father. Sometimes Hana would join them during her month vacation from work. Otherwise, Mr. Šmíd tended to Veronika entirely, and she tried to help him, too:

I was with him the entire holiday and we were like twins. I took care of father and he took care of me. This way we both ran the household...when it was like that for long periods of father's bad health, then I was definitely alone with Dad...for holiday we drove every year to the Krkonoš [a mountain range] where there was a company *chata*....So father resided there the entire summer and sometimes stayed to the fall, and actually I went there until I was 18.

Veronika also competed in school sports and performed well academically. In addition to long summer holidays with Mr. Šmíd in the Krkonoš, the family spent holidays with her mother's sister Eva and often visited with her father's brother who lived in Prague. One dim image of a maternal grandfather (Mr. Hrabal) visiting Prague, bouncing her on his

knee, was Veronika's only recollection of a grandparent. The other three grandparents (her mother's mother, and both of her father's parents) died before Veronika was born.

Family during Normalization: Veronika and Ondřej

Although Veronika had long planned to be a teacher, one of her mentors at school advised her not to pursue a bachelor's degree in pedagogy because the pay did not compensate for the work load. When flipping through a university catalog, Veronika came across courses at the electro-technical faculty and decided she liked the sound of technical cybernetics: "they were ideas which no one had ever spoken to me about, but sounded splendid, so I said, 'that's it.'" Her parents were amused by her choice but supported her nonetheless. Thanks to her strong academic record, Veronika was admitted into the college without entrance exams. She explained that she would not have passed them otherwise because, at the time, she leaned more toward the humanities. She met her husband, Ondřej, the first week of school outside a lecture hall. The lecture had been cancelled unexpectedly and Veronika and Ondřej headed to a pub to fill the time.

Ondřej and Veronika's courtship was short—they married in February 1975, and their son Josef was born in August of the same year. Members of the Vodrážka family joked about the sudden marriage and Josef's unexpected arrival, but they also spoke at length about how hard those years were. They were challenged by a number of issues: where to live, how to take care of themselves, and the dramatic change of lifestyle when they married and had a baby. As we have observed, family policymakers grew frustrated with Czechs such as Ondřej and Veronika who got married and had children before they

were, according to some specialists, mature enough to manage the responsibility. This young couple, however, did not approach the situation lightly.

Veronika realized that she could have had an abortion. But, she said, she knew that she wanted children and a family and decided not to put them off to the future. A harder decision it seems was ending her involvement with local sports teams and, especially, the decision to combine school with raising children. Veronika explained that she was protected and sometimes spoiled by her father: she did not know how to take care of herself, how to run a household, cook, or clean. Additionally, men dominated the field of electro-technology (as they do today). She felt that her studies were harder and more demanding because she was one of few women in the classrooms.

In the end, Ondřej moved into the Šmíd's apartment immediately following Josef's birth so that Veronika could be with her mother. The Šmíds had since moved from their first flat to a two-plus-one in Prague 2. Veronika's brother was also living at home with their parents, and the flat was crowded with five adults and one infant. During this period, Ondřej prepared his mother's two-room flat for their arrival. Mrs. Vodrážková (Kateřina) was returning during the same period from a mental hospital. She had retired early from her job as a tram conductor after suffering from an emotional illness.

The Vodrážkas subsequently moved to Prague 5, into the elder Mrs. Vodrážková's apartment. They stayed there for almost four years. Although Ondřej and Mrs. Vodrážková preferred to live separately, when Josef was born they began out of necessity to cohabitate again in her tiny apartment. Mrs. Vodrážková was able to help

with the baby after about two years, when she had fully recovered from what Veronika called "a problem with her nerves, a kind of psychic illness." Veronika and Ondřej were not comfortable leaving Josef alone with Kateřina until she was visibly recovered. All three grandparents helped take care of the baby, but Mr. Šmíd provided the majority of child care.

Indeed, Mr. Šmíd's early retirement in the mid-to-late 1960s fell at a convenient time for the family. Though Hana remained at work, when Veronika and Ondřej began their second year of university in October, Mr. Šmíd took care of his grandson. Again, he refused to have his offspring cared for "by others." Hana compared his attitude toward sending his grandchildren to state nurseries to what she had experienced when their two children were young.

The Byt'ak

As soon as Ondřej and Veronika learned that they were expecting a child (1974) they applied for an apartment at their local "housing office" (*bytovné komise* or *byt'ak*). In order to qualify, applicants had to prove that there was no space for the family in either household of origin. Because housing policy was also a part of pro-natalist policies, marriage and pregnancy increased the likelihood of being allocated a flat by the *byt'ak*. Despite the policy goal of providing every family with an apartment, however, waiting lists were long and bureaucratic procedures tedious. Success usually depended upon personal connections to state employees or bribes. Success also depended upon demonstrating significant family need. For four years Ondřej and Veronika, with the

help of their parents, officially claimed to be living separately (Veronika and the baby with Mr. and Mrs. Šmíd, Ondřej in his dorm room) when, in fact, the young couple and child were living unofficially in Prague 5 with Ondřej's mother.

Ondřej regularly stopped by the *byt'ak* to make sure the application was still under consideration and to pressure employees to grant them an apartment by stressing that Veronika and he were in a difficult situation. Veronika explained that she had to remain alert, in case *byt'ak* employees dropped by her parent's home to check on Josef's alleged living conditions and verify continued eligibility for new housing. When they came to the Šmíd's home, though, they inevitably found Josef because Mr. Šmíd was providing the majority of child care during the daytime. "It was okay," Veronika said,

because they always found Josef; he was actually there every afternoon so it could be argued that the child resided with my parents. His pants hung about and his toys were lying everywhere. And once I even met them as I was going to fetch Josef after school. So those controllers probably went to our commission proceedings and attested to the fact that the apartment was crowded, there is an older son, the grandmother works, the grandfather is sick, the father lives in a dormitory....the conclusion was that I *must* be moved out my parent's apartment.

In 1979, the Vodrážka's daughter, Magda, was born. Finally, the Prague 2 *byt'ak* commission granted the family their own flat in Prague 2, in an old apartment building. The space they were allocated, though, had only one source of water, no bathroom, and no electrical outlets. After a year of repairing the flat under Mr. Šmíd's leadership, Veronika, Ondřej, Josef and Magda moved in to their own residence in the summer of 1980.

Ondřej interrupted his studies briefly so that Veronika could complete her thesis and he could help renovate their new home. She graduated in 1980, and he finished the

following fall. Ondřej then satisfied his obligatory military service. In the meantime, Veronika took a brief maternity leave. Her combined income (from maternity leave and benefits for families of those serving in the military) was insufficient, and she eventually put both children in day care (Mr. Šmíd and Kateřina continued to help out in the afternoons) and started a job at a research institute. After returning from military service, Ondřej began working in military technology. Until 1999, when Josef moved out of his family's flat and into a rental flat with his girlfriend, Kamila, the family of four lived in the flat they were allotted in 1980. Veronika, Ondřej and Magda still live there today.

After their children (and grandchildren) left home, Hana and Mr. Šmíd had more time and money to travel throughout the eastern bloc. They also moved to a two-plus-one flat in a southeastern *paneláky* development called Legrační in the early 1980s (Prague 10), where Hana still lives. In 1985 she retired. And after suffering from two more heart attacks, Mr. Šmíd passed away in December 1989. Hana had a happy marriage to Mr. Šmíd, and his children and grandchildren missed him terribly. She was active in the Prague 10 pensioner's group and traveled yearly to Olomouc to attend elementary school reunions. Hana remained close to her sister Eva until Eva's death, and kept in close contact with her childhood neighbors' daughter, Andrea Holubová. Hana lived on her pension and a state benefit for widows. She was shocked by the rising cost of living, rising unemployment, and the decreasing value of Czech currency she witnessed in her lifetime.

Josef Moves Out

The Šmíd and Vodrážka family narratives became one when Josef's parents quickly married and lived with the Šmíds and then Mrs. Vodrážková. Josef remembered that his childhood was full of sports activities, school, camping in the summer, long trips to Moravia to visit his father's grandmother and Great Aunt Olga, and, especially, his grandfather Šmíd. As did his mother, Josef emphasized his grandfather's integrity, his fairness and how hard he worked for the family. He did not recall having lived with Grandmother Vodrážková until age four but at the time of our interview spent long stretches of time with her. For example, he often escaped to Grandmother Vodrážková's to study during exam season.

Josef's life choices were markedly different from those of his parents and his grandparents. He was fourteen when the socialist era ended. The person he imagined he would become, and the possibilities his parents imagined he would have, changed overnight. Both he and his parents spoke in terms of the gains in financial stability which accompanied transition to a market economy (in contrast to predominating images of market instability, such as those emerging from Maruška Procházková's interview and from Grandmother Šmídová), flexibility and open borders. His mother put it this way: "My son realized that he was able to take care of himself, that he can earn his own money when he tries, he can win or lose." Josef also wasted no time in traveling. In 1998, after completing his BA, he had earned enough money from a part-time job with a recently privatized firm to travel in Australia for ten months. Similarly, his sister Magda spent a

year of high school in Canada (visiting her father's childhood friends, the Vybíral's); she also planned to return to Canada for part of her university studies.

Josef was twenty-four when I interviewed him and lived with his girlfriend Kamila in a pleasant two-plus-one Prague flat. He was completing his MA studies in engineering at the Economics University in Prague. He expected to work in a bank when his studies were finished in late 2000. Josef was concerned with becoming independent and being able to take care of himself. He hoped never to need to rely on his family in the way his parents did, although he knew that he could turn to them at any time for financial and emotional support. Josef also wanted to wait to marry and have children. He laughed nervously at the idea that, if he followed his father's example, he would already be responsible for a four-year-old boy and have no opportunity to save, travel and build a career. He saw the postsocialist era as a time for his personal growth, but also for his parent's, especially his mother's, professional growth. "Before the family took up so much of mother's time," he said, "and Mother didn't accomplish what she wanted, or reach the position of something. [When she was young] she had the feeling that she would achieve something in life. So now she is being compensated, now she has time to work."

Probably because he was in the thick of his final year of studies and eager to begin working full-time, Josef returned to the theme of work throughout our interview. But he was concerned with the dangers of overwork, fixations on money and earning. He contrasted the immorality of the marketplace and business dealings to his grandfather,

who represented the antithesis of the postsocialist finance and banking community in

Prague:

He was a person who was awfully fair. Really, say he did some work that should cost 100 crowns, then he would charge twenty crowns. Meanwhile today it is rather the opposite: a person does work worth 100 crowns and charges 2,000 crowns. So he was the kind of person who would be out of place today...he would have been awfully sad to see how things work now in business. The fraud and so on....So it is awfully sad that he is not here, but I always say to myself that thankfully he didn't live to see this, but he *did* live to see the revolution—the enthusiasm, he saw that there was a future here, but he didn't live to see the disappointment. So maybe, thank God, he is at peace because many older people are disappointed.

Josef's association of market forces and greed with immoral public behavior of individual Czechs contrasted his characterization of the more upstanding, nurturing and fair family environment in which he was raised. Although Josef perceived himself as having gained from economic shifts begun in 1989, he recognized how shocking and dissatisfying the changes were to older Czechs. Mr. Šmíd served as a symbol of the family's belief system and morality.

Josef's parents also took on moral qualities during our interview. For example, he remarked, his father and mother wanted him to study, not simply to make money, but for the sake of pure learning. When they were younger, he and Magda were punished when their parents felt they were not straight-forward and honest; and Josef believed that his mother's apprehension toward the banking sector (though he found her too "conservative" and cautious toward investment and market reform) taught him that he should not take advantage of others to make a profit for himself. Note, however, that honesty at home with the family was more highly valued and meaningful than was "straight-forward" behavior in public settings. For example, we have seen that

maneuverings with the *byt'ak* were interpreted as better for the family in the long run and understandable (see Gal 2002). But such behavior would never have been tolerated of the children in the home.

Women and Work

Although less oriented than the Kliment story toward momentous events in state history, the Vodrážka family history is intertwined with various state policies toward families. We observe individual acceptance and rejection of those policies in the telling of the family's stories. In the first phase of state socialism, maternity leave was short and women were expected to return quickly to work. Hana and her daughter attribute Mr. Šmíd's exhaustion to a personal distrust of socialized child care institutions and his refusal to cooperate with the conditions of family policy (for example, the *jesle* "were absolutely out of the question"). Although she later enjoyed her responsibilities and personal relationships with co-workers at the press, Hana took pride in her husband's insistence that he, rather than the state, support his children. She recognized a greater similarity between herself and her mother's experience between World War I and World War II, when "women just did not go to work" (although at home they ran the household economy), and a sharp contrast between herself and her daughter, who later had no choice but to raise two young children while working a full-time job. In contrast, staying home to take care of Ondřej full-time was never an option for Kateřina Vodrážková.

I often asked my informants to compare their experiences as mothers or fathers with those of their mothers and fathers, as well as their children (if their children had

children). As I note above, Hana Šmídová drew several likenesses between herself and her mother in the first part of the twentieth century: they were both at home with their children for extended periods of time. Both Hana and her daughter, Veronika, recognized the contrasts between their experiences as mothers of small children.

Veronika felt that her mother had an easier time running a household than she did because her mother was at home for ten years; moreover, shortly after returning to work, her husband retired and insisted upon performing household chores. As we have seen, memories of a paternal caretaker dominate Veronika's story of her childhood. Her mother did not experience, Veronika said, a "typical mothering life" or the "life of a working woman with two children" as she did. Veronika carried a burden, she said, the constant worry that she was not giving her two children enough attention.

Although Veronika was perpetually worried that she did not have enough time for her children in the 1970s and 80s, individuals have less time for their families today than ever before: they are working longer hours and jobs are less secure. Veronika and Ondřej were thankful that their children were grown, just at the point at which they needed to give more time to their own jobs in computer technology (their places of employment have since been privatized). Throughout the family histories I collected, "family time"—be it every weekend at the family *chata* or lengthy family holidays in the mountains and countryside of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia—was the one thing many families had plenty of during the socialist era. In the year 2000 that time was more scarce. When explaining higher incidences of crime and drug use in the postsocialist period, in fact, social workers and policy makers often blamed the absence of parents and

reduced "family time." As in Možný's model of informal family associations, social order rested on behavior in Czech families and familial obligations.

Veronika and Ondřej disagreed about the quality of family life during the socialist era. Veronika felt that the state had provided meaningful advantages for families with children. The benefits of having children were more noticeable during the socialist era, she said. Child care was available, and "as a mother I used the advantages there were." For example, although the monetary benefits were insufficient, Veronika readily admits that, today, she could not have had her two children while studying. Ondřej was much more critical of the socialist era, and he did not agree that things were previously better for families. He felt that his and his wife's newfound fulfillment from work had a positive effect on family life regardless of lost family time. And their son Josef's ability to support himself, invest and save money in the current era removed the burden of supporting children through adulthood and parenthood.

Someday Josef wants to have a wife and children. But he wants to have kids when both he and his future wife are professionally able. During the late socialist era, women—as much as they might have wanted to be at home—had to combine childrearing with work. As a result of lengthy maternity leaves, the drop in child care providers, and unpredictable job opportunities, it is more likely that a woman will leave work today after giving birth. Yet Josef, who believed at the time of our meeting that he would marry a woman (like Kamila) with an education equivalent to his, regarded private nurseries as an opportunity for those up-and-coming Czechs who choose not to take parental leave at the cost of their careers. Unlike his parents, he did not conceive of the

jesle as a state provision and entitlement for working women, but as a private resource and option to be afforded in case his future wife chooses not to stay home.

Josef believed that there was a clear role and duty for public services. He argued that they should be used to protect the weak (the Roma from skinheads, for example) but, like Ivan Kliment, he would prohibit access to social services by the undeserving (also, interestingly, the Roma). Josef did not bemoan the cancellation of marriage loans and the reduction of public housing for families, which played a central role in his parent's household economy as well as family policy during the 1970s and 1980s. Rather, he argued, the state should develop a loan system that would make it possible and increasingly standard for hard-working young couples and families to take out mortgages (see *Radio Praha* 10-25-01). In this way, young Czechs would be able to do what he had done: study, work hard, save, and take care of themselves.

Generations

Housing and care for grandchildren Magda and Josef affirmed and clarified kin relations within the Vodrážka family. In the case of Kateřina and Ondřej, the sharing of Kateřina's residence for four years strengthened a relationship that had been on unsteady ground since Ondřej was a small boy. Through their emphasis on the importance of particular individuals, especially older family members, interviewees delineated family membership and belonging (see Segalen 2001 on a similar argument as regards grandparenting in France). Grandfather Šmíd appeared as a particularly devoted and loving father and grandfather. These traits were embodied by his care for children and

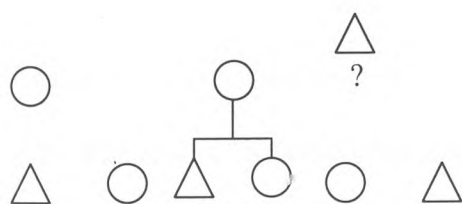
grandchildren, as well as the labor he devoted in 1980 to renovating Ondřej and Veronika's new flat. Save his presence during her childhood, Veronika's brother was missing from her personal story. Because he did not overtly assist in buffering hardships of the socialist era, she excludes him from more involved descriptions of her family. Certainly this was also the case with Ondřej's father and his paternal relatives.

In contrast to the Kliments, the Vodrážka family did not begin the socialist period with significant family property or resources. Neither grandmother in this kin group originated from Prague, but moved there from more rural areas to study in Hana's case, and work (and divorce) in Kateřina's. Housing was eventually secured by each through local housing offices; this housing was then made available to offspring until they, in turn, received state-allocated apartments of their own. As in the case of the Kliments, pooled family resources (what Kibria 1993 calls "patchworking") aided in coping with a poverty of resources during the socialist era. In contrast to the Kliments, however, the Vodrážkas combined family resources with officially available provisions (nurseries, apartments, newlywed loans) and the patchwork was made up of "public" and "private" pieces. Indeed, one could argue that the Vodrážkas "inherited" property from the state as well as each other (see Platz 2000:119; Humphrey 2002:188). The combination of family aid and state allocations put the Vodrážkas in a class position similar to that of the Kliments by the end of the socialist era.

Generational differences within the Vodrážka family point to how their economic position and relations with the state changed during the twentieth century. The two younger generations of Vodrážkas were quite willing to detach from what they felt to be

their dependency on the state when the socialist era came to an end. Josef in particular embraced the banking sector and, now that state policy toward families targets lower-income households, had little need of, or entitlement to, family-centered services. He felt this was appropriate, arguing only that the state should work harder to distinguish the needy from the un-needy. The same could not be said of Grandmothers Šmíd and Vodrážka. As pleased as they might have been by the end of one-party rule, pensioners like Kateřina and Hana were often dismayed by rising prices, rising materialism, and their meager pensions. The rest of the family was concerned for them as well. For example, Magda preferred to drop in unexpectedly to her grandmothers' homes when we went for interviews. Otherwise, she feared, they would spend money they do not have on hosting us—stuffing us with little sandwiches and cookies purchased and eaten only on special occasions.

The Home for Mothers



The Home for Mothers was a four-story building resting in a gray *paneláky* settlement on the outskirts of Prague. Auburn wooden balconies, where baby clothing, linens, and diapers hung from lines and nails, distinguished the building from an otherwise colorless housing landscape.

Entry to the building was also more warm and welcoming than what one would experience in the surrounding *paneláky*. Once buzzed through by an elderly, female porter seated immediately inside the foyer, visitors and residents signed in and greeted this “doorwoman” (*vrátná*). Four or five different pensioners alternated shifts as *vrátny*. Although they did not live in the Home, these women had worked there for extra money for many years and watched all comings and goings closely. Like the staff of social workers, the *vrátná* wore oversized purple smocks, and when not guarding the door, they substituted as babysitters and surrogate grandmothers to the building’s youngest residents. “Same old thing!” (*Pořád stějne!*), they groaned in response to greetings of “How are you?” and, “What’s new, Mrs. *vrátnice*?” Kids congregated in the front hall, playing, while their mothers chatted in their sweat clothes and house shoes near the *vrátná*’s desk, sometimes plopping down on the brown lounge couch and watching the small television set inside the *vrátná*’s office.

The first Home for Mothers was established in 1966 in the eastern Moravian city of Ostrava to provide housing for numerous single mothers who, the Prague director, Jitka, told me, were discovered by social workers to be alone, isolated and in need of help. This was a “gigantic phenomenon, growing and spreading in the industrial city of Ostrava,” she said. The Prague home opened in 1984. In 1997 they moved to the current site, allowing the institution to triple its occupancy. While I was there in 1999 and 2000, the majority of residents were non-Romani Czechs.

Varied backgrounds and experiences brought residents to the Home for Mothers, but their histories bore a number of similarities to each other. For one, each woman

sought eligibility for a unit because she had no family to turn to. She had exhausted the possibilities of support from family and friends; in some cases, moving from place to place with her children for months and years. Each resident had one to six children with her in the Home, all under the age of eighteen. Although these women were already drawing on a wide range of state provisions for families (maternity leave, benefits for children, social contributions, heat and rent subsidies, and payments to the living minimum), housing in an "asylum building" (*azýlový dům*), as they called the Home, was the most desperate claim to file, and chances for admission were slim. Most had to wait several months before getting word that a unit was available.

A place in the home offered relief, an escape, peace of mind, and physical security. In the case of one mother, her two-room flat in the Home allowed her to reunite with two children she had placed in an institute for children, one newborn from a postnatal care unit, and the two who had been living with her in a condemned building. In other cases, a space in the Home allowed a mother to separate herself and her children from abusive fathers and husbands, as well as unbearable mother-daughter relations. Others had been living in overcrowded flats, where five to sixteen other family members already lived. For several, getting pregnant meant the withdrawal of room and board once guaranteed by a job (such as one hospital cleaning lady and one hotel waitress). Unlike the Kliments and Vodrážkas, halting work and beginning maternity leave resulted in the loss of housing.

Residence in the Home for Mothers was guaranteed as long as a mother followed the Home's rules (which were laid out and agreed to in writing upon arrival), filed an

application with her local Prague district for permanent housing, and continued to demonstrate a need for a space in the Home. And case files were reviewed every three months to make sure the women continued to meet the qualifications; as during the initial application period, staff considered children the priority when granting residence. Some women and their children stayed only a few months before permanent housing was secured, others were there for three, four and five years. Social workers who staffed the Home were available to answer questions about benefits claims and social support; otherwise they interviewed and monitored the status of waiting applicants⁴⁶ and followed up on the housing requests of current residents with various Prague "housing offices" (the *byt'ák*).⁴⁷

The Home occupied only half of the *panelák* building. It was composed of twenty-five apartments, which were one or two rooms in size. The other half of the building (another twenty-five units) was being prepared for use by the Home when I left Prague in December 2000. During my fieldwork the Home introduced the possibility of admission for fathers with children and simultaneously increased on-site social services. This change gave the Home what the director called "greater capital, a greater ability to help mothers, or single parents, with children. This revision brought us an increase in the number of staff and, I hope, the ability to operate more effectively in the current social conditions." The eligibility of "fathers with children" to live in the Home was reflective of post-1989 gender-neutral social policies and operated much like new terminologies of "parental leave." State texts no longer approached women as the sole recipients of social services and state paternalist interest. Yet in practice low-income women continued to

bear the responsibility of applying to family support and care offices on behalf of their children.

Co si sama neuděláš, to nemáš: If you don't go it alone, you won't have anything

The actuality of residing in the Home disclosed one's family history inasmuch as the living arrangement depended upon both estrangement from family and the difficult experience of single motherhood. In the Czech setting, where strong ideologies of family and kin obligations operated on both the level of the state and in the shaping of individual lives, this separation and isolation was often a source of pain and self-doubt. For some, the separation was desired. The women insisted during our conversations that dependence on the family was out of the question, that they were alone and had to solve their own problems. One possible form of help was the staff and other residents within the Home, who swapped babysitting favors and spent long afternoons on maternity leave hanging out together. The Home was something like a dormitory, and the women living in it developed sets of supportive friend networks behaving like "one family" (see Weston 1997) during the time that they lived under one roof.

As regards the world outside of the Home, the mothers sounded like an extreme version of Josef Vondráček who felt that the postsocialist era offered the opportunity to support oneself and not have to turn to family or the state. In response to questions about which persons provided the most help with young children and in seeking housing alternatives, the women in the Home told me, "I have no one," "I'm the only one my children have," "I do everything myself," and "Family is for nothing, family played no

role.” In a number of cases, a social worker at a local care for children office had stepped in and urged the Home to place the woman and her children high on the Home’s waiting list.

In contrast to Josef, then, these women did not have the security of knowing that family was there just in case they were not self-sufficient; and the market economy did not foster financial autonomy, but rather economic vulnerability. The circumstances of these women’s family lives resulted in a greater dependence on the state (in the form of individual social workers and the Home itself) regardless of the downsizing of family services in the early 1990s.

It was difficult in this setting to elicit chronological “family histories.” Most women rapidly plotted childhood, an elementary and maybe middle school education, pregnancy, sometimes marriage, the birth of one or more children, marital difficulties followed by housing troubles, separation from a spouse or partner, the seeking of new housing, and word that a unit was being made available in the Home for Mothers. During hard times, friends outside of the Home had sometimes offered short-term help. If the mother and her children had been living with the children’s father’s parents, the mother was often made to feel unwelcome when the couple separated. Several of the mothers badly needed to remove themselves and their children entirely from their marital households because of the behavior of their children’s father (emotional abuse, physical abuse, drinking or gambling) or because the father kept legal rights to the apartment or house they once shared and had begun a new relationship and, perhaps, started a new family. In several cases the mothers had never entered into long-term relations with the

fathers of their children. After entering the Home, the women waited for what seemed to them an eternity for their own apartments, which were one of a dwindling number of "low-income apartments" (*sociální byty*). "What is yours is yours" (*svoje je svoje*), they said. Receiving a place in the Home was a stepping stone to independence. Once the security of one's own apartment was ensured, life could begin again.

An expectation of family in the Czech Republic is that one lives with, or in close proximity to, parents and grandparents through marriage and childrearing. Recall the Homolka family in *Ecce homo Homolka* saying to themselves that "home is home" (*doma je doma*) at the end of a day outside of their apartment and, much to their dismay, among strangers. Czechs frequently said this phrase to me when I explained my intention to return to the United States at the end of my research period. They presumed that my return home meant that I would then be among family members. Czechs often assumed this of each other as well. Residents of the Home hoped, however, to establish an altogether new household with their children. They could not rest easy that *doma je doma*, that parents and grandparents were a steadfast source of housing.

Although the residents of the Home had for the most part turned away from, or been cast off by, their parents or in-laws, some spoke of their children's grandparents in loving terms. They felt that once housing was secured, everything would be fine and their parents (the kids' grandparents) might be part of family life. When telling their personal stories, residents gauged connections to childhood homes through reference to mothers. Their own mothers' acceptance or rejection of them and their children symbolized how close or distant these women were from all family outside the Home.

Alena Stará knew that her mother would watch her daughter in an emergency, but she could not stand to visit her father for long. Living with him was out of the question. Zuzana Novotná had bounced from her mother's flat, where four adults and three children shared two rooms, to her maternal grandparents' home, where it was clear, she said, she and her children were not welcome. Bára Wagnerová had not lived with her mother since her mother refused to see her when she married a Romani man and gave birth to the first of their four daughters in 1990. Libora Fialová was in the middle of a drawn-out court battle with her mother over the rights to a three-plus-one apartment, which both women claimed was hers. Žofie Hilská's mother was a "compulsive alcoholic," whom she could not bear to have around her six year-old son any longer. Other mothers did not want to go in to the details of their relationships with their own mothers and said, simply, "*Nedělalo by to dobrotu...*" which could mean "It wouldn't work to be with my mother" or "It wouldn't be good to go back there."

In addition to housing, the unwillingness or inability of other family members to provide child care represented clear limits on family relations if not a total loss of kin ties. Zuzana Novotná tried to see her mother on a regular basis. She felt that they were not in very close contact because her step-father did not like to include Zuzana and her two children, Gabriela and Otto, in his life. Zuzana's mother, Zuzana explained, would have liked to take Gabriela to the family's *chata* over the weekend, but her step-father would not permit it. "We don't have grandmothers," she said. That is to say, although she and her mother still visit, there is no ability to rely on the wider family on an everyday basis. When I asked her to tell me about the differences between her

experiences as a mother and her own mother's experiences, Bára Wagnerová put it this way:

BW: Before, there was always the support of older generations. I don't have that support.

RN: From grandmothers?

BW: Yeah, my mother always had the support of her mother. And my grandmother, well my mother's mother, always had the support of her mother-in-law....her family wasn't around, but she had the support of my grandfather's family. So grandfather's mother helped her, you know? There was always some grandmother around to help with the children. We don't have any grandmother around to take care of us. It would really help. A lot of women might, you know, want to get away for a bit or go somewhere with their husbands. They just give the kids to the grandmother and have some peace....I could really use a grandmother.

While some residents in the Home for Mothers, such as Žofie or Libora, preferred to have no contact with their mothers and vigorously avoided being thought of as somehow linked to them (particularly as regards perceptions by benefits accountants that their mothers might be providing financial aid), for others like Bára and Zuzana the absence of grandmothers (and other relatives) underscored feelings of solitude and utter dependence on the self. They admitted that life with children would be smoother and more manageable with the support of family. They took care of their children themselves, though, reminding me that no one else was going to solve their housing and child care problems.

The Father

The fathers of the children in the Home were often not considered part of these family units. "The kids are my family" said one mother; neither her parents nor the

children's father and paternal kin were drawn into her narrative of family life. Much as in Ivan Kliment's claim that his wives were like strangers, in the Home, ex-husbands, ex-boyfriends and lovers literally turned into strangers, falling completely out of the family circle. Though these fathers were not considered family members, when residents described their lives, they depicted nonparticipating fathers as central to financial and emotional strain and the experiences of single motherhood. And male friends and new boyfriends were treated with great caution in this women-centered Home. In fact, if a mother began dating someone, she was required to introduce the man to the director, who would meet with him informally to make sure that he would be a healthy addition to the children's lives.

Still, it is important to note that, in terms of "family support," the mothers and staff at the Home were less condemning of absent or negligent fathers than they were of unconnected and unhelpful mothers and grandmothers. In fact, in all of the families I worked with (in and out of the Home) little was expected from fathers when it came to childrearing and housekeeping; and in the case of separation and divorce, Czechs did not problematize a father's disinterest and, even, disappearance, in the way they might similar behavior on the part of a mother or grandmother. In households across Prague, grandmothers (and grandfathers, as we observed in the case of the Šmíds) were often more significant parental figures than were fathers.

Although women across generations were more implicated in the neglect of children than men, according to the terms of social policy for low-income families, fathers were expected to contribute financially to the household. Yet it was up to the

mother to declare paternity and pursue child support payments (see Haney 2002). While mothers might not include a father in stories of her family and family life, the state demanded that fathers be documented and called upon to pay part of monthly expenses.⁴⁸ If the mother would not officially declare the father, the state deducted a "fictive child support" (*fiktivní výživné*) from her monthly support payments under the suspicion that a father figure was indeed contributing unclaimed resources and that both parents were possibly cheating the state.

The women in the Home varied in terms of their pursuit of child support payments. Markéta Hašková and Žofie drew on all legal means to force their children's fathers to contribute to their children's expenses. Both men had ignored their duties and were accruing sizeable debts to the state, which had taken on the responsibility of meeting the mother-child living minimum standards after the fathers had been formally identified and sued for support. Libora took her daughter's father to court for an increase in monthly child support payments, even though he paid regularly. But if the mother refused to pursue child support payments, the state did not step in. Some women, such as Radka Matoušová, felt it was immoral "after living with the man and having a child with him" to have the state mediate their parenting duties. Similarly, Lenka Serynková stubbornly ignored the pressure put upon her by social workers to identify her twins' father. "She says there is no father," wrote one social worker in a letter seeking a space in the Home for Lenka and the two babies. Among friends Lenka spoke freely of a boyfriend, who occasionally gave her money and other forms of assistance. Perhaps he was the father? Perhaps she was taking money from the father and trying to get as much

from the state as she could? She would not entertain the question, changing the subject: "I don't want help. The social worker suggested that I live with my sister and her seven children! How could I do that? No, I don't want help. Everything is good, the twins are my snowflakes, my darlings, my loves."

1989: Encountering the State

Unlike the momentousness of 1989 in the Kliment family history, and the financial opportunities which attended the end of socialism for the Vodrážkas, for the mothers in the Home the end of socialism was more like a bump in the road than the chance finally to "live in truth" or capitalize on an open market. As we have seen with the two other families, 1989 often served as a significant marker in stories people told about themselves, and personal histories were "subject to a *before* and after *coding*" as Borneman has usefully characterized historical categories following the Cold War (1992:7 emphasis in original; Platz 2000:129). The political symbolism of the end of socialism did not enter into the mothers' stories of social encounters and economic hardship. The changing nature of social policy toward the family, however, was central to understandings of life "before." If they did touch on state transformations, it was in reference to the beginnings of disorienting dealings in state offices, a shortage of work opportunities, and spectacular price hikes. Because the state remained a continuous part of their lives, both "before" and "after," these women paid little attention to grand narratives so significant to the state's chronology of its own history.

As I mention above, the level of contact with a mother figure stood for how connected the residents felt to kin outside of the Home. When discussing life “before,” residents often portrayed these mother figures as having had an easier time raising children. These women echoed Veronika Vodrážková, who felt that, during the socialist era, women could utilize various public facilities and resources in managing the demands of work and family. Similarly, the mothers in the Home felt that their mothers previously had access to a host of state services (in addition to the helpful older generations of women) such as the *jesle*, housing, guaranteed work, and reasonable prices of groceries and household furnishings. Whether or not this was true was not as significant as the imagined ease of running a home and family “before,” according to women who felt they were on unsteady ground with the state and the market “after.”

Bára became a mother for the first time in 1990 and faced a unique relationship with the state—one her mother never encountered. Not only did her mother reject her and the new baby, but family life before 1989 could not prepare Bára for the new routines in state support and care offices. New rules rose at every step; “everything I saw growing up at home was for nothing,” she complained. “I am full of paper,” said a frustrated Markéta, characterizing her trips to state offices, where all the mothers routinely verified income levels. When I asked women in the Home how they spent their days on maternity leave, the task of filing paperwork often took on the characteristics of a job; the wages earned on this job were family benefits. Documents, verifications, confirmations, evidence of pregnancy, receipts, divorce judgments had to be presented in order to “live on benefits” (*žít z dávek*). Lengthy maternity leaves, or unemployment,

allowed the time to travel from office to office, filling out forms with children in tow.

Unemployment and paperwork were two things their mothers had not had to deal with, the women complained.

These family histories displayed shorter lineages, and a more compact sense of time, than those I presented earlier. Admired elders and country roots, which symbolized familial breadth and temporal depth to the Kliments and Vodrážkas, are here replaced by circumscribed, restricted household "atoms." The women did not like to ponder for long about holidays with grandparents (if they had taken them), or family time during the socialist era. In an interesting twist on the atomization literature, the women in the home expressed feelings of alienation and separation from those older generations, parents and their children's fathers, while the state provided the most significant amount of financial and housing aid. They were resolutely autonomous while needing various forms of state support and care. Although they insisted upon their solitude, these women did receive "help" to raise and tend to their children: their main support network was the manifold array of benefits the state provided for low-income households of families with children.

But the state was not an ally; it remained immoral and untrustworthy in these narratives. While some mothers credited their case workers with locating and guaranteeing a space in the Home, other state contacts were thought to have obfuscated deliberately or irregularly informed the mothers of certain benefits for which they were eligible. Romani mothers in particular were outspoken about the treatment they received in some of the offices. "They look at you badly," said Žofie, "They say '*cikánka*' [pejorative for Roma, gypsy], this that and the other thing—they're the ones on social

benefits,' you know? This is in the department for children. They see you're a *cikánka* and just dismiss you altogether. They cite some paragraph, some number which you don't understand at all. It's always the same."

Many of the Romani as well as non-Romani mothers eventually became wary of requirements made of them in the Home. After prolonged stays, this institution and its staff, who had once delivered peace of mind and security, were seen as controlling and too involved in the women's lives. Signing in and out of the building was demeaning; mothers were secretive about boyfriends and hid new relationships from the director, the on-grounds psychologist and other social workers ("they are worried that I might have a fourth," giggled Renata, a mother of three); they often felt that how they spent their money, who visited, their visitors, ties to their children's father, and their children's behavior were being observed and evaluated at every moment. One might argue that in the Home, the family units often became atomized and distant from those running this state institution as well as, in some cases, from one another. Distrust of the state domain and its intentions and effects on the family continued.

No "One Family"

The women and children who live in the Home for Mothers recognized that other Czechs perceived them as weak and as less productive members of society. They did not fully see themselves in such a negative light. "I never thought I would get in this situation," Zuzana told me. "It's just a stroke of bad luck," explained Markéta, "if you had an apartment during the socialist era, you are not in the situation that we're in today."

These women recognized that they might be stigmatized for living in a state institution, but they were also aware that other Czechs were struggling to make ends meet during the postsocialist era. In many instances they made it clear that they were the lucky ones: their circumstances were taken seriously by state employees and their children had clean, warm, well-run and safe homes.

These women were set apart from other Czechs as regards the stories they told about family and what family means. For example, the Kliment and most members of the Vodrážka family often shared in discourses of family as a safe haven. Only Kateřina Vodrážková's story bears a resemblance to the despair and sense of isolation the women in the Home expressed. In the end, she was able to turn to family for both child care and housing. When there was not a "real" family member to turn to, the Šmíds and Ondřej Vodrážka identified neighbors and family friends who became part of "one family" (*jedna rodina*; on Armenia see Platz 2000:131). Similarly, Jana Klimentová and Hana Šmídová spoke fondly of older women who took care of them after their mothers passed away. Among the women in the Home, the trope of "family" as a supportive, close community did not always apply. For example, Libora recalled, after leaving the Home, that the women living there were too self-interested and difficult to connect with. She felt a lack of support among the mothers that was much like what she experienced when dealing with her own mother.

Additionally, these women were prohibited from participating in the more promising aspects of transformation to a market economy (as did the Kliment and the Vodrážkas), because of the cutting off of ties with parents and members of what could—

to some what should—have been guaranteed family support. While the women's children made up a new, young family unit, and in most cases these women were better off having limited contact with certain family members, their housing and child care predicaments put them in unusual position vis-à-vis Czechs of their generation. Indeed, the Kliment grandchildren and Magda and Josef Vodrážka were better able to navigate the postsocialist economic and political landscape thanks to family support. While many individuals have "privatized" their families, withdrawing from "duplicitous" maneuverings and mutually beneficial dealings in state settings, the women in the Home found their family lives continuously subject to social policies. Thus mothers without family had heightened interactions with the state bureaucracy during a period when fewer and fewer families were eligible for family awards.

NARRATING FAMILIES

During both the socialist and postsocialist eras, kin ties and bonds allowed for self achievement and, according to some, survival. While kinship literature has traditionally contrasted relational kinship systems and individualistic systems, this project demonstrates their interconnection in the postsocialist Czech Republic. Although individuated family units (socialism) and privatizing persons (postsocialism) appear to be instances of modern individualism cutting across changing state forms, wider relations among family and kin made possible the break down into smaller units—whether family "cells" *before* or entrepreneurial youths *after*. To be singular participants in ideologies of the Czech family, one must have broad social ties. Thus one could only turn inward

during the socialist era, toward the private domain, when there was a household and social unit in which to retreat. Today, one can only turn outward—venture into the public sphere as a responsible, self-supporting person—on the same basis: with the help of others, especially kin. One's "atomization" during the socialist era and "individualization" during the postsocialist era depended upon the strength of family networks and resources.

The degree to which one was atomized or privatized varied according to material circumstances that mediated relations with the state. Family resources inherited from the social and material prestige of nineteenth-century and interwar accomplishment (also cast as the height of a moral state) and an exchange network that outlasted personal wealth allowed the Kliments to set up strong boundaries between themselves and "public" influence. Because of their less affluent family background in comparison to the Kliments, the Vodrážkas experienced the socialist period as more of a give and take with the state. Boundaries between the private family and the public state were more blurred in this case. Family offered secure grounding when children were young and living space was scarce, yet parents worked with the providers of public resources to satisfy many material demands. Finally, mothers in the Home recalled that family life during the socialist era was necessarily state-centered and state supported due to weak or non-existing family networks. When they became mothers during late socialism and the postsocialist era, the state remained a constant, though reconfigured, presence. Poor women are still on intimate terms with the state and its family policies.

Anthropological literature on family life in East Central Europe during the socialist era insists that family was critical to survival during totalitarian rule. Here I have shown that the importance of family has outlasted the totalitarian state and that relations within families are shaping dependent relations with the state, particularly among single mothers. Moreover, the meaning of family gets configured by Czechs relative to their own experiences with class and gender. In the stories Czechs like the Kliments and Vodrážkas told about themselves, family stood for truth and morality that could not be found in public settings such as work, politics and government contexts. As I note in the introduction to this chapter, the linking of universal truths to the family, and prolonged immorality to the state, provides an interesting contrast to Collier, Rosaldo and Yanagisako's argument that family and state models change over time. Yet it is important to examine critically the idealization of family life in any era; the examples of women living in the Home for Mothers remind us that family can sometimes be the primary source of alienation and isolation.

Chapter 3: Family Time: Engendering Self-Care and Neo-Socialism

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

In the remaining chapters I explore how socialist-era family experiences and beliefs interacted with postsocialist influences. I argue that beliefs about the family inherited from the socialist era endured to inform and shape postsocialist family life. In particular, the idea of a united family, and the related theme of family versus state, carried over from the socialist era to mark growing class differences.

November 1989 signifies a moment of radical state change and a dramatic turning point in global alliances. The Czech Republic often stood for the “most” western and “most” reformable of the former Soviet states. Ethnographic work allows us to challenge this linear approach to Czech social and economic change by placing an emphasis on the continuity of socialist beliefs in the Czech lands—as well as the effects of socialism on everyday life in the present. For example, the few anthropological publications on the postsocialist Czech Republic attest to reticence and apprehension toward market activities and small vendors, which foreign economic theorists in the initial stages of transition to a market economy presumed Czechs would embrace (Lass 1999; Altshuler 2001).

It is important, however, not to allow socialism to become an overarching, explanatory model for behavior, but “to try to understand what patterns are emerging in the groundswell of everyday activities” (Humphrey and Mandel 2002:1). In the Czech case, socialist and postsocialist family ideologies combined to particular effect; they are

“responses to the new market initiatives, produced by them, rather than remnants of an older mentality” (Burawoy and Verdery 1999:2 emphasis in original).

This chapter explores how family beliefs and experiences from the socialist era endured to complement postsocialist state ideologies of individual responsibility. These beliefs should not be treated as residual or survivals of socialism, but as indicators of how family values interact with economic pressure (see Gal and Kligman 2000; Haney 2002). For example, go-it-alone values emerging from family narratives of the socialist era had the effect of reinforcing more recent state ethics of responsibility for the self and self-interest. Here I pull from a wide range of examples, including the Czech cottage culture, discussions of self-support, and assessments of family as a site of identity and personal safety within gender studies scholarship to make the point that, for many Czechs, family life during the socialist era was not characterized by dependence on the state but by independence. This independence and autonomy was established through notions of work for the family.

This point is of particular importance when placed against the backdrop of income- and needs-tested family policies introduced in the mid-1990s. During the socialist era all families received family benefits but, as long as they worked and raised families, Czechs felt that they “earned” those benefits. Today, most Czechs continue to “take” in some form, but when one is not perceived to work hard, or when one is getting by without working, one is stigmatized for receiving from the state. Those who had strong family networks during the socialist era—often the same Czechs who have relatively more resources today—continue to perceive of themselves in contrast to those

supposedly not working: as more self-interested, hard working and “independent,” even when they are drawing on identical state provisions and policies.

Czechs interpreted new family policies for those whom they referred to as the “socially weaker” (*sociálně slabší*) as productive of dependence and inequality. The founding principles of recently introduced income-based family policies, they complained, brought about a form of reliance (by the poor, weaker, lazy) on public services never before seen. Below I explore how Czechs interpreted current state leniency towards the “socially weaker,” those who “don’t want to work,” and new categories of support as protracting socialism, but in the form of beliefs and concerns specific to the setting of a market economy. I call this phenomena “neo-socialism” because Czechs described the “socially weaker” much in the way that critics of socialist paternalism portrayed the negative effects of social policies during the socialist era (see Chapter 1). I draw on ethnographic work in a family court, the Home for Mothers, the benefits office and family history transcripts to make this point. Although they had lived and raised their own families under a “caring state,” Czechs outside of the social support and care offices and those working within it were often troubled by what they considered to be the pathological effects of new “care” benefits and awards.

Socialism and postsocialism share ideologies of responsibility for the self and independence from the state. In the postsocialist period these ideologies shaped class differences based upon perceived notions of hard work and social weakness also witnessed throughout the socialist era. We find in the Czech setting, as in many others, that emergent capitalism “depends” upon material and social difference, and that the

post-1989 state is less motivated to repair or reconcile differences among families. The acceptance of “weaker” families by the state, moreover, suggested a return to paternalism toward some (rather than a return to Europe) that was being defined in the present and shaped by family policies differentiating conditions for receipt of public funds.

This chapter seeks to challenge simple binaries between socialism and capitalism, as I explore growing antipathy toward—yet enduring presumptions about—claims to state resources. I reveal the paradoxical inversion of values associated with socialist and capitalist societies and demonstrate how autonomy and individual responsibility framed stories of the socialist-era activities, while dependence on society and the state were contemporary phenomena—though imagined and perceived through the past. I am thus more interested in what happens when Czech ideologies interacted, and evoked one another, than in simplistic understandings of social change as originating solely from powerful external sources or the progress narratives too often considered the prime movers of social change in postsocialist Europe. We will see, moreover, that when differences among families are recognized and accepted by state institutions, expressions of independence from the state increasingly mark positions of privilege and lack thereof.

UNINTENDED INDEPENDENCE

The Kliment and Vodrážka families whom we met in Chapter 2 offered an initial look into families emulating ideologies of self-care. Their experiences during the socialist era embodied principles also underlying postsocialist family policies. During the socialist era these family members turned to the state to maximize self-interest and

satisfy family needs (particularly for housing in the Vodrážka case), although they preferred to keep a distance from public institutions and influence. Their interpretations of what was the best way to maneuver and distance the family from corrupt and controlling political influences is in accord with pervasive post-1989 discourses of self-care and independence from public services, although motivations for independence from the state during the two eras differ. An examination of elements from other family narratives—and the ways in which socialist experiences mirror current principles underlying the new state—will make these links between pre-1989 family values and post-1989 state ideologies of the family more evident.

We often asked the question toward the end of the family history interviews: “What do you think the state should be doing for families?” My research assistant Dana and I were, by this point, full of fruit tea and pastry. We had often been sitting for several hours in the living room of a *paneláky* apartment, on a couch or a chair across from a retired couple, a widow, widower, or a mother on maternity leave with her child(ren). Our conversation had traveled the family life-cycle. The topic of state responsibilities often brought renewed energy to family narratives that were winding down. Responses to this question were often mediated by memories of the socialist era, what Berdahl describes in the case of eastern Germany as, “a reservoir of thoughts” (cited in Wolfe 2000:206; see Fehérváry 2002:375).

When family members talked about state actions during the socialist era they emphasized their distrust, the difficulty of obtaining apartments through local housing offices, state intervention in everyday life, and their efforts to out-maneuver the

authorities at the state's expense. They marked disapproval of the previous regime by insisting that they had not been members of the communist party or that they had quietly supported or were personally involved in well-known moments of dissent (in 1968, 1989). Yet discontent with and disassociation from socialist ideals also took on a variety of subtle forms of expression, which my informants did not recognize as "resistance" or well thought-out dissension. Indeed, the efforts of socialist states had what some anthropologists have labeled "unintended consequences" (Burawoy and Verdery 1999:1; Wolfe 2000:198) and "autonomous effects" (Burawoy and Verdery 1999:2), and what Creed (1998) calls "conflicting complementarities." These terms stand for the occurrence of beliefs and behaviors such as risk taking and self-interest, which emerged specifically as a result of rival socialist practices such as the collectivization of agriculture and centralization of state resources. In his study of collectivization in Bulgaria, for example, Creed writes: "while collectivization came to symbolize the antithesis of capitalism, it actually produced many of the characteristics of agrarian capitalism" (1998:35). Nagengast (1991), Kideckel (1993), Verdery (1996), Rév (1987) and Szelényi (1988) also observed these accidental outcomes in Poland, Romania, and Hungary. In this chapter I contribute to this literature by exploring the reverse of conflicting complementarities: that is, how Czechs interpret the state's capitalist practices (the market, family welfare for the poorest) as producing their antitheses. First, however, I turn to examples of Czech "independence" and self-care under the close watch of a caring socialist state.

Cottages⁴⁹

The building and upkeep of cottages—either a *chata* (weekend house; see Figures 3.1-3.3) or *chalupa* (old cottage, recreational house; see Figure 3.4)—were important chapters in stories Czechs told about their families. They built *chatas* from start to finish. *Chalupas* are older houses, many of which were abandoned by some of the roughly three million Germans forcibly exiled from the Czech lands (particularly the Sudetenland in northwestern Bohemia) at the end of World War II and later taken on as second residences by Czechs. Both of these kinds of structures are located in rural areas. Czechs did not live in them year-round, but stayed for lengthy periods during the summer months—and winter if near mountains, for skiing and other winter recreation.

As we observed in the case of the Kliment family, particularly for Maruška and Jana, the *chata* symbolized family time, an escape from the city, and the running and enjoyment of the *chata* were shared among all generations. The significance of locating an old *chalupa* vacant or for sale, or building a new *chata*, became clear to me when stories of family experiences repeatedly centered around trips to a *chata* and interviewees stopped to show me pictures of weekend houses.

Cottage ownership is widespread across Europe, though their meanings and use vary locally. Prague residents laughed and smiled proudly as they described their holiday activities with friends and family in a *chata* or *chalupa*—outside of the everyday home, outside of the city. Unlike cramped Prague apartments, cottages in Bohemia, Moravia, and sometimes in the Slovak mountains, were inviting and stood for sociality and reciprocity among those who visited and/or worked on them. When families did not have



Figure 3.1: chata



Figure 3.2: chata



Figure 3.3: chata



Figure 3.4: chalupa



Figure 3.5: "in solitude"

their own *chata*, such as the Vodrážkas, they borrowed one or rented one (as did the Kliments before building from scratch in the 1970s). Alternately, trips to extended family in the country filled in for what many considered necessary migration out of Prague. Having an apartment in Prague was a sign of social competence (Bazac-Billaud 1998) because they were either passed along through family members, assigned by employers (i.e., the state), given by local offices to married Czechs with children, and parceled out to those with social connections. But large gatherings seldom took place within them.

Those Czech families I worked with acquired their *chatas* and *chalupas* prior to political changes in 1989. The weekend houses recalled the abundance of time for family once available and, increasingly today, an escape from shortages of time and the ever-quickenning pace of Prague. Yet Praguers are not the only "holiday-home owners" (*chalupáři*). Those living in small towns, such as the Janeček family in Ustí nad Bystřicí, a small town in eastern Bohemia (what their youngest daughter, Alžběta, considers a village), have weekend cottages set just outside town limits, usually in the woods, mountains, or near a body of water. To take another example, while on a stay at Judge Věra's *chata* in western Bohemia we stopped by for a visit with her old friend, František, who lived by himself in his parents' old farm house. Within site of the main house on the farm land, what Věra and her husband already considered refreshing and "in the country" (*na venkově*), František built himself a small *chata*. To mark the separation of the *chata* from his everyday domestic space, František had jokingly hung a typical red Czech street sign on the cottage porch. It read "in solitude" (*na samotě*; Figure 3.5). Within the

boundaries of the private, then, we can pinpoint a further layer of privacy and set-apartness in *chata* and *chalupa* ownership, providing an example of nested public/private oppositions Gal and Kligman give examples of from all over East Central Europe (2000:37-62; Gal 2002). The *chata* provided nature, solitude and privacy at the same time.

When they were not fixing up their cottages on stays during late summer and early fall months, fathers and grandfathers, in particular, collected heaping baskets of wild mushrooms, which were transported back to Prague, frozen and eaten in soups and sauces throughout the winter months. In addition to mushroom picking, the *chalupáři* often tended small garden plots of fruits, vegetables and flowers, bringing bulbs and produce back to friends and family in the city or town where they spend the majority of their working days and weeks. Praguers also explained that long sojourns in *chatas* and in the countryside provided required quantities of fresh air. One mother of two explained that she and her husband bought their *chalupa* in 1965 and tried to spend at least one and a half months in it during the summer for their and their children's health, specifically "in order to be outside of Prague." Their children and grandchildren continued to travel there regularly.

After their daughter Ivana was born, Alan and Josefa Beneš visited paternal kin living in the north Bohemian countryside to get the necessary and desired "fresh air" (*čerstvý vzduch*) and a break from the city. But when they began having differences of opinion on childrearing with a "sister-in-law" (*švagrová*; Alan's youngest brother's wife), they sought out their own *chalupa*. Their disagreements with their *švagrová*

resembled Maruška Procházková's anger concerning hers, which also emerged during holiday visits at the family *chata* in southern Bohemia. Maruška felt her *švagrová* was lazy and not committed to the family; Alan and Josefa felt that theirs was too strict toward children, particularly "Ivanka." During our interview in the Beneš *chalupa*, Josefa explained why they needed to find a weekend getaway for themselves when it became clear that they could no longer count on restful visits with Alan's relatives:

The trips provide peace and quiet [away from both the city and kin]. And so we began to want our own (*svý*). And it personally meant an awful lot, because I realized—I had never recognized this in myself before, when I was young and didn't have a child—how much I would take to living in the country (*na venkově*). Not that I would want to be here all year long, but from the first moment I came here I simply loved it.

Finding a *chalupa* allowed the Benešes to set themselves apart from other family members.

Although the family still gathered on some holidays (name days, Christmas), they sought to remove themselves from demands of the paternal branch over lengthier vacation times, thus creating another realm of privacy. The country, as we will see in the next chapter, often represents extended kin relations, particularly grandparents; however, the Benešes wanted a weekend cottage to separate further from family (and the city and the state). Josefa and Alan were delighted, then, when in the early 1980s a close friend told them about a *chalupa* for sale north of Prague. It came furnished but required serious reconstruction of the roof and some interior renovations, as well as the regular upkeep that these centuries-old structures demand. But as Josefa mentions above, she immediately knew the *chalupa* would be perfect for the family. She enjoyed the physical activity and the hard work.

Unlike state-owned apartment complexes and cooperative apartment buildings, where units were distributed by national committees and employers (both state organs), weekend houses and cottages were owned by Czechs during the socialist era, and all maintenance was assumed by them. Indeed, cottagers worked on their holiday homes more than they relaxed in them. Stories about holiday activities and weekend *chata* gatherings recounted necessary repairing and building contributed by, and expected from, family members. Care for weekend cottages was not limited to the weekends and vacations. My landlady, Tereza (who owned a *chata* and a *chalupa*, as well as an apartment building she was restituted in the early 1990s), told me about her dedication to keeping the family *chata* in habitable shape during the socialist era, and about driving around the city during work hours searching for materials and supplies to use for repairs the following weekend. This kind of story recalling the use of work time for private interest was repeated by other informants, who often took tools, wood and other useful equipment from work to use on weekend houses, thus exemplifying the socialist-era saying, "one who does not steal is robbing his family" (Holy 1996:25; Havelková 1993a:68).

Some of the oppositions between the country and urban areas played out within city and town settings. As Holy observes, neat and tidy Prague flats contrast sharply with the dirtiness of public spaces and disinterest in maintenance of streets (as evident in careless litter, dog waste, pollution), state offices and the hallways and stairwells of state apartment complexes. Differences between interior/domestic upkeep and exterior neglect extended to cottage ownership when the work and effort put in to weekend homes and

small plots of land counteracted the immense, deteriorating *paneláky* bordering Prague's limits (see Figure 3.6). People such as Josefa Benešová insisted that hard work on the cottages was enjoyable. One owner of a 200 year-old *chalupa* talked about how much more relaxed you could be out in the country; how it was "like home" but more easygoing, even when there was a lot of work to do: "Everyone loves to go to the *chalupa*; it's a lot like being at home but you can run around outside and just a step away are the woods and water. It is so beautiful; we all love it." Personal efforts were invested solely in the most cherished of spaces—the household in Prague and, especially, the tiny cottage. Intimacy radiated out from city and town centers, growing exponentially as one moved from urban to rural.

Seventy year-old Mr. Sokol and his wife historicized *chata* ownership by tying it to political dissent of the late 1960s and subsequent withdrawal into family units after the Soviet-driven Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968:

It was an entire movement...people closed themselves off (*privatizovat se*). When it became clear that they could have no political effect—that they could not influence the central, centralized state structure—they moved toward privacy. And it became the period of building and purchasing *chatas* and *chalupas*.

Mrs. Sokolová continued:

At first we rented in a village near a lake, in a one-room apartment with a veranda. And then the family of our son's playmate in the village wanted to sell their *chata*; they wanted to move to the mountains for skiing. So we bought theirs, and there was no electricity, so we put in the electricity and we built another floor on top.

Although the Sokol and Beneš families built on to and refurbished their weekend cottages, part of the enjoyment of time spent in them was feeling as if one was roughing



Figure 3.6: paneláky

it; cottage owners often described the houses as purposefully primitive and rough (indeed, *chata* stays are sometimes like indoor camping). One pensioner explained that Czechs must have cottages because they inherited the agricultural life from their ancestors; the draw of country life, he told me, was in the genes of the most urbanized Prague residents.

Offspring who showed particular dedication to keeping the little houses running eventually inherited them. Although their two daughters freely used the family *chata* on a regular basis, the Sokol's turned their *chata* over to their son two years before we met. And the Čapek family took over the care of, and attained legal ownership of, Mr. Čapek's parents' *chalupa* in the 1980s, when it became clear that his siblings had no interest in keeping the old cottage from falling to the ground. Milada Čapková remembered how it "needed a lot of investment and the others didn't want to put any money in to it....we began the work in 1987. We were constantly mending, repairing."

The recreation, health benefits and retreat provided by weekend houses is well-documented in studies from other parts of East Central Europe. In the case of Hungary and the Soviet Union during the socialist era, the second economy often operated out of second residences as well as full-time rural residences and houses with both vast and more modest amounts of land. The Hungarian state officialized and integrated the national economy with small holdings (Lampland 1995); while the Soviet Union divided land for vegetable plots "among favored workers, and the recipients often built houses on their plots which they called dachas" (Humphrey 2002:186).

Czech ownership of small plots of land and cottages represented a less formalized arrangement vis-à-vis the state. As I mention in Chapter 2, the Czechoslovak state never officially recognized or authorized a second economy. Still, Možný (1991) argues that family networks did the kind of work upholding the socialist system in Czechoslovakia that the second economy did in Hungary. They were, what Creed (1998) calls in the Bulgarian case, part of the "domestication" of socialism, through which individuals maneuvered the hardships of the era and, in turn, upheld the ruling party. In the Czech case, time spent working and playing at the *chata* was less threatened by suggestions of complicity, duplicity and "living within a lie," as Havel put it, than was life in Prague (see Kligman 1998). Stays in the *chata* explicitly opposed state intervention and a chilly political climate.⁵⁰ A *chata* made the domestication of the state unnecessary. Today the *chata* endures as a locus of the meaningfulness of family, and cottage ownership remains an integral part of city, town and village life (see Humphrey 2002:56).

The *chata* epitomize both hard work for the family and independence from an oppressive (socialist) state and persistently immoral and disappointing (postsocialist) state. Czechs called upon public and private resources (material, labor, personal networks and connections) to obtain and keep the cottages habitable. I now consider how these efforts supported beliefs that state provisions were not earned unless work for the family was taking place.

Benefits, Support

I draw on the example of cottaging to focus on historical continuities of family relations, such as the long-lasting importance of *chatas* and *chalupas* and the can-do ethic of their upkeep. This example also speaks to seemingly unrelated family encounters with social policy. The resourcefulness and ingenuity demanded of cottagers to maintain the small rural houses in the face of a scarcity of material resources resonated in other narratives of self-care and self-sustenance during the socialist era, such as those dealing with what the state was and was not doing for families and what Czechs did for themselves. We observed the large-scale shifts in family ideologies which occurred in 1989 in Chapter 1, and much has been made of the retreat of state ideological commitments to women and families since then (Čermáková et al. 2000; Einhorn 1993; Gal and Kligman 2000; and well before 1989 in Hungary, see Haney 2002). Yet Czechs did not always see postsocialist emphases on self interest, instead of state care, as aberrations. As we will further observe, recollections of socialist family life parallel the postsocialist attitudes of benefits accountants with whom I worked as they reminded clients that certain family problems did not fall within the domain of state responsibility and oversight. Certainly the hard work that Czech families conducted in the cottages matched well with more recent discourses.

While clarifying and marking out the terms of "independence" from the state, family members simultaneously took their "dependence" for granted. Indeed, during the socialist era, Czechs "took" (*brali*) from the state on a number of levels. As I have noted, state materials were often considered one's to obtain, hoard, steal and use for private

purposes, such as housing allotments in Prague or material for *chata* construction. In addition, formally legislated family-related entitlements and claims on the socialist state came to be taken for granted and expected. Throughout my family history interviews parents recalled with exacting detail the contributions to their income they received during the socialist era because of their status as parents. Women in particular, who held primary responsibility for raising children from the fifties to the eighties and often managed the household budget, remembered how much money they were awarded when their children were dependents. Some bickered with their husbands during our interviews, insisting on the precise amount of monthly support given for each child, down to the last crown. The financing of marriage and family was often assumed, and sometimes overlooked, in our discussions unless I pursued the topic.

For example, when my assistant and I asked the Pecls what kind of financial benefits they received from the state during the 1970s, they responded, “well, *of course* there was the child benefit...” (*přídavka*). One mother of two rapidly itemized what she and her husband purchased with their newlywed grants and birthing awards, such as a baby carriage and furniture, and the irreplaceable value of the child benefits. Mrs. Křížková similarly reeled off: “we took in 3,800 crowns a month—500 for each child, my salary and my husband’s salary...rent was 250 and we lived on the rest.” Like today, household budgets were tight. Allowances for children held an important place in calculations of monthly income, and they remain linked to memories of family life and negotiations of household resources during the socialist era. Mothers usually remembered the length of maternity leave periods, if it increased (as was the case in the

1960s and 1970s) during their childbearing years, and the availability of neighborhood “nurseries” (*jesle*). “Claims” (*nároky*) to funding, goods and facilities were not only unproblematic, but were not experienced as benevolent on the part of the state or as something for which to be thankful. As Humphrey writes in the case of the Soviet Union, state products and resources were conceived of as “ours” (*náš* in Czech) to be drawn on and used (2002:40).

Yet Czechs do not remember life during the socialist era as a time of taking indiscriminately and freely from the state, and they recognized social distinctions between claims categories. Receipt of certain services was connected to familial roles and relations. Although family benefits were “universal/across-the-board” (*plošné*), children were the primary beneficiaries. As one family policymaker explained, “it didn’t matter if the family was wealthy or poor, each child had a *nárok* to the benefit—they were only differentiated according to age. If the child was young he received more, if he was older he received less.”⁵¹ In some cases, such as the child benefits, a *nárok* was interpreted as a natural “right” (*právo*). Klára Pittnerová, a resident in the Home for Mothers, defined a *nárok* as “something (*něco*) that belongs to you.” During the socialist era, across-the-board family policy did the claiming for Czech households. Today, clients in the local support and care offices must do their own claiming by filing a request (*žádost*; to claim: *požadovat*). Today, a *nárok* is the state’s verification that a client’s claim is justified. The *nárok* is no longer promised to all, it is no longer an inherent right; although, those who “take” benefits, such as Klára, believed that postsocialist benefits were “theirs.”

As automatic as socialist-era *nároks* might first appear, they were in practice contingent on family circumstances and, in the views of some, left up to arbitrary bureaucratic decisions. Mrs. Heroldová was married but childless when she applied for an apartment, so she did not have a *nárok* to move from her one-room basement apartment to the three-plus-one apartment where she and her family still lived in 2000. She and her husband waited for two and a half years, from 1975 to 1978, for their apartment, and by that time had one young son and were expecting a second baby. Awards from the state were not guaranteed. When a claimant qualified for benefits on paper and in propaganda, they were more successful at having their requests filled when they had personal connections and contacts in their respective national committees. And even within the seemingly wide parameters of an across-the-board family policy, distinctions developed between recipient categories.

When I began my fieldwork, I presumed that across-the-board family awards and distrust of the state had led Czechs not to differentiate between those receiving state funds. I carelessly asked family members what kinds of “support” (*podpora*) they previously received and was surprised to hear them insist, “nothing,” absolutely nothing—they never received *support*. On the one hand, this denial of having ever been “supported” by the socialist state may be due in part to the recoding of past experiences in light of newer ideologies of individual responsibility. Today the most basic tier of income-based funding for families is called “support,” and although the majority of households were eligible for it in 2000, it required the filing of complex paperwork and verification of deservingness. Some of those eligible did not bother. This suggests that

stories of the socialist era were being mediated by growing contact with and awareness of dependent persons in the present. On the other hand, however, distrust and anger toward the previous regime was remembered well. That state had mythologized its generosity while keeping Czechs and Slovaks at low standards of living. Czechs did not feel that they had been especially helped by the state; rather, they had had to help themselves. My questions about socialist-era state "support" provoked memories and stories of not having been supported.

Grandmother Vodrážková (Kateřina) responded to my questions sharply, "I didn't get any support from the state, I had to work for myself." She had a hard life and identified neither the socialist nor the postsocialist eras as easier to live through. Yet in her recollections of state provisions for families, she saw herself as less dependent than some and as self-sufficient. She explained that "support" was not for "normal" Czech families, but for those she called "the unpowerful." Given the distrust of "the powerful" (politicians, bureaucrats) during the socialist era, the unpowerful should not be interpreted here as undeserving or immoral. Most Czechs would probably agree that Grandmother Vodrážková herself was unpowerful. As we know, she moved to Prague from Moravia in the early-to-mid 1950s, escaping what other family members implied was an abusive marriage and raising a child on her own by taking a series of labor-intensive jobs. Her acquisition of an apartment was thanks to a family member (Uncle Pavel) tied in to influential administrators at her national committee office. She did not think of the apartment and subsequent child benefits for her son Ondřej as "support," but

as earned through hard work—and deserved because she had looked out for herself and done what needed to be done to get by.

Although Mrs. Boudová and her husband obtained a large sum of money from the state in 1970 to build their family home, she also emphasized how hard she worked. “I seldom got anything for free,” she recalled bitterly.

[that loan] was all the state did for us, and building that house was absolute madness because there was nothing.... When we collected material it was unbelievable, because beforehand I had to call around Prague for building material and when I learned that someone had what we needed I got into the car and went there with money or some documents [showing what the materials were for]. My husband went to the site where we were building, where the truck we had was parked; he started it and drove to where I was waiting. He got there about an hour after me. During that time, I had tried to hold on to the cement or whatever (laugh)...and before he arrived he would get stopped [by authorities] and questioned as to what he was doing. Transportation could not be counted on—that is why we bought a truck. We were glad that we had our own things (*že jsme zvládli své vlastní věci*). So that’s how we collected our materials....It was quite a sight....

Mrs. Boudová described the building of her home in Prague much in the way that cottage owners depicted gathering and accumulating materials for weekend building and chores in the country. Her case demonstrates, moreover, that despite qualifying for a sizeable loan and (unlike many) accumulating enough resources to build a freestanding, “family house” (*rodinný domek*) in Prague, she felt that she had not been supported by the state. Mrs. Boudová was resentful because of how much labor she and her husband put into the project. In fact, as the example of the transport of building materials reveals, Mrs. Boudová and her husband’s interactions with state authorities as regards the construction of their home were more of an obstacle than a support.

It is important to note that "support" as a benefits category existed only minimally during the socialist era, and formal legislation for state social support was not passed until 1995. Rather, the socialist state denied that material differences between households was a social problem to be addressed. "Classic social work" with, or "care" (*péče*) for, at-risk children and a negligible amount of institutional aid for single mothers made official networks for the disadvantaged nearly invisible and structurally insignificant. The director of the Prague Home for Mothers, Jitka Králová, explained to me her own frustration with the system of social support during the early 1970s, when she went through a painful divorce. "I work in this field because I personally and privately experienced what it is like to have a divorce and be isolated with a child. It was such a negative experience, so I said, I will study social work. I don't want anyone to go through what I went through," she told me. Indeed, support for the "unpowerful" was almost non-existent, and a set of class distinctions based on familial resources operated during the socialist era. The few homes for mothers with children (and without families on which to lean) established during that period were the result of careful maneuvering on the part of few individuals, like Jitka, who were outraged by the absence of care for struggling parents and families. The mothers in the homes fell into the "unpowerful" category to which Grandmother Vodrážková referred. Because she had an apartment and a somewhat influential family member, however, Grandmother Vodrážková as a single mother did not categorize herself as unpowerful and state supported. Although all families with children qualified for universal benefits and various other state

distributions, one supported oneself rather than take from the state. Parents with children were simultaneously entitled and left to their own devices.

We can see that universal “family benefits” (*přídavky*) and “care” services (*péče*) operated according to a system of “relative merit” (Gal and Kligman 2000:77; see Chapter 1) during the socialist era in Czechoslovakia, much like the manifold range of unstigmatized and stigmatized public provisions in western states: “Universal cash transfers that make no distinctions within the relevant population of recipients have often been, in the history of Western welfare, less stigmatizing than aid for which recipients must reach some criterion of minimum income or ill health” (Gal and Kligman 2000:77). In their memories and reflections on the universalized system, Czechs categorize certain receiving persons as needier than others when they did not have personal resources (the “unpowerful”); while benefits designated for children and mothers—and housing allotments in Mrs. Boudová and Grandmother Vodrážková’s cases—were taken for granted and deserved when family members were thought to be looking out for themselves and turning to one another. Recalling their experiences building a home and raising children during the socialist era, these two and others like them remembered their efforts to make do. “No one helped me, I had to do it all myself,” they insisted.

Family Subjectivity

Before we examine the “unintended consequences” of capitalism, it will be useful to study some of the Czech publications written from the early-to-mid 1990s about what women’s lives were like during the socialist era. This topic often surfaced in response to

the derogatory coverage of western feminism in larger cities like Prague and Brno and as an explanation by leading Czech gender studies scholars for why Czech women were different from "western" women and why it was inappropriate to apply feminist concepts (patriarchy, the subordination of women at home and work) to the Czech setting (Nash 2002). As I point out in the introduction to this dissertation, this literature was one of the principle academic outlets evoking a family versus state opposition in the immediate post-1989 period. This literature also unmasked the shortcomings of socialist-era gender ideologies.

There is a bounty of literature on feminism, gender and anti-feminism coming out of the Czech Republic. Here I focus on the work of three scholars who, particularly in the early-to-mid 1990s, were called on most frequently in public settings (media, academia, international women's conferences) to represent "Czech women." These are sociologist Marie Čermáková, philosopher Hana Havelková, and former dissident and sociologist Jiřina Šiklová. Much like the family history interviews, their writing turns to past experiences when explaining social relations in the present. These publications join my examples of cottage ownership and "unsupportive" family care in making the point that a particular ethic of self-interest as regards family life, one which these authors claim is not familiar to western feminists, opposed the efforts of a homogenizing socialist state. In all of these cases, Czechs draw on the family as the cite of individuality and self-realization.

Havelková interprets "patriarchy" as the control of women by men, and as a guiding concern of feminism in the United States and western Europe. But she rejects

“the separation of women’s problems from the problems of the citizen” (1993b:89) in the Czech case. Patriarchy, she explains, should not be understood as “paternalism.” While Havelková admits that paternalistic state supervision harmed Czechs throughout the previous era, in homes and households men and women lived as one. Thus challenging “patriarchal” control in the postsocialist era was uncalled for because men and women were accustomed to being equally subordinated by the communist party and the state. They had acted as partners to fight and resist this external influence, or “common enemy” (see Čermáková 1995:82). “It was the family, or rather the household, where many people put to use their inventive potential and their desire to do things their own way, without having to observe some official regulation” (Havelková 1993a:68). Havelková reminded her readers that the identification of women as separate or unlike men was more antagonistic and, she suggested, could cause more harm than good in the early stages of social transformation. For this reason, and also because of the range of formal benefits families were once automatically entitled to, Šiklová wrote that in the early 1990s “[m]arriage and family are still the most attractive option for women” (1993:73). Although the socialist state had denied the pursuit of individual interests and civic sensibilities, moral subjectivity and a sense of what was right and wrong developed among family and close friends (Havelková 1993a:68) and family was “the last bastion of personal freedom” (Havelková 1993b:92).

Havelková and Šiklová were reluctant to identify differences between men and women in the family, but they wrote often in the early 1990s about the gendered realities of Czech politics. Both agreed political activity was corrupt and that the communist

party had been thought of as a male domain. Unlike "western feminists," then, Czech women did not perceive of political engagement as a way to improve their lives but as something to be avoided (Šiklová 1993; Čermáková 1995:77). For example, Šiklová writes "Women in socialism never allowed themselves to be manipulated to the extent that men did, which I regard as fortunate. Women took refuge in their 'double burden,' in motherhood and in care for young children" (1993:79). Šiklová might seem to be contradicting Havelková's insistence that, because they were united in a common dislike of the regime, Czechs did not recognize gendered oppositions between men and women. But both authors agree that family was a site of resistance. It was the "one free institution" (despite the state's engagement in family policy) and these gender studies scholars turned to the socialist period to inform their readers that marriage, having children and family activities were a source of identity building and not women's "subordination"—what had also been a keyword in socialist propaganda. In the words of sociologists of the family Ivo Možný and Ladislav Rabušic, marriage during the socialist era, unlike politics and the economy, was "perhaps the only free market even before the institution of a market economy" 1999:101).

Throughout their writing, Havelková, Šiklová and Čermáková challenge what they understand to be a western feminist preoccupation with earning the "right" to work outside the home. These authors did not conceive of work as the realization of individuality, they said, because women had been forced to work by the socialist state. In her research throughout the 1990s, Čermáková paid close attention to women's inequality, discrimination in the workplace and inequity in women's wages and access to

education. Still, she reasons that these imbalances should be attributed to women's preference for family over work and their willingness to sacrifice for the good of society (1995:76-77).

Since the Czech economic downturn in 1997, rising unemployment, and subsequent governmental crisis, the work of these gender studies scholars has grown more critical of women's unequal position in public and private in the Czech Republic, what they consider to be offensive images of women in advertising, and the harmfulness of minimal political representation by women. Younger generations of gender studies students and writers, moreover, freely use words like "patriarchy," even calling themselves "feminists" (*feministky*). In the early 1990s, however, Havelková, Šiklová and Čermáková drew on memories of the socialist era to counteract what they understood as the imperialistic framework and inappropriateness of western feminism. And within their writing, we can identify the narrative construction of family as a safe haven, "islands" as the head of a foster care NGO described them, and as a unique site of individuality during the socialist era.

There is much to be learned from these discussions of family life during the socialist era—from the meaning of cottage ownership and upkeep, to seemingly paradoxical denials that the socialist state was generous and supportive, to understandings of family as a source of women's identity rather than the source of women's oppression and subordination. The personal value of the family to many Czechs, and its necessity for material security, underscores similarities between socialist and capitalist family ideologies, particularly ideas about the stigma of dependence on public services. I now

address the ways in which principles conceived of as “socialist” transformed into postsocialist categories of productive and unproductive dependency.

FAMILY AND 1989: ENDING THE FREE MARKET, BEGINNING SOCIALISM

In the Prague “care” office where I conducted fieldwork, benefits accountants often explained to “claimants” (*žadatelky*) that there were limits on what the state would provide. For example, as I explain in Chapter 2, if a female client would not reveal the father of her child(ren) she was informed that a “fictive child support” of 1,000 crowns would be deducted from her living minimum benefits. If the client protested that the deduction would result in no living minimum funds, the benefits accountant responded, “that is your problem” (*to je váš problem*). A stress on “your” (*váš*) indicated that the client needed to look after herself and pursue the father’s financial contribution (rather than the state’s). Only after the father refused to pay or had been unsuccessfully sought after by the mother, court, and then police would the state make up the difference in monthly income. To give another example, if a client forgot a document or necessary verification (of residence, pregnancy, other state benefits received) she heard, “that is your mistake” (*to je vaše chyba*) or, “it’s your issue to handle” (*to je vaše věc*). The state was no longer “ours” (*náš*) to plunder; family concerns were “yours” (*váš*).

This meaningful shift in focus from “our state” to “your family” affirms processes outlined in Chapter 1: postsocialist family ideologies have moved from an emphasis on communal to individual/family units. The state no longer declares itself supreme caretaker; rather, Czechs must look out for themselves and their families. As I have

sought to demonstrate, however, this is something that family members were doing throughout the socialist era. Be it in the form of weekend retreats, household construction, ingenious support networks, or defining one's identity and self-worth through family relations, family members never presumed otherwise. For this reason, I argue, many narratives of self-sufficiency during the socialist era complemented the state's withdrawal of public responsibility for family well-being after 1989. Prior official rhetorics of intimacy between the state and family, many argued, was never achieved or made significant as Czechs maneuvered their lives and worked to retain a distinction between their households, on one hand, and work and political influence on the other.

In the first half of this chapter I draw on examples of heightened concerns for one's own family, which were the unintended consequences of the caring, collectivizing state. While one might find that these traits and patterns of behavior existed prior to the socialist era, my informants portrayed them as specific to their lives in a socialist setting and conditions under a totalitarian state. These Czech examples contribute to the body of literature on the accidental outcomes of socialism throughout East Central Europe (Creed 1998; Kideckel 1993; Verdery 1996).

I now relate questions coming out of this literature to the postsocialist context to show that Czechs responded critically to capitalist family policies toward lower-class Czechs as if those policies were creating a socialist lower class. This was a socialism never realized during the socialist era because, in the post-1989 era, the state generously redistributed public resources and *actually* cared for (needier) families with children. State administrators and more materially secure family members interpreted those who

were "taking" as over-supported by new provisions. If one were to presume that Czechs had faith in the prior redistributive ideology these criticisms might be surprising. Yet my informants, particularly older Czechs, were often quick to emphasize their sacrifice and self-care during the socialist era. New dependencies were perceived through denials that they were dependent in the past. Contemporary disparagement of those who "take" suggests rather that the socialist experience often led Czechs to believe that they could not count on the state as some do today. This perception of reliance on the state is, moreover, shaping the development of class distinctions which builds on the previous category of "unpowerful." While all Czechs are "dependent" in some combined form (on the family, on the state, on both), productive dependents stigmatize those whom they perceive as unproductive for both drawing on the state and, seemingly, not working. I call this paradoxical process "neo-socialism," and highlight how lower-class Czechs and Roma are emblematic of the economic transformation's individual and institutional moral failures.

Why work when you can live on benefits?

Most Czechs receive public funds from the state in some form. Given the legacy of the role of social policy in everyday life and an abiding social safety net, I believe it is more useful to interpret new Czech recipient categories in terms of a manifold range of relationships between individuals, households and the state, rather than as a binary between the self-reliant and the disadvantaged. Nevertheless, an opposition is developing in the Czech Republic between those who are "self-sufficient" (*sám za sebe*) and those

who are not (in Czech, *sociální slabší*, the socially weaker, or unpowerful as Grandmother Vodrážková put it).

Unless themselves recipients, many of the families in Prague with whom I worked were unfamiliar with elaborate benefits criteria. Returning to questions concerning what Czechs felt the state should be doing for people, most agreed, "the socially weakest need help from the state," "the state should help poor mothers," "I don't know how [the weakest] manage, the state should help them." But in their responses, my interviewees also established restrictions on how much the state could and should do for the growing numbers of poor. The conditions of public care for the poor were informed by understandings of whether or not those who "take" also work. If not, responses sounded a line familiar to American ears when Czechs argued "it's better to make people contribute to society, to work, than to pay them support," or "the social network is too plentiful."

Nowhere was the expectation that benefits recipients should work—and the moral evaluation of those who did not—more evident than among employees within the "social network" itself (the benefits accountants, family court judges, social workers in the Home for Mothers). These employees, almost all of whom were women, administered the new income- and means-tested criteria and commented openly about their effects. In the case of the benefits office, clients' status as employed or unemployed structured employees' willingness or refusal to seek greater funding on their behalf. When clients lived under the living minimum and still worked, were on parental leave, or had no luck finding work through an "unemployment office" (*pracák*) they usually had a claim to financial aid, and

the accountants processed the application and authorized the distribution of benefits.

Accountants were often saddened when someone hovered just above the living minimum and remained ineligible. For example, when a seemingly deserving client left with no further benefits in hand, the accountants would explain delicately, "*Má smůlu:*" "She is down on her luck." If a client was unemployed and had not registered at a *pracák* he or she was not eligible for further state benefits. The client might, however, be able to negotiate a "one-time-only" award (*jednorázovka*) or, alternately, an in-kind benefit.

If one's fate was uncertain, benefits accountants might explain that "the commission" would have to rule on the case. In matter of fact, "the commission" consisted of the office's three benefits accountants and their director flipping through files, drinking tea and complaining about so-and-so's last-minute application for benefits. "It's always the same," they told me. "Right before the school year begins, and just before Christmas, they come in and say, 'We don't have money for books and shoes, or we don't have money for Christmas.'" Final decisions were thus attributed to this anonymous body, "the commission," suggesting that the clients' requests, rights and needs had been taken into account and treated fairly and objectively. The system appeared structured and inflexible on paper, but like the earlier socialist era, post-1989 offices were maneuverable and subject to personal connections, inter-office cooperation and competition, and employees' mood swings.

When a client needed to stay at home to take care of children, she was often asked why she did not go to work and leave the child with a grandparent. Or, why not get the child's father, grandparents or other family members to work so that there were more

funds for the household? When clients were out of earshot the benefits accountants and social workers asked sarcastically, "Why work when you can live off of benefits?" After a consultation with an unemployed father seeking custody of his children, social worker Nina looked at me, exasperated, "There isn't an obligation today to go to work" (*není dneska povinnost jet do práce*). The responsibility for unemployment rested on both the client and the state's shoulders. The client lacked the willingness to work, but the state no longer forced him or her to work in the first place.

The director of the Home for Mothers, Jitka, lamented over incompatible trends—desire for material goods combined with what she interpreted as a reluctance to work—developing in the residents she oversaw, but she blamed post-1989 social policies for allowing people to count on the state without taking care of themselves. There was a "cost in the lack of freedom" during the socialist era, but with a nostalgic tone she recalled that certain things like apartments and employment had been guaranteed and, she suggested, helped one tolerate life under a totalitarian regime. Too much freedom and the continued availability of funds for the poor today, though, have produced an inexplicable group living on support. Czechs had new freedoms to take, claim and demand. Jitka said,

The state would prefer to pay social benefits and social support than motivate people to earn their own money and take themselves to some better place. The mothers here used to work themselves toward better lives; now those on support (*na podpoře*) are increasing. I don't know how it exactly works elsewhere, but here there's no time limit. People are on support forever, their whole lives. I simply don't understand.

Jitka did not confine the socialist-era work ethic to family domains exclusively. She contrasted previous requirements to work outside of the home to reduced expectations of

today's unemployed. Czechs were supported and cared for by the Home previously, but it was never for long (three years maximum) and the socialist system did not allow for the upholding of unproductive persons. She did not miss the socialist era, but had greater respect for the work ethic associated with it.

I didn't agree with communism. But at the same time I wanted to live here. Or at least I had to live here. No one could get out. So we tried to improve ourselves and stand on our own legs. And there were no exceptions—after school there was no way to get out of work. A person was obliged.

Both social worker Nina and Jitka mentioned that the “obligation” (*povinnost*) to work during the socialist era had been replaced by the right not to work—and a state that too easily allowed clients and the residents they worked with to expect many kinds of aid without working. These critical reflections and comments imply that the state was enabling new forms of dependency.

Some felt that wages were too low for working to seem necessary or beneficial. As one man put it, “if people had decent wages, they would not come in” to the state offices to file for their benefits and support supplements. At the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs policymaker Novák looked at the entire social services system to complicate this perspective, and also to make the point that, actually, the state was giving too much—the amount of care benefits were too close to wages so “why work?” In his opinion, benefits accountants were *overworked* and undervalued, so they processed paperwork without fully evaluating applicants' resources and needs and, then, justifying distribution. Time for the concerns of families—both in public and private settings—was too limited. The system was flexible enough to cut back on automatic awards, but

employees were not able to maximize its potential and to take the circumstances of each life into account because they were overwhelmed. "A person isn't poor because he doesn't have money," Novák explained,

Rather he is poor because he got in to a situation whereby he doesn't have money. Lack of money is only one indicator of poverty. And if we give him money, we don't eliminate the poverty. We only make him dependent (*závislým*).... There are a number of barriers on the system, one of which is the opinion that the living minimum is too high, and that it is contributing to the problem.

Novák's ideal use of the system of support and care by the social workers (toward whom, by the way, he was quite sympathetic) would be to pay closer attention to the unique conditions of individual persons and households. In Chapter 4 I demonstrate that benefits accountants were in fact alert to possible non-financial care resources, frequently calling on or inquiring about extended family members who might assist clients. Moreover, "the commission" tried to take advantage of the flexibility offered by policies. As an author and mentor of state texts and research studies Novák felt that the expansion of individualized treatment of clientele, more thorough examinations of claims, and subsequent denial of care, were justified.

Others found primary fault in those who were being "cared for" by the state. One of the full-time "doorkeepers" (*vrátná*), Mrs. Jedličková, at the Home for Mothers was astonished by the lifestyles of the Home's residents. We often chatted in her office as she buzzed residents in, admitted and signed in authorized guests, and connected phone calls to the upstairs living units from her switchboard. Although similar homes for mothers were founded throughout Czechoslovakia from the 1960s onward, Mrs. Jedličková considered theirs an indicator of the inconceivable claims Czechs made on

state resources. “This kind of institution didn’t exist before,” she said. “If you went to a social worker and said, ‘my husband doesn’t give me money’ she would say ‘go to work for yourself.’ People should work; before you had to have a stamp in your national identification card (*občanka*) that said you worked.” The *vrátnás* in the Home were retired women, usually in their late fifties and mid-sixties, and they worked as door minders to supplement their pensions. They led “triple (quadruple?) burden” lives, caring for husbands, grown children who often still lived at home, and grandchildren, while also working outside the home beyond retirement age. Like most of the benefits accountants, then, these women were older than the “socially weaker” clients they worked around. While recognizing the difficult family lives the residents came from, older state employees struggled to understand how mothers could stay at home all day, even after the completion of maternity leave. This *vrátná*, for one, insisted that she had not wanted to stay at home when she had little children. She “wanted to go to work.”

Neo-socialism in the Family Court

In contrast to the Home for Mothers, where a mother was usually her child’s only caretaker, the courtroom was a place where both parents appeared before the state to account for the care they contributed and to affirm—or at least financially compensate for—their role in childrearing. The several Prague family courtrooms I worked in had similar floor plans and seating arrangements. A judge sat behind a raised desk, a stenographer typed to her left, and a social worker sat to her right (see Figure 3.7). Two long tables faced one another, perpendicular to the judge’s bench. Usually the father and



Figure 3.7: courtroom

his legal council (who was not required, although the social worker attended on behalf of the children) sat at one, and the mother and her council, if she had obtained one, sat at the other. If the parents were on good terms, they might sit side-by-side, sharing a table. Facing the judge's bench and behind the parent's seats were three rows of raised chairs for courtroom observers, witnesses and guests of the court. In Věra's courtroom, I sat in the back row with the occasional law student. A closed door to the judge's chambers stood in the center of the back row of chairs.

This court was for parents divorcing as well as parents who had never been married. Divorcing parents had to acquire two official "decisions" (*rozhodnutí*) regarding custody and child support: one was temporary, applying to the period between filing for divorce and the final divorce. The second decision was permanent, at least until the custodian (most often the mother) sought higher child support payments or the father wanted greater visitation rights. Parents who had never been married usually sought a permanent decision on custody and child support amounts. Parents, I was told by social workers and judges, never agreed on joint custody although it was legally possible. Complicating gender studies scholar Hana Havelková's insistence that men and women work in concert versus the state, social worker Nina explained to me at one hearing that Czech parents who are divorcing "can't cooperate."

This was the courtroom where proceedings and judgments took place if non-parental family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings) had originally been awarded custody and a parent sought greater involvement, or if a parent sought to regain custody in the case that his or her child had been placed in a children's institute. This

was also where single and divorced parents—again, always mothers—came to report unpaid child support. The mothers I observed filing these cases lived below the living minimum and needed, according to the terms of “care” policy, to pursue payments in front of the court. If the father failed to appear after two or three hearings, the judge determined the child support amount, the mother’s local benefits office made up his difference in monthly living-minimum awards (including back pay), and the father began accruing a debt to the state.

Proceedings were allotted a maximum forty-five minutes and were scheduled back-to-back, two or three days a week. Usually the deliberations and decision making needed longer than forty-five minutes and, so, at the end of each hearing, the judge scheduled the next meeting and explained who (witnesses and, in some cases, psychiatric evaluations of children or parents) and what (verification of income, address, child’s expenses, medical needs) would be necessary to obtain and bring next time. Some decisions required only two or three hearings; the most complex and divisive took many more. Claimants and defendants had the right to an appeal.

The judge’s job during these proceedings was to determine the best possible home for children of divorcing parents and to assure that both parents were contributing within their means to the child’s upkeep. When the case concerned setting a child support contribution for a non-custodial parent, or raising child support payments, each parent stood before the judge and testified as to her, and then his, permanent address, monthly income including state supplements and benefits, current contributions made toward the child’s expenses, the role played by grandparents (financial, housing, childcare), any

property owned or savings held, if he or she had been restituted property, if he or she had other child support obligations, and health conditions which might limit the ability to work.

The judge wrote down this information and periodically repeated it to the stenographer to be recorded. The parents' testimony was thus not reproduced verbatim, but interpreted and reworded by the judge, who determined what, and what not, to include in minutes from the hearing (see Verdery 1996:223 on a similar process in Romanian courtrooms). She worked to cut lengthy explanations and, in her mind, digressions down to brief statements of fact about the role that each parent played in the child's upkeep and the resources at the parents' disposal.

After receiving evidence of these amounts the judge proposed a figure which she felt could reasonably be expected from the non-custodial parent. Often the mother, father and social worker came to the court hearing with an amount in mind. Věra said her goal was to reach an "agreement" (*dohoda*) or compromise. "Nothing is better for the child than when the parents agree," she told the courtroom during hearings. She often reminded the rest of us (stenographer, social worker, me) of this ideal between sessions. In 1998, *Family Code* revisions gave children the right to live at the standard at which their parents lived. So, if a father or mother made above-average amounts of money, the child had a legal right to the same. These new rights to a standard-of-living (defined by the family's material resources) counteracted decades of across-the-board payments to children. Věra worked to figure out precisely how much, or how little, parents earned before making a ruling. She considered a *dohoda* a major success.

As Nina insisted, however, compromises were often difficult to reach, and mothers and fathers sometimes threatened each other and the ex-spouse's new partner, accused one another of not caring about the child (*ona nemá zájem*, "she doesn't take an interest" in the child, reported fathers seeking custody—this was a serious accusation to make of a mother). Mothers rolled their eyes and shook their heads in disgust when fathers testified that they were involved in and interested in their children's affairs. Both parents became angry at the judge, and raised suspicions of extra-marital affairs and unreported sources of income. Rarely, though, did a parent who came to the courtroom reveal that he or she earned above-average amounts of money. Mothers with custody of children provided lengthy lists of child-related expenses they absorbed (household bills, rent, school, after school activities, special health needs, holiday expenses), while non-custodial fathers downplayed their living standards and provided lengthy accounts of what they already contributed to their child's maintenance. In addition, as a testament to the continued wide scope of family-related state awards, the fathers and mothers who appeared there were recipients of many kinds of income-based benefits.

Children seldom testified. In the few instances when they did, their parents exited the courtroom. The kids were asked to recall which parent gave them money for activities and expenses. Věra's task was then to sort out the claims and counterclaims, mediate the disputes, and keep working toward an agreement. Sometimes she grew depressed behind her bench. She cared about Czech families and family law but felt burdened by the power to determine people's futures and the involvement she had in troubled family relations. Before the parents signed the agreed-upon decision, Věra read

the final verdict and, taking on the tone of a family counselor, reminded the parents that their children's interests came first.

Thus it was Věra's task to sift through evidence provided by mothers and fathers before quantifying and proclaiming how much time, money and interest parents should contribute to their children's lives. Custodial hearings made it clear that, unless the mother had proven otherwise, participants considered women natural caretakers and custodians by default. The hearings also demonstrated that poor women with children were increasingly locked into disadvantaged relationships with the state.

Two types of cases I observed demonstrate that interpretations and applications of income-based policies elaborated ties between poorer families and public provisions, contributing to the particular form of dependency emerging in the postsocialist era. In the first case, I show how the court reinforced the previously low living standards of mothers seeking further funds from the fathers of their children. And, second, I demonstrate how those who implied that they were living beyond their means—by taking from the state while also participating in the market—encountered greater skepticism and increased financial responsibility.

In 2000 the living minimum of a household with one adult and one child under the age of six was 5,850 crowns.⁵² Sometimes it happened that a mother who "lives on benefits" (*žije z dávek*) appeared in the courtroom seeking to raise child support payments from the child's father. The mother was already making due with current child support payments (if the father paid regularly) plus "state support" awards (parental leave, social supplements, contributions to housing and heat) plus "care" benefits (the difference

between all of these figures and the state-set living minimum for a household made up of one adult and one child). Again, in a two-person household (mother and young child) this all totaled 5,850 crowns (see Figure 3.8). If the court determined that the father was obligated to pay more child support, the mother's receipt of "care" funds would be reduced, keeping her at her prior monthly intake. In other words, some of the state's contribution would be shifted to the father, and the mother would remain at the same living standard; she would have no more money than she did when she arrived in the courtroom. For the poorest mothers it was a zero-sum balancing act.

The mother living at a minimum who appeared before the court for increased child support wanted the father to make more of a financial contribution to her child's upbringing. To her it was a success to earn 100 or 200 more crowns a month from her child's father because the money represented a more equal division of parenting labor. Mothers often believed that fathers had more income at their disposal and that some of it belonged to them and their children. It was, in their view, responsible and practical to obtain as much money as possible—from whichever available source (be it the state or the father). Raising the child support payment would also benefit the child. Indeed, the mother's attempts to negotiate more monthly income followed after innovative patterns set by family members during the socialist era. She was trying to be less socially weak and more powerful.

Věra, on the other hand, grew irritated when ruling on these cases. The mothers living on benefits, she explained, were wasting everyone's time because their monthly intake was not going to increase. She called these mothers *tupá*, meaning "obtuse" and

Figure 3.8: Summer 2000 Living Minimum Charts ("Care" Benefits)Basic Personal Expenses

Age	Minimum allowance in Czech crowns
0-6	1,600
6-10	1,780
10-15	2,110
15-26	2,310
26+	2,190

Household Expenses

Number of persons in household	Minimum allowance in Czech crowns
1	1,580
2	2,060
3, 4	2,560
5	2,870

Instructions

Add basic personal expenses (according to age) plus household expenses (according to number of persons in household).

Examples

Living minimum for one adult (2,190), one child under 6 (1,600; plus household of 2: 2,060): **5,850 Kč**

Living minimum for two adults (2,190 + 2,190), one child age 5 (1,600), one child age 10 (2,110; plus household of 4: 2,560): **10,650 Kč**

Living minimum for one adult (2190), one child age 4 (1,600), one child age 6 (1,780), one child age 10 (2,110; plus household of 4: 2,560): **10,240 Kč**

“blunt,” because they did not understand that their incomes were not going to change, that while they would earn more from one source they would lose from another; their resources were going to level out in the end. The women were not working, they were taking from the state, from the fathers, and insisted on taking more. In one case, a mother was “primitive” (*primitivní*) because she did not recognize that the father could not afford to give any more child support—and the court proceedings were complex and time-consuming. Why bother? Věra wondered. The formerly “paternalistic” state might as well keep playing its fatherly role in low-income households.

In these instances the mother wanted a co-parent to pay rather than the state. But those determining family contributions preferred to continue the state’s involvement. Why would the state representative, here Věra, not want the father to pay more and the state to pay less? Raising a father’s input reduced state output and decreased the caring task of public offices. Given that the judge and the social workers spoke disparagingly of mothers living on benefits, one might think that the mother’s suits showed individual initiative and that, moreover, the state might choose to place more responsibility on the shoulders of mothers *and* fathers. The benefits accountants in care offices had, in fact, insisted that the father’s participation was left to the mother: identifying and pursuing him was her (“your”) responsibility. Yet within the court, poor mothers were kept living at a predetermined standard; rising above those levels was neither “supported” nor encouraged. The women’s status as low-income perpetuated their ties to state processes. They were caught between competing state practices toward families: benefits officers expected the women to look out for themselves, but when the women appealed to the

court to make this possible, judges and courtroom observers responded that the hearing was not worth the trouble. Poor fathers were often not accountable, sometimes receiving the benefit of the doubt. The women were locked into positions of reliance (on state employees, on their children's fathers) and neediness.

A second example builds on an observation I made in Chapter 1 regarding the belief that it was morally just to limit support to individuals when their lifestyles hinted at overlapping family ideologies (redistributive alongside private enterprise). To repeat, most mothers and fathers who appeared in the court drew on family support awards (such as child benefits and/or social supplements). In addition to stating these receipts, parents were required to declare if they owned any property (auto, *chata*, house). In some cases, the information mothers and fathers provided the court about family income and lifestyle contradicted.

For example, one mother drew on child benefits and owned a BMW automobile. Unlike benefits accountants, Věra could not reduce or end the mother's state awards. Her job was to determine how much the woman's ex-husband was going to contribute to their child's upkeep. She commented, however, that it "was strange" that someone getting *přídavky* (benefits) also had a BMW. The child benefits were a near-universal award initiated during the socialist-era. BMWs were luxury western automobiles. Věra expressed contempt for Czechs continuing to receive family awards while also owning a car tied to the reintroduction of a capitalist economy. If the woman could afford a luxury automobile thanks to her involvement in private enterprise, why was she still entitled to

and drawing on child benefits? The woman's competing itemizations implied that she obtained both the car and the benefits illegally.

Věra also raised an eyebrow when seemingly impoverished Czechs could not meet at the time she suggested for the next court session because they were going to be on holiday in Spain or Tunisia. Věra could not challenge or contest how those who appeared in her courtroom earned and then spent their money, but there was always the suggestion that parents were not truthful, that they benefited from old state practices at the same time that they were taking advantage of new consumer goods, opportunities to travel, and seeking extra sources of income. From her position within the state, Věra made moral judgments of those who simultaneously sought state funds and private money. While focusing on children's interests amidst difficult divorce proceedings, Věra could not believe that she was accumulating evidence of true parental incomes and expenses, particularly when mothers and fathers were possibly taking advantage of the state. In those cases, she often ruled to place a greater financial burden on the suspect parent (be it a custodial mother, non-custodial father, or vice versa) because, she determined, the family seemed to have more finances at their fingertips and the child had a right/claim to those resources.

In both of these examples (poor mothers seeking increased child support, the consequences of competing lifestyle patterns), judges attempted to determine what resources were at hand and how fairly they could be spread among dependent children and full-time caretakers, usually mothers. When faced with divorced, separating and unmarried parents and their children, the judges worked to redistribute materials equally

and compensate the parent doing most of the caring work. Living minimum considerations also entered the courtroom. Although they were designed to prevent the “socially weak” from experiencing further destitution, the living minimums introduced the possibility that some Czechs naturally lived on less than others and that the poor were suspect when they crossed into non-dependent terrain. Policymaker Novák warned that, in practice, social policies are enabling dependency. But poor women and their children who sought to increase their non-state income encountered obstacles and fewer claims to self-sustenance, and the state remained their primary caretaker.

Taking Through the Market

The ability to protect the family through hard work and initiative remained the privilege of Czechs living outside the scope of postsocialist family policies. Despite criticisms that the poor and disadvantaged were not working, Czechs often doubted entrepreneurial initiatives and new work practices. Xenophobic statements and expressions, moreover, associated a “wild” (*divoký*) market and unregulated accumulation and gain with those who “lived from benefits,” especially the Roma. Paradoxically, then, go-it-alone family ethics did not translate into enthusiasm for all private ventures. As I note in the introduction to this chapter, existing ethnographic accounts of the Czech Republic bear witness to profound distrust toward market activities, the efforts of small vendors, and the suggestion of entrepreneurial self-interest (Lass 1999; Altshuler 2001). But family members considered the private initiative of some (such as Maruška Procházková’s dental practice or Josef Vodrážka’s banking

ambitions) as brave risks and necessary contributions to the economy and society. I thus supplement work by cultural anthropologists on Czech apprehension toward the market with the proposal that we consider how this reticence is tied to ethnicized representations of those "taking" from the state and, it follows, from "normal" Czech individuals and families. Worse still, as we have seen, were those individuals and families earning and taking simultaneously.

Administrators of social policy were suspicious of their Romani clients, who, they complained, pretended not to know the terms of benefits and family-related supplements but when it was to their advantage, in fact, "knew the policies better than the accountants." When trying to determine a Romani parent's income, accountants and judges sensed that there were incomes from stealing, gambling and a range of unlawful ventures for which neither the state nor Romani applicants would account. Broadly generated and scathing stereotypes of Czech Roma, who fell outside of the state and the "Czech" family ideologies I present in Chapters 1 and 2, cast them as both subordinated and conniving. Non-Romani Czechs referred to the Roma and their children as illiterate and unruly, destroying and overrunning property, disrespecting neighbors, and undaunted by their dependency. Roma served as examples of un-Czech family values. The socialist state had, "at the very least," kept Romani laziness, criminality and social deviance under close watch (see Sokolová *ms.*). In the postsocialist era, though, Roma embodied both protracted reciprocity and the dangers of market recklessness.

According to the (non-Romani) family members I interviewed, the state needed to work harder to discern the truly weak from the capable when allotting family care funds.

Beginning with the disclaimer, "I am not a racist, but..." individuals distinguished between recipient categories, and Roma emerged in the superlative role of the Czech Republic's most "undeserving poor" (Katz 1989). Josef Vodrážka told me:

look at the maltreatment of state resources, there is a kind of excess.... Roma still believe that if they have six children they will get more benefits. Those children run about, beg, sell drugs; it is awful and as long as the state allows it, it must also solve the problem. But as long as the state goes easy on them [the Roma] the seeds are cultivated, which isn't good.

Later in our discussion Josef explained that there were other persons for whom an increase in state support would be justified, such as the disabled and those who try to, but cannot, find work, "For a certain group of residents more benefits are necessary....but too much money runs freely and it shouldn't be handed out." In the lengthier quote above, Josef referred to the socialist pro-natalist policy of raising a household's benefits when more children were born. Czechs today receive child benefits based on demonstrated (low) income and children's ages, rather than having an automatic *nárok* based on the number of children in the family. And while living minimums are calibrated according to household occupancy, the minimums recognize only up to five inhabitants (including parents and children; see Figure 3.8). Josef's comments associated Roma reproductive patterns and dependency with socialist-era paternalism and ineffectiveness. Benefits accountants felt sure that their Romani visitors were more on top of social policy legislation than they ever revealed; Josef suggested also that Roma did not want to admit that socialism had ended.

Contemplating the postsocialist social network, Milan Pokorný and his wife Pavla also concluded that the state is overly generous. Milan remarked that younger generations

do not want to work. "Young people don't want to take responsibility for themselves," he said, "the social network is too broad." Pavla added,

Take the example of the Roma. I've seen it myself. In the neighborhood of Nusle [Prague 2], that is a Romani quarter, you know? Our daughter Šárka lived there for a bit. I went to see her for a visit once, and in the hallway of the building [Romani] kids were sitting and playing cards. But their cards were not your typical playing cards. In place of the cards they had 100 and 200 crown notes in their hands. They held money like cards. It's well-known that they all have an awful lot of money. I don't know how they get it, they couldn't have stolen all of it. They had very broad social protection before and I think it still exists.... so they have plenty of money.

Milan and Pavla wonder what the Roma are doing with all of that play money while claiming poverty and destitution. Josef Vodrážka and Pavla suspected that the Roma they have seen in the streets and in the halls of apartment buildings accumulated through the combined efforts of stealing, "running about," as Josef put it, and maximizing their claims on state coffers. Images of ragged Romani children playing games with money—which hardworking Czechs struggled to earn legally—epitomized for these Czechs the ill-effects of both unregulated economic venture and the negative consequences of ongoing entitlement. Like Josef, Pavla was angry that the Czech state did not cut its losses.

"The state," however—at least its benefits accountants—was careful to scrutinize the applications of Romani clients and to hold them responsible for misrepresenting their financial circumstances. The accountants were quite willing, moreover, to cut off funds to Roma whom they felt spoke falsely or tried to claim what they did not deserve. In one memorable example, a Romani father, Mr. Růžička, came to the benefits office to file for living minimum benefits. When looking through his file, his accountant learned that four years prior Mr. Růžička had been awarded supplemental money to buy a car for the

transport of his disabled son. But when asked to declare “above-standard” items in order for the office to establish current resources and expenses, Mr. Růžička failed to declare the car.

One day in the summer of 2000, Mr. Růžička arrived to check on his application and turn in verification documents. He encountered a room of three fuming benefits accountants, led by the office director, demanding that he account for the car’s whereabouts. Mr. Růžička became nervous and said that he “did not know where the car was.” The office later concluded that Mr. Růžička had sold the car and left for Belgium, and that he was now back in the Czech Republic for good (perhaps, they speculated, the Belgians had kicked him out). The accountants determined the value of the missing car and applied the figure toward the amount of money the Růžička family would otherwise have been awarded. They told Mr. Růžička that he would have to wait several years—until he paid off the car debt with his living minimum family benefits—before being eligible to receive state money. The accountants scolded Mr. Růžička. They were appalled, they said, because he had put his profit before his son’s care. This case affirmed suspicions state employees held toward most Romani applicants. Indeed, I felt on the day in question as if the employees were pleased with themselves; they were triumphant because they felt that they had proven misconduct and misuse of the system.

Note the striking difference between Mr. Růžička’s treatment in the family benefits office in 2000 and the ways in which the Vodrážka’s remembered maneuvering for an apartment from the state housing office during the 1970s. In the Vodrážka’s case, what was bad for the state was good for the family. One was foolish if he or she did not

take advantage of holes in the system. The apartment became the Vodrážka's to alter, inhabit, leave to their children, or trade for bigger and better. We have also seen that housing allotments were treated as automatic family entitlements. In the postsocialist period, Czechs stigmatized these kinds of maneuverings—especially in the case that Roma were the beneficiaries. Admittedly, the car was meant for Mr. Růžička's son and not for Mr. Růžička, but this episode marks transforming moral relations with public funds and resources. Recall how Žofie Hilská, a Romani resident of the Home whom we met in Chapter 2, felt that her benefits accountant and social workers were constantly citing "some paragraph, some number which you don't understand at all" to deflect her pursuit of family care awards. From the perspective of employees in the care office, though, Romani "profiteering" was like stealing.

Czechs often described visible affluence as a false life, as if some had gained at the disadvantage of innocent others. Business activities obscured manipulations and deviance. At the Home for Mothers, Director Králová (Jitka) complained that the mothers were not working, that they lived on support their entire lives. Yet in her view, seeking riches and luxuries indicated similar laziness and unrealistic fantasies of getting rich quick. She worried about a thirteen year-old girl, Lída, who used to live in the Home with her mother, and Lída's envy and desire for wealth. "The reality is that she must work hard for herself to get anywhere," the director said. "And big houses, they lure some people who want to live in them; those people robbed someone or they got wealthy fast by stealing." The wealth does not last, it is not "real" life.

While the verb *podnikat*, meaning to go into business for oneself, stood for the courage to seek new opportunities, it also referenced the vagueness of business activity and connoted unseen, unethical accumulation. For example, in the courtroom, when a parent was a “private business person” or “entrepreneur” (*soukromy podnikatel*) and could not offer verification of his or her earnings, the judge based her calculations of the parent’s cash flow on a state-set estimate: the living minimum multiplied by fifteen. Mothers who suspected that their children’s fathers earned much more than fifteen times the living minimum were often exasperated, because untold sums of money were hidden from view and kept from their children.

One infamous trade of the *soukromy podnikatel* was taxi driving, which the state deregulated in the mid-1990s. Taxi drivers earned a horrible reputation among foreigners, tourists and Czechs, in particular, who rarely took cabs around the city of Prague but relied instead on the trusty public metro, bus and tram routes. But Czechs spread stories about cab drivers taking advantage of poor riders (especially tourists who did not know better), who were allegedly locked in cabs until they turned over all of their money—or supposedly got zapped by electric shocks installed in the back seat until they paid an illegal, overpriced fare. Similar fearful stories circulated about Romani neighborhoods and about the Russian mafia in Prague. Xenophobic stories of evil “thieves” (*zloději*), private business activity, banking scandals and the “tunneling” of money (Altshuler 2001) made private gain in the postsocialist period an immoral act.

The Roma and taxi drivers were not the only profiteers of unchecked free enterprise. During the socialist era, Vietnamese settled in Czechoslovakia as a part of the

fraternal labor supply among socialist states and, today, run markets for Vietnamese goods throughout city centers, particularly near metro stops and in open markets on town squares. The Vietnamese residents of the Czech Republic were less an object of scorn than were the Roma. They too were seen on the streets, but they were visibly working hard for themselves. Their goods were inexpensive and, given the declining value of the crown and the unpredictability of the price of household goods, some Czechs (such as the benefits accountants during their lunch hour) perused the Vietnamese markets before any. One friend, for example, went straight to a Vietnamese vendor when she needed to replace her worn-out house shoes.

Near the Austrian border, however, I encountered strong criticism of the Vietnamese markets and merchants. Jana Klimentová's cousin, Petra, worked for the owner of three small markets. Her boss was forced to close one because "the gypsies (*cikáni*) kept stealing" food. Petra's husband, Luděk, then bitterly described the flow of Vietnamese goods out of the Czech Republic and into the hands of Austrian consumers who, he suggested, would otherwise be buying Czech goods from Czechs. Unlike the Vietnamese, he explained, Czechs were subject to stricter trade rules and regulation. Luděk felt the Vietnamese were permitted to operate outside the realm of state oversight when selling their cheap goods, sounding much like Josef and the Pokornýs, Milan and Pavla, when criticizing state obliviousness to Romani behavior. During our conversation, Luděk grew angry that the police and Ministry of the Interior allowed the Vietnamese to do, in his view, whatever they pleased:

I don't know if it's deliberate, if [the authorities] are bribed. Yeah, they seem to close their eyes. [The Vietnamese] do what they want here. They

should have to pay the same, they should have to obey the same rules. But they work for themselves, do what they want. They have nothing but smuggled, undeclared, untaxed goods, whose prices are much less than local goods.... They are uncontrolled.

The free market operates too freely, particularly in the case of non-ethnic Czechs, who increasingly became associated with unfair competition and, ironically, emerged in postsocialist cautionary tales and calls for increasing state intervention, police supervision and market regulation. Critics feel that the Roma and the Vietnamese "take" from Czechs who would otherwise be gaining from new opportunities. Positive appraisals of self-care, hard work and entrepreneurial initiative soured when they appeared as un-Czech drains on the state, when attributed to an ineffective bureaucracy, and when private industry became immoral profit.

ENGENDERING THE SOCIALLY WEAKER

Czechs refer to past systems of social provisions when making sense of current reform, tortuous filing procedures, and differences between the self-sufficient and "the socially weak." Entitlement claims span a broad section of the population. Yet in recalling their experiences with the socialist state, people such as Grandmother Vodrážková and Mrs. Boudová distanced themselves from today's poorer classes of Czechs by insisting that they never drew on support and care. They took care of themselves, they never got anything for free. In contrast to state narratives of its own life-course, family narratives of sacrifice, hard work and self-sustenance refigure the trajectory of postsocialist transition. Instead of witnessing a radical break from state paternalism and civic laziness, these stories affirmed continued belief in, and value for,

the family and individual responsibility—and ongoing perceived independence from public provisions.

Czechs who have moved further outside of state oversight viewed those struggling to make ends meet as prolonging individual and family dependence on the state. But, as I note above, the socialist state did not turn significant attention toward the “unpowerful” (i.e., the socialist-era “socially weaker”). In Chapter 2 we observed families rejecting contact with political and bureaucratic influences also “patchworking” family care and state services to meet their needs. Today those who draw on the state are accused of creating their own struggle to survive and of perpetuating dependencies never before seen. Living minimum criteria and support eligibility mark expanding gaps and differences among Czech families and generations. Care benefits were meant to serve as a safety net for those unable to protect themselves in an unfamiliar economic environment. Within the system itself, administrators experienced the benefits as obstacles to care for the self and family, which older generations would otherwise have passed along. State representatives like Mr. Novák often called for greater individualization and targeting of services. In other instances, such as those of poorer mothers in the courtroom, dependency appeared to administrators as the best and most obvious alternative.

As anthropologists seek to understand how and why “the market” is not universally embraced, it is important to recognize that in the Czech Republic private enterprise stands for positive economic and personal growth as well as negative social change. Hardworking, *chata*-owning family members have a claim to profit from free

enterprise, but Czechs do not consider all social actors to be appropriate participants in and beneficiaries of the new economy or of state benefits/support—even if they should be turning to their own resources rather than “our” state. Ethnic categories (the Roma and Vietnamese) symbolized the risks involved in the market, ambivalences toward a downsizing state, and the unexpected transformation of all Czech families.

It is important to examine closely when Czechs evoke an ideology of independence from the state, which signifies an ability to turn to family as productive dependents and not the state (fully) in the postsocialist era. I now turn to an examination of the importance of kin networks to individuals and state representatives when faced with the downsizing of public child care facilities.

Chapter 4: Where is your mother? Maternity Leave, Functioning Grandmothers and Care for Children

KINSHIP AND THE STATE

Recent theorizations of kinship make clear the relevance of its study in both non-western and western, non-state and state, and private and public domains (Franklin and McKinnon 2001; Segalen 2001). In this chapter, I examine an array of child care arrangements within the framework of large-scale shifts toward the privatization of family life, the retreat of state services from all families, and applications for public care by those who could not turn to kin. As the Czech state redefined its obligations toward families and its texts downplayed intimacy between family and state, I witnessed the presence of kinship beliefs in state offices as state employees sought out "relatedness" among family members (Carsten 2000).

The postsocialist state is thus no less involved in defining the ideal terms of family relations than was the socialist state. I explore some of the ways in which state employees evoke kin bonds when interpreting and administering social policy. I observed powerful claims made on mothers, grandparents and extended families within state offices for families, specifically as regards the contributing role of female kin as care providers. Ideologies of kin care resembled those of the socialist-era, but the closing down of public nurseries have made the need for family in income-based offices explicit.

In the last chapter we observed Czechs evoking a family versus state opposition when criticizing poorer Czechs who "take" from the state. Czechs surviving on state care

benefits were stigmatized for supposedly not wanting to work. In this chapter we again witness pressure being put on poor mothers to work. We will now hear more from these women themselves (as well as some of the more materially secure family members we met in Chapters 2 and 3), who insist upon their inability to work, because they do not have family to turn to for help with their children. For them, "autonomy" led to disadvantages. I argue that both family and kin ties remain central to achieving ethics of personal responsibility. Indeed, it is precisely, if not paradoxically, the presence of family and kin that makes self-sufficiency possible.

CHILD CARE AND THE STATE

Authors who are critical of welfare provisions in the United States (and other parts of the world, including western Europe) often point out that irregular and unaffordable child care prohibits female recipients of welfare from holding down jobs, thus prolonging low living standards and cycles of dependency on public systems of support (Blau 2001; Jenson and Sineau 2001; Ladd-Taylor 1994; Jensen and Goffin 1993). The American work ethic informs the stigmatization of welfare reciprocity, emphasizing the centrality of wage earning as a way off of welfare and out of poverty. Thus, for some, providing child care to children of working mothers remains the key to realizing poor mothers' access to living wages and, in turn, increased self-esteem and self-sustenance via participation in the American workforce. Most recently, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act passed by the U.S. Congress in 1996 transformed welfare into "workfare" by making limited public assistance and

"nonparental child care" subsidies contingent upon paid employment (Michel 1999; Levy and Michel 2002).

Critics like Gwendolyn Mink have interrogated American preoccupations with "work for work's sake" (1998:109)—and how concerns with striking a balance between work and family blind some American feminists to the experiences of poorer women who have always worked—as the means to achieving full citizenship rights, insisting that motherhood and tasks of child care should be valued as "work" in their own regard and rewarded like labor outside the home (see also Michel 1999). Although she does not address the specifics of child care services in her opposition to 1996 reform measures, Mink points out the irony that care for other people's children outside the home is more valued in welfare regulations than care for one's own children. This premise, she writes, "insults a single mother's relationship with her own children by giving social approval to her care-giving work only when it is provided for other people's children" (1998:108).

These debates often touch on the question of who should be caring for children—a child care employee (nursery, nanny, au pair) or the mother (or father). As Mink points out, choosing between paying for child care services or staying at home, while tricky, is at least possible for certain parents (middle-class, upper-class), while for others (lower-class, poor) the terrain is often not navigable: "Hardship creates stark and often unresolvable conflicts between outside work and care-giving. For single mothers who are poor...wage-earning remains a privilege, affordable for those who can hire surrogate care-givers and costly for those who cannot" (1998:117). While middle-class mothers

are often admonished to stay at home, poorer moms are scolded for not working. The American work ethic thus serves as a critique of poorer mothers in particular.

From a number of perspectives, then, debates about women, work and social provisions in the United States hinge on child care. During my fieldwork in Prague, child care arrangements were similarly critical to managing everyday family life and kin relations; and, as in the United States, insufficient child care and demands on parents to work outside the home revealed gaps in social provisions for families (for instance, services for families with children bringing in less than the state-set living minimum). But configurations of work and family are less opposed in the Czech Republic than in the lives of many Americans. As we observed in Chapter 3, the Czech work ethic emerged out of a discourse of struggle and care for “one’s own” (*naši*) family in the face of a tyrannical socialist state. Thus work gets associated in many ways with work in the service of the family—be it in or outside of family circles. During the socialist era, one worked hard in “private” spaces and siphoned off “public” materials and resources to improve family life. Women, as we observed in Chapter 2, were also better able to patchwork family and socialist state provisions, allowing them to work while raising one or two children. The strained opposition between work and family familiar to the United States was (and still is) also alleviated in the Czech Republic in part by three to four-year state-funded maternity leaves, underpinned in both the socialist and postsocialist periods by a recognition of the work of mothering that Mink would envy. Increasingly, though, “retreat” into the family is a discourse of advantage, and the “balancing” of work and family is a privileged practice.

The restructuring of family policy, particularly the growth of new distinctions between support and care recipients, introduced needs-testing into the realm of family life and is fostering the recognition and acceptance of differences among Czech parents while producing new models of work and family (as it likewise produces new models of family and state; see Chapter 1). The experience of a paternalist socialist state serving as a parental partner to all women remains a lasting influence. Yet today this partner-state tends to poorer women, and in family offices these women (and/or their female relatives) faced pressure to work outside of the home. I observed competing demands on mothers to devote all of their energies to raising children, especially in early childhood, simultaneous with resentment toward primary caretakers who claimed they could not make ends meet on the 2,409 crown monthly parental contributions they were limited to if they stayed at home. Therefore, as in the United States, Czechs often evaluated and experienced motherhood through reference to financial resources and class distinctions.

In spite of Czech emphases on the separation of family and state during the socialist era and the codification of that separation in the present, it is interesting to note that a number of Czech terms stand for care for children in both household and public settings. For example, the verb *hlídat* means to look after, baby-sit, guard, or watch in the sense of a part-time care taker. The noun *hlídání* stands for a period of time during which a child is being watched by a non-family member. For example, when residents in the Home for Mothers attended their weekly therapy groups, their kids went to *hlídání*. *Hlídání* can also mean surveillance. A *chůva* is a private nanny, or a full- or part-time child minder. The job of parents and relatives as well as public schools is to provide

výchova, another word for care taking in the sense of upbringing (in the family), and education (in the home and outside of it, usually in the classroom). In my experience, a more frequently used word referring to and describing child care was *péče*, or *péče o dítě* meaning care for the child. *Péče* translates as care by family members for one another in an affectionate sense, as well as welfare, such as that which the state provides its citizens. Hence the name *Oddělení Péče O Dítě* (Department for the Care of Children), where I observed benefits accountants determining eligibility for state subsidies and awards based on means- and needs-tested criteria. The terms for care (babysitting, watching, minding, upbringing, providing) hint at the involvement of non-kin and public services in children's lives.

This chapter begins with a brief history of maternity leave and state child care facilities. It then turns to an examination of narratives of maternity leave during both the socialist and postsocialist eras. I then sketch the role of the idealized Czech care person: *babička*, or grandmother. As caregiver and nurturer extraordinaire, *babička* provided necessary child supervision for her family through her limitless availability and, I was often told, her own enjoyment in being with and looking after her children's children. Finally, I visit the households in which the mother's need to work and *babička's* unavailability, absence and/or disinterest create child care dilemmas similar to those in the United States: the inability to navigate the need to support one's family with wages from work outside the home and the need to provide quality care for children. I demonstrate that during the postsocialist era, those without kin appealed to the state while

the state turned to family to fill in gaps of social provision, such as what Czechs called the "grandmother service."⁵³

Family obligations were thus formalized and fully integrated in needs and means-tested analyses of household resources, just as Czechs with children sought public support unavailable in kin networks. State family policy includes family networks and familial care. I argue that, through their association with socialism, family support networks (especially the "grandmother service," or *babičkovská služba*) are often cast by Czechs as inhabiting a previous time and place. Paradoxically, however, it is this "service" that state employees elicit as the state shifts its orientation to needs-based welfare and calls for greater individual accountability and self-motivation. Thus, as the state and society transform to a market-based system, Czechs again evoke meanings of family to identify the "socially weak" and to encourage responsibility for the self.

STATE PROVISIONS: MATERNITY LEAVE AND THE JESLE

Care for children in pre-school facilities enables the mother to make her role as mother compatible with her profession, and with her many-sided involvement in the life of society.

--*The Family in Socialist Czechoslovakia*
Dr. Jaroslav Havelka et al. (1981:45)

During the twentieth century, maternity leave and public facilities devoted to the care of children whose parents are working varied in length and availability according to state form and demographic priorities. Permitted lengths of paid and unpaid maternity leaves steadily increased from the interwar period to the early postsocialist era. At the

end of the First World War, the option to take a maternity leave was introduced and set at six weeks. In 1962 maternity leave was extended to eighteen weeks; in 1963 the government extended paid leave to twenty-two weeks and introduced the option of unpaid leave up to the child's first birthday (subsidized by family benefits). The mother's job was held until her return. Later, paid maternity leave was extended to twenty-six weeks, and to thirty-five weeks for unmarried/single mothers (and for mothers of twins and triplets). The leave payment equaled ninety percent of the mother's salary. In 1970 unpaid leave was extended to two years. By the end of the socialist era, unpaid leave lasted up to the child's third birthday (Heitlinger 1979). In 1993, Act 308/1993 set paid maternity leave at twenty-eight weeks and sixty-nine percent of the previous salary (see Čermáková et al. 2000). After the twenty-eight weeks of maternity leave, the mother or father is entitled to a universal "contribution for parents" (*rodičovský příspěvek*) for three to four years (after four years the employer does not guarantee that the caretaker's job will be held). As I note above, Czechs refer to this payment in everyday discussions as the maternity leave award, although officially it is an across-the-board parental *contribution* (rather than leave) and any primary care taker is eligible for its receipt.

While the terms of parental leave for the care of young children have been maintained (and in some cases lengthened) since the end of the socialist era, state child care facilities established during the socialist era for children between four months and three years of age, the *jesle*, have dramatically reduced in number. *Jesle* closings in the 1990s coincided with fears of rising unemployment, making for some the lengthy maternity leave a temporary solution to job insecurity or anticipated job loss. Here I

focus on personal narratives relating to experiences with public and private forms of child care, as well as how family policies become standardized and part of "the natural order of things" (Borneman 1992:76). Yet it is useful to examine data given to me by sociologist Marie Čermáková on the reduction of both the number of *jesle* and children who visited them: In 1988 there were 1,367 *jesle* in the Czech Republic with 55,955 children enrolled in them. By 1999, 67 *jesle* remained with 1,913 enrollees (UZIS ČR 2000). Čermáková remarked with more than a touch of dismay that, rather than look at the numbers themselves, it is more productive to emphasize how they reflect the extreme shift in child care patterns that has taken place since the end of the socialist era in 1989. If and when families have children, they must balance family and careers in order for one parent, most often the mother, to stay at home with the child(ren). Although this was also the case during the socialist era, unlike the situation ten years prior, the state neither rhetorically promotes its child care facilities nor funds them.

In addition to the *jesle*, parents also drew, and continue to draw on, kindergarten programs called *školky* (a diminutive for school, *škola*) for children between the ages of three and five. Čermáková believed that one explanation for drops in *jesle* use might be earlier eligibility to attend *školka* (which is as young as age two and a half in some regions) as well as drops in numbers of children born. Moreover, she explained, mothers stay at home more than they used to because they are no longer pressured so strongly to work. Thus, parents choose not to send their children to the *jesle* at such young ages. Additionally, many mothers were anxious about unpredictable employment possibilities and decided to wait out the insecurity on maternity leave.

It appears that, by retaining lengthy maternity leave terms and universal parental contributions, the state has persisted in valuing redistribution to, and responsibility for, all families since the end of socialist rule. Yet many critics—especially Čermáková's team of sociology students—interpret drops in state support for public child care for the very young as compelling women to retreat from the workplace by instituting a neo-traditional family form under the guise of a generous social safety net (Čermáková et al. 2000; see Gal and Kligman 2000). For example, the policy prohibits mothers who draw on the parental contribution from working for more than a negligible part of the month; and family law specifies that children of parents on leave may not be placed in a care facility for more than three days a month (Holub and Nová 2000:387). In this way, it is nearly impossible for new mothers on leave to pursue legal employment during the first few years of their child's life. Moreover, many of the mothers I interviewed tried to time the birth of their second child at three or four years after the birth of their first, allowing the receipt of the parental contribution for up to eight years—and eight years away from the workplace. This trend is in sharp contrast to high employment numbers among women with children during the socialist era (Čermáková et al. 2000; Heitlinger 1979; Scott 1974; Havelka 1981). Although sociologists and critics from the gender studies community are skeptical of the government's motivations for allowing women to stay at home, or, as some might phrase it, keeping women at home, policy makers and government representatives often insisted that the policy is in the best interest of Czech children.

Integrating Public Care with Family Care: Critiquing the *Jesle*

During the socialist era, as today, parents and family members combined a number of child care alternatives in managing work and children. Although the socialist state provided a greater number of facilities for working parents, Czechs tried to limit the number of hours they left their children in the facilities and achieved a partial state/partial family child care regimen. Although the statistics Čermáková provided me might suggest otherwise, many family members explained that they drew on the *jesle* as a last resort and were unhappy doing so. For its part, the state turned to families to provide the majority of child care, and, as Heitlinger noted in her examination of socialist social policy in the late 1970s, "in relation to child care, there has been more emphasis on the family as the primary socialising agency" (1979:137). Nonetheless, there were many more *jesle* available during the socialist era, and people were using them.

The socialist state and individual Czechs leaned on family support as they do during the postsocialist era, though shifts in family policy since the early 1990s are most visible and meaningful as regards cuts in affordable access to child care alternatives in the case that other family members or close friends are not available to fill in for parents. These cuts have served to reconfigure the relationship between women and work and family. In this section, I examine personal narratives of state services by focusing on how parents interpreted family policy during the socialist period through the lens of postsocialist reforms and a changing array of child care alternatives. Faced today with a scarcity of public child care (and affordable private care) in contrast to a lengthy maternity leave, the vast majority of Czechs with whom I worked opted for the latter out

of both practical need and the conviction that mothers and children must spend the early years of childhood together. This belief has not changed since the end of communist rule, though in many cases women are increasingly estranged from the sphere of work outside the home.

In most cases during the socialist era, mothers stayed at home for at least a short period of time after the birth of a child before either beginning to take the new son or daughter to a *jesle*, or before a grandparent or older family member became a full-time care provider. Today, young mothers with whom I met often enjoy and appreciate lengthier periods of leave—calling it “one of the most lovely periods of life,” as many put it—while others explain that they suffer now that the state has cut back on the option of *jesle* services. Although my informants agreed that child supervision by a family member is most desirable, Czech criticisms of funding cuts for child care accompany the impression that the state is no longer interested in families. Thus, two contradictory points emerged: mothers should undoubtedly be taking care of their children on the one hand, yet the state should underwrite child care on the other.

Jesle were divisive institutions at the height of their use and many Czechs have unhappy and angry memories of them today. One prevalent theme woven throughout stories of *jesle* was that of illness and poor health. Part of a larger discourse about the unhealthiness of the socialist era in general (recall the premature deaths of Jana Klimentová and Veronika Vodrážková’s fathers, both of whom we met in Chapter 2), *jesle* were thought to make children sick because of a combination of unsanitary conditions, contagion among children, and a sense that too few nurses supervised too

many children (see Havelka 1981; Heitlinger 1979; Švejcar 1975:190). Just as often, family members spoke of the emotional dangers of a child not being taken care of by his or her mother, and the potential harm of an overly-collectivist institution. In contrast, the socialist state insisted that the collective environment "help[ed] in the building of social, unselfish behavior" (Nedvědová and Damborská 1962:18).

Grandfather Šmíd: Generation and the *Jesle*

Opinions of *jesle* often divided along generational lines. To take one example we encountered in Chapter 2, Mrs. Šmídová explained that her husband forbade her to place their children in a local *jesle* in the 1950s. After her three-month maternity leave in 1952, Mr. Šmíd refused to put his son in a state nursery "to be taken care of by others." He began working longer hours in his regular job as well as in a woodworking shop to allow his wife to care for the children at home. In protecting his children from the "common enemy" of the state, Mr. Šmíd also protected his familial authority, which had been eroded by an all-too intimate family policy of intervention and state involvement. Despite struggling financially, Mrs. Šmídová did stay home with their two children for nine years. Eventually Mr. Šmíd had to retire early because he suffered a heart attack that both his daughter and his wife attributed to too much work. Overwork at two jobs to keep his children out of state child care institutions led to Mr. Šmíd's early retirement and his transformation from breadwinner to the primary care taker of his own children. In many of the family histories, extreme manual labor and poor working conditions and concerns

about poorly tended children contributed to representations of an unhealthy living environment and an ill individual and social state in socialist Czechoslovakia.

By the time the Šmíd's daughter, Veronika Vodrážková, had her son Josef in 1975, the communist state was no less an enemy but the *jesle* had become more widely drawn upon. Yet according to Mrs. Šmídová, her husband refused to have his grandchildren sent to a *jesle*, as he had his own children. New parents Veronika and Ondřej thought about a *jesle*, Mrs. Šmídová explained, but

My husband said, "no nursery, absolutely not, I'll take care of Josef."
So he got his third child and actually took care of Josef from the age of two months to six years. He cooked, changed diapers, washed diapers and everything else.

As we will examine shortly, this grandparental "service" is also a common Czech child care practice. Mrs. Šmídová remembered her husband's life-long conviction that none of his off-spring would be taken to state child care facilities. She spoke lovingly of how he insisted upon working harder to keep two generations of children out of the *jesle*. Indeed, Mr. Šmíd's children and grandchildren described Mr. Šmíd, who died in 1989, as an honorable and devoted father and grandfather because of the sacrifices he made for them.

But Veronika and Ondřej's memories of child care decision-making did not echo Veronika's mother, Mrs. Šmídová's, who insisted that her husband watched Josef until he entered elementary school—much as they had their own two children. Veronika and Ondřej on the other hand struggled to recall the details of the arrangement. In the end, Veronika concluded that they left Josef in the *jesle* for part of the day and with his grandfather the other. Otherwise, she was certain, she and her husband alternated taking

care of the baby while they attended school. Here I transcribe their conversation and the meandering piecing together of a socialist-era child care routine:

A: Josef at the time [pause] how was it exactly in that second year [of school, when Josef was a newborn]? I probably was at home and you (to her husband) went to lecture that second year; I don't recall, but definitely if he didn't go to *jesle*, it probably was me [at home]. Probably only you went to lecture and I kept up on them through you. Yes, it was like that. Also, otherwise we went on shifts, so that when I had to be at a seminar, or at some lab, we divided tasks. So one of us was always at home with the baby and the other was at school....

O: And in our third year [of school] only the minor details of our required coursework differed....in the sense that Josef went to *jesle*. And then his grandfather brought him home. So when we were in school he was at *jesle* or with his grandfather; we would leave school to collect Josef at his grandfather's....

The discrepancy between Mrs. Šmídová's narrative of the family arrangement (that her husband refused to allow any of his offspring to stay in a state nursery and was the primary care taker of Josef) and Veronika and Ondřej's memories (that the *jesle* was fundamental to their child care regimen) points to an interesting contrast between the immediate post-war generation of parents and their children who had children in the 1960s and 1970s. Veronika and Ondřej did not have the fundamental antagonism toward state-run child care institutions which I found representative of their parents' generation, although they might have preferred to have Josef cared for by a family member. Over the course of their lives, lengthier maternity leaves and widely available state nurseries (all integral to pro-natalist approaches by the state) had become accepted out of necessity, albeit reluctantly.

Daniela and Monika: The *Jesle* and Biology

Wariness toward state nurseries, however, also cut across older and younger generations. Daniela Martínková was a mother of two young women, one in her late teens and the other in her early twenties, at the time of my fieldwork. When her youngest daughter was a small child in the mid-1980s, at the time her maternity leave ended, Daniela took a job in a *jesle* as a nurse's assistant. She was horrified by the conditions she witnessed in the facility and listed a number of problems with the care children received, including lack of affection by the nursing staff, the sharing of a sick child's spoon, hankie, and linens with healthy children—who then became sick—and an overly regimented and strict routine of napping and eating. As in most interviews, I prompted discussion with a general question about what Daniela thought of socialist family services, such as maternity leave and the *jesle*. "They are the worst," she quickly responded, continuing:

I would close them. At least from my experience. On the one hand I have the feeling that a child should be with its mother for a long time. I think that it's not just a primitive ritual that a woman carry a child on her hip for three years: it's the right thing and what nature wants. So I think that it was a big problem during the socialist era, and maybe before that, that children were torn from their mothers as early as the birthing rooms. It was a big mistake. The child should stay with its mother, but those routines in the institutions were incredibly systematic, such as precisely the interval at which to nurse. Absolutely illogical things....

Daniela argued that babies are too young to go to a nursery to be taken care of by a staff of unfamiliar and, in her experience, disinterested state nurses. In addition to echoing a conflict that many mothers and fathers face when both must, or choose, to work, this interview captured the prevalent assumption among Czechs (and codified by some

policies) that children must be cared for by their mothers. If not, the children and the mothers themselves suffer emotionally and physically because they are not together. The *jesle* are cold and unnurturing institutions and, I often heard, children placed within them received inhumane treatment by the staff of child care providers. And Czechs spoke harshly of mothers who placed their children in *jesle*. Maruška Procházková explained that she is not on speaking terms with her husband Viktor's mother, who, in addition to neglecting Viktor when he was a child as well as an adult, left him for week-long stays in a *jesle* from the age of six weeks. Notions of good and bad mothers thus transcended the socialist and postsocialist eras—"good" mothers in the current era should stay home, and they should have tried to do this to their best abilities (i.e., cobbled together more innovative care routines) during the socialist era. One older couple attributed Czech unfriendliness toward strangers to the dehumanizing treatment they experienced as infants in *jesle* facilities.

Note that, in Daniela's statement, socialist-era reliance upon *jesle* to maintain employment among women challenged natural maternal instincts and infant needs, such as the perceived biological requirement that children and mothers be together in the tender, early years of life. Hence the socialist state had manipulated culture and nature to bad ends. In effect, to leave one's child in a state facility suggested that the child was not properly cared for, despite state plans to provide good care for children while mothers were working.

Monika Jelavičová is Daniela Holubová's niece. In 2000 she had a five year-old daughter called Johanka. When Johanka turned four and Monika's maternity leave

expired she was unable to find a job. She felt that the parental leave and contributions (*výplaty*, or “wages,” as she referred to them) were generous, particularly in contrast to other countries in eastern Europe. Her husband is Croatian and she compared her four-year leave to Croatia’s one-year leave, and was grateful that the Czech state grants a substantial period at home. At the time of my fieldwork, Monika was looking for work in her community to the north of Prague. No available jobs suited her parenting schedule—Johanka was in *školka* until early afternoon, and her husband worked at a restaurant until 2 AM. The other potential care taker, Monika’s mother, lived an hour away and was unable to help out on a regular basis.

Monika had worked odd jobs before Johanka was born, but she argued that even if she had had a steady, good job when she was pregnant she would have taken the lengthiest period of maternity leave instead of returning to work as soon as possible: “I would have stayed home all the same,” she said,

because the mother should be with her child and nobody else. No one can replace the mother. The children seem to have been placed in the *jesle* too early. I think they began from six months of age, so I would never have put her in a *jesle*....if for instance a mother is single or for financial reasons doesn’t have any other possibilities, certainly she must do that. But otherwise if a person has another choice, I wouldn’t put the child in there.

Although sociologists of gender and family like Čermáková were concerned by cuts in social services, which seem to give parents no choice but to stay home with newborns, Czechs like Monika Jelavičová emphasized the primacy of family over career and strove to coordinate the reduced number of public services with what they felt their children needed. Despite the importance of finding work, Monika felt that spending four years at

home with her daughter was more essential in the long run. It seems in this example, at least, that some mothers have no problem with large-scale cuts in *jesle* services. Yet for single mothers with no "other possibilities," as Monika described their circumstances, the dramatic reduction in *jesle* services often demanded that they stay home with their young children, too, whether they want to or not, or work illegally.

Longing to Work Outside the Home

Although mothers like Monika experienced their maternity leave as complementing natural maternal commitments and children's life cycles, in other instances mothers with young children were depressed by a sense of loneliness and solitude while at home. Many with whom I worked were discouraged by their lack of options, angry that public services were cut back at the time they became mothers, and (even if they felt it essential that they be at home) bored during the leave, which sometimes lasted eight years. Here I examine the care-taking situations of two mothers from the Home for Mothers (both of whom we met in Chapter 2) who experienced maternity leave requirements as a restriction on their personal ambitions and, especially, as contributing to financial strain. Although these women lived in a municipality-run home for a time, I believe that their experiences were characteristic of many women outside the setting of public institutions and state supervision. Indeed, reflections I collected in the home about boredom and depression while on maternity leave were identical to many discussions I had with mothers of small children, some financially comfortable, outside the Home. Certainly, however, the circumstances of these women's

lives—particularly raising children alone—influenced their status as *sociální* (social cases), and the choices they faced appeared especially limiting.

Zuzana: “This is tiring”

Zuzana Novotná was in her mid-twenties when we met and the mother of two young children: Gabriela was two and a half when I worked in the home, Otto was almost one. Zuzana was not married to the father of Gabriela and Otto, although they were in a committed, long-term relationship. He is what she called “an Albanian from Serb territory” (i.e., from Kosovo). After leaving Prague and returning home in 1999 to check on his family during the NATO bombing of Serbia, he was caught illegally re-entering the Czech Republic and put in jail for what Zuzana felt was going to be an indefinite period of time. Although she did not much see the point of marrying, she granted that getting married might allow her partner to remain in the Czech Republic and was prepared to wed formally if it would help him earn legal residency and reunite the family. Zuzana considered working rather than staying at home on maternity leave, but Zuzana’s mother had her own young son from a second marriage and was unable to help out on a regular basis. Zuzana had not seen her own father since Gabriela was born.

We spoke in her one-room apartment at the Home. As during many of my visits with residents there, her kids alternated between demanding the attention of their mother, who was talking to this curious foreign woman, and trying to get a hold of the much more fascinating buttons and latches on my heavy tape-recorder. I began asking Zuzana about her opinions of maternity leave and whether she thinks it is sufficiently long. She paused

and laughed, taking in the scene of her two pushy babies, and said, “you see with your own eyes, Rebecca, you see how it is!” and attempted to hush Gabriela:

Sometimes I would rather work because this is tiring. There is a stereotype that a person with children has them because they want to leave work or to take it easy. But really from morning to evening, twenty-four hours a day, it's always the same: we get up, we eat, we play or go outside if it is nice, then lunch in the afternoon, then they sleep and I quickly clean up what I can, then later we're at home more or outside for a bit. At night they go to sleep. Every day it's the same. Sometimes I feel really tired. Maybe if there are two parents they can break things up and the father can take the kids outside while the mother rests, but I don't know...sometimes I am completely frustrated. Among other people I feel crazy, yeah like that, crazy. I feel that I no longer have contact with others because the kids are the only thing I do. How can I explain it?...My friends have other concerns. I feel outside of life....When people work they have normal contact with others and handle it....

I would be pleased if there were some kind of babysitting, if I could work and have someone to watch the children....But with my education, I couldn't find the kind of work that would support the family and pay a nanny....there are people who don't want to go to work and it suits them to be on maternity leave. I would prefer it if there were conditions that would allow a person to work. Like before, I remember there were the *jesle* and parents put the kids there and it was to the advantage of those who could not afford a nanny. So the *jesle* were an option, even for families with no money.

It is clear from this interview excerpt that Zuzana felt less bound by what others have described as unquestionable, automatic maternal instincts than by the conditions under which she had become a full-time mother, namely by the terms of postsocialist policies toward families. This bind was made all the more maddening when compared to (what seemed to Zuzana as) the wide-spread availability of *jesle* during the socialist era. Despite the fact that Zuzana fit the description of a “socially weak” (*sociálně slabá*) mother—unwed with two children, living in a public home for mothers with children, making ends meet entirely by drawing on various state benefits for families with

children—she wanted to work and to be able to support her children. She remarked at one point that as soon as both Gabriela and Otto were in *školka* she hoped to return to work. “I will support them and won’t have to be on these benefits,” she said. Not only did she anticipate a greater income working outside the home, but that the children would reach ages allowing Zuzana to balance employment with the care-taking services offered by a public school. As we saw in Monika Jelavičová’s case, mothers often find it difficult to locate work suitable to *školka* schedules. But it is important to keep Zuzana’s eagerness to work in mind, especially when faced with the simultaneous extension of leaves, decreases in affordable child care services, and criticisms of Czechs on care benefits for taking from the state.

Libora and Beata: Working under the Table

Libora (thirty years-old) and Beata Fialová (age five) were forced to move out of the Home for Mothers in September 2000 because Libora stopped paying her bills and owed a significant sum in late rent. She had lived there for three years before moving out. The administration at the home lost patience with her endless excuses and failure to make payments, her seeming inability to manage the money she received from the state, and, in the eyes of some (including those of fellow residents), her unwillingness to work. Libora moved in with her mother (Beata’s grandmother), with whom she was not on speaking terms. She and Beata occupied one of the three bedrooms in the apartment and kept to themselves, avoiding all contact with Libora’s mother. They were involved in a drawn-out court battle over who was entitled to remain in the apartment; it had initially

been awarded by the municipality to both Libora and her mother, but they were unable to live together peacefully. Beata had never met her father (Libora and he dated briefly and he played no role in Beata's life), though he did pay monthly child support payments to Libora.

At the time of my fieldwork, Beata was periodically sick with respiratory problems, making her unable to attend *školka* on a regular basis. Her illness qualified Libora for a lengthier maternity leave period—up to seven years for mothers with sick and disabled children (in some cases, even lengthier leaves were granted on the basis of proven health needs). Yet, given her debt and the low living standard when taking in state awards exclusively, Libora wrestled frequently with the possibility of both drawing on extended parental contributions and social support and care benefits and finding unreported work, called “*na černou*,” under the table or, literally, work on the black market, “in the shade.” The work would contradict the terms of benefits receipt: if she were found to be making more than the living minimum, her state support would be reduced, she would be indebted to the state for what the state had overpaid her, and she would be penalized for not having reported a source of income.

One day in mid-October 2000, I phoned Libora to arrange a meeting and she said to come to the video store across the street from where she and Beata had moved. The owner of the video store had agreed to employ her illegally. Although excited about her new income, she warned me not to say anything to the women at the Home, because the work was *na černou*. I visited her in the video store a few days later, and found her sitting behind a desk and checking out films to customers. She was hassled and tired by

the work hours (morning to night, all week) and low pay (200 crowns, a bit more than five dollars, a day—more on average, though, than the parental contribution) but was planning to hold on to the job at least through the fall so that she and Beata could have a nice Christmas. Beata was playing with a neighbor's kids, a new friend of Libora's who sometimes watched Beata free of charge. Occasionally when this friend needed to run a child-free errand, she left her two unruly kids in the video store, making it near impossible for Libora to work (and often driving customers away!). More frequently, though, Beata wandered around the video store and neighboring store fronts, looking for amusement and getting into trouble. Libora had managed to find an unofficial source of income but continued to operate for the most part as full-time care provider.

Libora decided to seek an income outside the terms of parental leave policy and to work illegally in her neighborhood, contradicting her reputation as someone refusing to work. She was willing to take the risk, given her financial straits, but she worried that someone she knew would walk by the store or hear word of the illicit arrangement. She often claimed that the accountants in her local benefits office were unfair to her, or senselessly delayed her contributions and claims, and she was thus able to justify the extra work. Many mothers in and outside the home picked up odd jobs, such as part-time waitressing or, in one case, filling up packets of push pins and getting paid per completed box.

Libora was not alone in out-maneuvering the terms of Czech maternity leave, though one organization chose to work within the limits of policies by organizing a non-profit network of mothers' groups, which met in the buildings vacated by old *jesle*

facilities. The "Mother Centers" (*Mateřské Centrum*) have sprung up in many parts of the Czech Republic as mothers gather while their children play (as of December 1999 there were seventy-eight countrywide). Participants can take English classes, exercise, listen to lectures, and visit. According to literature in one Prague Mother Center, fathers are "not disqualified" from attending the gatherings, but participants told me they did not expect any to attend, despite changing the name of "maternity leave" to "parental leave." One center's pamphlet recognized that mothers are often bored and lonely while on maternity leave, while taking it for granted that child care is the mother's responsibility:

The birth of a child and the beginning of maternity leave brings a change of lifestyle to every mother. The outside world, the many activities of women, slowly become confined to four household walls and a child. The woman is "only" at home and "only" caring for the child. In society, her esteem is lowered.... But mothers have the right to stay at home with their children as well as fulfill themselves.

Although these kinds of groups are spreading and increasingly popular, when I told Libora she might be interested in participating she insisted that she was too busy with the job at the video store. Indeed, a civic gathering, as reassuring as it might be to assemble and talk with other mothers, would not have solved her financial troubles. Women like Zuzana Novotná and Libora Fialová were caught between the increasing expense and privatization of child care and cuts in public services. Although many interpret developments like the Mother Centers as evidence of an emerging Czech "civil society" and as healthy mediators between family and state sectors, in Libora and Zuzana's cases, a non-profit organization would not ameliorate the effects of losing previously available child care centers.

Mother Work

Interpretations of public child care facilities varied according to both current material circumstances and memories of the socialist era. For mothers able to stay at home with their children in the postsocialist era, the socialist practice of leaving children in public nurseries was often seen as highly problematic and symptomatic of the hardships of family life during what they considered to be a troubled era. In contrast, those struggling emotionally and financially at home, or working illegally, often depicted socialist-era provisions as more generous and accommodating. To these women, the socialist era was easier; it was enjoyed by their mothers but unfairly denied to them and their children. The reconfigurations of state provisions for families and ongoing estrangement from kin locks poorer women into the category of "socially weaker." In both situations, however, opinions of current policies toward families were explained with reference to memories of the recent socialist past. Socialist family policies and their effects endured in stories Czechs told about themselves.

Nonetheless, parental leave and accompanying contributions for parents affirm the important labor of parenting in the Czech Republic, treating work in the home much like work outside of it. The lengthy term of leave and monthly care-taking "wages" (*výplaty*) allow mothers and fathers to rest assured that their children are receiving quality, loving attention in a safe environment while also securing the care-taker's job for up to three years. What the examples I have given here suggest (and so many critics of child care policy in the United States have repeated at length) is that maternity leave is most effective when combined with the option of affordable non-parental child care in

the case that both parents must work. When this child care is unavailable, or deemed inadequate, Czechs seek other creative alternatives. And throughout the socialist era and during this postsocialist period, fortunate families turned to fellow kin to provide child care for young children, particularly to retired grandmothers.

THE FUNCTIONING GRANDMOTHER

Granny lived very contentedly in a mountain village on the Silesian border, in a little cottage....

It was no solitary life she lived in her cottage; all the inhabitants of the village were brothers and sisters to her, she was their mother, their counsellor, without whom no christening, wedding or funeral could be properly solemnized.

One day a letter came from Vienna, from her elder daughter, with the news that her husband had taken service with a certain princess who had a great estate in Bohemia, only a few miles distant from the mountain village where Granny lived. Thither she was moving at once with her family, while her husband would normally join them there only in the summer, when the Princess herself would be in residence. The letter ended with a warm appeal to Granny to go to them permanently, and spend the rest of her days with her grandchildren, who were already looking forward eagerly to her coming.

--Babička: Obrazy venkovského života

(Granny: Scenes from a Country Life; Edith Pargeter, trans.)

Božena Němcová (1962[1855]:6)

Božena Němcová was a prominent patriot in the nineteenth-century Czech national revival, and of all the characters and works emerging from the period, her *Babička* endures as emblematic of the revival's ideals. *Babička* spoke Czech rather than German (used throughout the Hapsburg Empire), stood for village living, and passed her decency, faith and frugality on to her grandchildren, with whom she spent her days in the country. Although one Czech historian has described the charming images of country

living on *Babička*'s pages as "an ideal past which never existed" (Iggers 1995:50), my fieldwork and observations offered evidence enough that, for many Czechs, grandmothers (and grandfathers) inhabit the important inner circle of family life. Němcová's *Babička* is not the only source of grandmotherly imagery, but she emerged frequently as an example of how grandmothers should live with and tend contentedly to their children's families and offspring (Heitlinger and Trnka 1998:161-162; Čermáková et al. 2000:70-71, 92).

A "functioning grandmother" or "serviceable grandmother" is the mother of a mother or father who lives on her pension and takes care of her grandchildren while the children's parent(s) work. In some cases, the grandmother lives in the family's household, though quite often in the case of Prague residents she lives in her own apartment and adjusts her schedule to take care of the kids. The grandmother is "functioning" when she is healthy enough to provide full-time child care and "non-functioning" (*nefunkční*) when she is not integrated into the family's child care arrangements. The grandmother's age is significant—she must be a recent pensioner (in her mid-to-late 50s) at the time when her daughter has children.⁵⁴ Grandmothers who have grown too old to provide child care, or daughters who put off or never have children, are thought of as having disturbed a well-balanced, self-perpetuating system and having made unmanageable what would otherwise be a guaranteed babysitting cycle (see Švejcar 1975:17). Grandmothers thus "function" by filling in for mothers who have completed the three to four years of maternity leave, or decide for whatever reason not to draw on maternity leave. Grandmothers continue to function so long as the children are

in nursery school and elementary school and provide necessary child supervision after school ends for the day. I was struck in particular by one (functioning) grandmother's explanation that she had retired "but was still working," i.e., caring for her daughters' children rather than going to an office or factory.

I observed paternal and maternal grandmothers offering the grandmother "service" in equal amounts. In contrast to the frequent characterization of fathers as incompetent in the household and "naturally" unsuited to care for the family in the way that women are (see Čermáková et al. 2000:102-106), Czechs often depict grandfathers as nurturing figures. With retirement, grandfathers take on child care roles quite unlike those of younger Czech men and more similar to those of their wives and daughters.

Child care was usually not shared between sets of grandparents; rather, the same grandmother or grandfather would watch the children on a regular basis. Divorce often restricted the participation of paternal grandparents in a child's daily care schedule because fathers very seldom receive full or joint custody of children in the Czech Republic. Hence, when parents were separated or divorced, contact between the children, their mother and the paternal grandmother and grandfather was limited.

In my examination of the grandmother service and child care which follows, I weave together stories of pre-socialist, socialist and postsocialist eras. The narratives of the role and meaning of grandparents during these three periods bear many similarities to each other. Still, in many ways the grandmother service is perceived as a dying trend. As we will see in the next chapter, Czechs are having fewer children at an older age of first childbirth and grandmothers are thought of as too old to help out when their

grandchildren are “finally” born. Several Czechs claimed to me that pressures by children and grandchildren on grandmothers are decreasing. They pointed out that, like younger generations, elder Czechs are able now to take advantage of opportunities to travel and learn in a more open, democratic setting. Others suggest that mothers are staying home more than they did during the socialist era. Thus, both the *jesle* and functioning grandmothers have become less necessary for some, while those like Zuzana and Libora long for both and imagine that their mothers had access to these helpful child care alternatives. For these reasons, Czechs associate the incorporation of functioning grandmothers into everyday household negotiations with the increasingly outdated insular family behavior characteristic of the socialist era.

Despite these kinds of claims, however, grandparents remain central both to family histories and to kin relations in the Czech Republic. I came to recognize the importance of grandparents to the family “cell,” when they continued to appear with regularity across generations in the family narratives I collected. And despite depicting them as an antiquated resource, Czechs in varied settings and from a range of age groups lean heavily on functioning grandmothers in times of need. Indeed, as we will see below, state representatives often seek out the participation of grandmothers in care taking, particularly for families in which mothers need to work.

***Babička* in Time and Space**

As *Granny: Scenes from a Country Life* suggests, narratives of grandmothers and time spent with them are synonymous with stories of the Czech countryside and village

life. For example, Czechs are often eager to leave the city for the family *chata* or *chalupa*. These weekend trips, summer holidays and lengthy school vacations were spent outside the city and with grandparents, who (especially in the case of grandparents of today's middle-aged) seemed to reside in more rural parts of Bohemia and Moravia year round. Travel outside the smog-filled city stood for a movement back in time, toward a more traditional and simple life which grandparents then exemplified. Even those grandmothers who lived in Prague, such as Kateřina Vodrážková and Hana Šmídová, represented links to the timelessness of the countryside because they had migrated to the city for work in their youth and often retained kin ties in their hometowns and villages. Connections with the country and village life thus made the role of grandparents and representations of a bucolic landscape go hand in hand.

In the family histories I collected, stories of endless holidays in the country with older family members, usually grandmothers and grandfathers, made up a substantial part of childhood memories. Marta Veselá, whose father and mother provided daily child care for her son Bedřich in 2000, spoke at length of how meaningful her elder family members were to her in the 1960s and 70s, when she and her older sister were sent for school holidays to her father's home village in Moravia. Josef and Magda Vodrážka fondly remembered summer months in the Moravian countryside with their father's mother's mother, whom they called *Babinka*, an affectionate nickname for their great-grandmother. As we have learned, this *Babinka* had earlier raised Josef and Magda's father until he was six years old. And although her grandmother was ailing by the time she was old enough to visit on her own, Romana Čapková talked about her lengthy visits

to her grandmother's cottage in Bohemia and of their relationship as a great friendship, even though "at her place it was never that *Babička* took care of me. Rather, I took care of her, like a kid. When I was there with her I made sure to help her, if she needed anything." Her comments about how atypical her relationship was with her grandmother (in the sense that she tended to her grandmother rather than the other way around) made expected or "normal" behavior of grandmothers—i.e., the care of grandchildren—all the more apparent.

Marta's father, Mr. Hendrych, offered other examples of connections between grandparents and the country by relating time spent with his grandson, who he and his wife took care of after school, to trips to the village where he grew up. Although he lives in Prague and next door to his daughter, son-in-law and grandson, Mr. Hendrych often turned to stories of his native Moravia and extended family networks and relations as examples of a more ideal family form. He tried to share these values with his grandson during their time together, despite the complications of an urban setting:

We feed him when his mom is busy, and mainly we love our grandson terribly. He is eight and a half. Every evening I make it my duty to exercise and play soccer with him, because he is in that phase of enthusiasm for soccer.... I try to cultivate in him the feeling that he has a family here, in the sense that it's a certainty. And if he has a problem he has a person he can turn to. There are his parents, but also us grandparents. I always tell him how superb it is [to have grandparents and family]. He is looking forward to going to Moravia. Today I realized that at the end of September, when the IMF meeting will be held in Prague and all the schools will be closed, he can come and be with us in Moravia.⁵⁵

Czechs often included grandparents, especially grandmothers because of their automatic association with the care of children and the family in general, in depictions of

the immediate family. Like Mr. Hendrych, one informant who works with family-centered civic organizations explained that grandparents are indispensable to family life and child development. During one meeting, he drew a model of Czech childhood and family relations on a piece of paper. The drawing was a series of concentric circles (see Figure 4.1). The “nucleus” of the model was the mother and child. This relationship rested within a circle which stood for the child’s father and *babička*, seen as equal parenting figures. The circle of the grandfather represented the next level of family relations, followed by schoolmates and, finally, society, which encompassed the entire family unit and yet whose influence on a child was mediated by the family—particularly the mother, father and grandmother. Recall how similar imagery came out of the socialist state texts I examined in Chapter 1. Although Monika Jelavičová insisted that “no one can replace the mother,” grandmothers (and sometimes grandfathers) come close.

Extensive holiday visits and grandparental child care arrangements are often cast as old-fashioned or characteristic of a “bygone” era, understood as a time when family members lived and worked in close proximity. Marta and her father, Mr. Hendrych, both long for the family life they believe is more easily found in the country. She does not think her child care and living situation is common in Prague and locates the origin of the arrangement in her father’s own kin past. She speaks nostalgically of a time when family and friends had more time for each other and were involved in each other’s lives on a daily basis:

...in Moravia...with those big families, people simply didn’t know how they were related to each other—who is a relative and who is not, if someone is a great uncle or whoever. So everyone held together. But in Prague there is a kind of tendency of each for himself. You know, for

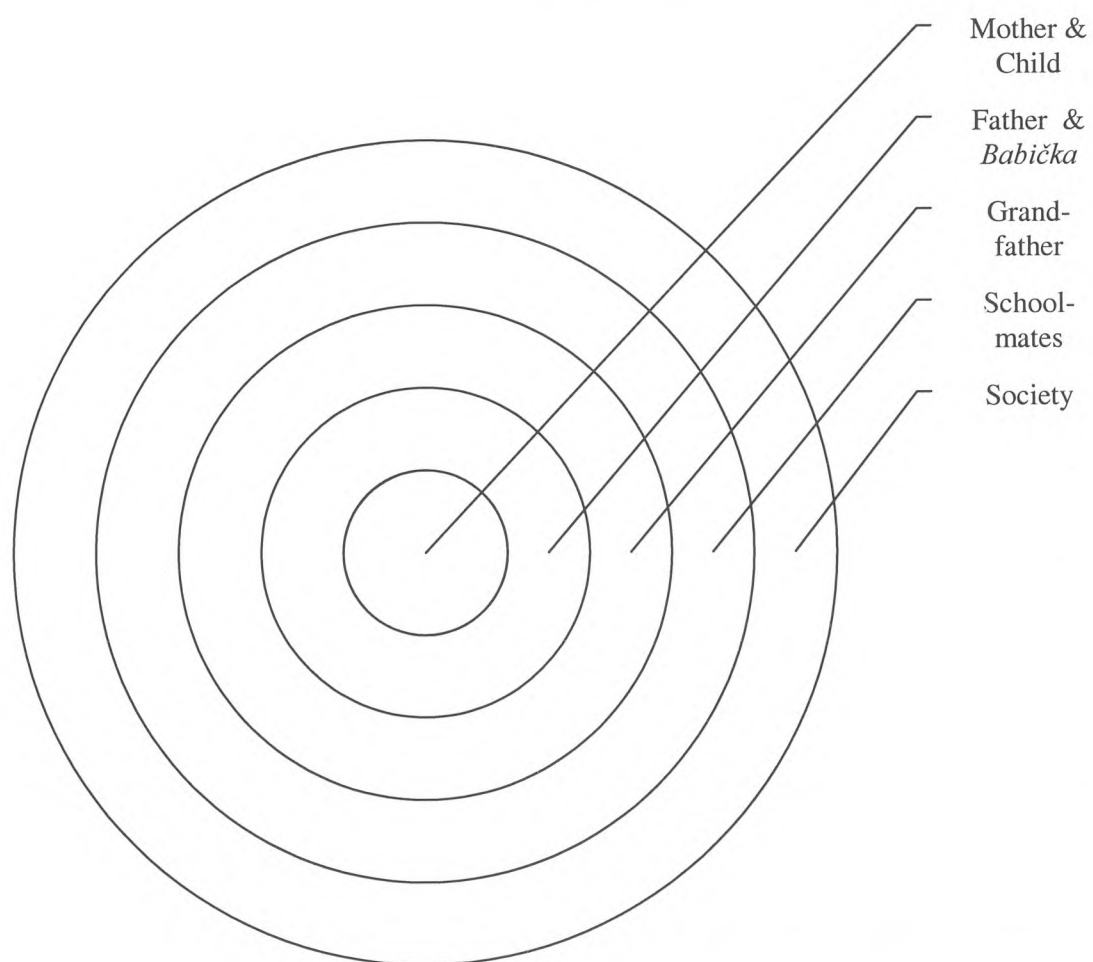


Figure 4.1: Czech Childhood and Family Relations

one to have his own family and to forget about parents, to forget about siblings, simply "this is mine." I think that is common.... We are not a typical Czech family, or at least a typical Prague family....people don't stick together like they did previously.

Here Marta opposes the familial atmosphere she experienced in her father's village (which stands for an earlier time) to the alienation she felt in Prague around strangers and, even, her husband's extended family, which she felt did not take good care of its members or spend enough time together. In contrast, families of her father's generation and her own grandfather's generation were "large" (*početná* for numerous, plentiful), and "held or stuck together" (*drželi*). Anxiety about family life in the present makes evident links Czechs often drew between socialism, large amounts of family time (spent both in the country and the city) and private networks. Although Marta could rely upon her father and mother (her son's grandparents), she worried that the world around her was changing and that this might not be the case for long. She gauged a changing economic and political environment by referencing kin ties.

As I addressed in Chapter 1, family forms often get used to signify different political and economic formations. In addition to evoking the opening paragraphs of *Babička*, those familiar with the history of kinship theory will notice the resemblance between Marta's above characterization of prior/village family organization in the Czech Republic and the extended kinship ties within Lewis Henry Morgan's classification of family types (1985[1877]). Morgan argued that disorderly cohabitation and indiscriminate procreation prohibited the establishment of paternal ties and, in turn, paternity rights and claims. But the indistinguishability of relatedness Morgan took as an impediment to progress is here cast as comforting and solidarity-making in what, as

Marta and her father explained, is now an era of increasing competition and self-interest. Although Morgan's taxonomies of savagery, barbarism and civilization have long been discredited and abandoned, we often hear traces of evolutionary frameworks in accounts of ties between family (extended, nuclear) and social type (simple, complex). Like Morgan, Marta associated the extended family (or, less differentiated family ties) with non-market and altruistic behavior (the moral inverse of "this is mine" attitudes). Additionally, as in Morgan, the idealized behavior and indiscriminate relatedness of the extended family is, according to Marta, becoming extinct.

Babička as Parent

Beyond speaking of holidays in the country, several informants who were born in the interwar period (1918-1938) described how their parents or they themselves were raised by grandparents in the country or, alternately, left their children in rural villages to be raised by their parents. In a tone of dark humor, Dáša Fronková giggled and told of how in the late nineteenth century, after giving birth to an illegitimate child, her grandmother left her newborn with her own mother (Věra's great-grandmother) to find work and send money home (presumably the father of the child did not contribute to its support). Only after several years did Věra's grandmother learn that the child had died shortly after her departure, and that her mother had been taking the money for her own use. Stories of family aid, support and contribution, however, predominated.

During the time between leaving northern Moravia and securing an apartment in Prague 5 in the early 1950s, for example, Mrs. Vodrážková's mother (Magda and Josef's

Babinka) raised Mrs. Vodrážková's son Ondřej. After six years Mrs. Vodrážková sent for her son. He studied in Prague during the school year but continued returning to his grandparents' house during the summertime. In addition to noting the practical assistance his grandmother provided his mother, Ondřej later interpreted his time with his grandparents as a substitute for the parental attention he believed his mother did not provide. He never knew his father:

during the free time when I didn't go to school, I went to grandmother and grandfather's in Moravia....I felt emotionally connected at grandmother's because she compensated in the early years for maternal care; grandfather stood in for a father in the sense of authority, or simply for what a boy needs for his growth...

Because mothers often worked outside of the home full time during the socialist era, grandmothers came to represent supremely maternal figures through extensive time spent with their children's children. In cases when grandparents lived in small villages in Bohemia and Moravia, images of rural simplicity and idealized family support networks accompanied memories of being raised and/or taken care of by a grandmother or grandfather. Moreover, Czechs often depicted their relationships with their grandparents as better because more intimate and playful than those they had with their parents, who many portrayed as too busy and unavailable during early childhood and adolescence. One resident of the Home for Mothers explained that grandparents were often kinder to their grandchildren because they identified with, and saw themselves in, the younger generation.

As we have seen in the case of Mr. Hendrych, grandparents in Prague often made important contributions to their grandchildren's upbringing and offered a critical child

care service (see Borneman 1992:142-143). Indeed, the necessary aid of grandparents has outlasted the pre-socialist and socialist eras. Mrs. Peclová took care of her grandchildren everyday during the work week and often over the weekend. She recognized the similarity between the strains of work and family she encountered as a working mother in the 1950s and those her daughters confronted in 2000. She felt that she was "compensating" (*vynahradit*) for having worked so many nights as a doctor when her daughters were young by taking care of her grandchildren on a full-time basis in retirement. Indeed, when she had her first daughter in the 1950s, Mrs. Peclová's mother-in-law (the paternal grandmother) initially kept the baby in Brno for several years before she was reunited with her parents. The Pecls were not able to secure an apartment for the three of them and the baby's grandmother provided an obvious solution to both the housing and child care shortage. The Pecls recognized a danger, however, in their young daughter staying with her grandmother for too long: "She was becoming a stranger, you know, she was more used to her grandmother. And then when we had our second baby, we said to ourselves that we could not bring up two only children." Thus after five years, the Pecls retrieved their first-born from the care of her grandmother, who they felt was reluctant to let the child go, and consolidated the family in their new apartment in Prague.

In 2000, Mrs. Peclová went to her eldest daughter's house in the afternoons and waited for her grandchildren to come home from school "so that they come home and someone is there who will look after them and their homework. They would prefer to be playing on the computer or watching television....I think every child needs supervision

and guidance.” It is important to note that when she was a young mother herself, Mrs. Peclová was given less responsibility at work because her employers saw her as beholden to her children’s needs. Thus despite the demands of her job and her sense that she did not give her daughters enough care and time, she explained, “My career was more of a progression down than up.” And, although Mrs. Peclová recognized that her daughters faced strains she herself confronted as a young mother, it is clear also that she believed the postsocialist setting makes children more vulnerable to outside influences and dangers, such as drugs, violence and crime. Perhaps for this reason, the grandmother service “serves” as a kind of protection or shield against postsocialist temptations, as the family previously did against the threats of the socialist state. Looking again at Figure 4.1, the grandmother and other family members are safeguards between the child and society. Mrs. Peclová also felt that she was giving back to her children something that family members (her mother-in-law in Brno and also an aunt in Prague) gave her when she was in need of child care alternatives. The Pecl’s example makes it clear that the grandmother function can operate throughout a person’s lifecycle—as a child, as a mother and, eventually, as a grandmother.

During one family history interview, Mrs. Sokolová interrupted our conversation by leaving momentarily to run down the street and fetch her granddaughter at her elementary school. She fed us, and her granddaughter, a lunch of soup as we completed our interview. Mrs. Sokolová and her husband interpreted the child care they provided their granddaughter as mutually beneficial. Mr. Sokol invented a word for the benefit they receive from time spent with their grandchildren: *pedoterapie*—pediotherapy,

defined in short as the healing powers of young children. He believed that the young have as many important lessons to teach to the old, as the old do the young. Before leaving to pick up her granddaughter from school, Mrs. Sokolová spoke similarly of how much she enjoyed her time with the young girl, their youngest grandchild:

Here on this couch we play all kinds of games and we draw pictures from photos. Now she has begun to go to school, where she is learning different subjects, and we have begun to exercise together. My daughter has the day shift today, so I've got to go for her [the granddaughter] at 12:15 PM.

Indeed, in many family history narratives, Czechs of all ages do not regard the help that grandmothers provide their children and grandchildren as draining or taxing, but as rewarding. The dedication to young children working that parents do not necessarily have the time to give and take pleasure in is often deferred until they are grandparents themselves. Simultaneously, however, though the grandmother service is often cast as old-fashioned, older and younger generations often take it for granted that grandmothers are available to attend to their grandchildren and that especially maternal grandmothers will come to their daughters' sides for prolonged periods shortly after children are born.

In some cases other relatives and even family friends were pulled in to provide child care when grandparents have died. As we learned in Chapter 2, when Mrs. Klimentová had her children during the early 1950s her mother had already passed away. Eliška, who remained in the household following the advent of communist rule, joined Mr. Kliment's mother and sister in tending to the Kliment children in the place of the maternal grandmother. Jana acknowledged that she couldn't have brought in her critical second salary if not for Eliška's help during the difficult years of early communism.

Today the "children," Ivan Kliment and Maruška Procházková, are grown, each with two children of their own. They remembered Eliška as an ever-present grandmotherly figure in their parent's home. And when Maruška had her children, they called Jana (their maternal grandmother) *Babička* and Eliška *Babka*.

***Babička* and the State**

In her work on the "new" grandparenting in France, Martine Segalen observes a growing grandparental model characterized by "incredible investment by grandparents in the young adult generation that mainly takes the form of caring for grandchildren on a regular basis and during holidays" (2001:258). In addition, Segalen argues, kinship is "claimed" through grandparenting and serves to delimit familial belonging and relatedness, particularly in the case of divorce when membership in a family and/or household might be unstable and undefined. The arrangements made within French families resemble the Czech situation in many ways. For example, Segalen observes the inheritance of apartments by grandchildren, a fully integrated child care service provided by the third generation, and the ways in which grandparental care collaborates with "the assistance of a still-generous welfare system" (259). She interprets grandparenting as complementing redistributive state mechanisms.

The usefulness of grandmothers to the redistributive state was formalized in state literature on the family during the socialist era in the Czech Republic. Despite an elaborate state support system for families, the architects of family policy leaned on grandmothers as did families themselves. As the authors of the "Alphabet of the Family"

wrote in 1983, "Grandparental care of grandchildren is a widely used means of caring for young children in the period when the mother is at work. This is an outgrowth of socializing between families and their grandparents, who are willing to take over the care of their grandchildren. *Babička* plays a decisive role" (Pachl et al. 1983:178; Švejcar 1975:330-331).

Although grandmothers were often presumed, "naturally," to want to spend time with their grandchildren, legislation sometimes allowed for the interpretation of time grandmothers spent taking care of grandchildren as work. At least in theory, the socialist state treated child care in the home like work outside of it and made it possible for Czechs to pay other persons to fill in when (a) the children were not cared for by state employees in a public facility or (b) grandmothers were not available. The third generation was incorporated formally into state analyses of household resources. In 1983, for example, a reader wrote into the newspaper *Svobodné slovo* (*Free Word*) asking what kind of child care a family can turn to when there is no grandmother and the child(ren) are not going to a state nursery or kindergarten. Editors of the "Letters From Our Readers" page explain,

In many families *babička* helps when the children cannot go to *jesle* or to *školka*; but sometimes she is a middle-aged woman and still has some time until retirement age. What then?... We consulted our legal advisors about this issue. One reader, like many, asks, "what to do when you don't have a *babička*?" The legal expert responded to this type of question as follows:

You can find assistance in another person. According to paragraph 269 of the Labor Code, a citizen can hire someone else for employment, though it is of course important to follow several rules. Citizens can only hire persons for a wage to help in assisting with small children if the child does not go to a *jesle* or *školka* or, during the period

under consideration, the child is unable to go to these facilities. (8-10-83)

On the one hand, families could not sidestep state facilities in favor of private, in-home child care. On the other, there was the presumption that if not working full time, grandmothers were helping out with grandchildren, who thus did not need public care. The socialist state allowed families to seek other help when grandmothers and parents were not available, constituting grandmothers as part of both family and state means. Family networks were a part of family policy (as they are, as we see below, in today's needs-based state offices for families).

Czechs often associated the child care work that grandmothers—and the family in general—perform with ideals cultivated in opposition to the socialist state. In conversation, the family members I worked with linked inter-generational loyalty to a “social feeling” (*sociální citenî*) and altruism toward family that was threatened by the spread of capitalism and market behavior. They told stories of coming to the aid of those in the private inner circle during the socialist period—such as the sacrifices Mr. Šmíd made for multiple generations of offspring because he did not want to use a socialist institution—and those stories reflected the kind of behavior that grandparents are thought to typify. In fact, families drawing on the grandmother service often interpreted the availability and willingness of grandmothers and parents to help out as examples to younger generations of how they should treat family members in general. This behavior was affirmed during extensive summer and weekend holidays spent at the family *chata*, where, as we have observed, family members often spent as much time repairing and (re-)building the cottages as they did relaxing.

Furthermore, when grandchildren grew older, grandmothers were often then themselves tended to by first and second generations. Indeed, those who placed ailing parents in nursing homes (and, during the socialist era, infants in the *jesle*) were widely derided as unloving and ungenerous toward family—as lacking the “social feeling.” The “social feeling” and the service family members like *babička* provided operated within a wide network of relatives that was set in contrast to self-interested family “atoms.” The large, undifferentiated mass of family members (coded as timeless and rural) coming to each other’s sides stood for an integrated, self-perpetuating and self-sustaining familial system at the center of which was a functioning and participating grandmother. Today’s single mothers on maternity leave, such as Zuzana and Libora, were set outside these family systems, despite the work they were doing for their young families.

Increasingly, the Czech case shares more with ethnographies of extended families in which the extended family form is stigmatized as uncooperative or opposing market models and capitalist behavior (linked by Morgan, for example, to less expansive and more differentiated family forms). Extended families stand in contrast to liberal welfare systems and resist dominant economic structures in their persistent allegiance to redistributive patterns of behavior. Paradoxically however, as Chapter 3 demonstrated, family networks were one way in which Czechs indicated self-designed “independence” from the state. Moreover, I observed Czech state representatives turning to models of the extended family, especially the grandmother service, to fill in the gaps of social provisions no longer guaranteed by the state.

The Caring Icon

*Když jsem našla hříbeček,
volal na mě dědeček.
At' prý k bábi pospíchám,
doma talíř nachystám.
Bude vonět smažinka,
dish,
co připraví babinka.*

When I found a mushroom,
Grandfather called to me.
Let's hurry home to Granny,
I will arrange the plates.
And it will smell like the mushroom
That we like Granny to make.

--Rodina v Ohnisku Zájmu [Family in Focus]
National Center for the Family
Barbora, 12 years old (2002:41)

When Němcová's *Babička* leaves her treasured village and moves to be with her daughter and grandchildren in a different part of Bohemia, she is sad to say good-bye to the villagers who have made up her family and the landscape that has been her home for so long. But, Němcová writes, "blood is not water" ("*krev není voda*" 1913:9), and it does not take *Babička* long to decide to leave. She yearns to meet her grandchildren for the first time and joins her daughter and her son-in-law, whom she has also never met. This "call of blood" summons her to her daughter's side, and she establishes her membership in the family by taking care of her grandchildren for her daughter.

When faced by life's challenges her grandchildren and neighbors turn to this model nurturer for guidance and support: "Soon everything in the household was conducted according to Granny's word, everybody called her 'Granny'; and what Granny said and did, was good" (1962[1855]:17). Grandfathers, great-aunts and old family friends sometimes also do the work of a *babička*. Still, Němcová's granny figure continues to serve as an ultimate care giving icon—a warm, loving and devoted older

woman, adoring her many offspring, constantly baking dumplings and pastries and playing games, and, importantly, filling in for busy parents.

“WHERE IS YOUR MOTHER?” EVOKING KIN, DISTANCING KIN

Because the terms of state social provisions are caught up in any discussion of child care, it is helpful to examine events in a family-centered “care” office such as the “Department of Benefits for Families with Children” to think about the effects of the privatization of care and the ways in which the absence of familial resources in a time of need shapes the growth of social class in the Czech Republic. While this office did not directly provide access to child care, mothers both on and off maternity leave visited on a regular basis claiming (a) not to have the money to cover their expenses and (b) to lack the kind of family support that would allow them to go to work.

During my fieldwork I observed state representatives evoking kin support (most often grandmothers) while benefits applicants distanced themselves from family ties to justify warranting awards. Rather than treat “the state” as removed from clients’ well-being, it is more useful to seek insights into the perspectives of state employees and the everyday decisions they made when interpreting and implementing social policies as well as how these decisions competed with their clients’ self-presentations. While accountants and social workers often suspected that claimants could and should be turning to personal ties rather than the state, on paper and in person, clients proclaimed themselves to be solitary and unsupported by parents, grandparents, fathers of children, friends, and boyfriends.

Given postsocialist state desires for self-motivation on the level of the individual within the family, and concerns that the socially weak (and social policies themselves) were prolonging socialist processes, the accountant/applicant relationship produced an interesting contradiction. Benefits accountants encouraged poorer Czechs to turn to the family for help with child care so that parents, usually a single mother, could work (see Haney 2002). They evoked extensive links and mutual obligations among generations, asking things like, "Where is your mother? Why can't she help take care of the child while you work?" or, "Don't you have any family that could help take care of your children?" While the institution of the family preceded the socialist era, I would argue that state representatives based their evaluations of clients' resources on presumptions many made about the personal aid and protection that families were thought to have offered during the chillier days of socialism.

Many of the visitors to the benefits department were Roma. Benefits accountants presumed that behind each Romani claimant seeking support stood a vast network of relatives who should fill in where the state would not (see Sokolová *ms.*). Roma and their kin were thought of as especially unwilling to work (honestly) and as having measureless amounts of free time on their hands to provide child care for one another. Non-Romani Czechs often depicted the socialist system as a check on Romani inefficiency and laziness because, like all other citizens, Roma had been required to carry proof of employment. In the service of encouraging self-sustenance and reduced dependence on state awards among clients, then, benefits accountants evoked social organization characteristic of non-market models, such as informal family sustenance during the

socialist era or the ease with which Roma were thought to turn to an immense association of family members. Roma, moreover, were not thought of as equals.

In contrast, clients insisting on their isolation vis-à-vis social networks were self-described "autonomous individuals." Like residents of the home for mothers (such as Libora and Zuzana, who were not Roma), they claimed to have no family to turn to for help with childcare and, through their self-dependence, to have been left little room to maneuver in the postsocialist marketplace. State representatives and values encoded in new policies encouraged these women to take care of themselves, to take responsibility for themselves ("on one's own" or *sama sebe*; "it is your problem" or *to je váš problem*) despite the designing of needs- and means-tested policies for those who were financially most vulnerable. Indeed, in the setting of the state, these women were claiming to have no one else to lean on.

Czech benefits accountants persisted in distrusting their clients. Perhaps because the accountants and the clients were operating with shared models of family obligations and responsibilities, there was always the possibility that a client was concealing a family member who was, or should be, helping out with child care (or housing or financial strain). Admittedly, having worked with many benefits recipients in the home for mothers and witnessing their various strategies (and having been influenced over time by the accountants' suspicions), I too often wondered if Czechs taking in the living minimum for families were not covering up various other forms of support. Yet the clients were claiming to need available subsidies, contributions, and benefits because

they could not work, because they did not have enough to pay the rent, because they had no one to watch their children.

Benefits accountants combed clients' statements and personal histories, questioning and seeking to verify that some family member was not out there providing unreported help. Grandmothers were especially suspect because it was taken for granted that grandmothers were willing and able to watch their grandchildren while mothers worked. In many instances, the benefits accountants codified and formalized the grandmother "service" through evocations of the natural care female figures often offer young children. The "care" office authorized financial benefits for clients who were primarily single mothers; but before they processed the paperwork, they sought out other female family members who could, it followed, instinctively step in and allow the younger mother to work outside the home.

Accountant-client interactions followed a predictable pattern: a potential client entered the office shared by two accountants (here Mrs. Berková and Mrs. Pavlíková) with questions about his or her eligibility for financial assistance based on status as a primary care taker. The accountants responded in turn with questions for the client. Although they could only work with documented evidence of financial resources when computing and determining eligibility for benefits, during these office visits, the benefits accountants were eager to tease out the circumstances of family relationships and any aid kin might first offer to allow clients to work if they did not already. After explaining his or her situation, the client left either concerned, angry or encouraged that she/he would qualify for the living minimum.

After the client exited the foyer, if no other clients remained, the benefits accountants and any other office employees in the immediate area would informally judge the client's character, appearance, and the merits of his or her claim. They gossiped, laughed, got angry, were sympathetic or indifferent to their clients' predicaments and personal stories. And they shared personal insights and information from outside of the office setting that might be relevant to client eligibility. As an ethnographer at the office, eager to understand both what was taking place during the client meetings and how the benefits accountants evaluated the cases, I found these post-encounter appraisals to be some of the richest moments of my fieldwork.

In the vast majority of client-accountant interactions, paperwork passed hands, documents were processed, and clients received their living minimum checks with little fuss. Here I present three scenarios taken from my field notes which were typical of moments when accountants suspected that there was more family "care" than met the eye. During these encounters, I was seated in between the two accountants' desks, reading (newspapers, files, policy papers) and observing the meetings. The dialogues reflect an approximation of conversations which took place, most of which I scribbled down after clients exited the office.

Example 1: Mrs. Pavlíková (MP) slowly rises from her desk and admits a client waiting in the outer sitting area. A young woman follows carrying a purse, with no papers in hand. It is clear that this is a first-time visit because regular visitors enter with various folders of documents and slips of paper in hand. Mrs. Pavlíková instructs her

visitor to take a seat in the chair to the right of her desk. Mrs. Pavlíková asks, "what do you need?" (*Co potřebujete?*)⁵⁶ The visitor wants to know if she and her baby qualify for living minimum benefits. Mrs. Pavlíková leans toward her calculator, preparing to enter a new list of figures, and fires off a series of questions:

MP "What do you currently receive?"

The mother says she currently takes in the monthly parental contribution (*mateřská*) and social support.

MP "Child support [from the father]?"

The mother says that she does not know the father of her child; he does not contribute.

MP "I will have to include a fictive child support payment into my computations because it is *your responsibility* to obtain child support from the father."

[The fictive child maintenance amount (*alimenta* or *vyživné*) was 1,000 crowns per month. This will be added to the parental contribution (2,409 crowns) and social support, all of which is then subtracted from the state-set living minimum for one parent and one infant (5,850 crowns at the time; see Figure 3.8). If the client's income is less than the living minimum, he or she is eligible for the difference.]

The client explains that she lives with an aunt and pays a sizeable rent monthly.

MP "You don't know the father?"

[At this point, Mrs. Pavlíková's office mate, Mrs. Berková (MB), and the director of the office, Mrs. Hauserová (MH), enter the office and ask the woman a series of questions about her child's age, the client's own mother, and, yet again, about the child's father.]

MB "Where is the child's grandmother? Why aren't you living with her?"

The client explains vaguely and softly that it just would not work to live with her mother.

Mrs. Berková and Hauserová's unsympathetic responses make it seem unlikely that the applicant will have a "claim" (*nárok*) on the state. Nevertheless, Mrs. Pavlíková looks up from her computing on the calculator and explains that the mother is taking in just under the living minimum for her category and might just have a claim. She reviews the necessary paperwork with the applicant, explaining the forms, signatures, stamps and evidence that she will need to obtain and bring in—a huge task in itself—before the office formally processes the request. The young woman leaves. As soon as the door closes, Mrs. Berková tells her colleagues that the grandmother of the child is waiting outside. Mrs. Pavlíková raises an eyebrow in confusion. The next client is admitted.

Example 2: Mrs. Berková sits behind her desk, while a woman sits in the chair directly in front of the desk. The woman's boyfriend stands to her right. It is unclear to me whether or not he is the father of the child in question. The couple is Romani. They explain that they cannot pay their rent, they cannot find work, and they are seeking care benefits. The mother no longer receives maternity leave. To process their file, Mrs. Berková will need evidence that they have both registered at the employment office. The man has registered, but his girlfriend has not.

MB: "To qualify for support up to the living minimum you must both go to the employment office."

The couple explains that they cannot stay in the flat where they currently live. And they cannot find another place to live, the rent is too expensive.

MB: "You do not meet the conditions for support because you have not registered to find employment.... you don't want your rent debt to grow."

The woman continues to complain about the amount of their rent, they cannot afford it. Her mother does not want her, she does not have anyplace to go.

MB: "You can find a nice flat outside of Prague for a third of the rent you pay now."

The woman is not interested, explaining that rents on those old, run-down *paneláky* are still too high. Mrs. Berková encourages them to rely on extended family. The woman dismisses Mrs. Berková.

MB: "Then I would encourage you to go downstairs to speak with our Romani support liaison, Miss Nečasová."

The male visitor is interested, his partner is not:

Female visitor: "No, I'll take care of myself, I will take the baby to a home for mothers with children."

MB: "It is not so simple."

The male visitor remains interested in the Romani support office, and Mrs. Berková gives him the contact information. His girlfriend leaves saying nothing. He exits behind her.

After the couple leaves, Mrs. Berková sends me a bemused look (I am seated to her right throughout the meeting). Mrs. Hauserová enters the office and she and Mrs. Berková discuss the couple's situation. Mrs. Hauserová laughs when she hears that the woman will "take care of herself" (*sama sebe*), suggesting that the woman wouldn't qualify for a spot in a home for mothers because she has an "extended family" (*širší rodina*).

Example 3: A young applicant enters Mrs. Berková and Mrs. Pavlíková's office accompanied by her step-mother. They take seats in front of Mrs. Berková's desk. The applicant's name, I learn, is Zdena and she has come to contest her denial of state benefits

up to the living minimum. Zdena has a young son, whom she does not bring along, and she herself is still a minor. Zdena's paperwork states that the department has refused her request for state benefits because of her above-average living standard and, moreover, because the child's extended family is responsible for contributing. Her step-mother is familiar with social policy legislation and the large, green volume "Code on the Family" rests on her lap throughout the meeting. Several pages are marked with paper tabs. The step-mother acts as Zdena's representative while Zdena sits sullenly and occasionally responds to questions. Office director Mrs. Hauserová leads the discussion, although Mrs. Berková was the case worker on this file and rejected the application. Mrs. Hauserová asks for various explanations and clarifications as she reads through the case file in her hands:

MH: "There is a discrepancy in Zdena's residence. Two addresses appear on the form."

The step-mother explains that Zdena's permanent, legal address is a flat owned by her two parents, but that no one lives there now. Zdena lives at a second address, a flat owned by her father and step-mother.

MH: [to Zdena] "When were your parent's divorced?"

Zdena: "I don't know."

MH: "That seems odd, not to know when your parents were divorced. What about the father of the child and his parents?"

Both Zdena and her step-mother insist that the father and his family are not in touch with Zdena or the boy, although the father does pay child support.

MH: "What about Zdena's mother, it says here that she is unemployed. [scoffing] She is only 51, she should be able to contribute, there are older women working at Delvita⁵⁷ Based on the information here, your family is far from needing state benefits."

Zdena and her step-mother question this decision at length, asking "how can Zdena find work?" She needs to watch the baby. Zdena's father and step-mother are private business owners and have various loans and debts, they do not have money to spare. Mrs. Hauserová is unmoved by these explanations.

MH: "The state cannot take care of Zdena, the family has got to do it, or Zdena has got to work."

Zdena: "What am I going to do, sell myself on the street?"

MB & MP: [gasp, tisk]

MH: [shaking her head] "That is enough, we will not discuss that any further. The father should be contributing; Zdena needs to go to the father for support, he is only paying 1,000 crowns a month in child maintenance."

Step-mother: "We are scared of him, we do not want to have contact with him."

MB: [rolls her eyes]

Mrs. Hauserová pushes further on the need for the father and his family to help.

Zdena: "The baby's father's mother [the paternal *babička*] watches the boy sometimes on the weekend."

MH: [to the step-mother, angrily] "Then what you said is not true, what you said is not true [*to není pravda, to není pravda*]. You misspoke when you insisted that there is no contact or help from the father's side of the family....[in response to further questions about where the money for the child should come from] You will have to sell above-standard items before the state steps in."

Zdena: "Where?"

Zdena laughs upon learning that a microwave is considered an above-standard item.

MH: "Sell the car."

Zdena: "It's the firm's car."

MH: "That is irrelevant."

Mrs. Berková steps in, listing the other items considered above-standard: television, answering machine, mobile telephone, etc. And Mrs. Pavlíková points out that money spent on gas for the car could go to groceries and food for the boy. Zdena's step-mother appears less confident in their success at an appeal. They ask a few more procedural questions and leave. Still, it seems, they will appeal the decision.

When the two women are gone, Mrs. Berková says that she has known of this family for years and that they are very wealthy. When she made the decision to reject Zdena's request for state support for families, she turned to a general statement in the "Code on the Family" obligating grandparents to help with their grandchildren. "In fact, that family has an enormous amount of property," she said. Because the mother of the child in question is still a dependent, Mrs. Berková factored in all other resources when determining eligibility for benefits for families. Furthermore, questioning by Mrs. Hauserová opened up the possibility of undeclared sources of family support and help, such as a baby-sitting *babička*, whose presence in Zdena's life and the baby's makes it possible for Zdena to work in the meantime—rather than lean on the state.

Accounting for Kin and Care

The benefits accountants demanded the accountability, mutual obligation and participation of family members, while their clients insisted they did not have family resources. Although capable of understanding and appreciating circumstances when family members were, in fact, the source of personal pain and misfortune, the accountants inquired about the whereabouts of *babička* when assessing household resources. In some instances, money that grandmothers were thought to be able to provide was deducted from the monthly benefits checks going to their offspring. Despite the ability for fathers

to take parental leave, state employees looked to mothers and grandmothers to care for children and households. Though they did accrue child support debts to the state, fathers were never pressured or interrogated for not providing child care. In contrast, mothers were accountable for fathers' participation and payments. Although a man accompanied an applicant in Example 2, men seldom visited the office. When men did enter to inquire about their various claims, they were often treated like children, particularly in the case of Romani visitors.

Romani visitors were approached more suspiciously in general. Their candidacy was often automatically called into question: Where the money would go, what it would be used for, and whether or not it would benefit children directly was always at issue. Because the benefits accountants (and Czechs outside of the office) often depicted Roma as inherently connected to a larger network of relatives, there was concern in the department office that state funds targeted for single households and particular children would be dispersed and distributed among many undeserving.

Clients, in turn, distanced themselves from their immediate family members, depicting kin organization quite unlike what some of the grandparents I introduced above felt was natural and normal in the Czech setting. Some, like the applicant in Example 1, did not give the details of their family arrangements and stated simply that "my mother does not help," or "my mother wants nothing to do with me." Others explained at length that they were under duress at home, or had nowhere to go. In extreme cases, applicants were sent from the accountants' office to that of a "social worker" (*klasická sociálka*), who might visit the client's home and apply to the housing commission or to a home for

mothers on the children's behalf. At this point, the state intervened and mediated family relationships directly.

Suspicion of unreported resources and relationships, however, dominated the office. It seems that private relationships, be they parental or romantic, carried with them the suggestion of possible financial or in-kind reward. In Example 1, for instance, Mrs. Berková surveyed those seated in the foyer, concluding that, in contrast to the client's testimony, she did in fact have a "functioning" relationship with her waiting mother. Another frequent technique was to wait until the client exited, to rush to the balcony, and to watch recent visitors leave the building: watch to see if anyone accompanied the visitor (a boyfriend, a father, a mother, a girlfriend?), watch to see who might be waiting at a nearby corner, and watch to see if the client unlocked and drove away in an undocumented, unclaimed car.

If clients were unable to survive on parental leave contributions—or if the period of parental leave expired—state employees turned to "natural" kin obligations and kin roles when seeking alternatives to distributing further state support for Czechs. Mothers (and, in Example 3, even grandmothers) were pressured to work and the accountants placed less emphasis on the inseparable mother-child bond. Accountants interpreted family ties as allowing for parental participation in the workplace. Yet paradoxically in these cases, as in the United States, insufficient public and private child care arrangements hindered the ability of Czechs, especially single mothers, to support themselves. Poorer Czechs in the postsocialist era increasingly face the bind observed by critics of the child care dilemma in the United States: they must both rely on personal

networks and go to work. Mothers with family support can choose not to stay at home on lengthy, though minimally paid, parental leaves. And when they do stay home, as was more often the case among my informants, their choice to care for their own children suits Czech ideals of family and mothering.

In the end, many Czechs did qualify for benefits up to the living minimum. As Lynne Haney has pointed out in her work on needs-based welfare in Hungary, it is all too easy to demonize social workers for denying meager amounts of money to poor families (2000:48-49). In fact, Mrs. Berková and Mrs. Pavlíková spent the majority of their time authorizing the distribution of state funds to families with children and had a difficult task in front of them in distinguishing "need." Yet this investigation into a state setting has allowed us to witness one way in which family gets pulled into formal assessments of individual means, and how family resources often shape individual abilities to participate in a changing economy.

FAMILY CARE

A three to four-year parental leave and the grandmother service were two of the most common forms of child care among my interviewees. Lengthy parental leaves during a period of economic and political uncertainty offered new mothers (and fathers) the possibility of staying home and continuing to draw on monthly parental contributions that value the work of parenting, while waiting out a period of instability in the marketplace. Many Czechs also believed that the period of parental leave complemented natural mothering duties and the biological needs of mother and child, ones that were

violated during the socialist era—and continued to be violated for poor mothers without family support. When parents eventually returned to work, often grandmothers and other family members and friends offered supervision and care for young children attending kindergarten and elementary school. Thus younger parents with resources used them to facilitate their own opportunities. For those mothers who were bored, lonely, or could not afford to stay at home, the grandmother service was especially helpful and appreciated. Czechs are never fully “independent” when raising a family. It is more useful to seek out their primary source of dependence, the state or the family, and ask how this dependence speaks to ideologies of family behavior.

At a time when local and state governments were closing public child care facilities, the work of “functioning” family members became visible and necessary—not only to young children and parents, but to employees at state offices. As care for children becomes privatized in the postsocialist period, and fewer families can afford private nurseries or nannies, the conditions of a market economy and families grew increasingly at odds. Extended families, functioning grandmothers, and the social feeling associated with ideal behavior among kin stood in contrast to an emerging market for private care of family members as well as the more solitary, “autonomous” mothers on maternity leave. Working mothers and sacrificial grandparents served as a behavioral model, floating in and out of personal and state narratives about how family members should act.

In this chapter we have witnessed the presence of both family and kinship in state settings. The terms of policy toward parents and children influenced what it means to be a family, who should be taking care of whom, how much one is entitled to live on while

providing care, and (in the case of child custody and the gender of care) the binding of mothers to child rearing. In this way, family is a product of the state and an institutional category. Importantly, too, ideals of kinship and relatedness are visible across political eras and the state codified these ideals when its representatives came into contact with needier families after 1989. These representatives preferred that elders and their offspring, rather than the funds they administered, provide for and tend to their own.

Younger parents with familial resources were better able to take advantages of postsocialist opportunities and discourses of self-fulfillment, but fewer and fewer young Czechs actually had children in the mid-to-late 1990s. I now examine the ways in which a "birthrates crisis" mirrors trends we have observed in discussions of child care and care benefits for families: that is, how talk of family and kinship relations signify emergent social difference and social order. In the case of reproductive behavior, those not having children paradoxically emulated new economic ideals.

Chapter 5: The Economy of Birthrates and the Continuity of Crisis

Our socialist society gives families with children considerable help most of all to facilitate their social and economic situation....Also in order to have enough working hands in the future which will contribute to society and in order to have energetic, young generations.

--Dr. Jaroslav Havelka, July 1972
Federal Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs
Secretary, Government Population Commission

Even though there is reason to believe the demographic prognosis that we are diminishing, we can be sure that even in the next century people will want children as intensely as they do today.

--Tomáš Novák and Věra Capponiová, May 1988
University of J. E. Purkyně in Brno
Učitelské noviny

Today the Czech Republic is experiencing swift declines in birthrates. In 1994, 106,579 children were born. These are the lowest rates since 1785, the first year Czech statistics were calculated. In 1995 the number of newborns fell for the first time below 100,000 and in 1996 they fell further, to 90,446. In 1997, for the first time in the nineties, birthrates grew a bit (90,657), but in 1998 they fell to 90,535 and signaled a long-term downturn in growth.

--Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, February 2000
Analysis of Demographic Growth 1990-1998

AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF BIRTHRATES

Throughout this dissertation I have touched on how birthrate trends influenced the development of Czech family policy, particularly during the socialist era. In this chapter

I focus on these discussions from a variety of perspectives: those of demographers, policy makers, the media, and families. While conducting my research I observed that within larger state discourses of population crisis and chronically low birthrates, Czechs articulate understandings of the ideal family form (mother, father, two children) while systematically excluding poorer women who *are* having babies from solutions to demographic "crisis."

In her research on the meaning and mystery of high mortality rates in Brazil, Nancy Scheper-Hughes encourages the study of what she calls "demography without numbers," an interpretive, qualitative approach that asks anthropologists to "point to demography's gaps, to suggest what may be missing, and to indicate what still needs to be construed" (1997:203). In other words, cultural anthropologists should ask the questions that demographers do not ask. For me this leads to an inquiry into the development of class-coded differences emerging from discussions of reproductive behavior in the Czech Republic. I demonstrate that low birthrates often stand for the negative repercussion of shifting economic models and a poverty of means, but that upwardly mobile young Czechs today receive sympathy and understanding for choosing to postpone and perhaps never have children in ways that poorer women with children do not encounter. Supportive kin networks and fewer/no offspring simultaneously represent increasingly class differentiated family behavior. Poorer mothers with young children are in a bind: they emulate "social weakness" (through an absence of kin care) while modeling reproductive patterns preferred among "productive" young Czechs.

I observed also that reproductive statistics from other parts of Europe are ubiquitous to discussions of Czech birthrates, serving particularly during the postsocialist era as a standard by which demographers, sociologists, policy makers and mothers and fathers evaluate reproductive behavior at home. This kind of comparison is not new to those working in historical demography who have long sought to specify and characterize family typologies according to "European patterns" or "eastern European patterns" of childbearing age, family size and marriage rates (see Rychtaříková 1994; Hajnal 1965). According to these categorizations, European (i.e., western European) families are thought to consist of two parents and one or two children; while eastern European families have a greater number of children and, often, three generation households. Today, fitting into western categories takes on particular significance as Czechs seek state membership in institutions such as the European Union. As I demonstrate, demographic developments in western Europe (where, as in the Czech Republic, birthrates are also decreasing) are cast as both threatening (by those who fear the danger of low birthrates to Czech society and the economy) and reassuring (to those for whom western trends serve as an absolute standard and a sign of the Europeanization/re-Europeanization of the Czech Republic).

I offer an ethnographically-based interpretation of quantitative, statistical frameworks which dominate population politics and studies of social reproduction. Throughout the chapter, I draw on theoretical analyses of demographic trends from around the world (to include over-population, pro-natalism, and high infant mortality rates) to think culturally about the social policies that have grown out of pro-natalist

agendas in the Czech Republic and their meaning in everyday life (see Anagnost 1997; Dölling et al. 2000; Greenhalgh 1995a and 1995b; Kligman 1998; Krause 2001; Scheper-Hughes 1992 and 1997). I contribute to a growing body of qualitative scholarship on low birthrates in Europe, where it seems getting married and having kids have fallen out of fashion (see for example "The World Overpopulates While Europe Dies Out," *Lidové noviny* 7-12-00).⁵⁸ This scholarship seeks to rethink the alarmist language of demographic "implosion" (in Europe) and "explosion" (in Asia and Africa;⁵⁹ see Krause 2001, Sen 1997) by offering examples of reproductive decisions from a range of informants in their familial contexts. These examples, as I demonstrate below, enrich our understandings of why Czechs are or are not having children, and how they are differentially evaluated as reasonable, selfish, or irresponsible persons. This chapter is framed historically by socialist era pro-population family policy (roughly 1962-1987) and pro-population policy of the current period of accession to the European Union.⁶⁰

DEMOGRAPHIC AUTHORITY

In a November 2001 interview with *Radio Praha*, Czech family sociologist Ivo Možný remarked that, since 1989, many Czech women have chosen to take advantage of new freedoms rather than establish families. For him this explains the rise in average ages at first childbirth, which climbed during the 1990s from the low twenties to the late twenties and into the mid-to-late thirties. Možný elaborates, "in the early 1990s women who previously would have started having children postponed them. We are now experiencing a dramatic moment in Czech demographic history because those same

women are in their early thirties. We will soon see how many of those postponed children will really be born." He adds, "we are generally shifting towards the western type of the family again" (*Radio Praha* with Daniela Lazarová 11-2-01).

Možný's comments are characteristic of how Czech sociologists, policy makers, and demographers make sense of low birthrates, which they usually constitute as a problem: "the birthrate problem" (*problem porodnosti*) or "the fertility problem" (*problem plodnosti*). Reports of problematic birthrate trends circulate in the media on a regular basis. Just a few newspaper headlines gathered during my lengthiest period of fieldwork offer a sampling of the urgent tone with which birthrates are reported in the Czech Republic: "Low births, aging citizens worry Czechs" and "Family size plunges amid doubts" (*Prague Post* 2-16-00); "The number of children born last year was the lowest" (*Mladá fronta dnes* 3-29-00); "Children continually decrease, city hall therefore closes nursery schools" (*Mladá fronta dnes* 6-15-00); "Czechs have one of the lowest birthrates in the world" (*Lidové noviny* 7-12-00); and "The Least Number of Children Born Since the Austro-Hungarian Empire" (*Dnešní Jablonecko* 3-13-02).

These headlines transmit the influences of literature on demographics concerned with decreasing birthrates in many European countries. The World Population Data Sheet, for example, reports that forty out of forty-two countries with below-replacement level (defined as 2.1 children per woman) are in Europe (cited in McDonald 2001), and that out of those forty countries the Czech Republic ranks almost lowest with 1.1 children born per woman in the year 2000. Australian demographer Peter McDonald notes the contrast between European population drops and heavy population growth in other parts

of the world (2001:3; Gauthier 1996:16-22; Day 1992:1), but admits that “most people and most governments care more about the future viability of their own families and countries” (2001:8). Authors foresee dangers in the inability of young generations to support the old, shrinking labor forces, dwindling economic growth, and a decline in the value of families, children and care for young and old kin. In this demographic literature, low birthrates are often attributed to periods of dramatic social change such as France’s defeat by Prussia in 1870 and 1871 (Gauthier 1996:16), modernization and industrialization in late nineteenth-century Europe, or the Great Depression in both America and Europe in the 1930s (Day 1992:2). As I explore below, in the case of postsocialist East Central Europe, the events of 1989 are credited with dramatic drops in birthrates and are understood by many as a negative trend symptomatic of social upheaval; although, as I will show, through their resemblance to patterns in western Europe, some Czechs see low birthrates rather as a positive development.

The rates of fertility and crude birthrates are lower today than ever before, but they have been of enduring concern to family specialists and experts since the late 1950s (see Figure 5.1). Many of the demographers who compiled the statistics and interpreted them in the postsocialist era were doing similar work during the socialist era, when they recorded a steady rise in birthrates between 1972-76 (what gets referred to with Czech pronunciation as the “*baby-boom*” and its literal translation “*populační třesk*”) but otherwise witnessed downturns throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1980s (Čermáková et al. 2000, Rychtaříková 1994, Wolchik 2000). A broad sample of headlines from the socialist period almost perfectly mirror the examples from the year 2000: “The current

Figure 5.1: Czech Republic 1950-2000, Fertility Rates and Crude Birth RatesFertility rate

The average number of children a hypothetical cohort of women would have at the end of their reproductive period if they were subject during their whole lives to the fertility rates of a given period and if they were not subject to mortality. It is expressed as children per woman.

Period	Total fertility rate
1950-1955	2.69
1955-1960	2.35
1960-1965	2.21
1965-1970	1.94
1970-1975	2.21
1975-1980	2.32
1980-1985	1.99
1985-1990	1.92
1990-1995	1.64
1995-2000	1.18

Crude birth rate

Number of births over a given period divided by the person-years lived by the population over that period. It is expressed as number of births per 1,000 population.

Period	Crude birth rate
1950-1955	19.4
1955-1960	15.8
1960-1965	14.6
1965-1970	14.3
1970-1975	17.3
1975-1980	17.5
1980-1985	13.8
1985-1990	12.9
1990-1995	11.5
1995-2000	8.8

Source of data and definitions: Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, *World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision* and *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2001 Revision*, <http://esa.un.org/unpp>

population situation in the ČSSR: worsening population development evident since 1967 continues to deepen" (*Rudé právo* 3-5-68); "We are smaller and smaller" (*Rudé právo* 5-16-69); "Czechoslovakia tackles the birth rate problem" (*Czechoslovak Situation Report* RFE/EE 1-10-73); "Unfavorable population development in the ČSSR" (*Radio Prague Domestic* RFE/EE 4-6-73); and "Does Czechoslovakia also have a population problem?" (*Tvorba* 4-9-75). These appeared later, in the 1980s: "The number of children in families falls" (*Svobodné slovo* 10-13-87) and "To have, or not have children?" (Novák and Capponiová 1988). Although current birthrate statistics are thought to be underpinned by a combination of opportunity, newfound freedoms and dramatic economic insecurities that arose in the early 1990s (see Možný's comment above), my cursory comparison of media depictions demonstrates that reports of low birthrates have been of enduring concern to demographers and state planners regardless of the ideological and historical moment.

While the tone of birthrate coverage is consistent over time, its content (or reasons provided for why we should care about birthrates in the first place) and policy responses often differ between the socialist and postsocialist periods. I outline the substance of socialist and postsocialist demographic discourses to look more closely at the meanings of Czech birthrate trends and the metaphors depicting them (see Handler 1988:146) and the ways in which reproduction made politics before and after 1989 while also varying historically (Gal 1994; Gal and Kligman 2000). While similarities between the eras make obvious that reproductive politics in the Czech Republic have not dramatically altered since 1989, the varied content of alarmist demographic discourses calls into question the

neutrality of population sciences and what are often taken by economists, politicians and demographers as the self-evident causes and consequences of "lowest-ever fertility levels" (Day 1992:xvi; see Greenhalgh 1995b:875, McDonald 2001). Indeed, the symbols shaping demographic trends during the socialist era were bound to the redistributive, collectivist character of the state, while the language of postsocialist demographic trends recalls increasing orientation toward an emerging market economy, consumerism and self-interest.

SOCIALIST DEMOGRAPHY, AGING HANDS

During the socialist era radio, television, and newspapers served as the means for communicating propaganda and rhetoric. The state controlled, staffed and ran the media. Often in these settings key officials, such as the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs or the Director of the Population Commission, directly authored articles or spoke on behalf of the state to explain the consequences of low birthrates and what the state was doing about them. In press, state and scientific contexts, the demographic reporters refer interchangeably to "society" (*společnost*) and "nation/the people" (*národ*) as those social units endangered by low birthrates.

According to the articles and studies I examined from the late 1960s, a variety of factors contributed to the low birthrates. These include a series of social developments related to women's roles, such as the rise in women enrolled in institutions of higher education (who would otherwise be starting a family), an unwillingness to have children because the mother's salary would be lost while she stayed at home, the insufficient

length of maternity leave, the high abortion rate, and relatively high ages of women at first childbirth (meaning an individual woman gives birth to fewer children than she would had she begun to have children earlier). Economists and demographers understood other causes of low birthrates in Czechoslovakia to be economic, such as the unavailability of apartments and the inability of most to buy an apartment, the expense of establishing a household,⁶¹ and, finally, the high cost of children in general (see Heitlinger 1979; Wolchik 2000). These reports suggest that Czechs would be having at least the "desired norm" of two children if they had the means to do so.

Causal inventories such as this suggest that women's reproductive behavior, roles and responsibilities in the family are inappropriate or inadequate. Writing about discussions of low birthrates in central Italy, anthropologist Elizabeth Krause criticizes the ways in which demographic "crisis" "implicates women, who ultimately are the sex/gender whose reproductive behaviors figure most centrally into demographers' calculations" (Krause 2001:586; White 2002:38, 174). Certainly, the location of Czech women at work, in the home or both has over time been central to models interpreting reproductive behavior and its effect on birthrates. As we observed in Chapter 1, women's positions in the family and society influenced family policies during the socialist era and served as a measure of socialist progress.

The tone of reports on population is scientific, matter-of-fact, and grim. Socialist regimes were labor intensive, as opposed to capital intensive, and low numbers of bodies were worrisome. As told by media sources and state publications alike, low birthrates threaten loss of manpower, specifically because populations age and retire, but younger

generations do not fill emptied places in the work force (see also Heitlinger 1979:177). An aging population breeding no youth and no future generations, it follows, cannot fulfill state production objectives. Population loss undermined what Kligman calls, in the Romanian case, "the productionist orientation of communist regimes" (1998:44). Images of chronic, unproductive elderliness, with no rising caretakers, predominate. Take for example an article from 1968, in which author Milan Kučera⁶² explains that if population trends persist downward as steadily as they have since 1964, Czechoslovakia will eventually grow too old for itself. He suggests that when fewer babies are born the population ages more quickly than it would otherwise (*Rudé právo* 3-5-68). The article continues,

without [necessary] precautions...the population could worsen and the future effect would be older residents, then the breakdown of further economic and social development would take place (because of the discrepancy between the number of workers and pensioners).

Elsewhere, Emilián Hamerník, the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs in the early 1970s, insists, "The population of Czechoslovakia today is among the oldest in Europe" (Hamerník 1971:1). These public spokesmen frequently use the verb *stárnout*, which means "to be getting on in years" and "to age." For example, two Slovak pediatricians explained, "*že národ biologicky stárne*" or, "the nation is biologically aging" as a result of unfavorable population development (Cilingová and Kratochvíl 1971:435). The frail—the least productive and least useful segments of society—will soon outweigh the fit within Czechoslovak society.

In these articles, authors argue that birthrates must rise in order to maintain the socialist system and preserve the population, its values, and its legacy. Spokespersons

often talk about the need for enough "hands" (*ruce*) to carry on work for society at large (see the Havelka quote opening this chapter). Youthful hands work not only toward economic ends, but in the service of social reproduction. Here, Hamerník explains the repercussions of continued low birthrates:

The importance of this [population] problem is critical to our future development and the future outlook of our socialist society....the continual worsening of the population's age structure and decreasing birthrates suggest that, in the next era, population development will not be in harmony with our stated objectives and needs. Said most simply, if population growth does not improve, it will have very serious effects on the future of our nation. In 1990, that is in not quite 20 years, the size of our population will begin to decrease, further worsening the national age structure, which will have a negative influence on economic and cultural development. (Hamerník 1971:1)

Hamerník then moves from the social repercussions of low birthrates to address the economic implications of disparities between the many old and the few young. These include wage imbalances, a decreased work force and lower employment, the weakening of certain fields and specializations, and an inability to predict and rely upon future development and growth so critical to a planned economy. In my interviews and in state and media coverage from both eras, population patterns get referred to as "waves" (*vlny*), as if the numbers of new socialist citizens were hazardous because unpredictable.

Hamerník and his colleagues drew comparisons between the Czech Republic and the rest of Europe (including non-socialist Europe). For example, low birthrate trends were linked to "demographic transitions," sometimes called the "demographic revolution," which took place throughout Europe in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. At this time, families started having fewer children and transitioned from a "traditional" to a "modern" family structure, which in Czechoslovakia meant two

or three children per family rather than four or more (Rychtaříková 1994:144; Kuchařová and Tuček 1999:10; *Tvorba* 4-9-75; Možný and Rabušic 1999:105; see Kligman 1998:42-70). Here Czechoslovak modernity rests on family size. This is not to say, however, that demographers imagined the Czechoslovak state to be part of larger European networks and population flows. On the contrary, most socialist states experienced low population growth. Their representatives were concerned largely because of isolation from both western Europe and one another. They were explicitly outside of the capitalist West, where, as one Czechoslovak demographer wrote, hunger and poverty exist, "not because of a food shortage, but as a result of an unjust social arrangement in which those without work and a salary cannot buy in sufficient quality or quantity" (*Tvorba* 4-9-75). Within Czechoslovak demographic discussions, this demographer singled out the irony that in some wealthy capitalist countries otherwise healthy-sized populations that could have been fed were not. The socialist bloc, it followed, cared more about nurturing and providing for its families and children, even if those families and children were growing smaller in number.

Low population growth contributed to an already well-documented, post World War II labor shortage. There was the possibility, however, of importing labor from fellow socialist states and all socialist states experienced labor immigration. In order to reach manufacturing goals, socialist Czechoslovakia brought in laborers from Poland, Yugoslavia, Cuba, Mongolia, North Korea and Vietnam (Heitlinger 1979; Czechoslovak Situation Report 2-15-88).⁶³ It is essential to note that reports never consider that these foreign populations could have solved the Czechoslovak population "problem." The

Romani population, for example, was excluded from census reports until 1962, and is under-reported in current censuses. Moreover, birthrates and marriage rates were consistently higher in Slovakia (Rychtaříková 1994:143). Population reports designated “Czechs” (*Češi*, that is non-Romani citizens) as the unmarked demographic category and the desired reproducers.

The examples I provide here demonstrate the ways in which just a few prominent demographers, reporters and state representatives identified low birthrates and aging hands in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s as problems to be dealt with in socialist Czechoslovakia. The state cared deeply about increasing the population and established a Population Commission in 1962, under the umbrella of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. As I explained in Chapter 1, the state also answered low birthrates with provisions for a broad range of pro-natalist measures, many of which increased monthly household “incomes” (*příjmy*).

Rising birthrates in the early-to-mid 1970s suggested to some that increases in financial incentives had an effect on reproductive behavior. Between 1970 and 1975, rates rose from roughly 1.9 children per woman to 2.5 (Rychtaříková 1994:140). Following this “baby boom,” which often is referred to as the second Czech “demographic transition,” national committees built thousands of *jesle* and *školky*. To address the economic vulnerabilities of young families who (according to demographers) would be having children if they could afford them and find room for them, the state introduced—and then steadily increased—child benefits based on the number of children per family, low-interest loans for newlyweds, and increased the production of housing

developments. Again, these policies were fundamental to socialist models of family-state relations.

Although Czechoslovakia never instituted the kinds of draconian measures seen in Ceaucescu's Romania (where abortions were outlawed and pregnancies mandatory; Kligman 1998), the literature identifies abortion as contributing to the population "problem" and the Ministry established medical commissions to review and approve abortion requests. But, as we have seen, my informants took the availability of abortion for granted. For example, Veronika Vodrážková explained to me that when she became pregnant with Josef in 1974, she knew one of her options was to have an abortion. "I could have gone for an abortion and not had the child, but I didn't consider it at all," she said. But many women had abortions as a means of fertility control. On January 1, 1987, the abortion commissions were disbanded due to what Wolchik describes as "widespread opposition...and their ineffectiveness in reducing the rates of abortion" (2000:67), and women were no longer required to provide a reason for terminating pregnancies (Rychtaříková 1994:141).

Not only did the state want desperately for families to have children, it preferred that they have three to maintain steady population levels—one or two were not enough. For example, one study argued, "a third child in a family is a reproductive contribution. The prevailing model of the one or two-child family has negative reproductive effects" (Cilingová and Kratochvíl 1971:435). A literature on family psychology blossomed in the 1970s and 1980s. This literature insisted that low birthrates might suggest that the Czech and Slovak people did not want to have children, but that this was far from the

truth. We love children, we want children, we are fulfilled by children, the scientists celebrated (I observed overwhelming affection toward children throughout my research—cooing, hugging, loving, praising). A profound child-centeredness particularly among women contrasted discourses of population loss and childlessness. One study in 1988 conducted a survey “proving” that for both women and men

the decision to have more children is connected to personal stability. Those who long for children show fewer neurotic symptoms than those who do not want children. They are better integrated into society. There is a clear link between dissatisfaction with life and the decision not to have children. (Novák and Capponiová 1988:11)

Later in this chapter I will examine the complications of state demands for “more” children; in fact, today, those who are having two, three, four or more are often not preferred parents.

Although dedicated to encouraging families to have three or more children, socialist demographers eventually concluded that most were not actually meeting the three-child goal. By tracking benefits distributions (which revealed what kinds of families were drawing on support), they observed that those having children were having even fewer. One report provided the results of one of these surveys in 1987:

The number of recipients [of benefits for children] fell by 4,120 [children] this year. According to the survey which is regularly carried out, the number of families with one child grew while families with three children fell. Based on these results it is obvious that there is a departure from the pre-war model of the family with two children toward the family with only one. (*Svobodné slovo* 10-13-87)

Although many credit elaborate birthing incentives with rising birthrates in the mid-1970s (Bartošová 1978; Kučera et al. 1978), pro-natalist awards were eventually not

thought to have real effects on population growth (Wolchik 2000:66; *Czechoslovak Situation Report* 2-15-88).

By the late 1980s, policy-makers shifted their focus from building a larger population, with an emphasis on quantity, to building a population of "quality" (*Czechoslovak Situation Report* 2-15-88; see Anagnost 1997), targeting in particular high abortion rates and high divorce rates. Couples were getting married younger; "we had the youngest mothers in Europe," Možný told the Radio Praha journalist in November 2001 (see also Možný and Rabušic 1999:98, 101). Mrs. Boudová, who has two daughters, explained how strange she felt having children at thirty: "In that period (1972) I was the oldest mother in the birthing ward because all the others were twenty, twenty-two, twenty-three and so on." Eventually less rhetorical emphasis was placed on the effects of monetary and in-kind benefits on family size (Wolchik 2000), and more resources went into pre-marital and marital counseling.

Still, throughout the socialist period families received more state awards if they had more children, women who had more than one child could retire earlier, and families with more children were eligible for larger apartments. Population policy in its various permutations stood firm as a fundamental aspect of redistributive family policies: "It is necessary to understand that population policy is a part of a unified state policy based on Marxist-Leninist principles, on concrete conditions, and according to concrete possibilities," wrote Milada Bartošová for the Czechoslovak Research Institute at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (1978:5). The need to maintain the collectivist orientation of socialist Czechoslovakia, as in most of the Soviet bloc, constituted the size

and strength of the population as critical to national and state survival. As I explain in preceding chapters, in everyday life families themselves also reinforced the centrality of family and kin structures.

Although Czechs came to expect family benefits, and took them for granted as a natural entitlement in calculating household budgets, in the family histories I collected they were not motivated or inspired by the financial benefits to have children although eligibility to receive housing did play a part. The narratives I collected confirm some policymaker's suspicions that the pro-natalist family awards did not have causal effects on reproductive behavior (although, as we saw in Chapter 3, those critical of Roma believe that above-average numbers of children in Romani families can be accounted for by misguided and suspect financial incentive). In many family histories, a couple only married upon learning (usually to their surprise) that the woman was pregnant. Alternately, they deliberately waited to marry until she "found herself in another state" (*přišla do jiného stavu*). There was less introspection about having children in stories of the socialist era, contrasting to a greater awareness and sense of planning among many young Czechs today. Indeed, many explained to me that they had children and got married "because there was nothing else to do" or because he or she wanted to get their own flat from the state, or because that was "what every one else was doing." In contrast to the rationale of demographers, family members went about everyday life with little concern for family policy reform, little interest in whether the population as a whole was reproducing itself, and little fear of the consequences of demographic "crisis."

Drawing on the results of their quantitative reports, demographers believed that low birthrates were caused by social and economic variables, which if improved would result in a healthier, younger and more populous *národ*. The population was aging and weakening, and the state attempted to remedy continued threats to the socialist economy and society with a series of family-focused policies. When Czechs and Slovaks began having more babies in the 1970s, society began to *mládnout* or “to get younger” and “to look younger” (*Tvorba* 12-22-83). Again, mothers grew younger too, “the youngest in Europe.” As I argued in my treatment of social/family “pathologies” in Chapter 1, state representatives then grew concerned with the immaturity of young parents. In the late 1970s, however, population rates returned eventually to pre-boom norms and the cycle of concern, population panic and efforts to solve the problem continued—as well as the “immaturity” and “passivity” of parents, who were comparatively young when they had their first child. If the ages at which Czech mothers bear their first child were to remain at 1970s and 1980s standards (the late teens and low twenties), baby-boomers would now be raising their own children. But, just as they came of average childbearing age in 1989 and the early 1990s, the world changed. As Možný explains above, many of these men and women did not have children. And the rates continued to fall.

SINGLES AND THE TREE OF LIFE

Judge Brabcová was a professor of family law at Charles University's Law Faculty. I went to see her in November 2000 to learn more about post-89 revisions to the

Code on the Family. Our conversation kept returning to Judge Brabcová's own family and only tangentially addressed Czech family law (which I discuss in Chapter 1). She looked to be in her seventies and had worked in Czech courts her entire professional life. The role of families in Czech society was to her (as it was to many of the family experts I spoke with) also personal. "Look," Judge Brabcová said to me,

how many children are born? Look at how the rates are falling—the people, the children. It's because no one says to people that the state is interested in families prospering, in families having at least two children. It's just the opposite. Most of the current ideologues say—and I'm really not a communist and I was not one—it's up to each individual, the state cannot worry about it. And people must solve their own problems. Those [leaders] don't say, 'We are interested, we will help you.'

Demographers during the socialist era overwhelmingly identified low birthrates as a "problem," one that needed ongoing attention by the state's related ministries and officials. Czechs sometimes interpreted previous state interest in birthrates as a dedication to families and households that has since vanished; the state's relationship with families, then, was gauged by its attention to birthrates and continued redistribution of state funds to families with children. Though largely discredited in the late 1970s, when birthrates turned downward after a brief period of population "renewal," some correlated benefits for children with pro-population motives and state appreciation for families. As Judge Brabcová suggested, the size of the population was no longer as elaborately bound to the survival of the state and socialism. She interpreted shifts in population discourse as an indication that politicians and, by extension, the state did not care as much about Czech families because individual responsibilities were becoming

more deeply embedded in policies toward families. Moreover, as many explained to me, population loss was just one item on a long list of social ailments.

Despite its critics, the state remained engaged in "correcting" demographic patterns. I observed during interviews at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, in press coverage of government-sponsored research and in conversation with state employees within a range of family services offices, that the postsocialist government was also concerned with low birthrates, but representations of the "problem" varied. Unlike the socialist era, some Czechs associated both socioeconomic costs and geopolitical benefits with "all-time lows." Population patterns put the Czech Republic—to borrow a phrase from Ann Anagnost—"in its place in the global community" (1997:133). Whether they interpret low birthrates as a curse or a blessing, demographers and economists consistently associated low birthrates with similar trends in western Europe, where birthrates and marriage rates were also falling (Ireland was always an exception). For example, influential sociologists of the family Ivo Možný and Ladislav Rabušic wrote in 1999, "It is certain that Czech society, as far as the formation of families, births, and deaths are concerned is becoming more similar to European standards" (94), and

The opening of the borders to Western Europe has brought with it also the acceptance of their cultural models....this means a return to the West European family model, from which Czech society had been separated for half a century. (101)

Population statistics positioned the Czech Republic in the center of Europe and unquestionably as a member of the European community. Unlike Anagnost's Chinese case, where she explains population discourse devalues bodies "in their sheer

numerousness" (1997:133), the Czech population "problem" attended global solutions, such as looking and behaving like families and individuals in the West—of which many Czechs such as Možný and Rabušic considered themselves to have always been a part (1999:133; see Hajnal 1965).

The more ambivalent spirit of postsocialist demographic discussions thus offers a lens through which to witness social tensions over family values in today's Czech Republic, which was underscored in particular by the re-positioning of the Czech Republic within Europe. For those who feared that low birthrates signaled a lack of interest in Czech families on the part of the state (such as Judge Brabcová), those low rates might keep the Czech Republic out of the European Union on the one hand, or symbolized rampant self-interest and pressures to consume (as opposed to raising a family) on the other. For those who responded to low rates with less alarm and a "let's wait it out" attitude (such as Možný and Rabušic), low birthrates represented an ongoing process of changing values and preferences, postsocialist modernization and democratization.

In the following section I examine how Czechs interpret this ambivalence: as tropes of the costs and benefits that low birthrates represented (and were represented by) in the postsocialist period. The organization of the following section into costs and benefits provides a variation on the theme of "winners" and "losers" so common in the "transitology" literature on East Central Europe (Verdery 1996). As I demonstrate in the Czech case, demographic discourse was a lens through which to make visible the

differential effects of state transformation and the ways in which birthrates are interpreted as signs of both negative and positive social change.

Costs: The Economy of Birthrates

Citing the Director of Demographic Studies at the Faculty of Natural Sciences, sociologists Věra Kuchařová and Milan Tuček describe the socioeconomic variables understood to be discouraging young Czechs in the postsocialist period from having children as "inflation, unemployment, drops in real wages and drops in the value of family benefits, problems on the housing market, and feelings of uncertainty (*nejistota*) caused by pessimism about future development" (Kuchařová and Tuček 1999:6). Analysts often blamed housing and uncertainty about the future for low rates during the socialist era (Freiová 1999), but unemployment and inflation were altogether new (official) phenomena because prior to 1989 unemployment was illegal and the state regulated the cost of food, goods and rent.

Despite the introduction of new causal explanations for the low birthrate trends, such as unemployment, analysts continued to be concerned that the population would vanish because of steady declines over time. Apocalyptic predictions emerging from discussions of birthrates provided a continuity with the socialist era. The imbalance of the population (many old, few young) remained characteristic of demographic forecasts as well. The baby boomers of the 1970s were one of the largest Czech generations, but they were not reproducing enough, it was claimed, and some economists expected population "waves" to cause future instability.

One article from the newspaper *Lidové noviny* drew on metaphors of the “tree of life” (*strom života*) to translate the economic repercussions of irregular population growth into a popular awareness (7-12-00; see also Možný and Rabušic’s academic—though less panicked—use of the tree of life metaphor 1999:112). Currently the tree is a healthy one: its green leafy top represented the retired population of pensioners, who were supported by the labor of their young, working trunk, i.e., the baby-boomer generation.⁶⁴ Today the tree has a “relatively strong foundation and many young people of productive age” to bear older generations. Yet within the next thirty years, some demographers argued, the trunk will age and transform into a more elderly and abundant crown but have little support from its dwindling younger stalk, resulting in one of the narrowest support bases (the population of working age) in all of Europe.

It is important to recognize that, as during the socialist era, recent demographic analysis turns toward the future. Population statistics for the year 1999 were released in February of 2000: the population totaled approximately 10,278,000, or 11,000 fewer than in 1998 (also a year of record lows in Czech demographic history). The real effects of this low growth, demographers explained, would be apparent within thirty to fifty years. The release of figures from 1999 triggered a rash of concerned coverage of birthrates through late 2000, especially those anticipating what the Czech Republic will look like around the year 2030. Reports explained that births were at “their lowest ever” and that the number of dying exceeded those born. For example, 20,000 more people died in the Czech Republic than were born in 1999. Here dead bodies outpace the creation of young ones and the tree of life gets pruned from both ends. The dead would

ideally be replaced by newborns, but both demographic categories (the deceased and the unborn) contribute equally to future economic strain.

In a public hearing in the Czech Senate in June 2001, seasoned demographer Milan Kučera spoke in a language of accumulated debt (rather than environmental/naturalist references to the tree of life)—as if those Czechs not reproducing today were taking out loans that could never be paid off. His arguments recall kinship studies attentive to the correspondence between economic, familial and state models (Collier et al. 1992; see McKinnon 2001). Given rising costs of living, Czechs may lighten personal economic burdens by not having children, he warned, but society will pay in the future:

Deformation of the age structure is such that within twenty to thirty years the Czech population will not be able to regenerate itself. The number of potential [future] parents will be so low that it will be impossible to raise birthrates, to raise the number of children born. The demographic debt (*zadlužení*) of long-term losses of children will be insurmountable. (*Veřejné slyšení* 2001:23)

The reference to bad demographic credit and irresponsible social “spending” reappears in Kučera’s public testimony when he argues that young people today feel more pressure to consume than become selfless, parental persons: “Look at leasing terms, at loan offers, at the choice of goods in catalogues—young people can have all of this immediately. Can we protect ourselves from this?” (*Veřejné slyšení* 2001:24).

As a corrective, Kučera concludes, the state should compensate for economic strain and the pressure to spend accompanying capitalism by rewarding families who have children. State awards would, he insists, counteract negative effects of new, unfamiliar and threatening consumerism. Kučera sees positive value in the state’s

paternalistic role; as during the socialist era, financial redistribution can defend family life and foster social reproduction in the face of western influences and negative examples. Birthing might work like the economy, the economy might influence birthrates, but the state should step in when families are affected and remedy influences of the market on families (see Dölling et al. 2000).

Many of my informants used an economistic language when explaining that the economy both suffers from recent birthrates and contributes to, and causes, low population growth. Often the links they drew between the economy and family life, however, were more literal than embellished. When I asked family members (many of whom have children) why other Czechs were not having babies I often received pat answers like "there are no apartments" or "it's too expensive." "Children are a luxury," (*děti jsou luxus*) some said. Czechs framed low birthrates in terms of the consequence of general economic insecurity, uncertainty and deprivation. They were perceived as the negative end of, and tax on, transition to a market economy despite the fact that the Czechoslovak statistical office recorded birthrates as progressively lower during most of the socialist era.

As during the socialist era, those who argue birthrates are dangerously low today suggest that Czechs would have children if they could afford to. They characterized the economy as prohibiting marriage and family development while Czech society aged and died off. This point was made clear to me during a conversation with Veronika Vodrážková who saw no reason for young Czechs with apartments and jobs *not* to have children, "when they say they don't have enough resources....when I think of the

conditions under which we had a family and they now have two paychecks—big ones—and still manage to say that they are not able to have children, I don't think that it's justification." Veronika underscored expectations of Czechs to have children at some point in their lives. She drew on her struggle in the mid-1970s while studying at Charles University, with two children and no apartment, as evidence that even those with few resources, let alone those with a home and income, should be able to begin a family. Economic explanations thus operated in two directions: (1) if couples were suffering, in need, or—in Kučera's terms—pressured to consume new goods and products, it was understandable that they were not having children, but (2) if couples were financially able, it followed, there was no reason not to start a family.

In both instances (economic instability and stability), many family activists believed the state should play a greater role in insisting on the value of families. The failure was found in the transformation process and the experience of transition to a market economy, during which families became further estranged from economic and political priorities (see Figure 1.11). In interpretations most critical of state policy, Czechs claimed the state had abandoned families out of fear of failure globally, and, it was often suggested, in the service of developing capitalism locally. Indeed, as we have already seen, "family" and the positive values linked to the family opposed finance and the market when the economy (and greed for high living standards associated with the free market, as Veronika's comment also suggests) was blamed for low birthrates. Many of these activists, as we saw in Judge Brabcová's comments, wanted the state to show its support for families in no uncertain terms.

As I demonstrate above and in Chapter 1, pro-natalist policies were part of a broad-based socialist agenda. Family policy positioned "the family" as essential to economic and political goals. Today many family spokespersons criticized the absence of an affirmative family policy familiar to the socialist period for the falling birthrate. Iva Hodrová, whom we met in Chapter 1 (she was the chairwoman of a leading women's organization and a former socialist family policy-maker at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs), explained to me that the state had let families down. She insisted that if it really cared about birthrates and families the state would reintroduce meaningful and effective measures to encourage Czechs to have children. Her beliefs about the responsibility of the state to families echoed Brabcová's above:

In the [nineteen] nineties the number of children [born] dropped greatly. In the period of socialism it was shown how the implementation of some kind of help was a way to keep the drop from being so strong....but thanks to the demolition [of subsidies in the early 1990s] the number is awfully low....in my opinion the state should be more involved in the living conditions of families. It should create a family policy and should give some kind of help to families.

I attended a number of family conferences where participants spoke similarly and in favor of an explicit program to improve family life. These conferences and related activities often gathered together persons of otherwise opposing ideological belief systems. For example, religious-based and neo-traditional groups (such as the Family Revival Movement—which is affiliated with the local YMCA chapter—as well as the Catholic Women's Organization, and the Family Values Committee at the Civic Institute) assembled with Hodrová's organization, left-leaning family experts such as Judge Brabcová, state and non-state gender-equality committees, and staff from the Ministry of

Labor and Social Affairs. Family experts from a range of backgrounds often interpreted low birthrates and reconfigured state support for families in the same way—as the dwindling social value of families.

There were important differences, however, between these two groups. The first cluster—those identified with the Catholic Church and the Civic Institute (a conservative non-governmental group which described itself as aspiring “to be the source of inspiration to all those interested in the roots of a free and ordered society”)—concentrated on how to promote, among other things, the rights of larger families, the authority of fathers in families, and the authority of the Church, while criticizing the confusion of family policy with social and population policies. They noted that state interest in families needs to involve more than social support for the neediest cases. The author of the pamphlet, “Reflections on Family Policy,” for example, wrote, “The contribution of functional families to universal social good always surpasses the amount of what society is capable of offering the family” (Freiová 1999:39). Families, then, were not a social problem, but a social solution. David Vrba of the Family Revival Movement (and a close colleague of the author of the “Family Policy” pamphlet) was more libertarian in his approach to the role of the state in family lives than left-leaning family activists. He wanted to keep the state out of private domains such as the home, yet demanded that its representatives declare officially that families in those homes matter, that people should be getting married and having kids:

there should be programs for families, grant systems in order for families to spend time together. [There should be funding] for activities similar to cultural programs....to show positive examples, positive examples through

films about beautiful long-term marriages. And the examples must be such that the law also says that personal responsibility is irreplaceable.

The objects of conservative critiques of institutional intervention in family life do not stop with the Czech government but extend to the European Union and the United Nations, both of which, Vrba explained to me, promote anti-family policies in the Czech Republic. Though many member states of the European Union do have family policies, the EU itself does not. Yet the terms of EU accession invariably affect the ways in which families live their lives, such as the requirement that all EU children sit in baby seats when in cars. Vrba responded sharply to my confused protests that seat belts and baby seats are safer, "But I am the father and I take care of my children. And I don't need for the state to take such interest in their security."

In contrast, family spokespersons involved with the state directly, such as administering social provisions and policy making, favor the involvement, rather than the retreat, of local, state and international institutions. They worked to keep public facilities for children open (like *jesle*) and to continue offering universal family awards. For example, "redistributive" (*plošné*) strategies were usually popular among the older socialist guard, which continued to advise the Social Democrats who came to power in 1997. Like Kučera, Dagmar Podskalská was a leading architect of socialist family policy and works on an informal basis with the current Minister of Labor and Social Affairs. Over tea she criticized how, in the early 1990s, the state reduced and/or cancelled redistributive measures instituted in the 1960s and 1970s (providing mothers with childcare facilities and financial support, allowing them to work more easily and encouraging marriage with low-interest loans and newlywed bonuses). But, she laughed,

those same measures were being called for during accession procedures to the EU, where many member states offer extensive family awards and (like the Czech Republic) face falling birthrates. Being a part of Europe, then, meant not only having smaller families, low birthrates, low marriage rates and high rates of unwed cohabitation, but also represented the social provisions and institutions characteristic of European welfare states, whose policies treat families as a public concern (Sipos 1994:226) and are not averse to redistributive measures (Bock and Thane 1991; Hantrais 1995; Gauthier 1996). The specter of European membership was drawn on in different ways in Czech interpretations of demographic patterns. In his recent public testimony, for example, Kučera commented that low birthrates and an aging population might pose an obstacle to EU membership. "It is necessary to consider," he cautioned, "that no one has foreseen the adverse effects of unfavorable numbers of older persons on Czech entrance to the European Union" (2001). To him, the burden of an aging population might make Czechs less desirable Europeans (though, it is important to recognize here, aging is also an issue of significant concern among western European demographers and social planners; Day 1992).

Despite widespread criticism of the state such as those emerging from a range of family organizations, many in the government did not take below-replacement-level birthrates lightly and often contributed to the reinforcement, reproduction, and circulation of alarmist language used by demographers and in the Czech and wider European press. Unlike the period during the early 1990s, when many family subsidies and bonuses were trimmed and cut, the government frequently proposed redistributive policies familiar to

the pre-1989 era. The government of Social Democrats, for example, attempted to pass birth-incentive legislation in 2001. One piece would put 50,000 crowns into an interest-bearing bank account for each newborn as well as raise parental-leave benefits by almost 30 percent (*Lidové noviny* 9-1-01);⁶⁵ another would offer subsidized housing loans to young families (*Radio Praha* 10-25-01). There was also ongoing talk in Parliament of reintroducing across-the-board benefits for families with children (*Právo* 10-25-01; *Lidové noviny* 7-28-00).⁶⁶ Defending his proposals for the reintroduction of such benefits (against his critics who insist benefits should not go to the wealthy) the leader of the Social Democrats, Vladimír Špidla (now Prime Minister), asked poignantly, "what family with children is wealthy?" (cited in *Právo* 10-25-01).

To summarize, current low birthrates were attributed to political events of the late 1980s, new economic challenges (like inflation, unemployment, and insecurity about the future) and changing morals (declines in the value of having children and getting married), but demographic "crisis" remained continuous. Since the socialist era, state alarm over unsteady growth of the Czech population stayed constant regardless of fluctuating numbers and in spite of shifting frameworks for interpreting reproductive behavior. Among many demographers and members of the family lobby, the costs of low birthrates were high: the economy will undergo a dwindling labor pool, and society will suffer from the loss of Czech families.

The tree of life symbolized the forces necessary for healthy population development: deeply grounded roots and the billowing strength of generation following generation. Those who referred to the tree as potentially destabilized and ill also used the

anxious, concerned tones of socialist demographers of ten, twenty and thirty years ago in the Czech Republic. Another more economistic metaphor, that of debt and repayment, interrogated the demographic costs of membership in the market economy. I found in my research that socialist-era demographers more frequently used a collectivizing symbol in their calls for higher birthrates: then, hands were needed to multiply and fortify socialist society bit by bit. Perhaps a logic specific to time and place codes the use of these metaphors—the tree and demographic debt recalled market forces. In contrast, hands called to mind the combined labor necessary to build a self-sustaining, egalitarian and redistributive economy. Czechs used all three symbols, however, to evoke and make tangible the dangers of low population growth. As with models of the family in state texts, definitions of modernity serve to distinguish economic visions, be they socialist or capitalist.

I will now turn to the other face of demographic discussions in the Czech Republic, one that focused on the positive meaning of low birthrates and the symbolic and ideological capital they offered, rather than more dominant images of quantitative loss and social impotence. Unlike dominant socialist-era and contemporary alarmist discussions, the following suggests that the state, society and individuals had much to gain from low birthrates.

Benefits: Reasoning Low Birthrates

The Velryba Café in Prague's New Town is full before the end of the working day. The basement space is filled by thirty-somethings speaking in low voices and smoking. It seems that no one needs to hurry anywhere. "I like to get together with my girlfriends, to chat, to talk about what's new. I want to make use of each free day," insists Iva, a young woman in her twenties. She is the kind you see hundreds of walking on the street. "Why not enjoy a coffee or wine at a café after work? Neither a husband or child wait for me at home, so let's play."

--"They Want to Have Fun: Why Women are Starting Families in Their Thirties"

Marcela Tomčíková

Respekt, March 6-12, 2000

As Ivo Možný suggested during the November radio interview I cite above, and other family experts and informants explained to me during my fieldwork, putting off having children in the postsocialist Czech Republic was a perfectly reasonable (*rozumná*) thing to do given opportunities to work, travel, study and simply be free and single. During my research Czechs often repeated the phrase "work, travel, study" when explaining demographic reports and to downplay the pessimism so common to discussions of "the birthrate problem." Even those who one moment fretted over the economic strain that low birthrates are popularly understood to contribute to, would the next moment perk up and say, "of course, young people are taking advantage of the opportunity to work, travel and study."

Yet opportunities to “work, travel, and study” came only to particular social persons in the Czech Republic (many of whom, like Iva in the above quote, live in larger cities, especially Prague). These workers, travelers and students were those who contributed to building a vibrant economy. Thanks to their upward mobility, work ethic and self-interest, they were the most desired reproducers. Yet, because of the time spent working, traveling and studying, these potential Czech parents were not yet choosing to have children.

It is important to stress that no one involved in demographic discussions with whom I came into contact considered the possibility of demanding or requiring Czechs to reproduce in greater numbers (although veteran demographers like Kučera believed that the state should at least be pushier about its investment in and need for families). But I would like to emphasize as well that, within discussions of drops in births, expert voices shaped understandings of when and in which cases Czechs should bear children as well as the impression that those working, traveling and studying—though not currently having children—are behaving “reasonably.” “Reasonable behavior,” it seemed, went hand in hand with, and facilitated, a successful transformation experience despite the falling birthrates. For example, demographers and writers of state policy argued that social engineering characteristic of the socialist era was “un-European” and undemocratic. At a public hearing in June 2001, for example, Rabušic cautioned that aggressive population policies were out of the question:

Theoretically we could raise fertility if we forced Czechs to give birth to a greater number of children, even if they don't want to. Yes, it is crude, but European culture knows of examples, such as the case of Romania, when several societies stopped at nothing. Nevertheless, that method is

unthinkable in a democratic society, unacceptable, and we will not raise it as a possibility. (*Veřejné slyšení* 2001:13)

In addition to rejection of crude pro-natalism, many demographers, consultants and policymakers working for the state were reluctant to replicate or mirror socialist era policy formulations (specifically, rewarding or encouraging Czechs to have children through universal benefits). They insisted to me that calls by Social Democrats to increase birth allowances and re-universalize benefits were deliberately political proposals and were motivated solely by an interest in winning votes from those nostalgic for communism.

Rather than coerce Czechs to have children, state planners draw on a language of individual opportunity and self-interest, suggesting that the decision to have children is and should be self-regulated. In these formulations, the state's responsibility is to create the economic conditions within which Czechs may have families if they so choose. Take, for example, remarks from an interview I conducted with Novák, a policy advisor at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, in November 2000. We first met Novák in Chapter 3, where I quote him discussing the ways in which overly-generous family benefits fostered dependency on the state. Like Rabušic, Novák touched on the inconceivability of interventionist population policy in the post-1989 era:

We don't have a family policy....nor do we have a population policy. It would probably be useful to open the discussion, but the experts are overwhelmingly against engaging in the ideaWe don't want to give people money to have children, nor do we want to give people money for having children. *Basically, people should be left to make money so that they can have as many children as they like* [pause] *so that nothing prevents this.* (emphasis added)

Those in positions like Rabušic and Novák's underscored the growth of, and increasing value in, individual profit and initiative. The state's key task, then, was to foster positive economic conditions, which were the solution to low birthrates. As Novák further explained, "A prosperous economy would raise salaries and influence the birthrates; we don't want to say, 'if you have a child we will give you 10,000 crowns or 20,000.' No, dear God, no." Redistributive language, whereby all children have a right to state resources, was in these cases countered by a language of personal choice and individual decision-making, made possible through the development of a market economy and carefully deliberated reproductive behavior in the household. While, as I note at length above, the relationship between the economy and birthrates was frequently drawn on in interpretations of low birthrates, in Novák's version only certain Czechs are going to be able to make the most of possible economic opportunity and promise. And, it follows, if one is not able financially to be having children, one should not be having children. It is also useful to point out that for demographers adamantly opposed to an explicit pro-population policy, current drops in abortion rates and increased use of contraception demonstrated the spread of reason, individual interest and choice in reproductive behavior (*Veřejné slyšení* 2001).

I observed along these lines that young Czechs with a certain amount of mobility and education who were rethinking traditional family patterns often receive sympathy—this despite plunging birthrates—given how dramatically the world they faced differed from their parents' world of the socialist 1970s and 80s; when, as one informant like many told me, "there was nothing to do but have the classic family: two kids, a weekend

cottage, and a dog" (see Chapter 2). Young Czechs and their parents believed that the expense of having this "classic" family interfered with new possibilities for advancement and achievement. Moreover—as alarmist readings blaming the economy for low birthrates tell us—families with children were often portrayed as the "weakest" household type.

Many of the family members I interviewed agreed that younger generations should not be having children until they have achieved their personal goals. Financial concerns were attendant to these goals of young Czechs, and "working, traveling and studying" served in many cases as a method of increasing standards of living as well as a slogan for the kinds of achievements that Czechs past child-bearing age, who raised their children during the socialist era, often felt they were denied. Many of my informants in this age group were the most understanding (and even encouraging) of decisions by younger family members to put children off until later in life.

Often, as Krause reminds us (2001), women are the first to be implicated in reproductive decision-making. For women, having children in both eras presented a dramatic change in lifestyle because men and women alike often assumed that women will stay at home with children on lengthy parental work leaves (three or four years). Many with two children planned back-to-back leaves, sometimes totaling eight years out of the workplace. Reflecting on her unhappy marriage and her own dissatisfaction, Mrs. Boudová said that the decision to conceive, marry, and leave work (usually in that order) should be taken seriously. In hindsight, she believed that she should have waited until she was older to have her first child and that her daughters, both in their mid-to-late

twenties, should now wait. Here she refers to her second daughter, Marcela, a friend of mine from the Gender Studies Centre who introduced me to her mother:

If I had been reasonable, I would have postponed my first child and not had her at 26. If I had had my first child at 33 [when she had Marcela] it would have been more reasonable....I hope that Marcela doesn't intend to have children for the time being, and I am bringing her up to feel that she can wait until after she turns 30. People should first realize their needs and secure their own contentment.

For Mrs. Boudová, personal goals included independence and self-reliance, as well as independence from the state. Self-realization and the careful timing of childbearing were part of her belief that Czechs should not lean on various forms of official support, that they should be responsible for themselves: "too many people don't think independently, they don't try to solve their own problems," she told me. Policymaker Novák would agree.

Still, Mrs. Boudová felt that younger generations were slowly changing, and that public alarm over birthrates ignored the kinds of practical decisions younger generations were facing at home and in the workplace. She dismissed demographers' fears that Czechs were not having enough children:

the demographers yell that low numbers of children are born, but Marcela's generation realizes that life is more than children, more than sitting at home and staying with the kids. And increasing numbers of people realize that they must earn what they have. They can't expect free goods and a flat and those kinds of things....it's more complicated today [than during the socialist era] and to rely on the means of the state is irresponsible.

As the state privatizes so too must Czechs in their everyday lives, although this has proven difficult for women in the workplace. The socialist state made mandatory the preservation of women's jobs during maternity leave (now "parental" leave), as the

postsocialist state does today. Yet currently—when opportunities to advance are both highly desired and competitive—many Czechs worry about blatant discrimination in hiring practices, and many women told me that during job interviews they were asked their ages and whether or not they planned to have children (see also Čermáková et al. 2000:21-30). Young women realized that newly “democratic” anti-discriminatory laws were not being enforced. Thus a need to support oneself in the face of shrinking state support, concern over discriminatory hiring practices, and growing discourses of self-fulfillment and individual achievement combined to make prolonged childlessness seem the most logical and sensible choice.

In addition to the practicalities of job stability and employment, there was a pervasive sentiment among many of the family members I spoke with that their young kin should see the world. Although her two sons are still in their teens, Maruška Procházková (Jana and Zbyněk’s daughter and grandsons; see Chapter 2) made planning for their travel and study abroad a top priority. Being at home in the Czech Republic to start a family was of little concern and did not enter our discussion of her family plans and immediate anticipations. Understandings of opportunity for today’s youth were again informed by what the socialist era denied older generations. During our interview, Maruška returned over and over to the theme of travel abroad and her inability to meet foreigners, master a foreign language, and perhaps even work in a foreign country (keeping in mind, of course, that she was bemoaning this to me: a foreigner, living and working abroad, and speaking, what was to me, a foreign language). She was not able to take advantage of the prospects her kids face and regretted it: “Simply my entire life, it

bothered me terribly that I didn't have the possibility to go to some foreign workplace, where I could have learned to speak fluently and acclimated to life and the people there." The inability to travel abroad was spoken of similarly by many Czechs—as a fundamental right violated throughout the socialist era.

Maruška's wistfulness for what she felt she lacked as a young adult contributed to the symbolism of open borders generally and what Czechs believe they offered those in their early twenties. Young Czechs today, it was thought, would have already started families of their own if socialism had not come to an end. Maruška explained that the pursuit of experiences outside of the Czech Republic are justified and desirable, wishing simply that she too could have had them:

If the borders had been open earlier, when I was a student, I could definitely have accomplished more—I could have made many acquaintances abroad. I don't know, I could have found a job which is now too difficult to pursue. To Australia, to America. Well, I consider that to be a detriment to myself.

I have noted that birthrates have been recorded as relatively low since the mid-1960s. Yet 1989 served to family members as well as demographers as a threshold event and as an explanation for reproductive behavior in the years that followed. References to 1989 to explain patterns of behavior in Czech society were both fretful and untroubled. Within debates about "why Czechs are not having babies" it is important to recognize that not all Czechs were agonizing over birthrate statistics. They calculated decisions about family planning in terms of what was understood positively as independent growth (work, travel, study). While many looked forward to being parents, and grandparents, for those like

Maruška narratives of experience and self-improvement shrugged off the alarmism circulating in the press, among family experts and in government offices.

Earlier I quoted Veronika Vodrážková arguing that when young people have an apartment and salaries, they are ready to have children. This statement was perhaps a veiled critique of her twenty-four year-old son, Josef, who insisted that he was not ready to have children, although he and his girlfriend, Kamila, have their own flat and relatively good salaries and educations. Josef explained to me that there were a number of reasons why he was waiting to start a family. Because Czechs often expected grandmothers and grandfathers to take care of third generation dependents, Josef worried in particular that a child would be a burden on his parents. As in the other examples I provide here, Josef used a language of postsocialist self-realization when describing his *mother's* future. Note the pattern of opposing possible opportunity to yet-unborn offspring, which arose in his interpretation of why it was not the right time for his mother to be a grandmother: "Now [that my sister and I are grown] Mother is actually compensating for what she didn't complete before. Before the family took up so much of her time, and she didn't accomplish what she wanted." Thus not only potential parents, but potential *grandparents*, should be given the chance to take advantage of work, travel and study.

Another way in which the decision not to have children (now or ever) appeared beneficial was through comparisons of the reproductive behavior of young Czechs to other young Europeans. Having children later and—maybe not at all—many explained, was a very western, European thing to do. Western reproductive trends were taken as an absolute standard by which birthrates, ages of first childbirth, marriage rates, divorce and

out-of-wedlock trends in the Czech Republic were gauged (Tomčíková 2000:11-12; see Chakrabarty 2000). As we have seen in the work of sociologists of the family Možný and Rabušic, Czechs in many cases considered patterns of family behavior increasingly resembling western European trends to be a natural aspect of the transition "back" to Europe at the end of the Cold War.

The most extreme form of newfound Europeanness was the "singles" phenomenon. Singles were hyper-individualist, free, and consumers. The singles phenomenon referred to men and women of marriageable age who chose in uncommon Czech fashion not to marry but work and, even more damning in the eyes of some, play. Some singles lived together, but without any intention of marrying soon or ever having children. Although media interviews and my discussions with real-live singles reveal that these Czechs continued to value family and marriage, they were far from ready to commit themselves to either institution.

The weekly intellectual magazine *Respekt* explains that a "single" has it all. A single was at the top of his or her field, such as business, the arts, journalism, or academia. The singles spent the majority of their time working, were rarely at home, and were uncommitted romantically though they did date occasionally. They valued their profession most of all and did not stay attached for long. When they worked, they worked hard. And when they played, they played hard. Life was wonderful and the singles were "successful" (*skvělý a úspěšný*). Their lifestyle was high-profile and attractive:

Singles influence society, not only on personal levels, but also the media climate and commercials, which often draw on their fast, dynamic,

efficient lives—the contrast of hard work and fun, which society is fascinated by. On the one hand there is responsibility, work meetings, a career and creative work, and on the other a night life in a wondrous, glamorous night club and parties. (Eckhardtová and Čápová 2000:13)

In these kinds of depictions, singles were deliberately not marrying and not having children, and they seldom lived with a partner. They were portrayed as part of a global youth culture; their lifestyles had more in common with those of young professionals in New York and Paris than with their parents' communist youths: "Czech singles bring new feelings and values, which the communist regime threw away, especially self-assurance. Singles can say to themselves, 'Everything that I earn, I earn myself. I don't owe anyone anything'" (Eckhardtová and Čápová 2000:12).

Admittedly, the singles phenomenon was largely a media construction of fantastic, unfamiliar Euro-yuppies. Indeed, I never met a young Czech in their twenties or thirties willing and able to jet off to Argentina at a moments notice, as the *Respekt* authors suggest one might (12). Certainly, though, within discourses of low birthrates, images of "singles" stood for one of the more radical new lifestyles of both men and women, the Czech Republic's new place in Europe and the world, fears of reduced value in family, greater interest in the individual, and demographic shock therapy. During my fieldwork, talk of singles evoked both positive and negative reactions, particularly in relation to what was seen by many as the danger of women's decreasing interest in having and caring for children. For example, at a gender studies conference in October 2000 attended by a variety of representatives of women's groups, one unfamiliar with feminism listened to a very general introduction to the topic. After a moment, she asked to clarify, "are feminists like the singles?" Through its association with local

interpretations of western feminism (understood as the rejection of family life) and renegotiations of the family vis-à-vis the state—themselves controversial topics—the singles phenomenon was far from universally well-received.

Positive interpretations of low birthrates countered their negative coverage in the press, hair-pulling among family spokespersons and government officials, and worry by family members themselves. No one voice dominated the discussion of demographic transformation and change, although alarmist tones have remained consistent since the socialist era. Yet here we have seen that “not having babies” translates in many cases into reasonable decision-making and reassurance in the face of both economic uncertainty and postsocialist promise. The reasonable reproductive behavior of young, mobile and educated Czechs, as I will now show, appeared as such when compared to those women who *are* having babies in today’s Czech Republic. Ironically, after decades of concern over “all-time” birthrate lows and “all-time” population drops, poor women having children were cast as unreasonable, unmodern and un-European.

THE BIRTHRATE MAKERS

A pedestrian approaching the Home for Mothers during the day witnessed a steady flow of children traveling from the front door toward a nearby playground, and back again. Some children might be clinging precariously to the railings which led to the Home’s entrance, some might wander out front of the house, yelling to each other or greeting their mothers who invariably were trying to carry too many bags of groceries

home at once. The seeming surplus of children at the Home for Mothers contradicted popular images of a baby-less Czech society. These women *were* having children.

Both Scheper-Hughes and Anagnost consider the significance of delineations of class within demographic study, and Scheper-Hughes's call to "point to demography's gaps" prompts me to think about the women who were not part of the problem of a barren state. The gaps in Czech demography (both discourses of costs and benefits) reveal the paradox of women who are both winners and losers: winners on paper—if you take an increase in birthrates as an absolute goal—because they maintain and even surpass birthrate "goals," and losers in their daily lives because their reproductive behavior is not seen as *reasonable*. This paradox was made clear during my fieldwork when I would visit sites where birthrate alarm was paramount and then move to others, such as the Home, where low birthrates were of no concern. At the Home, I was always surrounded by children and struck by the seeming contradiction between the state's insistence it needed more of them, and the "needs" of poorer families which often went unmet.

While demographers and social policy makers nervously awaited the arrival of more baby citizens, the mothers I worked with lost patience with the state during daily, weekly, and monthly trips to a variety of local offices. Rather than foster a sense that their children were valued by the state, their stories presented state employees as complicating and, according to the mothers, unfairly obstructing the nurturance of young Czechs. In this way, the mothers would have concurred with family values spokespersons bemoaning the decreasing value of the family to the postsocialist state. Unlike the socialist era, when all families received the same amount of money from their

local office, today's entitled must wait in line, figure out both how and how often to file paperwork, and shuttle from office to office—usually with children in tow. To them, the state was both a partner because it continued to “care” about their offspring, but also a contradictory influence because its procedures made life more difficult.

Viktorka Blažková lived with her five children in the Home for Mothers; a sixth lived with grandparents in Slovakia. She was at the time of our interview in drawn-out divorce proceedings with her husband, with whom she had her four oldest children; Viktorka's other two were by a current boyfriend. When I asked her to tell me about her experiences filing her paperwork, she explained:

...[I go to get money for the children] for camp, or sometimes [if] it [happens that I need] food and help, ...[T]hey give me problems in the benefits office; ...in February I gave birth—yeah, and on the 6th of February I was supposed to take my papers for money to the family benefits office. I was in the hospital, so I couldn't you know. So they stopped; the entire month I was with the children without crowns....

Viktorka expressed a common confusion with state procedures; the mothers in the Home often appealed to administrators for clarification, or to each other, worried and concerned by what they had been told by the accountants in the benefits offices. Many told stories of having been deprived of rightful support because of some minor paperwork mishap on their part—such as Viktorka's—or, more often, because of the mistake or ignorance (they claimed) of the accountant herself. Often the reason the money was not paid out was unclear, such as when a mother of one told me indignantly that the state “didn't send me 1800 crowns, that's an awful lot of money for me; they just didn't want to [give it to me].” Another mother of one, Žofie Hilská, had 500 crowns deducted “mysteriously” from her monthly living-minimum award. As some government officials

proposed a flood of benefits in the service of fostering financial security for potential families and others resisted the re-socialization of population politics, clients' interpretation of experiences in family-focused offices dissociated those who already qualify for benefits for families from a state hungry for population growth.

Often status as married or unmarried influenced whether or not an applicant received money. If married, then the spouse's salary reduced the amount of benefits.⁶⁷ Bára Wagnerová had four children; and at the time of our interview she was on maternity leave. She had been living in the Home for three years. Bára told me about what it was like to go to the family benefits office in her district,

when I was expecting Jiřina I [went to the benefits office and] said, 'I no longer live with my husband, we live separately, we are getting a divorce.' But I was pregnant you see. And they asked, 'you don't live with your husband? But you are pregnant?' I said again to them...[that] though we no longer share a household we are nevertheless having a baby.' And they immediately stopped the benefits. They said, 'you are pregnant with your husband, let him take care of you.'

Bára was bewildered by state demands for various documents, authorizations and confirmation certificates, such as required proof that the father was not paying support. Like the other mothers I introduce here, Bára did not question her entitlement to state awards, bearing a resemblance to what Haney has described in the Hungarian case as the framing of "assistance claims around a variety of social positions and needs" (2000:58), inherited from the socialist era. Here the social position and role was that of mother and caretaker.

Those women who were having children in the Czech Republic—such as those living in the Home for Mothers—represented the limits of calls to raise birthrates, limits

to a crisis that was unnerving many demographers. Indeed, there are two "negative visions" (Handler 1988:47-50) of demographic crisis. One included fears of the population dying out. One would think that those in this alarmed camp would have been comforted by high rates among some women, such as residents of the Home for Mothers. Yet the other negative vision of birthrates addressed the danger of too many "unreasonable" and unwanted poor citizens. These two negative visions were countered, as I have shown above, with a positive vision of newfound self-achievement. Because poor women with children today were in many cases poised in contrast to Czechs behaving "reasonably," they were constituted as a demographic problem rather than what might at first glance seem to be the obvious solution to low birthrates: that is, women with children.

Within discussions of why Czechs were not having babies, and why they should or should not, emerged unflattering images of those who actually are. A number of commentators, such as Novák, noted that there was an inverse relationship between an individual's salary and the number of children he or she has (these kinds of statistics also characterize the literature on birthrates in developing countries). This conundrum fueled Novák's desire to focus foremost on improving the economy rather than on ways to provide incentives or "reward" those who were having children, such as the women in the Home. These Czechs, he felt, were already largely supported by benefits for families that took monthly incomes up to state-mandated living minimums. In a similar way, retired policymaker Podskalská remarked first that too few people were having children. Well, she paused, everyone but Romani and Catholics. Roma in particular symbolized

state parasites extraordinaire. The Home's director, Jitka—a woman who has devoted her career to helping women with few resources and one or more children—suggested that families be limited to state support up to two children. These comments point to the meaningfulness of numbers and family size within demographic discussions.

Indeed, two other contradictory discourses emerged during my fieldwork, specifically as regards the size of families. First, Czech society was potentially destabilized by low birthrates which would limit the ability to build a strong work force, support older generations and benefit from participation in the modern world. Second and opposing this: to be modern, democratic and European demands the decreasing size of families and, even for the time being, few to zero children per family. Beginning with the demographic transition of the late nineteenth century, the modern family has had two to three children (Horska 1994; Rychtaříková 1994). The Czech lands were part of this demographic shift and familial type. Family size fell further during the socialist era and today, as we have seen at length, it continues to fall all over Europe. As one headline shouted from the pages of *Mladá fronta dnes* in the year 2000, "A Family With More Than Three Children Is Not 'Normal'," demographic decline or otherwise (7-31-00). Family size and family income served as boundaries around a demographic "crisis" that is also circumscribed by and framed in terms of the relationship between one's (in)dependence (from) upon public systems of support.

The administration of social policy for the disadvantaged worked outside of demographic agendas and suggested competing individual and state ideologies of the family. The family was a meaningful symbol before and after 1989, and Czechs often

expressed anxiety about the world around them through references to their families and the institution of the family. This anxiety was particularly evident in discussion about low birthrates. It is important to recognize the categories of ethnicity and class emerging from everyday conversations. As regards new income-based policies, poorer families with children were caught in the wake of shifting state-family relations as the state redefined itself. While struggling families with children worked to maneuver unfamiliar support and care mechanisms, demographic appeals were targeted towards up-and-coming Czechs: transformation success stories. Like ideologies of family versus state, "the crisis of the family" was not for everyone.

RELATIONALITY WITHOUT RELATIONS

In comparing the structure of demographic discussions from the socialist and postsocialist eras it appears that the tenor of distress has remained consistent over time. Although birthrates are statistically lower in the current period, more recent alarm resembled expert concern emerging from socialist documents and narratives about that era. Indeed, within academic and governmental communities since roughly the mid 1960s, there has always been a birthrate crisis (save a brief reprieve during the boom in the 1970s)—always a sense that Czech families were not producing enough offspring. Because of this continuity of crisis, I argue that demographic discourses reveal more about social anxiety and unease than they do about what economists and sociologists identify as the "objective" consequences of reproductive behavior. Demographic discussions, like the state texts I examine in Chapter 1, are useful in tracing the shifting

characterization of family and the meaningfulness of family to both the state and individuals over time.

Nonetheless within a framework of ongoing unease, I have shown that socialist and postsocialist demographic discourses do differ in significant ways. Specifically, the language used to talk about birthrates was shaped by the economic and political symbolism of each era. For example, during the socialist period low birthrates represented the loss of collective manpower, the failure of redistributive policies, and the futility of pro-natalist social engineering. More recently, the Czech Republic's position within Europe, westernization, and the down-sizing (or not) of state support for families supplied the idioms with which experts and non-experts alike filtered reports of a dwindling population.

Finally, I have argued that the "gaps" and paradoxes of demographic science are also ways in which to witness the growth of class distinctions and the moral coding of reproductive behavior among low income Czechs, particularly women. Having family members on whom to lean is critical to the experience of postsocialist personhood in both its extreme (work, travel, and study for young Czechs) and its more fundamental emphasis on personal responsibility and distancings from state influence. It is often the case, however, that Czechs are not raising future generations until much later in life than their parents and grandparents, if ever. Among some family specialists and older Czechs, these new patterns of behavior have caused worry over the continued value of the family. Yet to those for whom following "[western] European patterns" was interpreted as understandable and even desirable, those at home exhibiting relatively high birthrates

such as the "socially weaker" represented deferred membership in Europe and the market—and a prolonged role for the state in family life. At this point, demographic agendas were secondary and the family "crisis" came to an end.

Conclusion: The Homolkas Meet the Loners

SAMOTÁŘI

Hanka arrives home to find her mother and father seated at the dining room table and surrounded by Japanese tourists. She has just broken up with her boyfriend Jakub, a constantly stoned moving man who forgot that he already had a girlfriend. This is Hanka's second failed relationship in just a few weeks. Her parents, the Černýs, greet her and explain the roles they have agreed to play for the tourists as members of a typical Czech family. A dog has been borrowed and sits at their feet; they serve dumplings and beef. The epic composition *Má vlast* ("My Country") by nineteenth-century national revivalist, Bedřich Smetana, is playing on the stereo. Hanka refuses to cooperate with the charade; she needs some comfort. A Czech travel agent translates the family's conversation for her Japanese clients, who do not hesitate to film and photograph Hanka's dismay. Her father sits silently while his wife nags and criticizes Hanka, "It's that lifestyle of yours!" Hanka argues back. Mr. Černý finally steps in and yells at them both, "Shut up!" Hanka jumps from the table and runs out of the house and down the street of her Prague neighborhood. The tourists follow and applaud as Hanka disappears from sight.

Samotáři (The Loners, 2000) is a romantic comedy about seven residents of Prague in their mid-to-late twenties. They are two travel agents, a disc jockey at an independent radio station, a Macedonian bartender, a successful brain surgeon, a moving

man, and a student. The loners are representative of the mobility and travel brought by open borders and contact with western goods and influence in post-1989 Prague. Smetana aside, a mostly English-language rock soundtrack emphasizes the consequent isolation of the film's main characters.

The films *Ecce homo Homolka* and *Samotáři* resemble one another in their use of Czech family stereotypes to provide humor: dissatisfied mothers, cramped apartments, couple's quarrels. But the loner's lives are unlike the Homolka's in many ways. *Samotáři*'s sets are graffitied streets, nightclubs and bar counters. Its young characters are loyal to few. They avoid commitment and search for self-fulfillment among equally disoriented friends and acquaintances. Family relations reveal grave personality flaws. A husband leaves his wife and twin daughters to stalk an ex-girlfriend, a young man rarely visits his dying mother in her bleak hospital room, the Černýs gather for the sake of visiting Japanese, and Hanka's greatest fear is resembling her mother. The shrill Mrs. Černá voices generational concern with new "lifestyles;" her daughter, in turn, wants to escape her mother's grip.

The Homolkas and the Černýs stand for two eras of the Czech family. The afternoon the Homolkas spent in the Bohemian forest in the late 1960s captured much of what Czechs depict as ideal family life. Their three-generational "cell" wanted nothing more than to be alone in the country, amongst themselves, and not to be bothered by strangers. In 2000, the Černýs intended to model this family type while allowing foreigners into their home. Yet *Samotáři*'s "singles" (and "marrieds") operate in solitary terms. Like the Homolkas, the loners are easily annoyed, but their careers, lovers and

neuroses occupy them more than the inconvenience of kin. The loners in this movie have fled the Bohemian countryside too, and they are trying not to look back.

CZECH FAMILIES

We might treat *Samotáři* as a testament to the spread of "individualism" in the Czech Republic since 1989, particularly among younger Czechs. Yet in the face of these kinds of cultural products and discourses, this dissertation has argued that key ingredients of individualism and independence, like self-interest and personal responsibility, are mediated by the experience of socialism in the Czech Republic as well as significant material obstacles and challenges brought by regime change in 1989. Socialism should not be treated as overly deterministic, but present-day interpretations of the past help us better understand why it is that residents of this country, who were once hailed as the "most western" of East Central Europe, quickly grew wary of state reforms and economic uncertainties.

Presumptions that Czechs would celebrate the end of socialism were not unfounded. Everyday and academic accounts of the previous political era posited a steadfast opposition between personal life, most notably domains of the family, and the socialist state. Czechs explained how hard they worked to avoid the state's influence. They struggled to keep their homes and close ones uninvolved with, and unaffected by, the state's reach and tyranny. In my examination of this ideology of state versus family, I have shown that it is one with which the socialist state did not agree or condone. Official

texts and representatives instead positioned public offices and policies at the center of family life and the family at the center of the state's existence.

Today we are witnessing the inverse process. As the state pulls away from families through its implementation of income-based family policies and encourages self-motivation and an end to dependence on public provisions, a number of family spokespersons and present and former policymakers, as well as many older Czechs, are concerned that the state no longer cares about families. They point to low birthrates and new "lifestyles" to argue that a permissive society and neglectful state led Czechs to reconsider the value of having families after 1989. One would think that the state's prior authority and rhetorical emphasis on the family had actually been appreciated. Once again, values espoused by the state oppose the family. It appears contradictory, then, that poor families, especially single mothers, are still on intimate terms with the state and that they are stigmatized for this. They spend their days in offices for families; they work to understand the state's expectations of them while also taking care of children; they need to have their claims on the state recognized.

Talk of past family life marks the boundaries of class. Distinctions among family and kinship orders continue to reference the degree of the state's involvement in everyday life, be it "close" or "distant." Czechs are not nostalgic for the oppression they experienced during the socialist era. But those who are relatively well-situated in the present evoke the "typical Czech family" and conceptualize the state as a constant enemy; they also do this when singling out fellow Czechs who are economically insecure or are perceived of as threatening social stability. This happens repeatedly in relation to

the Romani population and regardless of Romani patterns of dependence/independence, passivity/motivation, autonomy/relationality, production/reproduction.

Those Czechs who turn to their kin for support and care are most able to achieve a productive dependency and, in turn, independence from the state. For them, an opposition between family and state is most attainable, although most families receive state funds in some form. Poorer Czechs do not replicate these idealized patterns of separation between family and state domains because they cannot. State employees echo the point that poorer Czechs should turn to their families before making demands on the state, officializing family support in their interpretations of postsocialist policies. Like those families who turned to a socialist-era work ethic when situating their own "autonomy" in the era of postsocialist responsibility, benefits accountants turn to understandings of continually valued relationality when interpreting their client's personal circumstances. As "the state," these employees are never outside of systems of meaning. Although they often authorized the distribution of public funds, it was not without first drawing on a repertoire of family models and ideals. The ideal family, be it the Homolkas of 1969 or the Černýs of 2000, floats in and out of the state setting, just as the state's history with its families persistently inserts itself in the most intimate of spaces.

NOTES

Introduction

¹ The term "Czech lands" refers to the contiguous areas of Bohemia, Moravia and lower Silesia. From 1918-1938 and from 1945-1992 they were a part of the state of Czechoslovakia. During World War II Slovakia was formally autonomous and allied with Nazi Germany, and Bohemia and Moravia were German protectorates. Since January 1, 1993 the Czech lands have coincided with the Czech Republic, the most recent incarnation of a Czech state.

² An exception is Možný (1991), whose study of the role of family networks in the downfall of socialist rule I draw on in Chapter 2. Stephanie Platz (2000) examines the relationship between kinship and social order in Armenia much in the way I approach Czech family forms. While Borneman (1992) does not focus on the moment of transition between socialism and postsocialism in 1989, his study of the semiotics of social policy and their resonance in everyday life in East and West Berlin during the Cold War has heavily influenced my study. Finally, Gal and Kligman's chapter on family forms (2000:63-90) offered theoretical guidance for my study of the family and state in the Czech Republic.

Chapter 1

³ Use of the term *rodinná politika* (family policy) spread in the late 1980s. Prior to that, policies toward the family fell under the rubric of *sociální politika* (social policy). I alternate between "family policy" and "social policy" to indicate policies and state programs specifically addressing the family, provisions for families, and family-centered activities.

⁴ Greater sympathy for pre-revolution family forms emerges in the policies of the Soviet Union in the mid-1950s and should be thought of as an aspect of de-Stalinization, as opposed to pro-natalism as was the case in Czechoslovakia. My analysis and organization of Czech family policy is shaped by internal discussions of low birthrates rather than by divisions within the Soviet bloc (i.e., pre- or post-Stalin). Other socialist governments in Europe were also addressing low birthrates, but the discussions varied in substance and outcome (see Kligman 1998).

⁵ Women with no children could retire at 57, at 56 if they raised one child, 55 with two, and so on.

⁶ "The taxpayer who...is supporting his wife and one or more children pays the basic tax rate....When the taxpayer does not support more than more person the tax rate is increased....The only exception to this rule is the single parent who will pay only the basic rate" (Havelka and Raduanová 1980-1982:294).

⁷ Propagandists are not the only ones to have argued for the continuity of socialist beliefs in the Czech lands. See Sayer on the founding of the communist party in 1921 and its "strong indigenous roots" (1998:167; Holy 1996:17). Janos confirms a budding socialist movement during the interwar era (2000:109, 162); however, he is careful to attribute later incorporation into the Soviet bloc to "great power politics of World War II," over which Czechoslovak leaders had little control (229).

⁸ See Chapter 4 for a similar chart of internal family organization drawn by a family activist in 2000.

⁹ Divorce became legal in Czechoslovakia in 1919.

¹⁰ Through, for example, retirement schedules, protective legislation as regards work, maternity leave conditions.

¹¹ One article in *Rudé právo*, "Children—our shared wealth," claimed that Czechoslovakia had the eighth highest divorce rate in the world (5-31-85).

¹² See Plzák 1971, Frýbová 1973, *Naše rodina* 9-30-87 and a staggering amount of twentieth-century Czech literature on the theme of extra-marital affairs, lovers and adultery.

¹³ 1992-1999 data reflect the population of the Czech Republic; 1949-1991 represent the population of Czechoslovakia

¹⁴ number of marriages divided by total population

¹⁵ average marriage rate between 1945 and 1949

¹⁶ 1992-1999 data reflect the population of the Czech Republic; 1949-1991 represent the population of Czechoslovakia

¹⁷ number of divorces divided by total population

¹⁸ represents average divorce rate between 1945 and 1949

¹⁹ Mrkosová went on to inform the woman interviewing her that the divorce rate in the United States was the highest in the world—more than 40 divorces per 100 marriages were recorded in 1973 (*Tvorba* 12-22-82).

²⁰ Minimum age at marriage remained eighteen.

²¹ 1994 & 1998 for Czech Republic. Data for 1993 unavailable.

²² Abortions were illegal in Czechoslovakia from 1936 to 1950. They were made available in 1950 with severe restrictions, which were relaxed in 1954. In 1957 abortions were made fully legal, but law 68/1957 required women to apply to a commission for permission. In 1962 a State Population Committee was established. One of its duties was to monitor the abortion law. In 1963 abortion was restricted further and no longer provided free of charge. By 1970 state representatives attributed the rising birthrate in part to strict access to abortion. Yet according to a report submitted that year by the Head of the Health Department, City of Prague National Committee, the abortion rate rose 22% in 10 years among women between 20 and 24. In 1973 abortion criteria was further restricted according to time between abortions, the woman's age, and number of children. 12 months were required between abortions. Abortion was permitted if the woman was over 40, if a woman already had 3 children, if the applicant was pregnant as a result of a rape or criminal act, or if there was an illness, housing or other family problem. Unmarried women were not affected by the new limits placed on abortion access in 1973. Despite detailed application and eligibility requirements, the abortion rate rose steadily from the mid-1970s to 1989 (Wolchik 2000:63). In 1987 commissions were disbanded, procedural delay was reduced, and contraception became free with a prescription. In the 1990s abortions became more expensive, but effective contraception is now widely available.

²³ One radio program reported that, between 1958 and 1968, abortions rose from 50,000 to 72,000 a year (*Listárna mladých* 5-25-73).

²⁴ Compare the Republican platform on the family, which sounds rather like the socialist texts we have been examining ("The family is society's central core of energy. That is why efforts to strengthen family life are the surest way to improve life for everyone"), to the Democratic statement ("[G]overnment can help make the hardest job in the world – being a parent – a little easier. Today, families come in all different shapes and sizes, but they all face similar challenges"). Each of these platforms on family values is accompanied by complementary social and economic programs.

²⁵ In late February 2003 Václav Klaus succeeded Václav Havel as President of the Czech Republic.

²⁶ I would like to thank Bill and Susan Nash for providing me with historical background and a clear explanation of the differences between civil codes and case law (see Glendon 1989; Radvanová and Zuklínová 1999:6-7).

²⁷ The right of children to live at their parents' living standard becomes relevant during child custody and child support deliberations (see Chapter 3).

²⁸ The European Adoption Accord, created in 1967 and signed by the Czech Republic in the 1990s and the Hague Accord on the Protection of Children signed into effect in 1993 in the Czech Republic are two international declarations to which a family specialist at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs referred me in 2000.

²⁹ Twenty-eight weeks of paid maternity leave is covered by the system of social insurance. State social support legislation addresses the contribution toward parents.

³⁰ Unemployed parents begin their at-home period and receipt of the parental allowance at the moment of the child's birth.

³¹ The new labor law went into effect January 1, 2001.

³² See *Lidové noviny* 12-3-99, 12-9-99, 12-10-99, 8-7-00, 8-12-00, 8-17-00, 8-23-00, 10-13-01; *Mladá fronta dnes* 4-26-00, 8-1-00, 8-10-00; Bauerová 2000; *Prague Post* 6-14-00, 8-23-00.

³³ I would like to thank Leah Seppanen Anderson for assisting in my thoughts on women and EU accession.

³⁴ Social security for persons with disabilities is not part of the assistance program, although under the terms of social assistance care takers of disabled dependent children are entitled to added benefits.

³⁵ Some I encountered during my fieldwork include the Society for the Support of the Family (www.profam.cz), the National Center for the Family, www.rodina.cz, locally-based Mother's Clubs supported by the Prague Mothers, the Children's Crisis Center, the YMCA's Family Revival Movement,

the Czech Union of Women, the Prague Gender Studies Centre, the Union of Catholic Women, the 2000 Shadow Cabinet Ministry of the Family, the Archbishop of Prague's Family Center, the Family Values program at the Civic Institute, Klub Rosa for single mothers, the Czech Family Planning Association, a civic organization for children called *Jahoda* (Strawberry), the Center for Foster Care, the Lesbian group Promluv, and the Association of Organizations of Homosexual Citizens (SOHO). This list does not reflect the frequent state-sponsored demography conferences as well as academic, family history conferences taking place on a regular basis in Prague. Many of these NGOs were modeled on and/or funded by western organizations.

Chapter 2

³⁶ I would like to thank Richard Handler for pointing out in an early reading of this chapter that all family histories are composites.

³⁷ On November 24, 1989, "At the end of the demonstration...[the protestors] all take their keys out of their pockets and shake them, 300,000 key-rings, producing a sound like massed Christmas bells" (Garton Ash 1993:96).

³⁸ Underlining indicates the family members I interviewed.

³⁹ Though I should note that aspects of the nineteenth-century revival, such as the anti-imperial movement, were usefully drawn on by communist historians.

⁴⁰ *Sokol*, Czech for "falcon," was a gymnastic society founded in 1862 by leading Czech patriots (see Sayer 1998:105-106). The communist party eventually renamed and ran sokol societies. After 1989 the civic association witnessed a great revival. Based on my unrigorous observations at one national sokol gathering in Prague in June 2000, membership appeared to be dominated by young children who have recently joined their local chapters and by older Czechs (such as Jana Klimentová) who were active prior to the communist takeover. Young adults and middle-aged Czechs often laughingly dismissed sokol because of its association with the socialist state. Czech émigrés in the United States and Canada established sokol organizations after leaving socialist Czechoslovakia. Overseas members of all ages participated in the festivities in 2000.

⁴¹ According to Robert Pynsent, Havel and other socialist-era "dissidents" preferred to be called "independent thinkers" (1994:212 n. 14). Pynsent explains that since the seventeenth century the Czech terms for "dissident" have been associated with religious discord.

⁴² Feminist critics, mostly from the United States and western Europe, criticized Havel in the early 1990s for the ways in which his appeal for moral politics before and after 1989 were "male-defined" (Eisenstein 1993:313; see Einhorn 1993:158).

⁴³ Jan Patočka was a philosopher at Charles University and author and signatory of *Charter 77*. The charter demanded that the Czechoslovak government observe human rights provisions of the Helsinki Accord, which it had signed in 1975 (see Leff 1997). Later that year Patočka died during interrogation by the secret police (*Státní Bezpečnost* or *StB*). The StB flew helicopters overhead during Patočka's funeral ceremony to discourage attendance and interrupt proceedings. A crowd gathered despite the risk.

⁴⁴ I would like to thank Petra Costolanski for pointing out similarities between Ivan's attitude toward marriage and Kocáb's song.

⁴⁵ I would like to thank Gail Kligman for making this point clear in an earlier reading of this chapter.

⁴⁶ The size of the waiting list hovered around 230 when I worked in the Home.

⁴⁷ The housing offices no longer guarantee apartments for all families as they ostensibly did during the socialist era. Today limited numbers of units are held for low-income families; usually they required renovation before being inhabited. The burden of making the repairs rests on new occupants.

⁴⁸ Monthly amounts of child support were determined by a judge in court hearings (see Chapter 3).

Chapter 3

⁴⁹ Many thanks to Melinda Reidinger for our discussions in Prague about the *chata*. Her lengthier work on cottage culture will provide a much needed analysis of links between the *chata*, leisure and Czech twentieth-century social history.

⁵⁰ Humphrey remarks that although land on which Russians built *dachas* remained state-owned, "the dacha as a building was the result of ceaseless tactics to create a sense of privacy and individuality by outwitting the norms and building regulations of the state" (2002:187).

⁵¹ Although, as Milada Bartošová's (1978) history of social policy makes clear, socialist family policy had income-based criteria in place until 1968.

⁵² In 2000 this was approximately 154 US dollars a month.

Chapter 4

⁵³ For similar state approaches toward grandparental support in Japan, Poland and the United States, see contributions by Peng, Heinen, and Levy and Michel, respectively, in Michel and Mahon 2002.

⁵⁴ See Segalen on the importance of grandparents' ages in the French case 2001:254.

⁵⁵ During the September 2000 IMF/World Bank meeting held in Prague, many residents closed up shops and homes and escaped to weekend houses and cottages outside of the city. Their fears of unmanageable foreign crowds and disorder were founded—protesters and police clashed violently during the initial days of the meetings and historic and commercial areas were vandalized. Protesters threw cobblestones, smashed bank, McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken windows, and sprayed anti-globalization graffiti on an already heavily graffitied city center. Some who chose not to leave the city told me they remained inside to avoid the dangerous street scenes being broadcast live on national television.

⁵⁶ "What do you need?" is an impolite and impatient way of greeting a stranger in Czech. It is not "hezky český," or, good Czech. For their part, residents of the Home for Mothers complained that state office workers were rude. In the "care" office where I worked, I certainly observed rough and insensitive attitudes toward applicants, though the accountants' responsiveness and temper fluctuated unpredictably. Indeed, on some days, even Mrs. Pavlíková was pleasant and helpful.

⁵⁷ Delvita is an "American-style," though Belgian-owned, grocery store chain with stores throughout the Czech Republic.

Chapter 5

⁵⁸ See one study for example with such chapter headings as "Denmark: The Land of the Vanishing Housewife," "Great Britain: the Lone Parent as the New Norm?" and "Ireland: Marriage Loses Popularity" (Kaufman et al. 1997).

⁵⁹ Although, given the spread of AIDS in parts of the world characterized generally as "exploding," it might be argued that populations there are now "imploding."

⁶⁰ See Frommer 2000 for a discussion of population crises and mixed marriages during and after World War II.

⁶¹ One article estimates that it cost 50,000 crowns for a couple to begin living on their own (*Rudé právo* 3-5-68).

⁶² Still a prominent demographer and Deputy Chairman of the Czech Demographic Society.

⁶³ As material in Chapter 3 demonstrates, the Vietnamese population continues to work throughout the Czech Republic, but the other foreign workers usually returned to their home countries after short-term stays.

⁶⁴ Fears that future young generations will not be productive or able to support future elderly generations (i.e., baby-boomers in the United States born after World War II) resemble debates over dipping into the social security fund in the United States (Frank 2002).

⁶⁵ This long-term bank account would be in addition to the current one-time-only birthing benefit of 8,450 crowns per child (5 times the living minimum for one child's expenses; 6 times for 3 or more children). The monthly parental benefit (i.e., parental leave) would rise from approximately 2,500 crowns to 3,300 crowns.

⁶⁶ In mid-March 2002, the Czech Parliament voted against re-universalizing benefits for families with children.

⁶⁷ As we observed in Chapter 3, the household income would be the same, but the mothers attempted to get as much as they could from the state. Often the father/husband/boyfriend contributed to the household although he was not officially registered as a part of it. The benefits accountants were aware of this, suspicious, and tried to prevent undue distribution of state money.

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Lidová demokracie

5-22-87 Rodina—základ pro celý život.

Lidové noviny

- 6-19-91 Osamělé matky čekají na "své" zákony: Nejde o almužny.
- 12-3-99 Sexuální obtěžování bude protizákonné.
- 12-9-99 Nepříjemné sexuální návrhy nutí české ženy mnohdy i ke změně místa.
- 12-10-99 Téměř polovina českých žen zažila sexuální obtěžování. Pátek.
- 7-12-00 Česko má jedno z nejnižších porodností na světě.
- 7-12-00 Svět se přelidňuje, Evropa však vymírá.
- 7-28-00 Špidla chce vrátit přídavky všem dětem.
- 8-7-00 Ministr Špidla chce zavést pozitivní diskriminaci žen.
- 8-12-00 Je třeba zavádět pozitivní diskriminaci žen? Ženy se musí přestat podceňovat.
- 8-17-00 Za diskriminaci nenesou vinu oběti.
- 8-23-00 A co diskriminace mužů?
- 9-1-01 Domácí Zprávy.
- 10-13-01 Nová rada vlády bude dohlížet na práva žen.

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3-29-00 Počet narozených dětí byl loni nejnižší.

4-26-00 Obtěžoval vás šéf? Žaloba bude snazší.

6-15-00 Děti neustále ubývá, radnice proto ruší mateřské školy.

7-31-00 Rodina se třemi dětmi není "normální."

8-1-00 Pozitivní diskriminace ženám uškodí.

8-10-00 Ženy a muži: rovnost v práci?

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6-14-00 Havel signs groundbreaking sexual harassment law.

8-23-00 Women want to change old workplace stereotypes.

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