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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH ON IDENTITIES IN THE CZECH AND SLOVAK REPUBLICS 1989-2001

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INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on empirical researches carried out after 1989. In fact, before 1989 there were only a small number of studies on the topics of national, ethnic, European, gender identities or nationalism in Czech and Slovak social psychology. The few theoretical texts published are essays trying to describe and compare Czech and Slovak mentalities and are rather speculative (Stavěl, 1982; Jurovský, 1943). A more systematic research was realised
at the Institute of Social Sciences of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Košice, on Romany and Hungarian minorities (Zeľová, 1984, 1991; Paukovič (Ed.), 1990, etc.).

After the split of the common state and the emergence of independent Czech and Slovak Republics both nations had to redefine their identities. Whilst in the Czech Republic the national identity has been historically more rooted, the Slovak situation was rather different. That's why the new state of Slovakia came into existence with the concept of the enduring Slovak nation being stressed as its raison d'être. Moreover, the complaints about Slovaks not having a sufficient national identity were increasing from nationally oriented political groups claiming the “true” Slovaks' struggle for the “national cause” (Bačová, 1999a). These opinions were widely disseminated by Slovak nationally oriented newspapers Slovenská Republika (Slovak Republic) or Literárny týždenník (Literary Weekly) in the period of 1992-1998. On the contrary, common Czech and Slovak cultural magazine Mosty (Bridges) tried to maintain the virtual Czechoslovakia even after its’ split.

Despite the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993, there is still a common Czech and Slovak psychological journal – Československá psychologie (Czech and Slovak Psychology). It is the most important journal of the discipline, presenting the results of research in various domains of psychology. If we examine its’ contents, we quickly understand that Slovak social psychologists have been much more interested in national identity, ethnic identity and nationalism than their Czech colleagues. Whilst the research in the Czech Republic focuses more on citizenship, meaning of democracy, civic virtues and the impact of the transforming society on psychological life, Slovak psychologists study national/ethnic identity as well as the between ethnic minorities and the Slovak majority.

This interest can be partly explained by the fact that ethnic minorities form almost 20% of Slovak population (Vašečka, 2001), the most important being the Hungarian minority living in the South and South East of the country and having a strong ethnic identity (Homišinová, 1999). Slovak social psychologists, sociologists, ethnologists and historians edited several symposiums on the topics of collective identity and minorities (see Csáky & Mannová, 1999; Bačová & Kusá, 1997; Bačová, 1996; Plichtová, 1992). In a series of theoretical studies, Bačová (2000, 1999b, 1998a, 1994) published a review of theories of personal and social identity in social psychology and of identity assessment issues. Bačová (1997b, 1996c) also discussed the social and cultural determination of personal identity and primordial versus instrumental basis of ethnic and national identity. Plichtová (1991b) defined the concepts of national identity, nationalism, ethnocentrism, group and individual identity, anti-Semitism and discussed their mutual links.
The empirical researches carried out by the Department of Social and Biological Communication of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and by the Department of Psychology of the Comenius University in Bratislava mainly focused on national, social and political identity of Slovak intelligentsia in changing society, on the representations of individual rights and responsibilities by students and on their perception of national identity and nationalism.

Research done in the Institute of Social Sciences of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Košice concentrated on historical and social memory and identity. Empirical studies were carried out with national minorities living in the East, Northeast and South of Slovakia such as Hungarians (Staško, 1997; Homišinová, 2000, 1998), Germans (Gabdzilová, 1997; Olejník, 1997), Ukrainians/Ruthenians (Gajdoš, 1997; Homišinová, 2001) and Romanies (Jurová, 1997). Many of these researches emphasised the historical perspective and the oral history approach. In 1995–1998, an extensive research was carried out with the purpose to assess the perceptions of identity by members of various generations on various levels of social life in the process of transformation of the Slovak society.

However, thus far, there has been no empirical work in social psychology directly focusing on European identity. European identity has been more reflected, whether theoretically or empirically, by sociology (Bunčák & Piscová, 2000; Matějů, 2000; Zich, 1999, etc.). Regional identity has been studied only indirectly, in the context of the above mentioned research project in Košice. In addition, the regional identity has been conceptualised as an “attachment to place”¹ in the framework of researches on forced relocation of inhabitants from the territory of the Orava dam (Naništová, 1998) and on “environmental dispositions in children” (Naništová & Mésárošová, 2000). However, these researches are little imputing to the domain of identity research.

I. IDENTIFICATION WITH MACRO SOCIAL FORMATIONS: FROM REGIONAL TO EUROPEAN IDENTITY?

The period of social transformation in the Czech and Slovak republics after 1989 lead to changes in identification with macro social formations such as nation, state, Europe, etc.

¹ In these researches, the attachment to place is defined as a phenomenon comprising different components of emotional and cognitive experience or symbolic relations of people to concrete places. The emphasis is given to two of its dimensions: dependence on place and identification with place (Naništová, op.cit., p. 377).
humans, etc. This period of time can be characterised by a high dynamics of reconstruction of social identities, by their complexity and sometimes by the conflicting character of the whole process. The following series of researches investigating the identity in different generations of people was realised to understand these phenomena.

1.1 Comparing the identification within three generations

This project carried out in Košice (Frankovský, 2000a; Bolfíková, 1997; Bačová & Výrost, 1996; Frankovský & Bolfíková, 1996; Baumgartner & Hadušovská, 1996; Lovaš & Pirháčová, 1996) is a research on projective role taking by the members of three different generations (below 25, 25-50 and above 50 years). The participants were asked to evaluate their own identification with various social formations and social roles, as well as to project themselves into their predecessors' (people of the same age as the participants who, however, lived 20-30 years ago) and successors' (people of the same age who will live 20-30 years later) identifications.

The oldest generation experienced a stronger sense of belonging to a village/town, region, nation and the Slovak Republic than the middle and the youngest generations. The youngest participants identified more with larger social formations such as Europe (Bačová & Výrost, 1996; Frankovský and Bolfíková, 1996; Frankovský, 2000a) and were rated as such by the two older generations. At the same time, the youngest generation identified the most with the roles of a good expert, wanted to have a leading position in professional life, to travel, to have an active and exciting life.

When projecting into their “predecessors” identifications, the participants imputed to their predecessors a stronger feeling of belonging to a village/town, region, nation and congregation than they actually expressed it. On the other hand, the belonging of predecessors to Central Europe, Europe and humans was rated as weaker than they expressed it. The participants probably thought that the preceding generations identified less with the broader context beyond Slovak frontiers because of linguistic barrier, political system and their limited contacts with abroad (Frankovský & Bolfíková, 1998). However, when evaluating their successors, the participants considered them as clearly oriented toward the formations that transcend the borders of a concrete state (ibid, Frankovský, 2000).

The authors conclude that the family membership, parenthood and expertise can be designed as ”universal” or ”age independent” identities (Bačová, 1996b; Lovaš & Pirháčová, 1996). All the three generations refused to make a political career, engage in the national
cause and follow a charismatic leader (*ibid*). This reflects the unfavourable political situation in Slovakia between 1993-1998. The authors conclude on the influence of age and of social and historical conditions on the identification with various social formations and roles. They also consider that the evidence of dissimilar identity construction for oneself and for other people living in different historical periods is the most important result of this research project (Bačová, 1996b; Bačová & Výrost, 1996).

### 1.2 Ethnic majority/minority membership

Homišinová (1999) focused on the strength of identification with macro social formations according to the ethnic minority/majority membership. One hundred 18 years old students (Slovak majority and Hungarian ethnic minority) participated in the research. The Slovak majority participants identified the most strongly with their village/town, Slovak Republic and humans. On the other hand, the Hungarian minority participants identified more strongly with bigger social formations such as Central Europe, Europe and humans. As expected, they identified the least with the Slovak nation.

Frankovský (2000b) compared the identification with macro social formations of according to the level of education. In general, the participants with elementary education identified more with micro regions where they live (village/town region). On the other hand, the participants with university degree identified more with macro social formations such as Europe.

### II. CONSTRUCTION OF ETHNIC IDENTITY IN CHANGING SOCIETY

While in Western Europe, the “nation” emerged as a consequence of preceding economic, social and cultural development; in Central and Eastern Europe the national communities were formed without adequate economic, social, cultural and political institutional bases (Bačová, 1996a). Moreover, the ethnic minorities in these states are descendants of people who did not “become minority” because they had decided to immigrate, but because of the change of borders with the neighbouring states (e.g. the Trianon Treaty in 1919). Bačová (*ibid*) argues that as a result of this politico-historical developments, the ethnic majorities in Central and Eastern Europe have had to defend their identity as much as ethnic minorities.²

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² In Slovakia and in the Czech republic the term “nationality” has often been used as synonym of “ethnicity”. The public administration in the Czech and Slovak Republics still distinguishes between the ”nationality” – Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Romany, etc. and the ”citizenship” – belonging to the Czech and Slovak Republic.
2.1 Ethnic identity and language

Plichtová (1991a) carried out an experiment (association task) with pupils of a Hungarian minority elementary school in Bratislava. She found that these childrens’ Slovak language knowledge and their communication skills in Slovak were under-developed in comparison with their Hungarian language skills and knowledge. Although this can hinder their social mobility and integration into the Slovak-speaking majority, a great part of Hungarian minority members in Slovakia understand the education in their mother tongue as the most important aspect of their ethnic identity (ibid, cf. also Zeľová, 1984, 1991).

Sokolová (2000) realised a structured interview with the Czech and Polish inhabitants of Silesia (Northern Moravia, Czech Republic), a region where the Polish minority is considerably represented. She examined the position of the mother tongue as an indicator of the ethnic identity and its' changes within “the integration and disintegration tendencies occurring in the contemporary society (ibid).” She concludes that a big part of the sample perceived the mother tongue as marker of the national identity, as a “heritage”, a mode of transmission of the traditions and culture. Since mainly the young generation realises that the European integration trends present a shift in the nations' perception, the mother tongue is considered as a relatively constant value that should be preserved (ibid).

Also Borák (2000) studied the minority language use in public institutions minority schools, culture and press in Silesia. Whilst local Czech an Slovak inhabitants of Silesia understood the minority language use only as a means of communication, the Polish understood it as a declaration of their political rights, differentiating them from other national groups, mainly from the Czechs.

Homišinová (2001) used a questionnaire to investigate the social norms of interethnic relations and their perception by Slovak majority and Ruthenian/Ukrainian minority in Slovakia. The minority participants manifested a better knowledge of ethnic minority language related laws than the Slovak majority participants. Equivalent results were obtained also with members of Hungarian minority living in Slovakia (Homišinová, 1998b, 1999).

Sometimes, Slovak researchers use the term “national identity” when speaking about the ethnic majority and “ethnic identity” when speaking about ethnic minorities.
Moreover, the minorities were more sceptical about the law application in practice than the majority.

2.2 Ethnic identification in nationally heterogeneous territories

Bačová (1996) argues that the identifications of Slovak and Hungarian participants with the representation of their own ethnic groups are very strong. She found however, that there is a difference between the structure of ethnic identity of Slovak participants from villages with mixed Slovak-Hungarian population and the structure of ethnic identity of Slovak participants from ethnically homogeneous Slovak villages. The ethnic identity of the former is more complicated and the participants who define themselves as Slovak construct their ethnic social world in a cognitively different way.

Bordás, Frič, Haidová, Hunčík & Máthé (1995) carried out an extensive survey (using questionnaires, interviews and projective methods) on the relationships of the Hungarians and the Slovaks in Southern Slovakia. They also analysed their national myths: these were strongly linked to the territory historically occupied by both nations. Moreover, the authors found that since the Hungarians have several historical figures they can be proud on, the Slovaks don’t have any real “Founding Fathers”. The authors argue that as the Slovaks had only few aristocrats in their history, a substitution myth of the plebeian Slovak nation emerged (with the national hero Jánošík, a kind of Slovak Robin Hood); the myth of a nation that rose from its “ahistoricity” only in the 19th century during the period of the so called Slovak National Revival. The authors also point out the importance of the mother tongue that is the only means of these groups' differentiation. This issue is particularly sensible because of the above mentioned “language laws”.

2.3 Perceptions of nation and ethnicity across different societies

Bačová & Ellis (1997) studied the nature of responses to the concepts of nation, ethnicity and other political, cultural and minority related concepts. A questionnaire consisting of a set of semantic differential sheets was used as a means of collecting data. The sample consisted on 155 university students from Slovakia (members of Slovak majority and Hungarian minority) and 67 university students from Britain (they previously categorised themselves as minority or majority members). As expected, the studied concepts were perceived differently in the two societies and in the majority and minority members, as a result of different histories, current affairs and official terminology.
Whilst the British samples' experience had been that of stability of the state and nation, the Slovak samples' experience had been different due to a history of constant change in the state organisation. On 1 January 1993, the new state of Slovakia came into existence. Moreover, the relationships of Slovakia with Hungary contain several sensitive issues, such as Slovak worries over possible Hungarian attempts to seek revisions in the borders fixed by the 1919 Trianon Treaty, the status of the Slovak minorities in Hungary and of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, the "language laws" issued by the Slovak government on Hungarian language use in the public administration, etc.

The Slovak majority participants were consistently more positive about some concepts than the British participants as a whole and than the Hungarian minority. They viewed the nation particularly positively in terms of being good, valuable, friendly, strong, understandable and promising. Moreover, they considered the concept of nation and the concept of culture as very similar and did not discriminate between the minorities’ related concepts. For the Hungarian minority participants, the concept of nation was identical with the concept of race and they perceived the nationality in the same way as the minority language. In comparison with the British as a whole, both Slovak samples saw mother tongue as more valuable, confident, active and understandable.

2.4 Primordial vs. instrumental beliefs about ethnic identity

Bačová (1999a) argued that whilst instrumental views are more concomitants of modernisation and globalisation, primordial beliefs are more traditional and they are more embedded in the Eastern and Central Europe. Using the Identity Exploration Method (IDEX) consisting of a series of bipolar rating scales made up of contrasting statements, Bačová (ibid) investigated the processes by which individuals evaluate primordial and instrumental ethnic statements. Among Slovak scholars (mean age=37), she differentiated “primordialists” (they understand ethnic identity as given forever) and “instrumentalists” (they consider ethnic identity as changeable).

Bačová (ibid) suggests that because of a possible confusion between the old and the new values that became officially accessible after 1989, some individuals may experience a degree of identity diffusion or even identity crisis (ibid, p. 153). Moreover, as the country faced the transition to the market economy, the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993 made it necessary for Slovakia to deal simultaneously with independence as a new nation-state. Since it can be claimed that the official ethnic ideology in Slovakia has always been closer to the primordial type, the Slovaks holding instrumental beliefs about ethnicity
had to combine their interiorised experiences of primary and secondary socialisation, their ensuing experiences of change and their knowledge of contemporary societal norms and values (ibid). The study revealed that the instrumentalists manifested higher degree of past identity diffusion and lower degree of past self-evaluation than the primordialists did. This indicated that the processes of ethnic/political identity development and change in instrumentalist participants were going on and their ethnic and political identifications were more complicated (ibid).

Bačová (1998b, 1999c) also examined the possible types of explanations people of three different generations construct about ethnicity and identity. The author used the Q-sort in three samples of well-educated people aged 20-25, 40-45 and 60 years and above. She concentrated on comparing the “primordialists” within the three generations. Overall, the primordialism was linked to: 1. The need of togetherness and compactness of the nation; 2. The opinion that the Slovaks belong to the East-European culture; 3. The opinion that the Hungarian minority does not bother about the well being of Slovakia.

However, only the young primordialists explicitly expressed their acceptance of democratic political principles and the support of the Romany minority culture and education. The youngest and the oldest primordialists thought that the image of Slovakia in the world reflects our real problems. The oldest were of opinion that the main “capital” of the Slovaks is that they are “hard-working” and it doesn't matter how the world sees us. On the contrary, the middle generation thought that the negative image of Slovakia is the “work of those who want to disfavour our country”, an opinion that was, at that time, disseminated by the nationalist press.

III. NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM

3.1 National, social and political identity of Slovak intelligentsia

Intellectuals were an important leading force of the “Velvet Revolution” (1989). Later they were active in diffusing the social representations of Slovakia and Slovak nation. The authors (Plichtová, Brozmanová & Berecká, 1999; Plichtová & Brozmanová, 1997, 1994; Plichtová, 1996) examined the transformations of the social identity of Slovak intelligentsia after 1989. They administered a structured questionnaire to 296 representatives of Slovak intelligentsia. The results show that Slovak intelligentsia defined its position in the society in high contrast to politicians and felt and identified with those social groups that had no political and economic power (Plichtová et al., 1999).
In-depth interviews were also conducted with the representatives of Slovak politically and medially active intellectuals (15 “nationally oriented” and 15 “civic oriented, Horvatová, 2000). The “nationally oriented” intellectuals argued that it is important to be proud of Slovak nation because of our national struggle in the past, our traditions and culture. The author did not encounter any expression of ethnocentrism: the nationalism of the “nationally oriented” intellectuals was romantic and defensive. They also perceived the European integration rather negatively. In fact, they feared the dissolution of the Slovak national identity and the loss of its cultural particularities.

On the other hand, the “civic oriented” intellectuals thought there is no reason to be proud, because ”being Slovak” is a category membership they did not chose and were clearly pro-European (ibid).

3.2 National identity of Slovak students and their perception of different nations

Ferjenčík (1995) studied how perception of different nations is organised and structured. Slovak university students rated ten different nationalities on semantic differential scales. Two main dimensions were identified. The first of them reflects the level of civilisation the nation holds from the point of perceiver's view. This dimension stresses cognitive aspects, knowledge and level of education, abilities and aptitudes. The second dimension informs about socio-emotional characteristics of nation perceived, in concepts of friendliness, trustworthiness and readiness for co-operation. German, Czech and Jews were rated as high in civilisation and friendliness. Russian, Ukrainian and Latvian were perceived as lower in civilisation but relatively friendly. Romany minority was rated as low in civilisation and friendliness.

In another study (Berecká & Plichtová, 1997), university students (aged 18-23) wrote essays on the topic of “national identity” in different political contexts. In February 1993 – one month after the creation of the independent Slovak Republic; in March 1994 – a period characterised by a parliamentary crisis and in June 1994 – a period of a governmental crisis. The content analysis has shown that whilst the principle of national identity was seen positively, its' application in Slovakia was evaluated in a negative way. That led the participants to differentiate between nationalism and national identity. Statehood and national identity were closely linked for the majority of participants. In spite of the fact, that the majority preferred liberal principles in the domain of economics and politics, the nation and national identity were understood mostly in the ethnic sense.
Zich (1999) deals with issues concerning national identity and ongoing integration processes in Europe. He considers the across border civic co-operation, i.e. establishment and maintenance of informal civic relationships, to be one of the most important facets of integration. He proposes a view on European integration process as a “social contract” creation between the citizens of different states. Aspects that might positively or negatively influence these relationships are demonstrated on an example of the across border cooperation on Czech-German border. However, the core of the across border co-operation is made by approximately only 5% of local inhabitants, who maintain relationships on the “personal level”. The rests of the inhabitants have only occasional and incidental contact with their foreign neighbours.

3.3 National identity and European integration

Bunčák & Piscová (2000) discuss the history modern Slovak national identity construction. They argue that the “pan Slavic” element of the Slovak national identity emphasised the incompatibility with the non-Slavic, Magyar-Hungarian identity (p. 293). They suggest that nowadays it is easier in Slovakia to accept multiethnic identities and that the European integration is a challenge to overcome this traditional barrier between Hungarian and Slovak national cultures (ibid). They also put that as in the whole Czechoslovakia, the idea of Central Europeanism has never become influential in Slovakia and no particular Central European identity appeared, because it was too tightly linked with the Austro-Hungarian Empire that was antimony of democratic Europeanism in the opinion of Slovaks. However, the question of a relation towards Europe and European institutions as well as of Slovakia entering the EU has become a part of the political fight in Slovakia already in 1990.

The authors (ibid) illustrate the attitudes towards Europe with the results of representative surveys carried out in Slovakia in 1991 and 1999. The opinion that a unified Europe is a way to protect one's national identity and national economic interests was dominant in both years. Only about 8% of people in Slovakia thought that a unified Europe endangers national identities. The number of people who were very enthusiastic about the protective role of the EU for national identity and economic interests visibly increased form 1991 to 1999. For younger people, the EU often had a more positive image than for older people. The number of persons having a positive image of EU increased until the end of the 1990' approximately from 30-35% to over 40%. On the other hand,
the number of persons having a negative image of the EU stayed at a constant level of 7-9%.

IV. CITIZENSHIP

4.1 Perception of the economic changes

An international research examined adolescents' perceptions of the economic changes and the justice of the new “social contract” in Hungary, Bulgaria and Czech Republic (Macek, Flanagan, Gallay, Kostron, Botcheva & Csapo, 1998). It was conducted in 1995 among high school students (aged 12-14 and 15-18) who were presented with a list of Likert-type items. The participants were children during an era of a state controlled economy but were teenagers when market mechanisms, providing more autonomy but less security, were introduced.

The responses differed significantly according to age, gender, social class, value orientation and country. The Czechs were the most positive in their assessment of costs of the social change, while the Bulgarians were the most negative. Girls were more sensitive to increased economic disparity than boys were. Values were even more important than gender in predicting perceptions of increasing economic disparities: whilst youth who endorsed a strong social welfare role for the state were more likely to feel that economic disparities were increasing, liberal views were related to beliefs in the efficacy of individual initiative and hard work. Perhaps because of the apparent success of market reforms in the Czech Republic at the time, the Czechs perceived the lowest levels of economic disparity.

In all three countries youth from better-educated families felt that their communities were less caring and cohesive places. Across all countries as youth got older, they were less likely to believe in the value of initiative. The Czechs were the most optimistic of all in the assessment of their own future possibilities. According to the authors, one issue that should be of concern is the perception by young people that their communities are not caring places. While this might be a natural response of adolescents to a time of turmoil, if it represents a significant change in these societies, it might be a danger for social stability and civil society.

4.2 Civic culture

Klicperová, Feierabend & Hofstetter (1997) used Q-factor analysis of “civic culture” in a sample of Czech, Hungarian and American university students. Contrary to the
hypothesis, the Czechs exhibited a robust civic culture (Cf. Klicperová, 1997) and formed, together with a half of American students, the "civic" factor of "participative and loyal" political culture. Whilst Americans were stronger in its participative component (active involvement in political issues), Czechs were stronger in its loyal component (interest in and loyalty to the civic principles and virtues). On the other hand, the majority of Hungarian presented a relatively weak civic culture. Although a number of phenomena in post-communist countries indicate the existence of a “post-communist syndrome” – corruption, learned helplessness and ethnic nationalism (Klicperová, 1998), this research failed to support its existence. The participants perhaps belonged to the strata that typically favoured transition and might have been the least affected by the post-communist syndrome: they were young and educated people, residents of large cities, high achievers and represented future elite.

Jantočšiaková (1996) realised the same research with Slovak students. In comparison with the above samples, the Slovaks manifested strong alienation from the state and passive discontent. In fact, the data were collected during the period of the Mečiar government (1994 –1998) that put Slovakia into political isolation. Many people, especially the young generation, were deeply deceived by this situation and were rather pessimistic about the country's future.

4.3 Roots of citizenship

The social contract study (Flanagan, Jonsson, Botcheva, Csapo, Bowes, Macek, Averina & Sheblanova, 1999) focused on the roots of citizenship and the ways young people develop a commitment to the commonwealth. The authors argue that engagement in the voluntary sector helps young people to develop an understanding of themselves as civic actors. The findings are based on a survey of more than 5600 12-19 years olds from 7 countries (Australia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Russia, Sweden and the US). There seems to be a universal function of service in fostering a civic ethic and integrating youth into the broader polity. Whilst in the US the service connotes charitable work that compensates for the shortfalls of the private and public sectors, during the Soviet era in Central and East Europe, the voluntarily sector functioned as one of the few ”free spaces” for expressing political opposition (ibid, p.151).

4.4 Meanings of “the individual” and ”community”
Moodie, Marková, Farr & Plichtová (1997) examined meanings of the terms “individual”, “community” and “local community” in Slovakia and in Scotland, in participants aged 18-23 and 40-45. For Scots but not for Slovaks, the concept “local community” evoked positive associations and was perceived as meaningful and positive. The authors argue that local attachments and loyalties were destroyed in Slovakia during communism. In the semantic space of the Slovak sample, “the individual” and the “local community” were integral parts of two distinct clusters of political values – democracy and dictatorship. Furthermore, Slovak associations to “the individual” referred also to “loneliness” and “isolation”. However, for the Scots, the individual was associated with the self and with a sense of agency.

4.5 Social representations of democracy

Czech and Slovak samples (18-23, 40-45) were compared according to social representations of the concept of democracy (Tyrlík, Macek & Plichtová, 1998; cf. also Plichtová & Hrabovská, 1992). The respondents rated on scales different concepts according to the fact if these concepts help to explain the term of democracy or not. After they rated on five-point scales their degree of satisfaction with changes in various parts of social life.

The concepts of private security, fraternity and profit were more emphasised by older Czechs and young Slovaks. The concepts of public interest, independent decision-making and freedom were more emphasised by young Czechs and older Slovaks. Both Czech and Slovak participants of lower education emphasised the relation between democracy and nation and Czech/Slovak nationality. The participants with higher education stressed close relation between democracy and the following issues: the individual, political parties, personal responsibility, opposition, private security, public opinion, minority rights and independent decision making, etc.

4.6 Representations of individual rights and basic human rights

Plichtová & Štulrajter (2001) studied how the youth considers the privacy, the individual rights and responsibilities. Discussions of 8 focus groups (aged 16-18 and 19-24) on the problem how to stop spreading HIV/AIDS while preserving medical confidentiality were analysed. Two main types of conceptualisation of responsibility were identified: the authoritarian and the autonomous one. The authors argue that the authoritarian conception of responsibility still dominates even among educated youth, probably due to prevailing practices both in the public and in the private spheres. The language for
expression of the autonomous responsibility and protection of the individual rights was less
developed than the language for the authoritarian responsibility and the students used only a
very limited repertoire of arguments for the individual rights' recognition. Plichtová (2001)
also compared the representations of responsibility and rights of patients and doctors in
discussions of Scottish and Slovak students. While the Scots understood the responsibility
in the terms of individual choice and rights, the Slovak spoke about the responsibility
in the terms of the duties towards someone else.

Macek, Osecká & Kostroň (1997) studied the representations of the basic human
rights in the Czech Republic. Over 400 Czech university students (19-23 years old) rated the
articles of the Declaration of Human Rights on various scales, according to their degree of
understanding, personal relevance, consequences for individual responsibility, for
government, political parties, etc. The results showed, among other, that the students
consider that the government and the political parties are likely to be more effective
than individuals in enforcing respect for these basic human rights.

4.7 Voting patterns in Slovak Republic

The Slovak sociologist Krivý (1999) showed in several studies that while people with
higher education manifest stronger support for democratic political principles, people with
lower education are more likely to support the antidemocratic political forces. The 1998
parliamentary elections represented a decisive moment for the future integration of Slovakia
into Euro-Atlantic structures. Approximately 380,000 first-time voters played a crucial role
in these elections and were mobilised by a huge get out and vote campaign organised by
numerous NGO’s.

At that time, the young generation had a very critical attitude towards politics and
politicians: as many as 85% of the first time voters in 1998 agreed with the opinion “politics
is dirty” (ibid). In June–July 1998, 45 % of first time voters were generally not interested in
politics against 22% generally interested. Only 17% considered that their vote will contribute
to significant changes and 33% were of opinion that their votes don’t have any weight
(Gyárfášová, Kúska & Velšic, 1999).

The results of the elections showed that the first time voters did not vote in the
same way as their parents' and grandparents' generation (ibid). Only 11% of first-time
voters voted for the governing coalition (HZDS) that brought Slovakia into political
isolation. 30% voted for the Slovak democratic coalition of opposition political parties
(SDK). 18% of first-time voters voted for the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL), 13% for
the Slovak National Party (SNS) and 8% for the Party of Hungarian Coalition (SMK). The preference for parties representing democratic political principles was thus predominant in young people (Gyárfášová, et al., 1999).

In 1998, cca 65-70% of young people from 18 to 25 professed democratic political principles against only a 5% of those who professed undemocratic principles. The SDK first-time voters stated that the main reason why they voted for is that “Slovakia needs a change” (the electoral campaign of the party was based on this slogan). On the other hand, the SNS first-time voters wanted to “protect the interest of Slovaks”. Finally, the SMK electorate reported that this party best defends their interest – they voted mainly on the ethnical principle (ibid).

Moreover, the first time voters did not identify with values of paternalism, egalitarianism, isolationism, authoritarianism and Anti-Westernism. These were more endorsed by the age groups of 40-49, 50-59 and 60 years old. However, the first-time voters just like their parents and grandparents had relatively high scores for ethnic intolerance (ibid).

4.7 Values of Slovak teachers and university students

The research was realised in 1991/2 and in 1997 with the Slovak version of the Schwartz Standard Values Survey (Bianchi, 1998; Schwartz, Bardi & Bianchi, 2000). In comparison with their West-European counterparts, Slovak teachers and students scored lower in the importance of “autonomy” and “egalitarianism” – they considered in a lesser extent that the individual responsibility could contribute to the well being of the society. On the other hand, the Slovaks were more “conservative” and scored higher in “hierarchy” – they considered the ascribed social roles as important and preferred to maintain the existing social structure. However, there was no significant difference in the importance of the value of “harmony” (avoidance of interpersonal conflicts and adaptation to the environment without any attempt to change it) between Slovak and West-European teachers and students (ibid).

V. GENDER IDENTITY

The psychological research in gender identity has been rare in Slovak and Czech Republics (Maxianová, 1999). The few theoretical studies discussed applications of gender studies in the family therapy (Gjuričová, 1991), social constructivist and feminist perspectives on gender identity formation (Baumgartner, 1997) or gender stereotypes in adolescence (Macek, 1998), etc. The main themes studied empirically were the intellect
differences in men and women (1970s), the differences in social behaviour (1970s), identity formation and the role of age (Bačová & Mikulášková, 1999), gender and socio-historical conditions (Bačová, 1997a) and pro-social behaviour (Kusá, 1990). Several studies were conducted in the Czech Republic on economic stress in the post-communist transformation, studying the vulnerability to stress according to age and gender (Pechačová, Hraba & Lorenz, 1996; Šolcová, 1996; Hraba, Lorenz, Lee & Pechačová, 1995).

Bačová (1997a) tested if there were any differences in identity of men and women in three periods of adulthood. The differences between men and women were most pronounced in the early period of adulthood (20-25). **Young women contrary to young men, identified significantly more with humans, family, neighbours, they defined themselves as more tolerant and longing for a secure life.** The factors influencing identity forming such as age, social and historical conditions, social norms and ideologies linked to gender were discussed.

**SUMMARY**

To sum up, the following main findings of the social psychology research on identities in the Czech and Slovak republics can be cited.

The researches investigating the impact of age on identification with macro-social formations and asocial roles showed that the oldest generation of Slovaks expressed stronger identification with a village/town, region, nation and the Slovak Republic, whilst the youngest generation identified more with larger social formations such as Europe. Young people also identified more than the generation of their parents and grandparents with the role of a good expert, they wanted to travel and have an active and exciting life. But family membership, parenthood and expertise were found to be “universal” or “age independent” identities. The researches investigating the impact of educational level on identification with macro-social formations showed that participants having elementary education identified the most strongly with their village/town and the Slovak Republic, whilst the participants having a university degree identified the most strongly with Central Europe and Europe.

The findings of several studies indicate that national minorities in the Czech and Slovak republics consider their mother tongue as the most important aspect of their ethnic identity, differentiating them from other ethnic groups. The mother tongue is perceived as a value that should be preserved in the integrated Europe.

The difference in perception and meaning of minority and ethnicity related political concepts in different is also a finding to be taken into consideration were
Whilst Slovak students in 1998 evaluated the national identity positively, they strongly differentiated between national identity and nationalism. In spite of the preference of the liberal principles in economics and politics, the nation and national identity were understood mostly in the ethnic sense.

In comparison with Bulgarian and Hungarian youth, the Czechs were the most positive in the assessment of costs and benefits of the social change. The Czechs were the most optimistic of all in the assessment of their own future possibilities.

Moreover, the Czechs exhibited a robust civic culture. In comparison with the young Czechs, the Slovaks manifested strong alienation from the state and passive discontent. As the civil society in Slovakia has considerably evolved in the last 5 years, this finding would most probably not be reproduced.

In the mid-nineties, the term “local community” did not evoke positive associations for Slovaks and their associations to the term “the individual” referred to ”loneliness” and ”isolation”. The Slovaks did not understand the concept of responsibility in terms of individual choice and individual rights, but in terms of duties towards someone else. The Czech students considered that the government and the political parties were more effective than individuals in enforcing respect for the basic human rights.

The majority of empirical research on national and ethnic identities and citizenship cited above were realised between 1993-1998, a period in which Slovak and Czech republics had to deal with simultaneously independence as new nation states and with the ongoing transition toward market economy. Moreover, this period was politically controversial for Slovakia because of the governing elites politics. Since 1998, the interest of Slovak researchers in national and ethnic identities has decreased. The same has happened in the media, where the discourse about nation, national identity and a newly independent state has been replaced by the discourse about the European Union. However, this discourse is economics and politics centred and almost no attention is paid to what Europe means in terms of culture, values and traditions.

We expect that the interest of our social psychologists in national and ethnic identity will re-emerge soon, but in a new context – the context of EU integration of Slovak and Czech republics and of construction of a supranational European identity. We hope that it will be able to shed some light on the issues, which are not taken into consideration by Czech and Slovak politicians and media.

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