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## Comparison of selected aspects of the family – past and present

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Wychowanie w Rodzinie 11, 43-49

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2015

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.



„Wychowanie w Rodzinie” t. XI (1/2015)

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nadesłany: 23.09.2014 r. – przyjęty: 16.06.2015 r.

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## **Comparison of selected aspects of the family – past and present**

Porównanie wybranych aspektów rodziny  
– obecnie i w przeszłości

### **Streszczenie**

Rodzina jest podstawową komórką wszystkich społeczeństw i dlatego też jest kluczowym elementem w powstawaniu i istnieniu wszystkich państw na świecie. Na początku XXI wieku wystąpił w sposób znacznie bardziej oczywisty niż kiedykolwiek wcześniej kryzys rodziny, charakteryzujący się niskim zainteresowaniem państwa sytuacją rodzin i wysokim współczynnikiem rozwodów wśród młodych małżeństw. Negatywne zjawiska wpływające na życie rodzin w Republice Słowackiej to niska pozycja społeczna i status ekonomiczny ludności, coraz częstsze zażywanie narkotyków i leków psychotropowych, wyjazdy zarobkowe na terenie Słowacji i za granicą, jak również stopniowe oddalanie się młodych małżeństw od rodziców i dziadków. Jeśli podczas tego kryzysu jednostki społeczne naruszały harmonię i zasady tradycyjnej moralności i etyki, możemy mówić o początkach przemocy i wielu poważnych konfliktów. W tym artykule omówiono sytuację rodziny biorąc pod uwagę podstawowe zagadnienia. Zaprezentowano również opisowe i interpretatywne analizy rodzin harmonijnych, nieharmonijnych, jak również przyjaciół rodzin i ich funkcjonalności. Dalej kładzie się nacisk

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na solidarność międzypokoleniową w jednostkach społecznych, która to jest konieczna, aby utrzymać i rozwijać poczucie wspólnoty. Na końcu dodać należy, że mamy obecnie do czynienia z wielorakimi spojrzeniami na rodzinę, w tym regulację prawną i społeczną sytuacji związków homoseksualnych. Zauważyć należy, że w słowackim społeczeństwie przewagę ma tradycyjna wizja rodziny.

**Słowa kluczowe:** rodzina, seniorzy, solidarność międzypokoleniowa, tradycyjny rodzina tradycyjna, rodzina współczesna, rodzina postmodernistyczna.

### Abstract

The family is the basic cell of every society and is therefore a key element in the creation and existence of every state across the world. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, more than ever the institution of the family is in crisis, characterized by a particularly low interest in the state of marriage and a high divorce rate among young couples. The main negative elements acting on the existence of families in the Slovak Republic include in particular the low social and economic status of the population, the expansion of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, some family members moving to work elsewhere in Slovakia or abroad and also the gradual drifting apart of young families from parents and grandparents. If the crisis of social units has violated the harmony and adjourned original morality and ethics, we can look at the initial violence and many serious conflicts. In this paper we deal with the family in terms of key features. Subsequently, we analyze the harmonious family, the disharmonic family, friends and functionality. Further emphasis is on intergenerational solidarity in the social unit, which is essential to maintain and develop the company. Finally, it should be added that at present there are different views on the form of the family, including social and legislative form of homosexual social units. It should be noted that in the Slovak society the dominant view is on maintaining the traditional family.

**Keywords:** family, elderly population, intergenerational solidarity, traditional family, modern family, postmodern family.

Family already existed in traditional society, its existence and functioning are justified in modern times and are also justified in the postmodern era. The modern age is affected by industrialization and urbanization. Cultural revolution, globalization and new economic division of the world is typical of postmodern times. In connection with this, many experts define postmodern family as the traditional family and its friends<sup>1</sup>.

As for the function of the family, there are a variety of different views by many experts. Family function can be understood from two angles, both in terms of the tasks to perform to the company and in terms of the tasks to their own fam-

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<sup>1</sup> O. Matoušek, *Rodina jako instituce a vztahová síť*, Sociologické nakladatelství, Praha 1993.

ily members. In the literature we can meet the different classifications of family functions; often shown by the following functions performed by the family<sup>2</sup>.

**Table 1.** Family Features

**Tabela 1.** Cechy rodziny

<b>1. reproductive function</b>	— gives new members not only to their own group, but also to the whole society;
<b>2. biological function of protection</b>	— provides daily services (food, keeping the apartment clean, clothing) takes care of that family member who can not take care of itself;
<b>3. socializing function</b>	— is reflected not only in relation to children, which, due to the fact that growing up in the family, they become members of society, but also in relation to her husband, as the process of their adaptation to marriage is a process of socializing;
<b>4. psycho function</b>	— gives members a sense of stabilization, security, emotional stability, the possibility of emotional exchanges, as well as conditions for personal development. Performance of this function strengthens family mental health of society;
<b>5. educational function</b>	— in relation to children meet family educational function, a forming their personalities;
<b>6. production function</b>	— source of workers and multiplies its creative and productive forces.

Source: Ľ Gáborová, Z. Gáborová, *Človek v sociálnom kontexte*, LANA, Prešov 2007, 172 p., p. 110; Ľ Kráľová, *Sociálne inštitúcie*, KM-Systém, Prešov 2007, 254 p.

Žródło: Ľ Gáborová, Z. Gáborová, *Človek v sociálnom kontexte*, LANA, Prešov 2007, 172 s., s. 110; Ľ Kráľová, *Sociálne inštitúcie*, KM-Systém, Prešov 2007, 254 s.

Plávková considers a harmonious family as:

- One which lives an active life and enhances the activity of individual members in overcoming various difficulties;
- Family members cope successfully with the completion of their tasks;
- Provides the necessary care and education;
- No major disruptions and difficulties;
- All members have a sense of family happiness;
- Between family members there is understanding, mutual support, trust, good family atmosphere and there<sup>3</sup> are evenly balanced emotional relationships.

Talking between family members and their mutual communication is called interaction. According Plávková<sup>4</sup> we know in terms of family functioning and its disorders in relation to child functional family, troubled family, a dysfunctional family and friends and functionally.

<sup>2</sup> Ľ. Gáborová, Z. Gáborová, *Človek v sociálnom kontexte*, LANA, Prešov 2007.

<sup>3</sup> O. Plávková, *Úvod do sociológie*, EU, Bratislava 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem.

Levická<sup>5</sup> emphasizes that the dysfunctional family is characterized by not addressing, mutual accusations, improper communication, unclear competencies and rules. Personal identity is stifled here at the expense of family identity. Family is failing in several areas, namely biological, educational, economic and emotional. Regarding the afunctional family, the family ceases having failed to fulfill their tasks. Education and also the health of children are at risk, children are placed in foster families.

## Family history

Family in the past had various forms in different cultures of the world. Families were often large networks of assistance to relatives, many fewer people were in old age and usually older people were self-sufficient. Generally, the family held their parents and elders in high esteem and showed them support and solidarity. At present, multigenerational families tend to be viewed as something to survive. However, non multigenerational families are important. Hegyi also points out that multigenerational families generally waned during the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The company always lived side by side for several generations that should live in harmony and understanding the role of his life. One of the ideas of the four-generation companies by Hegyi<sup>6</sup> is as follows:

- Generation of young: their rights and responsibilities related to their professional training and the development of an independent and responsible personality;
- Generation of economic productivity and biological reproduction: their rights and obligations arising from participation in the labour market;
- Generation of young retirees: they have the right and obligation usually to retire from the labour market and prepare for the life phase focused on autonomy and self-determination. They are fully integrated into society;
- Generation of the old: Specific characteristics not age, but disabilities, which prevent them from autonomous actions. This group has the right to the solidarity of society, which gives them the possibility of a decent final phase of life.

## The family currently

Solidarity between generations is a key phenomenon of economic, financial and social systems in Europe. Solidarity is a key condition for social cohesion

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<sup>5</sup> J. Levická, *Sociálna práca s rodinou*, Mosty a Fakulta zdravotníctva a sociálnej práce TU, Trnava 2004.

<sup>6</sup> L. Hegyi, *Sociálna gerontológia*, Herba, Bratislava 2012.

and inclusion<sup>7</sup>. Current trends in the family, according to Tamášová<sup>8</sup>, mainly include changes in families and households. Nevertheless, still prevalent is the traditional (nuclear) form. Families need to focus on the species diversity of family forms, family patterns and reproduction. The family has long been regarded as a stable and essentially unchanging institution. Like other social institutions, the family is changing. The institution of the family in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has just been exposed to a challenge to its traditional form and has undergone changes. Tamášová and Ustaníková<sup>9</sup> state that the social phenomenon referred to as the second demographic transition is characterized by a change from the traditional family and marriage with relatively early births per family to where marriages put off childbirth, and their number is declining sharply. There is also an increased number of single-parent families and a decreased average size of families and households. There is a growing aging population and an increased loneliness of women. Demographic development shows that the population is aging. The aging population is a global problem. Hetteš<sup>10</sup> states that families are becoming weaker and there are increasingly fewer multigenerational families. What is more, the generational gap is widening. This pertains particularly to the Roma communities in the Slovak Republic. For the Roma family is the most important and most beautiful thing in life and it is common for a family to consist of 9 to 14 members. All members of a Roma family have high esteem for their parents. If a family member dies, they organize big celebrations in their honour<sup>11</sup>. Horváth<sup>12</sup> points out that the primary object of social policy is the family in its classic form. „Family status is given current validity by the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, in particular in its Article 41, the fifth section (cultural, social and economic rights) of Title II (fundamental and human rights). Under the Basic Law marriage, parenthood and family are protected by law. Special care is given to women during pregnancy. Children who are born within marriage and outside have the same rights. Minors may be separated from their parents only through a court under the Act. Parents caring for children are entitled to assistance from the State”<sup>13</sup> Children’s rights in 1989 adopted the UN

<sup>7</sup> M. Hetteš, *Starnutie spoločnosti*, VŠZ a SP sv. Alžbety, Bratislava 2011.

<sup>8</sup> V. Tamášová, *Teória a prax rodinnej edukácie*, Axima, Bratislava 2007.

<sup>9</sup> V. Tamášová, L. Ustaníková, *Rodina na Slovensku a v Európskej únii*, [in:] *Kvalita života v centre pozornosti z výskumných projektov*, OZ V4, Bratislava 2005, p. 290.

<sup>10</sup> M. Hetteš, *Starnutie spoločnosti...*, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> More: K. Janas, *Perzekúcie Rómov v Slovenskej republike (1939–1945)*. 1. vyd. Ústav pamäti národa, Bratislava 2010.

<sup>12</sup> P. Horváth, *Sociálna politika v agende politických strán*, [in:] O. Bočáková, A. Tomašíková, *Aktuálne otázky politiky*. Zborník príspevkov z medzinárodnej konferencie konanej dňa 4. februára 2011, Trenčianska univerzita Alexandra Dubčeka v Trenčíne, Trenčín 2011, p. 28–29.

<sup>13</sup> (Article 41 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic).

Convention on the Rights of the Child, which integrates all categories of human rights: civil, political, social and cultural<sup>14</sup>.

## Discussion

Žiaková<sup>15</sup> writes that the current family is located halfway between the traditional family and a modern family. It has found itself in a transitional phase between a company recognized as one the general norms of family life with the pluralist model, in which a diversity of standards make legitimate, even desirable.

By Dvořáčková<sup>16</sup> technological developments make it possible to better reconcile family and professional life. Maintaining people in employment will depend on job quality and the working environment, by reducing accidents and improving the health of the workers, especially the oldest. Policies of European countries support the transition to a knowledge based society which promotes the modernization of work organization, the determination of lifelong learning strategies, the quality of the working environment, active aging, and in particular an increase in the average exit age from the labour market. The importance of these policies reinforce the demographic changes and have raised these questions: How to facilitate the involvement of young people, young families to active life and give them confidence that they can raise children to learn and adapt their skills to the requirements of the labour market? How to enable older people who still want to work to work? How to meet the specific needs of each age group at work? Mankind is an aging society, with their friends, neighbours, family members. Good intergenerational relations are important elements of active aging.

## Conclusion

Opinions vary on the family and are constantly changing. But we must remember that the family will continue to be a fundamental unit of society, the fundamental pillar of civilization.

The authors make no claim to having exhausted the issue. The role of this paper is to outline selected aspects of the family in the present and in the past, and further explorations into the subject need to be made in the future.

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<sup>14</sup> D. Kubičková, *Týranie detí ako dôsledok zlyhania ľudskosti*, [in:] O. Bočáková (eds), *Nové trendy, smerovania a vízie v treťom tisícročí (právno-bezpečnostné atribúty)*, Trenčianska univerzita Alexandra Dubčeka v Trenčíne, Trenčín 2013, p. 120.

<sup>15</sup> E. Žiaková, *Sociálna práca – teoretické východiská a praktické kontexty*, UPJŠ, Košice 2012.

<sup>16</sup> D. Dvořáčková, *Medzigenerační solidarita*, [in:] *Vol'nočasové aktivity pro seniory*, Grada, Praha 2013.

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