

Fifteen years after: Shifts in Czech adolescents' perceptions of family, school and society

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Abstract

Families and schools are traditionally seen as substantial socialization agents forming adolescents' social values and their views of society (Zukin et al., 2006). Special attention is paid to the question whether the relative importance of these influences remains stable in times of major social changes (Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2005). In this study, two different generations of Czech middle adolescents are compared: (a) the “post-totalitarian“ generation that grew up in the last decade of the communist regime and entered adolescence during the time of rapid political and socioeconomic changes (data collected in 1995), and (b) the current generation without personal experience with the communist regime, raised in a stable democratic society (data collected in 2010). Both groups of participants (total $n = 2,103$, aged from 14 to 17) were administered an identical questionnaire. First, we examined the changes in adolescents' perceptions and evaluations of the society over the last 15 years. Today's adolescents perceive society more as a community and their future orientations are more focused on materialistic and less on environmental values. While the emotional relationship between the children and parents remains the same, adolescents learn a somewhat different message in the family, emphasizing self-reliance. School environment is perceived more as positive and engaging than 15 years ago. Second, we predicted adolescents' social views and values from their assessment of family and school environment. Our results show that the effect of parental values on adolescents' value orientations is higher in the current generation. Positive school environment contributes to the development of socially responsible orientations despite the changes in society.

Keywords: social change, value orientations, perceptions of society, Czech adolescents, school engagement, family environment, normative beliefs

Fifteen years after: Shifts in Czech adolescents' perceptions of family, school and society

The fall of communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe at the end of the 1980s brought political, economic and social changes that markedly influenced the everyday life experience of people living in these countries. This radical social change can be considered a natural experiment affecting all groups in the population (Tomasik & Silbereisen, 2009). When analyzing its long-term consequences, it is important to bear in mind that social changes are extremely complex phenomena, occurring on several different levels and in many specific contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Flanagan, 1995; Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2005). Thus, we can study social changes from different points of view. Among them, the individual-level analysis, demonstrating the direct influence of social change on the individuals, is one of the most preferable ones. It provides us a valuable insight into how people interpret the changes and what they expect from the future development. This paper takes the individual-level perspective and asks how the opinions on the society and value orientations have changed over the last fifteen years since the early post-transition period. Specifically, we focus on young people in middle and late adolescence, in the process of acquiring their views on the society and developing their value orientations.

After the Fall of the Totalitarian System: Cultural and Macro-social Influences

Although there is a substantial evidence that the post-communist transition affected adolescents' values, interpretation of relevant political issues and social order, perceptions and evaluations of social welfare, family life, or activities (e.g. Bowes, Chalmers, & Flanagan, 1997; Flanagan et al., 1999; 2003; Flanagan, Bowes, Jonsson, Csapo, & Sheblanova, 1998; Krappmann, Uhlendorf, & Oswald, 1999; Macek et al., 1998; Noack, 1999;), it is necessary to distinguish among several intertwined effects. On one hand, young people in the generation that personally experienced the revolutionary events reported criticism in regard to the pre-revolutionary

situation, but also a lot of positive feelings regarding change, and, especially, the high level of personal enthusiasm regarding their future (Macek & Kostroň, 1996; Macek et al., 1998). In this respect, the change had an immediate short-term effect on young people's social perceptions and future orientations. On the other hand, we need also consider the paradox of democratic revolutions given by the prolonged influence of totalitarian experience. After the fall of communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe, changes at the socio-psychological levels were much slower than those at the political-economic level (Marková, 2004; Macek & Marková, 2004). As empirical studies on transformation processes in post-communist countries show, past experiences from the previous regime survive in the collective memory (namely that of families) for at least one generation. Regarding these collective and personal experiences, the concept of post-communist syndrome was introduced. It includes a lack of civic culture, division between public and private morality, reverence for paternalism, high level of social security etc. (Klicperová, Feierabend, & Hofstetter, 1997; Klicperová-Baker et al., 2007). Since these experiences are maintained through social interactions and are a part of inter-connected systems of communication, ideologies, songs, myths, collective memories and traditions, they are highly resistant to change (Macek & Marková, 2004; Marková et al., 1998; Plichtová & Erös, 1997). From this perspective, the social change has also its long-term effects that become apparent rather in later generations.

Therefore, when studying the effects of social change on adolescents, we have to consider both short-term and long-term effects. Two competing hypotheses can be drawn from these considerations. Either we can assume that the effect of the social change on social perceptions and values is stronger for the first post-revolutionary generation as a result of the direct revolutionary (or early post-revolutionary) experience; or we can expect the shifts rather in the next generations because the post-communist syndrome has to fade away before the effect of the change becomes

evident. Since such study cannot be based only on one-time evaluation, it is useful to conduct a cohort comparison of samples gathered at different historical points (see Silbereisen, 2005).

Besides the effects of social change, the comparison of the generations has to reflect also the macro-structural trends and changes relevant for everyday life experiences of adolescents in whole Europe (Mortimer & Larson, 2002; Tomasik & Silbereisen, 2009). First, the most immediate consequences stem from new informational technologies (mobiles, computers) and communication virtual networks (Anderson, 2002; Šmahel, 2008). The second remarkable change is related to new demographic trends, above all aging of industrial societies and migration between societies (Fussel, 2003). Third, the contemporary industrial societies are characterized by a high level of diversity, in terms of individualization and plurality of life courses (Elder, 1998), value orientations (Stattin & Kerr, 2001; Tomasik & Silbereisen, 2009) and possibilities. This diversity extends the individual developmental pathways for adolescents from the more advantaged social environment, but it can bring restrictions for adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds (Mortimer & Larson, 2002).

Family and School Environment and Social Change

Social changes can influence not only adolescents' perceptions of the society and social values but also the way how these perceptions and values are developed. They are developed mainly from two environments – families and schools. Family experience can affect social perceptions and values in several ways. First, family locates a young person into a certain social position, determined mainly by parental education and socioeconomic status. This general life experience forms offspring's social perceptions and values, independently of actual parental orientations (Glass, Bengston, & Durnham, 1986; Vollebergh, Iedema, & Raaijmakers, 2001). Next, parents influence their children in a more direct way. Through mutual communication and observation of parental behavior, adolescents learn about parental stances on important social issues and get examples of model civic behavior. Moreover, parents can actively try to persuade

their children to accept some social views or encourage them to take part in some civic activities (Jennings, 2004; Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli Carpini, 2006; da Silva, Sanson, Smart, & Toumbourou, 2004; Westholm, 1999). At the same time, some parental effects can be rather implicit. For example, parenting styles can have an effect on young people's political alienation (Gniewosz, Noack, & Buhl, 2009), or can serve as a channel through which parents pass right-wing authoritarianism on their children (Peterson, Smirles, & Wentworth, 1997).

Another specific source of social experiences and values are school environments. For children they represent the first public formal institution where their participation is obligatory (Flanagan et al., 1998). School communities and classrooms serve as small “laboratories” where students learn how the society works. They are institutions of civic society where young people exercise their social competencies, some level of autonomy, and decision making.

Educational reforms bringing democratic teaching and relationships to schools and classrooms have become an important task for the new democracies. It was necessary to change not only some formal characteristics and a content of education but also the general philosophy of teaching. The passive perception of knowledge and information overload should be replaced by students' active, independent and creative performance, which, hopefully, would later lead to a self-responsible and mature civic and career behavior (Rabušicová, 1991).

The relevant research reflecting the role of school experiences on the development of adolescents' value orientation and civic attitudes does not still offer a perfectly consistent answer as to which specific aspects of the classroom climate are responsible for social perceptions and values formation. However, it seems that students' perceptions of teaching practices, classroom democracy or participative school culture may play an important role here (Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, & Gallay, 2007; Gniewosz, & Noack, 2008; Ichilov, 1991; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001; Torney-Purta, 2002).

Although family and school environments influence adolescents' social perceptions and value orientations, these effects are not unambiguously stable across different social conditions. In times of social or political change, the influences from outside the family can have a strong impact (Beck, & Jennings, 1991). Similarly, the strength of association between school experience and attitudes towards societal institutions is not the same for societies with different sociopolitical characteristics (Torney-Purta, Barber, & Richardson, 2004).

Transformational Period and Czech Adolescents

There are some typical features of the Czech society and important political, economic, and social events of the transitional period that frame the everyday life experiences of the post-revolutionary cohorts. In the early 1990s, former Czechoslovakia (and since 1993 the Czech Republic) was still a post-totalitarian society, which in many respects resembled, metaphorically, the period of adolescence. There was a “social moratorium” which offered a great opportunity for experimentation as the legal environment was extremely vague, and the tolerance for breaking social norms was high. Both the young and the older had to undergo the process of re-socialization, experiencing and managing more personal freedom and self-responsibility in the new democracy and liberal society. Many people had to rearrange their personal values and to choose new life goals and perspectives (Macek, 2011).

Among the post-communist countries, various research studies conducted in Czechoslovakia and later in the Czech Republic have systematically shown a high level of confidence and optimism during the first years of transformation (Macek & Marková, 2004). Also, adolescents saw new social and life conditions in a very positive way, providing them with wonderful personal opportunities and challenges (Macek & Kostroň, 1996; Macek et al., 1998).

However, society's perceptions and the public mood changed drastically during the second half of the 1990s. The economic crisis had a profoundly negative effect on the State budget and a lack of legal framework of privatization led to the restriction of rights of small

shareholders. General dissatisfaction with the political representation grew rapidly. Many Czechs became disappointed and less optimistic about the future than during the previous era (Macek & Marková, 2004; Linek, 2009).

Compared to the 1990s, the first decade of the new millennium can be metaphorically seen as emerging adulthood of the Czech society. The period of social moratorium was terminated, the Czech Republic joined “adults” in May 2004 when it became a full-fledged member of the European Union (Macek, Bejček, & Vaníčková, 2007). The unrealistic optimism and naive trust from the early 1990s was replaced by a more realistic view of the society. As empirical data show, a large part of the population presents considerable criticism of political elites and of the ways in which democracy works (Linek, 2009).

Generally speaking, the current generation of Czech adolescents grew up in a changing society when a lot of people (including their parents) experienced both: many new opportunities, positive expectations, individual freedom and challenges, improving standard of life and also a high level of social uncertainty, growing distrust toward politics and political institutions, a higher pressure on self-responsible behavior (Macek & Polášková, 2006). Whereas the post-totalitarian generation of Czech adolescents at the beginning of the 1990s perceived social changes in an very positive way, since those changes represented personal opportunities and challenges (getting a good education, the possibility to travel and live abroad, and political and ideological freedom), the current generations of adolescents are more apt to view the same conditions as ordinary attributes of everyday life.

Recent data also reveal that Czech adolescents at the turn of the twenty-first century are more similar to their Western European peers than they are to the former post-totalitarian Czech generation (Macek, 2011). They experience personal freedom, but at the same time must take more responsibility for themselves. The value of education, success, social prestige, emancipation, free time, and entertainment has grown considerably (Macek & Polášková, 2006). Similar trends

were found regarding materialistic and hedonistic value orientations (Sak & Saková, 2004). Most of young Czechs declare very liberal and tolerant beliefs and values (regarding drugs, abortion, and sexual freedom) and a large majority of them reports no religious beliefs at all. According to data from 2008, only about 18% of them consider themselves religious (Rabušic & Hamanová, 2009).

The Study on Adolescents' "Social Contract"

The development of social perceptions and values has been studied mainly under the label of "social contract". It is a metaphor used by C. Flanagan as a framework for examination of factors related to development of adolescents' civic commitment to the society where they live (Flanagan et al, 1998, 1999; Flanagan & Tucker, 1999). Based on the idea of varying social contract in different socio-political contexts, the project "Adolescents' interpretation of the Social contract" considered normative beliefs about society, actual perceptions and evaluations of society, public interest and activity, and preferred values among adolescents in four developing (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Russia) and three stable democracies (Australia, Sweden, and the United States). Data were collected via survey in large urban areas of each country in 1995. Considering the process of transformation of post-communist countries to new democracies, it was the time when the first effects of political, economical, and social changes could be evident in young people's everyday life (Macek et al., 1998; Flanagan et al., 2003).

However, when we wanted to generalize the results from the three post-communist countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Hungary), empirical findings did not offer a clear general picture of adolescents' attitudes toward market changes. In regard to the assessment of social changes, only one predictor had a significant effect in all the countries: young people who endorsed a strong social welfare role from the state were more likely to feel that social disparities were increasing. Furthermore, only liberal values are the other predictor that had a significant

impact in each of the three countries: as expected, adolescents preferring liberal values also felt that initiative would be rewarded (Macek et al., 1998).

The ambiguous results of this study strengthen the argument for a more specific and detailed analysis of each transitional democracy. Moreover, it became evident that family background (SES) and value orientations cannot themselves satisfactorily explain the perceptions of social changes or social order. In this respect, additional developmental sources need to be considered, for example parenting, family relationships, or school experience. Further, the comparison of the countries shortly after the democratic transition with the stable democracies can bring only approximate results concerning short- and long-term effects of the social change. A repeated measure of the same country at different time points can provide much convincing results here.

The Present Study

Considering the transformational period in Czech society after “velvet revolution” in the November 1989, this study aims to find whether there are any changes in the adolescents’ perceptions of society, their normative beliefs about society and relevant value orientations over this time period. As the next step, we look at the predictors of these perceptions from the domain of family and school environment.

Based on the previous considerations, we decided to focus on the comparison of two different generations (cohorts) of adolescents in one country. The first generation can be called “post-totalitarian“ and represents young people who grew up in the last decade of the communist regime and entered adolescence during the time of rapid political and socioeconomic changes. The second cohort represents the current generation with no personal experience with the communist regime. Data representing the first generation come from the “Adolescents’ interpretation of the Social contract” project, mentioned above. Specifically, our new reanalysis of

the Czech subsample is used. We compare this data with the new data representing the current generation of adolescents, collected for the purposes of this study.

The purpose of the comparison is mainly exploratory. The sheer amount of changes at all levels of a person's environment makes it difficult if not impossible to propose explicit hypotheses. Generally we expected that the inertia of socialist values and morals would slowly dissipate and thus today's adolescents would be more conservative or right-wing than their peers in 1995. With the Czech society becoming a normal society as opposed to transformational we expected the role of the family to stabilize and the influence of parents to increase (Beck & Jennings, 1991). We also expected that current generation would report higher levels of materialistic or hedonistic value orientations (Macek & Polášková, 2006; Rabušic & Hamanová, 2009; Sak & Saková, 2004). We controlled for the effect of gender because differences between males and females have tended to blur after social change in the Czech Republic. Similarly, adolescents' studying lower and higher secondary schools were differentiated due to possible age differences (Amadeo, Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Husfeldt, & Nikolova, 2002; Macek, Lacinová, & Polášková, 2011).

Method

Participants and Procedures

Our data comprise two samples from the region of South Moravia; one collected in 1995 (N=1127, 52% male) and the other from 2010 (N=976, 47% male). Both samples comprise two age cohorts – grade 8 (lower secondary school; mean age 14.6; 50% in 1995, 55% in 2010) and grade 10 (higher secondary school; mean age 17.1). The proportion of males does not significantly differ between grades both in 1995 and 2010, $\chi^2(1) = 1.56$ and 0.39 respectively. Respondents were administered a multi-page paper questionnaire comprising many items tapping their perceptions of the economy, local community, school, and their personal beliefs. In 2010, only a part of the 1995 questionnaire was administered.

Cluster sampling of school classes within South Moravian region was used in 1995, the questionnaires being administered in schools. Due to changes in the legislature and the ever-increasing amount of social research taking place in schools, it was not feasible to replicate the cluster sampling procedure of 1995 in 2010. Instead, a quota sampling (replicating age and educational structure of the 1995 sample) with individual administration at home was used. Data gathering was performed by the academic institution in 1995 and the professional research company in 2010. Overall, South Moravian region is constantly close to the national average in terms of basic socio-economic indicators such as gross domestic product or unemployment rate (Czech Statistical Office, 2012; 2013).

Measures

Parents' highest achieved education was measured on a three-category scale – lower secondary education (up to grade 9; compulsory in the Czech Republic), higher secondary education (high school, vocational school) and university education (bachelor degree or higher). Fathers' and mothers' education were summed into an indicator of parents' education. In only 1.4% families in 1995 (1.7% in 2010) both parents had no higher education than lower secondary.

Most families were with one or both parents with higher secondary education (50.8% resp. 72.0%). Parents' employment was measured by two summed dichotomous questions "*Does your mother/father have a job?*" Both parents had a job in 81% families in 1995 and in 77% in 2010. There were 1.9% and 1.4% families respectively with both jobless parents.

Perceptions of current society: The *equal opportunities* scale measured a belief that the liberal ideal of equal opportunities has been accomplished in the society (two items; e. g. *If a person is willing to work hard, they can make a good living. $r = .42$*) with respondents expressing their agreement on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 – certainly disagree to 5 – certainly agree (unless otherwise stated this response scale is used in all the subsequent items). The items were combined into a summation scale by means of averaging them. The three-item *caring community* scale tapped whether the society was perceived as resembling to the communitarian ideal of helping and caring community (e.g. *If there is someone in our community with a problem he/she may count on the help of other people.*; Cronbach's $\alpha = .70$).

Normative beliefs about society: The *economic equality* scale measured a belief that the society should be more egalitarian and that the welfare state should be promoted (ten items, e.g. *It is not right that there are poor and rich in the society. There should be more of equality.* Cronbach's $\alpha = .73$). The two-item *social welfare skepticism* scale tapped the worry that people tend to "slack" when the government provides for them (e.g. *If the state offers services for free people tend to get lazy/cheat. $r = .51$*). The *state non-responsibility* scale measured the belief that it is not the government, but the NGOs who should take care of the homeless (two items, e.g. *Homeless people should be taken care of by a church and charity organizations, not the state. $r = .54$*).

Perceptions of society structure. Respondents were shown five ordered diagrams representing the structures of different societies – welfare pyramids (Figure 1), and they were instructed: "*These five diagrams represent different types of societies. Please look at the diagrams*

and read the descriptions. Then answer the following questions regarding the Czech Republic.” In one extreme the diagram represented an elitist society with most people at the bottom of the society, almost none in the middle and some at the very top. In the other extreme there was a pyramid with very few people at the bottom, most people just below the top and still many people at the very top. Respondents marked, which diagram represents today’s Czech society, Czech society in 30 years, and an ideal for the Czech society (Macek & Kostrůň, 1996).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Value orientations: This section of the questionnaire measured how much some values or value orientations appear to be important for their future life. All value-orientation items were evaluated on a five-point scale from 1 – certainly unimportant to 5 – certainly important. *Social responsibility* value orientation of adolescents was measured on a five-item scale (e.g. *to do something useful for the society*; Cronbach’s $\alpha = .77$). *Materialistic* value-orientation scale included five items (e.g. *to make a lot of money*; Cronbach’s $\alpha = .76$). Five-item scale measured *environmental* value orientation of adolescents (e.g. *to do something to stop pollution*; Cronbach’s $\alpha = .81$). The scale of *self-development/education* value orientation was based on three items (e.g. *to develop your talents*; Cronbach’s $\alpha = .68$). Two items measured the *value of power or influence* for the respondent (e.g. *to influence the other people*; $r = .44$).

Family functioning: Four items were combined into a scale of how much the respondent’s parents brought him/her up to help others, perceive their needs and sympathize with them – *socially responsible parenting* (e.g. *Parents taught me to pay attention to the needs of others, not only to my own..* Cronbach’s $\alpha = .73$). A measure of how much respondents were brought up by their parents to rely on themselves was computed as a mean of another four items – *self-reliance parenting* (e.g. *Parents told me, that I should be independent a take care of myself in*

life. Cronbach's $\alpha = .59$). *Positive relationship with parents* and the rest of the primary family was measured by four items (e.g. *Our family always made many things together*. Cronbach's $\alpha = .54$). Two items asked about how much parents respect respondents' opinions – *mutual respect* (e.g. *If I give a good reason parents are willing to change their principles once in a while*. $r = .41$). The final two-item summation scale here is a measure of perceived *economic anxiety* experienced by the family (e.g. *My parents frequently worry how to pay bills*. $r = .22$).

School environment: *School engagement* was measured by an eight-item scale (e.g. *Students are proud of their school*. Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$). One item, originally intended to be part of the school engagement scale, appeared to be more independent, so we decided to use it as an individual scale. It measured the belief in teachers' believing that every student can learn when he or she really tries – *equal treatment*.

Results

Our findings are presented in two sections. First, there is the description of changes from 1995 to 2010 on the various scales. Second, there is a comparison of the generations through hierarchical regressions predicting perceptions of society, normative beliefs, and value orientations. Considering the type-I error inflation due to the number of statistical tests performed and the large sample size, the .01 level was chosen as the base for rejecting null hypotheses.

Changes in Adolescents' Assessments Between 1995 and 2010

For both cohorts separate descriptives for individual scales are presented in Table 1. Along with the descriptives inductive tests of the differences between cohorts, sexes and grades are provided (univariate ANOVAs). In most items and scales, the 2010 cohort showed a little higher variance in their responses, which may reflect the difference in the mode of administration. All computed scales have a full range from 1 to 5.

Insert Table 1 about here

Perceptions of current society. There appears to be a small increase in perceptions of the local society as a caring community over the 15 years with a small effect of grade with younger respondents being slightly more optimistic about the “communityness” of their local society. The equal opportunity scale shows no effect of generation, only a small effect of grade with younger respondents being slightly more optimistic (Table 1). The difference between younger and older respondents was much larger in 1995 (.3 pooled SD) than in 2010 (.01 pooled SD)

Normative beliefs about society. The support for economic equality has slightly decreased over the 15 years. There is also a small grade effect – the younger respondents hold these values more than the older ones – and a very small gender effect – girls hold social values more than boys. The distribution of this variable has one of the lowest SDs and is thus very narrow (kurtosis = 1.20). None of the variables in the model had significant effect on the social welfare scale. The state non-responsibility scale showed a small increase over the 15 years stable across the various subgroups (Table 1).

Welfare pyramids. In all three items asking about the respondents’ perception of the welfare composition of our society, there were substantial differences. Current generation describes our current society most often a pyramid with triangular shape with wide base and a pointy top (2nd most elitist, 35.7%) whereas 15 years ago the most frequent description was a symmetrical shape with most people in the middle and same amounts of people above and below this middle (2nd least elitist, 39.6%). Considering this item an ordinal scale of elitism of a society the shift towards elitism perceptions is large ($Md_{1995} = 3.0$, $Md_{2010} = 2.0$, Mann-Whitney $U = 386307$, $z = 11.8$, $p < .001$). Similar shift can be found in predictions of the society in 30 years in the future; again there is a large shift towards elitist perceptions ($Md_{1995} = 4.0$, $Md_{2010} = 3.0$, Mann-Whitney $U = 375424$, $z = 12.0$, $p < .001$). In both generations, the item asking about the ideal shape has its mode in the least elitist option with most people one step below the top (59.7% in

1995, 46.9% in 2010). However, in the medians there is the same shift towards seeing the ideal less often as the least elitist option ($Md_{1995} = 5.0$, $Md_{2010} = 4.0$, Mann-Whitney $U = 451389$, $z = 7.4$, $p < .001$).

Values. On the scale of social responsibility, there were only slight gender and grade differences with girls and younger adolescents adhering more to this set of values. Materialistic-value orientation scale showed a substantial increase over the 15 years stable across the various subgroups. There was a similarly stable decrease, although smaller in magnitude, on the scale of environmental value orientation. Both in 1995 and in 2010 younger respondents adhere score higher on this scale. This difference seems to get smaller over time but the interaction is non-significant. There appears to be a very small decrease over the time on the scale of self-development/education values. This value orientation is the most generally adhered to (means over 4 on a scale from 1 to 5) with girls reporting slightly higher scores. The scale of power as a value is stable over time, not affected by any of the factors (Table 1).

Family functioning. On the scale of social responsible parenting there appears to be no change over time with only a slight gender effect of girls being more led by their parent to social values. There is a small significant increase the scale of self-reliance parenting over the 15 years attributable mainly to the interaction with gender – while boys remained the same, girls self-reliance parenting increased by almost 1/3 pooled standard deviation. Again, there is no significant difference between 1995 and 2010 in the positive relationship with parents. There is a medium effect of grade with the younger feeling closer and more positive relationships with their family (age does not seem to contribute to this effect any more beyond its relationship with grade). Next, there is a small decrease over the 15 years on scale of mutual respect, stable across the various subgroups. A small increase in the level of economic anxiety perceived by the family is attributable mainly to the increase in the younger group of almost .3 pooled standard deviation; the older respondents remained without change on this scale (Table 1).

School engagement. School engagement appears to have substantially increased over the 15 years (Cohen $d = .63$). The increase was significantly higher for the older respondents than for the younger ones (Cohen $d = .93$ in the higher grade). On the other hand, there were no significant inter-generational differences on the scale of equal treatment (Table 1).

Predictions of Perceptions of the Society, Normative Beliefs, and Value Orientations

We expected that the effects of family and school on adolescents' social perceptions, normative beliefs, and value orientations would change over the 15 years. To assess these changes, we conducted several hierarchical multiple linear regression models predicting perceptions of economic equality, equal opportunities, caring community, social responsibility values, and materialistic values. Four blocks of predictors were entered into the models. We started with gender and grade as control variables. Next, we added socioeconomic characteristics of the family represented by the mean level of parental education and number of employed family members. Then, we entered adolescents' reports on family experience, namely close relationship with parents, self-reliance parenting, and socially responsible parenting. Finally, perceptions of school engagement and equal treatment by teachers were added. Since we aimed to capture changing effects of these predictors, two identical models for 1995 and 2010 generations were computed. Statistical significance of the difference between regression coefficients was tested by the procedure given by Sheskin (2004).

Equal opportunities. For both generations, family and school significantly predicted the perceptions of equal opportunities, even though the effects were small. The most obvious change was the increase in the family influence (increase from 2 to 7 % explained variance). While the effect of family was rather dubious in 1995, there was an apparent positive effect of close relationship and self-reliance parenting in 2010. The effect of school retained the same size but it was rather subtle for both generations (2 % explained variance). Last noticeable change regards the effect of parental education. Whereas the level of parental education had no effect in 1995, 15

year later adolescents with more educated parents perceived the society as more just in terms of equal opportunities.

Caring community. The patterns found for caring community perceptions were similar to those found for equal opportunities. Family influence was a significant but rather weak predictor in 1995, and its effect became stronger in 2010 (increase from 2 to 6 % in explained variance). In both generations, socially responsible parenting fostered the perception that the society was a caring community. School was a stable predictor for both generations (4 and 6 % in explained variance) with school engagement as the only significant predictor. On the contrary, there was a change in the effect of parental education. In 1995 sample, adolescents with lower educated parents tended to perceive the society more as a caring community, while this predictor had no effect in 2010.

Economic equality. Adolescents' support for economic equality was predicted mainly by family influences in both generations. Similar to previous social perceptions, the effect of family considerably increased between 1995 and 2010 (from 4 to 14 % in explained variance). The most powerful family predictor was socially responsible parenting but also a small positive effect of self-reliance parenting appeared in 2010. The effect of school was rather negligible in both generations (1 % of explained variance), except for a small effect of school engagement in 2010. Both in 1995 and 2010, higher parental education was associated with adolescents' lower support for economic equality.

Social responsibility values. Both in 1995 and 2010, the strongest predictor of socially responsible value orientation was family experience. Although parents had substantial influence on adolescents' social responsibility already in 1995, this effect was much stronger 15 years later (increase from 16 to 34 % in explained variance). The only influential factor among family influences was socially responsible parenting. Another significant predictor of social responsibility values was school. However, the effect of school was weaker compared to family,

and there was a decline in its strength for the 2010 generation (decrease from 8 to 4 % in explained variance). While the effect of school engagement remained relatively stable, equal treatment by teachers positively predicted social responsibility values only in 1995.

Materialistic values. The findings concerning materialistic value orientations did not substantially differ from socially responsible orientations. The strongest effect on materialism had family, namely self-reliance parenting. While the effect was rather modest in 1995, there was an evident increase in 2010 (increase from 3 to 13 % in explained variance). The effect of school was barely significant and weak, except for a negative effect of school engagement in 1995.

In sum, we found that the effect of family experience on young people's social perceptions, normative beliefs and value orientations became stronger during last 15 years. The shift was apparent for all outcome variables, but it was especially strong for value orientations and normative beliefs. Socially responsible parenting had positive effects on adolescents' socially responsible orientations, support for economic equality, and perceptions that the society was a caring community. Besides, self-reliance parenting positively predicted particularly materialistic value orientations. Both types of parenting have stronger impact in 2010 than 1995.

In contrast to family, the effect of school remained more stable across the generations. For both generations, school experience moderately enhanced the perceptions that the society offers equal opportunities and that it is a caring community. The effect of school on the development of socially responsible orientations declined during last 15 years. Support for economic equality and materialistic value orientations seemed to be influenced only very weakly by school in both generations. The effect of school was mostly transmitted through perceived school engagement.

Parental education had no effect on young people's value orientations. However, children of more educated parents perceived the society less as a caring community in 1995, perceived more equal opportunities in 2010, and supported less economic equality both in 1995 and 2010.

For both generations, there was no effect of parental employment on social perceptions, normative beliefs, or value orientations.

Discussion

Our findings suggest no growing disillusionment about democracy among young people. When we look at how both generations perceive the fulfillment of the democratic ideals in the society in terms of equal opportunities and caring community, there is no significant decrease. Nowadays, current adolescents perceive the society little more as a caring community than their counterparts from fifteen years ago. At the first sight, this can seem surprising as especially the late 1990s were characteristic of “democratic disenchantment” (Linek, 2009). Moreover, also other data show that the young Czechs’ interest in politics has been declining continuously in the last eighteen years (Rabušic & Hamanová, 2009). Yet it is necessary to point out here that it is an all-European trend and it matters predominantly how the interest in politics, or in other words, political participation, is defined (Fahmy, 2006).

On the other hand, the other empirical results reveal that in the last decade, the view of democracy and its values has been more or less stabilized in the Czech society (Linek, 2009). Even though the overall highly positive assessment of the democratic political system has been slightly undermined in the recent twenty years, it does not mean, in any case, a shift towards the opposite polarity of assessment. According to a number of indicators from other studies, it is more likely a more realistic view of the society (Houška, 2006; Rabušic & Hamanová, 2009).

While the perceptions of democracy have not shifted towards pessimism, the perceptions of the economic equality in the society offer a different picture. The current young people see the society as more elitist and unequal than the previous generation. It corresponds with the real process of economic and social stratification of the Czech society during the transformational period.

Since the communist regime was very egalitarian and based on the power of state, we could expect a strong endorsement of egalitarian and statist normative beliefs in 1995 and a subsequent decrease in the following fifteen years. Although we found such a shift in terms of lower support for economic equality and state responsibility for social services, the observed difference was rather small. One explanation might be that this general belief can be expected to have a substantial inertia and we might expect it to change only slowly (Klicperová et al., 1997; Macek & Marková, 2004). Alternatively, we can also assume that the expected shift took place and was consequently suppressed by other influences. The major public discourse in the first half of the 1990s might have reinforced the belief that the egalitarianism is not necessary because “the able can finally achieve”. Moreover, it should be also mentioned that individual freedom and the possibility of free self-advancement were perceived at that time as one of the greatest gains and one of the most important values brought to young Czechs by the revolution and democratic changes (Nash, 2005; Arnett, 2006). Fifteen years later, the disappointment of the second half of the 1990s (Linek, 2009) could have reversed the change in the direction of higher endorsement of social welfare principles. As a consequence of these two influences, no obvious change in adolescents' beliefs could be observed.

Regarding egalitarianism and statism, we suggested two competing hypotheses describing the direction of change. The first one reflected weakening of deeply rooted egalitarianism, the second one expected that people had turned excessively to the opposite immediately after the transition because of their extreme distrust in the former political regime, and they have slowly returned to moderate beliefs during the following years. As described in the previous paragraph, we found a shift from egalitarianism and statism towards lower trust in state-based welfare. Thus, the first hypothesis seems to be plausible, though the difference is rather small.

Although we argue that the generations are quite similar, there are some noticeable differences. One of them concerns value orientations. The current generation is definitely more

materialistic, which corresponds with other researches as well (Sak & Saková, 2004; Rabušic & Hamanová, 2009). There are probably only a few factors that would lead young people away from material values. On the other hand, there are a higher availability of consumables and higher acceptance of the admittance or expression of material aspirations. The higher materialism of the current generation is accompanied by a minor adherence to environmental values. This may reflect at least two trends. A more proximal explanation is that by the end of the totalitarian regime the local environment was very visibly polluted and youth ecological organizations were very popular with young people providing an alternative to state youth organizations. This popularity remained even after the revolution. A more distal explanation of this trend, yet related to the first one, is that environmental politics has joined the mainstream politics, the “establishment” so to say making its values less attractive to adolescents. Ecological issues and behavior have become a part of everyday life while their being informed and involved is relatively high (Štursová & Bocan, 2006).

Adolescents' evaluations of family functioning have not undergone any large changes in the last fifteen years according to our results. It is good to note that although there is a small increase in self-reliance parenting, the assessment of positive relationships with parents does not appear to be changed, which suggests that these aspects of family functioning do not exclude each other. Further, we found a relatively strong association between parenting and adolescents' social perceptions, normative beliefs and values (Vollebergh, Iedema, & Raaijmakers, 2001; ter Bogt, Meeus, Raaijmakers, & Vollebergh, 2001; Westholm, 1999). The most striking finding here is an obvious increase in the parental ability to influence adolescents' perceptions and values. This makes us deliberate whether the parental role in the process of their children's civic and political socialization has become considerably stronger. A plausible explanation is that the inter-generational transmission of the social orientation can be weakened in the times of rapid social changes (Beck & Jennings, 1991). Therefore, the influence of family is more evident for the

current generation. Considering the socioeconomic status of family, there was an effect of parental education on perceived opportunities only in the current generation. Once again, it can be justified by the post-revolution euphoria and the fact that in the early 1990s, society was not still so much economically stratified.

The evaluations of school engagement appear to be improving. This is consistent with the findings of Mareš (2007), who reported very similar results, as well as other study according to which adolescents' active participation at school has increased during the last decade (Houška, 2006). This may be due to the many changes introduced in the educational system, most of which are in the direction from unified centrally prescribed curriculum towards community managed schools with higher curricular variability both among schools and within schools (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 2001). Even though both lower secondary and higher secondary schools appear to profit from this trend as judged by students' evaluations of their environment the improvement in the evaluations is greater in higher secondary schools. It may be because older students appreciate this individuation more but also because higher secondary schools have undergone more changes. What is interesting in this context is that the belief that all students can learn regardless of their ability is now not more attributed to teachers than it was fifteen years ago. This suggests that the increased pleasantness of the learning environment is not necessarily related to learning.

However, there are also several limitations to this study. The first one is related to difficulties in detecting the direct influences of social change. Our approach, based on a comparison of two different cohorts at two different historical points cannot exclude or control all social factors which influence young people immediately and only temporarily. If the social euphoria from the early 1990s can be regarded as a characteristic attribute of the Czech society of that period, the current generation's opinions can be currently affected by certain pessimism and insecurity brought upon by the ongoing world-wide economic crisis.

Next, some characteristics varied considerably within both generations. Therefore, we cannot consider the studied generations to be fully homogenous groups, sharing unanimous opinions. Instead, some opinions on the society in both cohorts might be quite heterogeneous. This means that the major part of inter-individual variability in the measured attitudes, beliefs, or perceptions is due to more proximal (developmental) factors, and the social change plays a more moderate role here.

Finally, when interpreting the results, we must also consider that the adolescents of 1995 had much less experience with the various social phenomena the questions asked about than today's adolescents. We have mentioned new informational technologies as a new source of information about society and life. However, in regard to the early nineties, also some more concrete items of our research interest were "new" in that time. For example, the issue of homelessness and the role of NGOs in this issue were just emerging. In spite of, or maybe due to, the fact that social welfare was omnipresent and automatic in the socialist society, visible welfare payments were a new thing. Thus, caution is warranted in the interpretation of various shifts. They may not be shifts in attitude or belief, but at least partially shifts in how well the belief is formed. It is possible that in 1995 at least a part of respondents expressed newly formed opinions formed ad hoc at the time of responding.

Generally, our results revealed smaller differences between the post-totalitarian and current generation than one might expect. Nevertheless, our finding is substantiated by some trends appearing in other studies (Macek, 2011; Macek & Polášková, 2006; Sak & Saková, 2004). Current adolescents are, in comparison with the post-revolution generation from the early 1990s, more individualistically and achieve oriented; they prefer material values to a higher degree. Moreover, they perceive society as more elitist, their view of the world and social environment is more differentiated, and their perception of society and value orientation is more evidently affected by the family in which they grow up. Current young people seem to accept that

democracy is accompanied by increased social inequalities since they do not have stronger feelings that the government should step in. However, these findings do not imply that Czech adolescents can be regarded as exceptional or even extreme in this respect. From a more general perspective, social beliefs and values of young Czechs fit into trends that are common among young people from countries with longer democratic traditions (Amadeo et al., 2002; Flanagan et al., 1998; 1999; Macek et al., 1998).

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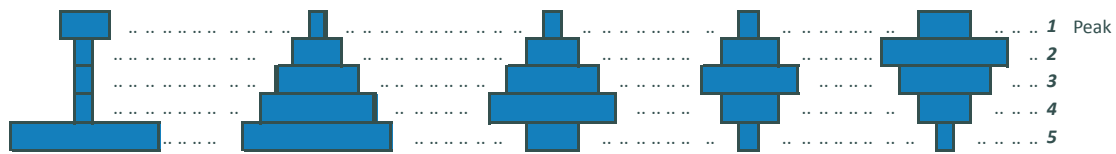
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Figures

Figure 1. *Diagrams representing the structure of society – welfare pyramids*



Note. The diagrams were accompanied by these descriptions: “Type A. Small elite at the top, only few people in the middle, many people at the bottom.” “Type B. Pyramid-shaped society, small elite at the top, more people in the middle, most people at the bottom.” “Type C. Pyramid-shaped society with only few people at the very bottom.” “Type D. Society with most people in the middle.” “Type E. Many people close to the top, only few at the bottom.”

Tables

Table 1. *Generation, gender and grade effects on perceptions of society, normative beliefs, value orientations, perceived family functioning, and school environment.*

	Mean (Standard deviation)						Partial eta ²				
	Generation		Gender		Grade		Gen	Gnd	Gra	Gen*	Gen*
	1995	2010	male	female	8th	10th				Gnd	Gra
Perceptions of society											
Equal opportunities	3.64 (0.83)	3.59 (0.87)	3.62 (0.86)	3.62 (0.83)	3.69 (0.85)	3.54 (0.84)	.001	.000	.007**	.000	.005*
Caring community	2.77 (0.69)	2.93 (0.80)	2.84 (0.76)	2.84 (0.74)	2.92 (0.74)	2.75 (0.75)	.011**	.000	.010**	.000	.003
Normative beliefs											
Economic equality	3.74 (0.44)	3.66 (0.55)	3.67 (0.51)	3.73 (0.48)	3.74 (0.50)	3.65 (0.49)	.008**	.005*	.009**	.001	.000
Social welfare skepticism	3.60 (0.85)	3.65 (0.92)	3.58 (0.90)	3.66 (0.86)	3.62 (0.93)	3.62 (0.83)	.001	.002	.000	.000	.000
State non-responsibility	2.83 (0.98)	3.07 (0.92)	2.96 (0.98)	2.92 (0.95)	2.97 (0.92)	2.9 (1.00)	.016**	.001	.001	.000	.000
Value orientations											
Social responsibility values	3.56 (0.56)	3.51 (0.61)	3.50 (0.63)	3.58 (0.54)	3.57 (0.61)	3.50 (0.56)	.002	.005*	.004*	.000	.001
Materialistic values	3.68 (0.59)	3.96 (0.65)	3.83 (0.64)	3.79 (0.62)	3.80 (0.63)	3.81 (0.63)	.049**	.001	.000	.002	.000
Environmental values	3.88 (0.59)	3.71 (0.66)	3.77 (0.67)	3.83 (0.59)	3.86 (0.66)	3.74 (0.59)	.019**	.003*	.010**	.001	.001
Educational, self-developmental values	4.25 (0.51)	4.18 (0.63)	4.17 (0.61)	4.27 (0.52)	4.21 (0.60)	4.24 (0.54)	.004*	.009**	.001	.000	.000
Power as a value orientation	3.33 (0.72)	3.38 (0.81)	3.39 (0.77)	3.31 (0.75)	3.33 (0.77)	3.38 (0.76)	.001	.003	.001	.000	.001
Family functioning											
Social responsible parenting	3.54 (0.59)	3.49 (0.66)	3.48 (0.63)	3.56 (0.61)	3.53 (0.62)	3.51 (0.62)	.002	.004*	.000	.000	.001
Self-reliance parenting	3.65 (0.56)	3.75 (0.62)	3.72 (0.6)	3.66 (0.58)	3.72 (0.59)	3.66 (0.59)	.008**	.002	.002	.004*	.000
Positive relationship	3.33 (0.62)	3.38 (0.62)	3.34 (0.62)	3.37 (0.62)	3.45 (0.61)	3.25 (0.61)	.001	.001	.024**	.002	.003
Mutual respect parenting	3.61 (0.70)	3.43 (0.80)	3.52 (0.75)	3.54 (0.75)	3.51 (0.76)	3.55 (0.75)	.014**	.000	.000	.000	.000
Economic anxiety	2.89 (0.82)	3.13 (0.91)	3.02 (0.87)	2.97 (0.88)	3.02 (0.89)	2.97 (0.85)	.017**	.001	.001	.000	.006**
School environment											
School engagement	2.66 (0.57)	3.04 (0.63)	2.79 (0.64)	2.87 (0.61)	2.86 (0.63)	2.80 (0.62)	.094**	.003	.001	.000	.015**
Equal treatment	3.88 (0.71)	3.79 (0.88)	3.84 (0.83)	3.84 (0.76)	3.84 (0.84)	3.84 (0.75)	.003	.000	.000	.000	.003

Note. Univariate ANOVAs with two interactions. Effective sample sizes ranged from 2,012 to 2,062. Gen = generation. Gnd = gender. Gra = grade. *p < .01, **p < .001.

Table 2.

Hierarchical multiple regressions predicting perceptions of the society, normative beliefs, and value orientations in 1995 and 2010.

	Equal opportunities			Caring community			Economic equality			Social responsibility values			Materialistic values		
	1995	2010	Diff.	1995	2010	Diff.	1995	2010	Diff.	1995	2010	Diff.	1995	2010	Diff.
Step 1															
Gender (female)	.00	-.03	-.03	-.02	-.05	-.03	.09*	.01	-.08	.03	.03	.00	-.06	.00	.06
Grade (10th)	-.15**	-.02	.13*	-.13**	-.07	-.07	-.10*	-.06	.04	-.05	-.02	.03	.01	-.02	-.03
ΔR^2	.03**	.00		.03**	.00		.02**	.01		.01**	.01		.01	.00	
Step 2															
Parents' education	-.02	.09*	.11*	-.19**	.04	.22**	-.17**	-.15**	.01	-.04	-.03	.01	-.06	.00	.06
Parents' employment	-.07	-.02	-.09	.01	.03	.04	-.02	.05	.07	.02	.04	.03	.03	-.01	-.04
ΔR^2	.01	.02*		.03**	.00		.02**	.02**		.00	.00		.01	.00	
Step 3															
Close relationship	.01	.16**	.14*	.03	-.04	-.08	.04	-.05	-.10	.07	.05	-.02	.03	.09	.06
Self-reliance parenting	.08	.13**	.05	-.02	-.08	-.05	.01	.13**	.12*	.01	.00	-.01	.17**	.34**	.17*
Socially resp. parenting	.04	-.02	-.06	.09*	.20**	.11	.17**	.32**	.15**	.30**	.48**	.18**	-.10*	-.01	.09
ΔR^2	.02**	.07**		.02**	.06**		.04**	.14**		.16**	.34**		.03**	.13**	
Step 4															
School engagement	.09*	.14**	.05	.18**	.28**	.10	.04	-.09	-.13*	.21**	.19**	-.02	-.11**	-.09	.02
Equal treatment	.08*	.01	-.07	.05	-.08	-.13*	.07	.12**	.05	.18**	.06	-.12*	.01	.08	.07
ΔR^2	.02**	.02**		.04**	.06**		.01	.01**		.08**	.04**		.01*	.01	
Total R^2	.07**	.10**		.11**	.12**		.10**	.18**		.26**	.39**		.05**	.15**	
n	1059	854		1050	831		1060	856		1060	855		1058	849	

Note. Diff = difference between the effect in 1995 and 2010. * $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$.