
Introduction

When we started planning this issue at the beginning of the year, we invited the wider Czech sociological community, together with some foreign authors, to turn its attention to the female half of the Czech population. Our aim was to present, together with the *Czech Sociological Review*, research concentrating on social questions from the perspective of gender or feminism. The title of this issue *The Position of Czech Women in the Society of the 1990s in the Spectrum of Research* also indicates a second aim, to use this issue as a place to confront research results and findings. We respected the various approaches and alternative points of view of both empirical research and analysis of material, of methodological questions, qualitative approaches and comparative research. This is the first collection of articles, research reports, comparative studies, and reports on the teaching of feminism and of questions linked with the conception of gender in the social sciences to be prepared in English in Czech academic circles. The issue also includes reviews and annotations of Czech and Slovak publications in the field.

The contributions to this issue are therefore the first to provide the foreign academic public with a profile of research in the social sciences that concentrates on Czech women. This is also due to the fact that the Czech community interested in questions of gender and feminism is oriented more towards research, methodology and the interpretation of data and research findings than directly towards theory. Approaches to the subject are far from limited, and there is an emphasis on the possibility of creating individual, alternative approaches and concepts.

The complexity of the conceptualisation of gender and the feminist perspective is due to the fact that it emerged outside the Czech sociological community, which for many years (1948-1989) was unable to participate in this development. It is theoretically strictly determined, which is also the case with our subject here – Czech women. Neither their past nor present state is influenced by feminist thinking, and this is still the case for the majority of women here today. For sociological thought, therefore, the loss of time which is to be ‘empirically’ demonstrated is not ‘empirically’ demonstrated. At times this is a even a *sine qua non* condition for opening the discussion.

It seems that the key to the analysis of Czech women is continuity, a respect for historical links and structural social ties. In the complex social and economic reality of a society in transition, concepts and analyses are strongly dependent both on studies and surveys of the behaviour and attitudes of Czech women as participants in possible social change. Czech sociology has come to terms with the question of concepts of gender or policies of equal opportunities for men and women by devoting greater attention to an analysis of institutional mechanisms such as the external influences of feminist ideas, agendas and policies, as well as the internal reactions of Czech bodies (governmental and institutional structures, political parties, the media, NGOs, etc.) to these influences.

Czech sociology also places considerable importance on the current position of Czech women in various spheres of social life – work, family, political activity, etc., because it is here that Czech society, with its own models and modifications, is struggling to formulate a new gender agreement, as yet without rules or an institutional framework.

The first article *Gender Differences among Economically Active University Graduates* by Marie Čermáková looks at questions related to the different positions of men and women university graduates. It analyses both differences in earnings and the subjective dimension of questions of performance and a career. The results presented are drawn from long-term sociological research and the discussion covers various extra-economic mechanisms which contribute to the secondary position of women university graduates on the labour market. The article also focuses on the functioning of women graduates' individual, personalised approaches to their careers or within certain professions and points out the risks and ineffectiveness of these in gaining equal status or in implementing equal opportunities policies.

In her article *The Political Representation of Women in Mass Media Discourse in the Czech Republic 1990-1998*, Hana Havelková offers a sociological analysis of the attitudes of the Czech intellectual public to the question of women's political representation. She analysed the main Czech dailies from 1990 to 1998, showing how the media helped open this question to public debate. The analysis also used the results of public opinion surveys on political issues. In terms of gender stereotypes, the author shows that in this context, the stereotypes of women have been disseminated and somewhat modified. One surprising finding of the analysis is the existence of a specific type of 'masculinity', which has reigned in Czech politics since 1990.

Eliška Rendlová in her article *The Gender Paradox in Public Opinion Surveys* uses a long series of public opinion surveys (1990-1996) to analyse the lack of difference between the opinions of men and women on questions of political and life values. As well as looking for an explanation of this, she tested the intervention of other demographic and social characteristics (e.g. age and education) which are in fact influenced by the category of gender.

In her article *Women and Employment*, Věra Kuchařová looks at questions related to the employment of Czech women today, basing this on the results of a 1998 research project on "The Status of Women and Men in the Czech Republic". She sees the key problem as the combination of the family and working lives of Czech women and so also compared working conditions with the professional expectations and satisfaction of working women in this country. She explains the position of Czech women on the labour market today from the point of view of social determination and the complementary nature of the male and female roles.

Martina Musilová's article *Equal Opportunity as a Matter of Public Interest* offers a broad conceptual framework for the analysis of attitudes in Czech society towards policies of equal opportunities for men and women. She uses two hypothetical models to describe the general and existing mechanisms for implementing equal opportunities in the Czech Republic. She looks at the differences between these and their appropriateness in the Czech situation, paying particular attention to the parties involved in these mechanisms.

Alena Křížková's article *The Division of Labour in Czech Households in the 1990s* is the only one of the Czech contributions that looks at the private sphere. She uses a database of sociological surveys in the 1990s to study the division of work in the house among Czech families. The article also includes an analysis of how men and women are tending to change the construction of gender roles in the home and an analysis of subjective views of the justice of the present model.

In her article *Men in the Czech Republic*, Iva Šmídová presents an aspect of the study of gender and feminism that is new to Czech social science – the integration of studies of men and masculinity. She looks at the differences between Czech and ‘western’ men and the scope for comparison.

An important part of this issue is taken by the section on Comparative Research, which includes articles by authors living and working in Great Britain, the USA and Canada, offering their professional view of the position of women in Czech society. While the different texts vary widely (from the presentation of the results of quantitative and qualitative research, through an analysis of equal opportunities in the EU and countries seeking membership of the Union, to reflections on the situation of emigrant women researchers whose main area of professional interest is still their country of origin), they all share a sociologically committed and critical approach.

The authors all consider the unequal position of Czech women at work and in the home, although at the same time they all see the situation in this country as fundamentally different from that in western countries. They believe that Czech society does in fact recognise the inequality of conditions in its own way, but also point out the conscious or more or less unconscious lack of interest in resolving these, a lack that is based in tradition.

The authors do not only criticise the situation in the Czech Republic, but also look at their present environment and at the discourse of western feminist or western European theory as such within this framework. Alena Heitlinger warns against a one-sided use of the western feminist framework to explain the Czech situation. Phyllis Raabe also notes that the approaches of certain western feminists do not allow for comparison and discusses the different life experience of Czech and Western European women. Mita Castle-Kanerova shows the EU’s inability to offer conditions for an equal partnership for the countries preparing for entry into its membership structure. Rosemary Crompton’s study shows both a number of other influences on the middle and micro-levels, as well as the influence of state (macro) structures on the fates of individual women and the mistakes made by a number of politicians.

The Reviews section includes reports on the Slovak feminist journal *Aspekt* and on two feminist works recently published in the Czech Republic. *Aspekt* has had a profound influence on Czech academics attracted to feminism and its texts and translations are used in gender studies. It is the only journal which also publishes Czech writing on gender and feminism questions. Jiřina Šmejkalová, who is at present teaching at Durham University in the UK and is studying questions of Czech cultural policy and gender relations in Central Europe, reviews two books, A. Heitlinger, S. Trnka: *The Lives of Young Prague Women* and the collection *The Maid’s War with Ideology*, edited and with an introduction by Libora Indruchová. Both books aroused considerable public interest and discussion, and so the article offers an interesting view of these initial ventures of SLON Publishers from a reviewer who is very familiar with the Czech situation, even though she has been working in western universities for a number of years,

News and Information is far from just an appendix to this issue in conceptual terms, as it provides information on the teaching of feminism and questions related to the conception of gender in the social sciences. For readers who are not familiar with the situation here, it should be said that this includes all such teaching and while the probability of new courses being offered is small, the existing ones will certainly see continual

improvement and innovation. The role of the 'Gender Studies Foundation' in the emergence and spread of feminism in this country has been irreplaceable and Lenka Simerská looks both at its past and its present position and activity. The section closes with report on two research projects – the first on "The Family and Fertility Survey" and the second on women in agriculture.

In conclusion, but in full awareness of their importance, I would like to thank all those who contributed to the issue and supported such an important project. First our thanks go to the Canadian Embassy, Prague, which provided finance for the translations and without whom it would have been difficult to produce this issue in the form it is, and to all the anonymous reviewers who contributed so greatly to the content and quality of the contributions. The translators had a demanding task and also deserve our thanks. Finally I would like to thank the editors of the Czech Sociological Review, and particularly the Executive Editor, Jitka Stehlíková, for the energy and understanding which she devoted to this issue.

Marie Čermáková, Guest Editor



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