

## **Developmental Idealism and Family and Demographic Change in Central and Eastern Europe**

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## **Abstract**

In this paper we provide new explanations for the dramatic family and demographic changes in Central and Eastern Europe following the political transformations of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Following these political transformations there were substantial changes in family and demographic beliefs and values, dramatic declines in marriage and childbearing, significant increases in nonmarital cohabitation and childbearing, and a movement from reliance on abortion to a reliance on contraception for fertility limitation. Although many explanations have been offered for these family and demographic trends, we offer a new set of explanations based on ideational influences and the intersection of these ideational influences with structural factors. Our explanations focus on the political, economic, social, and cultural histories of the region, with particular emphasis on how countries in the region have interacted with and been influenced by Western European and North American countries. Our explanations emphasize the importance of developmental models in guiding change in the region, suggesting that developmental idealism influenced family and demographic changes following the political transformations. We argue that developmental idealism states that the model for the future of development for Central/Eastern Europe lies in Western Europe and North America. This ideational system suggests that the political, economic, and family structures of the West are more advanced and superior to those observed elsewhere. It also provides beliefs that modern family systems help to produce modern political and economic accomplishments. And, this ideational system helps to establish the importance of freedom and equality as human rights. The disintegration of the governments and the fall of the iron curtain in the late 1980s and early 1990s brought clear understanding of social, economic, and family circumstances in the West. We suggest that consumption aspirations and expectations increased and clashed not only with old economic realities, but with the dramatic declines in economic circumstances occurring in many places. In addition, the dissolution of the

former governments removed or weakened systems supporting the bearing and rearing of children. And, the legitimacy of the former governments and their programs was largely destroyed, removing government support for old norms and patterns of behaviour. In addition, the attacks of previous decades on the religious institutions in the region had in many places left these institutions weak. During this period many openly reached out to embrace the values, living standards, and economic, political, and familial systems of the countries of the West. And, the thirst for freedom—and its considerable expansion—would have operated in personal and familial as well as political and economic realms. These dramatic changes would have combined together to produce the many changes occurring in family and demographic beliefs, values, and behaviour. We offer these explanations, without specifying the relative magnitudes of the forces we have identified or how they may compare in size with influences suggested by others.

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*European Demographic Research Papers* are working papers that deal with all-European issues or with issues that are important to a large number of countries. All contributions have received only limited review.

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## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

During the late 1980s and early 1990s the populations of Central and Eastern Europe underwent profound political and economic changes. Of central importance was the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and the break-up of Yugoslavia. All the countries of the region entered a new era of considerably increased political and economic freedom—and more interaction with Western Europe, including, for many, membership in NATO and the European Union. In short, the changes in the region's political economy during this period have been among the greatest of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

These changes in Central and Eastern Europe were accompanied by dramatic changes in family and demographic behaviour. Of central importance is that between 1990 and 2000, fertility fell dramatically in all of these countries. In fact, with three exceptions, fertility had fallen so low in these countries that the total fertility rates in the year 2000 were in the range from 1.1 to 1.4 children, among the very lowest in the world. Furthermore, this dramatic decline in fertility has been accompanied by substantial declines—not increases—in abortion.

In addition, courtship and marriage patterns have changed dramatically. In populations that have for decades, if not centuries, had relatively young ages at marriage—especially by European standards (Hajnal 1965)—there have been substantial delays in the timing of marriage. In several countries, there have also been significant increases in nonmarital cohabitation and childbearing outside of marriage. In fact, the fraction of all children born to unmarried women increased in all countries, often substantially, reaching levels above 40 percent in some countries. There is also evidence of attitudinal changes in several countries that are consistent with the behavioural changes.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is written for a general audience, including both specialists in Central and Eastern Europe and people who are not specialists in the region. It will thus contain some background information already known by specialists in the region.

Several explanations for these trends have been offered by scholars interested in the region. One explanation is that these countries generally had pronatalist policies and programs, including support for housing and childcare, that encouraged early marriage, early childbearing, and the bearing of at least two children. With the dissolution of the regimes, these supports for marriage and childbearing declined dramatically, or even disappeared (Macura 1999).

A second explanation centres on the dramatic drop in the standard of living and governmental supports in these countries after the governmental changes of the late 1980s and early 1990s. This explanation suggests that the economy declined so quickly and sharply in these countries that individuals had insufficient resources to marry and bear and rear two or three children, leading them to postpone marriage and childbearing and/or to have fewer babies (Macura 1999, Philipov and Dorbitz 2003).

A third explanation is that the political-economic transformations of the late 1980s and early 1990s brought substantial disruption of the social and economic structure of society and initiated a period of profound uncertainty in economic conditions and social policies, making it difficult for people to plan their lives with confidence and effectiveness. This explanation suggests that this disruption and uncertainty led to the postponement of such large decisions as marriage and childbearing—with, perhaps, this postponement eventually turning into fewer children being born (Caldwell 2004; Kohler, Billari and Ortega 2002).

A fourth, and related, explanation is that the political-economic changes substantially weakened the old institutions and the old norms of society. The argument here is that this drastic transformation left society with weak norms and institutions to regulate society, resulting in anomie or a condition without clear and strong rules. The effect on family formation, according to this line of reasoning, is twofold. First, the proscriptive and regulative power of norms lost its effectiveness which opened opportunities for new behaviour. Second, the prescriptive power of norms was weakened and people had less guidance for their personal decision-making. A likely

outcome of such changes is the postponement of crucial life decisions such as marriage and childbearing. (Philipov and Dorbitz 2003 and Macura 1999 discuss the effect of fears about the future experienced by the populations of some countries in the region).

A fifth common explanation is that the political-economic changes inaugurated a period of attitudinal and value change, with new emphasis on the values of self-fulfilment, individualism, and equality. This could have occurred as the new political-economic regimes permitted the transformation of attitudes and values that had occurred years earlier in the West. It could also have been the result of a new openness to the outside world, and the introduction of values from Western Europe and North America—with their emphasis on individualism and self-fulfilment. The result argued by adherents of this fifth explanation was very low fertility and greater nonmarital cohabitation and childbearing (Macura 2000, Philipov and Dorbitz 2003; Sobotka, Zeman, and Kantorova 2003; Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2007).

A sixth explanation is that the political and economic transformation ushered in a period of increased importance of higher education, with the number of people attending college increasing (Kohler et al. 2002). Higher levels of education are hypothesized to lead to lower fertility and postponement of marriage and childbearing—stemming from difficulties of combining school and marriage and childbearing and because of more educated people pursuing professional careers. Particularly important here is the postponement of family formation to pursue higher education and professional careers (Billari and Philipov 2004), but higher education can also modify values and beliefs concerning a wide range of things, including marriage, unmarried cohabitation, and childbearing.

Of course, these six categories of explanation are not mutually exclusive, but, instead, could be mutually reinforcing. Data inadequacies have made it very difficult to establish which, if any, of these reasons, either individually or together, can explain the dramatic family and demographic changes in the region. Furthermore, the many changes that occurred did so

rapidly and nearly simultaneously, making it difficult to establish causality, even with the most detailed data.

In this paper we introduce an additional set of explanations of the demographic and family trends in Central and Eastern Europe. The explanations that we offer are based on the developmental idealism framework formulated by Thornton (2001, 2005a). This framework offers new explanations and mechanisms that provide additional insights into how the family and demographic changes may have occurred. This framework also offers new insights into how the other factors may have operated.

The set of explanations that we offer are grounded in the complex history of the region and its relationship with Western Europe. We argue that the basic idea of development has for centuries been an important one in Europe—both in the West and in the East. This framework has provided Europeans a model for understanding and dealing with the world, with this model providing guidance concerning trajectories to success and the kinds of behaviour needed for achieving that success. Thornton has argued that this model has been important for understanding family and demographic change in Western Europe and North America. Here we argue that an understanding of this developmental model casts valuable light on recent family and demographic trends in Central and Eastern Europe. People in Central/Eastern Europe have been affected by the developmental model for centuries, although in different ways during different periods. The region was affected by the general developmental model for centuries before the advent of socialist governments in the region, by the Marxist version of the developmental model during the socialist era, and then again by the more general developmental model after the collapse of socialism. Of course, since circumstances in the Western and Central/Eastern regions have always varied and since the trajectories in the West and in Central/Eastern Europe diverged greatly during the twentieth century, the effects of the model have also played out in different ways in the two regions.

Our goal in this paper is not to discredit the explanations offered by others. We also make no attempt to decide which explanations or

combinations of explanations can best account for the changes. Instead, we present new possibilities and perspectives for understanding recent trends. We also offer new perspectives on the ways in which the various forces identified by others have intersected with developmental models to influence behaviour in Central/Eastern Europe. In fact, we present an overarching framework that incorporates into its mechanisms many of the explanations offered by others. More specifically, we discuss how the explanations of regime change and disruption, economic set-backs, uncertainty, normlessness, educational increases, and broad-scale ideational shifts fit within our more general developmental idealism framework, with our developmental idealism framework offering additional understanding of how the other factors may be operating. Given the scarcity of data to test the various explanations, we offer our developmental idealism model as a plausible explanation and not as a proven one. More evidence is required to establish the precise mechanisms operating. In addition, our model based on developmental idealism makes no effort to include all ideational and structural influences affecting family and demographic change in the region. Thus, it does not preclude the existence of yet other explanations. Despite these caveats, we believe that the model is a promising one for understanding family and demographic changes in the region.

It is also important to note that our contribution to the explanation of family and demographic change in the region focuses on ideational factors and the interaction of ideational factors with structural ones. Thus, throughout the paper it is these ideational factors that we emphasize. We place this emphasis on ideational factors because this is our contribution to understanding and not because we believe it is only ideational factors that matter or that the ideational factors are necessarily more important. It will require additional research to sort out the relative importance of the various explanations.

We also emphasize that our analysis is a broad and general one designed to explain general trends in the region rather than a detailed analysis of trends in any particular country. We recognize that there is



considerable heterogeneity in the region, including differences in the circumstances in the countries before the implementation of the socialist regimes, differences in the nature of socialism in the various countries, differences in contact with Western countries, differences in the ways in which the regime change occurred, and differences in subsequent political and economic structures and environments. There are also important differences in the timing of the introduction of socialism in specific countries—with the differences between the countries of the former Soviet Union and the other countries in the region being especially significant in this regard. There are also important variations within countries as well. These differences within and between countries, of course, have important implications for trends in individual countries and regions which are usually not addressed in this paper. Instead, we discuss factors that we believe are generally relevant and discuss their general operation in the region. More detailed analysis of individual countries is needed to identify the specific nature of the causal forces in each country.

We now turn to a general discussion of the developmental framework and how it is translated into models for dealing with the world. Then, we turn to a discussion of the ways in which the ideas of development relate to recent political, economic, familial, and demographic changes in Central and Eastern Europe.

## **DEVELOPMENTAL MODELS AND READING THE PAST AND FUTURE SIDEWAYS**

### **The developmental paradigm and reading history sideways**

We begin with the developmental paradigm, a model of social change that has dominated much thinking in Europe—both East and West—from the Enlightenment of the 1600s and 1700s to the present. Although the paradigm and its conclusions have now spread around the world, the primary adherents in the 1600s and 1700s were in Northwest Europe, with Scotland,

England, and France having particularly important centers. The developmental paradigm suggests that all societies progress through the same natural, universal, and necessary stages of development (for detailed discussions, see Burrow 1981; Harris 1968; Mandelbaum 1971; Nisbet 1975/1969; Sanderson 1990; Smith 1973; Stocking 1968, 1987). Although there was general agreement in the broad steps of this developmental model, there were differences in perceptions about the exact stages of development and even in the number of stages, with some authors positing numerous stages while others reduced the continuum to two, three, or four broad stages of development. The speed of advancement was believed to vary, so that at any one point in time societies at different developmental levels could be observed. That is, societies believed to be at the various stages of development from the lowest to the highest were believed to exist at the same time point.

Many scholars from the 1600s through the 1800s were interested in describing the specific changes that occurred at the various stages along this perceived uniform developmental trajectory. By placing contemporary societies at different levels of development, they believed that they could record the history of societal development by shifting their attention serially from what they believed to be the least through the most developed societies. With this conceptual model, it was possible for scholars to claim that at some time in the past the most developed nations—believed to be those in Northwest Europe and in the Northwest European diaspora—had been like their less developed contemporaries (Berkhofer, 1978; Carniero, 1973; Gordon, 1994; Harris, 1968; Sanderson, 1990). With this assumption scholars believed that they could use data from what they perceived to be less developed countries as substitutes for data about the pasts of societies such as Northwest Europe that they perceived as more developed. In this way, the social and family conditions of societies outside Northwest Europe could stand as proxies for the social and family conditions of the past in Northwest Europe. Thornton refers to this use of cross-sectional data to make historical conclusions as reading history sideways and shows how it

was used extensively by scholars in the 1700s and 1800s (Thornton 2001, 2005a).

The Northwest European proponents of the developmental paradigm regularly placed their region (and its overseas diaspora) at the pinnacle of societal development (Thornton 2005a, pages 33-34). This undoubtedly resulted partly from ethnocentrism, but also because of the military and economic might of Northwest Europe at the time (Blaut 1993; Nisbet 1980; Sheehan 1980). For example, Adam Ferguson believed that “rude nations ...always yield to the superior arts, and the discipline of more civilized nations” (1767/1767, page 95; see also Macaulay 1974/1790). Edward Tylor used somewhat different criteria when he wrote that “the educated world of Europe and America” set the standard for the developed end of the developmental trajectory, stating that “the principal criteria of classification are the absence or presence, high or low development, of the industrial arts, especially metal-working, manufacture of implements and vessels, agriculture, architecture, &c., the extent of scientific knowledge” (1871, page 23).

Societies least like Northwest Europe were designated by these scholars to be the least developed (Bock 1956; Meek 1976). Occupying the lower positions on such developmental ladders were the indigenous populations of Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Australia. Other societies were arrayed at various stages between the least and the most developed stages of development. For the purposes of this paper, it is important to observe that Central and Eastern Europe were generally assigned an intermediate stage between Asia and Northwest Europe in the developmental hierarchy (Todorova 1997; Wolff 1994). That is, in this developmental model Central and Eastern Europe were not only located geographically between Asia and Northwest Europe, but were located developmentally between the two regions. In addition, when scholars read history sideways, they frequently began with what they thought of as the “very young” societies of Africa, America, or Australia and progressed through the societies of Asia, then to the societies of Central and Eastern Europe, and

finally to the most “mature” region of Northwest Europe. Todorova (1997), in fact, suggests that the Balkans came “to be seen as the Volksmuseum of Europe” (page 63, also see pages 111 and 129)

This developmental model and its placement of Central and Eastern Europe between Asia and Northwest Europe in the developmental hierarchy—along with Central and Eastern Europe’s role as a proxy for the Northwest European past—were well established by the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Todorova 1997; Wolff 1994). The reports of three well-respected Northwest European travellers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century illustrate this perspective. Montesquieu, the French philosopher, for example, wrote that “I wanted to see Hungary” “because all the states of Europe were once as Hungary is now, and I wanted to see the manners of our fathers.” Similarly, on his way from France to Russia to become the new envoy to the Russian court, Count Louis-Philippe de Segur said that he had found in Prussia a land of “art and a perfected civilization”, but as he travelled into Poland, “one believes one has left Europe entirely,” and “everything makes one think one has been moved back ten centuries.” The Englishman, William Coxe, had a similar view when he commented about the perceived backwardness of the Russian peasants compared to people in other parts of Europe. But, he said that as he went from east to west from Moscow to St. Petersburg “and nearer the civilized parts of Europe, the villagers were better furnished with the conveniences of life, and further advanced in the knowledge of the necessary arts”, but “still, however, their progress towards civilization is very inconsiderable, and many instances of the grossest barbarism fell under our observation.”<sup>2</sup>

This view of development and history not only influenced the perspectives of travellers but also the theories and conclusions of some of the most important scholars of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Thornton 2005a). The work of Frederic Le Play, an influential French scholar who wrote

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<sup>2</sup> The Montesquieu, Segur, and Coxe quotes are all from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and are cited on pages 205, 19, and 35 respectively of Wolff (1994)

extensively about family life in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, illustrates this hierarchical categorization of societies and the reading of history sideways from the cross-sectional categorization of societies. Le Play identified three developmental stages, primarily in Europe, with only modest attention to Europe's neighbors (See Thornton 2005b). Le Play placed his first stage of societal development in the eastern regions of Europe. He stated that "the gradually ascending order of social conditions starts with the shepherd of the steppes in the eastern region of Europe, freed from the uncertainty and violent habits of nomadic life by the principles of authority, the influence of Christian religion, and the appeal of several civilized habits" (Le Play 1982/1855, pages 233-234). He stated that, "with many variations" the first stage "still reigns over half of Europe, particularly in Russia and the Slavic provinces of Turkey and Central Europe" (Le Play 1982/1855, page 240). Le Play located the second stage of development in "Sweden, Central Europe, and many of the provinces of the South and West" (Le Play 1982/1855, page 241). Like other developmental scholars of the era, he identified the highest levels of development in the Northwest, commenting on the "incontestable superiority of Western civilization" (Le Play 1982/1855, page 286). He identified this stage to be prevalent "in many parts of England, France, Belgium, and northwestern Germany, where democratic political tendencies have been combined with dramatic technological innovations" (Le Play 1982/1855, page 242).

It is important to recognize that the central features of the gradient of development perceived by Le Play and other scholars have existed for at least two centuries and are present today in the rating schemes of various organizations. Perhaps most well known in this regard is the Human Development Index (HDI) promulgated by the United Nations, which annually provides numerical development ratings of countries. The HDI ratings for the countries of Europe (and a few neighbouring countries) for the most recent year are provided in Table 1. A review of the HDI numbers reveals the same general East-West gradient identified by Le Play—with levels of the United Nations ratings generally increasing from east to west.

Perhaps most important for the present purposes is the strong demarcation between the countries of Western Europe and the countries of the former Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, and Warsaw Pact. Although not shown in Table 1, the HDI ratings for many other countries of the world are lower than those for Central and Eastern Europe.

**Table 1** Human Development Index Ratings, by Region and Year.

	1985	1990	1995	2004
<b>Central/Eastern Europe and Eastern Balkans</b>				
Czech Republic			0.850	0.885
Hungary	0.811	0.811	0.815	0.869
Poland		0.807	0.820	0.862
Slovakia				0.856
Slovenia			0.855	0.910
<b>Baltic states</b>				
Estonia		0.813	0.793	0.858
Lithuania		0.825	0.789	0.857
Latvia	0.809	0.803	0.769	0.845
<b>Western Balkans</b>				
Croatia		0.810	0.803	0.846
Bosnia & Herzegovina				0.800
Macedonia				0.796
Albania	0.693	0.704	0.704	0.784
<b>Eastern Balkans</b>				
Bulgaria	0.788	0.794	0.783	0.816
Romania		0.775	0.770	0.805
<b>Commonwealth of independent states and Caucasias</b>				
Russian Federation		0.818	0.771	0.797
Belarus		0.788	0.753	0.794
Ukraine		0.800	0.748	0.774
Kazakhstan		0.768	0.723	0.774
Armenia		0.738	0.701	0.768

	1985	1990	1995	2004
Georgia				0.743
Azerbaijan				0.736
Turkmenistan				0.724
Kyrgyzstan				0.705
Uzbekistan			0.681	0.696
Moldova		0.740	0.683	0.694
Tajikistan	0.700	0.697	0.631	0.652
<b>Mediterranean Europe</b>				
Italy	0.868	0.890	0.908	0.940
Spain	0.875	0.893	0.910	0.938
Greece	0.868	0.876	0.880	0.921
Portugal	0.830	0.853	0.883	0.904
Malta	0.793	0.828	0.855	0.875
<b>Scandinavia</b>				
Norway	0.898	0.912	0.936	0.965
Iceland	0.897	0.916	0.921	0.960
Sweden	0.890	0.901	0.933	0.951
Finland	0.882	0.904	0.917	0.947
<b>Western Europe</b>				
Ireland	0.848	0.873	0.897	0.956
Switzerland	0.900	0.914	0.925	0.947
Netherlands	0.898	0.913	0.932	0.947
Luxembourg	0.861	0.887	0.913	0.945
Belgium	0.881	0.902	0.932	0.945
Austria	0.874	0.897	0.916	0.944
Denmark	0.891	0.898	0.913	0.943
France	0.884	0.904	0.923	0.942
United Kingdom	0.868	0.889	0.927	0.940
Germany	0.868	0.887	0.912	0.932

*Source:* United Nations 2006.

Furthermore, although we do not have direct evidence of the knowledge that ordinary Eastern/Central Europeans, either in the past or the present, have of the developmental paradigm or of this cross-sectional

developmental gradient, we believe that such knowledge has been widespread in the region for hundreds of years. It is likely that in the 1700s and 1800s many people in Central and Eastern Europe understood the developmental model and its definition of differential development in Europe, oriented themselves at least somewhat towards the West, and attempted to model institutions after those in the West. Many of the socialist governments of the region in the twentieth century made extensive efforts to restrict the free flow of information and reoriented the institutions in the region, which undoubtedly modified the ways in which people in the region related to the West. However, it is likely that knowledge of the paradigm continued in the region. In addition, the Marxist model itself is a form of the developmental model. Furthermore, knowledge of the developmental model and Western institutions would have been reinforced after the transformations of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Concrete evidence from other parts of the world in the twenty-first century—including Argentina, China, Egypt, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and the United States indicates widespread understanding in these countries of the developmental paradigm and of the gradient of countries on the scale of development (Thornton, Binstock, and Ghimire 2007; Thornton Ghimire and Mitchell 2005; Binstock and Thornton 2006). Without evidence to the contrary, we believe that perceptions of the developmental paradigm and the developmental gradient would be as extensive in Central/Eastern Europe as elsewhere. This view is supported by Todorova's (1997) observation that many people in Southeastern Europe have viewed their region as less developed than Northwest Europe. It is also consistent with Melegh's (2006) conclusion that the idea of an East-West developmental slope across Europe is widespread and influential in Central and Eastern Europe.

Frederic Le Play provides an important example of how numerous scholars of the 1700s and 1800s read history sideways, with his approach being centred fully on Europe and its cross-cultural variation (for more information about Le Play, see Thornton 2005a, 2005b). Le Play stated that



the three stages of development “can still be seen today” (Le Play 1982/1855, page 240). He also stated:

*Thus, without going far beyond the frontiers of Europe, I have been able to observe and compare the primitive organization of work, the characteristic innovations which were gradually introduced during the second age, and finally, the undreamed of transformations which, since the time of my first voyage, have occurred from the shores of the Atlantic to the frontiers of Asia and which are now spreading throughout the world* (Le Play, 1982/1881, page 250).

More specifically, Le Play wrote that “in many respects, the present living conditions of labourers in Northern, Eastern, and Central Europe are comparable to those of labourers of regions of [Western] Europe in the not-so-distant past.” He also wrote that “readers need not wait for a talented historian to recreate the spirit of the past for them. In many cases we have only to observe the facts which are still before our eyes” (Le Play 1982/1855: 161). Le Play made his approach to using comparative data for making historical conclusions explicit in the following passage:

*If we want to recapture the mentality of the past and thereby gain a comprehensive understanding of the present situation of the working classes in the West, the best way to proceed is to study conditions in the countries where the agricultural and industrial techniques, the organization of labour, and the mutual relations of the various social classes remain like those which existed in France in past centuries. A summary of such observations is offered... [by my reports] dealing with Russia, the Scandinavian countries, Turkey, Hungary, and the countries of Central Europe. These studies offer some very useful preliminary findings. They show that although the old institutions were less favourable to the growth of industry and the rapid advancement of gifted individuals than the institutions recently established in the West, they did offer security to all social classes.* (Le Play 1982/1855, pages 161-162).

Le Play began his geographical tour of Europe’s history in the “far reaches of Europe” with the nomads and shepherds of the Eastern European

steppes. Next for him in his narrative of societal development were “the Slavs of Russia, Turkey, Hungary, etc.” (Le Play 1982/1855:264). Le Play ended his tour of the developmental trajectory with the developed West characterized by its commerce (Le Play 1982/1881: 249).

### **Views of family change from reading history sideways**

As the scholars of the era examined family patterns around the world, they discovered incredible heterogeneity of family life across regions of the world. In addition, they found substantial variations in family patterns within regions, and even within specific countries. Despite the substantial within-region differences observed in both Northwest Europe and in other geographical regions, these scholars observed that, in general, the family systems of Northwest Europe were very different from those in many other parts of the world (Alexander 1995/1779; Engels 1971/1884; Hegel 1878/1837; Le Play 1982/1855; Maine 1888/1861; Malthus 1986/1803; Millar 1979/1771; Smith 1976/1759, 1978/1762-63; Sumner and Keller 1929; Weber 1958/1916-17; Westermarck 1894/1891). They found societies outside Northwest Europe that were generally family-organized, had considerable family solidarity, and were frequently extended. Marriage was frequently universal and often contracted at a young age. These societies also had considerable authority in the hands of parents and the elders, arranged marriages, and little opportunity for affection before marriage. They also had gender relationships that the scholars of the day interpreted as reflecting low status of women. These scholars generally characterized such family systems as traditional, less modern, or less developed.

By contrast, Northwest European societies were observed to be less family organized, to be more individualistic, to have less parental authority, and to have weaker intergenerational support systems. They also had more nuclear households, less universal marriage, older marriage, and more affection and couple autonomy in the mate selection process. They also perceived women’s status as higher in Northwest European societies. These

family attributes of Northwest Europe were generally characterized by these scholars as modern or developed.

With the developmental paradigm and reading history sideways methodology it was easy for generations of scholars to believe that the process of development transformed family systems from the traditional patterns observed outside of Northwest Europe to the developed patterns within Northwest Europe. They believed that sometime before they wrote in the 1700s and 1800s, there had been a great family transition that had changed European families from being like the traditional world outside of Northwest Europe to being like the modern families of Northwest Europe (Thornton 2005a).

This historical model of cross-national differences provided much more than a description of history. It also provided a theory for the changes observed from reading history sideways. The dominant theory of the era was that the modern society in Northwestern Europe with its extensive technology, wealth, cities, education, and military power was the cause of its modern family structures. That is, the modern society of Northwest Europe had led to a modern family system. An alternate minority view was that the modern family system was the exogenous causal force producing a modern society. That is, such things as nuclear families and an older age at marriage were seen as factors producing the modern or developed society of Northwest Europe. Both theories, of course, indicated that traditional families were not compatible with modern societies; either modern societies transformed traditional families or modern families were necessary for the evolution of modern societies.

The main observations and conclusions described above were made by comparing circumstances in Northwest Europe with populations around the world. However, even though there were important differences within the various regions of Europe, with some exceptions, the same general observations and conclusions described earlier would apply if the data were limited to the European continent. The reason is that, as Le Play and generations of subsequent scholars have demonstrated, even accounting for

variation within regions, there have historically been differences between the social and familial circumstances of Eastern Europe and those of Northwest Europe, generally along the same dimensions as described above, with the family patterns of Central Europe often seen as intermediary between those of Eastern and Northwestern Europe (Anderson 1986/1980; Czap 1983; Hajnal 1965, 1982; Laslett 1978/1977; Macfarlane 1986; Seccombe 1992; Smith 1979, 1992; Szoltysek 2007; Thornton 2005a; Todorova 1989, 2006; Wall 1983, 1995).

### **Reading the future sideways**

The implications of this historical-geographical model did not stop with reading history sideways. Just as it provided a model for reading the past sideways, it provided a model for reading the future sideways. For people in the West, it was possible to project the history read from cross-national data into the future. Just as past development was believed to have brought the West societal and family structures unlike those found elsewhere, future progress and development would move the West along the same trajectory and make it even more different from societies elsewhere.

The model for the future for people in the non-West is even more straightforward, as there was a concrete model for change—and that model was in the West. If the people of the Non-West developed and progressed, they would become like the West in both social and family structures. Furthermore, because the model placed all societies on the same developmental ladder, it defined the modern family and societal system of the West as attainable elsewhere. Thus, the developmental model and cross-cultural data provided a means for understanding and predicting the future for those outside the West.

## **A DEVELOPMENTAL CROSS-CULTURAL MODEL FOR EVALUATION**

Interestingly, this historical model of cross-cultural variation went far beyond providing descriptions and theories of historical change in Northwest Europe. It also provided a framework for the evaluation of society and family structure—that is, a value system. The society and modern family structures of Northwest Europe were not only generally labeled by the model as more developed and modern than the societies and family structures outside of Northwest Europe, including those in Eastern Europe, but as more enlightened, civilized, and progressive. And societies and family structures elsewhere were defined by the model as undesirable—and sometimes as even backward or uncivilized.<sup>3</sup>

### **Developmental idealism**

Of course, to the extent that individuals labelled modern society and family structures as good, their view of the future with (even) more modernity would also be accepted as positive. This positive view of the developmental future would also provide a motivation for action to ensure the unfolding of the future as predicted by the developmental model. In this way the model would provide a blueprint for social policy and action.

Although this model of evaluation and the future is complex, Thornton has simplified it elsewhere as developmental idealism, with four overly simple propositions (Thornton 2001, 2005a). These propositions of

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<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, some scholars labeled certain features of Northwest European life as positive while others labeled such features as negative. An example of the former was Malthus who saw the Northwest European marriage system as positive. An example of the latter was Le Play who thought Northwest European society was good, but that the family system there, which he labeled as “unstable” was less desirable than the “stem” families he saw in Central and Southern Europe. However, Le Play viewed the stem family much more positively than the “patriarchal” families he observed in Eastern Europe and outside of Europe.

the model involve a combination of values about what is good and beliefs about what is attainable and what facilitates achievement of the good life. The first proposition of the model combines values and beliefs and specifies that the modern society discussed earlier is a good thing and can be attained. The model's second proposition specifies that the modern family discussed earlier, is good and attainable. The model's third proposition causally links together modern families and modern societies, stating the belief that the adoption of modern family attributes can help facilitate the achievement of a modern society and the belief that a modern society helps to produce modern families. The fourth proposition in the model also comes from reading history sideways but in a somewhat different way which we cannot explicate here. It is that freedom and equality are fundamental human rights.<sup>4</sup>

Note that we have conceptualised developmental idealism to include the distinction commonly made between collectivism and individualism. Individualism is conceptualised in developmental idealism to be part of modern society and family and identified as good, while collectivism is seen as less modern and less valued. In this way the collective-individual gradient is included as part of developmental idealism.

We are not presenting these propositions of developmental idealism as our own values and beliefs, but as the values and beliefs that are derived from the developmental model and its implementation with cross-sectional data. It is the developmental model's values and beliefs that are being indicated here and not those of the authors. In addition, the point is not whether the beliefs expressed in these propositions are true or false or whether the values expressed are good or bad. The point is that developmental idealism and its propositions provide a system of beliefs and values that can guide and motivate a broad array of family and demographic behaviours and relationships. Acceptance or rejection of these propositions can influence how people lead their lives. And, trends in the acceptance or

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of this fourth proposition of developmental idealism, see Thornton (2005a, especially pages 144-146).

rejection of these propositions can lead to changes in family and demographic behaviour. Thornton (2005a) has argued that these ideas and beliefs have been especially powerful in changing family and demographic structures and relationships in many parts of the world. We argue here that they have also been important in Central and Eastern Europe.

### **The dissemination of developmental idealism**

As discussed by Thornton (2005a), there have been many mechanisms for the worldwide dissemination of the developmental paradigm, reading history and the future sideways, and the propositions of developmental idealism. It is likely that these ideas have been spread broadly across Central and Eastern Europe for centuries where they have affected beliefs and values and have motivated changes in behaviour. We know that the ideas of the Enlightenment were introduced into Russia quite early, for example, with direct communication between Voltaire and the Russian nobility (Wolff 1994). Herzen, a prominent pro-western thinker in the 19th century, made significant contributions to arguments for the adoption of western values in 19th century Russia, for the development of socialist ideas, and for the abolishment of serfdom.

We also know that the West was used as an explicit model for social change in areas outside of the West during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This includes the efforts, initiated by Peter the Great of Russia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to obtain access to Western technology and ideas. Peter the Great changed the laws to require more independence and equality in family life (Pushkareva 1997), although the effects on Russian family life are not clear. Although Peter the Great may be the most well known leader to push for the modernization or westernisation of Russia, this push characterized many efforts in the subsequent centuries. Similar efforts were important in other places as well. For example, one scholar has suggested that “the whole history of Hungary in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries can be seen as a series of *abortive modernization processes*” (italics in original) where the aim “was to catch up with Western European societies” (Andorka 1999, page 20).

It is also important to note that although Marxism and socialism have been competitive political and economic systems to democratic capitalism, the developmental paradigm and developmental idealism played central roles in the theories and political agenda of Karl Marx (Nisbet 1980), a program that was widely disseminated within the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The socialist model in the Soviet sphere of influence was a developmental model in which societies were seen as progressing through various stages of development, eventually reaching a communist utopia with extensive freedom and equality. The pathway to this utopian framework, however, would require a totalitarian state in order to sweep away the barriers to progress existing in societies. During this Soviet era modernization and development were frequent themes in government and party doctrine. Citizens were frequently exhorted to work and sacrifice in order to reach the highest level of progress. A modern society was, in short, advocated as good and to be attained.

Family matters were included in the Marxist version of developmental idealism (Andors 1983; Davis and Harrell 1993; Geiger 1968; Meijer 1971; Kerblay 1996/1986; Whyte nd). The model condemned family forms that it associated with traditional societies, linked these forms with repression and backward social and economic patterns, and advocated replacing such family forms with the socialist model of the modern family. One of the primary way in which this played out in Central/Eastern Europe was the drive for gender equality and the integration of women into the labour force (Geiger 1968; Kerblay 1996/1986; Northrop 1999).

The United Nations and other international organizations, including the European Union, have been important players in the creation and spread of a world culture that explicitly endorses the ideals of individual and social development, freedom, and equality (Meyer et al. 1997; United Nations 1948, 1962, 1979). Because of the totalitarian political system in much of Central/Eastern Europe for several decades, such external organizations have probably been substantially more influential in this part of the world during the past decade and a half than during the socialist era.



We now discuss some historical background information about Central and Eastern Europe and then turn to the political transformation of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Our goal here is to provide the context for understanding the role of developmental idealism in changing family and demographic behaviour in the region. We then examine recent family and demographic trends and the relevance of developmental idealism for understanding these changes.

## **CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE BEFORE AND AFTER COMMUNISM**

### **Before the transformation**

The key elements in Central and Eastern Europe during the twentieth century were the control of the communist party after 1917 in the former Soviet Union, the control of the Soviet Union over the Warsaw Pact countries after World War II, and socialism in the former Yugoslavia after World War II. A key goal of the socialist program was a transformation of the economy and society through intensive industrialization that would rapidly bring economic productivity, education, health, and equality in the region up to and even beyond the levels in Northwest Europe and North America. Countries of the region had considerable success in industrialization, increasing education, reducing mortality, and in producing equality. However, the high aspirations of the regimes were not achieved and the overall standard of living remained below that in Western Europe and North America. In addition, the region experienced a certain malaise that made substantial achievement seem unattainable.

Furthermore, the Soviet period was a time of very authoritative and repressive government. Freedom of speech and the press were dramatically limited by the government and party. Great confrontation with the West—even a “cold war”—characterized the years after World War II. A central feature especially important for our analysis was the substantial censorship

of information from outside the region. Whereas the flow of information and ideas across the regions of Europe had previously been substantial, during the Soviet era an “iron curtain” was constructed to restrict severely the free flow of information and ideas from the West. Such restriction of information flow undoubtedly varied across the countries of the region, probably being least restrictive in the republics of the former Yugoslavia and in other countries or Soviet republics bordering on countries outside the region. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the efforts to restrict information flows were completely effective in any of the countries as there were numerous mechanisms to circumvent the official policies and programs.

Describing family and demographic behaviour simply during the socialist period is difficult because of the variety across the region. However, the basic East-West family gradient described by Le Play remained in place—with family structures in areas of Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia being relatively similar to those in Northwestern Europe, but with family patterns in the more eastern part of the region diverging substantially from those in the West—also with differences within and between countries. In addition, conditions of life under socialism had decreased age at marriage in areas of the region that had previously had older ages at marriage, such as the Baltic countries and the Czech Republic (Coale 1992). By Northwest European standards, age at marriage in the region was relatively young and almost everyone married. Nonmarital cohabitation and childbearing were relatively low. During the early 1980s, the total fertility rate (TFR) in most countries of the region ranged from approximately 1.9 to 2.5, with Albania and Azerbaijan being outliers with TFRs between 3 and 4 (see Table 2). Abortion was widely available and used throughout most of the region during this period.

### **After the Start of the Transformation**

The political transformations of Central and Eastern Europe during the late 1980s and early 1990s were remarkable both in their magnitude and

**Table 2** Total fertility rates (TFR) and mean age at first birth (MAFB).

	TFR			MAFB		
	1980	1990	2004 <sup>(1)</sup>	1980	1990	2004 <sup>(2)</sup>
Albania	3.62	3.00	2.10			
Armenia	2.33	2.63	1.38	22.1	22.8	23.4
Azerbaijan	3.23	2.74	1.82			24.8
Belarus	2.04	1.90	1.20		22.6	24.0
Bosnia and Herz.	1.93	1.71	1.21	23.3	23.6	
Bulgaria	2.05	1.82	1.29	21.9	22.0	24.4
Croatia	1.92	1.67	1.35	23.4	24.1	26.1
Czech R.	2.10	1.90	1.22	22.4	22.5	26.3
Estonia	2.02	2.04	1.46	23.2	22.9	24.8
FYR of Mac.	2.47	2.06	1.52	23.2	23.4	24.9
Georgia	2.26	2.19	1.37			24.7
Hungary	1.91	1.87	1.28	22.4	23.1	26.3
Latvia	1.90	2.01	1.24	22.9	23.0	24.7
Lithuania	1.99	2.02	1.26	23.8	23.2	24.8
Moldova	2.41	2.39	1.25			23.3
Poland	2.26	2.05	1.23	23.4	23.3	25.6
Romania	2.43	1.84	1.29	22.4	22.6	24.2
Russian F.	1.86	1.90	1.33	23.0	22.6	23.0
Serbia and Montenegro	2.29	2.10	1.60	23.2	23.9	25.7
Slovak Rep.	2.31	2.09	1.24	22.7	22.6	25.3
Slovenia	2.10	1.46	1.25	22.9	23.1	27.5
Ukraine	1.95	1.89	1.22			23.5

<sup>(1)</sup> Albania 1999; Croatia 2003.

<sup>(2)</sup> Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro 2003; Russia 1996.

Source: Council of Europe (2005)

rapidity. Although changes had been occurring slowly in earlier years, they were generally smaller than the transformations of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In many ways the changes were fundamental, with free elections becoming common in many of the countries, and many of the countries moved toward market economies.

Numerous elites as well as many ordinary people in these countries turned their attention politically, economically, and socially toward Western Europe and North America where they perceived the pinnacle of development, progress, and the good life to be. One theme for some people in Central Europe was that the collapse of socialism provided the opportunity for them to refocus their societies and lives “back to Europe” (meaning the West) after decades of being focused eastward (Krasnodębski 2003). For many this “return to Europe” meant reintegration into the model of modernity, development, and genuine civilization, so that Western Europe became a cultural norm and ideal again (Krasnodębski 2003; Brusis 2005). In addition, this Europeanization or modernization was sometimes a “device used by Westernizers to argue against traditionalists” (Brusis 2005, page 33).

The principles and programs existing in Western countries became the models for many in Central/Eastern Europe for democracy, multi-party electoral systems, and economic, legal, and statistical systems. In addition, many people of Central and Eastern Europe turned to the ethical and moral system of the West as a guide for replacing the moral and ethical system imposed by the communist governments. In some instances there was a general rejection of socialist things and an endorsement of Western things without specific knowledge of the West and what that endorsement meant in reality.

Although the flow of information, ideas, and people between the West and East had been increasing before the transformations of the late 1980s and early 1990s, information, ideas, and people flowed across these boundaries after the transformation as never before. Media channels were established within months and magazines, newspapers, and radio and television programs streamed across the region. In addition, artificial travel

restrictions to the West were lifted. Although the expenses of international travel placed limitations on such flows, numerous people from Central/Eastern Europe visited the West—where they saw and heard firsthand of the cultural, familial, social, and economic circumstances of the West. In addition, Westerners began to visit in unprecedented numbers the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Czechoslovakia provides an interesting example of the dramatic increases in the flows of information and people in a few short years following its political transformation in 1989 (Sobotka et al. 2007). Between 1989 and 1992 the number of registered cross-border trips by Czechoslovak citizens rose from 8.6 million in 1989 to 42.2 million in 1992—nearly a five-fold increase in just three years. Furthermore, the trips of Czechoslovak citizens in 1989 would have primarily been to other socialist countries and not to the West, whereas a large fraction of those in 1992 were probably to Western countries. Visits of foreign nationals to the country also increased dramatically during the same period—from 29.6 million in 1989 to 83.5 million in 1992. Interestingly, the number of visitors to Czechoslovakia from Hungary and the former Soviet Union actually declined during this same period, while the number from Germany and Austria increased dramatically. The number of newspapers and magazines in circulation also increased from about 800 in 1989 to about 3000 in 1992, and total circulation also increased dramatically.<sup>5</sup>

Another indicator of the importance of the West as a beacon and guidepost for many in Central and Eastern Europe was the rush by many countries to join Western political, economic, and military organizations. Several countries of the former Warsaw Pact or republics within the former Yugoslavia or former Soviet Union very quickly joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union. By the current

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<sup>5</sup> The source of the data in this paragraph is the Czech Statistical Office (1993, pages 281 and 315). We are indebted to Tomáš Sobotka for bringing these data to our attention.

writing in 2007 ten of these countries had joined both organizations. Several other countries are candidates for membership in the European Union and/or are members of NATO's Euro-Atlantic Cooperation Council. Both the European Union and NATO have requirements, clearly Western in orientation, that they expect interested countries to meet before admitting them to membership. The requirements of the European Union are particularly relevant here because they include a wide range of social and economic issues, including the role of women<sup>6</sup>.

### **FAMILY AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AFTER THE TRANSFORMATION**

Although the specific pathways of change varied across the countries of the region, the political and economic transformations of the late 1980s and early 1990s were accompanied by family and demographic changes in all of them, with many of those changes being rapid and substantial. We briefly discuss these general trends, beginning with the dramatic declines in first marriage in the region.

Philipov and Dorbritz (2003) characterized marriages before the start of the transition as being universal and contracted at a young age as compared to Western Europe. They further showed that shortly after the start of the transition marriage swiftly lost its universality and was continuously postponed to a later age in life; moreover there was a marked rise in cohabitation.

Table 3 documents both the decline in the first marriage rate and the increase in mean age at first marriage throughout the region. We use as our measure of the marriage rate the total first marriage rate (TFMR) which is the sum of the age-specific first-marriage rates by age 50. It is frequently

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<sup>6</sup> The drive to join NATO and the European Union for many was also motivated, in part, by security concerns and fear of Russia. In addition, the requirements of the European Union are not always followed and enforced in individual member countries.

**Table 3** Total first-marriage rates (TFMR), mean age at first marriage (MAFM).

	TFMR			MAFM		
	1980	1990	2004 <sup>(1)</sup>	1980	1990	2004 <sup>(2)</sup>
Albania	0.77	0.99		22.2	23.2	23.5
Armenia		0.93	0.59		22.4	22.8
Azerbaijan	0.98	1.05	0.80		24.2	24.1
Belarus			0.59	22.9	22.0	23.4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.69	0.67	0.75	22	23.3	24.6
Bulgaria	0.97	0.90	0.50	21.3	21.4	25.2
Croatia	0.79	0.70	0.68	22.1	23.1	25.6
Czech R.	0.90	1.02	0.48	21.5	21.6	26.0
Estonia	0.94	0.79	0.44	22.6	22.5	25.7
FYR of Mac.	0.91	0.86	0.83	22.2	22.6	24.3
Georgia	0.99	0.80	0.28	-( <sup>2</sup> )	23.5	25.5
Hungary	0.89	0.77	0.45	21.2	21.9	26.2
Latvia	0.97	0.92	0.46	22.8	22.2	25.1
Lithuania	0.94	1.06	0.62	23.0	22.3	24.7
Moldova	1.11	1.19	0.62		22.3	23.8
Poland	0.90	0.91	0.56	22.8	22.7	24.9
Romania	1.02	0.92	0.74	21.5	22.0	24.1
Russian F.	0.96	1.00	0.60	22.4	21.9	22.1
Serbia and Montenegro	0.82	0.78	0.73	22.5	23.4	25.7
Slovak Rep.	0.87	0.96	0.56	21.9	21.9	25.0
Slovenia	0.79	0.51	0.41	22.5	23.7	27.8

<sup>(1)</sup> The last available year for Albania is 1999; for Bosnia and Herzegovina 1998; for Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Slovak Republic 2003; for Russia 1996.

<sup>(2)</sup> The last available year for Albania is 1999; for Armenia 2003; for Bosnia and Herzegovina 1998; for Croatia and Georgia 2003; for Russia 1996.

*Source:* Council of Europe (2005). No data for Ukraine provided in source.

interpreted as the proportion of women who would enter a first marriage by age 50 if they were subject to the age specific first marriage rates of a specific year. A proportion close to 1—say above 0.95—can be interpreted as showing universality of marriages. The TFMR is a measure of marriage in one period that is suppressed downward during times of postponement of marriage and rising mean age at marriage (Bongaarts and Feeney 1998). It is elevated when the mean age decreases and can even be greater than one, as was observed during the 1980s in some countries.

With very few exceptions, the TFMR in the countries of the region declined dramatically between 1990 and 2004. In fact, the declines were so substantial that if the age specific marriage rates of 2004 were to continue, in most countries, less than two-thirds of all women would marry by age 50. And, in many countries one-half or fewer would marry by this age. In addition, in almost all of the countries the mean age at first marriage increased substantially after the start of the transition—by more than two years in several of the countries. However, in some countries the increase in mean age at marriage was very slight—for example in the Russian Federation. An adjustment of the TFMR for changes in timing does not change the picture of the overall decline in the extent of marriage very much (Philipov and Dorbritz 2003).

Because nonmarital cohabitation is an unofficial event, it is not measured in official statistics and conclusions about it are more difficult. Nevertheless, there is evidence suggesting that at the same time that marriage rates were declining and age at marriage was increasing, in many of the countries nonmarital cohabitation was increasing. The Family and Fertility Surveys conducted in the 1990s in several of the countries measured cohabitation experience and suggest substantial increases in this experience. Table 4 provides a summary of the nonmarital cohabitation experience of women in several of these countries by age 25—with the data presented separately by different age cohorts. By comparing across age groups, we can estimate intercohort trends in cohabitation experience.



**Table 4** Cumulative percentage of females who by exact age 25 have ever entered first partnerships that were non-marital unions.

Country	Year of interview	Age at interview		
		25-29	30-34	35-39
Czech Rep.	1997	29.3	25.5	20.5
Estonia	1994	64.0	60.8	48.9
Hungary	1992/93	18.1	14.8	8.9
Latvia	1995	40.0	28.6	25.4
Lithuania	1994-1995	15.3	9.5	12.2
Poland	1991	4.1	3.6	2.8
Slovenia	1994-1995	42.5	36.0	23.1

*Source:* Tables 8c from the series "Fertility and Family Surveys in countries of the ECE region" for the corresponding countries.

Although the surveys were conducted relatively soon after the political transformations in the region, with the exception of Poland and Lithuania, they reveal substantial increases from the older to the younger cohorts. Perhaps the greatest increase was in Slovenia where the proportion across just ten years increased from 23 to 42 percent, but in the Czech Republic the increase was from 20 to 29 percent and in Hungary from 9 to 18 percent. The relatively small increase observed in Poland is probably related to the fact that the Polish survey was conducted in 1991, very soon after the political transformation. In addition, as we discuss further below, Polish behaviour was also probably influenced substantially by the strength of Catholic religion in the country.

More recent data and life table analyses about cohabitation experience from the Generations and Gender Surveys conducted in Bulgaria and Russia in 2004 and in Romania in 2005 are also relevant (Tables 5 and 6). Table 5 displays estimates from three types of life tables, placed in the three columns in the table. Each one of them refers to the indicated time

**Table 5** Entry into a first union, with cohabitation and marriage as competing-risks; life tables for the indicated period, women, GGS data.

	<b>Entry into cohabitation as a first union, cumulative percent till age 40 <sup>(1)</sup></b>	<b>Entry into marriage as a first union, cumulative percent till age 40 <sup>(2)</sup></b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Bulgaria</b>			
1985-1989	54	39	93
1990-1994	60	32	92
1999-2003	65	16	81
<b>Russia</b>			
1985-1989	34	63	97
1990-1994	46	50	96
1999-2003	63	33	96
<b>Romania</b>			
1980-1989	20	76	96
1996-2005	35	57	92

(1) with marriage as a competing event

(2) with cohabitation as a competing event

Source: Bulgaria and Russia, Philipov and Jasilioniene (2007), tables 5.6a and 5.6b; Romania, Mureshan (2007), tables 5.5 and 5.6

period and comes from a period life table, not a cohort life table. The first column gives the life table estimate of the cumulative percent of women that had not previously been in any form of a union, who by age 40 would have ever entered a first union in the form of cohabitation. For example, according to the 1985-1989 life table for Bulgaria, 54 percent of women would have ever entered a first union as a cohabitation by age 40. Analogously, the second column informs about entry into a marriage as a first union, with cohabitation as a competing risk. It shows that 39 percent of

the Bulgarian women would enter directly into a marriage as a first union, according to the period 1985-1989 life table. The third column gives the percentage of women who would ever experience any form of a first union. The percentage ever experiencing a union is also the sum of the percentage experiencing cohabitation and marriage.

**Table 6** Transition from cohabitation to marriage, with separation as a competing event; life table estimates for the indicated periods, women, GGS data.

	<b>Percent cohabitations that turn into marriage one year after start of cohabitation <sup>(1)</sup></b>	<b>Percent cohabitations that turn into marriage by 15 years after start of cohabitation <sup>(1)</sup></b>
<b>Bulgaria</b>		
1985-1989	77	95
1990-1994	63	86
1999-2003	38	68
<b>Russia</b>		
1985-1989	53	83
1990-1994	44	67
1999-2003	27	59
<b>Romania</b>		
1980-1989	45	80
1996-2005	27	66

<sup>(1)</sup> With separation as a competing event

*Source:* for Bulgaria and Russia, Philipov and Jasilioniene (2007), tables 5.7 and A9; for Romania, Mureshan (2007), table 6.2

These life table estimates show a significant increase in the cumulative percent of women who enter into a first union as a cohabitation

in all three countries, while entry into a marriage dropped drastically. These trends were especially dramatic for Russia, where the percent experiencing cohabitation increased from 34 to 63 percent<sup>7</sup>. However, it is only in Bulgaria where the level of entry into any first union has dropped considerably, down to 81 percent in the period 1999-2003, thus indicating a rise in remaining single.

Table 6 informs about the transition from first cohabitation to first marriage. It includes estimates from life tables whose initial cohort (the radix) consists of first cohabitations. Time zero in these life tables is when the cohabitations started. About 77 percent would turn into marriage within one year after the start of cohabitation in Bulgaria during 1985-1989,. Another 18 percent would turn into marriage during the subsequent 14 years, so that ultimately 95 percent would ever turn into marriage<sup>8</sup>.

Table 6 shows that in the 1985-89 period cohabitations in Bulgaria were quite closely linked to marriage—with marriage following cohabitation within one year for 77 percent of the women. However, during the 1999-2003 period this percentage had dropped to just 38 percent. For the same 1999-2003 period, only 68 percent would have been transformed into marriage even after 15 years. In Russia and Romania the percentage of cohabitators marrying within one year or within fifteen years during the 1980s was lower than in Bulgaria, but the declines in these figures were almost as remarkable in these countries as they were in Bulgaria. Thus, the data show that cohabitations have gained considerable ground in a short period. They have become much more common, and when they occur, they are much less closely linked to marriage than in the past.

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<sup>7</sup> Also see Gerber and Berman (2006) for an analysis using a different data set that documents increasing cohabitation in Russia.

<sup>8</sup> Life table estimates were conducted only for 15 years after the cohabitations started because the number of observations for the subsequent years is too small.

As documented in Table 2, fertility rates also declined dramatically across the 1990s in every country. In fact, the declines were so substantial that by the year 2004, with three exceptions, the total fertility rate was between just 1.2 and 1.52 across the region. Although such low total fertility rates have been observed in other countries in Europe and in parts of Asia, the fertility rates in the Central/Eastern European region are among the lowest in the world. In fact, if such low rates were to last for a lifetime, the next generation in these countries would only be around two-thirds as large as the current generation—indicating large-scale population declines. However the TFR marked a moderate increase after 2000 in a few countries.

In almost every country with data shown in Table 2 mean age at first birth increased sharply during the 1990s. As with the increase in mean age at marriage, the mean age at first birth increased by two or more years in some of the countries. The postponement of first births—and consequently subsequent births as well—is at least part of the explanation of the dramatic declines in the total fertility rate in most of the countries during the same period. That is, significant postponement of childbearing can lead to a dramatic decline in childbearing rates observed in any particular year, even if the women postponing childbearing eventually have the same number of children as their predecessors. It is too early in the process to know if the low fertility of this period is just a result of postponement or, in addition, reflects a shift to fewer children born altogether. However, current estimates suggest that much of the decline in period fertility is due to postponement, but that there will also be declines in completed fertility for the cohorts of women currently in the childbearing years (Sobotka et al. 2007).

Earlier, we noted that Russia is an exception to the large increase in age at first marriage. Table 2 reveals that Russia is also an exception to the overall trend toward much later ages at first birth. A recent paper by Perelli-Harris (2005) suggests that the Ukraine may also be an exception to this trend. In the Ukraine fertility fell to very low levels, but this decline was due to reductions in second and higher births rather than to reductions or

postponements of first children. As Perelli-Harris concludes, there are clearly alternative paths to very low fertility in Central and Eastern Europe.

Philipov and Dorbritz (2003) noted that before the start of the transition entry into parenthood was universal, i.e. nearly every woman would have at least one child by the end of her reproductive age. Sobotka (2004) indicates that childlessness has emerged in some countries in the region, although not all. Philipov and Jasilioniene (2007) found that universality of motherhood remained prevalent in Russia towards the beginning of the 21st Century, while in Bulgaria voluntary childlessness has already emerged.

Another indicator of changing marital and childbearing patterns in Central and Eastern Europe is the percentage of children born to unmarried mothers. Table 7 provides data on this indicator and demonstrates increases across the 1990s in every country, indicating a clear shift from marital to nonmarital childbearing. However, caution must be exercised in interpreting these trends as the percentage of children born to unmarried mothers is a product of several different factors: the percentage of women who are married; the birth rates of married women; and the birth rates of unmarried women. Without decomposing the percentage of children born to married women into these various components, we cannot know which of the three components—or which combination of them—accounts for the change. Further investigation is required to know whether or not childbearing rates among unmarried women increased during this period.

In many countries where abortion is tightly restricted, one might expect that a decline in childbearing would be at least partially the result of a relaxation of abortion laws and an increase in abortion. Indeed, changes occurred along those lines in Albania where abortion was legalized in 1991 (Gjonca no date).

However, as we noted earlier, abortion was previously legal and widespread in most of Central and Eastern Europe. It then declined substantially during the period of rapidly falling fertility. As revealed by

Table 8, in almost every country the abortion rate fell during the 1990s, and in some cases the decline was dramatic.

**Table 7** Extra-marital births per 100 births.

	1990	1995	2000	2004
Armenia	9.3	9.3	14.6	11.4
Azerbaijan	2.6	5.8	5.4	20.3
Belarus	8,5	13,5	18.6	23.9
Bosnia-Herz	7,4		10,2	11.2
Bulgaria	12,4	25,7	38.4	48.7
Croatia	7,0	7,5	9.0	10.4
Czech Rep.	8,6	15,6	21.8	30.6
Estonia	27,1	44,1	54,5	57.8 <sup>(1)</sup>
FYR of Mac.	7,1	8,2	9,8	12.3
Georgia	18.2	29.2	40.4	44.6 <sup>(1)</sup>
Hungary	13,1	20,7	29.0	34.0
Latvia	16,9	29,9	40.3	45.3
Lithuania	7,0	12,8	22.6	28.7
Moldova	11,1	13,3	20.5	23.7 <sup>(1)</sup>
Poland	6,2	9,5	12.1	17.1
Romania		19,7	25.5	29.4
Russian F.	14,6	21,1	28.0	29.8
Serbia and Montenegro	12,7	16,4	24.3	20.6
Slovak Rep	7,6	12,6	18.3	24.8
Slovenia	24,5	29,8	37.1	44.8
Ukraine	13,0	13,2	17,3	20.4

<sup>(1)</sup> in 2003

**Table 8** Abortion rate, 1980-1999, per thousand women aged 15-44.

	1980	1990	1996	1999
Belarus	94.0	116.9	73.6	59.6
Bulgaria	76.7	67.8	51.3	42.2
Czech Republic	32.2	49.3	20.6	17.8
Croatia		25.8 <sup>(3)</sup>	12.4	8.2
Estonia	110.7	87.9	53.6	46.6
GDR	25.3	20.4	10.1	
Hungary	36.3	41.2	34.5	30.9
Latvia	107.8	87.2	46.1	35.0
Lithuania	59.3	61.7	34.0	22.9
Moldova	101.2	83.1	45.8	38.8 <sup>(5)</sup>
Poland	16.7	7.0	0.06	
Romania	90.2	199.3	90.2	51.7
Russia	140.2	125.6	79.8	70.1 <sup>(5)</sup>
Slovak Republic	28.7	40.9	17.2	16.1
Slovenia		27.4 <sup>(4)</sup>	22.7	19.8
Ukraine	106.8	96.5	62.3	
Yugoslavia		70.7 <sup>(1)</sup>	44.9 <sup>(2)</sup>	26.2 <sup>(5)</sup>

(1) in 1991; (2) in 1995; (3) in 1992; (4) in 1993; (5) in 1998

Source: David, ed. (1999, p.14) for 1980, 1990, and 1996; estimations of the author based on data from the Council of Europe (2002), 1999. Data provided in source only for selected countries.

At the same time that abortion rates were falling in most of the region, the use of chemical and mechanical means of contraception was increasing sharply. The governments in Central and Eastern Europe had long had policies and programs that restricted the distribution and use of chemical and mechanical means of contraception (David 1999 and the country chapters therein). Although many couples knew about contraceptives and used them, supplies were often few and irregular, making steady and



effective use of contraception difficult. As a result of the policies on contraception and abortion and limited and irregular supplies of contraceptives, there were low rates of usage of chemical and mechanical contraception, and the rates of abortion were exceptionally high—among the highest rates in the world. During the 1980s the governments of the region began to permit wider distribution of contraceptives. And, in the 1990s effective contraceptives became widely available and used by substantial fractions of the population (Philipov and Dorbritz 2003). Sobotka and colleagues (2007) report that the percentage of Czech women prescribed the contraceptive pill increased from 4 percent in 1990 to 44 percent in 2004—a remarkable increase during a relatively short period.

Finally, we note that there is evidence that the trends in family and demographic behaviour in Central/Eastern Europe have been accompanied by similar changes in personal and family values and beliefs. Table 9 provides trend data from the 1990 and 1995-97 European Value Surveys for five different value/belief indicators. As Table 9 shows, in a very short period of time, there were uniform declines in the proportion of the population supporting the idea that a child needs two parents and that children are necessary for a woman's self-fulfilment. In addition, there were uniform increases in the percentage saying that marriage is an outdated institution and that it is alright for a woman to have a child without a stable relationship with a man. In addition, in two of the three sub-regions the percentage saying that individuals should have complete sexual freedom increased, but in the third (the countries in Central Europe) it decreased. Unfortunately, we do not have data concerning these ideational factors before 1990.

Additional evidence of dramatic ideational changes is provided by data from the Czech Republic concerning attitudes toward homosexuality. Whereas 48 percent of women and 53 percent of men said that “they would not like to have homosexuals as neighbours” in 1991, just 8 years later the respective numbers had dropped to 17 and 22 percent (Sobotka et al. 2003, footnote 7).

**Table 9** Percent of respondents who agree with the statement made in the questions, three groups of CEE countries, EVS 1990 and 1995-97.

	Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia		Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania		Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania	
	1990	1995	1990	1995	1990	1995
v92	96	86	96	95*	96	86
v93	66	39	85	73	88	65
v94	16	30	17	27	15	28
v95	41	36	30	38	30	41
v96	36	54	47	48*	38	64

v92: *If someone says a child needs a home with both a father and a mother to grow up happily, would you tend to agree or disagree?*

v93: *Do you think that a woman has to have children in order to be fulfilled or it is not necessary?*

v94: *Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: marriage is an outdated institution?*

v95: *If someone said that individuals should have the chance to enjoy complete sexual freedom without being restricted, would you tend to agree or disagree?*

v96: *If a woman wants to have a child as a single parent but she doesn't want to have a stable relationship with a man, do you approve or disapprove?*

\*statistically insignificant difference

We now turn to an examination of the factors that can explain these dramatic changes in family and demographic behaviour and values. We will focus on the ideational factors associated with developmental idealism and its likely spread and increased influence after the political transformation in the region. We will focus both on developmental idealism itself, but at the same time discuss the ways in which it may have intersected with changes in the economy and government. We begin with the potential influence of changing economic knowledge, aspirations, and achievements.

## **EXPLAINING FAMILY AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE**

### **Economic knowledge, aspirations, and achievements**

The new flow of information from the West to Central and Eastern Europe after the political transformation would have had enormous implications for people's understanding of economic life and possibilities in the contemporary world. We noted earlier that knowledge of the West, the developmental model, and Western consumption patterns had been known among many before the implementation of socialist governments, but that the free flow of knowledge from the West had more or less been disrupted by the socialist regimes. As Balla (2005) suggests, this great reduction of information flows would have significantly limited people's ability to compare their living circumstances with those in the West.

With the establishment of regular linkages, people in Central and Eastern Europe re-established their knowledge bases. This made it possible for comparisons between the regions to be made much more easily than in the immediately preceding years (Balla 2005). In addition, the standard of living in the West had expanded greatly during previous decades, and the people from Central and Eastern Europe now discovered in the countries of Western Europe and North America a definition and understanding of modernity and development that they could not have had before the transformation. It is likely that the standard of living and consumer durables available in the West and newly known in Central/Eastern Europe would have raised consumption possibilities and aspirations to new highs for the latter region.

In addition, the development model had always pictured every society as being on the same developmental trajectory, with each having the capacity to achieve the high living standards already achieved elsewhere. Furthermore, it would have been easy for people in the former socialist societies to blame their relatively low economic performance relative to the

West on the socialist economic and political system and to expect that the removal of the socialist regime would facilitate rapid economic growth. In fact, among many there were expectations for a rapid transformation in a very few years from the previous economic and consumption circumstances to economic and living standards experienced in Western Europe and North America. Thus, the new definition of modernity and achievement offered by the West also was widely seen as attainable, with important implications for rising consumption aspirations. As one scholar has said about Hungary, it would have been easy for people to believe that all that was needed was the removal of socialism and Hungary could, “like Aladdin, on a magic carpet and fly it off to the world of welfare societies” (Robert 1999, page 87).

Unfortunately, the new economic and consumption aspirations were not fulfilled at all quickly. And, even worse, for many of the countries of Central/Eastern Europe, the economy and standard of living worsened rather than improved. Furthermore, in many instances, the drop in the standard of living was substantial. As demonstrated in Table 10, significant economic declines were experienced for at least two consecutive years in all countries in the region and in many of the countries the significant decline lasted for several consecutive years. Cumulative declines of 40 percent or more were not uncommon, and a few countries experienced significant declines exceeding 60 percent.

Such sudden and substantial declines in the economy and standard of living would have been a jolt under ordinary circumstances, but must have been especially shocking in an era with new standards of consumption revealed in the West and the new belief that those standards were now attainable. In fact, as shown in Table 10, many of the countries experienced subsequent improvement in economic matters, but still by 2004 gross domestic product per capita in several of the countries was at or below the income level in 1989. In addition, income levels in all of these countries, as shown in Table 11, were substantially lower than those in Western Europe. Even in the most prosperous countries such as the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Hungary, income per capita was only approximately \$20,000 as

compared with more than \$30,000 in most of Western Europe, and incomes were less—and sometimes far less—than \$10,000 per capita in many of the countries of the region.

It would be surprising if such a contradiction between rising aspirations, declining realities, and unfavourable comparisons did not lead to high levels of disillusionment and dissatisfaction. In fact, survey data from several countries after the transformation indicate that such dissatisfaction did become widespread, with many people openly criticizing current conditions, saying that life conditions had deteriorated rather than improved (Robert 1999). It is likely that such dissatisfaction would have substantial ramifications throughout the system.

The combination of new and supposedly attainable definitions of modernity and consumption with dramatic declines in economic well-being would be expected to create considerable disruption, uncertainty, and confusion. Exactly what would the future hold in a world with remarkable new freedoms and possibilities—including the freedom for dramatic declines in economic well-being? In addition, previously established social programs supporting housing and childcare were abandoned or diminished, with substantial implications for family formation. Confusion and uncertainty were probably further exacerbated by the fact that the promises of democracy and freedom of speech and the press proved harder to accomplish than expected. The difficulties of establishing the kind of modern society perceived to exist in the West and the presence of actual declining economic circumstances and social programs would likely create considerable confusion and uncertainty.

One would expect that increasing consumption aspirations, drops in income, and increases in uncertainty would have substantial effects on family decisions. Because both marriage and childbearing are seen as long term commitments and investments, it would be easy to expect that dramatic increases in aspirations, rapidly falling incomes, and rapidly increased uncertainty would lead to postponement of family commitments. And, if postponement is substantial enough and rapid enough, it can lead to

**Table 10** Growth of Gross Domestic Product for Central and Eastern European Countries, 1989=100.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	In 2004, 1989=100
Albania						13,3	9,1	-10,9	8,6	13,2	6,5	7,1	4,3	5,7	6,7	129
Armenia						6,9	5,9	3,3	7,3	3,3	5,9	9,6	13,2	13,9	10,1	94
Azerbaijan						-11,8	0,8	6	10	11	6,2	6,5	8,1	10,4	10,2	58
Belarus	-3	-1,2	-9,6	-7,6	-12,6	-10,4	2,8	11,4	8,4	3,3	5,8	4,7	5	7	11,4	110
Bosnia and Herz.						20,8	86	37	15,6	9,6	5,5	4,3	5,3	3	6	66
Bulgaria	-9,1	-11,7	-7,3	-1,5	1,8	2,9	-9,4	-5,6	4	2,3	5,4	4,1	4,9	4,5	5,7	88
Croatia						6,8	5,9	6,8	2,5	-0,9	2,9	4,4	5,6	5,3	4,3	96
Czech Republic	-1,2	-11,6	-0,5	0,1	2,2	5,9	4,2	-0,7	-0,8	1,3	3,6	2,5	1,9	3,6	4,2	114
Estonia	-6,5	-13,6	-14,2	-9	-2	4,5	4,4	11,1	4,4	0,3	10,8	7,7	8	7,1	8,1	115
FYR Macedonia	-9,9	-7	-8	-9,1	-1,8	-1,1	1,2	1,4	3,4	4,3	4,5	-4,5	0,9	2,8	4,1	84
Georgia						2,4	10,5	10,6	2,9	3	1,9	4,7	5,5	11,1	5,9	43
Hungary	-3,5	-11,9	-3,1	-0,6	2,9	1,5	1,3	4,6	4,9	4,2	6	4,3	3,8	3,4	5,2	123
Latvia	2,9	-10,4	-34,9	-14,9	0,6	-0,9	3,9	8,4	4,7	3,3	8,4	8	6,5	7,2	8,5	89
Lithuania	-5	-5,7	-21,3	-16,2	-9,8	3,3	4,7	7	7,3	-1,7	3,9	7,2	6,8	10,5	7	91
Moldova	-2,4	-17,5	-29,1	-1,2	-31,2	-1,4	-5,9	1,6	-6,5	-3,4	2,1	6,1	7,8	6,6	7,3	44
Montenegro						6,2	13,9	4,2	4	-6,7	3,1	-0,2	1,7	1,5	3,7	66

Poland	-11,6	-7	2,6	3,8	5,2	7	6,2	7,1	5	4,5	4,3	1,2	1,4	3,9	5,3	143
Romania	-5,6	-12,9	-8,8	1,5	3,9	7,1	3,9	-6,1	-4,8	-1,1	2,1	5,7	5,1	5,2	8,5	100
Russia	-4	-5	-14,5	-8,7	-12,7	-4	-3,6	1,4	-5,3	6,4	10	5,1	4,7	7,3	7,1	81
Serbia						6,1	7,8	10,1	1,9	-18	5,2	5,1	4,5	2,4	9,3	57
Slovak Republic	-2,5	-14,6	-6,5	-3,7	4,9	5,8	6,1	4,6	4,2	1,5	2	3,2	4,1	4,2	5,4	118
Slovenia	-4,7	-8,9	-5,5	2,8	5,3	4,1	3,7	4,8	3,9	5,4	4,1	2,7	3,5	2,7	4,4	127
Ukraine	-3,4	-11,6	-13,7	-14,2	-23	-12,2	-10	-3	-1,9	-0,2	5,9	9,2	5,2	9,6	12,1	57

*Source:* Transition Report 2000 (till 1994) and 2007 (as of 1995). Some of the numbers in the table are difficult to understand or explain—for example, the 86% growth rate in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1996. We only report the data from the source, without interpretation or explanation.

**Table 11** Gross Domestic Product for Countries in 2004.

<b>Western Europe</b>	GDP Per capita (PPP US\$) 2004	<b>Central and Eastern Europe</b>	GDP Per capita (PPP US\$) 2004
<b>Scandinavia</b>		<b>Balkan countries</b>	
Norway	38,454	Albania	4,978
Iceland	33,051	Bosnia & Herz.	7,032
Sweden	29,541	Bulgaria	8,078
Finland	29,951	Croatia	12,191
<b>Mediterranean Europe</b>		FYR Macedonia	6,610
Italy	28,180	Romania	8,480
Spain	25,047	<b>C.I.S. and Caucasus</b>	
Greece	22,205	Russian Fed.	9,902
Portugal	19,629	Belarus	6,970
Malta	18,879	Ukraine	6,394
<b>Western Europe</b>		Armenia	4,101
Ireland	38,827	Georgia	2,844
Switzerland	33,040	Azerbaijan	4,153
Netherlands	31,789	Moldova	1,729
Belgium	31,096	<b>Central Eastern Europe and the Baltic countries</b>	
Austria	32,276	Czech Republic	19,408
Denmark	31,914	Estonia	14,555
France	29,300	Lithuania	13,107
United Kingdom	30,821	Latvia	11,653
Germany	28,303	Hungary	16,814
		Poland	12,974
		Slovak Republic	14,623
		Slovenia	20,939

Source: United Nations 2006. Data for Serbia and Montenegro not available in source table.



substantial drops in period marriage and fertility rates. Furthermore, the postponement of marriage and childbearing can lead to individuals being less likely to marry and to having fewer children than they would have had without the initial postponement.

Thus, increasing aspirations, falling incomes, and rising uncertainty could play significant roles in the dramatic declines in marriage and childbearing after 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe. Although it is very difficult to identify exactly how much of the declines of marriage and childbearing could be attributed to each of these three causal factors—increasing aspirations, falling incomes, and rising uncertainty—it is unlikely that all of these family changes could be entirely due to falling incomes. The reason for this tentative conclusion is that the differences in the degree of economic changes across countries have been greater than the differences in fertility change (Caldwell 2004). In addition, absolute incomes have recovered in several countries such as Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic after the initial declines—even rising, in some cases, to significantly higher levels than in the 1980s—and even in these countries both marriage and fertility have remained at very low levels. Period fertility levels in these countries have not bounced back to their previous levels, to say nothing of making up for any postponement that may have occurred due to poor economic conditions in the immediate post-transformation period<sup>9</sup>. The continued gap between rising aspirations that are believed to be attainable and the state of the economy could, however, be part of the explanation for the long term trends even in these countries.

Although declines in income, increasing uncertainty, and rising aspirations resulting from contact with the West and new definitions of modernity and what is possible can help to explain declines in fertility and

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<sup>9</sup> Gerber and Berman (2006) also report that the increased income in Russia in recent years has not reversed the family trends in that country.

marriage, they are unlikely candidates for explaining the shifts of fertility control from abortion to contraception, the increases in cohabitation, and changing values concerning family life. It is not clear why these latter family and demographic factors would change as they have in response to increasing consumption aspirations, rising uncertainty, and falling income.

### **Changing Values and Beliefs Concerning Personal and Family Life**

As Central and East Europeans looked toward Western Europe after the political and transformations of the late 1980s and early 1990s, they found not only different and changed economies, but different and changed family circumstances. As we discussed earlier, family life in the West had been different from that in many places in the East for hundreds—perhaps even thousands of years. Before the advent of socialism and information control in these countries, family life in Western Europe would have provided a model of the future of family systems for people who lived in the Central/Eastern region.

But, in the four decades since World War II, when much of Central/Eastern Europe was very isolated from the West, the family and marriage system in Northwest Europe and North America had changed dramatically (Bianchi and Spain 1986; Davis 1984; Glendon 1976; Goldin 1990; Goldscheider and Waite 1991; Lesthaeghe and Neels 2002; Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2002; Michael et al 1994; Phillips 1988; Preston and McDonald 1979; Schneider 1985; Thornton, Axinn, and Xie 2007; van de Kaa 1987, 1994, 2001). Age at marriage in the West had risen, as had the prospects of many people never marrying. Childbearing was similarly postponed and the total fertility rate in many Western countries had fallen below replacement. Sex before marriage had become a common occurrence, and both cohabitation and childbearing outside of marriage had increased dramatically—so dramatically, in fact, that the majority of new unions in many countries were unmarried cohabitation. In addition, abortion and

divorce were made legal in Western countries that had previously outlawed them. In addition, equality between the sexes had increased dramatically.

These trends in behaviour in the West were matched by changes in values and attitudes (Thornton 1989; Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001; van de Kaa 1987; Varenne 1996/1986; Veroff, Douvan, and Kulka 1981). Marriage became less central in the value systems of individuals, childbearing became less required, and sex, cohabitation, and childbearing outside of marriage became more accepted. Attitudes toward abortion, divorce, and same sex marriage had become much more tolerant. Gender equality had also become a central tenet in the value systems of many people. Emphasis on the individual as compared to the community increased, as people took more individualistic approaches to life. In addition, self-expression and personal fulfilment had become central values. In fact, the changes in behaviour and values concerning family and personal life have been so substantial that several have labelled them to be a second demographic transition—a transition as large and important as an earlier decline in mortality and fertility labelled by many as the first demographic transition (Lesthaeghe and Neels 2002; Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2002; van de Kaa 1987, 1994, 2001).

In addition, there is strong support in the Western world for the proposition that a modern family is a cause and an effect of a modern society and personal life. Most importantly is the common idea that family life should be adjusted in order to meet socio-economic goals. This can be seen in the emphasis that marriage should wait until one has completed one's education, has a good paying job, and excellent financial resources. It can also be seen in the emphasis that the postponement of children is necessary for education and career success. It is likely that the preponderance of these ideas in the West was also observed by the awareness of Central/Eastern Europeans of the new circumstances in the West.

Furthermore, as people from Central/Eastern Europe learned more about the West in the 1990s and 2000s, they observed a new emphasis upon freedom and equality. In the years since World War II support for the

proposition that freedom and equality are fundamental human rights had witnessed a dramatic expansion. Increasingly, people believed that independence of thinking and behaviour occupied a very high place in the hierarchy of values. And, behaviour that was previously outlawed became increasingly accepted, as long as it was not seen as infringing on the rights of others. And whereas intolerance of certain behaviours was previously a hallmark of good citizenship, intolerance against intolerance had become an especially important standard (Caplow, Bahr, and Chadwick 1983; Roof and McKinney 1987). And, equality by religion, sex, race, ethnicity, and age has become widely acknowledged as a human goal, although also seen as difficult to achieve.

It is important to note that while behaviour, values, and aspirations concerning family life had changed dramatically in Western Europe and North America during the period after World War II, the new behaviours and values were not endorsed by everyone. Instead, the new behaviours and values were actively opposed by many. Yet, even among those not endorsing the new behaviours and values, there was an increased tolerance of them.

Family, political, social, economic, and personal life in the West were not just beacons or guideposts for the behaviour and values of others, but they became benchmarks and requirements for participation in Western political and economic institutions. This is perhaps demonstrated most strongly in the rules for admission into the European Union, as the Union has strong standards relative to freedom, equality, and tolerance that must be satisfied before a candidate nation can be fully admitted (see for example [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/index_en.htm) and therein). Of course, enforcement of these principles in practice is difficult, but even if the policies are not strongly enforced, the statement of the principles and policies can be influential.

There are several ways in which increased knowledge in Central and Eastern Europe of family behaviour, values, and beliefs in Western Europe and North America could have affected family behaviour, values, and beliefs in Central/Eastern Europe. One way is that some people in Central and

Eastern Europe became aware of the family values, beliefs, and behaviour in what they perceived as the more developed West and adopted those values, beliefs, and behaviours at least partially for themselves. This adoption or modeling across international boundaries could have occurred either consciously or subconsciously as knowledge and images from the West increasingly circulated in Central/Eastern Europe.

It is also likely that many people in Central/Eastern Europe did not actively adopt Western family patterns. In fact, many people in Central/Eastern Europe may have found what they observed in the West as objectionable and actively opposed those Western patterns. Yet, at the same time, the existence of such patterns in the West, which was seen as more developed and progressive, would likely have increased tolerance of the Western behaviour, beliefs, and values concerning family life. The prevalence of the new behaviours in the West would have, thus, given them legitimacy in Central/Eastern Europe that would have made opposition more difficult and less likely.

Another mechanism is the long history of the linkage of freedom in political and family arenas. It is easy to link the bases of political and familial authority, with increased emphasis on one leading to an increased importance on the other. Of course, one of the key issues in the political transformations of the late 1980s and early 1990s was the intense desire for political freedom among many in the populations of the countries. While this drive for political freedom was not universal among all people—and was even ignored or opposed by many—it provided a new framework of legitimacy for freedom of action. Thus, it should not be surprising to see this new legitimacy of political freedom lead to a desire for additional freedom in personal and family matters. It is also likely to have increased the legitimacy of trying out new behaviours widespread in the West but not previously experienced by many in Central/Eastern Europe.

We believe that through these mechanisms—and probably others—the new knowledge about family behaviours, beliefs, and values in the West had substantial influence on family behaviours, beliefs, and values in Central

and Eastern Europe. Probably of central importance here is the strong emphasis on individual and family freedom in the West which would have likely had a significant influence in Central/Eastern Europe where political freedom was such an important new and active principle. It is likely that the substantially expanded contact with the West would have led some in Central/Eastern Europe to model Western patterns, but for others the effect would have been more of increasing the legitimacy of and tolerance of Western patterns.

Such changing values and beliefs—including both endorsement and tolerance-- concerning personal and family matters have probably played a significant role in the postponement of marriage and childbearing and the decline of fertility. Increased individualism, independent thinking, and freedom of choice have probably played a significant role in making it possible for individuals to decide to postpone marriage and childbearing and to have zero or one child. These new values would have combined with rising consumption aspirations, economic declines, disruption of normal patterns, and increases in uncertainty to affect the timing of marriage and childbearing and the number of children born.

We also believe that the increased acceptance and/or tolerance in the Central/Eastern region of the values and beliefs in the West would have had especially strong effects on changes in nonmarital cohabitation and childbearing in Central and Eastern Europe. As we discussed earlier, there have been increases in each of these key indicators in several countries in the region. And, in some countries, the increase in cohabitation was very large in a very short period. And, as we noted earlier, the percentage of children born outside of marriage also increased dramatically.

The increased contact with the West—and the values and beliefs predominant there—were also probably important influences on changing values and beliefs in Central/Eastern Europe. It is likely that the values and beliefs existing in the West would have spread eastward and helped to foster the increased endorsement or tolerance of divorce, childlessness, sexual freedom, single parenthood, and the belief that marriage is an outdated

institution that we documented earlier. It is likely that the new values and beliefs legitimated the new behaviours and gave people the freedom to participate in behaviours that were previously discouraged or even proscribed.

Developmental idealism can also help to explain the dramatic change in Central/Eastern Europe in the method of controlling the number of children born—from a regime with little use of chemical and mechanical contraceptives and extensive abortion to a regime with extensive use of chemical and mechanical contraceptives and reduced levels of abortion. We will discuss this issue by focusing separately on contraception and abortion.

Beginning with abortion, we note that in most countries of the world where abortion is very severely restricted by laws and enforcement is effective, we would expect that the spread of developmental idealism—especially the proposition about freedom of choice—would lead to less stringent restrictions against abortion and more abortions performed. This expectation is consistent with trends in Western Europe and North America (Thornton 2005a). Albania follows this pattern where abortion had previously been illegal, but was legalized in 1991 (Gjonca no date).

However, for most countries of Central/Eastern Europe the historical precedents were very different from those in the West. Abortion had been very common in most of Central/Eastern Europe for decades. In such a situation with high acceptance and practice of abortion, it would be hard to imagine any particular political transformation increasing the number of abortions. Instead, what happened in most of Central and Eastern Europe in this regard was a dramatic decline in abortion that brought the incidence previously existing in Central/Eastern Europe to one more similar to that existing in most of Western Europe.

On the contraception side, the story is much more familiar. As Thornton (2005a) has discussed, contraception and small families have come to be central components of what is meant by the modern family. International organizations have facilitated the spread and use of effective contraception around the world in recent decades. After the political

transformation in Central/Eastern Europe, international organizations, including the United Nations, targeted this region with similar efforts to increase the use of chemical and mechanical methods of family planning (see Johnson, Horga and Fajans 2004 for Romania, and Carlson and Lamb 2001 for Bulgaria). The international organizations worked to increase the size and regularity of contraceptive supplies, and to improve the efficiency of clinics. They also expanded efforts to help overcome infertility. And, of course, the political transformation in the region opened up new markets for contraceptive products, many from the West, with businesses working to take advantage of new markets and opportunities for profits.

However, the story about increasing contraceptive usage cannot be limited entirely to the supply side of the equation. In order for contraception to increase couples in the region had to make the decisions to use these methods. In fact, enough of them made this decision that both the birth rate and the abortion rate fell substantially in most countries during the period immediately after the political transformation. We expect that the women of the region were also influenced by the campaigns to spread contraceptive use—and advertising campaigns were also probably at least somewhat effective.

It should, of course, be recognized that we are not the first to suggest the emergence of new beliefs and values concerning individualism, freedom of conscience, endorsement of delayed marriage, and acceptance of nonmarital cohabitation and childbearing in Central and Eastern Europe, where they have influenced related behaviour. Gerber and Berman 2006, Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2007, and Sobotka et al. 2003 have argued for the emergence of such new values and beliefs, suggesting that their operation in Central and Eastern Europe has become increasingly similar to their operation in the West. In fact, they have suggested that what they call the second demographic transition has, in fact, emerged in Central and Eastern Europe.

There are at least four alternatives to our explanation that the adoption of or tolerance for new values and beliefs were influenced by new



contacts with Western Europe, along with a developmental model that provided legitimacy and power to the values and beliefs of the West. One potential alternative relates to the rise of normlessness and disorderliness that probably occurred with the disruptions associated with the political transformations of the late 1980s and 1990s. Such normlessness and disorderliness could have substantially weakened the existing normative structure, thereby leading to the adoption and/or tolerance of alternative ideas. We discuss this possibility in more detail below, where we suggest that its combination with developmental idealism makes a particularly strong influence on changing family values and beliefs.

A second potential alternative explanation suggests that changes in family behaviour, values, and beliefs along the lines recently experienced in Central/Eastern Europe are simply natural events in the histories of societies. This explanation suggests that there are a series of transitions—such as the first demographic transition or the second demographic transition—that are part of the natural trajectory of development and that the countries of Central/Eastern Europe are simply following this natural and universal trajectory. That is, Central and Eastern Europe would have simply “caught up” with Western Europe, even without the political and economic transformations of the late 1980s and early 1990s<sup>10</sup>. We, however, find this explanation problematic because it relies on the developmental paradigm’s assumption of uniform and necessary trajectories and does so without providing an explanation of why such changes would have occurred. Our position is that such explanations are not useful as they do not provide mechanisms or causes for the changes themselves.

A third alternative explanation for the emergence of the new beliefs and values in Central and Eastern Europe is that they are an outcome of economic success and security. This explanation builds on the hypothesis originally formulated by Maslow (1954) and adopted by Inglehart (1977) that economic success and security will cause a switch in values from

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<sup>10</sup> For an argument somewhat along these lines see Vishnevskij (1998).

focusing on security and economic well being to focusing on self-actualisation and individual fulfilment. That is, as the old needs of security and economic well-being are satisfied, people will begin to focus on individual fulfilment and actualisation, with the result being new behaviours. We believe that this hypothesis has little plausibility in Central/Eastern Europe because, as we documented earlier, many of the countries of the region have experienced considerable declines in economic well being and security—not the increases in well being and security posited by the theory as producing new values and beliefs. And, even for the countries faring the best economically, the situations are nowhere near the levels of prosperity experienced in the West.

Gerber and Berman (2006), focusing on Russia, provide a somewhat different version of this explanation focused on economic growth and prosperity—which they combine with new openness to and contact with the West. They suggest that the economic growth and stability in Russia during the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s provided the necessary conditions for the emergence of new individualism and new values and behaviour. However, they believe that individualism and new values and behaviour were kept in check in Russia by the collectivist ideology and censorship of knowledge of alternative approaches. They suggest that with glasnost in the late 1980s, the political transformation of the 1990s, and the subsequent opening to the West that there were both increased opportunities for implementation of new individualism and new ideas and a new source spreading and legitimising new ideas and behaviour. This occurred, they argue, despite deteriorating economics and certainty during the period of rapid family change in the 1990s.

A fourth possible source of new values—particularly that of individualism—is suggested by the argument that democracy and market economies are based on contracts with individuals rather than families or communities (see Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002). As countries undergo democratic and market economy shifts and the creation of the welfare state, this idea suggests that there is, of necessity, a trend away from community

values to more individualistic ones. In addition, freedom of action becomes more important. The application of these ideas to the political and economic transformations in Central and Eastern Europe suggests that transformations toward democracy and market economies would, by themselves, lead to new individualism and personal freedom of action in the region. That is, the internal political and economic changes could have led to changes in values and norms even without the influences from outside the region.

Although it is very difficult to separate out the various sources of changes in individualism, values, and beliefs in Central and Eastern Europe, we believe that our theory about the importance of the diffusion of information and values from the West is an essential part of the explanation. Our theory also suggests that the new values and beliefs not only spread from the west to the east, but did so, at least partially, because they were part of the developmental idealism model associating them with the idea that a modern society is good, that modern societies and modern families are causally connected, and that freedom and equality are fundamental human rights. The connections of the new beliefs, values, and attitudes with the overall developmental model which has been so widely influential around the world, gives them an advantage in influencing people that is not enjoyed by other beliefs, values, and attitudes. That is, this international and universal system has more general power than exists in more local ideational systems.

Our theory about the dissemination of the new ideas and values across geographical boundaries as a result of the appeals of developmental idealism is also consistent with the fact that the new family and demographic behaviours are more widespread in the countries bordering the West and in countries with Roman Catholic religion than in the countries with more easterly locations and with Eastern Orthodox traditions. For example, nonmarital cohabitation and childbearing are increasing more rapidly in such countries as the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Hungary than they are in most of the rest of the region. Note that these countries are not only geographically and religiously the closest to the West and have the most

interactions with the West, but they are also the countries that most actively resisted the control of the former Soviet Union. We expect that all these dimensions would facilitate the spread of new ideas and values associated with developmental idealism and lead to more rapid change.

### **Institutional Disruptions, Vacuums, and Normlessness**

As we noted in the introduction and in the previous section, one explanation that has been offered for the changed family values and behaviour in Central/Eastern Europe is the period of profound disruption, disorderliness, and uncertainty that followed the political changes of the late 1980s and early 1990s. This argument is that the old governments were shattered and their institutions, laws, incentive structures, and enforcement devices abandoned or substantially weakened during the political transformation. There are several mechanisms by which such changes could be expected to influence family and demographic behaviour.

As we mentioned earlier, before 1989 many of the countries in the region had substantial pronatalist policies and supports for such things as childcare and housing. These pronatalist programs had been designed to encourage early marriage, early childbearing, and the bearing of two children, with some evidence that they were successful in encouraging family formation. Zakharov (2006), for example, argues that the pronatalist policies in Russia during the 1980s were effective in increasing fertility during that period, but did so primarily by motivating couples to have children earlier rather than by increasing the number of children born. Such an increase in the tempo of childbearing in the 1980s without an increase in numbers would have resulted in a decline of period fertility in the 1990s. Thus, the pronatalist policies of the 1980s would have contributed to lower period childbearing rates in the 1990s in Russia (and perhaps elsewhere) even if nothing else had happened.

With the dissolution of the governments, these supports for marriage and childbearing declined, or even disappeared. Particularly important for

family and demographic behaviour were the disappearance or weakening of supports for housing and childcare—two items directly relevant for family formation. To the extent that the prior pronatalist policies were effective in providing supports for the procurement of housing and childcare, their disintegration could have directly affected entrance into marriage and parenthood. The expected result would be increases in age at marriage and parenthood and the fractions of unions and births occurring outside of marriage. (Macura 2000).

The substantial changes in governmental supports for housing and childcare also combined with the substantial political changes and economic declines to produce considerable disruption and uncertainty in people's lives. This could lead to people postponing substantial family decisions such as marriage and childbearing.

It is also likely that as the old governments were shattered, their institutions, laws, and enforcement devices were substantially weakened. In addition, with the exception of a few countries such as Poland, the legitimacy and influence of religious institutions had been largely destroyed. That is, decades of religious persecution and the teaching of atheism would have decreased the reliance of individuals on religious organizations. And, in some cases, religious leaders were believed to have been co-opted by the socialist governments and seen not as trusted authorities but as agents of the discredited state. It is also possible that in such turbulent times that the confidence and authority of parents declined, providing many more alternatives for young adults.

It is possible that under such circumstances society would be left with weakened norms and institutions to guide and regulate behaviour. The hypothesized result is that there would be a vacuum, or partial vacuum, in that people would be disoriented from old norms and institutions and would be open to new behaviours. This line of argument suggests that as normlessness, disorientation, and anomie rises, there would be less support for old patterns of courtship, marriage, and childbearing, and people would begin to postpone and even reject crucial and irreversible commitments such

as marriage and childbearing. In addition, people may start replacing them with less crucial and irreversible circumstances, for example, marriage replaced by cohabitation and childbearing replaced by the rejection of a birth. Extramarital births can rise because of the fall of the normative restriction of births within marriage. Philipov (2001) discusses the hiatus between the old and the new societal regimes, and Philipov et al. (2006) present evidence concerning the effect of normlessness and anomie on fertility intentions in Bulgaria and, to a lesser extent, in Hungary.

However, we believe that this explanation does not go far enough in its theorization of the influence of disorientation and anomie on family formation. Although the ideas of societal disorganization and normlessness have explanatory power on their own, we believe that these ideas are more powerful when combined with developmental idealism. This is true because the developmental idealism propositions that a modern family such as experienced in the West is good (or at least to be tolerated), that modern family life helps bring material success, and that freedom and equality are fundamental human rights provide a set of values, beliefs, and norms that can help to fill the void left by the disintegration of previous organizational and normative structures. Such values, beliefs, and norms from the outside can be especially powerful in this situation because they come with the prestige of being part of the world commonly defined as being at the apex of development and progress.

From a somewhat different angle, we might say that developmental idealism can be especially powerful when it operates in a situation where previous organizations and rules have been delegitimated as they were in Central and Eastern Europe. When developmental idealism is introduced or strengthened in situations where there are legitimate and established rules and institutions to support those rules, its power will be significantly limited. The situation in Central and Eastern Europe was the opposite of this, permitting developmental idealism to have an especially powerful effect. This region in the late twentieth century was a prime location where powerful ideas crossed international borders, and the existing organizations

and institutions were in considerable disarray, opening the way for particularly powerful effects on behaviour.

However, it should be emphasized that even in Central and Eastern Europe the values and beliefs perceived as modern in Western Europe and North America were probably not simply adopted wholesale and immediately. In addition, among some people these values and beliefs were not simply accepted without opposition but were actively contested. Such contestation was probably especially significant in certain sections of the population—such as the more religious—with interest in preserving the existing family values and behaviours. In fact, the opposition of the Catholic Church has probably been particularly important in such places as Poland. It is highly likely that the strength and legitimacy of the Catholic Church in opposing Soviet and socialist power in Poland coupled with the strong norms of the Church on personal and family matters have played significant roles in family and demographic trends in that country. This is undoubtedly related to the new law declaring abortion illegal, a situation that probably led to illegal abortions among Polish women. The power and legitimacy of Catholicism is also probably one reason that, of all the non-Soviet countries in the former Warsaw Pact, Poland experienced between 1990 and 2000 the smallest increase in age at marriage and the percentage of babies born to unmarried mothers. In addition, of these countries, Poland had the lowest percentage of children born to unmarried mothers and the lowest percentage of women experiencing cohabitation. Poland also experienced the lowest inter-cohort increases in nonmarital cohabitation, but that may have been mostly a result of the fact that the survey measuring such trends occurred immediately after the political transformation itself, permitting little opportunity for change to have occurred (see Table 4)

However, despite the fact that the trends in marriage, cohabitation, and nonmarital childbearing have been muted in Poland relative to the rest of the region, there have still been trends in these behaviours in the same direction as in the other countries. In addition, the declines in overall fertility levels in Poland have been very substantial, and the TFR in Poland in 2004

was only 1.23, very much in the range of the other countries in the region. Apparently the opposition of a strong religious organization has not been sufficient to prevent entirely these trends away from Church norms.

### **Educational expansion**

Kohler et al. (2002) discussed the significance of educational expansion for the emergence of very low fertility, notably in Central and Eastern Europe. Sobotka and colleagues (2003, 2007) have argued that educational aspirations and accomplishments have expanded in the post transformation period in the Czech Republic. They argue that this expansion has led to a postponement of marriage and childbearing while people are actually attending school. In addition, they suggest that educated people tend to postpone family formation events longer than the less educated, even after finishing schooling.

There are probably multiple explanations for the increasing levels of educational aspirations and accomplishments in the Czech Republic and elsewhere. Of great importance here would be the new market economy and globalisation that would have increased both the need for educated workers and the returns to education. It is also likely that increased contact with Western societies—and the idea that they are more developed than those in the East—would have increased the demand for education in the East. Apparently such increases in demand for higher education were substantial enough to more than counteract increases in tuition costs in some places.

We also note that education is a multi-faceted and complex causal force. It represents time spent in school, additional human capital, and changed relationships with parents. It also represents access to new values and beliefs—such as those prevalent in the presumably more developed West. It is likely that both these structural and ideational elements of education would influence family and demographic behaviour, values, and beliefs.



### **Family and demographic changes before 1989**

Before closing with a summary and conclusions, we note one issue with the timing of family and demographic trends. In our discussion of these trends we have focused our attention almost entirely on trends following the political transformations of the late 1980s and 1990s. Yet, it is useful to observe that while the trends subsequent to 1989 have been of the most interest for this paper, some of the trends noted for this period actually began in the previous period, with implications for the explanatory frameworks accounting for them. One notable example of this is Slovenia where there were substantial declines in both first marriage and fertility between 1980 and 1990 (see Tables 2 and 3). Another notable example is Hungary where pre-1989 declines in marriage occurred (see Table 3) and where Spéder reports that cohabitation increased before 1989 (Spéder 2005). Spéder hypothesizes that the increase in cohabitation in Hungary may have been the result of changing values concerning marriage and cohabitation resulting from increased divorce in prior decades, a plausible hypothesis that merits further investigation. Another important example is Russia where marriage rates were declining and cohabitation rates increasing during the middle 1980s, several years before the overall political transformations of the early 1990s (Gerber and Berman 2006). Gerber and Berman suggest that an important force for this change was glasnost and the opening of the former Soviet Union to the ideas, beliefs, and values of the West. It is likely that this argument also applies to other Central and Eastern European societies where there were increases in the openness of society, thereby permitting the expansion of information, beliefs, and values from the outside. The application of these ideas to Russia by Gerber and Berman suggest that they may be even more applicable in countries bordering the West and with historical orientations toward Catholicism, such as Hungary and Slovenia where the changes before 1989 were particularly marked. This, and other hypotheses concerning the causes of pre-1989 changes, merit further research.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

In this paper we have provided a series of explanations for the dramatic family and demographic changes in Central and Eastern Europe following the political transformations of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Our explanations have focused on the political, economic, social, and cultural histories of the region, with particular emphasis on how countries in the region have interacted with and been influenced by Western European and North American countries. Our explanations have emphasized the concept of development, arguing that the ideas of a developmental paradigm with development progressing through natural, uniform, and necessary stages being a common one throughout Europe, including the Central and Eastern region—for several centuries. This paradigm generally posited that Western Europe was more developed and advanced than Eastern Europe—a view that continues to be widely shared in the world today. The related methodologies of reading history and the future sideways have also been important in that they have suggested that the model for the future of progress for Central/Eastern Europe lies in Western Europe and North America.

Furthermore, we have suggested that the developmental paradigm and the results of reading the past and future sideways provide values and beliefs that are important in guiding human behaviour. This ideational system suggests that the political, economic, and family systems of the West are not only more advanced, but better than those observed elsewhere. This ideational system also provides models to be followed in other places, including Central/Eastern Europe. In addition, it provides beliefs that modern family systems help to produce modern political and economic systems and accomplishments. And, this ideational system also helps to establish the importance of freedom and equality as human rights.

We believe that understanding of this developmental model and the circumstances existing in the West was available in Central and Eastern Europe before the imposition of socialism. In addition, one particular version

of the developmental model—Marxism and socialism--was emphasized during the period of socialist domination of the Soviet Union after 1917 and Soviet domination of other countries after World War II. The importance of development and modernity were strongly emphasized as social ideals and government policy.

The period of socialist and Soviet domination and isolation also lacked political and personal freedom in many aspects of life and the economy had stagnated at levels substantially below those enjoyed in the West. This period was also one in which an “iron curtain” was established to prevent information flows—and in many ways was successful in doing so—thereby substantially inhibiting understanding of Western economic and familial change.

The disintegration of the governments and the fall of the iron curtain in the late 1980s and early 1990s were associated with many additional dramatic changes. Of central importance for our argument is that the changes of the period brought clear understanding of circumstances in the West—with knowledge of the new Western definitions of modern social and family life. Consumption aspirations and expectations increased—and those new aspirations and expectations clashed not only with old economic realities, but with the dramatic declines in economic circumstances in many places. The dramatic economic declines and associated political and institutional change introduced substantial elements of uncertainty into the system.

In addition, the dissolution of the former governments removed systems supporting the bearing and rearing of children—such as childcare and housing--or decreased their generosity and/or effectiveness,. And, the legitimacy of the former government and its programs was largely destroyed, removing government support for old norms and patterns of behaviour. In addition, the attacks of previous decades on the religious institutions in the region had in many places left these institutions weak and without the ability to provide an anchor in tumultuous times. It would also have been difficult in such turbulent times for parents to maintain their influence on their children’s beliefs, values, and behaviour.

During this period many openly reached out to embrace the values, living standards, and systems of the countries of the West. This embrace ranged from economics to politics to legal systems to ethics, and most importantly for our purposes, to personal, family, and demographic behaviour. Of course, many people would have found the new personal and family values and behaviour existing in the West to be objectionable and would have opposed them. However, even among these people it is likely that the disorientation in their own regions and the definition of the West as more developed and progressive would have likely muted such opposition and increased tolerance of such personal and familial values and behaviour. It would have been very easy for Western personal, family, and demographic norms and behaviour to influence family and demographic behaviour in Central and Eastern Europe. This process was also facilitated by the expansion and importance of educational institutions. And, the thirst for freedom—and its considerable expansion—would have operated in personal and familial as well as political and economic realms.

Our argument is that the combination of these events and new circumstances and influences had dramatic effects on family and demographic beliefs, values, and behaviour in the region. They contributed to the dramatic changes in family and demographic beliefs and values. They also contributed to a dramatic postponement of marriage and childbearing, with likely long term declines in the quantity of marriage and childbearing. They also facilitated a strong movement towards nonmarital cohabitation and childbearing. In addition, they facilitated a movement from reliance on abortion to a reliance on contraception for fertility limitation.

It is also important in considering our arguments to understand that we have emphasized the importance of ideational factors in explaining the changes in family and demographic behaviour in Central/Eastern Europe. We have also emphasized particular ideational factors—those associated with the developmental model and developmental idealism. In addition, we have discussed how these ideational forces have combined with structural changes in influencing family and demographic behaviour. We have focused

on these ideational factors and their interaction with structural factors because they compose our contribution to understanding the nature of changes in the region.

With our emphasis on ideational factors, we have, of course, weighted our discussion in favour of ideational factors over structural ones. This decision, however, should not be interpreted as suggesting that we discount the importance of structural things such as the economic disruptions and declines of the period, the dismantling of important social programs, and the rise of uncertainty and anomie. Consideration of these economic, political, and social factors is necessary for a complete understanding of the family and demographic trends of the last two decades.

Of course, it is always difficult in the social sciences to establish causality and estimate how much of any change is produced by any particular factor or combination of factors. This is especially difficult when many explanatory factors are changing simultaneously and when reliable data for the period before the changes are in short supply. Thus, we cannot establish which, if any, of our many individual explanations—or the explanations of others—are correct and how much any of them may have influenced any particular family or demographic outcome. Nor can we rule out the validity of alternate explanations.

Despite these limitations, it is likely that the ideational forces that we have discussed here have been powerful in changing family and demographic behaviour in Central and Eastern Europe. We believe that our explanations about the influences of these ideational forces and the ways in which these ideational forces have interacted with other social and economic forces are plausible, even compelling.

### **Future Research**

It is common for research papers to close with a call for additional research, and we believe that such a call is particularly relevant in the domain of this paper. There is much that we do not know about the changes

in Central and Eastern Europe, and additional research can help to alleviate that lack of knowledge.

Although we endorse a wide range of research activities, we have specific suggestions for additional research concerning the issues and explanations discussed in this paper. We believe that we have made a strong case for the importance of developmental idealism in changing family and demographic behaviour in Central and Eastern Europe. The case fits much of the data that we have from the region in recent decades.

However, our explanations have been general in focusing on the region as a whole rather than on specific countries or groups of countries. An evaluation of our arguments and the ways they apply to specific countries would be useful, with additional attention paid to how exactly economic, political, and ideational factors intersected to influence family and demographic behaviours. We believe that such specific analyses in different places would reveal significant differences in circumstances and causal influences across the different areas. We also believe that more detailed analyses should focus on the ways in which structural and ideational factors combine and interact. For example, it would be useful to consider the different positions of people in the social structure and how the influences of ideational factors vary across subgroups of the population defined for example by age, gender, education, and place of residence.

Another useful line of research would be detailed comparative analysis of the data about values and beliefs existing for several countries in Europe across different periods of time. Although data are relatively scarce for Central and Eastern Europe prior to the transformations of interest in this paper, comparative research on trends in the various countries would be likely to shed additional light on the topics of this paper. Although detailed panel data are probably scarce in the region—greatly limiting the potential for causal analysis—it would still be useful to check out the correlations between behaviour and beliefs and values.

Furthermore, our analyses have been based on the understanding that there is widespread acceptance of at least some of the elements of the

developmental paradigm and developmental idealism among policy makers and ordinary people in Central and Eastern Europe. That is, our explanations suggest that many people in the region understand the developmental hierarchies of countries, with the gradient of development and progress culminating in the countries of Northwest Europe and North America. They also require that people in the region believe in at least one of the propositions of developmental idealism—that a modern society is good and attainable; that a modern family system is good and attainable; that modern societies and modern families influence each other; and that freedom and equality are fundamental human rights. While not all of these propositions of developmental idealism need to be believed by all people, at least one of the propositions need to be believed by some people in order for our explanations to be operative. It is our belief that many people in the region endorse many of these propositions, but we have not demonstrated that with empirical data from the region. It would be valuable for a research agenda to address how widespread these understandings, beliefs, and values are among policy makers and ordinary people in the region.

We believe that such a research program in Central and Eastern Europe could also provide valuable information for understanding future trends in the region. We have argued that developmental thinking and motivation have helped bring great changes in the past. We also believe that there is no reason to think that these ideational forces have expended all of their influence. Rather, it is more likely that these forces will continue to influence future changes.

A research agenda along the lines just described would inform us of the extensiveness of developmental thinking and motivation in the region—providing insight into whether such thinking and motivation is likely to lead to future changes. It could also permit evaluation of current expectations for future change and how policy makers and ordinary people evaluate such expected changes. Such a research program could also form the foundation for understanding the future changes that are likely to occur.

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