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Sweeping Changes in Marriage, Cohabitation, and Childbearing in Central and Eastern Europe: New Insights from the Developmental Idealism Framework

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Abstract

In Central and Eastern Europe following the political transformations of the late 1980s and early 1990s there were 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 trends, we offer new explanations based on ideational influences and the intersection of these ideational influences with structural factors. We 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 role of developmental models in guiding change in the region, suggesting that developmental idealism influenced family and demographic changes following the political transformations. Developmental idealism provides beliefs that modern family systems help to produce modern political and economic accomplishments and helps to establish the importance of freedom and equality as human rights in both the public and private spheres. The disintegration of the governments and the fall of the iron curtain in the late 1980s and early 1990s brought new understanding about social, economic, and family circumstances in the West, increasing consumption aspirations and expectations which clashed with both old economic realities and the dramatic declines in economic circumstances. 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 behavior. 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 West. And, the thirst for freedom—and its considerable expansion—operated in personal and familial as well as political and economic realms. These dramatic changes combined together to produce the many changes occurring in family and demographic behavior.

Keywords

Marriage; Cohabitation; Childbearing; Developmental Models; Family; Freedom; Equality; Living Standards; Socialism; Ideational Influences; Abortion; Contraception; Social Change

Introduction

During the late 1980s and early 1990s the populations of Central and Eastern Europe underwent profound political and economic changes, including 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 the Council of Europe, NATO and the European Union. The changes in the region's political economy during this period have been among the greatest of the twentieth century.

The political and economic transformations of the late 1980s and early 1990s were accompanied by rapid and substantial changes in marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing. Marriage rates swiftly declined, and marriage was postponed to a later age (Kotowska and Jóźwiak 2003; Macura and MacDonald 2003; Philipov and Dorbritz 2003; Sobotka 2008; Sobotka and Toulemon 2008). The declines in marriage 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 fewer than one-half would marry by this age. With the exception of a few countries, such as Russia, the mean age at first marriage increased substantially—by more than two years in several of the countries.

In many of the countries nonmarital cohabitation increased markedly during the same period. Surveys record significant increases in nonmarital cohabitation in just a few years in several countries, including the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and Russia. In Bulgaria, Romania, and Russia the percentage of people experiencing cohabitation increased substantially and there were significant declines in the percentage of all cohabitations rapidly transformed into marriage (Philipov and Jasilioniene 2008; Muresan 2007). Furthermore, the fraction of babies born to unmarried mothers increased in all countries, with some increases being especially dramatic.

Fertility rates declined markedly across the 1990s in every country in the region (Council of Europe 2005). In fact, the declines were so substantial that by the year 2004, with three exceptions, the total fertility rates were between just 1.2 and 1.52, among the lowest in the world. In almost every country mean age at first birth increased sharply during the 1990s, by two or more years in some countries. The postponement of first births—and consequently subsequent births as well—is at least part of the explanation of the dramatic declines in fertility in most of the countries (Sobotka 2004, chapters 7 and 8). In other countries, such as Russia and the Ukraine, it appears that the strong fertility declines were due more to reductions in second and higher births rather than to reductions or postponements of first children (Perelli-Harris 2005).

With the exception of Albania, abortion was previously legal and widespread in Central and Eastern Europe. The governments in the region also had long had policies and programs that restricted the distribution and use of chemical and mechanical 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. In almost every country the abortion rate fell during the 1990s, and in some cases the decline was dramatic. During the 1980s the governments of the region began to permit wider distribution of contraceptives, and, in the 1990s contraception became widely available and used by substantial fractions of the population (Philipov and Dorbritz 2003; Frejka 2008b).

Some of the marriage, cohabitation, and fertility trends specific for the 1990s actually began during the 1980s. One notable example of this is Slovenia where there were substantial declines in both first marriage and fertility between 1980 and 1990. Another example is Hungary where pre-1989 declines in marriage occurred and where Spéder reports that cohabitation increased

before 1989 (Spéder 2005). Furthermore, in Russia 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).

Several explanations covering a wide array of causal forces have been offered to explain these dramatic marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing changes (Frejka et al 2008; Kotowska and Józwiak 2003; Macura and MacDonald 2003; Philipov and Dorbritz 2003). These causal forces range from structural explanations such as the shift from state socialism to capitalism, falling incomes, and increasing education to ideational factors such as growing alienation, normlessness, and changing attitudes and values concerning marriage and children.

Our purpose in this paper is to provide an overarching framework that integrates together many of the causal explanations for these marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing changes. The overarching framework that we present is based on the developmental idealism framework formulated by Thornton (2001, 2005), which also provides new explanations and mechanisms into how these changes may have occurred in Central and Eastern Europe. This framework also offers new insights into how the factors hypothesized by others may have operated. Although the developmental idealism framework may provide insights into other demographic matters in the region, such as migration, divorce, and school attendance, we limit our focus in this paper to marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing.

Our goal is not to discredit the explanations offered by others, but to 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 behavior in Central/Eastern Europe. Our framework 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 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.

Our model based on developmental idealism makes no effort to include all ideational and structural influences affecting marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing change. Our contribution to the explanation of such change in the region focuses on ideational factors and the interaction of ideational factors with structural ones. Thus, 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 that only ideational factors matter or that the ideational factors we identify are the only ones operating. 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. 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 (Illner 1996; Katus 2003; Kotowska and Józwiak 2003). There are also important differences in the timing of the introduction of socialism in specific countries—with the differences between most of the countries of the former Soviet Union and the other countries in the region being especially significant. The relative independence of Yugoslavia and the uprisings in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary,

and Poland against the regimes and the Soviet Union also indicate the large heterogeneity in the region. 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 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 discuss the ways in which the ideas of development relate to recent political, economic, familial, and demographic changes in Central and Eastern Europe¹.

Developmental Models and Trends in Central and Eastern Europe

The developmental paradigm and reading history sideways

In order to explain the changes in Central and Eastern Europe, 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. The developmental paradigm suggests that all societies progress through the same natural, universal, and necessary stages of development (see Burrow 1981; Harris 1968; Mandelbaum 1971; Nisbet 1975/1969; Sanderson 1990; Stocking 1968, 1987). The speed of advancement was believed to vary, so that at any one point in time societies at different levels could be observed.

The proponents of the developmental paradigm regularly placed Northwest Europe at the pinnacle of societal development (Blaut 1993; Nisbet 1980; Sheehan 1980; Thornton 2005). Occupying the lower positions on such developmental ladders were the indigenous populations of Asia, Africa, America, and Australia, and other societies were arrayed at various stages between the least and the most developed (Bock 1956; Meek 1976). Central and Eastern Europe were generally assigned an intermediate stage between Asia and Northwest Europe (Neumann 1995; Sztompka 2004; Todorova 1997; Wolff 1994). This model and its placement of Central and Eastern Europe between Asia and Northwest Europe in the developmental hierarchy were well established by the 18th century (Neumann 1995; Todorova 1997; Wolff 1994).

Many scholars from the 1600s through the 1800s were interested in describing the specific changes they perceived at the various stages along this developmental trajectory. By placing contemporary societies at different levels of development, they believed that they could record history by shifting their attention serially from what they believed to be the least through the most developed societies. With this model, it was possible for scholars to claim that at some time in the past the most developed nations had been like their less developed contemporaries and that at some time in the future the currently least developed societies would become more like the currently developed societies (Berkhofer, 1978; Carniero, 1973; Gordon, 1994; Harris, 1968; Sanderson, 1990). We refer to this use of cross-sectional data to make historical conclusions as reading history sideways (also see Thornton 2001, 2005).

When scholars read history sideways, they began with what they thought of as the “very young” indigenous 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). Melegh (2006)

¹By Central and Eastern Europe we mean the former socialist countries of the region, including the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union, excluding the republics of Central Asia.

has also concluded that the idea of an East-West developmental slope across Europe is widespread and influential in Central and Eastern Europe.

This view of development and history influenced the theories and conclusions of the most important family and demographic scholars of the 18th and 19th centuries (Thornton 2005). The work of Frederic Le Play, an influential French scholar who wrote extensively about family life in Europe in the 19th century, illustrates this hierarchical categorization of societies and the reading of history sideways from cross-sectional data (Le Play 1982/1855).

The central features of the gradient of development perceived by Le Play and others have existed for at least two centuries and are present today in the rating schemes of various organizations. Perhaps most well known is the Human Development Index (HDI) promulgated by the United Nations. The HDI ratings for the countries of Europe (and a few neighboring countries) for the most recent years are provided in Table 1. The HDI numbers reveal the same general East-West gradient—with ratings generally increasing from east to west and showing a strong demarcation between the countries of Western Europe and the countries of the former Yugoslavia, Soviet Union, and Warsaw Pact.

Views of family change from reading history sideways

Although there are substantial variations in family patterns within regions, and even within specific countries, scholars have observed that, in general, the family systems of Northwest Europe were very different from those in many other parts of the world (see Thornton 2005 for a summary). 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. Many observers 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 it was easy for generations of scholars to believe that the process of development transformed family systems from the traditional patterns outside of Northwest Europe to the developed patterns within Northwest Europe (Thornton 2005). The dominant theory for these changes has been that the modern society in Northwest Europe with its extensive technology, wealth, cities, and education was the cause of its modern family structures. An alternate view was that the modern family system was the exogenous causal force producing the modern society of the region. Both theories, of course, indicated that traditional families were not compatible with modern societies.

The main conclusions described above were made by comparing Northwest Europe with populations around the world. However, even though there were important differences within the regions of Europe, the same general conclusions apply if the data are limited to Europe. The reason is that there have historically been differences between the social and familial circumstances of Eastern Europe and those of Northwest Europe, 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; Le Play 1982/1855; Macfarlane 1986; Seccombe 1992; Smith 1979, ¹⁹⁹²; Sovič 2008; Szoltysek 2007; Thornton 2005; Todorova 1989, 2006; Wall 1983, 1995).

The implications of this historical-geographical model did not stop with reading history sideways. For people outside the West, this approach provided a concrete model for change—and that model was in the West. This model suggested that if the people of the Non-West developed and progressed, they would become like the West in both social and family structures.

A Developmental Cross-Cultural Model for Evaluation

This historical model of cross-cultural variation went far beyond providing descriptions and theories of historical change. It also provided a system for the evaluation of society and family structure. The society and modern family structures of Northwest Europe were not only labeled by the model as generally more developed and modern than the societies and family structures outside of Northwest Europe, including those in Eastern Europe, but as more enlightened and progressive.

This positive view of development provided a motivation for action to ensure the unfolding of the future as predicted by the developmental model. In this way the model provided a blueprint for social policy and action in Central and Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Although this model of evaluation and the future is complex, Thornton has simplified it elsewhere as developmental idealism, with four overly simple propositions that involve a combination of values about what is good and beliefs about what is attainable and what facilitates achievement of the good life (Thornton 2001, 2005):

1. A modern society is good and can be attained.
2. A modern family is good and attainable.
3. A modern family helps produce a modern society and a modern society helps to produce modern families.
4. Freedom and equality are fundamental human rights.²

We have conceptualized developmental idealism to include the distinction between collectivism and individualism. Individualism is conceptualized 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.

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. In addition, the point is not whether these propositions are true or false or good or bad, but whether they are believed and motivate the decisions people make about a broad array of marriage and fertility behaviors. We believe that acceptance or rejection of these propositions can influence how people live, and trends in the acceptance or rejection of these propositions can lead to changes in family and demographic behavior. We argue that these ideas and beliefs have been powerful in changing family and demographic structures and relationships in Central and Eastern Europe.

There have been many mechanisms spreading these developmental ideas across Central and Eastern Europe for centuries (Israel 2001; Wolff 1994). These ideas were circulated among

²For a discussion of this fourth proposition of developmental idealism, see Thornton (2005, especially pages 144-146).

the elite of various countries through scholarly books and journals, travelers, educational institutions, and the mass media. They were, in turn disseminated from the elite to people in everyday life through schools, government programs, the media, and informal word of mouth.

In many ways the West was used as an explicit model for social change outside the West as early as the 18th and 19th centuries. This includes the efforts, initiated by Peter the Great of Russia in the 18th century, to obtain access to Western technology and ideas. As part of this effort, 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. Peter the Great may have been the most well known leader to push for the modernization or westernization of Russia, but this push characterized many efforts in the subsequent centuries. For example, Herzen, a prominent pro-western thinker in the 19th century, made significant arguments for the adoption of western values in 19th century Russia, for the development of socialist ideas, and for the abolishment of serfdom. Similar efforts were important in other places as well. For example, Andorka (1999, page 20) has suggested that “the whole history of Hungary in the 19th and 20th 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”.

Although Marxism and socialism have been competitive systems to democracy and capitalism, the developmental paradigm and developmental idealism played central roles in the theories and political agenda of Karl Marx (Nisbet 1980). The socialist model in the Soviet sphere of influence was a developmental model in which societies were seen as progressing through stages of development, eventually reaching a communist utopia with extensive freedom and equality. The pathway to this utopian framework, however, required a totalitarian state 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.

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 ways in which this played out in Central/Eastern Europe was the drive for gender equality and the integration of women into the labor force (Geiger 1968; Kerblay 1996/1986; Northrop 1999).

The United Nations and other international organizations, including the Council of Europe and the European Union, have been important players in the creation and spread of a world culture that explicitly endorses the ideals of 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.

It is probably impossible to trace the precise ways in which the ideas of development and developmental idealism were disseminated. However, we believe that many of these ideas would have been well-disseminated through the Westernizing influences extending back to at least Peter the Great. In addition, communism promulgated a developmental ideology during the socialist era. Educational institutions, the mass media, international organizations, and even the limited contact with the West during the socialist period would have all given people in Central/Eastern Europe a basic understanding of the ideas of development and developmental idealism. Then, in the late 1980s and 1990s, the long-standing wall between East and West

was breached, with a tidal wave of new ideas, beliefs, values, and information flowing from West to East

We now discuss some historical background information about Central and Eastern Europe. Then we turn to the political transformation of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

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 intensive industrialization that would rapidly bring economic productivity, education, health, and equality up to and 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.

Furthermore, the Soviet period was a time of very authoritative and repressive government, with freedom of speech and the press being limited. Great confrontation with the West—even a “cold war”—characterized the years after World War II. Information from outside the region was censored, with an “iron curtain” severely restricting the flow of information and ideas from the West.³ At the same time, people continued to be generally aware of the West, there was extensive dissatisfaction with the political and economic regimes of Central/Eastern Europe, and significant rebellions occurred in several countries, including Hungary, Poland, and the former Czechoslovakia.

Describing marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing during the socialist period is difficult because of the differences within the region. However, the basic East-West family gradient 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; Rabušic 2001). 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 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.

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 rapidity. Although changes had been occurring slowly in earlier years, they were generally smaller than the transformations in governments that occurred outside the Soviet Union in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union itself in 1991. In many ways the changes were fundamental, with the replacement of the state socialist regimes by the political and economic institutions of capitalism, the holding

³Such restriction of information flow varied across 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.

of free elections in many of the countries, and the movement towards market economies. Frejka (2008a) suggests that these things can be pictured as the basic causes of other changes.

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; Sztompka 2004). Sztompka (2004, page 489) states that the main aim “was to escape from the grip of Asia and move toward Western Europe, and finally to realize old pro-Western aspirations and ambitions”. In a similar way, Spéder (2003, page 457) suggests that “The countries of Central and Eastern Europe in transformation look on the industrial societies of Western Europe as an ‘ideal’ model to be followed; they want to catch up to them by adopting their institutions and integrating into their economy.” 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 the region turned to the ethical and moral systems of the West as guides for replacing the moral and ethical systems imposed by the socialist 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 (Sztompka 2004).

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 later flowed across these boundaries 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 (Sobotka et al. 2007; Czech Statistical Office 1993).

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 in the region quickly joined the Council of Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the European Union. By the current writing in 2009 ten of these countries had joined both NATO and the European Union. Several other countries are candidates for membership in the European Union and/or are members of NATO's Euro-Atlantic Cooperation Council. These organizations have requirements, clearly Western in orientation, that they expect countries to meet before admitting them to membership. Together, the requirements of the European Union and Council of Europe are particularly relevant because they include a wide range of social and economic issues, including the role of women⁴.

⁴The 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.

This desire for Western models was, of course, not unanimous as many people in Central and Eastern Europe contested those models. It is likely that such contestation was particularly marked in the states formed out of the former Soviet Union, with the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania being exceptions to this generalization. For example, as we noted earlier, the Westernizing influences in Russia can be traced back at least to Peter the Great, but there have also been strong counter-currents saying that Russia has its own distinct civilization, culture, and society and should resist such Westernizing influences. There is evidence that many Russians, including some in elite positions, continue to resist Western models concerning such things as democracy and individual freedom (Gvosdev 2007; Neumann 1995, 1996; Zimmerman 2005). These tendencies may have been exacerbated by the decrease in Russian power and prestige associated with the events of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Such resistance is probably not limited to Russia, but probably extends to other countries as well—such as Moldova, Serbia, and Belarus.

We now turn to an examination of developmental idealism and the ways it may have intersected with changes in the economy and government to help produce the dramatic changes in marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing in the region. We begin with the influence of changing economic knowledge, aspirations, and achievements.

Explaining Marriage and Fertility Change

Economic knowledge, aspirations, and achievements

Two propositions of developmental idealism are particularly relevant for understanding the role of economic factors in influencing trends in marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing: the idea that a modern society is good and can be attained and the idea that freedom and equality are fundamental human rights. Although the flow of information from the West was greatly restricted under socialism, many people in Central and Eastern Europe knew that the standard of living was better elsewhere. People were also aware that both economic and political freedoms were greater in the West. Consequently, there was continuous and rising pressure for economic improvement and the expansion of economic and political freedom

However, as Balla and Sterbling (2005) suggest, the restriction of information flows from West to East significantly limited the ability of people in the East to compare their living circumstances with those in the West. Consequently, people in the East would not have fully understood the East-West gap in living standards and the levels of political and economic freedom.

The new flow of information from the West to Central and Eastern Europe after the political transformation had enormous implications for people's understanding of economic life and possibilities. With the establishment of regular linkages, people in Central and Eastern Europe re-established their knowledge bases, making comparisons between the regions much easier than in the preceding years (Balla and Sterbling 2005). In addition, the standard of living in the West had expanded greatly during the preceding decades, and the people from Central and Eastern Europe now discovered in the countries of Western Europe and North America a definition of modernity that they could not have had before the transformation (Sztompka 2004). It is likely that the standard of living and consumer durables available in the West and newly known in Central/Eastern Europe 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 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 (Robert 1999, page 87; also Spéder 2003).

The new economic and consumption aspirations were not fulfilled quickly, and for many of the countries of Central/Eastern Europe, the standard of living dropped substantially. Significant economic declines were experienced for at least two consecutive years in all countries in the region and in many of the countries the decline lasted for several consecutive years. Cumulative declines of 40 percent or more were not uncommon, and a few countries experienced declines exceeding 60 percent. 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 were substantially lower than those in Western Europe (United Nations 2006).

Such sudden and substantial declines in the 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. It would be surprising if such a contradiction between rising aspirations, declining realities, and unfavorable comparisons did not lead to high levels of disillusionment and dissatisfaction. 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).

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. 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. As Caldwell (2004) and Kohler, Billari, and Ortega (2002) have argued, a period of profound uncertainty in economic conditions and social policies, make it difficult for people to plan their lives with confidence and effectiveness, which, by itself, could lead to the postponement of such large decisions as marriage and childbearing.

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 long term commitments and investments, it is likely 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, it can lead to 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. It is 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. Several scholars have suggested that falling incomes by themselves could explain the dramatic declines in marriage and fertility in Central and Eastern Europe, but this has been disputed by others⁵. Confidence in the explanatory role of the income decline is weakened by the fact that differences in income changes across countries have been greater than the differences in marriage and fertility changes (Caldwell 2004). In addition, absolute incomes have recovered in several countries such as Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic—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 period⁶. Although income changes alone cannot explain the marriage and fertility declines, the combination of uncertainty, rising aspirations that are believed to be attainable, and poor economic performance could be a significant part of the explanation for the long term marriage and fertility trends.

The effects of economic declines and rising aspirations may have been exacerbated by the dismantling of pronatalist policies and programs. Before 1989 many of the countries in the region had substantial pronatalist policies and supports for 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 behavior were the disappearance or weakening of supports for housing and childcare—two items directly relevant for family formation. As suggested by Macura (2000), their disintegration could have increased age at marriage and parenthood and the fractions of unions and births occurring outside of marriage. Furthermore, these substantial changes in governmental supports for housing and childcare could have combined with the substantial economic declines to produce considerable disruption and uncertainty in people's lives, with particularly sharp effects on such family decisions as marriage and childbearing.

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 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.

Another relevant element of socioeconomic restructuring in Central and Eastern Europe in the posttransformation period was the expansion of educational aspirations and accomplishments

⁵See Macura 1999, Macura and MacDonald 2003; Philipov and Dorbritz 2003, and Rabušić 2001 for discussion.

⁶Gerber and Berman (2006) also report that the increased income in Russia in recent years has not reversed the family trends in that country.

(Kohler et al 2002; Sobotka et al 2003, 2007). Several scholars (Billari and Philipov 2004; Kohler et al 2002; Rabušić 2001, and Sobotka et al 2003, 2007) 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. Of great importance here would be the new market economy and globalization 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 behavior, values, and beliefs.

Changing Values and Beliefs Concerning Personal and Family Life

We now turn our attention to values and beliefs in Central and Eastern Europe concerning personal and family life and address the ways that they have been changed by increased contact with the West and developmental idealism. Here we argue that three of the propositions of developmental idealism have had effects on family beliefs and values, with implications for marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing. These are the propositions that a modern family is good and attainable, that a modern family helps produce a modern society and a modern society helps to produce modern families, and that freedom and equality are fundamental human rights.

As Central and East Europeans looked toward Western Europe after the political and economic transformations of the late 1980s and early 1990s, they found not only different and changed economies, but different and changed family circumstances. As we mentioned earlier, family life in the West had been different from that in many places in the East for hundreds of years and 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 common and both cohabitation and childbearing outside of marriage had increased so dramatically 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, and equality between the sexes had increased dramatically.

These trends in behavior 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 fulfillment had become central values. In fact, the changes in behavior and values concerning family and personal life have been so substantial that several have labeled them to be a second 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 socioeconomic 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 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 personal and family matters. In the years since World War II support for the proposition that freedom and equality are fundamental human rights in all areas of life had expanded dramatically. Increasingly, people believed that independence occupied a high place in the hierarchy of values. And, behavior 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 behaviors 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 often difficult to achieve.⁷

Some elements of family, social, economic, and personal life in the West were not just beacons or guideposts for the behavior 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 nation can be fully admitted (see for example 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 behavior, values, and beliefs in Western Europe and North America could have affected family behavior, 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 behavior in what they perceived as the more developed West and adopted those values, beliefs, and behaviors at least partially for themselves. This adoption or modeling across international boundaries could have

⁷It is important to note that while behavior, values, and aspirations concerning family life had changed dramatically in Western Europe and North America during the period after World War II, the new behaviors and values were not endorsed by everyone. Instead, the new behaviors and values were actively opposed by many. Yet, even among those not endorsing the new behaviors and values, there was an increased tolerance of them.

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 may have found what they observed in the West as objectionable and opposed those patterns. This is suggested by data from the two Program and Policy Acceptance Studies (PPAS) conducted in 1990-1992 and 1999-2004 in several countries in the region. Both rounds of surveys showed that many people in Central and Eastern Europe have negative assessments of the family changes that have occurred there in recent decades (Dorbritz 2008a; 2008b; Pongracz and Spéder 2008; Stankuniene and Maslauskaitė 2008; Van Peer and Rabušić 2008). 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 behavior and values concerning family life. The prevalence of the new behaviors in the West would have, thus, given them legitimacy in Central/Eastern Europe that would have made opposition more difficult. Although the PPAS can provide trend data for only a few countries, the data available for the Czech Republic, the former East Germany, and Hungary—the only countries with comparable PPAS data across waves—indicate that attitudes toward the changes in these countries became more tolerant between the two surveys (Dorbritz 2008b). The changes were particularly significant concerning marriage and nonmarital childbearing, results that are consistent with the trend data from the European Values Survey that we present later (Table 2).

We believe that through these mechanisms—and probably others—the new knowledge of family behaviors, beliefs, and values in the West had substantial influence on family behaviors, beliefs, and values in Central and Eastern Europe. Probably of central importance 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 and economic freedom was such an important 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.

As indicated above, there is evidence that the trends in personal and family values and beliefs in Central/Eastern Europe have been along the lines just suggested. Table 2 provides trend data for twelve countries from the European Value Surveys across the 1990s (or just before or just after) for four different value/belief indicators. As Table 2 shows, in a short period of time, there were declines in all of the countries in the proportion of the population supporting the idea that a child needs two parents. Similarly, in all countries the percentage saying that children are necessary for a woman's self-fulfillment declined during the decade, and in some cases the declines were dramatic. In addition, there were uniform increases in the percentage saying that marriage is an outdated institution and, for most countries, that it is alright for a woman to have a child without being married. Unfortunately, the lack of comparable data for the region before 1990 make it difficult to document changes before then, and the most recent round of the European Values Survey is not currently publicly available.

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).

Our argument is that changing values and beliefs—including both endorsement and tolerance—concerning personal and family matters have 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 helped make 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.

Developmental idealism, especially its emphasis on freedom, also has strong relevance for the increased nonmarital cohabitation and childbearing in Central and Eastern Europe. The principle of freedom suggests that individuals can decide for themselves about their individual behavior and relationships with others—a principle that could influence both young adults and their parents. This effect is likely enhanced by the new understanding that in the West the principle of freedom makes nonmarital cohabitation and childbearing tolerated, or even endorsed. As we discussed earlier, there have been increases in each of these key indicators in several countries in Central/Eastern Europe, with the increases in both cohabitation and nonmarital childbearing being very large in a very short period. And, as we saw earlier (Table 2), the increased acceptance of nonmarital childbearing has been dramatic in some of the countries. The revolution in freedom of the mind and new models from the West which was considered to be more advanced undoubtedly had an influence on these changes in cohabitation and childbearing outside of marriage in the region.

As we noted in a previous section, several of the trends in marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing that we have noted for the 1990s actually began in the 1980s. These trends in the 1980s cannot, of course, be explained by the economic downturn that occurred during the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, changing values and beliefs are highly relevant for the 1980s, as that period was the era of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring). Although the new doctrine of glasnost and perestroika was promulgated in Russia, it was felt throughout the region. We argue that such openness and restructuring began the process of officially recognizing new freedoms in family and personal matters and new tolerance for cohabitation, nonmarital childbearing, and postponed marriage and fertility.

This argument about the importance of the new openness in the region during the 1980s for family and demographic beliefs and values is consistent with the argument of Gerber and Berman (2006) that glasnost and the opening of the former Soviet Union to the ideas, beliefs, and values of the West in the middle and late 1980s was an important force for demographic change in Russia. 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. In a similar way, van de Kaa suggests that revolts in the region prior to the 1980s and the widespread and rapid changes in the orientations of governments in the late 1980s “should almost certainly be interpreted as a clear sign of progressive value change prior to 1989 amongst the population at large” (van de Kaa 2003).

In most countries where abortion is very severely restricted by laws and effective enforcement, 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 2005). Albania followed this pattern where abortion had previously been illegal, but was legalized in 1991 (Gjonca 2006).

However, for most countries of Central/Eastern Europe the historical precedents were very different. Abortion had been very common in most of Central/Eastern Europe for decades, making it hard to imagine any particular political transformation increasing the number of

abortions. Instead, what happened in most of the region was a dramatic decline in abortion that brought the incidence to be more similar to that existing in Western Europe.

Contraception and small families have come to be central components of what is meant by the modern family (Thornton 2005). 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 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 advertising campaigns to spread contraceptive use.

We are not, of course, the first to suggest the emergence of new beliefs and values concerning individualism, freedom of conscience, equality, self-fulfillment, endorsement of delayed marriage, and acceptance of nonmarital cohabitation and childbearing in Central and Eastern Europe, where they have influenced related behavior. Several scholars 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 (Gerber and Berman 2006, Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2008, Macura 2000; Philipov and Dorbritz 2003; Rabušić 2001; Sobotka et al. 2003; Sobotka 2008; van de Kaa 2003).

There are at least three 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, (Macura 1999; Philipov and Dorbritz 2003; Sztompka 1996). Such change could have facilitated the adoption and tolerance of new ideas (Macura 1999; Philipov and Dorbritz 2003).

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 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 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.

Under such circumstances society was left with weakened norms and institutions to guide and regulate behavior. The result is that there would be at least a partial vacuum in that people would be disoriented from old norms and institutions and would be open to new behaviors. There would also be less support for old patterns of courtship, marriage, and childbearing, and people could begin to postpone and even reject commitments such as marriage and

childbearing. Extramarital births can also 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, 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 delegitimized 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, it will have limited power. 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 were in considerable disarray, opening the way for particularly powerful effects on behavior.

A second 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 focusing on security and economic well being to focusing on self actualization and individual fulfillment. That is, as the needs of security and economic well being are satisfied, people begin to focus on individual fulfillment and actualization, with the result being new behaviors. We believe that this hypothesis has little plausibility in Central/Eastern Europe because 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 different from the levels of prosperity experienced in the West.

Gerber and Berman (2006), focusing on Russia, provide a somewhat different version of this explanation of changing values and beliefs rising from economic growth and prosperity—combining it 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 behavior. However, they believe that individualism and new values and behavior were kept in check by the collectivist ideology and censorship of knowledge of alternative approaches. They suggest that with glasnost, the political transformation of the 1990s, and the subsequent more extensive opening to the West that there were both increased opportunities for implementation of new individualism and new ideas and a new source spreading and legitimizing new ideas and behavior. This occurred, they argue, despite deteriorating economics and certainty during the period of rapid family change in the 1990s.

A third possible alternative 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.

Although it is difficult to separate 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 and values with the overall developmental model, gives them an advantage in influencing people that is not enjoyed by other beliefs and values. 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 behaviors 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. 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 among the countries that most actively resisted the control of the former Soviet Union. We expect that all these dimensions facilitate the spread of new ideas and values associated with developmental idealism and lead to more rapid change.

It should be emphasized that in Central and Eastern Europe the values and beliefs perceived as modern in Western Europe and North America were not simply adopted wholesale and immediately by everyone. In addition, these values and beliefs were actively contested in certain sections of the population—such as the more religious. In fact, the opposition of the Catholic Church has been particularly important in such places as Poland. 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. 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, the lowest percentage of women experiencing cohabitation, and the lowest increases in nonmarital cohabitation.

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 behaviors 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.

Summary and Conclusions

In this paper we have provided explanations for the dramatic marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing 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 have been common throughout Europe for several centuries. This paradigm generally posited that Western Europe was more developed 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 the West.

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 behavior. This ideational system suggests that the political, economic, and family systems of the West are both more advanced and better than those elsewhere. This ideational system also provides models to be followed for people outside the West. In addition, it provides beliefs that modern family systems help to produce modern political and economic accomplishments. And, this ideational system also helps to establish the importance of freedom and equality as human rights.

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—was emphasized during the socialist period.

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, 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 dramatic changes. Of central importance for our argument is that these changes brought clear understanding of circumstances in the West—with knowledge of the new Western definitions of modern economic 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 changes 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 governments and their programs was largely destroyed, removing government support for old norms and patterns of behavior. 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 behavior.

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, marriage, and fertility behavior. Many people found the new personal and family values and behavior existing in the West to be objectionable, but even among these people the disorientation in their own regions and the definition of the West as more developed and progressive muted opposition and increased tolerance of such personal and familial values and behavior. It was easy for Western personal, marriage, and fertility norms and behavior to influence family and demographic behavior 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—operated in personal and familial as well as political and economic realms.

Our argument is that the combination of these events and new circumstances had dramatic effects on marriage and fertility beliefs, values, and behavior in the region. They contributed to a dramatic postponement of marriage and childbearing, with likely long term declines in the quantity of marriage and childbearing. They also facilitated increases in nonmarital cohabitation and childbearing and the movement from reliance on abortion to reliance on contraception for fertility limitation.

It is important to understand that we have emphasized the importance of ideational factors in explaining the changes in marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing 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 marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing. 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 favor 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 and the dismantling of important social programs. Consideration of these economic, political, and social factors is necessary for a complete understanding of the marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing trends of the last two decades.

Of course, it is always difficult 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 the many individual explanations are correct and how much any of them may have influenced any particular marriage or fertility outcome.

Despite these limitations, we argue that the ideational forces we have discussed have been powerful in changing marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing 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 compelling.

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Table 1

Human Development Index Ratings, by Region and Year.

	1985	1990	1995	2004
Central/Eastern Europe and Eastern Balkans				
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
Baltic states				
Estonia		0.813	0.793	0.858
Lithuania		0.825	0.789	0.857
Latvia	0.809	0.803	0.769	0.845
Western Balkans				
Croatia		0.810	0.803	0.846
Bosnia & Herzegovina				0.800
Macedonia				0.796
Albania	0.693	0.704	0.704	0.784
Eastern Balkans				
Bulgaria	0.788	0.794	0.783	0.816
Romania		0.775	0.770	0.805
Commonwealth of independent states and Caucasia				
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
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
Mediterranean Europe				
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
Scandinavia				
Norway	0.898	0.912	0.936	0.965

	1985	1990	1995	2004
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
Western Europe				
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.

Table 2

Percentage agreement/approval with the questions given below among respondents aged till 40

	Child needs parents	Woman needs child	Marriage is an outdated institution	Woman as a single parent
	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?	Do you think that a woman has to have children in order to be fulfilled or is this not necessary?		Some women choose to have children even if they are not married. Do you approve or disapprove of this?
Hungary				
1991	98	94	12	43
1999	94	91	21	45
Poland				
1987	98	73	8	16
1999	95	59	11	44
Czech Republic				
1990	99	86	13	27
1999	81	34	16	45
Slovenia				
1990	93	49	21	54
1999	83	27	31	55
Slovakia				
1990	99.6	84	10	25
1999	95	43	13	28
Lithuania				
1990	95	87	14	58
1999	77	63	28	70
Latvia				
1990	99.6	95	12	25
1999	90	86	25	62
Estonia				
1990	98	91	13	35
1999	95	67	23	35
Bulgaria				
1990	97	88	15	58
1999	96	66	30	66
Romania				
1993	95	78	11	46
1999	93	75	14	55

	Child needs parents	Woman needs child	Marriage is an outdated institution	Woman as a single parent
	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?	Do you think that a woman has to have children in order to be fulfilled or is this not necessary?		Some women choose to have children even if they are not married. Do you approve or disapprove of this?
Belarus				
1990	-	97	16	48
2000	94	69	24	69
Russia				
1990	97	91	19	43
1999	93	79	30	61