

Determinants leading to the realisation of male reproduction – the timing of male fertility in the Czech Republic: a microlevel approach

Renáta Kyzlinková¹

Anna Šťastná²

Introduction: A missing discourse

The analysis of reproductive behaviour patterns is conventionally targeted at women, to whom such behaviour is usually automatically assigned. The mother - woman connection is perceived to be a much stronger connection than that of the father - man (Hašková, Zamykalová, 2006). The enhanced emancipation of society, with the consequent increase in gender equality, evident particularly in the sphere of paid work (Alich, 2009; Tichenor et al., 2011; Eydal and Rostgaard, 2015; Mc Donald and Meyers, 2009), in tandem with the multi-layer plurality of life strategy options (see: the second demographic transition, Van de Kaa, 1987) both affect, and lead to shifts in terms of, decision-making strategies regarding the timing and realisation of fertility not only with regard to women but also to men. It is reasonable to state in this connection that international research in recent years on fertility and related subjects already reflects the fact that male and female attitudes and approaches to their reproductive behaviour differ to a certain extent.

This reflection is, however, lacking in terms of the demographic analysis of fertility in the Czech Republic. Although quite a lot is known about the various demographic contexts regarding the fertility of women, which are monitored largely through advanced demographic methods, e.g. the issue of the postponement of the implementation of fertility and subsequent recuperation and the issues of parity and differential fertility (Šťastná, 2010; Rychtaříková, 2010; Hamplová et. al., 2004; Kurkin, 2013; Burcin et al., 2010), fertility analysis has, to date, tended to ignore the demographic context of male reproduction. The rare exception in this case consists of research conducted by Rabušic and Manea (2011, 2013).

Indifference to this topic is reflected in particular in the manner in which it has been addressed in numerous foreign and one domestic study (Zhang, 2011; deMontigny Gauthier, 2013; Greene and Biddlecom, 2000; Alich, 2009; Tragaki and Bagavos, 2014; Rabušic and Manea, 2011) which employed insufficient data records and incomplete data on male fertility. Moreover, the male population presents a somewhat challenging topic for demographers due to the vaguely delimited male reproductive life span. A further significant aspect consists of the biological uncertainty of paternity. Thus, scholars are often forced to rely primarily on large-sample surveys.

¹ Senior researcher at Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs, Prague, renata.kyzlinkova@vupsv.cz

² Senior researcher at Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs, Prague, anna.stastna@vupsv.cz

Research objectives in the context of the position of men in both the private and public spheres of life

Due to the specific informational vacuum regarding Czech sociological and demographic studies in relation to male reproduction, the authors propose to endeavour to analyse male fertility and its determinants. They intend to focus on determinants of a structural and situational character and the final aim will be to monitor timing differences in terms of the transition from the childless life phase to the first child with respect to men defined according to selected characteristics (level of education, economic status, family background of origin, housing, partnership history, prior experience with cohabitation with children etc.). Fatherhood as a key life transition in the male life course will therefore be monitored by means of a number of determinants that can be classified as micro-individual players and which usually represent indirect impact factors when facing the decision on becoming a father. The authors will then attempt to anchor the findings in the current societal context, i.e. with respect to value and economic conditions, with a brief reflection on the choices available with concern to public policies and measures aimed at the support of families with children and parents.

The Czech Republic has, over the last quarter of a century or so, witnessed major reversals in reproductive behaviour (a sharp reduction in fertility, increasing age at first birth, an increase in the proportion of childless people, an increasing share of extra-marital births, the emergence of a multiplicity and loosening of forms of partnership etc.) which have, to date, been documented with regard solely to the female population. Although this paper will concentrate particularly on the current reproductive behaviour of the male population, a cohort approach to data analysis will allow the authors to look back to some extent into the past (especially to the period of political and economic transformation in the Czech Republic) and to describe the afore-mentioned reproductive changes based on male fertility attributes. It is considered likely that male fertility is, as is that of women, shaped by normative societal determinants evolving particularly from the prevailing macroeconomic conditions of the country (employability, opportunities for flexible working regimes, etc.) and from the value system of society as a whole, taking into account for the purposes of this study especially the gender division of labour in both the public and domestic spheres. These factors as well as other aspects such as the level of emancipation of society and its adherence to moral principles, the extent of legislation in the field of the family, the degree of religiosity of society etc. lead to changes in the nature of partnership constellations, i.e. the potential for partnership negotiations regarding reproduction. The decision to become parents is generally made following agreement within the partnership, however, the driving forces in such negotiations often differ between men and women (Corijn et al., 1996; Sørensen 1989; Yang, 1993; Voas, 2003). Numerous studies have shown that men exert a significant impact on overall fertility intensity, especially through their own specific ideas concerning reproduction or through their overall partner/wife strategy (Tretjakova et al., 2014; Pierotti, 2013, Cápová, 2015; deMontigny Gauthier, 2013; Greene and Biddlecom, 2000).

Although the data analysis will examine the effect of a variety of situational and socio-economic factors on the timing of male fertility and its implementation as such, particular attention will be devoted to variables such as education, economic status and partner history. Research suggests that the existence of a partnership, and particularly its length, makes up the main factor impacting the

realisation of fatherhood (Klein, 2003; Zhang, 2011; Alich, 2009). For example, Filasová (2014) calculated the probability of a 35-year-old Czech man having a child dependent on partner history and regardless of the number of children already born. The findings indicated a group of men who are disadvantaged in terms of reproduction, i.e. men who remain unmarried up to the age of 35 years. Married men, even those who eventually divorced or became widowed, were found to have a much higher likelihood of having another child than men who remained single up to the age of 35 years.

Further, the study will focus closely on the factors of education and economic activity since, according to sociological research (Hašková, 2011), the Czech Republic ranks among those European countries with the strongest application of the male breadwinner model with women as caregivers in families with children under 15 years of age. Moreover, the Czech Republic, according to the latest European comparative study on childlessness has one of the highest values of "final" childless men (Miettinen et al., 2015). Given these facts, it is necessary to consider the determinants that affect a man's positive approach towards the realisation of his own reproduction. A study of the intensity of childlessness in the EU (Miettinen et al., 2015) suggests that, in general, a greater proportion of men with lower education levels fail to realise their fertility potential than do their more highly-educated counterparts, and the Czech Republic perfectly illustrates this pattern. These findings, in conjunction with the strengthening of the re-familisation model in the Czech Republic have led to the assumption that male fertility will be increasingly influenced by pressure exerted by the role of the man as the breadwinner, with the resultant strong sense of responsibility, supported by the generally accepted norm of the working-employed man. The fact that men perceive a need for sufficient financial income and job security as a necessary precondition with respect to the life step of becoming a father has been addressed by numerous international studies (Tölke and Diewald, 2003; Astone et al., 2010; Cooney et al., 1993; Rindfuss, Morgan, Swicegood, 1988). Men in the Czech Republic, however, must accept the fact that ensuring the financial security of the family on one income only will apply over a relatively long time period since the vast majority of women remain, as a result of the social benefit system and the organisation of the pre-school system, on parental leave for a full three years on average. The increased workload of men is also evident from statistics on the labour market and working conditions which suggest that men in the Czech Republic work some of the highest hours usually worked per week in the EU (Czech Republic 42.1 hours per week on average compared to 40.3 hours per week on average in the EU27) (Czech Statistical Office 2014). The burden and expectations accompanying potential fatherhood, moreover, are accumulating as a result of the emerging and increasingly established trend known as "new fatherhood" (Lewis, 1986; Lupton et al., 1997; Singly, 2000; Clarke et al., 1998; Lamb, 1987; LaRossa, 1988; Coltrane, 1996) which was promoted with particular intensity in Western Europe and the USA particularly over the last three decades of the 20th century. The new discourse, therefore, does not presume the traditional division of roles within the family with the father acting as the breadwinner and relatively distant authority figure, but rather a father who occupies a far less hierarchical position in the eyes of his children and a father who is significantly involved in the care and upbringing of his children. Moreover, the so-called "new father" is receptive and attentive to the needs of his children and provides them with positive emotional support. It can be argued that the so-called "caring father" as a new phenomenon in the Czech environment emerged at the turn of the 21st century. However, due to the aforementioned relatively strong trend towards re-familisation it would appear that the complete fulfilment of the model must encounter a number of barriers in the Czech context. Czech men may

therefore feel both increased pressure in terms of the requirement to ensure the financial security of the family and at the same time to fulfil the role of the “caring father” who devotes attention, and therefore much of his available time, to his children. Needless to say, these roles may well be, due to the time constraints of the father, in mutual contradiction which, in turn, may influence the result of the timing and realisation of male reproduction, especially with concern to those groups of men who find it most difficult to fulfil both roles. A recently conducted sociological study (Kyzlinková, 2014; Šťastná, Paloncyová, 2011) suggests that such problems will be faced especially by men with low education levels and low economic status. It would seem that men with the lowest education levels in contemporary Czech society often remain excluded from important life transitions such as marriage or even partnership experience in general (Šťastná, Paloncyová, 2011). Thus, the transition to parenthood of this group of men is also likely to be threatened since, as evidenced by Kyzlinková and Šťastná (2015), men with a basic level of education exhibit significantly lower (and often zero) reproductive aspirations compared to those with secondary and university levels of education. Indeed, research on childlessness (Miettinen et al., 2015) also records the reduced implementation of reproductive plans by those with the lowest levels of education. Since the timing and differentials of male fertility according to education have not yet been studied in the Czech Republic, one of the most important aims of the analysis will be to attempt to explain the issue of so-called “dual outsiders” with respect both to the work and domestic spheres.

Data and methods

The data employed in this study is taken from the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) carried out in the Czech Republic in 2008. The GGS consisted of a panel survey of a nationally representative sample of 18-79 year-olds. The Czech second wave survey sample (2008) resulted in data on a total of 10 071 subjects consisting of 4 514 men (45%) and 5 557 women (55%) from cohorts born during the period 1926-1990. The study employed a sub-sample of men from the 1945-1990 cohorts. After excluding those who provided incomplete information on their life histories with respect to the event under study, a final sample of 3859 men was analysed.

Individual factors that affect childbirth may mutually reinforce or, conversely, negate each other. In order to assess the effect of selected variables while controlling for their independence from other factors, event-history analysis provides a useful tool which enables the modelling of the intensity of the progression to fatherhood of Czech men and the investigation of the determinants of having a first child. The analysis employs the piecewise constant model and focuses on the birth of the respondent’s first biological child (in a data set expressed in terms of the month and year of birth). The date of first childbirth is backdated by nine months so as to obtain the approximate date of conception, since events that occurred after conception might have been influenced by conception itself (e.g. changes in partnership or socio-economic status). The models include several explanatory variables, both time-constant (cohort, characteristics of the background family during childhood, experience with step-children prior to own fatherhood) and time-varying covariates (education, partnership, socio-economic status, and housing).

Preliminary results

The initial results of the analysis indicate that in terms of the transition to fatherhood, both structural factors and micro-level characteristics (particularly experiences from the early stages of life, e.g. the number of siblings, and partnership history in adulthood) play an essential role. The data revealed significant generational shifts in the timing and intensity of men entering into parenthood. However, it also showed that certain structural variables, in particular socio-economic status and education, had a significant impact with respect to the generations from the mid-1960s and older generations which established a family following the old reproductive model typical of socialist countries. With concern to politically and economically transforming societies, the transition to fatherhood began to be negatively affected by other structural labour market conditions (particularly unemployment) which previous generations had never had to face. In addition, the level of education has become an important factor - for older generations a lower likelihood of transition to fatherhood was found to be typical especially for men with the lowest, i.e. basic educational levels, whereas for the generations from the mid-1960s more diversification across the educational spectrum is apparent. It is intended that the paper will focus more deeply on both these structural aspects whilst taking into consideration other variables that exert a significant impact on the likelihood of Czech men entering into fatherhood.

Bibliography

Alich, D. (2009) „Fatherhood in Russia between 1970-2004. The male perspective if family and fertility behavior in a changing society.“ Dissertation zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades doctor rerum politicarum. Der Wirtschafts und Socialwissenschaftlichen Fakultat der Universitat Rostock. Available on – line at: http://www.demogr.mpg.de/en/projects_publications/publications_1904/monographs/fatherhood_in_russia_between_1970_and_2004_the_male_perspective_of_family_and_fertility_behavior_3722.htm

Astone, N.M., Dariotis, J.K., Sonenstein, F.L., Pleck, J.H. , Hynes, K. (2010) “Men´s Work Efforts and the Transition to Fatherhood.” *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 31, pp. 3-13.

Cápoová, A. (2015) „Factors influence on the entry into fatherhood.“ *Journal of Nursing, Social Studies, Public Health and Rehabilitation*, 1-2, pp. 32-39.

Clarke, S., Popay, J. (1998) „ I am just a bloke who´s had kids: Men and Women on Parenthood“. In: Popay, J., Hearn, J., Edwards, J. (eds.) „Men, Gender Division and Welfare.“ London, Routledge.

Coltrane, S. (1996) „Family Man: Fatherhood, Housework, and Gender Equity.“ New York: Oxford University Press.

Cooney T.M., Pedersen F.A., Indelicato S.L., Palkovitz R. (1993) “Timing of fatherhood: is “on time” optimal?” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 55, pp.205–215.

Corijn, M., Lifbroer, A.C., and de Jong Gierveld, J. (1996) „It takes two to tango, doesn´t it? The influence of couple characteristics on the timing of the birth of the first child.“ *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 8(1), pp. 117–126.

deMontigny Gauthier., P., deMontigny, F. (2013) „Conceiving a first child: fathers´ perceptions of contributing elements to their decision.“ *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, 31(3), pp. 274-284.

Filasová, A. (2014) „Vliv rozpadu manželských svazků na plodnost v České republice.“ *Demografie*, 56 (2).

Greene, M.E., Biddlecom, A. E. (2000) „Absent and Problematic Men: Demographic Accounts of Male Reproductive Roles.“ *Population and Development Review*, Volume 26, Issue 1, pp 81–115.

Hamplová, D., Rychtaříková, J., Pikálková, S. (2004) „České ženy: vzdělání, partnerství a rodina.“ Praha: Sociologický ústav AV ČR, pages. 108, ISBN 8073300400.

Hašková, H. (2011) „Specifika českého refamilializačního modelu.“ *Socioweb*, 11/2011, available at: <http://www.socioweb.cz/index.php?disp=teorie&shw=485&lst=112>

Hašková, H., Zamykalová, L. (2006). „Mít děti? Co je to za normu? Či je to norma?“ *Biograf* 13 (40-41): pp.3-53. ISSN 1211-5770.

Klein, T. (2003). „Die Geburt von Kindern aus paarbezogener Perspektive.“ *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 2(6), pp. 506–527.

Kurkin, R. (2013) „Plodnost žen SLDB 2011.“ ČSÚ. Available on-line at: <https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/20551769/170224-14.pdf/287dc43c-df94-40c1-bf04-b322ed0e4b84?version=1.0>

Kyzlinková, R. (2014) „Bezdětnost a rodiny s jedním dítětem.“ SOÚ AV ČR. https://www.google.cz/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwifx5yy7s_JAhWJWiwKHb8nDWAQFggBMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.soc.cas.cz%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fsoubory%2Fe_kyzlnkova_2013_bezdetnost_jedi

Kyzlinková, R., Šťastná, A. (2015) „(Ne) Plánování rodičovství- přechod k otcovství u mužů v České republice.“ Paper presented at RELIK conference 13.11.2015, University of Economics, Prague.

Lamb, M.E. (1987) „Introduction: The emergent American Father.“ In Lamb, M.E. (ed.) *The Father Role: A Cross-cultural Perspective*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum. pp. 1-26.

LaRossa, R. (1988) „Fatherhood and social change.“ *Family Relations*, 37, pp. 451-457.

Lewis, Ch. (1986) „Becoming a Father.“ Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

Lupton, D., Barclay, L. (1997) „Constructing Fatherhood: discourses and experiences.“ London, Sage Publishers.

Mc Donald, P., Meyers, M. K. (2009) „Social Policy Principles Applied to Reform of Gender Egalitarianism in Parenthood and Employment“, in Gornick, J.C., Meyers, M.K. (eds.) „Gender Equality: Transforming Family Division of Labour.“ New York, NY: Verso, pp. 161-75.

Miettinen, A., Rotkirch, A., Szalma, I., Donno, A., Tanturri, M. (2015) „Increasing childlessness in Europe: time trends and country differences.“ *Families and Societies*, Working paper, vol. 3. <http://www.familiesandsocieties.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/WP33MiettinenEtAl2015.pdf> (staženo 1.12.2015)

Pierotti, R.S. (2013) „Masculinity: An Overlooked Cultural Influence on Fertility.“ Paper prepared for the annual meetings of the Population Association of America, New Orleans, LA, April 2013, Population Studies Center, University of Michigan.

Rabušic, L., Chromková Manea, B. E. (2011) „Řekni, kde ti muži jsou? O chybějících mužích ve studiích reprodukce.“ [Where Have All the Men Gone? On Missing Men in the Study of Reproduction], *Sociální studia*, 4, Katedra sociologie FSS MU, pp.. 47–66. ISSN 1214-813X.

Rabušic, L., Chromková Manea, B. E. (2013) „Male fertility in the Czech Republic – first empirical evidence.“ *Demografie*, 55 (4), Prague, pp. 275-290. ISSN 0011-8265.

Rindfuss, R.R., Morgan, S.P., Swicegood, G. (1988) „First births in America: CHANGES IN THE TIMING OF PARENTHOOD.“ Published by University of California Press, Berkeley.

Rostgaard, T., Moberg, R. J. (2015) „Fathering: the influence of ideational factors for male fertility behaviour.“ In Eydal G. B., Rostgaard, T. (eds.) „Fatherhood in the Nordic Welfare States - Comparing care policies and practice.“ Policy Press, Great Britain.

Rychtaříková, J. (2010) „Pokles porodnosti – hlavní faktor demografické změny.“ in Burcin, B., Fialová, L., Rychtaříková, J. a kol. „Demografická situace České republiky, Proměny a kontexty 1993–2008.“ SLON, Praha, pp. 47–63. ISBN 9788074190247

Singly, F. (2000) „Le soi, le couple et la famille.“ Paris: Nathan.

Sørensen, A.M. (1989). „Husbands' and wives' characteristics and fertility decisions. A diagonal mobility model.“ *Demography* 26(1), pp. 125–135.

Šťastná, A. (2010) „Změny reprodukčních vzorců a individuální souvislosti rodičovství.“ *Demografie* 52(4), pp. 77-88. ISSN 0011-8265

Šťastná, A., Palonciová, J. (2011) „První partnerská soužití českých žen a mužů a rostoucí význam kohabitací.“ *Gender, rovné příležitosti, výzkum*, (2), pp. 16-29.

Tichenor, V., McQuillan J., Greil, A.L., Contreras, R., Shreffler, K.M. (2011) „The importance of fatherhood to U.S. married and cohabitating men.“ *Fathering*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 232-251.

Tölke, A., Diewald, M. (2003) "Insecurities in employment and occupational careers and their impact on the transition to fatherhood in Western Germany." *Demographic Research*, vol. 9(3), pp. 41-68,

Tragaki, A.; Bagavos, Ch. (2014) „Male fertility in Greece: Trends and differentials by education level and employment status.“ *Demographic Research*, Vol. 31, 6, pp. 137–160 <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol31/6/> DOI: 10.4054/DemRes.2014.31.6

Tretjakova, V., Šumskaitė, L., Šėporaitytė- Vismantė, D. (2014) „Fertility desires and visions of fatherhood: individual preferences of young heterosexual men in Lithuania.“ *Filosofija. Sociologia*, 25, 4, pp. 300-307.

van de Kaa, D.J. (1987) „Europe's second demographic transition.“ *Population Bulletin*, vol. 42, no 1, pp. 1-57.

Voas, D. (2003) „Conflicting Preferences: A Reason Fertility Trends to be Too High or Too Low.“ *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 29, Issue 4.

Yang, P.Q. (1993) „The differential effects of husbands' and wives' statuses on marital fertility.“ *Population and Environment*, 15(1), pp. 43–58.

Zhang, L. (2011) „Male Fertility Patterns and Determinants.“ *The Springer Series on Demographic Methods and Population Analysis*, Vol. 27, ISBN: 978-90-481-8938-0.