

STRUCTURAL AND VALUE INFLUENCES ON THE ENTRY INTO PARENTHOOD IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC¹

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INTRODUCTION

Although permanent childlessness among women living in the territory of today's Czech Republic was around 20% in the generation born at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, among women born between the 1940s and mid-1960s permanent childlessness never exceeded 7% (Juříčková 2005). During the entire socialist period, women's permanent childlessness was unusually low (as in other countries of the former Eastern Block). This was related to the young age of first birth and single brides, and also the high correlations between the first marriage and first childbirth in the countries of the former Eastern Block.

While at the end of the 1980s a woman's age at first birth was between 20 and 22 years of age in the former Eastern Block countries and as many as 60% of first births were among women aged 19 to 23, in the rest of Europe the age of first birth was around 25 and 26 years of age, but many women became mothers having reached the age of 30. In addition, while in the former Eastern Block countries the percentage of single, childless thirty-year-old women in mid-1980s was less than 10%, in other regions of Europe it was between 10 and 18%. In 1980s, the reproductive and family behaviour in the "East" was generally more homogenous and predictable than in the rest of Europe where family and partnership forms started differentiating sooner than in the "East" (Sobotka 2004).

Compared to other European countries, Eastern Block countries had a relatively high total fertility rate at the end of the 1980s (in the Czech society the total fertility rate varied between 2.8 and 1.8 children per woman between the 1950s and beginning of the 1990s). However, in the course of the 1990s the

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total fertility rate fell along with changes in other socio-demographic indicators. Over the span of a few years countries with the highest rates of total fertility in Europe in the 1980s became areas with the lowest rates of total fertility in Europe and the world.

In the mid-1990s the total fertility rate in the Czech Republic fell under 1.3 children per woman which placed the Czech Republic among countries with the lowest low fertility. However it is to be noted, the decline of the total fertility rate appeared in periods of significant socio-demographic and economic changes. As a result of the postponement of childbearing and growing age at first birth, the total fertility rate remains very low in the region, but this indicator does not give any information about how many postponed childbirths will be realised in the future. The relationship between the development of fertility and the postponement of childbearing in other European countries shows that although fertility is going to increase slightly at the time when postponed childbirths are realised (this is anyway happening in the Czech Republic and total fertility rate has been slightly increasing since 1999 although it still remains under 1.5 children per woman), while permanent childlessness (and families with one child) will be on the rise in the population. Nonetheless, due to biological or social factors or changes in personal reproductive preferences over the life cycle, not all postponed children will be born in the end.

The period of the 1990s was one when the former Eastern Block countries were undergoing sweeping demographic, social, economic and political changes, and (with varying success) social, economic and political reforms. Very quickly experts came to offer various explanations of socio-demographic changes. Some emphasised the influence of culture (values) and other structural (economic and institutional) changes in the socio-demographic and especially the reproductive behaviour of young people in the former Eastern Block.

With this paper I would like to contribute to this ongoing discussion using attitudinal data from two surveys of Czech population. On the basis of these data I test both the impact of cultural and structural influences on the (non)realisation of parenthood. In my paper I will first review the offered cultural and structural explanations of low fertility rate in Central and Eastern European countries; I will then introduce the data sets I used for my analyses and in the end I will seek an answer to the following research questions concerning the Czech population:

- 1) What factors influence decisions on (not) entering parenthood (yet)?
- 2) Are there any differences in factors influencing the entry into parenthood stressed by younger and older Czechs? Has the importance of any factor increased when decisions are made on the entry into parenthood in the current post-socialist period and under the conditions of a market economy?

- 3) Why have young childless Czechs between the age of 25 and 35 (reaching the age of 20 during the social changes in the 1990s) not entered into parenthood (yet)? Do they reject parenthood, postpone parenting or they simply have no childbearing preferences and plans (yet)?
- 4) Why do young childless people between the age of 25 and 35 living in stable partnerships with a preference for having children postpone childbearing? How do they differ from parents of the same age group?

ARGUMENTS OVER STRUCTURAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS EXPLAINING THE LOW LEVEL OF FERTILITY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The quick drop in the fertility rate in the former Eastern Block countries during the 1990s has so far tended to be explained from two perspectives.

The first stresses the convergence of demographic indicator values to the ones recorded in the “West” and the positive aspects of the social transformations in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which have brought to young people study, leisure and job opportunities which can compete with (early and multiple-child) parenting, as the availability of quality contraceptives increased together with the value of individualism and self-expression (see e.g. Rabušic 2001).

In contrast others focus on the unique socio-demographic changes in the “East” concerning their speed, depth and socio-economic and political contexts. These arguments also point to the negative aspects of the social transformation including unemployment, growing insecurity marketing employment, reduction of some social transfers and services, shift of income poverty to families with children, an increase in the cost of living, and growing income and property differentiation, which may prevent the establishment or enlargement of a family (see e.g. Rychtaříková 2000, 2001).

The first explanation for the drop in the fertility rate in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s is a “story” of *diffusion and internalisation of values* of individualism and self-expressions, of *opportunities “competing with parenthood”*, about faster or slower political, social, economic and demographic *inclusion* of the countries of the former Eastern Block into “Europe” and also of a *gradual demographic transition*. The basic research question here is *whether young* (so far) childless people *want to have a child or children*.

The other explanation is a “story” of *external* economic and institutional *barriers* to parenthood, of *differences* in the demographic changes (speed and depth) and their different temporal contexts (socio-economic and political in-

stability vs. stability) between countries of the “West” and “East”, of a *demographic shock* or human conduct in the conditions of *anomie* when the postponement of decisions which are expected to have a long-term influence on an individual’s life seems to be the only strategic option. The basic research question then is *which barriers prevent young people from establishing families or families with more children*.³

Although discussions on the fall of fertility, postponement of childbearing and the increase in the portion of childless in former Eastern European countries focus mainly on these two explanations, it is likely that they are not mutually exclusive but rather, complement one another.

Structural factors caused or supported by the socio-economic and political transformation may be combined with long-term changes in values. According to Sobotka (2004) there are probably many such combinations of structural and cultural factors which differentiate individual countries of the former Eastern Block one from another. Lesthaeghe and Surkyn (2002) argue that the degree of influence of the structural and cultural factors may change over time. Thus, while in the first years of the socio-economic and political transformation the influence of structural factors may have dominated, value factors may have come to prominence as the socio-economic and political situation in individual countries of the region stabilised. Similarly, Philipov (2003) claims that the current changes in fertility in the countries of the former Eastern Block may be a result of a sudden discontinuity in the lives of people after the dissolution of the Eastern Block, which event at the same time speeded up and intensified the effects of long-term changes in values.

Apart from the very topical question on the impact of social transformations in countries of the former Eastern Block on the reproductive behaviour of generations entering maturity during the 1990s, another question also emerges: what the reproductive behaviour of younger generations will be like in the future.

The hypothesis of the low fertility trap presumes that if fertility drops in society and remains low for a certain period of time, social mechanisms appear which lead to further reduction in fertility unless pressure is exerted to counter-balance these mechanisms. This hypothesis stands on three arguments:

- a) a demographic one which stresses the fact that a smaller number of potential mothers mean fewer childbirths in the future;
- b) a sociological one which builds on the assumption that low fertility will formulate a “culture of low fertility” and
- c) an argument building on the work by Easterline (1976; 1980) who links reproductive behaviour with a combination of economic aspira-

³ See the discussion in e.g. Kantorová (2004); Kohler, Billari, Ortega (2002); Kohler, Kohler (2002); Philipov, Spéder, Billari (2005); Rychtaříková (2000; 2001); Rabušic (2001; 2004); Sobotka (2004); and many other publications.

tions and expected income of young people. This argument presumes that while the aspirations of the young cohorts have now a growing tendency, their expected income falls in consequence of an ageing population caused by the low fertility rate (Lutz, Skirbekk, Testa 2006).

Goldstein, Lutz and Testa (2003) already raised the possibility of the formation of a “culture of low fertility” in countries where permanent childlessness (or having one child) is not a highly marginal model of private life. The argument is that generations who grow up and mature in countries with a high rate of permanently childless people (or families with one child) will be more likely to prefer and choose these models of private life as compared to preceding generations.

Such a development finds support especially in the reality of reproductive behaviour, plans and preferences in the former West Germany. There the number of permanent childless women is one of the highest in Europe; there is the highest percentage of young childless people who do not want any children in the future, and at the same time there is a great proportion of those who are not sure whether they want to be a parent in the future. Although the currently high percentage of permanently childless women in former West Germany is usually explained by institutional and structural reasons (high cost of motherhood concerning the work-life balance as formed by the gender conservative family policy) (Kreyenfeld 2004), there is also evidence of value changes – a significant increase in the preference for permanent childlessness over parenthood (among young generations) – reacting to the social reality in which permanent childlessness has become a part of a lifestyle of a significant portion (of the older generations) of population.

Altogether it seems that the distinction between value and structural changes is important from a scholarly and a political perspective, but it is also possible to argue that value and structural factors supplement and dynamically influence each other in their effect on reproductive preferences, plans and behaviour of individuals.

DATA

In this paper I draw especially on analyses of data from a sample survey of the Czech population focused on the relations between socio-economic changes and changes in the private life of people in the Czech Republic. The questionnaire survey Relations and changes of the labour market and private, familial and partnership life in the Czech Republic (conducted in the form of standard-

ised face-to-face interviews) was carried out in the last quarter of 2005⁴. Answers to the questionnaire's questions were obtained from 5,510 respondents between the ages of 25 and 54 (2,778 men, 2,732 women). The respondent sampling was quota controlled. The prescribed quotas concerning age, sex, education, size of residence and NUTS2 were met. From the perspective of the monitored quotas the sample can be considered to be representative of the Czech population. In the paper I analyse respondents' answers to questions that were contained in the section on reproductive conditions, preferences, plans and behaviour.

I draw answers to question about the planned number of children in the population of 25 to 35 year-olds from a sample survey of the Czech population *Matrimony, labour and family* carried out by the agency SC&C in 2005 on a representative sample of men and women between the ages of 20 and 40 (2,546 respondents of whom 1,262 men and 1,284 women). The venues of data collection were selected using the probability method so that they proportionately represent districts and sizes of municipalities. Respondents were sought in the selected municipalities using the method of random walk with a quota ending. The questionnaire survey was carried out in the form of standardised face-to-face interviews.

In places in the paper when I speak of young people, I mean men and women between the age of 25 and 35 as it was them who reached the age of 20 only after 1989 at the time of the social changes of the 1990s.

STRUCTURAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS IN DECISIONS ON (NOT) ENTERING INTO PARENTHOOD (YET)

In view of the extensive expert debates over the influences of structural and value factors on reproductive behaviour, respondents in the survey *Relations and changes of the labour market and private, familial and partnership life in the Czech Republic* were asked: "What is or should be the influence of the following circumstances on your decision to have a family?" Thirteen types of circumstances were offered (including the item "other"), where they were asked to define the degree of importance of the individual circumstances on their decision to enter into parenthood, on a scale "very big", "quite big", "quite small", "very small" influence.

In the sample of 25 to 54 year olds, parents considered their own *desire to have a baby* as the most important factor that influenced their entry into parent-

⁴ It was conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic within the project *Relations and changes of the labour market and private, familial and partnership life in the Czech Republic*, funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic programme *Modern Society and Its Changes*.

hood while a large portion of the childless identified *the situation in the partnership* as the main factor that had so far influenced their postponement of (or refusal to) have children. Other very important factors (besides the above-mentioned) which influenced the entry into/postponement/refusal of parenthood, mentioned both by the childless and parents, were *the housing situation*, general *economic situation* of their household, and *partner's opinions and demands*.

These findings correspond with the results of the Eurobarometer 2002.1 survey which examined the reasons behind not fulfilling reproductive plans in a population over 25 years of age in the then EU candidate countries – non-fulfilment of reproductive plans which these people hold when they were around twenty. According to the Eurobarometer 2002.1 survey, the partnership, economic and housing situation were seen as the most important factors in the Czech Republic. These were similar to those that respondents identified in most of the other candidate countries. Besides the above-mentioned ones, the three most important factors selected by respondents contained often the health condition and the item “other”. All the then candidate countries, however, differed from the EU15 in that in the EU15 countries the three most important factors included a change in reproductive preferences in addition to the health condition and partnership situation, while the economic and housing situation were not usually included at all among the three most important factors. The study suggested that unlike the countries of the former EU15, the economic (and housing) situation plays a greater role in the reproductive behaviour in the countries that acceded to the EU in the first (and second) wave of eastern enlargement as compared to the countries of the former EU15 (see The Gallup Organisation 2002).

Although *the partnership, housing and economic situations* are mentioned most frequently together with the lack of *desire for a child* and *partner's opinions and demands* as reasons among (so far) childless men and women over the age of 25 in the Czech Republic, more than one third of the respondents also stressed such factors as their *own or partner's job situation, leisure time activities and health condition*.

If we focus on circumstances influencing non/establishment of a family among childless people and those already being parents, we quite logically discover that *the desire for a child* and *accidents* significantly increase among the already parents. On the contrary, among the childless the influence of *the situation in partnership, one's own and partner's job situation, leisure time activities and health condition* increase significantly.

This clearly shows that both the childless people and those being already parents identified structural as well as value factors as the most important ones influencing their decisions on family formation. The degree of importance of the individual factors was different among those with and without children. In

order to simplify the analysis of individual factors, I have used a factor analysis which reduced the number of items (studied factors) to four:

- a) a situational factor which includes *partnership, employment and health condition*;
- b) an economic factor which includes respondents' *housing and economic situation*;
- c) an ideational factor which includes the influence of respondents' orientation to *leisure time activities*, respondent's "*world view*" (religion, beliefs, ideologies, etc.) and the influence of *reference groups*; and finally
- d) an intentional factor of the *desire to have a child*.

It appears that while the situational and economic factors tend to refer to structural influences, the ideational factor and the factor of desire to have a child refer to value influences. The situational and economic factors can be linked to possible external barriers to intended reproduction (with uncertainty in the labour market, economic deprivation, housing deficiency, conflicts among partners, absence of an appropriate partner, poor health condition etc.). The ideational factor and desire to have a child can be linked to values which can compete with parenthood (orientation to leisure time activities, "world-view" which does not support parenthood, reference groups in which postponement of childbearing is expected etc.).

Table 1
Factors influencing the reproductive behaviour of Czech men and women between the ages of 25 and 54

	Factors			
	external barriers		internalized values	
	positional	economic	ideational	intentional (desire)
partnership situation	,790	-	-	-
health condition	,645	,179	,178	,123
partner's opinions and claims	,585	,268		,362
partner's labour market situation/ plans	,568	,434	,194	-
respondent's labour market situation/ plans	,523	,310	,312	-,320
economic situation	,273	,852	-	-
housing situation	,193	,847	-	,106
reference groups (opinions of friends, parents, etc.)	-	-	,796	,191
leisure time activities	,153	,247	,742	-,192
respondent's "world view" (religion, beliefs, ideologies)	,342	-,147	,592	,249
desire to have child/ren	-	,130	,136	,843

Source: Relations and changes of the labour market and private, familial and partnership life in the Czech Republic 2005.

Note: In the factor analysis the Varimax rotation method and the four-factor alternative have been selected concerning the explanatory power of the model. Percent of total variance explained is 64%, of which the factor (situational) = 20%; factor (economic) = 18%; factor (ideational) = 16%; factor (intentional/desire) = 10%. Of the total number of items monitored in the questionnaire, the item "accident" did not enter the factor analysis for its insufficient communality. At the same time, the item "other" did not enter the factor analysis because 90% of respondents did not respond when asked about the degree of influence of "other" circumstances on their reproductive behaviour.

After the formation of the above-mentioned factors, socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents emphasising the influence of these factors in their reproductive behaviour were analysed. According to their opinion, the economic factor influenced the reproductive behaviour especially of young people, parents with small families and also those living in larger cities. The situational factor again influenced especially young people, those living in larger cities and parents with small families. In addition it was also important for singles, childless people, people with higher education and with a higher personal income. The ideational factor was especially important for childless people, singles, people with higher education, with a higher personal income

and people living in more affluent households. The factor of desire was especially important for women, parents (especially parents of larger families), people with lower education, people with a lower personal income, older people, the married and people living in smaller municipalities.

Table 2

Characteristics of respondents stressing importance of one of the four factors

External barriers		Internalized values	
positional	Economic	ideational	intentional
– the young	– the young	– the childless	– parents of larger families
– parents with small families	– parents with small families	– the never married	– married
– living in bigger municipalities	– living in bigger municipalities	– with higher education	– with lower education
– the never married		– with higher personal income	– with lower personal income
– the childless		– with higher household income	– the elderly
– with higher education			– women
– with higher personal income			– living in small municipalities

It is especially parents with small families (usually one child) and parents living in larger cities⁵ who stress influences more structural in nature and barriers of parenthood (income, housing, health, partnership and employment situation). Respondents who refer to value influences are characterised either by childlessness (emphasis on the ideational factor) or larger family (emphasis on the factor of desire). In the case of parents, we see the role of education. The more educated place more emphasis on the ideational factors, while people with lower education stress the factor of desire. In the case of the childless, we see the relationship to the respondent's personal income. People with a higher personal income place emphasis on the ideational factor while people with a lower income on the factor of desire⁶.

⁵ The influence of the respondents' age on his/her assessment of the situational factor in his/her reproductive behaviour disappears (or rather is not statistically significant at five-percent level of significance) if we control for the influence of whether the respondent is or is not a parent. The influence of the respondents' size of the place of residence on his/her assessment of the importance of the situational and economic factors in her/his reproductive behaviour disappears among the childless but remains significant among parents.

⁶ The influence of the respondents' family status on his/her assessment of the importance of the ideational factor in his/her reproductive behaviour disappears if we filter out the influence of whether the respondent is a parent. The influence of respondents' education on his/her assessment of the importance of the ideational factor in his/her reproductive behav-

Altogether we can see that lifestyle and conditions in larger cities appear to be less compatible with the formation of families with more children. Higher education implies a greater emphasis on considering interests, hobbies, one's own "world view" and also on the opinions and behaviour of reference groups (relatives, friends, etc.) in the reproductive plans of parents. On the other hand, parents with lower education tend to mention more often the desire to have a child as the decisive factor for their reproductive behaviour. The influence of external barriers on the reproductive behaviour is most often mentioned by parents with a small family (usually one child) while the childless and parents having a bigger family mention the influence of value orientations more often. The childless put emphasis on hobbies and one's own "world view" more often than others and parents with a bigger family put emphasis on the desire to have children more often than others. The influence of various hobbies, interests, one's own "world view" and reference groups (competing with parenthood) on the entry into parenthood is emphasised especially by the (so far) childless with a higher income, while the influence of an (insufficient) desire to have a child is mentioned especially by the (so far) childless with a relatively low income.

Changes in the importance of factors in the contemporary post-socialist period and under the conditions of a market economy

In view of the extensive scholarly debates on which factors influence the reproductive behaviour of contemporary young people and whether they are the same or they are different as compared to the ones influencing the reproductive behaviour of the older generations forming families before 1989, I was interested in whether there is any difference between the answers of younger and older respondents to the question about the factors influencing their decision about the establishment of a family. Considering the fact that the answers to this question largely depend on whether the respondent is a parent or not and thus he/she answers the question "What was the influence of the following circumstances on your decision to have a family?" from different perspectives, I divided the sample into two sub-samples – a sub-sample of parents and a sub-sample of the childless. With these separate sub-samples I then aimed at clarifying whether there is any difference between the emphases on individual factors among respondents of various ages. In this way it turned out that age groups differ in relation to the economic factor. This factor correlates negatively with age both among parents and the childless, which means that

our disappears among the childless but remains significant among parents. The influence of the respondents' personal income level on his/her assessment of the importance of the ideational factor in his/her reproductive behaviour disappears among parents but remains significant among the childless.

younger childless people and parents attribute a greater importance to their housing and income situation in their decision to have a family than older childless people and parents. The situational and ideational factors did not significantly correlate with age in the sub-samples of the childless and parents. Only in the sample of parents, age correlated statistically significantly with the factor of desire to have a child in a negative way, which means that younger parents mentioned the influence of their own pro-family orientation in relation to their reproductive behaviour more often than older parents. This can be explained by higher percentage of the unplanned conceptions before 1989 and the significant expansion in the use of modern contraceptives for timing the birth of the first child during the 1990s.

The result that younger parents and childless people stress economic indicators more often than older parents and the childless respondents do not necessarily mean that the relative income and housing situation of young people today is worse than it was at the time when the older generations were establishing their family. The above-mentioned finding should be interpreted in such a way that young people today place more emphasis on the economic situation in the context of their reproductive plans and behaviour than older generations.

A different sequence of family formation can be found in generations who had their children in the course of the 1970s and the 1980s than today. At that time there was a very close link between the timing of the first marriage and childbirth (in the 1980s around 60% of single brides were pregnant); marriage and parenthood was more of a "condition" for obtaining one's own flat than the existence of independent housing being a "condition" for entering into a marriage and parenthood. This was due to the pro-natalist measures⁷; to "full employment", the levelling of salaries and to an early entry into marriage and parenthood. The entry into marriage and the birth of the first child usually preceded the stable career in the labour market. In contrast to this situation, in generations forming their families in the 1990s and in the new millennium, extra-marital fertility has significantly increased (especially among women with lower education) and at the same time postponement of childbearing increased while young people study, try to establish a stable career in the labour market, develop leisure time activities and live unmarried with or without a partner. The greater emphasis on the economic situation today among young people when thinking about the factors influencing their reproductive plans and behaviour may demonstrate the concerned group's relatively greater economic weakness/insecurity as compared to those forming their families earlier. Or we may argue that currently there are their greater financial and property-related demands (also related to parenthood). The current labour market offers varying career opportunities to different groups of young people. Furthermore, the fi-

⁷ E.g. a state guarantee of zero-interest loans and waiting lists for flats preferring young married heterosexual couples with children born shortly after the marriage.

nancial costs of parenthood (to the impoverishment of families with children) and the opportunity costs of parenthood (the growth of opportunities especially for “mobile” singles and childless people) are increasing. And last but not least the economic demands related to parenthood are increasing, which can be linked (among other things) to the growing market and consumer orientation of society and the fact that Czech society is more differentiated today in terms of income and property than before. In addition to this, it should be noted that people of the baby-boom generation of the 1970s are investigated which generation enjoyed the pro-natalist measures taken at that time. According to East-erline (1976) it is the baby-boom generations that face huge challenges in the labour market (in the Czech Republic moreover amplified by the economic transformation in the second half of the 1990s) and for them the launch of a professional career can be more difficult. And this may result first in the postponement of marriage and childbearing, and second in the choice of other life goals than the (early) establishment of a family (with more children). A statistically significant relationship between a personal net income level and the emphasis young people place on the influence of economic conditions could be demonstrated only in the group of childless women under 35 and not in the whole group of young (childless) people up to the age of 35. Young (so far) childless women with a low personal income attributed a significantly greater importance to economic circumstances in postponing (or refusing) childbearing than their economically more successful peers. It is here that we find a potent field for new research, research on the role of structural and ideational factors in the establishment of families by men and women of various socio-economic groups.

Reasons behind not (yet) entering parenthood in the 25–35 age group

In the preceding section it has been demonstrated that economic and housing factors today play a greater role in decisions on family formation. However, it is still not clear why young people do not enter into parenthood as often and as early as compared to those reaching the age of 20 before 1989. In this section I will focus on a specific group of (so far) childless young people aged 25 to 35 who reached the age of 20 in the period of socio-economic and political transformation of the 1990s, a period of significant socio-demographic changes and a quick drop in fertility.

In 2005 more than a half of men aged 25 to 35 were (so far) childless and among women of the same age almost one third were still childless. The data also shows that approximately one half of these childless people did not have a stable partner as reported. While in the cohort of people born in 1954 two thirds of men and almost 90% of women entered into marriage at least once before

they reached the age of 25 (Pavlík and Kučera 2001) and first children were mainly born shortly after the marriage, people born 15 to 25 years later not only do not enter into marriage with such an intensity as the preceding generations, but at the age of 25 to 35 many of them still do not have a relationship they consider serious (even regardless of the length of such a relationship and whether they live together or not).

The preference of parenthood is, nevertheless, high among young women, including young women without a stable partner. The preference of parenthood among men is somewhat lower, especially among those without a stable partner.

Table 3

Plans of young men and women aged 25 to 35 concerning their parenthood (%)

Men and women aged 25 to 35					
	Does not have a child and does not intend to.	Does not have a child and does not know whether s/he wants a child.	Has a child, is expecting one or intends to have one.	Total	N
Men	5	14	81	100	647
Women	3	7	90	100	748

(So far) childless men and women aged 25 to 35					
	Does not intend to have a child.	Does not know whether s/he wants a child.	Is expecting or intends to have a child.	Total	N
Men	10	29	61	100	309
Women	9	22	69	100	233

Source: Matrimony, labour and family 2005.

The preference for permanent childlessness among young Czechs is still very low. However, the proportion of those who have not made up their mind with respect to parenthood is not insignificant among young (so far) childless men and women, and the high percentage of young (so far) childless people lacking a serious relationship suggest that in their case we are not witnessing a postponement of childbearing in the sense of planning an entry into parenthood in a near specified time, but only a presupposition and will to be a parent in the future.

Reasons behind postponing childbearing among 25–35 year old childless people in stable partnerships with a preference for children?

In the preceding section I pointed to the fact that although the preferences for permanent childlessness are low among the young Czech population, almost half of (so far) childless people aged 25 to 35 does not have a stable partner, which is related to the increase in the number of people who have not made up their mind yet with respect to parenthood. In this section I will concentrate only on the young respondents aged 25 to 35 who have a stable partner, want to become parents but have not done so far. In their case I am interested why they have not become parents yet, what barriers are mentioned and what opportunities they want to take advantage of before their parenthood. In what respects are they different from parents of the same age?

Table 4
Percentage of childless people and parents aged 25 to 35 who identified the influence of the following circumstances to be “very big” or “quite big” on their decisions concerning family formation

	The childless in stable partnership with preference for children (N=475)	Parents (N=1039)
75% + more	-	<i>desire for a child/ren (82%)</i>
51–74%	<i>desire for a child/ren (71%)</i> <i>housing situation (71%)</i> <i>economic situation (68%)</i> <i>partner’s opinions and claims (68%)</i> <i>partnership situation (60%)</i> <i>partner’s job situation/ plans (55%)</i>	<i>partner’s opinions and claims (69%)</i> <i>housing situation (66%)</i> <i>economic situation (59%)</i> <i>partnership situation (51%)</i> - -
25–50%	<i>respondent’s job situation/ plans (46%)</i> <i>health condition (42%)</i> <i>leisure-time activities (35%)</i> -	<i>partner’s job situation/ plans (37%)</i> <i>health condition (35%)</i> <i>accident (33%)</i> <i>respondent’s job situation/ plans (28%)</i>
0–24%	accident (22%) respondent’s “world view” (religion, beliefs, ideologies) (14%) reference groups (opinions of friends, parents, etc.) (12%)	<i>reference groups (opinions of friends, parents, etc.) (19%)</i> <i>leisure-time activities (19%)</i> respondent’s “world view” (religion, beliefs, ideologies) (14%)

Source: Relations and changes on the labour market and forms of private, familial and partnership life in Czech society 2005.

Note: Italics mark items where either parents or the childless placed statistically greater emphasis. The table does not include the item “other” because most respondents did not respond to the question about the degree of influence of “other” circumstances on their reproductive behaviour.

When considering factors influencing their decision about childbearing, parents aged 25 to 35 emphasised significantly more often the influence of *the desire to have a child, accidents* and also the pressure of pro-family oriented *reference groups* than childless people of the same age who have a stable partner and want to have children.

On the contrary, (so far) childless people aged 25 to 35 who have a stable partner and want to have a child emphasised the influence of their *economic, housing and partnership situation, their own and partner's job situation, leisure time activities and health condition* significantly more often than parents of the same age. The emphasis which (so far) childless people with stable partner and preferring parenthood placed on *leisure time activities* compared to parents of the same age clearly shows that they postpone parenthood for value reasons. Nevertheless, the greater emphasis they place on the *job situation* of the couple can point to both value changes and opportunities as well as to socio-economic barriers to parenthood when combined with the emphasis on the *economic and housing conditions*.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I investigated the structural and value factors in the reproductive behaviour in the Czech Republic as they are perceived by men and women over 25. Specifically, I concentrated on the barriers to parenthood and values and opportunities competing with parenthood which young Czech women and men aged 25 to 35 reaching the age of 20 in the 1990s consider important in their decisions on family formation.

As in other countries of the former Eastern Block, the Czech debates on the current drop of fertility, postponement of childbearing and expected increase of permanent childlessness and having only one child focused either on changes in value orientations speeded up by the social transformation (but not originating in the transformation) or on structural-institutional changes brought by the socioeconomic and political transformation.

The data analysed here suggest that in the attitudes of Czech men and women, both value and structural factors play a role in their decisions on entering into parenthood, the postponement of childbearing or remaining childless. Concretely, we can differentiate between a situational factor (which takes into account partnership, health, and job situation of the respondent), economic factor (which takes into account the income and housing situation), ideational factor (which takes into account the influence of interests and "world view", religion, beliefs, ideologies) and the influence of his/her pro-family or non-family oriented reference groups) and the factor of a desire to have a child.

Apart from *the desire to have a child* and *opinions and demands of the partner*, *the economic situation* together with *the housing and partnership situation* are most often mentioned as the reasons influencing the start of reproduction both among the childless and the already parents. Furthermore, the influence of *one's own and partner's job situation, health condition, leisure time activities* and *accidents* is also relatively high.

Structural circumstances of reproductive behaviour are mentioned more often by parents with small families (usually one child) while the influence of value orientations are more often mentioned by childless people and parents with larger families.

Young parents aged 25 to 35 differ from older generations in the greater emphasis they place retrospectively on their desire to have a child. This can be explained by the spread of planned fertility after 1989. Moreover, young childless people (and parents) aged 25 to 35 differ in their decisions from the older generations of childless people (and parents) in that they place more emphasis on the economic situation. And according to another survey, which looked into the reasons for the acceptability of the decision to remain permanently childless, it is young people today who significantly more often stress the fear of financial difficulties in maintaining a family together with fears about the health condition (of parents or children) as reasons for permanent childlessness. Comparatively, the increase in the tolerance for other reasons (such as the fear of future development of society, preference for work or hobbies, fear of losing independence, lack of trust in one's own parenting skills etc.) was not so great among people under 35 (see Hašková 2007).

The emphasis on economic insecurity when considering entry into parenthood among young people today can mean either their relatively greater economic insecurity as compared to earlier generations or the more acute financial and property-related worries. Referring to outer constraints can reflect existing and/or subjectively perceived constrains. It can be also a sign of subordination to a collective norm that may not be followed but difficult to question though. A direct relationship between the emphasis on the influence of economic aspects in reproduction and the respondent's actual income level in the total subsample of young people aged 25 to 35 has not been proven. It has been demonstrated in the group of young (so far) childless women only.

The choice of permanent childlessness and acceptance of this choice remains marginal in Czech society; however, the relatively high percentage of young people aged 25 to 35 who have not made up their mind whether or not to become a parent is not insignificant. It is not clear whether the group having no stable partner avoids specifically parenthood. The increase in the proportion of people aged 25 to 35 in Czech population who do not have a stable partner is substantial compared to older generations because before 1989 a large majority of men and women entered marriage and parenthood under the age of 25. The

survey shows that among young people aged 25 to 35 there is today a relatively high percentage of those who have not started parenthood (yet). Most of them do not deny parenthood, but many can be neither seen as postponing parenthood until near future because they do not have a stable partner. Rather, many simply assume they will become parents at some point in the future.

Those who are (still) childless at the age of 25 to 35, have a stable partner and want to become parents emphasised significantly more often the influence of barriers to parenthood and opportunities competing with parenthood (specifically *economic, housing and partnership situation, their own and partner's job situation, leisure time activities and health condition*). As compared to the childless respondents the already parents aged 25 to 35 emphasised more often the influence of their *desire to have a baby, accidents* and the influence of *reference groups*.

The above-mentioned facts suggest that the structural and value influences on reproductive behaviour do not have to exclude but can supplement each another. The increase in the importance of some structural and value factors does not have to have an equal effect across the whole spectrum of the Czech people but can be specific to various socio-demographic groups. More educated parents for example more often stress the influence of ideas and cultural attitudes (*leisure time activities, their own "world view" and opinions of respected people around them – reference groups*) with regard to family formation while parents with lower education stress their desire to have a baby. Similarly, the childless with higher income place greater stress on their *leisure time activities, reference groups and "world view"* in the context of their postponement (or refusal) of parenthood while (so far) childless people with a relatively smaller income more often mention a lack of *desire to have a child*. Further research could focus on analysing the role of structural and ideational factors in specific groups of young (so far) childless people.

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