

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

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**Topic:** POSTER SESSION  
**Title:** FATHERHOOD IN RUSSIA – EVALUATION OF BIOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS WITH DEMOGRAPHIC DATA  
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### **Research Issue:**

For a long time fertility research in demography was mainly focusing on birth dynamics of women. This is because a mother and their children are much easier to link to each other and because family and parenthood were viewed as a lifelong stable institution usually belonging to the female sphere. However, the meaning of family and parenthood has changed. During the last decades we could observe spreading patterns of stepfamilies, social parenthood, patchwork families etc. Recent studies have shown that inclusion of men in the examination of fertility and family dynamics leads to a more complete picture of family and fertility behavior.

We assume that especially in transitional countries of the former Eastern Block the issue of male fertility can improve our knowledge about the underlying causes of the drastic demographic changes in these countries. Since men differ from women e.g. in their education and labor market behavior, they should be affected in a different way by the economic, social and political changes. Thus, even though the aggregate fertility outcome of men and women is the same, some of the important factors which interfere in or promote fertility decisions are different for both sexes.

Common approaches and empirical studies of male fertility claim that it is different from female birth patterns in many ways. Coleman (2000) points out that these differences are based on biological, anthropological and evolutionary characteristics. However, demographic evaluations of these very basics are really rare. Therefore, we evaluate the following five hypotheses: 1. Men have a longer reproductive period in their life (*“fertile time span” hypothesis*). 2. Men usually start their birth career 2 to 3 years later than females (*“age gap” hypothesis*). 3. In terms of biological parenthood, men have a greater

diversity concerning their number of children born (*“parity” hypothesis*). 4. Men stay childless more often (*“childlessness” hypothesis*). 5. In surveys, men underreport their fertility (*“underreporting” hypothesis*). The aim of the study is to examine, if these patterns can be confirmed for Russian men, as well. A further question of interest is: How are the sex differences in fertility influenced by the political, social and economic changes in Russia in the 1990s?

### **Methodology and Data used:**

Data of the Russian Generation and Gender Survey (GGS) collected in 2004 are used in the empirical analyses. In addition to the computation of some basic macro-measurements (mean age at 1<sup>st</sup> birth, (male) TFR), we applied survival and hazard regression models to examine the transition patterns to the first, second and third birth for Russian men and women. In order to study the sex differences between men and women we compare the two groups with each other. The explanatory covariates are: age of mother / father and previous child, birth cohort, calendar year, religion and area of residence.

### **Results:**

Despite of valid biological arguments concerning the reproductive age span of men in general, we find no evidence for the *“fertile time span” hypothesis*. This means that Russian men and women do not really differ in the length of the fertile period. The first birth, as well as the transition to the second and third child, only happen in very similar time frames for both sexes. This implies that neither male family formation nor family extension is shifted towards much higher ages (e.g. 50 or 60 years). The predominance of a fast and short birth pattern, that is the *“Stopping Model”*<sup>1</sup>, seems to be much more important than the biological possibility for males to continue their fertility career.

The findings concerning the start of the fertility career of Russian men are not different from the results of previous studies focusing on men (*“age gap” hypothesis*). On aver-

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<sup>1</sup> Russian men and women start their family building career in relatively young ages (around 20). This pattern is combined with having short birth intervals for further births, but usually “stopping” their fertility at the family size of two children. This implies that the family formation and extension phase is usually finished before they reach the age of 30.

age, the age difference between men and women is around two years, with a small increase in the 1990s.

Concerning the average number of biological children we find evidence, that due to the strongly unbalanced sex ratio after World War II Russian men had a higher number of children than females, but for later cohorts this pattern slightly reverses. Also the computed macro-measurements do not show a substantial difference in the number of children between Russian men and women, especially not for the cohorts with almost completed fertility. Furthermore, also the transition to the second and third child show very similar pattern for both sexes. Thus, we suppose that the “*parity*” hypotheses can be rejected for Russia.

Nevertheless, Russian men usually stay childless a bit more often than Russian women. One possible explanation of this pattern could be the underreporting of the number of children of men. But we doubt that this argument is sufficiently supported by our dataset, because we find no evidence for “forgotten children” neither in the transition to the first child or in higher parities. Also the average number of children of men and women showed no remarkable differences. According to these findings the “*underreporting*” hypothesis could not be confirmed. Furthermore, we think that the higher level of childlessness is an untrue pattern for Russian men and we suppose that the “*childlessness*” hypothesis can be rejected.

In our investigation of period effects it turned out that in particular Russian men’s transition to the first child is affected in a strong way, however it appeared weaker for female Russians. Namely, the decline of the probability to become a father or a mother after the start of the political, economical and social transformation processes in Russia in the end of the 1980s was strongly decreasing. Also the transitions to the second and third child, however, show similar period effect for both sexes.