

HAKIM'S PREFERENCE THEORY IN THE CZECH CONTEXT^{*)}

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Abstract: The article presents a test of Catherine Hakim's preference theory in the Czech environment. Using data from a representative survey of Czech women between the ages of 20 and 40 the authors first test to what extent Czech women conform to the typology of home-centred, work-centred and adaptive women. In the second part of the article the authors test whether this typology is a good predictor of Czech fertility and whether it influences the attitudes of Czech women on family policy measures.

Keywords: preference theory, fertility, family models, family policies, work

In 2002 the 'preference theory' proposed by the British sociologist *Catherine Hakim* first appeared in literature mapping the causes of low fertility in modern developed countries. She presented the theory in a series of articles and books (see, e.g., *Hakim*, 2000, 2003a, 2003b), and it sparked off considerable interest. In the preference theory, Hakim tries to explain women's lifestyle preferences based on their participation in the labour market, indicating whether their preferences steer them towards employment and building a career at work, or whether they are drawn more towards having a family and raising children. Hakim interprets lifestyle as a factor that can have a significant impact on women's fertility¹⁾.

The preference theory puts forth a typology of women based on their relationship to family and paid work. Hakim distinguishes three types of women based on lifestyle preferences:

- I. Home-centred women, who prefer to devote themselves to the family and household and tend to have larger families; they only seek work if it is necessary to maintain the family budget.
- II. Work-centred women, who realise themselves more through work than through family; they form a kind of counterpart to the preceding type.
- III. Adaptive women, who try to combine their work at the workplace and at home; they are a kind of mixture of types I and II.

Hakim's typology was empirically tested using the theory's indicators in representative studies of the populations of Great Britain and Spain. The empirical data from these studies produce a normal distribution curve and show that 20% of women are home-centred, 60% adaptive, and 20% work-centred (*Hakim*, 2000: 6). According to Hakim, an important feature of this typology should be that women in each lifestyle type are inclined to have a different number of children. In Hakim's view, this fact should make it possible to predict the reproductive behaviour of women in relation to the social and family policy of the state.

In this context Hakim draws attention to an error often committed by politicians when introducing measures designed to increase fertility in the country. Women with different lifestyle preferences respond differently to family and population policy measures, and that usu-

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¹⁾ We have already presented the preference theory in more detail elsewhere, in Manea, Mrázová and Rabušič (2006).

ally prevents the measures from achieving their intended outcome²⁾. For example, home-centred women should respond to changes in the state's fiscal policy. If the state fiscal policy reduces the tax burden on families with children women in this lifestyle type tend to have a large family and stay at home with the children. The situation is different in the case of adaptive women, who respond to policies or programmes aimed at helping them achieve a work-life balance. Work-centred women are not sensitive to any family or population policies. What is most important for them are policies directed at combating discrimination on the basis of gender, race, or marital status.

The objective of this article is to determine whether the preference theory also applies to the Czech Republic and specifically to the population of Czech women. Three basic research questions can be drawn from the preference theory, and they are the subject of our analyses here: 1) First we will ask whether the same distribution of individual types of women can be found in the Czech Republic as Hakim found in her data; 2) We will verify whether there are significant differences by lifestyle type between the approaches women take to fertility; 3) Finally, we will determine whether there are differences by lifestyle type between the way women view individual measures in Czech family policy.

Methodology

These three research questions are analysed using data from a sociological survey carried out in the Czech Republic at the end of 2005. The research agency SC & C collected the data by administering a standardised questionnaire to a random sample of the population made up of women between the ages of 20 and 40 and also their husband or partner if they shared the same household; the age of the men was not limited. If the woman lived alone and was in the defined age group she was included in the sample. If the interviewers came across a man between the ages of 20 and 40 and living alone, he was administered a male questionnaire and also included in the sample. Data was collected from a total of 2546 respondents. In this article, for obvious reasons, we will be focusing just on the sub-sample of women made up of 1284 respondents.

Formulating a relevant typology was of key importance in this analysis. This was done in cooperation with Hakim by using her set of questions (see the Appendix). Home-centred women are defined as women who selected the third response under question H5 and for whom work is not their focal interest. Work-centrality was determined on the basis of questions H4 and H6. Work-centred women are women who would continue to work even if the family income was high enough to allow them to remain at home (the first response to question H4) and who are the main source or contribute equally with their husband/partner to household income (the first or third response to question H6). Work-centred women are those who selected the first response under question H5 and for whom work is their focal interest (based on work-centrality). Adaptive women are those who do not fall into either one of the two types.

Findings

Hakim's typology in the Czech Republic

Table 1 shows the distribution of women according to individual lifestyle preferences. It also presents similar data for Great Britain and Spain drawn from Hakim's publication. The comparison of Czech data with foreign data is not ideal, as Hakim worked with data for a different age group of women, but the table does provide a kind of illustrative comparison.

²⁾ It is a question whether her emphasis on the woman as the key element in determining the ultimate number of children is not perhaps somewhat erroneous. Hakim claims that 'romantics wanted to believe that couples decide together how many children they have, but in reality just one of the partners always has the decisive word' (2003a: 369). And in this she has the woman in mind.

Table 1 National distributions of lifestyle preference among women, Czech Republic, Great Britain and Spain, in %

Country	Home-centred women	Adaptive women	Work-centred women
Czech Republic			
Women aged 20–40 years	16	70	13
Working women	14	69	17
Married women aged 20–40 years	14	75	11
United Kingdom			
Women aged 16–64 years	14	71	15
Working women	11	72	17
Married women aged 20–59 years	13	77	10
Spain			
Women aged 18–64 years	14	71	15
Working women	5	67	28
Married women aged 20–59 years	15	73	12

Source: Authors' calculations for the Czech Republic from a data file from the MPR 2005; for Great Britain and Spain, Hakim (2003b: 85).

Like in the two other countries in the comparison, the Czech distribution of lifestyle preferences is relatively normal, but somewhat high. This means that the middle variant is larger than it should be for an ideal distribution. However, the share of **adaptive** women is also much higher than the other two types. There is a somewhat larger share of home-centred women (16%) in the Czech sample than work-centred women (13%), but the difference, though statistically significant at 0,05, is negligible. However, these shares are turned around in the sub-sample of employed women, where work-centred women make up the larger share. In the sub-sample of married women (which made up 49% of the sample) the share of adaptive women is very high, at 75%.

The Czech typological distribution is more or less similar to those seen in Great Britain and Spain. Given that these three countries have considerably different economic, social and cultural landscapes, this finding would suggest that there is a universal validity to Hakim's typology, as it has been empirically confirmed in three diverse cultures. However, the problem is that it is hard to accept this typological distribution because when the absolute majority of cases in every country fall into the middle category we have to wonder if this concept is being operationalised properly. We will return to this question in the final part of this article.

What characteristics are relevant to each type of lifestyle preference? Table 2 shows that among Czech women there is a link between typology and education: the best-educated women are more often work-centred women, while the least-educated women are more often home-centred women. Subjective class ranking works similarly: the higher the subjective class ranking the larger the share of work-centred women and the lower the share of home-centred women. We also found that women who were employed at the time of the research were more often work-centred than unemployed women, who, based on their responses, also more often belonged to the home-centred type of women. A woman's religious orientation did not play any role in the typology, though it could have been assumed that women with strong religious convictions would be more inclined to be the home-centred type³⁾. The older women (aged 30–40) were typologically more work-centred than the younger women in the sample. Widowed and divorced women were also more work-centred than other marital status categories. In relation to the number of children a woman has, women with more than three children were most often the home-centred type⁴⁾.

³⁾ Understandably there is a relatively strong correlation between the education of the respondent and her subjective self-classification (Goodman-Kruskal gamma for ordinal data is +0,66; $p < 0.001$).

⁴⁾ More than one-half of the women in our sample worked full time, 11% were at home, 7% were unemployed, and 5% worked part time.

Table 2 Lifestyle preferences among women aged 20–40 in the Czech Republic by various socio-demographic characteristics, in %

Indicator		Work-centred women	Adaptive women	Home-centred women
Age group	20–29	11	73	16
	30–40	16	68	16
Education	Basic	10	59	31
	Secondary vocational/ Secondary without maturita	11	71	18
	Secondary with maturita	14	73	13
	University	26	59	15
Marital status	Married	11	75	14
	Widowed	25	47	27
	Divorced	22	63	15
	Separation of spouses	0	73	27
	Single	13	67	19
Operate position ⁴⁾	Employed	17	69	14
	Unemployed	6	71	23
Current number of children	Childless	14	69	17
	1 child	14	71	16
	2 children	14	72	14
	3+ children	9	66	25
The role of religion in life*	Important	13	72	14
	Unimportant	14	70	17
Subjective class	Low/working class	13	65	22
	Lower-middle class	10	74	16
	Middle	15	71	15
	Upper-middle/upper class	24	66	10
Total		13	70	16

Source: Data file MPR 2005.

Note: *Four-item scale; here only the extreme fields are presented.

Given that the bivariate relations in Table 2 may conceal some apparent or even false associations, we also included these variables in a multinomial logistic regression. The findings from the regression are not presented here, as the regression model does not reproduce the data satisfactorily and adds no additional information that could not be drawn already from the tables of second-order categorisation – the variables used do not influence differences in preferences and the odds ratios come out statistically insignificant.

We tested the typology's validity by relating it to questions examining a similar phenomenon but formulated differently than the questions used to create the typology. If the typology is valid the answers should break down logically into consistent categories. Table 3 shows that this is the case. In all the statements (except statement 8) the views of home-centred women are genuinely much more pro-family than the views of work-centred women, while adaptive women (though not in such a clear-cut manner) always ranked in the centre⁵⁾. From this perspective, Hakim's typology differentiates in the Czech context as intended.

⁵⁾ Czech feminists will probably be somewhat disappointed by attitudes to statement no. 1. A full 47% of women aged 20–40 agreed with this statement, and only 26% disagreed.

Table 3 Opinions on gender roles, work and family by lifestyle preferences in the Czech Republic, answers “agree”, in %

Statement	Work-centred women	Adaptive	Home-centred women	Total “agree”	
				abs.	%
1. It is the man’s job to earn money, and a woman’s job to look after the household and the family’	23	47	64	590	47
2. Working mothers can have just as close a relationship with their children and given them the same sense of security as mothers who don’t work	91	78	72	978	79
3. A woman can derive the same satisfaction from being a homemaker as she can from working	16	26	39	333	27
4. Working is a good thing, but what most women really want is a home and a family	43	63	65	744	61
5. Women want to have both a family and children	92	84	65	1013	82
6. Working is so demanding on men today that they don’t have time to devote to their family	22	38	40	455	36
7. Today families who want to have children have to share the task of caring for the children much more than before	74	64	60	817	65
8. Fathers are as well-equipped to care for their children as mothers are	52	46	47	594	47

Source: Data file MPR 2005.

Note: *Opinions on these statements were measured on a five-point Likert scale; the responses “wholly agree” and “agree” were merged for presentation in this table.

To sum up in response to our first question, in the Czech Republic Hakim’s typology has a distribution similar to that in some other countries. The majority of women in the Czech Republic also fall into the adaptive category: in their responses to the questions these women hesitated over whether they clearly favoured work and their job or whether they were more strongly inclined towards the family. The typology of women by lifestyle preferences proved valid as a predictor of opinions on the roles of men and women in the family and the relationship between the family and employment. The individual types of women based on Hakim’s guidelines held the views it was assumed they would.

Does this typological differentiation have an effect on women’s fertility? According to Hakim’s theory, it should have, and we have data that will allow us to answer this question.

Hakim’s typology and fertility

The second question we are addressing in this article is whether the three types of women we defined also have significantly different fertility rates. The women included in the sample are at an age where many of them still have their reproductive life before them, while others have already completed their fertility. To address this, we used a variable that we called “hypothetical” (or expected) completed fertility. As its name suggests, it is similar to the demographic concept of completed fertility, but we calculated it as a sum of the number of children that the respondent has and the number of children that she would like to have in the future. The resulting datum summing up how many children a woman will probably have in her lifetime is thus a construct that is compiled out of already existing components (the actual number of children a woman has) and expected components (the planned number of children), which means it is not a certainty and is therefore referred to as “hypothetical”.

As the data in Table 4 show, we must (unfortunately and with regret) confirm that Hakim’s typology has little effect on the hypothetical completed fertility (HCF) of Czech women. In the 20–29 age group the HCF of home-centred women is the lowest of all three types (1,64), even though we ought to expect the reverse. While it is true that the difference between opposite types of women is small (though statistically significant, as the dispersion analysis demonstrated, so it can be expected to be found even in the basic sample), it is oriented in the “wrong” direction. The sequential correlation between the typology and the HCF, measured

as a gamma coefficient, is very small and statistically insignificant (0,16; $p > 0,05$)⁶). In the 30–40 age group the highest HCF is observed among adaptive women (1,92) followed by family-centred women (1,89), and work-centred women have the lowest HCF (1,76). The differences are of course very small, and moreover statistically insignificant, which means that the three types will not be different in the Czech Republic. The sequential correlation is almost zero and it is statistically insignificant (0,06; $p > 0,05$).

Table 4 Fertility indicators by age groups and Hakim's typology in the Czech Republic – mean number of children

Age group	Work-centred women			Adaptive			Home-centred women		
	CNCH ^I	NOCH ^{II}	HCF ^{III}	CNCH	NOCH	HCF	CNCH	NOCH	HCF
20–29 let	1.38	1.68	1.82	1.45	1.73	1.88	1.57	1.76	1.64
30–40 let	1.78	1.37	1.76	1.90	1.34	1.92	2.01	1.74	1.89

Source: Data file MPR 2005.

Note: ^I CNCH – current number of children (mean); ^{II} NOCH – number of other children (mean); ^{III} HCF – hypothetical completed fertility.

We find similar relations when, instead of the HCF, the variable in the analysis is the number of children the woman currently has (CNCH in Table 4) or the number of children the woman would like to have (NOCH in Table 4). For example, in the 30–40 age group, the average number of children for each individual type is 1.78 x 1.90 x 2.01. The differences between the averages are statistically insignificant and the sequential correlation between the typology and the number of children in this age group is close to zero and is also statistically insignificant ($\gamma = 0,11$, $p >$).

Another indicator signalling that Hakim's typology is not a good predictor of fertility in the Czech Republic is the relationship between this typology and the value of children indicator. Based on Hakim's theory we would expect women's perceptions of the value of children to differ by lifestyle preferences. But this is not the case. Table 5 shows that work-centred and adaptive women more strongly emphasise the value of children (i.e. they agree with the statement that a person must have children in order to have fulfilment in life) than home-centred women. This finding also tells us that even Czech career women desire to have children, again confirming a conclusion reached by many other analysts, that being able to achieve a work-life balance is extremely significant for increasing fertility in the Czech Republic⁷). Conversely, it is more often home-centred than work-centred women who agree with the statement that children are not essential to a person's self-fulfilment, while based on Hakim's theory the opposite distribution would be expected.

The final piece of evidence that Hakim's typology is not a good indicator of (expected) fertility in the Czech Republic is the data on the average number of children that women in our sample over the age of 36 have. We know from age-specific fertility that fertility among Czech women after the age of 36 is very low, so with some licence we can assume that the number they have at age 36 is their completed fertility. Table 6 shows that there is no difference between work-centred and home-centred women with regard to the average number of children they have, and moreover, the highest intensity of completed fertility is observed among adaptive women.

⁶) With some statistical licence, this typology can be regarded as an ordinal type of variable.

⁷) For example, *Rychtařková* (2003) claims that the conflict between a woman's work commitments and her traditional role in the family has led to the sharp decline in fertility. Based on empirical data *Kocourková* (2001) found that women would consider having another child if they had the option of working part time or if they had the option of flexible working hours.

Table 5 Perception of the value of children by Hakim's typology in the Czech Republic, share of responses agreeing with the statement (N = 1232), in %

Statement	Work-centred women	Adaptive	Home-centred women
To have fulfilment in life, a person must have children	91	93 + + +	79 - - -
Today's world offers many opportunities for achieving fulfilment in life that a child is no longer actually necessary	9	7 - - -	21 + + +

Source: Data file MPR 2005.

Note: The symbols optically underscore the cells where the frequency is significantly different from the expected frequency on the assumption of the independence of the observed indicators. The symbol "+" indicates a higher measured frequency compared to expectations; the symbol "-" indicates the opposite. In each cell there can be one to three plus or minus symbols based on the statistical significance of deviation (95%, 99%, 99.9%).

Table 6 The average number of children of women aged 36+ by Hakim's typology

Age group	Work-centred women	Adaptive	Home-centred women	N
36+	1.54	1.82	1.59	1.73 (N = 289)

Source: Data file MPR 2005.

Hakim's typology and family policy

It follows from Hakim's theory that women's perceptions of family policy measures designed to facilitate childcare and parenthood and make it easier to combine work and family responsibilities should differ by lifestyle preference. In our research we formulated sixteen such measures and asked respondents to rank them by subjective importance⁸⁾. Table 7 shows the total support respondents gave to the four measures they identified as the most important.

The preferences show that Hakim's typology does work in this case and women differ by lifestyle preference in their attitudes towards family policy measures. Home-centred women more often favoured extending paid maternity leave at 90% of the previous wage (compared to work-centred women the ratio is 57:42), significantly increasing the child allowance (50:42), and increasing the amount of the birth benefit (24:12). Conversely, work-centred women more often than home-centred women selected measures connected with work: support for flexible working hours or part-time work (38:20), increasing the number of nurseries and kindergartens (19:10), ensuring adequate availability of childcare facilities for school-age children (14:5). The differences were not that significant in the case of other measures.

Differences in preferences were similarly found with regard to which family policy measures work-centred women and home-centred women selected as the least important for making parenthood easier (Tab. 8).

Work-centred women more than home-centred women viewed increasing the birth benefit (17:6) and the existence of newlywed loans (12:4) as of absolutely no importance. Logically, home-centred women considered the least important measure that of allowing the father to be on maternity/parental leave instead of the mother (25:16) – these women naturally see childcare as their domain. They also ascribed little importance to measures aimed at increasing the number of nursery schools and kindergartens (13:4) – they have no need for them as they are at home with their children.

⁸⁾ The wording of the question was: In state family policy there are measures that are designed to make parenthood and childcare easier and to make it possible to better combine working in the labour market and family responsibilities. Select four from the following selection that you see as the most important in this regard. Arrange them in order of importance.

Table 7 Hakim's typology and the family policy measures that female respondents in the Czech Republic consider the most important for helping them combine work and family responsibilities (in%; the measures are listed according to the preferences of work-oriented women)

Measures	Work-centred women	Adaptive	Home-centred women
Extending paid maternity leave at 90% of the previous wage	42	48	57
Significantly increasing the child allowance	42	41	50
Support for flexible working hours or part-time work	38	32	20
Reducing the taxes of people with minor children	28	28	28
Reducing the costs of child education	23	20	20
More affordable housing for families with children	23	22	28
Increasing the number of nurseries and kindergartens	19	15	10
Stronger measures against unemployment	16	22	20
Ensuring adequate availability of childcare facilities for school-age children	14	8	5
Increasing the birth benefit	12	18	24
Better job protection legislation for parents	11	10	5
The existence of newlywed loans	10	11	13
Requiring employers to allow mothers/fathers with children under the age of 10 to have 1-2 days off every month	9	7	8
Reducing the length of parental leave, increasing the parental allowance	6	10	9
Making kindergartens and nurseries more affordable	4	5	3
Allowing the father to be on parental leave instead of the mother	3	3	1

Source: Data file MPR 2005.

Table 8 Hakim's typology and the family policy measures that female respondents in the Czech Republic consider the least important for helping them combine work and family responsibilities (in%; the measures are listed according to the preferences of work-oriented women)

Measures	Work-centred women	Adaptive	Home-centred women	Total
Increasing the birth benefit	17	9	6	10
Allowing the father to be on parental leave instead of the mother	16	17	25	18
Requiring employers to allow mothers/fathers with children under the age of 10 to have 1-2 days off every month	14	11	6	11
The existence of newlywed loans	12	9	4	9
Making kindergartens and nurseries more affordable	8	13	9	12
Better job protection legislation for parents	6	4	5	4
Reducing the length of parental leave, increasing the parental allowance	5	4	7	5
Increasing the number of nurseries and kindergartens	4	10	13	10
Reducing the costs of child education	4	4	5	4
Ensuring adequate availability of childcare facilities for school-age children	4	6	7	6
Extending paid maternity leave at 90% of the previous wage	3	2	0	1
Reducing the taxes of people with minor children	2	2	3	2
Support for flexible working hours or part-time work	2	2	3	2
Stronger measures against unemployment	2	3	2	3
More affordable housing for families with children	2	3	2	3
Significantly increasing the child allowance	1	1	1	1

Source: Data file MPR 2005.

Conclusion

In this article we tested whether Catherine Hakim's much-discussed theory of a typology of women (home-centred women, work-centred women, and adaptive women) based on life-style preferences relating to labour-market participation and the perception of the roles of men and women in the family also applies in the Czech Republic. According to Hakim, the typology should be a good predictor of women's fertility behaviour and family policy preferences.

Based on a representative survey of Czech women aged 20–40 we found that Hakim's typology does not work well in the Czech Republic. The distribution of the three types corresponds to Hakim's findings in other European countries, but, contrary to Hakim's assumptions, it is not a good predictor of expected or completed fertility. It does, however, apply as expected in the case of women's family policy preferences. Work-centred women favour measures that help them combine work and family, while home-centred women favour measures that make it easier for them to remain at home and care for their children themselves.

Hakim vehemently promotes her typology and claims that it is a simple tool with which to predict women's fertility behaviour. Following our analyses, we are not altogether convinced this is true. The findings relating to its ability to predict fertility were particularly disappointing. Hakim's writings and conference papers had inspired the hope that by determining preferences and formulating lifestyle types we would be able to predict completed fertility. If her typology did work and we were able with some probability to expect that differences between women's lifestyle preferences would be reflected in differences between their completed fertility, we would then be able to design the appropriate family policy based on this information. However, in the Czech context these hopes fell through.

One likely reason why women do not always follow the preference patterns expected under Hakim's typology is that the preferences the indicators are intended to capture do not relate to the perceived value of children, which is a very important factor in explaining differences in fertility intensity, and, as first demonstrated by *Hoffman and Hoffman* (1973) and then by *Nauck* (2006), has played a significant role in international comparisons. Another likely reason is that the responses to the set of questions the typology is based on are contextually dependent. Consequently, they are not deeply embedded and unchanging aspects of a woman's personality that determine all the decisions women make between the ages of 20 and 40 about the number of children to have.

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Appendix

H1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements using a five-point scale where 1 means agree strongly, 2 agree somewhat, 3 have no strong feelings either way, 4 disagree somewhat and 5 disagree strongly:

- a. Even when women work, the man should still be the main breadwinner in the family;
- b. In times of high unemployment married women should stay at home.

H2. Who should have the ultimate responsibility for ensuring an adequate income for a family? The male partner? The female partner? Or both equally?

H3. Who should have the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the housework is done properly in a household? The male partner? The female partner? Or both equally?

H4. If without having to work you had what you would regard as a reasonable living income, would you still prefer to have a paid job? Yes, No, I do not know.

H5. People talk about the changing roles of husband and wife in the family. Here are three kinds of family models. Which of them corresponds best with your ideas about the ideal family?

1. A family where the two partners each have an equally demanding job and where housework and the care of the children are shared equally between them.
2. A family where the wife has a less demanding job than her husband and where she does the larger share of housework and caring for the children.
3. A family where only the husband has a job and the wife runs the home.
4. None of these three cases.

H6. Who is the main income-earner in your household: respondent, partner, both of you jointly or someone else?