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# Where Are the Effects of Family Structure? The Educational Level, Current Partnership, and Income Level of the Czech Adult Population Socialised in Single-Parent Families\*

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**Abstract:** Socialisation in a single-parent family has been associated with negative consequences both in previous research and popular discourse. This article investigates whether this association may be different in a society with a high rate of divorce and extramarital fertility. Using data from the Czech contribution to the EU-SILC survey, it tests hypotheses concerning the difference between the current situation of adults who grew up in single-parent families and those who were raised in intact families. We look for the influence of socialisation on single-parent families in three areas—educational attainment, current partnership situation, and current family income. The results of regression analyses show that the differences between children from single-parent families and those from intact ones are very small in the area of education (the influence is apparent only at the secondary school graduation level, no difference is present at the tertiary education level), relatively weak in the area of partnership situation, and imperceptible from the viewpoint of family income. These results exclude a causal explanation for the influence of single-parent families on outcomes, cast doubt on selective principles, and open space for interpretation in terms of mechanisms of family de-institutionalisation.

**Keywords:** single-parent families, divorce, social reproduction, Czech Republic

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## **Introduction**

The Czech Republic is characterised by a high divorce rate and a rapidly growing percentage of extramarital children. Both phenomena manifest a strong upward tendency, which began in the middle of the last century in the case of divorce and during the 1980s in the case of extramarital births. In this paper I investigate the influence of the structure of family of origin on three aspects of the lives of children in adulthood. First, I ask to what extent the absence of one parent influences the educational level attained by children in adulthood; second, I examine whether the experience of living in a single-parent family is reflected in the composition of the households the children form in adulthood; and third, I am interested in the economic dimension of the issue and therefore wish to ascertain to what extent the influence of background family can be observed in the current household income of children from single-parent families.

These analyses as such are not particularly original, but within the specific context of an institutionalising divorce culture and the institutional decoupling of parenthood and marriage, they can bring innovative and interesting results. The motivation is also based on the absence of an analysis of the long-term influences of family of origin structure in Czech society. No study has yet been published (in the Czech Republic) that uses extensive representative Czech datasets to trace various aspects of the adult life of children raised in single-parent families.

The normative aspects of social institutions—stigmatisation and sanctions—transform in causal loops in conjunction with the extent and nature of actions beyond the framework of social institutions. This dynamic of demographic regime allows us to pose the question whether the empirically observed and theoretically expected negative consequences of socialisation in single-parent families may be weaker in this context. Should we expect the negative consequences associated with deviation from institutionalised forms of family behaviour to fade in line with the weakening of the normative aspects of social institutions [Hackstaff 1999; Cherlin 1978; Cherlin 1992]? Or will the very large share of single-parent families result in an expanding group of disadvantaged children?

This article opens by presenting theoretically defined (and empirically observed) mechanisms through which the absence of one parent can influence the future life chances of children. The ensuing theoretical section outlines three models proposing various explanations for the way that mechanisms of disadvantage can be tied to single-parent families: direct causal influences, selective principles and principles of de-institutionalisation.

## **Theoretically defined mechanisms of the influence of family structure**

In principle, single-parent families come about in two different ways: the birth of a child outside of marriage or partnership, and divorce. The mechanisms by which the structure of the family of origin affects the lives of children may be

summarised into three spheres of expected consequences on the basis of theoretically orientated literature [Amato 2000, 2010]: (1) the effects of the absence of one parent and the concomitant need for a specific behaviour (adaptation) on the part of the caregiving parent; (2) the impacts of the limited resources available in a single-parent family; and (3) the consequences of the increased level of stress present in single-parent families. Some of the mechanisms in these spheres may be understood as universally valid, regardless of how the single-parent family came about, others are tied specifically to the situation of divorce or to that of single mothers or fathers.

The defining trait of single-parent families is the absence of one parent—in the Czech context, the absent parent is the father in nine out of ten cases [Dudová and Hastrmanová 2007; CZSO 2013]. The absence or departure of a partner results in considerable time constraints for the caregiving parent, since he or she is usually forced to seek additional financial reserves (part-time employment) and perform a larger share of unpaid work in the household. This leads to a curtailment of the time devoted to children, their supervision, preparation for school, as well as collaboration with other agents (schools, advisory bodies), thus resulting in a generally lower level of support and supervision on the part of the parent [Astone and McLanahan 1991; Amato 2000].

Studies investigating the economic situation of single-parent families evince a very similar pattern: a marked disproportion in the economic impacts of divorce on women and men [Burkhauser et al. 1990, 1991; Jarvis and Jenkins 1999; Avellar and Smock 2005; Gadalla 2009]. Some research, nonetheless, indicates that a significant number of the economic disadvantages are only indirectly related to the structure or disintegration of the family and are caused by enduring inequalities between men and women in general [Holden and Smock 1991; Bratberg and Tjøtta 2008]. Holden and Smock thus conclude that until the positions of both genders and their standing in the labour market are equalised, the consequences of divorce will always be a greater burden for women [Holden and Smock 1991: 75–76].

The third sphere of mechanisms is related to the assumption that single-parent families are subjected to a high level of stress. On the one hand, this is the result of the circumstances mentioned above, on the other it is caused by parental conflicts, relationship crises within the family, and changes to the family arrangement. The bond between children from divorced families and one parent starts to weaken, they live in a tense atmosphere, and in some cases they have to adapt to a new environment, to a new family arrangement. Thus, there is a higher level of stress present in the lives of children in single-parent families, which is responsible for differences in life chances. The emotional impacts of family structure are closest to the type of mechanism that we could consider culturally universal, but the stress linked to the breakup of a family is also dependent on stigmatisation, or, more generally, on the institutionalisation of diverse forms of the family. Hackstaff [1999] speaks of the evolving culture of divorce, in which serial monogamy begins to appear to be an ordinary part of life.

## **Notes on interconnecting mechanisms of disadvantage with single-parent families**

When discussing various kinds of family arrangement, one should always bear in mind that family structure is merely an indirect indicator that we can use to identify the probability of certain trajectories and situations.

What, then, are the models for interconnecting family structure with the mechanisms outlined? Within the framework of these deliberations, it is possible to apply approaches that in part originated in the field of divorce studies. The first approach represents one of the most influential contributions among the arguments for causal connections between family structure and negative consequences. In the literature it is known as the 'divorce-stress-adjustment perspective' [Amato 2000]. Generally speaking, it is an approach that considers divorced families, or single-parent families in general, to be an environment that generates the abovementioned mechanisms through which it negatively impacts the life chances of children when compared to an intact, marital family [Plunkett et al. 1997; Ginther and Pollak 2004].

In contrast, the selection model assumes that the influence of family structure may be clarified through the accumulation of family forms present in disadvantaged parts of the population. Rather than being a causal result of the single-parent family situation, this may, for example, concern the adverse educational structure of single-parent families, which lies behind the differences in the life chances of children.

The third perspective, still somewhat under-represented in literature, takes into consideration the level of institutionalisation of given forms of social action. Besides causal and selective mechanisms, effects caused by the costs of actions taken outside of the framework of institutionalised structures may also be considered [Cherlin 1978, 1992]. Here, the negative consequences of socialisation in single-parent families could be understood as the result of stigmatisation and normative pressures, rather than of the situations of parental split themselves.

## **The historical context of post-socialist Czech society**

In general, according to our review of the literature, there are four broader aspects in which the historical development of family life in the post-socialist context is distinctive. These four general phenomena are, in my view, important factors that shape the experience of divorce or single parenthood.

First mention should be made of the historically high female employment rate, which suggests the existence of specific micro-economic frameworks of lone parenthood. In contrast to western European countries and the United States, women in the Eastern bloc did not retreat back to the household after the Second World War [Večerník and Matějů 1999]. Throughout the second half of the

20th century Czech women participated in the labour market at rates of 70 to 90% [Pollert 2003: 333].

The second factor that needs mentioning is the socialist welfare state. Together with the high female employment rate, protective welfare-state policies have influenced the economic background, which makes divorce or single parenthood possible without a fatal deterioration of the living conditions of single-parent families [Junková 1975]. However, we should bear in mind the broader consequences of the (welfare) state policies. During the communist era (1948–1989), Czech society was characterised by a strong familiarisation [see Možný, Pakosta and Přidalová 2008], a ‘turning in’ towards the private sphere as a response to the limited possibilities of self-realisation in the public sphere. Marriage was almost universal among the population and 95% of women were married at some time. During the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, no more than 6% of children were born out of wedlock; after 1980 this figure began increasing slowly, reaching 10% in 1989 (CZSO, 1980–2014).

In the 1990s, a lowering of the marriage rate became an added factor to the others already mentioned, and this first of all decreased the potential set of children in wedlock that could potentially go through the experience of parental divorce, and second shifted part of the experience with parental partnership breakdown into the sphere of unmarried cohabitation, an area that it is still not possible to study adequately in the Czech Republic. This has led to an increasing acceptance of single motherhood in Czech society.

The third important specificity is the timing of family transitions and the extreme changes in timing that occurred after the fall of communism, changes that gave rise to significantly heterogeneous family behaviour that prompts considerations of the heterogeneity of single-parent families. The early-marriage model (the mean age of women at marriage was about 21.5 years between the 1960s and 1980s; CZSO, 1980–2014) led also to early divorce [Fialová 2007; Sobotka, Zeman and Kantorova 2003]. Consequently, the majority of single-parent families were composed of divorced mothers with young children. While the number of children born out of wedlock did not begin to grow significantly until after the Velvet Revolution in 1989, the divorce rate trend was almost linear, increasing steadily since the middle of the last century. This trend conceals a number of factors, however, as a result of which the number of minors in Czech society who have experienced parental divorce has changed significantly. These factors include marriage duration and birth rate. Until 1989, the growth of the divorce rate corresponded to a growing number of children affected. The majority of marriages dissolved when children were still present in the household and the birth rate culminated in the 1970s. This also led to a higher average number of children in families going through divorce [Večerník and Matějů 1999].

Beside structural factors, we should take into account the high degree of secularisation and divergence from religiously defined norms of family behaviour [Hamplová and Nešpor 2009; Paleček 2015] This fourth factor has had a sig-

nificant influence on the institutional environment in which single parenthood takes place. Secularisation catalysed change in the values relating to marriage, divorce, and parenthood, and in particular the stigmatisation aspect of social institutions has weakened. Various measures show that the Czech Republic today is one of the most secular countries in Europe and also has one of the highest divorce rates [Lužný and Navrátilová 2001]. But the current level of secularisation is the result of the socialist regime, which perceived the church as an opponent and tried to weaken its influence as much as possible. Following the collapse of communism, this development was completed by processes connected to the 'second demographic transition' [Rabušic 2001; Sobotka, Zeman and Kantorova 2003]. Thus, the cultural acceptance of divorce is the result of a deep transformation of the wider institutional environment of partner relationships, family, parenthood, and more generally also gender roles [Dudová 2009].

## **Hypotheses**

On the basis of the theoretical approaches outlined, one may expect single-parent families to have limited resources at their disposal to equip their children for the competitive struggle in the field of education. Therefore, I formulate the following hypothesis: *(H1) Children from single-parent families will reach lower levels of education overall when compared to children from intact families. In particular they will be disadvantaged with respect to access to tertiary education.*

However, the family is not only a structural unit reproducing various forms of capital for its members, but also an area where they acquire notions about the sphere of intimacy. We should thus also try to follow the effects of the structure of family of origin outside of the public sphere. This is why a significant portion of specialist literature refers to intergenerational transfers of family behaviour [Wolfinger 2005; Šťastná 2007], on which I base my second hypothesis: *(H2) Children from single-parent families are more likely to be found outside of marriage or cohabitation.*

Family income is an easily measurable indicator that on the one hand provides insight about position on the labour market and on the other about buying-power and participation in various forms of consumption. Thus, to testing my third hypothesis I will investigate whether: *(H3) The income of people raised in single-parent families is lower than that of people from intact families.*

## **Methods and overview of data**

Our analysis is based on data collected as part of the EU-SILC survey (European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions). Even though the EU-SILC survey is not focused primarily on sociological research of the family, we decided

to use this data for two reasons. First, the selected dataset is sufficiently large (more than 20 000 individuals), so it is possible to make fairly reliable calculations even with regard to respondents from single-parent families, which in conventional datasets is a group so small as to be unfit for use. Second, the data contain a complex spectrum of indicators that cover not only the educational level of respondents, but also the current structure of their households and their economic situation.

We are able to use the EU-SILC data because in 2005 and 2011 the survey administrators implemented thematic modules focusing on the intergenerational transfer of social inequality. Although these extended questionnaires did not focus directly on the situation of single-parent families, they contained an indicator that we can use to identify the structures of the households in which the respondents were raised. People born between 1939 and 1981 were asked to provide information about a number of aspects concerning the households they occupied at around the age of 14.<sup>1</sup> From a biographical perspective I thus examine their family situations at the time when they were around 14 years of age, i.e. between 1953 and 1995. The age range of the subpopulation used for the analyses is therefore 24 to 66 years.

Besides family structure, the interviewees also responded to questions concerning the educational level of their parents and subjectively evaluated the economic situation of their families at the time. I use these factors as control variables. Although the questionnaires did not gather additional information on the duration of family structure,<sup>2</sup> or the causes of a given family structure, I decided to use the data because for our purposes it is indicative of a basic fact: the respondent experienced a time in life in a single-parent family. In order to triangulate the results, I used data from 2005 and 2001 in all descriptive analyses (here, the primary purpose is not to capture trends, but to verify the consistency of the basic findings), and in regression models I couple the data (in the models I differentiate the year of gathering with a binary variable).

The table below summarises the distribution of the original variations of the answer to family structure. For our purposes, it is necessary to make the 2005 and 2011 data comparable, and for this reason I combine stepfamilies in which there is one biological and one stepparent with two-parent families that have

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<sup>1</sup> The wording of the questions differed somewhat in each wave. In 2005, the question was: 'Which of the options best describes the composition of your family when you were between 12 and 16 years old?' In 2011, it was: 'Which of the options presented best describes the composition of your household when you were 14 years old?'

<sup>2</sup> For this reason we cannot avoid the cases of individuals who experienced divorce at an older age, but are treated as though they are from intact families (this flaw is addressed in the discussion part of this study). Throughout the empirical section of the article I use the term 'experience with single parenthood' in the limited sense of a family structure without one of parents between 14 and 16 years of age.

Table 1. Distribution of family structure in the SILC 2005 and 2011 data

	EU-SILC 2005 DATA				EU-SILC 2011 DATA				FAMILY STRUCTURE CODING				
	Total count	Total percent	Men	Women	Age 26-46	Age 47-66	Total count	Total percent		Men	Women	Age 26-46	Age 47-66
Both parents	5141	85.1	85.2	84.9	85.6	84.6	5608	85.9	86.4	85.5	84.6	87.4	Both parents
With mother and stepfather	94	1.6	1.4	1.7	2.2	0.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
With father and stepmother	21	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Only with mother	644	10.7	10.8	10.6	10.1	11.1	759	11.6	11.1	12.0	13.0	10.1	Single-parent family
Only with father	76	1.3	1.4	1.1	1.1	1.4	81	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.2	Single-parent family
Without parents (relatives, foster-parents)	48	0.8	0.7	0.9	0.5	1.2	41	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.7	Not used
Institution	19	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.4	38	0.6	0.8	0.4	0.5	0.6	Not used
	6043	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	6527	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Source: EU-SILC (CZ) 2005, 2011.

Note: Column percentages.



not been divorced (in 2011 they are indistinguishable).<sup>3</sup> As a result, I am working with a variable that has two categories: (1) intact family and (2) single-parent family.

### **The results: the educational level of children from single-parent families**

The first level at which we examine the effects of socialisation in single-parent families is education. Research has shown that education is an axis of social stratification, which to a significant extent determines the life chances of social actors in the public sphere (labour market, income, consumption), as well as structuring behaviour in the intimate sphere (marriage homogamy, birth rate differentiation according to educational level, life-course trajectory). At the same time, educational opportunities are influenced by family of origin [see Bourrieu 1973; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977]. For this reason, several studies have been devoted to educational attainment and participation at various levels of education with regard to children from divorced families or one-parent households [Beller and Sin Chung 1992; Jonsson and Gahler 1997; Ermisch and Francesconi 2001; Evans, Kelley and Wanner 2009; Bernardi and Radl 2014]. Although this is probably the dimension that has been the subject of the most thorough research, I investigate it here because it is the starting point for the study of the other consequences of socialisation in single-parent families.

In Table 2, I present the conditional distributions of all the variables that I use in the regression models (see Table 2). The data from 2005 and 2011 compares the educational level of respondents raised in intact nuclear families and those who experienced life in a single-parent family. Surprisingly, the difference between these two groups is not particularly marked. On a four-point scale (ISCED 4), we find respondents who grew up with one parent more often in the category of people with primary education or a vocational certificate as their highest completed level of education. At the same time they are less often found in the category of people who attained a secondary or tertiary level of education. Specifically, respondents from single-parent families achieved university-level education two to three percentage points less often than those from intact families.

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<sup>3</sup> To check the influence of differences between various specifications of family structure I computed comparisons between all five categories available in the 2005 survey (we omitted the last two categories). I can conclude that, according to the effect on the educational level of the offspring, step-families with a biological mother and a step-father most resemble two-parent families, while step-families with a biological father show are more like single-parent families in general. The share of step-families in the 2005 data is relatively small, and the majority of them are made up of a biological mother and her partner; therefore, I concluded that it is possible and sufficiently justified to collapse the step-family categories with two-parent families, and it can be legitimately expected that the differences in 2011 data will be of a similar nature.

Table 2. Overview of the variables used in the model (column percentages)

	2005		2011	
	Intact family	Single parent	Intact family	Single parent
Education				
elementary	9.4	13.6	7.1	12.1
lower secondary	41.6	46.4	38.7	40.4
upper secondary	33.8	26.7	37.7	34.3
university	15.2	13.3	16.5	13.2
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Gender				
men	47.9	49.2	42.5	40.2
women	52.1	50.8	57.5	59.8
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Parent education				
elementary/low. secondary	65.4	78.1	58.8	71.8
upper secondary	26.5	18.6	31.1	23.8
university	8.1	3.4	10.1	4.4
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Financial problems				
difficulties	18.3	49.1	16.6	51.6
minor difficulties	29.7	29.7	29.8	28.0
no financial problems	52.0	21.2	53.6	20.4
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Birth cohort				
1939–1950	27.7	30.0	–	–
1951–1960	24.5	24.0	34.8	30.1
1961–1970	20.8	19.0	30.3	27.3
1971–1981	27.0	26.9	34.9	42.6
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: EU-SILC (CZ) 2005, 2011.

Note: Column percentages.

Table 2 also shows the distribution of variables used in the regression model as predictors of attained educational level—apart from family of origin structure, they are thus control variables. To indicate the educational level of the family of origin, I use the highest level of education attained by the parent who raised the respondent; for intact families I use the level achieved by the more educated member of the couple.<sup>4</sup> The percentage comparison suggests that single-parent families are characterised by a lower level of educational attainment when compared to intact families. In the generation of the parents of the respondents under examination, this difference is caused primarily by the different educational structure of women. In intact families, the educational level of the family is in the majority determined by the father, in single-parent families by the mother. Significantly smaller differences are in evidence when comparing the educational structure of mothers from intact and single parent families.<sup>5</sup>

The economic aspect of life in the family of origin is investigated by examining answers to the question of how the family of origin manages on its income. Here it is possible to see significant differences corresponding to the expectations of economic difficulties in families with one breadwinner. The last two variables are the basic attributes of respondents: their gender and birth cohort are necessary in order for us to ensure that the (in)dependencies found do not differ in individual demographic categories.

Using multinomial logistic regression, we model the dependence of educational attainment on a set of explanatory variables, of which family of origin structure is of the most interest to us, while the other indicators serve as controls for factors that can intervene significantly in the relation. I constructed two variants of the model based on two kinds of theoretical assumptions leading to the financial difficulties experienced by the family of origin playing different roles. Financial hardship can be one of the major causal mechanisms that connect lone parenthood with its negative consequences. For this reason this variable is omitted from Model A, because in this logic it would 'overcontrol' the consequences of lone parenthood. On the other hand, financial problems can be understood as selective factors (causes) and as the consequences of family structure. Moreover, the outcomes of divorce or partnership breakdown cannot be identified with financial difficulties. These effects consequently need to be distinguish. Therefore, I constructed Model B, which also uses the indicator of financial difficulties.

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<sup>4</sup> The starting point here is the assumption that the cultural milieu of the family will typically be influenced by the person who holds the higher level of education.

<sup>5</sup> With regard to theories concerned with the selection principle, it is necessary to bear in mind the fact that in the Czech Republic, an unequivocal and significant educational differentiation with regard to divorce did not exist [Pakosta 2008] and single motherhood which is markedly more common among groups with lower educational attainment did not begin to have an effect on the educational structure of single-parent families until the end of the 20th century.

Table 3. Coefficients of the multinomial logistic regression model (educational level as the outcome)

OUTCOME:	MODEL A						MODEL B						
	LOWER SECONDARY		UPPER SECONDARY		UNIVERSITY		LOWER SECONDARY		UPPER SECONDARY		UNIVERSITY		
	EXP B	sig.	EXP B	sig.	EXP B	sig.	EXP B	sig.	EXP B	sig.	EXP B	sig.	
Gender	men	2.966	0.000	1.518	0.000	2.196	0.000	2.891	0.000	1.474	0.000	2.121	0.000
	women	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Parent education	elementary / low. secondary	0.696	0.264	0.082	0.000	0.013	0.000	0.797	0.487	0.097	0.000	0.016	0.000
	upper secondary	1.475	0.256	0.563	0.079	0.209	0.000	1.552	0.202	0.598	0.117	0.222	0.000
	university	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Financial problems	difficulties	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	minor difficulties	0.665	0.000	0.529	0.000	0.430	0.000	1.032	0.729	1.010	0.913	1.037	0.731
	no financial problems	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Year of data collection	2005	1.020	0.809	0.917	0.294	0.984	0.863	1.010	0.901	0.898	0.202	0.940	0.522
	2011	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Family structure	intact	1.377	0.000	1.548	0.000	1.275	0.039	1.196	0.068	1.259	0.027	0.967	0.793
	single parent	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Birth cohort	1939–1950	0.311	0.000	0.293	0.000	0.313	0.000	0.335	0.000	0.329	0.000	0.363	0.000
	1951–1960	0.407	0.000	0.319	0.000	0.386	0.000	0.420	0.000	0.341	0.000	0.427	0.000
	1961–1970	0.887	0.304	0.872	0.246	1.029	0.823	0.893	0.348	0.887	0.326	1.035	0.798
	1971–1981	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Intercept of the model (log-odd form)		1.652	0.000	3.574	0.000	3.776	0.000	1.747	0.000	3.751	0.000	4.047	0.000

Source: EU-SILC (CZ) 2005, 2011.

Both models show a consistent picture, which is slightly different in the case of the absolute value of the regression coefficients. Omitting financial problems increases the effect of family structure, but does not change the overall pattern of relative influences of the variables used in both models.

In comparison with primary education, the chance of attaining a vocational certificate or a certificate of secondary school education is somewhat higher for intact family children than for single-parent family children. However, we find smaller differences with regard to tertiary education (where the most significant stratifying dividing line is currently placed). It is thus evident that the influence of family structure becomes relatively weak when the educational level of the family of origin is controlled for. In the model, the line of intergenerational educational reproduction is the strongest structure in evidence and in comparison with how the chances of children are determined by the education of their parents, the influence of family of origin structure is several times lower.

Model B shows that financial difficulties have a stronger influence on the educational opportunities of children than family structure does. Although we have seen in the descriptive analyses that financial difficulties are in reality more often associated with single-parent families, when combined with the other factors it becomes evident that financial problems lower the chances of attaining higher levels of education regardless of family structure. Gender and birth cohort serve as demographic control variables. In the given cohorts (currently 33–75 years), men and those born later had a greater chance of achieving higher education levels.

### **The current structure of households and family status**

Besides the effects on stratification position, researchers look for the ways in which socialisation in single-parent families can influence the stability of partnerships or departure from institutionalised forms of partnership and parenthood [Šťastná 2007; Amato 1996; Kiernan and Cherlin 1999]. EU-SILC statistics provide us with several indicators of the current partnership situation of people raised in single-parent families and we again compare them with the partnership situation of other groups.

Almost 80% of the respondents of the EU-SILC survey in the 30 to 66 age category at the time of the survey were living in households composed of a married or unmarried couple. This category is 7 to 8 percentage points less likely to include people who were brought up in a single-parent family. This link is stronger for the younger cohort (35 to 45 age group) both in the 2005 and the 2011 surveys (see Table 4). The gender of respondents does not play a significant role in this relation. These results thus suggest that single-parent-family socialisation moderately increases the probability of a future tendency to dissolve partnerships. Can it also be said that it increases the tendency of the institutionalised

Table 4. An overview of the variables indicating the current partnership of respondents

	2005		2011	
	Intact	Single parent	Intact	Single parent
Current structure of the family				
intact family	79.9	71.5	76.6	69.9
single-parent family with child(ren)	9.5	14.4	11.8	17.9
non-familial household	0.6	0.4	0.5	1.0
single man	5.0	6.5	6.3	6.8
single woman	5.0	7.1	4.8	4.5
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Partnership form				
cohabitation	7.8	11.8	10.4	14.7
marriage	92.2	88.2	89.6	85.3
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Current marital status				
single	15.1	17.4	13.4	16.4
married	68.6	63.5	67.5	60.7
divorced	11.4	13.1	15.8	20.0
widowed	4.8	6.1	3.3	2.9
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: EU-SILC (CZ) 2005, 2011.

Note: Column percentages.

form of partnership—marriage—to be terminated? Within the framework of households categorised as intact, we find that 8% (and in the later survey 10%) consist of unmarried cohabitation and that people from single-parent families live in unmarried partnerships at a level of 4 percentage points more often. We can see similar differences if we look at current family status. Persons from single-parent families are 2 to 4 percentage points more likely to be divorced.

Unfortunately the EU-SILC survey does not provide us with retrospective biographical information. We cannot therefore distinguish between first and second marriages and we don't know anything about the time dimension of the current household structure. Nonetheless, we use the available data as the indicators whether there exists a probability of finding people raised in single-parent families more often outside of partnership.<sup>6</sup> Simply put, if the hypothesis about the negative influence of the structure of the family of origin on the intimate sphere is true, we should be able to find these differences at any time in an adult biography.

To construct the binary logistic regression models, I use two indicators as dependent variables that from various points of view provide an insight into the respondent's current family situation. We want to determine the probability of their occurrence in the 'intact family' category versus other categories, and the probability they belong to the category divorced versus the category of others. Besides family of origin structure, I use the same set of items as explanatory variables as in the previous section, with the addition of the respondent's education level, which will now be in the position of a control variable, for it is evident from demographic analyses that the majority of aspects of family behaviour in the Czech Republic are educationally differentiated [Možný, Pakosta and Přidalová 2008]. Both models are constructed again in two variants with or without the measure of financial difficulties.

The first comment that needs to be made with respect to the results is that models constructed in this way do not have a particularly convincing predictive ability.<sup>7</sup> The influences of the individual factors investigated are not very strong, nonetheless it is not possible to reject the null hypothesis that no relation exists and the effect of family structure is manifest both in the case of partnership and divorce. Persons from single-parent families have a lower chance of living in an intact family and a higher probability of going through divorce. Here, the influence of structure is stronger in comparison with other characteristics of family of origin. The educational level of parents only has a minor influence and the economic situation of the family of origin does not influence the partnership behaviour of children in adulthood. Thus both variants of the model provide almost the same information, regardless of whether the financial situation is considered. The significant characteristic of the respondent is education level itself, the higher

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<sup>6</sup> Other accounts based on longitudinal or retrospective data could provide different results, but we don't have the opportunity to use similar measures.

<sup>7</sup> The Nagelkerke R square is only 0.018 and 0.04, respectively.

Table 5. Parameters of the binary logistic regression model (partnership and marital status as outcomes)—first part

OUTCOME:	HOUSEHOLD WITHOUT PARTNERSHIP = 1						DIVORCED = 1	
	MODEL 1A		MODEL 1B		MODEL 2A		MODEL 2B	
	EXP B	sig.	EXP B	sig.	EXP B	sig.	EXP B	sig.
Gender								
men	0.807	0.000	0.808	0.000	0.656	0.000	0.664	0.000
women	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Education								
elementary	1.523	0.000	1.558	0.000	1.474	0.001	1.519	0.001
lower secondary	1.064	0.389	1.091	0.243	1.550	0.000	1.612	0.000
upper secondary	0.972	0.687	0.988	0.871	1.269	0.007	1.299	0.005
university	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Parent education								
elementary / low. secondary	0.761	0.001	0.745	0.001	0.822	0.070	0.802	0.051
upper secondary	0.806	0.011	0.797	0.010	0.971	0.788	0.962	0.731
university	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Financial problems								
difficulties			1.049	0.439			1.032	0.675
minor difficulties			0.918	0.114			0.952	0.446
no financial problems			.	.			.	.
Family structure								
intact	0.667	0.000	0.671	0.000	0.760	0.000	0.748	0.000
single parent					.	.	.	.



Table 5. Parameters of the binary logistic regression model (partnership and marital status as outcomes)—second part

OUTCOME:		HOUSEHOLD WITHOUT PARTNERSHIP = 1				DIVORCED = 1			
		MODEL 1A		MODEL 1B		MODEL 2A		MODEL 2B	
Year of data collection		EXP B	sig.	EXP B	sig.	EXP B	sig.	EXP B	sig.
2005		0.806	0.000	0.827	0.000	0.749	0.000	0.762	0.000
2011		.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Birth cohort	1939–1950	1.219	0.012	1.193	0.027	1.195	0.101	1.168	0.159
	1951–1960	1.136	0.024	1.113	0.069	1.877	0.000	1.828	0.000
	1961–1970	1.084	0.165	1.080	0.206	2.226	0.000	2.217	0.000
	1971–1981	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Intercept of the model (log-odd form)		-0.591	0.000	-0.597	0.000	-1.890	0.000	-1.886	0.000

Source: EU-SILC (CZ) 2005, 2015.

its level, the lower the chance of becoming divorced or breaking up with a partner. In the second case, however, this is only given by the difference between primary education level and all other levels. Even so, the difference in the odds ratio for educational level is slightly higher than for structure of family of origin.

### **Differences in economic situation**

The third aspect of the life of children from single-parent families in adulthood is the income situation of their current households. We have established that people from single-parent families live without a partner more often, and at the same time we know that their educational level does not differ very markedly from other groups. Besides educational level, the incomes of households point to a specific aspect of stratification position. If we consider education to be a cultural dimension of status and also view it as a potential or means of assuming specific stratification positions, household income then refers to the economic dimension of status (see, e.g., Bourdieu, who uses the dimension of cultural and economic capital) and at the same time it represents the results of stratification position.<sup>8</sup>

We measure the economic dimension of the current situation of single-parent households using the net annual monetary income of households. The household incomes are converted to consumer units<sup>9</sup> in conformity with EU methodology so that we can compare the situation of households without strongly distorting their different structures. Comparing averages, quantiles, and the shape of the distribution, we find the expected differences in income between households of people from intact and single-parent families. In the Czech Republic, the median of annual income in households occupied by people in the age range 26–66 was 145 000 CZK in 2005 and 207 000 CZK six years later.<sup>10</sup> The observed difference to the detriment of households occupied by people from single-parent families amounted to 7200 CZK in 2005. Household income in the Czech Republic increased during the six years between the two waves of the survey, so that in 2011

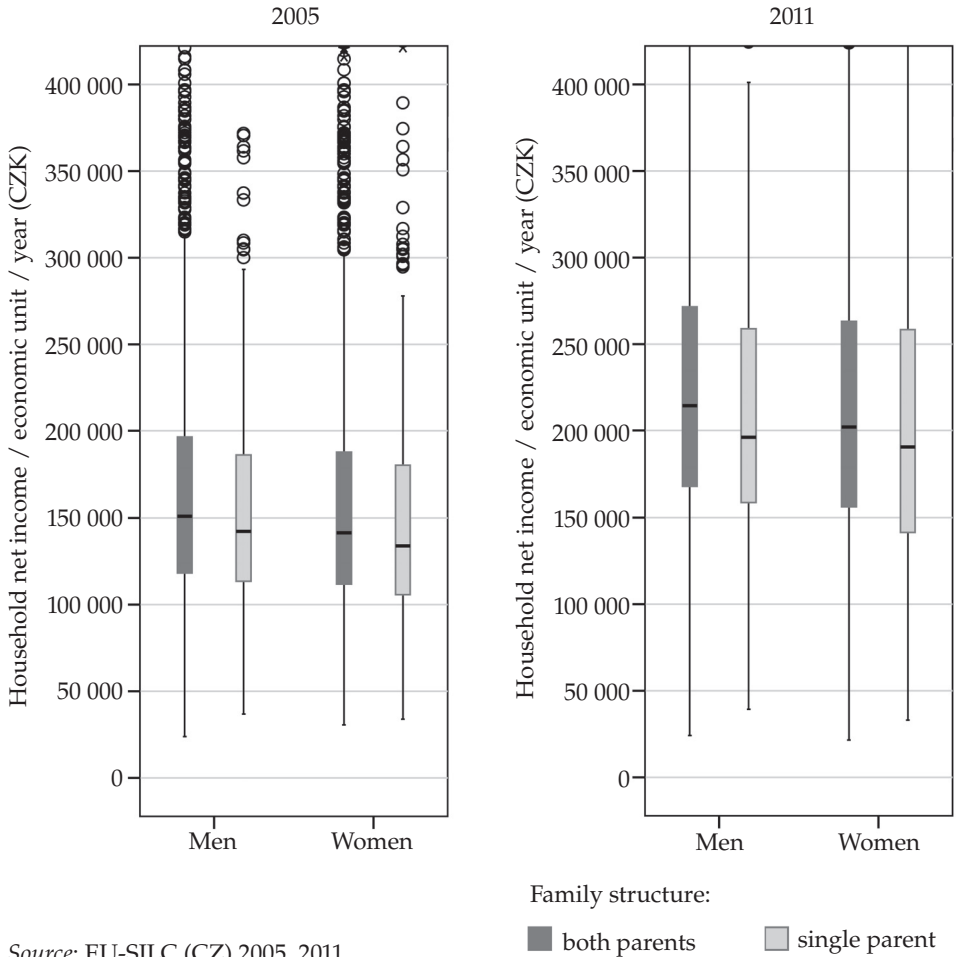
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<sup>8</sup> During the long communist era, an inconsistency arose between the cultural and economic dimension of status. Expertise in and of itself was not a guarantee of success on the job market and meritocratic principles were extremely weakened by the requirement of party loyalty. It took a long time after 1989 for the two dimensions of status to reach a consistent state, and for this reason it makes sense to pay attention to both these dimensions [cf. Machonin and Tuček 2004].

<sup>9</sup> Consumer units consist of all the members of a household multiplied by a coefficient for expected consumption. The EU definition used by the Czech Statistical Office (ČSÚ) is  
1.0 head of the household  
0.3 children aged 0 to 13  
0.5 other children and persons.

<sup>10</sup> Based on the current exchange rate (approx. 1 EUR = 28 CZK), the annual incomes are 5250 EUR and 7530 EUR, respectively.

Figure 1. Distribution of current household income by family of origin structure and by the gender of respondents (box-and-whiskers plot)



Source: EU-SILC (CZ) 2005, 2011.

the median was 62 000 CZK higher overall, but the difference between children from single-parent families and other groups increased twofold. That means the incomes of this group grow at a lower rate. Expressed relatively, the difference in median incomes was 5.2 percentage points in 2005 and 7.2 percentage points in 2011. A more detailed overview generated by comparing income distribution in box-and-whiskers plots.

I use a multidimensional linear regression model to estimate the relations between observed characteristics of the family of origin, respondent attributes,

Table 6. Parameters of the OLS regression (log income per economic unit as the dependent variable)\*

	MODEL A		MODEL B		MODEL C	
	B	sig.	B	sig.	B	sig.
Gender						
men	0.024	0.000	0.023	0.000	0.024	0.000
women	.	.	.	.	.	.
Education						
elementary					-0.228	0.000
lower secondary					-0.162	0.000
upper secondary					-0.086	0.000
university					.	.
Parent education						
elementary / low. secondary			-0.098	0.000	-0.038	0.000
upper secondary			-0.032	0.000	-0.017	0.007
university			.	.	.	.
Financial problems						
difficulties			-0.026	0.000	-0.016	0.000
minor difficulties			0.005	0.239	0.004	0.323
no financial problems			.	.	.	.
Family structure						
intact	0.029	0.000	0.017	0.001	0.003	0.568
single parent	.	.	.	.	.	.
Year of data collection						
2005	-0.139	0.004	-0.139	0.000	-0.138	0.000
2011	.	.	.	.	.	.
Birth cohort						
1939–1950	-0.013	0.03213	0.014	0.016	0.028	0.000
1951–1960	0.020	5.4E-06	0.038	0.000	0.049	0.000
1961–1970	-0.006	0.2047	0.002	0.693	0.001	0.728
1971–1981						
Intercept of the model	5.272	0.000	5.345	0.000	5.432	0.000
R <sup>2</sup>	0.131		0.168		0.256	

\* Based on the R squared of the models.

Source: EU-SILC (CZ) 2005, 2011.

and the income of the household occupied by the respondent.<sup>11</sup> I again use the same set of factors in the role of independent variables as in the previous analyses and compare the three models with different specifications of the independent variables. The models thus constructed explain 16.5 to 25.6% of the variance of the logarithm of incomes, which means that they have relatively good predictive ability. By comparing the three models the influence of the control variables can be examined.

Model A is designed to measure the 'net effect' of family structure and contains only the necessary basic control variables known as the structural determinants of income level (sex, age cohort, year of data collection).<sup>12</sup> Model B includes information about the educational level and financial difficulties of the family of origin. Finally in Model C I add the respondent's educational level as the most powerful factor influencing income level.

The effect of family structure is relatively strongest in the first model, but still rather too weak to make any conclusions about substantive differences; the coefficient of 0.029 represents about a 6% difference in the log-income scale.<sup>13</sup> As the control variables are added, the effect of family structure becomes weaker when controlling for the characteristics of family of origin, and becomes almost entirely absent when controlling for the respondent's educational level.

The explanatory power of the last model is provided mostly by the respondent's educational level, which is not surprising. Other characteristics of the family of origin also play a role here: children from more educated families differ more markedly in terms of income than in terms of family structure, the effect of the economic situation of the family of origin is somewhat weaker, but even in this case the influence is stronger than the absence of one of the parents. We could speculate about the causal chain of the mediated effect of family structure through the educational level of respondent, but since we know from the previous analyses that the influence of family structure on the education of offspring is not important in Czech data, we have to reject this explanation.

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<sup>11</sup> Prior to that, however, income is logarithmically adjusted, since its distribution does not correspond to a normal curve [cf. Björklund, Ginther and Sundström 2007].

<sup>12</sup> Controlling for the year of data collection is important here, because incomes in the Czech Republic increased markedly between 2005 and 2011, and controlling for cohort is necessary in order to be able to take into account, at least generally, the different incomes of families at different life stages.

<sup>13</sup> The range between the 10th and 90th percentile on the log-income scale is 0.5; therefore, a regression coefficient of 0.029 represents a change of one seventeenth of this range, which is about six percentage points.

## **Discussion**

Three general hypotheses were formulated in this article that summarise the three basic spheres of deliberations on the influence of family structure.

- (1) Children from single-parent families will attain lower levels of education overall when compared to children from intact families. In particular they will be disadvantaged with respect to access to tertiary education.
- (2) Children from single-parent families are more likely themselves to be living outside of marriage or cohabitation.
- (3) The income of people raised in single-parent families is lower than that of people from intact families.

In all cases, the results of the empirical analyses show that the effects of family of origin structure are not present in the data of the Czech contribution to the EU-SILC survey to the degree that we would expect based on theoretical and empirical inspiration. Although the first hypothesis cannot be formally rejected because statistically significant results can be seen on the level of secondary education, only small differences were found in terms of access to tertiary education. The regression model shows that the influence of the structure of family of origin is substantially weaker than the effect of the variables we used as controls. The influence of the educational level attained by parents is many times stronger. The chances of attaining higher education or a general secondary school certificate are also influenced by the (subjectively perceived) financial difficulties experienced by the family of origin. The interpretation of the role of financial difficulties is ambiguous. This can be understood as a direct link in the causal chain of divorce consequences. Thus we should identify its effect with divorce itself. On the other hand, the financial situation can be understood as a variable, indirect effect that is influenced by state policies and the institutional environment. As such it cannot be identified with divorce itself, because of its different variability. Differences between the results of the models that use financial situation as a control variable and those that exclude it are particularly noticeable in the case of educational attainment. Adding this control lowers the effect of family of origin structure.

The testing of the second hypothesis focused on searching for influences in the sphere of intimacy and produced somewhat different results. The models that use current household structure and family status as dependent variables show that socialisation in a single-parent family also affects family behaviour in adulthood. The influence is not particularly strong, however. On the one hand, these models as a whole do not have substantive predictive value, and on the other, the influence of family structure is moderately weaker than the influences of the control variables—the education level or gender of the respondent. Nonetheless, the hypothesis that there is a relation between family of origin structure and the formation of single-parent families in adulthood cannot be rejected.

To test the third hypothesis I made use of the main advantages of the EU-SILC dataset as a source of reliable and detailed measurements of household

income and I looked for the effects of socialisation in single-parent families on the economic situation of children that have reached adulthood. Although descriptive analyses show a difference in income, with children of single-parent families living in households with an annual income that is 5.7 percentage points lower than others, when the gender, age, and education level of the respondent are controlled for along with other factors of the family of origin, the regression model shows again that the structure of family of origin has weak or almost no influence.

When interpreting these results it is appropriate to take into consideration the limits to them set by the nature of the research and analysis. The EU-SILC survey is not a resource that focuses primarily on the life course, and for this reason data on the situation in families of origin are relatively inexact. Analyses could no doubt provide more accurate information on the age from which respondents were raised by a lone parent, the total time they were in their care, and the causes that led to this situation. However, thematic EU-SILC modules only contain information about households with children at the age of 14 only (and aged 12 to 16 in the later study).<sup>14</sup> This is thus an indicator that does not precisely define a category, but with a certain degree of probability refers to respondents' situation. Those who grew up at the given point of time with a lone mother or father will clearly be present in the given category. Those who experienced parental divorce before the age of 14 (or 12) and do not live in a foster family will also be included. Two groups are thus not captured: those with a lone parent who went on to marry and those whose parents divorced and the caregiving parent subsequently entered into a new partnership. Both situations indicate the relatively rapid reconstruction of a traditional family structure, however, and should thus be considered in connection with the theme of the stepfamily. In our case we consider it sufficient to work with information on the structure of the single-parent family. Additionally, demographic statistics from 1950 to 1995 do not show that substitute families in Czech society were forming in a dynamic fashion, rather they show a tendency for divorced women to remain with children outside of a partnership for a long time.

In order to increase the robustness of the results, I used data from two waves of the EU-SILC survey, which not only enlarged the set of adults raised by a single parent available for statistical analysis (although it still remains relatively marginal), but also made it possible to control whether the results from both waves provide a consistent picture. This is also the reason why I feel that it is appropriate to present the results of this analysis and that they are worthy of discussion.

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<sup>14</sup> The wording of the question differed slightly in 2005 and 2011.

## **Conclusion**

Although it is losing its negative connotations, the image of single-parent families in public and scientific discourse is still associated with the pathology of deprivation and disadvantage [see Usdansky 2009a, 2009b]. However, the results of my analysis suggest that in a society with a high degree of de-institutionalisation of marriage, the influence of family structure is not as strong as we would expect.

For the purposes of the analysis here, three models formed the theoretical starting points for deliberations on the effects of family structure: the model of direct causal influences, the selection model, and the model of (de-)institutionalisation. Based on the results of the analyses the causal explanation can be rejected as a prevailing explanation in the case of Czech society, which opens space for deliberating on the applicability of explanations based on selection or (de-)institutionalisation.

The fact that control variables played a more significant role in our models than family of origin structure did would seem to point to the importance of selection principles. In Czech society, the disadvantage of having been raised in a single-parent family is surpassed by the disadvantages stemming from low-level parental education and/or from the economic situation of the family of origin. At the same time it is evident that a low level of educational attainment is not as closely coupled with single-parent families as it is in societies in Western Europe and the USA. Thus, not even the selection principles related to divorce and lone parenthood lead to marked, empirically observable differences between children from different types of family. As a possible explanation we thus propose the principle of de-institutionalisation, which means that in societies with a high and increasing divorce rate, the negative impacts associated with actions outside of the framework of institutionalised forms of partnership and parenthood will decrease progressively under the influence of value transformation.

These findings are not in line with the results of analyses conducted on other (mostly Western) European societies. There may be two reasons for this: The first possibility is the (different) dynamic of the trend of weakening divorce effects in the Czech Republic. Owing to the specific circumstances of dynamic demographic and value change (the second demographic transition perspective), the negative divorce effects that existed in the past could grow weaker at a faster rate than they would in societies with a relatively stable demographic profile. Several studies show that in the western part of Europe there is almost no change towards weakening intergenerational divorce effects [Sigle-Rushton, Hobcraft and Kiernan 2005; Garriga and Gähler 2013].

The second explanation is the possibility that the character or efficiency of the mechanisms that transmit divorce effects differ. Such specific historical factors as the high rate of women's labour force participation, a paternalistic welfare state, a rapid weakening of traditional religiosity after the establishment of the communist regime: all this could create an environment in which family life has



relatively weak institutional anchors. These forms of de-institutionalisation result in a comparatively stable regime of low normative pressure and low stigmatisation attached to single parenthood.

Both explanations should be discussed and tested, so they can also be understood as an inspiration for further research in this field. It is my opinion that these explanations are fruitful for post-communist countries undergoing rapid demographic transformation; that they are consistent with the empirical data presented here; and that they help clarify why an increased share of single-parent families does not necessarily mean there will also be an increased number of disadvantaged children in society.

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