

Opponent review of Master Thesis:

Dinmukhamed Shermakhanbetuly:

Fertility patterns and trends in post-socialist countries contrasted with Sweden and the United States of America

Analysis of fertility in comparative view is highly relevant demographic topic for Master Thesis. Lowest low fertility which has been observed in post-socialist countries since the 1990s, has influenced their population dynamics. Recently, the broad political, social and economic changes in Kazakhstan have brought number of questions regarding the possible effect on demographic reproduction. Within the cross-country comparison the author has attempt to find the position of the Republic of Kazakhstan as regards the current fertility patterns. The selected post-socialist countries, Sweden as the forerunner of the “Second Demographic Transition”, and the USA characterised by special features in fertility were taken for comparison.

The submitted work has an appropriate structure and sufficient extent. Besides “Introduction” and “Conclusion” it consists of two main parts: theoretical and analytical. Within the theoretical part he has proved to be enough informed about the important publications related to this topic. The recent fertility trends are understood in a broader context. He is aware of the fact that the concept of the “Second Demographic Transition has not been completely accepted by all demographers, nevertheless he took it as the leading theory. The institutional setting is viewed from the perspective of “gender equity” and he applied the family policy models defined by Gauthier. In the theoretical part the methodology of his work was included which does not fit too much in my view. Nevertheless all data sources as well as most demographic indicators used in the work were adequately described. I would suggest to put into this part also the information about the “postponement ratio” that was used in the analytical part (page 65) and information about the “cluster analysis that was applied in the chapter 2.4 (page 86). Next to that the main formula of decomposition of TFR is missing although the whole technique of computations was described (page 32).

The key chapter is the analytical part based on the classical demographic analysis. Although he was limited by available data source, he has proved his knowledge of using demographic statistics and ability to apply methods of demographic analysis. At first, the trends in fertility level and timing were described in line with family policies. I appreciate the effort of author to prepare the comparable tables (Table 3-9) for all selected countries. The main fertility indicators are in these tables for the same years since 1960 and thus make the comparison more adequate. Recent trends in fertility were analysed in more detail in chapter 2.2. Results are presented in graphical form and are well illustrative. Special attention was paid to the trends in fertility of unmarried women. The decomposition was used to see the effect of the change in age structure of women by marital status. In order to summarize the findings the cluster analysis was applied to see the current similarities and differences in fertility patterns of selected countries.

In the “Introduction” goals and hypotheses were posed to be tested and in the “Conclusion” the main results were stressed in line with the intended objectives. I have two questions for the author related to his findings. According to author the State should support single mothers as it seems to be crucial for further increase and stabilization of fertility rate. *How do you think the State can intervene in this field? What about the indirect effects?* He also stressed both the similarities and dissimilarities in development of family policies. He put

the Republic of Kazakhstan together with the Czech Republic and Russian Federation within the pro-family/pro-natalist model. *What impact of the current economic crisis on family policies in those countries do you expect?*

The author devoted enough attention to the language corrections as well as to the required technical aspects. In my view the submitted work is well written and meets all criteria for master thesis in demography. I recommend this work to be defended.

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