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AN ANALYSIS OF THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARENTS OF ROMANY AND NON-ROMANY NEONATES FROM MOST, ÚSTÍ NAD LABEM AND KLDADNO (CZECH REPUBLIC)

ABSTRACT: Transversal anthropological investigation of Romany and non-Romany neonates was made in the hospitals of Most, Ústí nad Labem and Kladno in 2001–2004. In addition, ascertaining some anthropological and social characteristics of their parents was a part of this survey. Basic social characteristics were studied in 475 Romany mothers and 450 fathers and 215 mothers and 212 fathers of the majority population. The average age of Romany mothers and fathers was 23.76 and 27.47 years, respectively. Parents of majority population were, on average, older (mothers – 25.27, fathers – 28.72 years). The majority of Romany parents had completed or uncompleted elementary education (87.1% mothers and 77.6% fathers), to the contrary, non-Romany parents had most frequently the certificate of apprenticeship (45.1% mothers and 49.5% fathers) or high school education (36.4% mothers and 25.2% fathers). There were significantly more smokers in the Romany group. 80.4% Romany women smoked before pregnancy (versus 36.9% mothers of majority population), 72.2% Romany women and 14.6% mothers of majority population reported smoking in pregnancy. In the studied group of Romany fathers, non-smokers were represented by 12.9% and smokers by 87.1%; in the group of non-Romany fathers 50.5% of the fathers did not smoke and 49.5% smoked. In the Romany group, unemployed parents had significantly higher representation (88% mothers and 83.8% fathers) than in the non-Romany group (39.3% mothers and 34.4% fathers). Furthermore, Romany parents were more often unmarried (63.5% mothers and 65% fathers) in comparison with parents of majority population (42.2% mothers and 32.2% fathers). On the contrary, non-Romany parents were more often divorced (3.4% non-Romany mothers and 10.2% fathers vs. 2.4% Romany mothers and 0.4% fathers). We determined that 37.9% of Romany mothers were primiparas (vs. 61.4% non-Romany mothers) and 62.1% multiparas (vs. 37.9%). Romany mothers more often wanted to nurse longer than non-Romany mothers.

KEY WORDS: Education – Employment – Majority population – Marital status – Nursing – Pregnancy – Romany population – Smoking – Czech Republic

INTRODUCTION

The paper presents further results evaluating data collected during the anthropological survey of Romany and non-Romany neonates which was carried out in the hospitals in Most, Ústí nad Labem and Kladno in 2001–2004. The authors submit findings resulting from the evaluation of

questions about social characteristics of mothers and fathers that were acquired from an interview with mothers.

According to the results of nationwide anthropological surveys (NAS) of children and adolescents, the education of parents is a characteristic that has a significant influence on the growth and development of children. A higher level of education implies awareness of the impact of various

factors, such as nutrition on child development (Vignerová *et al.* 1998). When associated with better distribution of resources it leads to a healthier lifestyle meeting the child's needs (diet, leisure activities, extra education) (Bláha *et al.* 1999). It is necessary to realize that a whole number of other significant factors uncoils from the education of parents: the number of children in the family and with that birth order of the child, eating habits, parents' smoking, the children's manner of spending their free time and last but not least the size of the community in which the family lives (Vignerová, Bláha 1996).

In recent years, the number of smoking women has been increasing. Women mostly continue smoking during pregnancy and nursing after birth, and in this manner seriously harm and endanger their child. It has been clearly shown that smoking during pregnancy damages the pregnancy course, the development of the foetus and also negatively affects the health of the neonate. Women who smoked during pregnancy often had spontaneous

abortions, the abruptions of placenta and occurrence of premature deliveries. The birth weight of newborns of smoking mothers is reduced as a result of symmetric intrauterine growth retardation that is often called "foetal nicotine syndrome". As far as the pregnant woman stops smoking during the pregnancy, the risk of pregnancy damage decreases even till the level of non-smokers (Hrubá 1999).

We aimed our effort to basic anthropological and social characteristics of parents of majority population and also of Romany population. Little is generally known about the health condition of the Romany population; similarly, we do not have detailed information about Romany pregnant women and neonates at our disposal. We do not have enough experience in working with Romany population, too. There are several reasons explaining this situation. Firstly, a barrier in communication with the minority plays a big role in this problem. Secondly, reduced willingness of the minority to communicate with the majority population,

TABLE 1. Age of the parents.

Group	N	Mean	SD	SE	MIN	MAX
Romany mothers	475	23.7642	5.3141	0.2438	15	39
Non-Romany mothers	215	25.2698	4.6956	0.3202	17	46
Romany fathers	450	27.4645	8.1784	0.3855	16	58
Non-Romany fathers	212	28.7217	6.3472	0.4359	18	53

TABLE 2. Education of the parents.

Parents' education (%)	Romany group		Non-Romany group	
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
Elementary school	87.1	77.6	15.0	25.2
Skilled workers	11.8	21.3	45.1	49.5
High school	1.1	1.1	36.4	25.2
University	0.0	0.0	3.4	0.0

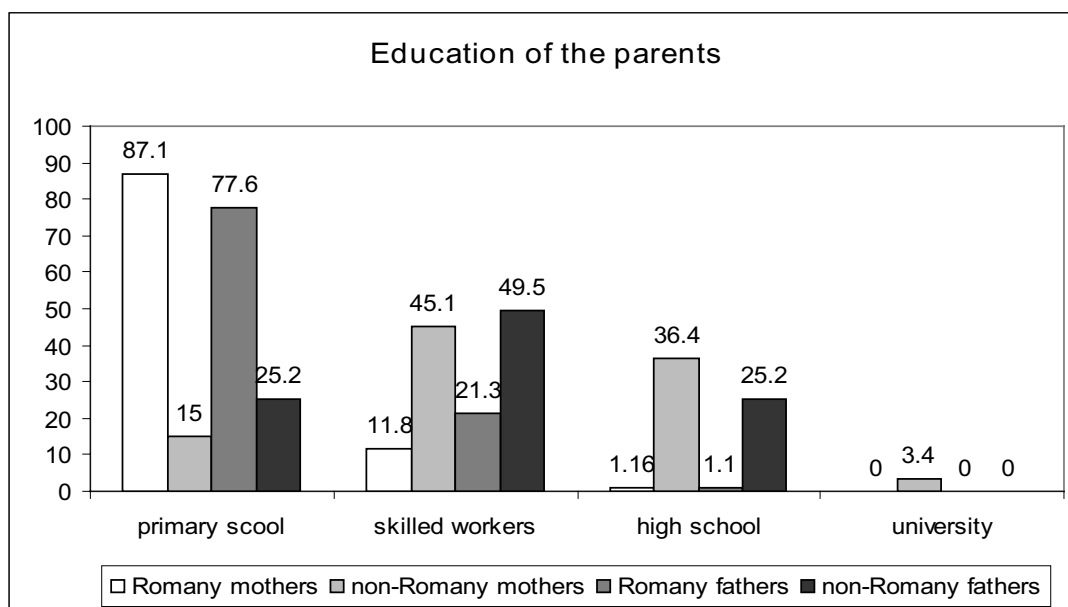


FIGURE 1. Education of the parents.

mainly in telling them private information about education, housing, marital status etc. (Rambousková *et al.* 2003).

The main aims of this part of the study about parents were the following: i) evaluating characteristics about parents that were ascertained, ii) comparison of these characteristics between the Romany and non-Romany groups of parents, iii) comparison of ascertained results of our research with works of other authors, mainly with the nationwide anthropological surveys.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study is based on the data on Romany and non-Romany neonates and their parents acquired by measurement of neonates and conversations with their mothers during the years 2001–2004. The data were gathered at the hospitals in Most, Ústí nad Labem and Kladno. The experimental group was formed by 475 Romany and 215 non-Romany neonates and their parents.

The data on neonates were supplemented with information on the mother and father. The following was ascertained: age of the mother, place of birth, body weight before pregnancy and body weight before childbirth, body height, birth order, number of children in the family, planned length of nursing the child, highest completed education (elementary education, certificate of apprenticeship, high school education, university education), smoking (non-smokers, smokers who stopped smoking when realizing they were pregnant, smokers during pregnancy), marital

status (single, married or divorced), employment (employed or unemployed), nationality (Romany or non-Romany nationality) and place of birth of her mother and father. The information about the fathers includes data about their age, place of birth, body height, completed education, smoking (amount of cigarettes smoked daily), employment, marital status, nationality, place of birth of their mother and father. The education, marital status, employment and nationality of the fathers were evaluated on the basis of the same categories stated for the mothers.

RESULTS

Age of the parents

Non-Romany mothers were, on average, 25.27 years old, Romany mothers were in comparison with them younger, their average age was 23.76 years. Similarly, Romany fathers were, on average, younger than fathers of majority population. The average age of Romany fathers was 27.47 years, non-Romany fathers 28.72 years. A summary of obtained values of mothers' and fathers' ages is shown in *Table 1*.

Education of the parents

Distribution of the education level of Romany and non-Romany parents is shown in *Table 2* and in *Figure 1*. The majority of Romany mothers and fathers had completed or uncompleted elementary education (87.1% mothers and 77.6% fathers), while non-Romany mothers and fathers

TABLE 3. Smoking of the parents.

Smoking of the parents (%)	Romany group		Non-Romany group	
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
Non-smoker	19.6	12.9	63.1	50.5
Smoker who stopped during pregnancy	8.2	–	22.3	–
Smoker	72.2	87.1	14.6	49.5

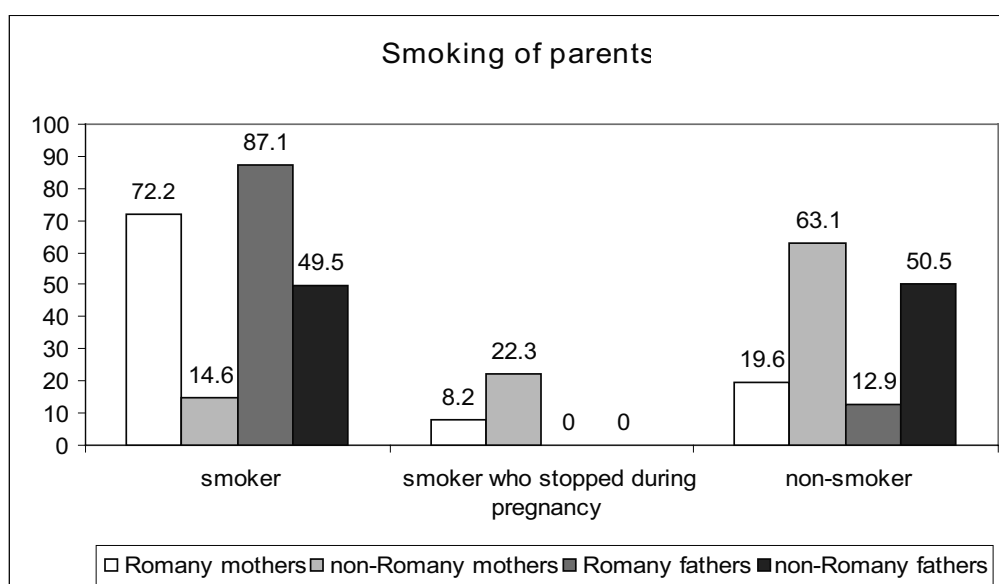


FIGURE 2. Smoking of the parents.

TABLE 4. Employment of the parents.

Employment of the parents (%)	Romany group		Non-Romany group	
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
Employed	12	16.2	60.7	65.6
Unemployed	88	83.8	39.3	34.4

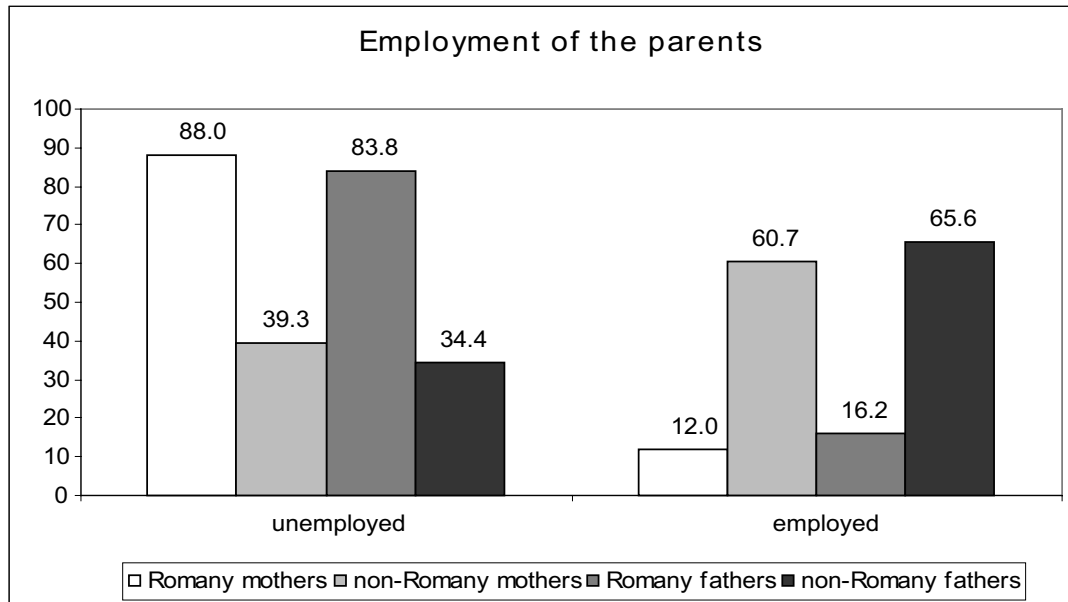


FIGURE 3. Employment of the parents.

TABLE 5. Marital status of the parents.

Marital status of the parents (%)	Romany group		Non-Romany group	
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
Unmarried	63.5	65	42.4	32.2
Married	34.1	34.5	54.2	57.6
Divorced	2.4	0.4	3.4	10.2

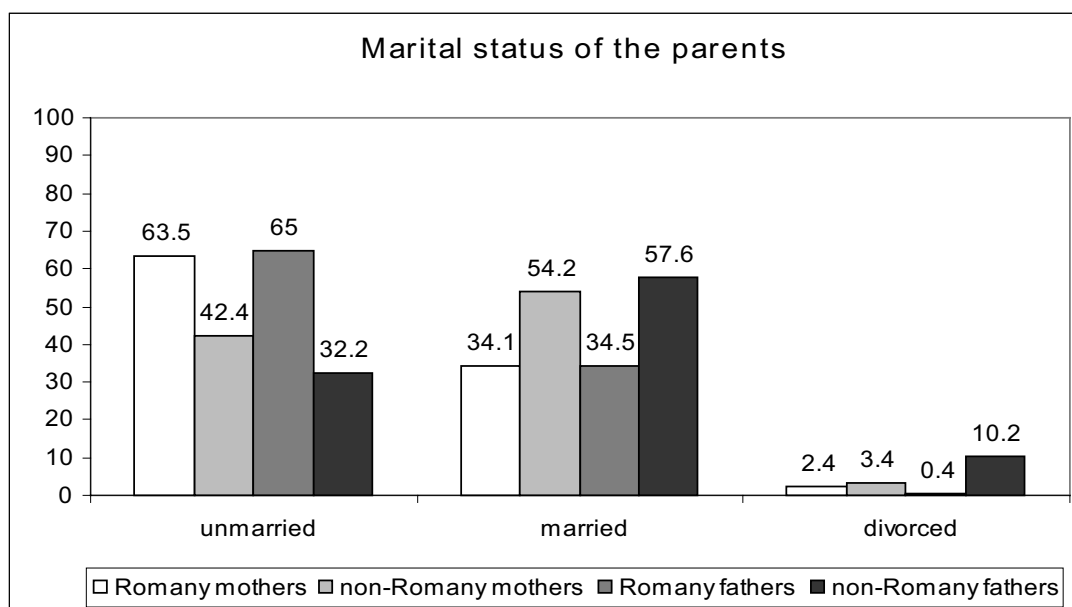


FIGURE 4. Marital status of the parents.

had most often the certificate of apprenticeship (45.1% and 49.5%, respectively) or high school education (36.4% and 25.2%, respectively). Furthermore, in the Romany group, 11.8% mothers and 21.3% fathers had the certificate of apprenticeship, only 1.1% mothers and 1.1% fathers had high school education and none of Romany parents reached university education. In the non-Romany group, 15% mothers and 25.2% fathers had elementary education, only 3.4% mothers reached university education and, surprisingly, none of the fathers had any university education.

Smoking of the parents

When smoking of parents was investigated, the following conclusions were obtained. In the Romany group, 80.4% of mothers who had given birth smoked, only 19.6% of them were non-smokers. Mothers who smoked were further divided into whether they smoked while pregnant (72.2%) or those who stopped smoking upon finding out they were pregnant (8.2%). In the non-Romany group of mothers, 63.1% were non-smokers, 22.3% mothers stopped smoking when they found out they were pregnant and 14.6% mothers smoked during pregnancy. In the studied group of Romany fathers, there were 12.9% non-smokers and 87.1% smokers.

In the non-Romany set of fathers, 50.5% did not smoke and 49.5% smoked. A summary of results of parents' smoking is in Table 3 and in Figure 2.

Employment of the parents

The employment or unemployment of mothers and fathers was investigated in both groups of parents, Romany and non-Romany. The groups of mothers and fathers were divided into two categories depending on employment or unemployment. In the group of Romany mothers, 88% mothers were unemployed and 12% mothers were employed. Similarly, in the groups of Romany fathers, 16.2% were employed and 83.8% unemployed. On the other hand, in the group of non-Romany parents, employed mothers and fathers had higher representation (60.7% and 65.6%, respectively) than unemployed (39.3% and 34.4%, respectively). Findings about employment of the parents are in Table 4 and in Figure 3.

Marital status

The following conclusions were obtained from investigation of the marital status of Romany and non-Romany parents. In the Romany group of mothers, 63.5% were unmarried, 34.1%

TABLE 6. Number of children in the family.

Number of children (%)	Romany group	Non-Romany group
1	37.9	61.4
2	27.2	32.1
3	16.2	5.1
4	6.5	1.4
5	5.5	0.0
6	2.7	0.0
7	3.4	0.0
8	0.6	0.0

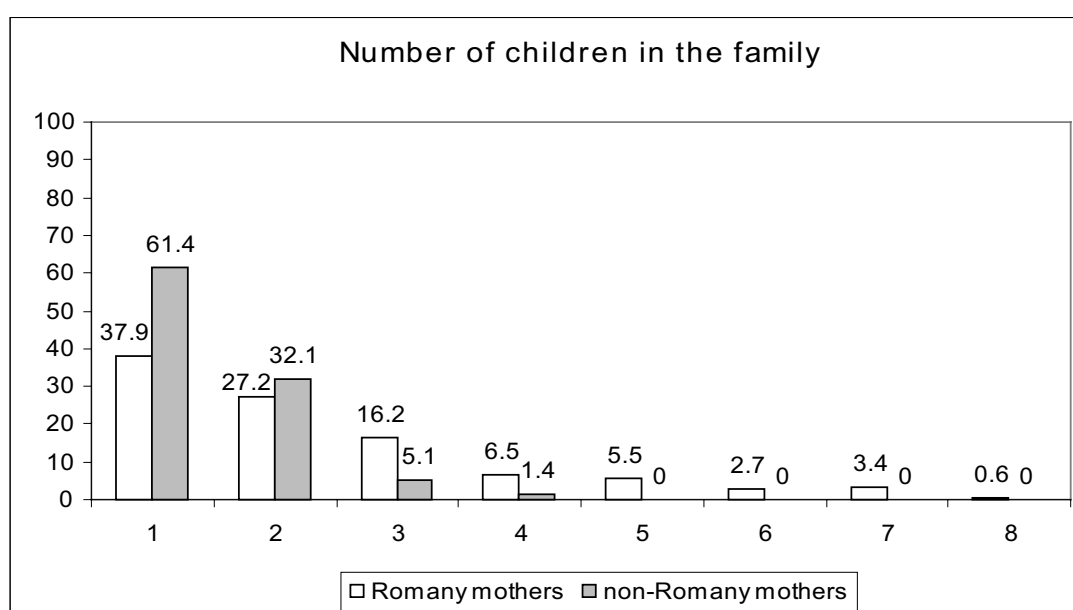


FIGURE 5. Number of children in the family.

married and only 2.4% were divorced. In the non-Romany group, married mothers had higher representation (54.2%) than unmarried ones (42.4%). Only 3.4% of them were divorced. In the Romany set of fathers, 65% were unmarried, 34.5% married and only 0.4% were divorced. In the non-Romany group, married fathers had higher representation (57.6%) than unmarried fathers (32.2%). Non-Romany fathers were more often divorced (10.2%) in comparison with Romany fathers (0.4%). *Table 5* and *Figure 4* show summary results of the parents' marital status.

Number of children in the family

In the group of Romany mothers, 37.9% gave birth for the first time. In the group of non-Romany mothers, it was 61.4%; 27.2% Romany mothers and 32.1% non-Romany mothers gave birth for the second time; 16.2% Romany mothers and 5.1% non-Romany mothers for the third time and 6.5% and 1.4%, respectively, for the fourth time. In the Romany group, there were also mothers who gave birth for the fifth (5.5%), sixth (2.7%), seventh (3.4%) and eighth (0.6%) times. *Table 6* and *Figure 5* show the summary of number of children in the families.

Planned length of nursing

The mothers were divided into six categories according to the planned length of nursing. The mothers who did not want or were not able to nurse their baby were included into the first group. This group included only 2.1% of Romany mothers and 1.4% of non-Romany mothers. The following group of mothers planned to nurse only for one month (2.7% of Romany and 1.9% of non-Romany mothers). Furthermore, 4.9% of Romany and 8.4% of non-Romany mothers wanted to nurse from 1 to 3 months, 28.7% of Romany and 30.4% of non-Romany mothers from 3 to 6 months, 32.9% of Romany and 48.6% of non-Romany mothers from 6 to 12 months and 28.7% of Romany and 9.3% of non-Romany mothers planned to nurse longer than 12 months. Findings on the planned length of nursing of mothers are in *Table 7* and *Figure 6*.

Place of birth of Romany parents

The place of birth of mothers and fathers was investigated in the Romany group. We wanted to find out the rate of migration of Romany parents from the Slovak Republic. In the Romany mothers' group, 68.2% were born in the Czech

TABLE 7. Planned length of nursing.

Planned length of nursing (%)	Romany group	Non-Romany group
0	2.1	1.4
0–1 month	2.7	1.9
1–3 months	4.9	8.4
3–6 months	28.7	30.4
6–12 months	32.9	48.6
>12 months	28.7	9.3

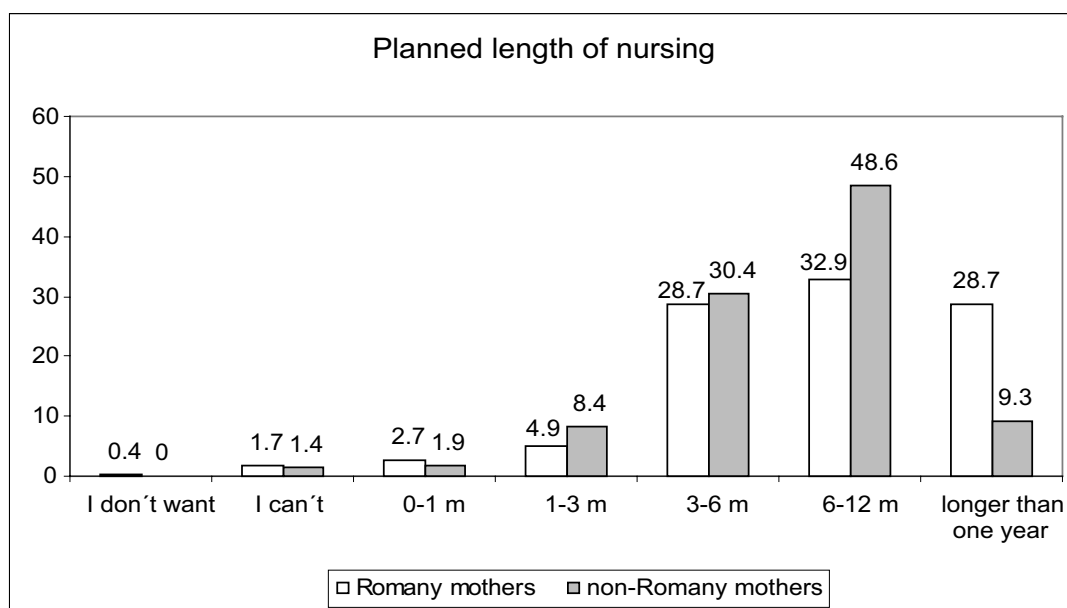


FIGURE 6. Planned length of nursing.

Republic and 31.8% came from the Slovak Republic. They moved to the Czech Republic because of better employment conditions. In the group of Romany fathers the situation was similar, 64.5% of them were born in the Czech Republic and 35.2% in the Slovak Republic. Furthermore, the place of birth of the mothers' and fathers' parents was ascertained to detect the origin of Romanies in the group (whether they come from the Slovak Republic as the majority of Romanies in the Czech Republic, or whether they are original Czech Romanies, who had been almost exterminated in WW II concentration camps). It was ascertained that 52.2% of parents of mothers came from the Slovak Republic, 27.2% of parents from the Czech Republic and the rest of Romany mothers (20.6%) were unable to answer where their parents had been born. Further, the mothers stated that 43% of parents of their husbands came from the Slovak Republic, 17.1% from the Czech Republic and 39.9% of mothers did not know where their husbands' parents had been born. The majority of the mothers were embarrassed when they had to answer the question about the place of birth of their parents and their husbands' parents, because they did not regard it as an important thing. For that reason these results must be accepted with some caution.

DISCUSSION

We compared our ascertained results with the following surveys of parents of majority population: Fifth National Anthropological Survey of Children and Adolescents (NAS) in 1991 (Lhotská *et al.* 1995), Vrňatová (2004 – this survey was a part of the Sixth Nationwide Anthropological Survey of Children and Adolescents in 2001), Rambousková *et al.* (2003) and with the following studies on Romany parents: Rambousková *et al.* (2003), Hamplová (1976), Malá, Hajnišová (1985).

The average age of Romany parents from our study was lower in comparison with non-Romany parents from the control group. Romany mothers were, in average, by one and half year younger than non-Romany mothers and similarly, Romany fathers were, in average, by one and quarter year younger than fathers of the majority population. Romany and non-Romany mothers and fathers from our study were younger in comparison with non-Romany parents from the research of Vrňatová (2004). It is mainly due to the fact that Vrňatová (2004) collected the data in Prague where women and men generally have children at a higher age. According to our results, Romany mothers from our study were on average younger than mothers from the studies of Rambousková *et al.* (2003) and Hamplová (1976).

Romany parents reached in average a lower degree of education in comparison with non-Romany parents of the majority population (χ^2 – test, $P \leq 0.001$). The majority of Romany mothers and fathers had elementary or mostly even uncompleted education. In spite of it, our Romany parents reached higher level of education in comparison with the findings of Malá *et al.* (1985) from the years 1976–1978 from

the Kladno and Chomutov districts. Ascertained education of non-Romany parents of the majority population differed in comparison with the findings about education in North Bohemia presented in the Fifth National Anthropological Survey (NAS) 1991 (Lhotská *et al.* 1995). Parents with an elementary education had higher representation (15% vs. 13.8% in the set of mothers and 25.2% vs. 7.5% in the set of fathers) and parents who reached university education had lower representation in our group (3.4% vs. 6.6% in the set of mothers and 0.0% vs. 9.9% in the set of fathers). Education of parents of majority population from our study differed from the research of Vrňatová (2004). The explanation for this fact is that our research was carried out mainly in North Bohemia, whereas Vrňatová collected her data in Prague where the education of parents is generally higher.

Romany mothers and fathers were more often smokers in comparison with non-Romany parents (χ^2 – test, $P \leq 0.001$). Smoking of non-Romany mothers and fathers was in accordance with the results presented in the 5th NAS 1991 (Lhotská *et al.* 1995), but the representation of smoking Romany parents was higher in comparison with the national study. The majority of Romany mothers and fathers from our study smoked. The percentage of Romany mothers from our group who smoked before pregnancy was lower in comparison with mothers from the research of Rambousková *et al.* (2003) (80.4% vs. 85.5%), but the percentage of mothers who reported smoking in pregnancy was higher in our set than in the group of Rambousková *et al.* (2003) (72.2% vs. 57.9%).

Unemployment in North Bohemia is very high. Established rate of unemployment of non-Romany mothers and fathers was in compliance with an information of the Czech Statistical Office, but Romany parents did not have any employment more often. (The majority of Romany parents from our group were unemployed.) Only 12% of Romany mothers and 16.2% of Romany fathers had an employment. Low qualification of Romanies and high unwillingness of the majority of employers to employ Romanies is the reason why the unemployment between Romanies is so high.

Romany mothers and fathers were more often unmarried (63.5% Romany mothers and 65% fathers, as compared to 42.4% non-Romany mothers and 32.2% fathers) and less divorced (2.4% Romany mothers and 0.4% fathers, as compared to 3.4% non-Romany mothers and 10.2% fathers) than mothers and fathers of majority population (χ^2 – test, $P \leq 0.001$). The main reason for this fact is that Romanies do not consider marriage as an important thing. In comparison with the study of Rambousková *et al.* (2003), the percentage of unmarried Romany mothers from our research is in compliance with this study (63.5% in our set vs. 63.2% in Rambousková's set), but the percentage of divorced mothers is lower in our set of mothers (2.4% vs. 10.5%).

According to the 5th NAS 1991, the situation in regard to the nursing is still unsatisfactory even though from

the mid-1980s one can see a slightly increasing trend. Only 15% of children are nursed longer than 6 months, and the same applies to children nursed between 3 to 6 months (Lhotská *et al.* 1995). The results ascertained in our studied sets of mothers are optimistic as compared to the contention of the 5th NAS in 1991. The main reason for this difference is that in the 5th NAS (1991) the actual length of nursing was ascertained, while in our sets of mothers it was the planned length of nursing. Every mother that proclaims that she should nurse as long as possible is aware of the trend. The actual length of nursing is also influenced by objective difficulties that could arise in the course of nursing (Kyznarová 2001). For that reason, it is necessary to consider the results as orientational only. From the comparison of planned length of nursing in Romany mothers and in non-Romany mothers it arose that the percentage of Romany mothers who wanted to nurse longer than six months is similar to the percentage of non-Romany mothers (61.6% vs. 57.9%); however, Romany mothers who wanted to nurse longer than one year had higher representation in our study (28.7% vs. 9.3%).

CONCLUSION

The summary of the results obtained in the study is the following:

1. The majority of Romany mothers and fathers had completed or uncompleted elementary education (87.1% and 77.6%, respectively). Non-Romany mothers and fathers from the control group had most often the certificate of apprenticeship (45.1% and 49.5%, respectively) and high school education (36.4% and 25.2%, respectively).

2. The majority of Romany mothers (80.4%) who had given birth smoked. There were 19.6% non-smokers. Mothers who smoked were further divided into whether they smoked while pregnant (72.2%) or whether they stopped smoking upon finding out they were pregnant (8.2%). In the non-Romany group of mothers there were 63.1% non-smokers, 22.3% mothers who stopped smoking when they found out they were pregnant and 14.6% mothers who smoked during pregnancy. In the studied group of Romany fathers there were 12.9% non-smokers and 87.1% smokers. In the non-Romany set of fathers, 50.5% of the fathers did not smoke and 49.5% smoked.

3. The majority of Romany parents from our group were unemployed. Only 12% of Romany mothers and 16.2% of Romany fathers had an employment. The situation was different in the set of non-Romany parents. Employed parents had higher representation (60.7% mothers and 65.6% fathers) than unemployed (39.3% mothers and 34.4% fathers).

4. According to our results Romany mothers nursed, on average, longer than mothers from the majority population.

5. Romany mothers and fathers were more often unmarried (63.5% and 65%) in comparison with parents

from the majority population (42.4% mothers and 32.2% fathers). On the other hand, non-Romany parents were more often divorced (3.4% mothers and 10.2% fathers) than Romany mothers (2.4%) and fathers (0.4%).

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