

Kapitány, Spéder

## The role of ideational factors in partnership formation

### *Abstract*

The gaining importance of cohabitation among first union is fact since the end of the 90s in Hungary. Today 70 percent of the first partnership is cohabitation and 30 percent (direct) marriage. Of course many cohabitants transform their partnership into marriage, however a not neglectable share of first cohabitants stay in cohabitation, others separate. As a result we experience variations in the ways how first partnership starts, and how it evolves. The profound changes in partnership formation call the attention to identify influencing factors. Using two waves of Hungarian GGS follow up survey we will concentrate on ideational factors in this investigation.

In our former descriptive analyse we could show that educational differences play a role in the proliferation of cohabitation: the expansion of cohabitation was triggered by the two end of the educational hierarchy, the lower and the higher educated had overaverage ratios according to cohabitation in first partnership. Current theory on partnership formation focuses on two other determinants of cohabitation, and types of partnership. The economic theory of partnership behaviour expresses the importance of labour market position (type of activity and uncertainty of job) and earnings. Cultural theories of partnership behaviour, especially the “second demographic transition” stress the importance of ideational (attitudinal, value orientations) factors. In our investigation we aim to disentangle the influences of the later type. Of course economic factors (labour market position, income class) and level of education will be controlled.

Two waves of the Hungarian Generation and Gender Survey “Turning points of the life course” enable us to overcome the problem of “selection” vs. “adaptation”. As long the dependent variables (having cohabitation vs. marriage as first partnership; transforming first cohabitation into marriage vs. staying in cohabitation) will be measured between the first two waves, independent variables (objective and ideational states of the respondents) will be measured at the first wave, before the events of partnership formation. Therefore our independent variables could be seen as “selection” factors.

## *Extended abstract*

### Descriptive report: Changes in partnership relations

As a starting point we will give an overview about profound changes in union formation, the changing dominance between cohabitation and marriage from a partnership-cohort perspective on the one side, and from a birth cohort perspective on the other side. Then we will focus on transitions from cohabitation as first partnership, also using a partnership-cohort perspective.

#### *(Diffusion of cohabitation as first partnership)*

The distribution of first partnerships between marriage and cohabitation is shown according to the date of partnership formation (Table 1): in the 1970s, one-tenth of the respondents commenced their partnership careers with cohabitation; the rate increased to 20-30% in the 1980s and crossed the 50% mark sometime in the mid 1990s. By the beginning of the new century, roughly one-third opted for marriage, whereas (more than) two-thirds entered cohabitation as first partnership.

*Table 1*

Distribution of first type of partnership (cohabiting or marriage) by the time of partnership formation

Period of first partnership formation	Marriage	Cohabitation
1960-1964	96,9	3,1
1965-1969	94,3	5,7
1970-1974	92,5	7,5
1975-1979	88,9	11,1
1980-1984	79,6	20,4
1985-1989	66,6	33,4
1990-1994	55,7	44,3
1995-1999	37,5	62,5
2000-2004	30,0	70,0

Source: Own calculations, "Turning points of the life-course", 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> waves, *Demographic Research Institute*, 2001-2005

Employing a birth-cohort approach, changes of partnership formation could be seen in the ratios of women who formed different kind of unions by a specific age (20, 25 or 30). The proportion of those who have entered cohabitation in first partnership is clearly increasing and the proportion of women whose first union has been marriage is declining. The ratio of

woman who had never been in partnership give us indication whether postponement in partnership behavior could be measured. With regards to the three age limits, we see an increase in the proportion of never-partnered women, first among those born between 1967 and 1971. This provides evidence for the practice of postponement with regards to the timing of first partnership, but it is not as dynamic as it could be seen regarding childbearing

*Table 2*

Share of women who established first partnership as marriage or cohabitation, and the share of the never partnered prior to a specific age, by birth cohort

Type of first partnership	Birth cohorts of females						
	1950–1954	1955–1959	1960–1964	1965–1969	1970–1974	1975–1979	1980–1983
<i>Prior to age 20</i>							
Marriage	39,3	41,7	36,2	27,1	17,7	10,2	2,0
Cohabitation	4,2	5,2	8,0	13,6	21,1	18,3	18,8
Never partnered	56,5	53,1	55,9	59,3	61,2	71,5	79,2
<i>Prior to age 25</i>							
Marriage	78,7	79,6	70,6	59,8	40,1	23,8	-
Cohabitation	5,9	7,0	14,6	24,4	35,0	49,4	-
Never partnered	15,4	12,4	14,8	15,8	24,5	36,8	-
<i>Prior to age 30</i>							
Marriage	86,6	84,8	76,2	64,6	44,6	-	-
Cohabitation	6,4	9,1	17,5	27,6	42,9	-	-
Never partnered	7,0	6,1	6,2	7,8	12,5	-	-

Source: Own calculations, “Turning points of the life-course”, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> waves, Demographic Research Institute, 2001-2005

*(Transitions)*

Some changes in the stability and conversion rates of partnerships also took place (Table 3). On the one side, there was a decline in the stability of partnerships that started as cohabitation. The ratio of separation among cohabitation as first partnership increased from the ‘around 20’ percent to 30 percent. On the other side the rate of dissolution of direct marriage hardly changed. Taking into consideration that in the late 90s cohabitation as first partnership clearly surpassed marriage as first partnership (60 vs. 40 %), the instability of all partnership increased. The proportion of those who turn their cohabitation into marriage is at the same time constantly declining. The stability of cohabitation as first union has somewhat increased.

*Table 3.*

Transitions from first partnership as cohabitation until the 60<sup>th</sup> months after its onset, by the time of the initiation of first partnership

Transitions	Time of first partnership					
	1970–1974	1975–1979	1980–1984	1985–1989	1990-1994	1995–1999
Permanent cohabitation	(18.8)	17.5	20.5	25.1	28.4	27.8

Marriage after cohabitation	(55.2)	42.0	47.5	53.1	47.5	42.0
Cohab.-Marr.-Divorce	(4.2)	3.5	7.1	3.4	3.0	3.0
Separation of cohabitants	(21.9)	18.2	15.5	18.3	21.1	27.2

*Source:* Own calculations, “Turning points of the life-course”, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> waves, *Demographic Research Institute*, 2001-2005

### Causal models: what influence transitions to and from

We would like to understand and filter cultural factors at two turning points: at choosing the first type of cohabitation, and at transforming cohabitation into marriage. Current theory on partnership formation focuses on two ‘family’ of other determinants of cohabitation, and types of partnership. The economic theory of partnership behaviour expresses the importance of labour market position (type of activity and uncertainty of job) and earnings. Uncertain structural positions support to choose cohabitation, if any partnership, and also insecurity ‘prevent’ to turn cohabitation into marriage. Cultural theories on the other side, especially the “second demographic transition” stress the importance of ideational factors. Stronger attachment to individualism, gender equality, and non-religiousness assumed to support to choose cohabitation, and to stay in cohabitation. Regarding the transition from cohabitation into marriage a factor other nature could come into play, the quality of partnership. According to the concept of ‘trial marriage’, a higher risk of becoming married should be found among those cohabitants who are more satisfied with their partnership (high partnership quality). In order to test this last assumption all other structural and ideational factors should be controlled. According to socialization theory the experience of divorce (of the parents) should be taken also into consideration.

Two waves of the Hungarian Generation and Gender Survey enable us to overcome the problem of “selection” vs. “adaptation”. As long the dependent variables will be measured between the first two waves, the independent variables (objective and ideational features of the respondents) will be measured at the first wave, before the events of partnership formation. Therefore they could be seen as “selection” factors.

We will build up multivariate models to test our hypothesis with the following factors:

- 1) Dependent variables in the model explaining the selection between cohabitation and marriage as first partnership: labour market status, personal income position, parental divorce (socialization), gender role attitudes, partnership ideals, assessment of advantages of cohabitation vs. marriage;

2) Dependent variables in the model explaining the transition from cohabitation to marriage: pregnancy, labour market status, partners labour market status, personal income position, parental divorce, gender role attitudes, partnership ideals, assessment of advantages of marriage, satisfaction with partnership, intensity of quarrels in partnership.