

Changing Patterns Of Entry Into Employment And Motherhood In Poland - A Cross Cohort Comparison.

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In the research on transition to adulthood, the entry into employment and the entry into parenthood have been recognised as important social markers. Special attention in the studies on the life course has been paid to the variability of these markers: their dispersion, sequencing and the degree of co-occurrence (Shanahan, 2000). However, existing studies describe mainly the experience of Western European countries, whereas the evidence concerning developments in the Central and Eastern Europe remains scattered and based mostly on the description of aggregate statistics in selected life course domains. Gaining insight into the way that entry into employment and family careers were shaped in country, where institutional and economic conditions used to be completely different than in Western part of Europe, but changed very rapidly within last two decades, may provide interesting background for discussion of the evolution of pathways to adult roles in modern societies. A case study of Poland can be considered as a valuable contribution in this respect. The transformation of the Polish economy after 1989 has brought about important changes for the range of opportunities and risks that young people used to meet at the beginning of their employment and family careers. On one hand, the shift from the centrally planned economy to the market economy meant that the graduates could strive for career goals which were beyond the reach of previous generations. On the other hand, those who were not able or willing to invest in education before their labour market entry, had to struggle with much greater difficulties in finding stable jobs, than it was the case before the transformation.

In parallel to the changes of situation on the labour market, the changes in family formation process were observed. Within the 15-year period following socialism collapse, Poland moved from the group of the high fertility countries to the lowest-low fertility group. In some studies it has been suggested that the fertility drop was linked to the postponement of childbearing caused by increasing difficulties in the labour market integration of young people and the uncertainty accompanying early employment careers' formation in turbulent transformation period (for example Bühler and Fraczak 2004, Kotowska et al. 2007). A contrasting perspective is proposed in studies inspired by the second demographic transition theory, which focuses on the role of educational expansion and underlines the growing

impact of education attainment and the importance of striving for self-fulfillment - also within employment career - in modernising societies (Jozwiak et al., 2003). However, again, the evidence – even at the descriptive level – showing associations between the early employment career events and family formation, remains scarce.

The aim of this study is to describe how the patterns of labour market entry and motherhood entry in Poland changed over the last two decades. Tracing variation in patterns observed for successive cohorts of women, i.e. comparing entry into labour market and family careers during the socialist period and after the transition to market economy can provide further insights into the mechanisms in which the early life course trajectories are shaped. In order to examine and compare in a quantitative way the structuring of employment and family career entries trajectories, Sequence Analysis combined with Optimal Matching Algorithm is applied. This relatively new in social science analytical technique allows to examine the labour market and motherhood entry jointly, view them as a process rather than as a transition between single states and thus, to take a holistic approach. To follow the objective of finding the main patterns of early labour market and family careers and assessing their prevalence across cohorts, Sequence Analysis was combined with clustering technique. In the second step I turn to data on the individual level for more detailed inspection of determinants of the entry into employment or parenthood in dynamic framework with competing risk model.

The hypotheses derived from the theories on the life course predict that the profound change of institutional and economic conditions should be reflected in the diversification of patterns of entry into family and labour market careers. The results of this study confirm this expectation and point at destandardisation of entry into these two domains across two last decades. Before the onset of reforms that introduced market rules, young women used to enter into both: stable job and motherhood directly after graduation. After the socialism collapse and withdrawal of the state from employment provision and regulation, this type of employment and motherhood career entry became much less frequent. The empirical findings suggest that the diminishing role of a pattern that used to dominate before transition was linked to the polarisation of female career entries. On one hand, some women still entered employment quite early, but starting a job was no longer associated with entry into motherhood and furthermore the employment that they entered was of different nature. Much more often the jobs they started after graduation were no longer provided within permanent, but rather fixed term contracts, which give less financial stability and might require more effort to remain in employment. On the other hand, a substantial share of women entered motherhood soon after graduation, but then met difficulties in the integration into the labour

market. The above described changes in patterns of employment and motherhood entries suggest as well that in the market economy pursuing employment and family career goals might have become – at least in the very early stage of the life course – competing to more extent than they used to be before socialism collapse.

The theories on the life course do not provide detailed explanation concerning the mechanisms that drive the heterogeneity increase of careers after withdrawal of institutions regulating public or private life domains. However, one of the possible explanations of rising diversity is offered in the economic literature, which links individual choices and outcomes to the level of human capital. Individuals who invest more in their knowledge and skills are offered higher wages and find jobs sooner than the lower educated. The differentiation of income rewards to skills increases heterogeneity of choices concerning the timing of family formation. For women, who acquired high qualifications, the level of opportunity costs of childbearing is higher and in their case it is rational to postpone the entry into motherhood and focus on the labour market career. On the other hand, lower educated women are not confronted with high opportunity costs, and therefore they can be expected to bear children relatively early. However, in the centrally planned economy, with its high wage compression and low returns to education, the opportunity costs of bearing children didn't use to be differentiated across educational groups to much extent. Therefore, one could expect that the diversity in choices of higher educated women concerning career entry increased after the socialism collapse.

The closer examination of the mechanisms of assignment of individuals to the career entry conducted with the competing risk model seems to confirm the predictions derived from the theory. The university graduates had higher entry rate into employment, they postponed becoming a mother, and this effect turned out to be relatively stronger for more recent cohorts, suggesting that a change of the childbearing behaviour within the group of higher educated women might have additionally contributed to the increasing diversity in patterns of transition to adulthood pictured with the outcomes of sequence analysis. On the contrary, women with primary education had significantly lower hazard rates of entry into employment and their hazard rate of entry into motherhood was relatively high.