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## Influences of values and partnership quality on separation

### *Abstract*

Massive changes in partnership formation and development took place in Hungary in the last two decades. Cohabitation outweighed marriage clearly among first union, cohabitation as an alternative to marry also seems to increase, the incentive to marry declined, however, at the same time the incentive to divorce didn't changed, in fact increased. All these developments express the growing instability of partnerships. In our study we would like to analyze which factors contribute to the dissolution of first cohabitation. It is known that economic uncertainty (fluctuation on the labor market) and the insecurity of social positions support the proliferations of cohabitation, and may contribute to instability of cohabitation. Less is known about the influence of subjective factors, although often is assumed, that values of individuality, supports the cohabitation as alternative of marriage, and may increase the growing rate of separation as well. We will devote special attention to the factors of latter kind, we will take into consideration overall values orientation and attitudes towards family life, and stress the importance of partnership quality. The latter is operationalized by satisfaction with partnership, intensity of quarrels, intention to separate. We assume, that partnership quality and value orientation will play a significant role in explaining separation among first cohabitants. In our analysis we will use the two waves of the Hungarian Generation and Gender Survey, the "Turning points of the life course". Attitudes and partnership quality will be measured at the first wave, separation, the dependent event, will be measured in the 3 years time window after the first wave. We will use event history analysis in our investigation.

## *Extended abstract*

### 1. About the factors of partnership instability

Partnership dissolution is associated with several demographic, socio-economic and psychological factors. Many studies have identified factors which are associated with an increasing likelihood of divorce, but few studies have looked specifically at separations among cohabiting couples - these may be similar to those for married couples but not necessarily.

Usually the following factors have been identified as increasing the likelihood of divorce: early marriage, premarital cohabitation, premarital birth, having children early in marriage, experience of marital breakdown among parents, having been married previously, experience of living apart, poor economic backgrounds, low educational achievement, inconsistency between couples social classes, access to alternative partners, access to an alternative home (eg parents' home). Furthermore, previous research has found that the probability of marital disruption is changing during the marriage: it is the lowest in the first year and the highest between the duration of five to ten years and then decreases again. Divorce risk varies also over calendar time which is the result of modifications in divorce legislation as well as changes in the socio-economic and cultural context. Previous researches found that demographic factors are more significant predictors of divorce than socio-economic ones. Only some research focused of subjective factors of the respondents, but found that these also play significant role: partnership quality (satisfaction), and value orientation ("conservative attitude concerning partnership") had clear significant effect in multivariate models.

There is much less investigation about breaking up cohabitation. We can assume that most of the factors experienced in case of divorce also work among cohabiting partners. However we could also assume, that some factors play different role in case of cohabitation.

### 2. Description of changing partnership instability

Since the mid 90s more people start her/his partnership carrier in cohabitation as in marriage. Of course many of them will be transformed into marriage, and could be seen as "trial marriage" as the popular opinion holds it. One could argue, that differences are only in the type of the institutionalization, but their meaning for the partners are the same. We are interested in the

stability vs. instability of partnership, therefore we compare the two type of first partnership according their propensity to stay or to break.

Considering the developments, different developments could be identified. Firstly the fragility of cohabitation as first union clearly increased. Among the most recent establishments, closely one third (30.3%) of cohabitation as first partnership will be dissolved within five years. Secondly, the transition of cohabitation into marriage decreased. Thirdly, the ratio of permanent cohabitation first increased and than leveled off around 27-28 percent of all cohabitation as first partnership.

As long as cohabitation today make up the bigger share of first partnership the dissolubility of the first union, and consequently partnership instability increased.<sup>1</sup> This development highlights the increasing importance of our topic.

*Table 1*

Transitions from first partnership within 60 months after initiation, by partnership-cohorts (%)

Partnership type and type of transitions	Year entering first partnership						
	1965–1969	1970–1974	1975–1979	1980–1984	1985–1989	1990-1994	1995–1999
<i>Partnership situation after 60 month of start of the first partnership</i>							
Partnership alive	92.3	91.3	90.9	87.5	87.0	82.8	78.1
Separation	7.7	8.7	9.1	12.5	13.0	17.2	21.5
<i>Partnership situation after 60 month of start of direct marriage as the first partnership</i>							
Lives in the same marriage	93.7	92.7	92.7	90.2	91.4	88.2	91.8
Divorced	6.3	7.3	7.3	9.8	8.6	11.8	8.2
<i>Partnership situation after 60 month of start of cohabitation as the first partnership</i>							
Permanent partnership		(75.0)*	78.9	77.0	78.3	75.9	69.7
Separation		(25.0)	21.1	23.0	21.7	24.1	30.3
<i>Transitions of first cohabitation within 60 months after initiation</i>							
Permanent cohabitation	-	(18.8)	17.5	20.5	25.1	28.4	27.8
Cohabitation then marriage	-	(55.2)	42.0	47.5	53.1	47.5	42.0
Cohabitation – marriage – divorce	-	(4.2)	3.5	7.1	3.4	3.0	3.0
Separation	-	(21.9)	18.2	15.5	18.3	21.1	27.2

*Source:* Own calculation, „Turning points of the life course” 1. and 2. waves, HCSO DRI, 2001–2005.

### 3. Data and method

The analysis is based on the two waves of the Hungarian GGS survey, named “Turning points of the life course”. Attitudes and partnership quality will be measured at the first wave, separation, the dependent event, will be measured in the 3 years time window after the first wave. The first wave was conducted in 2001, the second wave in 2004/2005.

Our method is event history analysis. The *dependent variable* in our study is separation of cohabitation as first partnership. The *process time* (the basic time factor) is the time elapsed from the first interview until the separation, measured in months. Observations are *censored* in two situations: at the date of the second interview, if there is no event, and at the death of a partner, when the partnership ends due to this reason.

We apply a *piecewise constant event history model* in our analysis, which assumes that hazard rates are constant in each segment of the basic time factor but can vary across them. Results are presented in a form of exponentiated coefficients, which are interpreted as *relative risks*.

Covariates

Independent variables:

*Control variables:*

- type of the first partnership
- duration of first partnership until first interview
- number of children
- living with parents
- type of settlement (urbanization)
- education
- parents' divorce (socialization)

*Explaining variables:*

- Changes in economic activity status (time-varying)
- Partner's economic status at the time of the first interview
- Partnership quality

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<sup>1</sup> And we have good ground to assume, that the consequence of this development on fertility is not neglectable.

Satisfaction with partnership

Intensity of quarrels

Intention to separate

Intention to marry

Values, attitudes

Gender role values

Measure of uncertainty

Partnership ideals

Index of subjective assessment of cohabitation vs. marriage

Religiousness