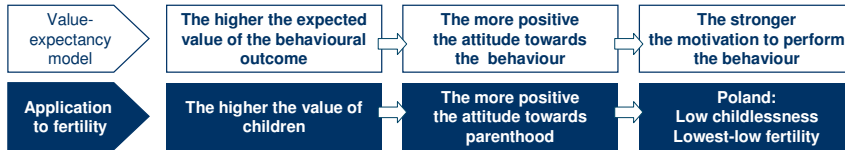


# Values of Children and the Life Course: The Case of Poland.



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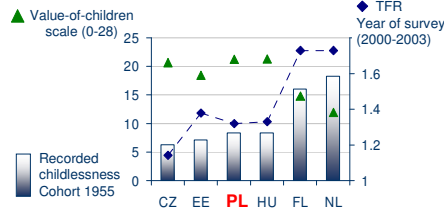
## INTRODUCTION



### QUESTION:

What values do young people in Poland attach to childbearing?

Can we improve our understanding of the childbearing behaviour by studying these values?



Value-of-children Scale: Fokkema & Esveldt (2008) Based on PPA Survey  
Childlessness levels: Sobotka 2004

## METHOD AND SAMPLE

### Qualitative approach

- 48 semi-structured in-depth interviews
- Conducted: August 2004 – July 2005
- Large city context (Warsaw) – modern and liberal environment

### Interview guideline includes questions on:

- Individual fertility desires and intentions
- Costs and benefits of children
- Experiences of and views on childbearing
- Views on childlessness and childless people



Couples Living Apart Together  
No children  
Women's age: 20-28

Couples cohabiting or married  
No children  
Women's age: 22-29

Couples cohabiting or married with 1 child  
Women's age: 26-30

The sample is differentiated by education, 2 levels:  
(1) up to secondary (2) studying at university or tertiary completed

## FINDINGS

### VALUES OF THE FIRST CHILD = BENEFITS FROM PARENTHOOD

What is gained by parenthood and at which stage of the life-course are the benefits recognized?

Life-course development

#### Immediate benefits

##### Adult status

"If I had a baby it would be different, they would see me more as an adult person" (Fem, 24, childless)

##### Constitution of the family

"We would become a family, as we are not a family yet" (Fem, 27, childless)

##### Binding relationship

"A child got us even closer together" (Fem, 28, 1 child)

#### Life-long: Positive feelings and emotions

"The future with children seems more positive, because we have a family, casue we're together" (Male, 30, childless)

"A child gives us security in old age" (Male, 32, childless)

"We need some kind of continuation of our line" (Fem, 28, childless)

#### Delayed benefits

##### Protection against loneliness

##### Support in old age

##### Inheritors

Immediate benefits of parenthood are related to the fulfilment of the „natural, normal“ life course



"Having a child is the next stage in an individual development" (Male, 20, childless)

"When you love the other person, it is just that way that you want to have a baby with this person and you grow up to it" (Male, 29, childless)

"Couples with children... the next stage. It's just natural for me" (Fem, 28, childless)

The ultimate and most threatening consequences of not following the normal life course is empty and sad old-age



"The fun ends one day and everyone turns 40 one day" (Male, 28, childless)

"When they retire and they will feel this emptiness, it will be too late" (Fem, 26, 1 child)

"When she's 60 or 50, her husband will leave her, her parents will die, (...) her friends will have their lives... and she will be alone" (Fem, 24, childless)

Even when the positive attitude towards having an offspring seems to be missing – the above beliefs fuel childbearing motivation  
"I don't want to have children. But I will. I surely will but only because of conformist and egoistic motivations." (Fem, 23, childless)  
Conformist – to do what is „normal“. Egoistic – to have security in old age

### VALUES OF AN ADDITIONAL CHILD

- The vast majority of the respondents want to have two children, but the values of the second (next) child are presented in a very different manner.
- The values are not discussed in relation to the parents' perception of their own life course
- The second child brings the benefits first and foremost to the first child.

#### An only child = spoilt and selfish

"I think two kids is an ideal solution. So that the child is not an egoist" (Fem, 29, childless)

#### Siblings' company and support

"The siblings can always help each other" (Male, 28, childless)



#### Gender composition

"Surely two children: a boy and a girl" (Male, 30, 1 child)  
"A brother, to protect his sister" (Fem, 30, 1 child)

### CONCLUSIONS

- We propose considering the values of parenthood in relation to the moment of the individual life course, at which they are activated. We identify two key categories of benefits associated with childbearing. They are related to the mage of the „normal“ life course and the expectations as to its last stage: old-age.
- Values of the second (next) child, however, are not discussed in relation to the parental life course. Even though, most of the respondents want to have two children – one kid seems sufficient to complete the „normal“ life course and provide some protection for the future.
- It is therefore likely that when parents face any constrains, they abandon the plan to have more children and stop at one. Even if such situation is not an ideal one – it may be an acceptable solution.
- This may improve our understanding why – at least in the Polish context – low childlessness occurs with lowest-low fertility.