THE MEANING OF COHABITATION AND MARRIAGE IN SLOVAKIA: COMPARING GENERATIONS

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Prevalence of cohabitation
  - census data

- Attitudes towards cohabitation
  - survey data: EVS 1999, ISSP 2002

- The meaning of cohabitation and marriage
  - qualitative data: in-depth interviews
QUALITATIVE CASE-STUDY: SAMPLING

- **The fieldwork carried out** October 2005 to January 2006
- **Contacting** of women in the mother centres, announcement at the webpage
- **Sampling strategy**
  - gradual purposive sampling, start with typical cases
  - snowball for specific cases (through social networks of the interviewees): single mothers, working mothers, and for contrasting cases: 2 childless women
- **Mother-daughter dyads**
- **Problems:** to achieve a sample consisting of the dyads only, to include single mothers for the older generation
Qualitative case-study: Sample structure [1]

- 39 in-depth interviews: 29 biographical and 10 semi-structured
  - 12 with women who started a family and had their first child in the 1970s = ‘the mothers’
  - 27 with women born in the 1970s = ‘the daughters’
  - 7 mother-daughter dyads
**Qualitative Case-Study: Sample Structure [2]**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Mothers (N=12)</th>
<th>Daughters (N=27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational attainment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary SLS</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious identity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing RC</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-practicing</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intended number of children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 1-2</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3, 3+</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of siblings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2+</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Premarital conception</strong>*</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extra-marital birth</strong>*</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cohabitation</strong></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SLS stands for the school-leaving certificate (maturita), RC for Roman Catholic.
* Only population at risk included (without childless women).
QUALITATIVE CASE-STUDY: INTERVIEWING and ANALYSIS

- Biographical interviewing
  - Generative narrative question:
    “I would like you to tell me about the part of your life, which is connected to your family, how did you start your family and how the children came about. You can start at the moment, when you started to think about having a family or about having children.”
  - Autonomous narration followed by additional questioning – questions to further elaborate the narrative and external questions

- Analysis: coding procedures of the Grounded theory, within-case and across cases, constant contrasting, semantic networks
If I got pregnant it wouldn’t matter then

I didn’t want to get unexpectedly pregnant

Myth of infertility during breastfeeding

I want to take rest, it’s tiring

I want to give the best to my son

You have to lower your standard

We were poor after my sister was born

My mother left me when I was child

It’s tiring

I don’t want 2nd child

I don’t want a child

He made the decision

The doctor pushed me

We planned it

I stopped taking it after wedding

That changed everything for me

Agreed to have a child

“Without children the life or partnership doesn’t have sense”

He was not supporting me during the pregnancy

I thought of studying at uni

I was bounded by my income

We wanted to save a bit

At that time we didn’t want a child

I didn’t have idea when

Now I have

I knew I didn’t want it being young girl (20)

I didn’t think of having a child

I was scared

You can achieve more

The child suffers then

The child is an obstacle

Shouldn’t have unless necessary

Important sequence: Education – experience – job – child

Have time

Experience

Education

Job

Time for us

vacations

friends

We wanted to enjoy life a little longer

FINANCES

EDUCATION

PARTNER

HEALTH PROBLEMS

CONTRACEPTION

CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCE

SEMANTIC NETWORK OF PAULA, 28, 1ST CHILD AT AGE 26
COHABITATION OF NEVER-MARRIED MEN AND WOMEN

Cohabitations of never-married men and women at census

Proportion cohabiting never-married women by age at census

Source: Pilinská (2005)  
Source: censuses 1980–2001, author’s computations
CHANGING RESOLUTION TO NON-MARITAL PREGNANCY?

Premarital conceptions and % non-marital births

Non-marital births by educational attainment of the mother at birth

Source: Potančková (2009)
COHABITATION AND INCREASING VARIETY OF LIFE-COURSE PATHWAYS

- Increasing variability in ordering of reproductive life events
- Changing timing of life transitions in young adulthood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequencing of reproductive life events</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Daughters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 12</td>
<td>N = 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 12 %</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating - Marriage - 1st conception - 1st birth</td>
<td>7 58%</td>
<td>9 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating - 1st conception - Marriage - 1st birth</td>
<td>4 33%</td>
<td>4 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating - 1st conception - 1st birth</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>4 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabitation - Marriage - 1st conception - 1st birth</td>
<td>1 9%</td>
<td>3 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabitation - 1st conception - Marriage - 1st birth</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabitation - 1st conception - 1st birth - Marriage</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ATTITUDES TOWARDS MARRIAGE AND COHABITATION

- Marriage highly valued (88% disagree to marriage being an outdated institution)
- 50% women, 45% men disagree to couples living without marriage
- 44% women, 52% men approve premarital cohabitation
- 77% think partners ought to get married when having children
- Approval to cohabitation differs between men and women, educational groups, religious identity and practice
- Experiences and attitudes towards cohabitation differ across cohorts
COHABITATION – OLDER INTERVIEWEES

“Well, before [in the 1970s] it was kind of WEIRD because (3) before it was the way that * people did not have a reason to live out of marriage. They even had advantages when they got married. They could take newly-wed loans and that was an important thing.” Tanja’s mother, G1, marr, 1B 25 (original emphasis)

- unusual
- moral code, social pressure
- housing conditions, living arrangements of young adults in early life course, when starting a family
- social policies
- marriage = a pathway to leaving parental home, gaining independence from the parents
COHABITATION – OLDER INTERVIEWEES

- if agree – only to premarital cohabitation
- high acceptance of premarital sex and widespread practice did not lead to spreading cohabitation in the 1970s
- make difference between marriage and cohabitation – what is cohabitation?
- cohabitation – a threat to traditional marriage
COHABITATION – YOUNGER INTERVIEWEES

important transition in partnership

a testing phase (between dating and marriage)

“I think that it is a very valuable experience. To test in this way to live together before they have kids and get married. Because wedding is more kind of a social event, it does not play such a role, but before they have a child, they should definitely try it because it’s something totally different.” Margita, G2, marr, 1B 25

premarital cohabitation prevents divorce

should become a universal premarital experience
COHABITATION – CATEGORIES OF DISAPPROVAL

- no legal protection
- irresponsible behaviour towards the partner
- high risk of union dissolution = unstable
- tradition = not a normal phenomenon in Slovak society
- against the religious moral code
  - all younger interviewees who identified themselves deeply religious disapproved cohabitation
  - contrasting culture among deeply religious people?

- disapproval to raising children in cohabitation
CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

- cohabitation of never-married persons started as alternative life-style, after 1990s and among younger cohorts premarital cohabitation becoming conformist behaviour
- weakening social pressure, approval across young cohorts – further increase in future
- changing life-course pathways, individualisation of the life course
- emphasis to partnership stability, reaction to the perceived increasing instability of marriage and divorce
- urban phenomenon?
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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RESEARCH DESIGN

- **Qualitative methods in demography:** until recently applied in developing countries, poor-quality data
- **Most frequented purpose:** to improve quality of survey data (Bozon 2006)

- QL research methods in fertility studies, European context:
  - Fertility choices and reproductive decision-making, the influence of kin and social networks and social norms on reproductive decisions
  - Interviewing techniques – mostly semi-structured interviewing, focus groups
QUALITATIVE CASE-STUDY: INTERVIEWING

- Biographical interviewing
  - Generative narrative question:
    “I would like you to tell me about the part of your life, which is connected to your family, how did you start your family and how the children came about. You can start at the moment, when you started to think about having a family or about having children.”
  - Autonomous narration followed by additional questioning – questions to further elaborate the narrative and external questions
  - Life trajectory sketch (biogram) and a short questionnaire (main personal data)