



**School for Sociological  
Doctoral Studies**

## **COLLECTION OF THESES**

**Ivett SZALMA**

**The effect of labour market position on the formation of the first  
partnership and transition to parenthood in Hungary**

Ph.D. Thesis

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Budapest, 2011

**Institute of Sociology and Social Policy**

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## **I. Introduction to the conceptual framework of the research area**

Nowadays one of the most remarkable demographic changes in Hungary is that the number of marriages drops, and marriages shift to older ages. While earlier Hungary belonged to the Hajnal-type Eastern European marriage pattern, today marriages are spectacularly postponed. While in 1995 the average age of men at their first marriage was 25.79 years, and that of women 23.36 years, during the course of 10 years, by 2005, this number had increased by 3.5 years in case of both sexes, to 26.72 years for women and 29.35 years for men (Eurostat, 2006a). Besides the rise of the average age at marriage the number of marriages drops, along with the spread of partnerships, especially among young age groups.

Apart from the transformation of relationships, the so called ‘postponing’ attitude is also demonstrable in connection with childbearing. One result of marrying at older ages is late childbearing, and the generated decrease in fertility. According to data on the website of Eurostat the average age of Hungarian women at childbirths rose by almost 2.5 years during the course of 10 years. In 1995 the average of women was 26.31, which rose to 28.70 years by 2006 (Eurostat 2006b). Although compared to other European countries women’s age at becoming mothers is not extremely old (e.g. it is above 30 years in Sweden and Norway), the dynamics of the change definitely deserves special attention. The postponement of the first childbearing by 2.3 years happened only during a decade, and this tendency seems to continue.

The present dissertation aims to analyse how first relationship formation and childbearing are influenced by labour market changes and individual labour market position, in other words, what role people’s labour market position plays in first relationship formation and in becoming parents. The topic is analysed both on practical level and on the level of attitudes.

Some of the Hungarian researchers claim that although the reasons underlying the differentiation of relationships are quite similar to concepts explaining the decline of fertility, they are not the same (Bukodi 2004; Spéder 2006; Spéder-Kapitány 2006), thus, the exact analysis of the relations between changes of relationships and childbearing behaviour remains to come. The present paper is unable to examine all the reasons influencing first relationship formation and first childbearing. For instance, no attention is devoted to moving away from

the parents' house, or the effect of social policy, the change of values, the effect of financial background, moreover, all the aspects of labour market position<sup>1</sup> will not be dealt with, either.

Several researchers have highlighted the increasing role of the job market on relationships and also on childbearing. According to Kalmijn (1994) in postmodern societies not only the pattern of assortative mating, but also the probability of marriage itself is even more influenced by one's job market status. To McDonald (2000) and Mills – Blossfeld's (2005) view, the postponement of childbearing is mainly due to unstable labour market position.

### ***1.1 First permanent relationship formation***

Surveys conducted in Hungary prove that the institute of marriage is still considered to be positive by society. Regarding the suggested form of life Hungarians are definitely in favour of marriage. Most cohabiting couples also plan to get married after a while (Pongrácz–Spéder 2003).

What is the reason behind the postponement of marriage, despite the fact that young people opt for it as the best form of life? Traditional values still prevail, i.e. that marriage is serious, the sign of adulthood, requiring a consolidated lifestyle and stable financial background. Furthermore, the expectation towards men to be the breadwinners of the family still remains. Young people, however, because of their unstable future, are less and less able to make long commitments. They cannot afford legitimate cohabitation until they have a secure financial status. The situation of men is especially harsh, since fulfilling the role of the main breadwinner in a society where women are similarly involved in the labour market is becoming more and more difficult. The job market is continuously contracting; opportunities are decreasing, while competition is growing. Establishing a stable background today takes longer than before. This is partly due to the fact that young people study for longer and longer, which makes it difficult for them to start their careers. Consequently, values could survive, while society shows a growing tolerance towards cohabitation without marriage, postponing marriage and childbirths out of wedlock. At the same time, society still makes a distinction between married and single people. With unmarried men and women society is

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<sup>1</sup> There is a deliberate distinction between labour market position and labour market status. Labour market position means the form of connection to the labour market, while labour market status rather refers to the index developed by Blau and Duncan (1967) for measuring *job or labour market status*. The index reflects a regression value calculated from the average wage paid in a certain job and the necessary qualifications to fulfil such a position.

quite indulgent, and by no means expects consistence or plans from them. On the contrary, married people are definitely expected to “*have sown their wild oats*” (Cseh-Szombathy 1979; Utasi 2002). Hence, young people are quite rational when they decide to postpone marriage, avoiding the control of society as long as possible.

In Hungary, Zsolt Spéder and Tiborné Pongrácz (2003) differentiate between two kinds of partnerships. One is the old kind, preferred by divorcees, widows and widowers, especially in the country. The authors define the other or new kind as that preceding/replacing marriage in the lives of the youth. Since it is a new sort of phenomenon, obviously it is top-down, i.e. the upper social layer is the pattern to be followed, however, major differences could not be found between the two groups. Utasi (2001) also found that people with better job market positions choose cohabitation. They are the ones who, due to their labour market status, can afford cohabitation without marriage and can freely choose non-prevailing forms of living (Utasi 2001, 2004). During her analyses Utasi did not make any distinction between the formations of first, second, third, etc. relationships.

At the same time, domestic research has found that less favourable labour market situations do not allow for the establishment of long-term relationships, i.e. marriages (Bukodi 2004; Szalma-Róbert 2007). Young people mostly establish partnerships when their labour-market position is still unsteady, so this life period does not allow them to make such definitive decisions as getting married. Secure jobs promote marriage. In this respect, employment and form of life are homologous, since labour market flexibility often goes along with less conventional types of relationships (Sántha, 2009). Surveys conducted about this issue in Hungary in the 1980s pointed out (Carlson and Klinger 1987) that the people living in extra-marital relationships come from the most disadvantageous social layers.

Reconciling school attendance with relationship formation is difficult, on the one hand due to the big differences regarding expectations, and on the other hand, uncertainty factors included in specific stages of the curriculum make the timing of career launching unpredictable (Bukodi 2001; Róbert-Bukodi 2005). Beyond doubt, in modern societies the student status is one of the biggest obstacles of marriage.

In line with international tendencies, the major traits of the transition from education to work are uncertainty and flexibility (Róbert 2002). While earlier it was easy to decide whether someone is ‘still a student so does not work yet’ or ‘no longer student, but has a job’, nowadays a special kind of diversification is demonstrable, and the status ‘does not study any more, but has no job yet either’ has also appeared. Labour market status has also become more varied and flexible. Recent graduates often face employment by limited duration

contracts, making the future unstable. In many cases young people are left with no other choice to enter the labour market than to become self-employed as only resort (Róbert 2002).

As Péter Róbert and Blossfeld (1995) point out: learning as such has a negative influence on relationship formation and not the acquired high educational level. The aforementioned is another refutation of Becker's hypothesis about women buying out marriage.

## ***1.2 First childbearing***

The vast majority of the Hungarian population thinks of having children as a vital, indispensable part of life. Although it is the same in most European countries, the rate in Hungary is higher than the average (Kapitány–Spéder 2009). Despite that, according to data from 2008 Hungary is one of the least fertile countries of the world. The only EU countries where the childbearing propensity is lower than in Hungary are Poland and Slovakia (Kapitány – Spéder 2009).

At the beginning of the 1990s Olga Tóth (1993) found out about when women think it is ideal to have children. She found that the longer the time since a woman left school, the better the time for childbearing. In other words, instead of an absolute age, it is much more the occurrence of specific life events that determine the scheduling of childbirths. According to an interview survey carried out in Budapest in 2004 involving 19 couples (i.e. 38 people), most of whom were born between 1973–1975, the most important criteria listed owning a flat, secure income and having a stable job, while psychological readiness, certain level of maturity and a happy relationship were scarcely mentioned (Hollós–Bernardi 2009).

Students with different levels of education finish their studies at quite different ages. The postponement of childbearing until the completion of studies already implicates that people with higher levels of education become parents at older ages, consequently the time range available for them, before reaching the upper biological and social age limit, to have children is narrower.

In Hungary the indicators of fertility propensity show that childbearing is not in the least similar in society; if we divide the population into homogenous groups according to educational level we find different numbers of children. This phenomenon suggests that the different groups of society have different rates of fertility. Since the indicators are general characteristics of the specific groups, it means that the underlying reasons are macro level ones (Husz 2006).

From the viewpoint of fertility a paradox situation has developed in Hungary, since based on rational considerations we would expect fertility to decrease if the educational level is higher. However, studies prove that people with secondary and higher educational levels have about the same number of children. Therefore, the fertility paradox is about why people with secondary education bear no more children, since their opportunity costs are lower than those of graduates.

The childbearing propensity of employed women declined after the regime change, partly due to fact that a lower rate of women found employment, and because the propensity of women remaining on the labour market also decreased (Spéder 2003).

Therefore, the qualitative change of the labour market resulted in the change of childbearing habits by employed women of the appropriate age, i.e. they have fewer children and first childbearing is postponed. One consequence is that a growing number of women insert a longer period of work between starting work and having children. This does not simply mean the postponement of births, but rather the rescheduling of work and family careers in one's life course.



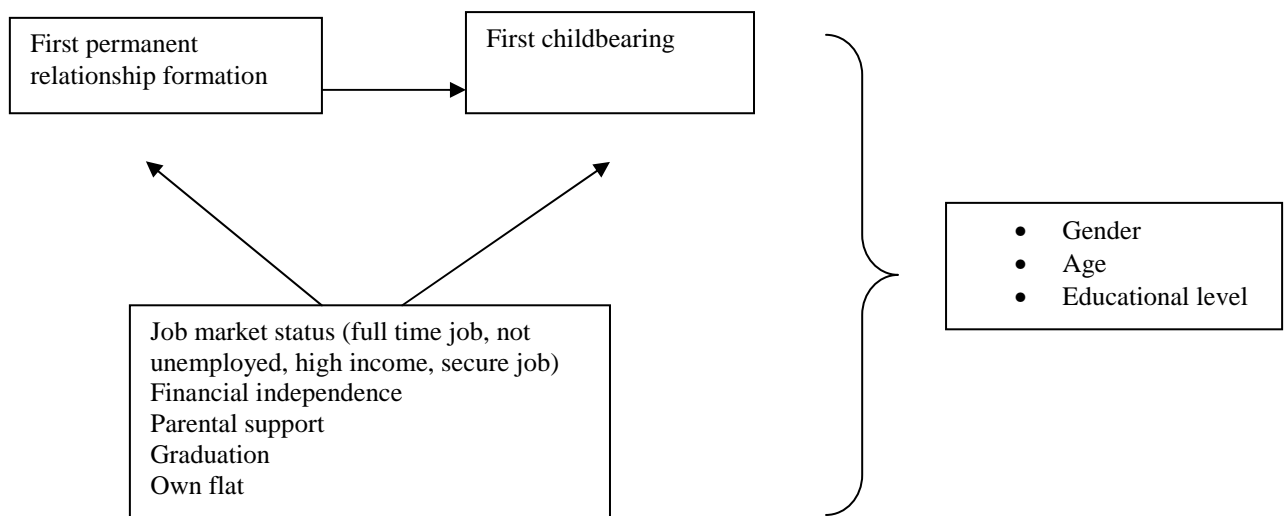
## II. Methodological framework

The scope of the present research includes first relationship formation and first childbearing only, taking the supposition that factors affecting first relationships and childbearing are different from those affecting further ones. For example, at second, third etc. relationships formation several factors are present that were negligible at the first, or had a different weight, such as children from the previous relationship, older average age, the shrinking role of parental background, or the appreciation of personal achievements during one's life course, etc. Having a second or third child depends on whether the parents would like a younger brother or sister, and also on the experience they gathered as parents.

The aim of the study is to survey the effect of the job market both on the level of attitudes and practice. Thus, first of all, public opinion about the necessary factors of marriage is examined. The two events (marriage/childbearing) are analysed separately, therefore based on previous research results (Pongráczné – S. Molnár 1997; Spéder – Kapitány 2006; Szalma 2010), relationship formation is supposed to potentially affect childbearing. Dependent variables (what is needed for marriage and childbearing?) are explained by labour market status, financial independence, graduation, owning a flat and parental support. Additionally, differences between groups with specific social characteristics (gender, age, educational level) were also investigated in the question of what they regard as important for the two phenomena concerned (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

### Research concept: level of attitudes



Besides the level of attitudes the paper explores what actually influences the formation of the first relationship, and how labour market status affects the choice between entering or not entering a relationship, and if entering, the choice between partnership or marriage as first permanent relationship (Figure 1).

**Figure 2**  
**Causal structure of analyses to be performed**  
**Competing model of first relationship formation**

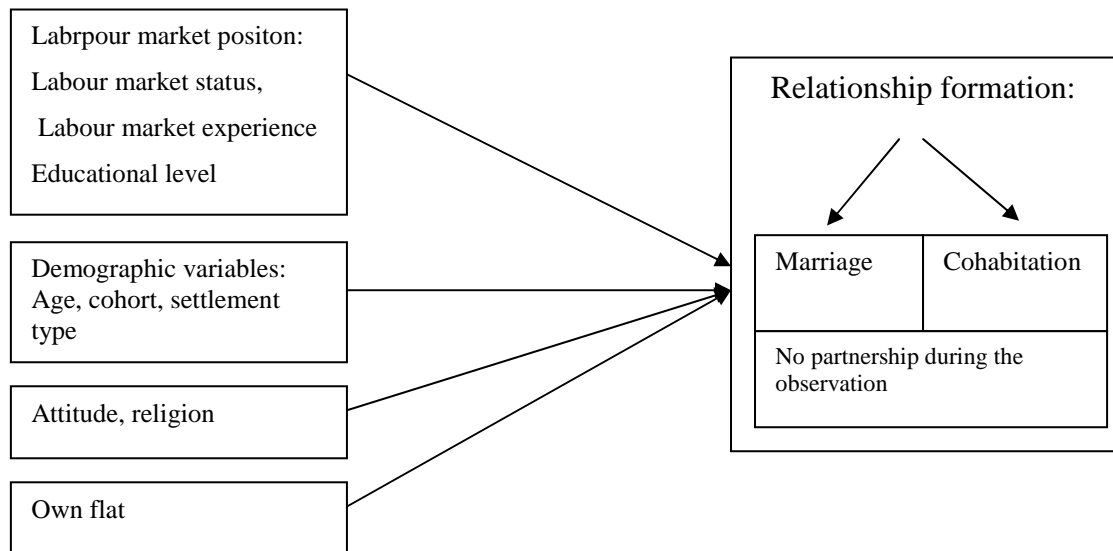
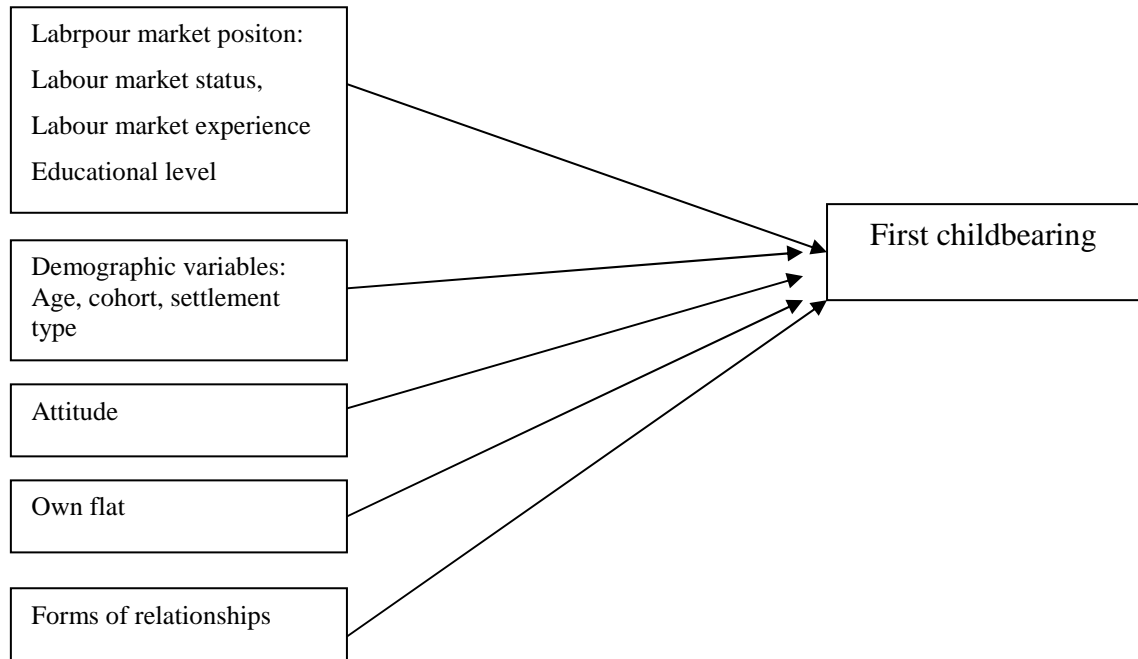


Figure 2 shows the competing model of first relationship formation, i.e. the way labour market position, demographic variables, attitudes and owning a flat directly influence relationship formation. The effect of the variables is examined separately on marriage and partnership, and the reference group is constituted by single people who had had no permanent relationships until the end of the second wave. Partnership and marriage are located in the life course and not regarded as each other's alternatives but complements. In other words, another supposition is that partnership does not ultimately replace marriage, only substitutes it temporarily during the personal life course, preventing people from having to make serious commitments (marriage) in a life period full of uncertainty. The goal of this research is to identify the social factors that motivate young people to opt for flexible types of relationships, as well as the dimensions where significant differences are found between them and their married peers.

**Figure 3**  
**Causal structure of analyses to be performed**  
**First childbearing**



Labour market status not only affects relationship formation, but via this as well as directly influences the issue of childbearing. The question again is logical: what social factors influence childbearing? The presumed model of the transition to parenthood is shown in Figure 3.

### ***II.1 Hypotheses***

According to the considerations above the following hypotheses have been tested.

#### **Hypothesis regarding attitudes:**

**H1.1: (Hypothesis of double standards)** In Hungary many people believe that men must be the primary breadwinners of families, despite that the double wage family model has been prevalent for quite long. Therefore, having a secure labour market position is more essential for marriage and childbearing as well when taking about men than women. I.e. there is a sort of ‘double standard’ in society: **the expectation towards men to have a stable job market position for marriage and childbearing is stricter than towards women.**

**H1.2: Maintenance of the double standard is more typical of women. They are the ones who tend to expect men to be the breadwinners, since marriage also used to mean economic stability for women, so presumably this expectation towards men to be closely related to the job market still remains.** At the time of childbearing women have to spend a certain period out of work, and can rely on their partners' economic assistance, as childcare benefits do not compensate for missing wages.

**H1.3:** According to age group major differences are found in the priority order of things needed for marriage and childbearing. As a result of big recent changes, marriage and fertility patterns have changed as well. The abovementioned events are postponed to older ages, and marriage willingness and fertility rates have also declined. **Older age groups - as secure job market position was given during their socialization - attach the greatest importance to job market stability. The young cohort, who still have such events ahead of them, are more prone to accept labour market instability and aim at avoiding it, so for these people family support, financial security and the stability of the relationship might be more important than for the older cohort.**

**H1.4:** People with higher educational level are in a better position on the labour market, thus, in their view labour market position is less important than in the view of their lower educated peers.

### **Hypotheses regarding relationships**

**H2.1: (Transmission hypothesis)** Based on Oppenheimer's theory (1997) it is hypothesized that first relationship formation – in case of both men and women – requires one to be present on the labour market, or at least to have some experience of such kind. Singles who became excluded from the labour-market, i.e. the unemployed, the inactive and students without any work experience find it the hardest to establish relationships. This may be called transmission hypothesis, since the existing advantageous or disadvantageous status in one dimension of life, the world of work, gets transmitted to another dimension, the issue of relationship formation.

**H2.2: (Selection hypothesis)** The nature of job-market presence, however, influences the chosen relationship type. Young people with stable job-market status tend to prefer marriage,

while a status carrying uncertainty promotes the choice of partnership, a much more informal and looser commitment (easier to dissolve).

### **Hypotheses regarding childbearing:**

**H3.1: (Transmission hypothesis)** Stable job market position, high educational level, and appropriate job market experience promotes childbearing in case of both genders. Therefore, young people postpone childbearing until they have a stable position on the job market.

**H3.2: (Compensation hypothesis)** Young women who do not see any chance of achieving a stable position on the labour market (low educational level, little job market experience, unstable job) view childbearing as a tool of self-fulfilment. This may be called compensation hypothesis, since if one dimension of their life is characterized by a high level of uncertainty, they compensate for that in their private life by doing their best to avoid uncertainty and have children quite early. This hypothesis concerns women only, but not men, because according to the double standards men definitely have to play their part on the job market, i.e. compensation makes no sense.

## ***II.2 Considerations related to the methods applied***

The present research builds on a threefold methodology. As elaborated in the previous subsection, three models are tested. First, on the level of attitudes, people's opinion is explored about what is needed for marriage and childbearing, with special focus on labour market position. First, connections between variables were explored by using the statistical methods best applicable on large sample databases, namely average calculation, and one of the methods of smallest space analysis, the MINISSA model (Michigan-Israel-Nijmegen Integrated Smallest Space Analysis).

After that the influence of labour market position on first relationship formation and childbearing was studied with the help of event history analysis.

For the analysis of first permanent relationship formation, within the discrete event history analysis method, the competing model was applied on the panel data. Finally, for analysing first childbearing discrete event history analysis method was used again, in specific the so called logit model.

The table below includes the databases used and the methods applied assigned to the groups of hypotheses (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Databases used and methods applied,**  
**assigned to groups of hypotheses**

<b>Groups of hypotheses</b>	<b>Used databases</b>	<b>Methods applied</b>
H1	ESS wave 4, self-complete supplementary questions	MINISSA model Profit model
H2	Critical Points in Our Lives 1. 2.	Event history analysis: competing model
H3	Critical Points in Our Lives 1. 2.	Event history analysis: discrete model

*Source: Self-made calculation*

*Omissions from the sample*

When analysing attitudes no omissions were performed on the sample, every subject was involved in the analysis. However, at the models of relationship formation and childbearing a special grouping was made: the two events were analysed on different samples. The analysis of the first relationship formation may not include people who have already been married. At the same time, when focusing on first childbearing, people who have never had a relationship logically fall outside the scope of attention. The subjects involved need to be those who were childless until the first wave, thus, the model of first childbearing can be reasonably investigated. First, let us examine the sample on which permanent relationship formation was analysed, then the model of the transition to parenthood, and finally the differences of the two samples.

**Table 2**

**Subjects omitted from the analysis with reasons – permanent relationship analysis**

<b>Number of records used (respondents)<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>13540</b>
<b>Reason of omission:</b>	<b>Number of subjects omitted</b>
Born before 1965	8465
Has been married before	2218
Has had a partnership before	512
Lack of data, has children already, lives in an institutional household	195
Total omission	11390
<b>Total of cases used</b>	<b>2150</b>

*Source: Self-made calculation*

Altogether 2150 respondents below 36 years were included in the sample, who did not establish any permanent relationships before November 2001. The reason for adopting this omission is that the involvement of older people in the analysis would seriously distort the sample. Statistical data indicate that during the studies period, between 2001 and 2005, the average age at the first marriage or partnership was 30 years for both men and women. People without any permanent relationships until the age of 36 are supposedly different from the majority; moreover, probably different factors influence their first permanent relationship formation as well, and they are less likely to form permanent relationships than their younger peers. The table below shows the rate of women and men in the sample.

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<sup>2</sup> Respondents who participated in both the first and the second waves.

**Table 3**

**The rate of women and men in the permanent relationship sample**

<b>Gender of the respondent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent (%)</b>
<b>Man</b>	1224	57
<b>Woman</b>	926	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>2150</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Self-made calculation*

Men are slightly overrepresented in the sample, which is partly due to the fact that men form their first relationship on average and a half two years later than women.

*Omissions in the analysis of the transition to parenthood*

**Table 4**

**Subjects omitted from the analysis with reasons – the model of first childbearing**

<b>Number of records used (respondents)<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>13540</b>
<b>Reason of omission:</b>	<b>Number of subjects omitted</b>
Born before 1956	6305
Younger than 45, but had children before the first wave	3572
Lack of data, lives in an institutional household	515
Total omission	10392
<b>Total of cases used</b>	<b>3148</b>

*Source: Self-made calculation*

This way, altogether 3148 respondents below 45 were included in the sample, who were childless until November 2001. The reason for choosing 45 as the age limit was that people very rarely bear their first children over this age. Presumably those women and men who do not become mothers and fathers until the age of 49 are quite likely to remain childless. The table below shows the rate of women and men in the sample.

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<sup>3</sup> Respondents who participated in both the first and the second waves.



**Table 5**

**The rate of men and women in the sample – the model of first childbearing**

<b>Gender of the respondent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent (%)</b>
<b>Man</b>	1836	58
<b>Woman</b>	1312	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>3148</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Self-made calculation*

The sample involves more men than women. This may have two reasons. First, on average men become parents two and a half years later than women. Second, the rate of subjects who remain childless all throughout their lives is higher among men than among women.

Papers dealing with relationships and fertility in particular inherently concentrate on female respondents. The respondents of the international database called Fertility are women only. The database called ‘Critical Points in Our Lives’, however, equally contain answers from men and women. From the point of view of the current analysis it is essential to explore any differences between the two genders in terms of relationship and family formation.

### III. Research outcomes

The present research aimed to find out about how labour market status influences first relationship formation and first childbearing. In the analysis labour market status was measured by the following categories: (1) stable labour market position, if the respondent has a full time job with a permanent work contract, (2) unstable labour market position, if the respondent has a service contract, a limited duration contract, or a part-time job, (3) student, if one is a full-time student, (4) self-employed, if one has an own enterprise or is a member of a joint venture, (5) unemployed, if one regards oneself to be, (6) inactive, if the respondent is a household or family worker<sup>4</sup>.

#### III.1 Results of the attitude survey

When it comes to marriage or childbearing labour market stability (secure job, full time job, and no unemployment) is regarded as a precondition. The first hypothesis is supported by the fact that the view according to which men should be the breadwinners still exists. For marriage and childbearing respondents believed that in case of men it is more important to have a full time job, not to be unemployed, to have a high income, and to be financially independent before getting married or having children, than in case of women. Such things had lower priority in women's lives. Thus, the first hypothesis is verified, i.e. *the expectation towards men to have a stable job market position for marriage and childbearing is stricter than towards women.*

Apart from that, stable relationship proved to be vital for childbearing, which, however, is not necessarily marriage. Only the older age groups regard marriage as important for becoming parents.

No evidence has been found to support the second hypothesis, namely that the double standards are maintained only by women. Both men and women consider men's labour market position to be more important for marriage and childbearing than that of women. It must be noted that women attach bigger importance to all items both regarding themselves and men when formulating their opinion about the preconditions of marriage and childbearing.

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<sup>4</sup> This category was applied only for women. Inactive men, due to their rather low number, the unemployed and inactive categories were combined, since inactive men are probably permanently unemployed and no longer eligible for unemployment benefit, and have no choice to enter the labour market again.

In the issue of marriage there are no major differences between the two genders. According to the results of analysis based on age groups, *older age groups attach bigger importance to job market stability than the young cohort*. By that, the third hypothesis is justified. It seems that the older Hungarian generation is also developing a desire to enjoy independence after raising their children, and to make their children less reliant on them. In the meantime, the younger generation continues to expect parental support.

Concerning educational level graduates regard family support and leaving school to be more important for marriage, while external expectations and owning a flat have the lowest priority in their opinion. For childbearing, however, the financial dimension (own flat, financial independence) is given importance. As for educational level the hypothesis (hypothesis four) has been partly proved, since in contrast with graduates the lower educated attach more significance to avoiding unemployment and having a full time job.

### ***III.2 Results from the competing model of relationships***

The empiric results partially support both hypotheses regarding men and women. To form either type of relationships it is essential for both men and women to finish their studies, while being unemployed decreases the chances of relationship formation. These results are in line with results of previous research and the attitude survey as well. Unstable job market status promotes partnership as opposed to marriage among men, unlike among women, where the main obstacle of marriage is self-employment. Meanwhile, men seem to regard self-employment as a less unstable labour market position than women do.

Furthermore, religion, attitude to marriage, owning a flat and the cohort proved to be decisive in young people's choice of relationship. Religious women prefer marriage to partnership, while no such effect was observable in case of men. A positive attitude to marriage raised the chances of choosing marriage as first permanent relationship in case of both genders. Owning a flat raised chances of both relationship types for men, but had no significant effect in case of women.

Young people have a much bigger chance of forming either marriage or partnership than their older peers. This may also be due to a selection effect, as only those older respondents were involved in the sample who did not establish any relationships for specific reasons.

### ***III.3. Results of the childbearing model***

Major changes have occurred in the fertility pattern during the last two decades. The number of children is decreasing, however, it is still unclear whether the younger cohort actually has fewer children than the older generation, or it is only a delay in time. The theory of the time delay is supported by the empiric finding that the oldest cohorts of men and women were the most likely to become parents. In case of men it is graduates, who had better chances of having children, while the opposite was true for women<sup>5</sup>. Being a student affects family formation negatively in case of both genders; self-employment increases such chances among men, while unstable job market status had a positive influence among women in the entire model. The results indicate that stable job market position is crucial for men, while it is exactly the unstable position of women which may promote childbearing. In a less stable labour market position the opportunity costs of childbearing are lower, and career uncertainties may be decreased by reducing uncertainty in another dimension of life (Tölke – Diewald 2003).

Regarding the effect of owning a flat, again different result were gained among men and women. While in the model of relationship formation owning a flat affected men positively, when it comes to childbearing the subjects of such a positive effect are women.

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<sup>5</sup> This finding may imply that in Hungary reconciling work and family is quite difficult. Women do not have any tools available (part time jobs, adequate nursery school system) that could make this reconciliation easier. Resulting from that, many women are forced to make a choice between the two.

#### **IV. Comments on the ways the dissertation can be utilized**

Further utilization of dissertation can be realized in two different ways. On the one hand, further research can be planned and performed on the base of these findings. On the other hand, on the basis of results we can define problems which should be focused by social policies.

1, **For academic research** several questions are raised by this research; in some cases we were not able to analyze some problems because of the next round GGS data has not been available yet. We discussed the further research plans in the dissertation in detail so we just mention some of them here.

- The labour market positions of the partners are also worth analyzing. How do the partners' labour market statuses influence the type of the partnership and transition to parenthood? Are young people more likely to get married if women and men also have secure labour market position or are they more likely to get married if men have secure position on the labor market and women have unsecure position?

- The Turning Point of the Life Course is part of an international survey which is conducted in 11 European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Russia and Slovakia). This enables making international comparisons among these countries in order to discover differences and similarities in partnership formation and in fertility patterns.

2, As for **family policy relevance** the main message of the research is that we have to consider the attitudes of both men and the women and also the labour market position. There are differences between the two genders. However, both men and women claim that the secure labour market position is the most important when getting married and becoming parents. The family policy should help young people's transition to the labor market and make easier the reconciliation of work and childrearing, especially in the case of the highly educated women.

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