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Summary of the dissertation titled:

## **LEAVING PARENTAL HOME BECAUSE OF UNION IN POLAND**

- determinants of the process and the perception of marriage

### **1. Motivation, goals and research hypotheses**

The period of transformation in Poland had profoundly influenced the socio-economic situation by bringing up new opportunities as well as necessitating adaptive behaviours in many areas of life. One extremely interesting aspect of the issue is the influence of the changing circumstances on the attitudes and behaviours of the youth striving after independence. Among the earliest decisions to be taken in the adult life is the one to leave parental home. Together with a number of other events it makes up the process of transition into adulthood. The choice to leave parental home is closely connected with a combination of the following processes: continuation of education, starting employment, setting up a family.

Due to the changing socio-economic situation, new possibilities and expectations, the process of leaving parental home and particularly its changes seem to be especially important in long-term perspective. Young people have to face new challenges related mostly to the economic sphere of life, such as: unstable labour market and low salaries or the barriers in housing market, which have significantly impeded the youth's becoming independent. The uncertainty has been the most common reason for delaying the decision to set up a family, especially marriage, which has been, and still remains, the main reason for leaving

the parental home (Liefbroer, Frątczak 1996). Whereas on the other hand, political changes had awakened expectations of the society that resulted in the general growth of life aspirations in both spheres: economic and social. Easier access to education, increased enrolment in higher education, new opportunities and offers on the labour market, in particular a larger range of offers in the services sector, comprised sufficient incentives to not postponing a decision of leaving the parental home and gaining independence.

The main goal of this dissertation is to characterize the process of leaving parental home because of union formation. The analysis concerns the conditions in Poland and its results were compared to international trends observed in research regarding the process of leaving parental home. Another research goal was to create a typology of views regarding marriage, determine the sources of their diversity as well as the changes in the importance attributed to formal union. Such changes were the result of transformation of a given individual's norms and values.

The models proposed in this dissertation allow to describe the trajectory of the process of leaving parental home because of union in the context of major determinants shaping it. Moreover, the methods applied allow to measure and evaluate the Polish society's changing system of values, which shapes the subjective aspect of individual behaviour influencing the process of becoming independent.

The following research questions have been addressed:

- *Can the process of leaving parental home be considered stable over time and, if not, what changes can be observed?*
- *To what extent the behaviours constituting this process are determined by objective, external determinants (in particular the influence of the environment, including parents and their resources, on the decision of becoming independent)?*
- *How important, in the decision to leave parental home, are the individual resources measured by the length of education, economic activity and professional experience, which are at the same time a reflection of a socio-economic status?*
- *What norms and values influence the diversity in perception of formal union?*

The theoretical and methodological deliberations related to the analysis of the process of leaving the family home, as well as the overview of socio-economic situation in Poland and the review of international literature led to the formulation of the following **research hypotheses**:



- H 1:** The patterns of leaving parental home vary depending on sex.
- H 2:** The role of union in the process of leaving parental home is changing, which is due to, among other reasons, the changes of perception of the meaning of marriage.
- H 3:** The varying access to family-related social capital resources, in the form of non-material intergenerational transfers, diversifies the decisions regarding leaving parental home because of union.
- H 4:** The availability of individual resources, which reflects the economic status of an individual, conditions the process of becoming independent.
- H 5:** The process of leaving parental home because of union is subject to change over time.

## 2. The scope of empirical analysis and data

### Leaving parental home because of union

The research regarding leaving family home are focused mostly on the analysis of the determinants of the process and the timing of the process. The method most often applied is the event history analysis. The process of leaving parental home is described using the piecewise constant exponential model with time-constant and time-varying covariates taking into account the unobserved heterogeneity. The results of modelling enable the comparison of the effects of proportional and period specific effects of covariates. **This dissertation offers a unique solution, namely an increased flexibility of the effects of independent variables<sup>1</sup> determining the process which was possible due to making the effects of the covariates specific<sup>2</sup> to the piecewise constant hazard rates.** This adopted solution allows for precise tracking of the changes in the direction and intensity of all distinguished components of the decision-making process with age.

### Attitudes towards marriage

The analysis of the determinants of the process of leaving parental home because of union was supplemented with the analysis of marriage perception influencing the intensity and timing of union formation. To distinguish the set of various attitudes towards marriage the latent class analysis was applied. This approach allows to enrich the analysis of the evolving process of becoming independent and forming unions by adding a typology of

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<sup>1</sup> applies to the time-constant covariates

<sup>2</sup> instead of typically used proportional approach

opinions on marriage based on the subjective evaluation of the norms, values and incentives to marriage<sup>3</sup>. The latent class model – a multivariate technique – is especially appropriate for analysing attitudes and perceptions due to its heuristic nature and the fact that it allows for correlations between covariates. As a result, statistically significantly different and at the same time not mutually exclusive classes of opinions on formal union were identified. The study was extended to test the expected changes over time as well as the influence of age-dependant life's experience i.e., experiencing formal union, having children, opinion on cohabitation, religiosity.

### **Data**

The analysis is based on the results of the research '*Evaluation of the changes in attitudes and reproductive behaviours of the young and middle aged generations of female and male Poles and their consequences to the process of family, union and household formation and dissolution*' carried out in 2001 and 2006 by the Institute of Statistics and Demography, Warsaw School of Economics.

For the purpose of this research the 2001 and 2006 samples were merged. For both samples a system of weights was constructed and the distribution with respect to age, place of residence and sex in the sample was tested for representativeness with population. The presented analysis includes the modelling of behaviour regarding leaving parental home because of union and the attitude towards marriage for people between 20 and 55 years old (as for 2001), residing at the time of the interview in urban areas (of or above 20,000 inhabitants).

### **3. Results and discussion**

The results obtained describe the intensity of the analysed process of leaving parental home because of union in Poland and its divergence among women and men. The difference and diversification between sex supports the first research hypothesis (H1).

The results prove that marriage is an autonomous reason for leaving parental home. This traditional, and at the same time unique, pattern of becoming independent is characterised by a progressive postponement in time in relation to both past periods, as well as the alternative reasons for leaving parental home.

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<sup>3</sup> i.e., socio-cultural norms attributed to marriage, division of household duties and mutual relations between spouses as well as perception of divorce and individual aspirations



## **Individual resources**

Taking into consideration the individual resources, educational and professional career characteristics proves that the young people's potential has a key role in the process of becoming independent. The individualisation of the decision-making process, which is dependant mostly on personal assets and preferences, is confronted with the determinants in which the decision of becoming independent because of union is made. The results obtained prove the hypothesis (H4), which states that the availability of individual resources, which reflects the individual economic status, conditions gaining independence.

The mainspring of the observed mechanism seems to be the amount and availability of individual resources and the disproportions in human capital, which are the crucial driving force of the decision-making process.

The length of economic inactivity (the period before first entrance to the labour market) influences mostly the decision regarding the timing of leaving parental home. On the other hand, the duration of professional experience reflects the preferences with respect to the way resources to support oneself by supplementing insufficient individual resources are secured.

The importance of individual resources and combining the partners' resources in case of union can be interpreted in the context of securing oneself against the unstable labour market and the poverty threatening young people at the beginning of their road to independence.

The opinions of young people deciding to leave the family home, in regard to the financial aspect and the strategy of leaving home because of union diagnosed in hazard models, in which an important factor is financial independence, stand in opposition to the determined importance of financial aspect in attitudes toward marriage. The most important assumption of this dissertation was the fact that young people, experiencing difficulties on the labour market related to its instability and low pay, decide to leave family homes by entering a relationship, because combining the available resources of two people allows them to become independent of their parents' support. However both men and women downplayed the importance of financial aspect of marriage<sup>4</sup>.

Securing the individual resources, represented by the effect of professional activity characteristic, is the fundamental component of the decision to leave parental home because

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<sup>4</sup> the importance of the financial aspect was confirmed only among respondents classified into the group representing traditional attitude towards marriage

of union. On the other hand respondents felt that marriage should not be motivated by financial reasons. These two conclusions coherently substantiate the observed delay in the moment of leaving parental home for men and women. In men's behaviour one can observe the preparations to become head of the family. Women, on the other hand, apart from putting emphasis on individual resources, pay more attention to the securing role of men's assets.

Relationship is the trigger for the decision to become independent, but only after cumulating an appropriate amount of individual assets of both partners, which, after being combined, will guarantee independence. At the same time the relationship does not seem to be a way of becoming independent by switching the source of resources from parents to partner, but is rather a responsible and rational decision, adapted to expectations and external conditions.

### **Family-related social capital**

The hypothesis (H3) stating that the diversity in accessing the family-related social capital, in the form of non-material intergenerational transfers, is the basis of diversification of decisions regarding leaving parental home because of union, proved to be more substantiated for men than for women.

The literature (e.g. Goldscheider, DaVanzo 1989; Avery, Goldscheider, Speare 1992; Buck, Scott 1993; Ermisch 1999; Whittington, Peters 1996; Iacovou 2011) emphasises that the decision to leave parental home is conditioned by the availability of resources, depending on its source: family or individual. Lack of statistical significance of social capital indicators in case of women – particularly the indicator of socio-economic status of family home with the simultaneous importance of human capital indicators – can indirectly suggest that the process of leaving parental home because of union is determined mostly by the level of individual resources. It does not confirm the second hypothesis (H2), but supports the third hypothesis (H3).

It was also being proven (e.g. Goldscheider, Goldscheider 1993; Aquilino 1990) that the availability of social capital – parents' support in particular – is key from the perspective of children becoming independent, when they want to live alone or they have left home for reasons other than marriage and not because of union. This indirectly explains the lack of significance of family-related determinants in the process conditioned by union detected in Poland. It still does not prove the second hypothesis (H2), but can explain the lack of importance of socio-family factors.



The results suggest that men's behaviour, to a much larger extent than women's, is dependent on the non-material transfers of social capital, despite the fact that human capital and individual assets play a key role. The results obtained confirmed, for men, the hypothesis (H3) of the influence of the diversity in accessing the family capital assets, in the form of non-material intergenerational transfers on decisions regarding leaving parental home because of union.

Relationship as a reason for becoming independent earlier is chosen mostly by men with relatively low social capital assets. Those with high social capital, who did not leave parental home for other reasons, show a tendency to postpone such decision.

A relatively better access to family social capital results in postponing the decision to become independent because of union. This is reflected in the process of postponing marriages and, indirectly, the men's preference to extend the period of taking advantage of the availability of parents' assets and support (of course it applies to those, who did not chose to leave the parental home for other reasons).

#### **Time aspect**

The analysis of time characteristics' influence, which verify the hypotheses of generational changes in the process of leaving parental home because of union and the dependence of said process on calendar period effect, confirms the hypothesis that the analysed process is subject to change (H5). The influence of calendar-period variable for leaving parental home, which conveys information about the changes in external conditions, shows a tendency to postpone the leaving of parental home because of union. It supports the negative perception of external circumstances as difficulties which are not favourable to become independent. The birth cohort effect shows that, the younger the generation, the higher the tendency to speed up the process of becoming independent in situations when the fact that the person was in a union implied the decision to leave parental home.

The diverse effects of two variables, which present the effect of time in the analysed process, can be interpreted in terms of double complexity of this phenomenon. On one hand young adults postpone the decision to become independent, both in case of leaving parental home and starting a family, which can be related to the unstable and unfavourable external conditions, not only economic, but also social and cultural – in this case the union becomes a catalyst for the decision for people who have difficulties in becoming independent. The combining their resources with those of their partner's make it easier for them. On the other hand the generational effect shows a growing intensity of the phenomenon in time, which

means that among the relatively younger generations the desire or need for becoming independent grows, and the possibility of sharing costs of becoming independent can be perceived as an alternative and catalyst for the decision to leave the parental home. Moreover, the shifting of the process of leaving parental home because of union towards younger age observed through the generational effect proves that marriage has a particular importance as a reason to leave parental home. The results of modelling the attitudes toward marriage, for which a similar generational effect was observed, are immensely helpful in explaining this relation. It was discovered that the younger the generation, the higher the popularity of traditional views on marriage. The liberal attitude is also ever more popular. This polarisation of viewpoints justifies the preferences regarding postponing the decision to form unions among people with liberal views, as well their leaving parental homes for reasons other than unions. At the same time it explains the rising popularity of leaving the parental home because of union as a strategy for becoming independent among people with traditional views on the importance of marriage.

When the process is considered in the generational changes context, the decision to leave parental home because of union become a strategy of gaining independence at a very early age. However when we consider the external conditions, the union seems to be serving a function of lessening the effect of adverse conditions, causing the deficiency of personal resources, by the possibility of combining the resources available to spouses.

### **Perception of marriage**

The modelling results obtained show that the path of leaving parental home is to a large extent determined by preferences which are reflected in behaviour by decisions adapted to particular circumstances.

The conclusions resulting from the findings suggest that the attitudes toward marriage play an important role in the decision-making process, which – as was showed in this dissertation – is made evident in the behaviour. These findings prove the first part of the hypothesis (H2), which states that the role of union in leaving parental home is changing. In order to verify the second part of the hypothesis (H2), that is in order to identify the reasons for such changes, the models of attitude toward marriage were characterised.

Three types of attitudes were identified, and although they vary depending on sex, the interpretations remain similar: non-traditional (de-standardised, liberal), traditional and socially-conditioned (conservative) and rational, emphasising the regulating role of union (moderate).



The rational (moderate) attitude is most common – the two others are a result of diversification of the basic trend.

The views described as standardised, connected to the liberal viewpoint, are typical of young people with little life experience, not attached to religious tradition and exhibiting liberal views on the forms of relationships. In particular, the non-traditional views on marriage can change as a result of experiencing marriage – the views on marriage and its importance become more radical. At the same time these opinions are strongly influenced by age, which questions their stability throughout the life. Moreover, liberal views have a tendency to become weaker and transform into more classical standpoints, what can be interpreted as an effect of life experience growing with age.

The conservative views, characteristic mostly of people attached to traditional standards and social imperatives, are typical of people who not only entered matrimony, but also related their decision to leave parental home to the event of marriage.

The differences in these distinguished viewpoints – moderate and liberal – result from the approach to traditional norms and values. The diversity between rational (moderate) and traditional and socially-conditioned attitudes is mostly a result of birth cohort and age effects. The views become more radical with age, and although the traditional attitude is least popular, the results indicate that it gains more importance among relatively younger generations. The identified non-traditional attitude seems to be, in itself, a result of liberalisation of norms, values and generational shift. That is why it is the most popular among youngest respondents and the lack of statistical importance of the birth cohort effect is observed.

The fact of having children loses its importance as a reason to enter formal union. The weakening of importance of marriage as a basic environment for raising children is an important message about the changes of meaning of formal relationship. The rational attitude towards marriage stresses mostly the mutual relations between spouses, and does not emphasise the parenting function. The relations observed reflect the changes in the perception of marriage. On one hand the views evolve with age and life experience, on other hand they generationally become polarised from traditional to liberal.

The distinguished attitudes toward marriage, the reasons for their diversity and the changes which they are subject to – all this is a valuable source of information supporting the description of the process of leaving parental home because of union. The results obtained suggest that the fact of leaving parental home because of union and all the factors related to this process, including its determinants and intensity of the process over time, are characteristic mostly of people with most conservative views towards marriage. In the

dissertation it was shown that the values related to the traditional model of forming and functioning of marriages are related to the traditional views on marriage. The attachment to tradition and religion, characteristic of the most conservative views on marriage, influences the behaviour regarding the process of leaving parental home because of union. The liberal viewpoint, which is characterised by denying the values typically associated with the role of marriage and accepting the modern forms of partner relationships, opposed to the religious values, characterises the preferences of people leaving parental home for reasons other than union.

#### **4. Final Conclusions**

The adopted conceptual and methodological solutions, as well as the model of the process of leaving parental home, are all author's original contribution, which allow for the stating of a research goal, formulation of hypotheses and their verification in the course of the research process.

This dissertation is an important contribution to the development of research regarding the leaving of parental home process, and the cognitive value of the findings obtained allow to not only better understand the situation and challenges faced by young people who want to become independent, but can also help better understand the decision-making mechanisms and discover better ways of supporting young adults in the process of gaining independence.

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