

Leaving the parental home in Poland

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Short abstract

This study compares trends in the process of leaving parental home before and after the breakdown of the Communist regime in Poland. Because of dramatic changes in Polish society, a significant alteration of the determinants of leaving home is hypothesised. This is examined with data from the Polish retrospective survey, which was carried out in 2001. With the help of piecewise linear event history regressions the explanatory significance of demographic (cohort, number of siblings), social (composition of household) and economic (occupational status of parents, region of residence) factors on the timing of leaving home is investigated. First results show that leaving home in Communist times was highly dependent on marital formation and education enrolment. In general, young people left their home in order to set up new households. Further analyses will examine whether this pattern remains also after the end of Socialism or whether other factors became influential.

Extended abstract

Introduction

Leaving the parental home is considered a major event in the life course and transition to adulthood. Young people generally are expected to leave home once they reach adolescence. This move is linked with other events associated with the transition to adult citizenship, in particular with entry into higher education or vocational training, marriage or family formation. This study has three general aims. Firstly, it looks at the timing of leaving home. Secondly, it investigates the reasons for leaving home. Thirdly, it compares the process of leaving home with its determinants over two periods: before and after the breakdown of socialism in Poland.

Situation in Poland

Due to the breakdown of the socialist system in 1989 and the ensuing dramatic economic and political changes, the socio-economic situation of young adults has altered

significantly. They began to face a multitude of problems concerning the transition to adulthood, caused by unstable labour markets, increasing unemployment, and/or unstable housing market conditions. The impact of these problems on leaving the parental home is not clear. Market instability contributed to the increase of uncertainty concerning market opportunities. This uncertainty has been an underlying factor for the postponement of family formation, the latter which remains the main reason for leaving home in Poland (Liefbroer and Frątczak, 1996). On the other hand, the social, economic, and political changes – especially the political ones during transition – led to rise of expectations among the population (e.g. easier access to education, new jobs on a market that is now new i.e. free). As a result, young adults might have seen no reasons to postpone home leaving.

Previous research about leaving the parental home in Poland

Although the Polish society under socialism was quite different from their capitalist Western European counterparts, the research shows that no significant differences existed between Poland and catholic Southern European countries (such as Italy and Spain) in the systems of values and norms concerning early events in the transition to adulthood (e.g. leaving home, partnership formation; Billari et al. 2000). The Polish pattern of parental home leaving during Socialism was similar to the Mediterranean one, while it differed from other Central and East European countries, such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, and East Germany. Corijn and Klijzing (2001) explain this difference by the important role religion played both at the individual and the societal level. Religion remained to be important in Poland during the first phase of the transition. This and the introduction of democracy and market economy instead of socialism and central planned economy resulted in even greater similarities between Poland and Italy.

Data and methods

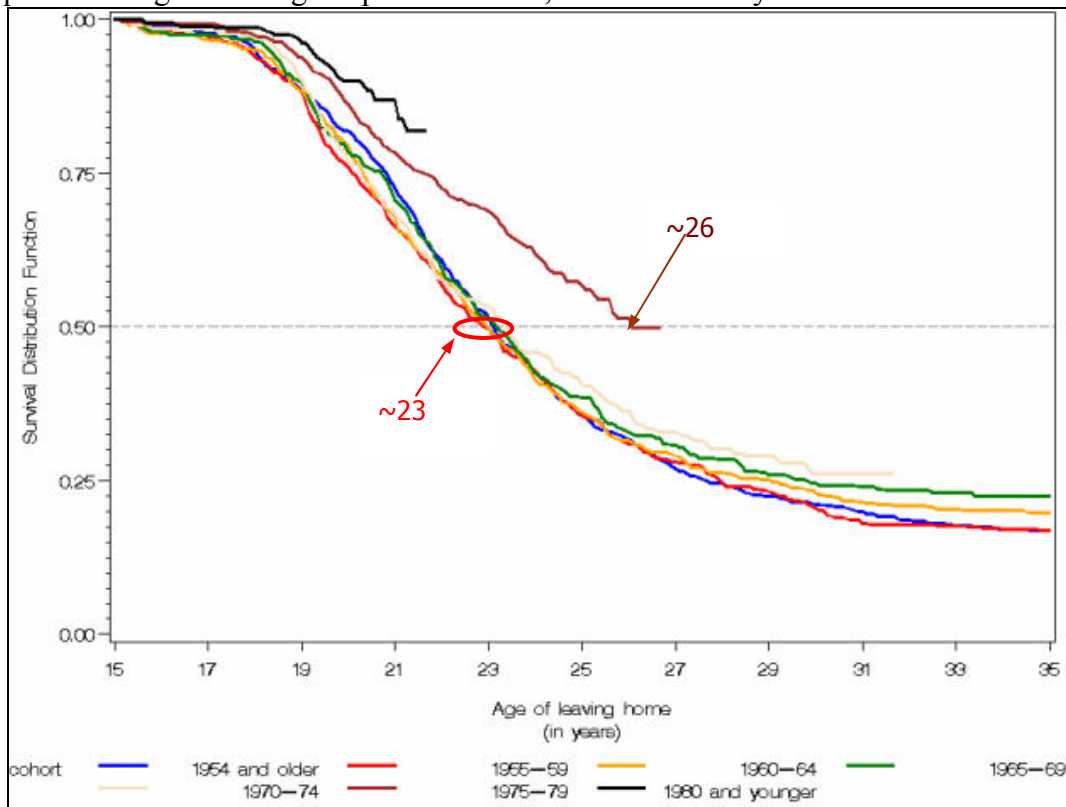
In my paper I use data from the Polish Retrospective Survey 2001. Data collected between October and December 2001. 3348 respondents, 1724 females and 1624 males were interviewed. As an explanatory variable following group of covariates are chosen: demographic (cohort, age, etc); socio-economic (occupational status of, parents during the respondent's adolescence, composition of household, number of siblings, level of parental education, as well as education, employment and relationship histories); geographical (region and place of residence up to age 15).

In order to control what? for the reasons of leaving home, competing risk are used, e.g. a piecewise linear exponential model. They allow for an assumption of additional unobserved heterogeneity in the data. Region-specific characteristics other than those considered as covariates may have an important influence on the timing of leaving. These characteristics are unobserved – either the relevant data is missing or they are not measurable in principle. In order to take them into account and to control their potential impact on the outcome, a normally distributed random effect on each level (with zero mean and variance of sigma-square) is included in some of the models, with the parameter sigma being estimated as a measure of heterogeneity.

Results

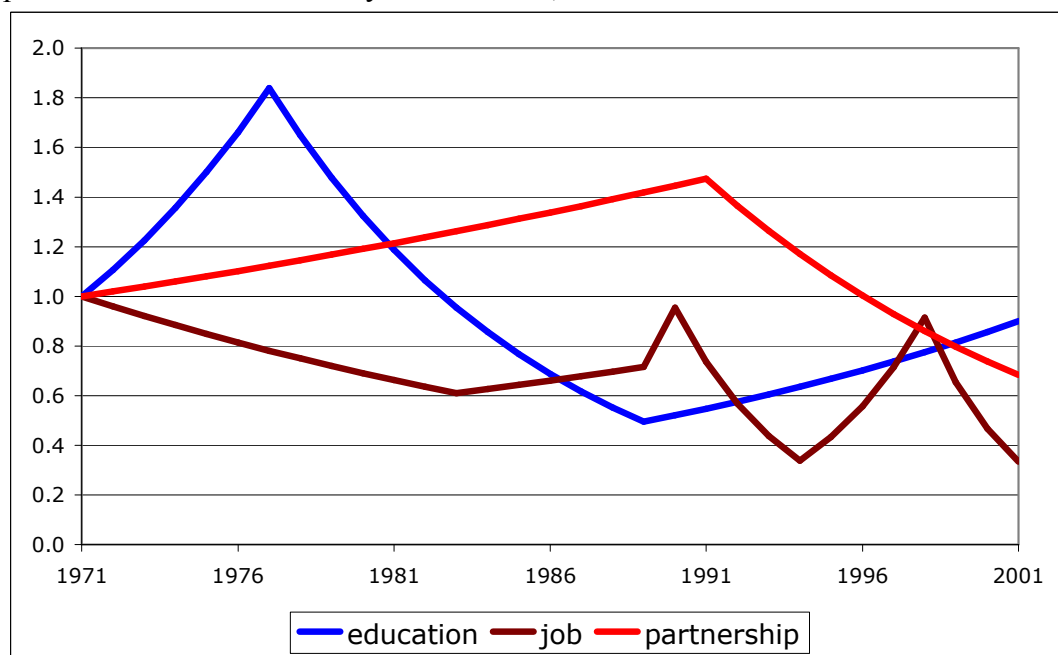
First results show that in youngest cohorts (born 1975 and later) there is postponement in the timing of leaving home. These cohorts differ significantly from older ones (see graph 1). The difference in the mean age at leaving home is around 3 years. The further analysis, namely an estimation the competing risk models, shows inter alia interesting effect of the calendar year. E.g. for females (see graph 2) we can observe a long declining trend for education as a reason of leaving home. It started after a wave of strikes in 1976 and it changed to a slight upward trend at the beginning of transformation. This period (after 1989) has an opposite effect on partnership formation as a cause of leaving home. From the beginning of 90s there is observed a constant drop for this reason. The most fluctuating pattern refers to employment. This is caused by an economic cycle in Poland. During the time, when the economy recovered there is an increasing trend for as a reason of leaving home.

Graph 1. Timing of leaving the parental home, broken down by cohorts



Source: author's calculation based on Polish 2001 survey.

Graph 2. The effect of calendar year – females, relative risk.



Source: author's calculation based on Polish 2001 survey.

The coefficient for time constant and time varying covariates are presented in Table 1. Analyzing the table one can observed that:

- Number of siblings. More siblings increase the relative risk of leaving home only for employment and partnership formation. Surprisingly, there is no significant effect for education or other reasons.
- Composition of household. The effect of this variable is positive (i.e. a intact family postpones the child departure from home), but not significant.
- Education of parents. From statistical point of view, father's educational level is more important for children behaviour, but there is an interesting effect of mother's education on daughters' behaviour. Higher education (university level) of mother enhances the risk of leaving home for education and employment reasons by ~3 times. A vocational education of father hampers strongly the act of leaving home for educational reasons.
- Education. This variable is very important for an investigated process. Especially, "being in education process" decreases the investigated risk very much (up to ~20 times). The level of education matters in case of leaving home due to continuing education. Finishing high school accelerates such risk ~20 times for females. Having only primary education decreases the risk of leaving home due to employment by about 70%, but the same time increases risk for "other" reasons (this category covers mainly family reasons).
- Size of place of residence up to age 15. According to expectation the highest risk of leaving home due to educational reasons have young people from towns and small cities. Simply they have to move to bigger cities, where the universities are located. The lowest risk of leaving home due to partnership of people living in rural areas can be explained by the fact, that young couple usually stays in their parental home.
- An introduction of representation of unobserved heterogeneity to the females' model hardly changes result. Although the standard deviation σ is statistically significant, the model without such covariate explains the behaviour of respondent in sufficient way.

Table 1. Relative risks of leaving parental home in Poland, females, competing risk model

		education	job	partnership	other
Siblings					
	0	0.77	0.43	0.71	0.79
	1	1.34	0.45	0.79	0.58
	2	1.38	0.77	1.05	0.65
	3+	1	1	1	1
having intact family at age 15					
	Yes	1	1	1	1
	No	1.59	1.24	1.09	1.65
education of father					
	Higher	3.05	1.20	0.92	1.04
	Secondary	2.63	0.96	1.08	0.94
	Vocational	1	1	1	1
	Primary	2.03	0.86	1.12	0.59
education of mother					
	Higher	3.09	2.99	1.11	1.05
	Secondary	1.76	0.85	0.81	0.55
	Vocational	1	1	1	1
	Primary	0.62	0.87	1.03	0.74
job of mother					
	never worked	0.92	1.11	0.92	1.34
	part time	0.72	1.54	0.92	1.69
	full time	1	1	1	1
Education level					
	Primary	1.57	0.29	1.00	2.85
	Vocational	1	1	1	1
	Secondary	22.10	0.92	0.58	1.43
	Higher			1.31	3.75
Education enrolment					
	yes	0.09	0.36	0.36	0.17
	No	1	1	1	1
Region of residence					
	more than 500 thou.	0.51	0.55	1.59	0.85
	100 - 500 thou.	0.95	0.70	1.65	
	less than 100 thou.	1.30	0.68	1.12	0.65
	Rural	1	1	1	1

Note: $p \leq 0.1$; $p \leq 0.05$; $p \leq 0.01$; not significant; reference category; standard deviation σ of normally distributed random variable in the model with representation of unobserved heterogeneity equals **0.91**

Conclusion

As it is presented there are some evidence of changes in Polish society after a breakdown of the socialism. The general pattern of these changes can be explained by the influence of the Second Demographic Transition, but the pace of this transition is so fast that most of the empirical theories known from the West Europe usually need some modification before they could be applied to Polish case. My future work on this field will

be an attempt to face these problems and present detailed study about first stage of the transition to adulthood focusing on the economic and political transition period in Poland since 1989.

References

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