

Jobs, careers, and becoming a parent under state socialist and free market conditions: The case of Estonia

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Short Abstract

Hobcraft and Kiernan's (1995) pre-conditions for childbearing were hypothesized in regards to norms prevailing in free market economies and the extent to which they are relevant in a communist or transitional context has yet to be fully explored. We compare the influence of job acquisition, while continuing or after completing education, on family formation in two distinct time periods—before Estonia's independence from the Soviet Union and after 1991. In Estonia and many other transitional countries, postponement occurred when there was a significant loss of employment opportunities, increasing the complexity of the relationship between family formation and employment. We employ the Estonian Health Interview Survey (2006) and event history analyses. First results unexpectedly show a stronger relationship between job acquisition and becoming a parent before 1991. This relationship varies across educational groups and migrant status.

Extended Abstract

Hobcraft and Kiernan (1995) argued that there are certain pre-conditions for childbearing, including the completion of education or training and having paid employment. These pre-conditions were hypothesized in regards to norms prevailing in free market economies and the extent to which they are relevant in a communist or transitional context has yet to be fully explored. We compare the influence of job acquisition on family formation in two distinct time periods—before Estonia's independence from the Soviet Union and after 1991. The shift from a command economy was dramatic in Estonia and market equilibrating mechanisms functioned early on in the transition (Noorkõiv et al. 1998). However, in Estonia and many other transitional countries, the increase in mothers' average age at first birth (MAFB) occurred at the same time there was a significant loss of employment opportunities, increasing the complexity of the relationship between family formation and employment. An increase in MAFB is also associated with educational expansion (Blossfeld & Huinink 1991; Blossfeld 1995). This study assesses how job acquisition, while continuing or after completing education, is related to postponement for both men and women.

Estonia is a particularly interesting case to study because of certain paradoxical characteristics. Women have long been committed to the labor force in Estonia, as in the majority of societies

belonging to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The high extent to which Estonian women are engaged full-time in the labor market (Puur 1995), as well as high cohabitation and non-marital childbearing rates, liken this context to Scandinavia. On the other hand, certain aspects of the cultural context in Estonia resemble Russia and Ukraine, such as materialist vs. post-materialist values (Katus, Puur & Sakkeus 2008). How cultural and structural factors interact to influence demographic patterns in Estonia is a main focus of this study.

In particular, we observe whether the timing of obtaining a permanent job is related to when men and women have their first child. We use a cohort analysis approach to ascertain whether this relationship has changed between women and men who had their first child under communism compared to those who became parents under free market conditions. In the pre-transition cohort (1945-1964), women maintained a low age at first childbirth and this became even lower for those born in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Klesment & Puur 2010). We expect to see dramatic increases in postponement for the post-transition cohort (1965-1985). We observe the impact of obtaining a permanent job on the timing of family formation above and beyond the effect of being in education. Our expectations are that finding permanent employment became more important to family formation under market conditions. The data source on which this study is based offers rich information about occupational histories and we are also able to assess whether the first job was part of one's main occupation and whether reaching this later stage in one's career generally meant the window for family formation narrowed.

In this study, we employ the Estonian Health Interview Survey (EHIS) to explore family formation in Estonia. This survey was administered in 2006 to a sample of permanent residents of Estonia, which was drawn with a stratified systematic sampling method. The final sample includes over 6434 individuals aged 15-84 and the response rate was 60%. In total, we are able to analyze the transition to parenthood of 3,472 individuals (1648 men and 1824 women).

We use event history models to analyze the transition to having a first child for men and women and we observe them through monthly increments from aged 16 onward. Observations are censored eight months before the first child is born to account for gestation or eight months before the interview, in case the respondent is pregnant at the time of the interview.

A large Russian-speaking minority has settled in Estonia and evidence has emerged that distinct demographic patterns characterize native and foreign-born populations (Sakkeus 2000). We, therefore, study the relationship between job acquisition and family formation within different groups, which include Estonian-speaking non-migrants, Russian-speaking non-migrants and migrants. We also expect heterogeneity in the relationship between job acquisition and family formation to exist by educational attainment and we observe how the effect of job acquisition varies by educational groups.

Presented in this extended abstract are first birth rates by language and migrant status for men and women. Russian-speaking non-migrant women and men in our sample appear to become

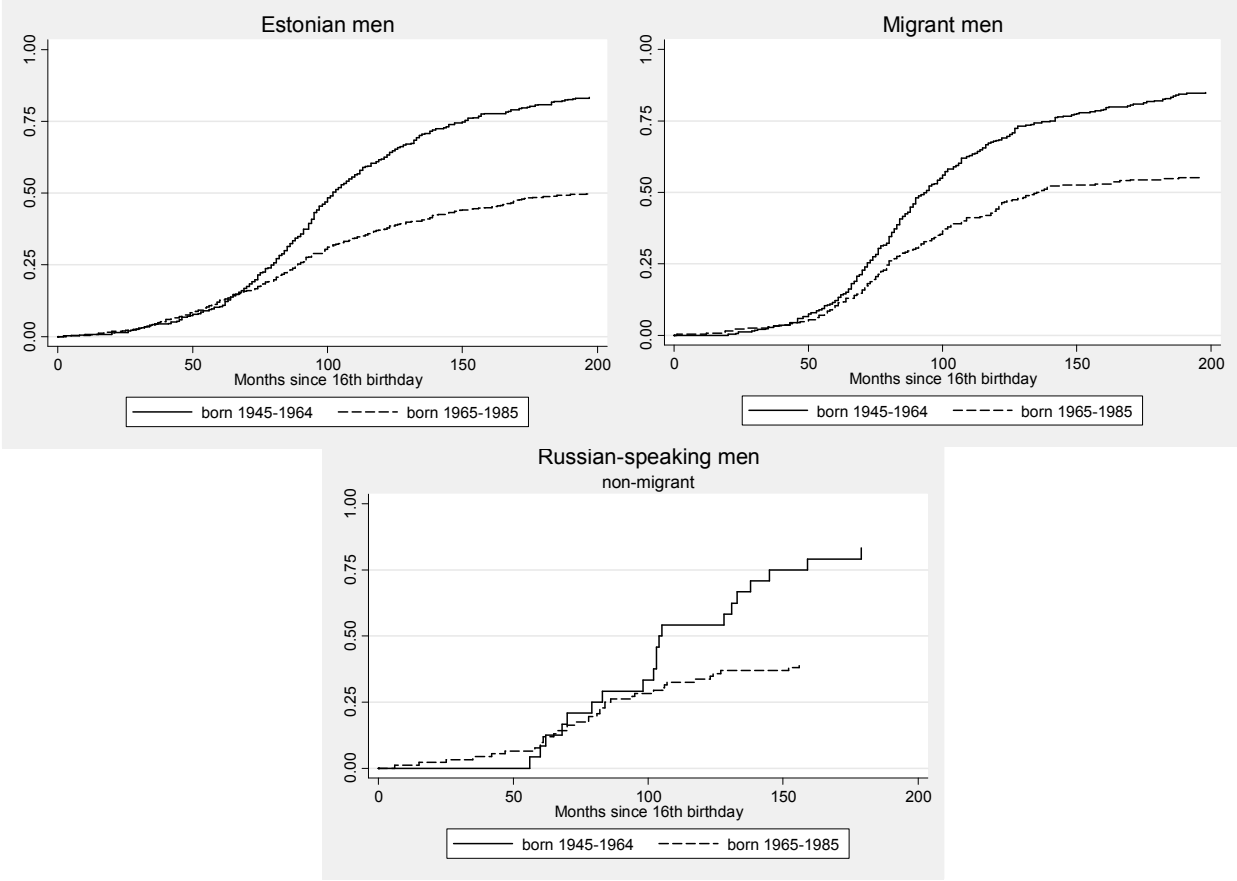
parents later than both migrants and Estonian-speaking non-migrants in the transitional time period. Estonian natives follow shortly in having their first child and the migrants appear to have their first child earliest. This pattern holds for both men and women. We also present preliminary results of the effect of acquiring the first permanent job on the timing of first birth and briefly discuss the results for Estonian natives here. Achieving employment in one's first permanent job has a strong positive influence on the timing of parenthood, both for men and women. The effect was much stronger under communism, which is an unexpected finding. For those individuals who had not had a child before reaching their main occupation, the effect of this achievement was positive under communism but reversed and had a negative influence under market conditions.

We will continue to explore the findings presented here and also conduct a descriptive analysis of how the characteristics of individuals' first permanent job as well as first job in their main occupation have changed over time and according to educational groups.

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Kaplan-Meier Failure Estimates for Men's first birth, since 16th birthday, by migrant/language characteristics



Kaplan-Meier Failure Estimates for Women's first birth, since 16th birthday, by migrant/language characteristics

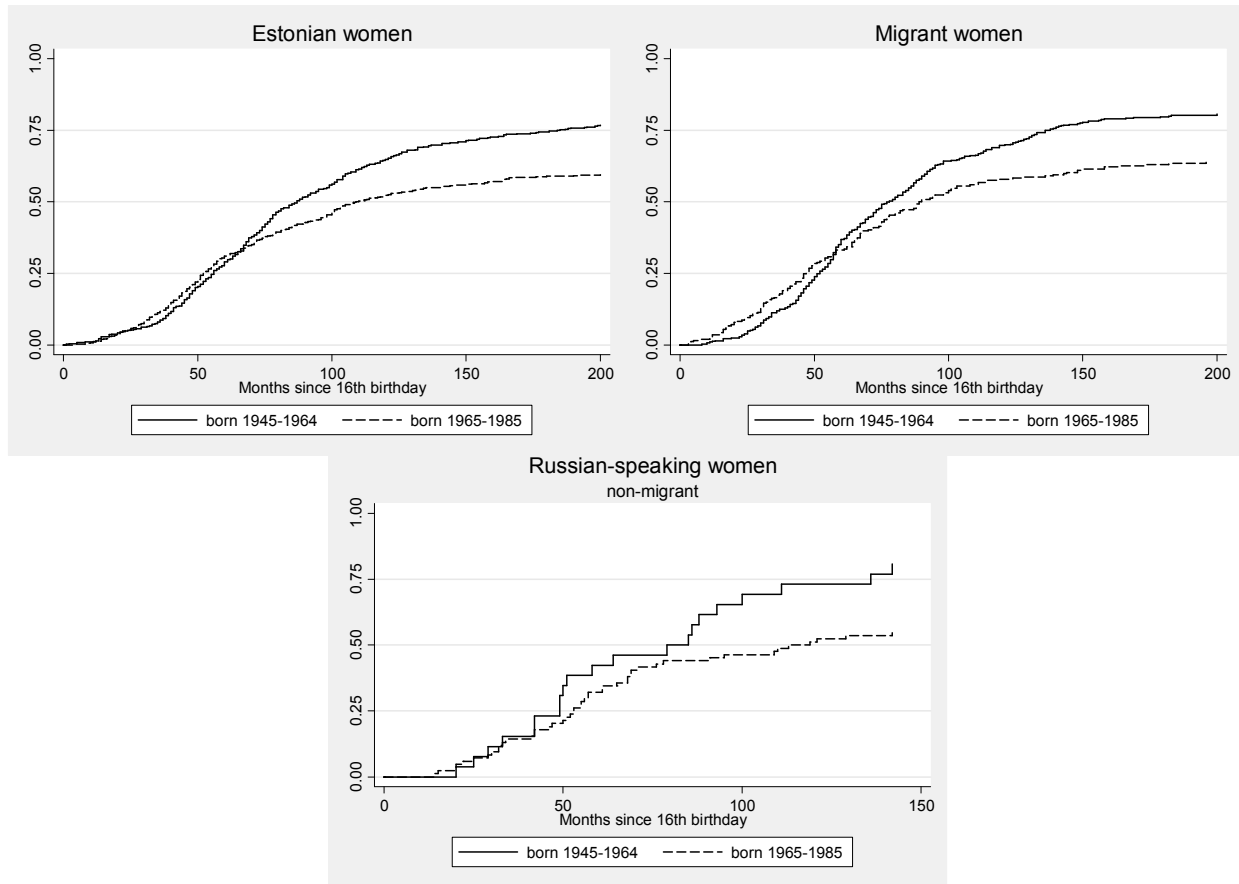
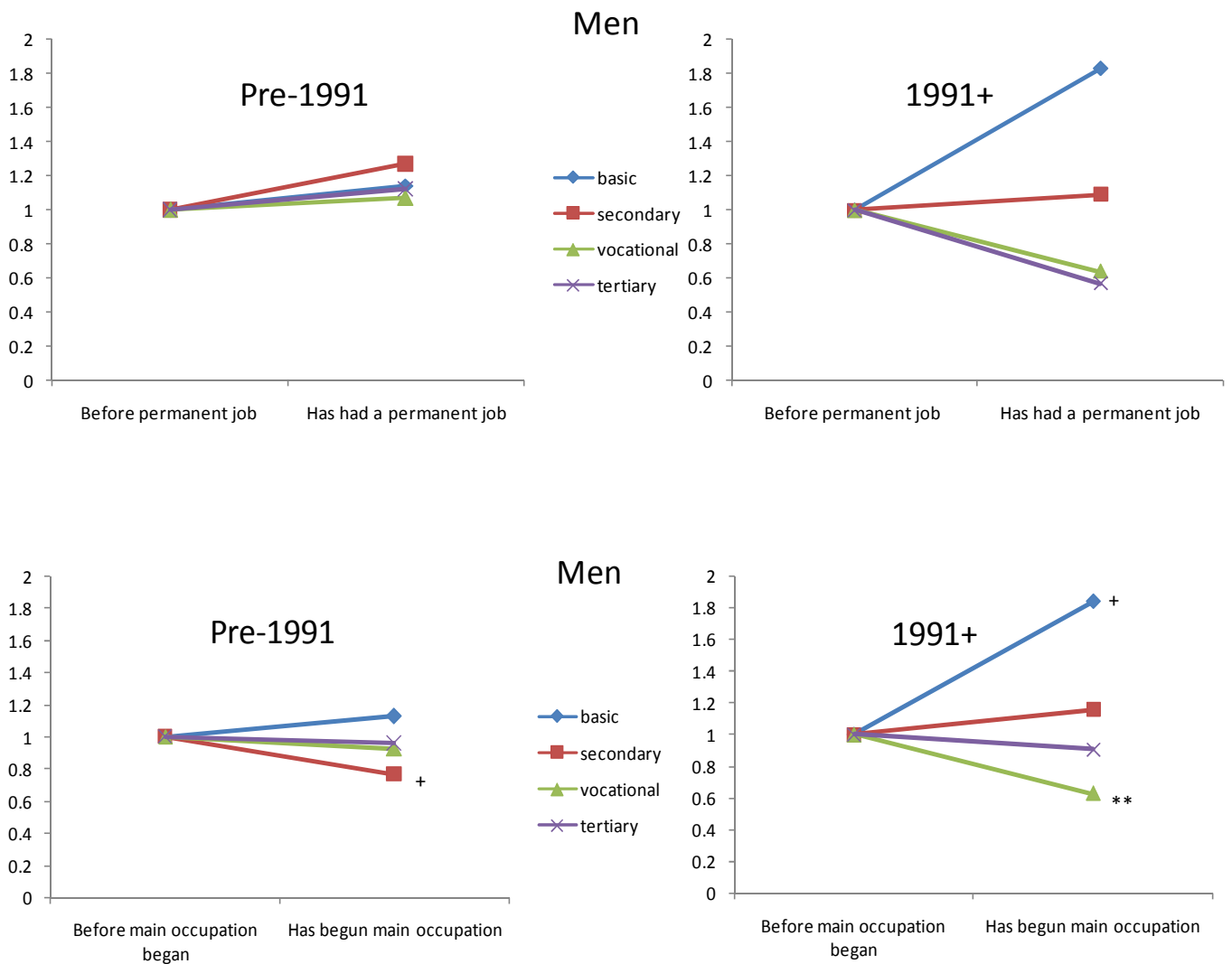


Table 1. Interactions of period and type of job attainment, separate models for the type of job acquired and migrant/language characteristics

Estonian speakers, non-migrant				
	Men		Women	
	1945-1964	1965-1985	1945-1964	1965-1985
Model 1.				
Permanent job				
no	1	1	1	1
yes	1.62 **	1.27	3.02 ***	2.05 ***
Model 2.				
Main occupation				
no	1	1	1	1
yes	1.24	0.75 *	1.53 **	0.65 **
Russian speakers, non-migrant				
	Men		Women	
	1945-1964	1965-1985	1945-1964	1965-1985
Model 1.				
Permanent job				
no	1	1	1	1
yes	3.83	0.59	1.03	0.84
Model 2.				
Main occupation				
no	1	1	1	1
yes	1.43	0.79	0.87	1.31
Migrants				
	Men		Women	
	1945-1964	1965-1985	1945-1964	1965-1985
Model 1.				
Permanent job				
no	1	1	1	1
yes	1.41 +	0.81	1.67 **	0.85
Model 2.				
Main occupation				
no	1	1	1	1
yes	1.26	0.56 ***	0.93	0.58 *

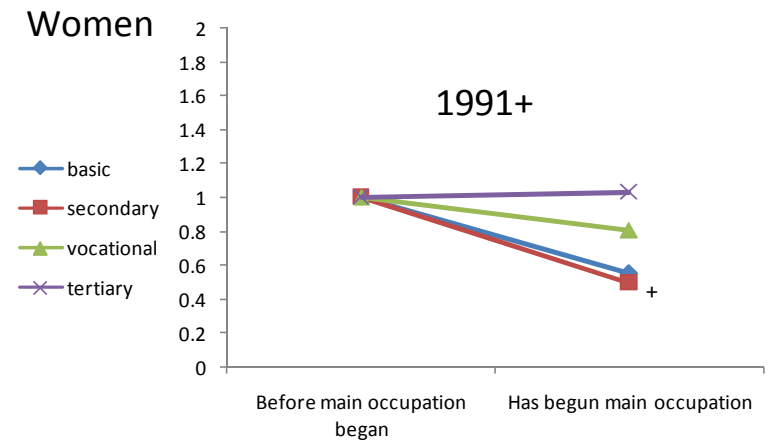
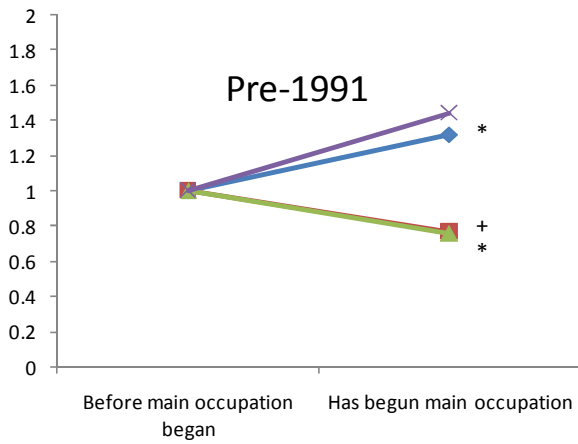
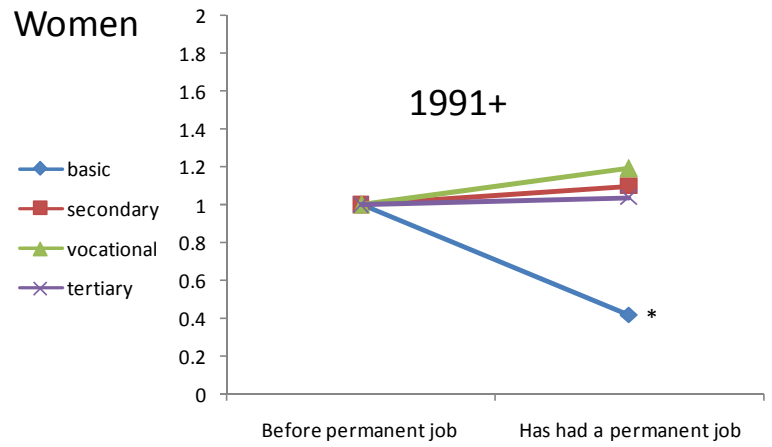
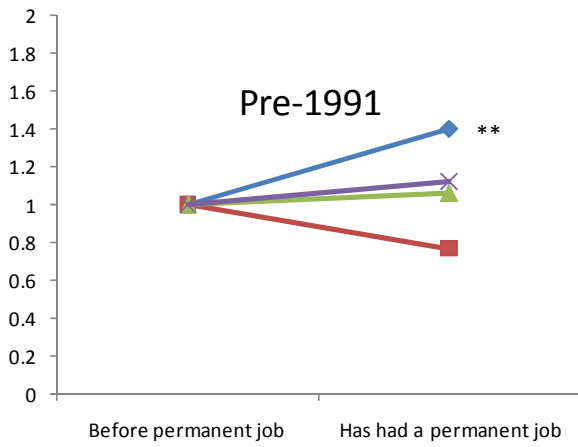
Note: all variables in previous models are controlled for in these models as well. Statistical significance: + = 10%, * = 5%, ** = 1%, *** = 0.1%

Interactions of education and type of job attainment, separate models for time period and type of job, all men



Note: all variables in previous models are controlled for in these models as well. Statistical significance: + = 10%, * = 5%, ** = 1%, *** = 0.1%

Interactions of education and type of job attainment, separate models for time period and type of job, all women



Note: all variables in previous models are controlled for in these models as well. Statistical significance: + = 10%, * = 5%, ** = 1%, *** = 0.1%