

## Partnerships and friendships

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**Ágnes Utasi**

Social solidarity and integration in Hungary:  
Aspects of confidential relationships

**Ágnes Utasi - Ádám Páthy - Péter Hári**

International trends of relationships  
in the last fifteen years



Institute for Political Science  
Hungarian Academy of Sciences



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## CONTENTS

### **Ágnes Utasi:**

#### **Social solidarity and integration in Hungary: Aspects of confidential relationships**

The Realignment of Interpersonal Relations in the Emerging Market Economy  
The Decrease of Trust Towards ‘Others’ and the Growing Importance of Confidential Strong Relationships  
Friendship: a chosen confidential relationship  
‘Emotional’ and ‘instrumental’ relationships  
Inequalities of social class in confidential friendships  
The dominant life-condition parameter shaping confidential friendships  
Social integration and strong, confidential relationships  
Relationship deprivation and lack of integration  
Improvement in the probabilities of integration through the virtual ties of associations, organizations and religion  
Bibliography:

### **Ágnes Utasi - Ádám Páthy - Péter Hári:**

#### **International trends of relationships in the last fifteen years**

Important parameters of the sample  
Changes in the structure of family status  
Changes in the structure of households  
Contact within the family  
Non-personal contact  
Friendships  
Microsocial solidarity and assistance  
Conclusion  
Reference list

Ágnes Utasi

## Social solidarity and integration in Hungary: Aspects of confidential relationships

A growing number of people use the Internet on regular basis and many of them have virtual friends and some of them have even found real friends thanks to the web. **Technical advances** like the emergence of the web, the ever growing popularity of telephones, etc. **might contribute to strengthening relationships but are no substitutes for direct human contact.** An international survey conducted fifteen years ago on the relationship-networks of seven countries showed that as regards keeping contact with parents and friends on the phone Hungary was lagging far behind the other six countries in the survey (ISSP, TÁRKI, 1986, N=10 700). In the aforementioned period only 10-12% of the population had a telephone line in Hungary. However the extent of respondents regularly keeping in touch with their parents, that is visiting them, was significantly higher than in countries better equipped in terms of telecommunication (Utasi, 1991).

**Social integration** *is maintained first and foremost through real relationships, especially through strong ties represented by regular visits and stays. A recent survey has provided further evidence for this claim. In the survey respondents had fifteen different options representing factors that help social integration, their task was to pick the one they considered the most effective. The results showed that illness or being disabled are the most important reasons for isolation, lack of integration. According to the survey people consider 'to have friends' (89.2%) and 'to have family and children' (81.0%) the most important conditions of avoiding isolation. (EURÓPA 2000, BKE, Házt. Kut. Csop. N=1500) This shows that an overwhelming majority of the respondents considered real confidential strong relationships essential. While altruism and selflessness are fundamental conditions of non-virtual relationships, these values are suppressed by the virulent tendencies of individualization, financial growth, the never-ceasing competition for 'progress' on the social ladder, the meritocratic value-orientation urging ever-increasing performance.*

*Quality of life surveys* dating from the 1960s and 1970s had already established that human relationships are essential constituents of 'well-being', happiness and satisfaction. At the same time both sociologists and demographers had noticed *changes in the workings of relationships* (Allardt, E., 1975). Most hit by changes corresponding to *the tendency of individualization and the spreading of civilization* were partnerships. The need for independence, for autonomy was on the rise and consequently a growing number of people wanted to lead a life adapted to individual needs and self-fulfillment. *The need for self-fulfillment together with growing financial autonomy and independence stemming from civilizatory welfare disentangles first the extra-familiar ties which rely on self-imposed altruism and 'piety'.* Most effected by this increased need for self-fulfillment is the longevity of partnerships. The number of marriages ending in divorce, the number of non-married couples living together and the age of people getting married have all increased. (Cseh-Szombathy L., 1994, Somlai, P., 1999, Tóth O., 1994 Pongrácz T.-né, 1994 S. Molnár E., 1997 Utasi Á., 1999, Szücs Z., 1999)

The international relationship-survey conducted *before the political changes* (in the 1980s) showed that *in Hungary strong family-relation ties have contributed to making a living and reaching financial security mainly by means of instrumental motivation.* Cooperation within

the family was intensive. Workplace and neighborhood acquaintances were also sustained mainly by instrumental motivation. On the other hand the number of respondents picking friends and especially close friends from the options was very low. To sum up, in the 1980s social solidarity and especially instrumental assistance was very well-sustained due to the network of strong relationships whereas emotional and expressive assistance was lagging far behind. (Angelusz-Tardos, 1988, Utasi, 1990, 1991).

### ***The Realignment of Interpersonal Relations in the Emerging Market Economy***

Following the political changes the *rapidly* growing prosperity of the *higher ranking*, financially better equipped social strata and the tendency for *individualization* together with the desire to get rich inevitably led to a loosening of relations considered ‘uneconomic’ and also to the upgrading of financially valuable relations. In the meantime *as a reaction to the growing social financial inequalities there has been an intensification of family ties among those lacking resources*.

The new emphasis on democracy, freedom and individual choice was reflected in the growing significance of values such as autonomy, independence and respect for others’ individuality. Whereas *the importance of respect for differences and the appreciation of individual performance was on the rise*, there was a corresponding *ebb* of solidarity towards people lagging behind in this new wealth-oriented society. The higher one gets on the social ladder, the wealthier, the more competitive he is with a higher probability of ‘meritocratic success’, the less he inclines to accept that the state should support those at the bottom end of the financial spectrum (e.g. people out of job or students coming from low-income families) (Utasi, 2000). Meanwhile *the trust in individual effort and achievement* has intensified.

In the new democratic political system criticism against the ‘regime’, the government and state representatives is no longer prosecuted. *Fear of retaliation and its companion servile attitude towards power has declined*. As a side-effect of this process *the prestige of state authorities had eroded*. Most spectacularly so in the case of offices and authorities representing political ‘self-government’ and also for the policy-making elite. Loyalty and trust towards them sharply declines. The majority of Hungarians lost trust in their government and the Parliament.

Unfortunately *the growing respect for individual rights and the rule of law* in the new democracy had encouraged criminal wrong-doing. *Vandalism in the streets* following political and sport events, causing damage in public places *had become frequent*. Disorderliness and crime in general is on the rise. As a counter-step the rich has moved from cities to suburban districts and nearby villages. The most likely sights at weekends in city centers, apart from tourists, are homeless people roving the streets with large plastic bags containing all their belongings and a few well-dressed people doing their best to ignore this unpleasant sight.

The past ten years had seen *the birth and proliferation of ‘security’ enterprises guarding the properties and belongings of the ‘privileged’*. Rented flats had given away to private flats and as these ‘private owners’ can’t afford to employ ‘security men’ and receptionist there has been a boom on the market of locks, steel bars and alarm-systems all unmistakable signs of the growing ‘*mistrust towards others*’ that *coexists with the aforementioned ‘respect for others’*. *These devices symbolize the fear of owners, the decline of trust towards ‘others’*. **The growing untidiness in public places further supports the feeling of lack of security, intensifies the isolation of individuals thus undermining and damaging the cohesion of society and correspondingly the extent of trust towards ‘others’.**

**The nuclearization of families signals the decline of socially integrative strong relationships.** Less and less people feel obliged to sustain broken marriages. The growing need for autonomy transforms the traditional institutions of marriage and family. *People are more likely to follow their individual judgments and thus ending imperfect relations to give way to new relations.* Divorce has always been an accepted reality and the extent of marriages ending in divorce was high but recently there is a new tendency of *couples living together without getting married and consequently an increase in the number of children born out of marital ties* (though some of these couples get married after their child is born) (Szűcs Z., 1999). The growing number of couples living in permanent relationships without being married and the postponement of marriage shows a reluctance to enter into lifelong, i.e. 'eternal' bonds in preference of partnerships demanding a lower level of altruism and sharing.

### ***The Decrease of Trust Towards 'Others' and the Growing Importance of Confidential Strong Relationships***

Contrary to the above described tendencies it would be a mistake to assume that in post-communist Hungary disorderliness, crime, untidiness, lack of trust and the decrease of strong relationships are more pressing problems than in the established democracies of the West. International surveys have shown that in modern democratic societies based on economic rationality the process of individualization led to similar changes over the past decade with the exception a few Asian democracies (Fukuyama, 2000). It remains to be seen whether the changes induced by the democratic and economic changes in Hungary should be regarded as part of this general tendency or specific to Hungary and if so in what degree.

As we have indicated traditional relationships 15 years ago were still based on trust and their operation was intense and wide in its scope. The trust that supported economic corporation reached beyond the circle of relatives and friends to that of colleagues and neighbours (Utasi, 1988, Sik E., 1988). *However this trust has gradually eroded and its scope is now limited to a much smaller circle - matters of confidence are increasingly kept and discussed within the closer circle of the family which even excludes further relatives* (Utasi, 1994). Many interpreted these changes as a consequence of the anti-religious policy of the Communist regime that undermined all tradition and the traditional values of communities. While not denying that traditional social values are losing ground, it is to be pointed out that the ebb of trust and the corresponding weakening of social integration should be explained in a wider context of contributing factors. The findings of empirical surveys show that social integration based on traditional community values was still largely operational in the days of Communism. It was not before the introduction of market economy that instrumental cooperation and 'naive piety' that characterizes traditional communities were radically pushed in the background (Weber, M., 1982), whereas the need for the meritocratic appreciation of performance, individual ambitions and achievements has intensified. One of the main reasons for these changes was the acceptance of the radical shift towards social inequalities by the elite and its endorsement by labeling it a 'transient' phenomenon that is a necessary prerequisite of the 'financial strengthening of the middle-classes'. The difference in average wages between the upper 10% and the bottom 10% was 380% in 1982, this inequality rose to 730% in 1994 which represents a doubling of the difference (Andorka, R., 1996, Ferge, Zs., 2000). By adopting this practice the governments gave priority to the further gain in prosperity of the well-to-do and letting the cohesion and integration of the majority fall, thus further increasing the inequalities.

The aim of the present study is to unravel the ways in which the mentioned economic and political changes effected the instrumentally properly operating strong human relationships

and mutual trust. The foci of our investigation are *the analysis* of the characteristics of *trust* and specifically of *confidential relationships within the nuclear family and outside the family: friendship ties*.

Following the political changes in Hungary the lack of resources (Dahrendorf, 1990) meant that relationships confidential and strong enough to provide financial backing and capital were essential to start new businesses. Sociological studies had shown that this need is most likely to be satisfied from within the family, just as tradition would dictate. The future of such new businesses being highly uncertain, thus their financial support being highly hazardous, they could only rely on family members as sources of capital. Another consideration that helped inter-family financing was the idea that the capital could be repaid for the next generation as well. Accordingly most of the small businesses, the so-called forced entrepreneurs started off with help from within the family that could take the form either of financial support or providing labor. (Lengyel Gy. 1995) The acquisition of privatized property and getting the necessary financing was often made possible by confidential information passed on by friends thus capitalizing on relationships. (Utasi, 1994)

This is of course not something peculiar to Hungary. Many companies and enterprises, even some multinational giants all around the world are run by families or their influence is maintained by having members of the family on the board, so as to protect the families interests. The rationality and practice of collaboration within the family to assist enterprises has strengthened in Hungary since the fall of Communism. One unique aspect of this process was that while previously the regrouping of resources stemming from connection capital could result only in relatively low profit because of the regulations limiting private profit, in post-communist Hungary the same connection capital by helping the acquisition of privatized property or to start a new business yielded extremely high profit ratios. The intensive cooperation and confidential relationship between members of the nuclear family and friends thus remained strong under the changed conditions but its content and result had significantly altered in the various strata yielding strongly diverging profits.

Traditional relationships operated mainly through instrumental motivation in the past as well. Providing help in building a home, interchange of products to lower costs and mutual labor-assistance was more typical than emotional ties. The sudden emergence of *unemployment* among not only the unqualified but also the well-qualified strengthened the cooperation and mutual assistance within the families and intensified the co-reliance and self-protection among confidential friends. Being jobless was something that the family considered a shame and tried to keep secret. This emotion reduced the ties outside the circle of the confidants. (Utasi, 1994)

*The period following the political changes saw the intensification of confidential relationships and friendships that were able to provide resources all along the social spectrum.* Friendship especially for those with a higher status could bring access to resources simply because it is the people belonging to the upper strata of society who have friends. (Utasi, 1990, Angelusz R.-Tardos R., 1988, Albert F.-David B., 1988).

Members of the new governments tended to appoint friends for confidential positions. The circle of those 'in power' was recruited from the circle of confidential friends, relatives, ex-classmates (Mills, C. W., 1951, Weber, M., 1987). Party leaders also tended to surround themselves with close friends and ex-schoolmates. In local communities, small or medium sized towns people of higher status could invariably find a relative or friend who could provide useful information if need be. 'Influential and confidential friendships and affinities' are also extremely effective in a small country like Hungary (Utasi, Á.-A. Gergely, A-Becskeházi, A., 1996).

*The discussed changes had limited the scope of trust to the circle of close agnates and friends. A survey made in 2000 showed that regular contact within the nuclear family remained as intensive as it was before the political changes. Almost all the respondents would visit their parents at least once a month, and only 2.8% falls below this frequency. The contact with children is similarly intense, but there is a slight shift: 5.5% of the respondents sees his/her children with lower frequency than once a month.*

*Since the earlier survey telephone has become the general means of communication. 62.4 % of the respondents makes a phone call to his/her parents at least once a month. The same figure for parents talking to their children on the phone is 72.8%. (Európa, 2000, BKE N=1500) In 1986 the figure for people staying in phone contact with their parents was just a few percent. Our previous studies have indicated that in Hungary the role of emotion in family relationships is less significant than that of instrumental motivation. However regardless of the kind of motivation operating in connecting people within the nuclear family, data shows that ties between relatives is still very strong and trust is undiminished.*

*A survey conducted last year investigated the intensity of trust and also its direction, i.e. who the respondents put their trust in. There was a scale indicating 4 levels of trust. Full trust was indicated by assigning number 4 to the given category, while number 1 would indicate no trust. Categories to be evaluated were: the government, political parties, NATO, the Parliament, God, the respondent himself and his family. (Demokrácia, MTA PTI, 2000, Simon)*

*According to the survey people trust first and foremost themselves with an average value of 3.7. Family-members, relatives came second: 3.6. These figures indicate almost unconditional trust. However there is a well-marked inconsistency in the value-structure of the respondents: the first of the top two categories indicates that one can rely only on oneself and this reflects an individualistic value-priority. The category coming second contradicts our previous conclusion as it indicates the endorsement of traditional value-priorities based on family-ties and kinship. The rest of the evaluated categories - including neighbors - received a far less favorable index ranging 1.5-2.6.*

*68.3 % of the respondents unconditionally trust their family and relatives, while only 7% evaluated the government similarly. (Unfortunately 'friends' was not included in the categories, but we have grounds to suppose that they would have received high marks, close to that of relatives.)*

*Trust in governments has sharply dropped as it was demonstrated by surveys conducted in the U.S. As a tendency policymakers seem to have lost public trust in liberal democracies. In 1958 in the U.S. less than a quarter (23%) of all respondents claimed that they would never or hardly ever trust their government, four decades later the same figure had tripled (1995: 71%-85%) (Fukuyama, 2000). At the present the number of people considering their government untrustworthy or almost completely untrustworthy is somewhat lower in Hungary (2000: 60.7%) (Demokrácia, MTA PTI, 2000).*

*Indices indicating mistrust are similarly high for categories designating people outside the closer circle of confidants, i.e. 'others' or 'people in general'. The Hungarian survey shows that 2 out of 3 respondents (68%) thought that one cannot trust or hardly ever others (Demokrácia, MTA PTI, 2000). The figures indicating mistrust towards 'others', 'aliens' is somewhat higher in Hungary than in the U.S. However it is worth noticing that the survey dating from 1997 showed a progressive loss of confidence in 'others' in the U.S. Three decades earlier the number of respondents saying that "one can trust or almost always trust" people in general was ten percent higher than the number of those saying "one cannot trust"*



others. By the second half of the 90s tables were turned and the majority of people would say that “one cannot or hardly ever trust others” (60%) (Fukuyama, 2000).

### ***Friendship: a chosen confidential relationship***

The trust in friends is similar in quality to the unconditional trust in family-members and relatives. *We believe that among confidential relationships the most significant one, next to the family-kinship relationships, is friendship.* Naturally, having confidential friends is not as common as having relatives one can rely on. *Friendship is a chosen relationship that may generate solidarity and mutual resources without a formalized framework and bring social integration.* It can operate successfully without legal or institutional regulations. Different schools consider different motivations to be dominant in forming friendships, but most would agree that it is not one but a set of motivations that shape friendships. Some claim that mutually attractive individual characteristics, attitudes are the main factors. Others would argue that friendships emerge on an emotional basis, that is the attraction is driven by *emotion*. Most experts would consider similarities in structural and cultural basics to be the determining factor in generating friendships. (Adams, B. 1979)

In our opinion friendships are primarily determined by social and structural factors, but emotion as a decisive relational motivation is essential in developing friendships. Nevertheless among the contributing and sustaining factors to this relationship - friendship not being different in this respect from all other human relationships - aim, value, tradition and emotion can all be present (Weber, M., 1987), but certainly the various motivations will have a different weight in contributing to friendships developing between individuals with different backgrounds. *Similarity, homogeneity and endogamy is among the defining characteristics of friendships.* (Laumann, E.O. 1973) (In 1998 Lawer’s survey: 83.9 % of first friends of lawyers, 86.2 % of second friends have a university degree, 74.8 % of their spouses have a university degree).

Compared with bygone ages today’s people have a greater freedom in choosing friends. Our ancestors were limited in their choices by rigid boundaries between estates formulated on the basis of birth. Despite the increased freedom the way in which friends are chosen is characterized by cultural and status homogeneity much like in the case of spouses. Why homogeneity has such a strong effect on choosing friends is not a question that could easily be answered. Most probably the answer lies in the fact that making one’s choice has both affective and cognitive components: the identical structural spot is the dominant field of the selection, this is where attraction, sympathy takes root, and at the same time where the cognitive process of getting to know the chosen person extensively takes place together with the more or less rational mapping of his social merits. As a result of the free choice of those befriending each other, the similar social values facilitate the trouble-free interchange of connections. (We presume that friendship and marriage are brought about by a similar cognitive force, but the affection involved certainly differs.)

*Homogeneity prevails primarily among people having similar status and prestige. Arguably homogeneity in finding friends is primarily the result of the prevalence of the prestige-principle.* Following and accepting Weber’s theory on the stratification by birth and lifestyle, we claim that men of similar status prefer similar means of living, they choose their friends, spouses and ‘commensals’ from similar circles (commensalism) (Weber, M. 1987). *Following the prestige-principle*, we suppose that friends predominantly occupy a similar position in the social hierarchy.

The most important characteristic of confidential relationships and thus of friendships from the viewpoint of social integration is **solidarity**. Solidarity towards others could be expressed by providing *material goods or labor, but also by providing symbolic resources*. This last category would involve *useful information, mediation, intercession, emotional support, joint visits of public events or spending time together*. The resources provided to each other might transform into other types of capital or wealth, and eventually they might contribute to the integration of society. (Wellman, B. 1990, Bourdieu, P. 1986, 1980).

*In our present study we define friendships as chosen confidential relationships with emotional ties, where the partners involved help each other by conveying solidarity by activating emotional resources in certain situations. We also presume that many instrumental relationships may over a period of cooperation transform and deepen into friendship bonds. In our previous studies we made a distinction between 'instrumental friendship' and 'emotional friendship' by saying that the former lacked emotional assistance. Friendship is a relationship predominantly based on emotionally motivated selection, it involves mutual solidarity and is usually characterized by some kind of homogeneity.*

### ***'Emotional' and 'instrumental' relationships***

The international survey conducted in 1986 showed that unlike in other countries of the survey the majority of friendships in Hungary derives from workplace relationships. (In Hungary 53.6% of friendships develops between fellow-workers, while the corresponding figure in other countries varied between 5-32%.) In 'instrumental friendships' based on working together emotion is of lesser importance. There is no denying that all relationships are motivated to some degree by emotions, but dominantly 'instrumental friendships' often end with the ceasing of cooperation (change of job, termination of a project, completion of building a house), while friendships hailing from school-days can survive decade-long intervals with no common activity.

According to the aforementioned fifteen-year-old survey 2 out of 3 Hungarians (64.4%) claimed to have a friend, that is being party to an 'instrumental' and/or 'emotional' friendship (Utasi, 1990). However 1 out of 3 Hungarian respondents claimed to have no friends at all and this was the highest corresponding figure in this international survey (35.6%).<sup>1</sup>

As the above definition shows we consider similar structural position and emotional motivation as binding element crucial in forming friendships. The categorization of friendships as 'instrumental' or 'emotional' was based on the presence or lack of the emotional motivation.

In our study a friendship was considered 'emotional' if the respondents claimed to share their grief with their friend (at least as second person) caused by some personal problems like being upset, depressed, having had a fall-out with their partner/spouse, etc. 1 out of 2 friendships in Hungary are emotional according to the survey, that is 1 out of 2 respondents would share their emotional problems with their friend. With the rest of the friendships instrumental motivation is the dominant cohesive factor. Overall one can conclude that among Hungarians 1 out of 3 people would confide in someone about their emotional troubles in cases of crisis, that is 1 out of 3 Hungarian respondents have an 'emotional friend'. (Utasi, 1990)

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<sup>1</sup> The survey showed that in Austria and West-Germany 1 out of 4 or 1 out of 5 people did not have friends (24.9% and 21.5%), the same figure for Italy and England was 1 out of 10 (14.7% and 13.7%), in Australia and the U.S. it was even lower: 5-6%.

### *Inequalities of social class in confidential friendships*

The nationwide representative survey conducted in 2000 offered better indicators to explore extra-familiar confidential relationships with emotional ties, that is friendships (Európa 2000, BKE, Ház. Kut. Csop. N=1500). The survey defined *friend as a person the respondent "feels very close to and can confide in about important personal matters, and is not a spouse/partner or family-member"*. Data shows that almost 1 out of 2 people (48.9%) claimed to have such 'intimate' friend, that is a friend *able to provide 'emotional resources'* in our terminology. (In case we could consider the data gathered by different methods in 1986 relevant, we could register a 10% increase in the number of 'emotional' friendships between 1986 and 2000.)

On considering the various classes and strata of society in terms of the unequal life conditions one could conclude that among people living under better conditions the ratio of people having friends is higher. This is especially true when we limit the scope of investigation to friends able to provide emotional assistance, understanding and solidarity.

As a result of the social inequality and discrimination based on biological differences between the sexes the number of friends providing emotional solidarity is *somewhat lower among women* (47.4%) than men (50.2%). Comparing friendships of the two sexes international surveys had shown that *more men (especially middle-aged men) have friends than women* (Fischer-Oliker, 1983). A possible explanation is that more men have jobs outside the home than women and their progress in the company hierarchy is also faster than that of women and both factors increase the chances of making friends. In the light of this women obviously have a lower chance of meeting 'potential' friends.

However research in Great Britain brought opposite results: there the number of women joining clubs, associations and charities was higher than that of men (Wellman, B., 1992), and so the number of friendships deriving from these communities was higher among women than men. Similar Hungarian surveys show that men's friendships clearly outnumber that of women even in this respect.

*Social inequality based on biological differences* could be noticed between *different age-groups* as well. *Among people younger than 29, 3 out of 4 have an extra-familiar confidential relationship (73.0%), while among people over 70 only 1 out of 3 has a friend (31.5%).* Despite the large differences between the two extremes of age-groups, comparison with previous surveys shows a *significant decrease in the extent of the difference*. In the 1986 survey *the youngest generation* claiming to have an emotional friend *outnumbered the oldest age-group 5 times, the 2000 survey showed a halving of this difference with a mere 2.5 multiplier*. The present inequality index in Hungary between the two extremes of the age-groups is now identical with that of the more developed western countries in 1986 (Utasi, 1990). It remains to be investigated whether the younger and the older generations would show a similar convergence in other fields of life-style.

*The development of friendships* is significantly effected by *life-cycle effects which are often accompanied by other kinds of biological inequalities*. The friendships generally typical in school-years show a significant drop after marriage and then there is a similar watershed at retirement age (Allan, G., 1979, Utasi, 1990). The result of the latest survey also confirms this trend of following life-cycles. *Obviously the life-cycle effect and the age effect usually adds up to form an important determinant in the development of friendships*. Some experts have noticed that friendships in old age are often characterized by multiplicity meaning a larger extent of friends who unify several different relationship contents and functions (Weiss-

Lowenthal, 1975). A likely explanation is that the inevitably decreasing number of friends in old age makes it necessary for friendships to fulfill several functions at the same time. The fields of activity that were previously divided into several different relationship contents and distributed between several individuals thus show an inevitable concentration by aging. As the actual range of activity narrows with old age the extent of elderly people naming their neighbours as their friends increases.

***Following the labor-division status-hierarchy*** first we investigated the ratio of respondents having confidential friends among the different labor-division groups of the ***actives***. Confirming our hypothesis we found the number of people having confidential friends was the highest among company leaders (72%) and intellectuals (69.2%) and the lowest among the different groups of workers (51.4-52.8%).

Differences also show up according to the *participation on the labor market*: a larger percentage of full-time employees claimed to have confidential friends (57%) than people employed in part-time jobs (53%). People running their own businesses show a higher index than employees (60%) and this is perfectly understandable considering the fact that they need to have confidential relationships and to be present continuously on the labor market to achieve success.

People active in labor-division have a higher chance of making friends outside the family, while conversely ***people not present on the labor market*** show a much lower index: in the case of homemakers and dowagers only 1 out of 3 (30.8-31.3%) have intimate friends, but the situation of young mothers receiving motherhood benefit and staying home to look after their children is even more worrying - only 1 out of 6 claimed to have someone outside the family they could confide in (16.7%). People outside the labor market and with low chances of having confidential relationships are almost exclusively women. This shows that *the disadvantages deriving from inequalities based on gender or on the unfavorable labor-division position add up to determine* the life conditions of these groups. The unfavorable positions in the two hierarchies get interconnected intensifying the negative effects and so increase the chances of isolation and segregation. The lack of intimate relations might eventually lead to the deterioration of subjective life quality.

As one grows older and especially after retirement social prestige declines in the overwhelming majority of cases. This then results in a decrease of the number of relations and correspondingly confidential friendships. This phenomenon of social devaluation deriving from different inequality dimensions is reflected in the low ratio of friendships among *pensioners*: *disability-pensioners* have the lowest hopes of finding friends (34.1%), *pre-pensioners* have somewhat better chances (36.4%) and finally *pensioners*, i.e. employees previously fully integrated into the labor market have the best chance within this group (39.1%). But the differences are relatively small. Being a pensioner and of old age definitely reduces the chances of having friends.

The inequality cross-sections investigated so far had all shown that the higher social status someone has the less disadvantages he will have to put up with in the life condition dimensions characterized by inequalities and the more likely he will find a friend who will understand his problems and provide solidarity. This was also confirmed by *the analysis of the cross-section showing cultural differences symbolized with the levels of qualification*.

In the category of *people not completing their primary school studies* only 1 out of 4 has an intimate friend (25.4%). In this category there is an overlapping intensification of the effects of the disadvantages of elderly age and low labor-division status. The index for *people completing their primary school studies* is markedly better: 1 out of 3 claimed to have a close friend (38.3%). The category of people with completed secondary school studies shows another significant extension: for those graduating from *technical school* the figure is 52%, while for those graduating from *grammar school* the figure is 55.8%.

The hypothesis that higher educational levels effectively safeguard from social disadvantages is further supported by the fact that among *people with a college or university degree* 2 out of 3 *do have close friends* (64.6%). The inequality between college and university graduation in terms of social capital and progress in the social hierarchy is reflected by the fact that people with a university degree - the ones who are the most likely to reach top positions and thus command power, prestige and wide-ranging network of relationships - have a significantly higher chance of having confidential friends (70.7%) than those with a college degree (61.5%).

We saw earlier that men in general have a higher chance of having confidential relationships than women. But once we shift the focus of investigation to levels of education, we find that *at those higher levels where women receive significant skill, expertise and this way command adequate competence and what is even more important become financially independent, they tend to have a better index of having close friends*. In the category of people with a degree women have a slightly better index (in the case of college degree, this index is 59% for men and 63% for women). There is a similar tendency in the case of high-school graduates, that is women being slightly better off in terms of having close friends. It seems that well-qualified women need to support their social capital by strengthening their friendships more intensely than men in order to protect their relatively rare and fragile privileged position. The higher extent of friendships among qualified women relative to men could be explained by the need to compensate for the sexual discrimination in society.

Inequalities effect one's self-respect and consciousness, and so they effect life conditions and the selection of friends. The existence or lack of friends has repercussions on self-evaluation, satisfaction, happiness and eventually on subjective quality of life (Allardt, E., 1998). People who classify themselves as belonging to the lower strata of society *in terms of lifestyle*, the 'self-depreciators' have a 50% lower index of having friends (37.8) than those who evaluate their life conditions more favorably and put themselves higher in the social hierarchy (i.e. upper-middle class) (64.9%).

The *existence or lack of friends* has a large impact on one's self-satisfaction, and *satisfaction is the single most important factor in determining subjective quality of life, that is individual happiness*. Those who have confidential friends, are, to various extents, *more satisfied with their life-standards (corr.102\*\*), health (corr..209\*\*), financial conditions (.112\*\*), than those who have no friends*. The causality-chain makes it difficult to identify clearly which is more important: the extent of satisfaction or the lack or existence of friends. Nevertheless it is more likely that the higher index of having friends among people being happier with their condition is the effect and the cause is their favorable condition of life. Those living under better condition are the ones who are 'better equipped with resources' and so are in a better exchange position on the market of social capital, so his chances are higher of finding confidential friends and in this way feeling more satisfied, happier.

The more optimistic outlook of those having friends is also a sign of more favorable life-conditions. Among people describing themselves as ‘*very happy*’ or ‘*happy*’ the number of those having confidential friends is significantly higher (61.3% and 51.8%) than among those describing themselves ‘*rather unhappy*’ or ‘*unhappy*’ (39.3% and 33.3%)

Data unambiguously proves the correspondence and interaction between *confidential friendship* and *subjective life quality*. We also know that people having friends are more likely to be members of social groups, classes that indicate a favorable position, that is a lower exposure to disadvantages and needs in the context of social inequalities. (Utasi, 2001) So *life conditions have a dominant impact on the development of confidential friendships, and as a consequence on the extent of satisfaction and happiness that indicates subjective life quality. The existence of a confidential friend is usually an effect and it is the outcome of the relatively favorable position in the different dimensions of life conditions within inequality structure of society.* Friendship ties develop and survive more easily where the traffic of solidarity-resources is two-way, where special interests (also) increase the viability of the contact, where there is a chance of long-term return of confidence capital in terms of solidarity. Friendship is not a relationship primarily based on altruism, it is rather an alliance based on mutual interests which due to the strength of the emotional relationship might occasionally produce expressions of altruism.

### ***The dominant life-condition parameter shaping confidential friendships***

The data examined so far had confirmed that different life-conditions correspond to the different chances of having friends. We tried to find out which cross-section of the inequality structure has the highest probability for the emergence of confidential friendships. If we consider confidential friendships accompanying favorable life-conditions to be a form of social capital, then it is also likely that people living under better conditions possess a significantly higher capital in general. As a consequence of the transferability of social capital people with confidential friendship connections can possess more favorable capital benefits and have a higher chance to acquire material and immaterial goods. (Bourdieu, P., 1980)

*We looked for the parameters of the life-conditions (by means of logistic regression) that make the development of confidential friendship ties the most likely.* In our model we applied variables symbolizing such life-condition extremes that indicated striking inequalities in friendships during the primary analysis. Our aim was to find out which of the following factors was the most determinant in having friends: (1) *levels of education*(variable name=E41), (2) *having a partner in life*(=E8), (3) *activity on the labor market* (0=jobless or retired, 1=active, receiving mother-care benefit, student)(AKTIVIT), (4) *age*(=KORCS2), (5) *gender*(=ENEME).

**LOGISTIC REGRESSION (EUROPA 2000, N=1500, BKE)**

Variables in the Equation							
Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig	R	Exp (B)
E8(1)	,4774	,1254	14,4904	1	,0001	,0773	1,6118
AKTIVIT(1)	-,0850	,1474	,3326	1	,5642	,0000	,9185
E41			56,3213	6	,0000	,1457	
E41(1)	1,9043	,3279	33,7187	1	,0000	,1233	6,7148
E41(2)	1,3695	,2628	27,1630	1	,0000	,1098	3,9335
E41(3)	,8068	,2449	10,8525	1	,0010	,0651	2,2406
E41(4)	,8688	,2587	11,2774	1	,0008	,0667	2,3840
E41(5)	,7989	,2324	11,8127	1	,0006	,0686	2,2230
E41(6)	,3541	,2234	2,5139	1	,1128	,0157	1,4250
KORCS2			60,4422	5	,0000	,1554	
KORCS2(1)	1,5318	,2387	41,1894	1	,0000	,1370	4,6267
KORCS2(2)	,8878	,2503	12,5853	1	,0004	,0712	2,4298
KORCS2(3)	,4507	,2319	3,7764	1	,0520	,0292	1,5694
KORCS2(4)	,2474	,2163	1,3078	1	,2528	,0000	1,2806
KORCS2(5)	,3362	,2065	2,6494	1	,1036	,0176	1,3996
ENEME(1)	,0148	,1169	,0159	1	,8996	,0000	1,0149
Constant	-1,4962	,2742	29,7717	1	,0000		

Variables: E21 1=having a friend, 0=not  
E8 1=having a partner in life, 0=not  
AKTIVIT 1= having activity on the labor market, 0= not  
E41 1= university graduate 7=incomplete primary.  
KORCS2 1= less than 30 years old, 6= 70 years old or more  
ENEME 1= man, 2= women

The model shows that ***the strong and significant life-condition parameter that makes the development of confidential friendship ties the most likely is the attained level of education*** (qualification=E41, sign.: 0.00, Exp. B=6.7148). So the extent of the inequalities in the chances of having friends among the considered life-condition dimensions was the highest between the different levels of education. ***Among the variables in our model age came second on the list of life-condition determinants making it most likely to have extra-familiar confidential friendships*** (sign.:00. KORCS2 Exp. B= 4.6267).

Examining the average values of the regression variable indicating probability (Pre3), we found that people not completing their primary school studies have the lowest chance of having a friend with 25%, while people with a university degree have the best chance with 71%. The extent of the difference between the two extremes in the education cross-section was almost the same as in the case of the two extremes in the age cross-section where people over the age of 70 have 31% probability while people younger than 29 have a 72% probability of having friends. *The largest difference in probabilities is then between elderly people with low educational level and young university graduates.*

The analysis clearly showed that the level of education attained is the fundamental factor in determining the probability of having an extra-familiar confidential relationship, that is a friend.

### ***Social integration and strong, confidential relationships***

Social integration in traditional societies is sustained almost exclusively by solidarity-networks deriving from family ties, and this is largely true for industrial societies as well. *We considered those relationships to be contributing to the social integration which the respondents claimed to be strong ties, people with whom they have a regular and intense relationship.* We consider *integration sustaining strong relationships the ones which typically develop between children and parents, spouses and confidential friends* (Granovetter, M.S. 1973). We supposed that regular resource-transfer is only attainable between those connected by an intensive relationship and so we considered integrative from the above enlisted relationships only the ones where *the respondent lived in the same household or made visits at least once a week or were in touch on the phone at least once a week.* We think that only ties as intense as that could provide the day to day solidarity giving the individual a sense of security, mutual emotional assistance and eventually social integration. We maintain this claim without denying that in cases of emergency the less intense strong relationships would also be ‘mobilized’, but obviously these looser ties provide less support and consequently they have less effect on the individual’s sense of security, awareness of integration and subjective life quality.

It is a well-known fact that child-parent ties are strong in Hungarian families: the generations living in separate households usually meet on a weekly basis or stay in contact on the phone. *1 out of 6 respondents over the age of 18 lives in the same household as his/her parents or parent (15.4%).* Among those living in separate households, but their parents/parent is still alive (38.5%) *3 out of 4 meets the parents at least once a week (71.7% = 24.9% of the complete sample), more than half of them (also) calls them on the phone at least once a week (57% = 16% of the complete sample).*

Our sample showed that ***almost 1 out of 2 people has direct or indirect intense contact with their parents (46.6%) which in most cases ensures social integration.***

The intensive cooperation and cohesion of the nuclear family is further demonstrated by the other side of the parent-child relationship: the contact of parents with their children. *Half of the respondents shares his/her household with their children (foster-children included) (48.7%) and almost half of the respondents (also) have a child living separately (43.2%).* 2 out of 3 parents having a child living separately claimed to meet them at least once a week (68.5% = 19.2% of the complete sample) and/or talk to them on the phone (65.9% = 16.9% of the complete sample).

***Overall 3 out of 4 of the respondents live in the same household as at least one of their children or meet them and/or talk to them on the phone at least once a week (73.8%).*** (It is of course true that part of the children are still under-aged, and so the transfer of resources is usually one-way, but the social integration awareness is significantly supported by such ties as well.)

The overwhelming majority of the sample is in ***intensive relationship with their parents/children*** that is some member of the nuclear family, and so ***only 1 out of 10 respondents reported no weekly contact with either children or parents (10.6%), while 1 out of 3 of the respondents***



***has strong ties to both parents and children*** indicated by at least weekly contact frequency (31.0%).

Those with intensive family ties by no means refuse developing strong extra-familiar relationships, that is friendships. In fact the opposite is true. While almost half of the respondents reporting strong ties to either parents or children have friends too (47.7%), and more than half of those with intensive family ties in both directions have confidential, close friends they can rely on in cases of personal problems (53.4%), only 1 out of 3 respondents with no strong family ties reported having confidential friends (39.4%). ***It is as if intensive, strong relationships would attract each other***, they multiply and show cumulative characteristics. *The existence of intensive family contact increases the probability of the development of friendship ties.*

### ***Relationship deprivation and lack of integration***

Of the four kinds of examined ***strong relationships*** (parent, child, spouse, friend) ***3.7% of the respondents claimed to have none, 1 out of 5 reported only one (15.9%)***, 1 out of 3 reported two (38.5%), 1 out of 4 reported three (27.9%), and a significant quantity reported to have all four (13.9%).

***Among those integrating with only one strong relationship (15.9%) the majority are in contact with their children (8.2%). The number of those integrating only with their spouse (2.7%) or friend (2.6%) or parent (2.3%) is low as compared with the above mentioned group.*** However it is a remarkable finding that *among those whose social integration is represented with just one strong relationship, the probability that this relationship would be a friendship is very close to the other two relationships which connect the individual to the nuclear family.* This fact suggests that *in case of lack of nuclear family members in the environment of the respondents friendship becomes the most valuable strong relationship.*

***Among those with just one kind of intensive strong relationship their labor-market position signifies important differences.*** For the complete sample 1 out of 6 (15.9%) respondents has just one strong relationship, while in the cross-section of those outside the labor-market their extent is much higher. 29.3% of pensioners, 49.9% of widowers, 22% of people living on social benefits and 22% of those taking part in rehabilitation programs have only one intensive relationship, that is someone they can rely on permanently.

Those who had *none of the four examined intensive strong relationships* have low chance of social integration through other channels (3.7%). They irreversibly lose access to resources provided by the traditional solidarity-network and unless social institutions or civil groups/organizations can effectively assist their integration they become 'outcasts' on the peripheries of society and become 'deprived' in terms of relationships. We tried to find out whether among the classes with different life-conditions which are the ones to be found with highest probability in this situation of complete contact deprivation and lack of social integration.

Age and the changes in life-cycle induce profound changes in the family-structure and in the quantity of people with strong ties, and so the probabilities of entering the group of those deprived of social relationships are also modified. In the age-group under 39 the extent of people without strong ties to spouse, parents, children or friends - that is without hopes of receiving solidarity - is negligible (0.4%). In the age-group of 40-59 the extent of people without strong ties is still very low (1.8%). However over 60 the index sharply rises: *1 out of 10 people in this group has no intensive relationship at all (9.4%).*

Considering the educational hierarchy we see that *in the cross-section of the least educated the extent of those without strong integrative relationship is high (7.2%)*. Above this level relationship deprivation is sharply reduced (vocational training: 2.0%, high school graduation: 1.5%, university degree: 2.2%) *Completion of primary school is a border-line in terms of possessing strong, socially integrating relationships*, above this line there is no significant difference between the categories. Relationship deprivation in the category of low-educated is probably connected to the fact that people belonging to this class are mostly elderly, as the changes in educational system almost rule out people under 55 not to have completed their primary school studies and so factors like losing relatives or the migration of children become highly relevant.

Another life-condition dimension that has a high tendency to implicate lack of relationships is *unfavorable position on the labor-market*. *Exceedingly high numbers of people **without intensive strong relationships*** belong to the category of those *living on part-time jobs* (and obviously predominantly unskilled) (20%) and also to *elderly people living on dower* (28%) but in general all the categories representing *people inactive on the labor-market* have an index higher than average (pensioners: 6.9%, people in benefit: 5.6%)

*In the group of respondents without intensive strong relationship the rate of those considering themselves happy - 'very happy' or 'rather happy' - was only half of the rate in the group of those with intensive strong relationships*. It comes as no surprise that the index of those considering themselves 'very unhappy' was several times higher among those without intensive strong relationships than among those who have such relationships.

It is easy to see which *life condition factor* is the most dominant in determining whether a person will have *several intensive 'strong' relationships* and extensive contact network as means of integrating into community: regression-analysis had also revealed that this factor is *age*. The younger a person the more likely to have intensive relationships in all four fields considered. Next on the list was educational level the one life condition dimension that synthesizes the effects of all the other dimensions of social inequalities.

### ***Improvement in the probabilities of integration through the virtual ties of associations, organizations and religion***

Sometimes it happens that people without the examined family or friendship ties consider themselves happy, satisfied, socially integrated. One typical example is people without strong relationship ties but with firm religious faith. And it does not in any way subtract from their well-being that transcendent and virtual relationship can provide only emotional resources. Similar emotions can arise in those who, though without strong relationships, belong to some sort of civil community, association, club. Such membership can also make people feel that they are not without ties, that they can integrate into society. Recently there is a new source of this emotional equilibrium though perhaps of more transient nature and that is Internet-friendship. However we have no statistically relevant information on people with such virtual ties.

*Accepting religious faith and membership in some form of association further integrative relationships*, we modified the index that was previously based on four different kinds of strong relationships by adding these two extra 'ties'. In this new index the number of those considered deprived was halved: a mere 1.5% of the sample remained without real or virtual ties as opposed to the previously indicated 3.7%.

Social integration with six types of relationship (parent, child, spouse, friend, religion, association)

The extent of those with just one tie had also dropped by half but remained significant (7.5%). The extent of those integrating exclusively through either *religious faith* (1.9%) or *friendship* (0.9%) or *membership in some association* (0.2%) complete with those *not* being able to report *any ties at all*, still only amounts to 4.5%. ***Thus we can conclude that in Hungary only 1 out of 20 people live their lives without intensive family ties.***

Our study has validated the thesis that family is the dominant and determinant integrative force in our society. It was also established that ***extra-familiar intensive strong ties provide integrative channels for relatively few people.***

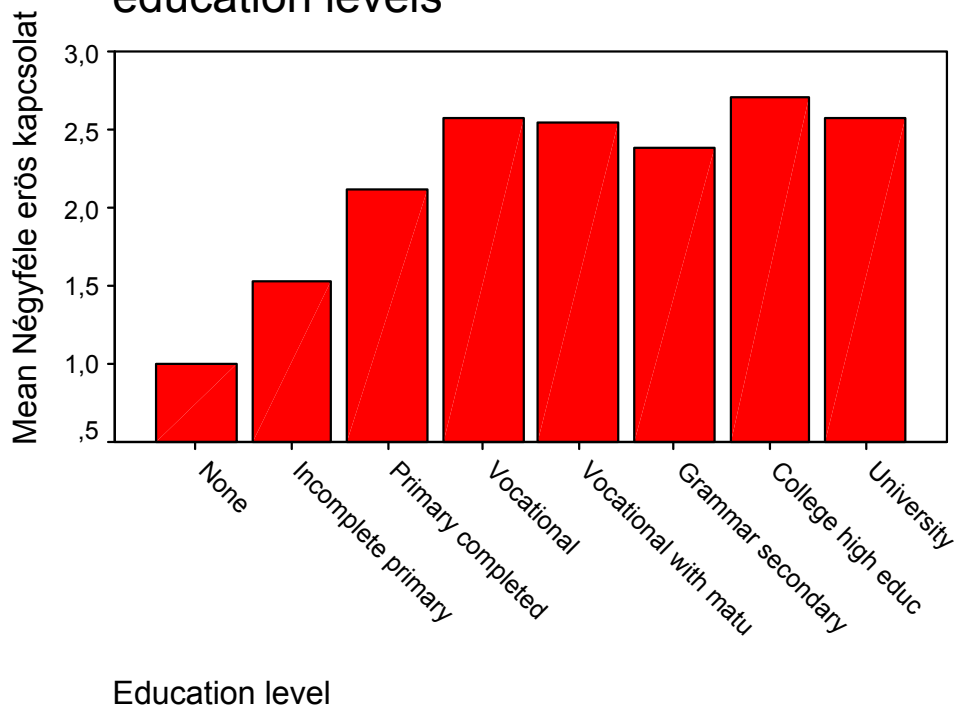
The cumulative nature of integrative relationships was also shown by the fact that in the group of people with strong family ties the probability of having intensive strong relationships is also higher. Relationships seem to follow the pattern established by prestige, namely: the more you have the higher your chances are to further expand them (Mills, C.W., 1951). Social capital accumulating through intensive strong relationships follows the pattern of other types of capital: it accumulates on the top of social ladder indicating the most favorable life conditions and at the other end of the hierarchy general deprivation is usually complemented by the lack of integrative intensive strong relationships.

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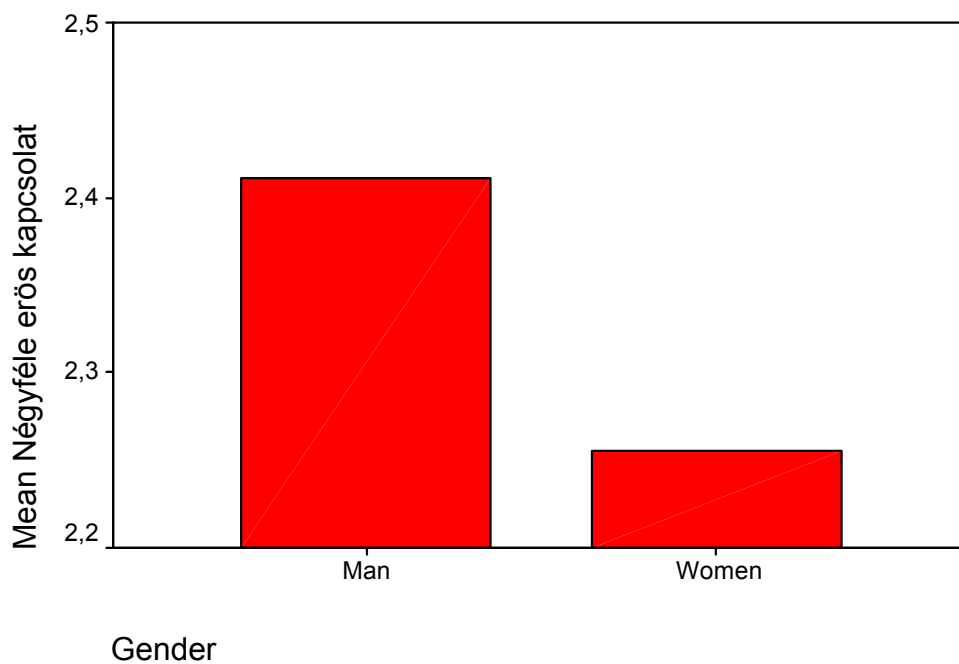
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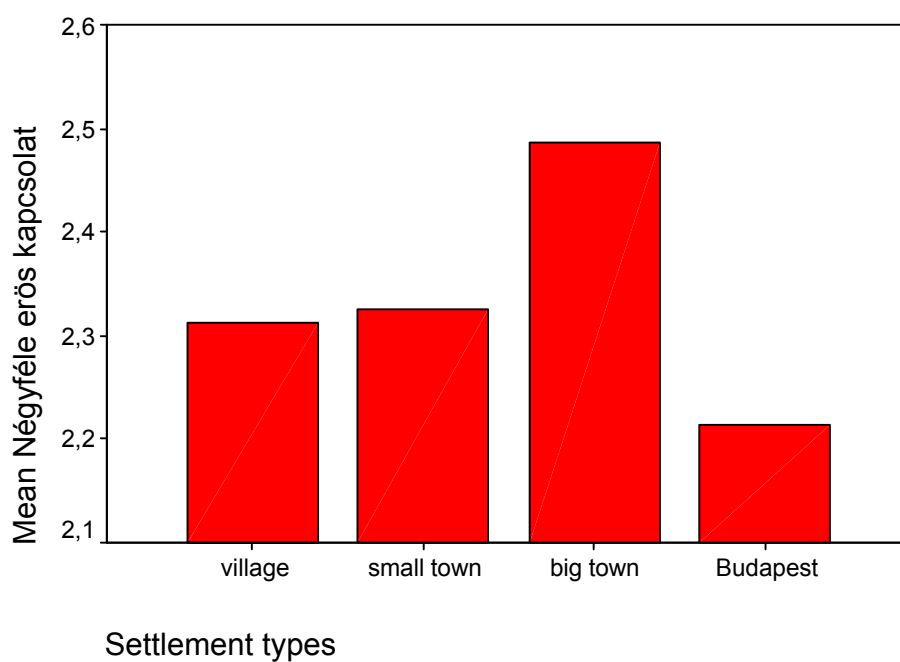
Strong ties (child, parent,partner,friend) by education levels



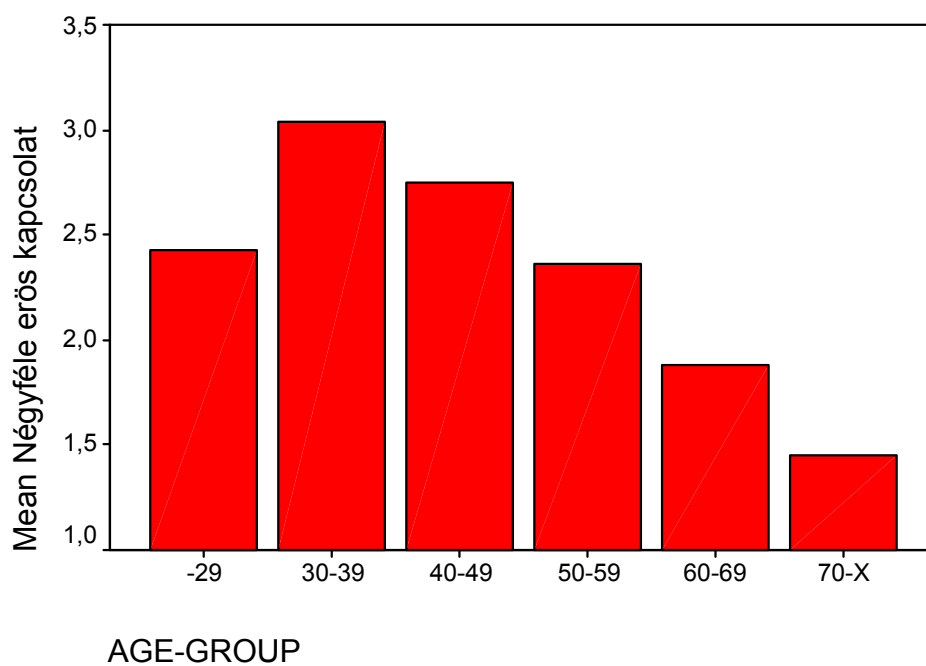
Strong ties (child, parent,partner,friend) by gender



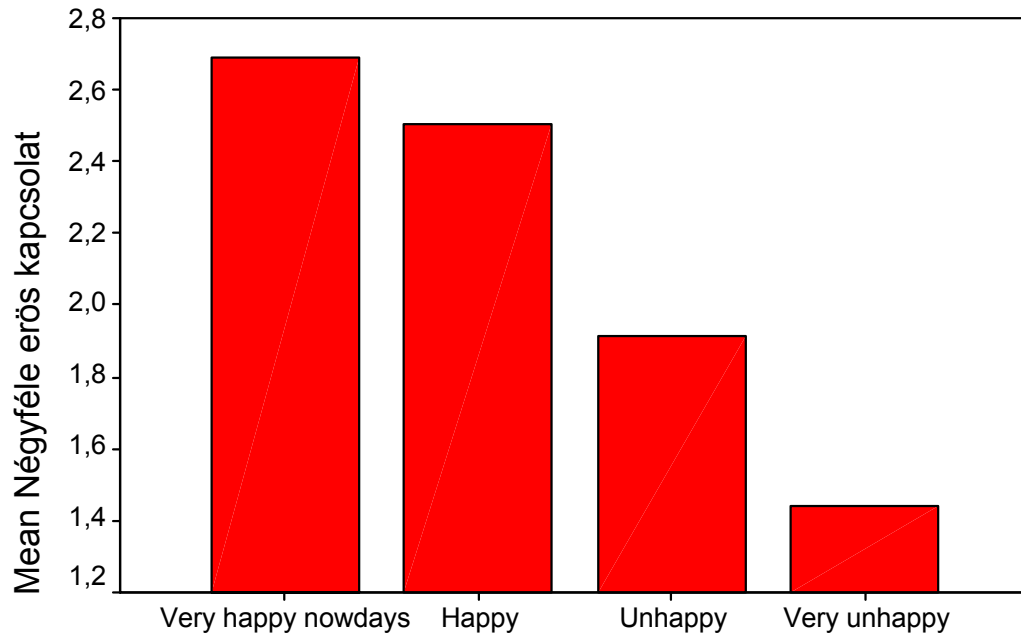
### Strong ties (child, parent,partner,friend) by settlement types



### Strong ties (child, parent,partner,friend) by age-groups



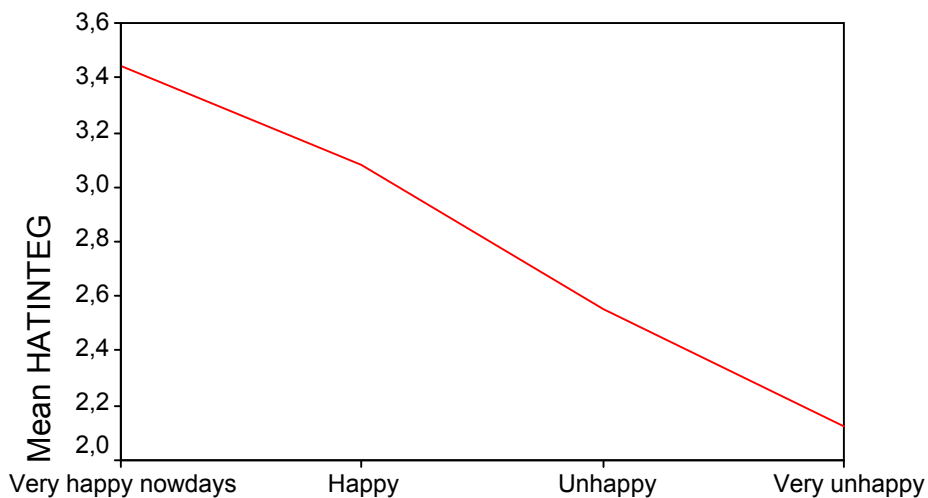
## Strong ties (child, parent,partner,friend) by hapiness



Hapiness nowadays

## Social integration with 6 ties (parent, child, partner,friend, club, God) by hapiness

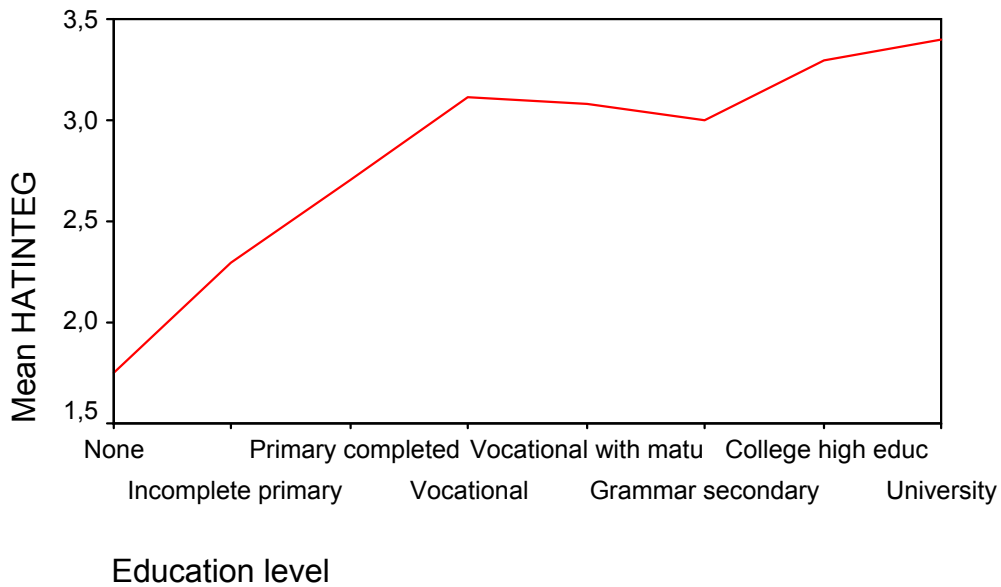
(EUROPA 2000, Hungary, N=1500)



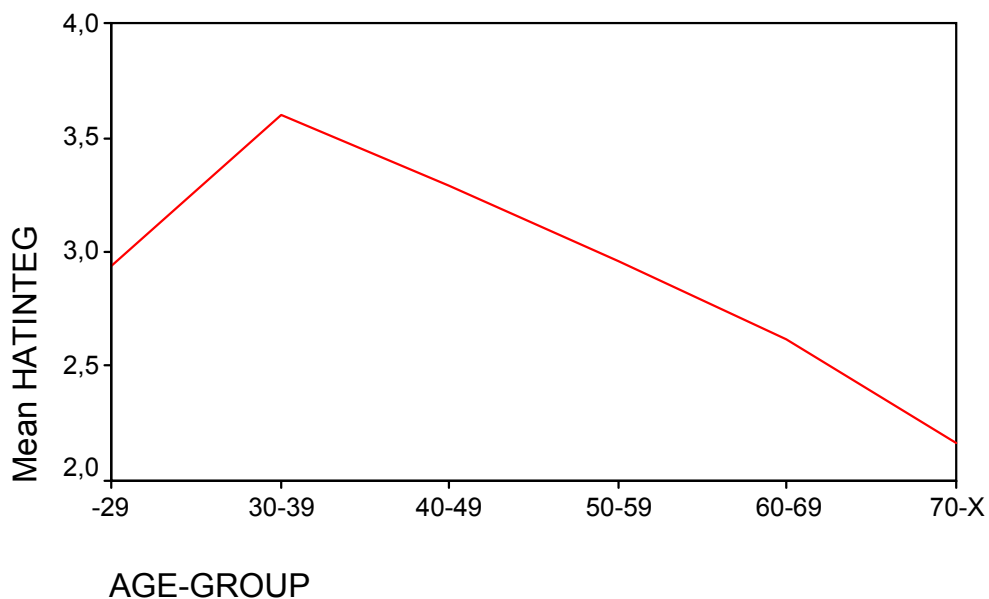
Hapiness nowadays



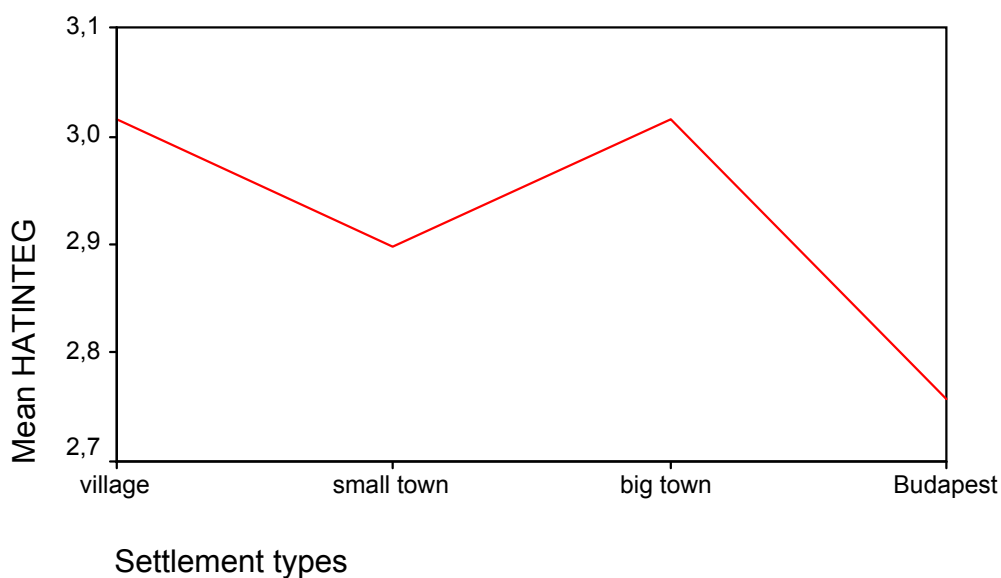
Social integration with 6 ties (parent, child, partner, friend, club, God) by education level  
(EUROPA 2000, Hungary, N=1500)



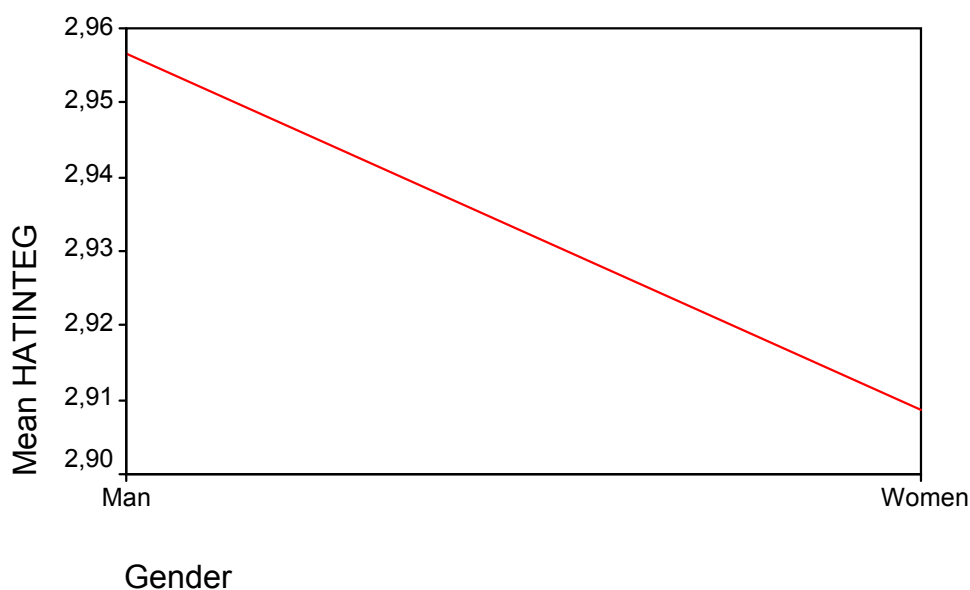
Social integration with 6 ties (parent, child, partner, friend, club, God) by age-groups  
(EUROPA 2000, Hungary, N=1500)



Social integration with 6 ties (parent, child, partner, friend, club, God) by settlement types  
(EUROPA 2000, Hungary, N=1500)



Social integration with 6 ties (parent, child, partner, friend, club, God) by gender  
(EUROPA 2000, Hungary, N=1500)



**Ágnes Utasi - Ádám Páthy - Péter Hári**

## **International trends of relationships in the last fifteen years**

***Australia, Austria, Great Britain, Hungary, USA  
(1986-2001)***

In the present study we analyse the data of the social network research done in the frame of ISSP (International Social Survey Program); and we try to reveal those tendencies that have been changed in the character of social relationships during the fifteen years between the two surveys.

The two surveys were carried out in 1986 and 2003, and from both years we have data from the following 5 countries: Australia N=125/1352, Austria N=1027/1001, Hungary N=1747/1524, Great Britain N=1416/912, and the USA N =1470/1149. One goal of our survey is to map whether the difference between the political systems has a noticeable effect on the social relations of Hungarian society. In connection with this, it is important to know whether the social change in post-socialist countries have been unambiguously dominated by the effect of opening to the West, or whether there might have been a Central European model with regard to the structure of relationships. On the one hand, it has a traditional basis, but there is also a justification for the hypothesis that the social structure which evolved during the four decades of the Soviet-type system has very strong effects on interpersonal relationships in many areas nowadays as well. Unfortunately, we cannot give detailed answer to the question, as in the 1986 survey the only socialist country was Hungary.

In the first part of our study we examine the change in family relationships with the help of different markers of family status, household structure and contact. After that, we present the change in the structure of friendship, and then, we review a few areas of microsocial solidarity.

The results of the 1986 survey showed that Hungary differs in many respects from the features which determine interpersonal relationships in Western Europe and overseas (Utasi, 1990; 1991). The radical social change beginning in the fifties had a great effect on social networks. This change dissolved traditional structures, increased greatly the grade of mobility, and in many cases, it disrupted microcommunities with strong ties (Andorka, 1982). Primarily, these processes had a harmful effect on families, but other forms of relationship also suffered because of the obligate change of residence. From the sixties, with the relative improvement in income, the level of integration increased, and later the appearance of second economy also helped this procedure. According to the 1986 survey in which seven countries were included; the strongest family cohesion was in Hungary despite the contradictory procedure. The markers of contact were similar in the case of Italy, which is not included in present the study (Höllinger - Haller, 1990; Utasi, 1991).

The economic crisis and the increase in social inequality following the change of the regime strengthened the tendencies of alienation (Andorka, 1995; Kopp - Skrabski, 2002). Abreast with the appearance of unemployment and with the radically increased number of inactive and retired people, the importance of non-relative relationships has decreased, meanwhile the role of strong family ties, that has been characteristic of Hungary, has remained important in the past decade.

### ***Important parameters of the sample***

Before comparing the data of the 1986 and the 2001 survey, we should mention a few demographic features of the two samples, which we have to bear in mind during our analysis.

Considering the 1986 and 2001 survey, we have to highlight the ageing in the age composition of the two samples. The fast ageing of Western societies is an evident fact, however distortion in the survey process may have occurred; therefore in comparing the data of the 1986 and the 2001 survey, we always have to take into consideration the age difference of the samples.

Apart from the age distribution, we also have to consider the ratio of genders. We discover (Table 1), that in the samples of Great Britain and the USA, there have been significant changes in this respect. Most probably it is subscribed to the difference of the sampling, because such a significant change in the distribution of genders, at best, may happen in case of a war in a comparably short period of time.

At the same time - having considered these distortions - samples can be regarded as adequate; the distortions do not imperil the relevance of the trend analysis.

**Table 1: Distribution of gender in the samples (N=6910 /1986/, 7355 /2001/)**

		<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
GBR	1986	47,0%	53,0%
	2001	40,4%	59,6%
USA	1986	42,2%	57,8%
	2001	48,3%	51,7%
AUS	1986	47,9%	52,1%
	2001	46,4%	53,6%
AUT	1986	44,2%	55,8%
	2001	40,2%	59,8%
HUN	1986	44,1%	55,9%
	2001	43,2%	56,8%

### ***Changes in the structure of family status***

In our analysis we first examined the ways in which the structure of family status has changed during the fifteen years in the five examined countries (Table 2).

The most important change is the significant decrease in the rate of those who live in marriage. Australia is the only exception, where this marker has not changed practically. The decrease in the rate of marriages coincide with our knowledge about developed Western societies according to which the increase of civilisational standards and the increase of individualism result in a belated establishment of an own family on the one hand; and on the other hand, single life style is becoming more and more natural, marriage is ignored, and forms of partnership other than marriage prevail instead of marriage (Vaskovics, 1994; Cseh-Szombathy, 1991; Somlai, 1999).

Considering the rate of those who live in a marriage the changes in Hungary orient to the changes of the examined Western countries; however, there is one significant difference: while the ratio of widows has decreased significantly in Austria, moderately in the USA and

in Australia, and increased slightly in Great Britain; in our country the ratio has increased dramatically. The sample of the 2001 survey produces 17% of widows as opposed to the ratio of the 1986 survey, where this value was only 5%. It is important to mention, that among the five examined countries Hungary has the second youngest sample, yet it produces significantly the highest ratio of widows compared to Western countries. The cause for this, primarily, is the very high ratio of early mortality of Hungarian males in an international comparison. This is supported by the fact, that in the 2001 sample only 5% of the males are widows, while this number is 26% (!) for females.

Therefore, it can be concluded that in the given fifteen years in the examined Western countries the decrease in the ratio of marriages is because of the increasing ratio of those who do not live in a marriage, so there is a kind of civilisational realignment. However, in Hungary the decrease in the ratio of marriages is because of the increase in the ratio of widows. This is a rather pathologic phenomenon; the contradictory modernisation in the decades of the state socialist system and the psychologically and physically destructive effect of the change of the regime may lie behind this phenomenon.

**Table 2: The structure of family status in the examined countries (N=6910 /1986/, 7355 /2001/)**

		<b>Married</b>	<b>Widow</b>	<b>Divorced</b>	<b>Separated</b>	<b>Not married</b>
GBR	1986	71,0%	8,9%	5,3%	0,0%	14,8%
	2001	55,9%	11,3%	9,3%	3,2%	20,3%
USA	1986	56,2%	11,6%	10,1%	4,1%	18,1%
	2001	43,6%	8,7%	15,2%	3,9%	28,5%
AUS	1986	68,3%	7,3%	4,3%	1,8%	18,3%
	2001	70,6%	4,5%	7,1%	3,3%	14,5%
AUT	1986	62,4%	10,4%	4,5%	0,6%	22,1%
	2001	56,5%	1,7%	15,7%	7,2%	18,9%
HUN	1986	71,0%	5,1%	4,1%	0,9%	18,9%
	2001	51,9%	17,3%	10,6%	2,8%	17,4%

At the same time, not only the early mortality of Hungarian males causes the decreased number of marriages; the modernisational realignment of Western societies also has an effect in Hungary.

To be able to elicit the degree of expectable dynamics of belated or cancelled marriages in the examined countries, we focused on the generation of thirties in the next step. This age group has evolved life style practices (however long the post adolescent phase may be, by this time it finishes in most cases), divorce, and especially widowhood, is not as typical in this age group as in older age groups.

In examining the family status of the 30-39 year-old age group, we have to face the spectacular decrease of marriages as compared to the data of the whole society (Table 3). During the fifteen years between the two surveys, in all examined countries the ratio of those who live in marriage has decreased significantly, while the number of those who do not live in marriage has increased greatly. The greatest change was detected in Australian society (the ratio of those living outside marriage has increased from 11% to 38.5%), the smallest change was detected in Austria, where people more strongly bond to catholic traditions and traditional life styles; however, the change was drastic in Austria as well.

**Table 3: The structure of family status among the generation of thirties (N=1725 /1986/, 1227 /2001/)**

		<b>Married</b>	<b>Widow</b>	<b>Divorced</b>	<b>Separated</b>	<b>Not married</b>
GBR	1986	83,9%	0,0%	7,0%	0,0%	9,1%
	2001	62,3%	0,9%	7,9%	5,6%	23,3%
USA	1986	67,1%	0,8%	12,7%	4,8%	14,4%
	2001	43,8%	1,7%	15,8%	5,0%	33,8%
AUS	1986	82,8%	1,3%	3,8%	1,3%	10,9%
	2001	51,9%	0,0%	6,7%	2,9%	38,5%
AUT	1986	82,3%	0,6%	9,1%	0,0%	7,9%
	2001	71,3%	1,3%	0,6%	6,4%	20,4%
HUN	1986	85,30%	0,80%	5,40%	1,00%	7,50%
	2001	65,90%	1,90%	8,90%	4,70%	18,70%

Hungary also oriented to the trends of the wealthier countries; in the examined period the ratio among the age group of thirties living in a marriage has decreased from 85% to 66%, while the ratio of those who chose not to marry has increased from 7.5% to 19%. Hungary showed the most traditional family model in 1986, while by 2001 Austria has forestalled Hungary in the respect of the ratio of those thirties who live in a marriage.

It can also be said, although to a different degree, that the ratio of divorced and separated people has increased, therefore not only belated or cancelled marriages contributed to the gradual erosion of family institutes, but divorce as well.

All in all, the most stable structure of family status among the five examined countries can be detected in Austria, while the most spectacular changes occurred in the United States. With respect to the change of the significance of family institutions, the most relevant data come from the thirties age group. According to their data, in the societies of the USA and Australia there has been a radical tendency to choose not to marry, which is also typical in Great Britain, although to a lesser extent. There is also a detectable change in the continental Austria, where philistine and Catholic traditions are stronger, but only to a lesser extent. Hungary, more or less, follows Western trends in the decrease of the ratio of those who live in a marriage; although, this can not only be subscribed to increased individualisation that follows modernisation, but also, through the drastic increase in the ratio of widows, to unmatched modernisation of the decades of “existed socialism” (Hankiss - Füstös - Szokolczai, 1982), and to the social shock caused by the change of the regime (Andorka, 1996; Kopp - Skarbski - Szedmák, 1998).

### ***Changes in the structure of households***

In order to map the changes in microsocial solidarity we also examined the change in the number and consistence of those who live in one household; as households are important in microsocial assistance; and living in one apartment assumes significant dependence.

Among the five examined countries we have data concerning the consistence of household only from three countries, and these are Great Britain, the USA and Austria. During the fifteen years between the two surveys, in all three countries the headcount of households has decreased significantly (Table 4).

**Table 4: Average headcount of households (person) (N=6910 /1986/, 7355 /2001/)**

	<b>1986</b>	<b>2001</b>
GBR	3,05	2,34
USA	2,78	2,32
AUS	No data	2,51
AUT	3,22	2,68
HUN	No data	2,79

This phenomenon presumes a powerful modernisation procedure. It is easy to see that the per capita cost of large headcount households is cheaper; therefore maintaining small - and especially single - households requires a more notable financial background, which can be a general capability in richer societies.

The data of the 2001 survey greatly mirror the modernisational differences of the countries. The average size of the households is the smallest in the USA, the following countries are Australia and Great Britain, the fourth is Austria, and finally Hungary.

The detailed data of household content (Table 5) provide more information than the raw average headcount. The most typical household consists of two adults; the second most typical consists of a single adult. Although in Hungary these are the dominant types as well, there is a high ratio of households where three or four adults and possibly more children live together, moreover, the largest-sized households (five or more adults and possibly children) represent themselves in a large number, as opposed to the evanescent data of Western countries respectively. This may mean a specific survival of the tradition of large families in a relatively wide circle, which can be subscribed to economic pressure.

**Table 5: The content of households (2001.) (N=6910 /1986/, 7355 /2001/)**

	AUS	GBR	USA	AUT	HUN
Single	18,8%	26,9%	32,6%	24,6%	16,4%
1 adult, 1 child	1,0%	3,4%	2,6%	1,1%	2,5%
1 adult, 2 children	1,3%	2,7%	2,5%	1,0%	0,6%
1 adult, 3 or more children	0,8%	1,3%	1,2%	0,1%	0,4%
2 adults	47,5%	28,8%	30,6%	46,3%	26,2%
2 adults, 1 child	3,0%	6,4%	6,6%	0,0%	3,3%
2 adults, 2 children	6,9%	8,7%	6,2%	0,0%	0,6%
2 adults, 3 or more children	4,3%	5,8%	4,7%	0,0%	0,0%
3 adults	6,2%	7,1%	6,9%	16,2%	13,0%
3 adults + children	3,8%	3,7%	2,4%	0,0%	6,9%
4 adults	3,0%	3,0%	1,8%	7,1%	7,5%
4 adults + children	1,9%	1,0%	1,0%	0,0%	10,0%
5 or more adults	1,3%	0,6%	0,4%	3,6%	5,4%
5 or more adults + children	0,2%	0,4%	0,3%	0,0%	7,2%

### *Contact within the family*

We also tried to discover the effects of the change in family status and household structure on the cohesion of families. We examined the trend of cohesion through the frequency of family contact. Firstly, we examined the regularity of personal contact, and then we looked at the regularity of other types of contact requiring different tools (telephone, letter).

By family we mean the modern definition of the word, the nuclear family. Primarily, we examine the relationship between parents and children and the relationship between siblings (Cseh-Szombathy, 1979).

#### **Parent-child contact**

With the help of the data gained from the surveys we tried to see how intensive the personal contact is between the parents and their children, therefore we examined the subjects' regularity of contact with their mother.<sup>2</sup> Independent of the detected tendencies of modernisation, from the data it seems that despite the decreasing number of marriages there has been a significant growth in the ratio of those who maintain an intensive contact with their mother, that is, they either live in the same household or they meet on a daily basis (several times per week) (Table 6).

**Table 6: Frequency of personal contact with the mother (N=4178 /1986/, 3720 /2001/)**

		<b>Living in the same household</b>	<b>Daily frequency</b>	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>Monthly</b>	<b>Once or twice yearly</b>	<b>Scarcer</b>
GBR	1986	5,1%	17,3%	34,2%	19,4%	16,9%	7,2%
	2001	9,8%	26,7%	22,0%	15,3%	17,3%	8,9%
USA	1986	5,1%	24,6%	20,6%	16,9%	17,9%	14,9%
	2001	8,9%	26,7%	18,7%	14,9%	16,8%	14,0%
AUS	1986	5,3%	12,8%	27,5%	18,1%	19,6%	16,6%
	2001	9,8%	14,9%	25,2%	18,6%	15,7%	15,8%
AUT	1986	13,0%	22,4%	26,1%	17,4%	15,9%	5,1%
	2001	19,4%	28,2%	18,7%	16,6%	11,2%	5,9%
HUN	1986	16,8%	35,2%	20,0%	16,4%	8,3%	3,4%
	2001	30,2%	29,7%	15,6%	11,4%	8,8%	4,4%

The seemingly surprising data can partly be explained. Individualisation does not necessarily mean becoming self-sufficient; moreover, in many cases it can be accompanied by the increasing dependence on parents as the lengthening period of education and the intensive presence of post-adolescent phase are practically characterized by the way that young people do not found their own family. They rather spend their “experimental period” in their parents' home, enjoying the partial care of their parents. During the fifteen years between the two

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<sup>2</sup> There are several methods to examine the regularity of parent-child contact, but because of the parameters of the questionnaire we only examined the regularity of contact with the mother. Theoretically, we could have examined the contact with the father, but in the 1986 survey there were data only about the physical distance from the mother, therefore it was practical to show contact regularity through the example of the mother.



surveys, the ratio of those who live in the same household with their mother has increased significantly in all countries and most probably it is due to this fact. The ratio of those who live in the same household with their mother is the highest among the generation under thirty (about 50% in Hungary, Australia and Austria; 35 % in Great Britain, and 17% in the country that is considered to be the richest, the USA).

However, this explanation does not fully account for the fact that in all countries the ratio of those who keep a daily or more frequent than weekly contact with their mother has increased noticeably. *It seems that modernisation and individualisation accompanying modernisation do not eliminate strong relations between family generations; in fact they strengthen family relationships, and they increase the frequency of contacts.* Presumably, with the decreasing number of births, the revaluation of children and the more insistent attitudes of parents towards their children due to the reduce in partnerships contribute to the strengthening of family ties. Besides these, the circle of confidence is becoming more and more tight in atomised modern societies, which spectacularly strengthens the cohesion of family ties (Fukuyama, 1990; Utasi, 2002).

When comparing the examined countries we can see that living in the same apartment with parents is the least probable in the considerably rich USA and Australia. In these countries there is the highest ratio of those who do not see their mother for a year. At the same time, we can not state unambiguously that this is solely due to the increase in wealth; we have to bear in mind another important factor: the size of the country. Regarding the five examined countries there is a coincidence between the economy and the size of the country. Therefore, we can not decide whether Americans and Australians do not meet their mother because of family ties flattened by modernisation, wealth and individualisation, or whether they do not meet their mother simply because of the great geographical distance between them. This latter statement is supported by the results (Table 7) according to which the ratio of those who can reach their mother in more than three hours is the highest in the USA and in Australia, while in the other three countries about the three fourths of subjects could reach their mother within one hour.

**Table 7: Duration of the journey to the mother's home (N=3272 /1986/, 3324 /2001/)**

		<b>Within an hour</b>	<b>Between one and three hours</b>	<b>More than three hours</b>
GBR	1986	76,8%	12,5%	10,7%
	2001	65,8%	17,6%	16,7%
USA	1986	63,8%	8,8%	27,4%
	2001	57,4%	13,1%	29,5%
AUS	1986	59,0%	10,0%	31,1%
	2001	57,9%	11,9%	30,1%
AUT	1986	73,3%	14,2%	12,5%
	2001	75,4%	14,2%	10,4%
HUN	1986	74,5%	15,1%	10,4%
	2001	78,5%	13,9%	7,7%

In this respect Hungary resembles its Western neighbour. Although in 1986 the data of the two countries differed significantly; by 2001 the intensity of the contact with the mother has become similar in Austria and in Hungary. The only noticeable difference can be experienced between the ratio of those who live in the same apartment with their mother, which may be a consequence of worse economic status of Hungarians, and the problems connected to gaining an own apartment.

### **Contact between siblings**

The temporal comparison of the contact between siblings is difficult as in the 1986 survey separate questions were asked concerning the contact with brothers and sisters; while in the 2001 survey siblings were treated all together. Moreover, there is no question concerning the physical distance between siblings in the 2001 survey; therefore, it is impossible to follow temporal change. In all examined countries subjects had less siblings on average in 2001 than in 1986 (Table 8).

**Table 8: Average number of siblings (N=6910 /1986/, 7355 /2001/)**

	<b>1986</b>	<b>2001</b>
AUS	2,66	2,44
GBR	2,32	2,05
USA	2,96	2,79
AUT	2,20	2,09
HUN	1,77	1,62

This fact is easily explained by the general demographic trends of the Western world and the decreasing tendency in childbearing attitude. With regard to the fact that in most Western societies the growth of population stopped (or almost stopped), the average number of children dropped to 2-2.2, which ensures the reproduction level. In spite of this, we can see that the subjects have more than two siblings on an average, which is explained by the larger number of children among the older generations (In the data of the 2001 survey only the American sample exceeded the average two siblings in the generation under thirty).

The “leading position” of the USA is not surprising if we know that the United States is the only exception among the developed countries, where the population grows primarily because of Hispanics, and the great number of immigrants (Belsie, 2001).

Data well mirror the bad demographic situation in Hungary: The population has been decreasing continuously since 1982, and the average number of siblings was only 1.62 in 2001; Hungary significantly lags behind compared to the other countries. The examination of the personal contact of siblings show that the ratio of those who rarely see their siblings has increased; while the ratio of those who see their siblings at least once in a week has decreased. In Hungary we cannot detect such a change; the personal contact between siblings is invariably intensive (Table 9).

**Table 9: The frequency of contact with the most frequently seen sibling (N=4297 /1986/, 5886 /2001/)**

		<b>Living in the same household</b>	<b>Daily frequency</b>	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>Monthly</b>	<b>Once or twice yearly</b>	<b>Scarcer</b>
GBR	2001	2,5%	13,1%	21,7%	18,1%	27,4%	17,2%
	1986/B	4,2%	27,9%	22,9%	17,2%	17,0%	10,8%
	1986/S	3,8%	11,3%	19,6%	16,7%	23,8%	24,7%
USA	2001	3,1%	12,8%	12,4%	18,8%	24,9%	27,9%
	1986/B	2,6%	18,5%	16,8%	18,1%	23,8%	20,2%
	1986/S	2,4%	15,5%	13,9%	20,5%	21,0%	25,9%
AUS	2001	3,9%	6,8%	9,7%	18,1%	26,5%	35,0%
	1986/B	4,2%	6,8%	17,0%	22,9%	27,7%	21,5%
	1986/S	2,6%	7,3%	15,7%	17,3%	25,8%	31,2%
AUT	2001	7,9%	14,6%	12,6%	18,4%	24,5%	22,1%
	1986/B	4,7%	17,8%	20,4%	25,1%	22,4%	9,7%
	1986/S	6,3%	18,0%	16,0%	20,6%	22,0%	16,9%
HUN	2001	6,6%	28,9%	18,4%	22,7%	16,3%	7,2%
	1986/B	6,8%	28,3%	15,9%	21,1%	19,8%	8,1%
	1986/S	3,9%	28,7%	18,0%	24,4%	18,2%	6,9%

Therefore, it seems that *modernisation* and individualisation *do not coincide with a decrease in the roles of close family, but on the contrary: people tend to maintain a more intensive contact with their relatives.*

In the decades of “existed socialism” relatives compensated the sourceless economic system with strong, mutual, instrumental and helping network of relations in Hungary. Obviously, a great number of things have been maintained from that condition.

If we compare the examined Western countries with each other, we experience that in larger countries people tend to maintain a less personal contact with their siblings, while in smaller countries they meet more regularly. All in all, the least frequent contact is in Australia, and the most regular contact is in Hungary.

### ***Non-personal contact***

We have only examined the intensity of personal contact so far. However, there are numerous other ways of keeping contact; among which the letter is known for centuries, in recent decades the telephone has spread rapidly, and during the 1990’s, mobile phones and electronic mail have also spread.

The revolutionary change in telecommunication obviously had an effect on social relations as well. Although nowadays we are more and more concerned about the negative effects of modern telecommunication; there is extensive scientific research about “mobile addiction” as a psychological disease (Buda, 2001), yet these newly invented communicational tools provide an opportunity of contact for those who cannot keep personal contacts.

*Between 1986 and 2001 the non-personal contact with the mother has increased almost everywhere (Table 10).*

**Table 10: The frequency of non-personal contact with the mother (N=3251 /1986/, 3077 /2001/)**

		Daily frequency	Weekly	Monthly	Once or twice yearly	Scarcer
GBR	1986	22,8%	43,0%	13,9%	5,4%	14,8%
	2001	43,9%	35,1%	10,4%	4,3%	6,3%
USA	1986	40,9%	26,7%	19,9%	4,6%	7,8%
	2001	44,5%	27,3%	13,1%	5,3%	9,7%
AUS	1986	28,3%	35,5%	21,1%	9,2%	6,0%
	2001	32,8%	37,5%	19,0%	7,9%	2,8%
AUT	1986	40,6%	24,6%	16,1%	6,8%	11,9%
	2001	45,6%	22,3%	13,3%	5,0%	13,8%
HUN	1986	10,7%	8,0%	9,8%	4,6%	66,8%
	2001	39,4%	18,4%	9,7%	2,6%	29,8%

There hasn't been a change in the number of letters, telephones, e-mails in the USA, presumably because of the early permeation of the most developed telecommunicational tools, which made these kinds of contact available. At the same time, it may be surprising that the two countries with the biggest territory do not use telecommunication to an extent as those smaller countries, like Austria, where the possibility of personal contact is higher.

During the fifteen years between the two surveys the regularity of non-personal contact has increased in Hungary to the greatest extent. Presumably, this is because of the fast permeation of telecommunicational tools after the change of the regime. While in 1986 only a small ratio of households had telephones; in the 1990's mobile phones and the Internet appeared. Among the two most state of the art telecommunicational tools, the Internet has not become spectacularly popular - the problem is that the number of Internet users do not reach the number of Internet users in neighbouring countries, not to mention Western Europe (Rét, 2004). However, the permeation of mobile phones, thanks to our geographical situation, was very fast: nowadays Hungary is among the best-equipped countries concerning mobile phones (IHM, 2004).

At the same time, despite the rapid growth, Hungary is still the last among the five examined countries. The ratio of those who do not use modern technologies for maintaining contact is the highest in our country. The reasons for this may be numerous. One reason may be, especially in the case of aged mothers/parents, that older generations do not accept the new tools of technology as easily as younger generations. There may also be a financial cause or it may be fact that because of regular personal contact there is no need for telephone contact.

This latter hypothesis was tested by a correlation analysis (Table 11).

**Table 11: Pearson's correlation between the personal and non-personal contact with the mother**

	AUS	GBR	USA	AUT	HUN
Pearson's correlation	0,594	0,541	,538	,263	,011
Significance	0,000	,000	,000	,000	,803
N	495	1022	678	377	494

With the exception of Hungary there is a strong positive correspondence between the personal and non-personal contact. It is not that those who can't maintain personal contact use telephones; it is more like those who maintain contact, maintain contact both personally and non-personally, while those who do not maintain contact, do not maintain contact at all. In Hungary there has been no sign of this relationship, neither has been a sign of its contrary, so we cannot say that non-personal contact replaces personal contact in Hungary.

According to our data there is a strong relationship between the subjects' age and the frequency of non-personal contact. Telephone communication is primarily used by young people - they use the tools of the information society more naturally.

The question may arise whether the use of telecommunicational tools will lead to the atrophy of personal contact, whether people will meet less when they can use telephones and e-mails. Our data unambiguously dissolve these fears, as we already have stated: *with the growth in the frequency of non-personal contact the frequency of personal contact has increased as well; people in all examined countries meet more regularly with their close relatives as fifteen years ago*. Moreover, the correlation mentioned above features opposing tendencies: it seems that contact through telecommunicational tools strengthens personal contact; therefore, it helps to draw family ties tighter and to increase cohesion.

### ***Friendships***

We have to be careful when examining friendships. It is upon the subjective choice of the people included in the survey whether they regard those people with whom they keep contact as friends or not. In this way, certain people may sign their relationships with similar confidence as friendship, while others may not (Wellman, 1983; 1992). As a consequence, it is very hard to draw conclusions about the depth of friendships in the frame of a quantitative survey; therefore, according to our data we may examine only the milieu of choosing friends and the distribution of the number of friends along different categories.

### **Average number of friends**

Because of specific features of the data gathering the exact averages cannot be calculated. In many of the examined countries there is no differentiation in the number of friends above a certain value. Therefore, in calculating the average we used the lowest top limit (=8, Great Britain, 1986) for the entire sample.

*The average number in all examined countries has increased during the years between the two surveys, and the ranking of countries has been changed slightly. In 2001 this marker was higher in the case of Austria, while earlier the first in the rank was Great Britain. According to both of the surveys the lowest number of friends was in Hungary, and the post-hoc tests examining the relative difference between the averages show no approaching to the other countries examined either. We cannot speak about a significant approach to Western societies concerning the growth in the number of friends in Hungary. Visibly, the structures solidified during the decades of the socialist regime function as a strong basis and global trends cannot prevail to an extent to level up Hungarian society.*

## People who do not have friends

The most telling index in connection with friendships is the ratio of those who do not mark any friends at all. *In both surveys the highest ratio of those who did not have any friends was in Hungary.* It is true, however, that the number has decreased as in the case of the other examined countries; yet the ratio is still high: while one fourth of Hungarians do not have any friends at all, this ratio is below one tenth in every other examined country.

There is a remarkable decrease in the ratio of those who do not have any friends in Austria; the 2001 ratio has dropped to one third of the 1986 survey. This trend is in harmony with the other trend concerning the number of friends, that is, during the fifteen years between the two surveys there has been a strong expansion concerning friendships in Austrian society. In the case of the other countries the degree of decrease more or less corresponds to the dynamics of the Hungarian data (Table 12).

**Table 12: Do you have friends? (N=6799 /1986/, 7118 /2001/)**

	1986		2001	
	no	yes	no	yes
AUS	6,7%	93,3%	6,0%	94,0%
GBR	13,7%	86,3%	8,9%	91,1%
USA	5,3%	94,7%	4,0%	96,0%
AUT	24,9%	75,1%	7,3%	92,3%
HUN	28,6%	71,4%	23,5%	76,5%

In all examined countries the ratio of those who do not have any friends has decreased during the passed fifteen years, although there is no change in the position of Hungary and in the relative difference between the ratios.

Examining the data according to gender differences, it can be concluded that in all countries, except for Hungary, the ratio of males who do not have any friends is higher. As opposed to the trends of other countries, earlier surveys proved that in Hungary the ratio of females who do not have any friends is higher, actually significantly higher, than the ratio of males (Utasi, 1990; Albert - Dávid, 1998). However, the significant difference between genders in the 1986 survey has decreased sharply by 2001. In the case of the other examined countries this ratio has remained more or less the same (Table 13).

**Table 13: Do you have friends? Distribution according to gender (N=6799 /1986/, 7118 /2001/)**

		1986		2001	
		no	yes	no	yes
<b>Males</b>	Australia	7,9%	92,1%	7,0%	93,0%
	Great Britain	15,2%	84,8%	9,6%	90,4%
	United States	6,1%	93,9%	4,4%	95,6%
	Austria	24,0%	76,0%	7,8%	92,2%
	Hungary	21,1%	78,9%	21,6%	78,4%
<b>Females</b>	Australia	5,5%	94,5%	5,2%	94,8%
	Great Britain	12,4%	87,6%	8,3%	91,7%
	United States	4,6%	95,4%	3,6%	96,4%
	Austria	25,6%	74,4%	6,9%	93,1%
	Hungary	34,5%	65,5%	25,0%	75,0%

*The data of different age groups also show the general decrease of those who do not have any friends (Table 14).*

**Table 14: Do you have friends? (according to age-groups) (N=6799 /1986/, 718 /2001/)**

		<b>1986</b>		<b>2001</b>	
		No	Yes	No	Yes
<b>15-24</b>	AUS	6.8%	93.2%	1.9%	98.1%
	GBR	1.9%	98.1%	3.9%	96.1%
	USA	2.2%	97.8%	3.4%	96.6%
	AUT	7.2%	92.8%	0,0%	100.0%
	HUN	5.7%	94.3%	4.4%	95.6%
<b>25-34</b>	AUS	11.5%	88.5%	7.8%	92.2%
	GBR	4.8%	95.2%	4.3%	95.7%
	USA	10.8%	89.2%	4.6%	95.4%
	AUT	2.4%	97.6%	1.7%	98.3%
	HUN	14.6%	85.4%	12.0%	88.0%
<b>35-44</b>	AUS	8.7%	91.3%	5.8%	94.2%
	GBR	11.8%	88.2%	6.0%	94.0%
	USA	4.0%	96.0%	1.8%	98.2%
	AUT	18.8%	81.2%	1.7%	98.3%
	HUN	16.0%	84.0%	14.4%	85.6%
<b>45-54</b>	AUS	6.3%	93.7%	5.5%	94.5%
	GBR	13.4%	86.6%	8.6%	91.4%
	USA	2.7%	97.3%	5.4%	94.6%
	AUT	31.7%	68.3%	6.2%	93.8%
	HUN	17.9%	82.1%	16.9%	83.1%
<b>55-64</b>	AUS	9.5%	90.5%	4.6%	95.4%
	GBR	17.0%	83.0%	10.5%	89.5%
	USA	11.5%	88.5%	3.1%	96.9%
	AUT	27.0%	73.0%	8.8%	91.2%
	HUN	55.8%	44.2%	32.8%	67.2%
<b>65-98</b>	AUS	10.1%	89.9%	8.2%	91.8%
	GBR	22.9%	77.1%	15.2%	84.8%
	USA	10.0%	90.0%	5.2%	94.8%
	AUT	42.1%	57.9%	14.8%	85.2%
	HUN	26.1%	73.9%	39.3%	60.7%

The only exception is the USA where in the case of young and middle aged generations there is a slight increase in the ratios, but because of the low element numbers we cannot draw an unambiguous conclusion. Both in 1986 and in 2001 most of the Americans had friends (Table 12).

It is a general tendency that the ratio of those who do not have any friends increases with ageing; the sharpest fracture is experienced above the age of 55, most probably because of their exclusion from the employment market. Among elderly age groups the ratio of those who do not have any friends is very high in Hungary (39.3 % of people above 65 do not have any friends) (Table 14). The reasons for this may be the difference in the age limit for pension, lower civilisational level, lower average age, and the higher mortality rate of elderly males.

### **Milieu of choosing friends**

The survey also examined the “source” of friends (employment, neighbours, other).

There is a great rearrangement with regard to friends coming from employment acquaintance. While in 1986 more than half of the respondents in all examined countries did not mention friends among colleagues, this ratio has decreased significantly by 2001. At the same time, in Hungary most friendships came from employment in 1986, therefore the ratio practically remained the same. The structural economic change of the change of the regime can be sensed in this “motionless state”. With the tightening of the employment market, rivalry between colleagues has increased, and friendship contact between them has become scarcer (Sik, 1988). Economic working communities, which gave the fundamental organisation of the second economy of the eighties and presumed a confidential colleague relationship, also closed down<sup>3</sup>. Those excluded from the employment market can replace their lost relationships only with difficulties, as civil social activity in our country is very low, and it is primarily a characteristic of higher social classes (Angelusz - Tardos, 1998).

*The ratio of friends coming from neighbourhood relationships, just as the ratio of friends coming from colleagues, has increased greatly.* According to the data of the 1986 survey the Hungarian ratio was near to the ratio of other countries, but, by 2001 because of the slight growth, there has been a great lagging behind concerning the number of friends who come from a neighbourhood relationships: *more than half of Hungarians do not have friends from their neighbourhood, while this ratio has an average of one third in other countries.* If we compare the distribution according to the type of settlements, we see that in an urban area people more likely have friends from their neighbourhood. The only exceptions are the USA and Great Britain, where suburban areas show higher values than downtown areas. The probable cause for this is the high degree of suburbanisation and middle class life style in the USA connected to this. This life style values the importance of neighbourhood communities (Clapson, 2003).

Hungary shows a special picture *in the case of friends coming from other sources* also. In both surveys the highest ratio of friends coming from other sources can be found in the USA and in Australia; while the ratio is far the lowest in Hungary. According to the 2001 data, less than 60% of Hungarian respondents marked other friends; while the ratio was between 75% and 85% in other countries. This difference can be explained by the low civil social and communal activity in Hungary and this is clearly seen from the relevant data of the survey (communal activity and the number of other friends show a relatively strong correlation in the 2001 data).

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<sup>3</sup> Even in 1988, more than 300 000 people were interested in different forms of associations (GMK, VMGK, professional groups) as a part-time job; in the middle of the decade the number was almost the double. The average headcount of the associations was 6-7 people (Laky - Neumann, 1990).



The choice of friends according to genders shows an interesting picture (Table 15).

**Table 15: Gender heterogeneity in choosing friends (N=6799 /1986/, 7118 /2001/)**

		<b>Gender of best friend</b>			
		<b>1986</b>		<b>2001</b>	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Male</b>	AUS	81,7%	18,3%	85,1%	14,9%
	GBR	84,5%	15,5%	75,2%	24,8%
	USA	87,8%	12,2%	79,3%	20,7%
	AUT	82,1%	17,9%	83,8%	16,2%
	HUN	98,7%	1,3%	90,6%	9,4%
<b>Female</b>	AUS	10,1%	89,9%	7,8%	92,2%
	GBR	6,7%	93,3%	6,7%	93,3%
	USA	9,6%	90,4%	12,8%	87,2%
	AUT	13,1%	86,9%	12,2%	87,8%
	HUN	13,3%	86,7%	10,0%	90,0%

In both surveys concerning the whole sample females prefer to choose friends from their own gender, but in 1986 it was different in Hungary. Although by 2001 gender heterogeneity strengthened in the case of males as well; this lags behind the heterogeneity experienced in other countries.

### **Contact with friends**

The most intensive contact between friends is experienced in Hungary, and this has not changed significantly during the fifteen years between the two surveys; it has changed only slightly. The number of those who meet with their friends daily has decreased slightly, while the number of those who meet with their closest friends several times a week has grown moderately. *During the fifteen years between the two surveys the intensity of contact has decreased in all other examined countries;* weekly contact has become dominant. The frequency of friendship contact is the lowest in the USA and in Australia, as the ratio of those who live the farthest from their best friend is the largest in these two countries.

Contacts other than personal contact are largely differentiated by the effect of different permeation of telecommunicational tools in the given countries. Development is the most visible in Hungary: while in 1986 65.8% of respondents did not keep contact with the help of a communicational tool with their friends, this value has decreased to 35.8% by 2001.

In the other four countries the intensity of personal contact and the contact with the help of a tool show a strong positive correlation. In this way these two modes of contact supplement and strengthen each other. The strengthening effect of the two forms of contact is the most visible in the case of Australia. Therefore, it is not characteristic that people replace lesser personal contact coming from great physical distance with contact supported by communicational tools. In Hungary, the ratio of telephone and letter contact has decreased; probably because of the more frequent daily personal contact; however, the belated permeation of communicational tools may also have an effect on this value, although to a much lesser extent than in the 1986 survey.

### ***Microsocial solidarity and assistance***

Both the 1986 and 2001 survey examining the functioning of the social network asked questions about everyday areas of assistance. It asked about the persons from whom the respondents would ask for help, assistance consolation primarily in case of a minor illness, major financial need or an emotional crisis.

All in all, the results of the two surveys show a great steadiness and similarity: excluding major financial loans, there is no such significant rearrangement, as we experienced in the case of examining family and friendship relationships.

### **Assistance in case of minor illness**

Overwhelming majority of the respondents would ask for a help from their relatives in case of a minor illness (1986: 90%, 2001: 88%). The ratio of those who would ask for help from their spouse has decreased in all countries; probably due to the fact that the ratio of those who live without a partner has increased. It may be contradictory that the lowest ratio of those who would ask for help from their spouse in a need was the lowest in Hungary even in 1986 (53%), while the ratio of those who live in a marriage was outstandingly high (71%) here. In 2001; however, the ratio of those who would ask for help from their spouse in case of an illness has decreased radically. It is noticeable that in Hungary the ratio of those who would ask for help from their parents in case of a minor illness was higher in 1986, than in other countries. This may be explained by the fact that in 1986 the ratio of multigenerational households was higher in our country; while it was not characteristic of the other examined countries.

According to the second survey, with the decreasing ratio of those who would ask for help from their spouse and their parents, the ratio of those who would ask for help from their children has increased in the sample of Hungary, Austria and Great Britain. The ratio of those who would ask for help from their friends in case of a minor illness is the highest in the USA (10.3% and 9.9% respectively). The ratio of those who would ask for help outside family and friendship relations is insignificant; with the exception of Austria, the ratio of those who cannot or do not ask for help from anybody in case of a minor illness has increased everywhere (Table 16).

**Table 16: Who would you call in case of a minor illness? (N=6808 /1986/, 7123 /2001/)**

		No-one	Spouse	Parents	Children	Siblings	Other relatives	Friends	Neigh-bours	Others
Australia	1986	0,8%	64,0%	9,3%	11,0%	2,8%	1,5%	7,3%	2,5%	0,6%
	2001	2,5%	70,4%	6,7%	9,1%	2,4%	1,0%	6,1%	1,5%	0,5%
Great Britain	1986	0,9%	64,0%	13,1%	11,3%	2,8%	1,0%	3,5%	2,6%	0,8%
	2001	1,5%	52,6%	13,2%	14,5%	6,7%	1,9%	5,2%	3,0%	1,4%
United States	1986	0,9%	52,3%	10,8%	12,9%	6,0%	2,6%	10,3%	2,4%	1,7%
	2001	2,5%	47,9%	14,3%	11,5%	6,9%	2,7%	9,9%	2,2%	2,2%
Austria	1986	0,8%	55,6%	16,1%	12,5%	3,3%	3,7%	4,1%	2,7%	1,3%
	2001	0,5%	51,3%	11,3%	15,6%	4,0%	4,7%	7,0%	3,4%	2,3%
Hungary	1986	0,5%	53,0%	23,0%	10,1%	4,1%	2,8%	2,4%	3,7%	0,4%
	2001	1,9%	44,0%	15,7%	22,0%	4,2%	4,5%	3,1%	2,6%	2,0%

## Major financial loan

Among the examined areas of everyday solidarity and assistance, the most spectacular change is in the ratio of those who do not ask for a major loan in case of financial need (Table 17).

**Table 17: Whom would you turn to for a financial loan? (N=6788 /1986/, 7100 /2001/)**

		No-one	Spouse	Parents	Children	Siblings	Other relatives	Friends	Neighbours	Others
Australia	1986	4,2%	21,9%	15,7%	4,9%	4,6%	2,8%	2,8%	0,1%	43,2%
	2001	5,6%	38,8%	12,0%	8,6%	4,5%	1,7%	2,4%	0,2%	26,4%
Great Britain	1986	6,6%	22,3%	16,5%	6,4%	3,9%	2,7%	1,6%	0,1%	39,8%
	2001	12,5%	18,9%	17,1%	7,1%	5,9%	2,1%	2,0%	0,1%	34,3%
United States	1986	3,8%	13,6%	20,3%	5,6%	7,2%	4,6%	4,3%	0,0%	40,5%
	2001	11,9%	12,7%	31,0%	5,7%	10,7%	6,4%	5,4%	0,0%	16,2%
Austria	1986	10,7%	19,1%	15,5%	6,9%	4,1%	2,4%	2,5%	0,1%	38,9%
	2001	13,1%	19,3%	15,3%	11,1%	4,1%	2,4%	3,0%	0,1%	31,6%
Hungary	1986	3,9%	2,5%	26,1%	5,7%	6,0%	5,9%	3,7%	1,4%	44,7%
	2001	20,8%	3,9%	14,8%	15,5%	7,0%	7,5%	4,7%	0,8%	24,9%

The ratio of those who do not or cannot hope for a loan has increased in all examined countries during the fifteen years between the two surveys, which probably signals the declension of international economic trends.

The most drastic change is experienced in Hungary, where the ratio of those who do not hope for a loan is five times higher in 2001 than in 1986. A unanimous cause for this is that less people are eligible for bank loans as earlier, when whole scale employment meant “cover” for the banks. In Hungary the ratio of those who hope for a bank loan has decreased to the half.

The ratio of those who would ask for loan from their spouse is telling; in Hungary this ratio was significantly less than in other examined countries. This shows that in our country the grade of financial independence in marriage is lower than in economically stronger Western European and transoceanic countries and in the years following the change of the regime this ratio has not changed significantly. In most countries the ratio of those who would ask for a loan from their children has increased. This growth of ratio is particularly high in our country.

The ratio of parents providing financial help for their children was outstandingly high in the United States, and this ratio even increased. As opposed to this, in every other country this ratio has decreased gradually, while in Hungary sharply. In case of the Hungarian respondents the reduction of financial resources can be traced back to two causes: The reduction in family financial help is caused by worse financial conditions; while the decrease in the ratio of those who hope for a financial help from another relationship or institution is caused by the general loss of confidence.

## Mental and emotional assistance

As compared to 1986 the ratio of those who would ask for emotional help from their spouse has decreased also. At the same time, the ratio of those who would ask for emotional help from their children has increased; while the ratio of those who would contact their parents in a similar situation has decreased almost everywhere. This phenomenon on the one hand is

caused by the ageing of the societies; on the other hand the increasing ratio of those who do not live with a partner.

The role of friends as emotional help has strengthened in the USA, Great Britain and Australia.

Apart from relatives and friends; the general practitioner has the most significant roles; especially in Great Britain (7.2 % in 2001). The ratio of those who would contact a psychologist is very low, it reaches 1% only in the United States. *Those providing mental and emotional help are mainly relatives. Institutional help is rarely seen as an alternative solution.*

When comparing temporal data of the Hungarian sample, the change in the ratio of those who would ask for any emotional help (Table 18) also shows a general loss of confidence. *The ratio of those who would not ask for any emotional help in case of mental need or sadness was outstandingly high earlier and this ratio has increased further in 2001 (to 10.5%).*

**Table 18: Whom would you ask for help in case of mental and emotional crisis, sadness?**  
(N=6807 /1986/, 7099 /2001/)

		No-one	Spouse	Parents	Children	Siblings	Other relatives	Friends	Neighbours	Others
Australia	1986	3,9%	51,1%	5,1%	6,7%	3,7%	1,5%	22,2%	0,5%	5,4%
	2001	3,8%	52,4%	4,0%	8,3%	5,0%	1,0%	21,5%	0,2%	3,9%
Great Britain	1986	2,7%	52,4%	7,2%	9,2%	6,5%	0,9%	15,7%	0,5%	4,9%
	2001	1,5%	42,6%	7,7%	9,3%	8,8%	1,4%	18,9%	0,6%	9,2%
United States	1986	2,4%	40,2%	6,2%	6,6%	7,9%	1,7%	26,8%	0,8%	7,4%
	2001	3,9%	31,9%	10,8%	6,0%	8,9%	2,1%	30,6%	0,4%	5,4%
Austria	1986	8,2%	49,8%	7,8%	8,1%	5,3%	1,8%	15,0%	1,0%	3,0%
	2001	5,2%	43,4%	5,6%	11,2%	5,8%	2,3%	20,1%	1,8%	4,7%
Hungary	1986	7,5%	43,0%	10,6%	6,6%	5,9%	1,7%	18,9%	2,4%	3,4%
	2001	10,5%	40,7%	6,3%	12,6%	5,6%	2,8%	14,6%	3,4%	3,6%

In Hungary the ratio of those who would ask for emotional help from their spouse/partner or parents has decreased, while the ratio of those who would ask for emotional help from their children has increased significantly. All in all, two thirds of the Hungarian respondents would ask for emotional help primarily from their relatives in case of sadness. Apart from family members the ratio of those who trust friends is considerably important; although, it is lower than in the other examined countries; and during the years between the two surveys it decreased further.

## Conclusion

In our study we tried to present the spectacular changes of fifteen years in the structure of interpersonal relationships. We particularly concentrated on the control of the question whether Hungarian “specialities” characteristic of earlier functioning of relationships has remained, or has disappeared with the economic rearrangement after the change of the regime (Angelusz - Tardos, 1988; Utasi, 1991). All in all; we can conclude that despite the strengthening trends of individualisation caused by modernisation and atomisation in societies (or maybe because of them?) *there is a growth in the intensity of both family and friendship relationships*; tight relations of confidence are appraised spectacularly and are becoming more intensive.

In examining the changes of the family structure, the most notable change is the decrease in the ratio of those who do not live in marriage, which is largely caused by the tendencies of social modernisation. As compared to the earlier survey, the ratio of other forms of living together, and the ratio of people living alone have increased. As a new phenomenon, single life style postponing marriage is spreading. The change in the household structure and the pluralisation of partnerships mainly affected richer countries, and in these countries *a reduction in the size of the household is experienced as well*. In Hungary, the size of the household is even bigger, and this difference is mainly because of the greater economic need, which is caused by the lower level of modern wealth as compared to other countries.

When examining the contact between family members it is clearly seen that *cohesion between the generations is strengthening*. Both personal and tool-assisted contacts became more intensive. The frequency of the contact with the mother/parents has increased in particular, but the intensity of sibling contact has not decreased either.

*The ratio of those who have friends has increased* during the fifteen years between the two surveys.

Microsocial solidarity and everyday assistance has been rearranged a little as compared to the data of the earlier survey; we assume that this is also caused by the processes of modernisation. *Primarily, family members and relatives help to solve everyday problems, and this has not changed, although the ratio of those counting on their spouse has decreased, and the ratio of those counting on their children has increased*. In case of a mental and emotional need the helping role of the spouse has decreased significantly; while in certain countries the role of friends, in other countries the role of children have been appraised. We can experience *a general loss of confidence* in most examined countries; *this might be a cause for the growth in the ratio of those who do not count on help in case of a minor illness, and those who do not ask for a loan in financial need*. The ratio of those who do not trust any assistance is far the highest in Hungary among the five examined countries, which might be because of excessive distrust and insecure existence following the change of the regime.

If we want to answer the question, how the functioning of relationships has changed in Hungary as compared to other countries, we can say that there is approximation in certain areas. However, it is more characteristic that differences and Hungarian specialities remain and are conserved.

*The intensity of family contact is unchangeably stronger in Hungary than in the other examined countries. The ratio of those who have friends or other confident relationships outside the family is unchangeably the lowest*. However the milieu of choosing friends has changed during the years. While the ratio of those who choose their friends from their colleagues has increased in every country, this ratio has remained the same in Hungary. Most

probably this is because of the rearrangement of the Hungarian employment market. In 1986, most friendships were formed from colleagues in Hungary. The stagnation in the ratio of colleague friends signs the radical decrease of active employees and also the increasing rivalry among colleagues.

Those who cannot count on any help in case of an emotional crisis has remained the highest *in Hungary, moreover this ratio has even increased*. According to the data of the earlier survey; parents provided important help in case of an emotional crisis; however, the data of the 2001 show that *especially the ratio of those counting on their children has increased*.

Therefore, we experience that the structure of social relationships in many respects has resisted rapid changes. However, we cannot ignore the significant effects of economic situation and modernisation on social networks. The economic crisis following the change of regime, especially the increased insecurity of existence coming with the decrease in general employment and the appearance of unemployment; and the negative effects of the more intensive stress on the health of the society together weakened interpersonal relationships outside close relationships. With this they also weakened social cohesion, while the joining of generations has necessarily remained, moreover it has been strengthened.

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