

Leaving the parental home in West-Germany and Italy

Opportunities and constraints

-PRELIMINARY VERSION-

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Alessandra Rusconi
MPI für Bildungsforschung
Lentzealle 94
14195 Berlin
rusconi@mpib-berlin.mpg.de

1. Theory

Young adulthood and leaving the parental home

This work focuses on the particular important event (marker) of leaving home in the transition to adulthood. Leaving home –as described in the next paragraphs- can be considered of particular interest as it denotes the attainment, among other things, of individual autonomy and responsible roles. Next to this aspect, it will be also discussed how leaving home is of particular importance also because of its interdependencies and its consequences: life spheres are closely linked together and therefore the decision of leaving home is closely connected to educational and occupational ‘trajectories’ as well as to family decisions. In the same way, the decision of how and when establishing an independent residence is also important for its consequences: for example a longer stay in the parental home results in a postponement of the other ‘adults’ events and in an increasing concentration in few years of demographic fundamental events such as marriage and childbearing. This reduces also the final number of children as the ‘useful’ time for childbearing becomes shorter. This work will adopt a comparative approach. The choice of Italy and Germany is due to the fact that both countries have gone through some common trends, although at somewhat slightly different times: education expansion, especially for young women, variation of average age at marriage, decrease of the family size, economic growth after the second world war and economic stagnation from the 1980s. Moreover, Italy and Germany experienced also common social changes: women’s movement, student movement, democratization of the relationship between children and parents, etc. And also the Welfare States present common features: in both countries - even if in Italy this is somewhat more accentuated - there is a strong pressure and obligation for the closer family (parents) to assume the (financial) responsibility of their children also when in adult age.

Yet, despite these similarities the process of leaving home, which was quite similar in the first decades after the post-war period, has developed quite differently. Notwithstanding within country differences among specific sub-groups (for example gender differentiation) young Italians seem to have adopted the strategy of living for a longer period of time with their parents and leave ‘the nest’ mainly with a married partner. Differently, young Germans become residential independent earlier and experience increasingly new forms of independent living and departures. This difference opens up the exciting question whether the explanation is to be searched at the micro-level, at a macro-level or in a combination of both.

Therefore the question of the study is threefold:

- At the individual level: in each country what influences the departure from the parental home? It is possible to define and recognize subgroups between the 'early leavers' and the 'late leavers', what distinguishes them?
- In a historical perspective: as society and its organization are not immutable over time it is plausible that different birth cohorts will experience different social settings and therefore experience different opportunities and constraints for leaving home. On the other hand each cohort is also a possible intermediary in introducing new attitudes. Is it possible to distinguish a historical trend? Is the process of leaving home different in its timing, sequencing and outcomes over time?
- In a comparative perspective: which are the differences and similarities in the leaving home behavior, both at the individual level as well as in a historical perspective, of Italians and West Germans?

1.1. The distinction of life phases and young adulthood

Historically the distinction of the life phases has begun with modern societies with the separation of childhood, adulthood and old age. Later on childhood was distinguished into early childhood, youth and adolescence and post adolescence, while adulthood was differentiated into early adulthood, mid life and old age. In recent years old age became distinguished in third and fourth ages, young-old, and old-old and more recently the oldest-old (For list of authors see Settersten 1999:104).

"The increasing differentiation of age groups in the development of modern societies –the invention of childhood, youth, and the third age – give rise to an ever-finer definition of age status and associated identities. A growing number of needs, motives, competencies, and qualities are attributed to the members of each given age group." (Buchmann 1989:29)

Buchmann points out how this formalization on the basis of chronological age has a specific social effect as all qualities and proprieties that the public definition gives to a specific age status are attributed to the members of this group irrespective of their real proprieties and capacities. She calls this process a "cultural representation of the life course and of the life stages". The cultural definition of needs, competencies, tasks and behaviors thought to be appropriate for individuals of a specific age-group is one of the basic elements of individual identity (Buchmann 1989:29, 43).

In Western societies up to the 18th century a distinctive youth phase existed only for the upper social class. Starting from the 19th century and increasingly at the beginning of the 20th century a youth phase developed in all social classes¹ and this process has been mainly reconnected to the rising importance of schooling or educational training. The youth period has progressively extended in the past 20 years because the transition from one status to another (leaving school, entrance in the labor force, economic independence, marriage and parenthood) has shifted to a later stage in people's life. Obviously, material and normative changes, that affect the society as a whole, are the root of these development and because of the existing interrelations it is difficult to say which are the causes and which are the consequences (Nave-Herz 1997: 674).

In the literature the discussion about 'youth' and 'youth life' has been focused on whether youth should be defined as an age group, a transitional phase or a specific stage of life with characteristics of its own.

The political (policy) preferred definition of youth has been in terms of age, as the majority of "political programs and measures aiming at the 'integration' of young people into society prefer this definition"². Yet, a definition based exclusively on age criteria can be very problematic as youth life can be very different as young people present different combination of educational, occupational (Bendit, Gaiser and Marbach 1999:9), but also familiar and residential statuses.

Differently, from a psychological and sociological perspective 'youth' has been defined as a stage of transition, with status-passages to adulthood being the main characteristic.

"The concept of transition emphasizes the acquisition of capacities and rights associated with adulthood. Personal development and 'individualization' are seen as processes that relay on learning and internalization of given cultural norms (socialization) as prerequisites of becoming, and being recognized as, a full member of society." (Bendit, Gaiser and Marbach 1999:10)

Yet, this concept can have a conservative bias if socialization is considered to be a one-way transaction, with norms and life pattern remaining unchanged (Bendit, Gaiser and Marbach 1999).

¹ According to other authors, before the '60s "youth (in the sense of having a 'youth life') was a privilege for males. In certain cases only for middle-class urban males" (Bendit, Gaiser and Marbach 1999:12).

² Current age-boundaries of youth in European countries and institutions comprehend age groups of 15 to 25, and in some cases from 14 to 30. Age limits differ according to the field of interest (Bendit, Gaiser and Marbach 1999:8).

According to the third definition, 'youth' is not a age but a stage problem. According to such view, "youth life has not vanished because its transition status has changed. It has become a state of being" (See Mörch 1999 in Bendit, Gaiser and Marbach 1999:12).

This approach does not consider socialization as a one-way transaction, which would leave norms and pattern untouched, but it asserts that young people have to build an adult world of their own. In this sense having one's own residence is important in order "to build up identity and social network, to create one's own style of living and to provide a stronghold in the vicissitudes of establishing oneself on the labor market" (Bendit, Gaiser and Marbach 1999:12).

The interest of the study lies in the recognition that young adulthood is a crucial and formative period in the life cycle. On the one hand, it is a time of transition,

"in which personal identity and social and economic independence are established. Young adulthood is, however, also becoming a life-style – a discrete period in the life-cycle, rather than just a transition between two substantive periods – childhood and adulthood." (Potter 1990:11)

Moreover the contemporary prolonged transition to adulthood is also accompanied by contradictions: young people have high expectations and become a large market for consumer goods, but they are confronted with high unemployment rates. Further, the social roles within the family changed: while children are now longer dependent on their parents, the parents' generation has gained a greater emancipation from their children, thanks to better wages and pensions (Potter 1990).

Therefore some authors regard that the contemporary way to autonomy of young adults is mediated in different ways by the support of the family (Ginsborg 1998; Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1993a), or as noted for the Italian case: "it is autonomy within one's parents' family, rather than outside it" (Saraceno 1997:6).

1.2. Rites of passage, critical events and leaving home

In "primitive societies" the entrance in the adult world is marked by rites of passage. In urban societies the process is protracted over a longer period and "while the passage to adulthood no longer is marked by a single dramatic rite, the occurrence of certain events generally does indicate the achievement of adult status" (Hogan 1978:573).

In more complex societies certain ceremonies - for example Christian confirmations, debutante balls and Jewish bar mitzvoth - symbolize that a young person is growing up, but there is no formal explicit

association between the physical, psychological and social transitions of the passage from adolescence to adulthood: "there is, rather, an implicit association by members of society of these roles with each other and with a person's age" (Hogan and Astone 1986:111).

The transition to adulthood in such societies is then better described as a process instead as an event: each life phase - childhood, youth, adulthood - is then defined by the 'role-complex' characteristic of each (See Fry & Keith 1982, Riley 1985 in Hogan and Astone 1986). While not every person will achieve all roles that define adulthood, nevertheless the occurrence, timing and sequence of social roles in public and private life spheres will define the unique life course pathways (Hogan and Astone 1986:112).

"One can, however, safely assume that both in the past and now, becoming an adult involves a series of changes in status which moves an individual from economic dependence upon parents or their surrogates to economic independence (or dependence upon a spouse), and from participation in the family of orientation to establishment of a family of procreation (or, far less commonly, to move out of the family of orientation into lifetime roles as spinster or bachelor). These events may not universally announce adulthood, but they certainly bear an overwhelming and apparent association with participation in the adult world." (Modell, Furstenberg and Herschberg 1976:9)

Likewise more recent research noticed the existence of critical events through which young people must go in order to achieve the adult status: the completion of education, becoming active participants in the labor force, the achievement of economic and cultural independence, the establishment of independent living arrangements, and the formation of an own family of procreation (Baanders 1998; Billari 1998; Kerckhoff 1990). But, there are obviously other events which could be used to define the transition to adulthood³ (See Mitterauer 1986 in Billari 1998:14).

If independence is the main characteristic of adulthood, then particularly important markers are the first full-time job (Laaksonen 2000) and an independent residence from the parents (Goldscheider 1993), since they indicate economic and individual autonomy from the family of origin and reflect also such aspects as: personal autonomy, responsible roles, own household, economic self-reliance. As pointed out by Bendit: "establishing an independent household is the focal point for all these developmental tasks and transitions" (Bendit 1999:21).

³ Even fixing transitional events, it still remains the question whether all events have to occur to "achieve" the adult status (Iedema, Becker and Sanders 1997). For example, applying strictly such an assessment a person, who (for whatever the reason) remains childless, would never have the possibility to "become" an adult. Nevertheless it can be retained that, if during the life course none of them occurs, a person did not assume the "adult" role (Billari 1998).

Leaving the parental home can be then considered as the beginning of the household evolution process (see Hooimeijer & Linde 1988 in Crommentuijn and Hooimeijer Pieter 1991); it is the first independent event of the life course (Mayer and Schwarz 1989).

Even if very cultural-specific, typical wishes associated with an independent housing are the opportunity for withdrawal, a sense of well-being, privacy and intimacy. One's own residence is regarded as resource for the development of personal identity, as material foundation of one's own life plan, as symbol of becoming independent, as a signal and chance for organizing relationships and partnerships for oneself, as opportunity for a new definition of the relationship to one's parents and as infrastructure for standing on one's own feet in a context of social networks, contacts, communication and cultural participation (Gaiser 1999:55).

The choice of residential independence from the family of origin as particular important marker for the transition to adulthood is strengthened by the observation that – at least in some countries - in the contemporary process familiar ties have lost some of their centrality. The study of residential independence allows both to look at the different timing of this event in a historical but also comparative perspective, as well as looking at its sequencing and therefore at its relation with other life spheres.

Kerckhoff in his comparison between USA and Great Britain, showing how elements in education, work, heterosexual relationships and parenthood are associated with the move out of the parental home, regarded important:

”to consider both the similarities and differences in the two societies' family and work structures and norms, especially as they interact with the school systems since the transition to adulthood involves changes in all three domains, and the shape of the life depends on all of them”. (Kerckhoff 1990:3-4)

Therefore the study of the leaving home process implies and requires to consider also the parallel educational, occupational and family careers.

Leaving home can be realized through different living arrangements, which can have various outcomes. For example, premarital residential autonomy is related to marriage delay and challenges the traditional family roles: young women who lived independently before marriage have increased expectations to go on working after marriage and to reduce their expected family size. Both young men and women, which lived on their own before marriage, approve, usually, the combination for women of paid work and parenthood (Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1993b).

On the other hand, staying home presents some advantages: living with the family of origin could be healthier and young adults, who support themselves, not reducing this expense benefiting of the

family home, might diminish other investments, such as education or savings (Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1993b). Further, residential closeness to the family of origin provides (usually) an increased access to economic opportunities through family networks and supports young adults (women) in their future family roles and duties⁴ (Del Boca 1999; Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1993b). It is then plausible that parents support the longer education of their children with a longer cohabitation. This could mean that some young people 'use' the parental home and support to improve their opportunities for future autonomy, through a better level of education and/or job. In addition, living under one roof with parents permits young people to enjoy a higher standard of living and life's style, which they could not afford relying only on their own resources (Cavalli 1999; Lauterbach and Lüscher 1999; Saraceno 1997).

"Early or late events often have substantial impacts on subsequent outcomes because they affect the amount of exposure to critical experiences, the amount of time remaining for other life activities, and the perceptions of relative social success or failure. The impacts are often both unintended and unforeseen." (Mayer and Tuma 1990:7)

A longer stay in the parental home can have some serious negative consequences. First of all demographic consequences: the prolonged economic and residential dependence of young people could be, more than the lacking recognition of the children's costs, one of the reasons for the fertility decline: both because it delays the moment when young people are (or feel) ready for childbearing (Palomba 1999) and because the experience of a prolonged dependence as children could be a disincentive to repeat the same experience as parents (Saraceno 1998:108). Further, the postponement of adulthood - next to demographic consequences such as a sharp decline of birth rates and increasing age distance between parents and children⁵ - could also influence "the attitude toward one's own future":

"Young people who remain dependent on the family for a long time get used to being supported by resources they are not committed to producing and do not rely upon their own initiative [...this produces a] 'culture of entitlement': as sons and daughters feel they have rights with regard to society. Society is the 'big mother' providing for the well being of her citizens. [...] there is a sort of correlation between attitudes towards parents and attitudes towards the welfare state" (Cavalli 1999)

⁴ Yet, there is some evidence that social interaction between parents and grown-up children is extensive and that mutual aid between generations is common also when living apart. (Kiernan, 1984:37)

⁵ whereby a higher burden is put on middle-aged population (especially women) who at the same time have to care for children and old parents.

1.3. Leaving home as a process of decision making

Like with other important life events, the establishment of an independent residence is usually preceded by a process of decision making. "In deciding to leave the parental home, adolescents will carefully consider the possible consequences and the advantages and disadvantages that leaving home might bring" (Baanders 1996: 273). As individual action is influenced by different biographical, economic, social and cultural resources, discussing 'youth' covers different realities.

In the literature different theoretical frameworks are presented:

- Rational choice theory and subjective expected utility (SEU): according to this approach the evaluation of each action is based on the expected probability that a certain outcome will occur, multiplied by the subjective utility attached to this outcome.

For example Da Vanzo/Kobrin (1982) used in their analysis a cost-utility model where "the complex of decisions made along the road to independence is assumed to result from child-parent negotiation over how their joint and respective resources are to be used in the context of their separate preferences, given the costs confronting each part." (See Da Vanzo/Kobrin (1982) in Mayer and Wagner 1986: 5). According to this study, the 'goods' which influence the decision are economies of scale, advantages by work division and the use of common goods within a bigger household, privacy and more freedom in an own household, parents' transfer versus costs of an alternative residence. Also the consequences of the changed parents-child relationship can be seen in a rational choice perspective:

"Whereas in the past young people traditionally lived - sometimes involuntary - with their parents until they married, today is their choice to do so [...] during the past 30 years, educational objectives have changed. Whereas honesty, cleanliness, and obedience were once most important, today's parents put more emphasis on a high level of independence. Correspondingly, educational methods have also changed: more liberal social manners are increasingly gaining ground [...] Proceeding from the rational-choice approach, it might be assumed that, compared to other patterns of living, at least for some of the young people the cost-benefit ratio of the parental home is most favorable." (Nave-Herz 1997: 682)

According to the rational choice approach whether young people live with parents or leave choosing one of the possible destination (living with partner, leaving to follow education or employment, leaving for achieving autonomy and independence) is a function of the young adult's preferences and of the restrictions and opportunities of the environment. The ability to realize preferences is closely connected with their resources available: both own resources, but also resources provided by parents (Michael and Tuma 1985).

De Jong and her colleagues, extending the typology of Goldscheider & DaVanzo 1989, developed a four-class typology of parental resources and discussed how these different types of resources might have different effects on the departure of children. They regard that parental resources can have the form of material or non-material resources, and that each category can be then distinguished whether such resources are transferable or not. These authors claim that transferable material resources (such as income and possessions⁶) and transferable non-material resources (such as Bourdieu's cultural capital) will have a positive influence on the process of leaving home, while non-transferable material (such as the mother taking care of household duties, meals, washing etc)⁷ parental resources and non-transferable non-material resources (e.g. relationship with parents, home climate) will have a negative effect. Nevertheless the role played by such resources should be different according to the different departure destinations. Those who leave home for education or employment – notwithstanding the presence and level of parental resources - might feel forced to do so, given the distance from the parents' home to the place of education or work. (De Jong, Liefbroer and Beekink 1991:58-61).

It has been noted that the relation between resources and leaving home age is quite complicated as parental income might be associated with high levels of both transferable and not transferable resources and as parents might use their resources differently in order to delay the departure of young children but to facilitate it for older children (see Avery, Goldscheider and Speare 1992; Whittington & Peters 1996 in Holdsworth 2000).

Moreover the importance of particular resources might vary with the cultural context. It has been argued that in Southern Europe, where living home to establish a family is more common, the transfer of parental material resources might be important. Differently, in Northern Europe the association between non-material resources and independent living might have more importance (Holdsworth 2000:203).

Several criticism have been raised to the rational choice approach. First of all, people may be not be in the position to maximize subjective utility because of certain situational constrains, given that the range of behavioral options is confined as a result of previous choices or because certain situation involve joint decisions. Further, individuals are often confronted with situations too complicated to

⁶ Such resources can take the form also of a house (or apartment); this kind of support is quite common for Southern Europe (see Tosi 1995, Emmanuel 1995 in Holdsworth 2000)

⁷ these resources are assumed to be greater if the mother is not employed and number of sibling is low. Still another fact is that at least partially these resources might be transferable over short distances: for example bringing the laundry home (Holdsworth 2000) or going often to meals even when living apart.

foresee all probable consequences. Individuals are not the highly autonomous actors that they are presumed to be by the rational choice theory, but individuals are embedded in a social context and therefore are confronted with a set of behavioral expectations that take the form of normative prescriptions. When the choice presents itself too complicated or unsure, it may be easier to fall back on socially accepted behavioral patterns and normative regularities (For a list of authors see Baanders 1996: 273-274).

A further limitation of the rational choice model is the fact that competing activities can influence the decision: "for reasons that are only indirectly related to the event of leaving home, a person may decide to postpone the transition because it is in conflict with the realization of other important life goals or, conversely, he or she may come to the decision to leave home because it is more compatible with other activities." (Baanders 1996:288)

· Theory of reasoned action (Ajzen and Fishbein Martin 1980): according to this approach an individual behavior can be predicted by the intention to perform the behavior. This intention can be explained by two factors: the attitude of the person and the subjective norm.

An attitude can be regarded as a general feeling of favorableness or unfavorableness toward performing a specific behavior and is influenced both by perceived consequences and anticipated advantages and disadvantages (behavioral beliefs) and by the subjective evaluation of the consequences. The subjective norm reflects the person's belief of what 'relevant others' expect him/her to do (normative beliefs).

Studies on the perceived consequences of leaving home show how young people expect less parental control, to do things for self, to take own decisions, to lead a life of one's own, to feel more mature and to become emotionally separated. Some authors pointed out the financial implications: the need for housing accommodation, the care of household duties and emotional support, the loss of the so called "nontransferable parental resources" (For a list see Baanders 1996).

The reasoned action approach opens up the question whether one should expect normative timetables during the transition to adulthood in general, and for the departure from home in particular. Young adulthood marks the culmination of socialization and therefore it is plausible that normative time tables will be highly important. On the other hand other research on normative time tables reveals how older people have stronger age norms (See Neugarten et al. 1965, Passuth et al 1984, Plath & Ikeda 1976 in Hogan and Astone 1986:117).

Studies on the social norms reveal the existence of parents' expectations in regard to the transition to adulthood of their children. These are mainly related to the timing of crucial life course events, e.g. age norms: "to be on or off time" (Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1993a). On the other hand, a Canadian study (Veevers, Gee and Wister 1996) reveals how only children seem to have internalized a 'social clock' regarding home-leaving, suggesting that the "source of normative prescriptions lies outside the family at least to some degree". These conclusions seem to strengthen Mayer's (1986) and Hareven's (1986) assertions that life courses are becoming increasingly regulated by social structural constraints and that the transitions are becoming "more rigidly governed by age norms" (Veevers, Gee and Wister 1996:291). Yet, Veevers' study revealed a strong congruence in parent-child answers in respect to ideal age and age boundaries for leaving home and these results seem to confirm that family factors cannot be ignored in the acquisition and transmission of age norms⁸. A further support can be founded by Baanders, who in her study on young Dutch adults recognized that: "behavioral patterns and values concerning the transition are *culturally transmitted* from parents to their off-springs" (Baanders 1998:218).

Normative expectations are often posed in terms of necessary requirements to be met before the transition can take place. Usually the 'social clock' for leaving home 'rings' after the completion of education, since an independent living could negatively effect completing education and because the required economic independence cannot be attained while being in education (Baanders 1996; Nave-Herz 1997; Veevers, Gee and Wister 1996). Marriage is also commonly accepted as a reason to move out. Yet, one should not forget that even within a given society there might be different cultural expectations about what constitutes the stages of the transition to adulthood for major subgroups of the population (for example gender) (Hogan and Astone 1986).

· The economic theory (Ermisch and Salvo 1995) assumes - similarly to the rational choice theory - that young adults will leave the parental home when their utility living on their own exceeds the utility they receive in the parental home.

Young people will differ in their tastes concerning living with parents, while parents are assumed to determine housing consumption when the child lives home.

"In this theoretical model, parents are altruistic toward their children (i.e. their utility is a function of the utility of their child as well as their own consumption of housing and other goods), and housing is a local public good for a household: that is housing services per person are not affected by household size" (Ermisch 1999: 48)

⁸ Yet, normative expectations are likely to become a point of conflict between parents and children during period of rapid change in a age-stratification system (See Bengston & Cutler 1976 in Hogan and Astone 1986)

When young people live on their own they choose their own housing consumption as well as 'other' consumption, while the parental interest in child's housing is assumed to be made effective by contributing to the child's housing costs. Parents' financial transfers' decisions in each state (coresidence and child lives apart) depend upon parental income relative to child's income. If the difference is large ($Y_p > Y_c$) enough financial transfers are made in both states, if the relation is intermediate there will be no transfers during coresidence but a contribution will be made when the child lives on his/her own. When Y_p/Y_c is sufficiently low no financial transfers will be made in either states. Parents "'dictate' the coresidence decision by manipulating the level of transfers to the child" (Ermisch 1999: 49).

However, other studies have shown how parental income can have opposite influence on different kinds of departure⁹ (Avery, Goldscheider and Speare 1992; Ermisch 1996).

Criticism has been raised to this kind of approach:

"The economic approach assumes certain more or less fixed criteria of choice and preferences that are always seen from the perspective of a maximizing individual. It does not recognize the possibility that people's expectations and calculations can be strongly shaped by general cultural ambience in which they live, and pressures imposed by those around them. We therefore need to relate these family changes to points of reference in the culture or prevailing values and to search for changes in these that might explain family change." (Crouch 1999: 230)

1.4. Theoretical framework for cohort comparison

Two theoretical frameworks are presented by the literature.

· The modernization theory (Beck-Gernsheim 1993, Beck 1986) which looks at the economic, technological, socio-cultural and political changes, that have taken place in the Western world since the French Revolution and industrialization. These are mainly secularization, urbanization and economic specialization.

According to some authors such changes brought an individualization of the life course: "the way of life in industrialized societies has become disintegrated and is being replaced by life trajectories in which people make their own biography. The influence of social class, family and gender roles diminishes with continuing modernization" (Iedema, Becker and Sanders 1997: 118).

⁹ Higher parental income decreases the probability to depart in order to live alone or with others (but not with partner) and increases the likelihood of leaving home as a full-time student (Ermisch 1996). A different influence of parental income on marriage and pre-marital independence has been noted also among younger and older children (Avery, Goldscheider and Speare 1992).

In regard to the transition to adulthood it has been noted that:

”In modern industrial and post-industrial societies this transitional process has become longer and more complicated because of the extension of secondary education, accompanied by diversification and individualization of social life. It correspond to what sociologists call ‘diversification of pathways into adulthood’” (Bendit, Gaiser and Marbach 1999:10).

Yet, while some authors claim that there is an increasing individualization of the life course, in the sense that individual life courses become more independent from that of siblings, parental family, spouse or children (See Held 1984 in Mayer 1985), other discuss the degree to which individual life courses are socially constrained and institutionally regulated. Further, it has to be noted that while increasing affluence provides the young with the opportunity to leave the parental home, "the decision whether and when to use this opportunity depends on values and preferences" (Mayer and Schwarz 1989:146; Crouch 1999).

”Young people, hence, must choose and choose correctly, running the risk of taking the wrong choice and becoming socially excluded” (Bendit, Gaiser and Marbach 1999:11).

According to the modernization approach, across cohorts people will display more and more different trajectories. Status passages are no longer linear, but become also synchronic and reversible.

The standardized linear and homogeneous life course that emerged in post-World War II western societies is generally attributed to the coming together of two forces: of the Fordist industrial mass production in which a highly paid relatively secure working class became established as the ‘universal’ class, and of the welfare state's guarantee of income across the entire family’s life cycle (Mayer 1998). In these societies the role transitions which typify the transition to adulthood were guided by social norms regarding the proper timing and the proper sequencing of the separate events. Most young adults conformed to what is called a standard biography (Baanders 1998).

In contrast the post-industrial (post-Fordist) life course pattern can be characterized by increasing de-standardization across the lifetime and increasing differentiation and heterogeneity across the population. A number of life transitions have been delayed, prolonged and age variance has increased, while the degree of universality and of sequential orderliness have decreased (Mayer 1998): order and duration of status passages are no longer fixed.

”Moving out of the parental home, for example, no longer has a more or less predictable ‘fixed’ position in life determined by other events: it can take place before the end of school or not have occurred with the existence of a stable relationship at the beginning of work life and with steady income, e.g. on account of a pragmatic cost-effectiveness analysis.” (Gaiser 1999:58)

This transformation is result of historical and cultural changes, which have had also an impact on prevailing social opinions regarding adulthood and the position of the young: adulthood is no longer defined by strict criteria and youths are no longer expected to automatically follow socially prescribed life course transitions (Baanders 1998). Hence, for increasing numbers of young adults the transition to adulthood will have the nature of a choice biography. In this context opportunities and constraints should become the main determinant of behavioral choices rather than the traditional normative patterns. Nevertheless, an increasing differentiation and fragmentation of the life course does not signify that social norms have completely lost their significance and that they no longer are a useful guideline for individuals (Baanders 1998).

This complexity is further aggravated by the fact that different countries will present –through different institutions, structures and norms – different opportunities and constrains: young adults’ behavior will therefore be different among the countries.

”Although the modernization process has a strong impact on the life of young people it does not equalize young people all over Europe:

- As pointed out earlier, the modernization process is a source of diversification and individualization of social life itself. Since ‘youth’ is a prime agent of social change, modernization impacts ‘youth life’ even more than ‘adult life’;
- The general pattern of modernization goes hand in hand with regional and cultural particularities. Some of them are adaptations of the main stream to local conditions, others are enduring recalcitrant traditions.” (Bendit, Gaiser and Marbach 1999:13-14)

· The generation theory: according to this approach the socialization during the formative period leads to values and orientations that remain relatively stable during the life-course (Ingelhart 1977) Becker (1991) proposes a more cautious view assuming that values and orientations remain stable only if a reinforcement takes place. Scarcity of opportunities and resources experienced during the formative period have lasting impact on opportunities in the life course (Becker 1987,1990). According to this theory, periodical scarcity of jobs leads to different chances of employment between people of different cohorts. Those who experience low chances of finding a job can be expected to increase their level of education in order to widen their opportunities. As a result the age at which they enter the labor market increases. Disposable income and housing market will also influence the departure from the parental home. Yet, since level of education increases there will be many young people who move out at an early age in order to attend university and vocational training. Similar constrains will be faced in the transition to marriage and cohabitation: available housing and disposable income. Nevertheless higher education will delay also such transitions, since there is a normative expectation

that people in education should not enter marriage or parenthood (Iedema, Becker and Sanders 1997: 119-121).

1.5. Leaving home in a historical perspective

Life course patterns emerge in particular historical settings and individual life courses must be considered within the context of the collective life trajectories of birth cohorts. Moreover competition for resources among members of different cohorts but also among members of the same cohort shapes the life course (Mayer and Tuma 1990:7).

It has been often assumed that leaving home is closely linked to marriage, but while this can be still true in many contemporary Western countries and among the less educated and lower social class, marriage was seldom a precise indicator for leaving home. In the more distant past young people left home in order to become servant and lodgers (Lenz and Böhnisch 1997; Mayer 1985). During the 1950s many new-married couples lived with parents or parents-in-law for some time after marriage (Kiernan 1989). Only during the 1960s one could find probably the closest coincidence between the departure from the parental home and marriage for the majority of the young. But starting from the 1970s – at least in some countries - this link became weaker as young people are increasingly likely to cohabit unmarried with a partner or to live in single-person households and also to leave the parental home to attend higher education (Kiernan 1989:121).

During the early stages of urban and industrial growth the probability for children to remain home until marriage increased, since new local economic opportunities did not force them to leave in order to become servants or apprentices. This new arrangement allowed them to minimize expenses and save for marriage (Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1993b; Mayer 1998; Saraceno 1996). During this time:

” [...] the transition to adulthood took place according to a pre-established order and calendar; it concluded a relatively brief period of preparation for life (childhood) and flowed into a series of events that followed one another at short intervals. [...] This model was based on two essential rules: that of instantaneity, of the suddenness with which the passage from adolescence to adulthood took place and that of temporal overlapping of the three most significant moments of the transition; that is leaving the parental home, beginning working life and the formation of a new family” (See Galland, 1986: 266 in Sgritta 1999)

Nowadays marriage and parenthood became ”optional” elements of adult lives, since it is socially accepted never to form a family. This could indicate that some young people move out of the

parental home before marriage, not only to attend school or military service, but just to live independently from the family of origin.

Nevertheless, union formation and economic independence have still a major role in the decision of leaving home. According to Baanders the timing of leaving home is strongly influenced by expectations of union formation and of financial independence, while the association with educational achievements is less important. This suggests that normative expectations, are recognized and that young people tend to conform to them (Baanders 1998:215; for Italy see Palomba 1999).

In the whole contemporary Europe there is a trend to emancipation postponement¹⁰, characterized by longer education, postponement of labor force participation and delay in marriage. Yet given this historical trend, and especially marriage delay, different options are open for the process of leaving home: pre-marital residential independence or longer cohabitation with parents.

Some authors explain the European common trend toward emancipation postponement (and delayed departure from home) with "economic and macro-structural reasons, such as the economic crisis in the middle 1980s and the starting 1990s or the breaking down of a stable labor market" (De Jong, Liefbroer and Beekink 1991; Laaksonen 2000; Rodal 1998:15). And further explanations can be found in the difficult accessibility of houses (or apartments) for rent and youth unemployment (Baanders 1998; Bendit 1999; Del Boca 1999; Ginsborg 1998). It has been also noted that less stable occupational careers¹¹ reducing the 'half-life' of the validity and usability of professional occupation give "rise to short-term work perspectives" but bring about "a relatively high degree of occupational insecurity and, accordingly, a relatively low degree of calculability and predictability" (Buchmann 1989:50).

Obviously during an economic crisis or generally when for young people is hard to find a stable job, the decision to leave the parents is complicated (limited) by the lack of financial resources necessary to establish and maintain an independent residence. Moreover if young people are confronted with an unstable labor market, then also those employed might feel that their occupational situation is not stable and sure enough to take on serious commitments, such as renting or buying (with a loan) a house or apartment. In addition it is quite important to remember that young adults - being at the beginning of their occupational career - earn usually lower wages, therefore they have to rely on the accessibility of cheap housing accommodations or of subsidized housing. If the existing housing

¹⁰ whereby gender differences have been mainly explained by the overall younger age at marriage of women.

¹¹ result also of the much shorter cycles of innovation (for example technological innovation)

market does not provide for such solutions, young people might delay the moment of departure in order to save money or to wait for a better opportunity.

Next to economic arguments, often the reason for the delayed departure from the parental home is searched in a general transformation in the transition to adulthood, whereby the change affected especially three life areas: education, family formation and residential conditions.

One of the main processes in advanced societies after the World War II has been the education expansion, with the most visible consequence of reducing the 'gender gap' in educational qualification. Education expansion is regarded by some authors as one reason for the rise of the 'nestling generation', because it led to a postponement of the labor market entrance and therefore to a longer economical dependency upon the family of origin (Mayer 1985; Mayer and Schwarz 1989; Nave-Herz 1997). On the other hand, other studies reveal how after World War II more people left home for educational reasons: as the age for enrollment in higher education is lower than the average age at marriage the shift in motives could lead to younger ages at the moment of departure from home (Crommentuijn and Hooimeijer Pieter 1991; De Jong, Liefbroer and Beekink 1991; Kiernan 1989).

The increase in education is not only result of the desire for more education, but is also a reaction to declining employment prospects (see Barnhause-Walters, 1984 in Buchmann 1989): when unemployment is high and competition is strong "the best way to get ahead the competition [...] is to get better qualifications" (Shavit and Müller 1998). Moreover, governmental policies itself are motivated by the wish to lower youth unemployment rates as well as to increase the educational levels of young people in order to improve their chances of later employment. And changes of youth labor force participation influence young adults' possibility of economic as well as household independence (for a list of authors see also De Jong, Liefbroer and Beekink 1991; Laaksonen 2000)

Next to education expansion, and probably partially due to it, starting from the 1970s some European countries experience a change in marriage and family formation behavior. This change can be also reconnected to a normative attitude and behavior transformation, and it induced a temporal separation (*Entkopplung*) of leaving the parental home, marriage and family formation (for Germany see Lauterbach and Lüscher 1999).

During the same time also young people's residential conditions (*Wohnumfeld*) improved: because of decreasing fertility and bigger domiciles children live seldom in narrow housing situations, but normally occupy own bedrooms and in some cases also separated dwellings (De Jong, Liefbroer

and Beekink 1991; Lauterbach and Lüscher 1999). The spending power of young people living home is considerable as they get a certain number of services for free and contribute less and less to the family budget; this allows them to spend what they earn on 'luxury' or superfluous goods¹². Moreover also the parents-children relationship has considerably changed (Del Boca 1999; Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1993b; Saraceno in print). Nowadays young people have negotiated a considerable degree of autonomy inside the family and often are able to live a virtually separate existence. Particularly the possibility to enjoy a degree of sexual freedom has reduced the need to "get away from home" (Cavalli 1995).

A family context where the parental authority has weakened and the personal autonomy and freedom has increased can create conditions for a protracted permanence within the family, as young people can live and experience some aspects of adult life, without assuming complete responsibilities and taking all the connected risks.

Other explanations for the delayed departure from home stress the importance of interactions between children's expectations, needs and fears and the parents' ones. According to an Italian qualitative research, young adults (university students) are mainly worried by the instability of the labor market and they want to have further space to test: it becomes important to create alternatives so to not "get stuck". Forming a family is positioned quite far away: undertaking definitive commitments and thinking about a new domestic situation is something "out of place". In this need they feel supported by their families: they sense that they do not have particular obligations, while they have physical and mental own spaces and recognize that economic support and "quotidian comforts" are not lacking and that nobody is making haste. The "absence of pressure" from parents goes with "not wanting to pay customs" of the children (Cigoli 1988:162-165; for similar results see also Palomba 1999). According to other scholars, the postponement of the moment of moving out reflects psychological needs of both parents and offspring. The young adult builds inside the parental home a sphere of autonomy and, from there, he/she makes a "controlled" experience of the adult world, without undergoing complete responsibilities and obligations. On the other side, parents fear the moment of the empty nest. They have only a limited number of children, and so these become an "emotional concentrate". (Scabini 1998; Sgritta 1999)

¹² Suffices to think at cellular phones, cars, trademark clothes

1.6. Leaving home in national contexts

There have been substantial changes in the age of leaving home in the Western countries in the past decades¹³. The changes and the way they differ among countries, can only be understood by referring to institutional arrangements and normative values which together structure individuals' decision about leaving home and also to their opportunities to do so.

"The life course is shaped by, among other things, cultural beliefs about the individual biography, institutionalized sequences of roles and positions, legal age restrictions, and decisions of individual actors" (Mayer and Tuma 1990:3)

Even if Italy and West-Germany are both west industrialized countries and in the European Union, they differ in their education, economic and welfare systems and, further, one should not forget historical and cultural differences.

All these nationally specifics, or "path dependencies", have probably an influence on the processes in study: "any impact of global changes must be mediated through the initial institutional configurations" (Mayer 1998:23). Therefore, even if the two countries are confronted with similar pressures and processes, they will probably react differently.

On the one hand the persisting differences in the leaving home behavior between North and South Europe can be regarded as reflecting different individual values. And along these lines it has been noted how while leaving home in Italy, and generally in Southern Europe, implies usually getting married (Palomba 1999; Rodal 1998). Differently in West-Germany nowadays this process has two different features a professional and a private one: the beginning of an employment or higher course of study and the beginning of a longer partnership, the foundation of an own household, marriage and family of procreation¹⁴ (See Buchmann 1989; Meulemann 1990, 1995 in Lauterbach and Lüscher 1999:1).

Yet the expectations of when young people should leave home are usually incorporated into a wider institutional framework: for example the organization of the educational system with different expectation of living arrangements and parents' dependency (support), or a housing market supporting (or not) independence prior to marriage and welfare regimes (Holdsworth 2000).

¹³ According to Rothenbacher until the 1960s there was a growing similarity of patterns in household and family structures in the industrialized countries of Western Europe. After this date some family patterns began to diverge: for example the importance of lone parenthood, divorce and cohabitation (Rothenbacher 1995).

¹⁴ These national distinctions are quite important since there is evidence that marriage tends to be the slower route to residential independence (Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1993b).

In Western societies many social institutions are formally organized by age¹⁵: for example, primary and secondary education, work careers prospects by age and seniority, retirement policies. "Thus, the organizational structures of schools, military service, and labor markets differ across societies producing unique institutional bases of age-grading, and societal variability in age-stratification systems" (Hogan and Astone 1986:115).

"The introduction and lengthening of formal schooling and occupational training probably pushed the age of leaving home upward. Universal formal education also institutionalize the age of leaving home as an expected element of educational career (e.g. age at entering college or university). Military service is another state-controlled mechanism which forces children out of the parental home" (Mayer 1985:2)

While all societies have some kind of age stratification, they differ in the degree to which certain age groups are expected to fulfill specific roles and avoid others, in the explicitness of these expectations, and in the nature of sanctions (if any) against those who do not conform to these expectations (Forner 1982, Fry & Keith 1982, Riley 1985 in Hogan and Astone 1986:114). From this point of view, cross-national differences are comprehensible: given that States rely on, as well as create conceptions of the life course. And considering that at least some age rules and preferences are embedded within laws, policies and social institutions, it is not surprising that all this results in cross-national differences in the structure and experience of the life course. Yet, one should keep in mind that age-structuring can be quite different among different sub-groups also within one country, for example according to gender¹⁶ (Hagestad 1991). Moreover it has been argued that different life spheres are more or less age-bound and that different social spheres are associated with different sorts of time.

According to Buchmann the degree of institutionalization of age criteria for role and status allocation is highest in "legally defined ascription of roles and statuses", while differently age-criteria based on informal consensus has the lowest degree of institutionalization¹⁷. However the officially regulated states, events and transitions influence the sequencing of positions and roles in the non-institutionalized life sphere, probably as "result of the practical acknowledgement of the objective

¹⁵ Such age-graded institutions are not only schools, but also compulsory military service, university, apprentice programs which usually select people within certain defined age limits (Hogan and Astone 1986).

¹⁶ Traditionally men lives were more closely linked to economic and political spheres, which seem to operate in a 'linear' time, therefore constraining male life courses more by age. Differently, traditional women's lives were more tied to the family sphere, which does not seem to follow a 'linear' time, therefore the female life course appeared to be less restricted by chronological time, with the exception of the biological clock for reproduction (Settersten 1999:67).

¹⁷ Examples of high institutionalized age criteria are compulsory school attendance, labor market entry, eligibility for Social Security benefits, while examples of lower institutionalized are the 'appropriate' age of marriage, childbearing, completion of career steps (Buchmann 1989).

requirements that the ‘state-regulated’ pace of life imposes on the individual’s scope of action” (Buchmann 1989:25-26). This temporal structuring results in ‘social timetables’ for non-institutionalized life transitions (Clausen 1986; Elder 1975; Neugarten and Hagestad 1976). European comparison of the timing of leaving home suggests differences in country specific age norms related to this event (Goldscheider 1997 in Holdsworth 2000; Jones 1995). These norms are associated not only with timing but also with the destination of leaving (with a partner, for a job or for education). The timing variation of leaving home in Europe are associated with the relative importance of departure destinations: the younger ages in Northern Europe are linked to the greater propensity of leaving home for other reasons than partnership formation (see Kieran 1986 in Keith and Finlay 1988).

Yet an age-norm approach has some limitation: it does not give information on the origins of these differences or of how they may vary over time (Marini 1984) as the origin of different patterns are founded in historical, social and political contexts. Second it does not give information on the wide range of variability within the countries, for example within socio-economic groups. Hence one has to consider the how “individuals’ own circumstances and opportunities mediate the transition out of the parental home” (Holdsworth 2000:202). Therefore according to Holdsworth a complete study - in addition to country specific normative expectations - should regard the ‘opportunity structure’, which is given by macro and individual factors, determined by labor market conditions, housing and welfare regimes.

The comparative perspective of this work wants to delineate also the importance of different national institutions for the individual decision of leaving home, as in the process of leaving home also the existence, organization and functioning of different institutions play a role.

It is a fact that - notwithstanding an European common trend - national particularities remain profound. Cavalli and Galland regard that these existing national features can be subsumed under two major types, whereby France has some characteristics of both and Britain remains an exception and therefore represents a model of its own (Galland 1995).

- A Mediterranean model, whereby family life is extended, characterized by: a) prolongation of studies¹⁸; b) a longer period of precariousness vis-a-vis employment after the completion of studies; c) tendency to continue living with parents, even when in stable employment, associated

¹⁸ In the Italian case with a very low proportion of conclusions.

(at least in Italy and Spain) with a high degree of independence; d) prompt marriage after leaving the parental home, with relatively low proportion of young people living alone or as unmarried couples.

- A Northern and French model, which includes also Germany, and that may be characterized as an extension of living away from home, since leaving home is not immediately followed by a new family. In the Northern European countries youth prolongation is featured by an early leave of the parental home, while living together with a partner and an own family of procreation take place relatively late. In this intermediate phase young adults experience a mixture of short-lived relationships and living alone.

France is similar to the Mediterranean model for its tendency to prolonged studies, while has in common with the Northern model the youth period as an intermediate phase, since living alone is widespread.

- A British model denoted by early entry in the labor market and an extended period of living with a partner without children: studies are abandoned early, entrance in the labor force happens soon as well as leaving the parental home and living as a couple, whereas there is a marked delay before the first child is born.

Another attempt to explain the European variability can be made by examining the characteristics of welfare models:

”the division of responsibilities between the different institutional spheres (family, market and state), the normative recognition of the different living arrangements and the objectives they pursue with regard to the support of children and dependent subjects in general.” (Sgritta 1999)

According to Millar (1996) there are three models or ‘families of nations’:

- The Scandinavian countries in which social protection is a right of citizenship and where family obligations are reduced to a minimum. In these nations family is regarded as an institution based on equality and economic independence of its members; State and parents have complementary responsibilities in regard to children.
- A second group of nations (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Ireland and UK) which are characterized by the obligation for the nuclear family to maintain its members. ”Individuality is relatively little developed; benefits and taxes almost always recognize the reciprocal obligations between husband and wife and between parents and children; as far as the services are concerned, they are mostly considered auxiliaries to the care given by the family”

(See Millar, 1996:6 in Sgritta 1999). The responsibility of the children is a private one, assigned mainly to the family and especially to the mother.

"One of the corner stone of the system of social security in Germany is the principle of subsidiarity. It implies both right and duty to all. On the one hand, everyone can be made to pay for the maintenance of relatives, but on the other hand, everyone also has the right to maintenance when in need. This particular act makes young adults who are not capable of maintaining themselves dependent on their parents decisions" (Laaksonen 2000).

- Southern European countries represent the third model where obligations of maintenance and care of weaker and dependent subjects are responsibility of the extended family¹⁹. The State intervention plays only a residual role: only when the private market and the family break down social welfare institution intervene (only temporarily). A system of income maintenance for young people and for those who did not (yet) join the labor market is lacking or insufficient. Another common feature is the high degree of particularism. Families in these countries play the role of 'shock-absorbers'. The poor or residual State intervention is not a result of ignoring the family, but rather of a 'sanctification' of this institution: the ability of the family to adapt as well as the division of work and family responsibilities between men and women and the intergenerational solidarity was, and still is taken for granted (See Saraceno 1994, Sgritta, 1995 in Sgritta 1999).

Focusing first on Germany, in this country according to the principle of subsidiarity parents have the main responsibility for maintaining their children, yet parents of dependent children become from the State a family allowance.

The housing situation is relatively good, but youth housing is in general not a special (extra) issue and housing policies or measures for youth do not exist. There is some rent controlled, public subsidized housing, but such supply is decreasing.

In general there are three kinds of benefits which apply also to young people (Laaksonen 2000:19-20):

- a) While parents must support their children's education until their first degree, if they are not able to do so and the student does not have a sufficient own income, then he/she is entitled to State's student benefits (*Bafög*)²⁰. A different system regulated by the employment regulation supports

¹⁹ In the case of Italy the law establishes a wide range of 'obliged kin' in terms of expected economic support: parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, siblings, children in law and parents in law, uncle/aunts and nephews/nieces (Saraceno in print).

²⁰ While in principle every student is entitled to some form of benefits, in reality the number of recipient are continuously diminishing.

those who attend vocational training, nevertheless also in this case the main responsibility for the maintenance falls on the parents.

- b) There are two kinds of unemployment benefits without any age limit: the insurance based (*Arbeitslosengeld*) or the means tested (*Arbeitslosenhilfe*). Yet as one is means tested and the other is related to the length of previous employment it could be difficult for a young unemployed to meet such prerequisites, or if they do they mostly gain rights for only short periods.
- c) As last resource, every resident in Germany has a right to social assistance (*Sozialhilfe*) if he/she cannot get maintenance from those relatives who are responsible for her/his maintenance according to the principle of subsidiarity.

Concluding, in the German benefit system

"young people are seldom excluded on the basis of their age. Rather, because of their transitional position they have not earned rights to individual social security and are thus dependants of their parents, as the principle of subsidiarity requires. However, as the German system is so proudly presented as a 'welfare state' (*Sozialstaat*) and as the family institutions is placed under the state's special protection, there are different measures to help the family, i.e. the parents, in their duties. It can be said that young people get their rights more by proxy, as family members, than as individuals." (Laaksonen 2000:21)

Looking at the transition to employment, as described among others by Mayer, Germany – an example of a conservative welfare state - provides institutions which make for a stratified and selective schooling: a well developed training system, a good performance in skill formation and therefore high internal labor market flexibility, but highly segregated, segmented and rigid labor markets. Social insurance are in comparison generous but they are based on entitlements derived from employment. Family services are relatively poor and therefore make it difficult for women to maintain continuous work careers (Mayer 1998).

School and training tracks are stratified and this induces a higher variance at the ages at which young adults leave education. While the historical trend toward a prolonged educational period pushes the age of leaving home upward, its variance is tied to educational and training decisions. To the extent to which training is also organized within firms, transitions to employment are smoother and integrated along the lines of occupational tasks and a smooth transition in employment surely creates favorable conditions for leaving the parental home and establishing an independent residence.

Yet, labor market rigidities go hand in hand with high rates of unemployment, especially for younger workers of foreign descent, women²¹ and older workers who became laid off. The major life course

²¹ Although the labor force participation of women has been increasing rapidly, the opportunities and commitments for married women with younger children are greatly limited. Careers interruptions in the early years

risks in this political economy are long-term unemployment and being pushed into the group of labor market outsiders (Mayer 1998).

Differently Italy, as all Southern European Welfare States, has a stratified schooling system, firm-based vocational training, low transfers – with the exception of pensions²² - and high labor market rigidity (Mayer 1998).

Life courses in southern Europe are - for both men and women - closely tied to the fortunes of the larger family: not only is the access to employment highly dependent on family and kinship connections, but most of the welfare burdens are put on families. The large number of unemployed or marginally employed young people live with their families longer than anywhere in Europe. As a consequence, inequalities between families are high and for individuals, they tend to be cumulative across the life course (Mayer 1998; for Italy see Saraceno 1994). Further the individual life course highly depends on the relative ability of families to cushion risks (Mayer 1998). Living with parents reinforces inequalities in a society as Italy with very low social mobility and limited availability of resources outside the family, such as access to education, credit, social networks and professional experience (For a list of authors see Saraceno in print).

To worsen the already not particularly happy situation of young Italians, the flexibility introduced in the Italian labor market has been achieved at the expense of young people and middle aged women: the majority of those working with non-standard contracts (training and working contracts²³, coordinate consultanship contact and temporary contracts) are under 35 (Saraceno in print).

The main problem of non-standard contracts is of how obtaining income continuity in situations of uncertainty and where the passage from a work to another leaves 'gaps' (Saraceno in print). Further, as banks seldom give loan credits to young people especially if not in stable employment, families have to compensate either substituting banks in giving loans to young people or through a longer cohabitation (Del Boca 1999). This of course could have the consequence that young people employed in such 'non-standard' manner - feeling unsure of their economic and occupational

after childbirth and later part-time work are normatively expected and institutionally supported by restricted child care and child leave options. Marriages are comparatively stable, but fertility is low. Especially for women with higher education a dualistic behavior pattern is observable: either high career commitment with no children or career withdrawal and two children. (Mayer 1998).

²² Southern welfare states show only in regard to pensions for certain occupational groups surprising generosity partly in level, but especially in regard to the early age of eligibility.

²³ For example -until the prohibition by the EU in 1999 - training-and-work contracts could last until the age of 34, while now is admitted only till 24.

position – delay the moment of residential independence as this is linked to the assumption of certain continuous costs.

A second problem of non-standard contracts is related to the fact that certain benefits (unemployment subsidizes, parental leave, family allowances) are available till now only for traditional categories of workers. Therefore, the spread of such contracts opens the question of establishing a system of protection also for these category of workers and not only for those who have greater stability and years of service²⁴ (Saraceno in print).

Focusing now briefly on Italian social policies, one notes how these consider young people as 'children' with almost unlimited rights to solidarity and economic support from parents, but practically none as individuals. Further, while young people or couples with low income have de facto no entitlement to social housing (which is very scarce, with long waiting lists and the priority is given to elderly, large families with children and lone mothers), at the same time policies and courts enforce the duty of parents to provide economic support and housing for their children, also when they are long beyond majority age²⁵ (Saraceno in print).

Direct monetary transfers in the Italian Welfare, which in some ways touch young people, are extremely job-based and basically of 2 kinds (Addis 1999):

- a) family allowances, in form of either a contribution (assegni familiari) or a tax deduction (detrazioni). While in the case of tax-credit, each person has the right to a deduction for the 'dependent' spouse, and for each child²⁶, family contributions are means tested and are paid exclusively to workers for the 'dependent' family members. The amount varies according to the income brackets of the worker and with the number of dependents, with a marked increase for disabled persons and single parents²⁷.
- b) Unemployment transfers, which can be distinguished in three programs: *Cassa Integrazione Guadagni (CIG)* and *Mobility (indennita' di mobilita')* and the ordinary individual unemployment subsidy. The latter is very low and is paid only for a short period, and only to those who had previously held a regular dependent (wage) job. CIG finances labor hoarding of firms facing temporary falls in demand, whereby the employment relation between firm and worker is never broken and at the end of the period the worker should go back working in the

²⁴ Still another question is also how to limit the risk of young people self-employed.

²⁵ Various court sentences have confirmed the obligation for parents not only to support their adult children economically, but also to take them living under one roof if the children desire so, age does not play any role (Saraceno in print).

²⁶ Until the child 18th birthday or 26th birthday he/she is in school.

same firm. Mobility – a transformation of CIG - applies for firms which will not reopen. CIG and Mobility are job-based and, therefore, do not apply those who never held a stable job, it favors old against the young, people working in larger firms against those employed in small ones or who are self-employed.

Also the organization of the Italian university²⁸ does not promote residential independence through the institution of a campus and since the costs of housing is very high, many young adults remain home while studying²⁹ (Del Boca 1999).

Several authors have stressed the problems of the Italian benefit system. First of all, in contemporary Italy, where unemployment is especially high among people in childbearing years, linking provision for poor children to the job of the head of the family is not an ideal solution. Further, "unemployment and lack of independent rights in the Welfare State delay family formation, and therefore an autonomous access to this benefit, while the benefit is granted as long as young people remain in the original household of a worker" (Addis 1999:16). This could also have the consequence of a prolonged stay in the parental home, as young people either unemployed or employed in non-standard contracts have no rights on their own but are uniquely protected by the family of origin.

²⁷ For an example of income brackets for family allowance see Table 5 in pg. 15 in (Addis 1999)

²⁸ young people who wish to attain further education are confronted with university fees, which are means tested on the basis of their parents' income, while grants are given only to those who can demonstrate that they can not depend on their parents (Saraceno in print).

²⁹ while in other countries the existence of campus and dormitories permits the first step toward residential independence.

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2. Hypotheses

2.1 At the individual level:

- 1) a) Parental transferable material resources can have a positive influence on leaving home as parents might contribute to the extra cost involved with an independent housing.
(b) Parental transferable material resources can have a negative influence as children who grew up in 'richer' families enjoy and are accustomed to a higher standard of living and therefore when deciding to depart from their parents must take in account of being confronted with a considerable decrease of such standard of living.
- 2) (a) Parental non-transferable material resources will have a negative influence on the departure as living independently is not only linked with greater costs but also with a greater amount of time spent for household duties, which living with parents could be spent in other activities.
- 3) (a) Non-transferable non-material resources should have a negative influence on the departure from home as children living in a peaceful well-balanced home climate could feel less the necessity to leave. Therefore it will be that especially children from families with conflict who will leave home.
- 4) (a) Transferable non-material resources should have a positive influence on the departure from home. Young adults, who through socialization have received more 'cultural capital', will show a more individualistic and liberal upbringing and therefore will have a stronger preference for autonomy. Moreover, these young adults will probably enroll in further education and hence will be more likely to leave home for this reason. Differently a more traditional upbringing will be more closely related to a set of rules on socially acceptable behavior regarding adulthood (e.g. leaving home will be more closely linked to marriage)

Own resources:

- 5) (a) An employment or income should have a positive influence on the departure from home as a job and the related economic independence are premises for the forming of one's own household. A postponement in the achievement of economic independence will, normally, delay the departure from home and therefore the transition to adulthood. (b)

Unemployment could, on the one side, render more difficult the achievement of an

independent residence as this is related to certain fixed costs. On the other hand some young people –and especially those living in ‘poorer’ regions - could be ‘forced’ to search a job in another place and therefore leave the parental home

(c) State’s subsidizes for young people without income could milder the consequences and make possible for also such young people to become independent.

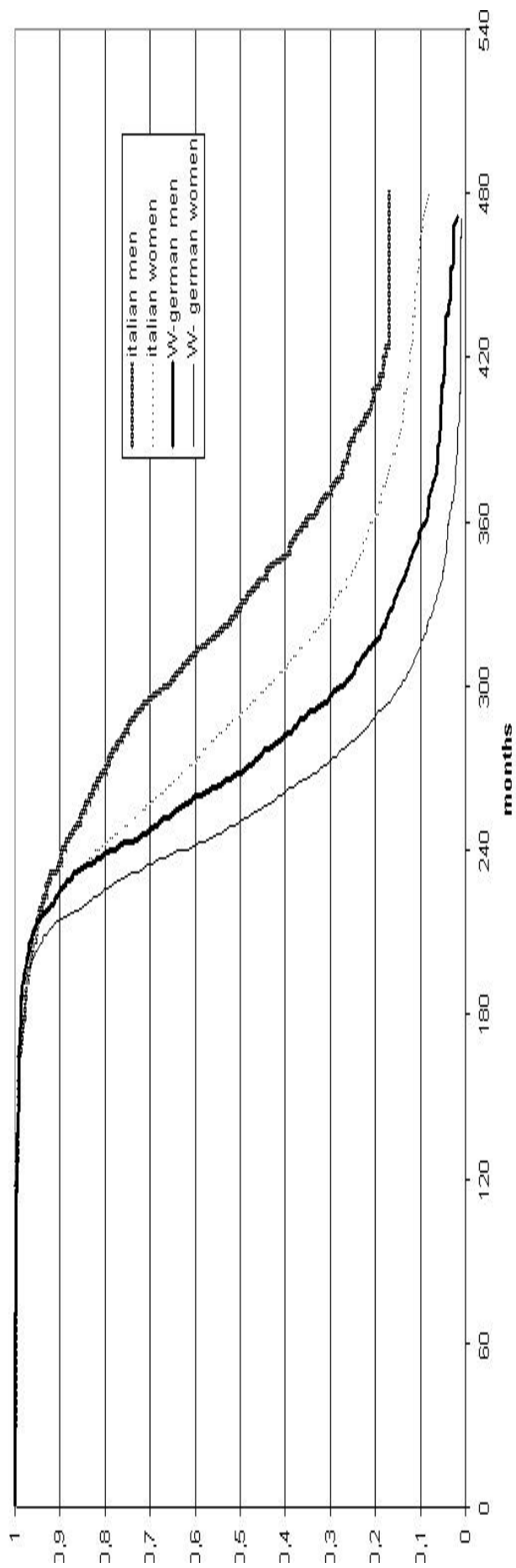
Norms:

- (a) More conservative attitude should lead to follow certain traditional behavioral rules: in the case of leaving home this would be to depart simultaneously to go to live with a (married) partner. Nevertheless as norms change so will also the behavior change. In addition some people might be forced to live home in order to get an employment or enroll in higher education.
- (b) Nevertheless in each population there will be also a certain number of people who are ahead of the times and will therefore follow a ‘non-normative’ behavior.

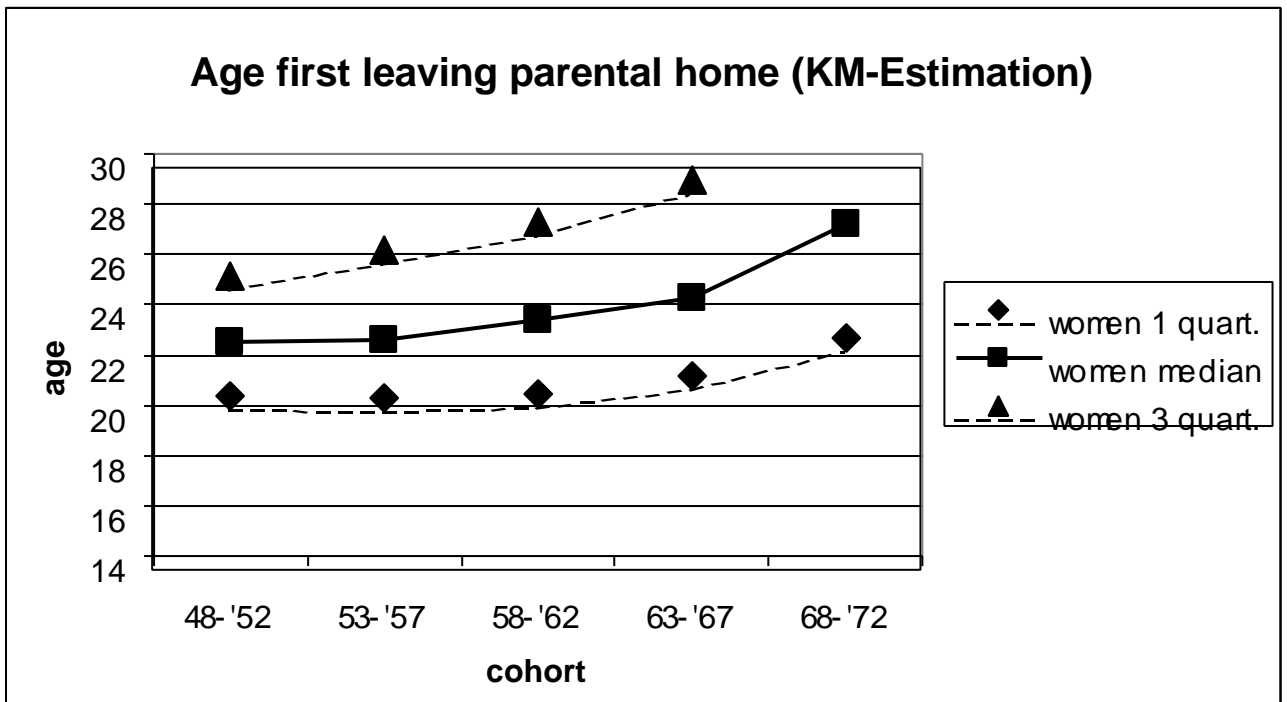
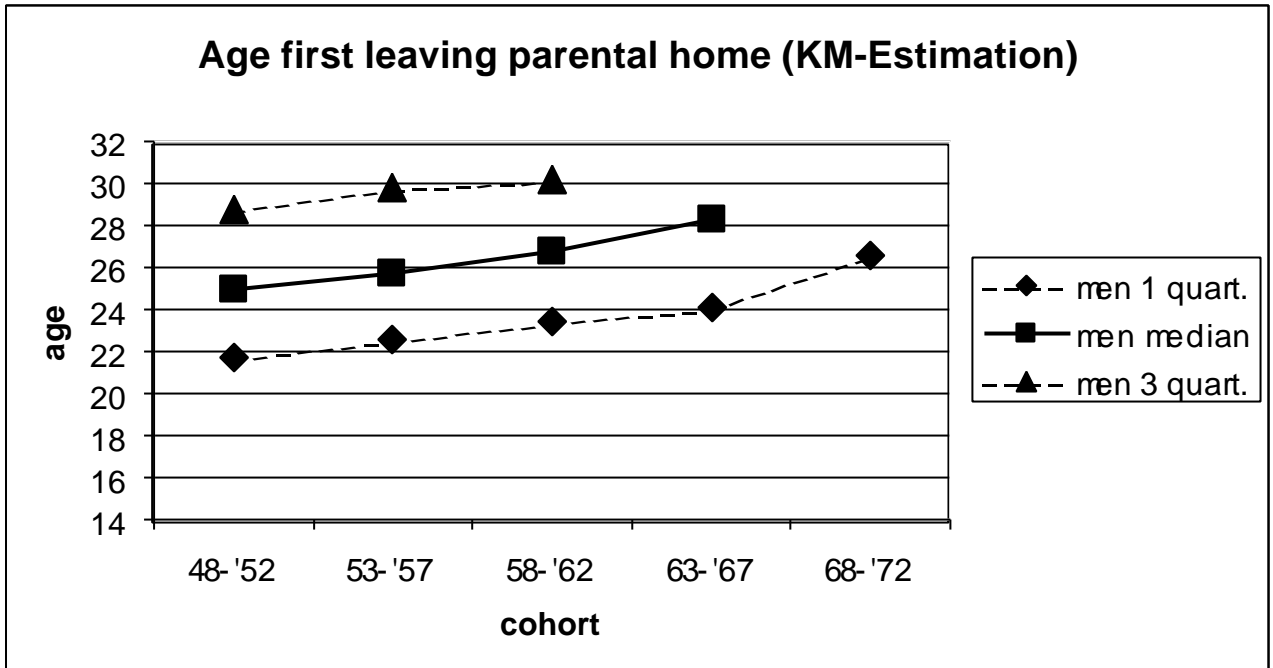
2.2 In national comparison:

- 8) (a) Young Italians and West-Germans react similarly to the influence of the above mentioned determinants. The differences in these two countries can be explained by the different composition of the factors. Italy should present less wealth in the family of origin, higher youth unemployment rates, less State’s subsidize to young people, more conservative behavioral norms than West-Germany. All these factors result in a delayed departure from home of Italians in respect to West-Germans.
- (b) Young Italians and West-Germans react differently to the influence of the above mentioned determinants. As the Italian Welfare and social institutions provide less support and rights to young people living independently and as youth unemployment is very high (especially for those in search of the first job), the strategy put into effect by Italian families and their children is that of a longer cohabitation while studying and during the search of a first stable employment. West-Germans - given a more smooth transition from the educational/vocational system to the labor market and confronted with a Welfare system which gives some support and independent rights to young people - are more apt to take on the risk of establishing an independent residence.

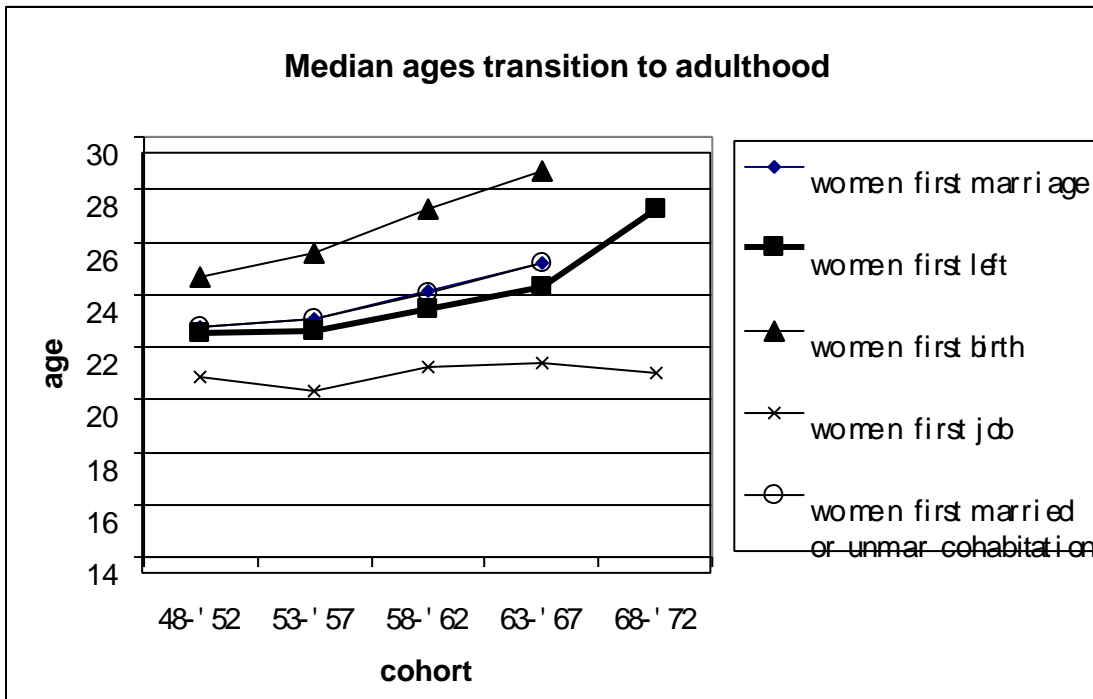
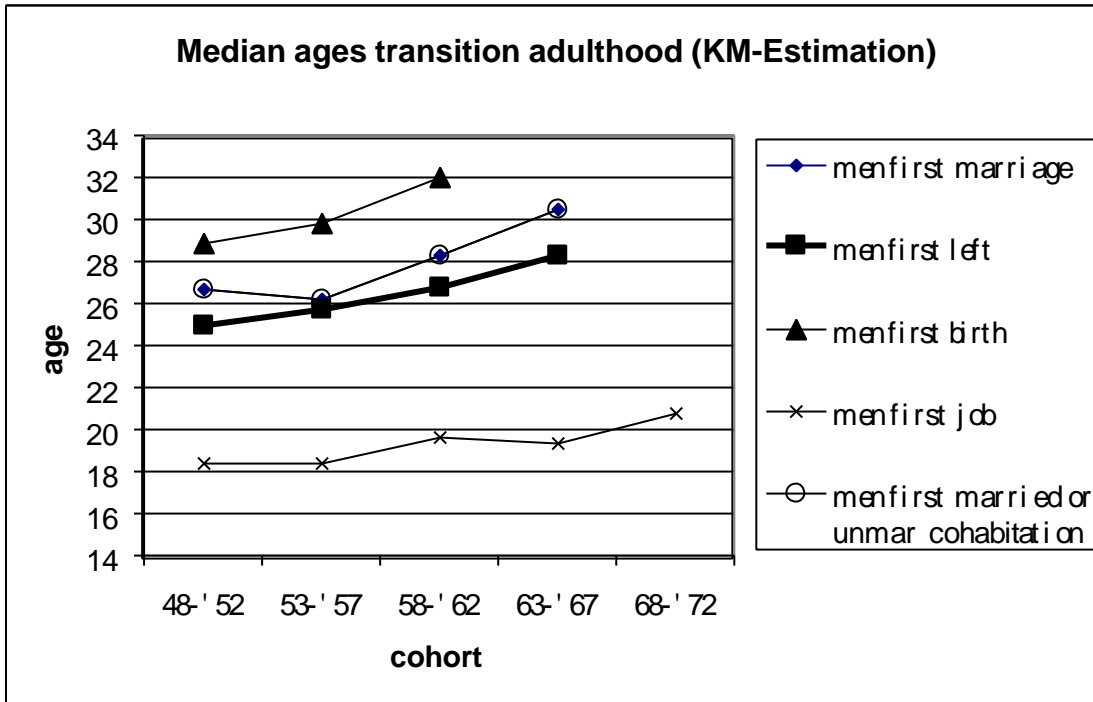
Survival leaving home



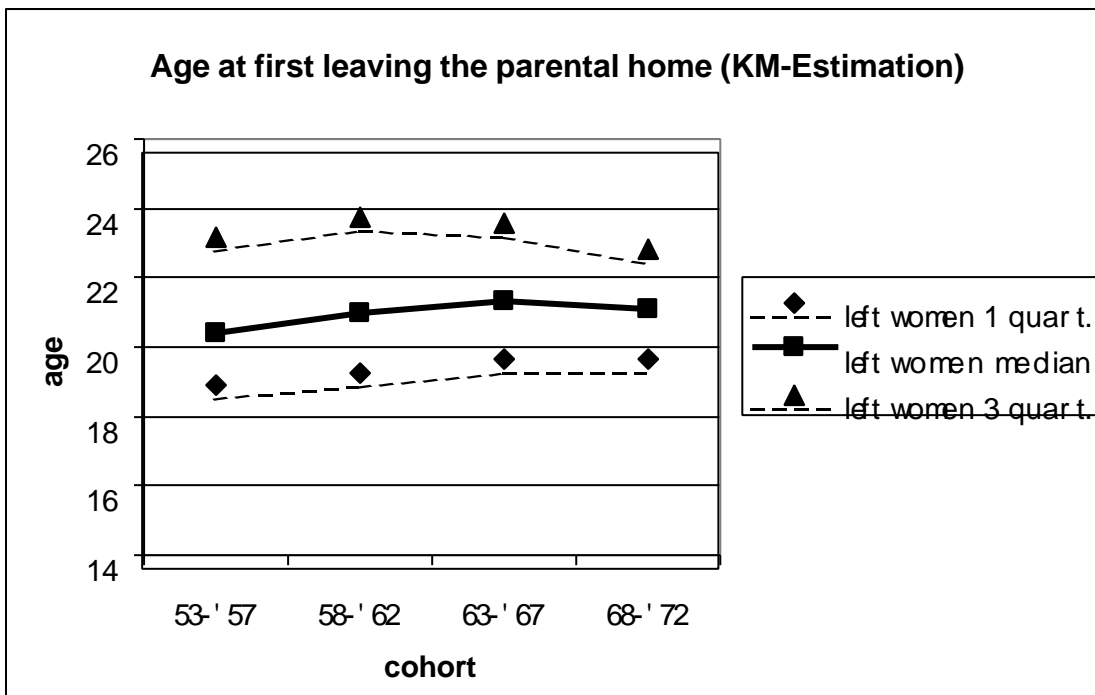
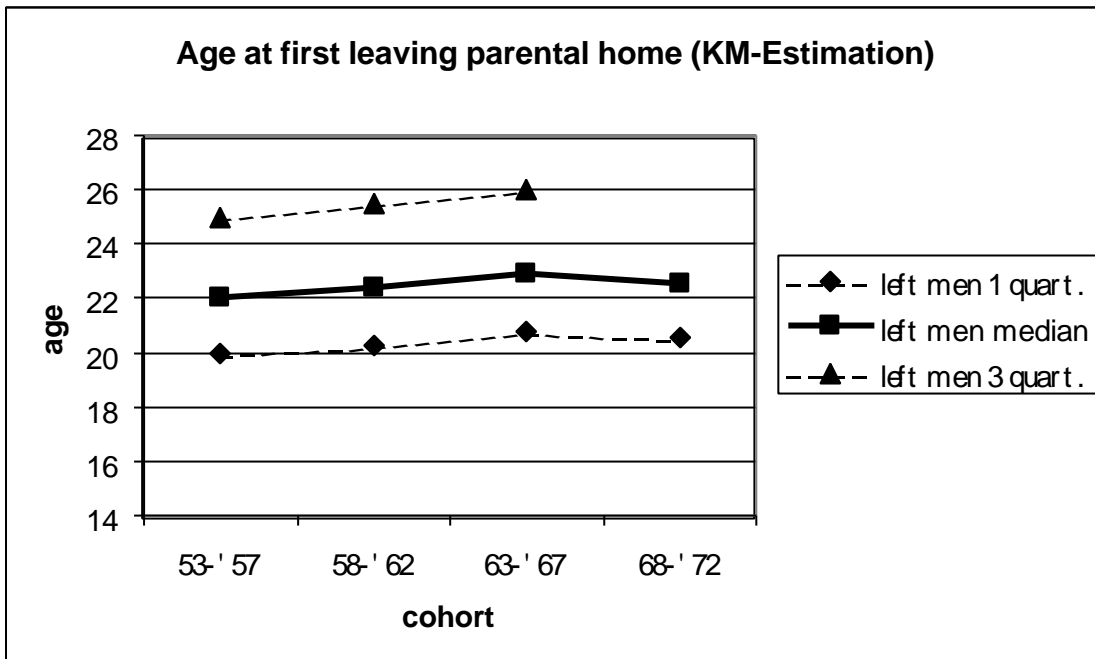
ITALY



ITALY

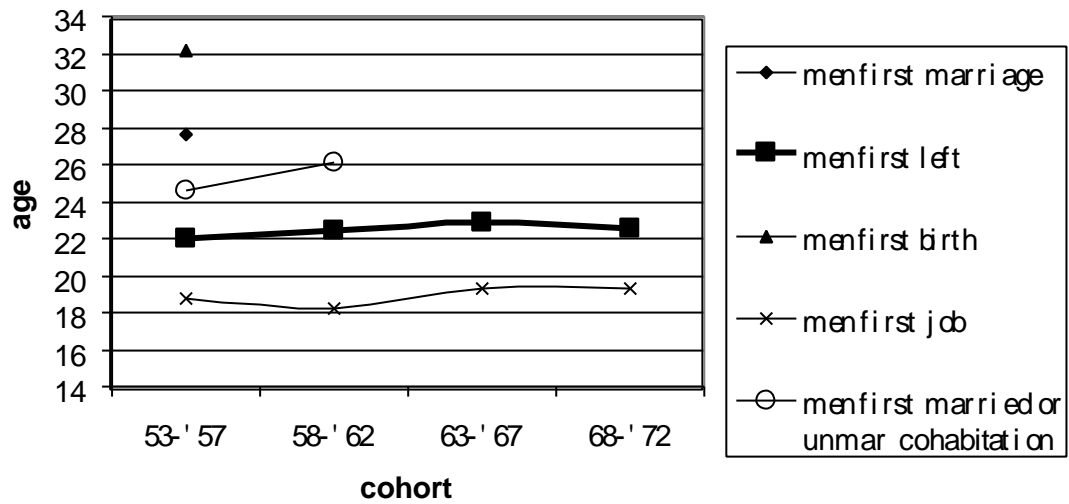


WEST-GERMANY

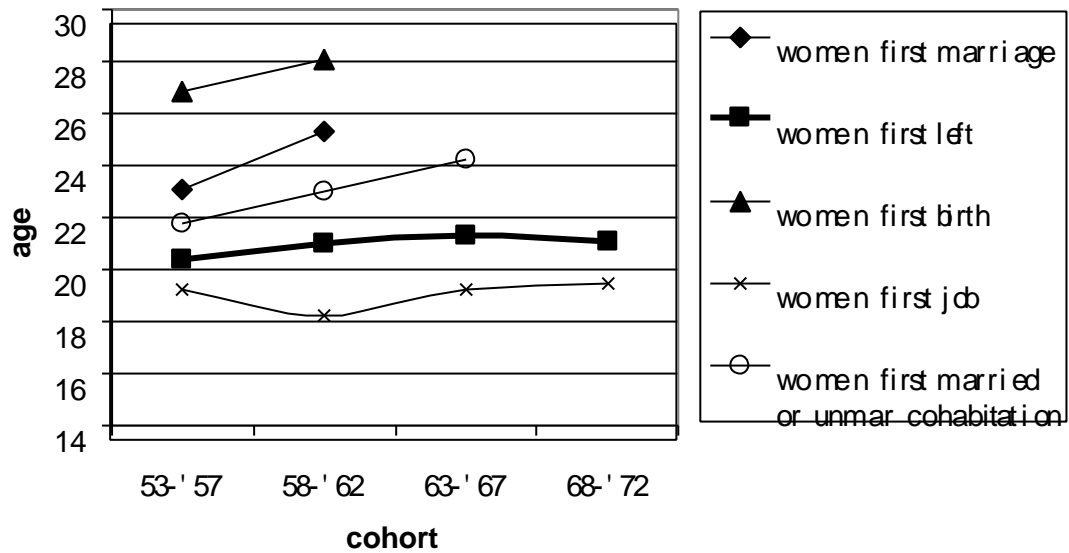


WEST-GERMANY

Median ages transition to adulthood (KM-Estimation)



Median ages transition to adulthood (KM-Estimation)



Cox regression with time-dependent covariates ^{a)}
(MEN W-Germany)

Cohort (ref. '53-'57)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
58-'62	0,85**	0,84**	0,84**	0,99
63-'67	0,76***	0,76***	0,74***	1,15
68-'72	0,83**	0,83**	0,82**	1,55***
Number siblings (ref. only child)				
1 sibling	0,93	0,95	0,93	0,94
2 or more siblings	1,07	1,15*	1,14	1,13
no information	5,07***	6,06***	5,77***	8,68***
Separation parents till 15 yrs old (ref. no)				
yes	1,45***	1,36***	1,31**	1,36***
no information	0,84	0,86	0,86	0,98
Num. inhabitants residence childh. (ref. less then 5000)				
5000 till 20000 excl		1,13	1,12	1,21**
20000 till 100000 excl		1,27***	1,24**	1,30***
100000 till 1 milion excl		1,45***	1,42***	1,69***
1 milion and more		1,81***	1,72***	1,85***
no information		1,00	0,93	0,88
Religious (ref. no)				
yes			0,91	0,97
somewhat			0,92	0,92
no information			1,08	1,15
Opinion about marriage (ref. out of date)				
not out of date			0,81***	0,72***
don't know			0,84*	0,85
Marriage (ref. no)				
yes				2,03***
Birth first child (ref. no)				
yes				1,28***
Achievement first job (ref. no)				
yes				1,03
	Chi-square 37,63***	70,19***	84,37***	222,56***

n= 1509, censored 342 (22,7%)

^{a)} Time dependent covariates: marriage, birth first child and achievement first job

Coefficients are significant: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$

Cox regression with time-dependent covariates ^{a)}
(WOMEN W-Germany)

Cohort (ref. '53-'57)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
58-'62	0,91	0,91	0,92	1,03
63-'67	0,90*	0,90*	0,89*	1,23***
68-'72	0,97	0,96	0,96	1,79***
Number siblings (ref. only child)				
1 sibling	1,05	1,06	1,05	1,00
2 or more siblings	1,28***	1,31***	1,29***	1,17**
no information	1,21	1,24	1,20	1,08
Separation parents till 15 yrs old (ref. no)				
yes	1,27***	1,25**	1,21**	1,14
no information	0,97	0,98	1,01	0,92
Num. inhabitants residence childh. (ref. less then 5000)				
5000 till 20000 excl		1,13*	1,10	1,14
20000 till 100000 excl		1,15**	1,11	1,14*
100000 till 1 milion excl		1,10	1,08	1,17**
1 milion and more		1,20*	1,17	1,26**
no information		1,22	1,20	0,99
Religious (ref. no)				
yes			0,74***	0,79***
somewhat			0,84***	0,83***
no information			0,81**	0,91
Opinion about marriage (ref. out of date)				
not out of date			0,99	0,90*
don't know			0,90	0,93
Marriage (ref. no)				
yes				1,87***
Birth first child (ref. no)				
yes				1,42***
Achievement first job (ref. no)				
yes				0,84**
	Chi-square 34,10***	40,52***	61,22***	252,42***
n=2190, censored 295 (13,5%)				

a) Time dependent covariates: marriage, birth first child and achievement first job
 Coefficients are significant: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$

Cox regression with time-dependent covariates ^{a)} (MEN Italy)

Cohort (ref. '53-'57)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
58-'62	0,87	0,85	0,87	1,05
63-'67	0,59***	0,59***	0,60***	1,38**
68-'72	0,34***	0,34***	0,35***	1,90***
Number siblings (ref. only child)				
1 sibling	1,08	1,07	1,08	1,12
2 or more siblings	1,34	1,32	1,32	1,21
no information	29,52***	32,63***	31,85***	6,82*
Separation parents till 15 yrs old (ref. no)				
yes	1,18	1,25	1,21	0,90
no information	0,34	0,16*	0,19	0,58
Num. inhabitants residence childh. (ref. less then 5000)				
5000 till 20000 excl		0,98	0,98	0,93
20000 till 100000 excl		0,78*	0,80	0,94
100000 till 1 milion excl		0,88	0,91	1,01
1 milion and more		0,80	0,81	1,09
no information		2,31*	2,29*	1,85
Religious (ref. no)				
yes			1,24	0,87
somewhat			1,25	1,24
no information			0,89	1,09
Opinion about marriage (ref. out of date)				
not out of date			0,97	0,84
don't know			0,90	0,74
Marriage (ref. no)				
yes				8,22***
Birth first child (ref. no)				
yes				1,49***
Achievement first job (ref. no)				
yes				0,69*
	Chi-square 74,12***	82,43***	84,50***	354,92***

n= 782, censored 321 (41%)

^{a)} Time dependent covariates: marriage, birth first child and achievement first job

Coefficients are significant: * p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.001

Cox regression with time-dependent covariates ^{a)} (WOMEN Italy)

Cohort (ref. '53-'57)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
58-'62	0,88	0,88	0,88	1,00
63-'67	0,74***	0,74***	0,74***	1,13**
68-'72	0,45***	0,45***	0,46***	1,84***
Number siblings (ref. only child)				
1 sibling	1,22**	1,22**	1,21**	1,22**
2 or more siblings	1,60***	1,58***	1,57***	1,50***
no information	1,71	1,78	1,79	1,65
Separation parents till 15 yrs old (ref. no)				
yes	1,41**	1,49***	1,46**	1,20
no information	0,91	0,92	0,92	0,92
Num. inhabitants residence childh. (ref. less then 5000)				
5000 till 20000 excl		0,96	0,96	0,91
20000 till 100000 excl		1,01	1,01	0,96
100000 till 1 milion excl		0,94	0,94	0,89*
1 milion and more		0,81**	0,81**	0,83**
no information		1,54***	1,54***	1,20
Religious (ref. no)				
yes			0,96	0,79***
somewhat			1,00	0,84
no information			0,46	0,56
Opinion about marriage (ref. out of date)				
not out of date			0,92	0,96
don't know			0,84	1,12
Marriage (ref. no)				
yes				9,20***
Birth first child (ref. no)				
yes				1,63***
Achievement first job (ref. no)				
yes				0,81***
	Chi-square 229,68***	249,01***	253,42***	1440,56***

n= 3161, censored 810 (25,6%)

a) Time dependent covariates: marriage, birth first child and achievement first job

Coefficients are significant: * p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.001

Cox regression with time-dependent covariates^{a)} (MEN Italy)

Cohort (ref. '53-'57)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
'48-'52	1,14	1,09	1,13	1,02
58-'62	0,88	0,85	0,88	0,99
63-'67	0,59***	0,58***	0,63***	1,28*
68-'72	0,34***	0,34***	0,38***	1,67**
Father's highest educ degree (ref. university)				
no degree/elementary	0,90	0,80	0,70	0,67*
junior high school	0,90	0,85	0,74	0,79
high school	1,15	1,07	0,96	0,87
no information	1,71	1,46	1,24	1,09
Mother employed during childhood (ref. no, never)				
yes, occasionally/some years	1,15	1,27**	1,20	1,11
yes, most/whole time	0,84*	0,87	0,83*	0,83*
no information	1,06	1,20	0,97	1,27
Number siblings (ref. only child)				
1 sibling	1,31	1,22	1,12	1,25
2 or more siblings	1,57***	1,33*	1,20	1,25
no information	32,84***	36,51***	31,61***	9,53**
Separation parents till 15 yrs old (ref. no)				
yes	1,12	1,11	1,13	1,03
no information	0,29	0,24	0,27	0,47
Area of residence till 15 yrs old (ref. north-west)				
north-east		0,91	0,91	0,95
center		0,99	1,03	1,01
south		1,52***	1,58***	1,59***
Islands		1,46**	1,56***	1,47**
no information		1,26	1,29	1,78
Num. inhabitants residence childh. (ref. less than 5000)				
5000 till 20000 excl		0,97	0,96	0,90
20000 till 100000 excl		0,73**	0,74**	0,81
100000 till 1 milion excl		0,91	0,89	0,93

1 milion and more

0,78

0,74*

0,86

Tab. Continued
Religious (ref. no)

yes	1,32*	0,82
somewhat	1,78**	1,43
no information	0,95	0,89

Age first sexual intercourse (ref. first quartile incl.)

in second or third quartile incl	1,03	1,05
over third quartile	0,89	0,90
never had sex	0,20***	0,78
no information	0,70	0,88

Opinion about marriage (ref. out of date)

not out of date	0,97	0,88
don't know	1,00	0,74

Marriage (ref. no)

yes		7,64***
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Birth first child (ref. no)

yes		1,32**
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Achievement first job (ref. no)

yes		0,74
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Chi-square 110,97*** 142,48*** 171,65*** 395,98***

n= 936, censored 334 (35,7%)

a) Time dependent covariates: marriage, birth first child and achievement first job

Coefficients are significant: * p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.001

Cox regression with time-dependent covariates ^{a)}
(WOMEN Italy)

Cohort (ref. '53-'57)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)
'48-'52	1,10*	1,10	1,16	1,12**
58-'62	0,90*	0,90	0,90*	0,97
63-'67	0,76***	0,75***	0,80***	1,07
68-'72	0,46***	0,46***	0,58***	1,60***
Father's highest educ degree (ref. university)				
no degree/elementary	1,24**	1,20*	1,21**	0,98
junior high school	1,04	1,01	1,04	0,95
high school	0,97	0,95	0,99	0,95
no information	1,50***	1,46***	1,45***	1,19
Mother employed during childhood (ref. no, never)				
yes, occasionally/some years	0,96	0,96	0,92	0,94
yes, most/whole time	1,05	1,05	1,01	1,01
no information	1,14	1,12	1,30	1,08
Number siblings (ref. only child)				
1 sibling	1,33***	1,34***	1,35***	1,46***
2 or more siblings	1,67***	1,66***	1,75***	1,83***
no information	1,51	1,58	1,80	3,00***
Separation parents till 15 yrs old (ref. no)				
yes	1,41**	1,42**	1,26	1,16
no information	0,85	0,86	0,67	0,72
Area of residence till 15 yrs old (ref. north-west)				
north-east		0,96	0,83***	0,86**
center		1,10	1,07	1,04
south		1,04	1,40***	1,19***
Islands		0,97	1,36***	1,15*
no information		1,55***	1,61***	1,33**
Num. inhabitants residence childh. (ref. less than 5000)				
5000 till 20000 excl		0,98	1,04	0,99
20000 till 100000 excl		0,98	0,97	0,94
100000 till 1 million excl		0,97	0,90*	0,88*
1 milion and more		0,85**	0,77***	0,76***

Tab. continued.

Religious (ref. no)

yes	1,11	0,93
somewhat	1,02	0,90
no information	0,63	0,90

Age first sexual intercourse (ref. first quartile incl.)

in second or third quartile incl	0,64***	0,69***
over third quartile	0,34***	0,36***
never had sex	0,06***	0,35***
no information	0,37***	0,40***

Opinion about marriage (ref. out of date)

not out of date	1,03	1,01
don't know	1,02	1,09

Marriage (ref. no)

yes		6,94***
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Birth first child (ref. no)

yes		1,50***
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Achievement first job (ref. no)

yes		0,78***
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Chi-square 361,59*** 381,67*** 1149,16*** 1892,56**

n= 3818, censored 837 (21,9%)

a) Time dependent covariates: marriage, birth first child and achievement first job

Coefficients are significant: * p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.001