

INEQUALITY AND THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

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ABSTRACT

Renee Ryberg: Inequality and the Transition to Adulthood
(Under the direction of Lisa D. Pearce)

The transition to adulthood has long been thought to play a key role in status attainment processes, but the mechanisms linking the transition to adulthood to family background and adult outcomes are not well understood. A first step in understanding how the transition to adulthood plays into stratification processes is to understand how this period differs for individuals from different social groups. The first chapter of this dissertation examines how the trajectories of events during the transition to adulthood vary by and within race, class, and gender groups. Sequence analysis is used to provide a “longitudinal thick description” of pathways to adulthood for youth in different race/class groups by gender.

In the second chapter, these pathways are used to predict young adult income and examine how experiences in this time period serve as mechanisms in the intergenerational transfer of status. The transition-to-adulthood pathways explain about one-third of the intergenerational transmission of status through young adulthood. For men, the pathway characterized by extended education mediates the relationship between parental wealth and young adult income, indicating a potential mechanism for resource hoarding in the upper-middle class. For women, on the other hand, this life stage may contribute to the poverty trap, as pathways related to less advantaged populations link family background to young adult income.

The third chapter contextualizes the transition to adulthood and examines how the impact of class on transition-to-adulthood pathways varies across institutional contexts in 20th century Europe. Class operates fairly consistently in Northern, Western, and Southern Europe, where young women with more educated parents tend to delay family formation and avoid rapid

transitions to adulthood. The role of class in the transition to adulthood is distinct in Eastern Europe, however. Results are explained according to the welfare states and family systems operating in each region.

Together, the chapters illustrate that an individual's location within society influences how they are likely to experience the transition to adulthood, which has meaningful consequences for long-term outcomes. The influence of class on these pathways, however, may vary by context.

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My original interest in the transition to adulthood came from my parents. They moved me and my brothers from one of the wealthiest suburbs in the country to a small town named after Daniel Boone's cousin. From there I went on to Johns Hopkins University and saw the divide between the pathways my peers from these three experiences were taking in their transitions to adulthood. So, Mom and Dad, thank you for exposing me to people with a diverse set of life histories.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAPI	Computer-assisted personal interview
ESS	European Social Survey
GSS	General Social Survey
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
LCA	Latent class analysis
MDA	Monothetic divisive algorithm
NLSY79	National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1979 cohort
NLSY97	National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1997 cohort
OMA	Optimal matching analysis
SA	Sequence analysis
UK	United Kingdom

INTRODUCTION

The transition to adulthood has long been thought to play a key role in status attainment processes. In 1986, Dennis Hogan and Nan Astone wrote that the transition to adulthood is a “critical juncture in personal life histories and connects social origins with subsequent adult attainments and life satisfaction” (Hogan and Astone 1986:125). In the 30 years since this review was published, however, research has focused on changes in the normative middle-class transition to adulthood. “Existing templates for the transition to adulthood are ... dominated by the assumption of a standard trajectory ... without taking into account the resources available to young people nor the complexities and variations of the demands they have to negotiate in making the transition to independent adulthood” (Schoon 2015:115). The role of the transition to adulthood in stratification processes, however, has not been an active area of investigation.

A first step in understanding how the transition to adulthood plays into stratification processes is to understand how this period differs for individuals from different social groups. Survey research has found differences in timing of events in the transition to adulthood for youth from different backgrounds, such that youth from more socioeconomically advantaged backgrounds reach each marker of adulthood later than youth from less advantaged backgrounds (Berzin and De Marco 2010; Cherlin 2010; Furstenberg Jr 2010; Kendig, Mattingly, and Bianchi 2014; Lui et al. 2014, 2014; McLanahan and Jacobsen 2015; Payne 2012; Schoen et al. 2009; Snyder, de Brey, and Dillow 2016; Taylor et al. 2011). Ethnographic work has shown that there are differences in the way the transition to adulthood is experienced by class. Youth from more resource-poor environments experience an *expedited* transition to adulthood, in which youth rush to become independent, and may make family transitions before education

and employment trajectories are set (Deluca, Clampet-Lundquist, and Edin 2016; Edin 2000; Edin and Kefalas, Maria 2005; Edin and Nelson 2013). These findings are in contrast with the middle-class idea of *emerging adulthood* with its leisurely time frame and extended identity exploration (Arnett 2000, 2004). There is little large-scale work, however, on how the holistic pathways of events during the transition to adulthood vary by social standing.

The first chapter of this dissertation uses a recent cohort of youth to establish the pathways that youth take through the transition to adulthood. Analyses are then broken down by race, class, and gender to examine how pathways during this time period vary for groups from different social backgrounds. Specifically, analyses are stratified by gender and examine the intersection of race and socioeconomic status by grouping youth into four race-class groups: white youth with college-educated parents, white youth without college-educated parents, black youth with college-educated parents, and black youth without college-educated parents. Sequence analysis is used to provide a “longitudinal thick description” of pathways to adulthood for youth in each group (Aisenbrey and Fasang 2017:1452).

The second chapter brings in the life course principle of linked lives to examine how the transition-to-adulthood trajectories developed in the first chapter mediate the relationship between early-life socioeconomic status and young adult status destinations.

Finally, the third chapter adds in the life course principle of time and place to examine how the impact of class on transition-to-adulthood pathways varies across sociohistorical context. Specifically, it examines how the influence of parental education on the transition to adulthood varies across regions in Europe throughout the 20th century.

This dissertation uses a life course approach to shed light on the role that the transition to adulthood plays in social stratification processes, illuminating the processes behind a decades old supposition of the importance of this life stage.

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CHAPTER 1: EMERGING ADULTHOOD AND/OR EXPEDITED ADULTHOOD? PATHWAYS INTO ADULTHOOD BY RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

Introduction

The transition to adulthood is a demographically dense time period (Rindfuss 1991). It is not a single transition from adolescence to adulthood, but is made up of many transitions that set the stage for the rest of one's life, including completing education, entering the workforce, establishing independent residence, cohabitation, marriage, and childbearing (Shanahan 2000). While early work on the transition to adulthood focused on the timing of these individual events, recent research has taken a more holistic approach focusing on the pathways that youth follow through these transitions. The literature has greatly benefited from this incorporation of the life course approach. In fact, research has shown that pathways taken through the transition to adulthood may matter for later life outcomes above and beyond the timing of individual events, including poverty and psychological well-being (Mouw 2005).

In order to understand the complexity of the transition to adulthood, it is necessary to not only treat it holistically, but also contextualize it. The pathways that youth take through this time period are contingent on the resources available to them. The field does not have a strong understanding of how the context in which youth make these transitions is related to how youth navigate this time period. This paper addresses this gap in the literature by describing the pathways that socially defined groups of youth take through the transition to adulthood. Specifically, this paper documents how pathways through this time period among a recent cohort of youth differ by race, class, and gender.

Background: Transition to Adulthood

Most existing research on the transition to adulthood has focused on how the timing of individual events during this time period varies by socioeconomic status and race. Youth from more socioeconomically advantaged backgrounds reach each marker of adulthood later than youth from less advantaged backgrounds.¹ Disadvantaged youth are less likely to go on to post-secondary education, especially four-year colleges, and thus finish their educational careers earlier (Lui et al. 2014; Snyder, de Brey, and Dillow 2016) and enter full-time employment earlier. They are more likely to cohabit (Cherlin 2010; Furstenberg Jr 2010; Taylor et al. 2011), less likely to marry, but do so earlier (Berzin and De Marco 2010; Lui et al. 2014; Payne 2012; Schoen et al. 2009), and have children earlier than their more advantaged peers (Berzin and De Marco 2010; Kendig, Mattingly, and Bianchi 2014; Lui et al. 2014; McLanahan and Jacobsen 2015; Schoen et al. 2009).

There are also patterns in transition-to-adulthood events by race. Basic demographic patterns show that whites are more likely to enroll in post-secondary education after high school graduation than blacks or Hispanics. Whites have higher enrollment rates in Bachelor degree programs, whereas blacks and Hispanics are more likely to enroll in Associate degree programs, or in individual classes not associated with a program (Snyder et al. 2016). Regarding family transitions, Hispanics have the earliest age at first marriage, followed by whites, while blacks have the latest age at first marriage (Payne 2012). Conversely, white women have the highest age at first birth, at 27 years, while black women become mothers three years earlier on average. There is wide variation in age at first birth among Hispanic women by country of origin (Matthews and Hamilton 2016). Once socioeconomic status is taken

¹The exception to this trend is age at leaving the parental home. The extant literature has mixed findings with regards to the timing of leaving the parental home by socioeconomic status (Dey and Pierret 2014; Furstenberg Jr 2010; Kendig, Mattingly, and Bianchi 2014), likely due to operationalizations of this transition conflating financial independence (which likely happens earlier for less privileged youth) and spatial independence. At least one study has also found a nonlinear effect between poverty and timing of leaving the parental home such that poor youth are more likely to move out before 18, but less likely to leave the parental home than nonpoor youth after this age (Berzin and De Marco 2010).

into account, non-white youth are more likely to become parents early, but less likely to marry or move out of their parents' house than are white youth (Berzin and De Marco 2010).

We know less about how transitions in the domains of education, work, and family are interrelated. This is important because “the meaning and implications of given roles reflect their order and timing in the life course. Becoming a parent means something much different after having completed one’s education and gotten married than it does in high school” (Macmillan and Copher 2005:860). To address this complexity, “it is thus necessary to examine the order and timing in which they assume multiple social roles and how individuals construct different types of life courses with the opportunities and constraints of the wider sociohistorical context” (Schoon 2015:126).

Recent research has moved beyond timing and approached the transition to adulthood using a life-course approach. Relatively new modeling approaches, including sequence analysis (SA) and latent class analysis (LCA) have allowed a more holistic investigation of a whole set of transitions together. These techniques allow authors to examine multiple transitions at the same time by studying the trajectories, or timing and ordering of events, that youth follow in their transitions to adulthood. In the United States, studies typically identify between three and seven different pathways through this time period, distinguished by higher education and family formation patterns (Amato et al. 2008; Bauldry et al. 2016; Dean, Bauer, and Shanahan 2014; Lee et al. 2017; Macmillan and Copher 2005; Mouw 2005; Oesterle et al. 2010; Osgood 2005; Sandefur, Eggerling-Boeck, and Park 2005; Sironi, Barban, and Impicciatore 2015).^{2,3} Almost all studies identify a higher education pathway, in which youth are in school for an extended period

² I have focused this review on studies conducted in the United States, as previous studies have shown differences between the United States and European countries, a topic that will be elaborated on in Chapter 3.

³ Throughout the text, I am using the terms trajectory and pathway as defined in the life course literature. Both terms refer to a series of transitions. A trajectory is an individual’s series of events, while a pathway is a higher order concept: “well-traveled sequences of transitions that are shaped by cultural and structural forces” (Pallas, A. M. 2003:168).

of time and delay entering the workforce and family formation (both partnering and childbearing). Another common pathway is the work pathway in which youth transition from education to full-time employment after high school or a short higher education experience, and delay family formation. Many studies also find a pathway in which youth, typically young women, make a rapid transition from education to parenthood. There are also pathways that mix employment and family roles. Finally, many studies identify an inactive or delayed pathway among a small subset of the population (generally less than 10 percent) in which respondents have not completed any transition-to-adulthood events by the end of the study.

While investigating the transition to adulthood holistically is a step in the right direction, the existing literature tends to generate these transition-to-adulthood pathways based on the entire population, limiting our understanding of how transitions may differ by gender, socioeconomic status and race.

Theory: Gender, Class, Race

Gender. The importance of gender has been recognized in the study of the transition to adulthood, but not interrogated (Wong 2018). This is a limitation of current scholarship, as our society is gendered, and young men and women face different choices and constraints in their transitions to adulthood. Young women are socialized to aspire to more caring and nurturing roles as adults (i.e., family roles) than are young men, who are socialized to be more instrumental and focus on work. Men and women also face different constraints as they work to actualize their aspirations, as society holds individuals “accountable for appropriately doing gender” (Wong 2018: 131). For example, mothers are frequently offered a longer parental leave after the birth of a child than are fathers (Wong 2018).

To date, almost all studies in this area either focus exclusively on women or stratify analyses by gender. Research based on youth coming of age during the 20th century found that men and women tend to follow similar sequences of events in the transition to adulthood, but

women tend to experience each transition earlier (Ritschard, Burgin, and Schumacher 2017). In recent cohorts of youth, however, more women attend college and graduate school than men (Kena et al. 2016), prolonging their education and delaying other life events. At the same time, women remain primary caregivers for children. As gender roles and expectations continue to evolve within our gendered society, it is important to critically consider the role of gender in the transition to adulthood among more recent cohorts of youth.

Class. There are two research traditions examining the transition to adulthood from a class perspective, each looking at a different end of the socioeconomic distribution. For youth at the upper end of the socioeconomic spectrum, this time period has been designated emerging adulthood. For youth with fewer resources, this time period has been coined expedited adulthood.

Developmental psychologist Jeffrey Arnett (2000, 2004) proposed emerging adulthood as a new developmental period in the life course between adolescence and adulthood. Emerging adulthood is thought to take place between the ages of 18 and 25 and is defined as “a distinct period of the life course, characterized by change and exploration of possible life directions” (Arnett 2000:469). During this time period, the identity exploration that began in adolescence continues and intensifies. Youth focus on themselves more than during any other time in their lives, as they are partially independent and have few responsibilities. They feel in between childhood and adulthood, no longer adolescents but not yet full-fledged adults.

Emerging adulthood has been fiercely critiqued as being overly deterministic and ignoring context: it “fails to recognize adequately that the huge diversity of individual experience is constrained by location in the social structure” (Bynner 2005:378). Emerging adulthood is critiqued as not being a universal developmental period, but applying only to middle- and upper-middle-class youth in fully developed nations who have the luxury of attending college (du Bois-Reymond 2016; Côté 2014; Lee 2007; Staff et al. 2010). Arnett recognizes that this proposed new phase of life is not universal, but rather “a period that exists under certain conditions that

have occurred only quite recently and only in some cultures ...members of minority groups may be less likely to experience their late teens and early twenties as a period of emerging adulthood” (Arnett 2004:21–22). Nevertheless, emerging adulthood is still interpreted to be universal among recent cohorts in the United States (Côté 2014).

At the same time that the transition to adulthood has been thought to be expanding, and emerging adulthood has arrived as an extended period of dependence and identity exploration, ethnographic work on the lives of low-income youth and young adults has painted a different picture, in which they are under pressure to become independent as early as possible. Youth are forced to downgrade their work and educational aspirations and seek ways to become independent immediately after high school (Deluca, Clampet-Lundquist, and Edin 2016; MacLeod 2008, 2009). They then start their own families while struggling to support themselves (Edin and Kefalas, Maria 2005; Edin and Nelson 2013; Furstenberg Jr et al. 2004). Instead of expanding, the transition to adulthood is being compressed for populations with limited resources. This compressed transition to adulthood has been named expedited adulthood (Deluca et al. 2016).

The sociologists studying the transition to adulthood in poverty are in a separate subfield from life course scholars and developmental psychologists engaged with the study of emerging adulthood. This has created the idea of a dualism of pathways into adulthood: one for college-going, upper-middle class, predominantly white youth, and a very different one for low-income youth who do not pursue higher education. Rather than a duality, previous research has shown that there are between three and seven pathways through the transition to adulthood, supporting the idea that there is heterogeneity in pathways both between and within socioeconomic strata. This heterogeneity can be examined with a diverse pathways approach (Schoon 2015; Schoon and Lyons-Amos 2016).

A handful of more recent studies have used class to predict membership in the pathways of transition-to-adulthood events described above to do just that. These studies find that youth

with more educated parents and those that grew up with both parents are more likely to be in the pathways that include higher education and delayed family formation, while youth who have experienced adversity end up in less traditional, more compressed pathways (Amato et al. 2008; Bauldry et al. 2016; Dean et al. 2014; Lee et al. 2017; Oesterle et al. 2010; Osgood 2005; Sandefur et al. 2005; Sironi et al. 2015). These findings are not consistent across measures of class, however, and family income and receipt of Free and Reduced Price Meals are not predictive of pathway membership (Bauldry et al. 2016; Oesterle et al. 2010).

Race. Race is another marker of privilege in our society that operates distinctly from, but is deeply interconnected with, socioeconomic status. Even though socioeconomic status has become more influential in predicting life chances and social mobility since the civil rights era (Wilson 1978), race continues to play a critically important role (Bonilla-Silver 1997; Omi and Winant 2015; Wilson 2003). Due to centuries of discrimination, black and white individuals of the same class background do not have access to the same level of resources that may help set their children on a path to success during the transition to adulthood. Below I use the example of the black middle class to illustrate the complex relationship between race and socioeconomic status.

Despite their advantageous socioeconomic status, the black middle class is not immune to racial discrimination (Feagin and Sikes 1994; Landry and Marsh 2011). Within the middle class (as defined by occupation in the Weberian tradition), blacks hold different types of positions than whites, have lower incomes than whites, and have less wealth than whites. In the same occupational group, middle-class blacks earn between 76 and 85 percent of the income of their white coworkers (Landry and Marsh 2011). In 1999, middle-class whites had an average net worth of \$123,000 compared to middle-class blacks' average of just \$26,500 (Landry and Marsh 2011). Residential segregation also cuts across class, such that the black middle class is in a highly precarious position, spatially and socially located between the white middle class and the black poor (Landry and Marsh 2011; Pattillo-McCoy 1999).

Differential access to resources may influence how blacks and whites of the same class standing navigate the transition to adulthood. Consider two middle-class teens, one black and one white. Despite their parents holding the same occupational position, the black family may not have the savings necessary to send their child to a four-year college that a white family may have. Therefore, the black student may begin postsecondary education attending a local community college living at home while the white student lives on campus at a four-year institution. During the summer after freshman year, both youth are interested in finding an internship. The white family may be more able to connect their student with an internship through their social network, while black parents may not have access to the type of social network that would facilitate this connection due to employment and housing discrimination, among other factors.

Race and class also intersect with gender so that opportunities for family formation are also not distributed equally along social divisions. Women in the black middle class, in particular, are different when it comes to family formation. College-educated black women have low rates of childbearing, similar to their college-educated white and Hispanic peers, but marry less often than other college-educated women. Instead, their marriage rates more closely track with less-educated black women's than those of other college-educated women. Middle-class black women's low rates of family formation could be partially due to choice, in an attempt to distance themselves from lower class black women's "immoral" out-of-wedlock childbearing behavior (Clarke 2011). It is also likely structural, as black women are rated as less attractive potential partners on online dating platforms (Rudder 2014). These trends have been documented in the demographic literature, and being single and living alone is a growing family pattern in the black middle class, especially for women (Marsh et al. 2007).

To date, the role of race has been largely ignored in the transition-to-adulthood literature. The only study, to my knowledge, to stratify analyses of the transition-to-adulthood by race was one of the very first life course studies on the topic. Using LCA on a sample of women from the

National Longitudinal Study of Youth's 1979 cohort (NLSY79), Macmillan and Copher (2005) find three pathways into adulthood for African American women (rapid school to parent, school to parent, and school to work), three classes for Hispanic women (rapid school to family, school to work to family, and extended schooling with delayed work), and four classes for white women (school to early work, extended schooling with delayed work, school to work to family, and school to early family). The black and Hispanic women are more likely to have a transition-to-adulthood pathway characterized by the transition to parenthood than are whites. Furthermore, transitions into parenthood are differentiated by race, such that parenthood is frequently accompanied by marriage for whites and Hispanics, but not for blacks. This study did not examine cohabitation.

More recent studies tend to generate the pathway membership based on the full sample of youth (generally using either SA or LCA) and then use multinomial logistic regression to predict pathway membership based on family characteristics. These studies have found that blacks and Hispanics are more likely to be in pathways dominated by work and early parenthood than are whites (Dean et al. 2014; Lee et al. 2017), and black women are more likely to be in an unmarried early mothers pathway than whites, yet equally likely to be in a pathway of married motherhood (Oesterle et al. 2010).

The field is only beginning to understand how pathways in the transition to adulthood vary by gender, socioeconomic status and race. Previous studies have shown that youth with more educated parents tend to remain in school longer and delay family formation, but that coming from a higher-income family does not have this same effect (Amato et al. 2008; Bauldry et al. 2016; Dean et al. 2014; Oesterle et al. 2010; Sandefur et al. 2005; Sironi et al. 2015). Furthermore, race tends to be related to family transitions more than education/work transitions (Dean et al. 2014; Macmillan and Copher 2005; Oesterle et al. 2010). These findings need to be unpacked, and the intersection of race, class, and gender needs to be examined. The literature is missing a systematic examination of the timing and ordering of events that take place during

this pivotal transition for youth from diverse backgrounds using a nationally representative sample of a recent cohort of youth.

Present Study

The present study seeks to fill this void and examines how the trajectories of events during the transition to adulthood vary by gender, socioeconomic status, and race, using a diverse pathways approach with a recent nationally representative sample of youth to examine two research questions.

First: What are the current pathways of events in the transition to adulthood? This will ground the study in the extant literature. I examine six transition-to-adulthood events: residential independence (moving out of one's family home), completing one's education, full-time employment, entering co-residential partnerships (first union and marriage), and first birth.

Then, going beyond the existing literature, I ask: How do the pathways taken through the transition to adulthood vary by race and socioeconomic status? Specifically, I stratify analyses by gender and examine the intersection of race and socioeconomic status by grouping youth into four race-socioeconomic status groups.

Methods

Data. This study uses data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97). NLSY97 participants were recruited as young adolescents (ages 12-17); the cohort is recent; and, most importantly, data provide fine-grained measures of the timing of events and statuses during the transition to adulthood.

The NLSY97 survey (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor 2015) is sponsored and directed by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, with assistance from the Center for Human Resource Research at The Ohio State University. It is an ongoing longitudinal survey of a nationally representative sample of youth born between 1980 and 1984 in the United States,

with an initial sample size of 8,984 youth. Respondents were first surveyed in 1997 when they were 12-17 years old, and were surveyed annually between 1997 and 2011, and then again in 2013 when they were between 28 and 34 years old. Surveys are conducted in-person, when possible, using computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) instruments. At the most recent wave of data collection, in 2013, the response rate was almost 80 percent. The present study uses data from all 16 waves of data collection.

Measures. An age at occurrence is calculated for each of the transition-to-adulthood events by subtracting the respondent's birth date from the date at which the event occurred. The public-use NLSY97 file contains birth month and year, but not day, so the 15th day of the appropriate month is assigned as the birthday. If dates of events are provided in monthly increments (rather than precise dates), the 15th day of the month is assigned.

Independent Living. Beginning in 2003, and repeating in every subsequent round, NLSY97 asked respondents who were currently living with others, but not their parents, when they started living "on their own" for at least three months, defined as "being the head of your household or sharing that role equally with others." Respondents provided the month and year that they first started living on their own, even if they later moved back in with another household head (most likely their parents). Of the approximately 90 percent of youth that had moved out by age 27, approximately 55 percent moved back in with their parents for at least three months. Youth who moved back in with their parent at some point were more likely to be white and come from a family with two parents and high income (Dey and Pierret 2014).

Completion of Education. Respondents report monthly start and stop dates for their educational enrollment, inclusive of whether or not a degree was earned. Completion of education is defined as the date of last enrollment before taking a break of at least 15 months. Going back to school is fundamentally different than staying in school; therefore, education is considered "completed" the first time a respondent takes a break from school of at least a full academic year and a summer. Of course, there are some people who go back to school: 11

percent of people who were out of school for at least 15 months went back to school in the next year, and 27 percent of people went back to school in the following five years. In order to fully capture returning to school, an older sample with additional years of data would be ideal. Individuals who did not report being in school in either 1997 or 1998 were excluded from the dataset, as it is impossible to determine whether they were in school at the beginning of the survey period.

First Full-Time Employment. Respondents reported their labor market status and number of hours worked for each week.⁴ First full-time employment is defined as the month in which a respondent first worked 35 or more hours per week for at least 26 weeks (6 months) consecutively. The 26 consecutive weeks cutoff is designed to exclude students who are working full-time during their summer breaks only.⁵

First Coresidential Union and First Marriage. Respondents reported the month and year of their first cohabitation and their first marriage, which could be the same or different relationships.

First Birth. Respondents reported the month and year of the birth of their first child.

Parental Socioeconomic Status. Parental education is dichotomized into having at least one parent with a college degree or not having a parent with a college degree. Approximately one-quarter of parents have a college degree. This corresponds fairly well with the upper-middle class (frequently operationalized as the top 20 percent of income, or an annual household income over greater than \$112,000). A recent book by economist Richard Reeves makes a convincing argument that “the most important fracture in American society” is between the upper middle class and everyone else (Reeves 2017:5).

⁴ Respondents who are active duty military were not asked the number of hours worked per week. They are included as full-time employees.

⁵ A 12-week cutoff was also examined, but with this cutoff more than one-quarter of respondents began working full-time at age 14.

Race is created based on the race and ethnicity variables available in NLSY97, and classified into non-Hispanic white and non-Hispanic black categories. Individuals reporting other races or Hispanic ethnicity are dropped from analyses, in order to have an adequate sample size for analyses broken down by race and parental education.

Gender was self-reported in 1997 at the first interview.

Statistical Analysis. Sequence analysis is used to examine the timing and ordering of events together in *trajectories/pathways* of events during the transition to adulthood. Sequence analysis is a holistic approach that treats the life course as a unit. It elegantly “gives a complex and informative description of demographic behavior” (Billari and Piccarreta 2005:82).

Each transition event is assigned a code of zero or one for each year from age 16 to 28. If the transition has not yet taken place, that time period is assigned a zero. If it has happened, it is coded as one. All transitions are treated as nonrecursive, or permanent.⁶

Table 1.1 presents a simplified example trajectory for one individual, using yearly data from age 16 to 28. This hypothetical respondent completes his education and enters full-time employment at age 23. He lives at home until age 25, at which point he begins cohabiting. He never has a child or gets married during this period.

Once data are coded in this way for each individual, analyses then proceed to put timing and sequences together in order to produce *trajectories* with yearly data.⁷ An extremely large number of trajectories are possible, and it necessary to use data reduction techniques to interpret the many different trajectories, and group them into pathways. There are two main

⁶ Some of these transitions are, in reality, recursive. Unfortunately, with this type of sequence analysis, recursivity cannot be addressed in a comprehensive and parsimonious manner.

⁷ Analyses for men were also run with monthly data, but results were largely the same as results with yearly data. For the sake of parsimony and computing speed, yearly data are used for pathway analysis.

ways to go about clustering individual trajectories into groups with sequence analysis: optimal matching analysis (OMA)⁸ and a monothetic divisive algorithm (MDA).

MDA is a more straightforward approach to grouping sequences into clusters, or in this case trajectories into pathways.⁹ It uses a variable-based approach to group trajectories into meaningful pathways, with the goal of clustering trajectories to maximize heterogeneity between groups and homogeneity within groups. Beginning with all individuals in a single cluster, “the MDA approach works by taking all of the life histories in the sample...and dividing them into groups one variable at a time in such a way that minimizes the heterogeneity in the life histories within groups and maximizes it across groups” (Mouw 2005:274). MDA is easier to replicate than OMA because it is based on relatively few decision points that are substantively meaningful (Billari and Piccarreta 2005; Mouw 2005).

⁸ With OMA, individuals’ sequences are compared to one another, and differences between sequences are calculated. The distance or dissimilarity between sequences is “measured by the total number of simple operations necessary to transform one sequence into the other” (Billari and Piccarreta 2005:91). These operations include insertion, deletion, and substitution of states or events. States can be inserted into a sequence (insertion), deleted from a sequence (deletion), or replaced by another state (substitution). Each of these transformations is assigned a cost. The distance between two sequences is then calculated as the minimum cost necessary to transform one sequence into the other (Cornwell 2015).

Once the costs have been calculated, the sequences can then be clustered into groups. Frequently, this is done with an agglomerative bottom-up approach, in which each individual sequence begins as its own cluster. Then, similar clusters are grouped together based on the distances calculated above (Billari and Piccarreta 2005). In order to use OMA with multiple events or transitions, as in this case, the data for each individual’s sequences for each transition either need to be collapsed into one series (multistate analysis) or analysis needs to be run separately for each sequence and then combined (multichannel analysis).

OMA has been met with many critiques. The largest concern with OMA is that it is hard to explicitly define the criteria used to calculate the costs assigned to each transformation and the corresponding distances between sequences (collectively known as the cost regime). Because there are so many minute decisions that go into these calculations, it is frequently unclear exactly how differences between sequences are calculated, and it may be impossible to replicate results. The cost regime choice can also impact clustering results. Furthermore, there is no universal approach to validity of OMA. The process will detect patterns among sequences no matter the level of heterogeneity in the sample (Cornwell 2015). OMA has also been critiqued as being out-of-line with social processes. OMA was developed in biology as a way to sequence DNA, and was later applied to social sciences (Billari and Piccarreta 2005; Cornwell 2015). There is concern in the field that its use implies that social processes work in the same logical fashion as biological ones (Cornwell 2015).

⁹ This description draws heavily from Mouw, T. (2005). Sequences of early adult transitions: How variable are they, and does it matter. *On the Frontier of Adulthood: Theory, Research, and Public Policy*, 256–291.

Figure 1.1 is a visual representation of the MDA algorithm results from Mouw's 2005 study, and will be used as an example to walk through the MDA process. Beginning at the top of the tree, all women are grouped together in one cluster. The algorithm then chooses a variable, in this case whether the woman had a birth by age 28 (B28), that has more explanatory power than any other possible variable (such as being married by age 30, for example). Following the tree to the left, the next split is based on whether the woman was married by age 32 (M32). The algorithm continues this splitting process of selecting variables that maximize explanatory power until the gained explanatory power for another split falls below a pre-specified threshold. This threshold can be made explicit so that the clustering process can be replicated. The resulting groups in this example are as follows: Group 1) did not have a birth by age 28, and was not married by age 32; Group 2) did not have a birth by age 28, and was married by age 32; Group 3) had a birth by age 28, was not married by age 29, and did not enter the labor market by age 33 (L33); Group 4) had a birth by age 28, was not married by age 29, and entered the labor market by age 33; Group 5) had a birth by age 28, married by age 29, and did not have a birth by age 24, and Group 6) had a birth by age 28, married by age 29, and had a child by age 24.

The measure of within- and between-group heterogeneity used by Mouw (2005) and others is the Gini heterogeneity measure. This study uses an alternative operationalization, called inertia criterion, implemented with the DIVCLUS-T program in R (Chavent, Lechevallier, and Briant 2007). Clustering is conducted separately for the different socioeconomic status and race groups, as it is hypothesized that there may be fundamentally different processes taking place in the transition to adulthood for youth from high- and low-status groups by race. Therefore, different variables may be used to split clusters at different levels for each group. The MDA will operate, continuing to split into clusters until either a) an additional split explains less

than three percent of variance, or b) a cluster contains less than five percent of cases in the group.¹⁰

All analyses are run separately for men and women, as is standard in the literature, and are based on cases with information on all transition-to-adulthood events. Analyses are unweighted, and use information from age 16 through 28 (the age of the youngest respondent in the most recent wave of data) in order to eliminate any biases due to right censoring.

Sample Description. After excluding cases from analysis that were missing data on any of the transition-to-adulthood events (n=2,011),¹¹ not enrolled in school in 1997 or 1998 (n=311), missing data on race or reported a race other than non-Hispanic white or non-Hispanic black (n=2,245), or missing data on parental education (n=481), the analytic sample consists of 4,987 respondents.¹² They were ages 12-18 in 1997, are evenly divided by gender, and are 65 percent non-Hispanic white and 35 percent non-Hispanic black (see Table 1.2). When examining the parent with the higher educational degree, 10 percent of youth had parents with less than high school diplomas, 37 percent had parents with high school degrees, 26 percent had parents with some college education, and 27 percent had parents with college degrees or more.¹³

¹⁰ Mouw (2005) used a two-percent cutoff in his study. As the goal of this study is to use the groupings as independent variables in chapter two of this dissertation, a smaller number of categories is preferred, and a three percent cutoff has been set. Additionally, because some of the groups (i.e., black men and women without college-educated parents) are quite small, I have set an additional constraint requiring each category to have at least five percent of cases in order to prevent uninterpretable clusters.

¹¹ 14 percent of respondents were missing data on independent residence; 15 percent were missing data on education, 14 percent were missing data on employment, 15 percent were missing data on cohabitation, 14 percent were missing data on marriage, and 17 percent were missing the birthdate of their first child. Much of this missing data is due to attrition from the study, as the respondent had to remain in the study for at least 10 years (in order to be 28 years old).

¹² There is overlap in the missing ns, as some people were missing multiple data points.

¹³ In comparison to the full NLSY97 sample (n=8,984), the analytic sample tends to be more female (48.8 percent vs. 50.2 percent) and have more highly educated parents. In the full sample, 17.2 percent of respondents had parents who had not completed high school, 34.0 percent had parents with a high

Results

Results are first presented by gender, corresponding to the first research question, and then split out by parental education and race groups in order to examine the second research question.

Men. Using the criteria explained above, the MDA split men's transition-to-adulthood trajectories into five pathways explaining 23.6 percent of the overall variance. The dendrograms representing the MDA processes producing the pathways are available in Appendix 1.1. The first pathway is characterized by average patterns of finishing education and entering the workforce, but delayed family transitions, especially leaving the family home (see Figure 1.2). No men in this pathway had moved out by age 25. This group can be thought of as *late starters*, and 13 percent of men fall into this category.

The second pathway is characterized by moving out of the family home relatively early and prolonging education. More than one-half of men had moved out by age 20, and none had left school by age 22. These young men likely move out of their family homes to go to college. Many continue their education after age 22, and many work full-time and are enrolled in school simultaneously. This pathway can be thought of as *extended education*, and represents about one-fifth of men. More than four in five of men in this pathway earn a college degree, and over one-quarter have a graduate degree by the end of the study (which could be later than age 28). In the remaining groups, less than 20 percent of men have a college degree, and less than five percent have a graduate degree.

The third pathway is the largest, containing 34 percent of men in the sample. It is characterized by relatively early transitions out of school (all men have left education by age 22), and delayed family formation. By age 28, about one-third of men have married and one-

school degree, 24.5 percent had parents with some college, and 24.3 percent had parents with a college degree or more.

quarter have a child. This pathway can be thought of as *work then family*, as men in this cluster tend to complete education and work transitions before family transitions.

The fourth pathway is characterized by relatively early transitions out of school and into family roles, especially as a parent. On average, men leave school at age 18 and nine months. They all have children by age 25, and none are married by age 24. This pathway can be thought of as *expedited adulthood without marriage*, and 21 percent of men fall into this pathway.

Finally, the fifth pathway is characteristic of *expedited adulthood*. Representing 11 percent of men, this pathway is characterized by quick transitions in both education/work and family domains. By age 20, approximately 80 percent of men have left school, and about 80 percent of men have worked full-time for six months. By age 25, all men in this cluster are married and have had a child.

Women. Women's trajectories were also divided into five pathways, which explain 23.6 percent of the total variance (see Figure 1.1.2. in the appendix for the dendrogram). The first pathway represents *late starters*, similarly to the men. Women in this group finish their education and enter the workforce at age 21, on average, but delay all family formation behaviors, especially leaving the family home. None of these women have left home before age 25, though some appear to have partners living at home with them, as they report cohabiting. *Late starters* are a small group of women, containing six percent of female respondents.

The second pathway is characterized by relatively early ages of leaving the parental home, somewhat delayed transitions out of education and into the workforce, and postponement of all family transitions. On average, women in this pathway leave school at age 22 and begin working full-time at age 21 and four months. This pathway can be thought of as *(somewhat) extended education*, as the extended education pattern is not a clear cut for women as it is for men. It represents 23 percent of women. Almost 70 percent of women in this group earn a college degree, and one-quarter earn a graduate degree by the end of the study. This

stands in contrast to other groups, in which less than one-half of women graduate from college by the end of the study period.

The third pathway is characterized by average ages at leaving education and entering the workforce (between age 20 and 21 on average) and delayed marriage and childbearing. In this way, it is similar to the work then family pathway for men. However, along with the education and workforce transitions, women in this pathway are also likely to cohabit. Therefore, this pathway can be thought of *work then family, but with cohabitation*. About one in four (23 percent) women belong to this pathway.

The fourth pathway is characterized by relatively quick transitions across the board, except for marriage, and is similar to the men's pathway *expedited adulthood without marriage*. On average, women leave school at age 19 and begin working full-time, move out, and have a child by age 21. All women in this group have a child by age 25 and none are married by age 24. This pathway is the largest for women, including 29 percent of women.

The fifth pathway represents *expedited adulthood*. Women in this pathway tend to complete all of the education/work and family transitions quickly. By age 25, approximately 95 percent of women have completed their education and moved out of their family homes, and 87 percent have worked full-time. By age 24, all are married, and by age 25, all are mothers. Approximately one in five women belong to this pathway.

By race and parental education. In this section, results are presented by race/class/gender groups in order to examine unique patterns for each group and how race and class sort individuals through the transition to adulthood. I used the MDA to develop pathways in the transition to adulthood for eight race/class/gender groups: white men without college-educated parents, white men with college-educated parents, black men without college-educated parents, black men with college-educated parents, white women without college-educated parents, white women with college-educated parents, black women without college-educated parents, and black women with college-educated parents. Rather than going through

individual pathways for each group (which are available in Appendix 1.2), here I focus on patterns in the pathways by race and parental education, first for men and then for women.

The distribution of pathways for all men presented above (Figure 1.2) looks very similar to the distribution for white men without college-educated parents in Figure 1.4. White men without college-educated parents are the numeric majority, so this is not surprising. By just examining men as a whole, however, the interesting patterns across the racial/parental educational subgroups would have been missed.

Focusing first on similarities, the most common pathway for three of the four race/parental education groups of men is *work then family*. All subgroups also contain at least one *expedited adulthood* pathway and a *late starter* pathway. The distributions look pretty similar when examining differences in Figure 1.4 within race groups vertically, by parental education. Across race groups, youth with more educated parents have smaller proportions of *late starters* than youth with less educated parents. Because the *late starter* pathway is defined by leaving the family home later, it could be that college-educated parents are able to provide housing assistance for their children, in the form of room and board at a college or paying rent, while less educated parents may not be able to financially assist their children in the same way.

Examining differences across Figure 1.4, by race, more differences become apparent. The *extended education* pathway does not emerge from the data for either black group. Furthermore, there are considerably more black youth in their respective *late starter* pathways than whites in theirs. *The late starter group* is also distinct for blacks without college-educated parents. In this group, young men tend to live at home for an extended period of time and do not have full-time jobs, despite many of them being fathers.

There are also differences by race in terms of partnering patterns. For whites, *expedited adulthood* tends to involve partnering through either marriage, or, more frequently, cohabitation. For blacks, partnering, especially marriage, less commonly accompanies childbearing in expedited adulthood. For blacks with less-educated parents, *expedited adulthood* involves

cohabitation but very low levels of marriage. For blacks with more-educated parents, *expedited adulthood* is characterized by universal childbearing by age 23, at which time just 62 percent of men have cohabited and less than 20 percent have ever been married.

There is also evidence of race and parental education working together such that white men with college-educated parents have the most privileged transition-to-adulthood pathways and black men without college-educated parents have the least privileged pathways. For example, among white men with more educated parents, the *work then family* pathway is also characterized by extended education (70 percent of men have a college diploma by the end of the study period), while for black men with less-educated parents, the *expedited adulthood without marriage* pathway is the most prevalent at 42 percent. Furthermore, only white men with college-educated parents have a pathway for *extended education without work*. In this pathway, no men have held a full-time job for more than six months until they were 25 years old, while 48 percent of men were still in school at this point, and over half of men had left school. This pathway leads to very high levels of education. Almost four in five men in this pathway have college degrees (79 percent), and almost one-half (46 percent) have graduate degrees by the end of the study period.

Turning now towards women, Figure 1.5 demonstrates that the overall pattern for women presented above (in Figure 1.3) is largely driven by white women with parents without college degrees. Unlike the men, there is quite a bit of diversity in the distribution of pathways by both race and parental education for women. There is no single most common pathway across race and parental education groups.

Looking first by parental education within race groups, the *extended education* pathway is more prevalent among young women with college-educated parents than youth without

college-educated parents,¹⁴ while the *expedited adulthood* pathways are more prevalent among young women without college-educated parents. Parents with college degrees may be able to draw on their cultural capital to emphasize the importance of postsecondary education to their children, help them through the application process, and then use their financial resources to help youth realize those aspirations in a way that is not as feasible for parents without college degrees.

Turning now towards differences by race within parental education groups, we can see that black women have a higher prevalence of *expedited adulthood* and *work then family* pathways and lower prevalence of *extended education* and *late starters* than their white peers. This pattern follows the same pattern of advantage by parental education. As with men, there are also racial differences in partnering patterns. For example, black women have a pathway of *expedited adulthood with delayed partnering*, representing about one-quarter of respondents, in which women tend to finish their educational careers relatively early and enter the workforce, and have children at high rates without cohabitation and particularly without marriage. Additionally, the *work then family* pathways for white women tend to involve cohabitation alongside education/work transitions, much before the other family transitions. This is not the case, however, for black women. In the *work then family* pathway for black women with more educated parents, and one of the *work then family* pathways for black women with less educated parents, cohabitation is delayed along with the other family transitions. Conversely, for black women with more educated parents, the *extended education* pathway tends to involve cohabitation.

Discussion

¹⁴The *work then family* pathway for black women with college-educated parents is a hybrid between *work then family* and (somewhat) *extended education*. Women in this pathway do not have a very distinct pattern of extended education like men, but have very high levels of educational attainment, with 73 percent of women earning college degrees, and 39 percent of women earning graduate degrees by the end of the study period.

Across race, class, and gender, I identified four broad transition-to-adulthood pathways: *late starters*, *extended education*, *work then family*, and *expedited adulthood*. These pathways generally align well with those found in previous studies. The *late starters* pathway is found in almost all previous studies of the transition to adulthood in the United States using LCA or SA with optimal matching in similar proportions. In the present study, however, this pathway is primarily differentiated by delays in leaving the parental nest. Large proportions of these young men and women have left school and entered the workforce in a full-time capacity, but they have not been able to, or have chosen not to, move out of their family homes. The *extended education* pathway corresponds well with the higher education pathway found in many previous studies, and the *work then family* pathways map onto what previous studies have called work pathways. The *expedited adulthood* pathway has a new name in this paper corresponding to emerging qualitative literature (Deluca et al. 2016), but maps onto other studies' pathways documenting a rapid transition from education to parenthood. Despite using diverse methodologies, the same general set of transition-to-adulthood pathways emerges across studies. This finding can increase our confidence in the existence of these pathways in the real world.

Gender. While these pathways are overall quite similar for men and women, there are a few differences by gender that point towards a clearer distinction between education/work and family for men than for women. First, the *extended education* pathway is much more clear-cut for men than it is for women. All men in the *extended education* pathway remain in school at age 22, while only 64 percent of women in this pathway are still in school at age 22. Furthermore, 82 percent of men in the *extended education* pathway earn college degrees by the end of the study period, while 69 percent of women in the pathway do so. For men, this group has much higher rates of college completion than the other pathways. Less than 20 percent of the next most educated group are college graduates. The distinction is less clear for women.

For example, almost one-half of women in the *work then family, but with cohabitation* pathway are college graduates.

Additionally, the *work then family* pathway for men includes a clear distinction between work transitions and family transitions. For women, meanwhile, cohabitation tends to occur with the work transitions, before any of the other family transitions. There are also larger proportions of women in the *expedited adulthood* pathways than men. Forty-eight percent of women are in either the *expedited adulthood without marriage* or *expedited adulthood* pathways while 32 percent of men fall into these groups. This finding aligns with previous research that shows that women tend to reach each marker of adulthood before men, and may reflect the fact that I did not change my definition of expedited adulthood between men and women. Additionally, men may not know that they have become fathers, or have chosen not to report this status, in some cases, and would be misclassified into pathways other than *expedited adulthood*.

Finally, the *late starter* pathway is much more common among men than women. Women appear to leave the parental home earlier, which may reflect their higher college-going rates, or they may jump start transitions into partnerships by leaving the parental home to cohabit at younger ages. All together, these gender differences reflect a clearer distinction between education/work and family domains for men than for women. There is a larger tendency for women to mix education/work and family transitions at the same time in comparison to men who tend to complete education/work transitions more distinctly from family transitions.

Race and Parental Education. The prevalence of the transition-to-adulthood pathways and their particulars also varies by race and socioeconomic status. More privileged groups, both white youth and youth with college-educated parents, tend to have larger proportions in *extended education* pathways and smaller proportions in *expedited adulthood* pathways. For example, the *extended education* pathway does not emerge from the data for black men, or for black women without college-educated parents in the way that it does for whites. Similarly,

Macmillan and Copher (2005) found of a pattern of extended schooling and delayed work for white women but not for black women. Meanwhile, the *extended education* pathway for white men with college-educated parents is characterized by a very delayed entry into the workforce. These findings line up with previous work on expedited and emerging adulthood.

At the same time, the analyses brought to light the huge amount of heterogeneity in transition-to-adulthood pathways. While the variable-based divisions were chosen by the MDA to explain the largest proportion of variation in transition-to-adulthood trajectories, approximately three-quarters of the variation remains.¹⁵ Each additional division would explain less than three percent of the variation, however, and some clusters would represent less than five percent of respondents in that subgroup.

The large amount of heterogeneity both between, and especially within, the subgroups by parental education and race provide evidence against the universality of emerging adulthood. Pathways mapping on to emerging adulthood, particularly *extended education*, did not emerge in this study for black men, or for black women without college-educated parents. Rather, the results of this analysis support the idea set forth by Schoon (2015; 2016) that a diverse pathways approach is essential to understanding the complexity of the transition-to-adulthood time period.

Results also reveal racial differences in transition-to-adulthood pathways that are distinct from socioeconomic differences. In particular, partnering patterns vary by race, such that black youth tend to delay partnering, and especially marriage, to a greater extent than white youth. Among men, *expedited adulthood* includes partnering in the form of marriage or more commonly cohabitation for whites. For black men, however, partnering less frequently accompanies childbearing in *expedited adulthood*. Black women's *expedited adulthood* is also characterized by delayed partnering. This aligns with Macmillan and Copher's (2005) finding

¹⁵In comparison, using a cut-off of two percent, rather than three percent, Mouw (2005) found that a similar MDA explained about 42 percent of variation among the NLSY79 cohort. Using a three percent cut-off, about 37 percent of variation would be explained.

using NLSY79 of classes of school-to-parent transitions with low levels of marriage for black women but not for white women (the study did not examine cohabitation). Meanwhile, white women tend to cohabit while making education/work transitions before making other family transitions in the *work then family* pathway.¹⁶ Macmillan and Copher (2005) posited that youth from various racial and ethnic backgrounds bring schemas with them that may shape their pathways through this time period. One of these schemas may be around marriage and its diminished practical significance, specifically in reference to children. Marriage has not lost its symbolic significance, but it is no longer viewed as necessary to be a valued person. Children are a large part of identity for women, especially in low-income communities, though, and may be coveted even if a partnership is not stable (Edin and Kefalas 2005). This may help to explain the patterns of expedited adulthood without partnership among black men and women with less educated parents. At the same time, middle-class black women have a less optimal marriage market than white women due to black men's lower educational attainment and higher unemployment and incarceration (Clarke 2011).

Among the middle class, there are differences in the distribution of pathways between blacks and whites, which may point to discrimination against black youth, or their parents based on the level of resources available to them. Despite both having college-educated parents, black youth are more likely to grow up quickly in the *expedited adulthood* pathway and less likely to have an extended, continuous educational career in the *extended education* pathway. The *extended education* pathway does not exist at all for black middle-class men. These differences may reflect structural forces based on long-standing discrimination. Youth with less educated parents, youth with less income, and youth of color are more likely to attend for-profit postsecondary institutions (U.S. Department of Education 2012). These institutions may take

¹⁶An interesting exception to this pattern is the *extended education with cohabitation* pathway for black women with college-educated parents. In this pathway, representing almost one in five black women with college-educated parents, women stay in school for an extended period of time, and over 70 percent end up with at least a college degree. At the same time, they also have very high rates of cohabitation, but delay marriage and childbearing.

advantage of low-income and minority students' situations (and their ability to receive financial aid) without much regard for their progression through the program, and, in fact, have much lower graduation rates than non-profit and public institutions (Cottom 2017; Deluca et al. 2016; United States Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee 2012). Youth of color may also face discrimination on the job market and have difficulty attaining sustained full-time employment.

These patterns indicate that differences in the transition to adulthood are not just about educational advantage and social capital. Race is also an important contributor to patterns in the transition to adulthood (Macmillan and Copher 2005). Moving forward, the study of the transition to adulthood cannot continue to ignore the role of race, but needs to be cognizant of a broader set of structural forces that shape pathways through this time period.

Limitations. The youth examined in this study are still young. They were between 28 and 34 years old at the most recent data collection, and have not completed their transitions to adulthood, especially their entry into childbearing and marriage. Nevertheless, this dataset provides a recent sample of young adults, to which the new hypotheses of emerging adulthood and expedited adulthood apply, unlike older cohorts. This cohort is also unique. They were still in the transition-to-adulthood stage—between the ages of 23 and 29—when the Great Recession hit in 2008. The labor market tightened up in response to the recession and youth may have been encouraged to stay in school longer or to go back to school. Because this is the most recent cohort for whom data is available, it is impossible to test whether the patterns found in this study will continue into the future, or were impacted by the great recession. Nevertheless, the pathways that emerged from the data for this cohort are similar to those in previous studies using data from earlier cohorts. The pathways may not change due to the Great Recession, or other cohort differences, but the distribution across pathways may vary.

The measurements of the transition-to-adulthood events in this study are limited by what was asked in NLSY97. The study rests on the assumption that all of the measures are valid for

non-white and non-middle-class respondents. It is impossible to know, for example, whether youth in various living arrangements consider themselves to be living independently. Is a college student living in a dorm paid for by their parents equivalent to a full-time worker of the same age paying her own rent? Certainly not. However, this study is not able to problematize the measurement of the transition-to-adulthood events because it is limited by what was asked in NLSY97. Future work should address whether these measures apply equally to youth in various situations through cognitive interviews and other techniques. Similarly, it would be ideal to look at levels of employment and levels of education rather than simply whether an individual had worked full-time and whether they had left education. Additional life course events that disproportionately affect certain demographic groups, such as incarceration, should also be examined. That is beyond the scope of the study, however, and is left for future work. Future work should also investigate the recursivity of the events that make up the transition to adulthood. The current study does not examine change in statuses over time, only whether a transition has ever taken place. It is likely that youth in all pathways have returned home, for example, as more than half of youth who moved out by age 27 moved back in with their parents for at least three months. That is beyond the scope of this study, however.

This study uses a purely descriptive analytical technique that is not meant to be interpreted causally, and does not allow for testing for statistically significant differences between groups. Results should not be taken as definitive, but as suggestive of patterns that exist in the world.¹⁷

Conclusion. This paper systematically investigated events during the transition to adulthood and documented how they differ for youth from different sociodemographic backgrounds, defined by gender, race, and parental education. This investigation revealed

¹⁷The specific pathways presented in this study are somewhat sensitive to changes in operationalizations of individual transition-to-adulthood events (i.e., changing the operationalization of completing education). However, the general descriptions of the pathways are fairly stable, as are the patterns of pathways by gender, race, and parental education.

significant heterogeneity in the experience of the transition to adulthood, both between and within groups. Broadly speaking, there are four types of transition-to-adulthood pathways: *late starters*, *extended education*, *work then family*, and *expedited adulthood*. The particulars of these pathways, and their prevalence, however, vary by social status. Neither a one-size-fits-all approach, such as emerging adulthood, nor the duality of emerging and expedited adulthood reflects the reality lived by adolescents and young adults. Rather, a diverse pathways approach is essential to understanding the transition to adulthood.

Researchers and policy makers should embrace the heterogeneity in this period and develop approaches that capture the breadth as well as the depth of individual experiences. There are long-term consequences to the events that transpire during this time period. One-size-fits-all approaches may not be the most appropriate for all stakeholders, and may actually perpetuate inequalities. For example, the college-for-all philosophy is designed to ensure a relevant, high-quality education for all youth. However, if it is designed for traditional college students, it only applies to a small proportion of predominantly white youth. Students in other groups may be inadvertently excluded from the benefits of education, perpetuating racial inequalities in education.

Tables

Table 1.1 Hypothetical transition-to-adulthood trajectory example

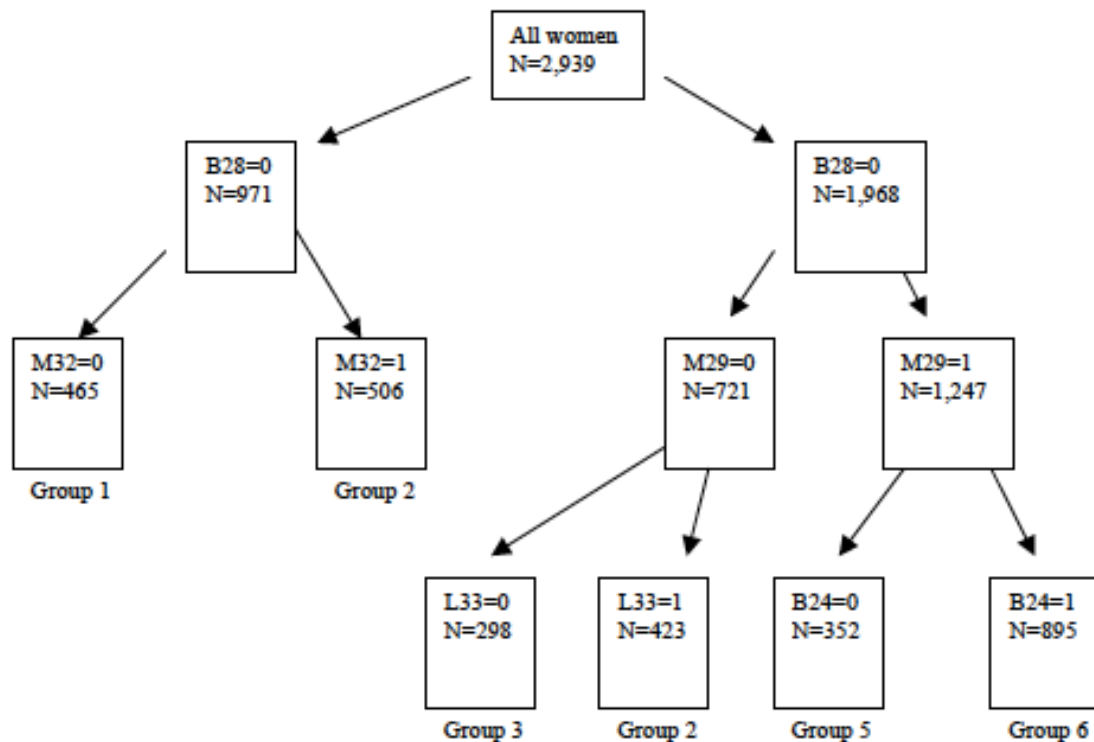
Domain	Age (in years)												
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Employment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ind. Living	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Cores. Union	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
First Marriage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
First Birth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 1.2 Unweighted analytic sample description, NLSY97

	N	Percent	Mean	SD	Range
Age (1997)	4,987		14.33	1.47	12-18
Female	4,987	50.23%			
Race/ethnicity	4,987				
Non-Hispanic White		64.95%			
Non-Hispanic Black		35.05%			
Parental education (highest)	4,987				
Less than HS		10.03%			
HS		37.10%			
Some college		26.03%			
College +		26.85%			

Figures

Figure 1.1 Dendrogram for women from Mouw 2005



Note: The text in the box on the top right (N=1,968) should say B28=1.

Figure 1.2 Transition-to-adulthood pathways for all men, NLSY97

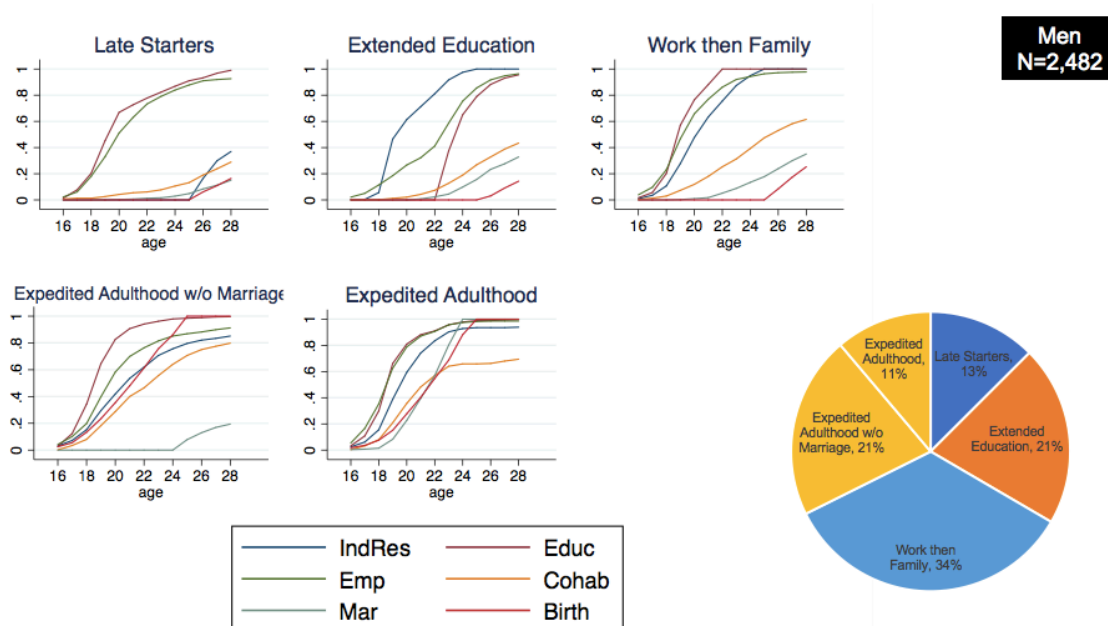


Figure 1.3 Transition-to-adulthood pathways for all women, NLSY97

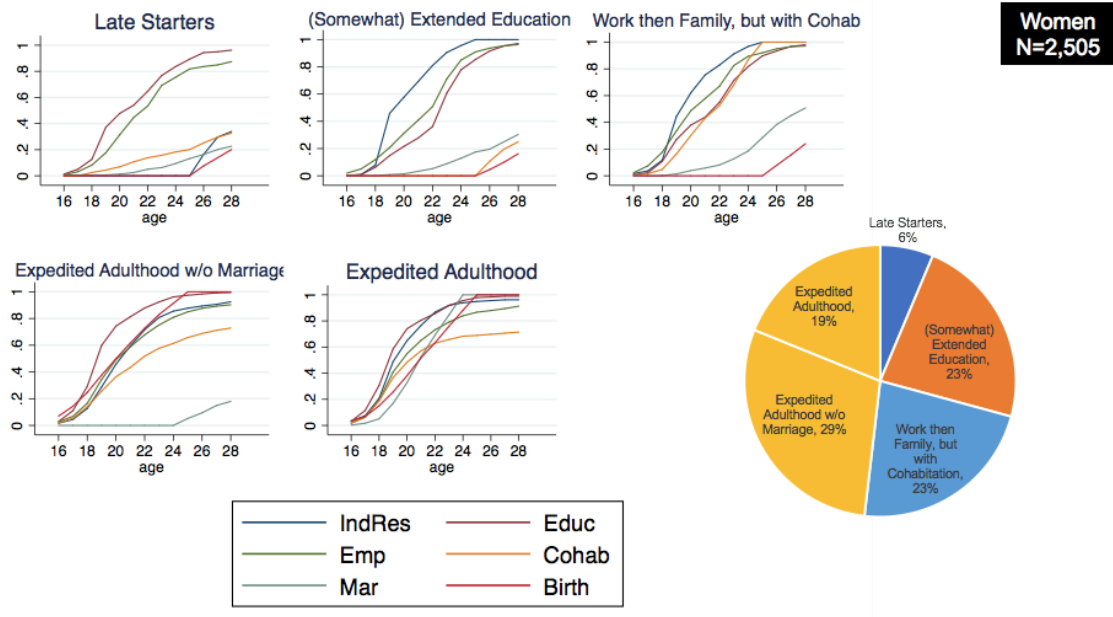


Figure 1.4 Distribution of transition-to-adulthood pathways for men by race and parental education, NLSY97

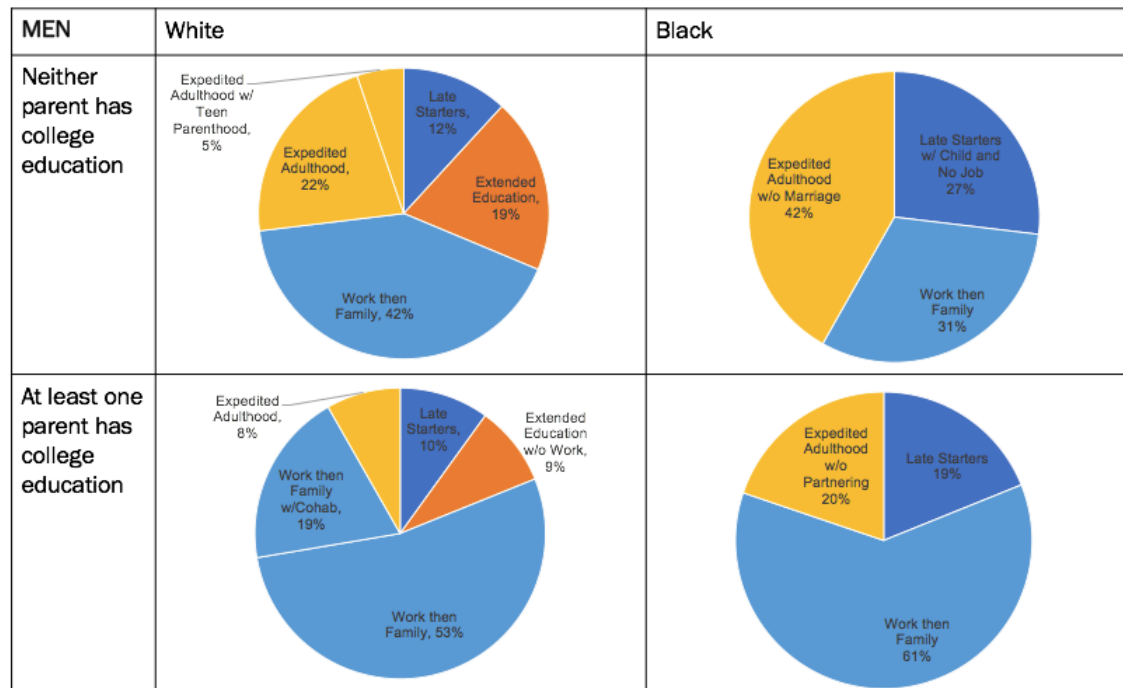
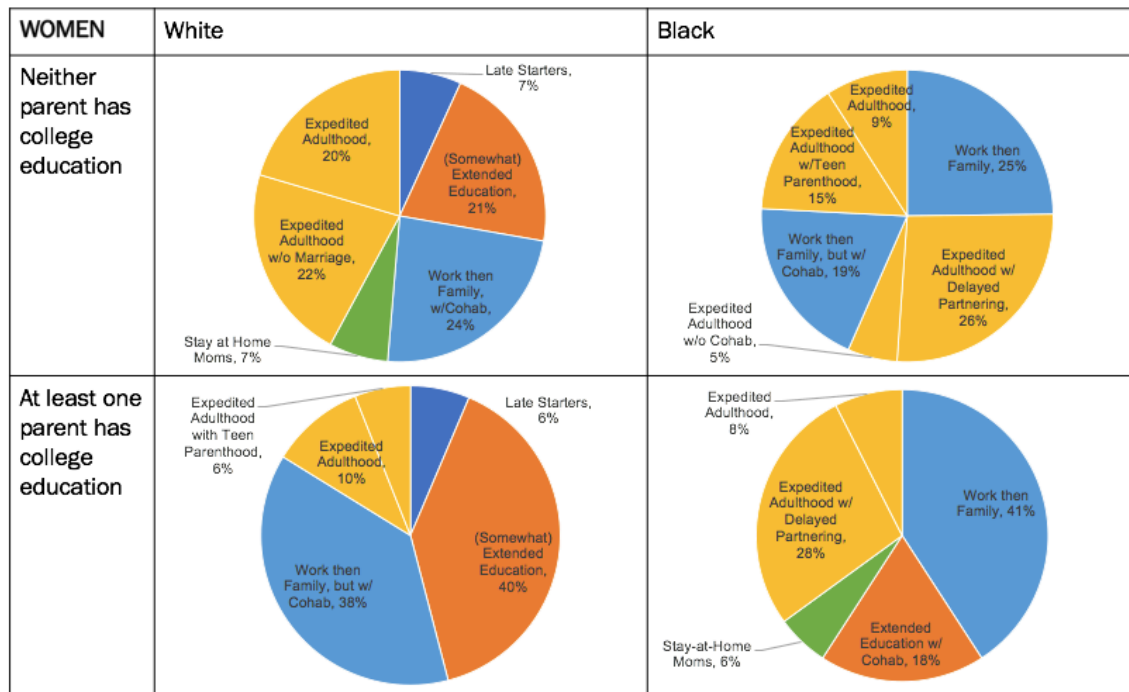


Figure 1.5 Distribution of transition-to-adulthood pathways for women by race and parental education, NLSY97



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CHAPTER 2: HOW DO PATHWAYS INTO ADULTHOOD LINK PARENTAL WEALTH AND YOUNG ADULT INCOME? BLACK AND WHITE YOUNG ADULTS COMING OF AGE IN THE 2000S

Introduction

Social standing is not randomly distributed throughout society, but is in large part passed on from one generation to the next, from parent to child. Intergenerational status transmission is especially pronounced in the United States, where class mobility is lower than many other developed nations. In the United States, income elasticity is between 0.4 and 0.6, meaning that a 10 percent difference in the incomes of two individuals is associated with a four to six percent difference in their children's earnings (Beller and Hout 2006; Solon 2014).

The process through which parents pass their status on to their children is not completely understood. The transmission begins even before conception, when parents pass their genetic code on to their children. Throughout the early life course, parents invest in their children's lives through various parenting practices and educational decisions. These investments lead to behaviors in the transition to adulthood, across the domains of education, work, and family that set youth down their own mobility paths for the rest of their lives. The transition to adulthood has long been recognized as a critical period for the intergenerational transmission of status. In 1986, Hogan and Astone wrote that the transition to adulthood is a "critical juncture in personal life histories and connects social origins with subsequent adult attainments" (Hogan and Astone 1986:125). Little is known, however, about how this juncture operates. This study uses a life course approach to explain how parents pass their status on to

their children through this critical period. In particular, it examines how pathways taken through the transition to adulthood link status origins to status in young adulthood.

The next section reviews what the current state of the field on the mechanisms of intergenerational status transmission. The life course perspective is then introduced, along with a review of extant studies on the transition to adulthood, before moving on to the current study.

Background

Intergenerational Status Transmission. Parents begin to transfer their social status to their children even before conception, and continue to shape their children's status throughout their formative years and into early adulthood.

Transmission of social status begins even before conception, as the health of parents sets future children on a developmental trajectory (Lane, Robker and Robertson 2014). At the moment of conception, parents pass their genetic fortune on to their children. Certain people have higher status in society (i.e., are more educated, earn more income, and have more prestigious occupations) because they possess characteristics that are valued by society, such as cognitive ability or certain personality traits. Children inherit these characteristics from their parents via genetics and are then also likely to have more status in society (Diewald et al. 2015; Nielsen 2008).

Once the genetic component is formed, parents tend to transmit their status to their offspring through their family formation patterns and economic resources. Parents generally want to do all that they can to help their children succeed in life. What parents are able to provide, how they provide it, and what they see as appropriate to provide, however, varies by background.

Widening disparities in child outcomes have been attributed to changes in family formation patterns since the second demographic transition. The second demographic transition resulted in two different pathways for women, differentiated by level of resources. Those with

more resources delayed childbearing, and mothers tended to work after having children. Both of these changes lead to higher investments in children. Women with fewer resources, on the other hand, were more likely to adopt different features of the second demographic transition, including divorce and non-marital childbearing, increasing the likelihood of poor children growing up with single mothers. Children of single mothers have worse outcomes, including lower incomes, higher levels of stress, and worse mental health (McLanahan and Percheski 2008). Taken together, these changes have led to “diverging destinies” between the two groups of women and their children (McLanahan 2004; McLanahan and Jacobsen 2015). The consequences of the second demographic transition have been so great that it has been argued that “family formation is a new fault line in the American class structure” (Sawhill 2014:76).

Middle class parents tend to take a “concerted cultivation” approach to parenting in which they actively work to shape their children through frequent two-way discussions between parent and child and participation in structured activities with children their own age. Children are treated as equals to adults, and interacted with as such. Parents intervene in school to make sure that their children are getting everything they need to succeed.

Working class and poor parents, on the other hand, tend to take a more hands-off approach to parenting labeled “accomplishment of natural growth.” Under this parenting model, children are less strictly supervised and are free to discover the world on their own. Children are treated as subordinate to adults, and are issued directives rather than being included in discussions. Working class and poor parents intervene in schools less often, and see schools and other institutions as authorities in raising their children (Lareau 2003).

These differential parenting practices lead middle-class youth to develop more skills that allow them to be comfortable navigating institutions, such as schools and workplaces, throughout young adulthood than working-class youth (Lareau 2015). Each approach has its benefits, but the skills that children raised under concerted cultivation learn are more valued by society’s dominant culture, and help them succeed at school and beyond (Lareau 2003). For

example, higher income youth have fewer behavior problems and may have more noncognitive skills, which are linked to positive outcomes including social mobility (McKnight 2017). Class differences in this cultural knowledge contributes to social inequality (Lareau 2015).

These parenting styles continue into adolescence and influence educational decision-making processes after high school. Middle class parents are very involved in their children's decisions to go to college. These parents have likely to have gone to college themselves and are able to help their children navigate the application process. They may also be able to pay for a student's postsecondary education and have personal connections to help them be accepted (Lareau and Weininger 2008). In fact, there may be an "education race" in which more affluent families seek to maintain their social standing by sending their children to the most prestigious schools, ensuring that they have the resources necessary to obtain good grades, and helping students choose the most rewarded subjects to study (Hamilton, Roksa, and Nielsen 2018; McKnight 2017).

Attending post-secondary education comes at a larger financial cost for lower income youth and their parents, as loans are a likely prerequisite to attendance (McKnight 2017). Working class and poor parents view the college application process to be the responsibility of the school and lack the experience necessary to help with college applications, making acceptance into a four-year college less likely (Lareau and Weininger 2008). Furthermore, lower-income youth are more likely to attend for-profit post-secondary institutions (U.S. Department of Education 2012). These institutions may take advantage of low-income students' situations (and their ability to receive financial aid) without much regard for their progression through the program, and, in fact, have much lower graduation rates than non-profit and public institutions (Cottom 2017; Deluca, Clampet-Lundquist, and Edin 2016; United States Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee 2012).

Altogether, then, there is a positive link between family background and educational attainment, and between educational attainment and later life status. In fact, the second

generation of stratification research revolved around explaining the mediating role of education on the intergenerational transmission of status (Karhula 2017 e.g., Blau & Duncan 1967).

Beyond educational attainment, parents with higher social standing may be better positioned to help their children enter the workforce. They may have social capital that enables them to connect their child with a relevant internship, and may even be able to support their child while they take on an unpaid internship, helping them to transition to their first job and secure their place in society (Greenhouse 2010; Reeves 2017).

These types of behaviors by advantaged parents are considered “dream hoarding.” Upper-middle class parents take advantage of biased college admissions processes (including legacy preferences) and the informal nature of the internship market to give their own children a leg up in society, while at the same time eliminating the potential for these advantages for less-advantaged youth (Reeves 2017). Many of these key moments in intergenerational status transmission take hold during the transition to adulthood. Youth finish their education, enter the workforce, and begin family formation processes during this demographically dense time period (Rindfuss 1991). All of these events happen within a short period of time, sometimes simultaneously. Nevertheless, these mechanisms in the intergenerational transmission of status are traditionally studied independently.

Life Course Perspective. The life course perspective emphasizes treating the life course holistically, and studying transitions, as they can have major impact on later life. The transition to adulthood is an especially salient period in the life course to study because it is demographically dense (Rindfuss 1991). It is not a single transition from adolescence to adulthood, but is made up of many transitions that set the stage for the rest of one’s life. During this time period, young people finish their education, enter the workforce, move out of their family homes, establish their own residences, enter into long-term romantic relationships (cohabitation and/or marriage), and have children (Shanahan 2000). Transitions in the domains of family, work, and education are extremely interrelated.

Furthermore, “transitions can have different meanings, antecedents, and consequences depending on when they occur in the life course and how they fit into larger sequences or trajectories. ... To gain a better understanding of how young people navigate the transition to adulthood, it is thus necessary to examine the order and timing in which they assume multiple social roles and how individuals construct different types of life courses with the opportunities and constraints of the wider sociohistorical context” (Schoon 2015:126). As emphasized by Schoon, it is imperative that transitions across social domains are studied together. The life course concepts of trajectories and pathways allow this type of examination.

Trajectories are individual sequences of transitions from state to state (Elder and Shanahan 2006). They are “long-term patterns of stability and change, often including multiple transitions” (George 1993:358). An example of an education and employment trajectory would be from student at age 18 to employee after high school graduation, and then to student-worker when the youth enters college at age 20, but maintains his job at the same time.

Pathways are higher-order constructs, based at the societal level rather than the individual. They are “well-traveled sequences of transitions that are shaped by cultural and structural forces” (Pallas, A. M. 2003:168). For example, the prototypical transition-to-adulthood pathway of the 1950s was from student, to worker after completion of a degree, then spouse, at which time the youth moved out of their parents’ home, and then to parent within marriage.

The important distinction between trajectories and pathways are that trajectories are individual, while pathways are attributes of social systems that can illuminate structures that link social locations within a social system (Pallas, A. M. 2003). Both represent a person-oriented approach, as opposed to a variable-oriented approach as is typical in stratification research, exemplified by Blau and Duncan’s status attainment model (Blau and Duncan 1967).

Previous Research

Life course scholars studying trajectories and pathways have embraced methodologies such as sequence analysis (SA) and latent class analysis (LCA) that treat the transition to adulthood as a single trajectory rather than a series of disparate transitions. These techniques allow authors to examine multiple transitions at the same time by studying the trajectories that individual youth follow in their transitions to adulthood. Studies typically include transitions in the domains of education, employment, partnering, and childbearing. Below I present an overview of these studies, and then examine how they are related to status origins and destinations.

Examinations of the sequencing of events in the transition to adulthood in the United States¹⁸ typically identify between three and seven different pathways through this time period (Amato et al. 2008; Bauldry et al. 2016; Dean, Bauer, and Shanahan 2014; Lee et al. 2017; Macmillan and Copher 2005; Mouw 2005; Oesterle et al. 2010; Osgood 2005; Sandefur, Eggerling-Boeck, and Park 2005; Sironi, Barban, and Impicciatore 2015). These pathways tend to be distinguished by higher education and family formation patterns. Almost all studies identify a higher education pathway, where youth are in school for an extended period of time and delay entering the workforce and family formation (both marriage/cohabitation, and childbearing). Another common is the work pathway in which youth transition from education to full-time employment after high school or a short higher education experience, and delay family formation. Many studies also find a pathway in which youth, typically young women, make a rapid transition from education to parenthood. There are also pathways that mix employment and family roles. Finally, many studies identify an inactive or delayed pathway among a small subset of the population (generally less than 10 percent) in which none of the transition-to-adulthood events have been completed by the end of the study.

Studies linking origin status to transition-to-adulthood pathways find that youth with more educated parents and those that grew up with both parents are more likely to be in pathways

¹⁸ I have focused this review on studies conducted in the United States, as previous studies have shown differences between the United States and European countries, a topic that will be elaborated on in Chapter 3.

characterized by higher education and delayed family formation, while youth who have experienced adversity end up in less traditional, more compressed pathways (Amato et al. 2008; Bauldry et al. 2016; Dean et al. 2014; Lee et al. 2017; Oesterle et al. 2010; Osgood 2005; Sandefur et al. 2005; Sironi et al. 2015). Notably, family income and receipt of Free and Reduced Price Meals are not predictive of pathway membership (Bauldry et al. 2016; Oesterle et al. 2010).

Fewer studies have examined the consequences of taking different pathways in the transition to adulthood, particularly in the United States. This may be due to the extra longitudinal data requirements necessary to have outcomes meaningfully measured at or after the end of the transition to adulthood. Amato and Kane (2011) examined the physical and mental well-being associated with transition-to-adulthood pathways, but only Mouw (2005) has examined their relationship with socioeconomic status outcomes. Mouw (2005) found that the pathways through the transition to adulthood were differentially associated with poverty rates and household size-adjusted income at age 35. These differences are only meaningful, however, if they explain poverty or income above and beyond the additive effects of the timing of individual events in the transition to adulthood. Otherwise, these pathways do not contribute to our understanding of outcomes above and beyond the timing of individual events. Once the timings of individual events are controlled for, the transition-to-adulthood pathways no longer explain household size-adjusted income, and Mouw concludes that there is “no evidence that any of the different pathways to adulthood affect income at age 35” (288). However, Mouw de-emphasizes the remaining effect of the pathways on poverty rates for both men and women. For men, the pathway characterized by marriage by age 33 and no children by age 30 has lower levels of poverty than the reference group that is unmarried by 32 and childless by 30. About 60 percent of the effect of the pathway is attributable to the additive effects of timing of individual events, but 40 percent of the effect remains and may be attributed to the interaction represented by the pathway. Similarly, for women, the group that has a child by age 29 but is not married by

29, and has not worked by age 33 is more likely to be in poverty than the group that has had a child by 29 but is not married by 29, and has worked by age 33. These results suggest that while transition-to-adulthood pathways do not add to our understanding of income once it is adjusted for family size, they may help us understand more basic patterns of socioeconomic status.

While there is evidence that status origins predict transition-to-adulthood pathways, and that these pathways may predict later outcomes, there are no studies, to my knowledge, that put these pieces together to examine both predictors of and consequences of transition-to-adulthood pathways, to consider the role transition pathways play in the intergenerational reproduction of social class.¹⁹ This is crucial, because “since the transition to adulthood is a time when social status is in flux, an individual’s experiences of accruing status during this transition should be considered in conjunction with the potential advantages or disadvantages bestowed by the previous generation” (Lui et al. 2014:1135).

Present Study

The present study extends the existing literature by examining both predictors of transition-to-adulthood behaviors and later correlates of those behaviors in order to evaluate how the timing and pathways of events that transpire during the transition to adulthood mediate the relationship between early-life socioeconomic status and young adult status attainment.

First, I construct a mobility table to document the extent to which parental wealth and young adult income are related to one another. The first research question then examines transition-to-adulthood pathways as predictors of young adult status. Building on the work by Mouw (2005), I ask: Is there something about the unique combination of events in pathways that matters for young adult income above and beyond the effects of timing of individual transition-to-adulthood events? The second research question then goes a step further, and I ask: How do

¹⁹ Francesco Billari, with colleagues, is currently working on a paper that examines family background, transition-to-adulthood pathways, and income trajectories; however, this work is not yet published.

the events that transpire during the transition to adulthood explain part of (mediate) the relationship between parental wealth and young adult income?

I predict that transition-to-adulthood pathways serve as a mediating mechanism relating status origins to young adult status destinations, above and beyond the additive timings of individual transition-to-adulthood events, such that youth from more privileged backgrounds are more likely to follow transition-to-adulthood pathways that are predictive of positive young adult outcomes, while youth from less privileged backgrounds are more likely to follow pathways that lead to less favorable outcomes in young adulthood.

Methods

Data. This study uses data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97). NLSY97 participants were recruited as young adolescents (ages 12-17); the cohort is recent; and, most importantly, data provide fine-grained measures of the timing of events and statuses during the transition to adulthood.

The NLSY97 survey (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor 2015) is sponsored and directed by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, with assistance from the Center for Human Resource Research at The Ohio State University. It is an ongoing longitudinal survey of a nationally representative sample of youth born between 1980 and 1984 in the United States, with an initial sample size of 8,984 youth. Respondents were first surveyed in 1997 when they were 12-17 years old, and were surveyed annually between 1997 and 2011, and then again in 2013 when they were between 28 and 34 years old. Surveys are conducted in-person, when possible, using computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) instruments. At the most recent wave of data collection, in 2013, the response rate was almost 80 percent. The present study uses data from all 16 waves of data collection.

Measures. An age at occurrence is calculated for each of the transition-to-adulthood events by subtracting the respondent's birth date from the date at which the event occurred. The public-use NLSY97 file contains birth month and year, but not day, so the fifteenth day of the appropriate month is assigned as the birthday. If dates of events are provided in monthly increments (rather than precise dates), the fifteenth day of the month is assigned.

Independent Living. Beginning in 2003, and repeating in every subsequent round, NLSY97 asked respondents who were currently living with others, but not their parents, when they started living "on their own" for at least three months, defined as "being the head of your household or sharing that role equally with others." Respondents provided the month and year that they first started living on their own, even if they later moved back in with another household head (most likely their parents). Of the approximately 90 percent of youth that had moved out by age 27, approximately 55 percent moved back in with their parents for at least three months. Youth who moved back in with their parent at some point were more likely to be white and come from a family with two parents and high income (Dey and Pierret 2014).

Completion of Education. Respondents report monthly start and stop dates for their educational enrollment, inclusive of whether or not a degree was earned. Completion of education is defined as the date of last enrollment before taking a break of at least 15 months. Going back to school is fundamentally different than staying in school; therefore, education is considered "completed" the first time a respondent takes a break from school of at least a full academic year and a summer. Of course, there are some people who go back to school: 11 percent of people who were out of school for at least 15 months went back to school in the next year, and 27 percent of people went back to school in the following five years. In order to fully capture returning to school, an older sample with additional years of data would be ideal.

First Full-Time Employment. Respondents report their labor market status and number of hours worked for each week.²⁰ First full-time employment is defined as the month in which a respondent first worked 35 or more hours per week for at least 26 weeks (6 months) consecutively. The 26 consecutive weeks cutoff is designed to exclude students who are working full-time during their summer breaks only.²¹

First Coresidential Union and First Marriage. Respondents reported the month and year of their first cohabitation and their first marriage, which could be the same or different relationships.

First Birth. Respondents reported the month and year of the birth of their first child.

Status Origin: Parental Wealth. Income tends to be volatile from year to year, and wealth is a more consistent measure of status and access to resources (Diemer et al. 2013; Duncan and Magnuson 2003). Therefore, parental wealth is the measure of status origin used in this study. In 1997, parents reported the net worth of their households in dollar amounts.

Status Destination: Young Adult Income. Wealth is less applicable to young adults, however, and may distort an individual's class status. For example, youth from more privileged backgrounds may have less wealth due to student loans and mortgages whereas less privileged youth were not able to capitalize on those types of opportunities. Therefore, young adult status destination is measured with gross family income as reported for the previous year in 2013.

Gender was self-reported in 1997 at the first interview.

Covariates include age at the first interview, race, parental education, and family composition. Race is created based on the race and ethnicity variables available in NLSY97, and classified into non-Hispanic white and non-Hispanic black categories. Individuals reporting

²⁰ Respondents who are active duty military were not asked the number of hours worked per week. They are included as full-time employees.

²¹ A 12-week cutoff was also examined, but with this cutoff more than one-quarter of respondents began working full-time at age 14.

other races or Hispanic ethnicity are dropped from analyses in order to use the pathways constructed in the first paper of this dissertation which were developed using only non-Hispanic black and white respondents. Parental education is dichotomized into having at least one parent with a college degree or not having a parent with a college degree. Family composition was reported in 1997 by the parent and has been recoded into the following categories: the respondent lived with bio biological parents, one parent and a step-parent, a single parent, or another arrangement at age 12.

Statistical Analyses. A mobility table is calculated to establish the direct relationship between status origin and young adult status destination. This table presents the relationship between parental wealth quartiles and respondent income quartiles.

Next, individuals are grouped into transition-to-adulthood pathways using sequence analysis with a monothetic divisive algorithm based on the timing and sequencing of the six transition-to-adulthood events described above. This process is described in detail in Chapter 1.

Once the pathways have been established using sequence analysis, the first research question is tested by regressing young adult income on the transition-to-adulthood pathways and the age at each of the six transition-to-adulthood events. The age at each event is categorized into five categories in order to avoid multicollinearity with the pathways. The first four categories are age quartiles for respondents who had completed the event, and the fifth category is made up of respondents who had not completed the event by the end of the study period.²²

Mediation, corresponding to the second research question, is tested using a simultaneous equation model in Mplus. The direct effect of status origin on destination is estimated at the same time as the indirect effect through transition-to-adulthood pathways. Race, parental education, and household structure at age 12 are treated as control variables, as

²² The categories for age at first birth for men had to be tweaked due to a multicollinearity issue with the pathways. Originally the quartiles were min/20.90, 20.91/24.00, 24.01/27.20, and 27.21/max. The revised quartiles are min/20.90, 20.91/23.90, 23.91/27.20, and 27.21/max.

illustrated in Figure 2.1. Age is also used as a control variable, but does not correlate with the others control variables.

All analyses will be run separately for men and women, as is standard in the literature. All analyses will be unweighted, as weights are not available with the sequence analysis package used to derive the pathways, and run on complete cases.

Sample Description. The sample began with the 4,987 respondents used to create the transition-to-adulthood pathways in Chapter 1. Additional respondents had to be dropped from analyses due to missing data on parental wealth (n=1,128), young adult income (n=588), or household structure (n=65). The analytic sample consists of 3,398 respondents. They were ages 12-18 in 1997, are evenly divided by gender, and are 67 percent non-Hispanic white and 33 percent non-Hispanic black.²³ Approximately one percent of the analytic sample report both of their parents being deceased.²⁴

Results

Before examining how the transition to adulthood mediates the relationship between parental wealth and young adult income, it is important to establish that this relationship exists. Figure 2.2 presents the percentage of youth reaching each young adult income quartile, based on which wealth quartile their parents belonged to in 1997. If this were a society free of inherited inequality, each of the columns would be evenly distributed into quarters. An individual born in the bottom wealth quartile would have the same likelihood of entering each income quartile as an individual born in the top wealth quartile. This is clearly not the case. Among this sample of black and white youth, more than two out of every five youth whose parents were in

²³ In comparison to the full NLSY97 sample (n=8,984), the analytic sample tends to be more female (48.8 percent vs. 50.2 percent in the analytic sample) and have more wealthy parents (\$90,166.49 vs. \$101,034.50), but earn comparable incomes themselves (\$67,515.43 vs. \$66,937.59)

²⁴ This is likely an underestimate, as a respondent may not know whether an absent parent is deceased.

the bottom wealth quartile were in the bottom income quartile by the end of the survey period, and approximately 70 percent of youth from the bottom wealth quartile remain in the bottom half of the wealth distribution, while only one in ten were in the top income quartile. Similarly, approximately two in five youth whose parents were in the top wealth quartile are in the top income quartile, and approximately 70 percent are in the top half of the income distribution. These disproportionate shares represent the stickiness of wealth and income across generations, particularly the poverty trap at the bottom end of the spectrum in which multiple sequential generations live in poverty, and the wealth trap at the top end of the distribution.

Now that the relationship between parental wealth and young adult income has been established, the next section describes the average timing of transition-to-adulthood events and the pathways that youth follow through them.

A large majority of both men and women have moved out of their family homes, completed their education, and entered steady full-time employment by the end of the study period (see Table 2.1). A smaller percentage of youth, especially men, have completed the family transitions. On average, among men who have made these transitions by the time the study's data were collected, men became their own heads of household at age 20 and 10 months. They left school at age 20 and entered full-time employment shortly after. Regarding family transitions, they enter cohabitation for the first time around age 23, have their first child just after they turn 24, and enter into their first marriage around age 25.

Women, on average, report being their own household heads at age 20 and two months, leave school shortly after, and begin working full-time six months later. They tend to reach each of the family transitions slightly earlier than men: women enter their first cohabitation at age 21 and 10 months, have their first child at age 22 and 7 months, and enter into marriage at just after turning 24.

Five transition-to-adulthood pathways were established for both men and women in Chapter 1. They will be briefly reviewed here, but please refer to Chapter 1 for more details.

These pathways were established separately for men and women, but because there are many similarities among the pathways for men and women, they will be explained together. The first pathway, designated *late starters*, is characterized by average patterns of finishing education and entering the workforce, but delayed family transitions, especially leaving the family home. This group tends to live at home for an extended period of time. The second pathway, called *extended education*, is characterized by moving out of the family home relatively early and a prolonged educational career. The prolonged educational career is especially pronounced for men. The third pathway, named *work then family*, is the most common pathway for men and is characterized by relatively early transitions out of school and delayed family formation. Work and education transitions tend to take place before family transitions. For women, however, cohabitation co-occurs with work and education transitions, so this pathway is known as *work then family, but with cohabitation* for women. The fourth and fifth pathways represent expedited adulthood including early transitions across education/work and family domains, and a lack of distinction between the timing of the two types of transitions as in the *work then family* pathway. The fourth pathway includes all transitions except marriage, and is named *expedited adulthood without marriage*, while the fifth pathway includes all transitions and is designated *expedited adulthood*.

These pathways are not distributed equally across family background characteristics, including the presence of college-educated parents, race, and parental wealth (see Table 2.1). Young men and women in the *extended education* pathways are most likely to have college-educated parents ($p < .001$ for both men and women), and their parents are, on average, wealthier than parents of youth in other groups ($p < .001$). Young men and women in the *expedited adulthood without marriage pathway*, on the other hand, are more likely to have non-college educated parents ($p < .001$), have less wealthy parents ($p < .001$), and are disproportionately black ($p < .001$). Young adult income is also not evenly distributed across the pathways. Youth in the *extended education* pathways tend to have higher income than their

peers ($p < .001$), while youth in the *expedited adulthood without marriage* pathway tend to have lower income in young adulthood. ($p < .001$).

Both the timing of transition-to-adulthood events and the transition-to-adulthood pathways are related to young adulthood income, as shown in Table 2.2 and Table 2.3. When examining timing independently of pathways, young men who extend their educations have higher earnings, as do young men who enter the workforce earlier than their peers (keep in mind that education is held constant), marry later, and have children later or not at all. Age of moving out of the family home and entering cohabitation do not appear to be related to earnings. Together, the timings of these six transition-to-adulthood events explain 20 percent of the variance in young men's earnings.

For young women, staying in school leads to higher income, as does entering the workforce (timing does not seem to matter for women once other transition timings are taken into account), getting married, and delaying or avoiding childbearing. Together these timings explain 25 percent of the variance in earnings for young women.

Turning now to the second model examining pathways separately from timing of individual events, men in the *extended education* pathway have higher earnings in young adulthood than men in the modal *work then family* pathway. Among women, the *expedited adulthood* pathways lead to lower earnings in young adulthood than the *work then family* pathway.

Timing and pathways are then examined in the same model to test whether the transition-to-adulthood pathways have additional explanatory power above and beyond that of the additive effects of individual events. For both men and women, the answer is no; there is not something unique about the combination of events in pathways that matters for young adult income above and beyond the effects of timing of individual transition-to-adulthood events. None of the pathways retain their significance once timings are added into the model for men or women, and r-squared values do not meaningfully increase, indicating no improvement in

explanatory power. Furthermore, global f-tests indicate that the addition of the pathways does not improve the model's functioning.²⁵

The second research question asks how the transition to adulthood mediates the relationship between parental wealth and early adult income. The value in using transition-to-adulthood pathways instead of the timing of individual events as mediators is in their interpretability. A pathway is a more holistic way to examine this demographically dense time period, and may map more closely onto reality than examining the timing of individual events, while holding the timing of other events constant. It may not be realistic, for example, to interpret the value-added of an additional year of education holding years of work experience constant, because those values are so interrelated. Therefore, even though the transition-to-adulthood pathways do not add explanatory power in predicting young adult income above and beyond the timing of individual events, they are still useful as heuristics for the types of trajectories that individuals take through the transition to adulthood.²⁶

²⁵ As sensitivity analyses, I tried additional specifications of pathways to see whether alternative pathway operationalizations lead to significant relationships with income. I tried a) developing pathways specifically for the analytic sample rather than using those developed in chapter 1; b) excluding cohabitation and independent residence variables when developing pathways, as these timing variables are not predictive of income; c) using the original pathway development strategy from chapter 1, but extending the threshold to two percent of variance explained instead of three; and d) extending the threshold to one percent of variance explained. Results remained insignificant for all except the last operationalization for women. In this model, with 14 pathways, a f-test indicated a significant contribution of the pathways ($p=.023$). However, only one of the 14 pathways is statistically significant at $p<0.05$. Once adjusting for multiple comparisons with a Bonferroni correction, or the less conservative Holm-Bonferroni correction, no pathways significantly predict income.

²⁶ Alternative approaches would include using the timing of individual events as mediators. This is complicated due to the right censored nature of the data. Each event cannot be included linearly because of right censoring. Anyone who has not completed the event would drop out of the model. Alternatively, each event could be included as a categorical variable, as in the models presented above. However, mediation with categorical variables as at the vanguard of the methodological literature, and the complications involved with multiple categorical mediators are not well understood. Another alternative analytic technique would be to recode the timing of each event to the number of years since the event took place. Individuals who have not completed the event would be assigned to 0. This would lead to zero-inflated distributions in the case of cohabitation, marriage, and childbearing, and the methodological literature has not caught up with how to include zero-inflated variables as mediators. The relationships would need to be approximated by OLS regression, and, even then, results would be difficult to interpret because of the reverse coding of the variables.

In order for the transition to adulthood to be a mechanism in the intergenerational transmission of status, social origins must predict the pathways that youth take through this transition, and the pathways that youth take during this transition must predict young adult income. Each of these parts of the model will be discussed separately (though they were estimated simultaneously) before discussing the overall mediation effects.

For both men and women, youth with more wealthy parents are more likely to be in *extended education* pathways, and less likely to be in both *expedited adulthood* pathways than *work then family* (see Table 2.5 and Figure 2.3). For example, the odds of young men being in the *extended education* pathway increase by four percent for each additional \$10,000 in parental wealth. For young women, the odds of being in the *expedited adulthood* pathway decrease by three percent, and the odds of being in the *expedited adulthood without marriage* decrease by nine percent for each additional \$10,000 in parental wealth.

The pathways are also related to young adult income. For young men, being in the *extended education* pathway is related to higher earnings as young adults, while the other pathways are not related to earnings at standard significance levels. Young men in the *extended education* pathway earn \$15,249 more, on average, than their peers in the *work then family* pathway. Altogether, for young men, there is significant mediation of the intergenerational transmission of wealth by the transition-to-adulthood pathways. The indirect effect of parental wealth on young adult income through transition-to-adulthood pathways is one-quarter of the total effect of parental wealth on income

For young women, on the other hand, the (*somewhat*) *extended education* pathway is not related to young adult income, but the *expedited adulthood* pathways are. Young women in the *expedited adulthood* pathway earn \$16,435 less, on average, than their peers in the *work then family but with cohabitation* pathway, and young women in the *expedited adulthood without marriage* pathway earn \$27,099 less. Altogether, the indirect effect of parental wealth on young

adult income through transition-to-adulthood pathways explains 42 percent of the total effect of parental wealth on income for young women.

Discussion

There is a clear relationship between parental wealth and young adult income, with stickiness at both the bottom and top ends of the socioeconomic distribution. The pathways that youth take through the transition to adulthood significantly mediate this relationship. The transition-to-adulthood pathways explain about one-quarter of the intergenerational transmission of status for young men in this study, and about 40 percent for young women.

For young men, the only pathway significantly mediating the relationship between parental wealth and young adult income is *extended education* (relative to the most common *work then family* pathway). Young men in the *extended education* pathway have more wealthy parents and have higher incomes themselves as young adults. This points to stickiness at the upper end of the status distribution. This phenomenon has recently been coined the “wealth trap” (Solon 2016). This wealth trap may be the result of opportunity hoarding on the part of upper-middle class parents, as they take advantage of their resources to help their sons gain admission into four-year colleges and secure internships setting them up for successful careers (Reeves 2017).

For young women, however, the mediating pathways are at the other end of the spectrum. Young women in the *expedited adulthood* and *expedited adulthood without marriage* pathways have less wealthy parents and have lower incomes as young adults than their peers in the *work then family but with cohabitation* pathway. This corresponds to the poverty trap, in which multiple generations remain at the bottom of the income or wealth distribution. These pathways are distinguished by early parenthood patterns. Childrearing is largely seen as a mother’s responsibility in the United States, and women’s incomes are penalized for having children (Budig and England 2001), so it makes sense for these pathways to mediate the

intergenerational transmission of status for women but not men. Interestingly, even though young women with more wealthy parents are more likely to be in the (*somewhat*) *extended education pathway* than the *work then family pathway*, they do not earn higher incomes in young adulthood. Because this pathway is not as distinct for women as for men, there may not be enough of a difference between this pathway and the *work then family pathway* for it to emerge as a mediator in the way that it does for the men.

The mediation estimates presented here are likely conservative. The transition-to-adulthood pathways are used as proxies for the transition to adulthood, and, as discovered with the first research question, they do not have explanatory power above and beyond timing of individual events. The mediating power of the entire transition to adulthood period then, is likely larger than what is presented here. Additionally, recent research has revealed that the transition to adulthood varies systematically by race and socioeconomic status (see Chapter 1). The current analyses do not take this variation into account, and thus may lose some of their potential explanatory power. Future research will need to use separate pathways for each group. Finally, the sample used for this study is still young, and the influence of parental resources on their outcomes has not yet run its full course. The effect of family background on earnings stabilizes between the ages of 30 and 40 (Karhula 2017). As this cohort continues to age, there may be further divergence in income. Youth with more education may have steeper earnings growth than youth with more work experience, which may exasperate the mediation of this time period for men in particular.

Limitations. The transition-to-adulthood pathways are treated as perfectly measured, and are not accompanied by standard errors, even though they were generated in a stochastic process in reality. Future work should address this limitation by using bootstrap standard errors. The present analyses are also not weighted, and are thus not nationally representative. Nevertheless, the sample is a broad representation of a recent cohort of black and white youth in America.

Conclusions. While the pathways that youth follow through the transition to adulthood do not predict young adult income above and beyond the timing of individual events during the transition to adulthood, they do serve as useful heuristics in examining the transition to adulthood as a mechanism in the transmission of status from parent to child. Pathways through the transition to adulthood explain about one-third of the intergenerational transmission of status. For men, there is evidence of this period reinforcing a wealth trap at the top end of the socioeconomic spectrum, while for women, the transition to adulthood reinforces the poverty trap. This study helps us begin to understand how this transition period serves as a mechanism in the intergenerational transmission of status that Hogan and Astone (1986) identified over three decades ago.

Tables

Table 2.1. Timing of transition-to-adulthood events by gender, NLSY97

Men (n=1,693)		
	% Completed Transition by End of Study	Average Age (Among Those who Completed Transition)
Independent Residence	90.9%	20.8
Completing Education	99.4%	20.1
First Full-Time Employment	96.9%	20.2
First Cohabitation	66.2%	23.2
First Marriage	46.8%	25.3
First Birth	56.2%	24.2
Women (n=1,705)		
	% Completed Transition by End of Study	Average Age (Among Those who Completed Transition)
Independent Residence	92.9%	20.2
Completing Education	99.1%	20.4
First Full-Time Employment	94.0%	20.7
First Cohabitation	70.2%	21.8
First Marriage	53.4%	24.3
First Birth	68.0%	22.6

Table 2.2. Descriptive statistics by transition-to-adulthood pathways and gender, NLSY97

Men (n=1,693)					
Pathway	%	% College-educated parents	% Black	Mean parental wealth	Mean young adult income
P1: Late Starters	12.2%	24.2%	41.1%	\$85,241.13	\$61,627.69
P2: Extended Education	21.7%	56.4%	14.4%	\$197,065.30	\$92,852.09
P3: Work then Family	34.7%	23.3%	23.3%	\$102,420.30	\$66,472.86
P4: Expedited Adulthood w/o Marriage	20.2%	8.8%	63.2%	\$41,011.75	\$46,659.69
P5: Expedited Adulthood	11.2%	20.6%	19.0%	\$81,029.39	\$61,562.59
Women (n=1,705)					
Pathway	%	% College-educated parents	% Black	Mean parental wealth	Mean young adult income
P1: Late Starters	6.5%	19.8%	36.9%	\$100,270.20	\$69,914.45
P2: (Somewhat) Extended Education	22.8%	40.4%	29.6%	\$157,921.00	\$82,586.31
P3: Work then Family, but with Cohabitation	22.8%	38.7%	18.6%	\$127,440.90	\$86,564.15
P4: Expedited Adulthood w/o Marriage	29.2%	9.6%	63.3%	\$34,593.12	\$40,942.98
P5: Expedited Adulthood	18.8%	16.9%	21.9%	\$77,206.06	\$63,002.59

Table 2.3. OLS regression of young adult household income on transition-to-adulthood event timings and pathways, men, NLSY97

	Timings			Pathways		Timing and Pathways	
Timing of Event							
Independent Residence							
Q2 (ref Q1)	0.34		(4.01)		0.03	(4.02)	
Q3	1.16		(4.18)		0.82	(4.19)	
Q4	2.49		(4.25)		1.98	(4.49)	
Event has not occurred	1.20		(5.56)		1.53	(6.45)	
Completing Education							
Q2 (ref Q1)	1.59		(3.97)		1.43	(3.98)	
Q3	6.91	+	(4.09)		6.47	(4.11)	
Q4	26.45	***	(4.67)		36.39	*** (7.22)	
Event has not occurred	0.56		(16.75)		10.76	(17.67)	
First Full-time Employment							
Q2 (ref Q1)	-6.65	+	(3.89)		-6.5	+(3.90)	
Q3	-11.41	**	(3.94)		-11.21	** (3.94)	
Q4	-11.79	**	(4.26)		-11.11	** (4.28)	
Event has not occurred	-27.72	**	(8.21)		-27.73	** (8.21)	
First Cohabitation							
Q2 (ref Q1)	1.73		(4.90)		1.50	(4.91)	
Q3	-1.56		(5.09)		-1.59	(5.11)	
Q4	2.48		(5.15)		2.73	(5.16)	
Event has not occurred	-5.85		(4.62)		-5.77	(4.62)	
First Marriage							
Q2 (ref Q1)	4.03		(5.74)		3.41	(6.22)	
Q3	9.31		(0.96)		7.77	(7.13)	
Q4	16.89	**	(6.05)		15.41	*(7.37)	
Event has not occurred	-8.17	+	(4.92)		-9.56	(6.57)	
First Birth							
Q2 (ref Q1)	10.48	*	(5.28)		10.34	+(5.30)	
Q3	13.76	*	(5.43)		12.38	(12.38)	
Q4	15.16	**	(5.67)		14.32	(14.32)	
Event has not occurred	11.74	*	(4.87)		10.77	(10.77)	
Pathways							
P1: Late Starters				-1.13	(4.52)	-3.52 (5.80)	
P2: Extended Education				15.25	*** (3.91)	13.68 +(7.52)	
P3: Work then Family (ref)							
P4: Expedited Adulthood w/o Marriage				-6.58	(4.00)	-2.03 (8.21)	
P5: Expedited Adulthood				-4.00	(4.63)	-4.82 (9.18)	
F test for pathways (df)						0.86 (4)	
R2	0.20			0.14		0.20	

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

N=1,693

Note: All models control for age, race, parental education, parental wealth in 1997 and household structure at age 12.

Table 2.4. OLS regression of young adult household income on transition-to-adulthood event timings and pathways, women, NLSY97

	Timings			Pathways		Timing and Pathways	
Timing of Event							
Independent Residence							
Q2 (ref Q1)	-5.54	(3.96)			-5.65	(3.97)	
Q3	-3.83	(4.00)			-3.86	(4.00)	
Q4	-3.04	(4.20)			-2.48	(4.26)	
Event has not occurred	8.50	(5.85)			12.39	+	(7.08)
Completing Education							
Q2 (ref Q1)	3.01	(3.87)			2.89		(3.87)
Q3	15.71	***	(4.17)		15.56	***	(4.17)
Q4	22.56	***	(4.56)		21.89	***	(4.58)
Event has not occurred	28.67	*	(14.24)		28.32	*	(14.30)
First Full-time Employment							
Q2 (ref Q1)	2.81	(3.82)			2.83		(3.82)
Q3	2.96	(3.93)			2.95		(3.94)
Q4	-3.98	(4.02)			-3.80		(4.02)
Event has not occurred	-24.44	***	(5.99)		-24.54	***	(6.00)
First Cohabitation							
Q2 (ref Q1)	1.41	(5.22)			1.51		(5.23)
Q3	4.69	(4.56)			4.20		(4.61)
Q4	7.51	(5.00)			8.66	+	(5.25)
Event has not occurred	1.24	(4.58)			2.84		(4.98)
First Marriage							
Q2 (ref Q1)	-4.8	(5.28)			-3.93		(5.38)
Q3	2.26	(5.45)			3.39		(7.00)
Q4	7.69	(5.53)			9.56		(7.16)
Event has not occurred	-23.89	***	(4.53)		-21.89	**	(6.61)
First Birth							
Q2 (ref Q1)	-2.82	(4.67)			-2.95		(4.68)
Q3	2.24	(4.79)			-0.58		(5.07)
Q4	14.72	**	(5.25)		2.12		(9.04)
Event has not occurred	9.07	+	(4.63)		-3.25		(8.82)
Pathways							
P1: Late Starters				-10.62	+	(6.00)	-10.18 (7.60)
P2: Extended Education				-6.55		(4.02)	-4.00 (5.07)
P3: Work then Family (ref)							
P4: Expedited Adulthood w/o Marriage				-27.1	***	(4.06)	-15.88 + (8.36)
P5: Expedited Adulthood				-16.44	***	(4.24)	-13.24 (8.61)
F test for pathways (df)						1.14 (4)	
R2	0.25			0.17			0.25

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

N=1,705

Note: All models control for age, race, parental education, parental wealth in 1997 and household structure at age 12.

Table 2.5. Simultaneous equation model of transition-to-adulthood pathways on parental wealth, and young adult household income on transition-to-adulthood pathways and parental wealth, by gender, NLSY97

Men (N=1,693)										
	Late Starters		Extended Education		Expedited Adulthood		Expedited Adulthood w/o Marriage		Young adult income (thousands)	
Parental wealth (thousands, 1997)	-0.001 (0.001)	+	0.004 (0.000)	***	-0.002 (0.001)	*	-0.008 (0.001)	***	0.063 (0.011)	***
Transition to adulthood pathway (ref: Work then Family)										
Late Starters									-1.126	(4.507)
Extended Education									15.249	*** (3.895)
Expedited Adulthood									-3.995	(4.618)
Expedited Adulthood w/o Marriage									-6.577	+ (3.983)
Women (N=1,705)										
	Late Starters		(Somewhat) Extended Education		Expedited Adulthood		Expedited Adulthood w/o Marriage		Young adult income (thousands)	
Parental wealth (thousands, 1997)	-0.001 (0.001)		0.001 (0.000)	*	-0.003 (0.001)	***	-0.009 (0.001)	***	0.060 (0.011)	***
Transition to adulthood pathway (ref: Work then Family)										
Late Starters									-10.619	+ (5.975)
(Somewhat) Extended Education									-6.554	(4.009)
Expedited Adulthood									-16.435	*** (4.224)
Expedited Adulthood w/o Marriage									-27.099	*** (4.048)

+ p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Note: Reference transition to adulthood pathway is Work then Family for men and Work then Family, but with Cohabitation for women. All models control for age, race, parental education, and household structure at age 12

Figures

Figure 2.1. Conceptual model of the relationships between parental wealth, transition-to-adulthood pathways, and young adult household income

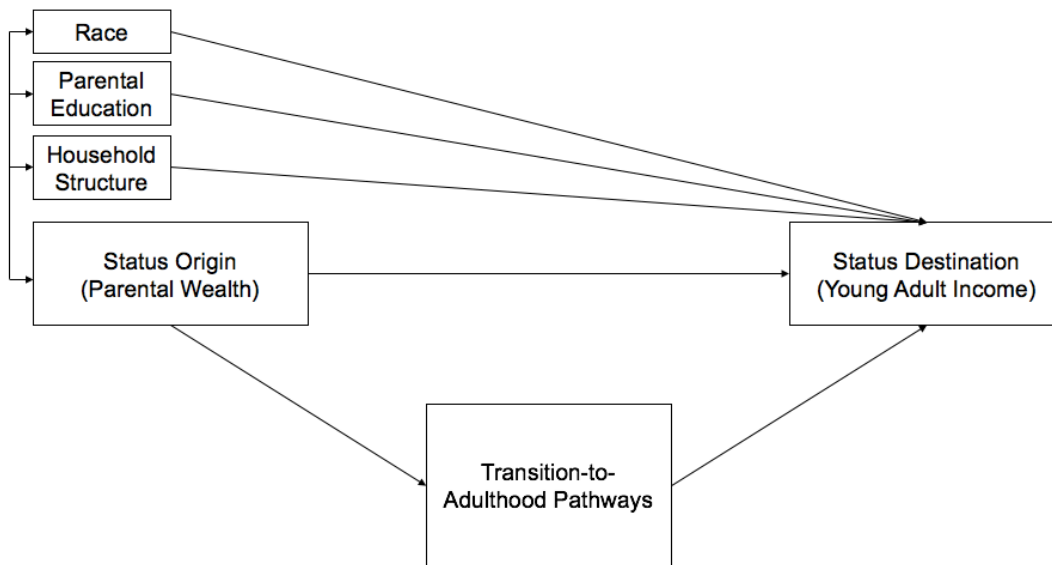
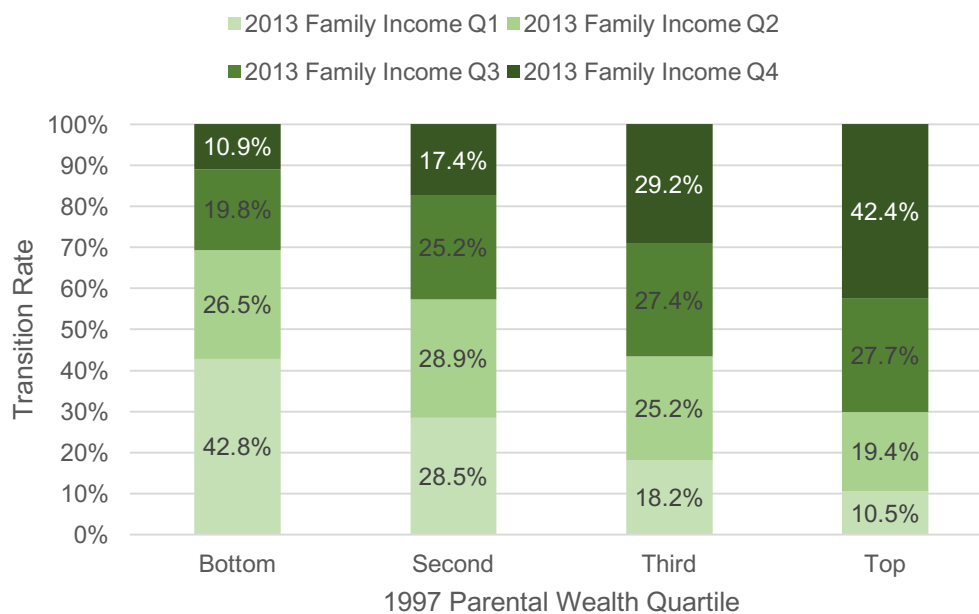
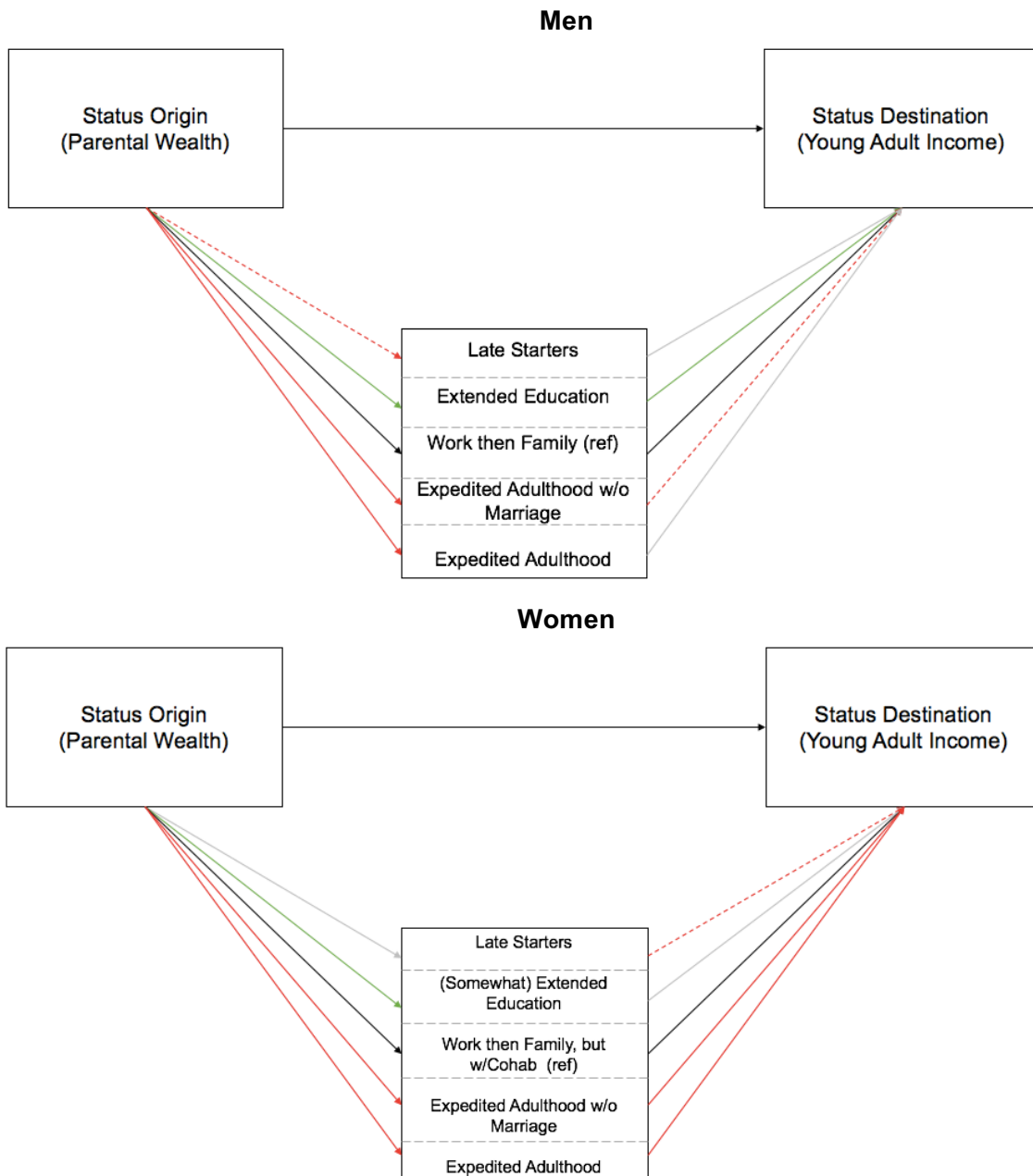


Figure 2.2. Percentage of youth reaching each income quartile by parental wealth quartile, NLSY97



Note: Based on the NLSY97 analytic sample

Figure 2.3. Path diagram of transition-to-adulthood pathways mediating the relationship between parental wealth and young adult household income by gender, NLSY97



Note: Models control for age, race, parental education, and household structure at age 12, as in Figure 2.1.

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CHAPTER 3: THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD IN 20TH CENTURY EUROPE: HOW DOES THE INFLUENCE OF CLASS VARY ACROSS SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT?

Introduction

Transitions to adulthood are incredibly diverse across Europe (Billari 2004; Buchmann and Kriesi 2011), and in recent history the transition to adulthood has been destandardized (Elzinga and Liefbroer 2007; Lesnard et al. 2016; McMunn et al. 2015; Robette 2010; Van Winkle 2017; Zimmermann and Konietzka 2017). Trends associated with the second demographic transition, including higher rates of women entering the labor market, a rise in cohabitation, and a separation of partnering from childbearing, have led to an increasingly diverse set of transitions, especially for women (Lesthaeghe 2010; Lesthaeghe and Van de Kaa 1986).

Meanwhile, there are longstanding regional differences across the continent in the timing and ordering of events in the transition to adulthood, including transitions in the domains of education/employment and family (Billari 2004; Billari and Liefbroer 2010; Schwanitz 2017). In fact, the transition to adulthood varies even more across regions than it has over time (Van Winkle 2017). The major regional patterns in the transition to adulthood are between Western and Northern Europe, on one hand, and Eastern and Southern Europe on the other. Western and Northern Europe exhibit more diversity in the pathways that youth take through the transition to adulthood (Elzinga and Liefbroer 2007; Van Winkle 2017). There has been a transition to less traditional pathways into adulthood in Western and Northern Europe (Billari and Liefbroer 2010; Elzinga and Liefbroer 2007; Ritschard, Burgin, and Schumacher 2017), and there is even some evidence of new norms emerging, including living independently while

single, cohabitation, and births outside of marriage (Billari and Liefbroer 2010; Lesnard et al. 2016; Ritschard et al. 2017). In Southern and Eastern Europe, more traditional family patterns persist (Elzinga and Liefbroer 2007; Lesnard et al. 2016; Mitrofanova 2017; Ritschard et al. 2017).

While regional differences in the transition to adulthood have been well documented, less is known about how the process leading to this transition varies by region. In other words, we know less about the variation in forces that shape individuals' transitions to adulthood.

One of the most important predictors of the transition to adulthood is class. Youth from higher class backgrounds tend to prolong their transitions to adulthood by extending their educations, living at home longer, and postponing family formation, while youth from less privileged backgrounds tend to enter the workforce earlier and have accelerated transitions that may include early parenthood (Ferrari and Pailh 2017; McMunn et al. 2015; Schoon and Lyons-Amos 2016; Schwanitz 2017). Most of the research on the role of class in the transition to adulthood in Europe relies on a single country, and operates on an underlying assumption that class operates similarly across settings (for an exception, see Schwanitz 2017).

There is theoretical work on the transition to adulthood, and fertility, in particular, that emphasizes the importance of regional institutions for the transition to adulthood, such as education systems, labor and housing markets, and welfare systems more generally (Mayer 2001; Rindfuss & Brauner-Otto 2008). These macro factors may limit the influence of individual class differently by region. There are also hints from empirical studies examining single aspects of the transition to adulthood (i.e., fertility and residential independence), that show that class is more influential in Western Europe than other regions (Schwanitz 2017; Geist & Brauner-Otto 2017). Together, the extant theoretical and limited empirical work posit that class is likely related to the transition to adulthood, but to date research has not examined how the relationship between class and the transition to adulthood as a holistic process varies across contexts. This paper challenges the assumption that the role of class is universal in predicting pathways

through the transition to adulthood and examines whether class has different influences in different settings. Specifically, this paper focuses on women to examine macro-micro links (Buchmann and Kriesi 2011) between institutional contexts, class, and pathways through the transition to adulthood in order to assess how the influence of parental background on the transition to adulthood varies across four regions in 20th century Europe: Northern Europe, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and Southern Europe.

Background

Due to each region's unique history, each region in Europe has distinct family systems, welfare states, and norms, that may influence the relationship between class and the transition to adulthood.

Family systems. One of the most important factors in the relationship between class and the transition to adulthood may be the family itself. In close-knit family networks, there is more interaction between parents, and other members of their generation, and children. These interactions give parents and other kin additional opportunities to exercise social control over their youth (Mönkediek and Bras 2016). Close-knit family systems may also limit exposure to diverse ideas. The strongest, most close-knit family systems, as measured by frequency of contact between youth and their parents, and their geographic proximity, are found in Southern and Eastern Europe (Mönkediek and Bras 2016; Mönkediek, Rotering, and Bras 2017). In Southern Europe, in particular, youth tend to live at home for extended periods of time, until they have stable employment, and, most importantly, get married (Mayer 2001; Reher 1998). In comparison to the other regions, Northern Europe has the weakest family system. Youth are less likely to live close to their parents and have less frequent contact with their parents in this region than others across Europe (Mönkediek and Bras 2016; Mönkediek et al. 2017). Family systems tend to be stronger in Western Europe than in Northern Europe (Mönkediek and Bras 2016; Mönkediek et al. 2017).

Because the strongest family systems are found in Southern and Eastern Europe (Mönkediek and Bras 2016; Mönkediek et al. 2017), class may be more influential in these regions. Preliminary evidence provides mixed support for this hypothesis: the association between parental education and the transition to adulthood in France significantly differs based on whether youth are native French, immigrants from Southern Europe, or immigrants from Northern Africa. These differences are attributed, at least in part, to the family systems in which youth were raised (Ferrari and Pailh 2017). Conversely, a study comparing the United States and Italy found more clear relationships between class and pathways through the transition to adulthood in the United States than in Italy, where family support has limited the destandardization of the transition to adulthood (Sironi, Barban, and Impicciatore 2015).

Welfare States. A strong influence of other institutions outside of the family may limit the influence of family and family background in the transition to adulthood. The welfare state, including the size and type of social safety net, may influence the relationship between class and the transition to adulthood. With a large safety net, there is less risk associated with having transitions that differ from the norm. For example, a family with many children is less at-risk of downward mobility when childcare is provided by the state, and both parents are able to work (Mönkediek and Bras 2016).

Northern Europe (Scandinavia) has a long-standing generous social welfare system, and is classified into the social democratic welfare regime, characterized by universal social benefits to both the working and middle class. This regime provides a high level of benefits that appeals to the middle class (Bell 2006; Esping-Andersen 1990), and is the most effective of any regime type at reducing child poverty (Esping-Andersen and Myles 2014).

Countries in Western Europe fall into Esping-Andersen's (1990) liberal and conservative welfare regimes. After the second world war, Western Europe experienced strong economic development during the 1950s and 1960s, and had a general expansion of the welfare state

(Bell 2006; Brose 2005). Still, the liberal and conservative welfare regimes are characterized by modest social supports that do not have a large effect on the redistribution of resources.

Southern Europe is known for its familialistic welfare regimes, in which the family serves as the main safety net rather than the state (Bonoli 1997; Esping-Andersen 1999; Ferrera 1996; Saint-Arnaud and Bernard 2003). This may intensify the importance of family and class, as young women rely on their families for support of all kinds for extended periods of time.

Eastern Europe was not classified into a welfare regime type until after the fall of communism at the end of the 20th century. It is helpful to think about the economic situation of this region during the 20th century, however. The region experienced economic growth during this time period, but began at a very low starting point after World War II, and any prosperity associated with the growth was not generally experienced by its citizens. Rather, the population experienced food rationing, decreasing life expectancies from the 1960s to the 1990s, and fell behind the times in terms of technology (Bell 2006).

The stronger welfare states in Western, and, especially, Northern Europe suggest that class may be more influential in Southern and Eastern Europe during the 20th century. The role of the welfare state in the transition to adulthood is a nascent area of research, but a few studies support this idea. Aassve et al. (2002) found that the timing of leaving the family home depends more on income and employment in countries with conservative familial welfare regimes (i.e., Southern Europe) than in continental Europe and in countries with social democratic regimes (i.e., Northern Europe). Similarly, Billari and Philipov (2004) found that welfare regimes shape the interrelationship between education and motherhood for women across Europe such that these processes are less dependent on one another in social democratic regimes that are supportive of role combinations. Together these studies suggest that events in the transition to adulthood are more class-dependent in Southern Europe than Northern and Western Europe. Conversely, a study investigating variation across countries in the education gradient in leaving

home found that the influence of education is stronger in Western Europe than in Eastern and Northern Europe (Schwanitz, Mulder, and Toulemon 2017).

Norms. Strict social norms resulting from additional institutions outside of the family may also limit the influence of family on young women's transitions to adulthood. For example, young women growing up in settings with strong religious and/or cultural norms may have less freedom to exercise agency in their transition to adulthood. Previous research has illustrated that in the case of fertility, the family has a weaker role in settings with strong social norm enforcement (Van Bavel and Kok 2009, as cited in Mönkediek et al. 2017).

There are regional differences in women's rights and the norms around women's roles across Europe. Northern Europe has relatively high levels of gender equality, thanks in part to its limited involvement in the world wars (Brose 2005). In Western Europe, women's presence in the workforce grew during the wars, but there was a reversal to traditional domestic roles after the second world war, as a way to resume some sense of safety as women longed for "security and motherhood" (Brose 2005:314). Women's equality and feminism movements began in the 1960s (Brose 2005). In Eastern Europe, women worked at levels comparable to men during communist rule, but there was not necessarily ideological gender equality (Brunnbauer 2000). Southern Europe was behind the rest of Europe in terms of women's rights, and some countries did not experience women's suffrage until the end of the century (Spain in 1975 and Portugal in 1976; Brose 2005).

The study of class differences in the transition to adulthood across context is an emerging area of literature, with nascent and conflicting findings. While there is a general understanding of how the transition to adulthood has changed over time and varies by region in Europe, we know much less about how the relationship of class and the transition to adulthood varies with sociocultural context.

Methods

Data. The European Social Survey (ESS) is the European equivalent of the United States' General Social Survey (GSS). It is a biannual survey that administers topical modules at each round to a representative sample of adults from a selection of countries across Europe. In 2003, the ESS fielded a module on the timing of life events to residents ages 15 and older of the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Ukraine, and the United Kingdom (ESS Round 3: European Social Survey Round 3 Data 2006). Latvia and Romania are excluded from analyses because weights are not available for these countries. Germany has been divided into East and West Germany (based on where the respondent lived when they took the survey), because Germany was divided for much of the time during which the sample experienced their transitions to adulthood.²⁷

To date, data from this module have been used primarily to study age norms, such as by what age should a person have moved out of their parents' house or had children (for example, see Aassve, Arpino, and Billari 2013; Billari et al. 2011) rather than the timing of lived events. The data also include, however, information on the actual timing of events, which will be used in this study. For the current study, the sample is limited to women ages 30 and older in order to capture women who have had adequate time to experience the transition to adulthood.

Measures. This study focuses on the timing and ordering of five transition-to-adulthood events. *Independent living* is measured as the age at which an individual first moved out of their parental home for at least two months. First *employment* is measured as the age at which an individual first worked at least 20 hours per week for at least three months. First *coresidential union* is measured as the age at which an individual began living with a partner (married or not)

²⁷ Residence in East and West Germany is based on when the respondent lived when they took the survey, not when they made their own transition to adulthood. This is, unfortunately, a limitation of the data.

for at least three months. Age at first *marriage* and age at the *birth* of the individual's first child are also measured. For each of these transition-to-adulthood events, an age at occurrence is calculated by subtracting the respondent's birth year from the year at which they report that the event occurred.²⁸

Status Origin. Status origin is operationalized as highest parental educational attainment. Respondents are asked to report their mother's and father's highest level of education with country-specific response options. Responses are then coded into an adapted version of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) classification so that they can be compared across countries as follows: 0: Not possible to harmonize into 5-level ISCED, 1: Less than lower secondary education (ISCED 0-1), 2: Lower secondary education completed (ISCED 2), 3: Upper secondary education completed (ISCED 3), 4: Postsecondary non-tertiary education completed (ISCED 4), and 5: Tertiary education completed (ISCED 5-6). Cases with parents with values of 0 are dropped from analyses. The two highest categories, postsecondary non-tertiary and tertiary education are collapsed into a postsecondary category due to a small number of respondents reporting that their parents completed non-tertiary postsecondary education. If data is missing for one parent, information on the parent that is available is used.

Cohorts. Due to the rapid changes in the transition to adulthood over the 20th century, it is important to take into account when women in the study experienced the transition. Respondents are divided into four cohorts according to major historical events, based on previous work using the ESS (Lesnard et al. 2016). The first cohort was born between 1917 and 1934 and grew up during the Great Depression and World War II. Young women in Southern Europe likely grew up in dictatorships, and young women in Eastern Europe were under communist rule. The second cohort was born between 1935 and 1944 and transitioned to

²⁸ A previous study conducted by one of the developers of this timing of life events module made data corrections in some cases for cohabitation and independent residence based on perceived misinterpretations of the questions (Billari and Liefbroer 2007). I have replicated these modifications.

adulthood during a time of economic growth in Northern and Western Europe. Meanwhile, repressive government regimes continued in Southern and Eastern Europe. The third cohort was born between 1945 and 1959 and turned 20 between 1965 and 1979, a time of economic prosperity and social liberalism in Northern and Western Europe. The youngest cohort was born between 1960 and 1976. These women came of age after dictatorships had been overthrown in Southern Europe, and, for the youngest women in Eastern Europe, during the transition out of communism. For Northern and Western Europe, this was a time of economic deregulation, educational expansion, and increasing uncertainty in the labor market (Lesnard et al. 2016).

Region. The European countries included in ESS are divided into four regions: Northern Europe (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden), Western Europe (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom(UK)), Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine) and Southern Europe (Cyprus, Portugal, Spain). These divisions are based on previous work (Billari and Liefbroer 2007; Lesnard et al. 2016; Ritschard et al. 2017) and generally represent welfare state regimes.

Statistical Analysis. The analysis proceeds in three steps. First, sequence analysis is used to examine the timing and ordering of events in the transition to adulthood. Then, the trajectories are grouped into pathways using a monothetic divisive algorithm (MDA). Finally, the resulting pathways are used as outcomes in a multinomial logistic regression.

Sequence analysis. Sequence analysis is a holistic approach that treats the life course as a unit. It elegantly “gives a complex and informative description of demographic behavior” (Billari and Piccarreta 2005:82). The following events will be examined in this study: entering full-time work for the first time, establishing independent living arrangements for the first time, first coresidential union, first marriage, and first birth. All transitions are treated as nonrecursive, or permanent. Each transition event is assigned a code of 0 or 1 for each year from ages 16 to

30. If the transition has not yet taken place, that time period is assigned a 0. If it has happened, it is coded as 1.

Once data are coded in this way for each individual, it is necessary to use data reduction techniques to interpret the many different trajectories. Individual trajectories are grouped into transition-to-adulthood pathways using a variable-based MDA based on the timing and sequencing of the five transition-to-adulthood events described above. Beginning with all individuals in a single cluster, “the MDA approach works by taking all of the life histories in the sample...and dividing them into groups one variable at a time in such a way that minimizes the heterogeneity in the life histories within groups and maximizes it across groups” (Mouw 2005:274). The algorithm continues splitting the sample into groups until an additional division would explain less than three percent of variation among the sample, or a resulting group would contain less than five percent of the sample. This process is described in detail in Chapter 1. Sequence analyses are performed on the full sample for which weights are available, but are completed without weighting the data due to a limitation of the DIVCLUS-T package in R. Therefore, all descriptions based on the pathways are based on unweighted data.

Regression analysis. The pathways resulting from the sequence analysis are then used as the outcomes in a multinomial logistic regression model predicting pathway membership by cohort, region, and class. Interactions between class and region are then introduced. This analysis was performed using a variety of reference regions, but Northern Europe will be used throughout the tables as a consistent reference group. All regression analyses are weighted, adjusting for both the probability of being selected for the sample and population size of each country (European Social Survey 2014).

Sample Description. The analytic sample was born between 1917 and 1976, and was between the ages of 30 and 89 when they took the survey in 2006. Additional cases were excluded from analyses because they were missing data on the timing of transition-to-adulthood

events²⁹ (n=1,733) or missing data on parental education (n=522). The analytic sample consists of 16,371 respondents.

Over 90 percent of the analytic sample were born in the country in which they lived at the time of the survey, and over 97 percent were citizens of that country. Participants were fairly evenly divided across the sampled countries sampled in Europe, but Cyprus had a notably smaller sample size than the other countries, and Germany, Portugal, and Russia, the UK, and the Ukraine had large samples.³⁰ Table 3.1 presents the proportion of the sample from each country, once cases have been weighted for their likelihood of inclusion in the survey and the population size of each country.

One-third of respondents' parents completed less than lower secondary educations; 24 percent completed lower secondary educations; 23 percent completed upper secondary educations; and about 21 percent had at least one parent with some postsecondary education.

Results

The MDA split women's transition-to-adulthood trajectories into six pathways, explaining 40.4 percent of the overall variance of transition-to-adulthood events. Figure 3.1 displays the divisions that led to the six pathways. The first division was based on whether or not a woman was married by age 24 and explained about 18 percent of the variation in transition-to-adulthood patterns. The next division, among women who were married by age 24, was based on whether or not they had worked by age 25. The women who had not married by age 24 were then divided by whether or not they had cohabited by age 28. Next, the women who were married by age 24 and employed by age 25 were divided based on whether or not they had cohabited by age 19. Finally, the women who had not married by age 24 or cohabited by age 28 were divided

²⁹ Eight hundred seventy-five respondents (4.7%) were missing data on the date of first employment, 1,853 (4.6%) were missing data on date of independent living, 438 (2.4%) were missing data on cohabitation, 238 (1.3%) were missing data on marriage, and 114 (0.6%) were missing data on first birth. Some respondents were missing data on multiple events, or on a timing event and parental education.

³⁰ About two-thirds of the German sample lived in West Germany at the time of the survey.

based on whether or not they had lived independently by age 26. The six resulting pathways will now be explained, starting with the pathway on the left-hand side of Figure 3.1, and working towards the right.

The first pathway is characterized by relatively low levels of participation in the workforce, delayed family formation, and, notably an extended period of *living at home* (see Figure 3.2). A moderate proportion of women in this sample have entered the workforce by age 30 (78%), but all other transitions are delayed. No women have moved out of their family's home by age 26. By age 30, one-third of women have lived independently, about one-quarter have cohabited or married, and fewer than one in five women have had a child. This pathway is small, representing six percent of the sample.

The second pathway is similar to the first in that it is characterized by moderate levels of participation in the workforce and *delayed family formation*, but young women in this pathway do move out of the family home. By age 30, more than 90 percent of women have entered the workforce, and all women have moved out of their family home. Meanwhile, these women have not really begun family formation. No women in this group have cohabited and virtually none have gotten married by age 28. By age 30, one in five women have had children. This pathway is also small, and represents six percent of the sample.

Women in the third pathway also delay family formation after living independently and entering the workforce, but not to the same extent as women in the first two pathways. By age 20, almost half of the women have moved out of their parents' homes and over 60 percent have worked. Cohabitation is also relatively popular, and by age 25, more than 60 percent of women have cohabited (which may include marital or non-marital cohabitation). Family formation is delayed, however, and about one third of these women have not gotten married or had children by age 30. Among those who have made these transitions, the average age at first marriage and first birth is later than age 27. One-quarter of women are in this *work then family* pathway.

The fourth pathway is characterized by very low levels of employment. By age 25, no women in this group have worked 20 hours per week, and, by age 30, just 15 percent of women have worked. Rather than working, these women have invested in family life. All have gotten married by age 24, and 95 percent have children by age 30. This group, representing nine percent of women, is labeled *stay at home moms*.

The fifth pathway is the largest, representing 39 percent of women. Women in this pathway tend to complete all of the transition-to-adulthood events, with the exception of childbearing, by age 24. They tend to get married and move in with their partners simultaneously between the ages of 20 and 24, and over 90 percent have a child by age 30. This pathway is labeled *expedited adulthood*.

Finally, the sixth pathway contains women who make rapid transitions to adulthood. By age 20, approximately 90 percent of women in this pathway have worked, moved out of their family home, cohabitated and gotten married. Childbearing is almost universal and follows quickly, at an average age of 20.5 years. This pathway represents 15 percent of women and is labeled *very expedited adulthood*.

These pathways are not randomly distributed in the sample, but associated with patterns by region (see Table 3.2 and Figure 3.3) and parental education (see Figure 3.4). In Northern Europe, the most common transition-to-adulthood pathway is *work then family*, (43%) followed by *expedited adulthood* (28%). In Western Europe, about one-third of women follow the *work then family* and *expedited adulthood* pathways. Eastern Europe follows a different pattern, and there almost one-half of women (48%) follow the *expedited adulthood* pathway; the second most common pathway is *very expedited adulthood* (20%), and the third most prevalent pathway is *work then family* (15%). Southern European women are more distributed across pathways, and the most popular pathways are *work then family* (41%), *expedited adulthood* (25%), *stay at home moms* (17%) and *live at home* (15%).

Class is also related to the distribution of transition-to-adulthood pathways. Compared with the most prevalent *expedited adulthood* pathway, youth with the most educated parents are more likely to be in pathways involving delayed family formation—*live at home* and *delayed family formation* — and are less likely to be in the *stay at home moms* or *very expedited adulthood* pathways. Figure 3.5 shows the predicted probability of an individual being in each pathway based on their parent’s level of education, controlling for cohort, and region. Note that while there are statistically significant differences in the probability of being in the *living at home*, *delayed family formation*, *work then family*, and *stay at home moms* pathways in comparison to the *expedited adulthood* pathway by class (see Table 3.2), these differences are substantively rather small.

Now that these patterns have been established, an interaction term between parental education and region is introduced into the model to examine differences in the relationship between class and the transition to adulthood by region.³¹ An f-test for the interaction between parental education and region was significant ($p < 0.0001$), indicating that the relationship between parental education and pathway membership varies across regions, and that this interaction adds to the explanatory power of the model. Results of this model are presented in Table 3.3 and visually in Figure 3.6.

There is statistically significant variation in the relationship between parental education and the probability of being in the *live at home* and *delayed family formation* pathways in comparison to the *expedited adulthood* pathway by region, but the effect size for this relationship is not very strong substantively to begin with, as noted above. The relationship between class and the *living at home* pathway is the strongest for Southern Europe. Young

³¹ I also examined whether the relationship between parental education and the transition to adulthood varies across time. An f-test test for the addition of an interaction between parental education and cohort was nonsignificant ($p = 0.40$), indicating that the addition of this interaction does not improve the model. This indicates that the relationship between class and transition-to-adulthood pathways is largely consistent across cohorts. This is consistent with previous research on the United Kingdom (McMunn et al. 2015).

women with more educated parents are more likely to be in the *live at home pathway* than the *expedited adulthood* pathway in Southern Europe. There is a hint of this relationship in Eastern Europe as well, but there is no relationship between class and being in this pathway in Northern or Western Europe.

The direction of the relationship between class and being in the *delayed family formation* pathway (in comparison to being in the *expedited adulthood* pathway) varies by region, which may help explain the small effect size found when examining the full sample together. Young women with more educated parents are more likely to be in the *delayed family formation* pathway in Western and Southern Europe, while young women with more educated parents in Eastern Europe are *less* likely to be in this pathway than *expedited adulthood*. There is no relationship between class and being in this pathway versus the *expedited adulthood* pathway in Northern Europe.

There is also clear regional variation in the relationship between parental education and membership in the *work then family* pathway. In Northern and Western Europe, youth with more educated parents are more likely to be in this pathway than *expedited adulthood*. In Southern Europe, the confidence intervals are very large so that the pattern between class and this pathway are not clear. In Eastern Europe, however, youth whose parents have lower secondary or postsecondary education are *less* likely to be in the *work then family* pathway than their peers with less educated parents in comparison to the *expedited adulthood* pathway.

There is no relationship between parental education and the probability of being in the *stay at home moms* pathway (in comparison to the *expedited adulthood* pathway) for young women in any region except Western Europe. In Western Europe, young women with more educated parents are less likely to be *stay at home moms* than *expedited adulthood*.

Although *expedited adulthood* is the reference pathway in Table 3.3, the predicted probabilities in Figure 3.6 illustrate that the relationship between parental education and *expedited adulthood* varies significantly by region. In Northern, Western, and Southern Europe,

parental education is largely unrelated to the probability of belonging to this pathway. In Eastern Europe, however, there is a positive parental education gradient such that youth with more educated parents, in particular parents with upper secondary education, are actually more likely to follow this pathway.

Finally, youth with more educated parents are less likely to follow the *very expedited adulthood* pathway to adulthood than the *expedited adulthood* pathway across all regions except Western Europe. This relationship is especially strong in Southern Europe, where youth with parents with lower or upper secondary educations have the lowest prevalence of following this pathway.

Discussion

Six clusters of transition-to-adulthood trajectories emerged from the data: *live at home*, *delayed family formation*, *work then family*, *stay at home moms*, *expedited adulthood*, and *very expedited adulthood*. These pathways are not randomly distributed across Europe, but follow sociocultural patterns consistent with the existing literature.

Regional differences in the prevalence of transition-to-adulthood pathways vary in expected ways. In Northern Europe, *work then family* is the most prevalent transition pathway, followed by *expedited adulthood*. There are very low levels of *living at home* for extended periods of time in Northern Europe, which may reflect governmental assistance for youth moving out on their own (Newman 2012). In Western Europe, there are higher levels of pathways involving a mixture of family and work roles in *expedited adulthood*, and a lower prevalence of pathways involving delayed family formation (with the exception of *living at home*). In Southern Europe, youth tend to make slower and more traditional transitions to adulthood, as evidenced by higher rates of Southern European women in the *living at home* and *stay at home mom* pathways and relatively low prevalence in the *expedited* and *very expedited adulthood* pathways. The pathways involving delayed family formation (*work then family* and

delayed family formation) are less common in Southern Europe. Similarly, in Eastern Europe, these pathways involving delayed family formation are less prevalent than in Northern Europe, but the most rapid transitions to adulthood (*expedited* and *very expedited adulthood*) are more common.

Class is also related to the pathways women take through the transition to adulthood in largely predictable ways. In comparison to the most common *expedited adulthood* pathway, young women with parents with post-secondary education are less likely to be in the *stay at home mom* or *very expedited adulthood* pathways and are more likely to be in the *live at home* and *delayed family formation* pathways. Surprisingly, though, youth with parents with medium levels of education are more likely to be in the “expedited adulthood” track. This pattern is driven by one region, however: Eastern Europe.

The present study then went beyond the existing literature to examine how the relationship between class and the transition to adulthood varies across regions in 20th century Europe, expecting to find a larger role of class in Southern and Eastern Europe than in Northern and Western Europe. Results were more nuanced than this prediction, and revealed interesting and complex regional variation in the relationship between class and the pathways that women follow through the transition to adulthood.

In Northern and Western Europe, young women with more educated parents were more likely to be in pathways that involve delaying family formation (*delayed family formation* for Western Europe and *work then family* for both regions), and young women in Northern Europe were less likely to be in the *very expedited adulthood* pathway than in the *expedited adulthood* pathway. These findings align with the current literature that suggests that youth with more resources are able to delay family formation and have a period of independence and self-sufficiency before beginning family life, while youth with less resources are more likely to experience multiple roles simultaneously throughout the transition to adulthood (Ferrari and Pailh 2017; McMunn et al. 2015; Schwanitz 2017).

Notably, parental education is related to the likelihood of being in the *stay at home moms* pathway (relative to *expedited adulthood*) in Western Europe only. In this region, women with more educated parents are less likely to be *stay at home moms*. Both welfare states and family systems are relatively weak in Western Europe, so women with less educated parents may stay at home with children out of necessity rather than by choice. Women with more resources may be more likely to be able to afford to daycare in a setting in which child care is not a public good, and extended family is likely not nearby to care for children.

The relationship between class and the transition to adulthood is similar in Southern Europe, where young women with more educated parents were more likely to be in the *live at home* and *delayed family formation* pathways, and were less likely to be in the *very expedited adulthood* pathway. The relationship between parental education and *very expedited adulthood* is not lock-step, however. The women with the lowest likelihoods of being in the *very expedited adulthood* pathway are not those with parents with postsecondary education, but those with parents with lower or upper secondary educations. Sironi et al. (2015) also found that the relationship between class and the transition to adulthood was less clear in Italy than in the United States, and attributed this difference to the system of familial support common in Southern Europe. "The reliance on family for fundamental support during the first stages in the life course implies that among the higher classes, de-standardization of trajectories is less evident. This is expressed mainly in terms of a further postponement of family formation, due to a prolonged stay in the parental home..." (Sironi et al. 2015:100). The relationship between class and living at home for extended periods of time makes sense for Southern Europe, as this is the region in which this pathway is most common. More privileged families may be able to support their daughters for extended periods of time, as is the preference.

The relationship between parental education and transition-to-adulthood pathways are quite different in Eastern Europe. There, young women with more educated parents were *less* likely to be in pathways involving delayed family formation, including both *delayed family*

formation and work then family than *expedited adulthood*. The probability of being in *expedited adulthood* also increases as parental education increases, while there is not a parental education gradient in other regions. Unfortunately, welfare regimes are less useful in explaining the patterns found in Eastern Europe, as the regime typology was developed to explain conditions after the fall of communism (Fenger 2007). It is clear, though, that young women in Eastern Europe grew up in very different settings than other European women in this time period. Most of the women studied in Eastern Europe came of age under communist rule. Governments actively worked to promote fertility, and family life was characterized by early marriage accompanied by early childbearing (Frejka 2008). This combination of government influence and tradition lead to *expedited adulthood* and *very expedited adulthood* being the most common types of transitions for women in Eastern Europe. Together, 69 percent of women in Eastern Europe followed these pathways. The positive parental education gradient for *expedited adulthood*, then, may be because most of the remaining women are actually in the *very expedited adulthood* pathway. Additionally, young women following the *delayed family formation* and *work then family* pathways may have wanted to begin family formation early, but were unable to due to a lack of resources and had to take care of other responsibilities (such as working) first.

Limitations. The present study is limited in a number of ways. First, the transition-to-adulthood pathways were generated based on unweighted data. Smaller countries and Northern Europe, in particular, are overrepresented, while Eastern Europe is underrepresented. Pathways may be biased towards the pathways prevalent in these areas compared to in Europe as a whole. Findings are also limited by the limited number of countries in ESS. The regions presented above are only representative of the countries available within those regions. Southern Europe is especially limited, as it does not include Italy, which is emblematic of the Southern European way of life and delayed transition out of the parental home. Additionally, because there are only a few countries in Southern Europe included in ESS, and because the

majority (83%) of respondents had parents with less than lower secondary education, the confidence intervals for this region are especially large. Future work should look at country-level characteristics and use multilevel modeling to try to explain the regional effects and attempt to distinguish between patterns related to family systems and welfare states (Schwanitz 2017). Finally, regression analyses are limited because there are no standard errors associated with the pathways, even though they were generated in a stochastic process in reality. Future work could attempt constructing bootstrap standard errors to minimize the effect of this limitation.

Conclusion. This study advances the literature on the transition to adulthood in Europe by examining differences in the relationship between class and pathways through this time period by sociocultural context. The role of class in predicting different types of transitions varies by context. In general, young women with more educated parents in Northern, Western, and Southern Europe, tended to take pathways that involve delaying family formation and were less likely to experience very rapid transitions to adulthood. In Eastern Europe, the relationship between parental education and the transition to adulthood is quite different. The totalitarian state that ran Eastern Europe for much of the 20th century likely changed the nature of class in that context.

While there are nuanced differences in each region, there is not a clear case for class mattering to a greater or lesser extent in one region compared to another. Instead, it may be helpful for future research to consider the types of support that youth receive in their transitions to adulthood, and where they receive that support. In Southern Europe, the family likely provides almost all kinds of support, ranging from social and emotional, to financial, as even government support is filtered through the family. In Northern Europe, the state provides more basic financial support for youth (such as housing), which may free the family to provide different types of support to their children. In Western Europe, youth may be more reliant on their families for financial support, as the welfare system provides minimal support for youth. Finally, in Eastern Europe, the state also provided for basic necessities such as housing, but

under a very different system. Future research should investigate country-level and regional characteristics to examine how they influence the role of class in the transition to adulthood.

Tables

Table 3.1. Weighted sample description, ESS

	N	Percent	Mean	SE	Range
Birth year	16,371		1952.871	0.2	1917-1976
Age	16,371		53.26	0.2	30-89
Cohort	16,371				
1917-1934		13.3%			
1935-1944		16.2%			
1945-1959		32.5%			
1960-1976		37.9%			
Native born	16,365	91.3%			
Citizenship	16,363	97.8%			
Parental education (highest)	16,371				
< Lower secondary (ISCED 0-1)		32.3%			
Lower secondary (ISCED 2)		23.9%			
Upper secondary (ISCED 3)		23.1%			
Postsecondary (ISCED 4-6)		20.7%			
Region	16,371				
Northern Europe		4.6%			
Western Europe		43.4%			
Eastern Europe		42.9%			
Southern Europe		9.1%			
Country	16,371				
Austria		1.4%			
Belgium		1.8%			
Bulgaria		1.2%			
Cyprus		0.1%			
Denmark		1.0%			
Estonia		0.2%			
Finland		1.0%			
France		10.8%			
Germany (East)		2.8%			
Germany (West)		11.8%			
Hungary		1.9%			
Ireland		0.5%			
Netherlands		3.0%			
Norway		0.8%			
Poland		5.7%			
Portugal		1.6%			
Russian Federation		21.6%			
Slovakia		0.8%			
Slovenia		0.4%			
Spain		7.4%			
Sweden		1.8%			
Switzerland		1.4%			
United Kingdom		12.8%			
Ukraine		8.2%			

Table 3.2. Multinomial logistic regression of transition-to-adulthood pathways on cohort, region, and parental education, ESS

	Transition to Adulthood Pathway											
	Live at home			Delayed family formation			Work then family			Stay at home moms		
Cohort (ref 1917-1934)												
1935-1944	-0.83	***	(0.21)	-0.55	**	(0.20)	-0.16		(0.14)	-0.41	**	(0.15)
1945-1959	-1.04	***	(0.18)	-0.59	**	(0.17)	-0.28	*	(0.12)	-0.54	***	(0.13)
1960-1976	-0.23		(0.17)	0.09		(0.16)	0.81	***	(0.12)	-0.43	**	(0.16)
Region (ref Northern Europe)												
Western Europe	0.78	***	(0.18)	-0.33	**	(0.11)	-0.52	***	(0.07)	0.47	***	(0.13)
Eastern Europe	0.57	**	(0.19)	-1.41	***	(0.15)	-1.71	***	(0.09)	-0.27	*	(0.14)
Southern Europe	2.20	***	(0.20)	0.29		(0.19)	-0.31	**	(0.11)	1.20	***	(0.15)
Parental Education (ref < lower secondary)												
Lower secondary	0.12		(0.20)	-0.10		(0.17)	-0.28	**	(0.10)	-0.10		(0.14)
Upper secondary	0.10		(0.18)	-0.03		(0.17)	0.05		(0.10)	-0.44	**	(0.16)
Postsecondary	0.46	*	(0.19)	0.50	**	(0.18)	0.17		(0.11)	-0.64	**	(0.19)

+<.10, *<.05, **<.01, ***<.001

Note: Reference pathway is expedited adulthood.

N=16,371

Table 3.3. Multinomial logistic regression of transition-to-adulthood pathways on cohort, region, and parental education, with interaction between parental education and region, ESS

	Transition to Adulthood Pathway														
	Live at home			Delayed family formation			Work then family			Stay at home moms			Very expedited adulthood		
Cohort (ref 1917-1934)															
1935-1944	-0.82	***	(0.21)	-0.58	**	(0.20)	-0.18		(0.14)	-0.41	**	(0.15)	0.23		(0.16)
1945-1959	-1.03	***	(0.18)	-0.60	**	(0.17)	-0.28	*	(0.12)	-0.56	***	(0.14)	0.55	***	(0.15)
1960-1976	-0.22		(0.17)	0.15		(0.16)	0.85	***	(0.12)	-0.45	**	(0.16)	0.90	***	(0.15)
Region (ref Northern Europe)															
Western Europe	0.63	*	(0.28)	-0.97	***	(0.21)	-0.61	***	(0.14)	0.87	***	(0.20)	-0.42	*	(0.17)
Eastern Europe	0.29		(0.29)	-1.33	***	(0.27)	-1.22	***	(0.17)	-0.23		(0.22)	0.05		(0.16)
Southern Europe	1.55	***	(0.24)	-0.78	**	(0.23)	-0.24	+	(0.14)	1.40	***	(0.19)	-0.59	**	(0.17)
Parental Education (ref < lower secondary)															
Lower secondary	-0.38		(0.39)	-0.35		(0.22)	0.06		(0.14)	0.39	+	(0.23)	-0.05		(0.18)
Upper secondary															
(US)	-0.20		(0.45)	-0.33		(0.23)	0.18		(0.14)	-0.06		(0.31)	-0.18		(0.19)
Postsecondary (PS)	-0.70		(0.48)	-0.35		(0.23)	0.46	*	(0.15)	-0.14		(0.30)	-0.98	***	(0.24)
Parental Education*Region															
LS*Western	0.19		(0.47)	0.47		(0.30)	-0.18		(0.19)	-0.82	**	(0.29)	0.06		(0.25)
LS*Eastern	0.34		(0.53)	0.16		(0.39)	-0.58	*	(0.25)	0.08		(0.33)	-0.35		(0.25)
LS*Southern	1.71	**	(0.56)	1.00		(0.65)	0.22		(0.20)	-0.28		(0.53)	-2.32	***	(0.60)
US*Western	0.24		(0.51)	0.78	*	(0.31)	0.18		(0.19)	-0.47		(0.38)	0.21		(0.26)
US*Eastern	0.02		(0.52)	-0.46		(0.39)	-0.56	*	(0.24)	-0.23		(0.40)	-0.53	*	(0.25)
US*Southern	1.31	+	(0.76)	2.03	**	(0.70)	0.63		(0.56)	0.81		(0.71)	-2.58	***	(0.69)
PS*Western	0.57		(0.56)	1.52	***	(0.32)	0.35	+	(0.21)	-0.69	+	(0.40)	0.60	+	(0.34)
PS*Eastern	1.10	*	(0.55)	0.21		(0.39)	-0.86	**	(0.25)	-0.16		(0.16)	0.16		(0.30)
PS*Southern	2.18	***	(0.60)	1.35	*	(0.56)	0.01		(0.39)	-0.59		(0.63)	-0.19		(0.80)

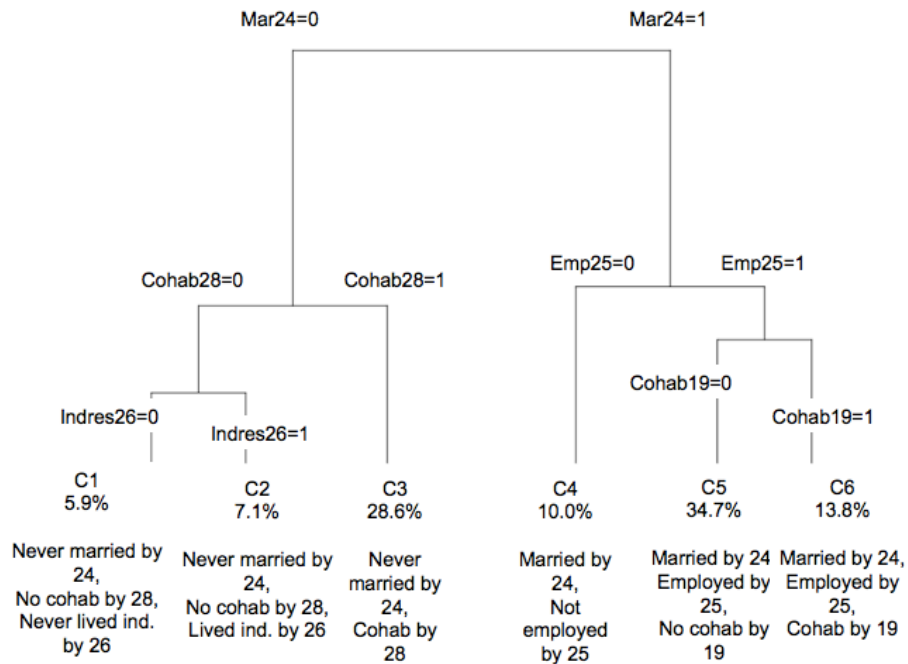
+<.10, *<.05, **<.01, ***<.001

Note: Reference pathway is expedited adulthood.

N=16,371

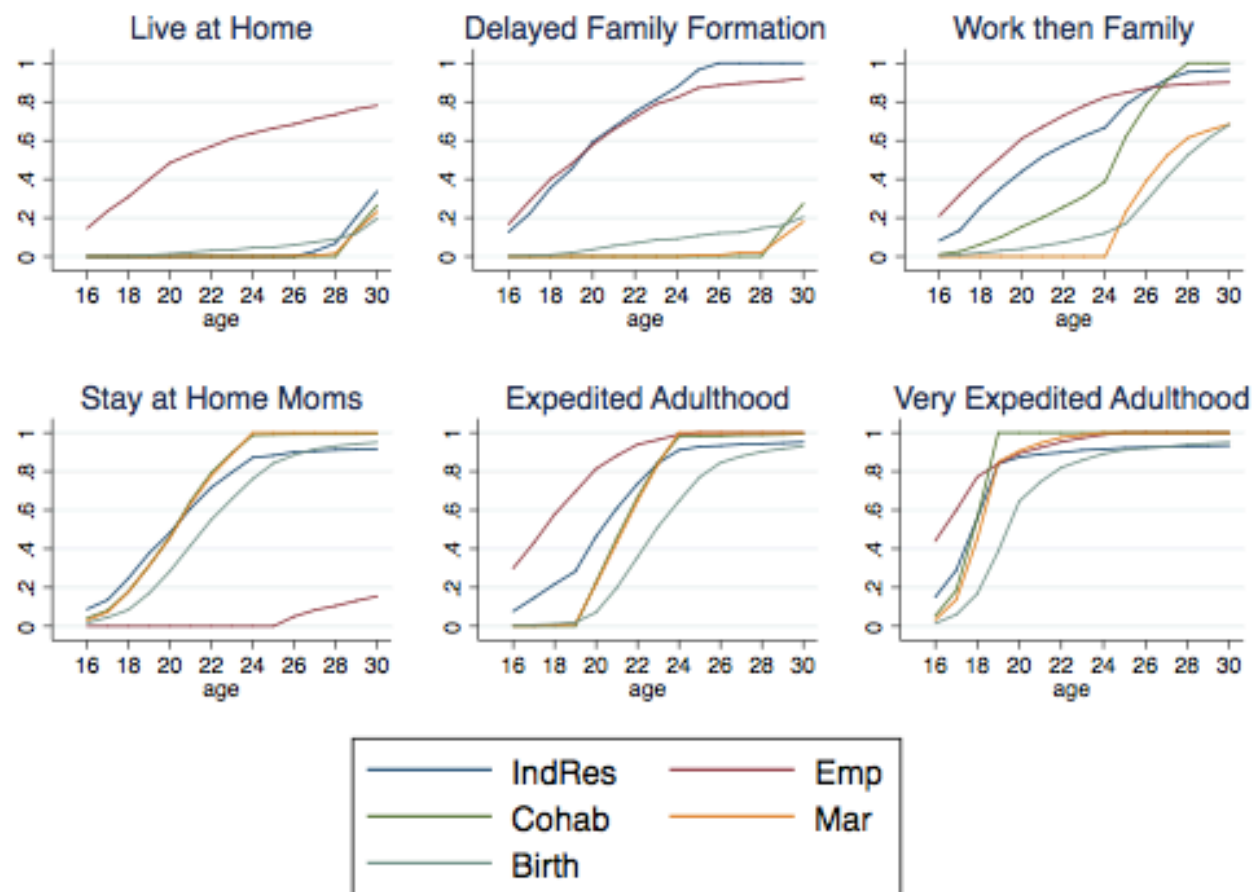
Figures

Figure 3.1. Dendrogram of transition-to-adulthood pathways for women, ESS



Note: Pathways are generated based on unweighted data. Unweighted distribution presented here

Figure 3.2. Transition-to-adulthood pathways for women, ESS



Note: Weighted distributions presented

Figure 3.3. Distribution of transition-to-adulthood pathways by region, ESS

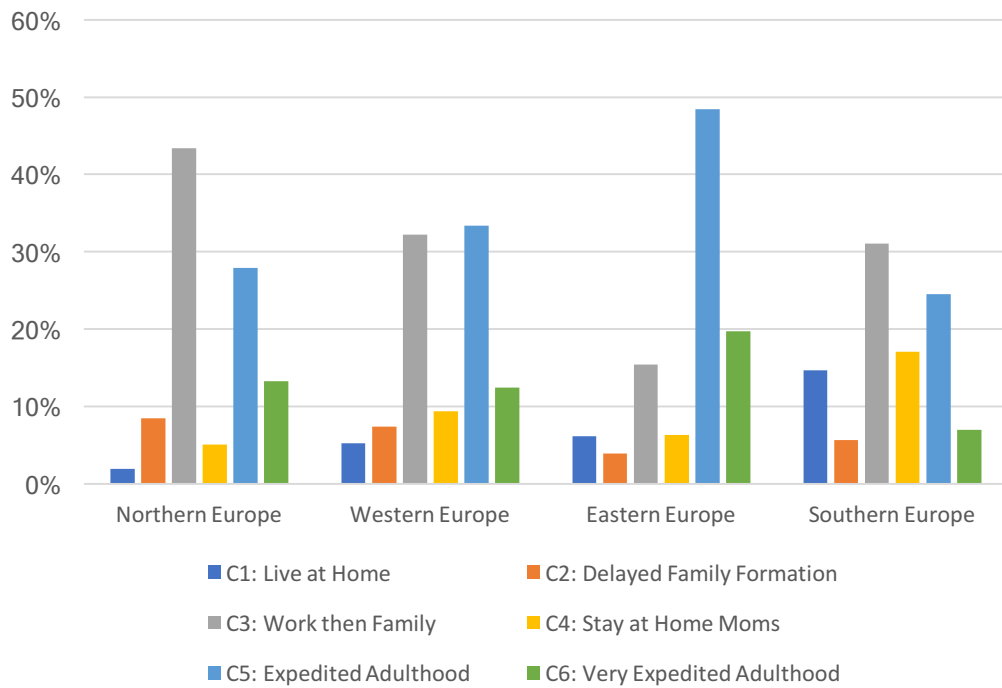


Figure 3.4. Distribution of transition-to-adulthood pathways by parental education, ESS

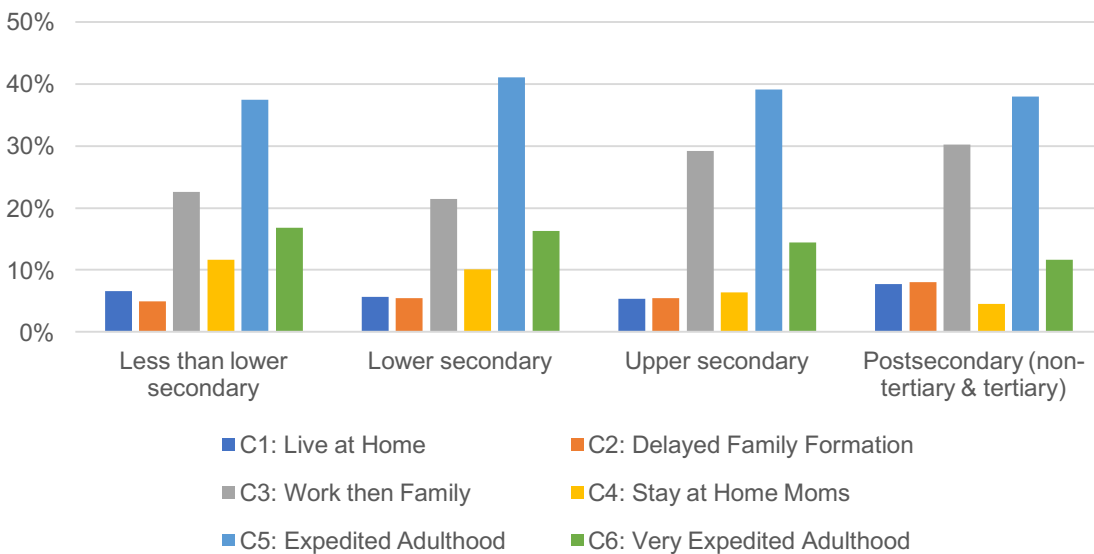


Figure 3.5. Predicted probabilities of transition-to-adulthood pathway membership by parental education, ESS

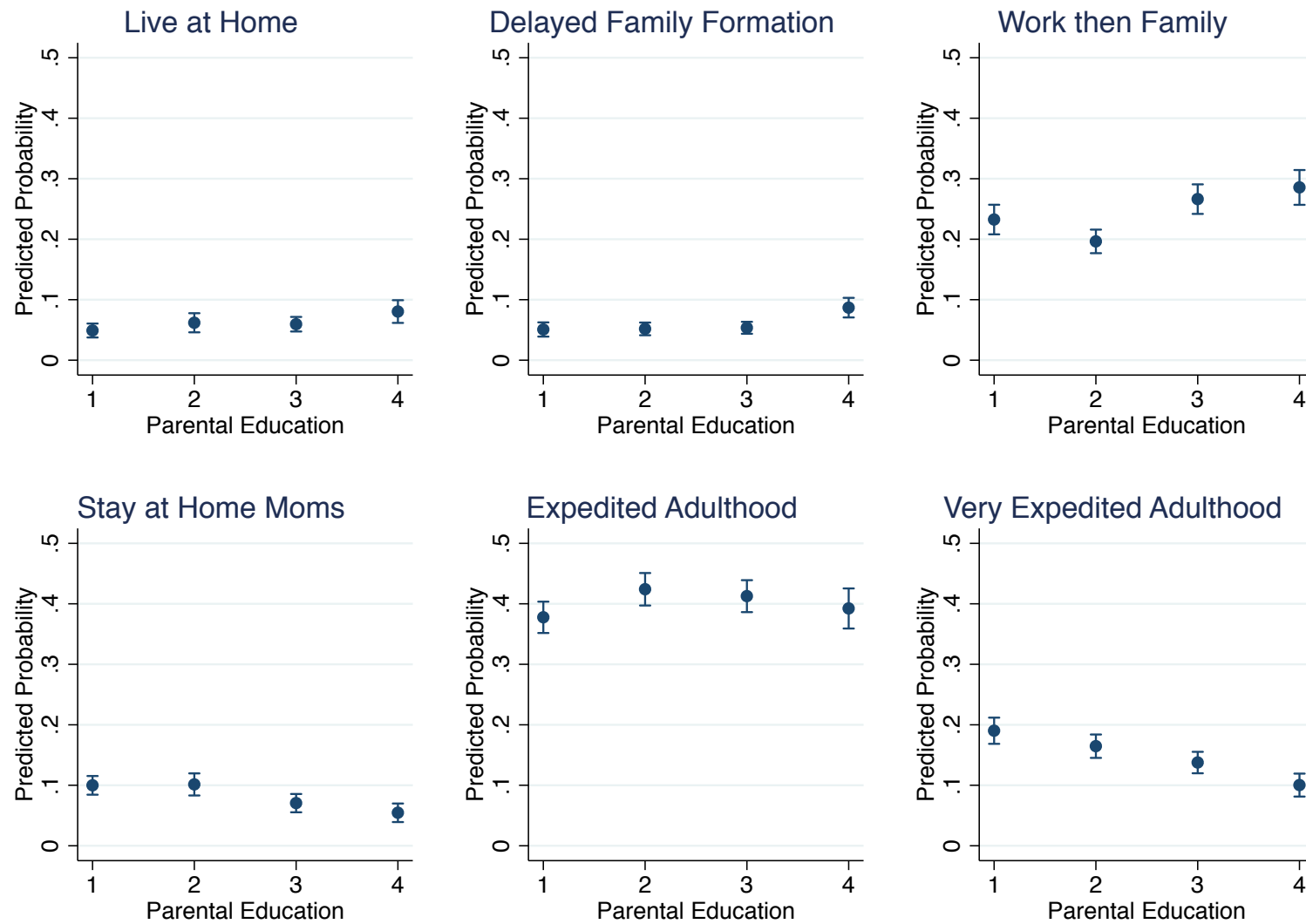
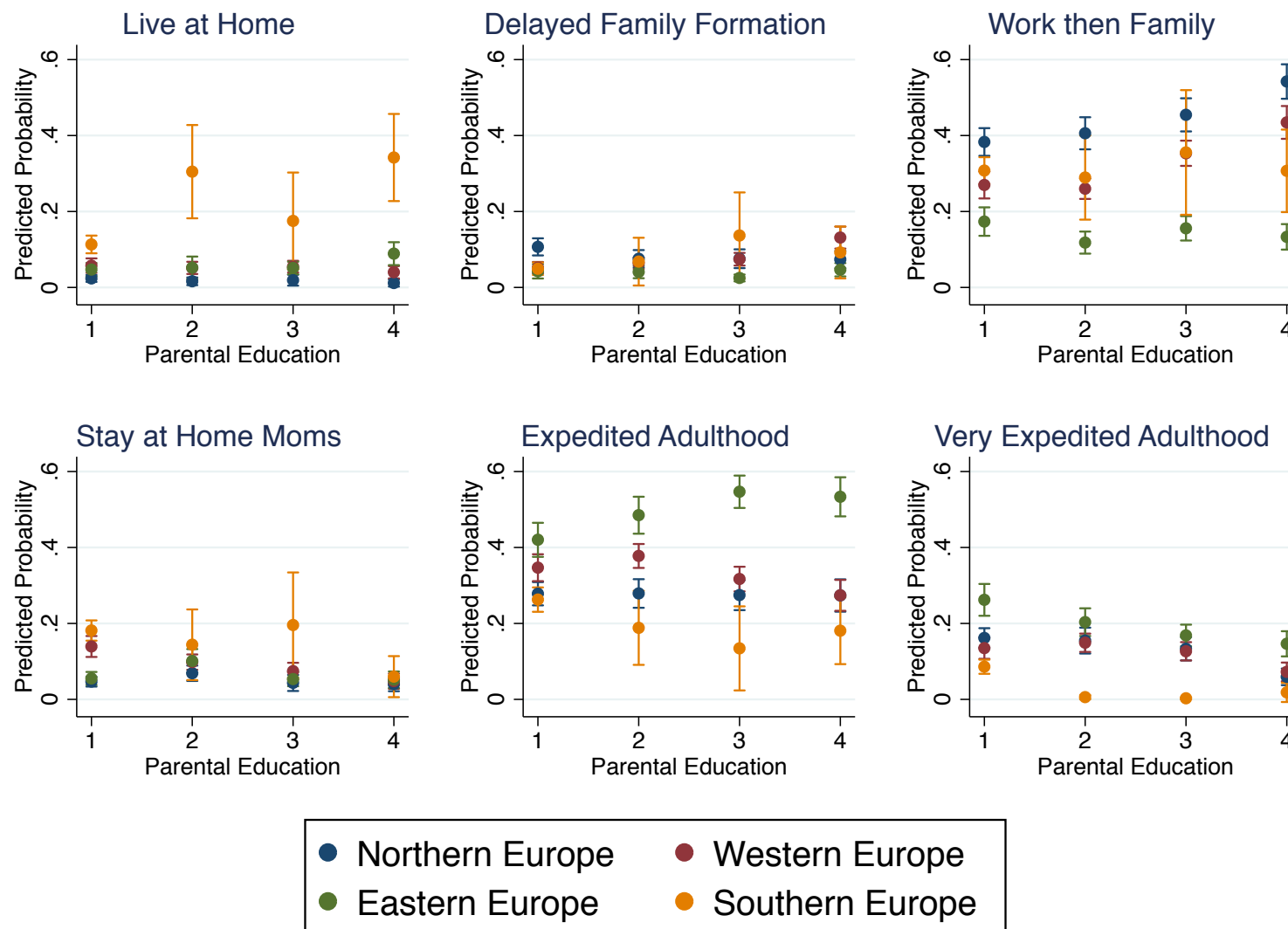


Figure 3.6. Predicted probabilities of transition-to-adulthood pathway membership by parental education and region, ESS



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CONCLUSION

One of the goals of this dissertation was to draw on both the life course literature about the transition to adulthood, specifically, and the social stratification literature more broadly. In doing so, I aimed to 1) add an explicit emphasis on inequality and stratification processes to the life course literature; and 2) add a holistic treatment of the transition to adulthood to the study of the intergenerational transmission of status. Drawing on the strengths of each literature, I aimed to address one overarching research question: What role does the transition to adulthood play in stratification processes?

The first step in answering this question was to document how the transition to adulthood varies for youth from different backgrounds. Using a data-driven technique, I allowed different patterns of transition-to-adulthood pathways to emerge for groups of youth with different race-class-gender configurations. This exercise revealed a huge amount of heterogeneity in the transition to adulthood, both within and between groups. Race, class, and gender all independently contributed to the types of transitions that youth were likely to experience, and worked together to create some distinct patterns for specific sub-groups. In general, groups with higher social standing (i.e., white males with college-educated parents) were more likely to follow pathways that led to higher levels of educational attainment (such as extended education without working while in school), setting youth up for long-term success. Meanwhile, groups with lower social standing, such as black men and women without college-educated parents, were less likely to follow pathways characterized by extended schooling and more likely to be single (unpartnered or unmarried) parents. Separating out groups by race and class also revealed unique contributions of each element of social status. Racial differences tend to be about family formation patterns, and black men's and women's transition-to-adulthood pathways less frequently involve partnering through marriage or cohabitation than their white peers. Meanwhile, class differences tend to be more about the pace of the transition

to adulthood and the presence of extended periods of continuous education, with more educated youth having slower transitions with extended education.

In the next chapter, I formally examine how these pathways link social origins (i.e., parental wealth) to young adult status destinations (i.e., young adult household income). About one-third of the intergenerational transmission of status by young adulthood can be explained by the pathways that youth take through the transition to adulthood. Young men with the wealthiest parents tend to follow the *extended education* pathway to adulthood and earn the most money in young adulthood. This is the only transition-to-adulthood pathway linked to both social origins and destinations, which may help explain the stickiness at the upper end of the socioeconomic distribution, or the fact that youth with wealthy parents tend to be high earners themselves. Parents of these young men may be opportunity hoarding for their sons, by helping them get into college and providing them with connections for internships, for example. For women, on the other hand, those with less wealthy parents are more likely to follow the *expedited adulthood* pathways, and earn less money in young adulthood. This supports the idea of a poverty trap for women, that youth who have less wealthy parents tend to earn less themselves.

In the introduction, I wrote that a 1986 quote from a review article inspired this dissertation: the transition to adulthood is a “critical juncture in personal life histories and connects social origins with subsequent adult attainments and life satisfaction” (Hogan and Astone 1986:125). These first two chapters help to illuminate some of the processes behind this quote. First, I show that status differences may be exaggerated during the transition to adulthood, as youth from different race-class-gender groups experience different types of transitions. Then, Chapter 2, in particular, illuminates two mechanisms through which the transition to adulthood connects social origins and young adult outcomes: opportunity hoarding for privileged young men and the poverty trap for less advantaged young women.

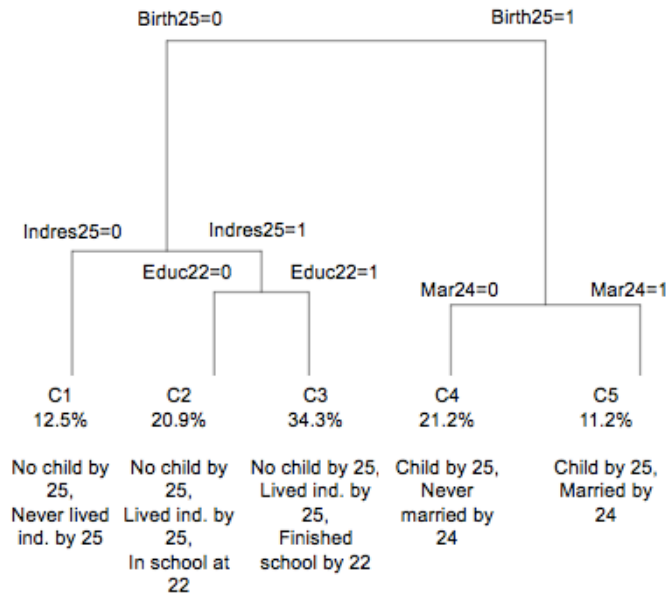
Chapters 1 and 2 collectively examine four elements of social context that influence the pathways that youth take through the transition to adulthood: race, parental education, gender, and parental wealth. In the third chapter I change settings to women in 20th century Europe, in order to examine whether the link between class and transition-to-adulthood pathways can be generalized. I also examine a fifth element of social context: region. I again find a large amount of heterogeneity in the transition to adulthood, and class is again systematically linked to transition-to-adulthood pathways. This relationship varies by region, however, and class operates differently to predict the pathways that young women take through this life stage in Eastern Europe. This comparison is a first step in examining whether the relationship between class and the transition to adulthood can be generalized across settings, and the findings indicate that the link between class and the transition to adulthood is instead context-dependent.

Together, this dissertation illustrates that the transition to adulthood varies based on one's location in society, whether that be race, class, gender, or geography. Extrapolating the findings from Europe to the United States, there may also be differences in the connection between social standing and the transition to adulthood based on other elements of context. Eastern Europe different from the rest of Europe during the 20th century, likely due to the level of control exercised by the communist government. Other related elements of context such as urbanicity, state- and local-level policies, the availability of affordable housing, and youth unemployment rates may also impact the role of class in the transition to adulthood in modern day settings such as the United States. Future work should examine this possibility, as identifying the contexts in which class has more or less influence could help clarify what mechanisms are important for the reproduction of social class. In turn, this work can point to policy levers to reduce the reproduction of inequality across generations.

To summarize, an individual's location within society influences how they are likely to experience the transition to adulthood, which has meaningful consequences for long-term outcomes. The influence of class on these pathways, however, may vary by context.

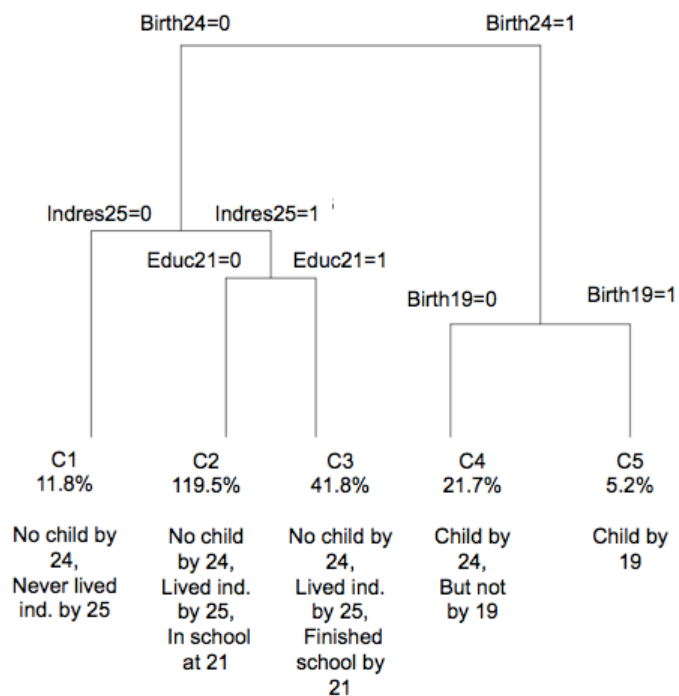
APPENDIX 1.1. DENDROGRAMS

Figure 1.1.1 Dendrogram of transition-to-adulthood pathways, men, NLSY97



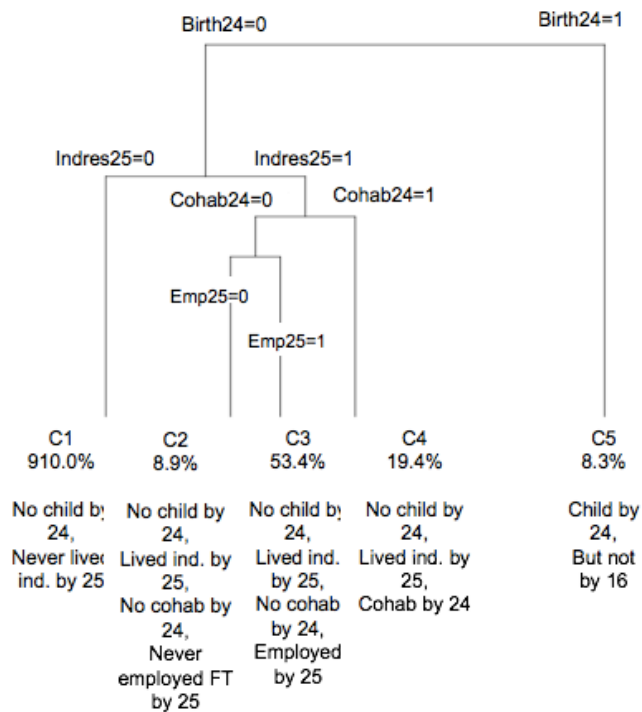
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Figure 1.1.2. Dendrogram of transition-to-adulthood pathways, white men without college-educated parents, NLSY97



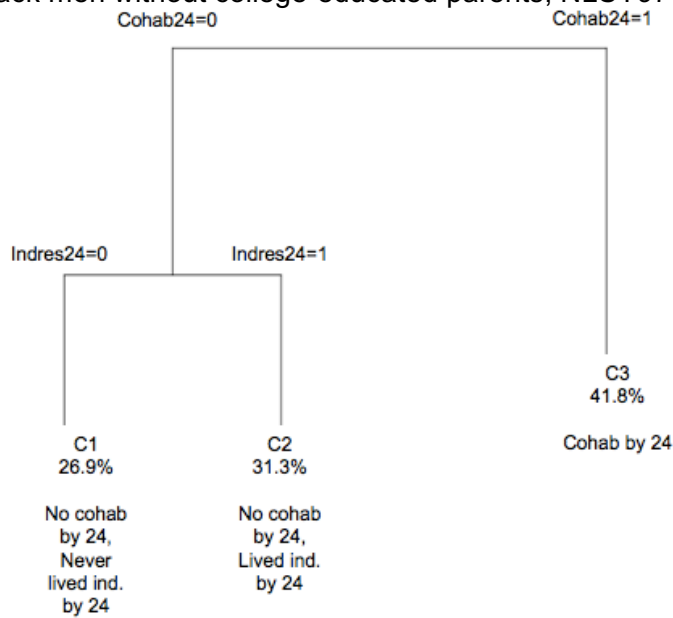
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Figure 1.1.3. Dendrogram of transition-to-adulthood pathways, white men with college-educated parents, NLSY97



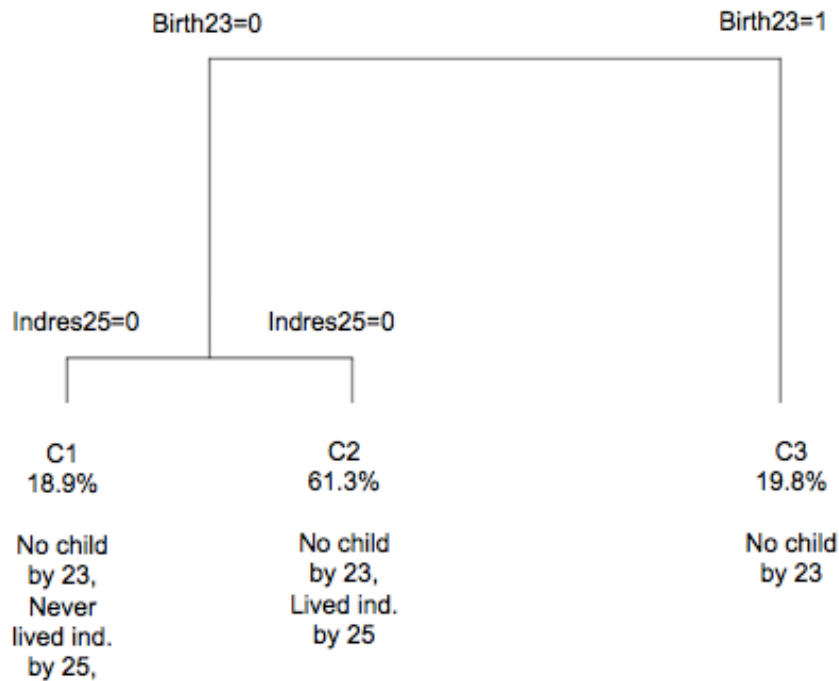
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Figure 1.1.4. Dendrogram of transition-to-adulthood pathways, black men without college-educated parents, NLSY97



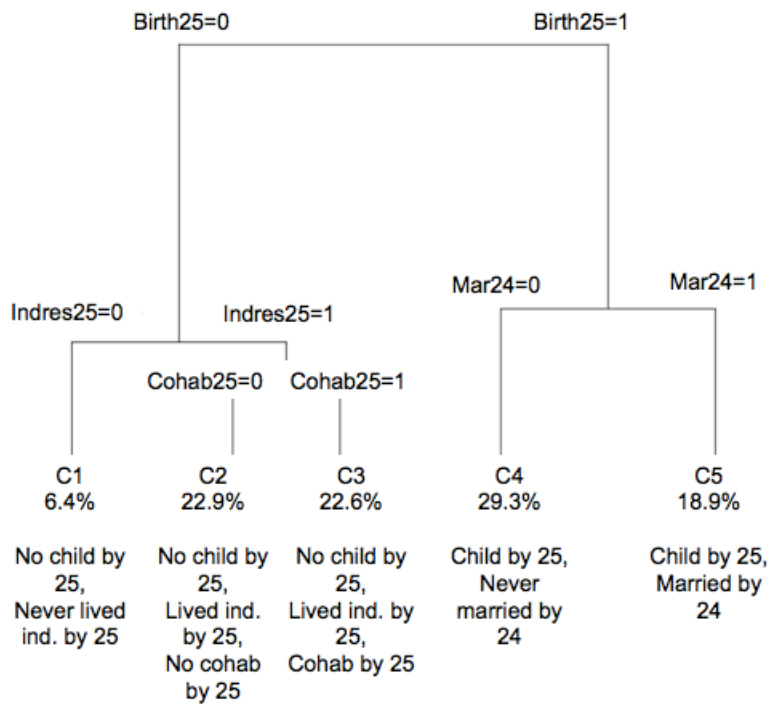
N=720

Figure 1.1.5. Dendrogram of transition-to-adulthood pathways, black men with college-educated parents, NLSY97



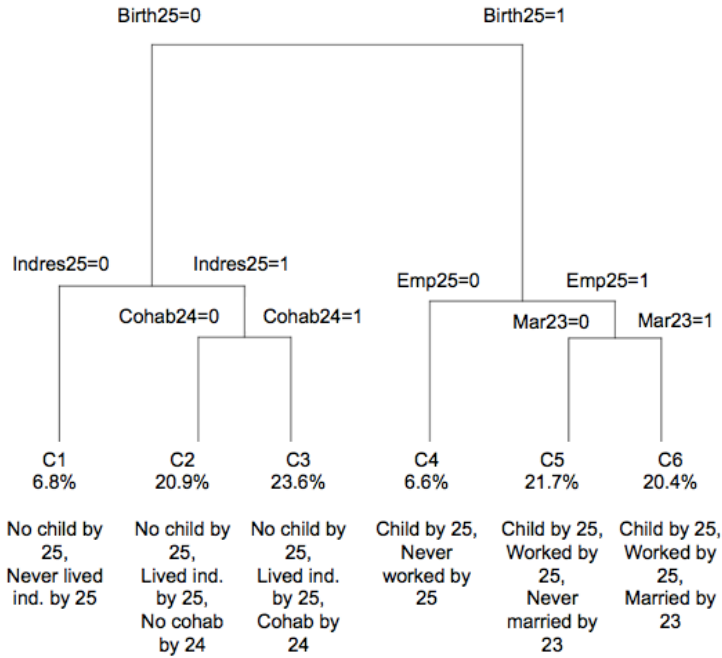
N=106

Figure 1.1.6. Dendrogram of transition-to-adulthood pathways, women, NLSY97



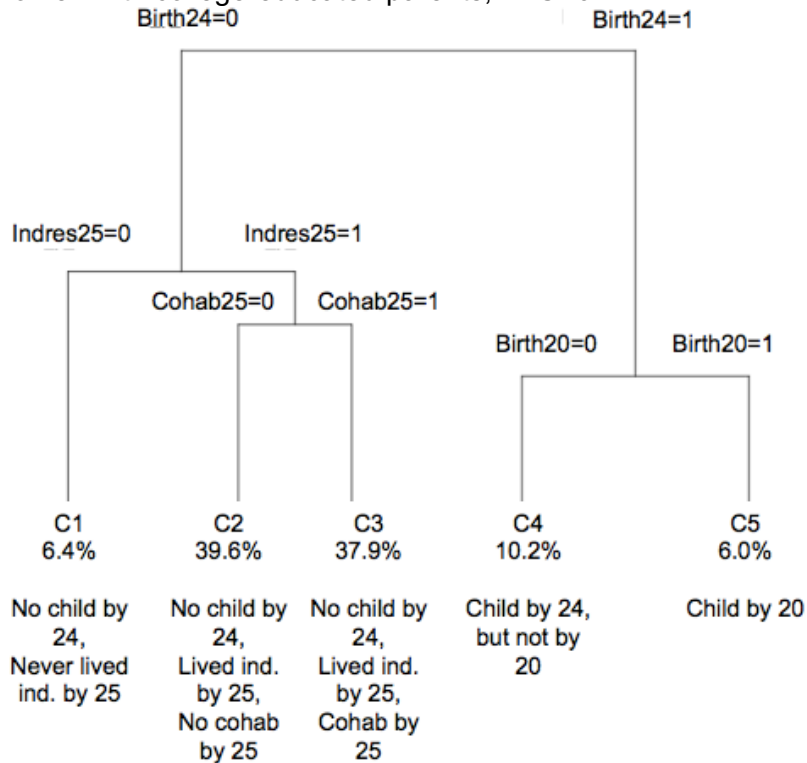
N=2,505

Figure 1.1.7. Dendrogram of transition-to-adulthood pathways, white women without college-educated parents, NLSY97



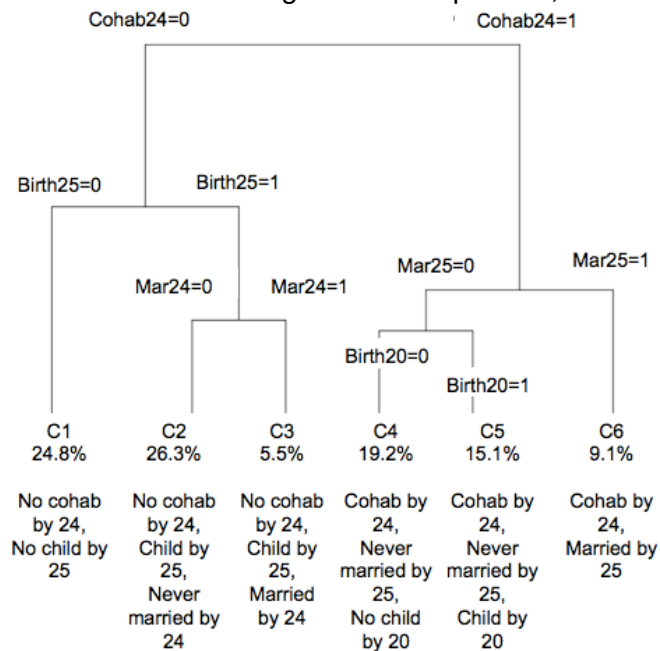
N=1,052

Figure 1.1.8. Dendrogram of transition-to-adulthood pathways, white women with college-educated parents, NLSY97



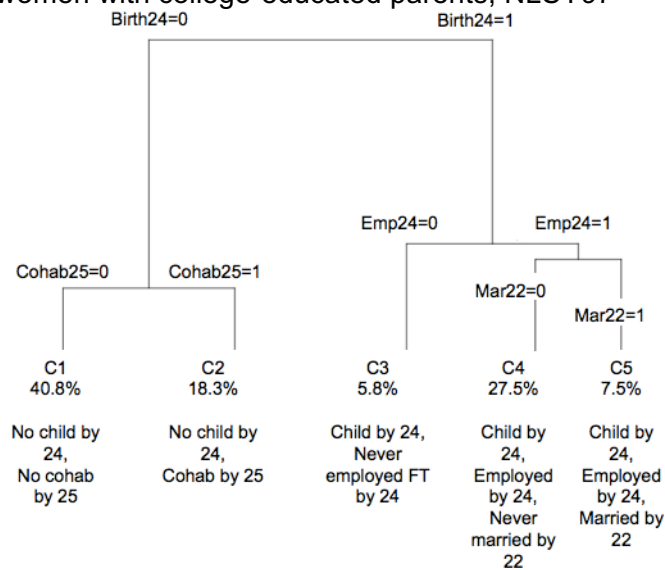
N=531

Figure 1.1.9. Dendrogram of transition-to-adulthood pathways, black women without college-educated parents, NLSY97



N=802

Figure 1.1.10 Dendrogram of transition-to-adulthood pathways, black women with college-educated parents, NLSY97



N=120

APPENDIX 1.2. PATHWAY DESCRIPTIONS

Figure 1.2.1. Transition-to-adulthood pathways, white men without college-educated parents, NLSY97

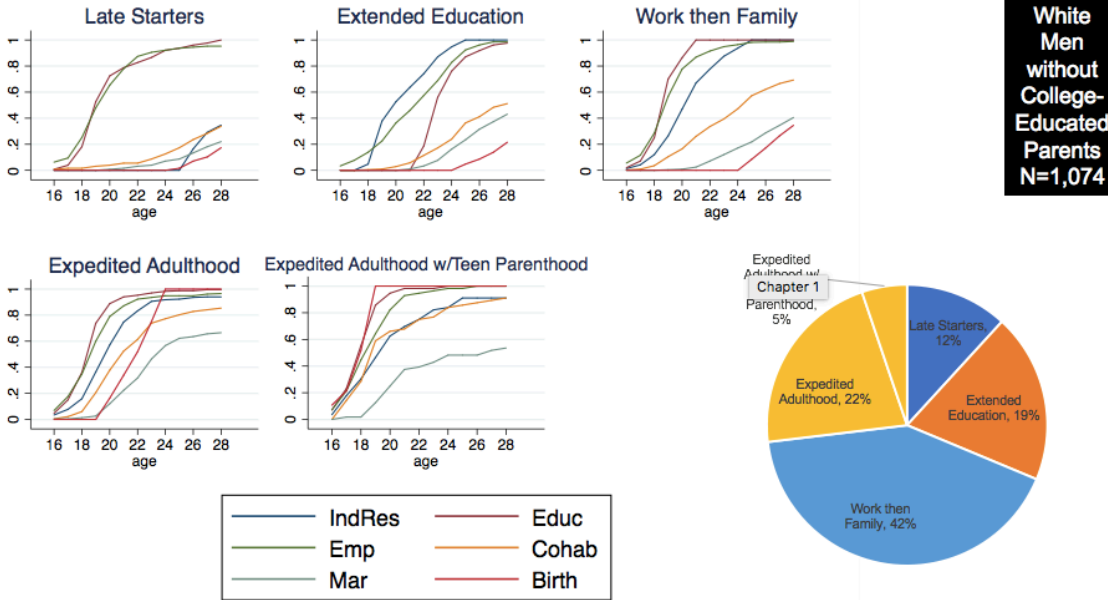


Figure 1.2.2. Transition-to-adulthood pathways, white men with college-educated parents, NLSY97

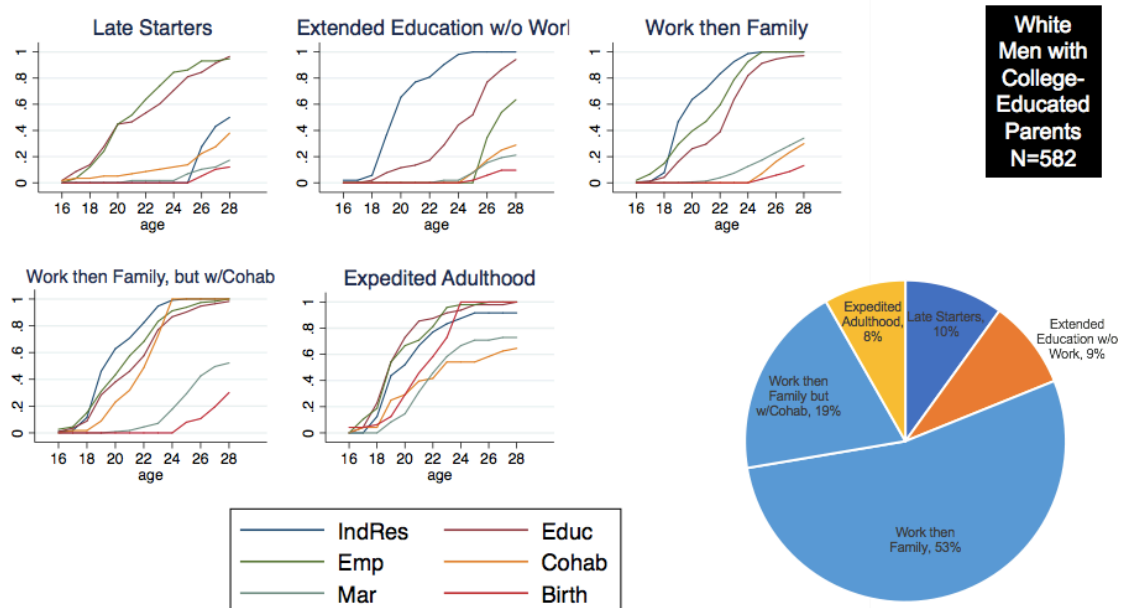


Figure 1.2.3. Transition-to-adulthood pathways, black men without college-educated parents, NLSY97

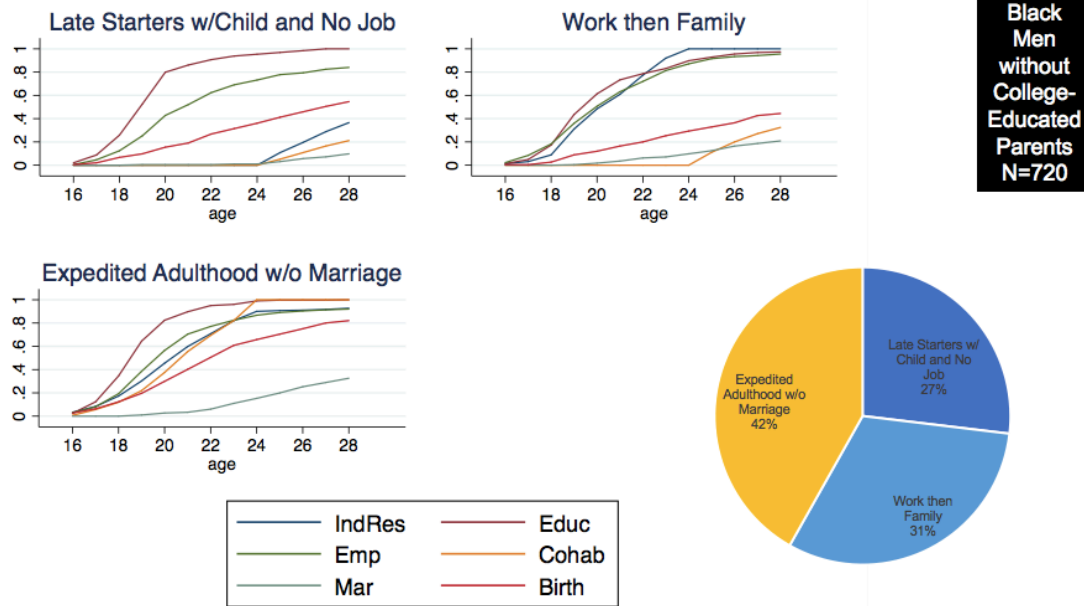


Figure 1.2.4. Transition-to-adulthood pathways, black men with college-educated parents, NLSY97

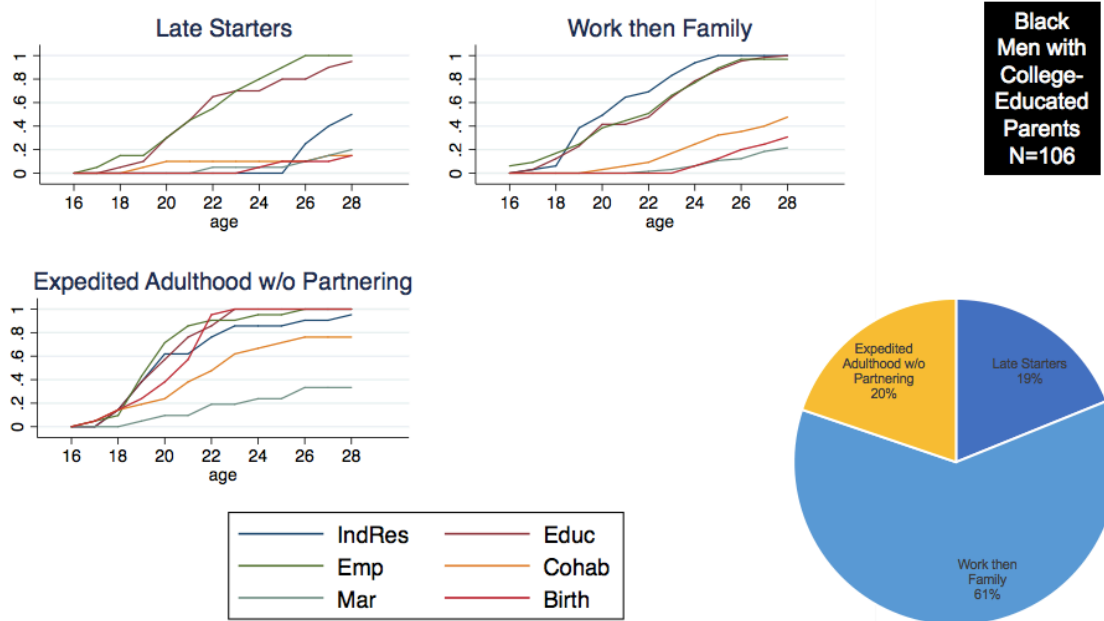


Figure 1.2.5. Transition-to-adulthood pathways, white women without college-educated parents, NLSY97

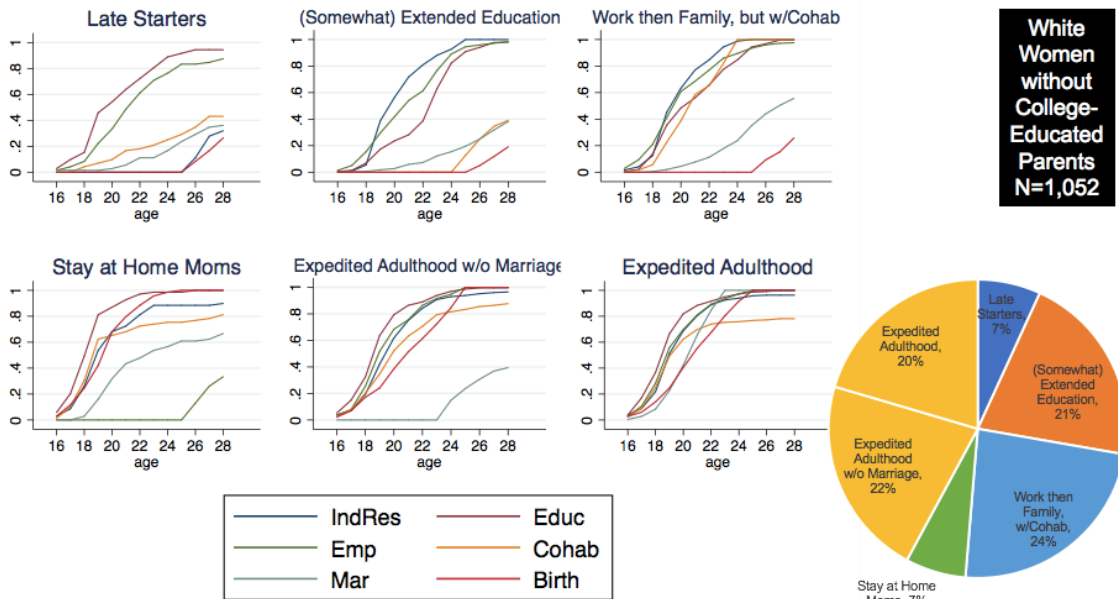


Figure 1.2.6. Transition-to-adulthood pathways, white women with college-educated parents, NLSY97

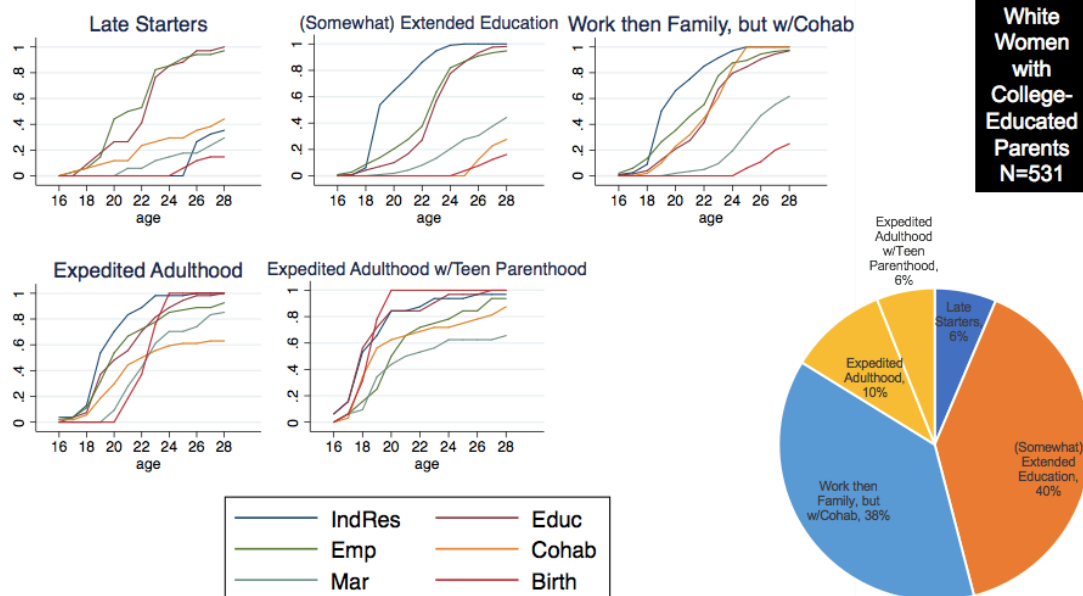


Figure 1.2.7. Transition-to-adulthood pathways, black women without college-educated parents, NLSY97

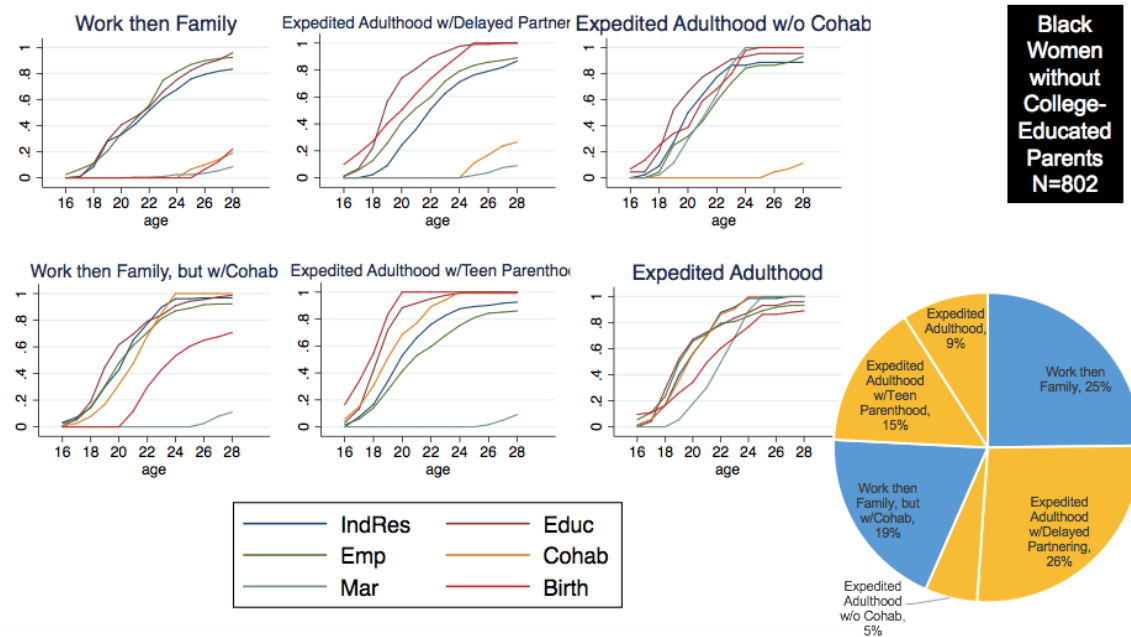


Figure 1.2.8. Transition-to-adulthood pathways, black women with college-educated parents, NLSY97

