



Thu 27.8.2015 14:00 - 15:30 room FA 650

Early transitions to adulthood: where does the rush come from?

Evidence from a longitudinal study in Portugal

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Theoretical framework

The current **patterns of transition** to adulthood have been characterized as **late, protracted and complex** (Billari and Liefbroer, 2010).

De-standardization theories: “life states, events and their sequences can become experiences which either characterize an increasingly smaller part of the population or occur at more dispersed ages and with more dispersed durations” (Bruckner and Mayer, 2005)

Grand narratives can conceal the diversity of experiences of youngsters and demonstrate conceptual and empirical limitations (Shanahan and Longest, 2009).

Theoretical framework

Some authors recognize that smooth, linear and traditional patterns persist (Furlong *et al*, 2002) and may be idealized by young adults (Elchardus and Smits, 2006).

But little attention has been given to the youngsters who make their professional, residential and/or family transitions early(ier).

Transitions are **socially stratified**.

Early transitions to work, conjugality and parenthood are associated to more disadvantaged background:

- Present more vulnerable and risk trajectories
- Are associated with poor investment in school and less skilled and weaker job prospects (Osgood *et al*, 2005)
- Seem to be reproducing parents' pathways

Methodological framework

Aim: socially characterize and explain the young people who by the age of 21 have made professional, residential and conjugality transitions.

Data: EPITeen – a longitudinal study of young people born in 1990, enrolled in public and private schools in 2003/4 in Oporto, Portugal, started at ISPUP (Public Health Institute of the University of Oporto)

Surveys:

2003/4	13yo	n=2160	n=1205
2007/8	17yo	n=2512	
2011/13	21yo	n=1761	
2014/15	24yo	ongoing	
Total n=2942			

Interviews (n=70): *here used as case studies*

Transitions' situations at 21

		N	%
School leaving	Not attending school	605	34,43
	Attending school	1152	65,57
Work situation	Full-time worker	266	15,15
	Part-time (or less) worker	116	6,61
	Unemployed or looking for 1st job	238	13,55
	Student or in education	1100	62,64
	Other situation	36	2,05
Leaving home	Doesn't live with household	197	11,33
	Lives with household	1541	88,67
Conjugality	Single	1669	94,83
	Married	10	0,57
	Civil partnership	73	4,15
	Divorced or separated	8	0,45
Parenthood	No child	256	94,81
	Has child/s	14	5,19

Total n = 1761

	N	%
At least one transition	494	28,3
1 transition	434	24,6
2 transitions	60	3,4
All transitions	0	.

Early starters: where does the rush come from?

Descriptive and bivariate statistics

		Full-time worker	Home leaver	Already in a marital union	Total
Sex	(% of boys)	53,53	47,31	28,95**	48,69
Years of schooling	(mean)	11,91***	14,24***	10,48***	13,28
Lived in nuclear family at 13	(%)	73,1*	85,71	52,05***	76,22
N people at home at 17	(mean)	4,11	3,8	3,67	4,04
Mother's years of schooling	(mean)	7,52***	12,17***	6,34***	9,69
Father's years of schooling	(mean)	7,36***	11,9***	6,79***	9,65
Minutes reading and studying at 17	(mean)	102,34**	191,06	91,25	153,07
Has retained in school (17)	(%)	57,08***	14,05***	77,33***	40,67
Has been suspended from school (17)	(%)	10,67**	4,62	15,71***	8,61
Family income until 1000	(%)	22,76*	14,97***	55,29***	22,27
Family income 1001 to 1500	(%)	29,27	17,37	27,06	22,4
Family income 1500-3000	(%)	35,37	39,52	12,94	38,06
Family income more than 3000	(%)	12,6	28,14	4,71	17,27

*** p<0,001; ** p<0,01; * p<0,05

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Binary Logistic regressions

*** p<0,001; ** p<0,01; * p<0,05

<i>Predictors</i>	Full-time worker	Home leaver	Already in a marital union
	<i>(odds ratio)</i>		
Sex (boys)	0,981	1,227	0,253 **
Years of schooling	0,751 **	1,005	0,583 ***
Lived in nuclear family at 13	0,609	1,000	0,358 *
N people at home at 17	0,885	0,579 **	0,765
Mother's years of schooling	0,898 **	1,047	0,898
Father's years of schooling	0,923	0,980	1,099
Minutes reading and studying at the wk (17)	0,999	1,000	0,995
Has retained in school (17)	1,707	0,271 *	1,614
Has been suspended from school (17)	0,498	3,050	0,743
Present family income (ref 1500-300)			
Until 1000	0,362 **	0,336 *	1,108
From 1001 to 1500	0,588	0,550	1,531
More than 3000	3,122 **	1,136	0,000
Constant	123,242	0,673	537,719
Nagelkerke R ²	0,25742 ***	0,125 **	0,371 ***
X ² Model	102,928	33,828	85,201

Early starters: what do they say?

Girl 1

9th grade and has had a lot of jobs and been through periods of unemployment.

Left school at 15: *"I became more interested in work than school"*.

"I would have not left school... I would even go to university"

"where I lived, and where my parents continue to live, it is a problematic neighbourhood. At that time we didn't want to be in school, we didn't think school was so good and we had no expectation of going to school, so we would quit and go to work, that's what I did, and many of my peers also. Those who continued studying were the one of better structured families"

Doesn't feel her parents motivated her or supported her for school.

Problems finding work: *"sometimes it is not even schooling, sometimes it is when I say I have a son and I am a single mother"*

Left home at 17, before was living with parents. *"I am now living with my son... my partner is abroad... for two years, he comes every 3 months..."*.

"... the house was full. I have more 4 brother and we all lived in a 2 bedroom house. So I decided together with my partner to rent a house".

Early starters: what do they say?

Girl 2

Finished Bachelor's (in nutrition) and then got a job in a sports club. She has been applying and looking for a better job.

"Even on the day of deciding my course... It was much because of family support... that I went. Maybe alone at the time, because of the indecision and all that stress and pressure at which we are subjected at the time of the applications, not sure I would have gone if I didn't have that support"

Lives alone (2 years) and visits parents at the weekend, after having shared apartment with friends during university. *"I live alone also because it is easier... It's a house of my parents"*

During secondary school (15) she came to study to the city, where she shared a room with a friend.

Final reflections

- Although the majority of these youngsters have not experienced any of these transitions, **an important part** (28,3%) has
- Of these, most have only one type of transition, which supports the idea that there is **not a linear sequence**
- Transitions are **distinctively socially** characterized and explained but **not all early 'transitioners' are associated with low socioeconomic status**
 - **Full-time workers:** less educated and greater family income
 - **Home leavers:** more family income and no school retention
 - **Marital union:** girls, less years of schooling, not having had a nuclear family composition

Final reflections

- Parental education and school habits loose its effect when entering own education, family composition and family income
- Family income has an interesting effect
- Case studies reinforce the distinctive reasons and contexts of “early starters”
- What will be the effects of these earlier transitions in other transitions and life opportunities? *24 year old survey and follow up interviews*