

Biserka Košarac¹

University of East Sarajevo
Faculty of Philosophy Pale

Original scientific paper

UDK: 316.422-053.6(497.6PC)

DOI: 10.7251/SOCEN2019027K

Accepted: 21st July, 2020th

Young people in the Republic of Srpska on transition to adulthood: Attitudes and perceptions²

Abstract

The subject of this paper is the research of attitudes and perceptions of the student population about the transition to adulthood. The transition to adulthood is understood as a multidimensional and multirelational phenomenon that depends on structural and institutional factors, but also on the value system and meaning that young people attach to this phenomenon and implies events that separate youth from adulthood: finishing school, starting a family and having children. For the theoretical framework of the research, we relied on the life-course approach, while the empirical survey alone included 226 students at the University of East Sarajevo. We analyzed the transition to adulthood from two aspects: the first refers to plans related to the transition in the family domain (marriage and parenthood), and the second to the perception of structural and institutional conditions that enable or hinder family transition. The obtained results show that young people highly value marriage, family and parenthood, that most of them plan to form their own family and become parents in the future. Also, young people specified those who provide existential security (permanent job and own apartment) as the basic conditions for a successful family transition, and identified unemployment and low wages as the basic structural shortcomings in society.

Keywords: *young people; transition to adulthood; life course; marriage; family; parenthood*

¹ Biserka Kosarac, PhD of Sociological Sciences; Associate Professor - non-tenured position; Correspondence: biserka.kosarac@ff.ues.rs.ba

² This paper is the result of the project "Social and cultural determinants of the future marital and reproductive behaviour of young people in the Republic of Srpska" funded by the Ministry for Scientific-Technological Development, Higher Education and Information society of the Republic of Srpska.

Introduction

In the past few decades, there has been a real expansion of sociological researches on the transition of young people to adulthood in different social and cultural contexts³. These researches have shown that there is a great diversity in the trajectories to adulthood in European societies and that this diversity is primarily a product of the diversity of structural factors (economic development), institutional and cultural, value factors. The transition of young people to adulthood is a set of events and processes that can take place successively, in parallel and / or partially overlap, and involve taking on new social roles and status. This process refers to the completion of formal education and entry into the labor market, entering into partnership, cohabitation or marital relations, leaving the parental home, independent living and becoming a parent. The strategies of young people during these events and processes may be different, but they have much in common that is a consequence of structural and institutional conditions, but also the dominant value and normative context in a society.

In our society, the transition from youth to adulthood, that is, independence and founding one's own family, is influenced by global trends from the West, but also by the combined action of structural constraints characterized by post-socialist transformation and polarized value system⁴. According to demographic data, young people are getting married and forming their own family later in life. The average age at first marriage is constantly increasing. According to the data of the Republic Bureau of Statistics, the average age of women at their first marriage in 2014 was 28.2, and in 2018 it was 28.9. The situation is similar with men. In 2014, the average age was 31.7, and in 2018 it was 32.1⁵. However, marriage as an institution still has a universal character. In the Republic of Srpska, the general rate of nuptiality has been at the same level from 4.6‰ in 1996 to 5.1‰ in 2018, while the divorce rate in 1996 was 0.4‰, and in 2018 it was 0.8‰⁶. The general divorce rate is twice lower than

³ Marlis Buchmann and Irene Kriesi, "Transition to Adulthood in Europe", *Annual Review of Sociology*, 37, 2011

⁴ The thesis of value polarization implies a mixture of traditional and modernist values that come from developed societies and has been confirmed in numerous researches. See: Miloš Bešić, *Tranzicione traume i promene vrednosnih orijentacija- generacijski pristup* (Beograd: Čigoja i Fakultet političkih nauka, 2014); Anđelka Milić, "Porodične vrednosne orijentacije-vrednosni raskol" U: A. Milić i dr. (ur.), *Vreme porodica: sociološka studija o porodičnoj transformaciji u Srbiji* (Beograd: Institut za sociološka istraživanja Filozofskog fakulteta i Čigoja); Biserka Košarac, *Izazovi savremene porodice* (Pale: Filozofski fakultet, 2019)

⁵ Republički zavod za statistiku, "Žene i muškarci u Republici Srpskoj", Banja Luka, 2019, p. 10

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 11

that typical for developed European countries, where it is around 1.9%, of course with certain regional differences (source EUROSTAT)⁷.

Structural changes within the post-socialist transformation of our society condition changes within the transition of young people to adulthood, i.e. young people face the risks posed by prolonged anomic transformation. Namely, the long-lasting economic crisis, the impossibility of economic recovery of the society after the Civil War and the collapse of the socialist system and the constant political crisis conditioned the polarization of social stratification on a small number of the rich and a large number of the impoverished as well as the reduction of social mobility⁸. The obstacles that young people face are the impossibility of employment, and consequently the impossibility of independent living and starting a family. Institutional shortcomings are compensated primarily by informal support networks and excessive dependence of young people on their families of origin. Destandardization trajectory to adulthood, characteristic of developed, implies the independence of young people from the family of origin and the separation of that process from marriage or cohabitation, as well as the separation of marriage (cohabitation) from having children⁹, is not yet present in trajectories of the life-course of young people in the Republic of Srpska, and in the societies of the former Yugoslavia in general, with the exception of Slovenia. This only indicates that we belong to the South European model of transition, which is characterized by the fact that young people stay longer in their parents' home, they do not have a period of independent single life, and if they leave the family, they do so after getting married and starting their own family. Such life trajectories are also characteristic of Spain, Italy and Greece¹⁰. Structural barriers, therefore, prevent young people from joining the sphere of labour in time, which leads to delays in starting a family, so today's life trajectories of young people differ from the life trajectories of previous generations. This is not a consequence of the free individual choice of young people, as in societies with a high degree of individualization, but a consequence of the structural and institutional shortcomings of our society.

The subject of this work is the analysis of attitudes and perceptions of young people about the plans and strategies of transition to adulthood, as well as the analysis of perceptions of structural constraints of our society that

⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00206/default/table?lang=en>

⁸ Biserka Košarac, *op. cit.*

⁹ Martin Corijn, "Transition to Adulthood: Sociodemographic Factors", In: M. Corijn & E. Klijzing (eds.), *Transition to Adulthood in Europe* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publications, 2001)

¹⁰ Maria Iacovou, "Regional Differences in the Transition to Adulthood", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 580 (1), 2002

hinder this transition and what conditions need to be met for transition to adulthood.

Theoretical concept of transition to adulthood research: A life flow approach

Most modern researches on the transition to adulthood use a theoretical approach to life course established and widely accepted in sociology in the 1980s, although its beginnings can also be found in research at the Chicago School of Sociology. This approach studies the interrelationships between the individual and society, introducing time into the analysis, which makes it possible to understand the relationship between the structure, institutions and actions of the individual during his life. Therefore, Glen Elder believes that life course research should include “time, process and context”¹¹, and the starting point should be the concepts: historical period with historical events, transition, life events and trajectories¹². Transition is defined as the transition from one phase of life to another and involves taking on new roles and statuses. The transition to adulthood is described mainly through a series of events: completion of formal education, entry into the labor market, leaving the parental home, forming the first community (marriage or cohabitation) and finally entering the parental role. This process is considered complete when the individual has experienced all the events. “Historical and social times are determined by normative expectations about the appropriate time of entry and transition from one phase of life to another and the meanings of the transition. A trajectory is a sequence of life events in one sphere of life, and a set of different trajectories (educational, work, family, housing) makes up the life course of an individual”¹³. Entering the world of adults itself means a period of life that is demographically dense and in which various events accumulate, successively follow one another or may partially overlap. All these events (employment, marriage, birth of children) have long-lasting effects and are of strategic importance for the life course of an individual. Also, this development phase requires from young people certain social and psychological capacities and skills as well as a certain amount of economic, cultural and social capital. In addition to the terms used by Elder, the concepts of synchronization

¹¹ Glen Hill Elder, “Family history and the life course”, *Journal of Family History*, 2 (4), 1977

¹² Glen Hill Elder, *Life course dynamics. Trajectories and transitions, 1968-1980*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985

¹³ Smiljka Tomanović, Dragan Stanojević i Milana Ljubičić, *Postajanje roditeljem u Srbiji* (Beograd: Filozofski fakultet, 2016), pp. 12

and sequence of events are often used in the analysis. So the time when certain events happen is important, the order of those events, the length of time between individual events and the synchronizations (the level of connection between the two events)¹⁴. What is important to emphasize is that in every socio-cultural context there is a standardization of time and order of certain events, so we are talking about the standardization of life trajectories. In the research, members of a certain generation are most often observed together, the characteristic trajectories for that age cohort are determined and those specific socio-cultural resources that determine such a course are discovered. Standardized trajectories to adulthood consist of a series of successive events: completion of schooling, entry into the labor market, period of single life, entry into marriage, and childbearing. However, the end of the XX and the beginning of the XXI century marked the process of destandardization of such trajectory, which is a consequence on the one hand of the process of individualization and the desire of young people to actively manage their lives, and on the other hand of structural changes in risk societies. There is a widespread view in the literature that “the transition to adulthood is transformed both in terms of the sequence of stages an individual goes through and in terms of the linearity of progress. As a result, individuals completely omit certain phases of the life trajectory, while others will change the standard order or return to an earlier stage”¹⁵. Namely, in developed societies also there have been labor market crises, rising unemployment, inability of young people to enter the labor market, job insecurity, which leads to the fact that transition from education to employment “increasingly loses its standard form and becomes prolonged and fragmented”¹⁶. Also, due to the extension of formal education, the phenomenon of prolonged youth or postadolescence occurs. Researches show that entry into the labor market in all developed, western countries has been delayed to later years¹⁷, and thus getting married and childbearing. The events that separate youth from adulthood become vague and fluid. Getting a job, marriage and parenting have a variable schedule and sometimes there is a “chaos of key life events: partnership without marriage, marriage without children, leaving work for parenthood”¹⁸. Sometimes there are reversible

¹⁴ Maria Iacovou, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Julia Brannen and Ann Nilsen, “Young People’s Time Perspective: From Youth to Adulthood”, *Sociology*, Vol. 36 (3), 2002, p. 514

¹⁶ Manuela du Bois-Reymond and Lynne Chisholm, “Young Europeans in a Changing World”. In M. du Bois-Reymond and L. Chisholm (eds.), *The Modernisation of Youth Transitions in Europe, New Directions for Child and Adolescence Development*. Number 113, Fall 2006, p. 4

¹⁷ Julia Brannen and Ann Nilsen, “Young People’s Time Perspective: From Youth to Adulthood”, *Sociology*, Vol. 36 (3), 2002, p. 514

¹⁸ Suzana Ignjatović, “Aktuelni problemi u istraživanju tranzicije u odraslost sa osvrtom na Srbiju”, *Stanovništvo*, 1, 2009, p. 10

events, for example young people who return to their families after divorce. Also, what was once implied in the normative order of growing up: marriage and the birth of children has today become a subject of reflection and free choice for young people. Individual choices are becoming as important as the planning of each key event, so Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim talks about life as a planned project¹⁹. Following in the footsteps of Beck-Gernsheim's idea, Jeffrey Arnett introduces the concept of a new adulthood, which is characterized by the postponement of obligations in the field of employment, marriage and parenthood. "The main characteristics of this phase are: identity research, experimentation in love relationships and work arrangements, instability and self-focus"²⁰. Arnett sees this prolongation of adolescence as a way of dealing with individualization and risk. Most Western sociologists believe that the concept of individualization is important for researching the destandardization of life trajectories, but comparative studies have shown that there are different tendencies in most of Southern Europe²¹.

In Spain, late leaving the parental home is associated with high unemployment, job insecurity, inability to live independently, institutional contexts of social policies and the value matrix of familism²². These findings are also characteristic of Italy, Greece and most Balkan societies in which family cohesion and connection are highly valued, rather than autonomy and independence from the family of origin, which in cooperation with structural factors leads to prolonged youth and long stay in the family of origin. The late transition from youth to adulthood is a product of the combined influence of institutional, structural, economic and cultural factors.

Combining structural and cultural factors with the stages of transition to adulthood, many researchers have made classifications of transition regimes. According to the speed of transition to adult roles, Olivier Galland believes that there are three models: northern (fast transition), southern (long-term and slow transition to adulthood) and transitional model²³. When only the family transition is observed, three models are distinguished: Nordic (early leaving the family of origin and practicing different life arrangements, cohab-

¹⁹ Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, "Life as a Planning Project". In S. Lash, B. Szerszynski and B. Wynne (eds), *Risk, Environment and Modernity. Towards a New Ecology* (London: Sage, 1996)

²⁰ Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties", *American Psychologist*, Vol. 55 (5), 2000, p. 469

²¹ Giuseppe Micheli and Alessandro Rosina, "The Vulnerability of Young Adults on Leaving the Parental Home". In C. Ranci (ed.), *Social Vulnerability in Europe. The New Configuration of Social Risks*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010

²² Almudena Moreno, "The transition to Adulthood in Spain in a Comparative Perspective: The Incidence of Structural Factors", *Young*, Vol. 20 (1), 2012

²³ Olivier Galland, "Adolescence, Post-Adolescence, Youth: Revised interpretations", *Revue française de sociologie*, Vol. 44 (5), 2003

itation, LAT forms²⁴, etc.), southern, to which we also belong (long stay in the family of origin, low level of cohabitation and getting independence during marriage) and northwestern (early family abandonment and diversity of lifestyles that ultimately lead to marriage)²⁵.

There are various methodological concepts used in empirical research on the life-course, i.e. the transition from youth to adulthood. What they have in common is that operationalization is always performed through key life events in the field of education, change of socio-professional status (employment), family formation and housing independence. It often happens that the characteristics of youth and adulthood mix (e.g. young people form a family before completing formal education or after a change in socio-professional status, getting a job still remain in the parental home) and then the boundaries between youth and adulthood are not clear, and events are not successive. What is even more important in empirical researches on the life-course is the analysis of the influence of the most important socio-demographic characteristics of a certain population on their life-course: gender, education, socio-economic position, amount of social and cultural capital, etc. In addition, the subject is the meanings, plans and strategies that young people develop, so that “individual perspective becomes indispensable in the analysis of the process of defining various trajectories”²⁶. This individual perspective of future events and plans is the subject of our research. It should also be noted that in some social and cultural systems, the meanings and values attached to certain key life events are not the same. E.g. in our value system in the earlier historical period, the transition in the family domain (getting married and having children) was considered a turning point, that separates the world of youth from the world of adults.

Research methodology

The empirical basis of this paper is a survey conducted in 2019 among the student population of the University of East Sarajevo, within the project *Sociocultural Determinants of Future Marital and Reproductive Behavior of Young People in the Republic of Srpska*. The instrument (questionnaire) consisted of

²⁴ Living Apart Together – The LAT form denotes couples (heterosexual and homosexual) who do not share a common home. However, they define themselves as a couple and this present themselves to their close surroundings and to their personal network of friends and relatives. So the definition requires three conditions: a couple must agree to be a couple, others must perceive them as such and they must live in separate households.

²⁵ Maria Iacovou, *op. cit.*

²⁶ Suzana Ignjatović, *op. cit.*, p. 10

71 questions (open and closed type) and 153 variables. It was divided into several parts, and important for our work are: basic socio-demographic characteristics, issues related to future plans for marriage and reproduction, and issues related to the perception of basic structural and institutional frameworks that facilitate or hinder the transition to adulthood. The processed data on plans for transition to adulthood and the perception of the structural and institutional context by young people in the Republic of Srpska are framed for the first time in the theory of life course and are presented as such in this paper. The quota sampling consisted of 250 respondents, but subsequent sequential analysis rejected 24 questionnaires with incomplete data. The obtained data were processed in the statistical package SPSS for Windows. There were 121 (53.5%) female and 105 (46.5%) male respondents in the sample; from Pale 75 (33.2%) respondents, Istočno Novo Sarajevo and Istočna Ilidža 42 (18.6%), Sokolac 10 (4.4%), Rudo 12 (5.3%), Kalinovik 15 (6.6%), Čajniče 18 (8.0%), Rogatica 15 (6.6%), Trebinje 18 (8.0%), Vlasenica 12 (5.3%) and Bileća 9 (4.0%); from the Faculty of Philosophy, which is the most numerous at the University of East Sarajevo, there are 145 (64.1%) respondents, from the Faculty of Economics 35 (15.5%), and from the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports 46 (20.4%) respondents.

The aim of this paper is to identify the basic plans, attitudes and perceptions of young people about key events in life (marriage, family and childbirth) and social conditions that complicate or help the process.

Research and discussion results

The first aspect of the transition to adulthood that we analyzed is family transition: plans related to marriage (motives and ideal age) and plans related to becoming a parent (motives and ideal age). The second part of the analysis refers to the perception of structural conditions that hinder or enable family transition.

Family and marriage are treated as the most important values in the value system of our society, and almost every research shows that. Although marriage is less important for today's generations of young people than for the generation of their parents, most individuals in empirical research still show a positive attitude towards marriage and family and expect to form their own family in the future²⁷. This is also shown by our data (Table 1).

²⁷ Biserka Košarac, *op. cit.*

Table 1 Sex of respondents and plans to form a marital union

do you plan to get married in the future	sex		total
	female	male	
yes	112 (92.6%)	98 (93.3%)	210 (92.9%)
no	9 (7.4%)	7 (6.7%)	16 (7.1%)
total	121 (53.5%)	105 (46.5%)	226 (100%)

The obtained data show that the majority of respondents plan to get married in the future and that the differences by gender are not pronounced. This tells us that despite the constant shifting of the age for marriage, the majority of the population will form a partnership (marriage or cohabitation) at least once by the age of forty²⁸.

Table 2 provides an overview of the distribution of respondents by gender and the reasons they consider important to get married.

Table 2 Sex of respondents and reasons for getting married

I would get married out of love for my partner				
sex	least important	important	very important	total
female	2 (1.7%)	5 (4.1%)	114 (94.2%)	121 (100%)
male	4 (3.8%)	11 (10.5%)	90 (85.7%)	105 (100%)
total	6 (2.6%)	16 (7.1%)	204 (90.3%)	226 (100%)
I would get married to avoid spending my life alone				
sex	least important	important	very important	total
female	88 (77.2%)	26 (21.5%)	7 (5.8%)	121 (100%)
male	52 (49.5%)	45 (42.9%)	8 (7.6%)	105 (100%)
total	140 (62.0%)	71 (31.4%)	15 (6.6%)	226 (100%)
I would get married to become a parent				
sex	least important	important	very important	total
female	15 (12.4%)	54 (44.6%)	52 (43.0%)	121 (100%)
male	16 (15.2%)	27 (25.7%)	62 (59.0%)	105 (100%)
total	31 (13.7%)	81 (35.8%)	114 (50.5%)	226 (100%)

²⁸ *Ibidem*

I would get married because my parents encourage me to take that step				
sex	least important	important	very important	total
female	109 (90.1%)	9 (7.4%)	3 (2.5%)	121 (100%)
male	80 (76.2%)	23 (21.9%)	2 (1.9%)	105 (100%)
total	189 (83.6%)	32 (14.2%)	5 (2.2%)	226 (100%)
I would get married because it is a sign of maturity				
sex	least important	important	very important	total
female	67 (55.4%)	36 (29.8%)	18 (14.9%)	121 (100%)
male	54 (51.4%)	32 (30.5%)	19 (18.1%)	105 (100%)
total	121 (53.5%)	68 (30.1%)	37 (16.4%)	226 (100%)

The distribution of data shows that love for the future partner (90.3%) and parenthood (50.5%) are the main subjective reasons for marriage. Respondents rated the encouragement of their parents to marry (2.2%) and the desire to spend life without a partner (6.6%) as the least important. 16.4% of respondents see marriage as a sign of maturity. The differences by gender are very small. The obtained data tell us that among young people, at least as far as marriage is concerned, there are trends of individualization, i.e. the desire to make decisions independently and to connect the partnership (love) relationship with marriage.

Table 3 Sex of respondents and perception of ideal age for marriage

sex	which, in your opinion, is the idela age to get married					total
	18-23	24-29	30-35	36-41	over 41	
female	7 (5.8%)	97 (80.2%)	15 (12.4%)	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)	121 (100%)
male	2 (1.9%)	47 (44.8%)	55 (52.3%)	1 (1.0%)	0	105 (100%)
total	9 (4.0%)	144 (63.7%)	70 (31.0%)	2 (0.9%)	1 (0.4%)	226 (100%)

$$\chi^2=43.1, p=0.00, df=4, \text{Cramer's } V=0.437$$

Table 3 provides data on the age that respondents perceive as ideal for marriage. Girls most often state the age of 24 to 29 years as the ideal age (80.2%), and male respondents 30-35 years (52.4%). The data we obtained are in line with demographic trends (the average age of women at the time of first marriage is 28.9, and men 32.1). Chi-square test shows a statistically

significant relationship between the sex of the respondents and the perception of the ideal age for marriage. Moving marriage to later years of life is part of a complex determinism of change. First, it is about the consequences of the second demographic transition, then the consequence of extended education, slow and difficult entry into the labor market and the impossibility of housing independence. Some researchers argue that procrastination is caused by the above-mentioned structural shortcomings rather than “cultural models of procrastination due to postmaterialist values, which characterize the countries of Western Europe. It is more about the impossibility of achieving cultural norms, which leads to a certain need to postpone and even give up marriage, than to choose”²⁹.

Another key event in the process of transition to adulthood is parenthood. The majority of respondents (89.8%) plan to play a parental role in the future, 90.9% of female respondents and 88.6% of male respondents. Table 4 provides an overview of the respondents’ answers to the question of what parenthood means to them.

Table 4 Significance of parenthood and sex of respondents

sex	significance of parenthood in an individual's life				total
	it is the most important thing in my life	it is one of the most important things in my life	it is not so important to me to have children	it is not important at all if I have children	
female	27 (22.3%)	80 (66.1%)	12 (9.9%)	2 (1.7%)	121 (100%)
male	29 (27.6%)	62 (59.0%)	12 (11.5%)	2 (1.9%)	105 (100%)
total	56 (24.8%)	142 (62.8%)	24 (10.6%)	4 (1.8%)	226 (100%)

$$\chi^2=1,22, p=0,74, df=3, \text{Cramer's } V=0,074$$

For most respondents, regardless of gender, anticipated parenting is the most important or one of the most important things in life. The high valuation of the family consequently leads to the high valuation of parenthood as a very important life and social role of the individual. In addition to marriage, becoming a parent is considered a key event. In modern society, there have been significant changes in the family domain, but parenting is still the most important expected event in the life of every individual. This data not only tells us that young people are positively oriented towards parenthood,

²⁹ Mirjana Bobić i Jelisaveta Vukelić, “Deblokada druge demografske tranzicije”, Sociologija, Vol. 53 (2), 2011, p. 159

but also that the family is extremely child-centric in our social context. Chi-square test does not show a statistically significant relationship between the sex of the respondents and the importance attached to the parental role in the future.

In addition to the importance of parenthood in the lives of young people, we also obtained data on the perception of ideal years for giving birth (Table number 5).

Table 5 *Sex and perception of ideal age for giving birth to the first child*

sex	what is, in your opinion, the ideal age for having the first child			total
	20-25	26-30	31-35	
female	63 (53.4%)	37 (31.4%)	18 (15.2%)	118 (100%)
male	16 (16.2%)	29 (29.3%)	54 (54.5%)	99 (100%)
total	79 (36.4%)	66 (30.4%)	72 (33.2%)	217 (100%)

$$\chi^2=45.6, p=0.00, df=2, \text{Cramer's } V=0.458$$

Girls (53.4%) state the period from 20 to 25 as ideal years, and boys (54.5%) from 31 to 35. Chi-square test shows a statistically significant relationship between the sex of the respondents and the perception of the ideal age for the birth of the first child. In order to obtain data on the number of desired children, we asked the respondents a hypothetical question: If you finished college, solve the housing issue, find a permanent job with a salary that you consider sufficient for a decent life, how many children would you have? The majority of respondents, 51.6% of them, would have three children in that case, and 27.7% two children. Although the Chi-square test does not show statistically significant differences based on half frequency indicate that there are still some gender differences. Female respondents more often answered that they wanted two children (33.6%), and male respondents three (54.6%).

The next aspect of the transition to adulthood that we analyzed was the fulfillment of the conditions for getting married and parenthood (Table 6).

Table 6 *Conditions for getting married and becoming a parent*

conditions	very important	important	least important	total
graduation from college	104 (46.0%)	86 (38.1%)	36 (15.9%)	226 (100%)
full-time employment	143 (63.3%)	77 (34.1%)	6 (2.6%)	226 (100%)
owning your own apartment	125 (55.3%)	80 (35.4%)	21 (9.3%)	226 (100%)
high monthly income	82 (36.3%)	126 (55.7%)	18 (8.0%)	226 (100%)
parental help and support	93 (41.2%)	111 (49.1%)	22 (9.7%)	226 (100%)
financial assistance from the state	34 (15.0%)	125 (55.3%)	67 (29.7%)	226 (100%)
the existence of childcare facilities	90 (39.8%)	96 (42.5%)	40 (17.7%)	226 (100%)

As the most important condition for marriage and parenthood, the respondents state permanent employment (63.3%), then owning their own apartment (55.3%) and graduating from college (46%). State financial assistance, the existence of childcare facilities and high income are much less mentioned. Since this is about looking to the future, that is, anticipating future events and expectations, young people identify these most important resources for transition in the family domain, which does not mean that the practice of marriage and parenthood will change priorities later. However, the key conditions are those that provide existential security (employment and housing). These are conditions that directly depend on the structural characteristics of society. Taking into consideration the protracted economic and political crisis, high unemployment and insufficient social protection system, these conditions remain unattainable for most young people, which in turn can lead to the postponement of key life events in the process of family transition.

We also received information from the respondents about what problems in society they perceive as aggravating for their future marital and parental roles. As the main problem, young people identified unemployment (72.6%) and low wages (68.4%), and somewhat less a problem absence of state financial assistance either directly or through certain tax and credit allowances (40.7%). To the least extent, respondents identify as a problem the inability of young couples to reconcile professional and family obligations (24.3%) and inadequate organization and work of family and child care institutions (15.3%). This is a consequence of the fact that young people are still waiting to take on new roles, and are therefore not familiar with all the obligations of marital and parental roles (e.g. reconciling the obligations of family and professional life). What should also be pointed out is that the perception of

problems by young people depends on the socio-economic situation, but also on public discourses about them. It can be concluded that young people are in a kind of ambivalent position, on the one hand they express a desire to become independent, get married, start a family and become parents, and on the other hand they encounter numerous structural obstacles that they clearly perceive, which leads to delays of key life events, which is clearly evidenced by the demographic statistics of our society.

Conclusion

In this work, we have tried to point out some basic characteristics of the attitudes and perceptions of young people towards the transition to adulthood and the key life events that determine that transition. We have placed the research in the theoretical concept of life flow, pointing out that trajectories and overall transition are a multidimensional phenomenon and depend on economic, institutional and cultural factors. The specific social conditions of post-socialist transformation and the value system condition the phenomenon of prolonged youth and the postponement of family transition (marriage and parenthood), as evidenced by demographic data. Today's transition to adulthood in our society shows characteristics similar to the models in Southern Europe: long stay in the parental home, postponement of marriage and parenthood, and even after getting married long reliance on the primary background, i.e. family of origin and relatives. This is primarily the result not only of structural constraints, but also of the prominent value matrix of familism, which implies a high valuation of family and kinship solidarity and support. This value system compensates for many deficiencies in the environment, while institutional and state resources have limited performance. Also, the individual, subjective meanings that young people attach to key life events, their perception of the future, plans and strategies significantly influence future paths to adulthood. Our research has shown that marriage and parenthood are highly valued in the value system of young people, and that most of them plan to start a family and become a parent. However, young people clearly perceive unfavorable social conditions that hinder the transition, primarily high unemployment and low wages, and accordingly point out that the fulfillment of basic living conditions (housing independence and permanent employment) is crucial to their future plans. For future research, which would be larger in scope, it should take into analysis the realized life events and make a comparison with the attitudes of young people who have not stepped into the transition process. What determines the life course of

an individual are, in addition to his plans, the resources at his disposal and which can help him to overcome unfavorable social conditions. In the context of unfavorable demographic trends, high evaluation of marriage and parenthood by young people and a clear anticipation that they plan to start a family in the future can serve as an advantage in creating public policies that would facilitate the transition to adulthood in risky social conditions.

Bibliography

- Beck-Gernsheim, Elisabeth .“Life as a Planning Project”. In S. Lash, B. Sze-rszynski and B. Wynne (eds). *Risk, Environment and Modernity. Towards a New Ecology*. London: Sage. pp. 139- 153, 1996
- Bešić, Miloš. *Tranzicione traume i promene vrednosnih orijentacija- generacijski pristup*. Beograd: Čigoja i Fakultet političkih nauka, 2014.
- Bois-Reymond, du Manuela and Chisholm, Lynne. “Young Europeans in a Changing World”. In M. du Bois-Reymond and L. Chisholm (eds.). *The Modernisation of Youth Transitions in Europe: New Directions for Child and Adolescence Development*. Number 113, Fall 2006
- Bobić, Mirjana i Vukelić, Jelisaveta. “Deblokada druge demografske tranzicije”. *Sociologija*, Vol. 53 (2), str. 149-176. 2011.
- Brannen, Julia and Nilsen, Ann. “Young People’s Time Perspective: From Youth to Adulthood”. *Sociology*, Vol. 36 (3), pp. 513–537, 2002
- Buchmann, Marlis and Kriesi, Irene. “Transition to Adulthood in Europe”. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 37, pp. 481-503, 2011
- Corijn, Martin. “Transition to Adulthood: Sociodemographic Factors”. In M. Corijn and E. Klijzing (eds.). *Transition to Adulthood in Europe*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publications, pp. 1-25, 2001
- Elder, H. Glen. “Family history and the life course”. *Journal of Family History*. Vol. 2 (4), pp. 279-304, 1977
- Elder, H. Glen. *Life cours dynamics. Trajectories and transitions, 1968-1980*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1985
- Galland, Olivier. “Adolescence, Post-Adolescence, Youth: Revised Interpretations”, *Revue francais de sociologie*, Vol. 44 (5), pp. 163-188, 2003.
- Iacovou, Maria. “Regional Differences in the Transition to Adulthood”. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Vol. 580 (1), pp. 40-69, 2002
- Ignjatović, Suzana. “Aktuelni problemi u istraživanju tranzicije u odraslost sa osvrtnom na Srbiju”. *Stanovništvo*, 1, str. 7-22. 2009.

- Jensen, Arnett Jeffrey. "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties". *American Psychologist*, Vol. 55 (5), pp. 469–480, 2000
- Košarac, Biserka. *Izazovi savremene porodice*. Pale: Filozofski fakultet, 2019.
- Micheli, Giuseppe and Rosina, Alessandro. "The Vulnerability of Young Adults on Leaving the Parental Home". In C. Ranci (ed.). *Social Vulnerability in Europe. The New Configuration of Social Risks*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 189-218, 2010
- Milić, Anđelka. "Porodične vrednosne orijentacije-vrednosni raskol". U: A. Milić i dr. (ur.), *Vreme porodica: sociološka studija o porodičnoj transformaciji u Srbiji*. Beograd: Institut za sociološka istraživanja Filozofskog fakulteta i Čigoja, str. 235–256. 2010.
- Moreno, Almudena. "The transition to Adulthood in Spain in a Comparative Perspective: The Incidence of Structural Factors", *Young*, Vol. 20 (1), pp. 19-48, 2012
- Republički zavod za statistiku. *Žene i muškarci u Republici Srpskoj*. Banja Luka, 2019.
- Tomanović, Smiljka, Stanojević, Dragan i Ljubičić, Milana. *Postajanje roditeljem u Srbiji*. Beograd: Filozofski fakultet, 2016.