



TRANSITIONS TO ADULTHOOD IN FLUX. ASSESSING COMING OF AGE THROUGH AN HISTORICAL LENS IN FINLAND AND FRANCE.

Tranzicije u odraslost u stalnoj promeni. Pristup odrastanju kroz istorijsku perspektivu u Finskoj i Francuskoj

ABSTRACT: According to youth experts, a significant number of contemporary young people in Western societies reach adulthood at a later age than previous generations. This phenomenon is generally perceived as a temporary misstep on the path to default patterns of transition established in the 1950s and 1960s. Given the current societal context, should the transition to adulthood today really conform to that model? This paper provides an historical analysis of transitions to adulthood to enquire whether the post-war model can still be considered a meaningful reference today. Were routes of transition similar or different in earlier times, or has the model always existed? To answer this question, the paper looks at demographics in two case countries, Finland and France, in three periods: the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the 1950s–1970s, and the early twenty-first century. The paper argues that the post-war generation's rapid patterns of transition were unique, resulting from a sustained period of economic growth in developed societies. This has generated new pathways of transition and a model of adulthood still used as a standard point today, even though the current socio-economic context has changed. Transitions to adulthood are not static. They have always evolved, mirroring the wider historical context within which individuals operate.

KEY WORDS: transitions to adulthood; historical comparison; Finland and France

APSTRAKT: Prema istraživačima omladine, značajan broj današnjih mladih u zapadnim društvima dostižu odaslost kasnije nego u ranijim generacijama. Ova pojava se uopšteno shvata kao privremeno odstupanje od uobičajenih putanja i obrazaca tranzicije koji su ustanovljeni pedesetih i šezdesetih. Uzimajući u obzir sadašnji društveni kontekst, postavlja se pitanje da li tranzicije u odraslost treba

1 lilie.aurelie.mary17@gmail.com

zaista da se prilagođavaju tom modelu? Ovaj članak pruža istorijsku analizu tranzicija u odraslost da bi se ispitalo da li posleratni model treba shvatati kao referentni okvir danas. Da li su putanje tranzicije bile slične ili drugačije u ranijim vremenima ili je ovaj model oduvek postojao? Da bi se odgovorilo na ovo pitanje, u radu se proučavaju demografski trendovi u Finskoj i Francuskoj u tri perioda: devetnaestom i ranom dvadesetom veku, u periodu 1950–1970s, i u ranom dvadesetprvom veku. Tvrdi se da su obrasci brze tranzicije posleratne generacije bili jedinstveni kao posledica održivog perioda ekonomskog rasta u razvijenim društvima. Iz njih je proizašao model tranzicija i odraslosti koji se uzima kao standardni i danas, iako se izmenio socioekonomski kontekst. Tranzicije u odraslost nisu statične, one su se uvek razvijale reflektujući šire istorijske kontekste u kojima pojedinci žive.

KLJUČNE REČI: tranzicije u odraslost; istorijsko poređenje; Finska i Francuska

Introduction

Transitions from adolescence to adulthood from the 1950s to the 1970s in Western societies were brief, clear and straightforward. The majority of youth became adults by fulfilling specific markers in a short period and particular order: they finished school, found a job, became financially independent, left the parental home, settled down, got married, and had children. Compared to previous generations, a large number of contemporary young people achieve transitions to adulthood at a later age, and often fulfil markers of adulthood in an unconventional order. The phenomenon of youth prolongation, starting in the 1980s, has been discussed amongst scholars, economists and policy-makers (e.g. Arnett, 2004; Baudelot, 1988; Côté, 2000; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Galland 1990; Helve and Bynner, 1996; Jones, 1995).

The pathways of transition experienced by baby boomers serve as a reference point to which current transitions are compared. However, were transitions in earlier times alike? Existing historical data calls for a revision of the current discourse on youth prolongation. Although the historical context, ways of life and life expectations differ, strong parallels can be drawn with the current situation. Young people in the early twentieth century more likely experienced what would now be considered nonlinear, delayed, blurred, and heterogeneous transitions, rather than ordered and short like in the 1950s–1970s.

An empirical doctoral dissertation comparing youth transition in Finland and France (Mary, 2012), with a focus on female university students, showed that early twenty-first century pathways to adulthood were similar in the two case countries, and also matched most of the patterns observed in other advanced societies. The main findings suggest a change in the understanding and undertaking of adulthood. The informants distinguished the psychological dimension of adulthood from the social dimension, and mostly associated adulthood with a mental state. Several studies show that for a growing number of young people, adulthood comprises a combination of subjective psychological

characteristics and social roles, as opposed to the current notion of adulthood that validates young people as adults upon achieving quantifiable roles rather than subjective proficiencies (e.g. Andrew et al., 2007; Hartmann and Swartz, 2007; Molgat, 2007; Shanahan et al., 2005).

These findings provoked further questions: How were transitions achieved in earlier times? Why are transitions extending today? Is the phenomenon new and unique? The historical dimension of transitions to adulthood lack in the literature. Few studies assess transitions before the 1980s. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to that missing aspect. The paper examines demographics in three historical periods in Finland and France to observe and assess the transformations of transitions to adulthood across time. Data concentrate on demographics on family formation in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, 1950s–1970s, and early twenty-first century.

History shows changing patterns of transition in the present times are neither an exception nor an intentional disruption. The wider societal context has transformed since the 1970s. Time-specific socio-economic demands force the youth to forge pathways to adulthood adapted to the current context. The post-war model of transition nevertheless remains unquestioned and continues to set up the archetypal framework for contemporary pathways to adulthood (Blatterer, 2007b, 2007c; Furstenberg et al., 2005; Wyn, 2004). Contemporary transitions are implicitly viewed as a transient destabilisation of established social and cultural norms (e.g. Anatrella, 2003; Furedi, 2003). The prolongation of youth also worries policy-makers and economists, especially regarding the continuity of the welfare state. The latter relies on an economically active population and the contribution of the younger generation (e.g. Esping-Andersen, 1999).

The paper argues that there is no right or wrong way to become adult. No model of adulthood can be conferred the status of reference model. The perception that young people are deliberately delaying their entry into adulthood reflects an outdated understanding of transitions to adulthood from another historical period within different societal conditions. The current evaluative framework of transition and the model of adulthood thus requires updating and redefining (Andrew et al., 2007; Blatterer, 2007a; 2010; Mary, 2012, 2014; Wyn, 2004).

The paper is structured as follows: first, it introduces the major socio-economic transformations that have occurred since the nineteenth century in Finland and France. Then it considers the methodological approach and challenges. The third section examines historical demographics to glean a new understanding of perceptions of adulthood. This is followed by a summary of the general evolution of transitions in advanced societies.

Major societal transformations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Finland and France

The paper focuses on transitions to adulthood in two case countries, Finland and France. The two countries present distinguishable features in their societal backgrounds. Both are Western European societies founded upon democratic

ideologies, members of the European Union, and share many features at the infrastructural level. However, both countries have been shaped from different directions. They adopted different types of welfare regimes – conservative in France and social democratic in Finland (Esping-Andersen, 1999). France is rooted in Roman Catholic traditions, while Finland adopted the Lutheran faith. In France, the state and the church have operated separately since the 1905 Law on the Separation of the Churches and State, based on the principle of *laïcité* (secularism) (Legifrance, 2018). In Finland, the state and the church have been separated since the Church Act of 1869 (Suomen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko, 2018). Both countries were agrarian before the industrial revolution but modernised at different paces. Industrialisation began in the early nineteenth century in France and in the mid-nineteenth century in Finland. Socio-infrastructural development was similar in both societies after the Second World War. While France had a colonial empire, Finland belonged to two empires: to Sweden until 1809, and then to Russia until the country gained independence in 1917. Additionally, France participated in the initiation of the European Union with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 and the European Economic Community (EEC) established in 1957. Finland maintained its neutrality until joining the Union in 1995. In 2001, both countries converted their national currency to the common European currency, the euro (European Union, 2018).

After the Second World War, Finland and France, like other advanced societies, experienced an unprecedented period of economic growth from 1945 to approximately 1975, referred to as the Golden Age of Capitalism. During this period, every level of society underwent major transformations. Standards of living and healthcare systems were greatly improved and expanded, welfare regimes were implemented, national infrastructures modernised, and transport, technology and information mechanisms made unparalleled progress. Advanced societies changed at the political, educational and cultural levels too. Mores and values became more permissive, and women and children gain rights and protection. Simultaneously, youth become more visible. New sectors developed around young people in terms of education, socio-politics, industry, consumption, and popular culture (Chauvel, 2002; Galland, 1990). Both countries were affected by the worldwide economic slowdown following the oil crisis of the 1970s. In France, like in other Western European countries, economic decline continued into the 1980s, while economy continued to expand in Finland (Statistics Finland, 2007b). Finland's economy got greatly affected by the collapse of communism in the 1990s, before it took off again. France was less touched by that major event, but the lasting worldwide economic stagnation continued to have a harmful impact. The economy of both countries suffered from the worldwide financial crisis of 2007–2008.

Schooling became free, mandatory and secular for all children aged six to thirteen in France in 1881. This was extended to the age of 16 in 1959 (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la jeunesse, 2018). In Finland, education became free and compulsory to all children for six years in 1921. In the 1970s, it became compulsory from age seven to sixteen (Finnish National Agency for Education,

2018). During the 1960s in advanced societies, education expanded as a result of policies aimed at reducing social inequality and increasing equal educational opportunities (Teichler, 2007: 26). Higher education became accessible to lower socio-economic groups and women. The development of the service sector in the 1960s and 1970s increased the demand for highly educated people and provided white-collar jobs that required qualifications higher than manual, blue-collar jobs.

Developed societies shifted to service-based economies, with the service sector overtaking the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, during the Golden Age. Over two-third of the population worked in the primary sector (agriculture, forestry, fishery) in Finland and France in the 1800s and early 1900s (see Table 1). In the 1920s–1930s, the secondary sector (industry and construction) and the tertiary sector (services) developed considerably in France, and the population worked equally in all sectors. The Finnish economy remained primarily agrarian until the 1970s. Since the 1970s in both countries, as in other European societies, their economies are almost entirely service-based. The service sector now employs about three quarters of the labour force. The agricultural sector involves only a small number of workers, and the industrial sector less than a quarter.

Table 1. Proportion (percentages) of the labour force per economic sectors in Finland in 1860–2017 and France in 1800–2017 (rounded numbers).

Sectors	Finland				France			
	1860	1920–30	1980	2017	1800–10	1920–30	1980	2017
Primary	80	60	13	4	65	32	8	3
Secondary	14	20	33	23	20	34	31	16
Tertiary	7	20	54	73	15	35	61	81

Sources: Eurostats (2018a); Hjerpe (1989); Marchand and Thélot (1991); StatisticsFinland (2007).

Western societies started to establish systems of public assistance before the First World War. Welfare state regimes were established after the Second World War in all Western countries. Development was slower in Finland until the Second World War, but expenditure increased in the 1970s–1980s, while it stagnated in France during those years (Tomka, 2003). The efficiency of welfare systems depends heavily on a strong and stable economic apparatus. According to Esping-Andersen (1999), welfare systems in Western societies are slowly eroding because of economic stagnation and the requirements of a growing population in need.

Methods and data

As per the results obtained in the above mentioned study (Mary, 2012), the debate on youth prolongation, and the ongoing reference to the 1950s–1970s model of adulthood strongly invited to question the criteria shaping the concepts of youth and adulthood. In order to develop a deeper understanding of current patterns of transition, demographics on family formation and studies connected to

transitions in Finland and France, with references to other Western societies, were investigated in three time periods: the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the 1950s–1970s, and the early twenty-first century. The study examines the following demographics: age at first marriage, age of women at birth of first child, fertility rate and age of majority. There exists little historical demographic data prior the Second World War, but sufficiently to offer insights generating profound reflexions upon the pathways to adulthood taking place today.

The historical data presented in the paper is based on approximate estimations, as the format of the historical statistics obtained is not compatible for accurate comparison with present times, let alone cross-country comparison. The paper relies essentially on secondary sources of data, as access to primary historical data sources were limited. Most information was collected by the church in earlier times, and little data was recorded on demographics. Population censuses were initiated in Finland and France in the eighteenth century but remained infrequent and incomplete. Only after the Second World War data collection became more extensive, and methods of collection and measurement more accurate. Historical data also present inconsistencies in definitions. Transitions to adulthood, for instance, were not much investigated before the 1980s. The concept was not identified as it is currently, similarly to the concepts of childhood and adolescence, which respectively became recognised in most advanced societies in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (Ariès, 1962; Kett, 1973). The purpose of the paper is to conduct a sociological analysis on the evolution of transitions to adulthood from a historic perspective. Historic statistics and facts are used with an illustrative and qualitative approach rather than a quantitative focus.

Results and analysis

The 1950s–1970s witnessed more uniformed patterns of transition amongst the youth than in previous times. Pathways to adulthood today appear scattered, and are largely heterogeneous, depending on socio-economic backgrounds, gender, ethnicity, education level, or geographical location. Looking at historical demographics reveals that this is not uncharacteristic.

Transitions throughout history

Table 2. Indicators of family formation in Finland and France, 1850s–2017 (rounded numbers).

		MEAN AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE						
		1855	1930	1970	1990	2000	2010	2017
Finland	Women	25 ¹	25	23	25	28,5	30	32
	Men	27 ¹	28	25	27	31	32,5	34
France	Women	26	23	23	26	28	30	31 ²
	Men	30	27	25	28	30	32	33 ²

¹Data for 1881–91. ²Data for 2016.

MEAN AGE OF WOMEN AT BIRTH OF FIRST CHILD

	1910	1950	1961–65	1980	1981–85	2000	2010	2016	EU 28
Finland	-	-	23	-	25	27,5	28	29	29
France	25	24,5	-	24,5	-	27,5	28	28,5	(2016)

TOTAL FERTILITY RATE

	1900	1950	1970	1990	2000	2017	EU 28
Finland	4,9	3,2	1,8	1,8	1,7	1,5	1,6
France	2,9	2,9	2,5	1,8	1,9	1,9	(2017)

PROPORTION (%) OF LIVE BIRTHS OUTSIDE MARRIAGE

	1960	1980	1990	2000	2010	2016	EU 28
Finland	4	13	25	39	41	45	43
France	6	11	30	44	55	60	(2016)

Sources: Bellamy (2015); Eurostat (2018b, 2018c); Legoyt (1863); Miettinen (2011); Pison (2010); Rothenbacher (2002); Statistics Finland (2010, 2018); Tomka (2013); Toulemon et al. (2008); Volant (2017).

Average age of marriage

In both Finland and France, people married at a later age in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries than one might expect. In Finland, the average age at first marriage in 1881–91 was 27 for men and 25 for women (Koskinen et al., 2007: 141). In France in 1855, men married on average at 30 and women at 26. This average decreased in both societies from the 1950s to the 1970s. In 1970, in Finland and France, the average age at marriage for men and women was 25 and 23 respectively. This started to increase again in the 1980s. In the 1990s the figures equalled those of the 1900s. Today, age at first marriage has reached unprecedented levels: 34 and 32 for men and women in Finland, and 33 and 31 for men and women in France (see Table 2). Based on data provided by official sources such as Eurostat and OECD, these later developments are broadly consistent with the experiences of other advanced countries.

In the nineteenth century in Western societies, household formation did not occur until the late 20s for a significant number of women and the early 30s for most men. Most young people had obligations towards their family, in the form of economic support. Moreover, men needed time to accumulate sufficient capital and resources to support a family of their own, and women could not marry without presenting a dowry to their future husband (Goody, 2000: 63–64; Model et al., 1976: 16). The obligation for men to attend military service (up to three years in France), eventual studies, inheritance laws, and parent consent, also delayed marriage (Legoyt, 1863).

The 1950s witnessed a drop in the age of marriage and the emergence of the nuclear family structure. This reinforced fixed gender roles and division, with a male breadwinner, a female homemaker, and generally two children (Coontz, 2005; Fussell and Furstenberg, 2005: 31). This model was adopted by the majority of young adults during the Golden Age. In the 1970s, it was disrupted by the massive participation of women in higher education and the labour force,

and mores and values connected to living arrangements such as living and/or having children in a consensual rather than in an official union (Coontz 2005). While societal context and ways of life are not comparable, today's transitions resemble in some ways those of early industrial times. A large number of young people are in a similar situation: working, accumulating capital, and still living with their parents. However, a century ago young people helped their parents financially. Today, it is parents who provide economic and material assistance to their grown-up children (Ray and Settersten, 2010: 32).

Fertility and median age of women at childbirth

In Finland in the early 1800s, both women aged 25–29 and 30–34 accounted for most births. A large proportion of women also gave birth at age 35–39, more than did women aged 20–24. Patterns remained unchanged until the 1950s. Both women aged 20–24 and 25–29 then accounted for most births. Since the 1980s, birth patterns have returned to earlier historical trends, with most women giving birth at the ages of 25–29 and 30–34, and the proportion of births at the age of 20–24 decreasing. Since 2009, most women give birth at age 25–29 and 30–34, much more than at 20–24 (Miettinen, 2011). France displays similar tendencies. In the first half of the twentieth century, most women gave birth at 25–29 and 30–34 and older. During the 1950s, the number of women giving birth before 24 increased, but never overtook the number of births among the 25–29 age group. From 1980 onwards, trends returned to earlier tendencies, with most women giving birth at 25–29 and 30–34 (INSEE, 2018) (see Table 2). Figures show that the mean age of women at first birth was 23 in Finland in 1961–65, and 24,5 in France in 1950. In both countries, this rose from the 1980s, reaching respectively 29 and 28,5 in Finland and France in 2016.

The socio-cultural context largely differed in the 1900s. Morals, family values and expectations, lack of contraception and high infant mortality constrained the lives of women. Women also had a larger number of children, and more closely spaced births. Nonetheless, data shows that the 1950s–1970s trends linked to marriage and childbirth were an historical exception (see Table 2). Fertility rates follow parallel trends in Finland, France and other Western societies, being much lower than at the turn of the twentieth century, and reaching the unprecedented low point of 1,6 in the European Union in 2016. The proportion of births outside marriage is noteworthy too. While out of wedlock births were illegal in earlier times, today, 45% of children in Finland and 60% of children in France are born outside marriage. France is a pioneer regarding this trend.

Age of majority

The age of majority in most advanced societies is 18 years old. Nevertheless, this specific age has been attributed as the legal transition to full citizenship only recently. The age of consent and legal age of marriage without parental consent have followed similar patterns. In France, before the French Revolution, the age of majority was 25 for both men and women. In 1792 and 1974, it was

respectively reduced to 21 and then 18 (Planiol, 1950 [1899–1901]). In Finland, before the 1700s, the age of majority for men was 15. Between the eighteenth and twentieth century it was increased to 21. Up until the mid-nineteenth century, women were not considered independent citizens and legally depended on their parents and then husband. In 1864, they received recognition as independent citizens from age 25. The age of majority was reduced to 20 in 1969 and 18 in 1976 for both genders (Finlex, 2018; Talve, 1997).

Variations in the age of full entitlement to citizenship reveal historical perceptions of adulthood. While young people fulfilled qualifiers that would entitle them to adulthood today, such as working and getting married, they were not necessarily considered fully-fledged adult citizens – especially women. Transitions to adulthood remained ambiguous. Most of those marrying were also conferred adult status by the community upon displaying signs of maturity, personal qualities and skills (Shanahan et al., 2005: 229). Historical trends provide evidence on the evolution of the concept of adulthood and framework of transitions. Transitions are not static but malleable features shaped by the evolution of society at large.

The post-war generation: unique patterns of transitions

After the Second World War, western societies experienced a phase of reconstruction and unprecedented socio-economic opportunities and security. Unparalleled socio-institutional transformations took place and strongly impacted the preceding routes to adulthood and framework of transitions (Chauvel, 2002). Prosperous economies, abundance of work, and access to higher education that guaranteed employment enabled early entry on the labour market and family formation. The pacing of transitions to adulthood metamorphosed in Finland and France but also other advanced societies. Transitions in the 1950s–1970s became shorter, more concentrated, and situated earlier in life; much more than in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Young people managed to achieve milestones simultaneously: the majority of youth entered the labour force, got married and had children almost at the same time, and at a younger age. Most young men and women were recognized as adults by their early 20s, both socially and economically (Model et al., 1976: 20; Ray and Settersten, 2010: 21).

Preparation for adult responsibilities was more extensive in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Western societies. Model et al. (1976: 16–17, 20) stress that the non-familial status transitions, such as leaving school and entering the labour force, started earlier and required slightly less time to reach completion than in the 1950s–1970s. Children entered the labour force in parallel of schooling, or as soon as compulsory schooling ended, usually helping their family or relatives. However, the familial transitions, including leaving home, getting married and household formation, started later and required considerably more years for completion. A greater proportion of young people lived at home with their families in both the early twentieth and twenty-first centuries than

in the mid-twentieth century. While in the 1950s–1970s most marriages took place in people's early 20s, a substantial proportion of women and most men did not marry until their late 20s or early 30s in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Model et al., 1976: 15–16; Ray and Settersten, 2010: 23).

The post-war period provided the necessary circumstances for particular transition pathways to be experienced homogeneously and in a condensed manner by the majority of young people. Only then did coming-of-age become associated with attaining stable work, individual financial independence, marriage and parenthood in a concentrated period. This in turn led to the emergence of new markers of transition and a new model of adulthood that gained normative validity. This particular model became institutionalised and deeply rooted in the collective imagination of advanced societies. It further became a standard reference against which the process of transition in younger generations are still compared and judged, even if the societal conditions have changed (Blatterer, 2007a: 6, 2007b: 774–778, 2010: 46–48; Ray and Settersten, 2010: 23; Wyn and Woodman, 2006: 498).

Misjudged pioneer routes to adulthood

Substantial cultural, economic, and demographic forces have altered the landscape and opportunities of young adults since the 1980s. The flourishing period of the Golden Age gave the illusion that a bright socio-economic future was guaranteed. However, prosperity did not last. The oil crises in the 1970s destabilised the socio-economic edifice and gave rise to economic stagnation and inflation. These dynamics generated a climate of uncertainty and competition compromising young people's possibilities to undertake the expected adult roles (Chauvel, 2002).

Nevertheless, the current definition of adulthood is based on a notion of adulthood that conceives social roles as routinized expectations, while being adult increasingly encompasses following a journey, and lifelong learning and development (Hartmann and Swartz, 2007: 277–278; Pallas, 2007: 190–193). The youth increasingly experience heterogeneous transitions, with some still achieving the traditional markers of adulthood at a fairly steady pace and young age, while others feel and act as responsible adults but do not fulfil the classical adult status.

Although it is increasingly difficult to follow the 1950s–1970s archetype in the current uncertain socio-economic context, the new routes of transition young people adopt are discarded and perceived as a temporary mistake that might be rectified in the future. The transition pathways experienced by the previous generation are still considered a benchmark by the dominant discourse and the youth are suspected of sabotaging the established model of transition (see e.g. Blatterer, 2007a, 2007c, 2010; Wyn, 2004). As such, Ray and Settersten (2010: 36) stress that “much of the media attention and public debate on the subject of

the changing transition to adulthood start from the assumption that something is wrong with young people today as they take longer to 'grow up,' that the 'fault' is of their own doing." However, young people neither intend to disrupt the post-war model of transition nor prolong their youth. Advanced societies have undergone profound and complex transformations that have deeply affected the framework of transitions and the process of socio-economic integration. Young people are therefore pursuing alternative and strategic pathways to adulthood more suitable to current socio-economic demands (Furlong et al., 2011: 361; Mary, 2014: 426–427; Wyn and Woodman. 2006: 511).

Social concepts are deeply rooted in and shaped by wider societal and historical dynamics. Each generation reacts and adapts to the circumstances they are confronted with. The experience of the baby boomers was the destiny of one particular generation, and cannot apply to the younger generations, whose lives are shaped by a thoroughly different socio-economic context. The 1950s–1970s markers of adulthood are increasingly irrelevant in the present era, as much as the pre-war markers became unsuitable to the youth born after the Second World War.

Discussion: transitions to adulthood mirror socio-historical change

The aim of this paper was to provide additional knowledge on the historical dimension of transitions to adulthood. The paper looked at demographics in Finland and France in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the 1950s–1970s, and the early twenty-first century to get a deeper understanding of the evolution of transitions. Generalisations are difficult to establish. However, seeing the similarities in the experience of coming of age in present times (attested by international data and youth experts), and the comparable wider socio-economic and infrastructural transformations that Finland, France, and other advanced societies experienced in the past two hundred years, some conclusions about transitions throughout history can be drawn to other Western societies too. This section thus offers a more general discussion on the evolution of transitions throughout time.

Bourdieu (1980: 144) argues that the concepts of youth and old age are socially materialised echoes of the struggle between younger and older generations, and that social concepts are socially constructed rather than biologically founded. Mauger (2010: 9–11) adds that notions of age and generation have acquired a variety of meanings, depending when, where and by whom they are used. In the early nineteenth century, the definition of adolescence was broader, applying to youth from their middle teens to their middle twenties. The current span covered by adolescence – thirteen to nineteen years old – narrowed from the 1870s onwards (Kett, 1973: 105, 107). In this line, contemporary perceptions of youth and adulthood are the result of social and mental legacies of the post-war

generation and continue to influence present thinking in Western societies in general (Blatterer, 2007a: 23; Chauvel, 2002).

Categories such as childhood, adolescence, adulthood or old age are artificial constructions created by specific societal conditions of a given time (Model et al., 1976: 8). Once new classifications are identified in the popular discourse, new behaviours appear. Such changes occur as solutions when old practices no longer work (Furstenberg et al., 2005: 3). The stages of childhood and adolescence emerged at times when the societal structure was ready to acknowledge them. Similarly, transitions to adulthood evolve and adjust to wider structural transformations taking place. Social concepts, but also established institutions, are mutable rather than fixed.

Social regulations and transitional stages in advanced societies have developed around age as a marker, accentuating the transformation of physical age into social age (Buchmann, 1989: 25–29). This arrangement has generated separate social categories that determine the roles, identities and social positions of social actors. Age categories have engendered a normative system that pressurises individuals to conform to the norms associated with their age. The allocation of status based on age also leads to disapproving the behaviour of individuals perceived as deviating from the supposedly normative social path (Sugarman, 1986: 50–52; Wyn and Woodman, 2006: 499, 511). In that sense, institutions and policy measures aimed at the youth and young adults may harm them if they are founded upon irrelevant assumptions about contemporary youth and outdated models that no longer correspond to actual life experiences (Furlong et al., 2011: 367; Settersten, 2005: 536). The prevailing discourse on the prolongation of youth confuses the youth. A large proportion of young people are caught between dominant institutionalised ideologies and the inability and unwillingness to adhere to the beliefs of another generation. Rapid socio-economic changes have provoked a rupture between post-war ideals and present possibilities for societal integration (Blatterer, 2007b: 63–64). Several scholars emphasise the difficulty for the youth to establish long-term plans due to socio-economic uncertainty. Young people are compelled to be constantly alert and prepared for unexpected risks, live in the here-and-now to handle potential sudden hazards, and simultaneously plan their future strategically (Andrew et al., 2007; Arnett, 2004; Hartmann and Swartz, 2007; Mary, 2014; Molgat, 2007; Pallas, 2007; Shanahan et al., 2005). Inconsistencies around the notion of adulthood imply that the theoretical framework for analysing contemporary pathways to adulthood is increasingly irrelevant and anachronistic, and needs re-evaluation.

Model et al. (1976: 16, 21) argue that in the nineteenth century, family represented a central institution for managing risks. Individuals were faced with sudden and unexpected hazardous occurrences, such as sudden sickness and/or death, accidents, or frequent and extended redundancies. These devastating events made it necessary for families to be prepared to face times of disasters.

Transitions were less secure, and hindered by uncertainty and possible risks. People were hence constrained to live in the here-and-now and on constant alertness.

The creation of welfare states after the Second World War, access to healthcare, employees' rights, unemployment protection, and retirement pensions, reduced the importance of family in dealing with life hazards. The implementation of welfare systems and the socio-economic boom considerably reduced existential risks, rendered life more predictable, and generated future and long-term planning. Individuals increasingly became more involved with non-familial institutions, such as education, training and career planning, while familial obligations considerably decreased (Model et al.; 1976: 21). However, these institutions require individuals to follow a specific timetable, such as becoming adult at a certain age and fulfilling specific markers, and reward those who manage to meet the prerequisites, but penalise those who fail to do so. By contrast, the nineteenth century family institution offered greater latitude with regards timing of actions, such as getting married and founding one's own household. Individuals were expected to fulfil familial obligations and to display qualities such as maturity and personal abilities. Today, they are expected to follow a strict schedule based on established deadlines (Model et al., 1976:21; Shanahan et al., 2005: 229).

Ray and Settersten (2010: 21, 23) argue that to some extent, transitions today are returning to a more natural pattern, akin to those of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when life was bound to farming and rural settings rather than the labour market. Becoming an adult then was a gradual process characterised by semi-autonomy, with young people waiting to be economically self-sufficient to set up independent households. Nineteenth century youth did not experience brief, ordered and predictable transitions as people today believe. They achieved some milestones of adulthood but did not complete the entire set of transitions immediately (Katz, cit. Model et al., 1976: 7). Today, a considerable number of young adults in most advanced countries experience a semi-autonomous status too, until their late twenties or early thirties, when they financially and/or residentially depend on their parents or state support, as a result of prolonging their studies or precarious employment (e.g. Arnett, 2004; Côté, 2014; Eurofound, 2014; Galland, 1996; Mary, 2012; Van de Velde, 2008). However, there are important differences in the ways they define and achieve adulthood: a large number of young people emphasise psychological aspects of adulthood such as maturity over the achievement of social markers. Life standards, choices and expectations have changed too. Additionally, young people are no longer bound to familial obligations as providers of economic support but financially continue to depend on their parents for longer (see Table 3).

Table 3. The evolution of transitions to adulthood from the nineteenth to the early twenty-first centuries based on data from Finland and France.

TRANSITIONS CHARACTERISTICS	HISTORICAL PERIODS		
	1800s–1900s	1950s–1970s	1980s–2010s
Main features of transitions	Diluted and scattered transitions, delay between statuses attainment	Accelerated and condensed transitions	Dispersed, lengthened, unpredictable transitions, blurred statuses
Societal aspects of transition process	Heterogeneous transitions across social classes and gender	Homogenisation of transitions across social classes and gender	Heterogeneous transitions across social classes, homogeneous transitions across gender (within classes); multiples transitions
Young adults' social status	Semi-autonomous	Autonomous	Semi-autonomous
Process and timing	Early entry into the labour force; later household formation	Early entry into the labour force and early household formation, almost simultaneously	Delayed entry into the labour force; delayed household formation
Institutional obligations	Bound to family obligations; support family of origins in early working life until marrying	Free from family obligations; obligations towards institutions (e.g. education, career, welfare state)	Free from family obligations but prolonged dependence on family and/or state support; obligations towards institutions (e.g. education, career, welfare state)
Adult status attribution requirements	Change in social status and personal behaviour (e.g. marriage, personal abilities and qualities)	Fulfilment of social criteria (e.g. working, marring, having children)	Fulfilment of social criteria, and individual and psychological maturity
Social circumstances and behavioural adaptation	Traditions and expectations based on gender and social class → this framework left few options and choices for individuals to manage life But also: no welfare systems, life hazards and uncertainty → encouraged spontaneous response to sudden events → life model based on a structured and predictable life and here-and-now approach	Socio-economic prosperity, stability, security, welfare systems → future predictions possible → life model based on long-term planning	Socio-economic uncertainty, global forces, welfare systems, individual values, multiple possibilities → anticipation of sudden change, assessing options, possible strategical response → life model based on a here-and-now and future planning mixed approach

Source: own construction.

Examining transitions across time reveals that no particular patterns of transitions are correct or incorrect or can be used as a standard point of reference, in Finland and France, but most possibly in other western societies too. Today's young people are often perceived as deviant or failing to become adults in the appropriate pace and manner because they are measured against another generation that came of age in a substantially different socio-historical landscape. The framework for transitions has transformed. Each historical era offers unique life circumstances. Times have changed, and so have life conditions, expectations, values, risks and chances. Young people are aware of those changes and adapt to their environment. They are simply setting up a new archetype for coming of age that mirrors contemporary times.

Bibliography

- Anatrella, Tony. 2003. Les "adolescents". *Études*, vol. 399, no 7: 37–47. Accessed 23.12.2018. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-etudes-2003-7.htm-page-37.htm>.
- Andrew, Megan; Eggerling-Boeck, Jennifer; Sandefur, Gary, D.; Smith, Buffy. 2007. The 'Inner Side' of the Transition to Adulthood: How Young Adults See the Process of Becoming an Adult, pp. 225–251, in: Macmillan, Ross (ed.). *Constructing Adulthood: Agency and Subjectivity in Adolescence and Adulthood*. Part of the series *Advances in Life Course Research*, vol. 11. San Diego: Elsevier Ltd.
- Ariès, Philippe. 1962. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. New York: Vintage.
- Arnett, Jeffrey. 2004. *Emerging Adulthood*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Baudelot, Christian. 1988. La jeunesse n'est plus ce qu'elle était: les difficultés d'une description. *Revue économique*, vol. 39, no. 1: 189–224.
- Bellamy, Vanessa. 2015. La nuptialité la plus basse depuis 1950. *INSEE FOCUS*, vol. 18.
- Blatterer, Harry. 2007a. Adulthood: The Contemporary Redefinition of a Social Category. *Sociological Research Online*, vol.12 (4), no. 3. Accessed 12.9.2018. <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/12/4/3.html>
- Blatterer, Harry. 2007b. *Coming of Age in Times of Uncertainty*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Blatterer, Harry. 2007c. Contemporary Adulthood: Reconceptualising an Uncontested Category. *Current Sociology*, vol. 55, no. 6: 771–792.
- Blatterer, Harry. 2010. Contemporary Adulthood and the Developing Life Course, pp. 45–54, in: Blatterer, Harry, and Glahn, Julia (eds.). *Times of Our Lives. Making Sense of Growing Up and Growing Old*. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1980. *Questions de sociologie*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Buchmann, Marlis. 1989. *The Script of Life in Modern Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- Chauvel, Louis. 2002 (2nded.). *Le destin des générations. Structures sociales et cohortesen France au XX^e siècle*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Coontz, Stephanie. 2005. *Marriage, a History. From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage*. London: Pinguin Group Ltd.
- Côté, James. 2000. *Arrested Adulthood*. New York: New York University Press.
- Côté, James. 2014. *Youth Studies: Fundamental Issues and Debates*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. 1999. *Social Foundations of the Postindustrial Economies*. Oxford: University Press.
- Eurofound. 2014. *Foundation Findings: La situation sociale des jeunes en Europe*. Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.
- European Union. 2018. *The History of the European Union*. Accessed 17.11.2018. https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history_en
- Eurostat. 2018a. *Online Database: Employment by A*10 Industry Breakdown*. Accessed 21.12.2018. <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitView-TableAction.do>
- Eurostat. 2018b. *Online Database: Fertility Indicators*. Accessed 22.12.2018. http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=demo_find&lang=en
- Eurostat. 2018c. *Online Database: Live Births Outside Marriage, Selected Years, 1960–2016 (share of total live births, %)*. Accessed 21.12.2018. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Live_births_outside_marriage,_selected_years,_1960–2016_\(share_of_total_live_births,_%25\).png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Live_births_outside_marriage,_selected_years,_1960–2016_(share_of_total_live_births,_%25).png)
- Finnish National Agency for Education. 2018. *Education System*. Accessed 26.12.2018. https://www.oph.fi/english/education_system
- Finlex. 2018. *Avioliittolaki 1929*. Accessed 8.10.2018. <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/1929/19290234>
- Fussell, Elizabeth and Furstenberg, Frank. 2005. The Transition to Adulthood During the Twentieth Century: Race, Nativity, and Gender, pp. 29–75, in: Settersten, Richard; Furstenberg, Frank and Rumbaut, Rubén (eds.). *On the Frontier of Adulthood. Theory, Research, and Public Policy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Furedi, Frank. 2003. The Children Who Won't Grow Up. *Frank Furedi: Sociologist, Commentator and Author*. Accessed 23.12.2018. <http://frankfuredi.com/newsite/article/103>
- Furlong, Andy and Cartmel, Fred. 1997. *Young People and Social Change. Individualisation and Risk in Late Modernity*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Furlong, Andy; Woodman, Dan; Wyn, Johanna. 2011. Changing Times, Changing Perspectives: Reconciling 'Transition' and 'Cultural' Perspectives on Youth and Young Adulthood. *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 47, no. 4: 355–370.

- Furstenberg, Frank, Rumbaut, Rubén and Settersten, Richard. 2005. On the Frontier to Adulthood. Emerging Themes and New Directions, pp. 13–25, in: Settersten, Richard, Furstenberg; Frank and Rumbaut, Rubén (eds.). *On the Frontier of Adulthood. Theory, Research, and Public Policy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Galland, Olivier. 1990. *Les jeunes*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Goody, Jack. 2000. *The European Family*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Hartmann, Douglas and Swartz, Teresa Toguchi. 2007. The New Adulthood? The Transition to Adulthood from the Perspective of Transitioning Young Adults, pp. 253–286, in: Macmillan, Ross (ed.). *Constructing Adulthood: Agency and Subjectivity in Adolescence and Adulthood*. Part of the series *Advances in Life Course Research*, vol. 11. San Diego: Elsevier Ltd.
- Helve, Helena and Bynner, John (eds.). 1996. *Youth and Life Management*. Helsinki: University Press.
- Hjerppe, Riitta. 1989. *The Finnish Economy 1860–1985. Growth and Structural Change*. Helsinki: Government Printing Centre.
- INSEE. 2018. *Vital Statistics and Population estimates. Fertility: Demographic Balance Sheet 2017*. Accessed 27.12.2018. <https://www.insee.fr/fr/metadonnees/source/serie/s1169>
- Jones, Gill. 1995. *Leaving Home*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Kett, Joseph F. 1973. Adolescence and Youth in Nineteenth Century America, pp. 95–110, in: Rabb, Theodore K. and Rotberg, Robert I. (eds.). *The Family in History: Interdisciplinary Essays*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Katz, Michael. 1975. *The People of Hamilton, Canada West*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Koskinen, Seppo; Martelin, Tuija; Notkola, Irma-Leena; Notkola, Veijo; Pitkänen, Kari; Jalovaara, Marika; Mäenpää, Elina; Ruokolainen, Anne; Ryyänänen, Markku and Söderling, Ismo (eds.). 2007. *Suomenväestö*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus Helsinki Universitypress.
- Legifrance, le service public de la diffusion du droit. 2018. *Loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Églises et de l'État*. Accessed 12.12.2018. <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000508749>
- Legoyt, A. 1863. Les mariages en France de 1800 à 1860. *Journal de la société française de statistique*, Vol. 4: 247–255.
- Marchand, Olivier, and Thélot, Claude. 1991. *Deux siècles de travail en France*. Paris: INSEE.
- Mary, Aurelie. 2012. *The Illusion of the Prolongation of Youth. Transition to Adulthood Among Finnish and French Female University Students*. Tampere: Tampere University Press.
- Mary, Aurelie. 2014. Re-Evaluating the Concept of Adulthood and the Framework of Transition. *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol. 17, no. 3: 415–429.
- Mauger, Gérard. 2010. Jeunesse: essai de construction d'objet. *Agora débats/jeunesses*, vol. 3, no. 56: 9–24. DOI 10.3917/agora.056.0009

- Miettinen, Anneli. 2011. Population Data on Finland 1900–2010. *Finnish Yearbook of Population Research*, vol. 46: 163–172. Accessed 16.12.2018. <https://journal.fi/fypr/article/view/45071>
- Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la jeunesse. 2018. *Le système éducatif*. Accessed 26.12.2018. <http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid289/le-ministere-de-l-education-nationale-de-1789-a-nos-jours.html>
- Model, John; Furstenberg, Frank F. and Hershberg, Theodore. 1976. Social Change and Transitions to Adulthood in Historical Perspective. *Journal of Family History*, vol. 1, no. 1: 7–32.
- Molgat, Marc. 2007. Do Transitions and Social Structures Matter? How 'Emerging Adults' Define Themselves as Adults. *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol. 10, no. 5: 495–516.
- Pallas, Aaron. 2007. A Subjective Approach to Schooling and the Transition to Adulthood, pp. 225–251, in: Macmillan, Ross (ed.). *Constructing Adulthood: Agency and Subjectivity in Adolescence and Adulthood*. Part of the series *Advances in Life Course Research*, vol. 11. San Diego: Elsevier Ltd.
- Pison, Gilles. 2010. France 2009: Mean Age at Childbearing Reaches 30 Years. *Population and Societies, INED*, vol. 465: 1–4.
- Planiol, Marcel. 1899–1901. *Traité élémentaire de droit civil, Tome 3e*. New edition rearranged by Ripert, Georges and Boulanger, Jean. 1950. Paris: Librairie générale de droit et de jurisprudence.
- Ray, Barbara and Settersten, Richard. 2010. What's Going on with Young People Today? The Long and Twisting Path to Adulthood. *Future of Children*, vol. 20, no. 1: 19–41.
- Rothenbacher, Franz. 2002. *The Societies of Europe: The European Population, 1850–1945*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Settersten, Richard. 2005. Social Policy and the Transition to Adulthood. Towards Stronger Institutions and Individual Capacities, pp. 534–560, in: Settersten, Richard; Furstenberg, Frank and Rumbaut, Rubén (eds.). *On the Frontier of Adulthood. Theory, Research, and Public Policy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Shanahan, Michael; Porfeli, Erik; Mortimer, Jeylan and Erickson, Lance. 2005. Subjective Age Identity and the Transition to Adulthood. When Do Adolescents Become Adults? pp. 225–255, in: Settersten, Richard; Furstenberg, Frank and Rumbaut, Rubén (eds.). *On the Frontier of Adulthood. Theory, Research, and Public Policy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Statistics Finland. 2007a. *From Slash-and-Burn Fields to Post-Industrial Society – 90 Years of Change in Industrial Structure*. Accessed 16.12.2018. https://www.stat.fi/tup/suomi90/helmikuu_en.html
- Statistics Finland. 2007b. *The Growing Years of Finland's Industrial Production*. Accessed 7.1.2019. https://www.stat.fi/tup/suomi90/toukokuu_en.html
- Statistics Finland. 2010. *Births 2009*. Official Statistics of Finland: Population 2010.
- Statistics Finland. 2018. *Births 2017*. Official Statistics of Finland: Population 2010.

- Suomen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko. 2018. *Valtionkirkko ja kansankirkko*. Accessed 22.12.2018. <https://evl.fi/tietoa-kirkosta/kirkko-ja-yhteiskunta/valtionkirkko-ja-kansankirkko>
- Sugarman, Léonie. 1986. *Life-Span Development. Concepts, Theories and Interventions*. London: Routledge.
- Talve, Ilmar. 1997. *Finnish Folk Culture*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society.
- Teichler, Ulrich. 2007. *Higher Education Systems. Conceptual Frameworks, Comparative Perspectives, Empirical Findings*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Tomka, Béla. 2003. Western European Welfare States in the 20th Century: Convergences and Divergences in a Long-Run Perspective. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, vol 12: 249–260.
- Tomka, Béla. 2013. *A Social History of Twentieth-Century Europe*. London: Routledge.
- Toulemon, Laurent; Pailhé, Ariane; Rossier, Clémentine. 2008. France: High and Stable Fertility. *Demographic Research*, vol. 19, art. 16: 503–556.
- Volant, Sabrina. 2017. Un premier enfant à 28,5 ans en 2015: 4,5 ans plus tard qu'en 1974. *INSEE PREMIERE*, no. 1642.
- Wyn, Johanna. 2004. Becoming Adult in the 2000s. New Transitions and New Careers. *Family Matters*, vol. 68: 6–12.
- Wyn, Johanna and Woodman, Dan. 2006. Generation, Youth and Social Change in Australia. *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol. 9, no. 5: 495–514.