

German departures from the parental home: A new pathway towards independence?

As in other countries, also in Germany one can observe a delay in the events which the literature considers being crucial for the achievement of the adult status. In this article I will argue that a particularly important marker is the establishment of an independent residence from parents. The focus is therefore on the opportunities and constraints young people face during their transition to adulthood and their outcomes on the residential trajectories from the parental home. Since young people can leave home for diverse reasons, not only the timing of departure from home, but also the different pathways that young adults follow when establishing an independent residence from their parents are a central issue of this article. The main idea is that there are not only opportunities and constraints of departing from home, but there are also opportunities and constraints in taking a specific route out of the parental home. Using the Family and Fertility Survey I will empirically compare four birth cohorts in order to discover similarities and dissimilarities in the leaving home behavior of young Germans from the mid 1960s to the early 1990s.

Keywords: Life-Course, Youth, Leaving Home, Transition to Adulthood, Family, Europe.

1. Introduction

In the last decades of the 20th century considerable changes have taken place in the transition to adulthood of young Europeans; characterized by a common trend toward emancipation postponement (Galland, 1995, Bendit, 1999). Also in Germany one can observe a delay in the events which the literature considers being crucial for the achievement of the adult status: completion of education, entrance into the labor force, leaving home and family formation. This article will focus on the changes occurred in the leaving home behavior of West Germans born from 1953 to 1972. Two are the reasons behind the choice of this particular transition. First, because of the crucial importance represented by the departure from home for young adults' personal development, which nowadays has become the "key indicator of leaving childhood behind" (Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1993: 3). Given that having an independent residence from parents is "a vital condition for social recognition", any change in the leaving home process can be regarded as both a symptom and a cause of difficulties in the social integration of young people (Cordón, 1997: 579). Second, in a time of overall convergence in economic and social patterns, leaving home is the social indicator presenting the most striking differences among EU countries (Cordón, 1997, Corijn and Klijzing, 2001). This divergence can only be understood by referring to institutional arrangements and normative values which, together, structure individuals' decisions about leaving home. Thus, the focus on the leaving home behavior highlights which opportunities and constraints young Germans face during their transition to adulthood as well as the meanings and expectations associated to it. (1)

(1) When not otherwise specified, throughout this article Germany is used as a synonym for West Germany, i.e. those States that constituted the Federal Republic of Germany before reunification in 1990.

The article is structured as follows. First, I will discuss the emergence of young adulthood as an important phase in life and the role played by the departure from the parental home for the transition to adulthood. In a second step, I will present my research design and the data used for empirical analyses. The fourth section presents and discusses the principal empirical results of how young Germans achieve residential independence from parents. Finally, the German situation is put back in a European context and the importance of institutional settings in encouraging young people's residential independence from parents will be highlighted.

2. Becoming an adult and leaving the parental home

According to the most reckoned life course sociologists, a specific feature of modern societies is the distinction of different life phases. In such societies life phases remain biological facts, but their meanings become "social facts or constructions" (Elder, 1975). Consequently, nowadays life course and age represent an "independent dimension of social structure" (Kohli, 1986, Kohli, 1985). Different life spheres are, however, more or less age-bound: the highest degree of institutionalization of age criteria is found in "legally defined ascription of roles and statuses" (e.g., compulsory school attendance), while age criteria based on informal consensus presents the lowest degree of institutionalization (e.g., 'appropriate' age at leaving home) (Buchmann, 1989). The officially regulated states and transitions influence however the sequencing of positions and roles in non institutionalized life spheres; probably as a "result of the practical acknowledgement of the objective requirements that the 'state-regulated' pace of life imposes on the individual's scope of action" (Buchmann, 1989: 25). With other words, each society imposes its own schedule and individuals internalize such normative timetables, by which they can plan their lives, and interpret themselves as being early, on time, or late in regard to familial or occupational events (Hogan and Astone, 1986: 114). The emergence of particular life phases is then also related to historical processes which allow different life phases to develop in their specificity.

A youth phase increasing emerged in all social classes not earlier than at the beginning of the 20th century, thanks to the rising importance of schooling or educational training (Nave-Herz, 1997). (2) In the past 20 years, however, this life phase has progressively extended and the transition from one status to another shifted to an ever later stage in people's life. The transition to adulthood in these societies is then better described as a *process* instead of a single event. Nonetheless scholars agree upon the existence of critical events through which young people must go through in order to achieve adult status: completion of education, becoming active participants in the labor force, achievement of economic and cultural independence, establishment of independent living arrangements, and the formation of one's own family of procreation (Kerckhoff, 1990, Billari, 1998, Shehan and Dwyer, 1989).

(2)
According to other authors, in Europe before the 60's "youth (in the sense of having a 'youth life') was a privilege for males. In certain cases only for middle-class urban males". (Bendit et al., 1999: 12)

In this article young adulthood will be considered being a crucial and formative period in the life cycle characterized, nowadays, by two main aspects. On the one hand, it is a time of transition in which personal identity and social and economic independence are established. On the other hand young adulthood is also a life stage during which young people have to build an adult world of their own. In this sense, having an independent residence is

crucial for developing an own identity and lifestyle (Bendit et al., 1999). Because of the meanings and expectations associated with an independent residence, “the process of leaving home is viewed as an integral part of establishing economic and emotional independence from the parental home” (Holdsworth, 2000: 201). Allowing young people to independently decide what, how, when to do what they please within their own four walls it symbolizes the achievement of individual autonomy from the family of origin. It is also a signal and chance for organizing relationships and partnerships for oneself, an opportunity for a new definition of the relationship to one’s parents and infrastructure for standing on one’s own feet (Gaiser, 1999: 55). But the departure from the parental home signifies not only freedom and privacy; it also implies costs and responsibilities. It is a learning process of how to take care of household duties, household finances, and time management. Thus, there are both advantages and disadvantages in both staying in as well as leaving the parental home; suffices to think at how much a young adult can save staying home and not paying a rent, electricity, etc. Hence, for some young people, establishing an independent household could represent suffering a considerable decrease in their standard of living (Ainley, 1991, Piccone Stella, 1997, Rieser, 1997).

3. Research question and design

The central research question of this article reads: What ‘triggers’ and what ‘discourages’ the departure from the parental home in Germany? Thus, the focus is on the opportunities and constraints young people face during their transition to adulthood and their outcomes on the residential trajectories from the parental home. Since young people can leave home for diverse reasons, not only the timing of departure, but also the different pathways that young adults follow when establishing an independent residence from their parents are central issues. The main idea is that not only do opportunities and constraints of departing from home exist, but that there are also opportunities and constraints in taking a specific route to residential independence. On the one hand, these relate to resources and expectations young people – but also “relevant others” (above all parents) – have. On the other hand, these also are closely related to the opportunity structures young people face. Thus, the interplay of resources, norms and institutions shapes the individual decision making process to leave the parental home in order to form an own family, to enter employment, to escape unemployment, enroll into education, or just to live independently.

The empirical analyses of this article are based on the German Family and Fertility Survey (FFS), which was carried out in 1992 by the Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB). Separately for West and East-Germany, 10000 Germans aged 20 to 39 years were interviewed with two different questionnaires for men and women. A comparison with German official statistical data reveals an adequate representativeness of the sample (Hullen, 1998). Two questions focus on the departure from the parental home: whether the respondent lives at the time of interview in the parental home and whether and when he/she first left. My analysis will include only individuals who lived with at least one parent, at least until their 15th birthday. The first limitation excludes all those who did not grow up with their parents, since my interest lays in the transition out of a household ‘governed’ by parents. The second limitation is due to the fact that an earlier departure,

apart of being very unusual or result of data-error, possibly implies a transition to another dependent or “semiautonomous” household (Goldscheider and DaVanzo, 1986). In order to reveal the association between leaving home and other events which characterize the transition to adulthood, and so to determine which events ‘trigger’ the achievement of residential independence, a new variable was created combining the timing of the departure from home with the timing of other role transitions. Although monthly information is available for all events, I decided to allow a certain time-span before or after the departure from the parental home. This approach is more realistic, since people plan their decisions and might decide to leave the parental home, because they know they are going to marry, or have a child, or start a job in a few months. Or they might have experienced a specific event, but need some time to find a new residency and move. Accordingly, all departures will be considered being triggered by a specific event if this takes place 6 month before or after leaving home; with the exception of childbirth (9 months before). In total 2372 women and 1594 men born in West Germany between 1953 and 1972 are included in the analysis.

4. Residential independence through marriage or while in education?

There is not a unique way to leave home: departures from the parental home show great variation between the genders, educational attainment, areas of residence, and among birth cohorts. The main differences can be connected to different pathways from the parental home, which result in a different timing of departure. In the following I will highlight the major features and differences.

4.1 Different routes toward independence

German women are quicker than men in achieving residential independence from parents. Scholars ascribe this gender difference, common to a wide range of countries, to different marriage behavior (Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1993, Kerckhoff and Macrae, 1992, Rossi, 1997). Given that women are usually younger than their spouses when they enter marriage, departures motivated by such family event will mirror such age difference as well. In fact, also in Germany the major difference in the timing of leaving home can be found between men and women who depart in order to enter married or unmarried cohabitation (almost 2 years). When young adults leave for other – ‘nonfamily’ – reasons such age difference disappears almost completely (Tab. 1).

Table 1. **Type and median age at departure from home**

	Men		Women	
	%	Age	%	Age
Marriage/ cohabitation	33,8	22,4	50,0	20,7
Birth of first child	0,9	22,2	1,1	22,2
Commence of first employment	7,2	20	5,4	19,6
Still in education	28,2	20,3	22,6	19,9
Completion of education	5,7	20,4	4,4	19,9
None in time-span	24,3	22,5	16,5	22,3
N	1256		2113	

Source: FFS Germany, own calculations

Yet, women achieve residential independence from parents more often than men simultaneously with a family event (50% of women vs. 34% of men). Men achieve an independent residence from parents more often while still in education and without having experienced any other role transition in the timespan of departure. Thus, whereas women frequently switch between family households, i.e. from parents to a partner, men experience in-between some 'nonfamily' residential experience (either living alone or sharing an apartment with others, non relatives). But can this different behavior be only ascribed to different preferences with regard to which pathway should be followed when leaving parents behind? The situation of young people who did not yet achieve residential independence tells us a different story. More men than women are still living with their parents at time of interview (21% vs. 11%), yet women's permanence in the parental home appears to be more closely linked to a lack of own resources. Although over half of the respondent residing in the parental home at time of interview reported their own earnings as their main source of income, this proportion was greater for men. Of those young adults who did not yet achieve residential independence, fewer women had experienced a first job (61% of women vs. 71% of men) and less reported their own income or state benefits (especially education allowance) as the main source of income, while more women depended on the support of their family (32% of women vs. 19% of men). To some extent these results suggest that women's permanence in the parental home is less a free choice than for men; a considerable number of these young women depends also financially on their parents.

Nonetheless, the predominance of co-residence with parents, despite having a first job and particularly despite having an own income, is quite remarkable. A possible explanation is that an employment might be not (or not considered) sufficient for establishing an independent household; in particular if the young adult wishes to simultaneously form an own family. As discussed above, such traditional pathway out of the parental home is, although not predominant, still quite frequently followed. The fact that ca. 40% of the first jobs experienced by young Germans residing in the parental home are trainees' contracts is possibly a further constrain. Although these contracts guarantee an income and social insurance rights, the wages depend on the profession chosen and give – at the most – only a proportion of a normal adult income. Thus, they are often not sufficient for sustaining oneself, let alone a new family.

The importance of economic but also cultural resources is strengthened by the observation that there are, for both genders, significant differences in the leaving home behavior depending on the type of education attained. With higher qualification, family formation as a reason for departure loses importance, while leaving home when still in education becomes more relevant. Whereas 60% of the women with a low or middle secondary degree had left home coinciding with married or unmarried cohabitation, this was the case for only 32% of the women with tertiary education. Men present a similar pattern. Half of the young Germans men and women with tertiary education have achieved residential independence from parents while still in education. In Germany this non traditional pathway out of the parental home is not only facilitated by parental resources, but also by state financial support. According to the principle of subsidiarity, in Germany parents must support their children's education until their first professional degree. Yet, the German state provides financial support for education and training

(Bafög) for those young people in education (especially university), whose parents are not able to guarantee a sufficient maintenance. (3) The importance of this state benefit refers not only to the financial resources it provides, but also relates to its being a frame of reference for family obligations. From a legal point of view, the minimum parents are obliged to give and the maximum children in education can ask (as well as the length) is anchored to *Bafög*. Obviously, some parents may be willing (and able) to provide more support and/or for a longer time whereas other families may be willing (or able) to give only less. Moreover, only a minority of students will want to enforce their right in front of a judge. Yet, this clarification of duties and rights allows young Germans to decide, independently, how to spend the money and some might decide to leave the parental home; eventually supplementing the financial support with either part-time jobs or with extra parental contributions. And the results show that German young people take advantage of this possibility in order to achieve independence while still in tertiary education.

Another factor which facilitates departures of young people who are not yet well established on the labor market, and consequently dispose of only limited financial resources, is the housing market. In international comparison, the West German market for rented housing is “extremely well developed”: almost 60% of household live in rented dwellings and ca. 10% of the income is spent for the rent (Hoffmann and Kurz, 2002: 3). Thanks to financial subsidizes and the availability of affordable dwellings for rent, in Germany nontraditional departures from home, such as leaving while still in education, become an accessible alternative to staying in parental home. The importance of the housing market is further supported by the observation of rural-urban variation. Especially for men, the proportion of young adults residing in the parental home at the time of the interview is greater by those who grew up in rural areas or in small townships (ca. 25%), than those who grew up in cities with over one million inhabitants (12%). These differences can be related to the different pathways from the parental home: young adults who grew up in smaller communities left home more frequently for married or unmarried cohabitation and to a lesser extent while still in education. Differently, young adults who grew up in metropolitan areas left home to a higher extent while still in education and coinciding with the first job. In addition, while overall more women than men had left for family formation, young adults who grew up in metropolitan areas left home for similar reasons: only one fourth had left for married or unmarried cohabitation and over 40% while still in education. Apart from cultural factors, a possible explanation for West German rural-urban variation can be found in the different housing market situation. (4) Young people in rural areas or smaller townships are confronted with a tighter housing market, especially with regard to rentable dwellings.

4.2 Countertrend to emancipation postponement?

From a cohort perspective, there has been only a slight postponement of approximately one year in the achievement of residential independence (Fig.1). Moreover, this delay can be observed only across the three oldest cohorts, while this trend cannot be confirmed for the youngest cohort (1968-72).

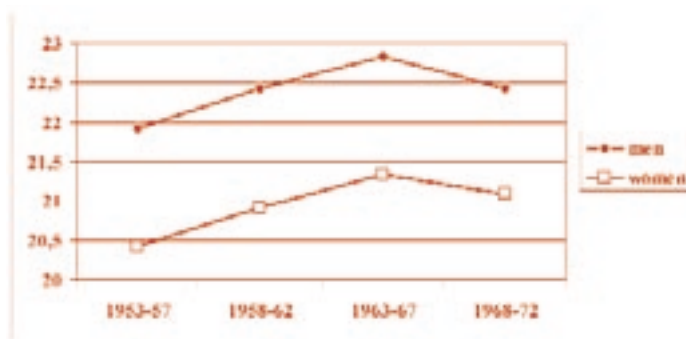
(3)

Only education leading to a degree, and only the first degree, is supported. In 1972, 45% of the university students received support. In 1982 – when a new regulation changed the support into a full loan – only 30% received support. Since 1990, *Bafög* consists of 50% allowance and 50% loan, only in exceptional cases there is a full allowance. However, only approximately 25% of all students meet the requirements to obtain support. In 1997, only a third of all entitled persons had utilized it. (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, 2001)

(4)

The permanence in the parental home for young people in small communities does not appear being a result of lacking own financial resources. Ca. 70% of the men report the own earned income as main source of income. Differently, cohabitation with parents in metropolitan is often linked to lacking resources: fewer have a first job and more depend on the support of their family (ca. 42%).

Figure 1:
Median ages at departure
from home
(KM-Estimation)



Source: FFS Germany, own calculations

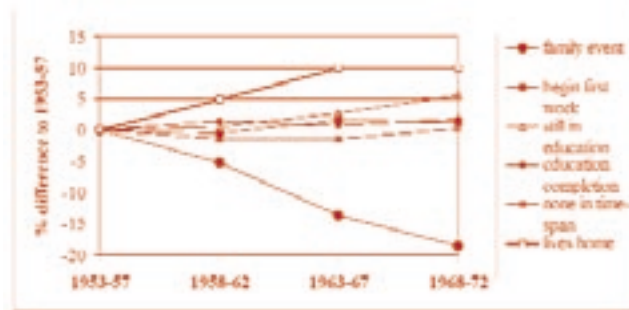
Embedding leaving home in a general vision of the transition to adulthood – and thus considering also the timing of the conclusion of education, achievement of the first job, and family formation – the time spent in these transitional phases increased across cohorts (from 5.4 to 7.5 years for men and from 3.8 to 4.8 years for women). Moreover, men need more time than women to conclude the transition to adulthood and such a gender gap is not only due to the fact that men form their own family later. Women leave home faster than men after the achievement of their first job. A further gender difference is that, for men, there is no clear association between the historical trend of other transitional events and leaving home; with the remarkable exception of family formation. Apart from family formation, men’s postponement of residential independence is not reflected by a similar delay of the events that characterize the transition to adulthood. The pattern for women is different: the procrastination of leaving home occurs in a context of a general postponement of the transition to adulthood.

Notwithstanding important gender differences, up to the 22nd birthday more young people left home in the past than today, and the reasons for departure differ as well. (5) Across cohorts, fewer young Germans left home in order to cohabit with a married or unmarried partner, while more left while still in education. Figure 2 shows that only departures for family reasons declined; i.e. those that took place coinciding with marriage, unmarried cohabitation, and the birth of the first child. Yet, this trend is partially counterbalanced by a growth in alternative pathways. In particular, departures that take place while the young adults are still in education increase. These two different trends result in only a relatively small increase of young people who were residing with their parents at their 22nd birthday (from 41% of the 1953-57 cohort to 51% for the 1968-72 cohort). Thus, family formation delay is reflected by a decrease of departures motivated by family formation, but the residential outcomes of this postponement are partially compensated by an increase in alternative pathways from the parental home (Fig. 2).

(5) When comparing different birth cohorts, one should keep in mind that respondents have been censored by the interview at different ages. A solution to such a problem is to look at young people at their 22nd birthday, age that had been reached by members of all cohorts.

With regard to the role transitions experienced by young adults who were residing in the parental home at their 22nd birthday, for men these are quite similar across cohorts. Differently, across the cohorts considered, fewer women had experienced a first 'normal' job, while more had a trainee contract or were in education without any employment experience. Thus, it appears that nowadays in Germany the permanence in the parental home is, especially for women, more related to a lack of own resources than in the past.

Figure 2:
Cohort differences in proportion of pathway followed out of the parental and proportion still living home at 22nd birthday



Source: FFS Germany, own calculations

These descriptive results provide valuable information as how young Germans experience their transition to adulthood and, in particular, achieve residential independence from parents. A considerable number of departures took place simultaneously with family formation, yet marriage was not the predominant route to residential independence and unmarried cohabitation is gaining importance. Moreover, quite a few young people left home while still in education and, generally, for 'nonfamily' reasons. Education and the area of residence during childhood appear to play an important role in the decision of when and how to leave home. From a cohort perspective, there was only a slight postponement of leaving home and fewer departures took place coinciding with family events. Thus, in West Germany the delay of family formation had been accompanied by an increase of departures due to 'nonfamily' reasons and especially due to education. As a result, the postponement of family formation appears to be (at least partially) counterbalanced by an increase of premarital (pre-family) departures from the parental home. This development is possible because, among other factors, state provisions provide a frame of reference for family obligations clarifying both duties and rights of parents and children. Thus, such detailed regulations of family obligations open 'residential' alternatives. Obviously, the decision of taking advantage of such opportunities and choosing one pathway instead of another will still also depend on young adults' preferences.

4.3 What favors and what discourages leaving home?

In order to distinguish the influence of different factors on the leaving home behavior, it is necessary to go beyond bivariate analyses (such as the result presented above), and compute multivariate models; such as Cox regressions which estimate (proportional) increase or decrease on the transition rate

(out of the parental home) induced by covariates (Blossfeld and Rohwer, 1995: 229). Such analyses show that several factors trigger or discourage the achievement of residential independence from parents, and that these partially differ for different pathways out of the parental home (Rusconi, 2004). I would like to highlight here two major findings of this research. First, as in other countries, also in West Germany leaving home 'follows' the achievement of the first job; i.e., in order to become residentially independent young adults generally must have entered the labor market. Yet, the models also reveal important gender and pathway differences that reflect the existence of different gender role beliefs in the West German society. The achievement of the first job has an especially strong positive influence for men who leave home coinciding with marriage and family formation. Women who depart for marriage or a family event are less constrained by the presence of their own material resources, since it is acceptable for them to rely on their partners' resources. Differently, men who depart in order to form their own family must have their own financial resources. When young Germans leave for reasons other than marriage, both men's and women's departures increase with the achievement of their first job. Thus, when departures follow a nontraditional route, also women must to rely on their own material resources. In addition, the models also reveal the importance of another societal expectation that family formation should take place after the conclusion of education. Consequently, the departure rate for marriage and family reasons is strongly increased by the conclusion of education; yet this effect is greater for women. This reflects the fact that for men the conclusion of education might not be a sufficient precondition for family formation because they still have to enter the labor force in order to gain sufficient means to sustain their new family. The second major outcome of multivariate analyses is that the attainment of higher educational qualifications favors departures not motivated by a family event. Young people with higher education do not wait for marriage (or another family event) but instead present higher departure rates for education, employment, or other reasons. On the one hand, this might be due to the fact that in order to enroll into university some young adults have to change their place of residence (e.g., when their favored university or course of studies applies a *numerus clausus*). On the other hand, higher-educated young adults might have a stronger preference for independence. Moreover, since marriage postponement is especially strong for this educational group these young adults have only two alternatives. Either they remain at home for a quite long period of time while waiting to finish their studies, then find a job, and then finally leave home with a partner; or they leave home during education (possibly only temporarily) into a 'nonfamily' household. The results show that it is this second pathway that is followed. Although this is true for both men and women, the effect is stronger for women. This might be explained by the stronger 'emancipation' effect that education has on women's behavior. Given the gendered division of household duties, to the disadvantage of daughters and wives, women gain more - in terms of privacy, freedom and household duties - by spending at least a period of time in a 'nonfamily' household.

5. Conclusions

Over the last decades of the 20th century in Western industrialized countries, important elements of the transition to adulthood have been delayed. Particularly, young adults experience a prolongation of their time spent in education, a postponement of labor force participation and marriage delay – if they do not forego marriage altogether. Moreover, not only young people enter the labor force later, part-time and temporary jobs are becoming more and more common (Cook and Furstenberg, 2002). Given the strong linkage between marriage and the departure from the parental home, it is important to focus on such transformations. Since the mid 1960s, the nuptiality rate of most western countries has decreased: marriage takes place (if at all) at increasingly older ages. Yet, this common trend has been accompanied by different residential outcomes: in some countries the link between leaving home and marriage became weaker and young people increasingly experience premarital departures, while in other countries they prolong their co-residence with parents. Notably, in Western Europe this divergence has followed a North-South divide: Northern-Central Europeans leave home earlier and more frequently for other reasons than family formation (and marriage) than their Southern European peers (Billari et al., 2001, Córdón, 1997, Goldscheider, 1997).

The principle aim of my work was to determine the main influences of young Germans' decision to leave the parental home and whether and why leaving home differs among different birth cohorts. In order to achieve a complete understanding of the leaving home process, it was necessary to recognize that young people's decisions are not only influenced by different types of resources and behavioral norms, but also by the opportunity structures young adults face. Moreover, leaving home was differentiated into different pathways, and particularly between 'family' and 'nonfamily' departures. Finally, this article did not neglect to look at those who did not yet achieve residential independence from their parents. This perspective gives important information on the possible reasons which induce young people to stay in the parental home.

Also in Germany, a considerably number of departures from the parental home takes place in coincidence with a family event. Yet, this pathway is not predominant. Particularly for men, departures for 'nonfamily' reasons are more frequent than those triggered by family formation. And, from a cohort perspective, there has been an increase particularly in the proportion of young people who leave the parental home while still in education. Yet, there are some gender inequalities: more women depart for family formation and the female permanence in the parental home is more frequently linked to a lack of own resources. This is due to the fact that fewer women enter the dual training system, which provides training wages, and when they do so, they are more frequently trained for less prestigious and lower paid positions. Thus, more women have to depend during their vocational training, and also when taking their first steps into the labor market, partially or completely upon parental support. The fact that in particular women who have attained only lower or middle secondary education leave for family

formation is a strong indication that also in Germany in certain social environments the prevalent 'accepted' pathway from the parental home is still through family formation. And that some parents might be more willing to support an alternative departure of their sons than of their daughters, especially if they have only few resources of their own. Yet, these gender differences disappear for those who grew up in metropolitan areas and for highly educated Germans, which indicates a stronger emancipation effect of higher education in Germany. Moreover, since secondary and tertiary educational expansion has nearly equalized participation by gender and students' subsidies do not discriminate between men and women, students enjoy support regardless of their gender. Thus, these highly educated women can negotiate with their parents from the same position as men.

As with other European countries, also in Germany family formation and marriage are increasingly delayed in a later life stage. This development has important consequences for the achievement of residential independence from parents, and also in this country one can detect a slight delay in leaving home. Yet, in a cohort perspective this article could show that only departures which take place in coincidence with a family event have decreased. Moreover, this decline is partially counterbalanced by an increase in the proportion of young adults who leave home while still in education. Thus, there is neither a general decrease of departures, nor a general increase of premarital departures. The development of the leaving home behavior toward the achievement of residential independence while education is favored by the opportunity structures young Germans face. In this country parents must support their children's education until their first professional degree, whereby their financial responsibilities are quite clearly specified in their amount and length. If parents are not able to guarantee sufficient maintenance, the German state provides financial support for those young people in education. Thus, depending upon which secondary education certificate the young adult holds, he/she can 'freely' choose his/her further professional education and, at least from a legal point of view, can independently dispose of the money he/she is entitled to. The crucial importance of training wages and educational allowances extends beyond the (additional) resources they provide to the conceptualization of higher education as an individual right and public good worthy of financial support. This conceptualization clarifies duties and rights of both parents and children, emancipating young adults from their role of 'children' dependent on their parents.

At last, it is important to point out that while in West Germany young adults increasingly experience new (alternative) types of departure, the traditional sequencing of family formation is still predominant: young adults in education generally do not start a family. They still wait to have concluded their education. Men especially wait to have achieved a stable employment. But, instead of staying in the parental home, an increasing number spends this period of time in nonfamily households. Thus, this 'new' behavior is based on a 'traditional' expectation that the role of a partner and parent should be taken only after having terminated the 'pupil' role. Yet, given that in Germany the achievement of the adult role is, to some extent,

unconceivable without the achievement of residential independence from parents, young adults increasingly adapt decoupling residential and family trajectories. And possibly because the meanings associated to residential independence for the self-realization of young adults are widely shared in the German society, this country provides a clearly defined frame of reference for family obligations.

References

- Ainley, P. (1991) *Young people leaving home*, Cassel, London.
- Bendit, R. (1999) «Youth life and the process of leaving home in Europe» In *Youth and housing in Germany and the European Union* (Eds, Bendit, R., Gaiser, W. and Marbach, J. H.) Leske+Budrich, Opladen, pp. 19-50.
- Bendit, R., Gaiser, W. and Marbach, J. H. (1999) «Introduction: Youth and youth life in Europe - a conceptual framework» In *Youth and housing in Germany and the European Union* (Eds, Bendit, R., Gaiser, W. and Marbach, J. H.) Leske+Budrich, Opladen, pp. 7-18.
- Billari, F. (1998) *L'analisi delle biografie e la transizione allo stato adulto aspetti metodologici e caso italiano*, Dottorato di ricerca in demografia, Dipartimento di statistica Università di Padova.
- Billari, F., Philipov, D. and Baizán, P. (2001) «Leaving home in Europe. The experience of cohorts born around 1960» *International Journal of Population Geography*, **7**, 339-356.
- Blossfeld, H.-P. and Rohwer, G. (1995) *Techniques of event history modeling: New approaches to casual analysis*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah.
- Buchmann, M. (1989) *The script of life in modern society: Entry into adulthood in a changing world*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (2001) *Die wirtschaftliche und soziale Lage der Studierenden in der Bundesrepublik 2000*, Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, Bonn.
- Cook, T. and Furstenberg, F. F. J. (2002) «Explaining aspects of the transition to adulthood in Italy, Sweden, Germany, and the United States: A cross-disciplinary, case synthesis approach» *Annals of the American Academy of Political & Social Science*, **580**, 257-287.
- Cordón, J. A. F. (1997) «Youth residential independence and autonomy. A comparative study» *Journal of family issues*, **18**, 576-607.
- Corijn, M. and Klijzing, E. (Eds.) (2001) *Transition to adulthood in Europe*, Kluwer, Dordrecht.
- Elder, G. H. (1975) «Age differentiation and the life course» *Annual review of sociology*, **1**, 165-190.
- Gaiser, W. (1999) «Young people and housing: A challenge for individuals and the welfare state» In *Youth and housing in Germany and the European Union* (Eds, Bendit, R., Gaiser, W. and Marbach, J. H.) Leske+Budrich, Opladen, pp. 51-79.
- Galland, O. (1995) «Introduction. What is youth?» In *Youth in Europe* (Eds, Cavalli, A. and Galland, O.) Pinter, London, pp. 1-6.
- Goldscheider, F. K. (1997) «Recent changes in U.S. young adult living arrangements in comparative perspective» *Journal of Family Issues*, **18**, 708-724.
- Goldscheider, F. K. and DaVanzo, J. (1986) «Semiautonomy and leaving home in early adulthood» *Social Forces*, **65**, 187-201.
- Goldscheider, F. K. and Goldscheider, C. (1993) *Leaving home before marriage: Ethnicity, familism, and generational relationships*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.
- Hoffmann, J. and Kurz, C. (2002) Economic research center of the deutsche Bank.
- Hogan, D. P. and Astone, N. M. (1986) «The transition to adulthood» *Annual review of sociology*, **12**, 109-130.

- Holdsworth, C. (2000) «Leaving home in Britain and Spain» *European sociological review*, **16**, 201-222.
- Hullen, G. (1998) *Lebensverläufe in West- und Ostdeutschland: Längsschnittanalysen des deutschen Family and Fertility Surveys*, Leske + Budrich, Opladen.
- Kerckhoff, A. C. (1990) *Getting started. Transition to adulthood in Great Britain*, Westview Press, Boulder.
- Kerckhoff, A. C. and Macrae, J. (1992) «Leaving the parental home in Great Britain: A comparative perspective» *The sociological quarterly*, **33**, 281-301.
- Kohli, M. (1985) «Die Institutionalisierung des Lebenslauf. Historische Befunde und theoretische Argumente» *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, **37**, 1-29.
- Kohli, M. (1986) «The world we forgot: A historical review of the life course» In *Later life: The social psychology of aging* (Ed, Marshall, V.) Sage, Beverly Hills, pp. 271-303.
- Nave-Herz, R. (1997) «Still in the nest. The family and young adults in Germany» *Journal of family issues*, **18**, 671-689.
- Piccone Stella, S. (1997) «I giovani in famiglia» In *Lo stato delle famiglie in Italia* (Eds, Barbagli, M. and Saraceno, C.) Il Mulino, Bologna, pp. 151-162.
- Rieser, D. (1997) *Jugend und Wohnen*, Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen.
- Rossi, G. (1997) «The Nestling. Why young adults stay at home longer: The Italian case.» *Journal of family issues*, **18**, 627-644.
- Rusconi, A. (2004) «Different pathways out of the parental home: A comparison of West-Germany and Italy.» *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, **35**, 627-649.
- Shehan, C., L. and Dwyer, J., W. (1989) «Parent-child exchanges in the middle years: Attachment and autonomy in the transition to adulthood» In *Aging parents and adult children* (Ed, Mancini, J. A.) Lexington Books, Lexington, pp. 99-116.

