The Social Stratification of Choice in the Transition to Adulthood: a Comparative Perspective[1]

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Abstract

This paper examines to what extent and through which mechanisms the socioeconomic background of young adults influences their family decisions in the transition to adulthood. We use data from two waves of the Generations and Gender Surveys to study this issue among young adults in six European countries (the Netherlands, Austria, France, Hungary, Bulgaria and Georgia). We find evidence that leaving home, entry into a first union and entry into parenthood are all socially stratified in (almost) all of these countries. We find additional evidence that part of this stratification results from the differential transmission of preferences and intentions among children with low and high SES backgrounds, and more limited evidence that differences in parental opportunities and resources between low and high SES families are important as well.

Introduction

The transition to adulthood is highly stratified. This is true in the educational and occupational domain, where children of parents with a higher socio-economic status (SES) achieve higher educational attainment and acquire better paid, more secure, and higher status jobs than children with a lower SES background. But it is also true for decisions in the family formation domain, where children with a high SES background often leave home earlier, but enter a union, marriage and parenthood later than their age peers with a low SES background (Modell, Furstenberg, and Hershberg 1976; Rindfuss 1991). This social stratification of entry into adulthood is thought to result from differences in the extent to which low and high SES parents are able to provide their children with the economic and cultural resources to become autonomous from the parental home. These parental resources comprise economic capital, such as monetary investments that facilitate investments in education, but also cultural and social capital related to role modeling, world views, networks and knowledge.

It is however less well understood *how* the social stratification of demographic behavior in young adulthood operates. Basically, the social stratification of demographic behavior can operate in *two*, potentially reinforcing ways (Featherman, Hogan & Sorensen, 1984; Marini, 1992). In the first place, children from high SES parents can hold different values, attitudes and preferences concerning the type of demographic events they want to experience and concerning the timing of these events than children from low SES parents. This can be termed the *socialization* mechanism. Secondly, children from high SES parents can have more resources at their disposal to realize their values, attitudes and preferences than children with a low SES background. This can be termed the *opportunity* mechanism. The key research question to be studied in this paper is (a) to what extent family formation decisions in the transition to adulthood are socially stratified, and (b) to what extent this results from the socialization or from the opportunity mechanism. The latter question will be studied by decomposing choice in the transition to adulthood into two stages, namely (1) the intention to experience key family formation events in the transition to adulthood and (2) the realization of this intention. Our focus will be on three main transitions: leaving home, entry into a union, and entry into parenthood.

The extent to which demographic decision-making in the transition to adulthood is socially stratified may vary across countries. At the country level, social policies and other

institutional arrangements (for instance, social security regulations, the educational system) may not only shape the opportunities that young adults have in making plans regarding the transition to adulthood and to realize these plans but also buffer the negative consequences of childhood disadvantage. By applying a comparative European perspective, examine whether and how the association between parental resources and choices in the transition to adulthood differs across countries with different types of welfare states.

We take advantage of new data sources to analyze the "diverging destinies" (McLanahan, 2004) of young adults in the transition to adulthood. We use panel data from two waves of the Generations and Gender Surveys for six European countries covering three Western (France, the Netherlands and Austria) and three Eastern European (Hungary, Bulgaria, and Georgia) countries. This survey contains rich demographic data on around 10,000 adults aged 18 to 79 years old (of which we select young adults aged 18 to 35 years old) and information on their family context during childhood. We measure parental background by educational and occupational level of both parents and study the association between parental background, intentions (measured in the first interview) and the realization of intentions (measured in the follow-up interview three years later) regarding leaving the parental home leaving, entry into a union formation, childbearing.[2]

Theoretical background and hypotheses

The transition to adulthood in contemporary Europe and other industrialized societies such as the United States has undergone significant changes that can be summarized as being characterized by (a) a general delay of nearly all events comprising the transition into adulthood (Aassve et al 2002, Furstenberg 2010, Billari and Liefbroer 20010) and (b) a de-standardization of the order and nature of life transitions (Elzinga & Liefbroer, 2007). Postponement and de-standardization of the transition into adulthood are key element of the changes in the demographic landscape that have been described as the Second Demographic Transition (SDT), and are thought to be the consequence of broader attitudinal change in individualized societies. Contemporary societies are often characterized by a high valorization of individualism, autonomy, self-fulfillment and

[2] We would have liked to analyse entry into marriage as well. However, the number of respondents experiencing marriage in the three-year period between waves was too low to do so.

flexibility (Lesthaege and Surkijn 2004). The other side of the coin is that the increasing freedom in designing one's own biography could make young adults more reluctant to commit to largely irreversible life transitions as these could be perceived as being at odds with the mobility and flexibility ideals that they value so much.

Young adults from different socio-economic family backgrounds may not share the same opportunities to follow the "modern" paths into adulthood (Rindfuss 1991; Settersten Jr and Ray 2010). One strand of literature focuses on social inequality in household, partnership and family formation that would lead to "diverging destinies" by social origin (Mc Lanahan 2004). This notion explicitly sees early transitions as potential signs of disadvantage and the potential cause for accumulating disadvantage in the future. This view is supported by findings that for instance, teenage pregnancies occur more often among the socio-economically disadvantaged strata of society and also are considered to have negative effects on the future employment and partnership career of women experiencing early (and often non-marital) childbearing (Upadhya and Ellen 2011). The diverging destinies idea is compatible with economic theories on union- and family formation in which it is argued that investment in human capital (by education) causes a delay in these transitions (Becker 1981; Gustafsson 2001). Oppenheimer (1988) emphasizes the potential gender specificity of this argument, i.e. the differential might decrease or reverse for men given their traditional role of main earner. Indeed, early studies have documented an inverted relationship between education and union formation (Blossfeld and Huinink 1991) as well as between education and the timing of births in the U.S. and in Europe with higher educated women having their children considerably later than their lower educated counterparts (Mills, Rindfuss, McDonald, and te Velde 2011; Martin 2000; Rindfuss, Bumpass, and John 1980). Because educational opportunities vary by social origin, this implies that individuals from higher strata would postpone these key events in the transition to adulthood.

The story of SES-based differences in leaving the parental home is usually told a little differently. In countries with a strong welfare state, leaving home has not been postponed strongly during recent decades and in some countries even occur earlier than in the past (Billari and Liefbroer 2010, Breen and Buchmann 2002). Given the connection between leaving home and the continuation of (tertiary) education in many societies (Billari, Philipov, and Baizán 2001; Buchmann and Kriesi 2011), it is unclear whether early home leaving could be view as a marker of a disadvantaged trajectory *per se*. There are, on the contrary, indications that, at least in some

societies characterized by late home-leaving such as Italy, later timing is associated with worse outcomes, hence leaving home *too late* might have disadvantageous consequences (Billari and Tabellini 2011). In a study of age deadlines for leaving the parental home in the Netherlands, Liefbroer and Billari (2010) find that these ages are lower for the highly educated than for the middle and lower educated.

Although there is a literature that stresses that social class origin is still a major determinant of structuring the transition to adulthood (e.g., Brannen and Nilsen 2002; Furlong and Cartmel 2007), this literature has not explicitly discussed through which mechanisms this stratification operates. In the introduction, we suggested that two mechanisms may be at play. The *socialization* hypothesis suggests that differences in attitudes, preferences and intentions set young adults with low and high SES family backgrounds apart. The *opportunity* hypothesis suggests that it is differences in opportunities to achieve preferred goals that explains differences by SES background. By decomposing choice in the transition to adulthood into these two aspects, we follow an approach that has been used mostly in the study of fertility behavior (intentions and their realization), where the debate on the measurement and meaning of intentions and subsequent behavior has been the strongest (see, e.g., Bachrach and Morgan2013). Indeed, socioeconomic factors affecting intentions and the ability to realize fertility intentions have been the focus of comparative analyses on this topic (Kapitány and Spéder 2013; Régnier-Loilier and Vignoli 2011).

The socialization hypothesis implies that in the parental home, cultural resources such as values and attitudes, worldviews and ideas about how the proper adult life should look like are transmitted from parents to their offspring. The parental home might thus influence young adults' plans with regard to key events in the transition to adulthood resulting in a social stratification of intentions on leaving the parental home, entering a union, and having children. High SES parents might thus transmit to their children the embracement of values supporting the postponement of life transitions that are costly and hard to reverse in favor of investment in human capital (education) and individual freedom. From our theoretical considerations we formulate a first hypothesis:

H1: Young adults from higher socio-economic parental backgrounds are more likely to intend to leave the parental home, and less likely to start living with a partner, and enter parenthood than their counterparts from lower socio-economic parental backgrounds.

The opportunity hypothesis implies that on the one hand, in the parental home, economic resources such as financial transfers are transmitted from the parents to their children that may facilitate the realization of an intention, which means both realizing a planned event and avoiding an unplanned event. For instance, leaving the parental home entails costs setting up an independent household and failing in realizing the intention to leave the parental home can be considered as a marker of disadvantage, and therefore more likely to be experienced among young adults coming from a lower social class background. We thus formulate a second hypothesis:

H2: Young adults from higher socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to realize their intentions with regard to home leaving, union formation, marriage and entry into parenthood than their counterparts from lower socio-economic parental backgrounds.

Only few scholars have studied SES differentials in the timing of events in the transition to adulthood in a comparative perspective (Blossfeld, Klijzing, Mills, and Kurz 2005; Corijn and Klijzing 2001). Prior research on the role of context focuses on institutional opportunities and constraints and how they shape the ability of young adults to follow certain pathways to adulthood across different societies (Breen and Buchmann 2002; Buchmann and Kriesi 2011; Mayer 2001). In the theoretical framework of the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen 1988, Ajzen 1991) the perception that a behavior can realistically be achieve ("perceived behavioral control") is a key determinant of forming an intention, but also influences the realization of an intention. Hence, when policies and institutions compensate to a certain extent the social inequalities that young adults face in the transition to adulthood, initial differences between young adults from lower and higher socio-economic background may be smaller in more equal societies. We therefore formulate a third hypothesis:

H3: The socio-economic differentials in young adults' intended and realized transitions to adulthood are smaller in more equal societies.

Data and Sample

We use data from the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) (Vikat et al. 2007). The GGS is a set of comparative longitudinal surveys of a nationally representative sample of the 18–79-year-old resident population in each of the participating countries (Vikat et al 2007). It aims at

improving our understanding of the various factors –including public policy and program interventions - that affect the relationships between parents and children (generations) and between partners (gender). To achieve this, a broad array of topics including fertility, partnership, the transition to adulthood, economic activity, care duties and attitudes are covered by the survey. In this study, we focus on six countries for which data from two waves are available: Austria, Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Hungary and the Netherlands. These countries differ in terms of general economic level and inequality.[3] We select 19,681 adults aged 18 to 35 years old.[4]

Measurements

Intentions and realization of transitions into adulthood

At the first interview, respondents who had not yet experienced the considered event (leaving the parental home, starting to live with a partner, having a first child) have been asked whether they intend to experience the event during the next three years (=in-between panel interval). Respondents who answered "definitely yes" and "probably yes" are considered to have positive intentions and respondents who answered "probably not", "definitely not" and "don't know" are considered to have negative intentions. In wave 2, we obtained information on whether the respondent realized the intention by experiencing the event. Failing to realize an intention means that the respondent did not succeed in experiencing an intended event (did not have the first child that was planned three years earlier) or experienced an event even though it was not intended (had a child that was not planned three years earlier).

Parental socio-economic background

Parental socio-economic background is measured by father's and mother's highest level of educational attainment and occupational status measured at the time of first interview. Education

[3] Given that the harmonization process is still ongoing (and it is carried at NIDI), we foresee that by PAA 2015, we will add the analyses also for Italy.

[4] The analyses on the association between SES and intentions is performed on all respondents who participated in Wave 1 and have at least one valid measurement of the four indicators of parental SES.The analyses on the association between SES and realization of intentions is performed on 14,314 of these respondents who also participated in Wave 2.

is measured by the International Standard Level of Education (ISLED) coding, which is a one-dimensional (continuous) score combining information on highest school level and highest vocational classification that is comparable across countries (Ganzeboom and Schröder, 2013). Occupational status is measured by converting occupational codes into the International Socio-Economic Index of Occupation (ISEI) (Ganzeboom et al 1992). A factor analysis confirmed that all these four indicators load highly on one factor. Therefore, we combine standardized values on mothers and fathers' education and occupation into one variable by taking the mean of these variables and standardizing the resulting score. This score is used to measure parental socio-economic status.

Analytical approach

We employ logistic regression analysis to study the association between 1) parental SES and having experienced the event prior to first interview, 2) parental SES and intention to experience the event within three years, 3) parental SES and experiencing the event between waves 1 and 2.

Results

The association between parental SES and having experienced the event before the first interview

We start our analyses by analyzing the relationship between parental SES and whether or not respondents have experienced the demographic events of interest before wave 1. In this analysis, we control for age and sex. This initial analysis will give us first insights in whether these events are socially stratified at all. Table 1 presents the estimates of the effect of parental SES on demographic events among all respondents that participated in wave 1 of the GGS.

Table 1 about here

First of all, the effects of SES show that all four processes are clearly socially stratified along the lines of our theoretical reasoning in all countries. The higher the parental SES, the more likely respondents are to postpone entry into a union, entry into marriage and entry into parenthood. In addition, the higher the parental SES, the more likely respondents are to leave the parental home

earlier (at least in Austria, France and the Netherlands. The only exception to our expectations is that for home leaving, there is a positive association with parental SES in Bulgaria and Georgia, implying that young adults with high SES parents leave the parental home at a later age than young adults with low SES parents in these two countries. Looking at these results make us confident that parental SES strongly influences transitions into adulthood, but these results cannot tell us anything about the underlying mechanisms, is it socialization (preferences) or opportunity? To answer this question, we use panel data that allow us to examine the influence of parental SES on the intentions of young adults concerning leaving home, entry into union and entry into parenthood, and the extent to which they are able to realize these intentions.

The association between parental SES and intending to experience transition into adulthood

Leaving the parental home

First of all, we analyze leaving home. This analysis is restricted to respondents who are currently living with at least one of their parents and have not left the parental home in the past. Table 2 provides descriptive information on the intentions and actual behavior of these respondents in our sample. Whereas 34% of Georgian and 39% of Bulgarian young adults intend to leave the parental home within three years, 55% (Austria), 66% (Netherlands) and 68% (France) of their Western European counterparts plan to do so. Across countries, individuals who intend to experience an event in the transition to adulthood are more likely to experience the event than their counterparts who do not intend to experience the event. Moreover, Western European respondents more frequently realize these plans than Eastern European respondents.

Tables 2 and 3 about here

Next, we turn to the results of the logistic regression analysis. For all countries, three models are estimated. In a first model, the intention to leave the parental home is regressed on parental SES, age (and age squared) and gender. This model tells us whether the intentions regarding leaving home are stratified by parental background. In a second model, the actual experience of leaving home is regressed on the intention to leave home, parental SES, age and gender. This model tells us whether parental SES influences the occurrence of the event, net of the intentions that respondents have. Finally, in a third model, the interaction between intention and parental SES is

added to model 2. This interaction tells us whether the extent to which respondents are able to realize their intention depends on parental SES.

The results in Model 1 of Table 3 show that in most countries, respondents whose parents have a higher SES are more likely to intend to leave the parental home than respondents whose parents have a lower SES. This effect is statistically significant in the Netherlands, Austria and Bulgaria, and approaches statistical significance in France.

In Model 2, leaving home between wave 1 and 2 is the dependent variable. As expected, those who intended to leave the parental home are more likely to actual do so in all countries (although the effect in the Netherlands is only marginally significant). More importantly, we observe quite different effects for parental SES across countries. In most countries the effect of parental SES is insignificant, but in Bulgaria it is negative (implying that respondents with a high SES family background are less likely to experience leaving home between wave 1 and 2), whereas in Austria it is positive (but only marginally statistically significant.

Finally, in model 3 the interaction between intention and parental SES is added to the model. Again, in most countries no statistically significant effects are found, However, in the Netherlands, the interaction is negative, implying that respondents with high SES parents are less likely to realize their intentions than respondents with low SES parents. In Bulgaria, there is a marginally significant positive effect, implying that intentions are more likely to be realized the higher the parental SES is.

In all, these results suggest that the socialization mechanism is quite influential, as the intention to leave the parental home was strongly influenced by parental SES in most countries. At the same time, little support for the opportunity mechanism was observed.

Forming a union

The second demographic event that will be studied is entry in a union (irrespective of whether this union is entered by marriage or by unmarried cohabitation. This analysis is restricted to respondents who have never lived with a partner, but who state that they have a partner in wave 1 with whom they are not cohabiting. Thus, this implies that they are in a LAT-relationship or in some kind of steady dating relationship. Table 4 provides descriptive information on the intentions and actual behavior of these respondents. In all countries, with the exception of the Netherlands and Bulgaria, the majority of these respondents expect to start living with their

partner within the next three years. Table 4 also shows that in all countries, those respondents who intend to start living with their partner in the next three years are indeed more likely to do so than those who do not intend to start living with their partner. The differences between intenders and non-intenders seem to be largest in Western European countries and smaller in Eastern European countries. At the same time, the results show that of those who intend to start living with their partner in the next three years only about half (or in Georgia and Bulgaria even less than 30%) actually start living with their partner. For many people, the initial intention to start living with their partner does not seem to be realized.

Tables 4 and 5 about here

Table 5 shows the results of the logistic regression analyses that were performed to estimate the extent to which intentions and behaviors about entry into a union were influenced by parental SES. Model 1 shows that parental SES has a negative effect on the intention to start living with one's partner in Georgia, Bulgaria and France (although the effect is only marginally significant in France). No effect was found in other countries. In these countries, respondents with high SES parents seem to prefer a somewhat slower pace in the union formation process than respondents with low SES parents.

Models 2 and 3 show results from the analyses of the influence of parental SES on entry into a first union. A first thing to note is that this analysis confirms the observation that could be made from Table 4 that respondents who intend to start living with their partner are much more likely to actually do so than those who did not intend to do so. The effect of intentions is highly statistically significant in all six countries. Secondly, the results from Model 2 show that in three countries (The Netherlands, Bulgaria and Austria) higher parental SES is associated with a decrease of the odds that respondents who already have a partner actually start to live with him or her. Thirdly, the fact that none of the interactions between intentions and parental SES in Model 3 are statistically significant implies that in none of the countries, parental SES influences the extent to which respondents are actually able to realize their intentions.

Overall, these results suggest that in some countries the socialization mechanism might be operative as parental SES is observed to influences the intentions that respondents have to start living with their partner. Less support for the opportunity mechanism is observed. None of

the expected interactions between intentions and parental SES were significant. However, in a few countries the negative direct effect of parental SES on entry into a union implies that parental SES does not only lead to postponement of entry into a union because respondents with high SES parents have other preferences, but that it even leads to postponement irrespective of the intentions that respondents might have. This last finding suggests that – at least in Austria, Bulgaria and the Netherlands – young adults whose parents have a high SES are more likely to postpone entry into a union than young adults whose parents have a low SES for other reasons than just because they have different preferences.

Entry into parenthood

The final family event in the transition to adulthood that we study is entry into parenthood. This analysis is restricted to respondents who have not had a first child prior to wave 1. In Table 6, descriptive information on intentions and behavior concerning entry into parenthood is presented. The figures show that in all six countries substantial proportions of childless young adults expect to have a first child in the next three years. Table 6 also shows that those who intend to have a child are more likely to actually have a first child in the next three years than those who do not intend to have a child in all sex countries. What is more interesting, though, is that intentions seem to be a much better predictor of actual behavior in the Western European countries in our study than in the Eastern European ones. For instance, in the Netherlands, 60% of those respondents who intended to have a child within the next three years actually had a child within this period, compared to only 11% among those who did not intend to have a child. At the opposite end of the spectrum the difference between those intending to have a child and those not intending to have a child is only 10% in Bulgaria. In addition, the percentage of Bulgarian respondents who realized their intention to have a child is only 17%.

Tables 6 and 7 about here

Table 7 presents the results of the logistic regression analyses on parenthood intentions and behaviors. The results in Model 1 show that in four of the six countries (The Netherlands, Austria, France and Bulgaria), higher parental SES is associated with a weaker intention to have a child in the next three years. These results are in line with the socialization mechanism.

Results of the analysis of factors that influence actual entry into parenthood between waves 1 and 2 are presented in Models 2 and 3. Model 2 shows that in three countries (Hungary, Bulgaria and France), respondents with high SES parents are less likely to have a child within waves 1 and 2 than respondents with low SES parents, even controlling for differences in initial intentions. In addition, Model 3 shows that in three countries (Austria, France and Hungary), a statistically significant positive interaction between intentions and parental SES is observed, implying that in these countries respondents with a higher SES background are better able to realize their intentions than respondents with a lower SES background. The only counterintuitive finding is the marginally statistically significant negative interaction between intention and parental SES in the Netherlands, implying that respondents with higher SES parents are less likely to realize their intentions than respondents with lower SES parents.

With the exception of that final surprising result for the Netherlands, the results on entry into parenthood provide partial support for both the socialization mechanism and the opportunity mechanism.

Conclusion and discussion

The key aim of this paper is to increase our understanding in the social stratification of family events in the transition to adulthood. Although it is well established that this transition is socially stratified – with children from high SES backgrounds leaving home earlier, but entering unions and parenthood later than children from low SES backgrounds, it is much less well understood *how* the social stratification of demographic behavior in young adulthood operates. In this paper we examined to key mechanisms that could explain the social stratification of demographic behavior (Featherman, Hogan & Sorensen, 1984; Marini, 1992). The socialization mechanism suggests that children from high SES parents hold different family values, attitudes and preferences concerning the type and timing of demographic events. Alternatively, the opportunity mechanism suggests that children from high SES parents have more resources at their disposal to realize these values, attitudes and preferences than children with a low SES background. We studied the issue by using panel data in order to decompose choice in the transition to adulthood into two stages, namely (1) the intention to experience key family formation events and (2) the realization of this intention. To examine whether the two

mechanisms we distinguished are operative to the same extent in different social contexts, we compared the process in six European countries.

Before testing our hypotheses, we first checked whether the events of interest were indeed socially stratified at all. It turned out that this was the case in the far majority of countries. The higher the parental SES, the more likely respondents are to postpone entry into a union, and entry into parenthood in all six countries. In addition, the higher the parental SES, the more likely respondents are to leave the parental home earlier (at least in Austria, France and the Netherlands. The only exception to this pattern is that for home leaving, there is a positive association with parental SES in Bulgaria and Georgia. This latter finding suggests that there is a stronger association between the processes of leaving home and union formation in these Eastern European countries than in the Western European countries in our sample.

Our first hypothesis suggested that the intentions concerning family events differ according to the socio-economic status of the parents. This hypothesis is partially supported by our data. For leaving home, we find effects of parental SES on intentions in four out of five countries (The Netherlands, France, Austria, Bulgaria); for union formation, we find so in three out of six countries (Georgia, Bulgaria and France), and for marriage we find effects in four out of six countries (The Netherlands, Austria, France and Bulgaria). Thus, differences in the timing of demographic events at least partially seem to result from differences between children from low and high SES families in their preferences and attitudes concerning family formation. This finding points to the importance of socialization processes in which attitudes and preferences concerning the occurrence, timing and sequencing of family behaviors are transmitted between generations.

Our second hypothesis suggested that the behavioral differences between children from low and high SES families depend on differences in the opportunities these children face. Our results find some support for this mechanism, but it is not as strong as that for the socialization mechanism, and it varies substantially between demographic events. For leaving home, we find a direct influence of parental SES on leaving home between waves 1 and 2 for two out five countries (Bulgaria and Austria), and an interaction effect for two out of five countries as well (Bulgaria and the Netherlands). Given that some of these significant effects even had an opposite sign to what we expected, hardly any support for the opportunity mechanism concerning leaving home was found. For union formation, we find a negative effect of parental SES on entry into a

union between waves 1 and 2, even net of intentions in four out of six countries (Austria, Netherlands, Bulgaria, Hungary), implying that children of high SES parents are more reluctant to start living with their partner than children of low SES parents, irrespective of their intentions. This suggest that it is not just socialization, but that other aspects – e.g. perceived parental support for entering a union – play a role in the decision to start living with a partner as well. However, no interaction effects between intentions and parental SES are observed, suggesting that children from high SES backgrounds were not more likely to realize their intention concerning entry into a union than children from high SES backgrounds. Finally, for entry into parenthood we find relatively strong support for the opportunity hypothesis. There are direct effects of parental SES on having a first child between waves 1 and 2 in three out of six countries (Hungary, Bulgaria and France) and there are indirect effects in the expected direction in three out of six countries as well (Austria, France and Hungary). Only in the Netherlands, an interaction effect in the opposite direction is observed. Thus, the strongest support for the opportunity mechanism is observed for entry into parenthood, whereas only limited support is found for leaving home and entry into a union.

Our third hypothesis suggests that the effect of parental SES is stronger in more unequal societies. Very little support is found for this hypothesis. It turns out that social stratification in preferences is stronger in Western European counties than in Eastern European countries, but no clear pattern arises for social stratification in opportunities. The stronger stratification of preferences in Western European countries suggests that family formation choices in these countries may be more strongly driven by values and preferences than in Eastern European countries, and given that more 'modern' family values often originate among the higher social strata, this could explain why young adults from higher SES backgrounds are more likely than young adults from lower SES backgrounds to leave home relatively early and enter into a union and into parenthood relatively late.

To our knowledge, this study is the first that attempts to disentangle the mechanisms causing the social stratification of demographic decisions in the transition to adulthood. We feel this to be a worthwhile first attempt, but clearly there are a number of limitations to our data. First of all, we could only disentangle these processes among young adults who had not yet experienced these events at the start of the panel survey. Given that relatively old young adults who have not yet experienced these events are overrepresented in such a sample, this could have

biased our results.[5] However, it seems reassuring that some indications that both the socialization and the opportunity mechanisms are operative could be found. Secondly, we could only observe behaviors across a limited timespan of three years. This short time-span, coupled to the relative crudeness of our information on respondents' preferences, probably makes it rather hard to find empirical support for our key hypotheses. Once again, that makes it reassuring that we find at least some indications for the posited mechanisms by what parental socio-economic background influences the transition to adulthood. Finally, we could 'only' examine these mechanisms in six European countries. Although this constitutes a major step forward compared to research that studies these processes in a single-country context only, it would be worthwhile to examine these processes in an even larger set of countries, preferably with a broad representation of different types of welfare state regimes and cultural backgrounds. As the number of countries in which multiple waves of the Generations and Gender Survey is increasing, the opportunities to approach this ideal design will improve in the future.

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[5] We plan to estimate Heckman sample selection models in a next version of the paper. Such models allow us to get a somewhat better view on whether and to what extent selection bias could have influenced our results.

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Table 1 Effect SES on event before W1 (controlling for age and gender)

	Austria		Bulgaria		France		Georgia		Hungary		Netherlands	
	b	*p*	b	*p*	b	*p*	b	*p*	b	*p*	b	*p*
Leaving home	0.23	0.00	-0.10	0.00	0.28	0.00	-0.14	0.00	*		0.39	0.00
Living with a partner	-0.16	0.00	-0.38	0.00	-0.06	0.07	-0.19	0.00	-0.15	0.00	-0.13	0.00
Marriage	-0.22	0.00	-0.08	0.00	-0.09	0.00	-0.07	0.01	-0.12	0.00	-0.25	0.00
Parenthood	-0.31	0.00	-0.22	0.00	-0.10	0.00	-0.13	0.00	-0.15	0.00	-0.16	0.00

* Question on parental home leaving not implemented in Hungarian GGS

Table 2 Intentions and behavior regarding leaving the parental home

	Intention in wave 1		Event in wave 2			
	Positive intention in Wave 1		If negative intention in wave 1		If positive intention in wave 1	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Austria	278	55.27	70	31.11	178	64.03
Bulgaria	436	39.21	181	26.78	143	32.80
France	160	68.09	22	29.33	107	66.88
Georgia	340	34.03	108	16.39	91	26.76
Netherlands	84	66.14	18	41.86	53	63.10

Table 3 Logistic regression estimates for leaving home

		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Dependent variable	Intention in wave 1 (1=yes)		Event in wave 2 (1=left home)		Event in wave 2 (1=left home)	
	Predictors	b	p	b	p	b	p
NETHERLANDS	Intention			0.79	0.058	0.85	0.046
	Parental SES	0.46	0.012	0.02	0.925	0.82	0.035
	SES x Intention					-1.21	0.008
	Age	0.32	0.026	0.79	0.016	0.48	0.010
	Age (squared)	-0.02	0.064	-0.03	0.042	-0.03	0.031
	Female	0.78	0.014	0.21	0.603	0.27	0.506
AUSTRIA	Intention			1.27	0.000	1.27	0.000
	Parental SES	0.25	0.008	0.21	0.054	0.31	0.088
	SES x Intention					-0.16	0.488
	Age	0.30	0.000	0.15	0.083	0.15	0.081
	Age (squared)	-0.02	0.000	-0.01	0.053	-0.01	0.056
	Female	0.22	0.000	0.34	0.082	0.33	0.087
FRANCE	Intention			1.60	0.000	1.64	0.000
	Parental SES	0.22	0.076	0.01	0.944	-0.24	0.451
	SES x Intention					0.32	0.369
	Age	0.39	0.000	-0.05	0.655	-0.05	0.655
	Age (squared)	-0.03	0.000	0.00	0.661	0.00	0.685
	Female	0.40	0.076	0.20	0.479	0.25	0.397
BULGARIA	Intention			0.35	0.013	0.35	0.014
	Parental SES	0.20	0.000	-0.23	0.001	-0.35	0.000
	SES x Intention					0.26	0.069
	Age	0.03	0.394	0.02	0.687	0.02	0.716
	Age (squared)	0.00	0.052	0.00	0.987	0.00	0.990
	Female	0.60	0.000	0.30	0.028	0.31	0.026
GEORGIA	Intention			0.38	0.033	0.39	0.028
	Parental SES	0.10	0.126	-0.04	0.641	0.03	0.791
	SES x Intention					-0.16	0.342
	Age	0.21	0.000	-0.06	0.384	-0.05	0.409
	Age (squared)	-0.01	0.000	0.00	0.251	0.00	0.263
	Female	1.20	0.000	0.96	0.000	0.96	0.000

Table 4 Intentions and behavior regarding entry into a union

	Intention in wave 1		Event in wave 2			
	Positive intention in Wave 1		If negative intention in wave 1		If positive intention in wave 1	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Austria	420	53.98	73	20.39	215	51.19
Bulgaria	629	43.96	83	10.86	114	19.90
France	368	70.10	37	23.57	192	52.17
Georgia	590	53.15	100	19.80	160	28.99
Hungary	174	79.82	15	36.59	70	53.03
Netherlands	176	40.09	62	23.85	104	59.43

Table 5 Logistic regression estimates for entry into a union

		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Dependent variable	Intention in wave 1 (1=yes)		Event in wave 2		Event in wave 2	
	Predictors	**b**	p	**b**	p	**b**	p
NETHERLANDS	Intention			1.52	0.000	1.58	0.000
	Parental SES	-0.01	0.885	-0.01	0.025	0.33	0.030
	SES x Intention					-0.18	0.423
	Age	0.19	0.004	0.21	0.018	0.21	0.016
	Age (squared)	0.19	0.026	-0.01	0.024	-0.01	0.022
	Female	0.35	0.028	-0.01	0.836	0.05	0.805
AUSTRIA	Intention			1.37	0.000	1.35	0.000
	Parental SES	-0.09	0.156	-0.14	0.085	-0.22	0.092
	SES x Intention					0.13	0.446
	Age	0.20	0.000	0.21	0.002	0.22	0.002
	Age (squared)	-0.01	0.000	-0.01	0.008	-0.01	0.007
	Female	-0.01	0.854	0.78	0.000	0.78	0.000
FRANCE	Intention			1.16	0.000	1.14	0.000
	Parental SES	-0.12	0.093	0.06	0.527	0.01	0.952
	SES x Intention					0.06	0.776
	Age	0.44	0.000	0.13	0.082	0.13	0.081
	Age (squared)	-0.02	0.000	-0.01	0.055	-0.01	0.055
	Female	0.09	0.540	0.01	0.964	0.01	0.957
BULGARIA	Intention			0.64	0.000	0.64	0.000
	Parental SES	-0.27	0.002	-0.27	0.002	-0.37	0.005
	SES x Intention					0.19	0.288
	Age	0.24	0.000	0.32	0.000	0.32	0.000
	Age (squared)	-0.01	0.000	-0.02	0.000	-0.02	0.000
	Female	0.43	0.008	0.43	0.008	0.41	0.011
HUNGARY	Intention			0.63	0.102	0.55	0.163
	Parental SES	0.14	0.317	0.02	0.923	-0.32	0.366
	SES x Intention					0.43	0.274
	Age	0.25	0.186	0.26	0.254	0.27	0.235
	Age (squared)	-0.01	0.253	-0.01	0.509	-0.01	0.474
	Female	-0.06	0.836	0.74	0.021	0.74	0.022
GEORGIA	Intention			0.56	0.001	0.56	0.001
	Parental SES	-0.16	0.006	-0.03	0.720	-0.03	0.786
	SES x Intention					0.01	0.957
	Age	0.39	0.000	0.07	0.235	0.07	0.234
	Age (squared)	-0.01	0.000	-0.01	0.053	-0.01	0.053
	Female	0.32	0.009	-0.07	0.664	-0.07	0.663

Table 6 Intentions and behavior regarding entry into parenthood

	Intention in wave 1		Event in wave 2			
	Positive intention in Wave 1		If negative intention in wave 1		If positive intention in wave 1	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Austria	493	36.98	62	7.38	201	40.77
Bulgaria	670	43.79	51	5.93	113	16.87
France	429	44.55	26	4.87	148	34.50
Georgia	625	52.70	70	12.48	159	25.44
Hungary	961	55.20	82	10.51	288	29.97
Netherlands	255	28.05	73	11.16	153	60.00

Table 7 Logistic regression estimates for entry into parenthood

		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Dependent variable	Intention in wave 1 (1=yes)		Event in wave 2		Event in wave 2	
	Predictors	**b**	p	**b**	p	**b**	p
NETHERLANDS	Intention			2.02	0.000	2.05	0.000
	Parental SES	-0.18	0.006	0.05	0.529	0.24	0.058
	SES x Intention					-0.32	0.051
	Age	0.55	0.000	0.52	0.000	0.53	0.000
	Age (squared)	-0.02	0.000	-0.02	0.000	-0.02	0.000
	Female	0.56	0.000	0.17	0.299	0.18	0.282
AUSTRIA	Intention			1.67	0.000	1.67	0.000
	Parental SES	-0.24	0.000	-0.10	0.190	-0.35	0.011
	SES x Intention					0.36	0.029
	Age	0.45	0.000	0.34	0.000	0.33	0.000
	Age (squared)	-0.02	0.000	-0.01	0.001	-0.01	0.001
	Female	0.31	0.004	0.30	0.044	0.30	0.045
FRANCE	Intention			1.96	0.000	2.02	0.000
	Parental SES	-0.33	0.000	-0.17	0.061	-0.82	0.003
	SES x Intention					0.76	0.009
	Age	0.66	0.000	0.33	0.000	0.32	0.001
	Age (squared)	-0.03	0.000	-0.02	0.001	-0.02	0.001
	Female	0.69	0.000	0.29	0.101	0.30	0.100
BULGARIA	Intention			0.85	0.000	0.91	0.000
	Parental SES	-0.22	0.000	-0.55	0.000	-0.75	0.000
	SES x Intention					0.28	0.474
	Age	0.42	0.000	0.18	0.015	0.17	0.021
	Age (squared)	-0.02	0.000	-0.01	0.048	-0.01	0.054
	Female	0.60	0.000	0.13	0.439	0.12	0.474
HUNGARY	Intention			1.11	0.000	1.10	0.000
	Parental SES	-0.04	0.423	-0.15	0.011	-0.34	0.007
	SES x Intention					0.24	0.091
	Age	0.55	0.000	0.43	0.000	0.43	0.000
	Age (squared)	-0.02	0.000	-0.02	0.000	-0.02	0.000
	Female	0.72	0.000	0.30	0.013	0.29	0.015
GEORGIA	Intention			0.79	0.000	0.79	0.000
	Parental SES	-0.02	0.698	-0.04	0.638	-0.11	0.386
	SES x Intention					0.12	0.461
	Age	0.40	0.000	0.04	0.509	0.04	0.524
	Age (squared)	-0.01	0.000	0.00	0.316	0.00	0.324
	Female	0.20	0.096	-0.08	0.621	-0.08	0.592