

Social Change and Entry to Adulthood

JEYLAN T. MORTIMER

Abstract

The effects of social change on the transition to adulthood are manifest in large-scale societal and institutional changes, alterations in relationships and networks, and shifts in individual psychological orientations and behaviors. This essay reviews key foundational work that has established the framework for our understanding of social change and the transition to adulthood, highlighting Mannheim and Elder's theoretical contributions and early empirical studies of age norms, status attainment, and the timing and sequencing of adult role markers. It then describes major ongoing programs of research on the movement from school to work, pathways of transition, familial financial and residential support of transitioning children, and both adult roles and character traits as sources of adult identity. Finally, in view of ongoing societal trends, it calls for future studies of inequality and its implications for the diverging destinies of youth that depend on their social class origin, race, and gender; shifts in the bases of youth age-related and other identities; the consequences of social media for transitional dynamics; and the implications of transitional patterns for young adult health, cross-national comparative studies, and youth responses to climate change.

INTRODUCTION

Links between social change and entry to adulthood are manifest across levels of analysis. Historical shifts in institutional structures—in education, the economy, the polity, religion, the family, and others—affect the social positions and opportunities available to youth as they transition to adult roles. Altered social ties, relationships, and networks are embedded within changing institutional structures; these affect youth's connection to the society, their social inclusion or exclusion, and their access to information and social support. And with these institutional and relational changes come shifts in individual orientations, attitudes, values, and self-concepts.

As a case in point, consider how the altered institutional structure of the family has affected family formation (Fussell & Furstenberg, 2005; Modell,

1989). Looking back to mid-twentieth century America, most youth stayed in the homes of their parents until they became self-supporting and married. After “going steady” during high school, teens married quickly, forming traditional nuclear families, with men as providers and women as homemakers or temporary workers until the birth of their first child. Family formation was thus a relatively straightforward phenomenon.

With the extension of formal education, young people spent longer periods of time living with peers (e.g., in college dorms or apartments), living alone, or cohabiting with romantic partners. These arrangements presented new opportunities for gaining independence and acquiring identities separate from the family and community of origin. Decline in the “traditional” single provider family was accompanied by the emergence of new family forms, especially the dual-provider family, with women increasingly likely to be remaining employed during their children’s preschool years, and beyond. Today, there is greater societal acceptance, and growing prevalence, of alternative arrangements—living alone, single parent families, “child-free” unions, same sex cohabitation and marriage, transgender life styles, and so on. All of these choices may present a bewildering array of options for young people entering adulthood, while at the same time offering manifold opportunities to enact life styles that were strongly negatively sanctioned mere decades before (Preves & Mortimer, 2013).

This essay reviews foundational work that established the theoretical and conceptual framework for subsequent studies of social change and the transition to adulthood, highlights some recent cutting-edge research, and raises key questions and issues that have heretofore received little attention. The impacts of social change on the entry to adulthood may be especially consequential for the futures of developing societies in which young people constitute large portions of the population.

FOUNDATIONAL WORK

Current understanding of the consequences of social change for the transition to adulthood is grounded in a series of major intellectual developments in the latter part of the twentieth century. Neugarten’s pioneering studies (Hagestad & Neugarten, 1985; Neugarten, Moore, & Lowe, 1965) drew attention to age norms, widely held conceptions about the timing of age-graded social roles as people move through their lives. There are acceptable ages for major transitions, “best” ages, and “age deadlines.” Thus, people have a sense that it right and appropriate at particular ages to marry, to have one’s first child, to leave home, to complete one’s education, or to retire. Those who are “off-time” feel “early” or “late” vis-a-vis others in their cohorts and recognize that negative consequences often follow from a failure to adhere

to normative schedules. The researchers noted gender and social class differences; with women expected to move through family role sequences at earlier ages than men, and those of higher social status expected to have later transitions.

Recognition of the normative structuring of the individual biography gave rise to questions about the durability of these ideas given social change and increasing variability in the actual timing of transitional sequences. In more recent years, Settersten (2003) has documented that age norms continue to hold, although ranges of acceptability have widened.

At about the same time, researchers at the University of Wisconsin began to study the status attainment process (Sewell & Hauser, 1975), elucidating one of the most important transitions in the passage to adulthood—the movement from school to work. By following the Wisconsin high school graduating class of 1957 through their transition to adulthood, the researchers revealed the importance of the family's socioeconomic status for their offspring's educational and occupational attainments; the linkages between educational attainment, first jobs, and subsequent trajectories of income and occupational prestige; and the class-linked social psychological dynamics that foster more or less successful transitions: significant others' encouragement (parents, teachers, and peers), and the young person's own educational and occupational aspirations. These studies highlighted the importance of earlier life experiences in the family and school for subsequent attainments in higher education and work. The status attainment research tradition laid the groundwork for later studies of inter- and intragenerational mobility that continue to address the transition to adulthood and the attainment process in the face of manifold social change.

Additional foundational work focused directly on historical change. Modell, Furstenberg, and Hershberg (1976) examined the years it took for late nineteenth and mid-twentieth century cohorts to acquire major adult markers of transition. By 1970, the time it took to depart from the parental home, marry, and establish one's own household contracted markedly in comparison to prior cohorts. These findings challenged the common assumption that more prolonged late twentieth century transitions were new and unique, in comparison to those earlier in U.S. history. They also suggested that normative standards about the timing of adult role markers are more or less readily expressed in distinct historical periods. That is, youth who "came of age" in poor economies, such as those who sought first jobs during the Great Depression, may have wanted to marry and have children shortly after completing their schooling, but had to delay these transitions if opportunities for gainful work were not available. In contrast, in the postwar period, young people entered an expanding job market more conducive to early economic independence and more rapidly formed their families of procreation. Others

(Hogan, 1980; Hogan & Astone, 1986; Marini, 1984a, 1984b; Rindfuss, Swicegood, & Rosenfeld, 1987) conducted further ground-breaking studies of the timing and sequencing of transitions to adulthood. Evidence accumulated that the prior tripartite organization of lives—with preparatory education, adult work, and retirement—was giving way to a much more fluid and “disorganized” life course (Buchmann, 1989; Kohli, 1986).

Further understanding of the impacts of changing historical conditions derives from the theoretical examination by Mannheim (1927) of the youth stage of the life course. Mannheim contended that young people, at the cusp of entry to adulthood, are especially responsive to social change—old enough to be aware of shifting economic, political, and social circumstances, but young enough to have not yet formed attitudes and behaviors geared to the previous era. Unlike their elders, youth are not yet tied to behavioral routines and investments in the status quo, which enhance their psychological and behavioral flexibility. They have greater motivation and time to participate in political and social movements. In times of rapid change, “generations” form that exhibit distinct and lasting imprints of the experiences they had when they entered adulthood (Alwin & McCammon, 2003). For example, those who became adults during conservative or liberal regimes continue to hold distinctive political views throughout their lives. It is now common to speak of the “greatest” generation, the “sixties” generation, the “millennial” generation, and so forth. Mannheim saw successive youth cohorts as the drivers of social change. As older cohorts die off, younger ones increasingly take charge and establish a new social order.

Elder (1973, 2003) synthesized these and other (Riley, 1985) intellectual currents in his exposition of a new theoretical perspective that is the basis for contemporary thinking about temporality in human lives. Building on the social structure and personality perspective in social psychology, Elder recognized the importance of structural location for manifold psychological orientations and behaviors. However, his central innovation was to call attention to the temporal dimensions of all phenomena in the purview of social psychology. That is, societies change through historical time, modifying major institutional structures and the roles that are available within them for people to enact. Institutional roles take the form of trajectories, punctuated by transitions. Interpersonal relationships likewise exhibit predictable changes as individuals grow older. Individuals’ progressions through role trajectories affect the character of their interpersonal relationships and their mutual influences on one another. Moreover, individual propensities of various kinds—attitudes, values, physical and mental well-being, and typical behaviors, both normative and deviant—cannot be understood without considering prior experiences. Psychological orientations themselves have important temporal dimensions with profound implications for future

behavioral progressions and accomplishments (Vuolo, Staff, & Mortimer, 2012). Elder enunciated a series of principles ("time and place," "linked lives," "agency," and others), which succinctly express these insights. Elder's large corpus of theoretical and empirical work, particularly his path-breaking study of the Children of the Great Depression Elder (1974), has inspired legions of scholars.

These foundational works have laid the groundwork for understanding the shifting relationships of social change and entry to adulthood. It is clear from Elder's conceptualization of the life course that history, individual biography, and identity intersect. That is, any changes affecting the distribution of roles in key institutional arenas will influence the character of transition to adulthood.

SOME CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH

Contemporary studies examine the consequences of recent social changes, such as globalization and the information technology revolution, which have fostered major alterations in the economy and education in the United States. Technological innovations and the movement of jobs overseas have led to a massive decline in the manufacturing sector and diminished job opportunities for youth without postsecondary education. "Good" jobs, with stable income, health and retirement benefits, and opportunities for advancement have increasingly been replaced by "bad jobs," lacking these characteristics (Kalleberg, 2011; Kalleberg, Reskin, & Hudson, 2000). In consequence, work careers have become more insecure (Fullerton & Wallace, 2007; Heinz, 2003; Skaggs & Leicht, 2005), especially for those just entering the labor force.

To avoid "bad jobs," youth are increasingly seeking higher education (Reynolds, Stewart, Sischo, & McDonald, 2006; Schneider & Stevenson, 1999), but many of these young people cannot summon the resources—financial, intellectual, or social—that would enable them to complete their degrees. About 40% of contemporary young people who start 4-year college degree programs do not obtain their degrees in 6 years. Recent research examines the continuing nexus between youth values and ambitions and subsequent outcomes (Johnson & Mortimer, 2011) and more and less successful contemporary school-to-work transitions (Mortimer, 2003; Mortimer, Vuolo, Staff, Wakefield, & Xie, 2008; Staff & Mortimer, 2007; Vuolo, Mortimer, & Staff, 2014). Those who lack postsecondary educational credentials experience long periods of "floundering" in the labor market. Because economic independence is difficult to attain under these circumstances, leaving home and family formation are also likely to be postponed.

Ongoing research also documents contemporary patterns of transition to adulthood. Although the increasingly individualized character of the

life course is now widely recognized (Shanahan, 2000), it is also clear that the acquisition of adult roles is not randomly distributed, nor are there innumerable ways to enter adulthood (Macmillan & Eliason, 2003). Still, there remains the task of identifying typical patterns of timing and sequencing, their distinct precursors with respect to prior social backgrounds and experiences, and their consequences for future life course progressions. The development of statistical methods for the analysis of categorical longitudinal data—multilevel latent class models that enable assessment of configurations of roles at particular times and movements between them across time—has greatly enhanced the capacity to delineate contemporary patterns of transition to adulthood.

It is clear from such studies of nationally representative as well as community-based samples that there is a finite, and rather small number of typical pathways to adulthood, with clear contours, precursors, and likely consequences (Bauldry *et al.*, 2012; Eliason, Mortimer, Vuolo, & Tranby, 2007; Osgood, Ruth, Eccles, Jacobs, & Barber, 2005). Youth statuses with respect to independent residence, education, work, marriage, and parenting come together in distinct configurations and pathways, some involving normative “on time” sequences, and others various “off-time” patterns. Not surprisingly, early child bearers, and particularly those who fail to acquire other adult roles, have the poorest outcomes (Falci, Mortimer, & Noel, 2010). Deviance, however, is relinquished as youth enter adult roles (Massoglia & Uggen, 2010). As studies such as these accumulate, we will gain greater understanding of variation in the contemporary transition to adulthood by social class, gender, race/ethnicity/national origin, and region (Corcoran & Matsudaira, 2005; Fussell & Furstenberg, 2005).

In view of the long and increasingly precarious transition to adulthood, researchers’ attention has focused on the ways families continue to support their children well after the typical age of majority. Higher education, difficulties in locating stable employment, and delays in family formation lengthen youth’s dependency on parents, economically and emotionally. Great inequalities between families, however, heighten resources available to advantaged youth, while poorer families may have little to offer. Researchers have examined families’ monetary contributions to their young adult offspring, patterns of coresidence (and the “boomerang” phenomenon), and mutual aid; as well as the implications of these family supports for offspring psychological well-being and attainment (Fingerman, Cheng, Tighe, Birditt, & Zarit, 2012; Johnson & Benson, 2012). Families across the board contribute to young adult children in the third decade of life—about 10% of their incomes, or very different real amounts for youth in different income brackets (Schoeni & Ross, 2005). Parental support is especially likely when children face difficulties (such as unemployment, negative life events);

aid subsidies when children successfully acquire the markers of adulthood (marriage and parenthood) and gain increasing income (Swartz, Kim, Uno, Mortimer, & O'Brien, 2011).

Another major focus of recent research examines the acquisition of an identity as an adult (Cote, 2000). If today's youth are taking longer than prior cohorts to acquire the full complement of adult roles, and if they occupy mixes of adult and preadult statuses for long periods of time (for example, a married student or a mother who lives with child in her family of origin), then how do they think of themselves? At what point do they firmly acquire the age-graded identity as an adult? A lively controversy surrounds this question, with developmental psychologists siding with Arnett's (2004) proposal that young people in the third decade of life are "emerging adults," who take on an adult identity when they acquire character traits such as independence and responsibility. These traits come to mind most readily when youth are asked to define what it means to be an adult. In contrast, sociologists have investigated the associations between actually thinking of oneself as an adult and the expression of adult identity, finding that family formation, and particularly parenthood, is a key predictor (Shanahan, Porfeli, Mortimer, & Erickson, 2005). It is clear, however, that character traits and adult role marker acquisition are not independent phenomena, as the latter involve taking responsibility for the self as well as others (Hartmann & Swartz, 2007). The ages at which such roles are acquired, and the assumption of adult identities varies by social class, race/ethnicity, and family structure (Benson & Johnson, 2009; Johnson, Berg, & Sirotzki, 2007).

KEY ISSUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

"Futurists" often extrapolate from existing trends, and we can do this as well in contemplating what questions and directions for research will be fruitful in the coming years. We might ask, what will be the consequences of social change for entry to adulthood, if present trends continue (Shanahan, Mortimer, & Krueger, 2002)? That is, if globalization and economic competition intensify, and technological change accelerates, what might be the consequences for youth in passage to adulthood?

How might growing cleavages within the society produce new patterns of transition to adulthood, in response to societal change? With increasing inequality, we already are seeing growing class and racial divides—"diverging destinies" as individuals approach the transition to adulthood (Corcoran & Matsudaira, 2005; Mortimer, 2008). If income, and especially wealth, is increasingly concentrated at the top, the distance between the wealthiest and the middle socioeconomic sectors will grow. It will be important in the future to continue to monitor the consequences

of such inequality for transitioning adults (Furstenberg, 2006; Swartz, 2008). Will family resources buffer the impacts of adverse social changes, particularly turbulence in the economy, making it possible for youth from the wealthiest families to continue to build the human, social, and cultural capital that yields greatest advantages in acquiring the markers of adulthood and higher socioeconomic attainment? More attention needs to be directed to the needs of especially vulnerable populations (e.g., the mentally and physically disabled, youth in foster care), as the social safety net continues to erode (Osgood, Foster, Flanagan, & Ruth, 2005).

As women have now outstripped men in educational attainment, they are making substantial inroads in occupations previously closed to them, but still suffer from “motherhood wage penalties” (Staff & Mortimer, 2012) and lower earnings. As more highly educated women move through their careers, will gender differentials in earnings and occupational attainments erode? Might we see gender convergence along with class divergence in early adult socioeconomic outcomes (Fussell & Furstenberg, 2005)?

The increasingly variable character of transitions, for example, movements from school to work and back again to school, changes in marital and living arrangements, and, will likely make it increasingly difficult to ascertain when “adulthood” has been reached. It is important to continue to examine the sources of adult identity. Will the widely recognized markers of adulthood—the “big five” studied by sociologists (leaving home, finishing school, stable work, marriage/cohabitation, and parenthood)—have the same resonance in the future? In view of the transitory character of these role markers, might there be increasingly widespread rejection of such designations as a basis of identity?

Researchers might also fruitfully investigate how other identities shift during the transition to adulthood. Which will be the most salient to future cohorts of young people? A strong worker or “career” identity may become increasing rare as long-term careers become ever more scarce. Given that role identities are placed in hierarchies of importance in accordance with their connection to social relationships and their capacity to enhance the self, we might expect that nonwork arenas (family, friendship, hobbies, aesthetic expression, volunteerism, religious pursuits, and other extra-vocational activities) will assume ever greater salience (Mortimer, Lam, & Lee, (Forthcoming)). In view of diminishing prospects for socioeconomic attainment, materialism may recede as a source of status and identity in broad segments of youth. However, those who are the most advantaged, who are moving into positions having the most upward mobility potential, wealth and status gains, may continue to have strong work identities and conventional orientations to success.

Furthermore, researchers should give greater attention to the implications of youth social media (Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) for identity development, attitude formation, and political behavior. Technological innovations (e.g., telecommuting, teleconferencing, social networking, and on-line college courses) diminish the importance of physical place as a constraint on opportunities. Young adults' choice of residence is less constrained by educational institutions, work locations, medical venues, recreation facilities, and so on. In the social realm, individuals form virtual communities and networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter) in the absence of physical proximity. All of these changes affect the range and character of choices and opportunities for young people.

Will youth increasingly look to one another, rather than to the mass media, political leaders, or other institutional representatives for their opinions? Apparently, "tweets" peaked during the recent Presidential debates, as youth exchanged their reactions. Such instant communications may also increasingly provide guidance during times of uncertainty and turmoil.

Much speculation and commentary has surrounded the negative potentials of the relatively new, "mediated" or "virtual" relationships. Commentators worry about whether youth may be squandering opportunities to develop social skills for face-to-face encounters, and whether young people may be exposing themselves to potential harm (sexual predators). Very little is known, however, about how social media may be facilitating, or hindering, successful transitions to adulthood. Through their virtual networks, youth may expand their exposure to alternative points of view, widening their horizons, or restrict their communications to others like themselves (Lefkowitz, Vukman, & Loken, 2012). Might the virtual community of friends and followers constitute a broader band of potential consultants (that is, extending beyond immediate family and close friends), providing relevant information about potential employers to youthful job-seekers, guidance regarding how to conduct oneself at an interview and negotiate employment contracts, or how to break off intimate relationships with the least emotional damage to each party.

What consequences does the increasingly individualized and precarious transition to adulthood have for youth health trajectories? Does the timing and sequencing of the acquisition of adult role markers have consequences for health over and above the effects of particular end states? Do normatively sequenced transitions, e.g., leaving home, finishing education, obtaining a stable full-time job, marrying, and having children, have more positive effects on adult health than more "disorderly" transitions, even when final educational attainment, for example, is the same? How does genetic propensity interact with environmental stressors and challenges to yield distinct outcomes of transition to adulthood (Shanahan & Hofer, 2011)? Increasing

understanding of such gene-environmental interactions may make it possible to alter negative genetic expression through well-designed environmental interventions.

Understanding the full implications of social change for entry to adulthood must draw our attention beyond the boundaries of any one country, given major variation in institutional bridges from adolescence to adulthood (Kerckhoff, 2002; Mortimer & Krueger, 2000; Mortimer, Oesterle, & Krueger, 2005) and likely responses to social change. For example, globalization has affected the institutional structures of the United States and most other countries. As competition for capital, labor, and markets extends across countries, work becomes increasingly precarious, with declining commitment of employer to employee. Similarly, developments in information technology permit instant dissemination of knowledge, affecting the delivery of higher education, and the transfer of jobs and economic processes around the world. Globalization increases youth's ease of movement across national boundaries, to become educated, or to seek work (Schoon & Silbereisen, 2009). To fully understand these transitions, researchers need to compare data across countries.

Finally, let us turn to a question that has received virtually no attention in the literature to date. How will the wide range of highly likely social changes, attendant on climate change, affect future generations of youth as they enter adulthood? Climate scientists predict that intensifying warming of the planet will cause more frequent severe weather events, droughts in many parts of the world, severe water shortages, and so on, that will, in turn, lead to massive migrations of populations as the most basic resources that support human life diminish in many places. Wars over declining resources are also likely to occur. Such changes will disrupt the passage to adulthood for many youth, especially in the global South. Youth constitute the age group that is often the most able, and willing, to migrate and that becomes soldiers in war, voluntarily or not. Massive population movements will likely disrupt the acquisition of the traditional markers of adulthood, as migrant populations of youth have difficulty assimilating into new societies.

Growing proportions of the world youth population may find it difficult to see ahead, to envision stable life courses for themselves and future generations. Failure of governments to act may lead to exacerbated decline in confidence in, and disconnection from, societal institutions (Smith, 2005). Will there be value shifts among young people as it becomes increasingly evident that the planet's capacity to support human and other life forms is eroding—for example, shifts in values regarding economic growth, population size, energy conservation, life style changes, and living arrangements. Will youth be attracted to social movements advocating the use of alternative

energy sources and altering life styles to reverse the extant environmental trends, or, in contrast, will they increasingly acknowledge dystopian futures, assume a fatalistic stance, and turn inward for immediate gratifications? Youth entering adulthood will likely be in the vanguard of all of these trends.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Consideration of social change and entry to adulthood involves phenomena at multiple levels of analysis—encompassing large-scale societal and institutional structures, networks, interpersonal relationships, and individual orientations. So too do we need a host of methodologies to address the relationships between them. Large, nationally representative, longitudinal studies, such as the National Longitudinal Study of Youth, the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, and others, are needed to continue to monitor national trends in pathways to adulthood. At the same time, ethnographic and interview studies, preferably also longitudinal, are needed to chart the reverberations of large-scale societal changes in individual values, attitudes, and behaviors. Only through face-to-face interviews and ethnographic observations will research reveal the full psychological scope of social change, affecting shifts in world views, work orientations, and identities. The wide scope of relevant phenomena thus calls for multidisciplinary research teams, including sociologists, economists, geneticists, social psychologists, and psychologists. Large-scale longitudinal studies are expensive, often requiring the collaboration of multiple federal agencies, but well worth the continued investment.

Social change not only renders the transition to adulthood more complex and often precarious but also provides more choices and options. Highly advantaged young people (Furstenberg, 2006) have many resources, which enable them to acquire the human, social, economic, and cultural forms of capital that allow them to succeed in the new institutional landscape. Those with fewer resources and less access to the new technologies, educational and work opportunities may become confused, floundering through various forms of postsecondary education and jobs. The truly disadvantaged (Wilson, 1987), whose families do not provide role models of success in the occupational sphere, who lack even a high school education, and especially if they have gotten in trouble with the law, may be entirely excluded from conventional adult roles. To understand variation in the transition to adulthood in an era of increasingly rapid social change, researchers must continue to monitor institutional shifts, relational changes, and individual psychological orientations, linked to socioeconomic strata within countries and subject to variation across national boundaries.

REFERENCES

- Alwin, D. F., & McCammon, R. J. (2003). Generations, cohorts, and social change. In J. T. Mortimer & M. J. Shanahan (Eds.), *Handbook of the life course* (pp. 23–49). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Arnett, J. J. (2004). *Emerging adulthood: The widening road from the late teens through the twenties*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Bauldry, S., Shanahan, M. J., Dean, D., Macmillan, R., Miech, R. A., & Boardman, J. D. (2012). *Parental and youth health and stratified pathways to adulthood*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Denver, CO.
- Benson, J., & Johnson, M. K. (2009). Adolescent family context and adult identity formation. *Journal of Family Issues*, *30*, 1265–1286.
- Buchmann, M. (1989). *The script of life in modern society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Corcoran, M., & Matsudaira, J. (2005). Is it getting harder to get ahead?. In R. A. Settersten, F. F. Furstenberg Jr., & R. G. Rumbaut (Eds.), *On the frontier of adulthood: Theory, research, and public policy* (pp. 356–395). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Cote, J. E. (2000). *Arrested adulthood: The changing nature of maturity and identity*. New York: New York University Press.
- Elder, G. H., Jr. (1973). Age differentiation and the life course. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *1*, 165–190.
- Elder, G. H., Jr. (1974). *Children of the great depression*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Elder, G. H., Jr. (2003). The emergence and development of life course theory. In J. T. Mortimer & M. J. Shanahan (Eds.), *Handbook of the life course* (pp. 3–19). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Eliason, S. R., Mortimer, J. T., Vuolo, M., & Tranby, E. (2007). *A sense of timing: The relationship between life course structures in pathways to adulthood and subjective perceptions*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, New York, NY.
- Falci, C., Mortimer, J. T., & Noel, H. J. (2010). Parental timing and depressive symptoms in adulthood: Gender, stressors, and resources. *Advances in Life Course Research*, *15*, 1–10.
- Fingerman, L., Cheng, Y.-P., Tighe, L., Birditt, K. S., & Zarit, S. (2012). Relationships between young adults and their parents. In A. Booth, S. L. Brown, N. S. Landale, W. D. Manning & S. M. McHale (Eds.), *Early adulthood in a family context* (pp. 59–85). New York, NY: Springer.
- Fullerton, A. S., & Wallace, M. (2007). Traversing the flexible turn: U.S. workers' perceptions of job security, 1997–2002. *Social Science Research*, *36*, 201–221.
- Furstenberg, F. F., Jr. (2006). *Diverging development: The not so invisible hand of social class in the United States*. Paper presented at the Biennial Meetings of the Society for Research on Adolescence, San Francisco, CA. Available at <http://www.transad.pop.upenn.edu>.

- Fussell, E., & Furstenberg, F. F., Jr. (2005). The transition to adulthood during the twentieth century: Race, nativity, and gender. In R. A. Settersten, F. F. Furstenberg Jr., & R. G. Rumbaut (Eds.), *On the frontier of adulthood: Theory, research, and public policy* (pp. 29–75). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Hagestad, G. O., & Neugarten, B. L. (1985). Age and the life course. In R. Binstock & E. Shanas (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and the social sciences*. New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company.
- Hartmann, D., & Swartz, T. T. (2007). The new adulthood? The transition to adulthood from the perspective of transitioning young adults. *Advances in Life Course Research, 11*, 255–289.
- Heinz, W. R. (2003). From work trajectories to negotiated careers: The contingent work life course. In J. T. Mortimer & M. J. Shanahan (Eds.), *Handbook of the life course* (pp. 185–204). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Hogan, D. P. (1980). The transition to adulthood as a career contingency. *American Sociological Review, 45*, 261–276.
- Hogan, D. P., & Astone, N. M. (1986). The transition to adulthood. *Annual Review of Sociology, 12*, 109–130.
- Johnson, M. K., & Benson, J. (2012). The implications of family context for the transition to adulthood. In A. Booth, S. L. Brown, N. S. Landale, W. D. Manning & S. M. McHale (Eds.), *Early adulthood in a family context* (pp. 87–103). New York, NY: Springer.
- Johnson, M. K., Berg, J. A., & Sirotzki, T. (2007). Differentiation in self-perceived adulthood: Extending the confluence model of subjective age identity. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 70*, 243–261.
- Johnson, M. K., & Mortimer, J. T. (2011). Origins and outcomes of judgments about work. *Social Forces, 89*, 1239–1260.
- Kalleberg, A. (2011). *Good jobs, bad jobs. The rise of polarized and precarious employment systems in the United States, 1970's to 2000's*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Kalleberg, A., Reskin, B. F., & Hudson, K. (2000). Bad jobs in America: Standard and nonstandard employment relations and job quality in the United States. *American Sociological Review, 65*, 256–278.
- Kerckhoff, A. (2002). The transition from school to work. In J. T. Mortimer & R. Larson (Eds.), *The future of adolescent experience: Societal trends and the transition to adulthood* (pp. 52–87). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Kohli, M. (1986). The world we forgot: A historical review of the life course. In V. W. Marshall (Ed.), *Later life: The Social psychology of aging* (pp. 271–303). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lefkowitz, E. S., Vukman, S. N., & Loken, E. (2012). Young adults in a wireless world. In A. Booth, S. L. Brown, N. S. Landale, W. D. Manning & S. M. McHale (Eds.), *Early adulthood in a family context* (pp. 45–56). New York, NY: Springer.
- Macmillan, R., & Eliason, S. R. (2003). Characterizing the life course as role configurations and pathways: A latent structure approach. In J. T. Mortimer & M. J. Shanahan (Eds.), *Handbook of the life course* (pp. 529–554). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

- Mannheim, K. (1952, 1927). The problem of generations. In P. Kecskemeti (Ed.), *Essays in the sociology of knowledge by Karl Mannheim* (pp. 276–322). Boston, MA: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Marini, M. M. (1984a). The order of events in the transition to adulthood. *Sociology of Education*, 57, 63–84.
- Marini, M. M. (1984b). Age and sequencing norms in the transition to adulthood. *Social Forces*, 63, 229–243.
- Massoglia, M., & Uggen, C. (2010). Settling down and aging out: Toward an interactionist theory of desistance and the transition to adulthood. *American Journal of Sociology*, 116, 543–582.
- Modell, J. (1989). *Into one's own: From youth to adulthood, 1920–1975*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Modell, J., Furstenberg, F. F., Jr., & Hershberg, T. (1976). Social change and the transition to adulthood in historical perspective. *Journal of Family History*, 1, 7–32.
- Mortimer, J. T. (2003). *Working and growing up in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mortimer, J. T. (Ed.) (2008). Social class and transitions to adulthood. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 119, 1–103 (whole issue).
- Mortimer, J. T., & Krueger, H. (2000). Pathways from school to work in Germany and the United States. In M. Hallinan (Ed.), *Handbook of the sociology of education* (pp. 475–497). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Mortimer, J. T., Lam, J., & Lee, S.-R. (Forthcoming). Transformation, erosion or disparity in work identity? Challenges during the contemporary transition to adulthood. In K. C. McLean & M. Syed (Eds.), *Handbook of identity development*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Mortimer, J. T., Oesterle, S., & Krueger, H. (2005). Age norms, institutional structures, and the timing of markers of transition to adulthood. *Advances in Life Course Research*, 9, 175–203.
- Mortimer, J. T., Vuolo, M. C., Staff, J., Wakefield, S., & Xie, W. (2008). Tracing the timing of 'career' acquisition in a contemporary youth cohort. *Work and Occupations*, 35, 44–84.
- Neugarten, B. L., Moore, J. W., & Lowe, J. C. (1965). Age norms, age constraints, and adult socialization. *American Journal of Sociology*, 70, 710–717.
- Osgood, D. W., Foster, E. M., Flanagan, C., & Ruth, G. R. (Eds.) (2005). *On your own without a net: The transition to adulthood for vulnerable populations*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Osgood, D. W., Ruth, G., Eccles, J. S., Jacobs, J. E., & Barber, B. L. (2005). Six paths to adulthood. Fast starters, Parents without careers, educated partners, educated singles, working singles, and slow starters. In R. A. Settersten, F. F. Furstenberg Jr., & R. G. Rumbaut (Eds.), *On the frontier of adulthood: Theory, research, and public policy* (pp. 320–355). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Preves, S., & Mortimer, J. T. (2013). Socialization for primary, intimate, and work relationships in the adult life course. In J. Delamater (Ed.), *Handbook of social psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 151–190). New York, NY: Springer.

- Reynolds, J., Stewart, M., Sischo, L., & McDonald, R. (2006). Have adolescents become too ambitious? High school seniors' educational and occupational plans, 1976–2000. *Social Problems*, 53, 186–206.
- Riley, M. W. (1985). Age strata in social systems. In R. Binstock & E. Shanas (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and the social sciences*. New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company.
- Rindfuss, R. R., Swicegood, C. G., & Rosenfeld, R. A. (1987). Disorder in the life course: How common and does it matter? *American Sociological Review*, 52, 785–801.
- Schneider, B., & Stevenson, D. (1999). *The ambitious generation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Schoeni, R. F., & Ross, K. E. (2005). Material assistance from families during the transition to adulthood. In R. A. Settersten, F. F. Furstenberg & R. G. Rumbaut (Eds.), *On the frontier of adulthood*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Schoon, I., & Silbereisen, R. K. (Eds.) (2009). *Transitions from school to work: Globalisation, individualization, and patterns of diversity*. London, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Settersten, R. A., Jr. (2003). Age structuring and the rhythm of the life course. In J. T. Mortimer & M. J. Shanahan (Eds.), *Handbook of the life course* (pp. 81–98). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Sewell, W. H., & Hauser, R. M. (1975). *Education, occupation, and earnings: Achievement in the early career*. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Shanahan, M. J. (2000). Pathways to adulthood in changing societies: Variability and mechanisms in life course perspective. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 667–692.
- Shanahan, M. J., & Hofer, S. (2011). Molecular genetics, aging, and well-being: Sensitive period, accumulation, and pathway models. In R. Binstock & L. George (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and the social sciences* (7th ed., pp. 135–148). Oxford, England: Elsevier.
- Shanahan, M. J., Mortimer, J. T., & Krueger, H. (2002). Adolescence and adult work in the twenty-first century. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 12, 99–120.
- Shanahan, M. J., Porfeli, E. J., Mortimer, J. T., & Erickson, L. D. (2005). Subjective age identity and the transition to adulthood: When do adolescents become adults?. In R. A. Settersten, F. F. Furstenberg Jr., & R. G. Rumbaut (Eds.), *On the frontier of adulthood: Theory, research, and public policy* (pp. 225–255). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Skaggs, B. C., & Leicht, K. (2005). Management paradigm change in the United States: A professional autonomy perspective. In L. A. Keister (Ed.), *Research in the sociology of work* (pp. 123–149). Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.
- Smith, T. W. (2005). Generation gaps in attitudes and values from the 1970s to the 1990s. In R. A. Settersten, F. F. Furstenberg Jr., & R. G. Rumbaut (Eds.), *On the frontier of adulthood: Theory, research, and public policy* (pp. 177–221). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Staff, J., & Mortimer, J. T. (2007). Educational and work strategies from adolescence to early adulthood: Consequences for educational attainment. *Social Forces*, 85, 1169–1194.

- Staff, J., & Mortimer, J. T. (2012). Explaining the motherhood wage penalty. *Demography*, *49*, 1–21.
- Swartz, T. T. (2008). Family capital and the invisible transfer of privilege: Intergenerational support and social class in early adulthood. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, *119*, 11–24.
- Swartz, T. T., Kim, M., Uno, M., Mortimer, J. T., & O'Brien, K. B. (2011). Safety nets and scaffolds: Parental support in the transition to adulthood. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *73*, 414–429.
- Vuolo, M., Mortimer, J. T., & Staff, J. (2014). Adolescent precursors of pathways from school to work. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *24*, 145–162.
- Vuolo, M., Staff, J., & Mortimer, J. T. (2012). Weathering the great recession: Psychological and behavioral trajectories in the transition from school to work. *Developmental Psychology*, *48*, 1759–1773.
- Wilson, W. J. (1987). *The truly disadvantaged: The inner city, the underclass, and public policy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

FURTHER READING

- Booth, A., Brown, S. L., Landale, N. S., Manning, W. D., & McHale, S. M. (Eds.) (2012). *Early adulthood in a family context*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Settersten, R. A., & Furstenberg, F. F., Jr. (2005). In R. G. Rumbaut (Ed.), *On the frontier of adulthood: Theory, research, and public policy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Settersten, R. A., Jr., & Ray, B. (2010). *Not quite adults: Why 20-somethings are choosing a slower path to adulthood, and why it's good for everyone*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Shanahan, M. J., & Macmillan, R. (2008). *Biography and the sociological imagination: Contexts and contingencies*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Co.

JEYLAN T. MORTIMER SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Jeylan T. Mortimer is Professor of Sociology at the University of Minnesota and Principal Investigator of the Youth Development Study. She teaches and conducts research in the areas of work and socioeconomic attainment, the life course, youth and transition to adulthood, and social psychology. Her books include *Classic and Contemporary Perspectives in Social Psychology* with Sharon Preves (Oxford, 2011), *Working and Growing Up in America* (Harvard University Press, 2003), the *Handbook of the Life Course*, coedited with Michael Shanahan (Springer, 2003), *Arenas of Comfort in Adolescence*, with Kathleen Call (Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001), and *Adolescents, Work and Family*, coedited with Michael Finch (Sage, 1996). Her recent articles appear in *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *Social Forces*, the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *Society and Mental Health*, *Developmental Psychology*, and *Demography*. Her current research

examines the effects of parental trajectories from adolescence through early adulthood on the achievement orientations and well-being of their children.

Web site: http://www.soc.umn.edu/people/mortimer_j.html

RELATED ESSAYS

Learning Across the Life Course (*Sociology*), Jutta Allmendinger and Marcel Helbig

Sibling Relationships and Development (*Psychology*), Nicole Campione-Barr and Sarah Killoren

Genetics and the Life Course (*Sociology*), Evan Charney

Patterns of Attachment across the Lifespan (*Psychology*), Robyn Fivush and Theodore E. A. Waters

Immigrant Children and the Transition to Adulthood (*Sociology*), Roberto G. Gonzales and Benjamin J. Roth

Family Relationships and Development (*Psychology*), Joan E. Grusec

An Evolutionary Perspective on Developmental Plasticity (*Psychology*), Sarah Hartman and Jay Belsky

Biology and Culture (*Psychology*), Robert Peter Hobson

Lifecourse and Aging (*Anthropology*), Haim Hazan

Maternal and Paternal Employment across the Life Course (*Sociology*), Michaela Kreyenfeld

Longitudinal Data Analysis (*Methods*), Todd D. Little *et al.*

Limits to Human Longevity (*Sociology*), Samuel H. Preston and Hiram Beltrán-Sánchez

Gender and the Transition to Adulthood: A Diverse Pathways View (*Sociology*), Ingrid Schoon

Modeling Life Course Structure: The Triple Helix (*Sociology*), Tom Schuller

DNA Revolution and the Social and Behavioral Sciences (*Psychology*), Maciej Trzaskowski and Robert Plomin