

特集：少子化社会の成人期移行（その1）

Well-being and the Ideal Timing of Key Events in the Transition to Adulthood: A Pilot Analysis Based on European Social Survey Data (2006-2007)

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The focus of this paper is on the relation between well-being and the ideal timing of the transition to adulthood. It analyses for women of 3 different age categories (15-25, 20-30 and 25-35) in 12 European countries the effect of 5 well-being variables (overall life satisfaction, paid work, health, social interaction, and education) on the perceived ideal timing of 3 key events in the transition to adulthood (living with a partner not married to, marriage, and childbearing). Use is made of micro-data available from two rotating modules (one on the life course, one on personal and social well-being) of the third round of the European Social Survey (ESS3, 2006-2007), which are analysed through multiple regression. Results show that well-being variables have an important effect on the perceived ideal timing of key events in the transition to adulthood. This effect differs substantially across events, age categories and countries. Well-being variables affect the ideal age for marriage most, followed by the ideal ages for childbearing and partnership. They are much more important for the age category 25-35 than for the other age categories. And they take on greater importance for some countries (e.g. Netherlands, Sweden) than for other countries (e.g. Spain). Education, paid work (with some interesting exceptions for higher age categories) and social interaction raise ideal ages while overall life satisfaction decreases them. The effects of health are mixed.

1. Background

The transition to adulthood comprises a series of key life events. There is no consensus in the literature on the precise number and definition of those events yet finishing school, leaving the parental home, finding a first job, union formation and childbearing are usually included (Arnett, 2001; Raymore, Barber and Eccles, 2001; Smith, 2004; Vogel, 2002).

The timing of the transition to adulthood is important. According to Mooney Marini (1985), the timing of the entry into adult roles has long-term consequences for individuals and for society. At the individual level, life course theory argues that connectivity exists across the life course and that the antecedents and consequences of life transitions vary depending on the timing of the transitions (Giele and Elder, 1998). At the social level, Graber and Dubas (1996) have argued that the poorly understood transition from adolescence to adulthood is of particular importance for society:

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