

PARENTHOOD AND LEAVING HOME IN YOUNG ADULthood

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With the rise in non-marital fertility in the last quarter of the 20th century, the sequencing of transitions in early adulthood has become increasingly complex. Marriage was once routinely linked with the first transition out of the parental home, followed by parenthood. This sequence was first replaced by the increasing experience of nonfamily living between living in the parental home and forming a new family via marriage. More recently, however, many young adults become parents before marriage or even cohabitation, often before leaving the parental home. Studies of leaving home in young adulthood have not yet examined the role of early parenthood in the nestleaving process, either for men or women. Does it retard leaving home, accelerate it, or both?

We use the Young Adult Sample, the children of the women of the NLSY79. Based on a life table analysis, although we expected parenthood to retard leaving home among the youngest Rs, who would need more parental support, while accelerating it among older Rs, this was not the case; the effect of having a child was approximately proportional between ages 15 and 28. We then modeled the probability of leaving the parental home between ages 14 and 28 overall, and distinguished whether the transition was: 1) to live with a partner & children; 2) to live only with a partner; 3) to live independently, as a parent with a female-headed family (nonresident for males); or 4) to live independently. We used discrete event history modeled using binomial & multinomial logit and have some preliminary results.

We find that the general determinants of overall leaving home in this early 21st century dataset fairly closely parallel results from studies of data from the 1970s – 1990s. Women leave home before men, overall and via most routes. Family disruption in childhood increases leaving home, overall and, a new result, particularly when creating a female-headed family. Further,

parental education encourages leaving home, particularly to non-family residential independence; racial/ethnic minorities leave home more slowly, and warmer relationships with parents retard leaving home, particularly to non-family independence (this is also a new result). Attending school retards leaving home while being employed speeds it.

Turning to results specific to parenthood, we find that parenthood encourages leaving home overall, and to each 'child' living arrangement (with or without a partner) while it reduces the speed young adults leave home to a child-free living arrangement. These results were expected. The more interesting differences are gendered. Becoming a parent does not have a negative effect on men's leaving home to live with a (new) partner with no children present, unlike the case for women. Further, becoming a parent has a much less negative effect on men's leaving home to live in non-family residential independence than it does for women.