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The Emergent Adult: Transition from School to Work

SUMMARY

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**KEY WORDS:**

Young people, unclear age status, emergent period, social exclusion, negative life events, successful transition, longitudinal study.

## Introduction

This thesis approaches the topic of the emergent adulthood of young people in Romania as well as the beginning of the first work experience. The main aim is on one hand to review the scientific literature regarding the central perspectives on psychosocial theories which explain human development focusing on the way people understand to divide the life span in stages, which are the factors of a successful transition to adulthood and from school to independent life. The paper also analyses the social status and the problems the young people in Romania face regarding the transition from adolescence to adulthood and from education to employment. Qualitative empirical studies from this thesis were carried out on high school and university students in 2012-2013, and the data type longitudinal panel study refers to the cohort of young people born in 1994-1995, the generation which graduated class XII or XIII in 2012. In all 4 longitudinal studies referred in this thesis I took part as a research assistant since the beginning of my doctoral internship in 2012 in a comprehensive research project “*Outcomes of Adolescence. A longitudinal perspective*”<sup>1</sup>. Mannheim’s theory of generations (1927) suggests that people’s development is influenced by the personal experience in a certain social background different from that of other generations. Mannheim says that people from the same generation (born on the same year and who have a common social and temporal space) motivated by biological necessities and influenced by the social background can develop a generation conscience. Values collectively formed by a generational group will continue to influence the behavior of people throughout their lives. The theory of generations helps explain how a "generation" is also defined by previous generations and by historical context. Generations are changing rapidly in response to major events, and young people adapt to the value systems of their everyday realities. *How are the young people today? Can we identify a special trait of the Romanian youth?*

The four types of empirical studies in this thesis are structured according to the set of general questions that we intend to formulate responses in this paper:

- How do young people (high school students) heading to adulthood define this stage of life?
- How do college students see adulthood?
- Can we talk about the phenomenon of "*emerging adulthood*" in Romania? Are there similarities/differences in criteria that define adulthood in Romanian high school and college students on the one hand, and on the other hand young people from other countries and cultures?
- What are the factors that determine the first work experience for young people and how does this look like?

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<sup>1</sup>It refers to Project PN-II-ID-PCE-2011-3-0543 funded by the National Research Council and implemented by a joint team of professors and researchers of the Department of Social Work of Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. Database for research IV of this paper is used with the consent of the scientific coordinator of the project (and also of this doctoral thesis) Professor. PhD. Maria Roth and Assist project manager. Lecturer PhD. Teodor-Paul Hărăguş. More information about the project on <https://www.facebook.com/sergiu.viitoradult> or <http://www.viitoradult.ro/>.

Name	Type of research	Method (instrument)	Lot/ Sample
Research I	qualitative	Open-ended questionnaires	Total: 80 high school students in 12 <sup>th</sup> class (F:50, B:30)
Research II	qualitative	Open-ended questionnaires	Total: 100 students (F:80, B:20)
Pilot research III	quantitative	Online survey	897 high school students in 12 <sup>th</sup> class
	quantitative	Online survey	343 1 <sup>st</sup> year college students Total: 1240 young people
Panel research	quantitative	Online survey	Total: 3509 high school students, wave I (2012) representative sample
		And/or „pen and paper” questionnaire after 2 years	Total: 1509 wave II (2014) respondents from first wave

Table 4.1. The table of researches presented in this paper

The scientific community has begun to perceive adolescents as representing a social problem when they noticed their tendency to achieve the criteria of adulthood later than those of previous generations. The transition to adulthood is perhaps the most complex stage of the lifecycle. It is an intense period for young people who encounter important life events such as enrollment in college (... or distance learning), getting a job (full or part-time), the transition to independence from the family home, sexual debut, marriage and childbirth. Achieving these goals will take longer routes and more varied than in the past (Papalia et al. 2010). The order and time of these transitions varies, no longer having a standard character, became even reversible, being influenced by economic, political and cultural conditions of the societies where the young people live. Compared to the last two or three decades, the transition to adulthood has become longer (extended), complex, risky, individualized, polarized and it makes finding a balance in life more difficultly. Young people graduate school, enroll to work, become independent, get married and become parents much later than the previous generations. We can speak about the existence of late adolescence and late adulthood (Kehily, 2007).

Although the process of becoming mature starts earlier, adulthood is reached later and later. The young people today live an extended adolescence all over the world. The young people *cannot* or *do not want* to assume the responsibilities of an adult person. Between 18-30 years those who want or have to find a job during high school or right after graduating high school change their jobs more frequent because at this age, regarding employment, they are more unstable than on any other life period. Some young people who have moved away from their parents' house come back and oscillate between dependence and independence due to frequent change of jobs or their life situation, thus getting married or becoming parents much later than their parents did. In many cultures for some decades it has become increasingly frequent the phenomenon of changing the "*maturity schedule*" reaching much later the traditional criteria of becoming mature: graduation, financial independence, leaving parents' home, marriage and assuming the parent role. And this happened maybe because, as Arnett (2001) mentioned, an increasing number of young people experience a "*sense of possibilities*" meaning that they explore their own identity more profound than they did during adolescence. The phenomenon of "*extended adolescence*" influences the social services in different countries as it happened in the case of adolescence<sup>2</sup> which proved to be a distinct stage in life for people from various cultures

<sup>2</sup> since the publication of Mead's famous study *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), scientists from various fields have agreed that adolescence as a stage of life or as a stage of development is biologically programmed.

and societies. Educational and medical institutions, as well as laws have been changed in order to protect the needs of people between 12-18 years old. In any society young people's entry into adult life is regulated by law which vary from one society to another, but nowadays this moment has a major importance because when reached it confers full legal rights. Thus, there is the voting age<sup>3</sup>, marriageable age or the age where they can have consensual sexual relationships, legal drinking age<sup>4</sup> or legal smoking age or driving age.

For young people the opportunity to explore the identity and to experience emotions are more accessible today than ever, with a de-standardization, a desinstitutionalisation, the individualisation of the life course, and young people have the opportunity to create their own biography (Buchmann, 1989) without following a certain pattern of life course events. The age when young people assume adult responsibilities varies in modern, industrialized countries (for example, when they choose to marry, become parents or get a full time job) in the way they relate to the future (with optimism or concern) in their way of life (living with parents, roommates, romantic partners or alone) in their educational and professional interests as well as in their behaviour (may engage in risky behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse or unprotected sexual behaviour). Influenced by the social environment they grow in, for some young people transition can be smooth, while others can experience age crises. Crises are caused by unpredictable future, by the conflict between expectations and reality, by their lack of experience or clear plans and support from peers and governments regarding social policies for youth often evaluated as insufficient and/or lacking outcomes (Robbins and Wilner, 2001).

The paper is divided into five chapters approaching the topic of transition to adulthood, with reference to the transition difficulties, to the transition theories, to empirical research that we have done to highlight the transition in the case of Romanian young people. The paper concludes with key findings, limitations of this study and recommendations for future research directions. The last two parts of the paper include *bibliographic resources* that have helped shape the ideas expressed in this paper and the *annexes* which offer details and arguments in figures of what has been presented in the theoretical and practical parts of this thesis.

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<sup>3</sup> is 16 years in countries as Austria, Bosnia, Brazil, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Jersey, Nicaragua (in Germany, and Switzerland for local elections), 17 years in East Timor, Indonesia, Sudan, Seychelles (in Israel for local elections) and in some US states.

Source: <http://youthrights.org/issues/voting-age/voting-age-status-report/>, accessed on 6.11.2015

<sup>4</sup> in most states the age is 18-19 years but varies in case of states which *prohibits drinking at any age* (Afghanistan, Iran, Kuwait, Libya, Maldives, Mauritania, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, Yemen), others that do not impose a legal minimum age (Bolivia, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Indonesia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone etc.) in countries where age ranges from 10-15 years threshold (Antigua and Barbuda, the Central African Republic), 16-17 years (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Dominica, etc.) to countries where the minimum age is 21 years (Iraq, Mongolia, Equatorial Guinea, Samoa, Sri Lanka, USA), source: <http://apps.who.int/gho/data/node.main.A1145?lang=en?showonly=GISAH>, accessed on 6.11.2015 .



## Chapter 1 “Young people – a social problem?”

In this first chapter are reviewed the reasons why the young people are an important social-demographical category that deserves more attention today from researchers and decision makers. It is defined the concept of youth, maturity and work integration (main phenomena analyzed in the paper). The distinguishing characteristics of adolescence and emerging social context influence on young people's transition to adulthood in various Romanian contexts are also described. Thus by presenting this specific period of transition from adolescence to adulthood which has become more different and more difficult to surpass and how young people understand it and how they adopt views, options and behaviours different from the previous generations it is intended to define the young people as a social problem. In the first chapter *"The social context of young people's transition to adulthood"* it is presented the distinctive character of the period of transition from adolescence to adulthood observed in recent decades in more societies and how technological development has changed the vision and options of young people undergoing this stage of life. Mannheim's theory of generations and the common features of American young people who are more and more frequently seen in Romanian young generation were briefly presented. The concept of youth and maturity has been defined from the point of view of different regional organizations and international institutions using the instruments and legislation documents, and the concepts of work integration has been presented. The meaning of the term *"youth"* varies in different societies around the world. The United Nations defines *"youth"* as people between 15 and 24 years, African Youth Charter defines *"youth"* as people between 15-35 years and according to Romanian laws the youth are active people between 14-35 years (350/21/7/2006 Youth Law, Art. 2 Para. (2) a).

The demographic changes in the last 25 years affect young people in terms of starting a family, getting an education or finding a job. Almost one in five young people in the age group 18-24 years did not complete compulsory education (17%) and over half of the students fail to graduate class XII and pass the Baccalaureate (UNICEF, 2014). The average age at first marriage increased progressively in Romania in the last quarter of the century, from 25 years in 1990 to 29.9 years in 2013 and the average age of the mother at birth has also increased progressively from 22.3 years, as it was in 1990 reaching 26.5 years in 2013 (NIS 2015). Half of the men who left home during the communist period were under 24 years, today the percentage is only reached at the age of 26 years (Mureşan, 2012). If inactive or unemployed there is a high change that the young people do not have the means to live more independently and is likely to continue to live with their families, postponing starting a family of their own (EC, 2012, SWD 409 final). In 2014 the unemployment rate among young people (15-24 years) in the EU-28 was 21.9%. In the EU, 15 countries are experiencing unemployment rates exceeding the EU average including Romania (24%), the situation is worrying in countries like Spain and Greece, where 50% of young people aged 15-24 years do not have a job (53.2% and 52.4%) (Eurostat, 2015).

In the section *"Young people – an important socio-demographic category"* it is mentioned that the studies about culture and subculture of young people started in the Chicago School, exploring in particular the acts of delinquency among young people, seen as a set of collective behaviours (*collective set of behaviours*) organized in and through subcultural class values

(*subcultural class values*) (Barker, 2008). Following the next chapter "*The concept of youth, maturity and integration into employment*" these concepts are defined. The meaning of the term "youth" varies in different societies around the world. Youth is best understood as a period of transition from dependence from childhood to the adulthood independence.

So the period of transition from adolescence to young stage is a period involving major changes in the life of any person. In crossing this period the changes may cause difficulties and overcoming them is a task that requires an effort both from young people, but it could be a task to find a solutions across society. I have shown that despite these changes and challenges young people today live in a world of unlimited possibilities, and can also live and lead their lives as they consider and maybe because they do not know what to do with this freedom many of them reach maturity unfulfilled.

In the section "*Characteristics of adolescence and youth*" it is mentioned that adolescence is a period between 14-18 years. It is seen as a critical stage because people at this age constantly try to compare to others as an autonomous person, with the consciousness of their own identity, but this status is not recognized by the family and peers, and this situation leads to age-related problems such as the tension between young people and society, gaining independence from parents; career choice and lifestyle. *Youth* is the period between 19-25 years, a period of transition from childhood dependence to adulthood independence. The chapter finishes underlining the fact that every young person has to understand that society is compelled to play social roles, has duties and responsibilities, which sooner or later they will have to assume.

## **Chapter 2. Social inclusion of young people**

The chapter reviews the youth's problems mentioned as they appear in the official statistics, but also in programme documents as well as in global, European and national reports. Statistical data (national and European) show the difficulties young people face such as low participation in education, school dropout, young people not enrolled in any form of education, training or employment, the difficulties in planning and insertion of young people in the labour market, the chronic unemployment, the insufficient programmes that facilitate youth access to employment (volunteer programmes, internships, etc.). These phenomena are experienced by a growing number of young people due to various causes (personal choices, unstable family socioeconomic status, difficult social context, etc.) so they fail a successful transition to maturity. The difficult situation is also reflected in official EU institutions' documents, which, despite adopting in the recent years a series of measures, programmes and projects for social inclusion of young people, but they haven't proved their effectiveness yet.

In the first part of the chapter "*The youth, education and the labour market*" it is presented the role of education in training young people for adult life and highlights the situation of youth participation in education by referring to the extent of school dropout phenomenon as the fundamental social problem among young people. Also in the first part it is discussed the phenomenon of higher education massification as a route to adulthood which has become increasingly common among many young people. It is presented the relationship of young people with work referring to career perspectives, labour market insertion and youth unemployment. What does the law stipulate about youth work? How important are volunteering,

internships and youth entrepreneurship? What does work mean for young people and what are the effects of experience on work? All these questions are answered in this part of the thesis. In the second part of the chapter we refer to the main documents (strategies, recommendations, reports) from the European Union and those taken at national level (in chronological order), European programmes on the situation of inclusion of young people in education and the labour market as well as the strategic future landmarks and the inclusion situation in Romania and Europe.

In the subchapter "*Youth participation in education and NEET or TPTS youth*" begins with the difficulties young people face in their transition to adulthood, among these being the difficulties that they face in covering education system. It presents the phenomenon of young people who, for various reasons, do not complete various educational cycles, it presents the situation of young people leaving the education system, even if the statistics about these young people are scarce since this category of young people is being difficultly identified. It is presented the way European authorities define young people who drop out of education, dropout possible causes, but also the benefits of staying as long as possible in school.

In the section "*Dropout phenomenon and its consequences*" terms such as *early school leavers* and *NEET young people* are being defined. The difference between these two terms is that if the first term refers to a narrower category of young people (18-24 years old), NEET youth include a wider age group (15-29). The term "*Early School Leavers*" refers to the rate of early school dropout of young people between 18-24, who have completed secondary education and currently not enrolled in any form of education or training, but who are on the borderline between the responsibilities of the two systems, the initial training and ongoing education (ISE 2009). According to EU, *NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training)* is the term that defines young people out of a form of education, training or employment. In terms of statistics NEET rate represents the percentage of the population in a particular age (usually 15-29 years), men or women, who are not employed or enrolled in an educational programme or training (Costache et al., 2014). The following subchapters present the *role of education in preparing young people for adult life: social return on investment in education*, and *College – a phase in the young people's process of becoming mature*, and *Graduates insertion in the labour market*.

In the section "*Preparing young people for insertion into the labour market*" it is mentioned that nowadays employers and companies seeks service-oriented youth with clearly defined abilities and skills, who understand the requirements and expectations of employers, young people showing ethical behaviour, a great desire to work, ambition to learn, who are punctual and honest and show appropriate behaviour. Factors such as opportunities, relationships, socio-economic status of parents influence the least the career development, more important being their qualities and skills. Education and labour market experience are the most important types of human capital. The level of education and the workplace become part of human capital, which could increase with growing labour market experience and age. One hypothesis is that those lacking human capital such as young people with a low level of education and/or inexperienced feel the impact of globalization more intensively in modern societies; part of them having a situation of precarious, flexible and uncertain employment (e.g. fixed-term contract, part-time job or irregular hours of work). On the other hand, those with higher education or "knowledge

workers" have more favorable experiences. Globalization accentuates or even produces inequality providing better opportunities for highly educated youth and limits the chances of less educated ones (Schoon și Silbereisen, 2009).

The chapter "*Studies on the relationship between Romanian youth and work*" shows that young people have an optimistic view on their lives. They intend to become autonomous and financially independent, work representing for them fulfillment and material security. Though they hardly find a job which meets the requirements and their professional training often they are willing to work in other areas than those that were prepared for and feel insecure which does not allow them to be independent and to start a family. If for those without any work experience the financial aspect is paramount, those with work experience value work relations and professional development the most. Forced to earn a living some young people are leaving school, often abandoning it for good. Although the family represents the most important support in all major decisions in life, young people nowadays often make decisions independent of someone's influence. Among young people the option to appeal to specialized institutions/agencies placing the labour force is used less, more often youth seeking a job on the Internet, in newspapers, jobs portals while admitting that often the information is ambiguous, incomplete or inconsistent with reality. They have a perspective of a system which is defined by corruption and nepotism. The next chapter reviews "*Youth perspectives on career and employment*".

In the section "*Work legislation for young people*" it is presented the Romanian legislation regarding youth employment according to the Labour Code. There are studies which prove that there are teenagers who work from an early age. One possible reason for this situation is that young people from socially disadvantaged families, rural families with several children, families where neither parent is employed, families where parents have only primary education, or families with health problems or with fewer goods and little cultural facilities are forced to work (Negreanu and Ionescu, 2006).

The results obtained by questioning people who managed to make a career show that external factors such as opportunities, relationships, socio-economic status of parents have influenced least to the development of their careers, more important being their specific qualities and skills. Qualification and competence are still decisive factors in finding a job, but new elements have emerged: initiative, creativity, flexibility, autonomy, dynamism, responsibility etc. (Brigitte, 2005).

Internships and volunteering, including entrepreneurship are opportunities that young people take into account in order to develop life skills and improve their employment perspectives. Their attitude is to be active rather than "to stand still". They realize that perseverance, experience and enthusiasm seem to be qualities from which they will benefit in the future (UNYWR, 2011). If these opportunities are stipulated by law and how they are seized it is shown in subsection "*Volunteering, internships and entrepreneurship*". The next section shows the "*Work significance for adults and young people.*" I have chosen to present in a separate chapter "*The effects of experience on youth work*" and in the last chapter of this first part are presented "*The European and national policies on youth employment*".

### Chapter 3. Theories on the transitions from adolescence to adulthood

Various theorists representing different psychological and sociological theories explain the factors that influence the transition from adolescence to young adulthood. There are taken into consideration general theoretical perspectives from the traditional ones such as structuralist-functionalism, interactionalism theories on social inequalities, resilience to the latest holistic view which summarizes the points of view of various classic theories such as the interactionist-eco-developmental, ecological systems theory, or the life course theory and rational choice theory. All these theories mention the socializing role of the family, of school and the general influence of socio-economic, cultural, and contextual on the development of a person, referring to the importance of personal role in managing life in a personal manner by choices and abilities to face life events. It is also taken into consideration the transition from school to work as well as career theory. First there are presented the sociological theories, more exactly structuralist-functionalist perspective whose precursors H. Spencer, E. Durkheim, T. Parsons and R. Merton were preoccupied to identify the social functions of various institutions. Authors such as Settersten, Furstenberg and Rumbaut (2005) adopted a functionalist perspective suggesting that emergent adults postpone assuming adults role until they are ready. The functionalists have a positive perspective on late transition of young people to adulthood because in this period the needs of emergent adults are fulfilled.

Using conflict perspective Allahar and Côté (1994) explains that nowadays young people need more education for some jobs than it was necessary for the same jobs in the past, referring to this trend as *credentialism*. They also claim that the extended transition of young people aims to exploit the emerging adults. Young people are excluded from the adult society by being regarded only as consumers and possibly income workers with a minimum wage in a youth culture. Young people spend more years in school because the reorientation of the economy means fewer available jobs in the traditional areas of employment for young people. Conflict theorists argue that society theory exploits young people by refusing them the desire to work and thus disadvantaging the adults, so that they cannot obtain financial independence from their family and do not have access to all the benefits of the society (Holloway et al., 2010). The research questions to be drawn from a functionalist perspective are: *What are the contributions of social institutions in the transition of youth to adulthood? Who benefits from these structures?*

The theory “*Maintaining maximum inequality*” (MMI) suggests that social environment may be more important for later educational transitions than for earlier. This is the difference between the theory of maintaining maximum inequality and life course perspective. If life course theory stresses that small children are becoming more independent from their parents, MMI theory emphasizes that adolescents’ independence depends on socio-political and social support in order to achieve certain levels of education (Lucas, 2001). The theory of hinged mobility points (Rosenbaum, 1976) explains the very low chances of students’ mobility emphasizing the conceptual and institutional supports in following a certain path. Lucas (2001) proposed the *theory of effectively maintained inequality* (EMI). The central idea of EMI theory to achieve a certain level of education is that when globalizing educational levels, social environment will distinguish between social classes (Lucas, 2001). The life course theory postulates that the

relationship between a parent and the child changes over time as the child grows old. Both EMI theory and MMI theory explains class competition between families, but MMI theory suggests that when any level of education becomes universal, the competition will not exist (Lucas, 2001). By contrast, the theory postulates that the EMI levels of education for those who become universal competition will take place for the *type of education* that aims to be achieved. Both theories predict the effect of social environment in achieving certain educational levels which are not universal. The concept of “*structured individualization*” refers to the fact that people have access to various resources and opportunities in life, but social inequalities are reproduced by taking individual decisions, such as, for example, if a teenager decides whether to continue studies or leave the education system (Schoon and Silbereisen, 2009). If in the adolescents’ middle class families there is a tendency to provide economic support to children till adulthood, working class parents do not offer much financial support to their children mainly because children start working in mid-adolescence, but later tend to offer support in raising children or in other things of everyday life (Schoon and Silbereisen, 2009). Although universal and pervasive stratification is present from the most simple and homogeneous societies to the most diverse and heterogeneous systems because they are all made up of vertical divisions based either on gender, age and structure of the family, or on material wealth, power and reputation (Boudon, 2006). In Romania the class structure is not stable, social class differences are not so big and there are variations within each social class in terms of parental values. The aspiration of children to continue school education depends on mother's level of education and mothers take part in a significant number in educating their children and educational styles are dependent on this (Negreanu and Ionescu, 2006).

Studies on transitions to adulthood in Europe often adopt conceptualization of becoming mature according to Arnett's theory, already described in the introduction of this summary, but also on life course perspective. Developmentalist theories or life course theories emerged in the 50s, analyzing the behaviour of large groups of people over a long period and explaining psychological development in family, community and social context. Promoters such as Erikson; Loevinger; Lenvinson; Arnett assume that people's behaviour derive from changes caused by internal psychological life situations. Results of the transition depends on the opportunities and structural limitations, but also on individual resources. The transition to adulthood is a development stage requiring psychological abilities, social skills and activism. The transition marks an intense period of life with transition events that accumulate and partly overlap with long-term effects which have a major importance for the future life course (Buchmann and Kries, 2011). A summary of the developmentalist theories is further presented. Erik Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development (identity) 1959 describes eight stages (without mentioning ages) in which the identity of a person appears and matures, the transition from one stage to another being achieved thanks to dilemmas faced by that person. For instance the dilemma from adolescence to young adulthood called “*identity versus role confusion*” occurs because people make many decisions in this period of life, from which education to pursue, what job to have, how to be as a male or female and what their beliefs should be. Till they decide who they are, they become confused regarding the role that they play in adulthood. To solve this dilemma people acquire loyalty, the ability to live by the standards of society (Erikson and Erikson, 1997).

Jane Loevinger's theory of ego development shows that the progress from one stage to another is determined by the psychological clock of a person and not by the chronological age or the social environment. Jane Loevinger's theory of ego development explains that people begin to appreciate the wide range of appropriate role behaviours that make each unique in this period of emerging adolescence. The *family life-cycle framework*, a theory developed at mid-twentieth century postulates that young people leave the family home, become independent and then start their own family for procreation. According to the cycle of life of the family, once independence is achieved, young people adopt three tasks: forming a separate identity from that of the origin family, undertaking a career or a role at work and developing intimate relationships with others having the same age apart from family members in order to get the emotional support and social benefit they need. These three tasks allow young adults to become autonomous in preparation for starting a new family through marriage and having children. The family has an important role, the relationship between parent and child tends to become less hierarchical as soon as the youth assume responsibility for the decisions they take. As ecological systems theory, the family life cycle focuses on the interaction between family members and their changing needs. According to Leonard Pearlin's *theory of psychological distress* from the 70s the way of life that people will adopt is determined by four elements: individual characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, intelligence, family status, personality and education; range of skills to deal with stress; availability of social support networks; nature and periods of stress requiring response. The theory explains how factors such as personality, family status and the resilience of a person (a person's ability to cope with stress) will determine how a person faces challenges. General characteristics such as ethnicity or socio-familial status influence the direction people take in life. He suggests that the availability of support from social networks, such as school, could help young people to cope with the transition (Holloway et al., 2010). The theory "Seasons of Life" (Levinson, D.J.) talks about the *transition to early adulthood* (17-22 years) which occurs at the end of adolescence when first choices for adult life are being made. In the second phase *entering to adulthood* (22-28) are made the first choices in love, work, friendships, values and lifestyle. Other theories worth taking into consideration are *the moral development theory* and the *theory of the development dimensions* of American psychologist Klaus Riegel.

*Adolescence* and *youth* are periods of transition very important for the development of healthy coping skills, but there is a high risk of engaging in unhealthy behaviours (use of narcotic substances, early sexual experiences, violence, emotional trauma and other problems) and can have dangerous effects on this periods of life. Resilient teenagers adapt to a dangerous environment because of their self-confidence, their abilities to overcome obstacles and avoid dangerous situations, being able to resist the dangers they encounter or to recover afterwards. Although resilience is not universal, unconditional or a permanent quality of life (including for teenagers) it can change in time and along with shifting conditions of life. Teenagers coping with adversities are those who enjoy a "*triad of protection*" of resources and circumstances which lead to mental health based on the strengths of the child, family and school/community environment (Luthar, 2006). Factors that may affect the adolescents' strength are: *relations with other family members, with colleagues and friends, the community and culture they grow in*. For

example, the relationships with family and colleagues are the most important resources for teenagers in Russia (Makhnach, 2014).

*Rational Choice Theory or General Theory of Rationality* (GRT) assumes that the choice can be considered rational, but the behaviour may be regarded as containing components inevitably irrational, which is partly caused by socio-cultural forces, which are unknown and free from any control of the person (Boudon, 2009). From the rational choice theory this research used the idea of the choices youth have made in looking for their professional direction, in choosing an educational institution. With every life event they made life choices based on their level of maturity which may be more or less rational or emotional.

Considering current *integrative theories* as theories in which modern theorists try to combine views from different groups of classical or recent theories. The interactionists show that a person's personality is formed and changed through contact with others. They intend to explain the social through individual action. The *ecological systems theory* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) explains how families influence the development of emergent adult's identity. According to *ecological systems theory* personal and family expectations, the *mesosystem*, are supported by ideologies and macro-system policies, but are constrained by the resources of *exosystem*. Hair et al., (2009) based on *Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory* examined the risk and protective factors from the proximal systemic environment (individual, friends, family and community) to learn how to predict adolescent risk behaviour profiles.

Other theories used in this research are theories on the transition from school to work. In *Social Cognitive Career Theory* Lent; Hackett and Brown (1999) hypothesized that the transition from school to work is a process rather than an event that takes place gradually during the school years and which is incorporated into the larger phenomenon of career development. A successful transition, therefore, depends on how well they cope with various young professional tasks. Both concepts are seen as essential for cultivating interests, setting aims and related actions, which are also shaped by contextual influences (support from social background and impediments) (Lent et al., 1999). Based on this theory, the development of appropriate interventions to promote road to a successful career could best be implemented throughout the school years. Also, the authors stress the importance of developing self-efficacy and competence in the most generic areas of qualification (employability skills, teamwork, leadership) that are needed to convert goals into action and to negotiate obstacles and support (Choon and Silbereisen, 2009). Another theory relates to the definition of personality in the workplace (Strauser et al., 1999) and focuses on the relationship between occupational interests, personality characteristics and possible workplace environments (Holland, 1997). Based on this theory, identifying and promoting the interests and skills becomes important for career development programmes and for assistance in making career choices (Schoon and Silbereisen, 2009). There are also references to the careership theory. Choosing different career paths is largely dependent on the level of education and influenced by the social class, which is a major factor in explaining the professional path (Bates and Riseborough, 1993). Griffin (1985) introduced the gender in explaining chosen job type, and studies such as those by Blackman (1987), Cros and Wrench (1991) showed that ethnic origin restricts opportunities for some groups. Banks et al. (1992) indicated that geographical location



is an important factor, due to variations in unemployment and employment opportunities (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997). For Bourdieu, each stakeholder brings capital (economic, social, cultural or symbolic) influencing the game. Okano (1993) speaks about resources. The same source can be positive, negative or neutral, depending on the context in which it is "used". In the transition to the labour market, other participants often hold more capital and can exercise more power than young people and the former have the resources to determine the rules. For example, employers have the power to hire and to fire, while training and education providers understand the systems better than young people and have contacts and access to networks that young people do not have (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997).

In scientific literature on transition to work a common concept is that of "*career path*" (Furlong 1992). Banks et al. (1992) argue that there are career advancement models that describe the route. These characteristics depend largely on youth past background, such as class, gender, ethnicity, geographical location and level of education. The trajectory is "*knowable*" because from the early decisions in the transition to work and as the lives grow, one climbs gradually in a direction that is clear and predictable for the knowledge of an outsider. Although the plan and the route can change, they are seen as occasional deviations when a person changes the route or refrains from a social level to another. The path from a turning point to another turning point may be predictable and smooth or irregular and idiosyncratic (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997).

## **Chapter 4. Research on transition from adolescence to young adulthood**

In this chapter I present my practical contribution to raising awareness on youth social problems in today's society and to understanding the phenomenon of transition to adulthood emphasizing young people work start.

In the four studies I have carried out which use both quantitative and qualitative methods it is explored the subjective and the objective side of the two phenomena (the presence of periods characteristic for the emergent adult in Romanian youth and the beginning of work) by descriptive means (what maturity means for Romanian youth) and the explanation (by statistical analyzes in order to identify the factors that determine a successful transition to adulthood and the beginning of work). By exposing the way high school and college students see their age status and how they relate to maturity, it is demonstrated that emerging stage to adulthood seems to act as a distinct stage of life for Romanian youth as well. We tend to believe that the economic, social and cultural trends, along with the many changes that can be seen in Romania, including improved living standards and adopting the values and ideologies of individualistic specific to western societies approaches the concept of youth in Romania with that from USA and other countries where Arnett's theory was tested and confirmed. Starting on one hand from the theoretical concepts presented which expose the complexities of growing young people and on the other hand the expectations of modern societies regarding young people that programmatically aim to emphasize the integration of young people into the labour market and emphasizes the importance of youth as the workforce the research presumed general objectives are:

1. Research on Romanian youth's perception about themselves, in two moments - before and after graduation, and comparing these with the perceptions of young people in other countries;
2. Understanding the social factors that influence young people in their development to adulthood and labour market by using regression models that show the explanatory power of social exclusion factors and those related to negative life events on the successful transition to adulthood and the beginning of work.

A number of studies (Macek et al., 2007; Nelson, 2009; Sirsch et al., 2007; Petrogiannis, 2011; Nelson et al., 2004) that investigated the views of young people about maturity in different countries and cultures show that young people between 18-24 years feel they are between two periods of life, neither adolescents, nor fully adults, and living a period they cannot define. The theory of emergent adult shows that for young people in Romania, as for young people in other Western societies (Czech Republic, Austria, Greece, China, USA), the emerging adult period to maturity represents a distinctive stage of life.

In order to identify the criteria of maturity for high school students in **RESEARCH I** it was used a questionnaire with six open questions, carried out on a convenience sample, 80 high school students of class XII (17-19 years old, 50 girls) in their last year study at two high schools in Cluj-Napoca chosen randomly. High school students have expressed their opinion on the moment they are being regarded as adults by three different entities: themselves, their parents and society. The questionnaire included two questions that revealed students' point of view on good and bad aspects regarding maturity taken and adapted from Horowitz and Bromnick's study (2007).

After processing the responses we noticed a heterogeneity of points of view related to the perspectives on maturity of youth around 18 years old. These research questions were focusing on the formal criterion of adulthood, reaching the age of 18 years old, so I noticed how they regard the criterion of maturity of young people on the threshold of 18, how young people, parents and society perceive maturity from the point of view of young people reported to the period before 18 years old and after reaching this age.

Romanian high school students define the process of becoming mature by internal psychological, changes, related to the sense of self-identity, responsibility and autonomy. They perceive the transition from adolescence to adulthood through the development of internal skills and the achievement of some psychological factors. They defined adolescence and maturity using psychological features, considering that they become mature as a result of a process of awareness. They noticed that they complete the stage of adolescence and become mature as they succeed in approaching various life events seriously, become more realistic, more careful, more attentive to everything that is happening around them. They consider that maturity means "*taking life in your own hands*", to begin acting responsibly and to understand that actions can have consequences. High school students feel that they become adults when they reach the age of 18 or are over this age. They do not feel complete adults until they are sure that they have reached a point in which they agree to take responsibilities, to make their own decisions and to become financially independent. During the development of these qualities they have a sense of not belonging to any age category.

**RESEARCH II** is a qualitative pilot study with the purpose to test the validity of the theory of the emerging adulthood as proposed by J. J. Arnett; it is presented the perspective Romanian students have on their own identity status and how they perceive the characteristics of maturity and of adulthood in general. Since the studies that test the emerging adulthood theory were carried out in various societies mainly on young people who continued their educational process with tertiary education, we chose to study how the Romanian students relate to maturity. The objective is to identify the perception of one's own age status and to what extent attending college (as a social institutional experience) influences young people's perception of the criteria used to define maturity. To be able to demonstrate that young people in Romania display features of the emerging adulthood, as those defined by Arnett, we questioned if being a student (as a role) determines the change of the perception of one's own status. Does completing one stage of life (the stage of high school education) have any influence on the perception of the own age status and on the perception of maturity broadly speaking? In RESEARCH II the pilot study was conducted in 2013, the target group being 100 young people aged between 18-25 years (average 21.49 years), most of them girls (80 persons), all students in different fields and years at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. The survey form was delivered in one single day to the students who were studying that day at „Lucian Blaga” Central University Library in Cluj-Napoca. We picked a segment of “diligent” young people, namely those who go to the library, to understand how the young people who, we assumed, read and get steadily informed, thus forming a more complex vision of life, see the transition from adolescence to maturity. Because of this, our sample is not representative for the entire population of young people, whose features are much more various and dynamic, but it offers instead a partial insight of a segment of young people as a result of a stage of life in a certain point in time. The perception of these young people regarding the adult status was measured via an self-administrated survey with open questions: *‘Do you feel you are an adult, mature person?’*, the available answers being *‘Yes’*, *‘In some respects, yes, in others, no’*, and a third option, *‘No’*, with the request to explain their answer. The survey also included two other items: *“Which, in your opinion, is the main feature of adulthood?”*, the respondents naming characteristic feature that define an adult, while the last item was a statement that the young students had to complete: *‘You are an adult when...’*. Although the questions have different forms, they all aim at revealing the way in which one sees maturity, at obtaining as many criteria of maturity as possible, in different means of expression.

The stage in life that follows adolescence and that young people pass through on the way to maturity equals, for many of them, the years spent still studying, as an increasing number of young people attend superior education programs. We have also involved a sample of students in the study of the perception on one's own age status to see to what extent attending a college, as a social institutional experience, influences the young people's perception on the criteria that define maturity, as we assumed students experience feelings of freedom and decision-making more often as compared to high-school students. In similar studies in the USA (Arnett J., 2001), China (Nelson, 2004), Czech Republic (Macek et al., 2007), Austria (Sirsch, U. et al., 2007), Greece (Petrogiannis, K., 2011) and Romania (Nelson, 2009), in order to assess the subjective feeling of being an adult, the participants (mainly adolescents, emerging adults and young adults) were asked if they believe they have reached maturity, with possible answers *‘Yes’*, *‘No’* and *‘In some respects, yes, in others, no’*.

By presenting the way in which the students see their own age status and relate to maturity we demonstrate that the adult stage developing to maturity is seemingly a distinct stage of life for the Romanian young students. The results prove the same trends; young people have at this point in life an ambivalent feeling of their own status. The percentage of young people who do not feel adults is similar in studies carried out in various countries and cultures. Akin to a previous study (Nelson, 2009), in which 69% of the interviewees did not consider themselves mature, in our study 75% of the young people aged between 18-25 years provide the same answer.

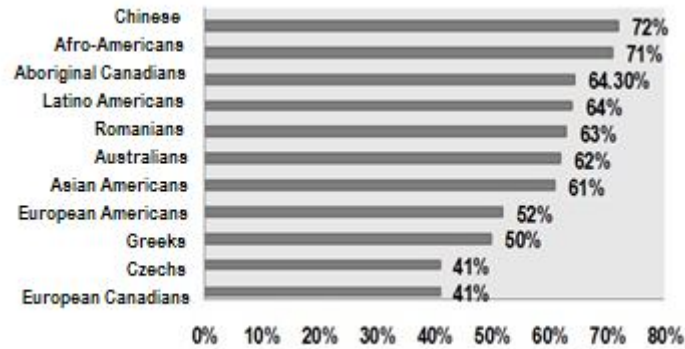


Fig. 4.5. Comparison between countries regarding the percentage of people that are not considered adult

Notes: The chart was created by the author of the present thesis using data from the studies in:

- China (Nelson; Badger; Wu, 2004), respondents: 207 students – 94 boys, 113 girls.
- USA 2 (Arnett, 2003), respondents: 574 – 109 Caucasians, 122 Afro-Americans, 96 Latino, 247 Asian Americans.
- Canada (Cheah; Nelson, 2004), respondents: 201 – 69 Aboriginals, 132 Europeans out of which 85 boys, 126 girls.
- Romania (Nelson, 2009), respondents: 230 students (18-27 years) – 94 boys, 136 girls.
- Greece (Petrogiannis, 2011), respondents: 183 students (18-25 years) – 49 boys, 134 girls.
- Czech Republic (Macek et al., 2007), respondents: 436 students (18-27 years) – 196 boys, 246 girls.
- USA 1 (Arnett, 2001), respondents: 519 – 171 adolescents, 179 emerging adults, 165 adults.
- Israel (Mayseless; Scharf, 2003), respondents: 546 – 188 adolescents, 218 emerging adults, 140 adults.
- Austria (Sirsch et al., 2007), respondents: 775 – 226 adolescents, 317 emerging adults, 232 adults.

Taking adult roles (e.g. being employed, getting married or becoming a parent) does not necessarily imply that a person feels he or she has the skills and competences to be an adult (Nelson, 2009). Some psychologists suggest that the debut of the adult age cannot be identified by external criteria, but by internal indicators, such as the feeling of autonomy, self-control and personal responsibility, that it is more of a state of mind than a tangible event. From this point of view some people never become adults, regardless of their chronologic age (Papalia, 2010). The study results show that growing mature is multidimensional and there are people who feel, at any point during adolescence or after 20 years, that they have reached maturity through having checked certain criteria, while other still remain unchecked.

As a conclusion of the two researches presented so far, we can state that, following the analysis of the means of expression through which high school students define becoming mature, we have noticed they focus on the moment of the “outbreak” in that they assert “*we become mature when one becomes more realistic, asks oneself fundamental questions on life or understands that one has to strive in life and that actions have consequences*”. Students, on the other hand, focus in their expressions to define maturity on the idea that the process of becoming mature is a continuous one and is achieved through the experiences we undergo so that we control our behavior and attitude to be able to adapt to various situations. The transition from

adolescence to adulthood is not only a biological process, but, according to the studies on young people's perception on maturity, also a social, psychological and cultural one. The results of this micro-research conducted in 2013 on the convenience sample of "diligent" students confirm that young Romanians aged between 18-25 years do not see themselves as full adults, living instead an emerging stage to maturity. Even though according to the psychological they have a logical thinking ability that has reached maturity and many of their answers indicate they guide themselves using principles and values, many of them still have contradictory thoughts as far as their own maturity is concerned and postpone declaring themselves mature. From what they say, they assume responsibilities, take decisions not influenced by the others' opinion and suffer the consequences of the decisions feeling they can manage by themselves as far as solving certain problems are concerned, but the *feeling of the ambivalence emerging adult – adult appears to be triggered by financial dependency on parents and thus determining them not to consider themselves adults.*

Thus the predictors of subjective perception of individuals regarding the adult status are feelings and individual perceptions such as being able to take responsibilities, having the courage to make decisions by oneself and facing consequences of the decisions, as well as an objective event: to succeed in obtaining and maintaining financial independence. It is possible that changing the educational status (transition from high school to college) in conjunction with changes in housing and changing the indicator of the financial independence (getting a job) could have significant effect in generating a sense of reaching the adult stage although maturity means ongoing learning from all the experiences we go through.

**RESEARCH III.** To explore more detailed the perception of maturity in young people, after seeing how high school students at the beginning of legal adulthood (age of majority) and college students in Romania perceive their identity and how they relate to maturity each of the two categories of young people Research III refers to the international perspective of the emerging adult model. Based on an internationally tested instrument (inventory dimensions of emerging adults) abbreviated IDEA proposed by Arnett 2001 that I have used in Romania on school and university students are described the characteristics obtained by different researchers in different countries. For this purpose we collected data in two distinct periods and for two different groups (students), the data being gathered with the pilot testing of the research instrument for the study „*Outcomes of Adolescence. A longitudinal perspective*”. In the autumn of 2012 it was conducted the pilot study on high school students, and that on college students was carried out in the summer of 2013. Students in the final years (grade 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>) come from theoretical, technological and vocational education, mainly in the counties of Argeş, Ilfov, Timiş and Vâlcea, and college students were from university centers such as Cluj, Timișoara, Bucharest and Petroșani. Students come from faculties with various specializations from 8 universities (Polytechnic University, Western University, "Victor Babeş" University of Medicine and Pharmacy Timișoara, Technical University, "Babeş-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca, The Academy of Economic Studies (ASE) in Bucharest, Bucharest University and the University of Petroșani). In order to compare how high school and college students understand the process of becoming an adult in Romania the two groups were put together. Thus a new data base was created with those items that were identical in the survey of high school and college students in

order to describe how high school and college students understand the process of becoming adult in Romania, whether there are differences in criteria that they choose and to compare criteria of Romanian young people with those of youth from other countries. Thus the database for this analysis includes a total of 1.240 adolescents aged 16-25 years ( $M=18.87$ ,  $SD=1.05$ ), most girls 60.6% and is composed of two samples of respondents: 897 12<sup>th</sup> class students ( $F=52.8\%$ ) and 343 first year college students ( $F=81\%$ ). Data from both groups were collected during the pilot research within the project mentioned above, pilot research on testing research instruments (two questionnaires from the project IDEAS in the first questionnaire in Appendix) being carried out on high school students and a pilot study on college students. On the entire group (school and college students) the first three criteria of maturity were *to take responsibility for the consequences of your actions* (94.03%), *to make decisions based on the beliefs and personal values independent of parents or other influences* (78.23%), *to be financially independent from parents* (78.2%). For girls the first three criteria of maturity were *to take responsibility for the consequences of your actions* (93.22%), *followed by the criterion taking care of children (for female respondents)* (86.04%) and *to get financial independence from parents* (81.52%). For boys, the three most important criteria of maturity are *"to take responsibility for the consequences of your actions"* (95.29%), *to give physical safety to your family (male)* (80.74%) and *to support financially a family (man)* (80.33%). Overall, the high school students' most important three criteria of maturity are *"to take responsibility for the consequences of your actions"* (96.99%), *to orient yourself to a lasting career lasting* (81.72%) and *not to use illegal drugs* (79.15%).

For college students, the top most important three criteria of maturity are *"to take responsibility for the consequences of your actions"* (86.30%), *to be financially independent from parents* (86.01%) and *to make decisions based on the beliefs and personal values independent from parents or other influences* (79.59%). There were presented the differences in perceived maturity criteria for high school and college students, although most frequently chosen criteria by high school students (96.99%) is the same as the one chosen by college students (86.30%) *"to take responsibility for the consequences of your actions"*, but while among teenagers the next criterion was *"you are targeting a lasting career"* (81.72%) and *"do not use illegal drugs"* (79.15%) college students chose as second and third criteria *"to be financial independent from parents"* (86.01%) and *"to make decisions based on the beliefs and personal values independent of parents or other influences"* (79.59%), which suggests the importance of appreciating the independence and autonomy for college students compared to high school students.

So, many adults emerging Romanian adults appreciate the criteria from individualism scale as markers of maturity, on top being *to take responsibility for the consequences of your actions, make decisions based on the personal beliefs and values independent of parents or other influences, be financially independent from parents*.

**RESEARCH IV.** The data from RESEARCH IV come from the longitudinal study *"Outcomes of Adolescence. A longitudinal perspectives"* the respondents filling in the online form in both waves on the project's site. The questions refer to many aspects of their lives:

family, relationships and support, physical and mental health, high-risk behaviour and their perspective on major events that can take place in adolescence. The collection of first data took place between October 2012 and February 2013 in 33 localities in the country (from Bihor, Sălaj, Cluj, Sibiu, Covasna, Iași, Bacău, Galați, Constanța, Argeș, Teleorman, București, Ilfov, Dolj, Vâlcea, Timiș, Caraș-Severin counties). The type of sample is random, multistage stratified (four stages of sampling: area, counties, schools, classes). The first wave (2012) consists of 3509 high school students nationally representative sample (high school students in final year of high school, average age 18.06 years), 58.1% female, 58.4% representing youth from urban areas. Young people from 1<sup>st</sup> wave have been invited to complete the new online questionnaire on the project site. Response rate was 43% of young people from first wave, the average age 20.04 years. 59% female, 61.9% urban, 97.1% unmarried, 99.1% have graduated high school, 90.8% have passed the Bacculaureate, 0.7% are parents (11 people), 82.4% continued their education after high school, mostly high education studies (74.8%). 49.4% had no jobs when filling in the questionnaire, two years after graduation.

		Wave 2012-2013 (no)	Wave I %	Wave II 2014-2015 (no*)	Wave II %	Percentage Val II/ Val I (%**)
<b>Gender</b>	Girls	2043	58.1	891 (-1152)	59.0	<b>43.6</b>
	Boys	1466	41.9	618 (-848)	41.0	<b>42.1</b>
<b>Residence</b>	Urban	2030	58.4	934 (-1096)	61.9	<b>46.0</b>
	Rural	1445	41.6	575 (-870)	38.1	<b>39.7</b>
<b>High school from area</b>	Urban	2962	85.7	1389 (-1573)	92.4	<b>46.8</b>
	Rural	493	14.3	114 (-379)	7.6	<b>23.1</b>
<b>Material deprived family</b>		610	19.5	236 (-374)	16.6	<b>38.6</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>3509</b>		<b>1509</b>		<b>43</b>

Notes: \*number of young people is smaller in the first wave of the study

\*\* the percentage of total initial sample of young people who filled in the questionnaire in the second wave of the study.

Table 4.23. Socio-demographic characteristics of the samples from the two waves of the study

To achieve the objectives and to answer the research questions suggested we chose the from the questionnaires to analyze questions which are referring to the path taken by youth to adulthood, to gaining academic experience and youth view in preparing ongoing educational training. For the *Labour Market Section*, the questionnaire included questions on youth first work experience. Questions addressed occupational status, work experience during their studies, type of first work experience (practice, voluntary, formal or informal employment), manner of employment at first job, remuneration or not, satisfaction on salary, number of hours worked per week, willingness of employers to accept flexible working hours, type of employment contract, compatibility of job training education, the salary, intention to involve the following year, period of looking for a job, participation at interviews and reasons why young people do not have a job.

	WITHOUT work experience	WITH work experience
Passed Bacculaureate*	53.5	46.5
Didn't pass Bacculaureate	24.2	75.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>684</b>

\* figures express the percentage, the total number

Table 4.18 Work experience based on bacculaureate success

*Descriptive analyses.* From the young people in the sample 99% have successfully graduated high school. The vast majority (96.8%) took the Bacculaureate exam and 90.8% passed it. From

the 17.6% who do not attend any form of education, 25% said they wanted to start work, 23.4% failed the exam because they did not feel ready, 21.5% mentioned economic reasons (not had resources, money), 14.8% had to work to support themselves, while 5.9% said that level of education is sufficient. From the 82.4% who continue their education, the majority (90.8%) are college students and 9.2% follow a form of post-secondary education. Most of them (86.2%) are supported by parents, not necessarily financially, to cope in everyday life. 56.8% of young people are interested in pursuing a master's degree abroad. 65.7% say that after graduating current educational programme would like to look for (another) job, while 31.7% would like to continue their education. Half of young people have work experience 50.1%, 25.2% working at the moment of filling in the questionnaires, two years after graduation. Of these 46.2% were employed on the first job through an interview/competition, 37.5% were hired with the help of a recommendation from an acquaintance/friend, while for 11.4% of them parents found them a job. 76.5% worked/are working to earn money, 20.7% to gain experience. Most of them say that the activity of the workplace is not related to their specialization (79.2%) and 20.8% said that it is. 60.6% of them say that the job did not help/does not help achieve career related plans and 39.4% say it did. In our sample, the majority are students, the percentage of those who were in an interview in the previous month is small: 8.3% were in an interview in the previous month, looking for a job for an average of 5 months. Among the reasons for not having a job, 97.8% of young people stated they do not want a job now, 96.6% mentioned school or a training programme attendance, 83.8% say employers consider them young and inexperienced, 67.1% said their families do not want them to work, 65.7% of young people are not interested in the jobs they can get, 56.9% do not know how to find a job, 55.8% say that there is no job available for their specialization, 41.5% say they have given up the search because no one helped them when they tried to find a job.

*Inferential analyses.* In order to see what influences the successful transition to adulthood and youth decision to have a work experience in early adulthood our approach has been structured as follows: description of variables used in the statistical analyses interpreting in the end the relations between the resultants of the successful transition to adulthood and the work start of youth through various explanatory variables analyzing the results. In this chapter we try to answer the following two research questions:

1. What are the resultants of a successful transition to adulthood and how are these explained by the demographic, social exclusion and negative life events factors?
2. What are the factors which influence youth work start?

In this fourth part of the research we proposed the following objectives:

1. To examine the emerging adult's lifestyle in Romania through continued education after graduating high school and having their first work experience.
2. To study how some young people manage to combine studies with work.
3. To describe the causative factors that may explain the successful transition to adulthood and the beginning of work (high school graduation by passing Baccalaureate exam) and further education after graduating high school by following training courses, post-secondary schools or a form of higher education and/or employment), the individual and



family factors (parents' low intensity of work, assessment of living standards, socio-economic, material deprivation, education level of parents, gender, urban/rural areas) and psychological factors (self-esteem, optimism, life satisfaction, depression, etc.);

4. To see if social exclusion factors - material deprivation, income poverty, low household labour (as defined by EUROSTAT) influence a successful transition to adulthood.

### **Hypotheses:**

Hypothesis 1. Successful transitions are influenced by social exclusion.

When formulating the hypothesis it was taken into consideration the concept of Schoon and Silbereisen, 2009 which said that the experience of transition depends on economic resources, opportunities and constraints of family background and of Lent et al., 1999 saying that the training aims and actions are shaped by contextual influences (support and obstacles). Factors of social exclusion are material deprivation, family poverty, and low intensity of work (Eurostat<sup>5</sup>) and in order to have a more accurate, rigorous view on social exclusion it was taken into account the level of education of parents and perception of the family status. Explanatory model of successful transitions can be improved by adding some factors related to life events. So we formulate a second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. Life negative events have significant negative effects on the chances of successful transitions to adulthood.

In formulating the hypothesis it was taken into consideration the concepts of Elder, 1998; Mortimer and Shanahan, (2002) and the theory of life course perspective. In the category of negative life events were included those events over which the young man has no influence: serious illness or death in the family, unemployment or deterioration of parents' financial status, the loss of housing, excessive consumption of alcohol, tobacco, drugs in the family, relative in prison, witnessing severe violence.

Based on the maturity criteria proposed by Arnett (Table 9, in the thesis) I have designed the successful transition factors which were introduced in several explanatory models as dependent variables. The factors were designed based on the questions from a longitudinal database IDEI project mentioned in the introduction to this summary. So we selected from the questionnaires applied to young people in the first wave of the longitudinal study the correspondent criteria described Arnett the *Inventory dimensions of emergent adults* (IDEA) to create the dependent variables (resultants) that define *successful transition to adulthood*, these being: *educational success, psychological wealth, avoidance of high-risk behaviours, health and getting employed*.

In the category demographic variable are included gender and area of residence of the young person. In the category of social exclusion variable are included material deprivation,

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<sup>5</sup>[http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People\\_at\\_risk\\_of\\_poverty\\_or\\_social\\_exclusion](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion), accessed on 13.08.2015.

income poverty, low labor intensity and parents' education and perception of family's social status. The independent variable related to negative events of life refers to the following events over which the young man has no control or influence: injury, serious illness or death in the family, unemployment or deterioration of parents' financial status, robbery of personal property, excessive consumption of tobacco, alcohol, drugs in the family, a relative in prison, homelessness, family separation, witnessing violence or disasters which have serious life-threatening consequences.

For each of the five dependent variables which measured the successful transitions I designed three linear regression models (hierarchical) introducing sequentially in blocks in each of the steps (model) control variables. Thus, in order to see how the variance of the dependent variable (one at a time from all of the five successful transitions) is explained by variables (control factors, indicators): demographic, social exclusion and the influence of negative events of life, I have sequentially introduced these in the three regression models. If all five dependent variables in the first model we introduced demographic variables (gender, place of residence) to see the influence of their effect on educational success, on psychological wellbeing, avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviours, on the perception of health and on employment. In the second step, we introduced a second group of factors to see how much explanatory power indicators of social exclusion have, controlling the demographic variables. In the last step we introduced the composite factor comprising those negative life events on which the young person has no control but which we assumed, may influence (negatively) the successful transition to adulthood. By inserting this factor it can be seen in the second model how much of the variance in academic success, of avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviours, of psychological wellbeing, of perception on health and employment of young people is explained by these three groups of factors (demographic, social exclusion and negative life events).

Presented below are the explanations of factors for successful transition to adulthood:

*Educational success* is explained by gender and residence area in the amount of 6%, by exclusion factors in a ratio of 7%, and by the negative events at a rate of 1%. All these factors together explain 14.4% of the variance of educational success in youth.

*Psychological wellbeing* is explained in a ratio of 0.6% by gender and area of residence, at a rate of 3.4% by social exclusion factor and 10% by negative life events. All these factors together explained 13.3% of the variance in psychological wellbeing of a young man.

*Avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviours* is explained 8% by demographic factors (gender, area of residence), 1% by social exclusion factors (material deprivation, financial poverty, low labor intensity, educational level) and 5% by the factors related to negative life events. All these factors together explain about 15% (14.9%) of the variance avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviours of the young person.

*The perception of health* is explained by gender and area of residence 5%, 3% of the variance is explained by health and social exclusion factor and 4% is related to negative life events. All these factors together explained 12% of health variance.

*Employment* is explained in amount of 1% by gender and area of residence, 4% by factors of social exclusion and 1% by factors related to negative life events. All these factors explain the variance of 6% of the employment of young people.

*Gender and the area of residence* explains 6% of educational success, 0.6% of psychological wellbeing, 8% of avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviours, 5% of health and 1% in employment. Demographic variables (gender, residence) have the greatest contribution in explaining avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviours (8%), then in explaining educational success (6%), followed by 5% in explaining health. Demographic variables explain the least psychological wellbeing and employment of young people (0.6% and 1%).

*Factors of social exclusion* explain 6% educational success, psychological wellbeing 3.4%, 1% avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviours, perception of health 3% and 4% employment. The greatest contribution have social exclusion factors in explaining the educational success of youth, they explain 4% of employment, 3.4% of psychological wellbeing, 3% of the perception of health and the lowest explanatory power of social exclusion factors is in variance to avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviours.

*Negative events factors* explain 1% of educational success, 10% of psychological wellbeing, 5% of avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviour, 4% of the perception of health and 1% of youth employment. Factors related to negative events of life have the greatest contribution in explaining the psychological wellbeing of the young (10% of the variance in psychological wellbeing is explained by factors related to negative events of life), 5% for avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviour, 4% of the perception of health and at least 1% of youth employment.

Linear regression analysis (hierarchical) showed the following:

- The greatest effect on *academic success* have factors related to social exclusion, 7% of the educational success variance is explained by *factors of social exclusion*
- The greatest effect on *psychological wellbeing* of the young person have factors related to negative life events, 10% of psychological wellbeing variance is explained by *negative life events factors*.
- The greatest effect on *avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviour* have demographic factors, 8% of avoidance in engaging in high-risk behaviour variance is explained by *gender and area of residence*.
- The greatest effect on *health perception* have demographic factors, 5% of perception on the health variance is explained by *gender and area of residence*.
- The greatest effect on *employment* have *social inclusion* factors, 4% of employment variance is explained by *social exclusion factors*.

The greatest influence of these three factors (demographic variables, factors of social exclusion and factors related to negative life events) have on *avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviour* (explains 14.9% of variance), followed by the *effect on academic success*, explaining 14.4% of

the variance in academic success, 12% of health perception is explained by these three factors and 6% of the youth employment variance.

Social exclusion factors have the greatest effect on youth academic success and on employment (7% and 4% of the academic success variance, and employment is explained by social exclusion factors).

Demographic factors (gender, residence) have the greatest effect on avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviour of young people and on health perception (8% and 5% of the avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviour or the perception of health is explained by demographic factors).

Factors related to negative events of life have the greatest effect on one successful transition to adulthood that is on the psychological wellbeing of the young person, explaining 10% of the psychological wellbeing variance, otherwise having the greatest effect of all control variables. The second largest effect of a control variable is the independent variable related to demographic factors (gender, residence) on avoidance of engaging in high-risk behavior that is 8% of the avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviours variance is explained by demographic factors.

Table 4.24. shows the results of predicting academic success. In the first stage of demographic variables individual (gender, residence) had a significant effect on educational success explaining 6% of the variance. Data from step 2 are obtained following the introduction of explanatory variables in the model related to social exclusion (material deprivation, parental education, income poverty, low labour intensity, perception of family status). This gives an extra 7% in explaining the variance, and the last step in model 3 introduced another variable related to the social context (passive negative events) the entire model explaining 14% of the entire youth educational success. The greatest contribution in explaining the educational success of children had the higher education of parents, gender and secondary education of parents, meaning that young people whose parents have many years of education have educational success (to graduate high school, to pass the Baccalaureate exam, to continue post-high school training, to enroll in higher education, to do well in school and to show interest in continuing educational training).

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	Standard error	sig.	B	Standard error	sig.	B	Standard error	sig.
(Constant)	<b>4.009</b>	<b>0.087</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>3.653</b>	<b>0.235</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>3.778</b>	<b>0.237</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Gender (0=male)	<b>0.636</b>	<b>0.087</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.642</b>	<b>0.084</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.645</b>	<b>0.084</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Area of residence (0=rural)	<b>0.547</b>	<b>0.088</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.269</b>	<b>0.090</b>	<b>0.003</b>	<b>0.297</b>	<b>0.090</b>	<b>0.001</b>
Severe material deprivation (0=not)	-	-	-	<b>-0.477</b>	<b>0.117</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>-0.456</b>	<b>0.116</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Parents' ed., secondary education	-	-	-	<b>0.603</b>	<b>0.162</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.627</b>	<b>0.162</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Parents' ed. higher education	-	-	-	<b>1.013</b>	<b>0.172</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>1.034</b>	<b>0.172</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Financial poverty (0=not)	-	-	-	<b>-0.393</b>	<b>0.105</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>-0.374</b>	<b>0.104</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Low intensity of work (0=not)	-	-	-	<b>-0.634</b>	<b>0.197</b>	<b>0.001</b>	<b>-0.598</b>	<b>0.197</b>	<b>0.002</b>
Perception of family status	-	-	-	0.006	0.024	0.814	-0.005	0.024	0.852
Negative events, NO active role of the young	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>-0.100</b>	<b>0.030</b>	<b>0.001</b>
N	1376			1376			1376		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.062			0.137			0.144		
Sig. R change	0.062			0.075			0.007		

Table 4. 24. Linear regression analysis (hierarchical) for *educational success*

Table 4.25. shows the regression analysis for psychological wellbeing. In the first step, individual demographic variables (gender, residence) although they have had a significant effect on psychological wellbeing, explained less than 1% of the variance in psychological wellbeing, but until the final step after the introduction of variables related to social exclusion (material deprivation, parents' education, income poverty, low labour intensity, perception of family status) and social context (passive negative events) as explanatory variables, the explanatory power increases to 13%. Variables with a significant effect in the model are individual demographic variables: gender (B=-1.813), urban (B=-1.733) and variable related to social exclusion: the subjective perception of the family (B=1.013), the largest influence on explaining the psychological welfare of young people having a variable related to youth social background (absence of negative events over which the young man has no control), passive events without active role (B=-3.258), which means that the more life events occur such as injury or illness, problems with the police, serious illness or death of a family member; unemployment and worsening financial status of parents, witnessing scenes of serious violence in the family, excessive drinking of a family member of alcohol, drugs, being robbed under threat of force, being separated from family, facing a life threatening natural disaster, the lesser psychological wellbeing is, those who do not go through such events enjoying a greater psychological wellbeing.

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	St. error	sig.	B	St. error	sig.	B	St. error	sig.
(Constant)	<b>76.177</b>	<b>0.820</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>68.136</b>	<b>2.270</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>72.257</b>	<b>2.187</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Gen (0=male)	<b>-1.711</b>	<b>0.820</b>	<b>0.037</b>	<b>-1.869</b>	<b>0.809</b>	<b>0.021</b>	<b>-1.813</b>	<b>0.769</b>	<b>0.019</b>
Area of residence (0=rural)	<b>1.706</b>	<b>0.828</b>	<b>0.040</b>	0.867	0.867	0.317	<b>1.733</b>	<b>0.828</b>	<b>0.037</b>
Severe material deprivation (0=not)	-	-	-	-0.503	1.121	0.654	0.190	1.068	0.859
Parents' ed., secondary education	-	-	-	1.416	1.568	0.367	2.235	1.494	0.135
Parents' ed., higher education	-	-	-	0.827	1.664	0.619	1.562	1.584	0.324
Financial poverty (0=not)	-	-	-	-1.709	1.007	0.090	-1.131	0.960	0.239
Low intensity of work (0=not)	-	-	-	-3.837	1.924	0.046	-2.479	1.834	0.177
Perception of family status	-	-	-	<b>1.346</b>	<b>0.235</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>1.013</b>	<b>0.226</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Negative events, NO active role of the young	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>-3.258</b>	<b>0.274</b>	<b>0.000</b>
N	1354			1354			1354		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.006			0.041			0.133		
Sig. R change	0.006			0.035			0.091		

Table 4.25. Linear regression analysis (hierarchical) for *psychological wellbeing*

Table 4.26. shows the result of regression analysis to explain the influences of demographic variables, of those related to social exclusion and of that related to the social context on the avoidance of the young people to engage in high-risk behaviours. Along the three models, as all the explaining variables are introduced, the explanatory power increases from 8% (R<sup>2</sup>=0.82) in the model in which only the individual variables are introduced to 9% (R<sup>2</sup>=0.09) when the model also contains the variables related to the social context reaching an explanatory power of 14% (R<sup>2</sup>=0.14) when in the model there are also introduced, along these two categories, the variable related to the social context. Thus, gender (B=0.597), residence area (B=-0.228), the education level of the parents (higher) (B=-0.304) and the existence of negative events (B=-0.201) are those with significant effects up to the last model, the strongest effect on avoiding engagement in high-risk behavior being shown by gender and parents' education, in that the girls and the boys whose parents have a higher education level are those who engage less in high-risk behavior.

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	St.error	sig.	B	St.error	sig.	B	St.error	sig.
(Constant)	<b>7.743</b>	<b>0.061</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>7.664</b>	<b>0.171</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>7.916</b>	<b>0.168</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Gender (0=male)	<b>0.588</b>	<b>0.061</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.588</b>	<b>0.061</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.597</b>	<b>0.059</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Residence (0=rural)	<b>-0.319</b>	<b>0.062</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>-0.280</b>	<b>0.065</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>-0.228</b>	<b>0.063</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Severe material deprivation (0=not)	-	-	-	-0.016	0.085	0.853	0.028	0.082	0.730
Parents' education - secondary	-	-	-	-0.152	0.119	0.201	-0.103	0.115	0.369
Parents' education - higher	-	-	-	<b>-0.344</b>	<b>0.126</b>	<b>0.006</b>	<b>-0.304</b>	<b>0.122</b>	<b>0.013</b>
Financial poverty (0=not)	-	-	-	0.024	0.075	0.752	0.060	0.073	0.409
Low intensity of work (0=not)	-	-	-	-0.182	0.144	0.206	-0.100	0.140	0.473
Family status perception	-	-	-	<b>0.043</b>	<b>0.018</b>	<b>0.015</b>	0.023	0.017	0.185
Negative events, NO active role of the young	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>-0.201</b>	<b>0.022</b>	<b>0.000</b>
N	1343			1343			1343		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.082			0.094			0.149		
Sig. R change	0.082			0.012			0.055		

Table 4.26. Linear (hierarchical) regression analysis for *avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviours*

In table 4.27. where we introduced in three models of hierarchical linear regression the same explanatory variables, the explanatory power of the last model increases from 5% ( $R^2=0.05$ ) to 12% ( $R^2=0.12$ ) to explain the good health of the young people. The variables with a significant effect that explained a better health of the young people in the last model were gender ( $B=-0.450$ ;  $p<0.0001$ ), residence area ( $B=0.118$ ;  $p<0.0001$ ), material deprivation ( $B=-0.146$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), family status perception ( $B=0.068$ ;  $p<0.0001$ ) and the existence of passive events ( $B=-0.144$ ;  $p<0.0001$ ). Girls, young people from rural environments, those not in situations of material deprivation, those with a better perception on the material status of the family and who did not experience negative events feel about themselves as having a better health as compared to the boys and young people from the urban environment who are in a situation of material deprivation and have a worse perception on the financial status of the family, or have experienced negative events in which they did not have an active role.

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	St. error	sig.	B	St. error	sig.	B	St. error	sig.
(Constant)	<b>3.587</b>	<b>0.053</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>3.317</b>	<b>0.148</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>3.498</b>	<b>0.147</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Gender (0=male)	<b>-0.454</b>	<b>0.053</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>-0.456</b>	<b>0.053</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>-0.450</b>	<b>0.052</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Residence (0=rural)	<b>0.109</b>	<b>0.054</b>	<b>0.043</b>	0.082	0.057	0.147	<b>0.118</b>	<b>0.056</b>	<b>0.034</b>
Severe material deprivation (0=not)	-	-	-	<b>-0.176</b>	<b>0.073</b>	<b>0.016</b>	<b>-0.146</b>	<b>0.072</b>	<b>0.042</b>
Parents' education - secondary	-	-	-	<b>-0.224</b>	<b>0.102</b>	<b>0.028</b>	-0.191	0.100	0.056
Parents' education - higher	-	-	-	-0.196	0.108	0.070	-0.167	0.106	0.114
Financial poverty (0=not)	-	-	-	0.078	0.066	0.236	0.107	0.065	0.099
Low intensity of work (0=not)	-	-	-	-0.156	0.124	0.210	-0.110	0.122	0.366
Family status perception	-	-	-	<b>0.083</b>	<b>0.015</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.068</b>	<b>0.015</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Negative events, NO active role of the young	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>-0.144</b>	<b>0.019</b>	<b>0.000</b>
N	1349			1349			1349		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.054			0.087			0.125		
Sig. R change	0.054			0.034			0.038		

Table 4.27. Linear (hierarchical) regression analysis for the *perception of health status*

Table 4.28. shows how the explanatory variables introduced in the models of hierarchical linear regression explain the work experience of young people, the power of the explanatory effect being smaller (of 0.1%,  $R^2=0.01$ ) with an increase up to the final step of model 3 (0.6%,  $R^2=0.06$ ) when in the analysis there were introduced all the variables. Significant effects on young people's starting a job are shown by such variables as gender, the superior education level of the parents, financial poverty, and the subjective perception on the family's status and the existence of negative events in which the young did not have an active role. The greatest influence on young people's getting a job is the education level of the parents ( $B=-0.184$ ). The

low intensity of work within the family has a significant effect in regression model 2 (B=0.218; p<0.05), but once the variable of negative events' presence without the young's involvement is introduced, the significant effect of the former variable disappears. The boys with parents who do not have higher education, young people in situations of financial poverty, those who have a worse perception on the financial status of the family and those who have experienced negative events (could be unemployment or worsening of the financial status of the parents, but also the other negative events) are those who tend to have a work experience even from the beginning of youth.

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	St. error	sig.	B	St. error	sig.	B	St. error	sig.
(Constant)	<b>1.755</b>	<b>0.046</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>1.916</b>	<b>0.127</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>1.830</b>	<b>0.128</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Gender (0=male)	<b>-0.146</b>	<b>0.046</b>	<b>0.002</b>	<b>-0.141</b>	<b>0.045</b>	<b>0.002</b>	<b>-0.143</b>	<b>0.045</b>	<b>0.002</b>
Residence (0=rural)	<b>-0.143</b>	<b>0.046</b>	<b>0.002</b>	-0.035	0.049	0.468	-0.054	0.048	0.267
Severe material deprivation (0=not)	-	-	-	0.050	0.063	0.424	0.036	0.063	0.567
Parents' education - secondary	-	-	-	0.029	0.088	0.742	0.012	0.087	0.887
Parents' education - higher	-	-	-	-0.169	0.093	0.068	<b>-0.184</b>	<b>0.092</b>	<b>0.047</b>
Financial poverty (0=not)	-	-	-	<b>0.136</b>	<b>0.056</b>	<b>0.016</b>	<b>0.123</b>	<b>0.056</b>	<b>0.029</b>
Low intensity of work (0=not)	-	-	-	<b>0.218</b>	<b>0.106</b>	<b>0.041</b>	0.193	0.106	0.068
Family status perception	-	-	-	<b>-0.040</b>	<b>0.013</b>	<b>0.002</b>	<b>-0.033</b>	<b>0.013</b>	<b>0.012</b>
Negative events, NO active role of young	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>0.068</b>	<b>0.016</b>	<b>0.000</b>
N	1376			1376			1376		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.014			0.052			0.064		
Sig. R change	0.014			0.038			0.012		

Table 4.28. Linear (hierarchical) regression analysis for *getting employed*

We have also drawn hierarchical linear regression analyses for the same dependent variables such as educational success, psychological wellbeing, health, high-risk behaviours and work, introducing this time in the models the variable of material deprivation with 4 traits depending of the intensity of the deprivation. The explanatory power of these new models is similar to the aforementioned, the four stages of material deprivation along with the other individual variables (demographic), variables related to social exclusion and the variable related to social context being able to explain 3% of the educational success, 14% of the psychological wellbeing, 15% of the avoidance of high-risk behaviours, 11% of health and below 1% of the work experience (0.6%). The explanatory power of these levels or degrees material deprivation is significant in the case of educational success (level 4 material deprivation; B=-0.482; p<0.05), of psychological wellbeing (level 4 material deprivation; B=3.006; p<0.05) and of health (level 1 material deprivation, B=0.264; p<0.05) and is not significant when speaking of avoidance of high-risk behaviours and starting to work.

#### *Start in work of young people and the factors that influence it*

In studying the start in work of young people we were interested in young people who reported work experiences.

	Exp (B)	Sig.
Constant	<b>3.05</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Gender (subj. girl)	<b>1.47</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Residence area (subj. urban)	1.07	0.51
Material deprivation (subj. is not in a situation of material deprivation)	<b>0.71</b>	<b>0.02</b>
Financial poverty (subj. is not poor)	<b>0.59</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Intensity of work (subj. does not have low intensity of work in family)	<b>0.52</b>	<b>0.01</b>

Table 4.29. Relative opportunities of starting to work for young people (0 – has no work experience, 1 – has work experience)

By calculating the multiple determination coefficient  $R^2$  Nagelkerke we find that the model explains 0.4% of the variation in the dependent variable *young people's start in work*, which is a rather low percentage. The model helps us to remove the insignificant variables. Upon checking the exponential beta coefficients, it resulted that:

- The chance for a female to prefer a start in work as compared to the chance for a male not to prefer experimenting work in this stage of their life increases by factor 1.47 when the gender index increases with one unit, keeping under control the other variables.
- As far as material deprivation is concerned, the change for a young person to prefer starting to work from this age as compared to one who does not prefer to start working decreases by a factor of 0.71. Consequently, the young people whose family is not in a situation of material deprivation have lesser chances to prefer starting to work at this age.
- The situation is the same in the case of young people who are not in a situation of financial poverty, the chance for them to prefer to start working decreasing with 0.59, so young people who are not in a situation of financial poverty have lesser chances to prefer starting to work.
- The chance for a young person who lives in a family in which the intensity of work is low (according to the Eurostat indicator) increases with 0.52, so these young people have higher chances to prefer to start working immediately after graduating high school or even during high school.

Upon analyzing the data from the second wave of the panel research we reached the conclusion that demographic factors, such as gender and residence environment, factors related to social exclusion (severe material deprivation, financial poverty, low intensity of work in the household, parents' education and the perception of the family's own socio-economic status), but also the existence or not of negative events have a significant influence on the successful transitions to maturity (educational success, avoiding high-risk behaviours, psychological wealth, a positive perception of one's own health, employment). Thus, the greatest influence of these three factors (demographic variables, social exclusion factors, negative events) on the successful transitions to maturity is shown in *avoidance of engaging in high-risk behaviours* (they explain 14.9% of the variance), followed by the *effect on educational success*, explaining 14.4% of its variance, 12% of the perception of one's own health being explained by these three factors, and 6% of the variance of the young person's starting to work (see Fig. 4.6. for the influence of each factor separately).



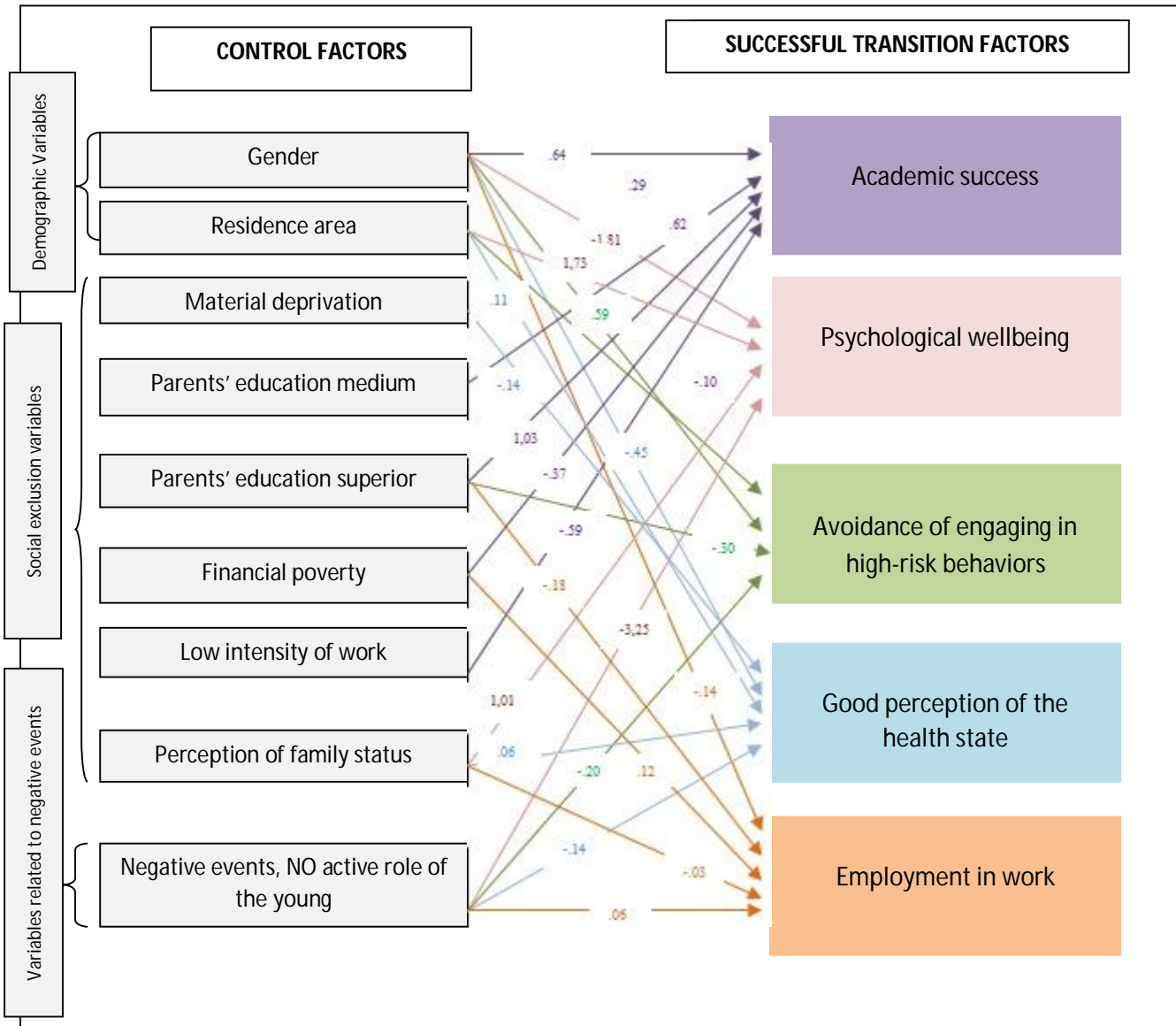


Fig. 4.6. The empirical diagram of the influence of the control factors on the successful transitions to maturity

## Conclusions and Limits of the Research

As per J. J. Arnett's theory (2000), used in the present research to explain the perception of young people's own age status, the way in which they define maturity and the influence of such factors as social exclusion and negative life events on the successful transition to maturity, it is shown that the stage of adulthood developing toward maturity seems to stand as a distinct life stage in the case of Romanian youth.

Although it is not the only cause that affects the self-perception regarding maturity, independence has a significant effect on generating the feeling of reaching adulthood. The fact that financial independence is achieved increasingly late, for a determined period or the subsequent return to a living supported by the parents represents one of the main causes that make Romanian young people not to see themselves as adults. The ambivalent feeling emergent adult – adult seems triggered by the financially depending on the parents, determining young people not to consider themselves as adults.

The perception of the self with regard to one's own maturity is not clear in the young people's minds. In the two qualitative pilot researches (100 high school students approaching graduation and 100 college students in various departments, RESEARCH I and II) evidence was gathered that, similar to the data collected in USA (Arnett, 2001), China (Nelson, 2004), Czech Republic (Macek et al., 2007), Austria (Sirsch et al., 2007), Greece (Petrogiannis, 2011) and other countries, among which Romania (Nelson, 2009), the period of transition to maturity is a time of uncertainty. The maturity perception table that summarizes results from different countries and cultures shows that the percentage of Romanian young people is similar to that of other youth regarding the ambivalent feeling of the age status. Most of the young people in the students group studied, aged between 18-25 (69%), have answered the question "*Do you feel you are an adult?*" by choosing option "*in some respects – yes, in other respects – no*". 25% of the Romanian young people see themselves as adults, but if we also take into account those who categorically answered "*no*", the percentage of the young people who do not consider themselves adults reaches 75%. The ambiguity of feeling mature in these young people's answers can be explained by the criteria they use to define shifting to maturity, referring to traits of character obtained gradually (that develop gradually), are intangible and difficult to assess explicitly and declaredly, such as taking responsibility for the consequences for one's own deeds, deciding without being influenced by others, becoming less self-oriented. These are processes obtained in a long time span.

The specificity of the emerging transition period was also confirmed by the studies in the project "*Outcomes of Adolescence. A longitudinal perspective*" (on two groups totaling the opinions of 1240 high school pupils and students) (in RESEARCH III), by using an internationally tested research instrument (IDEA: Inventory of the Dimensions of Emerging Adulthood) proposed by Arnett (2001). The results reflect internal criteria of the adult status as being the important maturity criteria for the young people in today's societies, rather than transition events (such as getting married or becoming a parent), the latter ranking very low among young people's options. Despite the results' showing cultural differences among the

various countries, the data collected in Romania are similar to those provided by young Americans, Austrians, Greeks, and Israelis or Chinese, showing the transition to maturity is defined mainly through individual transitions, balanced partly by criteria that reflect the concern for others. A possible explanation for the similarity of young Romanians to the youth in other societies could be the current economic, social and cultural environment, with the multiple changes occurring in Romania, including the improvement of the living standard and the adopting of the individualist values and ideologies specific to Western societies.

Following the analyses on the samples in the panel studies, we studied the connection between the factors related to social exclusion and the variables characterizing the success of the transition period. Based on the regression analyses, it is shown that, even though the explanatory power of these factors, taken as a whole, on the five successful transitions to maturity is rather small, the strongest effect of each of the three groups of factors is different in explaining the five successful transitions separately. Thus, social exclusion has the strongest effect on educational success and on starting to work. The factors related to negative life events have the strongest effect on psychological wellbeing, while the demographic factors have the strongest effect on avoiding engaging in high-risk behaviors and on the perception of one's own health.

As per the theoretic approaches, the starting hypothesis was that the successful transitions are under the influence of social exclusion (Elder, 1991), and the effect of negative events in the life of a young person diminishes the chances for a successful transition to maturity (Dykstra, van Wissen, 1999).

Following the testing of the hypothesis on the longitudinal data of the 1509 young people that participated in both waves of the research (RESEARCH IV) the conclusion was that the demographic factors, those related to social exclusion and to negative life events influence the social status and the success of the transition period. To be more specific, the factors related to exclusion significantly influence the education, the avoidance of high-risk behavior, the employment in work of the young respondents and contribute to increasing the level of the psychological wellbeing and of the perception of the good quality of one's health. The testing of the regression models also concluded that the paths and resultants of education and employment in a professional career, but mostly engaging in high-risk behavior are considerably influenced by the existence of negative life events. Thus, the greatest influence of the models that include: 1. *Demographic variables* (gender, residence environment, 2. *Social exclusion* (severe material deprivation, financial poverty, low intensity of work in the household, parents' education and the perception of the family's own socio-economic status), and 3. *Negative life events*, is exercised upon *avoiding engagement in high-risk behaviors* (explains 14.9% of the variance), followed by *the effect on educational success* (explains 14.4% of the variance), 12% of the perception of one's own health status and 6% of the variance of the young person's employment in work (see Fig. 4.6 for the influence of each factor separately).

Out of the young people who drop out of school, most (61.3%) lack resources and do not believe they can combine studying with work. alleging they had to/ wanted to work to support themselves invoking financial reasons (did not have money, resources); almost a quarter (24%) failed their exams, while 5.9% assert they have learned enough. Out of those who continue education, most are students and approximately 60% want to apply for a Master's degree abroad.

Half of the young people have work experience, one quarter currently working – even if not in an area connected to their academic background or in a job that would help them achieve their career goals. They were employed either by taking part in a selection/ interview, or after being recommended by friends/ acquaintances, around 10% being helped by their parents to find a job. In fact, most of them have their parents’ support, not necessarily from a financial viewpoint, to deal with everyday life. Most of the have worked/ are working to earn an income and 20% to gain experience. Most do not work because, they say, they study (namely, they want to dedicate themselves to studying and do not see how they could cope with both attending education and working). On the second place there is the employers’ argument related to lack of experience and being too young. A significant percentage assert they do not want or their family does not want them to work, while others are not interested in jobs as they do not find openings in the fields of their specialization, or because nobody helped them to find a job.

In this respect, the panel research distinguished different transition routes of the young people in the period after graduating high school to starting a professional career. Although the sample in the second wave of the present research has not maintained the national representativity as the first wave, at the level of the study on high school pupils, the young respondents’ different chances that can result in starting very different professional careers and family life are still emphasized.

### **The limits of the present research and future research directions**

As future research direction – to study the different paths with qualitative means, but also extending the quantitative research to those in the rural environment, the Romani ethnics and the vocational high schools.

The overwhelming majority of the young people in the sample in the second wave of the panel research have graduated high school, attended final exams and passed. As shown in the table containing the demographic data of the sample, the young persons in the second wave come mostly from an urban environment are students in different academic centers around the country. Young people who have failed their final exams, those from the rural environment, those who graduated vocational high schools, those who left abroad, Romani ethnics, those with disabilities or the young persons in child protection groups are under-represented in this study. Part of these vulnerable groups was investigated within the research project “*Outcomes of Adolescence. A longitudinal perspective*” by other fellow researchers (Pop; Roth, 2015), yet other part will have to be investigated from now on.

However, even with these limits, it was emphasized that after graduating high school the young can follow different life paths. They continue their education, or they enter the labor market (forced to support themselves and/ or their families), or a combination of the two, or they end up in a period of stagnation, not knowing what to do with their life, not having the necessary resources to continue their education (most often resigning themselves to the status of unemployed or unskilled worker, in the case of some, or to depend on their parents, in the case of others). In the future researches the quantitative and qualitative investigations can be carried on by describing the various evolution paths toward the status of mature adult (akin to those described by Roth et al., (2009) depending on the two genders, in the rural environment, at the

Romani ethnics, the graduates of vocational high schools, the juvenile delinquents and other categories.

Based on the data so far four young typologies become apparent: those decided to stop their education, those that have to suspend their studies for the moment due to external factors (most of the time financial ones, to be able to support themselves and/ or their families; or factors related to marriage, pregnancy, looking after a family member and so on), those with risk of early school dropout who, although they continue their studies, still present high chances of dropout (they work, combine studies with being a parent, are not motivated enough or lose their motivation during their studies because of the system) and successful young people who manage to combine education with work. If for those in the first category to continue their studies is a matter of will and a personal choice, for those in the second and third category, if they have support and encouragement (through policies and measures that facilitate the access to and the continuation of post-high school or superior studies), they can return to school or carry on with their education to finish their studies. These young people in the fourth category, those that we call successful, are very interesting – ambitious, driven by an inner activism and often managing on the one hand to acquire an education as high as possible (as they are aware of the need to continuously prepare in order to face up to an increasingly competitive labor market, developing their knowledge and skills), and having already started to work, on the other hand, having a work experience, being independent, managing to support themselves and to gather experience in work (regardless of the fact that their profession may or may not lead to a career). The political body may find the ways that would enable the young people in the first three categories to have a successful transition to maturity (educational background as high as possible, to cope with a very competitive labor market) and a work experience (so that their being introduced on the labor market occurs as fast and as effective as possible). The emerging to maturity can be both beneficial, for the young people who come from the economically privileged categories, and hostile, for those lacking financial and social resources required to complete this start in life.

Other limits of the research derive from the theoretical perspective to which we undertook, and which is somewhat limitative. Although our model explaining the successful transition to maturity of the young people with a risk of social exclusion and of those who experienced negative life events demonstrates that the psychological factors (self-esteem, optimism, satisfaction with one's own life) can counterbalance the favorable outcome of a successful transition for the young people in these categories, there has not been performed an operationalization of the data according to the resilience theory, which may explain the educational success and the starting of a professional career for young people with an exclusion background. The future analyses could also take into account the factor of the resilience of young people to check to what extent it influences the successful transition to maturity.

The limits of these studies exist both in the case of the qualitative researches, and in the panel research, in the longitudinal study. As for testing the perception of the age status and of the criteria by which the young people in the two qualitative studies define maturity, these cover the opinions of young people in a limited geographic area (the city of Cluj-Napoca), and as far as the students' opinions are concerned, they are limited only to those young people who are students. However, it is possible that the young people who do not attend college are less likely to have a dual perception of the age status. Young people who do not attend school, especially those in the

Romanian rural environment, but not only, may be forced to do so because of the economic setting that compels them to assume different roles (e.g. a job), thus feeling, even from an early age, an adult member of the community. In the case of the longitudinal panel research, the limit refers to the lack of balance of the sample in the second wave (there is a poor representation of young people who do not continue their studies, those from the rural environment and who probably did not graduate high school). For the future, so as to reach them, the research method can be other than the on-line approach, and, combined with a financial incentive or other type of reward for taking part in the study, the young people in these categories may provide much more information.

It is essential to know the way in which people live their lives from childhood to old age, the way in which the previous life paths influence subsequent development and aging and to have information on the historical and geographical contexts in which the human development occurs. All the governments in all countries need to invest, financially and socially, in the young generations so that they can prove their potential in the transition to maturity and become active citizens, involved in society. Local authorities, in partnership with the responsible doers in the field of education and initial and continuous professional training (schools, universities, suppliers of continuous training, social partners), must contribute to organizing and developing local permanent learning centers, based on offers adapted to the specific needs of interested various target-groups, or should revive those already existing.

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