

## **BETWEEN CHILDREN AND PARENTS: HOUSING (IN)DEPENDENCE AND “GROWING UP”<sup>3</sup>**

### **Između dece i roditelja: stambena (ne)zavisnost i „odrastanje“**

**ABSTRACT** *In this paper we explore the relationship between financial and residential independence of young people and some aspects of their psychological separation from parents. Namely, the adequate psychological separation of the youth from their parents is affected by the characteristics of family dynamics as a whole, by family narratives, and also by the ecosystem conditions (opportunities) for the financial and housing independence from parents. In order to examine these findings, which have been confirmed almost without exception in the foreign literature, we bring young people who live with their parents into the focus of this study, comparing them with their peers who have become independent in this respect. The analysis included a total of 1627 respondents aged 19-35 years, 909 of whom lived with their parents. We were interested in whether there were any significant differences in terms of statistics between these two diverse housing categories of respondents, considering material possibilities of the physical separation and some aspects of psychological separation from parents. These are: emotional, conflicting, and functional independence, and lack of privacy in the family. We obtained the following findings: there are clear differences in some aspects of psychological separation among those young people who continue living at their parents' home and those who chose (had a possibility of) physical separation. These findings must be interpreted from a broader, ecosystem perspective, in anticipation of the possible implications of the overall (non)independence of young people for their life outcomes.*

**KEY WORDS** *the youth, housing situation, parents, separation, (dis)functionality*

**APSTRAKT** *U ovom radu bavile smo se istraživanjem povezanost između finansijske i stambene nezavisnosti mladih ljudi i nekih aspekata njihovog psihološkog odvajanja od roditelja. Naime, adekvatno psihološko odvajanje mladih od roditelja zavisi od*

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<sup>3</sup> This paper is the part of the project “Challenges of the new social integration in Serbia: Concepts and actors”, funded by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Serbia. The research was carried out within the framework of the Regional Research Promotion Programme in the Western Balkans (RRPP), which is run by the University of Fribourg upon a mandate of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, SDC, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The views expressed in the paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent opinions of the SDC and the University of Fribourg.

*karakteristika porodične dinamike u celini, porodičnog narativa, a takođe i makrosistemskih uslova (mogućnosti) za finansijsku i stambenu samostalnost u odnosu na roditelje. Kako bismo istražili da li ovi nalazi, koji su bez izuzetka potvrđeni u stranoj stručnoj literaturi, u fokus našeg istraživanja smo stavili mlade ljude koji žive sa roditeljima, upoređujući ih sa svojim vršnjacima koji su postali nezavisni u tom pogledu. Analizom smo obuhvatili 1627 ispitanika, uzrasta od od 19-35 godina, od kojih 909 živi sa svojim roditeljima. Zanimalo nas je da li postoje značajne statističke razlike između ove dve različito stambeno situirane kategorije ispitanika, s obzirom na materijalne mogućnosti za fizičko razdvajanje od roditelja i neke aspekte psihološkog odvajanja od roditelja. Reč je o: emotivnoj, konfliktnoj i funkcionalnoj nezavisnosti, te nedostatak privatnosti u porodici. Došli smo do sledećih zaključaka: postoje jasne razlike u nekim aspektima psihološkog razdvajanja između onih mladih ljudi koji i dalje živi u kući svojih roditelja i onih koji su izabrali (imali) mogućnost fizičkog razdvajanja. Ovi nalazi se moraju interpretirati iz šire, ekosistemske perspektive, u očekivanju mogućih implikacija celokupne (ne) samostalnosti mladih ljudi za njihove živote ishode.*

*KLJUČNE REČI mladi, stambena situacija, roditelji, odvajanje, (dis)funkcionalnost*

## Introduction

Up until recently, it was thought that transition of the young to adulthood follows the established pattern. In order to become an adult, it was necessary for a person to finish school, find employment, separate from parents, form their own household and relationship, and finally, become a parent (Dey, Morris, 1999). In Europe and USA during the 1970s, the linear model of transition was questioned. It has been noticed that growing up does not occur in strict stages (Hilmert, 2005). Contrary to this model, a view that the transition is influenced by numerous social forces has been initiated and directions of growing up diversified (Hartman, Swarty, 2007). However, this approach failed to enlighten the subjective experience of transition to adulthood. *What do young people know and think about themselves whilst heading for the path to their adult roles and how do they understand and experience growing up?* Lately, the attempts have been made to answer these questions from a new perspective. This perspective rejects the scientific meaning of the concept of *growing up* and embraces the term emerging adulthood. A personal dimension, self perception of a young person as an adult bears more than the strict phases of growing up. Also, significant regional differences regarding transition have been noticed (see: Lavrič, Flere, 2011). Empirical models embrace such local traits. For example, Walter and associates (2009, Ibid. 2011) name five main models<sup>4</sup>, which include the so-called co-protective model typical for Serbia<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The models are: liberal transition model characteristic for Anglo-Saxon countries. The so-called universal model is typical for Nordic countries, the sub-protective one relates to Mediterranean countries, the transitional, which is orientated to employment, is characteristic of growing up in Austria, Germany and France. Also, a model of transition distinctive of post-socialist countries has been recognised (see Lavrič, Flere, 2011).

(Ignjatović, 2009). Still, it appears that regardless of theoretical (and empirical) frameworks which describe the process of growing up, some questions, which are hard to answer, impose themselves: to what extent is growing up influenced by structural, familial and subjective aspects? Answering these questions is a rather difficult task. Nonetheless, the nature of transition is multidimensional. For example, as regards the influence of structural factors, it is of vital importance to consider the labour market, the social security system, but, also the rules: conventional, formal and informal, since all of them together shape the circumstances of growing up. Holsworth (2007) has observed a contradictory process. He has noticed that, on the one hand, individualism<sup>6</sup> is forced upon the young (especially in Western societies), while, at the same time, they are pushed into dependence<sup>7</sup> on significant others due to financial needs and the overall feeling of insecurity.

Naturally, the special role in the process of growing up always belongs to the parents (Dey, Morris, 1999). When referring to the young aged 18 to 25, Dey and Morris have emphasized a widely accepted opinion that the young should at that age already be, more or less, independent. Still, it has been noticed in Europe and USA that their position is dual: they move back and forth between dependence<sup>8</sup> and independence. Finally, as noted by Hilmert (2005), the proclaimed forced individualism of young people is largely facilitated by parental conduct.

Also, attention should be given to a practice of delay in residential independence that has become more common and has been recognized globally. In

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<sup>5</sup> Transition of the young to adulthood in the countries that belong to this type is characterised by a weak link between the educational system and the labour market, uncertain employment, poor state support and turning to the family of origin, which is the cause of a low social status of the young (Lavric, Flere, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> In Giddens' opinion, individualism should represent a positive process that enhances every individual's freedom of choice, giving them the opportunity to enrich their personality and to create their life. Beck derived the meaning of this term from the view that contemporary societies are the societies of risk that bring about constant change. Therefore, there emerges the need of the young to focus on the present day and to form their own biography (Čičkarić, 2003). In this case, individualisation is a necessary prerequisite for forming the identity, and transition is a mode of individualisation which involves taking responsibility for different activities (Tomanović, Ignjatović, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Author noted that the dependence is equally burdensome for men and women on theoretical agenda (Holsworth, 2007). Still, significant gender related differences in the perception of subordinate position are recognized in practice. They have been confirmed through practice and marital status. Also, men with higher income fit into the independence framework, but it has been overlooked that they highly depend on their employer and finally, on their spouse who, if in the role of a housewife, replaces one type of dependence – on parents – with another – on husband. This category of relationship is not necessarily recognized as problematic, since it is believed that the freedom of young women who are in such a relationship is not limited but broadened.

<sup>8</sup> It has been said that if there is room for talking about their autonomy the young are not entirely dependent (Day, Morris, 1999).

fact, quite a few authors are in agreement that residential independence is the key marker of the transition to adulthood (see: Dey, Morris, 1999). For instance, Treas and Batalova (2011) have introduced Arnett and Settersten's study findings which point out that the most significant indicator of adult status for Americans is living out of the parental home. Still, the authors have asked for caution: their research<sup>9</sup> has revealed that members of minority communities (Hispanic, Afro-American, Asian), do not consider residential independence to be an important confirmation of adulthood.

In England, as well as in the USA, it has become more common for parents to provide housing (and other provisions) for their children. Permanent move, preceded by brief departures and returns, has been delayed. A similar situation has been found in France (see: Robertte, 2010), Canada (see: Dey, Morris, 1999), and, surprisingly, in Norway (see: Ibid., 1999), given that this country provides support for the young so they could achieve independence<sup>10</sup>. Similar trend has been noticed by Lavrič and Klanjšek (2011) in Slovenia. By comparing the residential (in)dependence of the young during two different periods (2000 and 2010), they discovered that the percentage of the young aged between 25 and 29 who continued living with their parents increased significantly (from 41.7% to 59.9%). The authors explained these findings by referring to some traits of young Slovenians (permissive attitude of parents that encourage the conformity of their offspring), but, also, the lack of economic opportunities for independent living. Residential independence has been undoubtedly limited by labour market circumstances (Gaudet, 2007). Therefore, the real question is whether the young can accomplish, and in what way, the residential independence, or grow up, if the labour market circumstances remain uncertain? Does this mean that the path of transition to adulthood is different now than it has been before?

### **Between transition and separation, or about transition and separation**

Researchers have found a number of answers to the previously asked question (Dey, Morris, 1999, Lapsley, Edgerton, 2002, Christopoulous, 2003, Billari, Liefbroera, 2010 and others). However, these models have subtracted an important internal dimension of growing up, or they have put too strong an emphasis on it. Therefore, we believe that it would be useful to consider growing up from a different, integrated, socio-psychological perspective. Such an integrated approach allows us to introduce structural factors such as residential, employment and

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<sup>9</sup> The findings have been taken from the *American Community Survey* for the three years period (2005 – 2007). The sample consisted of the young aged between 16 and 39 from the areas of New York and Los Angeles (Treas, Batalova, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> This country provides residential and other modes of assistance to the young after they turn 18 to help them become independent (Dey, Morris, 1999).

financial status of young people and an important internal, psychological dimension of growing up. This internal process of transition to adulthood represents a process of psychological separation, parting of the young from their parents. Psychological separation is a focal dimension of adulthood leading to the development of a (grown up) identity of a person (Hoffman, 1984). It is a process which consists of stages and includes assuming responsibility and winning independence in different areas: functional, conflicting and cognitive.

1. Functional independence is a measure of young person's ability to deal with a problem without parental assistance.
2. Conflicting independence excludes the feeling of guilt, anxiety, distrust, rage, inhibition and distance with regard to parents.
3. Attitudinal independence involves autonomy with regard to parental values, attitudes and opinions; and
4. Emotional independence is freedom from the expressive need for approval and presence of the parents, and emotional attachment to them (Ibid., 1984).

The research examining the transition to adulthood through the process of psychological separation from parents, especially in the cultural-comparative perspective, has been rarely conducted. The question whether psychological separation from parents goes hand in hand with residential and economical independence of the young remains unanswered. In other words, we are not fully aware whether young people facing structural obstacles of residential and economical separation continue to be psychologically dependent on their parents. Some studies (see: Meeus et al., 2005), have found that separation of the young is related to detachment from parents, reduction of the time spent together, and less of emotional closeness. Contrary to these, other studies (Lapsley, Edgerton, 2002), have confirmed that the individualization is strongly correlated with the parental capacity to nourish and support. It has been found that young people are more confident and emotionally mature if their parents have been supportive and have nourished open family communication. If this is the case, residential and financial independence do not play a major role in the process of psychological separation from parents.

Finally, in view of the separation, as well as of the internal side of the transition to adulthood, it is of vital importance to consider cross-cultural differences. For example, Christopoulos (2003) begins with the thesis that in some cultures independence of the young from their parents is considered to be pathological, whereas in other cultures it is expected. Furthermore, since she was dealing with Greek culture, she pointed out that this culture is collectivistic, not individualistic one. Also, the fact that family group is highly valued, and that separation from parents, compared with other West European countries, occurs much later in life (most commonly after finishing university studies, but sometimes children stay with their parents or in their vicinity even after they get married).

Findings of her study<sup>11</sup> have pointed out that conflicting independence is significantly associated with enhancement of social skills and higher education or, in the negative context, with behavioural problems. Unlike conflicting dependence, emotional (in)dependence has not been associated with functionality that author related to Greek culture, in which strong emotional dependence is considered to be a necessary condition for adaptability to social and academic circumstances.

Some other studies, Spanish<sup>12</sup> (Parra, Oliva 2009) and Portuguese ones<sup>13</sup> (Santos, Coimbra, 2000), have shown that emotional autonomy is tightly linked to dysfunctional family relations. For example, Sveda (2010), dealing with separation-individualization of the young suffering from bronchial asthma, has discovered the existence of specific family relations and potential inability of the young to separate from their parents. Therefore, this illness, according to system family theory, is a symptom that points to specific family relations: to strongly networked and closed family.

## Methodology

The analytical frame of this research study is basically integrative. It has been derived from the need to observe the transition to adulthood from two interrelated perspectives: the relation of the outer indicators of individualisation (see: Tomanović, Ignjatović, 2004) and psychological indicators of the level of separation of the young from their parents.

Specifically, the model included:

1. Three important structural markers of transition: residential independence, financial and professional status of the young in the final discussion, seen through the prism of our society and its characteristics together with the following element of the integrative approach;
2. That is, the psychological separation scope: functional, conflicting and emotional, which have been defined and made operational in the same way that Hoffman has done (1984).

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<sup>11</sup> The sample consisted of 240 adolescents aged between 15 and 17 (Christopoulos, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> It is a 5-year longitudinal, perspective study. The sample consisted of 513 subjects aged between 12 and 19 (Parra, Oliva, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Santos and Coimbra (2000) had a sample of 418 subjects aged between 16 and 22. They used the modified *Hoffman's scale of psychological separation*. Instead of four subscales which are used to measure psychological separation, authors used two: emotional and conflicting. Both scales consisted of 11 items regardless of the original Hoffman's conflicting scale which includes 34 items, and emotional with 50 items.

Let us begin. The so-called empirical models (Ibid. 2009) of the operational indicators of transition to adulthood begin at several key points in life.<sup>14</sup> They refer to the educational, professional, familial and the residential transition of the young. We have begun the research having in mind the three key aspects of transition: the residential, very often considered to be the crucial indicator of successful transition to adulthood (see: Lavrič, Klanjšek, 2011), the employment status of a young person and the financial status of the family. Information on residential status of our respondents have been based on details they have given us concerning with whom they live. Financial status of respondents has been measured with two indicators, an objective one expressed by the employment position and a subjective one expressed by the respondents' view of the financial status of the family. The objective indicator measured not only the employment, but also the position and security of the position. Private and state employers were separated. Private sector was rated according to the employee's status: formal or informal employment, on a permanent or a temporary basis.

Subjective dimension of the financial/living status has been confirmed by several variables. Firstly, the respondents have been offered a choice of five answers describing their existential (familial) circumstances. The first two options: *We do not have enough money for food* and *We have enough money for food but not for clothing* describe very poor and poor living conditions. Good living conditions have been described by a statement: *We have enough money for food and clothing and we can save some money*; and very good living conditions by: *We can afford to buy expensive goods but not a car*; and excellent: *We can afford to buy anything we want*. Judging by this subjective perception, most respondents considered their living conditions to be good, and a significant number of them believed that they were poor. It has to be added that, when we compared the data on the top and the bottom living circumstances, that is, the very poor and excellent ones, we found that there were more of those who believed that their family could not afford to purchase food.

We have tried to understand the characteristics of transition of the young to adulthood in Serbia within the transition context of the country. To be precise, the so-called transition models (see: Ignjatović, 2009) begin with the idea that the transition of the young to adulthood varies between countries. Or, in other words, the pace at which the young leave the parental home, get married or become financially independent bears a regional stamp. Serbia, judging by the above indicators, has been placed in a group of Mediterranean, southern countries, which are characterised by a slow transition: leaving parental home late and strong connection with a family of origin (Ignjatović, 2009). Late transition has been explained by the cultural matrix, and the key elements in the process recognised as

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<sup>14</sup> Ignjatović (2009), defining the life sequence, referred to Mitchell who said that the life sequence is a line of socially determined events and roles taken on by an individual during a period of time.

economic and political features (difficulties), but also, by a broader context of socialist heritage and reliance on an informal network of social support.

Still, regardless of how the above indicators point to a certain trend in transition to adulthood, they do not portray the internal (psychological) separation of the young from parents. In other words, young people who have separated from their parents should take responsibility for themselves, rely on their personal strength, respect their own and the needs of other people, be able to untie themselves emotionally from parents (but not distance themselves from them). We observed this process of internal growing up, of forming the identity of a young person, through three domains which require to grasp the independence. We defined these dimensions of psychological separation in the same manner as Hoffman did (1984). These are:

1. Functional independence represents the skill of a young person to take responsibility and deal with everyday problems and obligations without relying on help from parents,
2. Conflicting independence is an ability of a young person to explicitly express their disagreement with parents without having feelings of guilt and shame; and
3. Emotional dimension of independence allows a young person to separate emotionally from parents sufficiently but not in a negative way<sup>15</sup>.

The main aim of our research has been to see if there is a link between psychological separation and residential (in)dependence of the young in Serbia, which is considered to be, in the empirical models of transition, one of the most important elements in sketching the specific transition processes (the employment status is the other). Then this first and the broadest aim has been extended because it was necessary to consider the obstacles that stand in the way of residential independence of the young. Firstly, we are referring to financial circumstances and employment status of the young. Therefore, the second aim of our research has been to investigate the link between the residential independence of the young and their financial status, measured by their employment position and their perception of family's financial circumstances. The next aim has been to determine if significant statistical differences exist between young people with regard to residential and employment circumstances and their family financial state and the level of psychological separation.

With regard to the above defined aims, several hypotheses were tested:

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<sup>15</sup> Negative separation is a concept taken from system family therapy. It involves spatial but not emotional separation of the young from parents. In other words, even physically separated young remain in a dysfunctional emotionally networked relationship with their parents (Milojkovic, Srna, Micovic, 1997).



1. Residential dependence of the young is significantly linked to their age, employment status and financial circumstances surrounding the family. In other words, we expected to find that a larger number of the youngest respondents (19-20), those who are unemployed, employed informally, as well as those who assessed their living conditions as very poor or poor, would continue living with their parents than the older respondents (34-35), permanently employed and those who assessed their living conditions as good or excellent;
2. We expected to find significant differences in levels of emotional, conflicting and functional independence between young people with regard to their age, residential and financial conditions and employment status. The youngest respondents are emotionally, conflicting and functionally dependent on parents the most, followed by the young who live with parents, than those who are unemployed or employed informally and, finally, those who assessed financial circumstances of their family as very poor or poor.

The research was conducted during the year 2011 within the *Regional Research Promotion Program* for Western Balkans. 1627 subjects from Serbia (excluding Kosovo) aged between 19 and 35 were included in the research. They were divided into four age cohorts: from 19 to 20, from 24 to 25, from 29 to 30 and the oldest from 34 to 35 years of age. Among the respondents, there were 407 of them (exactly  $\frac{1}{4}$ ) aged between 19 and 20, a few more – 424 (26.1%) between 25 and 26. There were 397 (24.4%) between 29 and 30 and 399 (24.0%) between 34 and 35. There were somewhat more female respondents (834 or 51.3%) compared to male ones (793 or 48.7%).

It should be stressed that the sample included a proportional number of the young from rural and urban communities, but no consideration has been given to these demographic indicators in the final analysis.

In the research we used the so-called *General Questioner* which examined the most general socio-demographic characteristics of the subjects, family and social life, personal and family traits, as well as personal and family practices in everyday life. In order to measure the level of psychological independence from parents, we have used the significantly modified Hoffman's scale of psychological separation. Original Hoffman's scale consists of four subscales: conflicting, emotional, independence of opinion and functional independence, but for the purpose of our research, we have outlined three of them: conflicting, emotional and functional subscales.

Also, it should be said that not all of the items of the scale have been used. No doubt that a number of flaws can be ascribed to this approach (if the items are suitable for our population<sup>16</sup>, a small number of items), but we believe that some of

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<sup>16</sup> The value of Hoffman's scale was verified by Vukelić (2005) on her empirical material.

them can be moderated by the fact that Cronbach's coefficient alpha of internal consent was satisfactory<sup>17</sup>.

Gathered data were coded and entered into SPSS program (version 15.0).  $\chi^2$  test was used for data processing to establish the existence of statistically significant difference between cross-markers and co-relation coefficient (C) that was used to measure the strength of links between the chosen markers.

## Analyses

### *a) Residential status*

Out of a total number of respondents, more than one half of them live with their parents (914 or 56.2%), around 12 of them pay rent for the apartment themselves (6.9%) or with the help from someone else (probably parents, 5.7%). About 6.5% of respondents live with a partner/spouse in an apartment which they bought themselves (2.4%) or with a partner/spouse (4) (Table 1.).

**Table 1 Residential status of respondents**

Residential status of a respondent	f	%
with parents	914	56.2
in an inherited apartment or a house	182	11.2
in an apartment or a house bought for them by parents or cousins	86	5.3
with friends or cousins	30	1.8
in an apartment or a house which they bought themselves or together with a partner	65	4.0
renting apartment/house on their own	113	6.9
in a rented apartment paid for by someone else	93	5.7
in a dorm	65	4.0
at partner's or spouse's	39	2.4
other	34	2.1
total	1621	99.6
missing	6	0.4

Compared with female respondents, male respondents live considerably more often with parents, even if noted rationale is not very strong ( $\chi^2=58.623$ ,  $p=0.000$ ,  $C=0.187$ ) (Table 2). Also, compared with male respondents, female ones are more prone to using other residential options such as: inheritance, living with friends/relatives, dormitories and living with a partner. Female respondents do not opt for renting on their own except if the renting fee is paid for by someone else.

<sup>17</sup> With regard to the number of items, it is 0.674.

**Table 2 Residential status with regard to gender**

Residential status of respondent		Gender		Total
		female	male	
with parents	f	413	501	914
	%	45,2	54,8	100
in an inherited apartment or a house	f	104	78	182
	%	57,1	42,9	100
in an apartment or a house bought for them by parents or cousins	f	48	38	86
	%	55,8	44,2	100
with friends or cousins	f	21	9	30
	%	70	30	100
in an apartment or a house which they bought themselves or together with a partner	f	38	27	65
	%	58,5	41,5	100
renting apartment/house on their own	f	53	60	113
	%	46,9	53,1	100
in a rented apartment paid for by someone else	f	57	36	93
	%	61,3	38,7	100
in a dorm	f	42	23	65
	%	64,6	35,4	100
at partner's or spouse's	f	36	3	39
	%	92,3	7,7	100
other	f	20	14	34
	%	58,8	41,2	100
Total	f	832	789	1621
	%	51,3	48,7	100

$$\chi^2=58.623, p=0.000, C=0.187$$

Significant differences have been discovered concerning the age of respondents and residential independence ( $\chi^2=381.293, p=0.000, C=0.436$ ). The oldest respondents (34 to 35) rarely live with their parents. The respondents aged 34-35 solve their residential problems by buying property together with a partner (37 out of 65 or 56.9%), inheritance (95 or 52.2%), and renting (43 out of 113 or 39.8%). Contrary to them, the youngest (19 to 20) more commonly live with parents (293 out of 914), relatives (10 out of 30 or 33.3%), or in a rented apartment if the rent is paid for by someone else (35 or 37.6%). High percentage of the latter live in a dormitory (10.3%), but no respondent older than 30 uses this particular option. These findings correspond to the linear model of transition which emphasises that the number of the young who continue living with parents reduces as they become older. Finally, it should be noted that it is more common for young men than it is for young women to use this option (expected or justified in our country/culture).

### *b) Employment and financial status*

Bearing in mind all of the above, the need to open another question arises: What are the characteristics, with regard to employment and financial circumstances, of those who continue living with their parents? We have assumed it is the financial dependence caused by unemployment.

Let us begin. It has been found that the majority of the respondents were employed (798 or 40%), mostly in the private sector (permanently 290 or 17.8%) and in the state sector (161 or 9.9%), but, there is a large number of those who work in the private sector informally (148 or 9.1%), and quite a few of them are still in school (434 or 27%). It is worrying that about 20% (315) of the young aged between 25-26 and 30-31 are unemployed and also, that a very small number of the young are either owners or co-owners of a firm (20 or 1.2%). Finally, it has been found that age is strongly linked to a chosen profession ( $\chi^2=644.043$ ,  $p=0.000$ ,  $C=0.536$ ): the number of dependants, farmers, and firm owners increases the younger the age, whilst the youngest, compared to the rest of the respondents, continue schooling.

Judging by this subjective perception, most respondents consider their living conditions as good (620 or 38.1%). A significant number of them believe that they are poor (464 or 28.5%).

It has to be added that, when we compared the data on the top and the bottom living circumstances, that is, the very poor and excellent ones, we have found that there were more of those who believed that their family could not afford to purchase food (60 or 3.7%) (Table 3).

**Table 3 Financial/living conditions**

Financial/living conditions		f	%
very poor	not enough money for food	60	3,7
poor	can afford food but not clothing	464	28,5
good	can afford food, clothing and save money	620	38,1
very good	can afford more expensive items but not a car	426	26,2
excellent	can afford whatever they want	39	2,4
Total		1609	98,9
No answer		18	1,1
Total		1627	100

Statistically significant medium connection, as expected, has been found between employment and respondents' financial self-assessment ( $C=0.327$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Therefore, the respondents who assessed the living conditions of their family as very poor or poor, compared with others, have been significantly more often unemployed or employed informally, in the informal labour market ( $\chi^2=189.143$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). The assumption that the employment status of respondents is linked significantly to chosen (imposed upon) residential options has been

confirmed. Renting is an option more often used by those employed in the state sector and in private firms, regardless of the formality of employment. These results speak for themselves; they need no further explanation unlike the following, somewhat surprising ones. ( $\chi^2=501.458$ ,  $p=0.000$ ,  $C=0.491$ ) (Table 4).

**Table 4 Residential options and employment status**

Employment status		Respondent lives in / with									Total	
		parents	Inherited apartment/house	house/apartment bought by parents	with friends /relatives	house bought alone or with	rented apartment pays on his own	rented apartment paid for by someone else	dorm	other		with partner
dependent	f	9	10	2	1	4	1	3		3	4	37
	%	24,3	27	5,4	2,7	10,8	2,7	8,1		8,1	10,8	100
unemployed	f	219	28	20	11	6	11	13		5	11	324
	%	67,6	8,6	6,2	3,4	1,9	3,4	4,0		1,5	3,4	100
temporary employment informal	f	55	10	4	1	5	10	2		4	1	146
	%	59,8	10,9	4,3	1,1	5,4	10,9	2,2		4,3	1,1	100
temporary employment formal	f	55	10	4	1	5	10	2		4	1	92
	%	59,8	10,9	4,3	1,1	5,4	10,9	2,2		4,3	1,1	100
permanent employment state administration	f	66	31	17	1	14	22	1		3	6	161
	%	41	19,3	10,6	0,6	8,7	13,7	0,6		1,9	3,7	100
permanent employment private	f	140	57	15	5	17	35	5		7	9	290
	%	48,3	19,7	5,2	1,7	5,9	12,1	1,7		2,4	3,1	100
agriculturist	f	21	6			2				1		30
	%	70	20			6,7				3,3		100
self-employed	f	23	6	3	1	1	6			2	1	43
	%	53,5	14	7	2,3	2,3	14			4,7	2,3	100
business owner provides employment	f	11	3	2		1	1			1	1	20
	%	55	15	10		5	5			5	5	100
employer	f	7	3	1		1	2					14
	%	50	21,4	7,1		7,1	14,3					100
schooling	f	269	6	13	7	3	9	62	63	3	1	436
	%	61,7	1,4	3	1,6	0,7	2,1	14,2	14,4	0,7	0,2	100
Total	f	902	177	82	30	63	113	92	65	32	37	1593
	%	56,6	11,1	5,1	1,9	4	7,1	5,8	4,1	2	2,3	100

A significantly weaker link has been found between residential status and subjective perception of financial circumstances of the family ( $\chi^2=71.649$ ,  $p=0.000$ ,  $C=0.207$ ). Unexpectedly, it has been shown that those who assessed the financial

family circumstances as poor or good more often lived with their parents. The respondents who considered them to be at the bottom of the scale, as well as those assessing them as being at the top, seldom lived with their parents. Those who placed their families at the bottom of the status scale more commonly decided to live with friends or cousins, while those whose financial circumstances were the best lived in a house/apartment which they bought themselves or with a partner<sup>18</sup>. With regard to the possible explanation for these unexpected findings, we have tested the following hypothesis, but we did not go into depth to prove it since it surpasses the ambitions of this paper. Our hypothesis has been that in the case of young people from the poorest background, reliance on parental help and support is illusory and, therefore, they search for different options/alternatives by relying on personal strength. In families that are of poor or good financial status, we noticed certain cohesiveness. These families offer a sanctuary to young people (food and accommodation and, we suppose, emotional support), but not the conditions required for separation. Between the existence jeopardising separation from parents and some kind of safe harbour, young people chose the latter.

The findings that we have reached impose the conclusion that living conditions largely shape our life choices. But how do they affect psychological separation?

*Separation of the young from parents: connection between some socio-demographic indicators and psychological separation*

Psychological separation has been explored with three subscales that measured functional, conflicting and emotional (in)dependence of young people from parents. Let us start at the beginning.

As far as functional independence is concerned, the analyses indicate that most of the respondents are completely independent from parents (22.7%) or that reliance on parents is weak (over 59%). We have questioned whether age and gender are linked to these findings, first of all, if the hypothesis that functional dependence reduced with age could be confirmed. The latter hypothesis has been confirmed ( $\chi^2=20.173$ ,  $p=0.017$ ,  $C=0.113$ ), although the correlation between age and functional independence from parents is weak. We could conclude that the ability of the young to take responsibility and solve problems on their own increases with age. Furthermore, it should be stressed that there are no statistically significant differences in relation to gender ( $\chi^2=3.883$ ,  $p=0.274$ ,  $C=0.050$ ).

As regards the conflicting dependence, it has been shown that dependence on parents of the majority of our respondents is weak (633 or 38.9%) or medium (791

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<sup>18</sup> None of those respondents (total of 39) rent accommodation!

or 48.6%). Significant conflicting dependence is present in 8% of our sample, while a very small number of our respondents lack it completely (41 or 2.6%) (Table 5.).

**Table 5 Conflicting independence with regard to age**

Intensity of conflicting independence	Age				Total	
		19-20	24-25	29-30		34-35
none	f	10	10	8	13	41
	%	.6	.6	.5	.8	2.6
weak	f	139	171	144	179	633
	%	8.7	10.7	9.0	11.2	39.7
mild	f	209	204	203	175	791
	%	13.1	12.8	12.7	11.0	49.7
strong	f	45	30	30	23	128
	%	2.8	1.9	1.9	1.4	8
Total	f	403	415	385	390	1593
	%	25.3	26.1	24.2	24.5	100

After incorporating age into the analyses the results confirmed findings of the previous studies that we have consulted in this research. It has been shown that the intensity of conflicting dependence significantly decreases with age ( $\chi^2=19.011$ ,  $p=0.025$ ,  $C=0.109$ ).

After including gender into the analyses, the picture got clearer but still left enough space for hypothesing. Even if gender does not influence conflicting dependence, an interesting finding captured our attention, as we have found no statistically significant difference concerning conflicting dependence and gender ( $\chi^2=5.904$ ,  $p=0.116$ ,  $C=0.061$ ). An interesting occurrence caught our attention: we observed that male respondents took up extreme positions: full independence or complete dependence, while female respondents settled in between.

When exploring emotional independence, similar findings have been revealed. Over 75% of subjects were insignificantly or only slightly emotionally dependent on their parents. For about 1.2% of the respondents, this type of dependence has been continually present for a long period of time. The reason was, presumably, extreme networking between respondents and their parents, and it was found that 8% of respondents were fully independent from their parents. Finally, after including gender and age into the analyses, the findings became unexpected but explicable within the cultural framework. It has been shown, however, that the female subjects have been significantly more emotionally dependent on their parents than their male counterparts. ( $\chi^2=19.505$ ,  $p=0.000$ ,  $C=0.110$ ) (Table 6.). Still, such a significant link has not been found between the level of emotional dependence on parents and the age of male respondents ( $\chi^2=14.535$ ,  $p=0.105$ ,  $C=0.095$ ). Therefore, it could be said that the difference between the youngest and the oldest male respondents and the level of emotional dependence on parents is irrelevant.

**Table 6 Emotional dependence with regard to gender**

Intensity of emotional dependence	Gender			
		female	male	Total
none	f	66	107	173
	%	38.2	61.8	100
weak	f	554	526	1080
	%	51.3	48.7	100
mild	f	183	143	326
	%	56.1	43.9	100
strong	f	15	5	20
	%	75.0	25.0	100
Total	f	818	781	1599
	%	51.2	48.8	100

$$\chi^2=19.505, p=0.000, C=0.110$$

After incorporating structural indicators into the analyses: residential and employment status, financial circumstances, interesting findings have emerged. First of all, residential options of young people are significantly correlated with both emotional ( $\chi^2=43.862$ ,  $p=0.021$ ,  $C=0.164$ ) and conflicting ( $\chi^2=42.775$ ,  $p=0.028$ ,  $C=0.162$ ) but not with functional dependence ( $\chi^2=29.993$ ,  $p=0.314$ ,  $C=0.137$ ).

Since we have discovered that age is strongly linked to intensity of conflicting and functional independence, and gender to emotional independence, we were interested to know if similar links can be traced to financial and residential status of young people. Such a significant statistical link has not been found between residential status and conflicting independence ( $\chi^2=35.413$ ,  $p=0.228$ ,  $C=0.149$ ), nor between residential status and functional independence ( $\chi^2=33.792$ ,  $p=0.289$ ,  $C=0.146$ ). On the other hand, such a link, although statistically weak, exists between the employment status and emotional independence ( $\chi^2=54.142$ ,  $p=0.004$ ,  $C=0.182$ ). Among the respondents who were most dependent on their parents were those who either lived with them or in a dormitory, a fact that enables us to assume that they were the youngest respondents (19 to 20). On the other hand, medium emotional dependence has been observed among the respondents who had their accommodation paid for by someone else. If we presume that the accommodation is paid for by parents, these findings are self-evident. A weak emotional dependence on parents has been discovered among the respondents who did not live with their parents but in housing which they purchased themselves or with a partner, and those whose housing had been bought by their parents. In both cases it could be assumed that a weak emotional dependence was the result of a new life stage (marriage/relationship, separation supported by affluent parents). Emotional dependence was most obvious in the case of respondents who lived in an inherited apartment or with friends/relatives. Since we already know that the latter option is mostly chosen by respondents whose families are in financial distress, we could



hypothesize that emotional independence goes hand in hand with distancing from parents who are unable to provide support and help (Table 7).

**Table 7 Emotional dependence of respondents with regard to residential status**

Emotional dependence of a respondent	Respondent lives in / with											Total
	parents	Inherited apartment/ house	house/apartment bought by parents	with friends /relatives	house bought alone or with a partner	rented apartment pays on his own	rented apartment paid for by someone else	dorm	other	with partner		
None	f	84	30	9	6	7	15	4	11	4	3	173
	%	48,6	17,3	5,2	3,5	4	8,7%	2,3	6,4	2,3	1,7	100
Weak	f	591	127	64	16	46	70	66	44	25	27	1076
	%	54,9	11,8	5,9	1,5	4,3	6,5	6,1	4,1	2,3	2,5	67,5
Mild	f	210	23	10	8	9	24	21	8	4	7	324
	%	64,8	7,1%	3,1	2,5	2,8	7,4	6,5	2,5	1,2	2,2	100
Strong	f	14		1		1	1	1	2			20
	%	70		5,0		5	5	5	10			100
Total	f	899	180	84	30	63	110	92	65	33	37	1593
	%	56,4	11,3	5,3	1,9	4	6,9	5,8	4,1	2,1	2,3	100

$$\chi^2=43.862, p=0.021, C=0.164$$

With regard to conflicting independence, the following should be outlined: 1. As with emotional independence, the most independent young people regarding conflicting independence are those who live with their cousins/friends, or in other words, those who have distanced themselves from their parents due to financial circumstances; 2. Weak conflicting dependence exists for those who live in an inherited home, therefore it could be assumed that their dependence on parental help is quite reduced; 3. Somewhat more conflicting dependence on parents is noticeable for those living in dormitories (younger respondents), and those whose housing is paid for by someone else (probably parents); 4. Conflicting dependence is, as expected, the strongest for those, who live with their parents. We have tried explaining the latter findings in this way: young people who live with their parents and are also mostly unemployed, are burdened by guilt because of their low status. Dependent on their parents in every way, they have no right to express their attitude clearly. It could be read like this: as long as you live under my roof and I feed you, you shall obey me!

On the other hand, the findings that residential options of young people are not significantly linked to their ability to solve problems without relying on parents come as a pleasant surprise. Still, it should be pointed out that such a mode of independence is more often characteristic of those who have been living separately from parents: with cousins/friends or with a partner, which is quite understandable. It is also a pleasant surprise that such responsibility for oneself was characteristic of

those who had been living in dormitories. Extreme dependence was the most obvious in the case of young people whose accommodation fee was paid by someone else (probably parents), and those living with their parents (Table 8).

**Table 8 Residential status of respondents and functional dependence**

Functional dependence on parents		Respondent lives in/with										Total
		parents	Inherited apartment/ house	house/apartment bought by	with friends /relatives	house bought alone or with partner	rented apartment pays on his own	rented apartment paid for by someone else	dorm	other	with partner	
None	f	196	49	22	10	19	32	21	13	3	5	370
	%	53	13,2	5,9	2,7	5,1	8,6	5,7	3,5	0,8	1,4	100
Weak	f	533	108	53	18	35	63	54	41	25	28	958
	%	55,6	11,3	5,5	1,9	3,7	6,6	5,6	4,3	2,6	2,9	100
Mild	f	141	20	8	1	8	9	16	10	3	4	220
	%	64,1	9,1	3,6	0,5	3,6	4,1	7,3	4,5	1,4	1,8	100
Strong	f	12	1	1			2	1				17
	%	70,6	5,9	5,9			11,8	5,9				100
Total	f	882	178	84	29	62	106	92	64	31	37	1565
	%	56,4	11,4	5,4	1,9	4	6,8%	5,9	4,1	2	2,4	100

As for the employment status and conflicting ( $\chi^2=35.413$ ,  $p=0.228$ ,  $C=0.149$ ) and functional ( $\chi^2=33.792$ ,  $p=0.289$ ,  $C=0.146$ ) dependence, no statistically significant correlation has been found. On the other hand, there exists a link, even if weak, between the employment status and emotional independence ( $\chi^2=54.142$ ,  $p=0.004$ ,  $C=0.182$ ) (Table 9). Full emotional independence or weak dependence, has been recognised considerably more often among those respondents who manage their own business. The most emotionally dependent are those young people who perform temporary work or have been informally employed, and those still in school. Unexpectedly, the unemployed have not been found in this group.

Slightly different image is portrayed when intersecting psychological separation with financial circumstances of the respondents. Above all, it has been shown that there are no significant differences between young people of various financial status with regard to functional ( $\chi^2=13.318$ ,  $p=0.092$ ,  $C=0.346$ ) and conflicting ( $\chi^2=16.185$ ,  $p=0.101$ ,  $C=0.183$ ) independence. Still, this difference becomes significant in terms of statistics when we consider emotional independence of the respondent whose financial status differs ( $\chi^2=31.198$ ,  $p=0.002$ ,  $C=0.139$ ). First of all, it has been found that the most independent young people emotionally are those who assessed their family financial status as very poor. Those respondents whose families' financial status is excellent are only slightly emotionally dependent on parents, and at the top of the list are those whose families are of poor or good financial conditions (Table 10).

**Table 9 Emotional dependence on parents with regard to employment status**

Employment status	Emotional dependence					Total
		none	weak	mild	strong	
dependent person	f	4	24	9		37
	%	10,8	64,9	24,3		100
unemployed	f	33	217	71	2	323
	%	10,2	67,2	22	0,6	100
temporary employed informally	f	14	98	32	2	146
	%	9,6	67,1	21,9	1,4	100
temporary employed formally	f	3	70	15	1	89
	%	3,4	78,7	16,9	1,1	100
permanent employment state administration	f	15	120	22		157
	%	9,6	76,4%	14,0%		100
permanently employed in private sector	f	42	176	63	2	283
	%	14,8	62,2	22,3	0,7	100
agriculturist	f	5	17	8		30
	%	16,7	56,7	26,7		100
self-employed	f	3	32	8		43
	%	7	74,4	18,6		100
business owner or a co-owner employing others	f	2	17		1	20
	%	10	85		5	100
employer	f	5	7	1		13
	%	38,5	53,8	7,7		100
in school	f	41	288	92	12	433
	%	9,5	66,5	21,2	2,8	100
Total	f	167	1066	321	20	1574
	%	10,6	67,7	20,4	1,3	100

**Table 10 Emotional dependence of respondents with regard to financial status of the family**

Emotional dependence of respondents	Respondents' assessment of family financial status					Total	
		very poor	poor	good	very good		excellent
none	f	12	63	58	38	1	172
	%	7	36,6	33,7	22,1	0,6	100
weak	f	33	284	409	313	29	1068
	%	3,1	26,6%	38,3	29,3	2,7	100
mild	f	11	106	131	67	8	323
	%	3,4	32,8	40,6	20,7	2,5	100
strong	f	1	5	12	2		20
	%	5	25	60	10		100
Total	f	57	458	610	420	38	1583
	%	3,6	28,9	38,5	26,5	2,4	100

### Conclusion

In summary, the results of our study point to a conclusion that there is a substantial interrelation of the structural transition indicators and personal, psychological separation is substantial. Some findings are surprising but

understandable within a broader social framework. The hypothesis, which has already been proposed in the studies of some local authors (see: Tomanović, Ignjatović, 2004), that the majority of young people live with parents, has been confirmed. Also, as expected, it has been found that the youngest respondents (19 to 20) live with parents considerably more often. This is the option more commonly chosen by (or imposed on) young men, quite understandable within the cultural framework: the sons should stay with parents. On the contrary, female respondents more frequently live in accommodation paid for by someone else, as suggested by the findings of Tomanović and Ignjatović (2004) in Serbia, but also in Slovenia (Lavrič, Klanjšek, 2011). Also, amongst young people who live with their parents, there are more of those who have assessed their family financial status as poor or good. As expected, the most affluent young people live independently considerably more often, while those in the worst financial distress live with their relatives or friends. On the other hand, there are interesting findings which have emerged after comparing residential and employment status of our respondents. It has been shown that a considerable number of the unemployed (and those in school) and those employed by private companies (regardless of the formality of employment) live with their parents. It should be added that among those young people who live with their parents, those who have assessed their family financial status as poor or good have been found significantly more frequently. In order to answer the question why they were found in this category, we took into account the characteristics of the region and its influence on the family. Results of the studies conducted in Serbia (see: Ljubičić, 2011) clearly point out that the financial status of the family, as well as the overall social situation, strongly influence the level of internal cohesiveness, the emotional interaction. It is almost certain that those young people who get a chance to separate from parents without having to imperil their own existence (the most prosperous ones) do so. On the one hand, young people who see their existence as a choice between being hungry and cold or living with parents (somewhat pampered), opt for the latter since it brings less risk than separation, which they cannot afford anyway (uncertain survival), and causes potential damage to family cohesiveness which has been formed around the need to survive! On the other hand, those young people who live in the poorest circumstances (see: Ljubcic, 2011) cannot rely on family recourses, not even their support, since the family is in a state of financial deprivation and, therefore, some of them (probably those resilient enough to endure life tremors) decide to lead (seek or accept) independent life with friends or cousins.

After comparing structural indicators of the transition to adulthood with the elements of psychological independence, an interesting picture emerged. First of all, it has been found that the majority of respondents are weakly or mildly functional, emotional and conflicting. Also, it has been shown that the intensity of functional and conflicting independence from parents is considerably related to the age of respondents. The oldest respondents are, in a way, equal to their parents, they are

able to negotiate with them, exchange opinions (conflicting independence), and, finally, solve problems (functional independence), all of which represent a confirmation of successful transition to adulthood. On the other hand, the youngest respondents have the most vivid experience of avoiding conflicts with parents (most probably because it is recent) especially if they live together, as well as the experience of solving problems on their own.

Then again, the findings about the level of emotional separation of the young are very interesting: it has been shown that, unlike other types of psychological independence, emotional independence is strongly correlated with gender and living conditions but not the age. As regards the emotional separation from parents, the difference between various age groups are insignificant. But a significant link has been found between emotional independence and gender in the first place, followed by residential, employment and financial status. Emotional independence of the young, especially young women, then those who live with their parents or rely on them regarding accommodation and those who describe their living conditions as poor or medium, is very strong regardless of age. These findings could be interpreted in view of the spatial distance of parents (if they live together they are oriented to one another), then the possibility that parents pay for the accommodation, therefore, dependence is over-reliance on parental help (first of all, the financial one). Also, it has been noted that the unemployed, those still in school and those employed in the private sector, are highly emotionally dependent on their parents. We could propose a hypothesis that the employment status, especially unemployment, leads the young towards emotional dependence – a symbiosis with their parents. Still, the findings on those who are employed in the private sector, formally or informally, are confusing. It has been observed that the most emotionally dependent ones are those who describe their living conditions as poor or medium. Therefore the question is raised: Do working conditions dictated by the labour market and financial status call for the emotional symbiosis? We could say that vulnerable and potentially unpredictable position of young people (in the middle), make the parental support essential for moving up as well as down the ladder. Indirectly, this hypothesis has been confirmed by the findings that the most emotionally independent ones are those on the edge of the financial chain: the poorest or the richest (self-assessed). Some of them are probably aware of the difficulties experienced by their parents; others do not need any help at all.

Finally, the findings of this study could be understood through the so-called empirical models of transition that take into account regional characteristics. The researchers (see: Ignjatović, 2009) have placed transition of the young to adulthood in Serbia within the framework of sub-protective model. This model is characterised by extremely late residential separation from parents (a consequence of structural obstacles), but also strong emotional networking and prolonged reliance on parental help. Even when children are physically separated there remains a strong emotional tie with parents, who take on a responsibility for caring for their grown-up children!

Therefore, the result that regardless of the age young people remain emotionally tied to their parents has emerged. We could hypothesize that only those whose existence is in jeopardy and those with excellent financial status separate themselves emotionally from their parents. The former because they do not expect to be supported or helped out; the latter because they have already been helped out.

Finally, it remains to be said that the key question of this study: *Is a process of internal growing up (psychological separation from parents) connected with the so-called structural factors of transition to adulthood?* does not have a single answer. However, it is certain that structural obstacles and benefits shape to some extent the internal process of forming the adult identity, especially when referring to emotional independence.

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