

How is the transition
to adulthood different
for this generation



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Young people fall into the period of life from the beginning of puberty to the attainment of adulthood. Caton (2001) argues that this period is usually concomitant with problems as they "struggle" to fit themselves into society. Symonds et. al, 2011 concur with this and state that the journey from adolescence to adulthood in this day is far more daunting. It takes much longer, and the roadway is filled with "far more potholes, one-way streets, and dead ends.

For youths to leave home at an early age during the 1950s, for example, was "normal" because opportunities for work were plentiful and social expectations of the time reinforced the need to do so (Settersten and Ray, 2010). The circumstances of this generation are however different.

Settersten and Ray (2010) purport that becoming an adult has traditionally been known to comprise five core transitions— completing school, leaving home, entering the workforce, getting married, and having children.

Recent research on how young adults are handling these core transitions has yielded some important findings. First, the process of becoming an adult is more gradual and varied today than it was half a century ago. Social timetables that were widely observed in that era no longer seem relevant, and young people are taking longer to achieve economic and psychological autonomy than their counterparts did then. Families are often overburdened in extending support to young adults as they make their way through this extended process.

Parents now contribute sizable material and emotional support through their children's late twenties and into their early thirties. Such flows are to be

expected in more privileged families, but what are now striking are the significant flows and associated strains in middle-class families at a time when families themselves have become increasingly stressed or fractured. The heavier reliance on families exacerbates the already precarious plight of young people from a variety of vulnerable backgrounds.

Settersten and Ray (2010) further explain that, these findings put together point to the need to strengthen the skills and capacities of young people on the path to adulthood and to improve the effectiveness of the institutions through which they move. From Settersten and Ray's (2010) arguments, we realize that there are some important new realities being faced by young adults in this age. We can summarise these as follows: * Becoming an adult today usually involves a period of living independently before marriage.

It is clear that the emergence of a period of independent living is one of the most profound changes in the experiences of young adults in the past several decades (Settersten and Ray, 2010) * The early adult years often involve the pursuit of higher education, as a decent standard of living today generally requires a college education- if not a professional degree. * Regardless of whether young people enter college, it takes longer today to secure a full-time job that pays enough to support a family, and young people now have a greater range of employment experiences in getting there.

As a consequence of these changes, marriage and parenting now come significantly later in the life course. Settersten and Ray (2010) assert that societies have not yet become fully aware of, or begun fully to address, the

ramifications of the longer and more varied transition into adult life. Social institutions, much like young people and their families, are without a clear script for a new era and need to be refashioned to better reflect the times. Finally, for most young people, whether by choice or by circumstance, adulthood no longer begins when adolescence ends.