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A DIVERGENT TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD IN FRANCE AND RUSSIA: A COHORT APPROACH

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ABSTRACT : Since the mid-20th century, both France and Russia, despite different social, economic and political environments, have incentive-based demographic and family policies. The family and marital careers of their populations share some common features. In particular, marriage is no longer the only way to form a couple, and the age at the first child's birth has risen. Nonetheless, these apparent similarities conceal significant differences. Studying the timing of the first events in adulthood – completing education, leaving the parental home, finding a job, forming a couple for the first time, and becoming a parent – and the conditions underlying them reveals how transition toward adulthood evolved in both countries. It also brings to light the complexity and diversity of changes that affected the generations born since the mid-1930s.

INTRODUCTION

A study and comparative analysis of the transition to adulthood in France and Russia involves attempting to decipher changes in the demographic events shaping the early years of men's and women's life courses in the two countries. The transition to adulthood and family formation are two key components of the early life course. Numerous studies in sociology and demography have examined the stages in the socialization of children and the impact of the changing timetable of the first events in the life course, such as extended education and attainment of adult status. The concept of "transition" to adulthood has been much discussed (Bigot 2007; Bourdieu, 1980; Eisenstadt, 1963; Galland, 2000; Toulemon, 1994). A consensus seems to have been reached that the transition from youth to adulthood consists of a succession of stages and events in the life course. A study of this major phase in the life course usually considers five thresholds: completing education, leaving the parents' home, securing employment, forming a union and birth of the first child (Singly, 2000; Galland, 2000; Villeneuve-Gokalp, 2000; Prioux, 2003; Rougerie & Courtois, 1997). The aim of this research is not to discuss the concept of transition to adulthood, or whether all these stages need to be completed in order to attain adult status, but to show how these key demographic events fit into the life courses of different cohorts. This paper also seeks to understand the interactions between demographic events and the social, economic and political conditions facing different cohorts.

France and Russia have implemented different demographic and family policies at different times in their histories. Those policies have often had specific short- or medium-term effects on population trends. However, the same overall trend has nevertheless emerged in both countries, namely a diversification of marriage and family formation patterns. In both France and Russia, marriage is no longer the only type of union and people are marrying for the first time at older ages. Union breakdown followed by new unions points to the development of new types of family organization. Lastly, in the youngest cohorts, union formation and childbirth – which are occurring more frequently outside marriage – seem to be increasingly influenced by individual strategies of securing a stable economic activity (Blum & Goussef, 2003).

This factual view of the demographic changes in France and Russia seems to attest to a common socio-demographic trend that is bringing innovation. However, it is less effective at explaining how the two countries exhibit similarities and differences in the stages of the transition to adulthood in different socio-economic, demographic and political contexts. This paper proposes an analysis of the demographic changes in which the birth cohorts of the last 50 years have participated in France and Russia.

More specifically, it addresses the five events of the adult life course that, according to the literature, define the transition to adulthood: completing education, leaving the parents' home, securing employment, forming a union and birth of the first child. The timing, sequence and interaction of these events are studied to identify majority combinations of demographic behaviour marking the transition to adulthood, which could represent "models" of transition.

The longitudinal study on which this research is based covers the cohorts of men and women born between 1935 and 1974¹, interviewed by two French and Russian surveys (Generations and Gender Survey – GGS). By putting the behaviour of these cohorts into its historical context, these data can be used to identify changes in the stages of the transition to adulthood, and attempt to establish a relationship between the models of transition to adulthood and family formation and the social, economic and political conditions of the childhood and youth of these cohorts. Economic, political, social and family opportunities facilitate childbirth and childcare. Therefore, policies on housing, employment, the life/work balance, abortion and contraception can create favourable conditions for family formation and young people's financial and residential independence. Political and cultural changes, which have been substantial in France and Russia, can also encourage new social and demographic practices. Lastly, several brief but violent economic, political and social upheavals (e.g. the war in Afghanistan and the socio-economic and political turmoil of the late 1980s in Russia; access to contraception in the second half of the 1960s and the 1968 student revolt in France) affected the cohorts that lived through them, leaving an impact that persists well beyond the events themselves.

This article first describes the trend in the events used to study the transition to adulthood of men and women in France and Russia, followed by the contexts facing the various cohorts. Next, the authors examine the impact of the changing timetable of these events on the transition to adulthood, by emphasizing the sequence of events. Lastly, a summary is proposed of the different models of transition to adulthood in which the cohorts participated, and the question of the convergence of practices in Russia and France is raised.

1. For this analysis, only respondents to the French and Russian GGS from the 1935 to 1974 birth cohorts who were aged between 31 and 70 at the time of the survey were selected. To avoid reporting errors in dates or sequence of events in the life course, respondents born before 1935 were excluded. Similarly, the cohorts born after 1974 were too young at the time of the survey to have enacted all the first events in the life course under review.

1. FAMILY FORMATION: A STORY OF COHORTS

The French and Russian surveys include the dates and ages at which four of the five above-mentioned events in the transition to adulthood occur. Only “securing employment” is absent. Since these data were not gathered by the Russian survey, this threshold in the life course could not be included in the comparative analysis here². The other events are comparable, however, both because the relevant data are available in both surveys and the events are similarly defined. Special care was taken in the GGS project to make the surveys and questionnaires comparable (Sebille & Régnier-Loilier, 2006). Although the questions were adapted to the national contexts in France and Russia, fidelity to the original questionnaire of the project enables term-by-term comparison of the events included here for analysis. “Completion of education” is defined as the first time the respondent left the school or university system. The GGS did not specify the length of time education could be suspended. It simply stated that “completion of education” meant the completion of the first qualification, which therefore excluded retraining or resumption of education after the first school or university qualification³. “Leaving the parents’ home” or “securing independent housing” is defined as the end of the first period during which the respondent lived with his/her parents. The respondent must have lived outside his/her parents’ home for at least three months. If the parents separated or divorced or one died, “leaving the parents’ home” means the first time the respondent no longer lived with either parent⁴. “Union formation” is defined as the first period of at least three months of cohabitation under the same roof with a marital partner. This definition therefore excludes the first stable love relationship without cohabitation. It should be noted that this is a relatively rare type of union, more typical of the oldest cohorts. Lastly, “birth of the first child” means the birth of the respondent’s first biological child, excluding children adopted in or out⁵.

2. In the second wave of the GGS, a section on occupation was incorporated into the questionnaire. In Russia and France, data on the whole career, particularly the first job, were gathered. The data gathered in Russia in 2007 and in France in 2008 are not yet available. Therefore they could not be included in the analysis.

3. The respondents had to answer the question: “When did you complete your education? (Indicate the month and the year).”

4. However, there is no information about the terms on which this is enacted: in the case of multi-residence observed among some young people, who divide their time between their parents’ home and an independent home, the choice was left to the respondent. In the questionnaire, the question is: “When did you first start living separately from your parents for more than three consecutive months? (Indicate the month and the year).”

5. Entry into first union was covered by the following questions. “By ‘living together in a relationship’, we mean living under the same roof with a partner for at least three consecutive months”. If the person was living with his/her first cohabiting partner at the time of the survey, the question was: “When did you start living together? (Indicate the month and the year)”. If the person had already lived with another person before the date of the survey, the respondent was asked the following questions. “Outside your current partnership, have

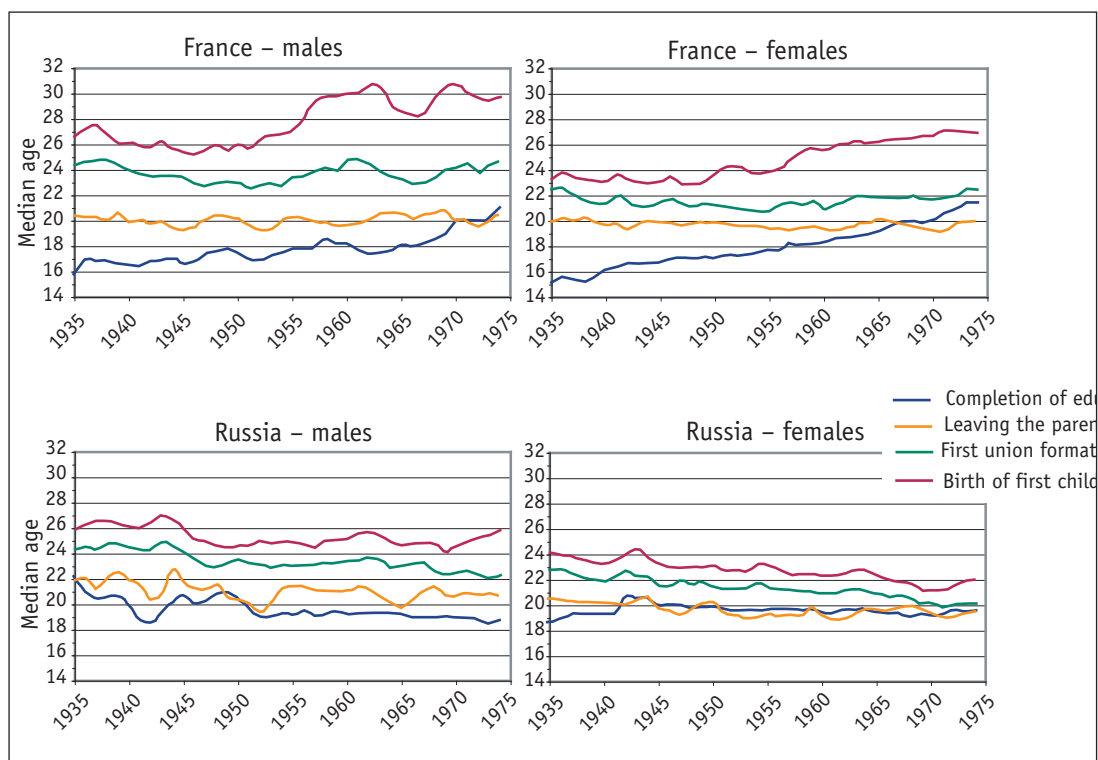
The cohorts born before or during the second world war in both countries exhibit some common features. The median age of first marriage⁶ is two years older for men than for women born in 1935 in both Russia and France. The first union and the birth of the first child also take place at approximately the same age in these cohorts: the median ages of men when they form their first union and have their first child are 24 and 26-27 respectively. These events occur slightly earlier for women, at 22-23 and 23-24 respectively in both countries. Similarly, the trend in median ages at first marriage and birth of first child reflect cohort variations in the timing of these two stages in family formation. Thus, the age at union formation and birth of first child was younger in the cohorts born around 1940 in Russia and in the cohorts born between 1940 and 1945 in France.

By contrast, the next cohorts entered adulthood at quite different ages in the two countries (Figure 1). While in both Russia and France, the median ages at union formation and birth of first child started to fall significantly, the trend persisted for much longer in Russia. In Russia, the events in the transition to adulthood occur earlier in the life course and within a very short timeframe. Until recently, these events were also strongly interlinked. In France, the transition to adulthood started to occur later among men born in the mid-1940s and among women born after 1945. By noticeably pushing back age at birth of first child, these French cohorts dissociated the various stages of the transition to adulthood, and enacted them over an increasingly protracted timeframe. Putting the French and Russian cohorts into their historical context should provide a better understanding of the mechanisms and factors that led to these divergences.

you lived with someone in a relationship before? Please indicate the first name of your first partner. When did he/she first start to live with you? (Indicate the month and the year).” Lastly, regarding the birth of the first child, the questionnaire refers to the respondent’s first biological child. The child may be deceased, may have been from a previous union, and may be living or not living with the respondent at the time of the survey. The date of the birth of children identifies the timing of the birth of the first child in the respondent’s life course.

6. For the sake of convenience, the median age is considered to be the age by which 50% of the population has enacted the event. Some individuals might not have enacted the event at the time of the survey but could still enact it later. The use of this definition makes it possible, in a conventional descriptive life-course analysis (COURGEAU & LELIÈVRE, 1989; BOCQUIER, 1995), to have indicators of the timing of an event for population groups that are still young and remain exposed to the risk of enacting the event under review.

FIGURE 1
Median ages of events in the transition to adulthood



1.1. THE CULTURAL AND CONTRACEPTIVE REVOLUTION IN FRANCE: THE “WATERSHED” COHORTS

In France, the 1940-1945 cohorts experienced war as infants, but their living conditions were far less harsh than in Eastern Europe or Russia. After the war, these cohorts enjoyed highly favourable economic and social conditions. Born in a still conservative society, they were the first to challenge the values of society in the 1950s and 1960s and, belonging to small cohorts more qualified than their seniors, they enjoyed strong upward mobility.

In Russia, the cohorts born during the war are very small. As in France, they coincided with a transition out of a conservative system, but also a more coercive one – Stalinism. The history of their childhood is linked to the years of war and repression. Many of these children were orphaned and suffered from malnutrition and violence because they lived in occupied territories or behind the continuously bombed front lines. Those living conditions left psychological scars (“the fatherless complex”: Snegireva & Pod-

chnev, 2004) and impaired physical health. Many of the children from these cohorts died or were separated from their parents in infancy. Some lived outside a family environment in collective facilities. These cohorts have displayed high mortality throughout their lives (Vishnevsky, 2006, p.289-293; Adamets, Blum & Zakharov, 1994). They have also exhibited strong geographical mobility, initiated in childhood during the war years.

The small cohorts born in the 1940s benefited from less competitive access to education and employment than the previous cohorts. The abolition of tuition fees also gave them more opportunity to continue their schooling beyond the intermediate level (beyond Grades 7 and 8, the first two years of secondary school). Technical education and higher vocational education in particular became more accessible⁷. Thus, almost 100% of pupils born in the 1940s who reached Grades 10 and 11 (the final two years of secondary school) went on to higher education. Furthermore, the shortening of compulsory military service by one year and the decrease in recruitment enabled men to finish their education earlier and undertake specialized training, such as engineering. That was especially the case for the cohorts born in the second half of the 1940s.

These were also the first cohorts to reach adulthood in post-Stalinist Russia, during the Khrushchev Thaw. They graduated from the education system, entered employment and started families in a less coercive political context. Some demographic practices, such as abortion and divorce, were legalized. Mobility from the countryside to the cities was permitted again on certain conditions, including education. The repression of spontaneous flight to the cities that occurred under Stalin decreased sharply, even though the peasantry did not gain complete freedom of movement until the 1970s (Popov, 1996). That newfound geographical mobility was also spurred by political incentives. Many young people took part in the campaigns initiated by Khrushchev to settle and farm the virgin land of the southern Urals and northern Kazakhstan. While less forced than Gulag labour under Stalin, these campaigns were nonetheless the subject of intense propaganda.

These cohorts thus experienced two periods of socialization: the first within the strict framework of school under Stalin, and the second when Stalin’s personality cult was denounced⁸. This dramatic transformation of the “ideological matrix” in their youth was not without impact on these cohorts. They went on to become the main actors in the first movements of

7. Tuition fees were abolished for Grades 8, 9 and 10 (the last three grades of secondary school) and for technical education (tehnikum, teaching and medical institutions from the third and fourth years onwards).

8. Assuming that socialization occurs mainly between 16-17 and 25 (MANNHEIM, 1992; SCHUMAN & SCOTT, 1989; SCHUMAN & CORNING, 2000).

intellectual protest against the social and political order of the USSR. The combination of economic hardship suffered in childhood and an exceptionally high level of education undoubtedly contributed to the emergence of a “sixtiers’ project”, initiated by the cohorts of the mid-1940s (Voronkov, 1993; 2005).

The 1945-1955 cohorts were watershed cohorts in the evolution of demographic behaviour in France too, but in an altogether different direction. Dubbed the “May 1968 cohorts” (Préel, 2000) in France, they were instrumental in changing the French family model and enacting the “modern” transition to adulthood. One of the major changes was the participation of women in social and economic life. Unlike previous cohorts, these women joined the workforce in large numbers, and many took jobs in a rapidly expanding service sector. They enjoyed upward mobility unattainable for the previous cohorts. The social status of women changed substantially. Early attainment of financial and residential independence spread. These female cohorts represented a strong break with women from previous cohorts, who were more subject to social and family control.

The cultural and social changes in which these baby-boom cohorts participated, and the demographic changes they initiated, were fostered by a highly favourable economic, political and social context. A period of strong economic growth, which lasted until the early 1970s in France, enabled men and women to secure higher-skilled, better-paid jobs than previous cohorts, and at a younger age. That economic and social shift in French society occurred against a backdrop of political and legal milestones that enhanced couples’, and particularly women’s, control over the family formation process (Guibert-Lantoine & Leridon, 1998). The Neuwirth Act of 1967 authorized oral contraception, and the Veil Act of 1975 legalized voluntary termination of pregnancy. The cultural revolution triggered by a liberalization of mores was thus accompanied by a contraceptive revolution, one of the consequences of which was control of fertility and postponement of family formation.

Demographic behaviour followed those transformations. These watershed cohorts first significantly postponed their fertility timetable, even as they entered into unions younger. The liberalization of social practices led to a strong desire for independence, manifested in early partnership formation and the adoption of new types of family formation. Leaving the parents’ home at an early age became a pre-condition for the transition to adulthood, and marriage was no longer regarded as the only way to form the first union. Similarly, the spread of contraception from 1967 onwards made it possible to dissociate the stages of leaving the parents’ home, forming a union and childbearing. In these cohorts, the birth of the first child came later and was more and more disconnected from union formation

(Figure 2). Lastly, a large percentage of these cohorts went into higher education, without delaying union formation (Sebille, 2009).

The persistence of a close link between leaving the parents’ home and forming a union on the one hand, and the emergence of new attitudes to family on the other, demonstrate the post-war cohorts’ “watershed” position in the development of new demographic behaviour. Some past values, such as union formation simultaneous with leaving the parents’ home, are observed alongside new forms of family formation, where union formation was disconnected from childbirth, thus ushering in the behaviour of the subsequent cohorts.

The situation was not the same in Russia, where an extremely different political context had a strong impact on demographic trends after the war. The 1945-1955 cohorts reached adulthood in the Brezhnev era, a period of economic, social and ideological stagnation. The conditions facing the large post-war cohorts contrasted with those experienced by the previous cohorts. The violence and extreme repression of the period prior to Stalin’s death were superseded by a coercive state paternalism, whose formal, mass forms of expression strove to constrain individual behaviour. The education system, the Pioneer Organisation and the Komsomol inculcated strictly defined normative behaviour. The – sometimes contradictory – effects of that silent propaganda were enormous.

Individual strategies were focused on academic achievement, which became a priority for families. Scholastic achievement and compliance with the decreed rules were a passport to higher education and a successful career. Boys who performed well could also be exempted from military service. For those who failed, the only path open after Grade 8 was to enter the workforce and try to attend vocational training at the same time⁹. After that training, boys were required to do two years of compulsory military service. The only exemptions were for boys who graduated from vocational training institutes geared towards the military-industrial complex.

Competition for entrance to higher education was particularly fierce in these cohorts. To regulate flows, the government introduced highly selective entrance exams. Candidates had to submit recommendations from school principals and the Komsomol¹⁰, attesting to the student’s academic ability, participation in social life and “moral” behaviour. In the extensive, labour-intensive post-war economy, policymakers thus strove to control access to the labour market and higher education, sources of emancipation from political power. In response to these constraints, a black market in private

9. Vocational training institutes (PTU in Russian) provided two-year courses after Grade 8 and one-year courses after Grade 10.

10. The Communist Union of Youth. A large percentage of Soviet youth were members.

tutoring, corruption and the system of *blat*¹¹ grew rapidly. Access to good jobs and promotions frequently depended on connections and patronage.

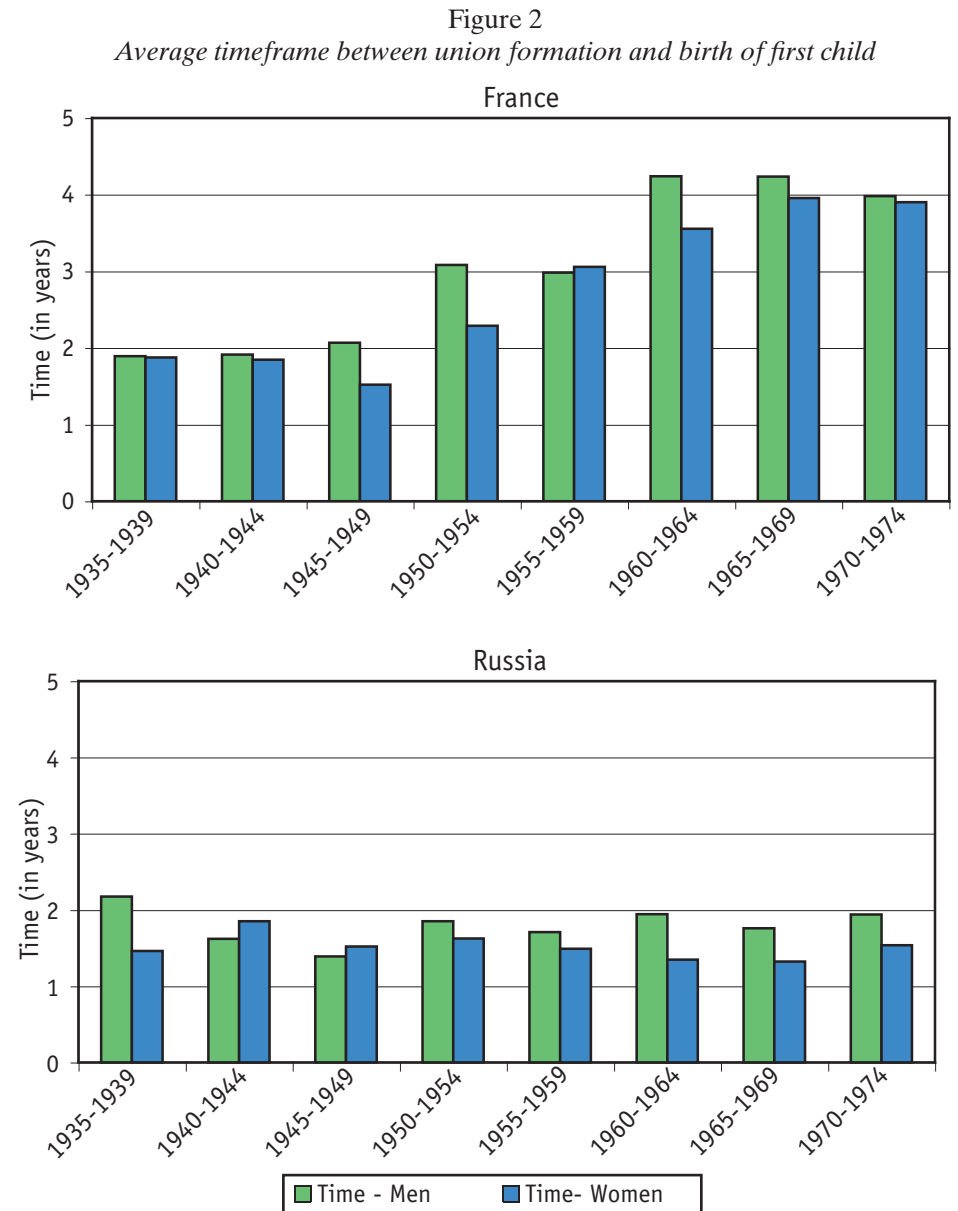
The voluntary creation of a deficit of full-time university places was accompanied by the development of a parallel higher education system in the form of evening or correspondence courses that lasted one or two years longer than the “normal” university degree. Access was reserved for those who already had a regular job, particularly a blue-collar job. It was common for young people to work as laboratory assistants to obtain the papers they needed to enrol in this type of course (these papers were sometimes obtained through “connections”).

Consequently, social mobility was severely restricted, even though it was not as closely linked to loyalty to the regime as it had been under Stalin. At the same time, the cohorts of the 1950s experienced high horizontal mobility. That was a consequence of the final stage in the urbanization process, hastened in the 1970s by a policy of destroying villages “with no prospects” and developing the territories beyond the Urals, the result of the permission finally granted to kolkhoz workers to leave the land. Horizontal mobility was not usually concomitant with upward social mobility, however: kolkhoz workers became unskilled workers in the many factories operating with outdated technology or in municipal services, where there was considerable tension with the supervising staff, who were from urban backgrounds.

The socio-economic context of these cohorts was characterized by a constant deficit of consumer goods (Kornai, 1992). The State Planning Committee’s economic policies had to factor in rising inflation and the opening of Russia to outside information and the influence of Western consumer models. The petrodollars of the 1970s enabled the USSR to access more consumer and industrial goods. However, massive purchases abroad were not enough to catch up the economic lag accumulated previously. People could only obtain goods by waiting in long queues, and there was sharp inequality in access to goods. A person’s economic sector, position in the enterprise, place of residence or work, and Party membership status become factors determining access to various consumer goods. Regional capitals and large towns became increasingly privileged, closed zones.

Young people were strongly disenchanted by the mismatch between the official ambitions of the communist project and the reality on the ground. Dissident groups emerged, revealing discontent felt by the whole population. These post-war cohorts nevertheless enjoyed a higher standard of living. The quality of food and housing improved. However, the

brakes on growth and social mobility and the lack of free speech bred strong dissatisfaction.



In this context, the post-war cohorts in Russia enacted the first stages in the life course, displaying contradictory sexual, marriage, reproductive and childrearing behaviour (Temkina, 2004; Zakharov, 2008). The liberalization of sexual practices and their earlier onset were not accom-

11. The informal system of reciprocal favours.

panied by a contraceptive revolution, as they were in Western Europe. The Soviet state not only opposed the distribution of contraceptives, but made any public discussion of sexual and contraceptive issues taboo (Avdeev, Blum, Troitskaja, 1994; Blum 1994). The contraceptive culture of these cohorts was under-developed, and contraceptives that were not prohibited, such as condoms, were scarce (Popov, Visser, Ketting, 1993). Therefore, the number of early, unplanned pregnancies, which often led to childbirth, rose steadily every year, frequently prompting early marriage. The age of family formation decreased in these cohorts, even though they completed their education later and employment conditions became increasingly difficult. Young families with children therefore became dependent on the material and non-material support of parents and the state. Traditional paternalistic stereotypes increasingly collided with a modernizing society. Early, unplanned marriage encouraged early and more frequent divorce. The cohorts born in the 1950s were the first cohorts for whom successive marriages and children with different partners became widespread practices. The gentle transition in France, reflecting a shift away from the values of the previous cohorts and an increased supply of contraceptives enabling that shift, contrasted with the restrained, constrained transition in Russia, resulting in practices at odds with rapidly changing values. In Russia, all the stages in the transition to adulthood continued to be enacted within a short timeframe: the stages of leaving the parents' home, union formation and the birth of children were experienced passively rather than decided actively.

1.2. FAMILY FORMATION: LATER IN FRANCE AND EARLIER IN RUSSIA

Russia is thus an exception in terms of the timing of the family formation process. In Western Europe, the cohorts born in the 1960s have demonstrated a trend towards later age of marriage and childbirth. That is what is happening in France. From the 1955-1965 cohorts, the age of entry into first union has been pushed back, and the age of first childbirth even more. These cohorts have consolidated the dissociation of marriage and fertility initiated by the previous cohorts. Men and women are waiting longer and longer after forming their first union to have their first child (Figure 2). A new model of family formation has become dominant in France: first union formation is no longer linked to childbirth. That lag between entry into first union and birth of first child can be attributed partly to the increasing complexity of marriage and family formation patterns, where a union with children may come after a first cohabiting union without children. However, it is mainly ascribable to the emergence of a model of couples living together without children (Régnier-Loilier, 2007; Mazuy, 2006). Young couples are enjoying a period together before committing to children. Another reason for this period of living together without children in

the 1960s and later cohorts is that the economic and social context does not offer young people favourable conditions for securing employment and attaining financial and residential independence. The youngest cohorts were affected by the crisis in the French economy in the 1980s. They postponed their entry into the labour market, because the large baby-boom cohorts that came before them occupied all economic sectors, offering few opportunities for the next cohorts in a context of high unemployment.

The Russian cohorts born in the 1960s experienced a historical context that bears some similarity to that experienced by the cohorts from the late 1930s and early 1940s. As the children of the "war babies", the 1960s cohorts are small. Like their parents' generation too, they experienced the two periods of socialization in very different contexts: childhood under Brezhnev and adulthood in the turbulent 1980s.

The changes of the 1980s were accompanied by a major economic and political crisis. The artifices of the Brezhnev period were less and less able to conceal rising inflation, and the deficit of basic consumer goods resulted in long lines outside shops. Mikhail Gorbachev's appointment to the supreme post triggered euphoria, underpinned by enormous social expectations. The enthusiasm was short-lived. The political intentions of boosting economic growth and liberalizing the regime ("glasnost") failed to deliver the innovations required to restore social and economic stability in Russia.

A high percentage of the male cohorts born in the 1960s took part in the war in Afghanistan (December 1979 - February 1989). The Afghan war strongly impacted the demographic behaviour of both men and women. In the early 1980s, the rules on conscription were amended, strongly reducing the categories of men eligible for exemption. The biggest change concerned students, who had always been entitled to defer military service in peacetime. On 1 January 1984, the draft was extended to students from higher education institutes. An additional 270,000 young men were enlisted from across the Soviet Union (Gradosel'skii, 2005). The same number suspended their studies.

Women from these cohorts were affected indirectly by the war in Afghanistan. Complaints from the army about a decline in the potential number of recruits, notably during the war in Afghanistan, bolstered family policy from 1981 onwards¹². While the reasons were first and foremost military, the policy's officially proclaimed objective was to overcome the deficit of workers by increasing the birth rate. The measures introduced were intended to encourage childbirth by offering women partly paid leave to raise their children. The birth rate increased rapidly to a high in 1987. The rising birth

12. The first measures stemming from that decision took effect in 1982-1983.

rate was concomitant with a sharp fall in the age of marriage and motherhood (Avdeev & Monnier, 1994; Zakharov, 2006; Zakharov, 2008). By giving priority to fertility, women withdrew from education. Many women preferred to have a first or second child and stay at home to take care of their children in exchange for payment and decided not to continue or resume their education. The age of motherhood and the interval between the births of the first and second child in these cohorts were among the lowest in the whole demographic history of Russia (Zakharov, 2006).

These cohorts were nevertheless still young at the time of the economic reforms of the first half of the 1990s. They therefore had time to adapt their strategies to the rapidly changing political and socio-economic context. They turned to the private sector and free market and responded much faster than older cohorts to the transformations in the labour market. These cohorts represent the core of Russian businesspeople and politicians today. The change affected men and women and had a major impact on the organization of Russian society. Women who had their children early and who wanted to participate in the economic and political changes of the 1990s were faced with the impossibility of combining a career and childrearing. Consequently, many young fathers were forced to seek new jobs and devote themselves to careers that could provide for the whole family. Some specialists even saw this as a step backwards in gender relations compared with previous cohorts (Zdravomyslova, Arutûnân, 1998).

1.3. FROM THE SOVIET UNION TO RUSSIA: A NEW FAMILY MODEL

The significant postponement of family formation is a major aspect of demographic behaviour in Europe. It emerged in the cohorts born in the mid-1950s and early 1960s in France, whose age at first childbirth rose from 25 to over 26 for women and from 27 to over 30 for men. In Russia, postponement of family formation was slow to emerge. Until the cohorts of the early 1970s, the timetable of union formation and childbirth was even brought forward substantially, to 20 and 21 respectively for women and 22 and 24 for men. Age at family formation did not rise until the following cohorts (Figure 1). That sudden change can be attributed partly to the end of communism. The context in which the cohorts born from the 1970s onwards experienced the first stages in their life course was profoundly different. The family policies initiated in the reform decade of the 1980s enabled a significant cyclical rise in the birth rate, which had been steadily falling since the 1950s. But worsening economic conditions and the collapse of the Soviet state led to a redefinition of the family formation model. The new Russian state gradually withdrew, shifting from a universal welfare system to unpredictable targeted support. Family support was considerably reduced, and childcare, previously provided by the state, became the responsibility of the family (Lefèvre, 2005). The higher constraints and costs

associated with private childcare have redefined roles and statuses within the family. Many women who had previously worked left the workforce to take care of their children.

For the cohorts born from 1970 onwards, the transition to adulthood occurred amid the major political and economic changes of the recent past. Once the existing political, economic and social framework was called into question, this generation rapidly changed their practices, which moved closer to those observed elsewhere in Europe (Blum, Goussef, 2003). Age at first union – and even more so at first childbirth – were pushed back, especially for men. That trend, which has arrived late in Russia, is similar to that observed decades earlier in other European countries. This is an apolitical, pragmatic generation, which has little faith in the state, and which rejects state paternalism in all its forms. Highly educated and emphasizing their professionalism, they believe that economic security, more than investment in politics, is the foundation of freedom. For them, there is no legitimate authority, and their values are centred on the individual and hedonism (Semeneva, 2005). It is this generation that accomplished the consumer revolution and challenged previous forms of power in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Magun, 2003).

These young cohorts are more attracted by the American than the European model. They ignore and reject youth welfare, and the Soviet and Western European brands of socialism. They remember their past as Soviet pioneers as a game, and their parents' poverty as bad luck.

These are the first Russian cohorts who, with access to modern contraception, are efficiently controlling their fertility. They are delaying the birth of the first child and thus breaking with the early family formation pattern of the previous cohorts. The institution of marriage is also more strongly challenged. Unmarried cohabitation is spreading as a preliminary or an alternative to marriage (Blum & Lefèvre, 2006). The transformations in values and family practices, which had been developing gradually over the decades, have at last found favourable conditions for their realization.

2. IMPACT OF NEW FAMILY FORMATION PATTERNS ON THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

2.1. THE PLACE OF FAMILY FORMATION IN THE LIFE COURSE

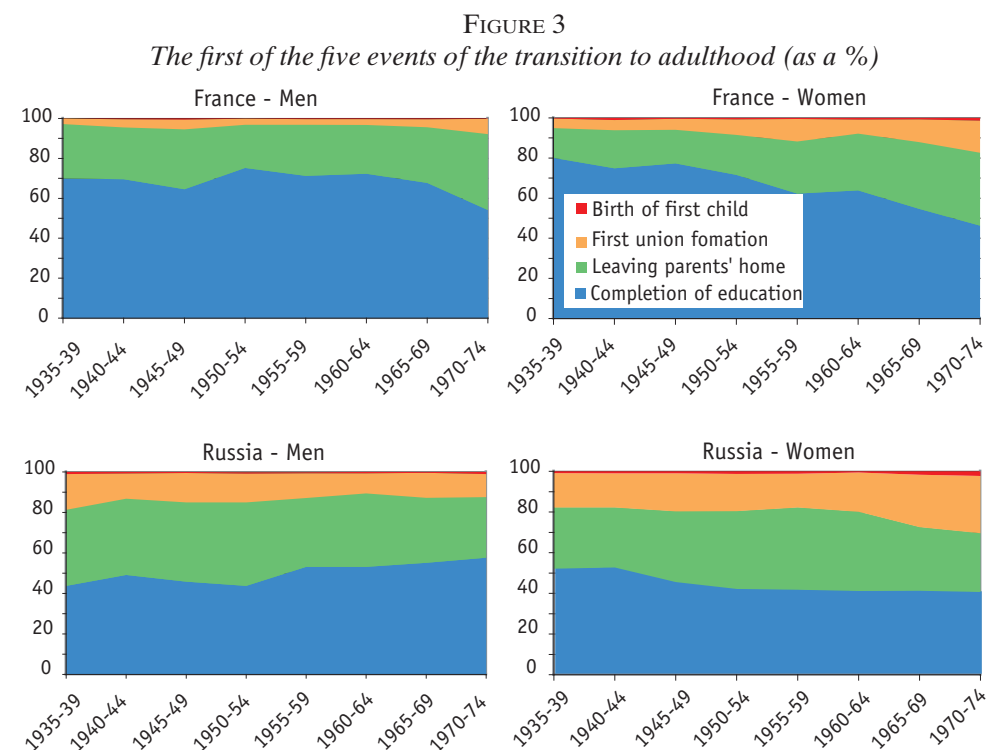
The family formation model in France has undergone two periods of change over the cohorts – first, a trend towards earlier family formation until the “watershed” cohorts of 1945-1955, then a pronounced postponement, with an increase in age at first childbirth and a lengthening of

the period between the first two stages of family formation, i.e. first union formation and birth of the first child.

The trend towards delayed family formation has occurred even though the age at leaving the parents' home has remained relatively stable (median age of 19-20 for men and 20-21 for women) and education has lasted longer and longer (Figure 1). The median age at completion of education has increased from 16 to 21 for men and from 15 to 21 for women. The "watershed" cohorts of 1945-1955, which participated in the social and cultural changes of the late 1960s, enjoyed the biggest gains in education. Unlike their seniors, many continued their education to university level (Chauvel, 2006). Although completion of education is still the first stage experienced by a majority of people in France (Figure 3), more and more men and women from the most recent cohorts are leaving their parents' home before completing their education.

The Russian family formation model has trended towards an earlier timetable. Similar to the French model for the cohorts born in 1935-1940, the age at family formation became steadily younger until the 1970 cohorts, who were in their twenties when the Soviet Union collapsed. In that period, the first stages in the life cycle were enacted within a short timeframe. That was especially true of women born in the early 1970s, half of whom completed their education, left their parents' home, formed their first union and had their first child in the space of less than three years (Figure 1). The process of family formation in the Soviet period shows a very strong inter-relationship between marriage and childbirth, which also reflects a cultural model that encourages early attainment of the status of spouse and of father or mother. The break of the early 1990s indicates how the young cohorts have appropriated new demographic behaviour, specifically postponing the stages of family formation. The timing of completion of education and leaving the parents' home has changed little. The specific characteristics of the Soviet context, state policies and the types of family organization that developed there, encouraged stability of that timetable until the early 1990s (Büttner, 2005). The result is a strong divergence between the Russian and French models with respect to the first stage in the transition to adulthood. Although they complete their education relatively young, for many Russian men and women leaving the parents' home – and to a lesser extent forming a union – are the first of the four thresholds studied here. The importance of family formation and the close proximity between these events in time undoubtedly favour this sequence of events. The Russian model of transition to adulthood is more strongly linked to the family formation process than the French model and appears to respond much more to a "life cycle" logic, where union formation and birth of the first child occur at an early age, regardless of the context.

The timing of the events in the transition to adulthood under review highlights the changes in behaviour related to this phase of the life course. However, it does not show how the adjustments between the different stages of the transition occur. A study of the sequence of events provides a better understanding of how this is changing.

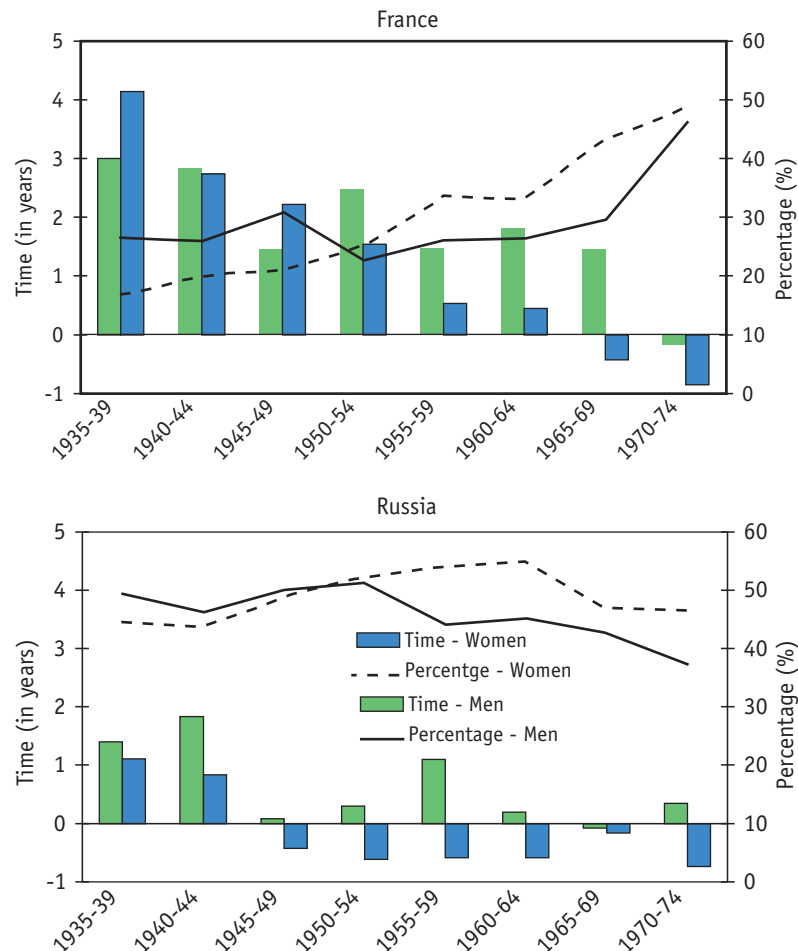


2.2. LEAVING THE PARENTS' HOME: FOR EDUCATION IN FRANCE; TO START A FAMILY IN RUSSIA

The first sequence examined is completion of education and leaving the parents' home. In France, as the median ages suggest, the extension of education has had a major effect on the [completion of education/leaving the parents' home] sequence. Men – and women even more so – are increasingly leaving their parents' home before completing their education. The change occurred in the 1945-1955 cohorts, who were the first to significantly extend their education. For those "watershed" cohorts, economic and social conditions were favourable to leaving the parents' home earlier. Expanded housing opportunities in the late 1960s and early 1970s also enabled these cohorts to attain financial and residential independence

early. The changes were undoubtedly the biggest for women. They were able to access higher education and benefited from the major social and cultural changes brought by the 1968 movement, and leaving their parents' home became a model of emancipation for women.

FIGURE 4
Average length of time between completion of education
and leaving parents' home (histograms)
Percentage of men and women who left parents' home
before completing their education (curves)



The trend towards completing education after leaving the parents' home emerged in the 1960-1965 cohorts, but in a different context. While education levels continued to rise, economic conditions were highly unfavourable to finding employment (Monnier, 2007). Many young people's inability to

enter the labour market encouraged them to invest in higher education. The extension of education was a way for young people to bide their time and acquire skills to increase their employability (Préel, 2000). With the delay in the completion of education and an increasing need to leave their parents' home in order to move to large cities offering more higher education opportunities, leaving the parents' home has become the first stage in the transition to adulthood for many young people. Consequently, while "leaving parents' home" was the first stage for 15% of women and 27% of men born in 1935-39, it was the first stage for 35% and 38% respectively in the 1970-74 cohorts (Figure 3). That change in the youngest cohorts occurred in a difficult economic context where young people had difficulty securing employment and attaining financial independence. The extension of education and leaving their parents' home were facilitated by family support from the parents' generation, cohorts that had enjoyed favourable economic and social conditions and who, when their children entered adulthood, were able to help them continue their education (Herpin, Déchaux, 2004; Laferrère, 2005; Jauneau, 2007). Although many are still financially dependent on their parents, these young cohorts have maintained a model of leaving their parents' home early (Villeneuve-Gokalp, 2000). Thus, almost 50% of men and women born in 1970-74 left their parents' home before completing their education (figure 4).

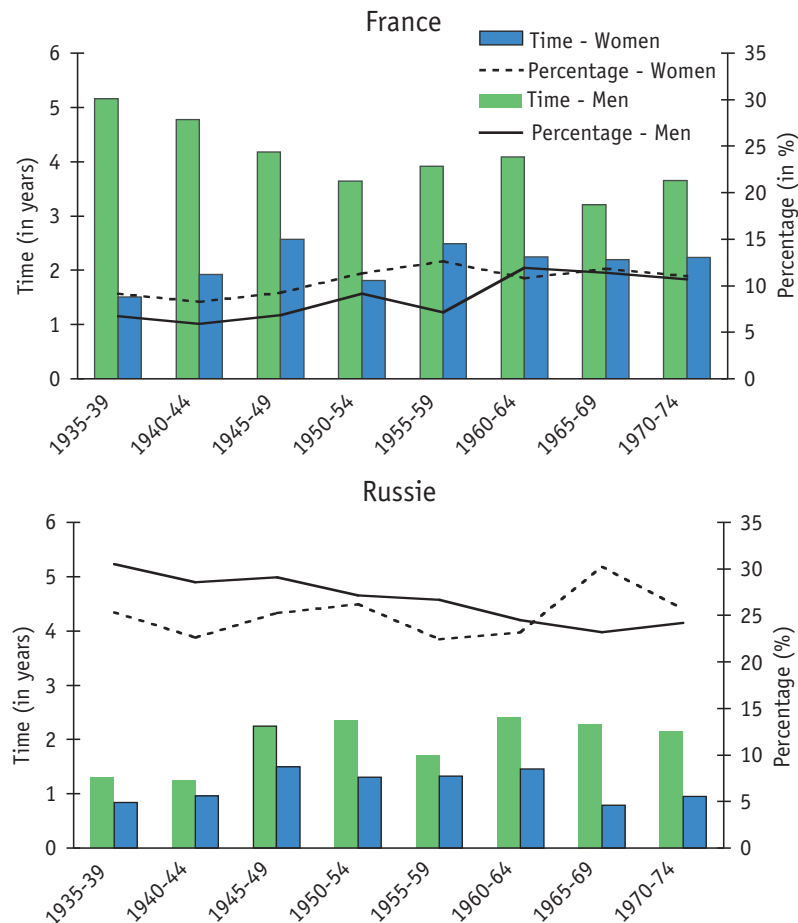
Unlike in France, the sequence has changed little in Russia and the period between completion of education and leaving the parents' home has remained virtually stable over the cohorts. The timeframe of the two events has remained highly concentrated, reflecting the strong link between them. That is especially clear in the post-war cohorts (1945-55), where the period between completion of education and leaving the parents' home was very short, and even negative for women. While the values for this period are less than one year, they nevertheless remain significant of practices specific to the Russian model. Indeed, unlike France, the percentage of men and women who leave their parents' home before completing their education has always been high for all cohorts, between 40% and 55%, even if it is decreasing now. This highly specific situation in Russia can be attributed to strong state paternalism and high student mobility.

The [leaving parents' home/union formation] sequence pinpoints the nature of the divergence in the models of transition to adulthood and family formation between France and Russia. In Russia, the two stages are closely linked: a high percentage of men (30%) and women (40%) enact them simultaneously. However, the specific nature of the Russian model is undoubtedly linked to the major role played by union formation in the process of leaving parents' home. For 20% to 30% of men and women from the cohorts under review, union formation occurs before leaving parents' home. These results confirm the existence of practices of parents

and parents-in-law accommodating young couples in their home and the strong involvement of the spouses' relatives in their family project, across all cohorts.

FIGURE 5
Average time between leaving parents' home
and union formation (histograms)
Percentage of men and women who formed a union
before leaving parents' home (curves)

In France, the percentage of men and women who live with their parents after forming a union is low (between 5% and 12%). Similarly, leaving



parents' home, which occurs increasingly early in the sequence of the transition to adulthood, leads to a relatively long period outside the parents' home without a spouse, which is very rare in Russia. For the oldest French

cohorts (1935-44), the average time between leaving the parents' home and union formation nevertheless differs strongly between men (five years) and women (two years). That heterogeneity is ascribable to gender-differentiated access to social and financial independence before the mid-1960s, which long characterized the French model of transition to adulthood and family formation. More than 60% of women born before 1955 left their parents' home and entered their first union simultaneously, whereas only 30% of men from the same cohorts had the same sequence. The link between leaving parents' home and union formation for women decreased over the cohorts. More and more women live alone for a period between leaving their parents' home and forming a union, thus moving closer to men's behaviour.

2.3. A LONGER TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD IN FRANCE THAN IN RUSSIA

The combination of sequences in the transition to adulthood results in a much longer timeframe for all the stages in France than in Russia. The contraceptive revolution in France that began in the mid-1960s played an important role in the affirmation of a French model of long transition. The control of fertility in the cohorts born from the mid-1950s onwards has considerably delayed the birth of the first child. Despite extended education, this phenomenon of delayed first childbirth has had a major impact on the whole transition to adulthood (Figure 6). The dissociation between completion of education and first childbirth is a constant, and atypical cases where the birth of the first child precedes completion of education are rare (around 5%).

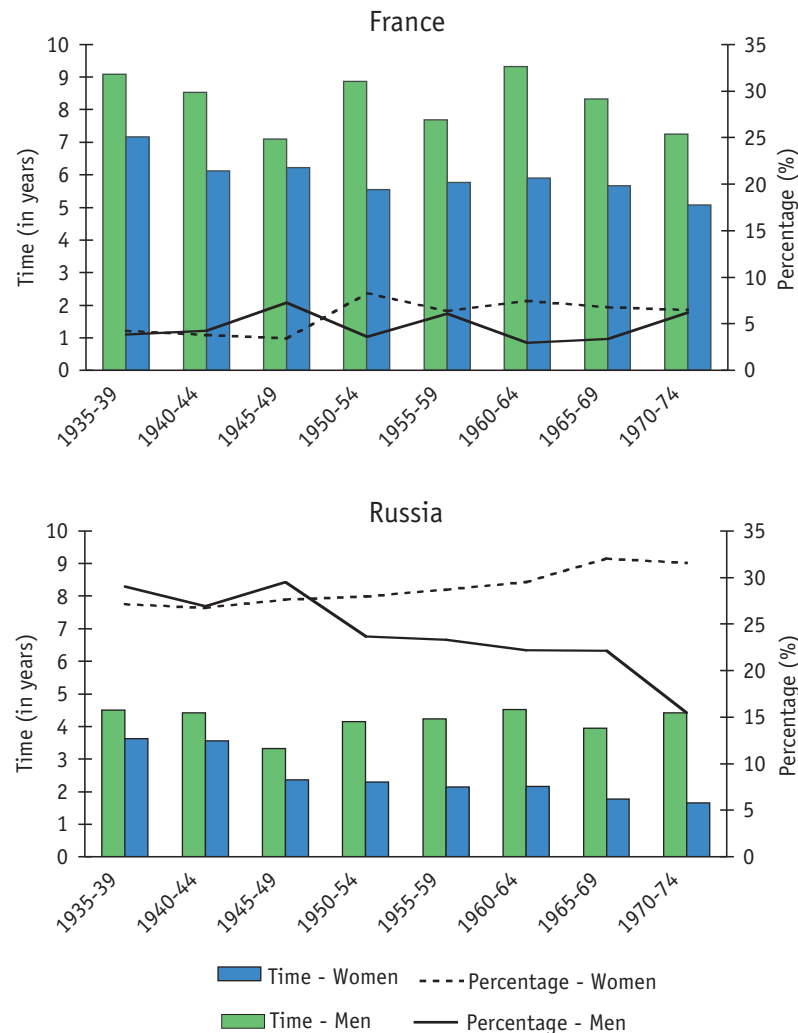
By contrast, in Russia, all the stages are closely linked. The timeframe of the entire sequence of the transition to adulthood is very short, and many men (between 20% and 30%) and women (more than 30%) experience the birth of their first child before they complete their education.

This confirms that the model of transition to adulthood in Russia is closely linked to family formation, whereas that link is much more tenuous in France. The idea of a Russian model closer to the "life cycle", where family formation must occur, regardless of the stages completed and the context, is borne out.

That Russian model is clearly changing today, at least for men. Men who were born after 1970 and who therefore lived through the social and economic changes linked to the upheavals of the 1990s, far less frequently experience the birth of their first child before they complete their education. That clear delay in the timetable of family formation and the changes between the stages in the transition to adulthood seem to show, especially for men, that a transition model is emerging, which is converging towards the French model. A rationalization of the family formation pro-

cess, particularly birth of the first child, is apparently emerging. Access to employment and housing and completion of education may be becoming necessary pre-conditions for starting a family. The disappearance of a model based on a paternalistic state and a lack of modern contraception right up until the youngest cohorts seems to offer the conditions for a redefinition of the previously predominant strategies in young people's transition to adulthood.

FIGURE 6
Average time between completion of education and birth of first child
(histograms)
Percentage of men and women who had their first child before completing
their education (curves)



3. CONCLUSION: A CHANGING TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD IN FRANCE AND RUSSIA

The review of the similarities and differences in the transition to adulthood and family formation, and the social, economic and political changes that have taken place in France and Russia, confirms that divergent models have emerged. On the one hand, the timing of all the events in the transition to adulthood has evolved differently across the cohorts. On the other hand, while in France men and women's behaviour has become more homogeneous in the youngest cohorts, in Russia behaviour seems to have become more gender-differentiated since the change in the political system in the early 1990s.

An analysis of the changes in the models of transition to adulthood in France and Russia shows that they have been influenced by the historical social and cultural context – in which various practices have been alternately socially valued or penalized – and by the economic and political context – in which favourable conditions for access to jobs, housing and government support have emerged. The cohorts have enacted behaviour and established strategies of entry into adulthood and family formation in these contexts.

Two sequences – [union formation/leaving the parents' home] and [birth of first child/completion of education] – appear key to distinguishing between the transition models in France and Russia. They highlight specific demographic behaviour, whose significance is different in France and Russia.

Forming a first union before leaving the parents' home is rare in France and reflects a transition to adulthood that runs counter to the trend towards a period of living alone without parents or a spouse in the young cohorts. However, the sequence of union formation prior to leaving the parents' home could reflect a model of parents' accommodating young couples or of young people staying in their parents' home even though they report being in a union, which may not be a cohabiting union. Those models might be driven by financial constraints, which prevent access to independent housing, or could be the expression of family solidarity, with parents accommodating young people. The latter strategy is much more present in Russia, where a strong link is found between union formation and leaving the parents' home. For young Russian couples, living with their parents or parent-in-law is much more common than in France and tends to reflect a strategy of parents participating in the family project.

The birth of the first child before the completion of education is also atypical behaviour in France. Even though education has been continuously extended, the birth of the first child before the completion of education

could be the sign of a lack of control over fertility. This behaviour is more common in the oldest cohorts who did not experience the “contraceptive revolution”. In the cohorts that began the transition to adulthood after the late 1960s, the birth of a first child before the completion of education could reflect early “accidental” fertility or – alternatively – chosen fertility despite the fact that other events, such as completion of education, have not yet taken place. This behaviour has increased in the young cohorts where higher education has become widespread. In Russia, the birth of a child before the completion of education is more common. Unlike in France, it is more likely to reflect a lack of control of fertility. In Russia, people have only been able to control their fertility since the 1990s, after several decades of policies that restricted modern contraceptive practices. The low prevalence of modern contraception and the early birth of the first child undoubtedly contributed to maintaining the family project among the first stages of the life course. But an early age at first childbirth also reflects a model of transition to adulthood that values the status of father and mother. The concentrated timeframe between the completion of education and birth of the first child seems to reflect the importance of the family project in the transition to adulthood in Russia, even if young Russian cohorts are increasingly moving away from that transition model.

A study of the timing and conditions of the first events in the life course highlights four groups of cohorts representative of the changes observed in the transition to adulthood in France and Russia, from the cohorts born just before the second world war (1935) to those born during the economic crisis of the 1970s.

*Different paths for men and women
(cohorts born before 1945)*

The first model of transition in both France and Russia is that followed by the cohorts born between 1935 and 1945. Behaviour in the first stages of the life course shows strong conformity to a highly gender-differentiated model of transition to adulthood. Men left the school system, entered employment and left their parents’ home early but began the process of family formation late. Men’s transition to adulthood was long, with seeking economic stability probably delaying the process of family formation. That observation mirrors the social norms influencing these cohorts in the 1950s. At the time, men were still perceived as “breadwinners”. They had to secure economic stability before forming unions and starting their fertility path. By contrast, women, whose transition to adulthood occurred earlier and whose family formation cycle was shorter, adhered to a traditional model of attachment to the family project. Less numerous than men on the labour market, women from these cohorts were still regarded in this period as the cornerstones of family and domestic organization. More

devoted to family formation, they experienced union formation and the birth of the first child earlier than men.

Rapid entry into adulthood (1945-1954 cohorts)

The cohorts born in 1945-1955 were the drivers of the key social, political and demographic changes of the 20th century in France, whereas the same cohorts were strongly constrained by the period of stagnation under Brezhnev in Russia, generating strong tension between the behaviour and the expectations of the population. In France, these baby-boom cohorts enjoyed the most favourable economic and social conditions for redefining demographic behaviour. The extension of education and the attainment of financial and residential independence were easier for these cohorts, even as they participated in the transformation of social norms and practices from the mid-1960s onwards. The emancipation of young people, especially young women, created more favourable conditions for leaving the parents’ home, union formation and control of fertility. Therefore, these cohorts left their parents’ homes and formed unions earlier and redefined the modes of transition to adulthood. They were also the first to dissociate union formation from childbirth in large numbers. The desire for independence and the liberalization of sexual, social and family behaviour in these cohorts led to the emergence of a model of transition to adulthood and family formation freed from the social constraints imposed on the previous cohorts.

By contrast, in Russia the tension that built up in a population liberated from Stalinism but still subject to control and a largely unchanged economic system led to the development of a paternalistic state. These cohorts were a long way from the sexual revolution in France. The inefficient, conservative political model that followed the repressive model of Stalinism did not enable new social practices to develop. Although abortion and divorce were officially permitted, modern contraception was rare. Consequently, the modes of transition to adulthood differed strongly from the trends in France: far from being dissociated, the various stages were superimposed and occurred within a very short timeframe, with completion of education immediately followed by family formation, consisting of early union formation, often before leaving the parents’ home, and birth of a child soon after. The coercive institutional framework confronting the post-war cohorts fuelled a strong rift between a population prevented from innovating and a rigid political regime. The most virulent manifestation of these tensions was the emergence of the dissident movement.

Postponement versus stability (cohorts born in 1955-1964)

In France, the cohorts (1955-1964) that came after the baby boomers reached adulthood in a far less favourable economic context than their seniors. It became difficult for men – and even more difficult for women – to secure employment. The extension of education, which was significant for women in these cohorts, became an alternative to employment. But the main change was the postponement of the process of family formation and the long delay of the birth of the first child. Although union before leaving the parents' home and birth of the first child before completion of education still represent marginal behaviour, men and women have different strategies. The extension of education is still a factor favouring the birth of the first child before the completion of education. However, for women, social origin is found to be a determinant of the conditions of union formation. Thus, wives of farmers and managers exhibit different transitions to adulthood, where union formation can precede moving out of parents' home. These results should be linked to the economic conditions experienced by these cohorts at the time of entry into adulthood and family formation. The difficulty of securing employment and occupational instability that stemmed from the economic crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s pushed men and women into different strategies. While all men seemed to redefine the “priorities” of the transition to adulthood, women seem to have accepted their situations.

The 1955-1964 cohorts were the first to have to adjust the stages of their transition to adulthood and family formation to economic difficulties. These “downwardly mobile” cohorts (Préel, 2000) are long delaying their transition to adulthood, thus marking a break with the previous atypical baby-boom cohorts.

In Russia, the cohorts born after the mid-1950s experienced violent, contradictory shocks. Enlisted in the war in Afghanistan, these cohorts also had to adjust to the socio-economic upheavals of the 1990s. They entered adulthood at a key time in the socio-demographic changes observed in Russia. Supported in the first stages of adulthood by the family policies of the 1980s, they maintained the demographic model of the previous cohorts where the different stages in the transition to adulthood occurred early and were strongly linked. However, they were soon exposed to the reforms that led to the disintegration of the paternalistic state and Soviet moral norms.

Constraints and adaptations (1965-1974)

The last cohorts studied here, born between 1965 and 1974, are in a difficult economic and social context. They reached adulthood and started their early life course in the second half of the 1980s. These young cohorts

have faced difficulties securing employment because of the economic crisis in France and because the large baby-boom cohorts still occupied most jobs. The extension of education emerged as an alternative, relegating “completion of education” to second or even third place in the first stages of the life course for many young adults. In this context, leaving the parents' home is often conditioned on having to continue education outside the family's place of residence and sometimes on being dependent family support to secure independent housing, and often before securing stable employment. Union formation is increasingly dissociated from the birth of the first child and the “family project”. With the redefinition of sexual practices and the generalization of control of fertility, a period of living alone or in a couple has become more common, pushing further back the stages of family formation.

In Russia, the cohorts born between 1965 and 1974 are the first who appear to be changing their behaviour strongly. They are halting the trend towards earlier transition to adulthood, and the interconnection between the different stages. They are experiencing the long-awaited contraceptive revolution, are much more frequently than before forming unions that do not lead to the birth of a child soon after, and are waiting to secure a stable financial position before committing to family formation. However, it is too early to assert whether this model, similar to the model observed elsewhere in Europe, has really emerged. These cohorts have uncertain prospects and have taken opportunities without guarantees. Women have tended to withdraw from the labour market, and have not yet changed their behaviour. Men have preceded women in what seems to be a probable evolution.

The results of this analysis of the thresholds in the transition to adulthood recognized in the literature – completing education, leaving the parents' home, securing employment, forming a union and birth of the first child – indicate that the evolution of this demographic behaviour, although marked by profoundly different historical contexts in France and Russia, is nevertheless driven – with a lag or in different forms – by strategies that are often similar. The cohorts that have lived through a large part of the second half of the 20th century have been vectors of majority behaviour, symptomatic of demographic models, which are sometimes gender-specific and sometimes cohort-specific. The complexity of the transition to adulthood, the sequence of the stages and the timing of these events make this phase of the life course difficult to analyse. Alongside majority behaviour, there are atypical trajectories that nevertheless reveal specific sub-populations, that are always observable and challenge the concept of a majority model of transition to adulthood. The transition from childhood or adolescence to the status of adult seems to correspond to a process of gaining economic and residential independence

from parents, and to the crossing of thresholds that lead to family formation. In any case, the evolution of the timing of behaviour that contributes to the transition to adulthood in both France and Russia shows that the sequence of events has gradually changed and that the birth of the first child has been dissociated from the other events in the transition to adulthood. Indeed, many men and women from the young cohorts have not yet experienced the birth of their first child.

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