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This chapter reports on results of a study conducted with 1,622 young adults between the ages of 17 and 20, comparing the profiles of youth who either opt out or do not have access to extended services beyond the age of 18 to those who benefit from these services. Young adult protection in France, also known as Young Adult Contract, is a welfare contract between a young adult and a Child Welfare Officer that “commits” the young person to either continue their education or actively seek a job and accommodations, continue medical treatment, update administrative documentation, and learn to manage a budget. Opportunities and the limitations of extended care contracts are reviewed and the perverse effects of this measure are reviewed in a context of fiscal restraint when youth have difficulties acquiring vital skills essential for a successful transition to adulthood.

leaving care, youth transitions, foster care, foster youth, young adults

Stay or Leave?

Transitioning from Care to Young Adult Services in France

Isabelle Frechon and Lucy Marquet

Introduction

The time it takes to achieve adult autonomy has increased significantly in recent years and is largely dependent on parental support. Attaining legal majority at age 18 grants new rights to young adults in domains that are no longer governed by their parents (voting, driving, signing an employment contract, marrying, handling own money, etc.). And yet, coming of age no longer means becoming independent. Although the age at which young people move out of the parental home has remained relatively stable, staying in school has prolonged dependence on parents. In 2014, 77% of French people at age 18 were still in school, and, at age 21, this figure was still more than 40% (National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, 2015a). Youth policy in France is based on “social democratic” principles that replace a young person’s dependency on his or her family with direct public support (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Van de Velde, 2012). Education grants are calculated based on parental resources, and there is no minimum income available at the age of 18. As a result, only 17% of those between 18 and 24 must pay for their own accommodations. Others living away from home (26%) depend entirely or in part on parents to pay their rent, and 57% still live with their parents (Castell, Rivallin, & Thouilleux, 2016). Taken together, the transition to adulthood is much less clear cut and requires much more parental support over a longer period of time to be successfully achieved.

For young adults who have been placed in child protection, in some cases for many years, coming of age is a major milestone, and it brings with it a change in status that completely alters the youth’s relationship with relevant institutions. The reduction of the age of legal majority in France from 21 to 18 in 1974 created a legal vacuum for 18- to 21-year-olds in need of government care and protection. In 1975, a “young adult” protection system was set up so that these youths would not suffer as a result of the policy change. This new legal category applies to young people from 18 until their 21st birthday who have “family problems, social and educational difficulties likely to seriously impair their well-being” (Families and Social Action Code, Article 221).¹ Often criticized, this is the only social support available for young people who are not subsidized by their families. Since the early 1980s, new child protection policy has transferred most responsibilities from the state to the départements, smaller jurisdictions led by local French authorities. Still functioning under national legislation,² the decentralization of child protection services involves 95 such départements, all of which are governed locally but are under auspices of the national Families and Social Action Code.

During the same period that the reconfiguration of services for youth and families took place (Bianco-Lamy Report, 1980), the protection of young adults became a grant contract that required a young person to prove that he or she was engaged in some form of social insertion program, particularly in some sort of education program. Young adult protection in France, also known as Young Adult Contract (YAC), is a welfare contract between a young adult and a Child Welfare Officer (CWO) that “commits” the young person to either continuing their education; actively

seeking a job and accommodations; or continuing medical treatment, updating administrative documentation, and learning to manage a budget. The contract is valid for a variable period (weeks, months, or, more rarely, years). At the end of the contract, the young person may apply again for another contract that lasts from 18 until their 21st birthday. However, to reduce public expenditures and lighten the financial burden on the départements after the Organic Law on Finance Laws (2006),³ aid to young adults became increasingly difficult to obtain.

The goal of this chapter is to highlight both the contributions and the limitations of the YAC for young people who wish to be supported beyond the age of 18. First, it will highlight the discriminatory aspect of this aid program. Certain young people do not have access to this support, and we will demonstrate that the most disadvantaged individuals cannot benefit from it at all. In the absence of minimum income available at the age of 18, these young people are at major risk of social precariousness. The results presented here are based on the analysis of a longitudinal study on Access to Autonomy after Placement (ELAP), which interviewed young adults at three distinct waves, including in their last placement and at the actual time of leaving care. To demonstrate the discriminatory nature of programs of support, we will compare profiles between young people who leave care at age 18 and those who continue after age 18. Then, we will be explained what this prolongation of the help of the young people in care, in the field of financial support, education, but also the development of skills and competencies acquired during young adult protection to live quickly on social assistance. Nevertheless the extension of aid—in addition to its discriminatory nature at the entrance—has its limits. The requirement that skill areas be acquired over a very short period does not leave room for interpersonal relationships. The consequence is that, during the period of support through the YAC, a young person may actually weaken his or her ties with a personal network.

Current State of Knowledge

Both French and international researchers have exposed the difficulties and inequities facing young people in relation to social integration during the period following the end of formal education (Munro et al., 2011). This is especially true for those with few or no qualifications (Jahnukainen, 2007; Maunders, Liddell, Liddell, & Green, 1999), insufficient external support from parents or support from parents that inadvertently slows the young person's insertion into productive society (Fransson & Storø, 2011; Frechon, 2003; Goyette, 2007; Rutman, Hubberstey, Feduniw, & Brown, 2006). Most of these young people experience the end of their formal education as a particularly hard time. Their spouses, if present, may also not provide sufficient support (Coppel & Dumaret, 1995; Frechon, 2005; Jahnukainen, 2007; Quinton & Rutter, 1984). A transfer to general social benefits may not be possible in some countries, like France, where minimum welfare payments for adults only start at age 25. This harsh reality evokes criticism from young adults who see this experience as “institutional abandonment” (Corbillon, Dulery, & Mackiewicz 1997).

In the United States, aid to young adults who attain the age of maturity has only recently been established. Extended care is now available in 22 of the 50 American states. Numerous studies have evaluated these measures and the benefits of extended care for youth transitioning to independent living. For example, extended care is clearly associated with favorable outcomes in other domains of adult functioning, such as employment and increased earnings (Courtney &

Hook, 2017; Hook & Courtney, 2011), delayed homelessness (Dworsky, Napolitano, & Courtney, 2013), reduced criminality among females (Lee, Courtney, & Hook, 2012), and increased involvement of young fathers with their children (Hook & Courtney, 2013).

Although France has taken protective measures over the past 40 years, there have been only a few studies that have highlighted the benefits of prolonging assistance to young adults. Recent evidence does suggest that young people who benefit from extended care do attain a higher level of education (Dumaret, Donati, & Crost, 2009); however, public authorities regularly question these measures, remaining concerned with its costs rather than its relevance. Consequently, young people find it harder to obtain financial support in a climate of financial austerity and reduced budget allocations.

Department policy that is administrative rather than legal stresses two principles, one of responsibility and the other of protection. As a result, recipients of financial support are selected using criteria that favor those enrolled in an educational program and not those who are most in need of help (Jung, 2010).

The YAC is an individualized tool that social workers adapt to each person's career plans (Petit-Gats & Guimard, 2011) but that comes with time limits. These time constraints prevent the YAC from providing security for those young people who have not been able to acquire sufficient support during the period of funding (Petit-Gats & Guimard, 2011). This provision also targets a specific age category, which, from the outset, defines a person's life history by age categories, ignoring those who experience delays in development and greater variation in social life histories. (Bessin, 2011; Lima, 2016). The research studies undertaken, however, always concern young people who are currently on YAC and never those who are unable to qualify for it. Frechon and Marquet conducted a longitudinal study that examined the experiences of young people in placement and their acquisition of autonomy (Frechon, Marquet, 2016). This project contributed new, forward-looking data that quantify the situation regarding the YAC and compare young people aged 17 with their status at 18.

This chapter focuses specifically on the profiles of those 17-year-olds, who at age 18, either remain in young adult protection or drop out. It then goes on to describe the system of support to young adults, demonstrating how its main purpose is to prepare young people for a specific type of autonomy: future financial self-sufficiency only.

Methods

Sample and Selection of Participants

The ELAP⁴ aims to capture the profiles of young people in child protection between the ages of 17 and 20 and identify both their living conditions in placement and their immediate futures. Data collection occurred in three distinctive stages. The first survey wave (V1) in 2013–2014 comprised a representative sample of 1,622 young people in placement aged 17–20. It involved seven French departments in the two pre-2016 French regions of Nord Pas-de-Calais and Ile-de-France. These areas supervise 27% of children in placement in France. The second wave (V2) was conducted 18 months after V1 with a subsample: all those who were aged 17 in V1. This was in order to obtain more information about the period of transition from child protection to young adult protection

and included those aged from 19.5 to 21 in V1 who had left the protection system 18 months after their initial inclusion in the research. Of this subsample, 74% responded in V2. Passive monitoring of the management databases of French departments is currently under way to identify the final outcomes in the protection history of all the young people surveyed in V1. This stage will be finalized when the youngest member of the sample turns 21. Passive monitoring provided insights into the situation of a young person 18 months after V1 (whether still under protection, having left the system, and age on leaving).

The Specific Nature of the Population Under Observation

Because of the unique features of these départements, they provide care for many young people in placement: these departments are urban, their clientele overall are young, and both sharp inequalities between areas or serious indicators of social exclusion can be observed (Marquet, Perron, & Frechon, 2017). Although the survey is only representative of these seven French departments, it is the first in France to measure the living conditions of a large sample of young people.

Populations that Vary by Age

Child protection in France covers both “endangered” and “at risk” minors (Art. L 112–3 of the Families and Social Action Code). This protection may be extended by a YAC. Not all young people will sign this contract, which is intended to support further education. Consequently, there is a severe reduction in the number of youth receiving services over time: the young people surveyed at the age of 18 are only a proportion of those in placement at age 17, and those aged 19 are only a proportion of those aged 18.

Assessment and Measures

To analyze the profiles of 17-year-olds as they were about to come of age, we used data from the first survey wave (V1) and supplemented this with administrative data from the end of placement in child protection 18 months after V1 or at the time that they left protection entirely.⁵ V₁ recorded the institutional and educational trajectories of the young people in placement, their relationships with family members, and their opinions about their current placement. Unaccompanied non-French minors displayed a specific profile: having spent much of their childhood outside France, their educational trajectory could not be compared to other minors. The treatment of unaccompanied minors in child protection, particularly when they come of age, involves different processes, reflecting variations in policy in France. Thus, unaccompanied minors have been excluded from the current analysis. Of the 1,622 V1 respondents, 1,078 were not unaccompanied non-French minors and had been placed under child protection before the age of 18. Of these, 393 were 17 and 686 were between 18 and 20 and thus already participating in YACs.⁶

RESULT

Outcomes at Age 17

From a total number of 393 youth participants who reached the age of 17 at the time of the first survey wave, we identified 136 youth who had left child protection with either no YAC or with

only a very short contract. Thirty-five percent of these youth had a contract no longer than 6 months. We included them because this “mini” extension is often used by institutions to encourage the completion of a current school year. Conversely, some adolescents may try out a contract over a short period without committing themselves to the full 6 months. These short contracts do not have a significant impact on young people’s preparedness for the future. Of the 136 early leavers, 84 left the youth protection system with no YAC at all (21% of the 17-year-old group).

Profiles of 17-Year-Olds Based on Their Situation at 18

The profiles of 17-year-olds were analyzed based on their subsequent departure from child protection or their continued involvement in young adult protection as a way of analyzing and predicting the end of placement. From this point on, we will refer to the 17-year-olds who leave with no young adult protection or after a less than 6-month contract as “leavers” and those who go on to a 6-month-plus YAC as “continuers.”

Our analysis was driven by the following questions. Why do youth in foster families pursue more YACs than do youth placed in a residential care? Is it because they have more professional input or because they have weaker family support? Do school delays (because of grades being repeated) disadvantage young people in pursuing a YAC or is it because of school dropouts that the YAC is not promoted? Is it because young people do not like their place of placement that they leave care at 18 or is it because they want to live with their parents or with their friends? In other words, do the chances of continuing in the YAC depend more on the socio-family characteristics of young people just before their 18th birthdays or on their experiences of foster care during their childhood, or even their skills at school? To answer these questions, a logistic regression model was utilized to control both for socio-family characteristics of 17-year-olds and elements of their care and their school trajectories.

The 17-year-olds born outside France who arrived in the country with their parents are 5.6 times more likely to stay in the young adult system than those born in France of French-born parents. Contact with parents is relatively infrequent given that they are often absent—only 36% of the 17-year-olds in this study were still in contact with both parents: either they were dead, or their location was unknown, or the youth no longer had any contact with them (Frechon & Marquet, 2016). Among the young people who had at least one parental figure, the quality of contact with them varied considerably: ultimately, 41% of the 17-year-olds in placement stated that they get on well or very well with at least one parent. Those who no longer had positive contact with their parents were 2.6 times more likely to continue with a YAC than were those who still had a relationship with their parents. However, there were no gender differences: young men and women were roughly as likely to continue or leave at 18. Leavers more often had a boyfriend or girlfriend (61%/45%), and those not in a romantic relationship were 1.6 times more likely to continue in youth protection (Table 9.1).

Table 9.1 Continued

Probability of continuing with young adult contract CJM	17 yo leavers %	17 yo continuers %	Significance	Odds ratio
Number	136	257		
Percentage leavers and continuers	35	65		
Gender				
Male	51	49	<i>ref.</i>	1,00
Female	49	51	ns.	1,14
Origin				
Born in France of French-born parents	85	72	<i>ref.</i>	1,00
Born outside France	9	22	+++	5,65
Born in France of parents born elsewhere	7	6	ns.	2,34
Relations with parents				
Get on very well or reasonably with at least one parent	80	59	<i>ref.</i>	1,00
No contact or get on poorly with both parents	20	41	+++	2,64
Have a boy/girlfriend				
Yes	61	45	<i>ref.</i>	1,00
No	39	55	+	1,62
Current type of placement				
Family	43	55	<i>ref.</i>	1,00
Collective	42	32	ns.	1,14
Autonomous	15	13	ns.	1,20
Age when first placed				
Under 6	21	39	<i>ref.</i>	1,00
6 to 11	22	19	ns.	0,49
11 to 15	21	20	--	0,36
15 or older	37	22	---	0,17
Happy in current placement				
Very	37	60	<i>ref.</i>	1,00
Reasonably	40	28	-	0,49
No (not very or not at all)	23	13	ns.	0,54
Involvement in choice of institutional trajectory				
Institutional trajectory imposed	51	37	--	0,41
Institutional trajectory chosen	15	27	<i>ref.</i>	1,00
Only one placement	34	36	ns.	0,56
Current education course attended				
Niv_IV_gén techno (Bac level general/technology)	14	21	<i>ref.</i>	1,00
Niv_IV_prof (Bac level vocational)	24	30	ns.	0,83
Niv_V_VI (pre-Bac levels)	35	34	ns.	0,52
Non-certificate training)	9	8	ns.	0,52
Not attending course	18	6	---	0,19
Repeated school year				
Never repeated	29	44	<i>ref.</i>	1,00
At least once in primary school	42	38	ns.	0,76
At least once in secondary school	30	19	ns.	0,52

Ns: nonsignificant; + or – significant at p<0.05; ++ or -- significant at p<0.01; + or – significant at p<0.001.

Coverage : 17-year-olds, less unaccompanied non-French minors.

Source : ELAP V1, INED, Laboratoire Printemps, 2013-14, Frechon & Marquet, 2016

On the other hand, several indicators from a young person's institutional trajectory did influence whether they left or continued at age 18: the later they entered placement, the more likely they were to leave with no young adult protection. A young person who came into child protection at the age of 15 or older was 5.8 times more likely⁷ to leave at 18 than one who was placed before the age of 6. It was not so much the type of placement for the 17-year-old or even the number of times they changed placements that effected leaving or continuing, but rather the fact of "being happy there." So, a 17-year-old who says he or she is "reasonably happy" in placement is twice as likely to leave as one who says he or she is "very happy." But being "not very" or "not at all happy" did not reach significance in the regression analysis. However, leavers were proportionately more numerous among those who are unhappy in their current placement (23% leavers, 13% continuers). We also asked two questions of those who had at least two different placements: "Have you ever had to leave a foster home where you wanted to stay?" and "Have you ever had to stay in a foster home you wanted to leave?" The aim of these questions was to analyze the ways in which choice concerning foster homes has an impact on young people's later careers. However, this varied considerably based on how long the young person had been in the protection system. It is easier to involve adolescents in decisions about protection than younger children. If all other elements and factors remain unaltered, those who have had an "imposed" institutional trajectory are 2.4 times more likely to leave at 18 than those who "chose" their trajectory. Thus, 51% of leavers had a trajectory that was imposed compared with 37% of continuers, although the age of being placed in child protection for leavers is proportionally higher than that for continuers.

Since young adult protection is usually granted on the condition that the young person continues or returns to education, it is important to see what aspects of an educational trajectory most affect leaving or continuing in protection at age 18. Whereas 61% of the general population of the same age have never repeated a school year (Observatoire Français des Drogues et des Toxicomanies [OFDT], 2011), the figure is only 37% for 17-year-olds in placement. Repeating a year in primary school usually strongly affects educational trajectories, not the least of which is school dropout. In this case, it is mainly repeating a year in high school that affected whether a young person left the protection system at 18. Only 29% of the leavers had never repeated a year (44% of continuers), and 30% repeated a year in high school (19% of continuers). These are not significant differences in the regression when not attending school is included. What matters for continuing in young adult protection is not so much the educational standard achieved as the fact of having dropped out by the age of 17. Dropouts are 5.2 times more likely to leave with no young adult protection than are those who are attending classes for a general a high school diploma.

Results Regarding the Contributions and Limitations of the Young Adult Contract

Young adult protection in France, also known as YAC, is a welfare contract between a young adult and a CWO that "commits" the young person to either continuing education; actively seek a job and accommodations; or continuing medical treatment, updating administrative documentation, and learning to manage a budget. The contract is valid for a variable period (weeks, months, or, more rarely, years). At the end of the contract, the young person may apply again for another contract that lasts from 18 until their 21st birthday. Some social workers use the contract to create deadlines for objectives to be met and set mandatory meetings for reporting back, while others do not consider that educational support depends on the length of the YAC. It is a measure that varies considerably from one department to another. In the Nord and Pas-de-Calais department,

for example, 88% of contracts last 6 months or less, whereas in French departments in the Ile-de-France region only 35% of YACs are as short, and 64% last from 6 months to a year. Only 1% last more than a year. Young people with foster families often (80%) have YACs of from 6 months to a year compared with those in residential care (54%) or even those in so-called autonomous accommodations (53%).

Reaching the age of 18 and entering a new protection system often means a different form of support, even for young people who have lived in the same foster or other home since early childhood. More than half of 17-year-old continuers live with foster families, but only one-third of young adult continuers do (Table 9.2).

Table 9.2 Current type of placement by age

	Under age		Young adults		Competency increase 17 yo continuers -> age 19.5-20
	17 yo leavers	17 yo continuers	age 18-19.5	age 19.5-20	
Number	136	257	420	266	
Percentage female	49	51	54	54	5%
Type of placement (%)					
Family (foster family, trusted third party, group home)	43	55	36	33	-40%
Collective (home, boarding school)	42	32	23	7	-78%
Autonomous (semi-autonomous, external follow-up, young workers' hostel, hotel)	15	13	41	59	343%

Coverage : 1079 young people in placement (except unaccompanied non-French minors) since before age 18.

Source : ELAP V1, INED, Laboratoire Printemps, 2013-14 ; Frechon & Marquet, 2016)

The proportion living in collective homes also tends to decline during the YAC. Of 17-year-old continuers 32% are in collective homes. By age 18–19.5, it is 23%, and by 19.5–20 only 7%. This is due to gradual encouragement for young people to “move out while still in placement.” Before 18, young people are rarely placed in so-called “autonomous” accommodations (13% at age 17), but by 18–19.5 there are 41% in such accommodations and by 19.5–20, 63% live this way. In this accommodation, young people are housed in apartments or rooms but pick up mail and pocket money at offices where they also meet with an educator. The objective of these programs, which are increasingly being developed in France, is to support a gradual exit from a system that is perceived as too coddling. In these programs, young people learn how to cope on their own with daily living (cooking, laundry, budgeting, paying bills, punctuality, etc.), which may sometimes be harder to arrange in traditional forms of placement (foster family, home).

Learning to Budget

Since most of those with a YAC are still in education or looking for work, most of them receive a young adult benefit with a median value of €250 per month. Those who do not receive one either have income from other sources (salary, apprenticeship, less often from parents, etc.) or have no expenses where they live. Including all sources of income, these young people receive on average €350 a month (median €378). Out of this income they have expenses that they may need to cover entirely, partly, or not at all. Learning to manage a budget occurs in stages: the first expenses are leisure; then clothing; then personal care products, followed by food, transport, school fees, and, to a lesser extent, accommodations (Figures 9.1 and 9.2).

Figure 9.1 Expenses paid by age

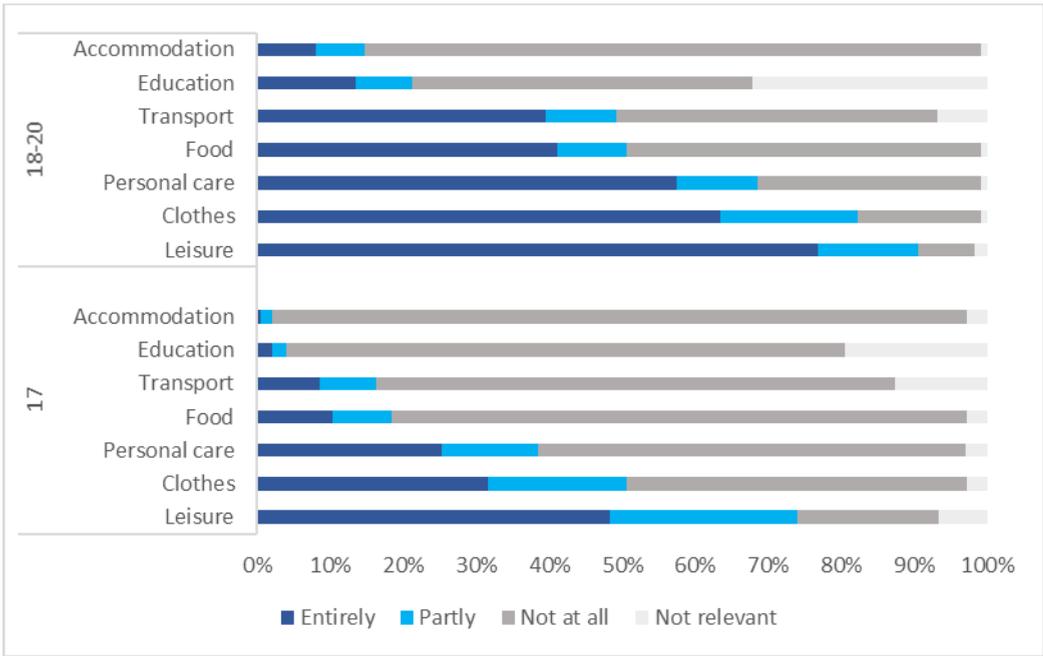
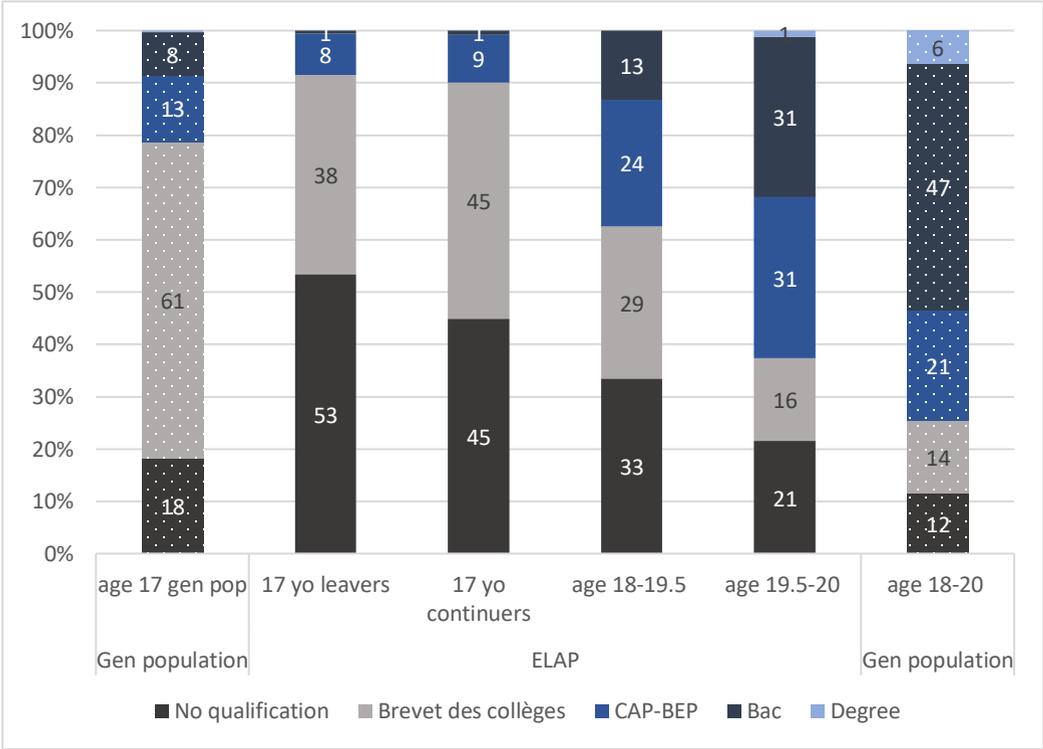


Figure 9.2 Comparison of young people in placement (ELAP) and general population



Coverage : 1079 young people in placement (except unaccompanied non-French minors) since before age 18. Source : ELAP V1, INED, Laboratoire Printemps, 2013-14 ; Frechon & Marquet, 2016)

The Young Adult Contract Is Used for Continuing or Catching Up with Education

Qualifications are gained as one ages, but in theory all must be acquired before the age of 19 (except for postsecondary education). Although the YAC is meant for those who will continue their education, it first enables them to catch up with delays that have already built up. More than half of the 17-year-old continuers have no diploma; in the general population, it is 18% and most have already passed their BEPC, the exam at the end of high school. By 18–19.5 and even more so by 19.5–20, the gap in the number of unqualified individuals among young people in placement versus the general population narrows but does not disappear (33% and 21% at these ages, compared with 12% at 18–20 in the general population). Most continuing in young adult protection gain at least one qualification; however, only 13% of the 18–19.5 group and 31% of the 19.5–20 group have at least a high school diploma compared with 53% of the general population at 18–20. A high school diploma is required to enter higher education. Consequently, the YAC operates more to catch up with delays in schooling than to send the young person on to higher education (Frechon, Breugnot, & Marquet, 2017).

Skills and Competencies Acquired During Young Adult Protection

Getting older is helpful when it comes to developing competencies, but personal biography is also of importance (Bessin, 2011). Although the 17-year-old leavers have fewer qualifications, they do seem to have developed more competencies than the 17-year-old continuers, particularly in relation to the skills and “habits” of everyday life, employment, and knowledge about access to general benefits. Although the leavers tend to have fewer savings, more of them already have bank accounts (Table 9.3).

Comparing the skills, competencies, and achievements of the three age groups—17-year-old continuers, 18- to 19.5-year-old continuers, and 19.5- to 20-year-old continuers—these indicators increase with age among the youth in placement. For example, 24% of the 17-year-old continuers cook every day, and 58% of the 19.5- to 20-year-olds do. Of 17-year-old continuers, 18% have work experience, while the same is true of 43% of 18- to 19.5-year-olds and 63% of 19.5- to 20-year-olds.

In the general population, 42% of the 18- to 20-year-old age group have a driver’s license,⁸ but the figure is lower for those in placement, even with a YAC: 14% of the older 19.5–20 group (with 26% preparing for the driver’s licensing exam). Some competencies, such as access to general benefits, the use of support missions,⁹ and accessing the services of employment agencies,¹⁰ are only acquired at the end of the YAC. Yet these services are known about earlier on in the contract, although less so at age 17. Similarly, the use of a debit card for payments other than cash is virtually absent from the lives of the 17-year-olds but is developed during the YAC.

Table 9.3 Competencies and skills by time spent in child protection

	Under age		Young adults		Competency increase 17 yo continuers -> age 19.5-20
	17 yo leavers	17 yo continuers	age 18-19.5	age 19.5-20	
Number	136	257	420	266	
Skills (proportion "yes, entirely")					
Daily life					
Cook a meal	74	67	73	74	1,1
Go shopping within a budget	80	69	80	82	1,2
Wash clothes	69	63	74	83	1,3
Punctuality (appointments, pay bills on time)	72	73	81	82	1,1
Accommodation					
Know how to find accommodation	21	15	25	33	2,1
Employment					
Know how to find a job	37	30	50	60	2,0
Know how to write a CV	53	44	62	70	1,6
Know how to reply to an employer	38	23	51	63	2,8
Know how to approach an employer	52	38	58	66	1,7
Habits					
Daily life					
Cook every day	30	24	42	58	2,5
Housework at least once a week	84	84	88	91	1,1
Leisure time					
Gone on holiday in last 12 months	74	81	64	53	0,7
Artistic activity at least once a week	25	30	23	23	0,8
Sport at least once a week	62	76	67	59	0,8
Spend time with friends at least once a week	92	92	90	81	0,9
Employment					
Job experience (gainful employment, summer job)	19	18	43	63	3,5
Job-related experience (internship, apprenticeship)	92	87	92	93	1,1
Knowledge of general benefits					
Aware of Missions Locales	79	61	77	87	1,4
Already used services of Missions Locales	31	18	38	56	3,2
Aware of Pôle Emploi	91	87	87	93	1,1
Already used services of Pôle Emploi	19	8	29	54	6,8
Aware of PAIO, CIO career advice offices for 16-25-year-olds	67	60	63	68	1,1
Already used services of PAIO, CIO	44	39	40	46	1,2
Assets for leaving placement and getting a job					
Money, financial resources					
Savings	52	57	69	72	1,3
Bank account	60	43	88	97	2,2
Able to pay other than with cash (debit card and/or checkbook)	14	14	63	79	5,7
Licences and certificates					
Having or preparing for driving license	5	5	24	39	7,7
Secondary school certificate	42	52	55	53	1,0
CAP or BEP	8	9	26	41	4,5
Baccalauréat	1	1	13	31	40,2
Degree	0	0	0	1	

A single item—leisure—is of less importance as these young people work through the YAC: 81% of 17-year-old continuers went away on holiday during the previous year, 64% of 18- to 19.5-year-olds did, and only 53% of 19.5- to 20-year-olds did. Regular involvement in an artistic activity or in sports or even spending time with friends are all less frequent among YAC groups. The preparation for autonomy within the YAC thus involves developing young people’s competencies in relation to qualifications, vocational integration, and coping with everyday life, rather than in maintaining or extending their social and personal contacts. Thus, the YAC, while contributing to the acquisition of skills and competencies, operates to the detriment of building or developing a network. As they prepare to leave placement, 62% of 17-year-old leavers state that family is one of the two most important things for them (Table 9.4).

Table 9.4 - What are the two most important things for you at the moment?

	Under age		Young adults		General population age 17-18 *
	17 yo leavers	17 yo continuers	age 18-19.5	age 19.5-20	
Number	136	257	420	266	
Health	29	28	30	31	20
Emotional attachments	28	28	24	22	25
Friends	15	17	15	12	30
Family	62	55	47	50	51
Education and work	49	56	65	63	41
Practice sport	8	11	10	8	11
Play music	2	2	2	5	4

Coverage: 1,079 young people in placement (except unaccompanied non-French minors) since before age 18. (Source: ELAP V1, INED, Laboratoire Printemps, 2013–14 ; Frechon & Marquet, 2016.) Comparative data: ESCAPAD* (OFDT, 2011) ; Spilka, Le Nézet, & Tovar, 2012.

The figure for 17-year-old continuers is 55%, so it remains one of the key elements in the lives of young people in placement, although it is less so among young adults. At all ages, the leavers are probably those for whom family is of particular importance. Note that family is cited as often by youth from placement as by young people in the general population. Conversely, education and work are mentioned most by young people in placement, and the longer their time has been on a YAC the more important these become. These are mentioned by only 41% of the general population at the same age. Young people in placement mention health more often than those in the general population (30% and 20%). Although at this age young people place great importance on relations with friends or boyfriends/girlfriends, those in placement rarely mention them and even less so when they are on a YAC.

Implications

The extension of protection to young adults goes back more than 40 years in France and is part of a major change in the perception of life stages over this period. Education now lasts longer, entering the labor market occurs later and with more difficulty for young people, and inequalities in vocational integration based on qualifications have grown during successive economic crises (Aliaga & Lé, 2016). The consequence has been the extension of young people’s financial dependency, usually on parents. Whereas, at the outset, young adult protection was solely intended to provide an extension for children in placement, the measure is now inadequate for the needs of young people who find it hard to get work and lack support from family.

Inadequate Numbers of Young Adult Contracts

The number of measures for young adults remains stable at a time of crisis when youth unemployment continues to rise. The consequence is that the support has become conditional and goes to those young people most committed to a plan of integration through continued

education. The measure therefore excludes those with the greatest educational difficulties and who have had the least active role in their placement trajectory (Petit-Gats & Guimard, 2011). One could rightly be concerned about the lack of legal recourse for this marginalized group among the population of non-continuers, and indeed by the subjugation of these young people who have no other possible recourse (especially if they have no family ties). They must be subject to the increasingly strict rules of the YAC if they are to claim the only support available to them.

Extended Protection

Termination of services and support at age 21 is out of sync with the current timing of adulthood, which requires qualifications and employment for financial independence. Early termination makes it almost impossible to envisage further education. Most career advice in child protection is constrained by this age limit. Young people leaving care, who have often experienced delays in their education, are directed toward short, vocational courses rather than longer programs of preparation that guarantee professional integration. Because these measures are threatened and because they are concerned with the future of young people at the end of placement, social workers set up a range of provisions to prepare these youth for life without the support of the institution that brought them up. Although still in protection, most of the young adults with YACs move toward living independently via “autonomous” accommodations, where they learn to cope with aspects of daily life on their own. During this period, they learn how to manage a budget, and most of the money is provided by the protection service. They also learn about various general benefits available to them so that they can have contact addresses when they leave placement. However, this preparation takes precedence over other possible forms of preparation, such as encouragement for building a sustainable network of mutual support and solidarity. The insistence that young adults must complete their education and prepare for life outside is so pressing that they are forced to prioritize their aspirations. Any space for extracurricular, extrainstitutional life, for relaxation and leisure, where they could build up their networks of family and friends is thus reduced to a strict minimum. This echoes the work of Goyette (2014) on the concept of “interdependent living.” Thus, thinking of these individuals leaving care as moving not toward independence but interdependence (that is, able to connect and function with others) would “focus on one essential objective: to help young people in alternative environments to establish and maintain essential relationships to meet their needs as human beings” (Goyette, 2014).

Conclusion and Future Directions

The period of transition to adulthood takes longer than ever, and young people need to increasingly rely on family support to be able to continue their studies and to integrate into the job market. The economic crisis has impacted young people looking for jobs: the unemployment rate in France for those under 25 has steadily increased since 2008, stagnating in 2017 at around 25%. Parental support is essential. In this context, the assistance provided to 18- to 21-year-olds transitioning from care to adulthood is being threatened by the persistent lack of financial resources.

The withdrawal of the state from the protection of young adults was initiated in 2005, and, most recently, this disengagement became evident in several child protection departments in France. However, it is the only measure that provides for young people placed and without parental support, relieving them of pressure regarding basic survival (having a roof, a meal, feeling safe). This, in turn, allows them to concentrate on the pursuit of their education.

Our study has highlighted the undeniable benefit of this measure, which enables young people to pursue education or, if necessary, catch up in school to obtain at least a high school diploma. Support for young adults also allows them to acquire a range of skills, which are both not easily accessible before they reach majority or which are not well anticipated (such as the acquisition of driver's licenses, accumulating professional experience, opening a bank account, gaining familiarity with common law aids, etc.).

Our study has also highlighted the filtering and discriminatory effect of this help, which is granted only to the least vulnerable among these youth. Project-based aid gives little space to those who do not have enough or have nothing. Young minors who have already dropped out of school and/or those who have had less success in their placement trajectory are also those who benefit less or for a shorter period of time. On the other hand, the YAC creates other risks and may eventually have a paradoxical effect on the future of young people: There is a risk that young people submit to the requirements of the YAC program, especially those who have no recourse other than to accept the conditions for getting support. This may result in them putting their own aspirations aside, for example by taking on professional training even if they want to go to university. By compressing the time during which reinsertion must be accomplished, these measures can limit—or even preclude—any other form of secondary socialization, in turn perpetuating isolation as these youth move into adulthood.

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- 1 Article L221-1 1° of the Families and Social Action Code.
 - 2 The most recent is Law No. 2016-297 of March 14, 2016, on child protection, reforming the Law of March 5, 2007.
 - 3 Constitutional by law on budget acts.
 - 4 Etude Longitudinale sur l'accès à l'Autonomie après le Placement
 - 5 Comparative sources. For a comparative source of data in the general population, see the health and consumption survey on defense preparation day of 25,500 17-year-old French nationals (Spilka, Le Nézet, & Tovar 2012).
 - 6 Of the young people in young adult protection at the time of the survey, 9% entered protection between the ages of 18 and 20. Since we are concerned with the lives of those who continue from child to young adult protection, this small group (n = 71) is excluded from our analyses.
 - 7 Calculated as the inverse of the odds ratio: $1/0.17$.
 - 8 Based on the Trajectoires et Origines database, youth strand (Beauchemin, 2015).
 - 9 The Mission Locale is an office devoted to youth and provides individualized support to administrative applications. The office answers questions about employment and training, and also on accommodation and health.
 - 10 The main mission of the Pôle Emploi (employment office) is to offer each job seeker a single contact person who will take measures to ensure that they rapidly return to the labor market on the right terms. The Pôle Emploi provides registration, information, career advice, follow-up, and support for job seekers. It is also responsible for bringing together employers and job seekers. The Pôle Emploi provides the unemployed with financial support: it determines and pays out unemployment benefits and welfare minimum benefits for the job seekers on its books.