

The Self-Made Crisis: Why the Quarter-Life Crisis Is a Socially Constituted Occupational Crisis and What Social Work Must Do About It

Sora Pazer¹

¹Department of Psychology and Social Work, IU International University of Applied Science, ORCID: 0009-0000-8928-705X |
 Correspondence: sorapazer@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
Article history: Published: August 2026 Keywords: Quarter-life crisis Emerging adulthood School-to-work transition Occupational identity Social work	The quarter-life crisis is commonly interpreted as an individual affliction of an overburdened generation, a matter of psychological vulnerability to be addressed through counselling and self-exploration. This conceptual review advances a contrary position. It argues that the quarter-life crisis is not a psychopathological phenomenon but a structurally produced transition problem; that its core lies not in diffuse identity searching but in a delayed and therefore devaluing entry into occupational life; and that the extension of the exploratory phase, celebrated as a gain in freedom, systematically withholds the very experience from which occupational identity is formed. The review integrates four literatures that are rarely read together: developmental work on emerging adulthood and identity status, sociological work on the de-standardisation of life-course transitions, career-psychological work on self-efficacy and self-concept implementation, and labour-market research on entry timing and scarring effects. From this synthesis it derives a testable proposition: individuals who acquire their first substantial employment experience only around the age of thirty carry an elevated risk not merely of delay but of never completing the transition at all. The consequences for social work are specific. The profession must address the school-to-work transition earlier, more practically, and with explicit reference to the family; treat internships as developmental interventions rather than administrative requirements; and work towards the parallelisation rather than the sequencing of qualification and employment. The limits of this position, including its thin longitudinal evidence base, are stated openly.

1. Introduction

A twenty-eight-year-old sits in a counselling room holding two master's degrees, a portfolio of unpaid internships, and a curriculum vitae that documents everything except an occupation. She is articulate about her values, fluent in the vocabulary of self-reflection, and entirely unable to answer a simple question: what can you do. She has spent a decade being prepared for work without working. The distress she reports is real, but its source is not where she has been taught to look for it. Scenes of this kind have become common enough to acquire a name. The quarter-life crisis denotes a period of disorientation, doubt, decisional paralysis, and the persistent sense of falling behind an invisible schedule, typically occurring between the mid-twenties and the mid-thirties (Robinson, 2019). The dominant interpretation of these reports is therapeutic. Commentators speak of overload, of mental health burdens, of a fragile generation. That interpretation is not wrong, but it is inconsequential, because it locates the cause where the cause does not lie.

1.1 Position of the Review

The present review takes a different position. The quarter-life crisis is socially constituted and, in a precise sense, self-made: it is the predictable outcome of an arrangement that grants young people an ever longer exploratory phase while withholding from them the one thing that produces orientation, namely experience. Those who are qualified for years without working accumulate options rather than self-knowledge. Options multiply uncertainty; they do not reduce it. The central thesis follows from this. The quarter-life crisis is primarily an occupational crisis rather than an identity crisis. Identity diffusion is the symptom; delayed occupational integration is the cause. Those who enter employment late, after prolonged qualification, do not suffer from a weak personality but from a thin evidential basis about themselves. They know what they studied. They do not know what they can do, what they can tolerate, or what they are suited for.

1.2 Research Questions and Contribution

Three questions organise the argument. First, through which social mechanisms is the quarter-life crisis produced? Second, why should the timing of first occupational experience, rather than the intensity of self-exploration, be treated as the decisive variable? Third, what follows for a profession whose institutional position places it precisely at the intersection of person, family, education system, and labour market?

The contribution of this review is threefold. It reframes a phenomenon that is predominantly psychologised as a structural transition problem; it identifies the timing of first substantial employment as the analytically decisive variable and formulates this as a testable

proposition; and it derives from that reframing a concrete mandate for social work at four levels of intervention. The practical stakes are considerable, because the framing determines the intervention: reading the crisis as one of meaning prescribes more reflection, which is more of what produced the problem, whereas reading it as occupational prescribes structured exposure to work.

2. Literature Review

Four bodies of literature bear on the phenomenon, and their separation explains much of the conceptual confusion surrounding it. The developmental literature describes the life phase, the sociological literature describes the transition regime, the career-psychological literature describes the formation of occupational identity, and the labour-market literature describes the consequences of entry timing. Each is well developed; they are rarely read against one another.

2.1 *The Construct and Its Origins*

The term did not originate in scholarship. Robbins and Wilner (2001) coined quarterlife crisis in a trade publication to describe the sense of being overwhelmed that follows the move from education into working life. Empirical treatment came later. Robinson (2015, 2019) conceptualises the phenomenon as a transitional crisis passing through four phases: a sense of entrapment within a self-chosen role, an inner distancing from that role, an exit or rupture, and finally the reconstruction of an altered self-conception and occupational project. Two findings from this line of work are decisive for the present argument. First, the crisis is precipitated in the large majority of cases by occupational triggers, namely the workplace, the choice of course of study, or the trajectory of a career, rather than by relationship or health events. Second, it is not a clinical disorder but a developmental crisis with a potentially constructive outcome. Both findings support the reading advanced here: the object of analysis is a problem of transition and experience, not an illness.

2.2 *Emerging Adulthood: From Description to Prescription*

Arnett (2000, 2015) proposed the term emerging adulthood for the life phase between eighteen and twenty-nine and characterised it through five features: identity exploration, instability, self-focus, the feeling of being in-between, and a heightened sense of possibility. As a descriptive concept this is precise. What has been made of it is not. A description of a life phase has been converted into a normative programme: young people are to try themselves out, to search, to take their time. The blind spot lies exactly here. Arnett describes the exploratory phase as developmentally beneficial without systematically examining the conditions under which exploration issues in clarification and those under which it terminates in exhaustion. Critics have been direct. Emerging adulthood is not a universal developmental stage but the privilege of an educationally advantaged middle class in affluent societies (Bynner, 2005; Côté, 2014). Those who must work do not experience emerging adulthood. They experience work, and in doing so acquire, incidentally, the experience whose absence generates the crisis.

2.3 *Identity Through Action Rather Than Reflection*

Erikson (1968) framed adolescence as a struggle for identity against role diffusion and introduced for it the notion of a psychosocial moratorium, a period of grace in which commitments may be deferred. What matters is what Erikson did not mean by the moratorium, namely an indefinite extension. The moratorium is functional because it ends. Marcia (1966) operationalised this idea and distinguished four identity statuses. The mature form, achieved identity, presupposes both exploration and commitment. Those who only explore remain in the moratorium status. That condition now describes the normal state of a substantial share of people in their mid-twenties. They explore permanently without ever arriving at commitment, because their environment does not demand commitment but rewards the preservation of openness. Vocational psychology supports this reading. Super (1980) describes career development as a process of implementing a self-concept, a process that necessarily presupposes trial. Social cognitive career theory holds that occupational interests and goals arise from self-efficacy expectations (Lent et al., 1994), and self-efficacy draws most powerfully on personal mastery experience (Bandura, 1997). Without employment experience the strongest source of occupational self-efficacy is simply absent. Occupational identity is not formed through reflection upon possibilities. It is formed through action under real conditions.

2.4 *Transition Regimes and Entry Timing*

Transition research has for decades documented the de-standardisation, individualisation, and prolongation of transition trajectories (Beck, 1986; Blossfeld et al., 2005; Heinz, 2009). Transitions have become reversible, looped, and repeatable. Comparative work on school-to-work regimes shows that the institutional linkage between education and employment, rather than the volume of education, predicts the smoothness of entry (Shavit & Müller, 1998; Wolbers, 2007). Labour-market research adds the temporal dimension: delayed or interrupted entries exert long-term scarring effects on income, employment stability, and health (Gangl, 2006; Schmitten & Umkehrer, 2017). These findings are seldom brought to bear on the quarter-life crisis literature, which is the gap this review addresses.

3. Methodology

This article is a narrative conceptual review with an explicitly argumentative orientation. It does not aim at the exhaustive coverage characteristic of a systematic review, but at theoretical integration across research traditions that address the same phenomenon under different descriptions.

Narrative synthesis was chosen because the problem is not a shortage of empirical findings within each literature but the absence of a framework connecting them. Where the analytical task is conceptual rather than aggregative, narrative review is the appropriate design (Snyder, 2019). The review generates no new empirical data, and its claims are accordingly theoretical rather than evidential. Sources were identified through targeted searches in PsycINFO, Web of Science, and Google Scholar using the search terms quarter-life crisis, emerging adulthood, school-to-work transition, occupational identity, scarring effects, and youth employment, in combination and in isolation. Searches were supplemented by backward and forward citation tracking from the core references in

each tradition. Selection privileged foundational theoretical statements, comparative institutional analyses, and empirical work bearing directly on the timing of occupational entry. Publications were included irrespective of date where they constitute canonical statements of a theoretical position. The synthesis proceeded in three steps. First, each literature was summarised in terms of the causal mechanism it proposes for the disorientation observed in young adults. Second, these mechanisms were compared with respect to their implications for the timing of occupational entry. Third, a single proposition was formulated that is consistent with all four literatures and, in principle, falsifiable. Counterarguments were sought deliberately rather than incidentally and are presented in Section 5.

4. Findings

The synthesis yields four connected findings: the crisis is structurally produced rather than individually caused; employment rather than reflection is the site at which occupational identity is clarified; a first entry around the age of thirty concentrates several risks simultaneously; and the family operates as an underestimated gatekeeper of early occupational experience.

4.1 *The Social Constitution of the Crisis*

The transition to adulthood was for a long time short, binding, and collectively timed: school, training, employment, family. That sequence has eroded. Beck (1986) identified the mechanism through which its erosion becomes invisible. Individualisation transfers socially generated contradictions into the biographical responsibility of the individual. The person must close the institutional gap personally. Where this fails, the failure is interpreted as personal inadequacy. Precisely this attribution is observable in quarter-life crisis narratives: those affected speak about themselves, not about structures. It is not young adults who have changed but the architecture of the transition. Educational expansion has substantially lengthened the time spent within the education system. This is, in the first instance, an achievement. Its unintended effect is that the phase of institutionally structured non-employment expands: longer schooling, undergraduate study, master's programmes, sequences of internships, second degrees, doctoral study, fixed-term qualification posts. In many academic trajectories the first permanent full-time contract falls beyond the thirtieth year of life. Credential devaluation compounds the effect. Where a certificate that once opened access now merely secures participation in a competition, a rational response follows: another degree. This logic is individually comprehensible and collectively destructive. Schwartz (2004) demonstrated that expanding choice lowers rather than raises decision quality and satisfaction, through deferral, regret, and anxiety about the better alternative not taken. Transferred to occupational biographies the effect is severe, because the costs are not incurred immediately. Those who do not commit lose nothing in the short term and everything in the medium term: years of experience, accumulated competence, occupational networks, and self-efficacy. Diagnoses of acceleration and self-optimisation complete the picture (Ehrenberg, 2004; Rosa, 2005), describing an ideal of unbounded self-realisation that generates a specific form of exhaustion, not that of the overworked but that of the insufficient. The term self-made, applied to this configuration, does not denote individual culpability. It denotes collective authorship. Education policy, universities, labour markets, families, and counselling systems have jointly produced an arrangement that rewards deferral and penalises commitment. To treat the resulting crisis as individual suffering is to treat the symptom and to conserve the cause.

4.2 *Work as the Site of Clarification*

Employment performs far more than an income function. Jahoda (1982) identified five latent functions: time structure, social contact beyond the family, participation in collective purposes, status and identity, and regular activity. Those who first enter employment at thirty have foregone all of these for a long period without constructing a substitute structure, since study provides time structure only weakly and status allocation only provisionally. The feedback mechanism is decisive. Work generates feedback. It reveals what functions and what does not, where limits lie, which tasks sustain a person and which erode her. This information cannot be replaced by contemplation. Those who lack it cannot form a realistic occupational self-concept. What they possess instead are conceptions, and conceptions are not robust against disappointment.

4.3 *The Risk of a First Occupational Contact at Thirty*

The central risk case may be stated plainly: individuals who acquire substantial occupational experience for the first time only around the age of thirty. For this group several disadvantages accumulate simultaneously, as summarised in Table 1. The first is an experience deficit under conditions of high expectation. The employer observes the age and the credentials and anticipates competence; in fact the person is beginning as a novice, and the discrepancy generates shame and raises the probability of withdrawal. The second is a hardened self-image. At twenty-five an unsuitable occupational choice can be corrected; at thirty the self-description as highly qualified has consolidated to the point that an entry below that level is experienced as descent and therefore avoided. The third is the absence of occupational networks, since occupational contacts arise in workplaces rather than in seminars. The fourth is the collision of developmental tasks, as family formation, housing, financial security, and occupational entry converge and must be accomplished simultaneously. The fifth is scarring, documented in labour-market research as a long-term effect of delayed or interrupted entry on income, employment stability, and health (Gangl, 2006; Schmillen & Umkehrer, 2017). The consequence is pointed but defensible. A very late first entry is not merely a delay; it raises the probability that the transfer into the labour market will not be accomplished at all. Deferral becomes a cul-de-sac.

Table 1: Accumulating risks associated with a first substantial occupational entry around the age of thirty

Risk mechanism	Description	Principal reference
Experience deficit under high expectation	Age and credentials signal a competence the person has not yet acquired; the discrepancy generates shame and withdrawal.	Bandura (1997)
Hardened self-image	The consolidated self-description as highly qualified makes entry below that level appear as descent and is therefore avoided.	Marcia (1966)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Absence of occupational networks	Occupational contacts arise within workplaces; late entrants lack the network that cushions further transitions.	Granovetter (1973)
Collision of developmental tasks	Family formation, housing, financial security, and occupational entry converge and must be accomplished at once.	Heckhausen et al. (2010)
Scarring	Delayed or interrupted entry exerts long-term effects on income, employment stability, and health.	Gangl (2006); Schmillen and Umkehrer (2017)

Source: Author's synthesis of the reviewed literature

4.4 *An Occupational Rather Than an Existential Crisis*

Counselling practice regularly treats the quarter-life crisis as a crisis of meaning. Those affected ask who they are, what they want, what they are living for. These questions are genuine, but they are secondary. They arise because the person possesses no robust answer to a prior question: what can I do, and where am I needed. This is more than a nuance, because it determines the intervention. Reflection without experience circles upon itself; experience without reflection remains blunt. The order, however, is not arbitrary. Experience comes first.

4.5 *The Family as an Underestimated Factor*

The family is the earliest and most effective agency of occupational orientation, and it operates through three channels. The first is modelling: those who have experienced employment as self-evident, shapeable, and meaningful develop a different relation to it than those for whom work remains an abstraction, since occupational self-efficacy is also acquired vicariously (Bandura, 1997). The second is social and cultural capital, which explains why internship placements, contacts, and insider knowledge are distributed along highly unequal social lines (Bourdieu, 1986). Access to early occupational experience is therefore itself a mechanism of inequality, which is at once the strongest objection to a naive demand for internships and the strongest argument for social work as a compensating agency. The third channel is expectation, and it operates in both directions. Two patterns are obstructive. Status expectation devalues every non-academic pathway. Overprotection shields the person from every test and thereby withholds the experience from which self-confidence arises. Parental care that cushions the transition not infrequently prevents it. For practice this implies that occupational orientation without reference to the family is inadequate: to work only with the young person is to work against a system that is stronger than the counselling relationship.

4.6 *Parallelising Rather Than Sequencing Qualification and Work*

The obvious response, shortening education, is mistaken, since it sacrifices depth of formation for speed. The correct response is structural: qualification and employment should be parallelised rather than sequenced. The German dual system demonstrates that this is feasible. Comparative research attributes the comparatively low youth unemployment of dually organised systems substantially to the embedding of training within firms (Shavit & Müller, 1998; Wolbers, 2007). The mechanism is straightforward. Those who work during qualification possess, at the end of qualification, experience, a network, and a realistic self-image. The transition does not occur because it has already occurred. For the academic sector this implies dual and work-integrated degree programmes, mandatory and substantial practice phases, working-student employment as the norm rather than an additional burden, and the recognition of occupational performance as academic credit. The aim is not to shorten educational time but to abolish its separation from the world of work. Under this perspective an internship is not an administrative requirement but a developmental intervention, supplying the mastery experience that constitutes the principal source of occupational self-efficacy. An internship is effective where it transfers genuine responsibility, is appropriately remunerated, and is professionally supervised. Unpaid extended internships operating as disguised employment achieve the opposite, prolonging the moratorium and devaluing the person.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The quarter-life crisis is not a property of a generation but the result of an arrangement. The exploratory phase has been extended and the experience from which orientation arises has been removed from it.

5.1 *Conclusion*

The outcome is predictable: highly qualified young adults who do not know what they can do, because they were never required to find out. The core of the crisis is occupational. Those who enter very late risk not merely delay but the failure of the transition itself. The answer lies neither in more self-reflection nor in shorter education, but in the parallelisation of qualification and work. The position advanced here is deliberately pointed and must answer several objections. Not every delay is harmful; there are well-documented cases in which late entry following an extended search yields higher person-job fit, and the thesis asserts no causality in the individual case but an elevation of risk in the aggregate. Early commitment can itself be damaging, since foreclosed identity, commitment without exploration, is a fragile form that collapses readily under crisis (Marcia, 1966); the appropriate response is not less exploration but earlier exploration, conducted through action. Access to early occupational experience is socially unequal, so that a demand for internships may aggravate inequality where it normalises unpaid labour, which makes remuneration and access conditions of feasibility rather than peripheral matters. The evidence base is limited, since much quarter-life crisis research rests on small, qualitative, and strongly self-selected samples from Western, educationally advantaged milieus, and longitudinal studies testing the relation between entry timing and crisis experience are largely absent. Finally, the individualising interpretation contains a kernel of truth, since psychological distress is real; what is disputed is not its reality but the order of explanation, in that structure produces the conditions under which individual vulnerability becomes crisis.

5.2 *Recommendations*

Social work is the profession competent for this problem, because it operates at the intersection of person, family, education system, and labour market. Its task is not the therapy of the crisis but the reconstruction of the transition, and four levels of intervention

follow. At the level of early intervention, school social work must treat occupational orientation as a core task rather than as a supplementary offer in the final year. What proves effective is whatever establishes real contact: workplace exploration, repeated and serious internships, mentoring by working practitioners, and projects with external clients. Interest inventories and occupational databases generate no experience but a further list of options, and therefore reproduce the problem of choice in miniature. At the level of access, the provision of early occupational experience becomes a matter of social justice once it is recognised as protective and unequally distributed. Social work should build and maintain internship networks, particularly for young people without family contacts; press for remuneration and professional supervision; and recruit and support firms willing to accept disadvantaged young people. This is classical network and community work directed at a resource that has so far been underestimated. At the level of counselling, a clear priority follows: action before self-exploration. Concretely this means limiting decisions to a manageable horizon, a year of trial rather than a decision for life; relieving the fear of the wrong choice through revisability; framing entry below the formal qualification level as a legitimate pathway; and interpreting employment experience explicitly as a source of self-knowledge. Systemic and solution-focused approaches are compatible with this priority because they place small concrete steps ahead of large clarifications, and the family belongs in the process wherever status expectations or overprotection sustain the blockage. At the structural level, social work should name the cause rather than process it in individualised form. This entails advocacy for dual and work-integrated educational pathways, for remunerated and quality-assured practice phases, for the revaluation of non-academic pathways against the status hierarchy of credentials, and against the further extension of unpaid qualification loops. Future research should test the central proposition directly. Longitudinal designs relating the age of first substantial employment to subsequent crisis experience, occupational stability, and wellbeing are the obvious priority, ideally in cross-national comparison between dual and academically sequenced transition regimes. Intervention studies evaluating early, remunerated, and supervised practice phases would establish whether the mechanism proposed here is manipulable. Until such evidence exists, the argument presented in this review should be read as a research programme rather than as a settled finding. What can already be said without hedging is that a profession which administers the quarter-life crisis as individual suffering becomes the symptom management of the system that produces it.

References

- [1] Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55(6), 469-480.
- [2] Arnett, J. J. (2015). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. {Book}
- [3] Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: W. H. Freeman. {Book}
- [4] Beck, U. (1986). *Risikogesellschaft: Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. {Book}
- [5] Blossfeld, H.-P., Klijzing, E., Mills, M. & Kurz, K. (Eds.). (2005). *Globalization, uncertainty and youth in society*. London: Routledge.
- [6] Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241-258). New York: Greenwood Press.
- [7] Bynner, J. (2005). Rethinking the youth phase of the life-course: The case for emerging adulthood? *Journal of Youth Studies*, 8(4), 367-384.
- [8] Côté, J. E. (2014). The dangerous myth of emerging adulthood: An evidence-based critique of a flawed developmental theory. *Applied Developmental Science*, 18(4), 177-188.
- [9] Ehrenberg, A. (2004). *Das erschöpfte Selbst: Depression und Gesellschaft in der Gegenwart*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.
- [10] Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: Norton. {Book}
- [11] Furlong, A. & Cartmel, F. (2007). *Young people and social change: New perspectives* (2nd ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- [12] Gangl, M. (2006). Scar effects of unemployment: An assessment of institutional complementarities. *American Sociological Review*, 71(6), 986-1013.
- [13] Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380.
- [14] Heckhausen, J., Wrosch, C. & Schulz, R. (2010). A motivational theory of life-span development. *Psychological Review*, 117(1), 32-60.
- [15] Heinz, W. R. (2009). Youth transitions in an age of uncertainty. In A. Furlong (Ed.), *Handbook of youth and young adulthood* (pp. 3-13). London: Routledge.
- [16] Jahoda, M. (1982). *Employment and unemployment: A social-psychological analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [17] Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D. & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 45(1), 79-122.
- [18] Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 3(5), 551-558.
- [19] Mortimer, J. T. (2003). *Working and growing up in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. {Book}
- [20] Robbins, A. & Wilner, A. (2001). *Quarterlife crisis: The unique challenges of life in your twenties*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam.
- [21] Robinson, O. C. (2015). Emerging adulthood, early adulthood and quarter-life crisis. In R. Žukauskienė (Ed.), *Emerging adulthood in a European context* (pp. 17-30). London: Routledge.
- [22] Robinson, O. C. (2019). A longitudinal mixed-methods case study of quarter-life crisis during the post-university transition. *Emerging Adulthood*, 7(3), 167-179.
- [23] Rosa, H. (2005). *Beschleunigung: Die Veränderung der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. {Book}
- [24] Schmillen, A. & Umkehrer, M. (2017). The scars of youth: Effects of early-career unemployment on future unemployment experience. *International Labour Review*, 156(3-4), 465-494.

- [22] Schoon, I. & Silbereisen, R. K. (Eds.). (2009). *Transitions from school to work: Globalization, individualization, and patterns of diversity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. {Book}
- [23] Schwartz, B. (2004). *The paradox of choice: Why more is less*. New York: Ecco. {Book}
- [24] Settersten, R. A. & Ray, B. (2010). What's going on with young people today? The long and twisting path to adulthood. *The Future of Children*, 20(1), 19-41.
- [25] Shavit, Y. & Müller, W. (Eds.). (1998). *From school to work: A comparative study of educational qualifications and occupational destinations*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. {Book}
- [26] Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333-339.
- [27] Super, D. E. (1980). A life-span, life-space approach to career development. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 16(3), 282-298.
- [28] Wolbers, M. H. J. (2007). Patterns of labour market entry: A comparative perspective on school-to-work transitions in 11 European countries. *Acta Sociologica*, 50(3), 189-210.