

Leavers, Planners and Dwellers

The decision to leave the parental home

Arianne N. Baanders

Stellingen

behorend bij het proefschrift van Arianne Baanders

"Leavers, planners and dwellers. The decision to leave the parental home".

1.

Bepaalde mogelijkheden om uit huis te gaan leiden niet noodzakelijkerwijs tot het uitstellen van de transitie, maar ook wel tot het bijstellen van geprefereerde opties.

(dit proefschrift)

2.

In tegenstelling tot wat vaak beweerd wordt, moet de betekenis van sociale normen in de beslissing om uit huis te gaan niet uitgevlakt worden.

(dit proefschrift)

3.

De subjectieve evaluatie van het individuele inkomen is een belangrijker determinant in de beslissing om uit huis te gaan dan het objectieve inkomensniveau.

(dit proefschrift)

4.

Het geringe aanbod van goedkope twee- en driekamerwoningen op de Nederlandse woningmarkt vermindert de kans van jongeren om uit huis te gaan.

(dit proefschrift)

5.

Het gevaar van analyses op geaggregeerd niveau is dat zij gemakkelijk leiden tot misinterpretatie van de gevonden effecten of tot oversimplificatie van gedragspatronen. Anderzijds is het lastig om met analyses op individueel niveau te komen tot een adequate en hanteerbare vertaling van de uitkomsten naar patronen op macroniveau.

6.

Maatschappelijke arrangementen en politieke beslissingen zijn mede bepalend voor de wijze waarop de stappen in de overgang naar volwassenheid gezet worden.

7.

Door de pluriformisering van de samenleving zijn de verzameling en interpretatie van nationale statistieken complexer en tijdrovender geworden.

8.

"Prognoses worden veelal zonder veel discussie aanvaard als uitgangspunt voor verdere beleidsvorming, terwijl er vaak wel degelijk verschillend kan worden gedacht over de uitgangspunten die aan de prognoses ten grondslag hebben gelegen."

Pieter Hooimeijer, De toekomst ver(te)kend. Bevolking en Gezin, 1995 (boekaflevering), 1-15.

9.

De kritiek dat het model van Ajzen en Fishbein een structuurmodel is terwijl bestudering van besluitvorming een procesmodel vereist¹⁾, is niet terecht. Het punt is niet zozeer dat het model statisch is, als wel dat bij toepassing ervan veelal een cross-sectionele benadering gebruikt wordt.

1) Jonas K, Doll J (1996), Eine kritische Evaluation der Theorie überlegten Handelns und der Theorie geplanten Verhaltens. *Zeitschrift für Sozialpsychologie*, 27,1: 18-31.

10.

Flexibilisering van de arbeidsmarkt werkt flexibilisering van de levensloop in de hand.

11.

Afgaande op het in Nederland gevoerde milieubeleid, is het belangrijkste kenmerk van normen dat ze bijgesteld kunnen worden.

12.

Bij een wandeling door Nederlandse nieuwbouwwijken is weinig te merken van de toenemende behoefte aan individualisering.

13.

De komst van de computer heeft het geheugen van de mensen aangetast, getuige de door systeembeheerders vaak gehoorde klacht: "Ik heb niet genoeg geheugen".

14.

Het economisch nut van stellingen is nihil.

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Leavers, Planners and Dwellers

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Proefschrift

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For my parents

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Leaving home

In western society, leaving the parental home can be considered one of the most common events in the demographic life course of individuals. It is looked upon as a normal and natural thing to happen to virtually everyone at some time. We all know that children are bound to move away from their parents and to establish independent households. What cannot be foreseen with such certainty, however, is the route that young adults will choose when leaving the parental home. Despite the generality of the event, the transition is not the same for all. Some leave home early, others wait until they are older; some start living alone, others set up independent households with a partner; some will move into lodgings, others look for an apartment.

Furthermore, the generality of the event says nothing about changes in the patterns in home-leaving behaviour over time. During the past several decades, interesting shifts in the timing and arrangements of the transition have occurred. In the period between 1950 and 1980, Dutch young adults were seen to leave home at ever younger ages, and they increasingly started living alone when doing so. After 1980, however, a reversal in the trend occurred as young adults were observed to postpone leaving home (Latten, 1990; De Graaf, 1989; Van Der Heijdt & Prins, 1993; Ter Bogt & Van Praag, 1992). This trend was cause for concern, with even the media and popular magazines frequently addressing the matter, speculating on the underlying causes and pointing out in passing its possible negative consequences (Margriet, 1993; *Intermediair* 29/5/92; *NRC* 15/11/1997; *NRC* 6/8/1994; *NRC* 13/9/1997). It has been suggested, for instance, that the economic circumstances of the 1980s could be responsible for the delay of the departure. A lack of opportunity to move out would frustrate young adults in their need to gain full adult status, being prevented from setting up independent households, thus disrupting the 'normal' transition of young adults into adulthood (Wallace, 1987; Blossfeld & Nuthmann, 1989b). They were forced to remain dependent on their parents, which was believed to impede personal and social maturation (Ward & Spitze, 1992; Wise & McBride Murry, 1987).

Other sources speculated that young adults voluntarily linger in the parental home, because they are reluctant to give up the comforts of their parents' home (*Volkskrant* 13/7/1994; *Volkskrant* 1/10/1997; *Trouw* 26/11/1993; De Jong Gierveld *et al.*, 1991; Ter Bogt & Van Praag, 1992). In this case, the prolonged stay in the parental home is believed to be a problem for the parents, because they are stuck with their offspring longer than expected or desired, affecting their personal freedom and privacy (Schnaiberg & Goldenberg, 1989; Suitor & Pillemer, 1987; Thooft, 1998).

Obviously, there is a need to increase our understanding of the mechanisms that explain why young adults decide to continue living in the parental home, and what makes them decide to move out. *What are the factors that influence the transition from living at home to living independently?* Improved insight is not only relevant to alleviate concerns about the well-being of young adults or their parents. It should be realised that leaving the parental home has far-reaching consequences, not only for the young adults, for whom the event marks the end of parent-child coresidence and the beginning of independence, but also for society, because the transition involves such large numbers of individuals.

For one, all these individuals have to find a place to live. Household formation of young adults leaving the parental home thus creates tremendous pressures on the housing market, and changes in the age at departure or in household destinations are directly reflected in the demand for housing. It is therefore in the interest of public housing policy to gain greater insight into the factors that play a role in the decision to leave the parental home. Such knowledge not only allows one to foresee the possible shifts in behaviour resulting from fluctuations in these factors, but also to anticipate the need for policy measures necessary to prevent insufficient housing provisions, and to assess whether and to what extent planned measures are likely to affect home-leaving behaviour. Similarly, to the extent that economic factors may be found to affect the decision, socio-economic policy can benefit from an improved understanding of the event of leaving home. As this study aims to disclose which factors influence the individual's departure from the parental home, and to which groups of young adults these factors are relevant, more precise policies can be formulated which fit better with the differentiated reality and take account of the diversity of circumstances and perspectives of different categories of people (Tilanus, 1997). In addition, knowledge of the housing needs and aspirations of young nest-leavers may lead to a more efficient, market-oriented management of the housing stock (Smid & Priemus, 1994).

It is also important to realise that the decision to move out is taken during a period of life during which many other important life-events are taking place. To the extent that these events are interrelated, it can be expected that leaving home may affect or interfere with the achievements in other life-course domains (Blossfeld & Huinink, 1991). Shifts in leaving home may therefore have consequences for the realisation of other demographic events, such as union formation, family formation, or migration, which in turn have their consequences for the demand on housing. It can thus be argued that the relevance of studying home-leaving behaviour exceeds the subject itself.

1.2 Explanatory factors

In the literature, there are mainly two perspectives dominating theoretical thinking about the determinants affecting departure from the parental home: an economic and a cultural one. First, in many previous demographic and economic studies, the search for an explanation of the changes in leaving home focused on the impact of the *situational context* on the individual's behaviour (McElroy, 1985; Whittington & Peters, 1996; Iedema & Sanders, 1996; Irwin, 1995; Mitchell *et al.*, 1989; Wallace, 1987). The economic perspective underlying this theoretical viewpoint also guided many studies on issues which are directly related to or coincident with leaving home; that is, studies on household formation, union formation, migration or tenure choice (Cebeon, 1985; Chew, 1990; De Pamphilis, 1977; Ermisch, 1988; Ferment, 1986; Harris, 1988; Leonard, 1980; MacDonald & Rindfuss, 1981; Priemus, 1983; Van Leeuwen & Ploegmakers, 1987). These studies argue that the situational context defines the individual's opportunities, resources and constraints, and may thus limit or broaden the set of options. As such, the opportunity structure can facilitate or impede realisation of behavioral choices. In this point of view, temporal changes in home-leaving behaviour are seen as a response to changes in prevailing circumstances.

Two aspects of the situational context are particularly highlighted because they are believed to supply the basic resources to support moving out or the formation of a household. On the one hand, the decision to start a (new) household is believed to depend on the economic position. It is asserted that the absence of opportunities for employment or lack of an adequate income will affect the decision to move out. Evidence for this hypothesis is derived from macro-level studies which relate changes in unemployment rates, in the number of sources of income, or in national income to shifts in the number of households, household composition, migration, and, of course, leaving home. Others also discussed, for instance, the impact of (revisions in) the social security system on these matters. Apparently, economic conditions seem to play a role in the decision to leave the parental home.

On the other hand, some writers stress that the opportunity to move (out) or start a new household depends on the availability of affordable housing (Börsch-Supan, 1986; Carliner, 1975; Jones, 1987). In these studies, the impact of the price of rental accommodations, of the relative shortage of housing and of vacancy rates are investigated. The relevance of housing in the decision to leave home becomes clear, for instance, from the finding that 20.2% of those living at home said that they were doing so because of concerns about housing (Pickvance & Pickvance, 1994).

Drawing on the insights provided by these studies, it can be hypothesised that financial resources and the accessibility of affordable housing are essential in the decision to leave the parental home and set up an independent household. The first factor to be included in our study as a potential determinant of leaving home thus relates to the situational context as defined by both the economic situation and the housing market.

There is, however, a second dominant, more culturally oriented, research tradition that has addressed the event of leaving home from the perspective of the individual's life course. Although this tradition also acknowledges the role of the situational context by referring to the essence of the 'historical time' (Elder, 1978, 1980), sociologists studying the individual life course typically emphasise the *normative context* and the role of social norms which are believed to regulate the timing and arrangement of important life course transitions. It can be argued that the normative context defines the social opportunity structure (Mulder, 1993). To the extent that a person's choice is guided by social norms and expectations, the normative context can be said to present another argument on which the decision to move out may be based. Changes in transition norms (Crommentuijn & Hooimeijer, 1991) or, stronger still, a waning influence of such norms (Fuchs-Heinritz, 1990; De Hart, 1992) are believed to affect the timing and the nature of the transition to residential independence. To improve our understanding of the decision to leave home, it is therefore believed to be essential that prevailing normative expectations be included in the analytical framework and to be considered as a second possible factor that can explain home-leaving behaviour.

1.3 Research question

The insights generated by previous research have helped to demarcate the scope of this study by pointing out the two sets of factors on which to focus; that is, one line of research concentrated on the effect of the economic and housing market conditions; the other emphasised the regulating effect of social norms. This study then aims to find out which of these perspectives can most accurately explain leaving home, and in case both sets of factors appear to have an effect, to what extent the two perspectives are complementary in explaining the timing and arrangement of leaving home. The basic research question thus runs as follows:

To what extent is leaving home affected by economic factors, by housing factors, and by normative factors?

1.4 Scientific relevance

This study views the event of leaving home from the perspective of the individual decision maker. As such, it joins in with the call in demographic research that more attention should be paid to the process of decision making and to the factors and arguments that underly behavioral choices. Theoretically, the study draws on the theory of reasoned action, developed by Fishbein and Ajzen, and later adjusted and reformulated as the model of planned behaviour by Ajzen. In origin, the model is a social-psychological one. By adopting the model for the analysis of the decision to leave the parental home, its usefulness for studying demographic behaviour can be tested.

In many studies thus far, the understanding of the mechanisms which evoke specific behaviour is based mainly on the observation of statistical relationships between macro-level trends and shifts in behavioral patterns on the aggregate level. This study, however, investigates the decision to leave home at the *individual level*. As such, it fits perfectly with the tradition of Household and Consumer Studies, which specifically aims at investigating the (functioning of the) household from within.

Moreover, in contrast with much existing research which concentrates on objective determinants, this study also intends to highlight the individual's *subjective* experience of the situational context. This perspective allows a more direct and thus more accurate determination of the factors and arguments affecting the individual's decision on when and how to leave home. Addressing both objective and subjective determinants is also characteristic of Household and Consumer Studies in which this study had its origin; whereas economic and demographic studies mainly incorporate objective variables, relegating subjective variables to the area of psychological studies, it is typical for Household and Consumer Studies to consider both objective and subjective aspects.

Analyses of aggregate behavioral patterns implied that previous research mainly focused on young adults who had actually left the parental home. It is believed, however, that understanding why young adults have *not* yet left home will provide additional, useful information about the factors affecting their decision. Yet, the motives and considerations of young adults still living in the parental home have never been addressed extensively. An extra merit of the present study is therefore that young adults who are still living in the parental home will be included as well. Moreover, by distinguishing the ones who do not intend to leave home soon from those who have concrete plans to do so within one year, it is possible to discern the successive stages in the process of decision-making, and analyse the effect of the independent factors in each of these stages.

While existing research predominantly concentrates on either the situational or the normative context, this study will insert both and consider the impact of each. Thus, it will be possible to determine more precisely the *relative impact* of each factor and this will deepen our understanding of the way that the combination of situational and normative factors affect the decision to leave home.

Furthermore, we will not confine ourselves to the examination of these two sets of variables, but will also try to find out whether, beside economic, housing and normative factors, additional aspects play a role in the decision to leave home, thus providing a more complete picture of the variety of factors that should be taken into account. An explorative analysis of written material collected among 300 students provided the necessary data to discover young adults' additional considerations in the matter of leaving home. Apart from that, this qualitative material was used to obtain quantifiable information about the kind of normative expectations that are related to leaving home. After all, although in life course research the normative context is hypothesised to guide home-leaving behaviour, there is little empirical knowledge about the specific relevant norms involved. This study fills this theoretical gap.

The qualitative analysis formed the basis for the concrete operationalisation of the situational and the normative factors and for the formulation of statements which could be measured in the quantitative survey. To obtain the necessary data, a large-scale survey among 1000 young adults was set up, in which both objective characteristics of their personal situation and their subjective considerations and perceptions were measured.

1.5 Structure of the study

It is well known that since the 1950s remarkable social and economic changes have taken place in Dutch society, which undoubtedly have also affected the circumstances and opportunities of young adults. As one of our hypotheses emphasises the role of the opportunity structure in the decision to leave home, we start this study with a description of the relevant social and cultural changes, and a sociological assessment of the profound impact of these transformations on the social and economic position of young adults in general and on their opportunities to leave the parental home in particular (see chapter 2). This gives a solid base to our hypothesis that changes in home-leaving behaviour are related to economic and housing market opportunities. The presumed effect of the normative context is addressed in chapter 2 as well. Also, the temporal changes in leaving home that took place in the period between 1950 and 1980 and during the 1980s are reflected upon. The discussion results in the further elaboration and formulation of the research questions.

To illustrate how fluctuations in the situational context may be reflected in patterns of leaving home, chapter 4 examines at the aggregate level the shifts in behavioral patterns that occurred during the 1980s, and relates them to the changing circumstances of this period.

However, both the discussion in chapter 2 and the results of chapter 4 make it clear that, notwithstanding the useful insights a macro-level approach generates, it may sometimes be difficult or hazardous to draw firm conclusions regarding the effect of specific factors when analysing them on the aggregate level. It is therefore argued that a micro-level should be adopted, in which the decision to leave the parental home and its determinants are studied at the individual level.

In chapter 3, the Theory of Reasoned Action and its modifications are discussed and the theoretical model underlying this study is presented. In order to use this theoretical model, it was necessary to specify the relevant consequences and the normative expectations that are related to leaving home. The qualitative method employed to identify prevailing perceptions on this subject is discussed in chapter 5.

Chapter 6 describes the process of setting up a cross-sectional survey, and the measurement and construction of relevant variables. The results of the analyses of the survey data are reported in chapters 7 and 8. By comparing the personal situation and subjective considerations of leavers, planners and dwellers, we try to find evidence that the defined variables affect the decision to leave home as hypothesised (chapter 7). Chapter 8 aims to detect the most important determinants in this decision.

Chapter 9 concludes this study with a summary overview of the research design and an evaluation of the main findings, followed by a discussion of their implications for policy, theory and research.

Chapter 2. The societal context of leaving home

2.1 Introduction

Many social changes have taken place in Dutch society since World War II, which have had far-reaching implications. An interplay of economic, structural and cultural processes induced a number of transformations, which strongly affected the nature of post-war society. Not the least, these changes have had a direct and profound impact on the social and economic position of young adults. This has also affected the nature of the transition to adulthood, of which the event of leaving home constitutes an essential step.

To put the topic of this study in a wider social and historical perspective and at the same time gain a fuller understanding of the crucial impact of the situational context on the decision to leave home, it will be illustrative to present an outline of the relevant societal transformations and the changing circumstances that have taken place in the Netherlands since the 1950s. The following discussion will first highlight the period before 1980, because the early 1980s were a turning-point in the patterns of leaving home which prevailed in the preceding decades. After presenting the crucial societal changes between 1950 and 1980, we will discuss their consequences for, and impact on the situation and position of young adults. Next, we will narrow our scope still further and describe the changes in the event of leaving home that occurred between 1950 and 1980, in reaction to the changing opportunity structure for young adults. After this, we will focus on the fluctuations in the situational context that occurred during the 1980s, and on the shifts in the timing of leaving home that seem to have resulted from this.

This historical overview suggests that in the modern welfare state the situational context has become a highly relevant determinant in the decision to leave home, and that the guiding influence of normative expectations has been changing. By examining the mechanisms which seem to be related to the shifts in home-leaving behaviour in the previous decades, this chapter helps to identify possible factors affecting the decision to leave the parental home. The insights generated here will aid in the formulation of a research model, which will guide the procedure and the design of this study.

2.2 Structural and cultural changes in the period 1950-1980

Economic recovery

In the period following World War II, Dutch society was faced with the need to reconstruct and recover economically. It was generally felt that these tasks could best be stimulated by governmental initiatives, and that active intervention by the state was required to successfully overcome the prevailing problems (Van Wijngaarden, 1983; De Kam *et al.*, 1987b). During the 1950s, the government mainly engaged in a combination of industrialisation policy, guided incomes policy, and social security policy. The aim of

the industrialisation policy was to force up the level of the productive machinery, in order to give a powerful impulse to industrial production, and to stimulate technological innovations. These policies were regarded as vital instruments with which to accomplish a rapid economic recovery. However, to gain optimally from the growth of industrial production, the government simultaneously advocated a restrained incomes policy (Van der Hoek, 1985). The risk of sharp rises in labour costs was controlled by keeping wages low. It was believed that low labour costs would consolidate a nation's competitive position which in turn would promote economic revival and also make possible the objective of full employment. In addition, a policy of strict wage control allowed for a balanced wage movement across all people, thus reducing existing income inequalities. In response to a growing sense of the need for social justice and solidarity in society (Van den Heuvel, 1994; Schuyt, 1991), the realisation of a fair income distribution had become another of the main policy objectives of post-war governments.

Increasing affluence

The restrictive incomes policy and the industrialisation policy seemed to work successfully. During the 1950s, national income increased steadily (De Kam *et al.*, 1987a), enabling a further expansion of the industrial sector (Van den Heuvel & Mommaas, 1990), which, of course, resulted in yet more growth in national income. The Dutch economy entered an ascending spiral which was reflected in growing prosperity. Yet, increasing affluence also endangered the ongoing control of wages. The wage explosion that took place in 1963 signified the end of the guided incomes policy and the onset of free wage negotiations (De Kam *et al.*, 1987b). This did not mean, however, that the state now withdrew from the arena of wage negotiations. Rather, income levelling still caused the state to interfere in wage negotiations, but other parties now also played their part.

Increasing affluence and the strong rise in wages increased the spending capacity of the Dutch population. Consequently, ever more people were able to purchase a variety of new consumer goods that had come on the market. The new attitude toward consumption that accompanied the increased spending capacity, clearly reflected the characteristics of the American culture of mass-consumption, which had invaded Europe along with the Marshall aid and the presence of American military. Due to the proximity of Americans, the Dutch people became acquainted with new consumption goods and with the social and cultural values that are typical of the American consumer society. These values were readily incorporated, leading to a growing tendency to consume and an increasing preference for leisure time and for new types of commercial entertainment (Van Elteren, 1990; Van Den Heuvel & Mommaas, 1990). These changes in the patterns of consumption and the increased significance of leisure time have had a marked influence on the direction of

various social and cultural changes, which typically received a strong impulse during the 1960s (Dieleman, 1990).

Birth of a welfare state

The central role of the state in the economic recovery and incomes policy not only resulted in a growing prosperity, but also provided a solid basis for the construction of a welfare state. This is not altogether very surprising, considering the fact that the incomes policy and social security policy are ideologically closely connected. Both originate from a feeling of social commitment and from the principle that the state should play an active role in preventing or solving social problems and in trying to achieve greater social equality.

Pragmatically also, the two policy domains are closely related. By pursuing a restrictive incomes policy and an activating industrial policy, the national income had been growing, creating the financial margins for the gradual expansion of the public sector and for the development and improvement of a system of social insurance (Van den Heuvel, 1994; Albeda, 1985). Several arrangements were established to avert the risks of loss of income that could result from illness, accident, old age, death, or unemployment. As more of these arrangements were gradually effectuated, more groups of people experienced the security of having access to some kind of subsistence income should they not be able to support themselves. Obviously, all inhabitants thus profited from the growing affluence and gained a sense of financial security from the establishment of the welfare state.

Aside from a sense of security, the welfare state also brought along essential changes in the structural organisation of society. Now that individual well-being had become an important social issue, a variety of new professions was created in order to provide the services of the welfare state (De Swaan, 1989). These professionals were usually academically trained and therefore adhered to scientific views rather than to religious ones. They propagated the standpoint that one should not necessarily be guided by normative expectations, that one should not unquestioningly adopt prevailing opinions and that one should also rely on one's own insights. Because of the key position held by these professionals in the expanding welfare bureaucracy, the new values they adhered to soon spread through the society (Snippenburg & Vettehen, 1990). As a consequence, traditional norms and religiously based values were abandoned and conventional rules were no longer taken for granted and lost their significance. This process was intensified by the fact that traditional religious barriers in societal organisations were increasingly removed (Dieleman, 1990; Kleyer *et al.*, 1992). At the same time, individuals were confronted with a society that had become increasingly complex: due to the rise of various new institutions and professions, society continued to differentiate. With traditional norms no longer offering strict guidelines, personal responsibility and flexibility were stressed as

essential values in finding appropriate alternatives to deal with the demands of a rapidly changing and dynamic society. In assessing the new boundaries of acceptable behaviour, the process of discussion and bargaining became vital and, according to De Swaan (1989), became the crux of social relationships in modern society.

Individualisation

The structural changes and the erosion of traditional values during the 1960s induced major cultural changes. To satisfy the requirements of modern society and to adapt to altered social relations, great importance was attached to the individual exploration of behavioral options, leading to increased latitude to express alternative ideas and views (Bakker, 1990). Self-actualisation and personal development became key values in an individualised society. People no longer unquestioningly conformed to general social norms or to traditional patterns, but instead started to consider possible alternatives (Klaassen, 1993). As a consequence, "deviant" or "abnormal" opinions and behaviour became more easily accepted (or at least became discussible) and a gradual pluriformisation of values and of behavioral choices was observed.

Of course, the process of individualisation also rested in part on the favourable economic conditions: growing affluence and the safety of the social security system had made it less hazardous to deviate from the traditional and familiar course of action, to "free" oneself from traditional social ties, and to try out alternative options. One clear manifestation of this process of individualisation is the increasing acceptance of living arrangements other than marriage and the family, resulting in unmarried cohabitation becoming a common and wide-spread phenomenon. The proportion of people who had ever engaged in unmarried cohabitation at the age of 32 increased from 15% for the birth cohort of 1945-49 to 27% for the birth cohort of 1950-54. For the cohort 1960-64, this 27% was already reached at the age of 21 (Van De Giessen, 1988). Moreover, a growing number of people decided to live alone or to join a commune. Between 1960 and 1980 the proportion of one-person households increased from 12% to 22.5%, and to almost 30% in 1990 (Van Praag & Niphuis-Nell, 1997). The proportion of traditional two-parent families with children decreased from 55% to 36% (De Hoog, 1996). The process of individualisation, the changing cultural values and the emergence of new living arrangements caused a gradual pluriformisation of society.

In short, the favourable economic conditions of the 1960s and 1970s which created better financial opportunities for everyone, also opened the way to the establishment of the welfare state which led to important structural changes and simultaneously to the corrosion of traditional socio-cultural values and increased tolerance of 'deviant' behaviour. This typical interplay of economic, social and cultural changes also directly affected the lives of young adults, as will become clear in the next section.

2.3 The transition to adulthood in the period 1950-1980

Delayed economic independence

Historically, the youth phase has always been considered to be a time during which dependent young people could prepare to function independently in the adult world and acquire the rights and responsibilities which pertain to adult status. By a series of transitions, children pass through adolescence and eventually achieve adulthood. Traditionally, the critical events that youths are supposed to go through involve the completion of schooling, the start of an occupational career, gaining economic and cultural independence, marriage and setting up an independent household, and becoming a parent (Arnett, 1994; Hart, 1992; Scheer *et al.*, 1996). The youth phase, therefore, is not defined in terms of fixed age limits, but rather is conceptually demarcated by the onset and completion of a series of crucial role transitions.

As a result of the societal changes described above, the youth phase and the status of youths have changed in nature. The most remarkable change is the *extension* of the transitional period between childhood and adulthood (Du Bois-Reymond, 1992; Hurrelmann, 1989a; Blossfeld & Nuthmann, 1989a; SCP, 1985), which results both from a postponement of some transitions and from the expedited attainment of certain rights which are related to the adult status.

Full economic independence, for instance, is reached later in life. This is a direct consequence of what is considered the most important structural change in postwar society, that of prolonged education. In modern society, with its fast technological innovations and professionalisation of the public sector, education became both very important and necessary in order to function optimally (Van Nimwegen *et al.*, 1989). Moreover, credentials gained significance, because they were believed to open the way to a successful professional career. Consequently, preparation for the labour market took more time and effort and, as they increasingly started to participate in higher education, an increasing number of young adults spent more years in the educational system (see Table 2.1).

Logically, this trend of prolonged education led to a postponement of their entry in the labour market, which implies that these young adults remain economically dependent for a longer period of time. Schwarz (1989), for instance, has found for the former West-Germany that more than 80% of the 15-19 year old men who were born in 1940 were employed, whereas in the birth cohort of 1960 this proportion was no more than 40%. Many students nowadays take part-time weekend or evening jobs, but these do not assure economic independence. Also, young adults are not really inactive economically, because they are active consumers, an aspect to which we will return later.

Table 2.1 Young adults enrolled in education, by age, period and level of education (%).

	MBO ¹⁾		HBO ²⁾		University	
	male	female	male	female	male	female
at the age of 18						
1958	5.9	3.0	5.2	3.5	2.0	0.5
1964	6.6	4.4	5.6	3.9	3.1	0.7
1969	11.9	5.8	4.6	4.3	3.8	1.0
1974	13.2	7.3	5.7	5.4	3.5	1.5
1979	16.7	13.7	5.5	5.7	3.6	2.1
at the age of 20						
1958	1.9	0.7	5.3	2.8	3.0	0.9
1964	2.5	1.0	6.0	3.3	4.6	1.3
1969	4.5	1.4	7.2	4.4	6.5	2.0
1974	6.7	1.7	9.4	6.6	7.0	2.3
1979	9.3	2.8	11.0	8.7	7.9	3.9
at the age of 23						
1958	0.7	0.1	1.9	0.5	3.2	0.7
1964	0.5	0.1	2.3	0.6	4.7	1.1
1969	0.5	0.1	2.4	0.8	6.4	1.5
1974	0.5	0.1	3.9	1.4	7.9	2.0
1979	0.8	0.2	5.6	2.7	7.9	3.6

1) intermediate vocational college

2) higher vocational college

Source: CBS, *De Nederlandse jeugd en haar onderwijs* [Dutch youth and its education]. The Hague: Staatsuitgeverij/SDU (1971, 1976, 1979, 1981, 1986, 1991).

Another consequence of a prolonged education is that marriage is postponed as well, as is the start of a family (Featherman & Sørensen, 1983; Manting, 1994; Blossfeld & Huinink, 1991). Since completion of education, achievement of full economic independence, and union formation are critical events in the transition to adulthood, one of the consequences of the 'meritocracy' (Meyers, 1990) is an extension of the youth phase into older ages.

Expedited cultural and social independence

The structural and cultural changes that led to a delay in achieving economic and relational adulthood also encouraged an earlier cultural and social maturation of youth. The young who became adults in the postwar era entered a complex and fast-changing society in which they had to deal with a variety of opinions and behavioral options. Traditional solutions and normative scenarios no longer offered suitable answers and lost much of their significance. Instead, it was expected that young people - as was required from adults - map out their own life and bear personal responsibility for their own decisions (Klaassen, 1993). The inevitable consequence was that the youths gained the freedom to

make independent decisions and formulate their own cultural expressions, achieving at an earlier age the cultural independence which had previously been associated with adult status.

In this light, it can be understood that the relationship between parents and their children has also altered fundamentally. Parents, who formerly provided a straightforward frame of reference to their children, became aware that traditional normative expectations no longer offered adequate guidelines to their children, which affected their attitude towards them. Interestingly, the nature of the change in family relations clearly reflects the new social values of bargaining and equality. Instead of an interpersonal power relation, in which the parents' wish is law, a new family type emerges where domestic rules are based on dialogue and on mutual agreement. Using the terminology of De Swaan, Du Bois-Reymond refers to this change as a shift from a command household to a bargaining household (Du Bois-Reymond, 1990). As a result the position of dependent children in the parental household has changed. They are increasingly treated as equals and are allowed to express their own opinions. Children gradually came to enjoy more freedom vis-a-vis their parents (Winkels, 1990), and in this sense young adults gained independence within the household at an earlier age. Of course, such transformations require time, and it was not until the late 1970s that greater equality between parents and children became customary.

The more liberal attitude of parents towards their children and the understanding that children should be allowed a freer hand, in turn 'encouraged' young adults to go out and meet their friends, who now became a valuable reference group. In this respect, Van Hessen (1964) points out the essence of 'being young together'. When traditional solutions no longer suffice, experimentation in small, informal peer groups offers an adequate opportunity to test new options. The phenomenon of *youth subcultures*, that was typical of the 1960s, can be seen as a reaction to societal changes (Goudsblom, 1959). Though these youth subcultures initially caused a great deal of opposition and concern, they appeared to be very useful and valuable to the youths themselves. Within these groups, which offered an opportunity to escape from parental control, young adults experienced a certain amount of autonomy and the opportunity to determine their own norms. In other words, the emergence of youth subcultures gave rise to greater cultural freedom and self-determination at younger ages than before (Hurrelmann, 1989a), and one can imagine the profound impact their emergence has had on the social position of young adults.

The media and the commercial world also granted young adults the opportunity to develop and express their own cultural views, contributing to their earlier cultural maturation. Radio and television started to present special programs which dealt with the

concerns of young people and with which they could identify. Moreover, the commercial market discovered youth as an interesting group of potential consumers. They understood that rising affluence and increased wages also broadened their spending capacity, either because children were given more pocket money (Fuchs-Heinritz, 1990), or because they earned more at jobs, money which they were usually allowed to keep (Chrisholm & Hurrelmann, 1995; De Regt, 1997). The commercial world eagerly created a market which specifically addressed young adults, thus stimulating creation by youth of a world of their own and contributing to the establishment of the youth subcultures. Furthermore, by looking upon youth as serious consumers, the notion is reinforced that young people, although still largely dependent upon their parents, are capable of making responsible decisions. Chrisholm and Hurrelmann (1995) conclude therefore that as far as leisure and consumption is concerned, young adults today very early develop an individual and (relatively) autonomous lifestyle.

Furthermore, although marriage and union formation are postponed, many young adults start dating while still attending high school, and many also have their first sexual experience before marriage (Peters, 1992). Thus, in this sphere as well, young people earlier obtain the prerogatives that formerly pertained to adult status.

Post-adolescence

It can be concluded that in modern society the youth phase is prolonged and that crucial role transitions have become scattered over an extended time span. That is, judging from the accelerated attainment of independence in the social, cultural, and sexual domains, young adults reach the stadium of semi-adulthood sooner than they used to. On the other hand, the attainment of full economic and relational adult independence has been delayed. Some authors assert that these shifts have invoked a new stage of 'emerging adulthood' (Arnett, 1984) in the life course of young adults, sometimes referred to as post-adolescence (Hurrelmann, 1989a; Zinnecker, 1986). This stage is typified by a certain level of status-inconsistency, because some role transitions have occurred while others still have to be attained.

Where the extension of the youth phase is in part regarded as a direct consequence of major structural and cultural changes, it has also been considered a functional adjustment to the complexity of modern society (Goudsblom, 1959; Eisenstadt, 1964; Fuchs-Heinritz, 1990). After all, in a complex world in which much of the traditional social consensus disappeared, young adults need more time for personal development and self-orientation in order to attain a social identity.

Normative structure of life-course transitions

Traditionally, the role transitions which typify the transition to adulthood were guided by social norms regarding the proper timing and the proper sequencing of the separate events. Life course decisions were embedded in a normative context, resulting in the passing of the transitions in a relatively predictable order (Chrisholm & Hurrelmann, 1995), although marked class and gender specific differences could be observed. Most young adults conformed to what is called a *standard biography* (Bildén, 1980; Du Bois-Reymond, 1992; Van Leeuwen & Ploegmakers, 1990; Peters *et al.*, 1993).

Currently, however, life-course sociologists have observed the emergence of a heterogeneity of pathways, in which order and duration of the status passages are no longer fixed (Blossfeld & Nuthmann, 1989b; Thornton *et al.*, 1993). This phenomenon is believed to result from the reported historical and cultural changes, which have had an impact on prevailing social opinions regarding adulthood and the position of the young. As a consequence, adulthood is no longer defined by such strict criteria, and youths are no longer expected to automatically follow socially prescribed life course transitions. Hence, for increasing numbers of young adults the transition to adulthood will have the nature of a *choice biography* (Du Bois-Reymond, 1992; Bildén & Diezinger, 1984; De Hart, 1992; Fuchs-Heinritz, 1990). In the view of life-course theorists, this phenomenon should be interpreted as a sign that life-course decisions are based on individual choices primarily rather than on social norms. The context of opportunities and constraints is believed to become the main determinant of behavioral choices rather than the traditional normative patterns.

It can be questioned, however, whether this has occurred on a large scale (Chrisholm & Du Bois-Reymond, 1993; Jones & Wallace, 1990). Although some evidence for choice biographies is shown by empirical research (Guit *et al.*, 1992), these studies make clear that the proportion who significantly divert from traditional routes to adulthood is very small. Moreover, Mayer (1986) explicitly states that differentiation in observable life courses in no way implies that life courses are not socially regulated. An increasing pluriformisation and fragmentation of the life course does not signify that social norms have completely lost their significance and that they no longer are a useful guideline to the individual decision maker. The possible guiding function of social norms should therefore not be disregarded altogether yet. Instead it will be interesting to investigate more closely to what extent such norms are adhered to in the decision to leave the parental home.

2.4 The changing social and economic position of young adults

Youth policy

The new set of expectations that young adults had to live up to in post-war society caused a fundamental shift in the way that youth was viewed upon by the adult world. By the beginning of the 1960s state authorities also realised that in order to function in modern society, youth must be given full scope to develop a fully valued position (Bakker, 1986; SCP, 1985). They acknowledged their specific responsibilities towards the group of young adults and set themselves to creating the conditions for optimal development. The *Youth Policy Document* (Nota Jeugdbeleid) of 1969 was the first formal document reflecting active state interference with the group of young adults, denoting the formal recognition of youth as an autonomous social category with specific needs (Abma, 1990; Van Dam & Van Snippenburg, 1990). This formal appreciation has considerably affected the social position of young adults. It was felt that just like any other social category which receives special attention of state policy, young adults should also profit from recent economic growth and the social attainments of the welfare state. In response to the changing perception of youth, young adults were gradually granted a number of autonomous rights and claims that were previously linked exclusively with adult status.

Right to an independent income

One of the rights that was acknowledged was that to an independent income. First of all, the idea had caught on that young people's earnings should follow general wage movements. As a result, the purchasing power of young adults increased and their economic position improved. In 1974, the right to an acceptable income was officially secured when the minimum wage regulation of 1964 was broadened to include people below the age of 23. A minimum youth wage regulation was introduced (Boonen, 1984) in which the minimum youth wage was set at a certain (age-graded) percentage of the income level for adults. This was justified by a price argument (that is, young people are less productive and are therefore not entitled to the same wage as adults) as well as by a restricted-need argument (Raad voor het Jeugdbeleid, 1989). Moreover, the concept of age-dependent minimum wages for youth reflects the idea that young adults should traverse an income trajectory which will gradually lead them from dependence upon their parents to full economic independence. Thus, besides the favourable employment perspectives in the 1960s and 1970s, which had a positive effect on the economic position of adolescents, the financial position of young adults was further consolidated by the state's interference with their income.

The recognition of the independent economic rights of young adults is also clearly expressed in the introduction of a special benefit arrangement for those school-leavers who cannot find a job right away. Schooling is compulsory until the age of 16, but when adolescents leave school after this age, they are entitled to a so-called RWW-benefit (an

Unemployment Assistance arrangement, which was introduced in 1964 (SER, 1984) as part of the National Assistance Act). This illustrates the prevalent view that from the age of 16 onwards adolescents should in principle be enabled to be economically independent. Young adults who are still enrolled in education remained economically dependent upon their parents.

To summarise, youth not only profited from the expansive economic growth since the 1950s through rising wages. When their economic rights were acknowledged and embedded in several financial arrangements, young people were also assured a basic income which resulted in a stronger economic position for them.

Right to independent housing

In the domain of housing, young adults also gained explicit rights, when the *Rent and Subsidy Policy Document* (Nota Huur- en Subsidiebeleid) of 1974 assigned the right to independent housing to all inhabitants 18 years and older. This formal recognition of the right to an independent residence is further elaborated in 1975 in the *Policy Document on the Housing of Single and Two-person Households* (Nota Huisvesting Alleenstaanden en Tweepersoonshuishoudens, Van Dam, 1975). Policy makers realised that the right to it does not automatically mean that sufficient quantities of adequate housing are available. Hence it was stressed that additional measures had to be taken to particularly enlarge the number of smaller living units. Various measures were proposed to accomplish this: special units should be built in or around city centres (a locality preferred by young people), vacant dwellings that did not fully satisfy the current (higher) standards for family housing should be placed at the disposal of one and two person households, and large empty buildings should be reconstructed and divided up into small units. A system of object subsidies, paid by the government, must guarantee that the starting rent of these accommodations does not exceed a certain level.

In case some persons still cannot afford the rent, the policy document of 1975 also introduced the possibility to apply for individual rent subsidy to the young adults between 18 and 30 years of age. The right to this subsidy, however, is restricted to tenants of independent accommodations (that is, lodgers are excluded) and to young adults who are married or have been married. Subsidy applications of single persons below the age of 30 are granted on the basis of an adjusted standard-rent quota table, and accordingly they receive a smaller amount of money (Van Dam, 1975).

Clearly, by explicit intervention in the housing opportunities of young adults, the state showed its concern about the restricted accessibility of the housing market to young adults who wish to leave the parental home. This does not mean that the problem of housing for young adults had at once been solved but does clearly reflect the viewpoint current then that young adults have the right to and therefore should be given the opportunity to establish an independent household.

2.5 The transition to residential independence: 1950-1980

As we have seen, the economic, social and cultural circumstances changed considerably in postwar Dutch society, affecting the social and economic position of young adults. The circumstances that young adults encountered when growing up and making their way into the world during the three decades following World War II were quite favourable and this profoundly impacted on the way they entered adulthood.

A crucial step in attaining adult status is the transition to residential independence. It is obviously that leaving home implies that the individual has to assume greater adult responsibility for his own life and for daily recurring matters and that he or she has to make many more decisions independently. In fact, Harris (1988) has found that young adults often regard the transition to living on their own as even more important than other passages in their transition to adulthood, such as finishing school or starting a job. During the post-war period, the event of leaving home underwent several interesting changes, which are believed to be related to the societal and cultural transformations that made up the context in which the transition took place. The shifts in home-leaving behaviour will be highlighted in this section.

The age at leaving home

During the 1950s, the process of leaving home accelerated. At first, this trend could be attributed primarily to changes in the age at marriage. Affected by the favorable opportunities and the prosperous perspectives of an expanding economy (and secured by arrangements of the welfare state), young adults were in the position to get married at ever younger ages and indeed decided to do so (Leonard, 1980). In those days, when marriage usually coincided with leaving home, the age of leaving home declined correspondingly. During the 1950s, the mean age at which young men left the parental home started to fall from 26.2 years in the first half of that decade to 25.9 years in the second half (Baanders *et al.*, 1989). For women, the mean age dropped from 24.8 years to 24.4 years by the end of the 1950s. Then, however, the age at marriage started to rise, but because the traditional link between marriage and leaving home had been weakened, the decline in the age at which people left home persisted throughout the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s. Halfway through the 1970s the average age at departure for men had dropped to 23.7 years and for women to 21.9 years (Baanders *et al.*, 1989; CBS, 1988b). After that things stabilised.

The decline in the average age at which young adults left home did not result from a lower minimum age at which this process commences. The proportion of young adults who leave home before the age of 18 has remained very small over time. The process, however, increasingly started to concentrate on the time span between 20 and 25 years of age. The accent of the process, therefore, has shifted towards younger ages, and the

process as a whole has become more homogenous, as can readily be inferred from the interquartile range (Mayer & Schwarz, 1989), i.e. the difference between the age at which 75% of a birth cohort has left home and the age at which 25% has left home. Among Dutch men who were born between 1930-34, the interquartile range measured 5.4 years, whereas the range was 4.2 years for men born between 1945-49. For women the interquartile range for these two birth cohorts shifted from 5.0 years to 3.6 years (Baanders *et al.*, 1989). Iedema and Sanders (1996) present the shift in standard deviation as an indication of diminishing differentiation of the home leaving process. They found that between the birth cohorts of 1930-34 and 1960-64 the standard deviation decreased from 7.2 years to 3.1 years.

The change in the timing of the departure can also be inferred from statistics on the number of children still living in the parental home. Latten (1990), for instance, has shown that over the period 1960-71, the proportion of dependent children decreased from 72% to 60% among 20-24 year olds, and from 28% to 17% among 25-29 year olds.

On average, women tend to leave the parental home earlier than men do (e.g. Baanders *et al.*, 1989; Jones, 1987; Mayer & Schwarz, 1989; Corijn & Deven, 1991). Judging from the interquartile ranges presented above, the difference in the age at departure has even increased somewhat. This was also found by Liefbroer and De Jong Gierveld (1993a), who reported that, compared to men, the relative probability of women leaving increased from 1.25 for the birth cohort 1903-07, to 1.41 for the birth cohort of 1933-37, and 1.75 for the birth cohort of 1961-65.

Living arrangement when leaving home

Leaving home has also changed dramatically with respect to the kind of living arrangement that is chosen when moving out. Until the 1960s it was common for the majority of young adults to wait until marriage before leaving, but during the 1960s other routes out of the home came in vogue. Increasingly more young adults left to start living alone. Compared to the 1950s, in the mid-1980s the percentage of Dutch men moving out to live alone had doubled, from 19% to 38%; the percentage increase for women was even greater, from 12% to 35%. Furthermore, a growing proportion of young adults decided to start living with housemates. Between 1950 and 1985, the proportion of men who did this increased from 6.1% to 8.7%. At first, this option was not as popular with women, and even declined until the period 1970-74; after that the percentage of women who moved in with others also rose, from 4.7% to 6.8% (Baanders *et al.*, 1989). These shifts in living arrangements imply that the proportion of young adults who leave at marriage has declined.

The decrease in the numbers who get married was partly offset by the growing popularity of unmarried cohabitation as an alternative. Based on the Housing Demand Surveys of 1993, the Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau found that of the young adults who left home

between 1961 and 1965, only 1.9% moved into unmarried cohabitation; in the period between 1976 and 1980, this proportion had risen to 14.6%, and it continued to rise to 23.2% in the first half of the 1980s (Van Praag & Niphuis-Nell, 1997). By the end of the 1980s, the proportion of home-leavers choosing this alternative (29.5%) even exceeded the relative number of leavers entering marriage (26.9%). It should be noted that, although the traditional destination of marriage was more and more displaced by the alternative choices of leaving home alone or in unmarried partnership, the formation of a relationship as the primary reason to leave the parental home remains dominant.

Reasons for leaving home

Of course, part of the remarkable changes in both the timing and the routes out of the parental home are directly related to changes in the reasons for leaving. As mentioned before, participation in higher education has increased substantially since the 1950s which is reflected in increasing percentages of young adults who leave home for educational reasons. Since the birth cohort of 1935-39, the percentage leaving for education has increased from around 6% to 20% for the cohort 1960-64 (Iedema & Sanders, 1996). From previous studies it is known that starting higher education often prompts a departure from the parental home and those who leave home for this reason tend to leave at younger ages than those who leave for marriage (Baanders *et al.*, 1989; Young, 1989; Visser, 1994). Visser (1994) found that young adults leaving home for educational reasons on average do so 1.4 years before those adults who leave for a job, 2.7 years earlier than persons who start unmarried cohabitation, and even 3.6 years earlier than people who are getting married. Moreover, young adults who leave home for education usually start living alone or with others and hardly ever with a partner.

An obvious conclusion is, therefore, that the tendency to pursue higher education is directly responsible for the shifts in the age at leaving home, as well as in the living arrangements of home leavers. However, when controlling for level of education, the trends in age and living arrangement can still be observed (Baanders *et al.*, 1989). In other words, the tendency to leave home younger is also observed among less educated adolescents, and these individuals also increasingly show a preference for living alone instead of with a partner. This seems to reflect the emergence of a 'new' motive to leave the parental home. In response to the altered social and economic circumstances, young adults seem to more and more leave home just to have more freedom and autonomy. Iedema and Sanders (1996) found that the proportion of those who left home to gain autonomy started to increase among those born after 1949. The percentage leaving home for this reason quickly rose from 10% for the birth cohort of 1920-24 to almost 30% for that born between 1960-64. This trend is perceived as a manifestation of the individualisation process (Crommentuijn & Hooimeijer, 1991).

In sum, union formation has lost its significance as a motive for leaving the parental home (with the percentage leaving for this reason decreasing from about 65% for the cohort of 1945-49 to 42% for the cohort 1960-64), whereas autonomy and participation in higher education increasingly have become the primary motivation. The percentage of young adults who left home for a job fluctuated slightly between 15% and 8% during the observed period (Iedema & Sanders, 1996).

2.6 Leaving home in the 1980s

2.6.1 Staying home

Around 1977, an interesting reversal in the trends of leaving home once again took place in the Netherlands. Several investigators observed that young adults have become more home-bound again, a trend which becomes quite clear in the 1980s, when the proportion of young adults still living in the parental home started to rise (De Graaf, 1989; Latten, 1990, 1993; SCP, 1992). Ploegmakers and Van Leeuwen (1994), for instance, found that the proportion of 18-29 year olds living in the parental home increased by 8% between 1977 and 1986. Latten (1993) found that among both men and women born in the second half of the 1960s (who left home during the 1980s) the cumulative proportion that has left home is smaller than among those born in the 1950s. The prolonged stay in the parental home is also reflected in an increase in the average age at leaving home, which is observed by Mulder and Manting (1994): for males it went up from 23.0 years in 1977 to 23.2 years in 1985, and for females it went up from 21.1 years to 21.4 years. Although the delay in the transition is not very spectacular, it is considered a fundamental change, because of the persistence of the new trend during the first half of the 1980s (Mulder & Hooimeyer, 1995). Detailed information about the trend during the second half of the 1980s is not yet well documented. In chapter 4 of this study, the changes that occurred throughout the 1980s will be looked at more closely.

Postponement of the decision to leave home was also observed for young adults from the United States (Aquilino, 1990; Glick & Lin, 1986; Buck & Scott, 1993), Canada (Lehrhaupt *et al.*, 1993), Australia (Kilmartin, 1987), and twelve countries of the European Community (Chrisholm & Hurrelmann, 1995), such as Great Britain (Eversley, 1983), France (Leridon & Villeneuve, 1988), Belgium (Corijn, 1993) and the former FRG (Mayer & Schwarz, 1989; Wagner & Huinink, 1991). The authors of these studies agree in their explanation of the change, and ascribe the trend to the specific economic conditions, which are characterised by high unemployment rates and limited financial opportunities for young adults (De Graaf, 1989; Haurin *et al.*, 1993; Latten, 1990; Leridon & Villeneuve, 1988; Mayer, 1986; Ward & Spitze, 1992). Moreover, reduced opportunities in the housing market, where rents have gone up and the supply of adequate housing is restricted, are also considered to be responsible for the delay in home-leaving (Chrisholm

& Hurrelmann, 1995; Wagner & Huinink, 1991; Pickvance & Pickvance, 1994; Burton *et al.*, 1989). As in most of the above-mentioned countries, Dutch young adults were also confronted with severe changes in the situational context, defining the opportunities and constraints to start an independent household.

2.6.2 The situational context of the 1980s

Economic recession

By the end of the 1970s there was a serious turn in the economic tide, the onset of which can be traced back to the oil crisis of 1973. The significance of its implications were not immediately recognised, however, and the long term economic impact became evident only later. Initially, confidence in the Keynesian mechanisms was firm and the recession was believed to be temporary. The government therefore saw no reason to depart from their course of action and persisted in their policy of reducing income inequalities and improving the income position of lower income groups. Minimum wages were continuously raised (De Kam *et al.*, 1987b), and no objections were made at that time to the unrestrained rise of salaries and labour costs (Albeda, 1985).

By the end of the 1970s people began to realise that the economic recession was a serious one. Economic opportunities drastically deteriorated and unemployment levels continued to rise substantially. Especially young adults were confronted with the problems of a tight labour market. In the period between 1980 and 1984, the proportion of unemployed 18-24 year-olds in the Netherlands increased from 9.6% to 30.0% for males, and from 10.9% to 27.2% for females (CBS, 1987a, 1988a). After 1984, conditions slightly improved and by 1988 the proportion of unemployed young people had fallen to 20.0% among men and 20.3% among women (CBS, 1989). Nonetheless, compared to levels of unemployment before the 1980s, this percentage was still relatively high.

Recovery of the labour market position of young adults was assumed to be feasible by reducing the costs of labour. Young workers were considered to be too expensive. In 1981, and again in 1983, the minimum youth wages for 17 to 22 year olds were therefore reduced by a modification of the age grading of wages for youth (Boonen, 1984). In addition, in 1984 the government decided to reduce the legal minimum wage level by 3% (Bosch & Van der Hoeven, 1991).

However, not just minimum wage earners were confronted with serious drops in real income. To assure a quick recovery of employment levels, collective wage agreement repeatedly refrained from raising income. Altogether, the net nominal wages of young adults were reduced substantially during the first half of the 1980s. After 1985, the income situation recovered slightly, but still lagged behind the wage levels of the end of the 1970s.

The cutbacks in wage levels that were effected, also led to serious reductions in social security benefits on which increasing numbers of young people were dependent. Through a linking mechanism in the social security system, the level of the RWW-benefit is directly affected by a reduction of the minimum wage for youth. Since unemployment benefits are based on the amount of the last income earned, the average income of young adults who lost their jobs also declined. They had to live on 80%, and since 1984 even on only 70% of their last income.

In 1987 the New Unemployment Insurance Act (nWW) was introduced. Due to a reformulation of the so-called work-history requirement in this act, the period for which unemployed young people are entitled to unemployment benefits is reduced (SCP, 1988). Most young adults now receive these benefits for no more than 6 months. After this they are reduced to subsistence level RWW-benefits (welfare). It should be noted that in determining the right to an RWW-benefit, the incomes of other household members are taken into account. Consequently the limited entitlement to individual nWW-benefits can profoundly affect the household income level. In addition, the cabinet suggested a cut back in RWW-benefits for 18-20 year-olds who were living independently, unless they could prove that they had lived away from the parental home for more than 12 months (Emancipatieraad, 1988). Apparently, state authorities feel that below the age of 21 young adults need not necessarily live on their own.

With the introduction, in 1986, of a new Act on Study Financing for students who are older than 18 (the WSF18+), the household position of students also became relevant to their income position. The basic bursary for those living at home was set lower than that for students living independently. The introduction of the WSF18+ law did not really originate from a need to cut back on government expenditures. Rather it was the result of a lengthy discussion about the preferred financial independence of students vis-a-vis their parents (De Regt, 1993). It soon became evident, however, that some adjustments were needed to keep expenses within reasonable limits. First, bursary levels were frozen and later reduced, in exchange for an annual public transportation pass.

Another economy measure taken by the government in 1985 involved an extra 10%-reduction in the welfare benefits paid to single persons who shared accommodations with other people¹ (Van Brakel & Van de Wetering, 1985; SCP, 1986).

Evidently, the economic circumstances and all the measures described here generally have had a negative impact on the economic position of young adults, which is directly reflected in the change in their spending capacity. Every year between 1980 and 1985, the static purchasing power of individuals below the age of 25 decreased compared to the

¹ Single persons living alone receive benefits which amount to 70% of that paid to a couple; the benefits for single persons sharing a residence with other people is 60% of that received by couples.

previous year (TKSG, 1987). After 1985 their purchasing power slowly recovered (CBS, 1991), mainly due to the decline in unemployed youth during the second half of the 1980s.

The housing market

Affordability

Clearly, the financial position of many young adults deteriorated during the first half of the 1980s and this seriously affected their spending capacity. This was a problem when they wished to leave home and had to pay their own way. Even more so because when moving out one must first of all acquire a place to live. Yet, when lacking sufficient financial resources young adults cannot easily afford independent accommodations (Chew, 1990). Leaving home is therefore thwarted by economic thresholds.

The problem of affordable housing became even more serious during the 1980s due to specific developments in the housing market. The cost of housing in the rental sector - where young adults usually end up (Antonissen, 1986; Buijs *et al.*, 1991; Dijkhuis-Potgiesser, 1984) - has risen substantially through an interplay of three factors. First of all, the annual state-induced increases resulted in a strong rise in rents. As of 1980, an annual rent increase is determined by the government. In the first years that this measure was applied, the annual increases were set at a high level: in 1980, 1981 and 1982 the legally set increases amounted to 6%. After that, the percentage increase was gradually decreased (Conijn *et al.*, 1987; VROM, 1986). Second, tenants in dwellings, the rent of which lies below a reasonable minimal level, were confronted with the effect of a policy of rent harmonisation, which implied an additional raise in rent. Third, the average level of rent has increased as a consequence of an overall improvement of the quality of the Dutch housing (Van Fulpen & Priemus, 1983) and as a consequence of the government's decision to pursue a more stringent initial-rent policy, so that the rent of newly built houses corresponds more closely to their actual cost price (Grooten, 1991). The combination of these three mechanisms led to significant increases in rents. In 1982 the rents even increased by almost 10% on the average (VROM, 1986).

On the other hand, the possibilities of acquiring affordable living quarters are reduced considerably by several revisions in the system of individual rent-subsidies (IHS-system). The lower limits of the IHS-tables (that is, the minimum income and the minimum rent at which one is entitled to a rent subsidy) were raised (Van Fulpen, 1984). This notably affected young adults, because they usually fall into the lower income brackets and can only afford cheaper housing. For many, the possibility of receiving a contribution to lower the costs of housing was thus withdrawn as a consequence of the modifications of the IHS-system (Antonissen, 1986). In 1988, the separate youth-table of the IHS-system was cancelled altogether (Heerma, 1989), abolishing the relatively favourable income-rent ratio that had previously been used for young adults. In addition, the minimum income-

level in the IHS-table was set at the level of the minimum wage for adults, which exceeds the income of most young adults. The number of young adults who could depend on the IHS for a rent-subsidy was thus further reduced. All of these measures have restricted the accessibility of the housing market to young adults. Even the so-called HAT-units, that were built especially for them, are no longer an option now that they cannot get individual rent-subsidy (Stelder, 1986).

Availability

Affordability is not the only problem that young adults are faced with; finding suitable housing is quite difficult as well. Young adults starting their household career are not interested in spacious four-room single-family houses, that are overrepresented in the Dutch housing stock. Smaller units, like one- or two-room apartments or a room in lodgings, are preferred, as they are often sufficient to meet the needs of people at this stage of life. However, the supply of these types of housing is restricted². Of course, this was also the case in the preceding period, but during the 1980s the pressure on the cheaper segments of the housing market increased, because the production of inexpensive housing was reduced and because the flow away from this segment of the housing market stagnated. Pressed by the economic climate, the government decided to adjust the building programme, leading to a decline in both the number of newly built houses in the rental sector and the production of subsidised owner-occupied houses (Van der Schaar & Hereijgers, 1991). Young adults wishing to leave the parental home, largely suffer indirectly from this policy. As the supply of relatively inexpensive housing diminishes, the cheapest accommodations remain occupied by low-income groups and therefore do not become available to young starters in the housing market (Cebeon, 1985). Even households which might be able to afford to move to more expensive accommodations prefer to stay put reckoning with a possible loss of income in economically troubled times, especially since the overall cost of housing has increased as a result of the aforementioned rent-increases. The government searches for adequate measures to reduce this skewed situation in the housing market (Heerma, 1989), but thus far it has not been very successful (SEV, 1997).

Unfavourable opportunity structure

The combination of deteriorating economic opportunities and the limited availability of housing have clearly affected the young adults' chances of finding suitable and affordable accommodations, and to leave the parental home. It is interesting, by the way, to note

² 10% of the so-called 'independent' accommodations in the Dutch housing stock has 1 or 2 rooms (VROM, 1994). Van Rongen (1989) has estimated the number of lodgings in 1985 to be 275,000, which is 5% of the total housing stock of 5,384,000 'independent' accommodations (VROM, 1994).

that young adults are not only the victims of these deteriorating circumstances, but also of a changing attitude of the state towards young adults. After a period in which they were gradually assigned a series of autonomous rights, young people in the 1980s were confronted with a switch in the governmental opinion about the necessity of some of these rights. The semi-adult status of young adults has been annihilated by several policy measures in the domains of income and housing. The government of course realised that this would frustrate the young adults' opportunities to live on their own, but they explicitly said that they do not feel obliged to "honour the choice of 18-21 year olds to live independently" (Raad Jeugdbeleid, 1988). Individuals who really want to move out should call upon their parents for the necessary support (TKSG, 1984). In contrast to the preceding decades, in which a high level of state intervention could be observed, the government now advocated a retraction of the welfare state so as to bring about a strong reduction in government expenses and to achieve a rapid recovery of rates of employment. This, however, occurred at the expense of a continued recognition of the autonomous rights of youths, and of their economic and housing situations. Evidently, policy measures have complicated the leaving of the parental home, illustrating how the state can have a direct influence on the life-course of individuals (Featherman *et al.*, 1984; Mayer, 1986; Chrisholm & Hurrelmann, 1995).

In summary, this examination of the historical conditions and the societal context of the 1980s gives rise to the hypothesis that the situation in the housing market, coincident with a deterioration of the economic situation, was responsible for the trend of young adults deciding to stay longer in at the parental home, which was observed by several authors.

2.6.3 The cultural context

Obviously the economic opportunities and the situation in the housing market in the 1980s did not encourage young adults to leave home. At the same time, it can be argued that the socio-cultural context did not strongly urge them to do so. For one, as has already been discussed, young adults no longer experience social pressures to conform to normative expectations about the right moment to leave home. Instead, they live in a cultural context in which self-determination has become a central and widespread value, and in which they have much more freedom to make individual choices. This culture of self-determination has also resulted in a more permissive parental attitude. As a consequence young adults no longer have to live up to strict rules and have more leeway in expressing opinions of their own and acting as they please (Chrisholm & Hurrelmann, 1995; Fuchs, 1990). The climate of bargaining, which had been adopted by many parents (Van der Linden, 1991), positively affected the relationship between young adults and their parents, and is presumed to have led to a more harmonious atmosphere in the parental home. Also,

young adults came to profit from the cultural changes in sexual morality, gaining greater sexual freedom earlier and it becoming increasingly more acceptable to parents for their offspring to spend the night with their boy- or girlfriend. All this shows that young adults nowadays have a considerable degree of autonomy, even when living in the parental home (Winkels, 1990). Consequently they may not feel as strong an urge to emancipate themselves from parental influences and rules. Furthermore, living in the parental home means that spacious and comfortable living accommodations, and parental care in the matter of daily living are provided (Jones & Wallace, 1990). Some authors argue that many young adults are unwilling to give up this comfort and decide to remain in the nest just a little longer (De Jong Gierveld *et al.*, 1991; Latten, 1990; Van Leeuwen & Ploegmakers, 1987).

2.7 Towards formulation of the research model

The preceding description of social changes and trends particularly demonstrates the crucial impact that the *situational context* can have on the timing of leaving home. The discussion illustrates how societal circumstances and a specific policy on youth have affected the opportunities and constraints that young adults encounter when trying to set up independent households. Especially the availability of adequate financial resources and the availability of suitable and affordable housing seem to be related to the timing of leaving home. Thus, when trying to understand the factors affecting their decision, the opportunity structure as specified by the economic and the housing situations is one of the determinants that should be taken into account as a crucial determinant.

However, the economic opportunity structure may just be one of the factors affecting the decision to leave. The discussion pursued by life course sociologists has made us aware of the crucial role of the *normative context*. More or less strict social expectations regarding the proper timing and sequencing of life course events may constitute a behavioral guideline for individual decisions. Although youth sociologists speculate that, due to societal and cultural changes, the influence of social expectations has been waning, it is felt by the author to be somewhat premature as yet to disregard their meaning and their effect on the decision to leave home. This study therefore intends to find out whether young adults today are faced with any social expectations and, if so, what aspects these relate to. Thus, not only the situational context, but also the normative context will be considered as a crucial determinant in leaving home.

In most research thus far, conclusions about the effect of situational constraints and opportunities are based on the observation of an association between macro-level circumstances and home-leaving behaviour on the aggregate level. Similarly, the existence of

normative structures is mainly inferred from the existence of general regularities in transition patterns on the aggregate level (Featherman *et al.*, 1984; Marini, 1984).

However, when examining the effect of contextual variables on the aggregate level, the fact that considerable variation exists on the individual level is disregarded. Not all individuals find themselves in exactly the same circumstances, and not every individual will be confronted with the same social norms. If we want to better understand the influence of the opportunity structure on the one hand, and the normative structure on the other, I believe it useful to leave the aggregate level and to move down to the individual level instead. In other words, to more precisely determine the effect of contextual factors, we must measure the individual's *personal situation*. The substantive question underlying this project will thus be rephrased in terms of individual behaviour:

Is the individual's decision to leave home affected by his or her financial situation, housing situation, or normative context?

Furthermore, this study takes the standpoint that the objective context does not always directly affects an individual's behaviour, but that it is rather the *subjective* response to the constraints and opportunities of the individual situation which ultimately gives rise to behaviour. After all, it is the individual who has to deal with the specific situation he or she is confronted with. What counts is the social reality as experienced and constructed by active mediating subjects (Kohli, 1986; Lesthaeghe & Moors, 1992), and this subjective experience may determine the degree to which financial, housing and/or normative considerations are taken into account as viable arguments in the decision to leave home. In other words, the effect of the personal situation is assumed to pass through the subjective interpretation and evaluation of these circumstances. This implies that the individuals' *subjective considerations* are explicitly included into the research model for the present study (see figure 2.1). This implies that we must look for a theoretical framework which views the individual decision maker as an intermediate between the objective situational context and the behavioral outcome.

The second research question to be addressed in this study thus asks:

Is the individual's decision to leave the parental home affected by financial considerations, by housing considerations, or by normative considerations?

The previous overview of the literature has suggested that other considerations may also play a role in the decision to leave, such as, for instance, the atmosphere in and comfort of the parental home. Possibly, still other aspects are taken into consideration that have not emerged thus far. To complete the picture, we will additionally examine

What other considerations are taken into account by young adults who wish to leave the parental home?

Of course, the way a person reacts to the situational context and social expectations depends on a number of factors. Obviously, the objective context is important in itself as it poses direct limitations on the range of options that are open to the individual. However, the effect of the situational context on an individual is likely to vary with the person's *social background*. For instance, Avery *et al.* (1992) have demonstrated that the effect of some determinants of the nest-leaving pattern differ with the age of the young adult. Latten (1990) asserts that the difference in home-leaving behaviour between men and women, which have been found in previous research, can be attributed to the distinction in their respective social orientations. Furthermore, we have seen that the home-leaving pattern appears to be related to educational level as well, whereas other research has shown that age and destination at leaving home vary with social class. It is hypothesised that this cannot only be attributed to class-specific differences in resources, but also to differences in social values (De Jong Gierveld *et al.*, 1993; Blossfeld & Huinink, 1991). A person's social background may yield a set of values by which a given context is assessed and appraised. As a consequence, the event of leaving home and the impact of restricting or facilitating factors may be evaluated differently. It is hypothesised that this may account for differences in the decision to leave the parental home.

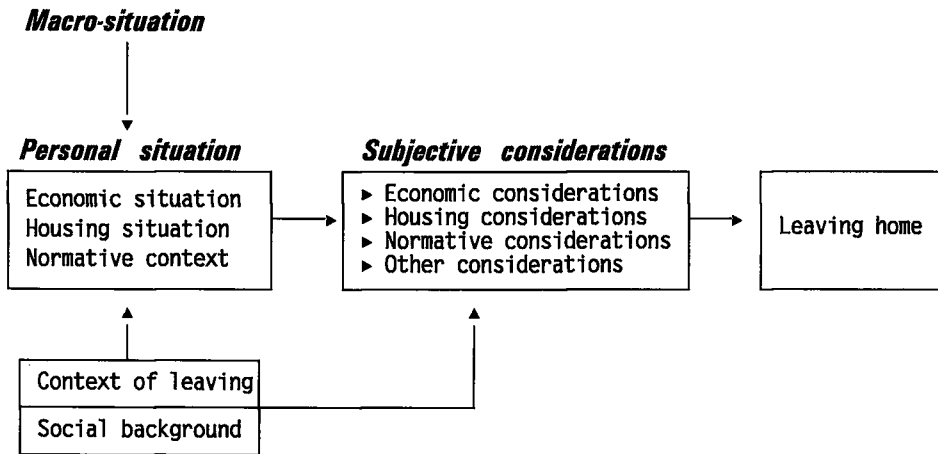
Similarly, it can be argued that a person's situation and his or her evaluation of it are determined by the specific route out of the parental home. Someone who leaves home to start living with a partner is likely to face different circumstances than someone who starts by living alone, and may therefore weigh the financial, the housing and normative considerations differently. Previous research has found, for instance, that a young adult's earnings are indeed critical when moving out to get married, but this was not as important when children moved out to live either alone or with housemates (Avery *et al.*, 1992; Goldscheider & Da Vanzo, 1989). Also, when departure from the parental home is triggered by another event, such as the start of advanced education or a job, the financial implications or the impact of housing opportunities may be perceived quite differently than when one decides to leave home to form a union. People may possibly have anticipated these consequences and therefore do not perceive the situation they are confronted with as restrictive or unattractive. They may also (temporarily) adjust their preferences and accept the options that are open at the moment (Goetgeluk, 1997; Miron, 1996). In other words, it should be recognized that the relevance of either the situational context or normative expectations may depend on the specific context of the transition. One could say that the *context of leaving* (motive and living arrangement) defines the relevance of a given situational context and normative context as well. It is therefore decided to include 'motive for departure' and 'arrangement at departure' in the block of the research model representing the personal situation in the research model (see Figure 2.1).

The above remarks concerning the possibly mediating effect of a person's characteristics as determined by background or motive for departure, give rise to the third research question:

Which categories of young adults can be distinguished concerning the degree that financial, housing, normative or other considerations are relevant factors in their decision to leave home?

Now that the basic starting-points and the relevant independent variables have been defined, the research model which will direct the present study can be presented as follows:

Figure 2.1 Research model



Chapter 3. Theoretical framework

"All one can do is first reflect and
then act. That's the human job."
Iris Murdoch, *Under the net*

3.1 The Theory of Rational Choice

The rational individual

In the previous chapter the question was raised whether the decision of individuals to perform certain behaviours can be understood by studying the situational context at the macro-level. Surely, the situational context directly defines the opportunities and the constraints a person is faced with, and thus limits the behavioral alternatives that are open to him or her. However, the effect of situational conditions is believed to be mediated by the individual's personal responses to these conditions (Bagozzi & Van Loo, 1989). A central assumption is that "the individual reacts to the appearance of reality in its various, situationally determined forms, leading to a 'dialectic' relationship between the subject and the socially experienced reality" (Hurrelmann, 1989b, p.108). By merely focusing on the objective conditions, one overlooks the individual decision-maker who actively responds to these conditions, viewing each alternative in the light of the situational context, and eventually choosing one alternative.

A prominent theoretical approach, that assumes the notion of an actively mediating individual, is the Theory of Rational Choice. According to this theory, individuals are inclined to weigh the consequences of each alternative action and select the behavioral option that is most advantageous to them. The evaluation of each action is based on the subjective expected utility (SEU), that is, the expected probability that a certain outcome will occur, multiplied by the subjective utility attached to this outcome. This type of model is also referred to as an expectancy-value model (Bagozzi, 1986). An individual, who is faced with two or more behavioral options, will consider the whole set of positive and negative outcomes that each action may produce, and will rationally decide to choose the action that yields maximum utility or minimizes negative utility (Burch, 1980). From this theoretical perspective, human actions are regarded as based on purposive and rational decisions.

Critical remarks concerning the assumptions of the Theory of Rational Choice

Some of the premises underlying the Theory of Rational Choice have met with criticism from several authors. A first criticism addressed the assumption of maximizing behaviour as well as the validity of the rationality-concept that dominates rational choice theory. It was felt that people may not always be in the position to maximize subjective utility. In many circumstances behavioral options may be limited because of certain situational

constraints people are confronted with. Consequently, they are forced to choose among options that may generate only suboptimal utility. This kind of situation is referred to as a constrained-choice situation (Franz, 1986) or as context-bound rationality (Boudon, 1987).

Behavioral options may also be restricted as a result of previous choices made earlier in the life course. These choices are often bound to affect the set of actions still open to the individual later in life. Similarly, in situations that joint decisions are to be made, realisation of maximum utility may not be attainable to all decision-makers (Burch, 1980). This situation may arise, for instance, when two individuals decide on the timing of leaving home to start living together. In response to shortcomings like this, Simon (1957) suggested the concept of "satisficing" behaviour instead of maximising behaviour; that is, people will choose the behavioral alternative that fulfils at least some of the most preferable outcomes.

Some authors also doubt whether an individual will always be able to make conscious and strictly rational choices (Friedman & Hechter, 1988). In order to do so, a person would need to have perfect knowledge of the world around him, of the possibilities that are open to him and of all the implications of his actions. Instead, it is argued, people are often confronted with uncertainty or ambiguity concerning the outcomes of alternative actions (Meeker, 1980; Boudon, 1987) and situations are often too complicated for an individual to adequately foresee and anticipate the full range of consequences. Consequently, a strictly rational and maximising evaluation of costs and rewards cannot be reached. It is asserted by some authors, that in these instances it may be a lot easier for the individual to fall back on socially accepted behavioral patterns and normative regularities (Friedman & Hechter, 1988; Lesthaeghe & Moors, 1992). The normative expectations will provide the individual with some guidance as to what can be regarded as a right decision to make and a preferable option to choose.

Critique was also directed towards the overly individualistic perspective of rational choice theory (Meyer, 1988) and claims that individuals are not the highly autonomous actors they are presumed to be by rational choice theory. It is stressed that one cannot disregard the fact that individuals are embedded in a social context and as such are confronted with a set of behavioral expectations that take the form of normative prescriptions.

The implications of this critique are twofold. For instance, Sansone (1992) makes the case that the subjective evaluations of alternative actions cannot solely be attributed to an exact calculation of probabilities and utilities. Following Bourdieu, he argues that the evaluations are also affected by the "habitus" of an individual, that is, by an internalised scheme that colours the individual's perception of the options available to him or her. This implies that individuals from different groups are likely to evaluate the consequences of particular options differently.

Furthermore, Meyer (1988) feels that not all actions can be viewed as the result of a conscious decision-making. Sometimes it is no more than a taken-for-granted behavioral option common to the social background of the individual. The social environment offers the individual a more or less restricted 'decisions environment' (McNicol, 1980), and this brings individuals to orient themselves toward specific courses of actions that are frequently observed and thus familiar.

Social norms

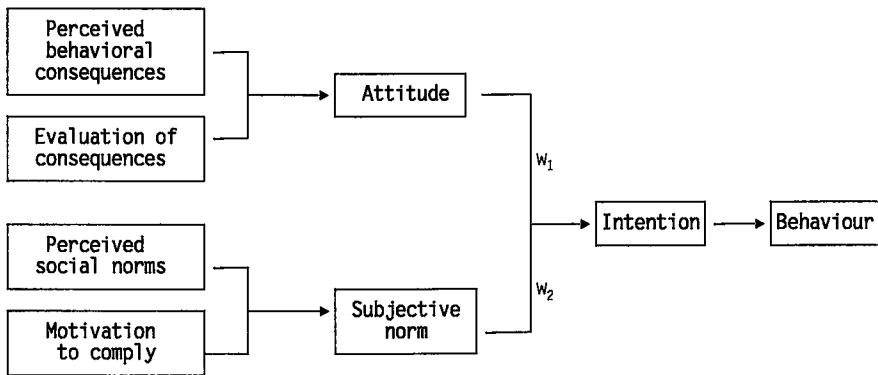
In reaction to arguments like these, several authors have urged that more attention be paid to existing social norms and to the effect that social expectations may have on individual behaviour. However, these theorists explicitly dissociate themselves from the deterministic perspective of classical sociological theory, which looks upon man as a *homo sociologicus*, whose actions are fully determined by social structure, who is merely obedient to societal pressures, and who is guided by the behaviour of groups that provide an image of 'normality' (Hammel, 1990; Sørensen, 1986). Instead, it is felt that individuals do not automatically react to existing norms, but rather that norms provide just another set of feasible and acceptable alternatives to choose from (Poole, 1989; Nye, 1980) or some guiding principles that may be taken into consideration in the decision for specific behaviour. Moreover, inclusion of the effects of social norms does not mean a rejection of the Theory of Rational Choice. Though some stress that social norms must be seen as operating differently from rational considerations and thus must be dealt with separately (Elster, 1989), others feel that the following of social norms can be regarded as a form of rational behaviour (Lindenberg, 1985; Poole, 1989) and that for a better understanding of social behaviour, existing social norms should be included in the Theory of Rational Choice as well. Norms may help determine what is or is not acceptable behaviour.

3.2 A Theory of Reasoned Action

Model components

A theoretical framework, consistent with the SEU-model, that offers an interesting integration of the concept of an actively anticipating individual who considers the consequences of behavioral alternatives, with the idea that awareness of normative expectations may also influence a person's behaviour, is the Theory of Reasoned Action, developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) (see Figure 3.1). "As its name implies, the Theory of Reasoned Action is based on the assumption that human beings usually behave in a sensible manner; that they take account of available information and implicitly or explicitly consider the implications of their actions" (Ajzen, 1985, p.12).

Figure 3.1. The Model of Reasoned Action



Source: Ajzen, Fishbein, 1980

According to the Theory of Reasoned Action, an individual's behaviour can be predicted directly from his intention to perform (or not perform) the behaviour. This intention in turn can be explained by the linear combination of two factors: the attitude towards the behaviour, and the subjective norm. An *attitude* can be seen as a general feeling, either favourable or unfavourable, that a person has towards performing a specific behaviour. This attitude is shaped both by the anticipated consequences he or she associates with the behaviour and by the subjective evaluation of the desirability (or noxiousness) of these consequences.

In accordance with the expectancy-value model that underlies the concept of attitude in the Theory of Reasoned Action, we can obtain an estimate of the attitude by multiplying belief strength and outcome evaluation, and summing the resulting products. Symbolically this can be presented as: $A_B = \sum b_i e_i$, where b_i is the *behavioral belief* that the behaviour leads to consequence i , and e_i is the person's subjective evaluation of consequence i . It is assumed that people's beliefs are based upon the information and perceptions they have about the world around them (the concept of an active information-processing individual).

The *subjective norm*, on the other hand, reflects a person's perception of what referent individuals or groups expect him to do. It is an indication of social pressure exerted by the individual's social environment (Swanborn, 1991). The subjective norm is a function of a person's beliefs that specific others would approve or disapprove of the behaviour, multiplied by his motivation to comply with these referents. Symbolically: $SN = \sum NB_i MC_i$, where NB_i is the *normative belief* that person i or group i thinks (s)he should or should not perform the behaviour, and MC_i is the motivation to comply with this person i or group i .

A person's intention will depend on the relative influence of both the attitudinal (personal) and the normative (social) factor. Each component is weighted to reflect its relative importance as a determinant of the intention. For some behaviours attitudinal considerations may be more important than normative considerations, while for others normative considerations may predominate. The relative weights of the attitudinal and normative factors may vary from one behaviour to the other as well as between persons, and must be determined empirically.

The complete Model of Reasoned Action, which is schematically presented in Figure 3.1, can now be expressed algebraically as:

$$B \sim BI = w_1(\sum b_i e_i) + w_2(\sum NB_i MC_i)$$

Measurement

It can be inferred from the structure of the model, that the attitude and the subjective norm, which predict intention, can be estimated either by a *global measure*, or more specifically by a *belief-based measure*.

A global measure of attitude is usually obtained by presenting a set of semantic differentials to respondents, who have to indicate on a 7-point evaluative scale how they feel about performing the behaviour. These statements run as follows: 'My performing of the behaviour is favourable - unfavourable / good - bad / usefull - useless. The scores on each evaluative scale are added together so as to provide an overall global measure of attitude.

A global measure of the subjective norm can be assessed by asking people to rate, on a 7-point scale, how likely it is that most people who are important to them would approve or disapprove of their performing the behaviour. For example, 'Most people who are important to me think I should -:-:-:-:- should not leave the parental home'.

An estimate of the attitudinal and normative factor can also be obtained by measuring the underlying behavioral and normative beliefs, thus providing a *belief-based* measure of attitude and subjective norm. Behavioral beliefs are measured by asking the respondent to state, again on a seven-point scale, whether (s)he perceives a given consequence very likely or very unlikely to occur. For example: 'My leaving home will affect my spending capacity; very likely -:-:-:-:- very unlikely'. The scores on the belief items are multiplied by the individual's evaluation of the listed consequences, which are measured by statements like: 'Having money to spend is extremely pleasant -:-:-:-:- unpleasant'. To measure the normative beliefs, the respondent is asked to indicate the perceived expectation for each of the salient referents. For instance, the measurement format that is often employed runs: 'My parents think I should -:-:-:-:- I should not leave the parental home'. The score on this item is multiplied by the person's motivation to comply, which is measured by the question: 'How important is it to you what your parents think about your leaving home?'

3.3 Critical review of the Theory of Reasoned Action

Validity of the model

The Theory of Reasoned Action has been applied in much empirical research, both in experimental designs, such as laboratory games like Prisoner's Dilemma (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1970) and Chicken's Game (Songer-Nocks, 1976)), and in natural settings, which involved studies on voting behaviour (Jaccard *et al.*, 1979), drug and alcohol use (Bentler & Speckart, 1979), giving blood (Bagozzi, 1986), class attendance (Fredricks & Dorsett, 1983), sexual and contraceptive behaviour (Davidson & Morrison, 1983; Smetana & Adler, 1980), ecological behaviour (Stutzman & Green, 1982; Midden *et al.*, 1981; Goldenhar & Connell, 1992; Kok & Siero, 1985), and consumer behaviour (Warshaw, 1980; Van den Putte *et al.*, 1996). There have also been a number of applications of the Theory of Reasoned Action to demographic issues, for instance studies on family planning behaviour and family size decisions (Bagozzi & Van Loo 1989; Kar 1978), union formation (Liefbroer & De Jong Gierveld, 1993b), the choice for parenthood (Niphuis-Nell, 1981), migration decisions (Desbarats, 1983), and on life course transitions in general (De Jong Gierveld & Liefbroer, 1987).

A primary goal of many of the early studies was to check the validity and predictive power of the model, and to test the consistency between the model components (e.g. Bentler & Speckart, 1981; Jaccard *et al.*, 1979; McCarty, 1981). Later studies also aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the determinants of specific behaviour, which is helpful in problem-focused behaviours. Such understanding would, for instance, help in setting up effective intervention programmes, such as AIDS-prevention (Boldero *et al.*, 1992), or in planning productive strategies in the field of consumer behaviour (Sheppard *et al.*, 1988).

In many studies, attitudes and normative beliefs have been found to be highly predictive of intentions, and intentions appeared to be directly linked to behaviour. For instance, in their study on the use of birth control pills, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) found correlations of 0.85 between intention and behaviour, of 0.81 between attitude and intention, and of 0.68 between subjective norm and intention. Manstead *et al.* (1983) conducted a study on infant feeding and reported correlation coefficients of 0.82, 0.78 and 0.72 respectively. Smetana and Adler (1980) even found a correlation of 0.96 between the intention to have an abortion and subsequent behaviour.

On the other hand, however, several studies have been conducted in which behavioral intention did not always lead to the corresponding behaviour. In a study on having another child, for instance, Vinokur-Kaplan (1978) found a correlation of only 0.29 between attitude and actual childbirth one year later. In Zuckerman and Reis' (1978) study on blood donation, the correlation between the intention to donate blood and behaviour was as low as 0.40. And Uusitalo (1990) found that, compared to older

respondents, the young who had the most positive attitude towards environmental protection showed the least pro-environmental behaviour. In addition to the problem of empirical inconsistencies, some investigators also noticed that in their analyses the total variance that could be explained by the model components was quite small (Bentler & Speckart, 1979; Jorgensen & Sonstegard, 1984).

Given the lack of consistency in many empirical studies, the validity and generalizability of the model is frequently questioned. Many critics wonder whether the model as presented by Ajzen and Fishbein, is a comprehensive one, in that all relevant components are incorporated into it, and the crucial causal relations are reflected. They distinctively suggest that in future research additional variables should be addressed in order to improve both predictability and understanding of behaviour, and to increase total explained variance.

Underlying conditions and assumptions of the Theory of Reasoned Action

The empirically observed inconsistencies between the model components did not trouble Ajzen and Fishbein. They defended the validity of their model by stressing that accurate predictions are guaranteed as long as its basic assumptions and conditions are carefully considered (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

First of all, they stated that for an attitude or subjective norm to be consistently related to intention, and for an intention to predict behaviour, the components of the model should be measured at the same level of specificity with respect to action, target, and time (the condition of *correspondence* (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977)). It was also stressed that the beliefs should refer to the person's *own* performance of the behaviour rather than to performance in general.

A second requirement for the model to be valid deals with the *stability* of intentions. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) recognise that intentions can change over time, especially when the time interval between measurement of intention and observation of actual behaviour is quite long. In such case it becomes more likely that unforeseen events will occur which may cause a change in intention, or that new information regarding the possible consequences of the behaviour is acquired. This problem can be avoided, however, when the time between the measurement of intention and the observation of behaviour is limited. Of course, judging the adequacy of a specific time frame is dependent on the behaviour in question and on the (stability of the) prevailing circumstances. In this study, respondents were asked about their intention to leave the parental home within (the foreseeable timespan of) one year. Obviously, behavioral beliefs and normative beliefs can also be subject to change, so in assessing these items a well-defined time span should be considered as well.

Next, a basic assumption of the Model of Reasoned Action is presented to deal with the frequently voiced critique that the model overlooks the moderating effect of *external variables*, like demographic factors and personality characteristics. (Falbo & Becker, 1980; Liska, 1984; De Jong Gierveld & Liefbroer, 1987). Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) refute this suggestion by claiming that the effects of such external variables on behaviour and behavioral intention are all accounted for through the components of the model. In their opinion, demographic variables, like age, sex, socioeconomic status, education, or religion, are reflected either in the beliefs a person holds, or in the relative importance that persons attach to attitudinal or normative considerations. They contend that external variables will affect behaviour only through their effects on one or more of the components specified by the model, and are thus implicitly part of the model.

This justification for leaving out the effect of external variables from the model of reasoned action does not satisfy the opponents. Liska (1984), for instance, maintains that acknowledging the fact that weights vary systematically across sub-samples calls for explicit identification of the underlying factors and inclusion of these factors in the equations. Other authors also strongly advocate that relevant background variables are to be included into the model (Adler, 1979; De Jong Gierveld & Liefbroer, 1987) so as to enhance understanding of the behaviour in question.

A second assumption underlying the Theory of Reasoned Action is the assumption of *volitional control*. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) state that most behaviour to be studied is under volitional control. It is this assumption that has been criticised repeatedly as being not very realistic (Bentler & Speckart, 1981; Desbarats, 1983; Kar, 1978; Liska, 1984; Sheppard *et al.*, 1988). The critics maintain that many actions are, at least partly, determined by factors beyond voluntary control, and that engaging in these actions is dependent on the availability of resources and opportunities, like money, time, the social support of others or favourable circumstances (e.g. Sarver, 1983; Kar, 1978; Boldero *et al.*, 1992). It is argued that greater emphasis should be placed on the factors which restrict behavioral options and which stem from accessibility of relevant opportunities (Burnett, 1980; Pipkin, 1981). However, by postulating a direct relation between intention and behaviour, the Model of Reasoned Action fails to consider the impact of such additional variables, and fails to acknowledge that various situational constraints may prevent individuals from acting in accordance with their intentions, which is a particular weakness in view of the present study. Even before Fishbein and Ajzen formulated their Theory of Reasoned Action, Wicker (1969) had already stressed that attitude research must seriously take account of *situational thresholds*, which can impede the actual performance of behaviour, and may thus interfere with the move from intention to behaviour. He suggested, for instance, that an unanticipated change in income may influence actual application for public housing. In the same line of reasoning, Desbarats (1983) remarked that a person's

housing opportunities may be dependent on the allocation system of local authorities, and Sheppard *et al.* (1988) mentioned that unaffordable interest rates may prevent a person from effectuating his intention to buy a house. De Jong Gierveld and Liefbroer (1987) pointed out that, even when a person has a strong behavioral intention to get a job, (s)he may not succeed in finding one in times of a depressed labour market; in other words, employment opportunities can thwart a person's intentions. Likewise, a person may be prevented from leaving home when lacking the necessary financial resources. In the field of ecological studies, researchers also identified some situational barriers which affect the individual's behaviour. For instance, recycling behaviour appears to be mediated by the area of residence (urban or rural) and by type of residence (living in an apartment complex or not) (Schultz *et al.*, 1995; Derksen & Gartrell, 1993). Both factors reflect the impact of 'low-cost' or 'high-cost situations' (Diekmann & Preisendorfer, 1992), that is, the relative ease (or difficulty) to act in accordance with one's environmental attitude.

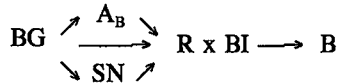
The Model of Reasoned Action, however, does not comprise a factor to represent the effects of the situational context, or the opportunity structure of an individual. This limitation may well be responsible for the often observed discrepancies between intention and behavior, and between beliefs and intentions. It is contended that a model which so obviously tries to explain the occurrence of behaviour, should be complemented with a set of relevant situational factors which may mediate the actualisation of an intention into overt behaviour, and may explain why seemingly relevant beliefs or intentions are unrelated to behaviour.

Several authors, each using their own terminology, have proposed an adjustment to the model of the Theory of Reasoned Action. Triandis (1977) was among the first and most prominent, and included the term 'facilitating conditions' in his attitude-behaviour model. Soon after that, Kar (1978) also stressed that the accessibility of social and economic means for action may have an additional effect on behaviour, and referred to the term "subjective accessibility" in his study on sexual behaviour contraceptive use.

Sarver (1983) introduced the often cited term 'context of opportunity'. Judging from the illustrative case that Sarver presents, it is both the availability of adequate resources and opportunities, and the occurrence of unanticipated events which may prevent or encourage an individual to act in agreement with his or her beliefs and/or intentions. Sarver claims that, by systematically assimilating an additional factor which reflects the context of opportunity, the investigator has a construct which enables him to analyse the impact of situations which block or facilitate enactment of the behaviour.

Liska (1984), then, strongly advocated that an additional factor, described as 'resources and opportunities' should be incorporated in a behavioral model. He suggests a model, in which available resources interact with the behavioral intention to mediate the effect of

attitude and behavioral norm. This model also encompasses the previously discussed aspect of social background and is presented as follows (Liska, 1984, p.65):



where BG stands for social background, A_B is the attitude towards the behaviour in question, SN is the subjective norm, R are the resources, BI is the behavioral intention, and B is behaviour.

Desbarats (1983) mainly focuses on constraints imposed by the individual's socio-physical environment, which are believed to narrow down the objective choice set to a more limited "effective choice set" (p.351), and thus possibly obstruct subsequent actualisation of the behaviour.

Kuhl (1985) highlights the relevance of the situational context by introducing the term 'action control'.

3.4 The Theory of Planned Behaviour

Acknowledging the situational context

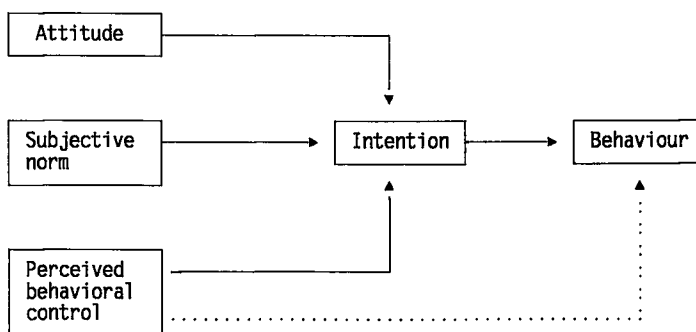
Initially, Ajzen and Fishbein set aside the suggestions to expand their Model of Reasoned Action and persisted in their argument that most behaviour is under volitional control and that external factors will not exert a disturbing influence, so long as the timespan-criterion is considered (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). However, the growing body of empirical research and the ongoing criticism regarding the validity and generalizability of the model has led Ajzen to consider the question of control (Ajzen, 1985). He admitted that situational factors may indeed interfere with the amount of control a person has over the successful accomplishment of the behaviour he or she intends to perform. Ajzen recognises that for many behaviours, lack of opportunities or adequate circumstances may prevent their actual performance and that situational factors may thus disturb the link between the model's components. Intentions will not always result in behaviour, as they may be frustrated by situational factors. In line with this understanding, Ajzen has reformulated an intention as an indication of how hard people are willing to *try* to perform the behaviour (Ajzen, 1985, p.29), instead of as the *likelihood* to engage in specific behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). If a person believes that (s)he lacks the required resources or opportunities, or, in other words, feels a lack of control over the implementation of the behaviour, (s)he will not develop a strong intention to perform it, and consequently will not even attempt to do so. Intentions must be understood as a person's *plan* to perform a behaviour, and should be measured accordingly. This implies that intentions should not be measured by statements that are put as "I will perform the behaviour", as was suggested for the Model of Reasoned Action, but by inquiring whether one *plans* to engage in a specific behaviour.

In looking for an adequate extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action to account for the impact of the situational context, Ajzen introduced the notion of perceived behavioral control, a notion which was most directly inspired by Bandura's (1977, 1982) concept of self-efficacy (Ajzen, 1991). Like the concept of self-efficacy, a person's perceived behavioral control reflects the belief that one is or is not capable of performing a particular behaviour. The inclusion of this concept resulted in the formulation of a Theory of Planned Behaviour, which was first presented in an article by Ajzen and Madden (1986).

Perceived behavioral control

In the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Ajzen thus included a third predictor variable, which is termed *perceived behavioral control* (see Figure 3.2). This determinant reflects the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour (Ajzen, 1988), considering the potential barriers which may obstruct its realisation. It is assumed that people will acquire an impression of their chances to perform the behaviour, which is based on the perceived availability of resources and the anticipated constraints and opportunities. This subjective judgement provides an indication of the individual's behavioral control and is believed to affect the intention to perform the behaviour (the solid arrow between perceived behavioral control and intention). According to Ajzen, perceived behavioral control is therefore an adequate measure of the impact of situational constraints. In other words, in addition to, and in interaction with, the effect of attitude and subjective norm, a person's intention will also be influenced by his or her perceived behavioral control. For behaviours over which the individual has complete volitional control and does not encounter any impediments, the model of the Theory of Planned Behaviour concurs with the model of the Theory of Reasoned Action.

Figure 3.2. The Theory of Planned Behaviour



Several empirical studies have shown that addition of the construct of perceived behavioral control to the model improved the prediction of both intention and performance of behaviour which is characterised by incomplete volitional control, and therefore appears to be a worthwhile extension of the original model (Parker *et al.*, 1995; Netemeyer & Burton, 1990, White *et al.*, 1994; DeVellis *et al.*, 1990; Sparks *et al.*, 1992).

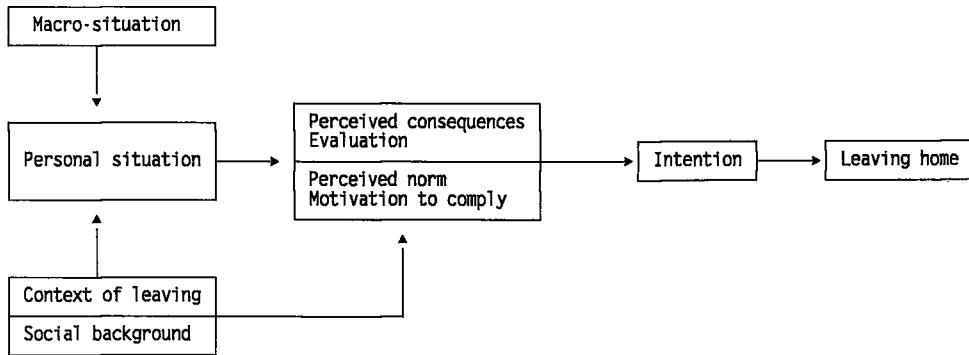
It must be stressed, however, that, although Ajzen claims that perceived behavioral control will quite accurately reflect actual control, the Theory of Planned Behaviour does not deal with the actual availability of resources and opportunities. The model merely considers the subjective effect of situational conditions (the solid arrow from perceived behavioral control to intention), which is quite understandable considering the motivational nature of the model (Ajzen & Madden, 1986). This implies, however, that the model does not account for the direct and objective effect of situational factors on the actualisation of behaviour. Ajzen states that the link between perceived behavioral control and behaviour only occurs when there is reasonable correspondence between perceived and actual control (Ajzen, 1988). If this is not the case, perceived behavioral control may add little to the accuracy of behavioral prediction. That is why he presented the relation between these two components in a dotted line. I will return to this issue in the next section.

Perceived behavioral control can be measured directly by asking respondents about the likelihood that, if they tried, they would succeed in performing the behaviour. For instance, "For me to engage in this activity is easy / difficult". Perceived behavioral control can also be assessed indirectly by measuring control beliefs. Control beliefs deal with the presence or absence of resources and opportunities, obstacles and impediments to perform the behaviour (Ajzen, 1988, 1991). Each of these beliefs must be weighted by its perceived power to facilitate or inhibit performance, that is, by the likelihood that each factor might help or interfere with performing the behaviour (Ajzen, 1988; Ajzen & Driver, 1992).

3.5 The theoretical model in this study

Upon presenting an outline of the Theory of Reasoned Action, of the critique regarding its flaws and limitations, and of the extended Theory of Planned Behaviour, I will now reflect on the specific integration of some of the components of the theoretical framework into the present study. Several elements will be discussed, of which the situational context is the most crucial one. This will result in the presentation of the theoretical model to be employed in this study (see Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3. The theoretical model in this study



The effect of situational context in the model

As may be recalled, primary emphasis in this study is on the relative influence of the opportunity structure on the decision of young adults to leave the parental home. In the original Model of Reasoned Action, this aspect was not accounted for in any way. In the expanded Model of Planned Behaviour a subjective measure of the required resources and opportunities was included as an estimate of the objective conditions. It is felt, however, that the impact of the situational context cannot be dealt with satisfactorily by incorporating a measure of *perceived* behavioral control, as Ajzen suggested, and neglect the actual control. Even though Ajzen realises that perceived control may add little to the prediction of behaviour when the opportunity structure is not perceived accurately (Ajzen, 1987, 1988), he still asserts that perceived control is more important than actual control, and therefore disregards the effect of the objective situation altogether. In my opinion, this may be right when trying to understand the intention of an actor, but the actualisation of an intention into overt behaviour cannot be controlled by an actor's perceptions only. For one, the individual's perception of possible constraints and opportunities may not be realistic or be based on inaccurate information. People may very well misjudge their situation (Adler, 1979) or purposely rule out certain situational factors as they wish to conform to social norms (Desbarats, 1983), and may thus fall victim to what Weinstein (1980) calls 'unrealistic optimism' (or pessimism, of course). When trying to actualise the intention, the individual may unexpectedly encounter some obstacles which prevent the performance of the behaviour, or - conversely - an unforeseen opportunity may expedite it. Especially when there is a large discrepancy between perceived and actual opportuni-

ities, it will be difficult to explain or predict actual behaviour by only considering the subjective component. In such instances, I feel it would be better to add a component which reflects the actual opportunity structure. In other words, it is my conviction that the situational context must be included explicitly into the model and cannot be substituted by a measure of subjectively perceived control.

Moreover, I feel that subjectively anticipated constraints are already reflected in the behavioral beliefs. Since the model emphatically inquires about *personally* performing the behaviour, it seems obvious that people will take account of their own personal situation and of the context of their behaviour when stating the perceived consequences of leaving home (see also Sarver 1983, and Swanborn 1991). Inclusion of the additional component of perceived behavioral control would, in my opinion, lead to a double count of the effect of perceived behavioral constraints¹. In a prior study, Manning and Wright (1983) also discussed the problem of distinguishing between self-efficacy expectancy (which, as mentioned before, is closely related to the concept of perceived behavioral control) and outcome expectancy (i.e. behavioral beliefs). They found that the two concepts were highly correlated and therefore redundant in explaining behavioral intentions. In fact, they argue that inclusion of the two measures simultaneously might lead to confounding.

The two arguments mentioned above made me decide to leave out the subjective measure of the perceived opportunity structure, and to include direct measures for the actual situational context into the model instead. As such, the model joins in with the 'theory of individual choice' proposed by De Jong Gierveld and Liefbroer (1987), who present the sociostructural context as a separate model component to account for the 'opportunity effects'.

One might argue that with the omission of the concept of behavioral control, the theoretical model to be used in this study reverts to the original Model of Reasoned Action. However, the motivation to add the situational context to the model is directly inspired by the same critical remarks which prompted Ajzen to propose an adjusted Model of Planned Behaviour. Moreover, in the Theory of Planned Behaviour an alternative definition of intention is adopted, in which intentions are understood as a person's *plan* to engage in behaviour. It is this definition that is adhered to in this study. Thus, the theoretical model in the present study must be considered a further modification of the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

¹ Even though Ajzen contends that the concept of behavioral control actually makes a significant contribution to the prediction of intention, as he found in a study on weight loss that the proportion of explained variance increased from 0.65 to 0.72 when, besides attitudes and subjective norm, perceived behavioral control was added (Schifter & Ajzen, 1985).

As may be recalled from the illustrative examples presented in section 3.3, situational factors which may interfere with the realisation of behaviour often refer to a mixture of specific macro-conditions and personal resources. Obviously, both the micro- and macro-level context are crucial in posing certain limitations on behaviour. In the theoretical model presented here, I prefer to specifically distinguish between both sources of behavioral restriction and regard them separately. The theoretical model thus contains both a component reflecting the individual situation and one reflecting the macro-conditions, as is also advocated by Swanborn (1991) (see Figure 3.3). Yet, in our study design main attention will be focused on the impact of the personal situation of individuals; by selecting an observational period of one year, the macro-conditions are largely kept constant, with the exception of regional differences.

Belief-based measures

The complete Model of Planned Behaviour comprises both a global measure of attitude and subjective norm, as well as a measure of the set of underlying beliefs. If, as in the present study, we are interested in the determinants of intentions and behaviour and in the variety of considerations that are handled in the decision, the measurement of underlying beliefs will yield more insight, as they explain *why* some people have moved out while others remain at home, and *why* some of them intend to leave and others do not. Addressing the underlying beliefs will teach more about the specific considerations that are handled than a global measure of attitude or a subjective norm will. Moreover, the use of belief-based measures is considered more accurate because they are likely to evoke more reasoned responses rather than automatic reactions (Ajzen, 1991). For these reasons, I will not secure a global measure of attitude and subjective norm in the model, but focus on the separate, more meaningful (behavioral and normative) beliefs and their evaluation (see Figure 3.3).

Operationalisation of behavioral beliefs

According to Ajzen and Fishbein, the scores on the expectancy component and on the evaluation component can be multiplied to obtain an estimate of a person's attitude. In this study, however, it was decided to investigate the effect of both components separately, and not to construct a combined estimate. This has been done for two reasons. First of all, multiplication of the components assumes an interaction effect between expected consequences and evaluation. This assumption, however, has not been supported convincingly by empirical findings (Liefbroer, 1991; Fokkema, 1996). Second, separate analyses of the two constituent components reveal more clearly whether differences in home-leaving behaviour can be attributed to differences in the perception of certain consequences, or to differences in the evaluation of the aspects involved.

Operationalisation of normative beliefs

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the normative beliefs deal with the set of referent others that may express specific social expectations regarding acceptable behaviour. As such, this concept provides useful insight into the kind of groups that may exercise social pressure on the behaviour in question. However, it does not provide any information about the specific expectations that individuals are confronted with in their social environment. In this study, we specifically aim to find out what the normative expectations entail, which aspects they refer to, and how the diversity of prevailing expectations affects the behavioral options and the decision environment of young adults. To achieve this, it was decided that besides statements regarding the overall opinion of relevant others, additional statements covering the specific content of these expectations will be presented to the respondents. The respondents are asked to point out, on a 7-point bipolar scale, the relevance that is attached by the referent others to each of these items. The identification and specific formulation of the prevailing normative items will be further elaborated in chapters 5 and 6.

The place of background variables in the model

As described before, Ajzen and Fishbein reject the suggestion that background variables should be added to the model, since they feel these are implicitly reflected in the beliefs. The present study, however, not only wishes to explain behaviour, but also wishes to gain more insight in subgroup variation, and in the underlying factors that cause differences between individuals. Following Liska (1984) and De Jong Gierveld and Liefbroer (1987), it was therefore decided to include these factors as a separate component in the theoretical framework.

It must be understood that background variables can affect transition behaviour in different ways. First, the social background shapes the opportunity structure that young adults encounter, by determining the economic resources and restrictions that are available to them (socio-structural background). Second, social background variables may determine the specific beliefs of an individual (socio-cultural background). Clearly, individuals are not all equally vulnerable to the impact of specific constraints, and they do not all value certain consequences in the same way. In fact, the very notion of an SEU-model that underlies the concept of attitude in the theory of Ajzen and Fishbein, implies that two individuals may associate quite different sets of consequences with performing the behaviour, and, in case they do anticipate the same set of consequences, they may still hold different attitudes if they evaluate these consequences differently. The anticipation and evaluation of possible consequences is to a significant extent socially prestructured, and in this sense, the socio-cultural background variables will exert a "socialisation effect" (De Jong Gierveld & Liefbroer, 1987, p.169). Also, a person's sociocultural back-

ground may determine the prevailing normative expectations which more or less guide a person's behaviour.

In other words, the model component 'social background' is linked both to behavioral and normative beliefs and to the individual situational context (see Figure 3.3 on page 45).

Measurement: alternatives

In this study on home-leaving behaviour, the formulation by which behavioral beliefs are measured, slightly departs from the standard formulation proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein. The rationale behind this lies in the critique that the Theory of Reasoned Action is not concerned with the consideration of alternatives (Adler, 1979; Jaccard, 1981; Sheppard *et al.*, 1988). Basically, the theory focuses on one particular choice alternative, and neglects the fact that people usually choose between alternative courses of action. Consequently, a person's behaviour will not only depend on how good or preferable a given behaviour is, but also on the attractiveness of alternative choice(s). Several authors suggested that more accurate predictions of behaviour will be obtained when the beliefs and intentions towards each behavioral alternative are considered (Adler, 1979; Sheppard *et al.*, 1988; Van den Putte *et al.*, 1996). In its most simple form, the very choice between performance versus not-performance implies two alternatives (Swanborn, 1991). In other words, not only the beliefs about leaving home must be considered in this study, but also the beliefs about the alternative of staying home. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) object that this unnecessarily complicates the model, because the number of items becomes too large. However, I feel this problem can be solved by asking the respondents about the expected *changes* that leaving home will bring about as compared to staying home, thus combining the perceived consequences of either staying home or leaving home. To illustrate the procedure, consider the following example: 'When I leave my parental home now, I expect to have much less -:-:-:-:- much more freedom'.

3.6 Conclusion

A basic starting-point of the present study is that, in trying to understand the decision of individuals, the *subjective considerations* of these individuals should be of central interest. After all, it can be argued that it is the subjective response to prevailing opportunities and constraints which is essential, and that the effect of the situational context is likely to be mediated by the individual's perception of his individual situation.

In this chapter, Ajzen and Fishbein's Theory of Reasoned Action has been examined systematically, and it can be concluded that their model provides a useful theoretical tool to make concrete the subjective component of the model. More specifically, by introducing the notions of 'behavioral beliefs' and 'normative beliefs', the model is an adequate

theoretical instrument to operationalise the subjective perceptions that are central to the research model. Of course, in order to use the theoretical model, the relevant subjective beliefs will have to be specified concretely for the type of behaviour that is being studied here. The procedure that was used to identify the behavioral and normative beliefs related to leaving home will be discussed in chapter 5.

Another feature of the model, which makes it particularly suitable as a theoretical basis for the present study, is the way it acknowledges that both the situational context and the normative context must be regarded as separate factors that may determine a person's behavioral choice. As such, it joins in perfectly with the standpoint underlying the research question and the research model of this study.

On the other hand, it is argued that the Model of Planned Behaviour, as presented by Ajzen, should explicitly contain a component which measures the opportunity structure of the individual. What is more, it is asserted here that actual measurement of a person's individual situation adds more to the understanding of behaviour than an approximation of the situation as reflected by perceived behavioral control. Moreover, it was decided to include a person's social background as an additional model component. The theoretical model to be employed in this study thus is an adapted version of the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

Examination of the Theory of Reasoned Action also drew attention to the fact that it is crucial to distinguish two separate stages in the process of decision-making: a stage of intention formation, and a subsequent stage of actual behaviour. One should not only focus on the actualisation of behaviour, but also investigate the stage that precedes actual behaviour, and try to find out which factors affect the formation of an intention. In the analyses of the survey material, this distinction will be carried through explicitly.

Chapter 4. Leaving home in the 1980s: opportunity structure and temporal changes.¹

4.1 Trends and determinants

Leaving home is an age-old phenomenon. Yet, the nature of this event certainly has not remained unchanged over time. Several demographic studies have shown how the timing of the event and the type of household arrangement into which a young adult enters have undergone major changes in the second half of this century. A significant change, observed in practically all Western societies during the 1950s and 1960s, was a strong decline in the average age at which young adults left the parental home. This trend persisted until the mid-1970s, when the age at departure stabilised (Baanders *et al.*, 1989). During the 1980s, however, a new trend in the timing of the transition was detected, several authors observing that more and more young adults decided to stay longer in the parental home (Corijn, 1993; Van Der Heydt & Prins, 1993; Latten, 1990). According to these authors, the economic recession must be considered one of the main causes for this delay. In addition, some researchers stressed the restraining effect of a limited supply of attractive and affordable housing. This both makes it more difficult to find acceptable independent housing, and implies that, if moving out, one has to give up the comfortable conditions of the parental home for unattractive and/or expensive independent housing. It is asserted that this prospect will have made young people less anxious to move out (Burton *et al.*, 1989; Ter Bogt & Van Praag, 1992; Jones, 1995). Some researchers also point out that changes in the relationship between parents and children (more autonomy for the children, more equality and mutual understanding), have contributed to the trend of young adults not feeling a strong urge to seek independence by moving out (De Graaf, 1989; De Jong Gierveld *et al.*, 1991). Yet, in most demographic and economic studies the emphasis is on the major influence of the situational context, which defines the economic and housing opportunity structure.

Cohort approach

In previous demographic research on home-leaving behaviour, a cohort approach was commonly employed to locate historical shifts (Latten, 1993; Young, 1989; Mayer & Schwarz, 1989; Corijn, 1993). Patterns in the age of departure were compared for subsequent birth cohorts, and the observed changes were linked to the specific societal circumstances that prevailed at the time these cohorts left the parental home (Baanders *et*

¹ The results presented in this chapter were previously published in Baanders A.N. (1995), *Uitvliegen of uitstellen: reacties op het economisch klimaat* [Leave or linger: responses to economic conditions]. *Bevolking en Gezin*, 1995,1: 1-26.

al., 1989). This approach yielded a first understanding of the determinants of home-leaving behaviour, although it must be kept in mind that the method is used specifically to describe the changes in behavioral patterns over time (Ní Bhrolcháin, 1992), and to reveal processes of social change (Ryder, 1965). However, when trying to determine the direct impact of short-term fluctuations, the use of cohort data has its drawbacks. One must realise, that by the time all the members of a cohort have completed the process of leaving home, a period of eight years or more has passed, and during this time the situational context may have gone through a series of consecutive shifts. Consequently, the representatives of the cohort may encounter different opportunities and constraints, depending on the exact time of their transition. When examining the patterns for an entire cohort, it may therefore be difficult to determine accurately during which calendar years the propensity to leave home changed under the influence of then prevailing circumstances. This may be even more difficult, when cumulative percentages are presented (e.g. Latten, 1993). In such a case, a fluctuation in the percentage of home-leavers in a given year will directly affect the cumulative percentages that are observed for a subsequent year. A reversal or slow-down in the trend may then more easily pass unnoticed. Thus, a period approach is recommended as a more appropriate method to recognise behavioral responses over short time spans (Mulder, 1994).

Period approach

To study the changes in home-leaving behaviour during the 1980s and more accurately detect the possible influence of the situational context, a period approach will therefore be employed in this chapter. To do so, the patterns in three different years, which practically cover the complete decade, will be compared: 1981, 1985, and 1989.

For each time segment, the number of young adults who left the parental home during the year of observation will be related to the total number of young adults who were living in the parental home at the beginning of the year. This gives an indication of the period-specific *odds* of leaving home. Fluctuations in the odds that occurred during the 1980s can then be related to the period-specific circumstances² at the time when the young adults left home, or, alternatively, decided not to.

4.2 Research questions and hypotheses

Several aspects of the process of leaving home will be highlighted to gain a better understanding of the effect of the opportunity structure on the event of moving out on an aggregate level.

² An extensive description of the situational context of the 1980s is given in chapter 2.

The first question to be answered is: which changes in the *odds* of leaving home have occurred under the influence of the economic conditions and the housing market opportunities of the 1980s? Considering the fluctuations in the economic situation that were described in chapter 2, where a strong recession at the beginning of the 1980s was followed by a certain recovery during the second half of the decade, it would be expected that the odds of leaving the parental home declined between 1981 and 1985, and increased again in the year 1989. On the other hand, we also know from chapter 2 that the situation in the housing market did not improve much and throughout the 1980s remained rather unfavourable for the group of starters. Therefore, it would have been more difficult to find housing, while people may also have lowered the intensity of their search in reaction to the poor housing market (Hooimeijer & Oskamp, 1996). If the housing market is a decisive factor, it is less likely that by 1989 the odds of leaving home increased again. A closer look at the shifts in the odds of leaving home in a particular year may improve our understanding of the way in which such situational factors affect the propensity to leave home, and may provide a clue about the impact of each of these determinants.

Second, it is conceivable that the economic and housing opportunities are not only reflected in the odds of leaving home. The situational context may also be reflected in the *motive* to leave the parental home. For instance, it is likely that individuals who simply wish to leave home to achieve independence, will more often decide to postpone the transition in times when financial and housing opportunities are limited. Likewise, leaving home for union formation (either marriage or unmarried cohabitation) may also be deferred until the circumstances have improved. These motives may therefore be relatively less dominant in times of restricted opportunities. Alternatively, leaving home for educational reasons cannot easily be delayed if the distance between the parental home and the educational institution requires migration. Similarly, when jobs are scarce, people may relatively more often be forced to move out in order to accept a job. Conversely, it is also possible that leaving home for job-related reasons will be observed less often when there simply are no jobs. The second question to be answered in this chapter therefore is: which fluctuations in the motives for departure have taken place during the 1980s?

Although this chapter aims to study the impact of economic conditions on a macro-level, it may be fruitful to additionally analyse the effect of socio-economic status on the individual level. When directly comparing employed and unemployed young adults, the impact of economic factors on home-leaving behaviour may be made visible. This brings us to the third research question of this chapter: What are the odds of leaving for young adults who are employed, unemployed, and enrolled in education, and which fluctuations can be observed during the 1980s. It is expected that because of their weak financial position unemployed young adults are much less likely to leave home than employed ones are.

The fourth research question is: Are the financial and housing opportunities expressed in the type of *living arrangement* that is chosen when moving out? Several authors assert that if people are restricted in their financial latitude, they tend to seek the economies of scale that are related to sharing a household with more people (Chew, 1990; Ermisch, 1981; Ferment, 1986). This would imply that, in comparison with young adults who left home in 1981, a relatively large proportion of those who left in 1985 would have decided to live with a partner or with others, whereas in 1989 the proportion of nest-leavers who lived alone would have increased again. It is, of course, also possible, that relatively fewer home-leavers are inclined to establish a household with a partner, because they feel that they lack the necessary financial resources or adequate housing (Chew, 1990; Modell *et al.*, 1978).

The fifth question to be addressed in this chapter more closely deals with the impact of the housing market on home-leaving behaviour: Are housing market opportunities reflected in the *type of housing* that nest-leavers move into? It can be hypothesised that young adults who are about to enter a tight housing market with limited opportunities of finding appropriate and attractive housing, are forced to linger home until proper housing becomes available, or will perhaps willingly decide to postpone the transition until they have the means to move into more attractive housing. On the other hand, it is possible that young adults who wish to leave home will - at least for the time being - settle for the kind of accommodation that is available in the short run, even though this means adjusting to smaller, qualitatively less attractive or less comfortable housing (Miron, 1996). To answer the fifth question, the housing characteristics of young adults who left home in 1981, 1985 and in 1989 will be compared.

Finally, not only the actual move out of the parental home will be examined. We will also focus more closely on the group of nest-stayers, that is, the ones who did not leave home during the year of observation, and investigate whether the *intention* to leave home within this group has varied with the prevailing circumstances.

4.3 Data and methods

4.3.1 Secondary analysis of data sets

To study the process of leaving home during the nineteen eighties, data from the Dutch Housing Demand Survey³ were employed. This is a large nation-wide survey, which is representative of the total Dutch population, and is conducted every four years among more than 50,000 respondents. The data for the analyses in this study will be derived

³ In Dutch: Woningbehoeftenonderzoek (WBO).

from the surveys that were conducted at the end of 1981, 1985, and 1989, thus covering practically the entire decade.

The research population consists of young adults living in the parental home at the beginning of the respective calendar years. These can be considered the individuals 'at risk'. The group thus contains both young adults who remained at home with their parents, and those who left home in the course of the year.

The sample only includes young adults between 18 and 26 years of age, as this is the time span in which almost 95% of young adults leave the parental home (Baanders *et al.*, 1989). Because the Housing Demand Surveys are always conducted at the end of the year, there is no danger that many nest-leavers were not registered as such because they left after the interview.

Table 4.3.1 provides some information on the size and composition of the three samples. The average age and the standard deviations that are reported in this table show that the three samples are comparable with respect to age distribution. This implies that standardisation by age is not required in order to make valid comparisons for the three observation periods.

Table 4.3.1 Description of the three study populations

	1981	1985	1989
Total sample size	7214	6197	5814
Number still living at home	6460	5525	5088
Number of nest-leavers	754	672	726
Mean age, entire population ^{a)}	20.6 (2.2)	20.7 (2.3)	20.8 (2.3)
Mean age, stayers	20.5 (2.2)	20.6 (2.2)	20.7 (2.2)
Mean age, leavers	22.0 (2.2)	21.9 (2.3)	21.8 (2.3)
Number of males	4158	3703	3396
Number of females	3056	2494	2418

a) standarddeviation in parentheses

Weighting factor

Although the Housing Demand Surveys use a weighting factor to adjust for under-representation of specific subgroups (CBS, 1992a), the analyses in this study will not be performed with weighted data. The main reason for this is that the weighting factors relate to the total Dutch population, and do not accurately adjust for the possible selective under-representation within the subgroup of 18-26 year olds that is addressed in this study. Furthermore, because this study concerns a comparative analysis of the three data sets, and aims at detecting the changes occurring over time, it is perfectly justifiable to use unweighted data here. Better yet, considering the fact that similar sampling pro-

cedures are pursued in each survey, a possible distortion of the results, which could theoretically result from selection bias, is avoided.

4.3.2 The variables

Leavers and stayers

Obviously, a first concern in this study is to construct a variable which identifies the population at risk, and the individuals who belong to the group of nest-leavers. Two questions in the Housing Demand Survey provide the necessary information. First of all, respondents were asked to indicate their household position. All respondents who reported being a child-member of their parents' household were included in the sample and classified as 'nest-stayer'. Respondents who were living outside the parental home were asked in which calendar year they had moved out. Only respondents who reported having left home during the year of the respective surveys were selected, and were classified as 'nest-leaver'.

For the group of nest-leavers, additional information concerning the transition to independent living is available. First of all, respondents were asked about their motive for departure, and about the kind of living arrangement they entered into. In the 1981 and 1985 surveys no further distinction was made between the alternatives of marriage and unmarried cohabitation. Although this nuance was later introduced in the 1989 survey, for the sake of mutual comparability of the three surveys it was decided to maintain a combined category of 'living with a partner'.

Housing situation

Additionally, the surveys contain several questions pertaining to the characteristics of the residence moved into upon leaving home. These are questions about the type of housing, the number of rooms, the facilities, and the housing market sector (rental or owner-occupied). Unfortunately, the data regarding the monthly costs of housing and regarding rent subsidy were so incomplete for the group of nest-leavers, that it was decided not to use them. As we are only interested in the initial housing accommodation of young nest-leavers, respondents who moved to another residence since leaving home are excluded (less than 2%).

Economic status

In principle, the information from two different questions could be combined to construct the variable which measures economic status. A first question asks about the current source of income, the other about the predominant daily activity. The combination of both questions yielded the following six categories: employed, unemployed with income, unemployed without income, student with income, student without income, other with income, other without income.

Unfortunately, this procedure appeared to be appropriate for the group of nest-stayers only, and could not be applied to the subgroup of nest-leavers. To compare the economic status of nest-leavers with that of nest-stayers, and thus measure its effect on home-leaving behaviour, it is essential to determine the economic status of the nest-leaver just before (s)he left the parental home. However, the source of income that is reported at the time of interview is not necessarily the same as that just before the transition took place. Some sources of income are directly related to the household position of individuals. For instance, students who are living with their parents receive a smaller bursary than students who live independently, and unemployed persons who establish an independent household may only then become entitled to welfare benefits. Consequently, information on the source of income could not be used for nest-leavers. As it seems safe to assume that a person's main activity will not change within the short time-span of one year at the most, it was decided to use the reported daily activity as the sole indication of economic status. Of course, the possibility cannot be ruled out that someone who has left home for educational reasons, becomes bored with his or her studies, decides to quit and becomes unemployed or has accepted a job by the time of the interview. However, comparison of motives for departure and economic activity shows that the danger of such misclassifications is extremely small⁴.

Intention

As discussed above, this study will also examine trends in the intention to leave the parental home. To determine more precisely which young adults seriously plan to move out and distinguish them from the ones who cannot really be considered inclined to leave, the strict criteria proposed by the Department of Public Housing are adhered to. This implies that besides expressing the intention to move out within two years, the respondents also must indicate that they have taken the necessary steps to obtain housing (like register with a housing cooperation, or placing an add), and that they must be prepared to accept suitable housing if it were offered to them.

⁴ The hazard of unwanted misclassifications is reflected in the following figures:

- employed persons who left home for educational reasons: n=4 in 1981, n=4 in 1985, n=10 in 1989.
- unemployed persons who left home for a job: n=4 in 1981, n=14 in 1985, n=2 in 1989.
- unemployed persons who left home for education: n=0 in 1981, n=0 in 1985, n=0 in 1989.
- students who left home for a job: n=0 in 1981, n=19 in 1985, n=11 in 1989.

Table 4.4.1 Probability of leaving the parental home, by period, age, and gender (in %)

				Males			Females		
	1981	1985	1989	1981	1985	1989	1981	1985	1989
All	10.5	10.8	12.5	8.3	8.7	9.4	13.4	14.0	16.9
18-20 years	5.2	5.8	7.5	3.2	3.5	4.7	7.4	8.4	10.7
21-23 years	15.1	14.8	16.2	10.2	10.3	11.0	23.2	22.5	23.9
24-26 years	21.4	20.4	21.5	19.2	19.1	18.1	27.8	24.9	31.1

Table 4.4.2 Motive for leaving the parental home, by period, gender, and economic activity (in %)

	Education			Work			Union formation			Independence		
	1981	1985	1989	1981	1985	1989	1981	1985	1989	1981	1985	1989
All	5.1	11.5	17.0	5.7	5.9	3.5	74.1	58.8	59.1	15.1	23.9	20.4
Male	5.2	14.7	15.7	5.2	5.2	5.0	74.5	58.4	57.9	15.0	21.7	21.4
Female	4.9	8.6	18.0	6.1	6.5	2.4	73.8	59.1	59.9	15.1	25.8	19.6
Employed	0.8	1.0	1.2	6.4	6.5	4.0	78.3	69.0	76.2	14.4	23.6	18.6
Unemployed	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.8	3.6	3.7	62.7	58.2	40.7	29.4	38.2	55.6
Student	58.7	71.4	64.0	0.0	1.1	1.2	26.1	6.6	12.4	15.2	20.9	22.4

4.4 Changes in the process of leaving home

4.4.1 The odds of leaving the parental home

Changes in the propensity to leave the parental home can most directly be inferred from the odds of leaving in successive time spans. A first examination of the overall odds in Table 4.4.1 seems to suggest that even between 1981 and 1985 the probability of leaving home increased, which is quite contrary to our expectations and to the observations of many investigators. However, the increase really cannot be considered a substantial one. Moreover, a closer look at the age-specific odds reveals that only the youngest age group showed a slight increase in the propensity to move out. Among the 21-26 year olds, a trend of decreasing probability can certainly be observed, but this appears to be caused by the subpopulation of women only. A decrease in the odds is not observed for men. In other words, the tendency to postpone the transition, which is reported by several authors, applies only to women who at the age of 21 and over were still living at home.

In the second half of the nineteen eighties, the odds of leaving home clearly increased from 10.8% in 1985 to 12.5% in 1989. This trend can be observed among all age groups, and is particularly strong for women. The increase coincides with the recovery of the economic climate in the Netherlands.

4.4.2 Motives for departure

The unexpected increase in the proportion of home-leavers among the 18-20 year olds, that took place between 1981 and 1985, can perhaps be explained by shifts in the reasons for leaving the parental home. It is known from previous research that young adults who leave for educational reasons are usually younger than those who leave home for union formation or for job-related reasons (Baanders *et al.*, 1989). Some authors assert that young adults who are confronted with a tight labour market will more often decide to start on an advanced education in order to enhance their chances of finding a job (CPB, 1986; Furlong, 1987; Hurrelmann, 1989a), or because entry into the labourmarket is blocked (Roberts & Parsell, 1989). If this is the case, and if more young adults started an advanced education in 1985, economic conditions may have been the cause of an increase in the proportion of individuals who moved out at a younger age, and thus of an increase in the odds of leaving for the 18-20 year olds. At the same time, the ones who leave for alternative reasons, usually do so later. It seems plausible that this is exactly the group that decided to postpone the transition and linger home when confronted with a less promising economic situation and housing market.

To test whether this assumption adequately explains the unexpected trend that was observed in the previous section, we will examine Table 4.4.2, which shows the reasons why young adults left their parental home in 1981, 1985, and 1989 respectively. A closer examination of this table will provide some insight regarding the effects of changing opportunity structures on the motives for departure.

The first row of Table 4.4.2 shows that the proportion of those who left for educational reasons rose considerably between 1981 and 1985, and again in 1989. This confirms the hypothesis that in times of economic hardship more young adults will continue their education, thus inducing a change in the timing of their leaving home. The increase was particularly strong for women.

The proportion of those who left for job-related reasons appears to be much smaller in 1989 than in 1985. Considering the fact that exactly during this time span the economic conditions improved, and thus also job opportunities, this finding seems to confirm the hypothesis that an expansion of the labour market creates ample opportunities for finding a job near the parental home. However, it must be noted that the observed decrease can almost entirely be attributed to the behaviour of the female population, which exhibited a strong tendency to catch-up to their male counterparts as far as their participation in the educational system is concerned. Between 1981 and 1985 the number of women entering university increased by 28%, whereas in 1989 the number of female first year students was even 82% higher than in 1981 (CBS, 1984, 1987b, 1992c). Among men, the increase was much smaller: 8% during the period 1981-1985, and 36% between 1981 and 1989. The number of students at the higher vocational level did not increase as spectacularly, but again the increase among women was stronger than that among men, with the indices for women being 110 in 1985 and 136 in 1989 (1981=100); and the indices for men being 106 in 1985, and 125 in 1989 (CBS, 1992b). In fact, leaving home for educational reasons has become a relatively more prevalent motive among women than among men. This tendency resulted directly in a lower percentage of women leaving to go to work. Apparently, the emancipation of women, which stimulated their educational ambitions, induced a shift in home-leaving characteristics. This makes clear that not only considerations of economics and housing may affect the process of leaving home, but that other factors, such as the socio-cultural context, may be important as well.

The increase in the popularity of the educational motive went hand in hand with an impressive decrease in the proportion of those who left home to form unions. Between 1981 and 1985, the proportion of individuals who left home to start an independent household with a partner (either in marriage or in unmarried cohabitation), fell from 74.1% to 58.8%. In 1989, this proportion had not changed much, that is to say, in the overall population. When differentiating by economic status (last three rows in Table 4.4.2), it appears that among employed and studying individuals the proportion who left home for union formation in 1989 has risen again and approximated to the 1981 level. Yet, it is among unemployed individuals that a continuing decline in the proportion of those who leave to form unions is observed. This can be understood as an indication that the ones who are employed usually more than the unemployed profit from an economic upturn, such as took place in the second half of the nineteen eighties, and relatively more often find themselves in the position to start living with a partner. For unemployed

individuals, on the other hand, the financial situation presumably continues to be less than favourable. Consequently, they either cannot afford to set up a household with a partner, or perhaps feel that they should not start living with a partner as long as they are unemployed (Wallace, 1987). Thus, the financial opportunities to start an independent household are reflected in the motives for leaving the parental home.

The continuing decline in the proportion of individuals who left home to start living with a partner among the unemployed is counterbalanced by an increase in the proportion of young adults who left home to be independent. Although this fits in with an overall trend of individualisation (Buck & Scott, 1993; Iedema & Sanders, 1996), it may also seem somewhat controversial. After all, it would be expected that people with limited financial resources would not leave home for a un-urgent reason such as independence. However, to arrive at sound conclusions about the effect of the economic opportunity structure on home-leaving behaviour, we must be aware that a shift in a particular motive can only be interpreted correctly when considered in relation to changes in alternative motives. Apparently, when the traditional routes of work and union formation are blocked due to economic circumstances, those unemployed individuals who decide to leave home will more often do so merely to attain an independent household position. Consequently, the independence-motive will be mentioned relatively more often. Besides, it has been argued that, now that unemployed youngsters cannot achieve the status of independent adult through employment, they are tempted to secure this status, and possibly also financial independence, by establishing an independent household (Harris, 1988).

In addition, it can be seen that among studying young adults the prospect of independence also became a relatively more important motive to leave home in the course of the 1980s. The onset of education was no longer the primary motive to them. Apparently, more and more individuals nowadays break with the traditional link between education and leaving home and the achievement of an independent household has become an accepted reason in itself to leave home.

4.4.3 Economic status

We have seen that the motives of unemployed young adults for leaving home are different from those of employed or studying young adults. It was suggested that this can be interpreted as a reaction to the financial position of these individuals. The question arises, whether economic opportunities are also directly reflected in varying probabilities to move out for individuals of different economic status. The figures in Table 4.4.3 reflect the number of individuals in a specific economic category who have left the parental home, as a percentage of all young adults who belong to the same socio-economic category, and who lived in the parental household at the beginning of the year of observation.

Table 4.4.3 Probability to leave home, by economic status, period and gender (in %)

	1981	1985	1989	Males			Females		
				1981	1985	1989	1981	1985	1989
Employed	12.8	13.7	14.5	10.7	11.4	11.5	15.5	17.3	18.8
Unemployed	9.0	12.2	11.7	7.7	9.3	8.5	10.6	15.5	16.4
Student	5.0	4.8	8.6	4.5	4.6	6.1	5.8	5.1	11.9

Tabel 4.4.4. Living arrangement of home-leavers, by period and economic status (in %)

	1981			1985			1989		
	Alone	With partner	With others	Alone	With partner	With others	Alone	With partner	With others
All	25.2	69.6	5.2	37.8	56.2	6.0	38.3	56.1	5.6
Employed	18.8	78.9	2.3	30.4	66.7	2.9	24.5	74.0	1.5
Unemployed	31.7	65.0	3.3	42.5	53.0	4.5	51.5	45.5	3.0
Student	64.6	18.2	17.2	76.3	6.2	17.5	71.9	12.4	15.7

It becomes evident from Table 4.4.3 that young adults who are still enrolled in the educational system (those attending secondary school and those in advanced education) cannot be held responsible for the increase in the overall odds that was observed in the period 1981-1985. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case. It appears that the probability that a person will leave home actually increased for all individuals except students. We must bear in mind, however, that leaving home for educational reasons is not the same as leaving whilst being enrolled in an educational institution. Leaving for an education is usually restricted to those who enroll at the higher vocational or university level (Baan-ders *et al.*, 1989). Yet, the group of students also contains individuals who are enrolled at lower levels in the educational system. So perhaps students in general do not exhibit an increased probability of leaving, but it can still be argued that the trend towards higher educational aspirations (particularly among women) has caused a change in the overall odds of leaving.

After 1985, there was a considerable increase in the odds of students leaving home. Particularly for female students the rise was substantial. A plausible explanation can be found in the introduction in 1986 of a new system of financing one's studies. As the amount of bursary one receives depends on whether the student lives independently or not, it became financially more appealing to start one's own household than to remain in the parental one.

Contrary to prevailing ideas, it appears that for unemployed young adults the odds for leaving are not quite that small. Certainly, the probability is smaller than that observed for employed young adults, which is an indication that the weaker economic position of unemployed individuals is a restraining factor in the transition to independence. However, compared with their studying contemporaries, unemployed individuals are more probable to move out.

Moreover, it is remarkable to note that the probability of unemployed individuals to move out was much higher in 1985 than in 1981. This trend is not as expected, considering the poor economic conditions in the mid-1980s. It can possibly be related to the mechanism described by Hutsons and Jenkins (1987), who assert that in times of economic recession, every individual, whether employed or unemployed, will be confronted with the same drawbacks of an unstable labour market and cuts in salaries. Consequently, the financial prospects of both groups are basically not much different. It is conceivable, that the ongoing economic recession has caused a feeling among unemployed individuals that it was hardly worthwhile to postpone the transition until they would find work, when at the same time they realised that under the prevailing economic circumstances getting a job does not guarantee an improvement in one's financial position. In line with the argument outlined earlier, it may be that, in pursuit of the highly desired independence, relatively more young adults decided not to wait and left the parental home. It would seem,

however, that effectuation of the transition was then closely related to a change in social norms: apparently, it has become socially more accepted to leave home even when one has not yet secured one's livelihood. Yet, the fact that particularly unemployed women show a strong increase in the odds of leaving the parental home may indicate that the norm of securing self-support is still stronger for men than for women. Unemployed women may more easily decide to leave home and start living with a (employed) partner than men do.

All in all, it can be concluded that even when economic conditions were not very favourable, and the housing market kept deteriorating, the desire to stand on one's own proved to be quite persistent. Apparently, the relatively unfavourable opportunity structure could not keep the young adults from leaving home.

However, it may very well be that the ones who decided to leave home had to make some concessions in terms of their living situation in order to make it feasible for them to live independently, an aspect which will be considered in the next section.

4.4.4 Living arrangement and housing situation of nest-leavers

A first element which determines the living situation of young nest-leavers is the type of household they enter when moving out. Table 4.4.4 presents an overview of the living arrangements that were chosen by the young adults who left home in 1981, 1985, and 1989.

The table shows that the proportion of home-leavers who started living alone increased during the 1980s, with a particularly strong increase between 1981 and 1985. This trend occurred at the expense of the proportion of young adults who started living with a partner, which declined deeply. The number of young adults who established a household with other young adults remained quite stable. These shifts in living arrangement fall in neatly with the previously observed changes in the motives for departure.

The fluctuations in living arrangement, and the effect of the situational context, can be further specified when distinguishing home-leavers according to their economic status. For working individuals, an initial decline in 1985 in the proportion of those who start living with a partner is followed by an increase in partnerships by the end of the 1980s. A reversed fluctuation in the proportion of those who prefer to live alone occurred, that is, the proportion of single persons was considerably higher in 1985, and had declined again in 1989. This finding confirms the suggestion made above, that economic hardship discourages young adults from settling with a partner, whereas the prospects of a recovering economy gives them greater confidence about entering a relationship.

Among unemployed home-leavers, the decrease in the proportion of individuals who establish a household together with a partner persisted throughout the 1980s. This does

not agree with the hypothesised mechanism of 'economies of scale', which assumes that individuals in a weak financial position more often seek the advantages of sharing a household with other people. However, unemployed persons who receive unemployment or welfare payments were often better off when living alone, as in the 1980s the benefits received by a couple were less than twice those for a single person⁵. Besides, when the partner of an unemployed person has an income, this is deducted from the welfare payments. Moreover, individuals who live under the same roof with other persons than a steady partner are also faced with a deduction on their welfare payment by a special regulation, introduced in 1985. Such measures obviously even out the advantages of economies of scale, and can therefore well explain the living arrangement preferences of unemployed home-leavers.

The option of living with others is observed most often among students, but even those prefer to live alone.

A second element that typifies the living situation of home-leavers is their housing situation. The question to be answered here is whether economic circumstances and the opportunities available in the housing market affect the type of accommodations that home-leavers can find or afford.

Table 4.4.5 shows that the majority of home-leavers end up in the rental sector. Between 1981 and 1985, the proportion of home-leavers who purchased a house decreased, but in 1989 the proportion of those who entered owner-occupied property increased again. It seems likely that this was in reaction to more favourable economic prospects. On the other hand, the lack of available housing is expressed in an increasing proportion of home-leavers who sublet a room. Many of these individuals presumably are lodgers.

The fraction of home-leavers that moved into a house or an apartment in 1985 is slightly higher than in 1981; in 1989, however, this percentage has dropped strongly, and even more individuals appear to end up as roomers than in 1981. This shift is undoubtedly linked to the next finding in Table 4.4.5, which shows that through the years increasingly more home-leavers moved into only one or two rooms, whereas the proportion that occupied more than three rooms decreased. Strangely enough, the proportion of home-leavers that moved into accommodations with four or more rooms increased after 1985. This is most likely a matter of the supply of housing, as after 1984 an increasing number of dwellings with four rooms were built (Bais, 1990).

When we turn to the use of facilities within the living unit, it appears that the percentage of home-leavers who had to share facilities like the kitchen, bath and toilet with other housemates increased steadily as the decade progressed. This trend is probably related to the increase in the percentage who became roomers.

⁵ In 1995 the benefits for single persons were reduced from 70% to 50% of those for couples.

Table 4.4.5 Characteristics of the housing occupied by nest-leavers, by period (%)

	1981	1985	1989
Sector:			
Owner-occupied	24.6	21.9	25.9
Rental	75.4	78.1	74.1
of which in subtenancy	6.4	7.2	8.7
Type:			
House or apartment	90.9	93.0	86.6
Room	9.1	7.0	13.4
Number of rooms:			
1-2	22.3	25.2	26.8
3	23.9	25.3	18.8
4+	53.8	49.5	54.4
Facilities:			
Private facilities	90.4	89.4	86.0
Partly joint facilities	3.1	7.3	2.6
Joint facilities	6.5	3.3	11.4
Housing satisfaction:			
Very satisfied	66.7	42.9	41.8
Satisfied	29.4	47.0	47.2
Not satisfied	3.9	10.1	10.9

Summarising the above, we can conclude that in the course of the 1980s housing conditions became relatively less attractive for nest-leavers. This shows in the degree of satisfaction with the housing situation as expressed by the three groups of home-leavers. The proportion of leavers reporting to be 'very satisfied' decreased over time, whereas the proportion feeling 'not satisfied' increased, particularly between 1981 and 1985.

Yet, the limited availability of acceptable housing (or the limited ability to afford better housing) did not discourage them from moving out, as can be deduced from the findings with respect to the odds of leaving. Obviously, young adults who intend to move out are prepared to accept less attractive housing if necessary, and this does not lead them to postpone the decision.

4.4.5 The intention to leave home

The previous analyses demonstrate that, despite limited economic opportunities and a restricted housing market, many young adults decided to leave the parental home anyway. Yet, there is still a large group of young adults who did not make the transition and remained in the parental household. Some of these individuals, however, indicated that they intended to move out within two years, whereas others obviously did not, preferring to linger at home for the time being.

Table 4.4.6 Intention to leave the parental home among nest-stayers, by period, gender, age, and economic position (in %).

	1981	1985	1989	Males			Females		
				1981	1985	1989	1981	1985	1989
Intends to leave within 2 years	18.2	11.6	19.7	16.5	9.9	18.3	20.6	14.3	21.8
18-20 years	11.5	6.8	13.9	7.7	3.7	11.4	15.7	10.4	16.9
21-23 years	25.8	16.1	24.7	23.4	13.8	22.4	30.7	20.6	28.7
24-26 years	32.0	22.1	31.2	31.6	21.0	30.2	33.3	26.4	34.4
Employed	23.4	14.5	24.3	21.2	12.2	22.9	26.2	18.2	26.3
Unemployed without income	13.3	4.3	20.4	9.8	7.0	12.5	15.5	2.0	28.0
Unemployed with income	21.5	19.0	29.8	18.8	14.2	29.0	26.2	25.5	31.3
Student without income	4.7	3.7	8.9	4.5	2.6	7.4	4.9	5.1	10.5
Student with income	11.8	8.0	13.3	12.7	8.3	11.7	10.3	7.5	15.8
Employed	23.4	14.5	24.3	21.2	12.2	22.9	26.2	18.2	26.3
Unemployed ¹⁾	19.2	16.1	27.9	17.1	12.9	26.4	22.0	19.9	30.4
Student ²⁾	6.6	4.9	12.3	6.9	4.3	10.9	6.2	5.7	14.5

1) categories 2 en 3 from preceding classification have been merged

2) categories 4 en 5 from preceding classification have been merged

It is conceivable that the intention to leave the parental home is directly influenced by the socio-economic position and opportunities of the young adults involved.

The first row in Table 4.4.6 makes it clear that among those who still lived at home in 1985, the percentage who intended to move out was much smaller than it was in 1981. In 1989, the proportion of young adults who were inclined to move out had risen again. The concurrence of these changes with the fluctuations in the economic climate are quite interesting, in that it indicates the immobilising effect of restrained opportunities and the stimulating effect of an economic recovery. The successive shifts from a decrease to an increase can be observed for both sexes and for all age groups. Apart from that, it is interesting to see that the proportion of young adults planning to leave within two years increases systematically with age, and that, at any age, relatively more women than men are inclined to move out. Apparently, other factors beside economic conditions determine the timing of the transition.

The third section of Table 4.4.6 compares the intention within groups of different economic status. Between 1981 and 1985, there is a general decline in the intention to leave home in all categories. However, there is some variation in its extent. The decline is particularly strong for unemployed persons without any form of income, whereas the reduction is quite limited for unemployed young adults with an income. Apparently, having an income is a crucial factor in the formation of an intention to leave home. Especially unemployed women with no income were extremely reluctant to move out in 1985. In 1989, however, the difference between unemployed women with and without income had practically disappeared. Among unemployed men, however, income still appears to be an important condition in evoking the intention to leave home.

4.5 Summary and conclusions

During the 1980s, young adults were confronted with an economic recession and limited opportunities to obtain suitable housing. As housing and financial resources are believed to be of crucial importance when establishing an independent household, it was investigated in this chapter whether these economic and housing market conditions had an impact on home-leaving behaviour of Dutch young adults. This was done by confronting, on an aggregate level, the trends in home-leaving behaviour on the one hand with the fluctuations in situational context on the other, correspondence between the two trends being regarded as an indication of the impact of either the economic conditions or the housing market.

For the group of nest-stayers, the desire to leave home actually appeared to be affected by economic circumstances. It was observed that in 1985 the proportion of those living at

home who indicated to have serious plans to move out was much smaller than in 1981. As economic circumstances improved during the second half of the 1980s, the readiness to move out rose again. The finding that particularly young adults with no income felt reticent about leaving home, is interpreted as an indication that financial considerations indeed play a dominant role in the decision to leave home.

Nevertheless, despite the observed hesitation, there were also many young adults who did make the transition to living independently. In fact, as the 1980s progressed, the overall odds of leaving home actually increased, although during the first half of the decade this trend could be attributed to the behaviour of 18-20 year old women only.

This observation clearly contradicts the findings of other researchers, who maintained that the proportion of children living in the parental home had increased during the 1980s. A possible explanation for this discrepancy may be offered by the phenomenon of the 'returning fledgling', which was increasingly observed in the United States (Da Vanzo & Goldscheider, 1990) and Australia (Young, 1989). As far as I know, this aspect was not accounted for in previous research on the household position of Dutch young adults. Anyhow, the fluctuations in the odds of leaving home, as have been studied in this chapter, do not support the conclusion that leaving home was seriously delayed during the 1980s.

On the other hand, the ones who did leave home did show a behavioral response to the restricted opportunities on the housing market, as can be inferred from their adaptations in choice of housing and living situation. It was observed, for instance, that in the course of the decade an increasing number of home-leavers accepted less comfortable accommodations. Besides, even when financial resources are limited, young adults seem to prefer to live alone rather than settle down with a partner. Perhaps the norm that one must have sufficient financial means to establish a household with a partner is responsible for this. Alternatively, the fact that 95% of the young adults who start to live with a partner ended up in a house or an apartment seems to suggest that young adults may have a preconceived notion that the choice for this type of housing is inherent to living with a partner. Yet, the cost of living in an entire house or apartment is generally much higher than that of a room. For young adults with limited resources this option may therefore be less feasible. Instead, they will aim at finding cheaper housing, and thus decide to live alone, at least for the time being.

All in all, it must be concluded that financial considerations indeed appear to affect the decision to leave home, although it is clear that they do not simply lead to the postponement of the transition. Instead, it was found that many young adults look for alternatives which make the transition to independent living feasible. Financial considerations are

reflected in the specific form that the transition takes. We have seen that macro-economic conditions often lead to adjustment in living arrangement and the housing situation, rather than to postponement.

Evaluation of method

Analysing data on an aggregate level, as was done in this chapter, clearly has the advantage of providing a first understanding of the relationship between contextual variables and the behaviour in question. A major limitation, however, is that no decisive conclusions can be drawn about the direct impact of each of the context variables under study (Engerman, 1978). For instance, in case of concurring trends in two context variables, which theoretically would have the same effect on the behaviour, it cannot be determined with certainty which factor induced the behavioral change; was it either one of these factors, or was it an interplay of both? And if so, what was the relative influence of each factor? To be more specific, we would not know exactly whether financial considerations played a decisive role or whether considerations regarding housing opportunities were indeed a direct motivation for behaviour. Besides, other considerations may be influential as well. For instance, the observed trends may just as well reflect shifts in socio-cultural expectations, which stem from such societal processes as individualisation and emancipation. Consideration of additional factors like these, however, would further complicate the interpretation of trends on a macro-level.

In addition, more detailed knowledge will emerge when measuring at the *individual level* what kind of considerations are related to the decision to leave the parental home. In the next chapter, we will proceed with an exploration of the variety of young adults' considerations when thinking about leaving home and living independently. The range of aspects that are detected there will subsequently serve as an adequate operationalisation of the components of the theoretical model that directs this study.

Chapter 5. Identification of beliefs about leaving home ¹

"The only way to come to understand
the world, is by telling a story."
Marcel Möring, In Babylon

5.1 Operationalisation of the Model of Planned Behaviour

In order to use the Model of Planned Behaviour, and to understand why a person intends to engage in a particular behaviour, one first has to specify the arguments that are relevant to the specific behaviour under study (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Falbo & Becker, 1980). With respect to the process of leaving home, this has never yet been done systematically.

This chapter therefore aims at identifying the possible consequences and the normative expectations (or, in the terms of Fishbein and Ajzen, the behavioral and normative beliefs) that, in the eyes of those involved, are directly related to leaving the parental home. We will start by examining existing literature to see if any useful suggestions regarding possible arguments are presented there. As it was felt that this did not yield a complete picture of possible arguments, an explorative study was set up, in which a large number of schoolgoing young adults were asked to write down their thoughts on what leaving home is all about, and what it encompasses. The qualitative analysis of these essays, which is described in the third section of this chapter, uncovered a variety of possible consequences that young adults associate with leaving home, as well as diverse normative expectations that prevail in their social environment. Subsequently, a preliminary survey was conducted to determine whether the identified consequences and norms are recognised by a significant number of young adults and thus can be regarded as 'modal salient beliefs'. The results of this preliminary survey will be discussed in the fourth section of this chapter.

5.2 Review of literature

5.2.1 Perceived consequences

A study by Moore and Hotch (1981), in which American adolescents were asked to define home-leaving, revealed a number of aspects that can be regarded as consequences of leaving the parental home. Among these were 'less parental control', 'must do things for self now' and 'make own decisions'. In addition, Corijn and Deve (1991), who studied a

¹ This chapter directly draws on two papers by A.N. Baanders: *Thinking about leaving the parental home*, presented at the XXIIInd General Conference of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population in Canada, 1993. And: *Considerations in the decision to leave the parental home: anticipated consequences and normative expectations*. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 24(1996)3: p.272-292.

group of Belgian adolescents, mentioned consequences such as leading a life of one's own, living independently, feeling more mature, becoming emotionally separated, having fewer conflicts with parents. By looking for reasons not to leave home, Clemens and Axelson (1985) pointed out the financial implications of living independently. Likewise, other day-to-day necessities are more conveniently and automatically provided for when living at home, for instance the need for housing (Ward & Spitze, 1992), or care of household duties and emotional support. Goldscheider and Da Vanzo (1989) refer to these aspects as 'non-transferable parental resources' and postulate that the presence of these could have a direct effect on a young person's readiness to leave home. Certainly, this overview of the (scarce) literature on this subject is indicative of interesting categories of possible consequences, but it cannot be considered to be comprehensive. For a more complete picture, additional inquiry is needed.

5.2.2 Social norms

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, a person's subjective norm is determined by the opinions of that person's reference groups, and his motivation to comply with these reference groups. Not every possible referent will be relevant. Ajzen and Fishbein assert that only the opinion of salient referents will be considered. From the literature it is known that particularly expectations that are held and communicated by parents have considerable impact on realisation of life course transitions of young adults (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1993). Further, it has been found that peer group members also constitute a major source of social influence on the young adult when it comes to major life-course related decisions (Sebald, 1986; Gecas & Seff, 1990; Sabatelli & Anderson, 1991).

However, in this study we are not only interested in the degree of social pressure that is experienced by the young adult, and in its effect on his or her decision. We would also like to present a picture of the type of expectations that young adults are confronted with, and what kind of expectations they refer to. What are the social norms which guide the transition to living independently?

Indications of relevant social norms may be found in sociological studies which focus on other life course transitions. The general idea of life-course theorists is that significant stages in the life course of individuals (like leaving the parental home) are accompanied by a variety of social expectations, which, as they become socially recognised and shared, often evolve into social norms (Elder, 1978). According to the life-course perspective, these normative expectations relate primarily to the *timing* of crucial life-course events. The resulting age-norms offer the individual some guidance in assessing whether one is 'on time' or 'off time' (Aldous, 1990), or 'early' or 'late' (Howell & Frese, 1982).

Aside from timing in terms of age, the norms also refer to the timing of an event in relation to other commitments specific to the stage of young adulthood (sequencing norms (Featherman *et al.*, 1984; Hogan, 1978; Marini, 1984)) and to the appropriate arrangements of the event (Elder, 1978). This explains why normative expectations are often posed in terms of requirements or necessary *preconditions* to be met before the transition can take place. For instance, most population groups adhere to the idea that couples should be economically self-sufficient at the time of marriage (Modell, 1980). Although the influence of social norms is of central interest to life course theorists, and has been investigated for transitions like marriage (Modell *et al.*, 1978; Teachman & Polonko, 1984; Santow & Bracher, 1994), and parenthood (Furstenberg, 1976; Cooney *et al.* 1993), no research has been found that focuses on the norms specific to the event of leaving home, which is being studied here. Hence, further study was initiated, not only to detect perceived consequences, but also to identify the relevant normative expectations that may influence the decision to leave home.

5.3 Exploring perceived consequences and normative expectations

It was felt that a complete picture of all arguments involved could best be obtained by asking young adults who were still living in the parental home, to write an essay on the topic of leaving home.

5.3.1 Collecting written material

In the fall of 1992, teachers of students in their last year of secondary school were approached and asked for their cooperation. The schools selected were in three localities that varied in degree of urbanisation: a large city (Utrecht, 232,700 inhabitants), a middle-large city (Amersfoort, 104,400 inhabitants), and an urbanised village (Culemborg, 22,600 inhabitants). Geographically these places were situated in the central part of the Netherlands. Moreover, two different types of secondary school were included in each locality: general level, and vocational level. In this way it was hoped that students from different socio-economic groups would be represented.

One could wonder whether secondary school graduates are old enough to have well-formed opinions about leaving home, especially vocational level students, who sometimes are only 16 years old when they leave school. As one of the students wrote:

< I think this study is quite stupid. I am only 16 years old and I never think about leaving home at all, because I intend to stay at home until I am 25 >

On the other hand, it could be argued that leaving home is such a common event in our society, that it is very likely that most young adults have given the matter some thought, even though the transition still lies well ahead of them. Children growing up in this society all know that some day they will leave their parents' home and start living on their own. They probably talk about it with their parents and are likely to know one or

more persons (relatives or people from the neighbourhood) who have moved out. This assumption was affirmed by several of the essays:

< I'm writing an essay on leaving home, because I really have it on my mind >

< I like writing about this. Now I can finally express how I feel about it, because I have thought about it a lot >

< I'm able indeed to write down my ideas about this, because I regularly talk about this subject with my parents >

Besides, information gathered from young adults who do *not* have definite plans to leave home yet will provide additional knowledge about those aspects that keep young adults from moving out. These young adults are likely to discuss arguments that differ from the ideas and perceptions of those who intend to leave shortly, thus providing a more diverse array of potential considerations.

Thirteen schools were addressed to find the required twelve teachers willing to participate. This remarkably high participation rate may be explained by the fact that the teachers felt that the assignment could easily be incorporated into a regular course and that cooperation therefore would not interfere with their teaching schedule. They were also very enthusiastic, because they found the topic an interesting and useful one for pupils in this life stage. The twelve teachers who agreed to take part received written instructions, which were handed out to the pupils during class and had to be carried out as an ordinary assignment. This guaranteed that all students in a class responded.

The instruction to the students contained a brief introduction, followed by eight questions to be elaborated in the essay. To get a first impression of the way young adults look upon the event of leaving home, the list started off with a general question: *"What does leaving home mean to you?"* Next, two questions were asked, which were intended to address the notion regarding the *timing* of leaving home that was discussed before. These questions ran as follows: *"When do you think you can start living on your own? What would be an important reason for you to leave home?"* It was assumed that reactions to these three questions would reveal the perceived consequences as well as the normative expectations related to leaving home. Next, three questions pertained more directly to the possible consequences that young adults perceive as being associated with leaving home and living independently. These questions were: *"What do you think will change when you leave the parental home? What do you see as the positive effects of leaving home? What do you perceive as disadvantages of living independently?"* Two further questions were formulated to elicit the perceived normative expectations. As was explained before, the purpose of the essays was to identify both the individuals whose opinions with respect to the timing of leaving home are important to young adults, as well as the nature of the normative expectations. As parents and friends are known to be the most important relevant others in this matter, the questions on prevailing normative expectations

distinctively inquired about the opinions of these two categories: *"What do your parents say about your leaving the parental home? What do your friends say about your leaving home?"* In addition, a more general question was asked to trace down possible other reference groups: *"What do other people around you say about your leaving home?"* By formulating these questions in this way, we assured that both the relevant others and the kind of expectations would be discussed and could be identified.

5.3.2 Examination of the essays

A little over 300 essays were returned, which yielded a large quantity of written information. Six essays could not be used for analysis because of illegible writing. Table 5.3.1 shows the composition of the group that has written the essays.

Table 5.3.1 Number of essays that were returned, by locality and schooltype.

	Secondary general	Secondary vocational
Utrecht	27	68
Amersfoort	23	61
Culemborg	52	72

In handling and analysing the written material, relevant quotations were extracted from the compositions, and entered in the computer, whereupon they were assigned a characteristic conceptual label that typified the purport of the quotation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1984). The making up of accurate labels was partly inspired by the existing literature, but was mainly a gradual process of reading and careful interpretation. As the aim of the exploratory analysis of the essays was to discover the full range of possible arguments, all text fragments were eligible for registration; the frequency with which they were mentioned was not a criterium. All quotations were grouped according to the labels that could be attached to the fragment. Some groupings required a further refinement as they appeared to represent specific instances of a more general concept, and were accordingly split into subcategories. To illustrate the procedure: the following citations were all interpreted as expressions of the category reflecting "increased autonomy" as a consequence of leaving home:

<I will no longer be bothered by my parents telling me what to do> <You don't need to ask your parents' permission any more> <I can live my own life> <I make my own plans without having to answer to my parents> <I will be able to make my own decisions> <I will be free to do as I like and do things as I see fit> <More freedom, more privacy>

The quotations presented in the following sections as illustrations of the various components that were identified, can all be considered 'strategic citations' (Du Bois *et al.*, 1994, p.16), in that they exemplify a characteristic expression of the argument (Pennartz, 1986). The analysis resulted in the detection of nine groups of perceived consequences and eight groups of perceived normative expectations (see Scheme 5.3.1).

Scheme 5.3.1 Overview of the identified behavioral and normative beliefs.

Behavioral beliefs: Perceived consequences of leaving home	Normative beliefs: Perceived normative expectations regarding timing of leaving home
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Autonomy 2. Self-managing of responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - personal care - financial management - domestic care 3. Time-budget effects 4. Psychological effects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - separation - adult status 5. Relationship with parents 6. Commuting time 7. Social network 8. Housing 9. Financial costs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appropriate age 2. Acting independently 3. Having a job 4. Having financial resources 5. Residential independence 6. Completion of full-time education 7. Start of advanced level education 8. Marriage or cohabitation

5.4 Examination of the written material

5.4.1 Identification of perceived consequences: behavioral beliefs

One of the first aspects most young adults that wrote the essays mentioned as being a consequence of leaving home was an increase of **autonomy** and **self-determination**. Especially the fact that they would not have to ask permission from their parents or have to adjust to their rules appears to be a highly valued aspect of leaving home. Moreover, the freedom to arrange their lives at their own discretion and do things as they see fit, is perceived as a positive effect.

<No more nagging parents telling me to do this or that; I can just do everything as I see fit>

<Take my own decisions and no nagging that I can't do this or that >

<Live my own life, in which I can plan everything myself without having to answer to my parents >

<It means that I can make up rules and regulations myself, which implies more freedom >

<I won't be watched all the time, and will be free to go wherever I want >

<I will be independent, and won't have to stick to my parents' rules >

<It means that I can decide everything for myself, like which programmes to watch or when and what to have for dinner. My parents won't bother me anymore by saying: clean up behind yourself and be home by ten >

<You don't have to ask your parents' permission all the time any more >

<I can party full-time >

<I get to decide for myself when to go out and when to clean up and whether it is wise to stay out late >

Judging from these quotations, the prospect of having more freedom obviously is an appealing one. Yet, many young adults are well aware of the fact that an increase in freedom and autonomy usually goes hand in hand with more responsibilities, because henceforward they will have to take care of things that were previously being arranged by the parents. When the parents no longer direct general day-to-day matters, the young adult must take care of them himself.

<Having more freedom also implies having more responsibilities, which I must take care of myself, even when it doesn't suit me at all >

<This could very well pose a problem that may be hard to deal with, taking care of everything that was previously done by my parents >

<Even though it will be nice to decide on what's for dinner, you have to do the cooking yourself >

This is not to say that all young adults resent having new responsibilities and obligations, because many of them really wish to be independent, a finding which was also reported by Edgar and Maas (1984).

<I would like to leave home because I wish to have more responsibilities >

<I would love doing everything myself >

In other words, young adults also expect to be confronted with an increase in new **self-managing responsibilities**, which constitutes the second behavioral belief.

<All the things that my parents used to do, I must then do myself >

<Lots of things must be taken care of at my own initiative; I can't ask my parents to arrange everything for me anymore >

<It seems a heavy burden to me, to arrange everything that my parents used to do >

Closer examination of the quotations revealed that these responsibilities can relate to three different domains. The first is the responsibility of taking care of one's **personal well-being**. This deals both with physical well-being, that is, health and the matter of being looked after during illness:

<I may end up eating junk food all the time >,

as well as with emotional well-being, which has to do with loneliness, with yearning for the sociability of the parental home, and with having someone around to talk to and get advice from:

<I am really going to miss my mother and sister; where can I go to and talk things over? >

<After all, early in the morning and late in the evening I'll be all alone, with no one to fall back on >

<What I will miss most is companionship, my mother making tea and sitting down to hear my stories and comfort me >

Of course, this problem is less awkward if other people will substitute for the loss of sociability in the parental household, and can provide a certain amount of emotional support.

<I would like to live in a student house or with a friend. Then there will always be somebody around >

The second domain of self-managing responsibilities is that of **managing financial matters**, which is described by the essay-writers in terms of taking care that bills are paid on time and finding a way to make ends meet.

<You will have to pay for everything yourself. You can no longer turn to your parents and say: mum, can you give me another f25 >

<The biggest problem will be money... living with your parents is easy, they pay for everything... but when I live on my own, I can't keep asking them for money all the time >

<You really must reckon with everything, the phone bill, the gas bill. You must pay it all on time >

<You must make sure that you get by on a specific budget >

The third subcategory pertains to the responsibilities of carrying out **housekeeping activities**.

<When I come home now, I walk straight to the kitchen and find the groceries my mother bought; later (when I live on my own) I must go shopping myself >

<Now my mother takes care of laundry, later I must do this myself >

<Cooking, shopping, cleaning, all kinds of things that I don't have to worry about now >

Obviously, one of the advantages of living in the parental household, is that parents usually perform the bulk of household chores. After all, running an independent household will be a lot more demanding, compared to the occasional chores children are expected to do by their parents, especially because these domestic duties will restrict the **time-budget**, which has its consequences for leisure and social time.

<I won't have as much free time as I do at home >

<I do not really dislike doing all that, the only problem is time ... these activities surely cost a considerable amount of my precious time >

<My leisure activities will alter. I can't continue to meet my friends everyday as I do now, because I should also spend some time on household chores >

Likewise, it was felt by some that the time to spend on educational or career activities will be affected by living away from home.

<When living at home, you just have more time to spend on your studies >

<I must allocate my time to study, shopping, cleaning, and friends >

<It will be hard to combine an education with living independently; if I have to arrange my own affairs, this might interfere with my educational efforts >

For some, this consideration denotes a motivation to stay home a little longer.

<Since taking care of these responsibilities requires too much time, I think it would be better to spend a few more years with my folks >

Fourth, the transition to independent living may also have psychological consequences. These stem from the fact that growing up and leaving home require a mental **separation** from parental ties (Daniels, 1990) and, as some respondents expressed, this usually means letting go of things one has grown accustomed to.

< You have to break away from the old familiar circumstances >

< It's not easy to let go of the place you've always lived >

However, one must bear in mind that separation is usually a gradual process. The step to living independently merely represents a phase in this process, and does not immediately imply a total separation for all young adults.

< In the beginning I think I will spend more time at my parents' place than in my room >

< I don't really leave home, because I'll come home every weekend with my dirty laundry >

< I wouldn't exactly call it 'leaving'; I'm just moving to another place for five days a week >

Moreover, according to Pardeck and Pardeck (1990), separation is inherent in autonomy, and is therefore inevitable and functional in the development of independence. At the same time, however, the actual, physical, separation from the parental home is important in the recognition of the **adult status**. According to Jones and Wallace (1990), young people are usually not regarded as fully adult as long as they are living at home.

< The positive side is that my parents will treat me as an adult >

< Everyone wants to move out and feel mature >

Apparently, acquiring adult status is valued positively and may thus be a motivation to leave the parental home.

The possibility that the **relationship with parents** may improve after moving out, is the fifth consequence that leaving home might bring about, although most young adults felt that having an occasional argument is not sufficient cause for moving out.

< Of course there is a row once in a while and at those times I wish I was living by myself; but I think that's only natural >

Nonetheless, improvement in mutual understanding can be evaluated as a positive effect of living away, and may thus affect the readiness to leave home.

< Things will only get better between me and my parents. The discussions and arguments we have now will diminish >

Still another factor that appeared to influence the decision to leave home of some young adults pertains to **commuting time**.

< It will cost me about two hours to get there, which is not particularly enjoyable >

< If it wasn't for the distance I would have to travel, I would stay home for the time being >

If it becomes a burden to travel to and from work or school every day, some people may consider moving out in order to save time, or, conversely, they may

< intend to stay home as long as the time spent commuting doesn't make it necessary to move >

Inherent in moving to another town in order to reduce commuting time are the implications this may have for one's **social network**. As some individuals pointed out: old friends may be lost, new friends will be found.

< You get to visit your old friends, your sporting club, or your favourite candy store just once in a while >

< I will hardly ever see my friends anymore. I can't play soccer or tennis, or just have fun >

< Friendships will soon disintegrate >

< You will join a new social circuit, where you get to meet a lot of new friends >

< Moving to another city offers the opportunity to make contact with other people and make new friends >

However, meeting new friends and building a social network obviously cost some time and effort, and may therefore be something not looked forward to.

< I would really dislike to be all by myself at first, when I won't have many friends as yet >

Several phrases in the compositions indicated that the element of **housing** can be an issue in the decision to leave home. Moving to a place of one's own, may imply adjusting to new - often poorer - accommodations compared to the living conditions in the parental home. If one has a pleasant room to oneself, and the parents' house meets the desired need for privacy, the young adult may be less inclined to depart.

< I have a nice room of my own in the attic where I feel perfectly comfortable >

< Everybody wonders why I would leave home, because I live in such a large house where you don't have to meet each other >

< Why bother to leave home when I have everything here a nice and well-equipped room >

On the other hand, some young adults are of the opinion that they will acquire more room for their personal belongings when they move into independent housing.

< Now I just have one room to store everything I've got; then I would have a bedroom and a living room, and a separate room for my Ajax-collection >

< A nice place to live, all to myself >

At the same time, many young adults realise that adequate and comfortable housing is not always readily available, or that one may have to content oneself with poor accommodations when living on one's own. Those who value comfortable housing may not be willing to settle for this and may prefer to wait until they find something more suitable, or until they can afford acceptable housing.

< Now I have a large, spacious room, but I don't know what I will find >

< The first problem you encounter: how to find a room? There is a great shortage of rooms >

< I will linger home for some time, so I can take my time in finding a place to live >

< When I move out I want a private apartment, not some room in a student house or in lodgings >

< I think I'd better stay with my parents a little longer, save up some money and then buy me a nice house, instead of wasting my money on some shitty apartment that's too small to move about in >

The final, although very obvious, category of consequences perceived to be inherent in living independently, concerns the **financial costs** involved, both in setting up a new household, and in meeting one's daily expenses.

<All sorts of things must be purchased ... a stove, a table, chairs, a new bed, kitchenware >

<I hope I can turn to my mum to do my laundry, because buying a new washing machine is quite a purchase >

<You must be able to pay for everything yourself >

<... that you have to pay for gas, water, the rent, and food >

<Financially, I will face a serious tightening of the belt, having to pay the rent, insurances, the doctor, my clubs and daily expenses myself >

When lacking sufficient funds, some individuals may decide to defer the transition and stay in the parental home:

<I cannot afford the expense of it, because I do not have a steady income and without an income I cannot afford to pay the rent >

<I think I will be leaving home in about three years, because by then I will have enough money to furnish my house and buy other things >

<Of course I must be able to pay for the apartment, so maybe I won't leave until I have a job >

Apart from that, the prospect that one cannot spend one's money as freely as one used to and must economise seems to occupy many young adults' minds.

<I must be more careful with my money, for it will be tough to get by on a student's grant >

<Not much money will be left to spend on clothing, on pleasures, on nice petty things for your room >

<I must become more cost-conscious, because I have to pay for a lot of necessities and then I won't have as much money left as I'd hoped, and that will certainly be a setback >

5.4.2 Identification of perceived normative expectations

Various normative expectations emerged from the collected essays. These expectations took the form of preconditions to be met or socially accepted occasions to move out.

A first norm deals with the **appropriate age** at which the young adult is expected to leave home.

<[you leave home] once you have reached a certain age and are old enough, because you don't spend your entire life at home with your parents >

For some, the age norm marks a required minimum age, for others it refers to a maximum age at which the transition should have occurred.

<I think my parents would say that 16 years is too young to start living on your own, but that 18 or 19 years is an appropriate age >

<You shouldn't leave home before you're 18 years old >

<When you turn 18, people will start asking: So, tell me, when do you intend to move out >

<My parents sometimes tease me by saying: we want you out of this house by the time you turn 25 >

It is not possible to distill one generally accepted norm for age because a whole range of prevailing age norms are apparent in the essays. Still, a certain awareness of the existence of an age norm is indeed evident among many young adults, and appears to serve as a guiding principle in the decision on when to leave home.

The existence of an age norm is in part connected with the second requirement: being capable of **acting independently**, although the norm of independence seems to vary with respect to the degree to which one is supposed to be independent. For some, moving out constitutes a stage in learning how to *become* more independent, whereas others state they must actually *be* adequately independent before moving out.

< It is considered good practice to become independent of your parents >

< You learn to stand on your own two feet >

< You can only take this step when you're independent enough >

< You must be able to take care of your own business >

< [...] when I am prepared to take the big step, in about three years. By then I'll know more, I will be wiser and I will be able to handle the responsibilities >

According to Goldscheider and Da Vanzo (1989), the assessment of one's ability to live independently will generally be based on parental communications, which give the young adults a clue as to whether they are independent and responsible enough to live on their own. It seems plausible that age norms function as a more concrete indication of potential independence.

The next three norms specify more concretely in what respect one ought to be independent. First, there is economic independence, which can be attained either by having a **job**, or by having adequate **financial resources**, or a combination of both.

< When you're done studying and have a good job >

< As soon as I find a job >

< When I have a proper job, it will be alright to my parents >

< You should have the money to pay for the utilities and everything >

< You must be sure to have some money to pay the bills >

< I couldn't leave home right now because I haven't got enough money. As soon as I can make a living, I am out of here >

Careful interpretation of the quotations makes clear that normative expectations with regard to economic independence sometimes function as a necessary precondition for living independently, yet sometimes provide an incentive to move out. That is, leaving home may be expected to be conditional on having a job, but once having found a job one is supposed to move out, because economic independence, and thus the capability of sustaining an independent household, has been established.

In addition, realisation of **residential independence** is also often posed as a precondition to moving out. That is, some individuals mentioned that their parents would not approve of their children leaving home unless these have obtained adequate housing.

<My parents wouldn't oppose it, but only if I have a nice place to live and enough money >

Two normative prescriptions, quite different in their bearing, relate to educational activities. For many young adults, the timing of leaving home is conditional on **completion of full-time education**.

<Before I can move out, I must finish my education >

A motivation for this precondition seems to be that independent living can interfere with successfully completing one's education. However, in some cases, this particular expectation seems to be related to the requirement of economic independence, which often cannot be attained while one is involved in education or training.

<My parents wouldn't approve of it as long as I am still in school, because then I wouldn't have enough money. But when I have a job, they would accept it >

Another norm, however, expects children to move out when commencing **advanced education**. For many young adults this event constitutes a socially acceptable pathway for leaving home; for some it is directly and self-evidently linked with moving out.

<My parents wouldn't particularly like it, but when my studies require my moving out, they will accept it >

<Everybody would find it highly logical if I leave home for that reason >

<My parents just expect me to move out when I graduate and go to university >

Findings like these make us aware that the event of leaving home is often embedded in other life course trajectories (such as schooling or entry into the labour force). A person may decide to postpone the decision for reasons that are only indirectly related to leaving home because it conflicts with the realisation of other important life goals (Hogan & Astone, 1986; Marini, 1985). Conversely, he or she may decide to leave home because it is more compatible with other activities. When the decision to leave home is actually triggered by parallel careers (Mulder, 1994), it may very well affect the way young adults look upon the event. This implies that, in studying the considerations of young adults, and in trying to understand differences in the way they judge the consequences of leaving home, one should be aware of the mediating effect of these competing activities.

Finally, although it was not mentioned very frequently by this group of young adults, union formation, either through **marriage** or **unmarried cohabitation**, still appears to be an acceptable reason to leave home, as it traditionally has been.

<I think they would really appreciate it if I didn't leave until I get married >

5.4.3 Identification of relevant others

The essays were also explored to discover which groups of significant others may influence the young adult's behaviour. As expected, parents and friends were frequently mentioned. Besides these, however, no other groups were referred to explicitly, with the exception of neighbours and an aunt, and these were mentioned only once. It can therefore be safely decided that only parents and friends should be taken into account in subsequent research when examining the effect of social pressure and normative expectations.

5.5 Determination of modal salient beliefs

The main objective of the previous qualitative analyses was to identify as exhaustively as possible the variety of prevailing behavioral and normative beliefs surrounding the process of leaving home. It is inherent in the explorative nature of the preceding procedure, that not all consequences or norms mentioned in the compositions will be relevant to every individual who is considering leaving the parental home. In fact, some arguments may be salient to only a small number of young adults. A subsequent step therefore involves the determination of the so-called "modal salient beliefs" (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), that is, the beliefs that are expressed by a relatively large number of individuals, and can thus be regarded as valid for the average young adult. If only few people indicate that a certain outcome or norm is relevant to them, this item should then be removed from the list of salient beliefs. Following criteria suggested by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), a certain belief can be accounted as modal and salient when at least 10% to 20% of a group of respondents indicate that the argument is relevant to them.

In order to learn which behavioral and normative arguments are modal, a preliminary survey was conducted, which also served as a pilot study to test the validity of the questions. The identified categories were then translated in a number of statements relating either to the perceived consequences of leaving home or to the normative expectations. Since the defined categories may manifest themselves in diverging ways, several statements were formulated to represent each category. This exercise resulted in the construction of 27 statements regarding possible consequences of leaving home and 12 statements regarding perceived normative expectations.

5.5.1 Preliminary survey

In the summer of 1993, a total of 102 respondents, between 18 and 26 years old, living in various parts of the Netherlands, were questioned. Young adults living at home and ones living independently were included in equal numbers. To avoid recall problems in the latter group, only respondents were selected who had left home in the year prior to the interview. In addition to household position (living with parents or away from parents), respondents were also selected on the basis of their sex, age and current educational level,

Table 5.5.1 Composition of the sample of the preliminary survey (n=102), conducted to determine the modal salient beliefs.

	% in sample	% living at home (50%)
Gender		
Male	47.1	52.1
Female	52.9	48.1
Age		
18-19	25.5	80.8
20-21	28.4	58.6
22-23	23.5	20.8
24-26	22.6	34.8
Educational level		
Univ, higher vocational, higher general	50.0	49.0
Lower or interm. vocational and general	50.0	51.0

in such a way that all subgroups were equally represented in the sample. Interviewers throughout the country were sent out to search for and approach respondents in accordance with the above sampling scheme. As can be seen in Table 5.5.1, the procedure of quota sampling succeeded satisfactorily, except for the age factor. It is apparently slightly more difficult to locate either adolescents who have left home while still young or older adolescents who have not yet moved out. Obviously, the sample is too small to analyse and compare response patterns within these subgroups. But then, this was not the primary goal of this pilot study.

With respect to the consequences of leaving home, the respondents were asked to indicate whether the item in question plays a prominent role in their decision to leave home, or whether it does not play a role at all. With respect to the perceived normative expectations, the respondents were asked to indicate whether, in their opinion, their parents and their friends, respectively, absolutely did or absolutely did not expect them to act according to the statement, or whether it did not matter to them. Individuals who had already left home, were emphatically asked to relive the time they were considering leaving home and to recollect the aspects that were significant to them at that time. It is assumed that the respective response categories "no role at all" and "does not matter" reflect that the argument is of no relevance to the respondent. In addition, respondents were asked how much they valued the opinion of respectively their parents and friends. The response categories ranged from -2 to +2.

5.5.2 Modal salient beliefs

Tables 5.5.2, 5.5.3, & 5.5.4 show the results of the preliminary survey among 102 young adults. For the consequence-statements (Table 5.5.2) it can be concluded that all items are relevant to more than 50% of respondents (that is, the percentage of respondents

Table 5.5.2 Percentage of respondents indicating that, in the decision to stay home or to leave home, the statement plays "no role at all" (in %).

Statement	"plays no role"	Statement	"plays no role"
Being independent of parents	16.7	Having arguments with parents	35.6
Having the freedom to do as one likes	17.6	Keeping up contacts with old friends	36.3
Getting to meet new friends	19.8	Having money to spend on pleasures	37.3
Having privacy	20.6	Feeling lonely	38.2
Bearing responsibility for own decisions	20.6	Having room for personal belongings	38.2
Residing in comfortable situation	20.8	Having time to spend on study/career	39.2
Being viewed as an adult	24.8	Having someone around to confide in	41.2
Living in familiar circumstances	25.5	Having kitchen duties	42.2
Experiencing home sociability	26.5	Having to do domestic chores	42.2
Having leisure time	27.5	Bearing responsibility for payments	42.6
Having parents arrange daily matters	29.4	Getting respect from other people	44.1
Having financial latitude	33.3	Taking care of one's health	47.1
Commuting time	33.3	Being nursed when ill	50.0
Getting parental support	33.7		

indicating that the item plays no role at all never exceeds 50%), whereas all norm-statements appear to apply to at least 51% of the respondents (see Table 5.5.3). Therefore, all statements defined on the basis of the essays should be regarded as being salient to the average young adult and will be taken into account in the continuation of this research.

However, the results of this pilot study also showed the need for two slight adjustments in the lists of items to be measured in the final survey. First of all, it was believed useful to further specify the item "Getting respect from other people", and distinctly ask about the respect from parents on the one hand, and the respect from friends on the other. Thus, the list of behavioral beliefs will contain one extra item. Second, it was felt that the set of questions pertaining to the normative items could be phrased more effectively and would be more in line with the theoretical starting point, if the notion of necessary preconditions was more directly accentuated in the question and response categories. A number of items could thus be combined into one, which eventually resulted in the formulation of nine normative items instead of twelve.

In addition to the above conclusion about the salience of each item, it is interesting to observe, how the percentages in Table 5.5.2 present a clear picture of the arguments that are considered important to relatively many individuals and the aspects that are prominent to relatively few respondents. Aspects relating to autonomy (e.g. freedom, privacy and independence from parents) are relevant to a large number of young adults, whereas the statements that deal with managing of one's own responsibilities (such as taking care of one's health, finances and domestic activities) seem to affect a young adults' decision to leave home far less frequently. When further examining the figures for nest-stayers and

nest-leavers separately, it is striking how the order of statements for nest-stayers is almost identical to that of nest-leavers. This would suggest that they basically all share similar views regarding the salience of possible outcomes. However, it is also remarkable that for each consequence that was identified, the percentage of nest-stayers that reported the statement to be important was larger than that of the nest-leavers. A possible explanation may be that, in due time, young adults living at home may start realising that - as one of the essay-writers put it - "inevitably, one has to move out and start living on one's own anyway", regardless of the negative consequences. At some point, young adults become aware that they have no choice but to overcome drawbacks, whereupon they may no longer regard the perceived consequences as being relevant. Another possibility is that recollection of the aspects that were important in their decision is coloured by actual experience of the new situation and that, looking back, they cannot even remember - or imagine - that certain considerations ever bothered them. In this survey an attempt to prevent such recall bias was made by selecting only nest-leavers who had left home less than a year ago, but the problem can probably not be avoided entirely.

When comparing the perceived opinions of parents with those of friends (Table 5.5.3), the parents' expression of their expectations regarding the proper timing to leave home seems to be more pronounced - particularly with respect to aspects like acting independently, economic independence and obtaining adequate housing, for which the percentages of 'does not matter' are quite small. Friends, on the other hand, are perceived by the respondents to be more indifferent about these things.

Furthermore, the data showed that most young adults did not attach great importance to the opinions of their friends. On a scale of -2 to +2, the average score on the question

Table 5.5.3 Percentage of respondents indicating that acting according to the statement "does not matter" to parents and friends respectively (in %).

	"does not matter" to parents	"does not matter" to friends
Leaving when not capable of acting independently	9.8	36.0
Leaving when not earning money of one's own	17.2	30.0
Leaving when not having adequate housing	18.0	27.7
Leaving before having a stable income	18.0	28.0
Leaving before having a job	22.8	33.7
Staying home upon reaching a certain age	31.6	28.3
Leaving home before reaching a certain age	32.7	39.6
Leaving while still attending school	33.0	35.0
Leaving without marrying	33.3	31.7
Leaving without going to live with a steady partner	37.4	35.0
Staying when starting an advanced education	44.9	43.4
Staying upon having found a job	48.5	35.0

Table 5.5.4 Percentage of respondents indicating that acting according to the statement "does not matter" to parents, by household position (in %).

	Nest-stayers	Nest-leavers
Leaving when not capable of acting independently	5.9	13.7
Leaving when not earning money of one's own	18.0	16.3
Leaving when not having adequate housing	17.6	18.4
Leaving before having a stable income	14.0	22.0
Leaving before having a job	28.0	17.6
Staying home upon reaching a certain age	28.0	35.4
Leaving home before reaching a certain age	32.0	33.3
Leaving while still attending school	44.0	22.0
Leaving without marrying	28.0	38.8
Leaving without going to live with a steady partner	40.0	34.7
Staying when starting an advanced education	48.0	41.7
Staying upon having found a job	53.1	43.8

about the appreciation of the opinion of friends was -0.63. Overall, the opinion of parents was considered much more important (mean score +1.27).

A comparison of the response patterns regarding parental expectations of nest-stayers versus nest-leavers (Table 5.5.4), shows that the two groups differ only with respect to three aspects. These relate to leaving home when not able to act independently (thought to be not relevant to parents by relatively more nest-leavers), leaving home while still attending school (perceived as being not important to parents by relatively more nest-stayers), and leaving home before setting up a marriage (reported to be not important to their parents by relatively more nest-leavers). Considering the nature of these expectations and the presumed effect on the timing of leaving (leaving home for education usually takes place at an earlier age than leaving home for union formation), these patterns seem to suggest that to some extent parents have a retaining or pushing influence on the decision of their off-spring.

5.6 Discussion

The preceding analyses revealed nine categories of possible consequences that young adults perceive to be associated with leaving home, and eight categories of normative expectations that seem to prevail in their social environment. Some of the behavioral beliefs were already referred to in previous publications, yet the compositions often yielded a more articulate representation of certain aspects. For instance, the financial implications that were mentioned by Clemens and Axelson (1985) could be further specified as having financial latitude and having money to spend on pleasures, whereas less parental control appeared to manifest itself in terms of more freedom, being independent of parents, and being able to make your own decisions. Moreover, this study has added several new aspects that have not been described elsewhere (like the possible

impact on available time, changes in the social network, effect on privacy, or the likelihood of a reduction in the quality of one's accommodations). Besides, the analysis drew attention to the fact that some of the normative expectations not only reflect a necessary precondition, but sometimes also operate as an incentive to move out (e.g. when starting advanced education). Furthermore, it appeared that the norm regarding independence is regarded either as a precondition, or as a means to accomplish socially valued goals (that is, some feel that one should have gained adequate independence first, others are of the opinion that one should move out in order to learn to act independently).

Clearly, the interpretative analysis of written material, though not frequently used in life course research, proved to be a successful approach to discovering a broad range of arguments that may influence a person's decision to leave the parental home. The stories told by the young adults certainly helped in coming to understand their world, as Möring promised.

The second part of the study further disclosed that all of the defined statements are salient to a significantly large fraction of the population of home-leavers. Particularly remarkable is the apparent unanimity of parents in their wish that their children should be able to act independently. It seems that, besides posing specific expectations regarding the timing of the event, parents also communicate their expectations in more general terms, thus presenting a comprehensive guideline which serves as an ultimate precondition.

The high percentage of individuals expressing that the stated outcomes were indeed relevant to them, appear to indicate a striking conformity in the way Dutch young adults look upon leaving the parental home, and they seemingly share, to some extent, a common understanding of what leaving home is all about, what it entails and what its consequences may be. Yet it should be realized that usually no more than about five to ten beliefs will be salient to the individual young adult (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Consequently, certain behavioral or normative beliefs may only be experienced by some people, while others may associate leaving home with quite another set of beliefs. For instance, Buunk (1982) asserts that the set of beliefs that is salient to an individual will vary over different social categories. It is also conceivable, as discussed above, that the consequences anticipated by a certain individual depend on the reason for leaving home (for instance, work or study) or on the living arrangements (alone or with partner) he or she chooses (Corijn & Deven, 1991). Likewise, it can be expected that different social groups will be confronted with different social expectations regarding appropriate or acceptable behaviour (Hogan & Astone, 1986). Moreover, an individual's attitude towards leaving home may show some variation over time. This may result from a shift in the evaluation of certain outcomes as the young adult grows older, implying that the impact of determinants may vary with age (Avery *et al.*, 1992; Waite & Spitze, 1981). Obviously, these aspects may interfere with the relationship between beliefs and behaviour that

is central to the Fishbein model, and contextual variables and socio-cultural background should therefore also be taken into account when studying the decision to leave home. Unfortunately, the sample size in this pilot study precludes further determination of the above-mentioned relationships. However, the primary goal of the analyses in this chapter has been to provide an empirical basis for the operationalisation of the components of the model to be used in the continuation of this study. In other words, now that the relevant considerations that may influence the decision to leave home are clear, the extended Model of Planned Behaviour can be readily applied and be used to quantify the hypothesised effects. A large survey among a group of 1000 young adults was conducted for this purpose. In this survey the behavioral and normative beliefs defined above were measured, along with the personal opportunity structure of the respondents. Simultaneous analysis of all this information makes it possible to determine the relative importance of the various considerations, and the possible interaction between subjective considerations and personal opportunities in their effect on the propensity to leave the parental home.

Chapter 6. Data collection and measurement

6.1. Determination of study group and sample composition

6.1.1 Study population

This study is concerned with the issue why some young adults decide to leave the parental home at a particular time, whereas others postpone their departure for a while. The preceding analyses of three successive Housing Need Surveys showed on an aggregate level, how changes in societal circumstances, in casu the labour market and housing market conditions that young adults are confronted with, can induce certain shifts in home-leaving behaviour. However, in order to draw further conclusions about the young adults' personal considerations in their decision to leave the parental home, it seems necessary to come down from the aggregate level, and proceed this inquiry at the individual level. Moreover, attention will be focused not only on the elements that constitute the 'opportunity structure', but also on normative elements that accompany the event of leaving home, as well as on various other considerations that emerged from the essays of graduate students. Additionally, both the personal opportunity structure and the subjective perceptions of the individual will be regarded. We wish to find out whether and to what extent these factors influence the decision to leave home, and whether the effect applies to all young adults or only to certain subgroups.

To obtain the data that are necessary to investigate this research problem, a survey was conducted among a large number of young adults living in the Netherlands. The research population was confined to young adults who are between 18 and 26 years old, since this is the age span during which 95% of the home-leaving process takes place. Moreover, only 18-26 year olds who are either still living at home or who left home less than twelve months before the interview are included.

The respondents who lived at home were questioned on their present situation and their current perceptions and expectations, while respondents who had recently left home were asked about their situation and expectations as they experienced them right before the transition.

From previous research on (determinants of) home leaving behaviour, it is known that the timing of departure is closely related to both gender and educational level (see chapter 2). Females leave home earlier than males do, and individuals with higher education (academic and vocational college level) are usually younger when they leave home than young adults with less education. One implication of these patterns is, for example, that the number of men with a secondary education who leave home before the age of 20 will be very small. Similarly, the number of women with a higher education who are still

living with their parents at the age of 25 will be quite limited. It was anticipated that this may pose a problem when composing the survey sample. To avert the risk that certain subcategories of the sample would be void, it was decided to draw a sample that was stratified by age, gender, highest level of education, and by household position (that is, living at home or living independently).

Four age categories were determined: 18-19 years, 20-21 years, 22-23 years, and 24-26 years old. With respect to educational level, four categories were distinguished: university, higher vocational education (hbo), secondary preparatory or intermediate vocational education (vwo, havo, mbo), and lower formative or lower vocational education (mavo, lbo, vglo). Individuals were classified according to the highest level of education they had attended or planned to attend; that is, those who had no intentions to pursue further education were classified by current level, whereas those who reported concrete plans for subsequent education were placed in the category of their intended level of education.

Along with the stratification by gender and household position, this resulted in a scheme of $4 \times 4 \times 2 \times 2 = 64$ cells. Each stratum of the scheme that was thus constructed had to be represented by an equal number of respondents. To prevent the problem of empty cells when further breaking down the sample by other independent variables, a minimum of 15 respondents per stratum was considered necessary, so a disproportionally stratified sample of around 1000 respondents was aimed at.

6.1.2 Sampling procedure

Selection of respondents followed a multi-stage procedure. As a first step, indirect use was made of the address register of the National Rayon Survey (NRO), a nationwide survey that is conducted annually in the last quarter of the year by research bureau Ogilvie¹. The NRO is representative for the entire Dutch population. As a rule, the person responsible for running the household - usually the woman - is interviewed.

To locate the relevant universe² from which the sample for this study had to be drawn, a number of questions were added to the NRO-survey of 1993. Firstly, the 20.974 respondents of the NRO93 were asked if they had any children in the age of 18 to 26 years. If this were the case, they were asked how old each of these children were, their sex, the level of education they had attained, whether they planned to pursue further education and if so, at what level, whether they were still living at home or had already moved out, and when they had moved out (year and month).

¹ presently Indumar/Ogilviegroup.

² This terminology is used by Ogilvie; it refers to the congregate set of young adults who match the criteria for the study population. The universe forms the base population from which the sample for the present study is drawn.

Table 6.1.1 Size and composition of the universe, by criteria of stratification (n=4575)
(absolute numbers)

	Males				Females			
	18-19	20-21	22-23	24-26	18-19	20-21	22-23	24-26
AT HOME								
univ	95	51	52	52	53	41	27	17
hbo	138	128	133	106	153	112	50	36
vwo,mbo	331	289	159	139	282	213	122	68
mavo,lbo	141	188	136	149	96	93	80	52
AWAY								
univ	17	15	13	18	26	24	21	8
hbo	10	19	18	27	44	42	20	14
vwo,mbo	19	26	38	45	20	47	42	45
mavo,lbo	5	21	18	37	8	16	34	33

On the basis of this information, a universe of 4575 young adults could be constructed (see Table 6.1.1). Since the NRO is based on a representative sample of the Dutch population, this universe can readily be considered to be representative of the category of young adults that is under study here.

6.1.3 Response rates

In stage two of the sampling procedure, a disproportionally stratified sample was drawn from the universe that was assembled in stage one. From each stratum, the addresses of respondents were selected at random. From the sub-population of young adults living in the parental home, a total of 554 addresses was approached to obtain the required number of at least 15 respondents per stratum. The nonresponse among this subpopulation appeared to be exceptionally low. Only 41 of the 554 respondents who were approached declined the invitation: 24 refused to cooperate, 13 could not be contacted during the period of the interviews, and 4 were not able to participate because of illness or for other reasons. This means that a response rate of no fewer than 92,6% was achieved.

Selection of the subsample of home-leavers ran somewhat less smoothly. First of all, for some of the strata the universe could not supply the required number of addresses (see Table 6.1.1). To obtain a sufficient number of respondents in each stratum, an additional 49 respondents, who matched the stratification criteria, had to be found. Second, the nonresponse among the 590 respondents was slightly higher: 33 individuals refused, 28 could not be contacted, 12 could not be traced with the information given by the parents, and 16 were ill or dropped out for other reasons. Yet, the net response rate in the

Table 6.1.2 Size and composition of the sample, by criteria of stratification (n=1012)
(absolute numbers)

	Males				Females			
	18-19	20-21	22-23	24-26	18-19	20-21	22-23	24-26
AT HOME								
univ	15	18	16	14	18	15	17	14
hbo	16	17	17	15	16	19	18	14
vwo,mbo	16	17	14	17	15	17	15	19
mavo,lbo	15	15	16	16	17	15	15	15
AWAY								
univ	17	14	16	16	19	16	15	15
hbo	15	17	12	15	16	18	15	16
vwo,mbo	15	19	14	17	16	16	15	18
mavo,lbo	14	14	16	14	14	15	15	15

subpopulation of nest-leavers was 84,9%, which is quite acceptable. Two respondents were later removed from the sample, because they had spent their youth in boarding schools for bargees' children, and not in the parental home. The subsample of respondents who had recently left the parental home thus contained 499 young adults, giving a total sample size of 1012 respondents (see Table 6.1.2).

6.2 The questionnaire

The interviews were carried out in February of 1994 by the research bureau Ogilvie. Interviewers, who work for Ogilvie, received extensive written instructions, a list of addresses which they had to visit, and a prestructured questionnaire to be filled out in a face-to-face interview. Two different questionnaires were constructed, one for respondents living at home and one for respondents living independently. Of course the topics that were raised, were the same in both questionnaires, but the questions were often phrased differently, because the first often referred to an event and a situation that was to occur some time in the future, whereas the latter inquired about an event that had already taken place. On average, it took about one hour of the respondent's time to complete the questionnaire.

Leaving home

Of course, a number of questions pertained to the transition of leaving the parental home. Respondents who were still living with their parents were asked in a prospective way about their plans and expectations regarding the event; respondents who had recently left home were asked retrospective questions. The questions deal with age at leaving home, living arrangement (alone, with spouse or partner, or with others), the reason for moving

out, and the region they intend to move to or had moved to. With respect to the reasons to leave home, respondents were presented a list of possible motives, and they were asked to report which of these applied to them. They were also asked to indicate the most important reason.

Economic position

Next, the questionnaire successively focused on the cornerstones of this study, that is, financial and socioeconomic position, housing situation, and social norms.

A person's economic position is generally associated with his income and economic status. This is why the questionnaire inquired about the respondents' main daily activity and about the source and level of income. Some young adults commonly receive (extra) money from their parents. Therefore, the amount of the parents' contribution was determined as well.

Not only present economic position is relevant. Significant recent changes in income or main activity may influence the decision to leave the parental home, or to postpone the transition. Thus, respondents were asked successively whether any changes had occurred in their primary activity during the last twelve months, whether this was accompanied by a change in income, whether any changes in income had occurred during the preceding twelve months, what was the level of their previous income, and what was their previous primary activity.

Housing situation

To find out more about the possible influence of the housing situation, the respondents were asked both about the housing situation in the parental home, and about the characteristics of the (aspired) independent residence. After all, in accordance with the theoretical framework, the decision to leave the parental home involves an individual reflection on the attractiveness of the situation at home as compared to the alternative of living independently.

With respect to the situation at the parental home, questions were asked about housing type, number of rooms, and having a room of one's own.

Questions on the characteristics of the independent residence pertained to the type of accommodation (a house, apartment, or in lodgings), number of rooms, the presence of facilities such as kitchen, toilet and bathroom and whether these were private or had to be shared with other occupants of the building, tenure type, and housing costs. Additionally, respondents who had already moved out, were also asked if their present housing was to their liking, and if not, what kind of housing or facilities they would prefer. It is asserted that reactions to this question will reveal whether young adults are inclined to make some concessions regarding the quality and facilities of their homes when moving out.

Of course, respondents who were still living at home could not report on the characteristics of their independent residence. Instead, they were asked to indicate what housing, in terms of housing type, number of rooms, and facilities, they considered to be acceptable for someone in their position. This question was also asked in retrospect of the home-leavers, making it possible to compare the housing aspirations of leavers and stayers.

Normative context

A general indication of the normative influence of parents and friends was obtained by asking respondents who were still living at home how their parents and their friends would react if they were to leave home at this moment: would they disapprove or would they encourage the transition. Respondents who had just left home, were asked retrospectively how their parents and their friends judged their decision to move out at that particular moment.

To obtain some information on the nature of prevailing normative beliefs with respect to the event of leaving home, respondents were asked to express their beliefs about the appropriate age at which to leave the parental home (both minimum age and maximum age) and about the requirements that are considered important for living independently. The respondents had to reflect on their own point of view as well as on the perceived opinion of their parents and their friends. To recover the beliefs about normative requirements, respondents had to indicate, on a bipolar scale from 1 to 7, the importance of nine different statements, with score 1 indicating "not important at all", 4 indicating that the stated aspect "does not matter", reflecting an indifference towards such a normative requirement, and 7 indicating "very important". The statements were derived from the qualitative exploration of the essay material, described in chapter 5.

In addition, respondents were asked how much they value the opinions of their parents and their friends. Respondents could indicate their 'motivation to comply' on a four-point scale ranging from -2 (not important at all) to +2 (very important).

Perceived consequences

From chapter 5 it became clear that norms, finances and housing are not the only elements that are taken into consideration when a person is thinking of leaving home. A broad variety of aspects emerged when high school students were asked to describe what they perceived as possible consequences of their leaving home. In accordance with the Theory of Planned Behaviour, a series of questions were asked with respect to these aspects. First of all, the respondent's *evaluation* of each item had to be assessed. Respondents who still lived at home were asked: "I would like to know which questions in life are very meaningful or very pleasant to you and which you find not important or unpleasant. I will mention several aspects, and you can state your opinion by referring to one of the options that are written on this card." Respondents could pick a score from 1

to 7, with 1 indicating 'extremely insignificant' or - depending on the issue that was raised - 'extremely unpleasant', 2 'very insignificant/unpleasant', 3 'quite insignificant/unpleasant' 4 'neither insignificant nor significant /neither unpleasant nor pleasant' 5 'quite significant/pleasant', 6 'very significant/pleasant' 7 'extremely significant/pleasant'. Respondents who had already left home, were asked to try and recall the time they were still living at home and indicate how they valued each aspect then.

Secondly, the anticipated consequences of the transition had to be retrieved. Following the theoretical notion that individuals weigh the alternatives of performing versus not-performing, it is essential to measure both their view on the situation at home and their view on the expected situation after moving out. It was felt, that this could be done most effectively by inquiring about the possible *changes* that respondents expect(ed) to occur when entering the new situation. The respondents were presented the list of items once again and were asked: "To what extent do (did) you expect the following aspects to change when you depart from the parental home and start living on your own?" Reactions to this question were stated as follows: "When I move out, I expect to have this (1) a lot less, (2) much less, (3) a little less, (4) neither more nor less, (5) a little more, (6) much more, or (7) a lot more.

The responses to the questionnaire were coded and fed into the computer by Ogilvie. The data were delivered on a floppy disc in SPSS-format.

6.3 Descriptive analysis of the sample

The research sample consisted of 513 respondents who were living at home and 499 respondents who had moved out between February 1993 and February 1994. On average, the latter group had lived independently for 6.7 months at the time of the survey. Of those living independently, 40% lived alone, 6% lived with a spouse, 23% lived with a partner in unmarried cohabitation, and 31% lived with others.

Of the ones living at home, 32% reported they had no intention of leaving home within the next two years. 15% percent said they may want to leave home within two years, but did not know exactly when that would be. Since obviously these respondents' plans are rather indistinct, they are considered as having no short-term intentions to leave home. Thus, almost half of the survey population living at home had no definite intentions to leave the parental home. On the other hand, 45% of the respondents who were living at home reported that they would "probably" or "definitely" depart from the parental home within two years: 20% of the sample intended to do so within a year and 25% between one and two years. Almost 8% of the young adults living at home had already found independent accommodations to move into, and are thus also regarded as inclined to move out before long.

The respondents in the sample originated from all over the Netherlands. As members of the parental household, 10% of all respondents lived in the northern region of the Netherlands, 16% lived in the eastern region, 10% lived in the central region, 34% lived in the region called Randstad, which is situated in the west of the Netherlands, 10% lived in the southwestern region, and 20% in the southeastern region of the country³. A majority of 50% of the respondents' parents lived in or outside a village, 28% lived in a small city, and 22% lived in a large city⁴.

6.4 Construction of variables

Dependent variable: leaving home

This study aims to explain home-leaving behaviour. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, a person's behaviour is always preceded by the intention to perform it. Thus, three different groups will be distinguished accordingly: those who have no intention to leave home as yet (the group of *dwellers*), those who have the intention to leave shortly (the group of *planners*), and those who have recently left the parental home (the group of *leavers*). To distinguish planners from dwellers as accurately as possible, it was decided that only respondents who indicated to have definite plans to leave "within one year" were to be counted as serious planners. All other respondents who were living at home were classified as dwellers⁵. Finally, respondents who had already left the parental home belong to the group of leavers.

Age

To investigate the (mediating) effect of age, it is essential to compare the age at leaving home with the current age of the stayers. Thus, for the group of leavers the age at which the transition took place is determined, whereas for nest-stayers the age at the time of the interview was used.

In the sampling phase, the selection of nest-leavers was based on the current age of the respondent. A number of leavers, however, has had a birthday since the time they left home. Because of this, 160 of the 499 respondents were shifted to another age category.

³ Assuming that the parents of these young adults are approximately between 40 and 59 years old, this distribution closely resembles that of all Dutch 40-59 year olds, of which 10.5% lives in the northern region, 18.6% in the eastern region, 8.1% in the central region, 37.2% in the Randstad region, and 25.6% in the southwestern and southeastern regions (CBS, 1994, p.32-35).

⁴ With respect to urbanisation level, statistics report that 50% of Dutch 40-59 year olds live in the least urbanised municipalities (categories 4 and 5 on a scale from 1 to 5) (CBS, 1994, p.44).

⁵ In other words, the group of dwellers include both respondents with rather vague plans of "maybe" leaving "in 1 or 2 years", or "in more than 2 years", as well as respondents who stated with certainty to have no intention yet.

As a consequence, the age distribution of the group of nest-leavers in the analyses is slightly different from that in Table 6.1.2 (18-19 yr: 29.1%; 20-21 yr: 26.7%; 22-23 yr: 23.4%; 24-26 yr: 20.8%).

Income position

To explore whether *level of income* affects the propensity to leave home, it is necessary to compare the present income of nest-stayers with the income of nest-leavers at the time of their departure. However, some nest-leavers have experienced a change in income since moving out. For these respondents, the income-at-departure is therefore determined by prior income level. The same procedure was followed to construct a variable for *economic status*, that is, for stayers and leavers who had not experienced any recent changes, the current primary activity was used, whereas for leavers who reported a recent change in daily activities the predominant activity just before departure was taken. Three categories of economic status were distinguished: studying, working, and unemployed.

Income was measured in round guilders. Respondents who were not willing to report their exact earnings, but referred to the relevant income category instead, were assigned the class mean of the category as their level of income.

Sociocultural background

In this study the sociocultural background of individuals is assumed to be a relevant covariate, for two reasons. First of all, the socioeconomic status, which is usually measured by a combination of education and profession, determines the income position of the parents. In the literature it is asserted that parental income may be an essential resource to young adults, because it can be used to facilitate the transition to independent living (De Jong Gierveld *et al.*, 1991). Parents with a higher income thus have the means to subsidise the departure of their off-spring, which may be the reason why children of parents with high socioeconomic status leave home at an earlier age (Goldscheider & Da Vanzo, 1989). However, it seems to the author that parents can subsidise whichever behaviour they wish to. Of course, it may well be that working class children leave home later because their parents cannot afford to support their children's independent life, but the pattern may just as well reflect what Barker (1972) has observed, namely that working-class parents use their money to keep the children at home until marriage, and prevent them from leaving home at inappropriate ages (Avery *et al.*, 1992). On the other hand, one might wonder whether children of parents with high incomes leave home earlier because these parents can more easily supply them with money, or because middle- and upper class parents use their money to enable their children to pursue further education, for which they have to leave home relatively young. In other words, in my opinion it is not the money as such, but rather a set of parental expectations that provokes their 'subsidising' behaviour and thus the timing of their children's leaving home.

This brings us to the second reason why sociocultural background is considered important: it is assumed that it colours the life course orientations of children, as well as the set of social values regarding specific aspects that are related to the transition. In the context of this socialisation hypothesis, and in the light of the argument above, it is preferable to use the parents' educational level as a more direct and effective approximation of sociocultural background. That is, if either one of the parents or both parents have studied, they are likely to hold different views and communicate different social expectations than parents who have not pursued higher education do. Two categories of sociocultural background are distinguished: 1. either one or both parents have studied at a university or higher vocational level, versus 2. neither one has done so.

Dimensions in the consequences of leaving home

As many as 28 items have been identified as possible consequences of leaving home. However, these items should not be considered to be distinct aspects. They represent several underlying dimensions. To check on the validity of the grouping of the items that was arrived at in chapter 5, a factor analysis was performed, based on the respondents' scores on the *evaluation component*. Factor analysis is a statistical technique that can be used to discover and identify the dimensions that underly the original items (Hair *et al.*, 1987). In these analyses, a VARIMAX-rotation was applied. This procedure searches for high loadings for some of the items and loadings close to zero for the other items. Interpretation of the factor is easiest when the item-factor correlations are either close to +1 or -1, indicating a high correlation, or close to 0, indicating a clear lack of association with that particular factor.

To hit upon the underlying denotation of the factors, the factor loadings for each item are examined horizontally, and the highest loading for the item on any factor is underlined (see Table 6.4.1). The assignment of labels to the emerging factors is based on the nature of the items that load high on the factor. The results of the factor analysis revealed that the 28 items in the questionnaire basically represent seven factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. The results of the factor analysis and of the assignment of labels to the factors is shown in Table 6.4.1.

Although the seven factors do bear close resemblance to the categories that were identified in chapter 5, the grouping of certain items does not match the original classification. For instance, item 20 (time for study/career) was originally identified as a manifestation of a time-budget factor, but it now appears to combine with financial considerations. Yet, compared to the factor loadings for item 19 and item 25, the loading for item 20 is quite low. It was therefore decided to remove this item from factor 6 (Cronbach's α is still 0.53).

Table 6.4.1 Results of the factor analysis on the evaluation items (n=1012).

A. Factor loadings (varimax rotation)

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7
EVAL01	<u>.63437</u>	-.06283	-.14613	.13500	.21049	.06582	.00441
EVAL02	.45568	<u>.53063</u>	.10532	-.05743	-.01710	.00348	.01744
EVAL03	.12410	.11061	<u>.77512</u>	.00139	-.01763	-.13547	-.00117
EVAL04	<u>.58181</u>	.22369	.25029	.08102	.01000	.16634	.03455
EVAL05	-.12100	-.06484	.07385	-.08055	-.02708	.02564	<u>.75515</u>
EVAL06	.46580	-.10591	.27207	.07259	<u>.47085</u>	.18858	-.04325
EVAL07	<u>.68770</u>	.01161	.08263	.12545	.26087	.10732	-.08260
EVAL08	.35565	<u>.41277</u>	.33231	.18771	-.04865	.06368	-.32373
EVAL09	.02600	-.02247	.46583	.00791	<u>.52758</u>	.20825	-.10248
EVAL10	.15236	.15412	.04312	.14179	<u>.74552</u>	.07503	-.06728
EVAL11	.02569	<u>.74206</u>	.07745	.07454	.06094	-.15259	.11316
EVAL12	<u>.44013</u>	.25175	.17229	.16604	.15235	.12344	-.27103
EVAL13	.16532	.06763	.12103	<u>.58907</u>	.32509	.04193	.04467
EVAL14	.07049	.10379	.07325	.01003	-.05183	-.09258	<u>.76108</u>
EVAL15	.28276	-.11233	-.06982	.14030	<u>.64264</u>	-.00957	.05869
EVAL16	<u>.50482</u>	.01272	-.02505	.49787	.06647	.24534	.01008
EVAL17	.15510	.03007	.07566	<u>.78143</u>	.03486	.11753	-.10215
EVAL18	.04089	.22502	.09399	<u>.74356</u>	.08412	.09365	-.04359
EVAL19	.25281	.06661	-.15994	.22200	-.02517	<u>.69529</u>	.13742
EVAL20	.02673	.17450	.24119	.15255	.32906	<u>.35353</u>	-.12385
EVAL21	.05334	<u>.55659</u>	.14994	.07526	-.03587	.41396	-.18986
EVAL22	.13678	-.00059	<u>.74287</u>	.17837	.02100	-.02242	.05679
EVAL23	-.07662	.09314	<u>.47907</u>	.05302	.07545	.12352	.22358
EVAL24	.03865	<u>.51765</u>	.30892	.25230	.19794	.23350	-.11459
EVAL25	.24176	.03924	.15349	.09845	.23310	<u>.66530</u>	-.13042
EVAL26	.18866	<u>.45306</u>	.21698	.27327	.08466	.19044	-.22752
EVAL27	-.07984	<u>.69148</u>	-.14836	.04107	-.07306	.08107	.11209
EVAL28	.05491	.08994	<u>.52594</u>	.03511	.20903	.38751	-.10694

*B. Labeling of the factors and overview of the constituent items*Factor 1: Housing ($\alpha=0.70$)

- 01=Freedom
- 04=Room for personal belongings
- 07=Privacy
- 12=Comfortable residence
- 16=Leisure time

Factor 2: Security and parental support ($\alpha=0.74$)

- 02=Familiar circumstances
- 08=Home sociability
- 11=Parental support
- 21=Being nursed when ill
- 24=Respect from parents
- 26=Having a confidant
- 27=Having parents to arrange daily life

Factor 3: Daily care ($\alpha=0.65$)

- 03=Domestic responsibilities
- 22=Cooking duties
- 23=Commuting time
- 28=Take care of health

Factor 4: Social well-being ($\alpha=0.66$)

- 13=Meet new friends
- 17=Contact with old friends
- 18=Respect from friends

Factor 5: Adult status ($\alpha=0.65$)

- 06=Responsible for own decisions
- 09=Responsible for payments
- 10=Viewed as an adult
- 15=Independent of parents

Factor 6: Finances ($\alpha=0.53$)

- 19=Money to spend on pleasures
- 20=Time for study/career
- 25=Financial latitude

Factor 7: Mental commotion ($\alpha=0.52$)

- 05=Loneliness
- 14=Conflicts with parents

note: α = Cronbach's α
(reliability coefficient)

Next, the analysis shows that not only the items 04, 07 and 12 make up the factor which deals with the housing situation, but that two additional items belong with this factor as well. However, the author believes that these two items address housing characteristics rather indirectly. That is, freedom can certainly be guaranteed by specific characteristics of housing, but it does not reflect these characteristics as such. This aspect is therefore removed from factor 1 and is analysed separately. Likewise, housing characteristics may certainly provide the opportunity to spend your leisure time pleasantly, but spending leisure time does not define the characteristics of the housing. As this item relates to an entirely different aspect, it was removed altogether. The housing-factor to be used in subsequent analyses thus contains three items ($\alpha=0.61$).

Whereas it was believed beforehand that item 21 (being nursed when ill) presents an element of daily care, the aspect appears to be experienced by the respondents as a sign of emotional security. Besides, factor analysis discloses that the items reflecting security and support can be combined into a single factor. However, the author feels that some of the items clearly contain an emotional element, whereas others refer to more practical matters, preferring therefore to adhere to the original categorisation, and distinguishing a factor presenting *emotional security* (items 02, 08, 24, 26; $\alpha=0.68$) from the factor reflecting *parental support* (items 11, 21, 27; $\alpha=0.56$).

Also diverging from the original impression in chapter 5 is the finding that 'commuting time' is classified as an element of the daily-care factor. As it is felt that a change in commuting time really pertains to a different aspect than the other three items, which are believed to depict the domestic domain, it was decided to disregard item 23 as a representative of the daily-care factor ($\alpha=0.64$).

In subsequent analyses, the factors are expressed as a linear combination of the constituent items, and a factor score is computed by adding the scores on the separate items and dividing the sum by their number.

Dimensions in the normative items

To discover an underlying pattern in the normative items, a factor analysis was also performed on the items measuring perceived parental expectations. The results of this factor analysis, presented in Table 6.4.2, show that six of the nine items can be combined into three different domains. These domains relate to educational career, to financial independence, and to union formation. The three remaining items that deal with independent functioning (EXPPAR1), age (EXPPAR2), and proper housing (EXPPAR9) did not score high on either of the three factors and are therefore omitted from further analyses.

Table 6.4.2 Results of the factor analysis on the normative items (n=1012).

A. Factor loadings (varimax rotation)

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
EXPPAR1	.42416	-.19375	.39439
EXPPAR2	.34643	-.04857	.51981
EXPPAR3	<u>.85234</u>	.16463	-.08120
EXPPAR4	<u>.87854</u>	.01730	-.01518
EXPPAR5	.10756	-.09266	<u>.78595</u>
EXPPAR6	-.22935	.12435	<u>.78881</u>
EXPPAR7	.14368	<u>.91099</u>	-.02043
EXPPAR8	.04475	<u>.91275</u>	-.03342
EXPPAR9	.44733	.13247	.22016

*B. Labeling of the factors and overview of the constituent items*Factor 1: Financial independence ($\alpha=0.85$)

3=To have a job

4=To have an income

Factor 2: Union formation ($\alpha=0.83$)

7=To start living with a steady partner

8=To marry

Factor 3: Educational career ($\alpha=0.63$)

5=To have finished high school

6=To start advanced education

note: α = Cronbach's α (reliability coefficient)**6.5 Methods***Weighting factor*

By drawing a disproportionally stratified sample, the research population can no longer be considered to be representative of the Dutch population. Some categories have been oversampled, whereas others have been undersampled. In order to make inferences about the situation in the total population, a weighting factor should be calculated to adjust for the selective overrepresentation of some subgroups and the underrepresentation of others.

The calculation of this weighting factor is based on the fraction of respondents in a specific stratum of the sample as compared to the fraction in the universe (see Tables 6.1.1 and 6.1.2). For instance, the fraction of 18/19 year old men with academic level living at home in the sample is $15/1012 = 1.48\%$, whereas the fraction in the universe is $95/4575 = 2.08\%$. In other words, in reality the fraction is 1.41 times as high as in the sample, and thus a weighting factor of 1.41 is assigned to respondents with these characteristics. Similarly, a weighting factor is determined for each stratum. Using this method to generate a weighting factor (Manski & Lerman, 1977) has the advantage that the data are weighted back to the original sample size of 1012 (the mean of all 64 weighting factors is 1). The analyses in chapter 7 and chapter 8 are based on weighted observations.

Comparison of leavers, planners, and dwellers

A comparative method was employed to obtain a first understanding of the factors that have an effect on the decision to leave the parental home: in chapter 7, the group of leavers will be compared with the group of planners, and the group of planners will be compared with the group of dwellers. The underlying idea is that differences between individuals with respect to the factors under study will lead to contrasting dispositions in home-leaving behaviour. If characteristics of leavers differ significantly from the characteristics in the group of planners, the variable concerned is assumed to influence the transition from intention to behaviour. Likewise, if dwellers differ significantly on particular variables compared to planners, this will be regarded as an indication that these variables affect the first stage in the process of decision-making, that is, the formation of an intention. Both characteristics of the personal opportunity structure of the young adults, as well as subjective perceptions will be examined.

For nominal variables, frequency distributions for each group were presented, and differences in relative frequencies were tested for significance by using a Chi-square test.

For ordinal⁶ and interval variables, the mean scores for each group were presented and t-tests were performed to test for significant differences.

Regression analysis

Besides studying differences between the three behavioral groups, this study also aims to find out which young adults handle the distinctive considerations. In other words, we also wish to explain the variation in subjective perceptions. This will be done by using multiple linear regression analysis. In these analyses, the explanatory variables of this study will then successively be treated as the dependent variable (see chapter 7).

In order to apply regression analysis, the dependent variable should be measured at interval level. Strictly speaking, some variables (like expected change, or income satisfaction) do not meet this statistical criterion, because they are measured at ordinal level⁷. However, it is generally deemed justified to regard ordinal variables as an adequate approximation of interval variables (Bohrnstedt & Carter, 1971), especially, because the aim of using regression analyses in this particular case is not to get exact estimates for the B-coefficients, but rather to get an indication of the relative influence of each variable or category as compared to the others, and thus determine the subgroups to which certain considerations apply.

⁶ Strictly speaking, a t-test is not appropriate for ordinal variables. Instead, a Mann-Whitney test should be applied which tests for differences in the median. However, it is common practice to treat ordinal variables which clearly have the character of an interval variable as an approximation of interval variables.

⁷ These variables assume discrete values between -3 and +3.

The use of regression analysis also requires that independent variables are measured at the interval level. A way to nonetheless include categorical variables into a regression equation, is to transform the categorical variable into a set of dichotomous dummy variables; that is, for each category of the variable but the last a dichotomous variable is created. The last category of the variable is the referent category and its B-coefficient is assigned the value zero. For dummy variables that are not selected during the procedure, the B-estimate also equals zero.

Another analytical concern may be that two of the context variables to be analysed (motive, and living arrangement) are partly overlapping variables. After all, union formation is both a reason for leaving home and a type of living arrangement. When entering both variables into the regression analysis, the problem of multicollinearity may arise. To get an indication whether the problem of multicollinearity arises, the tolerance of each variable can be determined. The tolerance is a measure of the degree of linearity between independent variables, and reflects the part of the variance that is not explained by other independent variables ($1-R^2$) (Huizingh, 1991). If the tolerance⁸ is smaller than 0.01, one should be careful to enter both variables into the analysis. The test on tolerance shows that the tolerance of the dummy variables for 'union formation', and for 'with partner' never even falls below the level of 0.37. This does not come as a complete surprise, because the two context variables of motive and living arrangement are not completely inclusive. For instance, people may also move out to accept a job and decide to start living with their partner simultaneously. It therefore seems justified to include both variables into the regression analyses, for this also allows us to unravel the distinctive effects of both motive and living arrangement.

Most regression analyses in chapter 7 are performed in two steps. In a first step, the relevant variables or categories are selected by using a backward stepwise procedure. Variables that, judging from the partial F value, do not contribute significantly to the proportion of variance explained are removed from the equation (Model I). In a second step, the selected variables together with the dummy-variables for behaviour (leaver, planner; referent category is dweller) are all deliberately entered into the model (Model II).

The B-coefficients presented are significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level if the absolute value of the T-statistic is higher than 1.96; it is significant at the 0.01 level if $|T| > 2.58$, and it is significant at the 0.001 level if $|T| > 3.29$.

⁸ Tolerance = $1 - R_i^2$, where R_i^2 is the squared multiple correlation of independent variable i , which is now treated as the dependent variable, with all other independent variables.

CHAID-analysis

As a final step in the analyses, we will try to determine which are the most important predictor variables to explain the transition from no-intention to intention, and the subsequent transition from intention to behaviour. This will be done with the aid of CHAID-analysis (chi-square automatic interaction detection). The basic principles and the underlying algorithm will be discussed in detail in chapter 8.

Chapter 7. Personal opportunity structure and subjective perceptions : comparing leavers, planners, and dwellers

7.1 Introduction

The central issue to be addressed in the present study deals with the question, whether the decision to leave home is affected by financial considerations, by housing considerations, by normative considerations, or by what will be denoted briefly as Hotel-Mama considerations. We aim to find out to what degree each of these factors are related to the fact that some young adults have decided to leave home (leavers), others have the deliberate intention to leave home but apparently have not yet effectuated their intention (planners), while still others do not even intend to leave home within the foreseeable future (dwellers).

In order to get an indication whether either of the four above mentioned factors play a decisive role, a comparative approach will be used (see also chapter 6). That is, the characteristics of the three behavioral groups that are distinguished here (leavers, planners, and dwellers) will be compared; in case significant differences are observed, these are interpreted as an indication that the factor concerned indeed affects the decision of individuals to leave home, either in the stage of intention formation, or in the stage of actually doing so. As our main concern lies with the question which factors influence the transition from no-intention to intention, and which factors affect the subsequent transition from intention to behaviour, only significant differences between leavers and planners, and between planners and dwellers will be marked in the following tables.

As it is hypothesised that some young adults are likely to experience a given context or specific consequences differently than others do, because of their socio-cultural background or because of the way they (intend to) leave home, we also aim to determine to which groups of young adults the noted considerations apply more strongly, and for which subgroups the effect is relatively weaker. This will give an indication of the relative influence of particular factors within the home-leaving process as a whole.

As was discussed in chapter 6, the analyses will be performed with weighted data, to make sure that the results can be considered representative for the total population of Dutch young adults, 18-26 years old, who were living at home at the beginning of 1993.

Before turning to the main analyses of this chapter, we will start with a more detailed description of the patterns in leaving home that were observed among the group of young adults who actually left home during the twelve months prior to the interviews. The aspects to be discussed in the next section involve age at leaving, living arrangement when moving out, and motive for departure.

Table 7.2.1 Transition rate, and living arrangement when leaving home

	Rate	Living arrangement (row %)		
		Alone	With partner	With others
Leavers				
All (n=175)	17.3% ¹	40.1%	30.5%	29.4%
Males	13.1%	37.7%	35.2%	27.1%
Females	20.2%	42.0%	26.9%	31.1%
18-19 years old	12.4%	48.2%	11.7%	40.1%
20-21 years old	16.1%	39.1%	16.7%	43.2%
22-23 years old	21.1%	35.5%	44.3%	20.2%
24-26 years old	23.5%	38.2%	49.1%	12.7%
Planners (n=192)	22.9% ²	40.0%	41.3%	18.7%
Dwellers (n=646)		32.0%	55.9%	12.1%

1) number of home-leavers, as a percentage of all respondents living at home at t_0

2) number of planners, as a percentage of all respondents living at home at the time of the interview (t_i)

7.2 Leaving home

7.2.1 Age

Of the 1012 individuals who were interviewed, a total of 175 had left the parental home during the twelve months prior to the interviews, which were conducted in February 1994. This means a transition rate¹ of 17.3%. The mean age at leaving home was 21.6 years, and on average the home-leavers had lived away from their parents for 6.8 months. The probability of leaving home increased with age, with the transition rate for 18-19 year olds being 12.4%, for 20-21 year olds 16.1%, for 22-23 year olds 21.1%, and for 24-26 year olds 23.5% (see Table 7.2.1). In line with the findings of previous research, a marked difference was observed between men and women. With a transition rate of 22.9%, the likelihood of females leaving the parental home was much higher than that for males, for whom the probability to leave home was 13.1%. On average, the women who left home were also significantly younger (21.2 years old) than their male counterparts, who were on average 22.0 years ($p=0.03$).

From the group of individuals still living in the parental home, 192 (22.9%) had indicated that they intended to leave the parental home within the time span of one year. This group will be denoted as the *planners*. That leaves a total of 646 respondents who did not intend

¹ The transition rate reflects the number of events relative to the population at risk at time t_0 .

to move out in the short-term (the *dwellers*). The mean age of the individuals who were inclined to leave home was 21.3 years, whereas the ones who did not want to leave home were on average 20.8 years old ($p=0.08$). These findings make clear that age is an important determinant in the decision to leave home.

7.2.2 Living arrangements

Upon leaving home, 40.1% of home-leavers started to live alone, whereas 29.4% started living in a household with others than a steady partner. A total of 30.5% started living with their partner. The majority of the latter started living in unmarried cohabitation (77.4%), whereas only 22.6% set up a household with a spouse. It is remarkable that the relative number of women who start living with a partner is much lower than the relative number of men, which seems to contradict the findings of previous research. However, when a further distinction is made between the two alternatives of marriage and unmarried cohabitation, it appears that the percentage of women who leave home for marriage practically equals the percentage of men who started off by marriage. The diverging result with respect to the living arrangement 'with partner' can be attributed to the smaller number of women who decided to set up a household with an unmarried partner. Instead, women decide to live alone or with other people more often than men. In this study, the alternatives of marriage and unmarried cohabitation will be taken together and considered as one option, irrespective of the formal status of this relationship.

The choice for a specific living arrangement changes with the age at leaving home. The number of leavers who start living with a partner is quite small for young adults who move out before the age of 21. In this age group, a large majority prefers to live alone or with someone other than a steady partner. After that age, the proportion of leavers who choose to live with others falls off dramatically, whereas the percentage deciding to live with a partner increases rapidly. Almost half of the individuals who leave home between the ages of 24 and 26, opt for this living arrangement. The proportion of young adults who starts living alone also decreases with increasing age, but by no more than 10%.

The respondents who were still living in the parental home at the time of the interview were also asked about the living arrangement they intend to choose when they leave home. Of course, it must be realised that the final living arrangement may not correspond with what was reported during the interview, but the fact that most respondents could readily provide an answer to this question indicates that the measure is accurate. Only 3.5% of the dwellers indicated that they had no idea which living arrangement they would choose. They are of course excluded from analyses which focus on living arrangement. The expected living arrangements of planners and dwellers are also presented in Table 7.2.1. It is noteworthy that living with a spouse or partner is an option that is reported far more frequently by dwellers than it is by planners and leavers.

7.2.3 Motive for departure

Young adults may decide to leave the parental home for a variety of reasons. During the interviews, the respondents were presented a list of viable reasons to leave the parental home. For each of the options, they were asked to indicate whether this reason applied to them. Next, they were also asked to state which reason was (or will be) the most important motive to move out, and which is or was the second most important motive. The options presented in Table 7.2.2 are based on previous research findings that were discussed in chapter 2. Let me briefly elucidate the motives that were defined.

Naturally, the traditional motive to leave the parental home was marriage. Since nowadays unmarried cohabitation has become a well accepted substitute for marriage, marriage and cohabitation are combined to present one motive for departure (item 7 in Table 7.2.2). As became clear in chapter 2, departure from the parental home may also be triggered by activities in other life domains (parallel careers), like working or studying. This aspect is reflected by items 2, 4 and 5. From life-course theorists the idea was adopted that the process of leaving home may (in part) be determined by societal expectations regarding the proper timing and arrangements of leaving home. These social norms may refer to a specific age at which the transition should occur (item 6), but also to the condition that one has to be economically independent, a condition which cannot be met when enrolled in education (items 1 and 3). In addition, young adults may experience some kind of social pressure from significant others, without being able to indicate the exact expectations that underly such pressure. This is why items 9 and 11 have been added to the list. It was also discussed in chapter 2 that in a modern individualised society, specific social norms may have lost their meaning. Instead, young adults have gained more and more freedom to decide for themselves when and how to make important life course transitions; intrinsic motivations and the expressed desire for self-actualisation have become accepted as legitimate reasons to start living independently. This motive is reflected in items 8 and 10. Moreover, some young adults may leave home in order to distance themselves from conflicts they are having with their parents (item 12). Such conflicts may cause the individual to feel seriously restricted in his or her personal freedom, and thus this item can be regarded to represent the motive of 'freedom' as well.

Let us now examine the relevance of each of the motives described above. In Table 7.2.2 one can see which motives are mentioned very frequently as the main reason for moving out, and which motives are rarely mentioned.

Remarkably, the central motive for leaving home is still the formation of a stable relationship, either through marriage or a consensual union. This motive is followed by the intrinsic motivations of freedom and readiness to move out, which are also reported by a relatively large number of respondents. On the other hand, motives reflecting social norms or social pressure are not mentioned very frequently. Conflicts with parents is not

often mentioned as an immediate motive to leave home. This seems to support the suggestion by other authors that children nowadays enjoy a great amount of freedom and have the opportunity to have their say in the parental home. Consequently they do not experience many serious conflicts which might prompt them to move out. Work and study, finally, take a middle position as far as their relative frequency is concerned.

Table 7.2.2 Reasons for departure from the parental home, total group (in %)

1. Finishing high school	2.5%	7. Marriage/cohabitation	30.6%
2. (Start) advanced education	8.9%	8. Freedom	13.1%
3. Completion advanced education	2.0%	9. Friends are moving out	0.4%
4. New job	5.2%	10. Ready to move out	26.4%
5. Closer to work	4.5%	11. Parents are pushing	0.7%
6. Age	3.2%	12. Conflicts with parents	2.5%

The results presented in Table 7.2.2 call for a further reflection on the options that have been defined. Guided by the results of a factor analysis on the separate motive-items (whyout1 to whyout12; see Table 7.2.3), and the basic ideas underlying this study, it was decided to combine several response categories and subsume them under the heading of one motive.

The factor analysis reveals that the job-items and the marriage-item belong to the same dimension. Possibly they both reflect the more traditional motives to start living independently. Despite this outcome, the motives 'work' and 'union formation' will be considered separately in the subsequent analyses, because in other studies on leaving home the two motives are also considered as separate alternatives. The motive 'high school finished'

Table 7.2.3 Results of a factor analysis on the 12 items reflecting the motives to leave the parental home.

Varimax rotated factor loadings	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
1. Finishing high school	-.13448	<u>.71594</u>	.11611	.04630	.20660
2. (Start) advanced education	.13251	<u>.82662</u>	.02511	-.02081	-.07171
3. Completion advanced education	.25230	.17655	<u>.30077</u>	.24562	-.05520
4. New job	<u>.72673</u>	.06198	-.12894	.16326	-.21723
5. Closer to work	<u>.71564</u>	.00461	.12099	-.14310	.11950
6. Age	-.14637	.09528	.19315	-.02735	<u>.66028</u>
7. Marriage/cohabitation	<u>.51097</u>	-.40868	.07421	-.12873	.15281
8. Freedom	-.00476	.00312	.04315	<u>.70066</u>	.23742
9. Friends are moving out	-.05781	.02829	.06986	<u>.75786</u>	-.06187
10. Ready to move out	.19114	-.03287	-.18117	.20598	<u>.72711</u>
11. Parents are pushing	.09712	.04794	<u>.70815</u>	-.01023	.14654
12. Conflicts with parents	-.08379	.01563	<u>.76657</u>	.09892	-0.0800
Cronbach's α	0.44	0.47	0.36	0.28	0.20

makes up one factor with 'advanced education'. Closer inspection of the data showed that a large number of respondents who mentioned the first reason instantly mentioned the second reason as well. It seems that the end of high school and the beginning of advanced education are seen as directly related and thus simultaneous events. It was therefore decided to count those who answered both option 1 and 2 among the ones who leave home for educational reasons. The remaining respondents who did not mention reason 1 in combination with reason 2 ($n=9$) were classified according to their second most important reason for departure.

'Completion of advanced education' scored highest on factor 3, but the factor loading is extremely low. Considering that this reason was mentioned by a mere 2 percent of the respondents, it was decided to delete this item as a separate motive and classify these respondents according to their second motive.

It is interesting to see that the items 'friends are moving out' and 'freedom' represent one factor. Perhaps, the desire to copy the behaviour of friends is not an expression of the need to answer to the social pressure from peers, as was assumed beforehand. Instead, watching friends who live independently may cause a feeling among the stayers of "yeah, being free must be lovely". This motivation may thus very well reflect the urge for autonomy and self-determination.

Further, 'attained age' as the motive to leave home appears to score high on the same factor as 'readiness', and can be understood to share one underlying dimension. We must conclude that age is not a normative reason for departure, but rather seems to represent a more concrete indication and a general notion of 'being ready'.

Although readiness and freedom score high on different factors, there are good reasons to assume that in the present study they should be combined, as they both reflect an intrinsic motivation. Also, they epitomise the feeling that 'maybe there is no direct reason for moving out, but I feel it is about time to go live independently and pursue the freedom that is related to living an independent life'. As such, these factors stand opposite to the more pressing motives of study and work. The items that make up these two factors will therefore be taken together as one, which, incidentally, results in a considerable increase of Cronbach's α as compared to the α 's of the separate factors ($\alpha=0.33$). Moreover, although item 12, concerning conflicts with parents, is not clustered with freedom, it was decided to subsume it under the same motive, because getting away from a discordant situation may indeed be seen as an act of seeking autonomy. The resulting motive, which will be called '(desire for) independence' is thus represented by five items ($\alpha = 0.32^2$).

This means that the direct social pressure of parents (item 11) is the only item left representing normative motives. As Table 7.2.2 shows, this item was mentioned by an

² Considering the low values for Cronbach's alpha, the factors cannot be considered to have the properties of a real 'scale'.

insignificant percentage of respondents (0.7%). Besides, it is conceivable that each of the motives (work, study or union formation) also carries a normative component, and, at least for some individuals, may also (in part) be inspired by underlying normative expectations. Maintaining this single item as representative of the effect of social norms would create the deceptive suggestion that the effect and salience of normative incentives can be properly measured by this item. It was therefore decided to leave this item out altogether. Instead, the relevance and possible effect of social expectations will be analysed later on the basis of other, more direct measures of social influence.

Table 7.2.4 Motives for leaving the parental home.

	All	Leavers	Planners	Dwellers
Education	9.8%	26.1% **	13.7%	4.2% **
Work	10.1%	8.8%	6.2%	11.6% *
Union formation	31.2%	21.2% *	31.6%	33.7%
Independence	49.0%	43.8%	48.5%	50.5%

To test for significant differences, the prevalence among leavers is compared with the prevalence among planners, and the prevalence among planners is compared with the prevalence among dwellers, for each motive in succession.

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

The preceding operation has resulted in a major reduction of the number of motives to be distinguished. In the analyses to come, the following four motives will be distinguished: (advanced) education, work, union formation, and autonomy. Table 7.2.4 shows the relative frequency of the four motives in the population (weighted numbers).

It turns out that, in the total group, the desire for independence is the predominant reason for leaving home (mentioned by almost half of the population), followed by union formation, which is the reason given by almost one third of the respondents. Motives that are related to the educational and occupational careers are the direct impetus to leave home for 20% of the young adults. Again, an interesting difference can be observed between the groups of leavers, planners and dwellers, which seems to suggest that the timing of leaving home is closely related to, and possibly directly inspired by, the motive for departure. We can see that young adults who have already left the parental home have done so for educational reasons significantly more often than planners intend to do, whereas this motive is hardly mentioned by the group of dwellers. Instead, planners and dwellers intend to leave home in connection with union formation significantly more often.

7.3 The impact of the financial situation on home-leaving behaviour

One of the main hypotheses of this study assumes that the opportunity to establish an independent household may be conditioned by the availability of financial resources and by the repercussions that independent living may have on the spending capacity of the home-leaver. It is evident that setting up an independent household requires money. One has to support oneself on a daily basis and pay the rent. These are expenditures one does not have when living with one's parents because parents commonly cover most of their children's daily expenses when they are living under the same roof, and paying for housing is usually not the responsibility of coresiding children.

Moreover, many young adults receive pocket money from their parents, which, as it turns out, can generally be spend freely on personal pleasures and does not have to be reserved to meet necessary expenses (De Zwart & Warnaar, 1993; De Regt, 1997). In addition, more and more youths attending school nowadays earn money with weekend-jobs, and they can spend their earnings at their own discretion (Hutson & Jenkins, 1987). Of course, young adults living with their parents sometimes have to pay board, especially if they earn money of their own. In this case staying home does not offer as great a financial advantage and they may be more inclined to leave home.

It is therefore expected that young adults who get pocket money may be less inclined to leave the parental home than those who do not receive such money from their parents. On the other hand, where pocket money is expected to make it financially more appealing to stay at home, the obligation to pay board is likely to curtail the person's financial freedom and thus lead to a stronger motivation to leave the parental home. Both these hypotheses on the effects of the financial position at the parental home will be studied in section 7.3.1 of this chapter.

When moving out, the young nest-leaver will loose many of the financial benefits that are directly related to living in the parental household. Instead, they now have to pay for everything themselves. Obviously, persons with higher incomes will have more financial latitude and will experience fewer financial constraints in starting to live independently. We therefore expect that the propensity to leave home will increase with the level of income.

In section 7.3.2 we will examine whether differences in financial situation may account for differences in the propensity to leave home, by comparing the financial situation of home-leavers with that of planners, and the financial situation of the latter with that of dwellers.

7.3.1 Parental contribution when living at home

Respondents who were living in the parental home when interviewed, were asked whether they receive any pocket-money or money for clothing from their parents. The group of respondents who had recently left the parental home was asked: "When you were still living with your parents, did you receive any pocket-money or other money? How much did you get just before you left home?" Respondents indicating that they only occasionally get (or got) such money from their parents are regarded as not receiving spending money. Respondents were also asked whether they paid board to their parents, or, in the case of home-leavers, whether they did so just before leaving.

Spending money

Contrary to our expectations, the responses to questions on spending money make it clear that receiving pocket money does not keep young adults from leaving the parental home (see Table 7.3.1). Whereas the percentage of leavers who received spending money on a regular basis until the time of departure is as high as 39.9%, only 23.1% of the planners receive pocket-money, money for clothing or a combination of the two ($p < 0.01$). On the other hand, the average amount of spending money received by planners turns out to be slightly higher than the average amount received by leavers (f163 vs f152 monthly³), but this difference is not significant. There is also no difference between planners and dwellers with respect to the number of respondents receiving spending money. Moreover, dwellers receiving spending money on average get a smaller amount (f140) than do the group of planners.

On the basis of these findings it must be concluded that there is no relationship between receiving spending money or the amount of spending money received on the one hand, and the propensity to leave home on the other.

Table 7.3.1 Financial contributions from and commitments to the parental household

	Leavers	Planners	Dwellers
Percentage receiving spending money	39.9% **	23.1%	23.2%
Amount of spending money received monthly ¹⁾	f152	f163	f140
Percentage paying board	23.1%	31.4%	28.7%
Amount of board paid monthly ²⁾	f224 *	f174	f215 **

1) calculated for those who received any pocket money

2) calculated for those who had to pay board

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ (Leavers compared to planners, and planners compared to dwellers)

³ The f-sign symbolises Dutch guilders. One Dutch guilder is worth about 0.55 American dollars.

Board money

Table 7.3.1 also shows that the assumption regarding the effect of paying board is only partially right. Young adults who have indicated that they intend to leave home within the coming year indeed pay board relatively more often than young adults who do not intend to do so, but the difference between the two groups is not significant. Besides, comparison of the findings for planners and leavers clearly contradicts the launching effect of financial obligations ($p=0.09$), although it must be noted that, if board money was being paid to the parents, the amount paid by leavers was significantly higher than that which planners remitted to their parents. The same, however, can be said about the group of dwellers, who also pay more board than the group of planners do, but apparently do not feel like leaving home soon, which is contrary to the hypothesis.

All in all we must conclude that the data do not provide convincing evidence that pocket money or board either directly motivates or demotivates young adults to leave the parental home or seriously plan to do so.

7.3.2 Parental contribution after leaving the parental home

The allocation of money from the parents to their off-spring is not strictly limited to the time the children live in the parental home; parents can still give money to their children after leaving, although it must be understood that this money is probably meant to supplement their income to help cover daily expenses, and not to be spent on personal pleasures, as was the case with pocket money. However, not many home-leavers have the benefit of such an extra source of income.

Table 7.3.2 shows that more than 70% of the home-leavers does not receive any financial help from their parents (see first two rows). The majority of this group did not get any extra money in any case, but for 21.5% of the home-leavers the transition to independent living also means the discontinuation of any financial contribution from their parents. Less than one third of the home-leavers receives some financial support from their parents, which on average amounts to f291 per month. It may not come as a surprise that it is mainly students who enjoy such parental beneficence; more than 50% of students receive a parental contribution, compared to a mere 3.9% of the working home-leavers.

Table 7.3.2 Receiving spending-money upon leaving home (among home-leavers)

No contribution at home, no contribution upon leaving	50.7%
Termination of parental contribution upon leaving home	21.5%
Start of parental contribution upon leaving home	9.8%
Parental contribution remained the same	1.8%
Parental contribution was raised	14.0%
Parental contribution was lowered	2.3%

These findings could be interpreted as an illustration of a social norm which seems to apply to a majority of home-leavers: once a young adult starts living independently, (s)he should also be economically independent. Students are excused from meeting this societal expectation, because other, legitimate commitments prevent them from financially supporting themselves. Young adults who leave home while still enrolled in education can be said to enter a stage of partial independence (Jones, 1987) or semi-autonomy (Goldscheider & Da Vanzo, 1989), and are therefore released from financial responsibilities. When exploring the effect of personal financial resources, it therefore seems sensible to examine students and non-students separately.

7.3.3 Personal financial resources

Socioeconomic position

An important determinant of a person's financial position is his or her socioeconomic position. It has been hypothesised that the opportunity to leave the parental home will be less optimal for unemployed persons because of their weaker financial situation and lack of prospects. In Table 7.3.3, it can be seen that the proportion of unemployed young adults is indeed highest in the group of dwellers. In the group of planners the relative number of unemployed persons is smaller than in the group of leavers, which is contrary to our expectations, but the difference is not significant. The three groups do not differ significantly with respect to the relative number of students or working young adults.

Table 7.3.3 Socioeconomic position of leavers, planners, and dwellers

	Leavers	Planners	Dwellers
Studying	50.8%	55.0%	53.3%
Working	46.0%	43.9%	40.7%
Unemployed	3.2%	1.2%	6.1%

Income level

In order to compare the financial situation of leavers and non-leavers, and obtain an answer to the question whether the financial situation of home-leavers is perhaps more prosperous, thus making it easier for them to set up an independent household, it is essential to measure their financial situation at the time they left the parental home. Because we do not know whether young adults still living in the parental home will receive a parental contribution once they move out, this source of income will be excluded from the calculation of the level of income.

A first glance at the mean income level of leavers, planners and dwellers seem to provide convincing evidence that home-leavers are in a much better financial position than young adults who have not yet decided to leave. However, when differentiating by economic

Table 7.3.4 Mean monthly income of leavers, planners, and dwellers, by economic status

	Mean income at departure / at interview			Mean income of leavers at interview
	Leavers	Planners	Dwellers	
All	f1217**	f 942	f 902	f1303
Studying	f 763**	f 406	f 478	f 853
Working	f1775	f1796	f1665**	f1850
Unemployed	f 852	f 915	f 973	f1102
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 (Leavers compared to planners, and planners compared to dwellers.)				

status of the respondents, the effect of level of income partially disappears. It turns out that the incomes of working and unemployed planners do not lie below the incomes of those who did leave home; in fact, they are even slightly (though not significantly) higher. Especially the income at departure of unemployed leavers is less than that of unemployed planners. However, this category of leavers may have anticipated a favourable change in income in the near future, as their current income level is significantly higher than that at the time of departure (see last column of Table 7.3.4).

The hypothesised effect of level of income on the transition to independent living thus appears to exist only for leavers who are still enrolled in education. However, we must be aware that the financial situation of students is directly related to their household position: students who are living in the parental home receive a smaller scholarship from the government than do students who live away from home. The relatively favourable financial situation of students thus is a direct consequence of their leaving home, and therefore may not have been the immediate incentive to move out. On the other hand, the students may of course have anticipated the increase in their scholarship and may have decided to leave for this reason. However, we cannot be absolutely certain about this conclusion on the basis of a comparison between leavers and non-leavers.

Nonetheless, where we cannot convincingly detect an effect of income on the transition from planner to leaver, income does seem to affect the transition from dweller to planner among working young adults. It appears that the average income of young workers who intend to leave home is significantly higher than that of working young adults who do not wish to do so. This relationship is not found for students and unemployed young adults. In other words, the effect of income depends on the specific context in which the young adult finds him/herself.

Recent changes in income

The respondents have not only been asked about their recent income, but also about any changes in income which occurred during the past twelve months or the twelve months that preceded their leaving home. It can be hypothesised that recent income changes may help surmount existing financial thresholds (McElroy, 1985) which up to that point suppressed the young adult's willingness - or perceived ability - to start living independently.

It appears that among the group of working and unemployed young adults (students are excluded from this analysis of income changes because of their aberrant situation) as much as 70.7% of the planners experienced an improvement in income, compared to 66.4% of dwellers. This discrepancy, although pointing in the expected direction, cannot be considered a significant one, however. On the other hand, the percentage of home-leavers whose income increased during the twelve months prior to their move, is only 40.8% which, when compared to the 70.7% for planners, contradicts our hypothesis. Yet, it is possible that an improvement in income may have triggered the intention to leave home, activating the young adult to take the necessary steps to effectuate their intention. Due to the inevitable time lag between the formation of an intention and the actual transition, the crucial income change might have occurred more than twelve months before, and cannot be traced back in this survey any longer. This interpretation would also explain the unexpected finding that the income of leavers is not higher than that of planners.

7.3.4 Subjective perception of financial situation

Thus far, we have restricted our attention to objective measures of income position. However, a principal theoretical starting-point in this thesis maintains that one should not overlook the subjective experience of, and the personal reaction to the specific opportunity structure of the individual, as these may more directly determine behaviour. The objective income situation, as measured by level of income, may not be fully indicative of the individual's perception of his financial possibilities, and may therefore not completely explain an individual's willingness to leave the parental home. This was also illustrated by the findings in Table 7.3.4, which showed that the mean income of students lies well below the mean income level of workers. Yet, many students decided to leave the parental home, while many workers did not.

It is believed that the subjective economic position of an individual is highly dependent on the specific context in which the transition takes place, on the specific circumstances that the home-leaver is about to enter, and on the subjective expectations regarding the financial consequences of leaving home. An individual will judge the financial constraints and opportunities in the light of his or her specific context and background, and this subjective perception of the financial situation may also, or perhaps even more directly,

affect the person's behaviour. To be more specific, the motive for departure as well as the living arrangement that is chosen, typify the specific context of leaving home and may well affect the individual's notions about what to expect and what to aspire to when it comes to living independently. Also, it was hypothesised that a person's subjective interpretation of a given situation is likely to be related to several background variables which may colour his or her perception and evaluation. Background factors that are believed to influence the subjective perception and evaluation include gender, age, economic status, income level, sociocultural background (i.e. whether or the not the parent(s) have studied at academic or college level, or not), and the educational level attained by the young adult.

Besides examining differences in subjective perceptions of leavers, planners and dwellers, we will therefore simultaneously examine which background or contextual factors can explain the variation in subjective perceptions. This will be done by using linear regression analysis.

There are several indicators, measured during the interviews, that can be used to analyse the subjective perception of economic position and the financial implications of leaving home. First of all, the respondents were asked whether they felt that their income is or would be sufficient to support themselves in their present or projected circumstances (income satisfaction), and if not, what level of income they thought would be sufficient (acceptable income). Second, respondents were asked whether they expected their financial position to improve or deteriorate when moving out, and to what degree (expected changes). All these indicators will be examined in this section.

Satisfaction with income position

A first measure of the subjective income position is income satisfaction. The respondents were asked the following question: "Do you find your present income sufficient to live on independently?" The respondents could indicate their satisfaction on a 5-point bipolar scale, reflecting not at all sufficient, not quite sufficient, alright, satisfactory, and highly satisfactory. Additionally, a subsequent question was asked of those who reported being not fully satisfied: "What income do you consider to be acceptable for someone in your circumstances?" For those who indicated to be satisfied, the 'acceptable income' was equated with their actual income.

Evidently, as far as the subjective appreciation of their income is concerned, leavers differ significantly from planners ($p_{\text{phi}} < 0.01$) and planners differ significantly from dwellers ($p_{\text{phi}} < 0.01$). The proportion of home-leavers who think their income is adequate is much higher than that of planners who think so, whereas the proportion of those who are extremely displeased with their income is highest among dwellers. The mean score on the satisfaction measure also provides strong evidence that the subjective

Table 7.3.5 Subjective evaluation of income position when living independently, acceptable level of income, and discrepancy between actual and acceptable level of income

	Leavers	Planners	Dwellers
Satisfaction with present income	**		**
not at all sufficient	11.1%	38.8%	46.7%
not quite sufficient	26.6%	21.0%	33.5%
alright	13.2%	4.9%	4.0%
very satisfactory	40.5%	31.4%	14.3%
highly satisfactory	8.6%	3.8%	1.4%
Mean satisfaction score [-2,2]	0.09 **	-0.6	-1.1 **
Acceptable income level (average)	f1505	f1488	f1680 **
Discrepancy between acceptable and actual income ¹⁾			
<0 (actual income higher than aspired income)	7.7%	4.2%	4.5%
=0	25.8%	20.1%	12.2%
>0 (actual income less than aspired income)	66.6%	75.6%	83.2%
Mean discrepancy between acceptable and actual income	f278 **	f532	f771 **

1) present income for planners and dwellers, or income at time of departure for leavers

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ (leavers compared to planners, and planners compared to dwellers)

evaluation of the income situation can be considered highly predictive of home-leaving behaviour and intentions.

Although leavers on average appear to be more content with their disposable income, they do not differ significantly from the group of planners with respect to the income level which they consider acceptable. For both, the mean acceptable income lies at approximately 1500 guilders. The dwellers, however, aspire to an income that is significantly higher than the acceptable income reported by planners, namely almost 1700 guilders.

In spite of the fact that leavers and planners hold similar opinions about acceptable income levels, it appears that the discrepancy between actual and acceptable income is significantly smaller for leavers than it is for planners; this must be due to the fact that, for all the leavers the average income lies above the average income of the planners as a whole (see Table 7.3.4). In turn, the discrepancy between actual and acceptable income among planners is significantly smaller than it is among dwellers. This finding suggests that the perceived discrepancy may be the crucial element in the influence of financial opportunity structure on the propensity to leave home: it is not so much the actual or the aspired income which influences the decision, but rather the discrepancy between these two.

motivation disappears when controlling for behaviour. Apparently, the effect of motive that was observed in Model I, reflects an overrepresentation of individuals leaving for education among leavers, and an independent effect of motive does not occur.

People who move out to set up a household with a partner feel more strongly that their income is not sufficient to support them both. Actual income also has a significant effect on the evaluation of its adequacy to cover daily expenses: income is positively related to income satisfaction, an increase in income by £100 results in an increase in satisfaction with 0.10. Young adults, whose parents have studied, appear more satisfied with the amount of money they can dispose of. Comparison of the B-coefficients for leavers, planners, and dwellers again show that leavers are relatively more satisfied with their income than planners are, and that dwellers are relatively least satisfied. This finding is interpreted as an indication that the subjective evaluation of one's income as being adequate to live on may be responsible for the decision to leave home or to postpone the transition.

Turning now to the aspect of acceptable income (Table 7.3.7), it is interesting to see that the effects that were discovered in Table 7.3.6 are reflected in the results of the regression analysis with acceptable income as the dependent variable. The income level that is deemed acceptable by males is higher than that of females. Young adults who leave to live with a partner feel that they need more money, whereas individuals who leave home for educational reasons are content with a considerably smaller amount than those who leave home for other reasons. The effect of educational level, although included in the model, appears not to be significant.

Compared to planners and leavers, young adults who have no short-term intentions to leave the parental home feel that their income should be much higher in order to live independently. This finding can be considered to confirm the assumption that subjective income level indeed has a delaying effect, and may retain young adults in the parental home; young adults who feel that they do not have enough money seem to decide to remain in the parental home rather than moving out to live independently. However, the B-coefficient for income shows that the amount of money that is perceived to be acceptable increases with actual income. This indicates that adequacy of a specific income is not a fixed given; the appraisal of its adequacy appears to be dependent on the amount of money one actually gets. Some people will feel satisfied with the amount of money that others actually receive, but these other persons in turn are likely to prefer more money when leaving than they in fact receive. Obviously, income level carries a subjective component and it seems that people adjust the level of their aspiration with rising incomes.

Table 7.3.7 Regression analysis with acceptable income (in guilders) as the dependent variable

	Model I		Model II	
	B	T	B	T
GENDER				
male	211	(5.3)	186	(4.6)
female	0		0	
MOTIVE				
education	-276	(3.9)	-214	(2.9)
work	0		0	
union formation	109	(2.3)	98	(2.1)
autonomy	0		0	
LIVING ARRANGEMENT				
alone	0		0	
with partner	281	(5.9)	275	(5.8)
with others	0		0	
ECONOMIC STATUS				
studying	0		0	
working	127	(1.9)	117	(1.8)
unemployed	0		0	
EDUCLEV high	-85	(1.9)	-60	(1.3)
INCOME/100	40	(9.4)	44	(10.1)
BEHAVIOUR				
leaver			-181	(3.1)
planner			-147	(2.8)
dweller			0	
F=88.42 ; R ² =0.40			F=81.00 ; R ² =0.41	
Eliminated from equation: parental educational level, age				

Expected change in income position as a consequence of leaving home

Aside from adequacy of income, the individual's evaluation of his or her financial situation may also be affected by the financial consequences perceived to be inherent in leaving home. If one feels that living independently will have a seriously limiting effect on one's spending capacity, or on the amount of money one can reserve for personal accessories, one may be less inclined to move out. This aspect represents the *expectancy* component of the attitude towards the behaviour, which is central in the Theory of Planned Behaviour which underlies this study. Yet, even if people anticipate similar financial consequences, they may differ with respect to the significance that they attach to them. This aspect reflects the *value* component of an attitude.

As was discussed in chapter 3, it is assumed that perceived consequences are based on the simultaneous assessment of the situation at home and that of living independently and can be measured most effectively by asking about the *expected changes*. The explorative examination of the written material produced by high school students in chapter 5

revealed two items that can be considered to depict the financial implications of moving out. The factor analysis in chapter 6 confirmed that these two items can be combined into one factor. For each item the respondents were first asked to indicate on a 7-point bipolar scale how highly they valued "having money to spend on personal pleasures" and "having financial latitude to cover necessary expenses" (the response categories ranged from "not important at all/very negative" to "of the utmost importance/very positive"). They were then asked to what extent they expect(ed) these things to change when moving out (with response categories ranging from "I expect to have it a lot less (-3)" to "a lot more (+3)"). Factor scores for both the evaluation component and the expectancy component were computed by adding the scores on the constituent items and dividing the sum by two. The resulting factor-scores form the basis of the following analyses, in which we will examine whether leavers, planners, and dwellers score differently on the items which measured the perceived consequences for and the personal evaluation of the financial situation.

Table 7.3.8 Anticipated consequences with respect to financial situation and the evaluation of financial spending capacity; mean scores (range -3, +3)

	Leavers	Planners	Dwellers
Expected change in financial situation	-0.24	-0.30	-0.20
Importance attached to spending capacity	1.63 **	1.92	1.91
* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ (leavers compared to planners, and planners compared to dwellers)			

On the average, young adults expect their financial situation to deteriorate when they move out to live independently, although not very dramatically so (mean = -0.22, SD = 1.28). The proportion of young adults expecting a moderate to strong improvement is only 8%. Planners appear to be slightly more pessimistic about the financial implications of leaving home, but dwellers, on the other hand, are more optimistic, which is not as expected. The differences between them are not significant, however.

We do, on the other hand, find a significant difference in the evaluation of having spending capacity. Young adults who have not yet left the parental home attach significantly more importance to financial latitude than leavers do. All in all, this seems to indicate that people who do not care as strongly about a cut-back in their spending capacity do not feel hindered by the financial complications of leaving home. Of course, we must not rule out the possibility of an alternative explanation, namely that in order to avoid cognitive dissonance the leavers adapted their evaluation so as to deal with the fact of having less to spend.

Apparently, differences in the inclination to leave the parental home cannot be explained by differences in the subjective anticipation of financial consequences. This is not to say that financial considerations are irrelevant to *all* young adults. We merely know that it does not result in significant differences in the tendency to leave home. Nonetheless, it seems worthwhile to explore whether specific background variables are related to variation in either the expected consequences or their subjective evaluation. In the regression analyses conducted here, the possible effect of paying board was also tested, as it was believed that doing so implies that one's financial freedom when living at home is already limited, and as a consequence the reduction in spending capacity may be of lesser consequence.

Interpreting the results of the regression analysis with expected change as the dependent variable is not very simple (see Table 7.3.9). For instance, why is it that unemployed people expect to be in a considerable more favourable financial position when moving out than employed or studying young adults do? Is it because they will receive a higher unemployment benefit? Considering the conservative position of the government regarding the rights of young adults to unemployment or social security benefits, this does not seem

Table 7.3.9 Regression analysis with expected change in financial situation, and evaluation of financial spending capacity respectively.

	Dependent = Expected change		Dependent = Evaluation	
	B	T	B	T
MOTIVE				
education			-0.35	(3.6)
work			0.00	
union formation			0.00	
autonomy			0.00	
LIVING ARRANGEMENT				
alone	0.00			
with partner	0.35	(3.8)		
with others	0.00			
ECONOMIC STATUS				
studying	-0.56	(2.7)	0.00	
working	-0.48	(2.2)	0.15	(2.4)
unemployed	0.00		0.00	
INCOME/100	0.02	(1.8)		
BOARD	-0.52	(4.8)	-0.14	(2.2)
BEHAVIOUR				
leaver			-0.21	(2.8)
planner			0.10	(1.4)
dweller			0.00	
	F=9.42; R ² =0.05		F=8.18 ; R ² =0.04	
Eliminated from equation: educational level, parental educational level, age				

plausible. And then, why is it that, contrary to the hypothesised effect, individuals who had to pay board expect a relatively greater deterioration in their financial situation? Is it because they have developed a more sensible notion about the value of money and may therefore realise more strongly than others that living independently requires a lot of it?

On the other hand, it is quite understandable that the effect of leaving home on an individual's financial latitude is less severe when the person can dispose of more income, which is reflected in the positive effect of level of income on expected change. The B-coefficients for the variable living arrangement also make clear that young adults who will establish an independent household with their partner expect a relatively more favourable financial situation than young adults who start living alone or with others do. Perhaps the former anticipate that pooling their income with that of their partner will prevent a strong decline in their spending capacity. When combining this finding with the previous finding regarding the acceptable income level, an interesting conclusion can be drawn. Although young adults who will start living with a partner feel that they need significantly more money to be able to live independently, they also expect a relatively smaller regression in their financial position once they move out. This combination of findings may be interpreted as an indication that young adults who leave home with a partner are likely to defer the transition until they have realised, or at least approximated, the level of income that they consider acceptable, thus avoiding a serious downswing in spending capacity. Thus actual level of income is a stronger determinant in the decisions of young adults who move out to live with a partner, than of individuals who start living alone or with others.

When we turn to the predictors of the evaluation of spending capacity (second column in Table 7.3.9), it is interesting to see that young adults who leave home for educational reasons place much less value on spending capacity than individuals who leave for other reasons do. This may be attributed to the fact that students are aware of the transient situation of semi-independence which they enter upon leaving home. As a result, they probably do not feel as strongly that they have to accede to the living standard of a more settled life style and therefore place less value on being able to spend at will.

Young adults who are employed, on the other hand, appear to value spending capacity relatively more than individuals who are unemployed or are still enrolled in education do. People who had to pay board when living at home attach relatively less importance to spending capacity, which may stem from the fact that even when living at home they also could not freely dispose of all their money. Leavers differ from planners in accordance with the hypothesised direction: because leavers think spending capacity is less important than planners do, the deterioration in the financial situation is less important. Yet, this relationship cannot be found when comparing the coefficient for planners with the referent category of dwellers.

Moreover, it must be stressed that no matter how interesting some of the above mentioned results may be, and no matter how significant the effects of the variables that were entered into the equation, they can explain only 5% of the variance in expected change and only 4% of the variance evaluation of financial latitude. This leaves a large proportion of unexplained variance.

7.4 The impact of the housing situation on home-leaving behaviour

Housing is an essential prerequisite in starting an individual household. The availability and characteristics of living accommodations may be an aspect to be considered in the decision on when and how to leave the parental home. Young adults who are on the verge of leaving home will orient themselves on the kind of accommodations that are available and affordable. If the type of housing one prefers is scarce, rarely vacant or expensive, it is likely that the decision to leave home will be postponed.

As people may differ in their housing ambitions, the type of housing looked for can affect the success of finding a home, and thus of leaving the parental home. It can be expected that people with 'higher' housing requirements, may be inclined to linger home until they have found a place to their liking. If, however, individuals are willing to adjust their housing preferences, they may more easily overcome the limitations of a tight housing market and thus experience fewer difficulties in effectuating the transition to independent living. It is likely that some young adults will more easily adjust their housing aspirations than others, thus causing variation in home-leaving behaviour.

During the stage of orientation, individuals will not only explore the possibilities on the housing market, but are also likely to compare the characteristics and commodities of their potential new housing situation with what they are accustomed to at home. If housing conditions at the parental home are very comfortable, the individual may be less inclined to move out than if the parental home is less appealing. Favourable characteristics of the parental home may thus function as a retaining factor, and may result in a delay in the decision to leave home. In this section, both the situation in the parental home and characteristics of the independent housing will therefore be examined.

We will first inspect whether with respect to the housing situation in the parental home, young adults who still live in the parental home differ from their counterparts who have already decided to leave home (section 7.4.1). In section 7.4.2 we move on to analysing the characteristics of independent housing. To obtain a more general picture of the kinds of accommodation that young adults occupy, the section on independent residence starts off with a detailed description of the housing situation of the group of home-leavers. Next, the subjective component of housing satisfaction is highlighted (section 7.4.3). By focusing on existing discrepancies between the acceptable and the actual housing situation,

we may get an indication of the willingness to adjust housing aspirations to the opportunities available on the housing market.

To find out whether differences in housing aspirations can be held responsible for differences in the propensity to leave home, the opinions of leavers, planners and dwellers regarding acceptable housing conditions will be examined in section 7.4.4. This section also focuses on the subjectively anticipated changes in housing characteristics and on the evaluation of these characteristics, so as to find out whether these components can explain why some young adults leave, others intend to leave, and still others wish to remain at home for the time being.

7.4.1 Living conditions at the parental home

Several authors presume that, due to the trend of declining family sizes, the degree of privacy enjoyed by children in the parental household has increased. Moreover, it is argued that the improved quality of modern housing has increased the attractiveness of the parental home. In their opinion, both trends may cause a delay in the departure from the parental home (Beeker & Merens, 1994; Ter Bogt & Van Praag, 1992). With fewer siblings around, young adults nowadays have more room and thus more opportunities to withdraw from their parents' watchful eye. The amount of privacy, however, is also dependent on the space available per occupant, and can thus be indicated more accurately by the housing capacity of the parental home. The availability of a room of one's own will further contribute to the young adults perceived autonomy within the parental household. A private room demarcates a personal domain, and guarantees more freedom than if one has to share a room with a sibling. Having a considerable amount of privacy may reduce the urge to move out.

The attractiveness of the parental home may also be determined by housing type, with an apartment in a multi-family dwelling presumably being less attractive than a single-family dwelling (Bertholet, 1992). Let us examine these aspects successively.

Table 7.4.1 shows that the proportion of parents occupying an apartment is indeed higher among those who have actually left the parental home than it is among those who intend to leave in the near future, which, in turn, is higher than the proportion of dwellers living in an apartment. Although this pattern corresponds with the hypothesised effect, the differences between the three behavioral groups are not significant.

The housing capacity of the parents' house, which serves as an indication of potential privacy, does seem related to home-leaving behaviour, but the direction of this relationship is contrary to our expectations. It turns out that planners and leavers enjoy significantly more personal space than dwellers, yet decided to leave home or plan to do so shortly, in contrast to dwellers. For the leavers this may be explained by the fact that the proportion that has its own room is smaller than for planners and dwellers. This difference, however, is not at all significant.

Table 7.4.1 Characteristics of the housing situation at the parental home

	Leavers	Planners	Dwellers
Housing type			
single-family house	86.1%	90.0%	90.4%
apartment	12.9%	10.0%	8.9%
other	0.9%	0.0%	0.6%
Average housing capacity ¹⁾	1.53	1.55	1.42 **
Having a room of one's own	93.7%	96.5%	96.9%
Mean housing satisfaction [-2, +2]	1.19	1.15	1.34 **

1) housing capacity = number of rooms divided by household size
 * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ (Leavers compared to planners, and planners compared to dwellers)

It must be concluded that the objective characteristics of the parental house cannot be considered to affect the decision to move out. On the other hand, the subjective evaluation of the house does seem to do so. Young adults who are not inclined to move out appear to be more satisfied with the living conditions at home than are the planners and the leavers, who do not score differently (final row of Table 7.4.1). Of course, we do not know for sure what this positive feeling towards the parents' house is based upon. Perhaps one must doubt whether the respondents merely judged the objective housing characteristics when they were asked: "How do you like this house?" It is conceivable that instead they considered the entire situation in their parents' house, thus reflecting a satisfaction with living at home instead of with housing characteristics. The survey question may reflect a time-dependent variable: at some time, young adults will become inclined to move out and will then rate living at home as less attractive. Yet, the results of a regression analysis show that satisfaction with the parent's house is actually related to type of housing (single-family house versus apartment, $B=0.43$; $T=5.9$) and to having a room of one's own or not ($B=0.46$; $T=4.1$), which are typical housing characteristics; housing capacity was removed from the equation. It must be stressed though, that these two variables explain only 5% of the variation in home satisfaction.

Thus, it must be concluded that although the effect of the objective characteristics of the parental home was as hypothesised, and although satisfaction with the parental home is seen to be related to these objective characteristics, the effect of the housing situation in the parental home on the propensity to leave home is very small or far from significant. In addition, the effect of housing capacity is contrary to expectations.

Table 7.4.2 Accommodations of starters on the housing market (leavers and planners who have already found independent housing), by motive for departure

	All	Motive for departure			
		Study	Work	Union formation	Independence
Housing type					
In lodgings	30.4%	72.8%	45.1%	2.7%	28.5%
- joint facilities	26.7%				
- private facilities	3.7%				
Doubling up	13.7%	22.4%	19.0%	1.9%	18.0%
- joint facilities	10.8%				
- private facilities	2.9%				
Apartment	29.2%	2.5%	32.6%	35.9%	36.8%
Single-family house	26.5%	2.3%	3.2%	59.5%	16.7%
Sector					
Rental	78.2%	99.4%	91.3%	51.5%	86.6%
Owner-occupied	21.8%				
Net housing expenses (mean) ¹⁾					
Total group:	f470	f323	f399	f637	f457
By housing type:					
In lodgings	f309				
Doubling up	f400				
Apartment	f535				
Single-family house	f669				
By tenure type:					
Rental	f419				
Owner-occupied	f731				

1) Respondents who did not pay any rent (n=29) are excluded

7.4.2 Housing conditions when moving out

The living accommodations of home-leavers

It is not unlikely that the quality of the newly acquired residence of the home-leaver contrasts sharply with the more luxurious accommodations in the parental home. It is well-known that starters on the housing market in the Netherlands are generally thrown back upon the cheapest and qualitatively less attractive housing, often in the informal segments of the housing market (Antonissen, 1986; Buijs *et al.*, 1991), mainly because of their restricted budgets and of their specific household position. Many start off by living alone or with others.

Officially, only those who enter the so-called independent housing market sector are considered 'starters on the housing market'. Young adults moving into the more informal segments (lodgings or shared living quarters) are usually disregarded, whereas this type of housing is essential for starting households (Goetgeluk, 1992). In this study, these housing types will therefore be distinguished explicitly.

For the group of leavers, as well as for the planners who have already found independent housing ($n=55$), the kind of housing arrangements they entered (or are about to enter) is presented in Table 7.4.2.

Table 7.4.2 shows that over 30% of home-leavers starts by living in lodgings, that is, a room in a (student) lodging house or a room in the house of a landlord. 13.7% of the respondents reported doubling-up with other tenants, either in a single-family house or an apartment. Almost 30% of young adults moves into an apartment, alone or with their partner, and a slightly smaller percentage (26.5%) settles in a single-family house.

Of all nest-leavers, 37.5% has to share facilities like the kitchen, bathroom, or toilet with others living in the same unit (not a partner). The majority of nest-leavers ends up in rented accommodations, only 21.8% are owner-occupiers. As could be expected, the average housing expenses for young adults living in lodgings or doubling-up are lowest, whereas on the average young adults in an apartment or single-family house pay much more. Still, when compared to the average costs of all apartments and houses in the Dutch housing stock, the housing costs of nest-leavers appear to be significantly lower⁴.

Relation with motive and age

These findings confirm that starters on the housing market usually have to put up with modest accommodations, although a striking relationship can be found with motive for departure (see Table 7.4.2) and with age at departure (see Table 7.4.3). Young adults who leave home for advanced education almost exclusively start off by occupying a room, either in lodgings or together with other tenants. When leaving home for other reasons, the proportion moving to an apartment is much higher: approximately one-third. Single-family houses appear to be occupied predominantly by young adults who have left for union formation; this group will hardly be seen living in lodgings or with other tenants. For young adults leaving to work or to achieve greater independence, the option of a room in lodgings is also quite frequently observed, although not as often as for those who leave home for educational reasons.

Home-ownership is most common among the young adults who start living with their partner; this tenure type is hardly ever observed among individuals who leave for study or work, and only slightly more often among those who leave home to become independent.

⁴ In the rental sector, the mean net rent in 1994 amounted to f571 per month, which is significantly higher than the net rent of starters ($z=-10.07$, $p<0.001$). The total net housing expenses of owner-occupiers amounted to f912 per month (VROM, 1994), which again is significantly higher than among starters ($z=-3.45$, $p<0.001$).

In line with the type of housing that is occupied, monthly housing expenses are lowest for those who leave home for educational reasons and highest for those who set up an independent household with their partner. Of course, the latter can pool their incomes and thus afford more expensive accommodations. On the other hand, the pattern may also reflect the notion that union formation is usually regarded as a more definite pathway to leaving home, in contrast, for instance, to doing so for education, which is perceived more as a stage of semi-independence which allows for transitional housing (Mulder & Manting, 1994; Goldscheider & Da Vanzo, 1989).

The characteristics of independent housing also change with age at departure. Just over 70% of the individuals leaving at the age of 18 or 19 end up in lodgings or shared accommodations, whereas 22.7% occupy an apartment and 6.9% live in a single-family house. Practically all 18 to 19 year old home-leavers live in rented housing. At the age of 22 or 23, the dominance of living in lodgings abruptly shifts towards living in an apartment. This seems to coincide with the destination pattern that was observed in section 7.2.1: when leaving at the age of 22 or higher, more young adults start living with a partner. Young adults postponing the transition even longer until the age of 24 and over, far more frequently move to single-family houses, whereas the proportion of individuals in this age group who move into lodgings or double-up reduces to 25%.

The highest age group is also more prevalent in the owner-occupied sector: 46.9% owns the living quarters they moved into after leaving home. This may seem a suprisingly high percentage, but the proportion of owner-occupiers that was found for all home-leavers (21.6%) closely corresponds with the findings of Linde et al. (1986), who reported a percentage of 23.1% of owner-occupiers among starting households in the Randstad region of the Netherlands, and 29.7% outside the Randstad.

Table 7.4.3 Accommodations by age at leaving home (leavers, and planners who have already found independent housing)

	18-19	20-21	22-23	24-26
Housing type				
In lodgings	53.3%	36.2%	19.3%	17.5%
Doubling up	17.1%	16.0%	14.4%	7.6%
Apartment	22.7%	22.0%	40.2%	31.6%
Single-family house	6.9%	25.8%	26.1%	43.3%
Sector				
Rental	97.6%	59.8%	63.1%	53.1%
Owner-occupied	2.4%	40.2%	36.9%	46.9%

7.4.3 Subjective perception of housing situation

In much migration research, the actual housing situation of individuals who have recently moved is viewed as a criterion for housing preferences. However, researchers who assume this standpoint overlook a crucial phase in the housing search process (Gordon & Vickerman, 1982), during which individuals may adjust their housing preferences in order to link them more closely with the opportunities and restrictions of the housing market (Hooimeijer & Oskamp, 1996). Substitution of housing aspirations happens in reaction to an exploration of the housing market, which yields a clearer picture of the presence and accessibility of suitable accommodations. It is believed that most young adults will have some notion of the limitations of the housing market and about the type of housing arrangement that can be considered suitable for someone in their circumstances. Such subjective notions are likely to vary with social background, residential background, and/or the specific context of leaving as defined by motive for departure or living arrangement.

In this section, the actual housing conditions will be compared with the subjective perceptions regarding acceptable housing (the housing aspiration). When major discrepancies between actual and acceptable housing are observed, these will be interpreted as an indication that a substitution of housing aspirations has occurred among the group of home-leavers, that is, they settled for living quarters that they value less highly (Goetge-luk, 1997, p.14). Furthermore, the perceptions about acceptable housing that are held by leavers, planners, and dwellers respectively will be compared to find out whether differences in housing aspirations can be considered to cause differences in the propensity to leave home.

Discrepancy between housing aspiration and actual housing

In Table 7.4.4, the discrepancy between actual housing and acceptable housing is measured by subtracting the 'acceptable housing score' from the 'actual housing score'. A resulting value of zero then indicates that the achieved housing conditions correspond with the type of housing that is deemed acceptable; a negative value indicates that the individual has settled for less than the aspired housing situation, whereas a positive value indicates that the actual housing situation is better than that considered acceptable.

We can see that as much as 74% of the nest-leavers moved into the type of housing which they feel is appropriate for someone in their circumstances. More than 20% has settled for less. Only 3% was lucky enough to live in a better housing type than they deemed necessary. A more detailed examination of the data revealed that of the people who felt a single-family house to be most appropriate, 61% actually lived in one, but 27% lived in an apartment, and 12% lived in lodgings or shared a living unit. Likewise,

Table 7.4.4 Discrepancy¹⁾ between actual housing and acceptable housing (leavers and planners who have already found independent housing)

Discrepancy score	Discrepancy in housing type ²⁾	Discrepancy in number of rooms	Discrepancy in use of facilities ³⁾
-4		0.7%	
-3		1.7%	
-2	4.6%	12.2%	
-1	18.2%	26.1%	19.8%
0	73.9%	46.8%	79.0%
1	2.6%	8.7%	1.2%
2	0.6%	2.7%	
3		0.7%	
4		0.5%	

1) discrepancy = actual - acceptable

2) 1=in lodgings or doubling-up; 2=apartment; 3=single-family house

3) 1=private facilities; 2=joint facilities

of those feeling that an apartment is the acceptable type of housing, more than 27% resides in lodgings. Conversely, whereas 33% of leavers thinks living in lodgings is acceptable, as much as 45% actually does so.

Almost half of the population of home-leavers occupies the exact number of rooms they feel is required; 38% feels they could use 1 or 2 extra rooms, whereas more than 10% has more rooms than necessary. Almost 20% has to share facilities where they feel they should not have to, whereas for almost 80% the presence of facilities is as desired.

It is quite obvious that a considerable proportion of home-leavers has adjusted their actual housing choice to overcome the limitations of the housing market with respect to availability and accessibility, especially as far as the number of rooms is concerned. For the majority, however, the housing conditions match their aspirations.

It can be expected that the necessity to adjust individual housing aspirations depends on the motive to leave home. In urgent situations, like the start of a study or a job, young adults may experience more pressure to quickly find accommodations than individuals who leave for more intrinsic reasons, because they may decide to linger home until they have found housing that is to their liking. From Table 7.4.5, which presents the mean discrepancy-scores by motive for departure, it can be seen that particularly young adults who leave home to take up a job have to make serious concessions with respect to their housing situation, whereas those leaving for union formation indeed appear to be able to realise their housing aspirations most effectively.

Table 7.4.5 Mean discrepancy in housing type, number of rooms, and use of facilities, by motive for departure (leavers and planners who have already found independent housing)

	Education	Work	Union formation	Independence
Mean discrepancy in housing type	-0.21	-0.45	-0.16	-0.28
Mean discrepancy in number of rooms	-0.40	-0.72	-0.11	-0.58
Mean discrepancy in use of facilities	-0.35	-0.44	0.00	-0.21

Satisfaction with housing conditions

The results above show that quite a number of home-leavers have to make some concessions with respect to their housing situation. Yet, it seems that a significant proportion of the young nest-leavers are satisfied with their housing conditions. To the question whether their living quarters satisfied their needs, not even 18% responded negatively ('not fully satisfied' and 'not at all satisfied'). However, when this figure is compared with the housing satisfaction of the total Dutch population, it turns out to be relatively high. In the Housing Demands Survey of 1993/94, which is representative for the Dutch population, the proportion of dissatisfied persons was no more than 9.5%. In other words, in comparison to the Dutch population, young leavers are significantly less satisfied with the housing they end up occupying ($\chi^2=11.59$; $p=0.001$).

Still, almost 20% of the nest-leavers thinks housing conditions are alright, 32.2% rates his or her living quarters as 'good', and 30.9% even rates them as 'extremely good'. The 69.1% of leavers who appeared to be not extremely satisfied, were asked an additional question regarding the source of their discontent. Table 7.4.6 shows the nature of their grievances and, in descending order, the relative number of times they were mentioned. To avoid creating the possibly false impression that large proportions of home-leavers have to endure very bad living conditions, while they personally do not think so, the frequency with which certain reasons for dissatisfaction are mentioned are related to the total group of home-leavers. Respondents who have already found independent housing but have not yet moved out are excluded, because they are not yet in a position to form a well-founded opinion about their living quarters.

Evidently, size and price of the accommodations are the main sources of discontent. Furthermore, the type of housing, the age of the building, as well as a lack of privacy relatively often give rise to dissatisfaction.

Table 7.4.6 Reasons of dissatisfaction with actual housing conditions (leavers, N=175)

	Percentage mentioning each reason		Percentage mentioning each reason
room too small	24.6 %	ownership preferred	7.2 %
too expensive	15.7 %	poor facilities	3.0 %
too few rooms	14.1 %	garden/balcony preferred	2.8 %
too old	13.9 %	sharing preferred	2.0 %
other housing type preferred	13.7 %	rented hous preferred	1.1 %
little privacy	12.3 %	too many rooms	0.4 %
no sharing preferred	10.4 %	too large	0.3 %
neighbourhood disliked	10.4 %	other reasons	2.9 %

7.4.4 Subjective opinions of leavers, planners, and dwellers compared

Housing aspirations

Not every young adult requires or desires similar housing. Is there ground to believe that differences in housing aspirations, as can be inferred from the question about 'acceptable housing', will create differences in the propensity to leave home? In Table 7.4.7 the opinions about acceptable housing as expressed by leavers, planners, and dwellers are compared. In this table, the information on housing type and number of rooms is combined. As it appeared that two or three room housing is desired most frequently by the group of young adults, the following classification was specified: accommodations (apartments or single-family houses) with less than three rooms, and accommodations with four or more rooms.

Table 7.4.7 Acceptable housing conditions

	Leavers	Planners	Dwellers
Type of accommodation			
In lodgings or doubling-up	41.6%	34.4%	31.3%
≤3 room apartment	22.8%	34.6%	38.7%
≥4 room apartment	3.8%	3.7%	4.4%
≤3 room single-family house	7.1%	7.9%	10.9%
≥4 room single family house	24.7%	19.5%	14.5%
Joint facilities (versus private facilities)			
kitchen	23.0%	25.2%	20.7%
bath	19.0%	20.7%	12.8%
toilet	19.4%	21.6%	12.8%

The pattern in Table 7.4.7 seems to point at two separate mechanisms in which the housing market factor affects home-leaving behaviour. First of all, it appears that living in lodgings or doubling-up is considered acceptable by relatively more leavers than by planners or dwellers. Moreover, we can see that where the majority of young adults think they should not have to share facilities like a kitchen, toilet or bathroom, it is particularly the group of dwellers that rejects the joint use of toilet or bathing facilities (only very few think it is acceptable). These findings confirm our hypothesis that young adults who accept modest living accommodations will more easily succeed in finding a place to live and therefore have better chances to leave home, whereas 'higher' housing requirements result in a postponement of departure.

On the other hand, the data show that in the groups of planners and dwellers relatively more people opt for two- and three room apartments or houses, whereas leavers relatively more often aim at single-family houses with four or more rooms. On the Dutch housing market, single-family houses with four rooms belong to the type of housing that is most common⁵ (VROM, 1994), and therefore will be more easily attainable. Availability of three-room accommodations, on the other hand, is limited, and considering the preference for it, the demand will more strongly exceed the supply. As a consequence, young adults looking for such accommodations may not easily be able to find suitable housing. This is specially true because the young starters also aim at cheap accommodations: 61.8% of the young adults still living at home indicated that they look for housing which costs between f300 and f600 per month. Only 10% is willing to pay more than f600 per month. It is only plausible that these young adults will encounter more problems when trying to find acceptable housing, and it can be argued that this may explain why they have not yet moved out or do not even have plans to move out shortly. As Hooimeijer and Oskamp (1996) remarked, if housing market opportunities are limited, search intensity will drop. Of course, the findings may be biased by the fact that the type of residence home-leavers are looking for is related to motive for departure. However, the figures in Table 7.4.8 show that both mechanisms which were described above can also be observed when controlling for motive. In addition, the data suggest that 'settlers' more often aim at housing with four or more rooms (young adults leaving to form a union), whereas others are content with transitional housing types like lodgings or doubling up relatively more often, in accordance with their more flexible life styles.

The conclusions regarding the effect of the housing market are therefore twofold. First, the informal housing market of lodgings and shared residences (doubling-up) serves as an important buffer-supply on a tight formal housing market, except for young adults who

⁵ 10% of Dutch housing has 1 or 2 rooms, 16% has 3 rooms, 44% has 4 rooms, 21% has 5 rooms, and 9% has 6 or more rooms (VROM, 1994).

Table 7.4.8 Acceptable housing conditions, by motive for departure (in %)

	Education			Work			Union formation			Independence		
	L	P	D	L	P	D	L	P	D	L	P	D
In lodgings	79.4	82.4	81.9	43.1	14.1	22.0	0.9	11.8	18.8	36.5	38.2	38.4
≤3 room apartment	11.7	11.0	7.9	27.7	80.8	45.6	14.8	29.6	36.7	32.8	38.6	40.7
≥4 room apartment	0.5	0.0	10.1	7.4	0.0	0.0	5.8	10.2	8.2	4.2	0.9	2.5
≤3 room house	4.3	6.6	0.0	11.2	5.1	16.2	8.6	11.9	9.7	7.5	5.9	11.3
≥4 room house	4.0	0.0	0.0	10.7	0.0	16.3	69.9	36.4	26.6	19.0	16.3	7.1

L = leavers; P = planners; D = dwellers

move out to live with a steady partner because they do not search on this segment of the housing market. Second, the limited availability of specific types of accommodations, especially cheap ones, can be said to be a restrictive factor in leaving home.

Expected difficulties in finding housing accommodation

The previous findings made clear that the supply and limitations of the housing market to some extent determine the opportunity to find suitable housing. It seems reasonable to assume that individuals who are about to enter the housing market will have some notion of their chances to find a home. It may be that young adults who expect to encounter many problems searching a place to live (because the housing market is hardly accessible) may be discouraged from entering the housing market and therefore decide to postpone the transition. Stated differently, individuals who believe that they have little behavioral control will not try as hard to effectuate their intentions - or not even form the intention to act (Ajzen, 1991; Jackson, 1990).

To examine the effect of the perceived behavioral control with respect to the accessibility of the housing market, respondents who were living with their parents were asked the following question: "How difficult do you think it will be for you to find housing when you wish to leave home?" Respondents who had recently left were asked: "Before you succeeded in finding a place to live, how difficult did you think it would be to find housing?"

The results of the analysis only partly confirm our hypothesis that anticipation of difficulties in finding living accommodations may discourage young adults from moving out. It appears that, compared to dwellers, planners are indeed more confident and expect to find housing relatively easily. On a scale from 0 to 4 ('no trouble' to 'extremely difficult'), planners have a mean score of 1.76, whereas dwellers have a mean score of 1.96 ($p=0.0045$). Leavers, on the other hand, on average score higher than planners (mean=1.93; $p=0.08$), signifying that they expected to encounter more trouble in finding

a place to live than planners. This, however, did not make them avoid entering the housing market, which would be expected on the ground of our hypothesis. The reason for this inconsistency is not quite clear. Perhaps asking this type of question retrospectively is prone to produce unreliable answers, or perhaps the retrospective question was posed too indistinctively, as it did not refer to a specific point of time in the past.

Now that the group of leavers apparently succeeded in finding a place to live, it appeared that almost 17% of those who did not expect any problems, reported to have nonetheless experienced unforeseen difficulties, whereas among those who expected to have a hard time finding independent housing, 36.8% actually had trouble finding a place of their own. The information they receive from the media, which frequently stresses the unfavourable housing market position of young adults, seems to be taken quite seriously, and young adults are thus prepared to face quite troublesome situations, but in the end it turns out easier than expected.

The question arises, whether certain subgroups expect more trouble finding suitable housing than others. Possible variation is expected to be related to the personal circumstances (financial restrictions or specific home-leaving patterns), and to differences in housing aspirations.

In Table 7.4.9, the results of the regression analysis with 'expected difficulties' as the dependent variable reveal that individuals who leave home for educational reasons are more positive about their chances on the housing market than young adults are who leave

Table 7.4.9 Regression analysis with anticipated difficulty in finding independent housing as dependent variable

	B	T		B	T
MOTIVE			REGION of destination		
education	-0.14	(1.3)	east	0.27	(3.0)
work, partner, independence	0.00		centre	0.23	(2.4)
LIVING ARRANGEMENT			randstad	0.28	(4.2)
alone	0.19	(3.0)	north, sw, or se	0.00	
with partner, or others	0.00		BEHAVIOUR		
ACCEPTABLE HOUSING			leaver	-0.06	(0.8)
in lodgings or doubling-up	-0.18	(2.4)	planner	-0.27	(3.6)
single-family house or apartment	0.00		dweller	0.00	
F=4.46 ; R²=0.05					

Eliminated from equation: gender, economic status, income, acceptable facilities

B is sign. different from zero at the 0.05 level if | T | ≥ 2.0, and at the 0.01 level if | T | ≥ 2.6

home for other reasons, that is, they expect to experience less difficulty. Young adults who start to live alone on average think it is more difficult for them to find housing than do leavers who set up a household with a partner or with others. This may result from the fact that the young adult has some knowledge about the situation on the housing market, where housing supply is primarily geared to the needs of family households, implying an overrepresentation in the available housing of single-family dwellings with four rooms. Yet, this type of housing is not particularly suitable for young single-person households. In other words, housing for single persons is less available than the type of housing that couples are looking for. Only when they are willing to accept a room in lodgings or in shared living quarters⁶, rather than an apartment or single-family house, do young adults expect to find housing relatively more easily, as can be inferred from the regression coefficients for 'acceptable housing'.

Furthermore, the housing market in the east, centre and Randstad area is perceived by young adults to be least accessible: individuals who are looking for housing in these regions expect relatively more difficulty. The Randstad and the centre part of the Netherlands are known for their limited housing opportunities. This is not the case in the eastern part, however, so it is not quite clear why young adults there expect to encounter relatively more difficulties.

Although it was expected that individuals with higher incomes would have more options on the housing market, and thus face fewer problems in finding suitable housing, this is not supported by the data. Income level is not included in the regression model, so cannot be said to have an additional significant effect.

Expected change in housing conditions

As we have seen above, people may hold different views with respect to the type of housing they consider acceptable. Regardless of their housing aspirations, people may also have different beliefs regarding the possible consequences that leaving home may have for their housing situation. It is conceivable that the subjective anticipation of drastic changes in housing conditions can exert some influence on the transition to independent living. Considering the relatively poor housing situation of many starters, it can be expected that many young adults will anticipate a considerable decline in housing quality compared to the situation in their parental home. However, they may not all expect a similar degree of change, or, what is more, they may not all value housing comfort equally. Such differences may induce a difference in the propensity to leave the parental home.

⁶ The options of living in lodgings and doubling-up are taken together here, because they both represent the informal segment of the housing market.

Table 7.4.10 Anticipated consequences with respect to housing conditions, and the evaluation of housing characteristics; mean scores (range -3, +3)

	Leavers	Planners	Dwellers
Expected change in housing conditions [much less much more]	1.21	1.43	1.48
Importance attached to comfort, privacy and space	1.89 **	2.11	2.09
* p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 (Leavers compared to planners, and planners compared to dwellers)			

Based on the factor analysis in chapter 6, three items will be considered which represent the factor that deals with the housing situation: space for personal belongings, comfort, and privacy. Table 7.4.10 compares the average score on expected change in housing conditions of leavers, planners, and dwellers, as well as the average score on the evaluation of the housing items.

The picture reflected in Table 7.4.10 is, to put it mildly, not quite as expected. Instead of a serious deterioration with respect to comfort, privacy, and personal space, young adults on average expect a considerable improvement. Only 8.7% of the respondents expects to be off worse, 5.0% expects no changes, and as much as 86.3% reported to anticipate an increase in housing comfort, space and privacy.

On second thought, however, this may be perfectly understandable. Of course, the parents' house will be qualitatively more attractive and better equipped, but in the end it is *their* house. The young adult may have a room of his own, but his personal domain is generally restricted to this single room. However, when leaving home, more than half of the home-leavers moves into an apartment or single-family unit, which implies a respectable increase in personal space. This is illustrated by the data. It appeared that for 73.3% of the leavers the living area enlarged when they moved to independent housing. On average the surface increased from 20.1 m² (the surface of their own room in the parental house⁷) to 43.9 m² in their independent living quarters. The average increase was largest for young adults who started living with their partner (65 m², as compared to an average increase of 16 m² for leavers living alone and 10 m² for leavers living with others), but of course couples share this surface together. Furthermore, moving out implies a greater physical distance from the parents, and, consequently, less day-to-day interference, which may be experienced by the young adult as an increase in privacy.

⁷ For respondents who did not have a room of their own, it was assumed that they shared their bedroom with no more than one household member; the reported surface was therefore divided by two.

Although dwellers and planners are most positive about the changes in housing conditions, they apparently are not the first to move out and effect these improvements. This finding contradicts our assumptions about the effect of anticipated consequences. The difference with the group of leavers is not significant though. Besides, it appears that leavers attach significantly less importance to the housing characteristics defined here than planners and dwellers do. On average, relatively unattractive housing is not disliked as strongly by the leavers, and consequently leaving home may not be perceived as extremely bothersome as far as housing conditions are concerned.

Although the anticipation of changes in housing conditions appear to be irrelevant in understanding the decision to leave home or to postpone the decision, and the decision seems to be affected by the evaluation component only, we will nonetheless now examine whether some young adults look at the consequences with respect to housing differently than others do. It is expected that the anticipated changes as well as the evaluation of specific housing conditions are related to the context of leaving home, to the situation in the parental home as well as to the type of housing young adults aspire to.

We will first discuss the results of the regression analysis with expected change as the dependent variable (first column of Table 7.4.11). The results show that young adults who (intend to) leave home for education anticipate significantly fewer favourable changes in the condition of their housing than other home-leavers do. Individuals who are still participating in the educational system also expect a much smaller improvement in their housing situation, but at the same time the students do not value these aspects as highly as working or unemployed young adults do (see second column of Table 7.4.11). The same holds true for individuals who leave home for educational reasons; those also place significantly less importance on comfort, space and privacy ($B = -0.20$). The combination of both components, which reflects the attitude towards leaving home, thus explains why on average students and those who leave home for educational reasons do not decide to linger home as long as possible, although their new living conditions may not be particularly appealing - on the contrary, as the results in paragraph 7.2 have indicated.

Although individuals who leave home for the specific reason of union formation anticipate the most favourable improvement, compared to individuals who leave home for education or a job, the ones who choose to live with a partner when leaving home on average expect fewer positive changes than the ones who start living alone or with others do. This may seem paradoxical, but one must bear in mind that many individuals who leave home for a job may decide to start living with their partner, and their situation may be different from that of individuals who decide to leave home just *because of* union formation. Apparently, both variables have independent effects on the expected change in housing conditions. The effect of motive that is detected here, probably reflects the effect that the

Table 7.4.11 Regression analysis with expected change in housing conditions, and with evaluation of specific housing characteristics as dependent variables

	Dependent = Expected change ¹⁾		Dependent = Evaluation ²⁾	
	B	T	B	T
GENDER				
male			-0.12	(2.5)
female			0.00	
MOTIVE				
education	-0.53	(4.2)	-0.20	(2.4)
work, union formation, independence	0.00		0.00	
ECONOMIC STATUS				
studying	-0.28	(3.4)	-0.20	(2.6)
working, unemployed	0.00		0.00	
LIVING ARRANGEMENT				
alone, with others	0.00			
with partner	-0.19	(2.3)		
PARENTS' HOUSE				
single-family house	-0.61	(5.0)		
apartment	0.00			
HOUSING CAPACITY parental home	-0.24	(3.4)		
ACCEPTABLE HOUSING TYPE				
in lodgings or doubling-up	-0.33	(2.9)		
apartment or house	0.00			
ACCEPTABLE # ROOMS	0.11	(2.7)	0.05	(2.1)
ACCEPTABLE FACILITIES				
private facilities	0.28	(2.5)		
joint facilities	0.00			
OUTREGION				
east	-0.20	(1.9)		
Randstad	-0.13	(1.7)		
north, centre, southeast, southwest	0.00			
INCOME/100			-0.02	(3.5)
PARSTUD (yes)			0.21	(3.6)
	F=22.09; R ² =0.21		F=6.83; R ² =0.05	

1) Expected change in comfort, privacy and space; 2) Importance attached to comfort, privacy and space
 Eliminated from equations: age

immediate urgency to move out has on the actualisation of leaving home, whereas the living-arrangement variable reflects the consequences of intimately sharing a life, and a house, with another person (which may imply less privacy).

Next, it becomes clear that the characteristics of the parental house directly influence the perceived consequences. Individuals who live in a single-family house before they leave home do not expect their housing conditions to improve as much as dependent children who live in an apartment do. Housing capacity also negatively influences anticipated changes: the larger the housing capacity of the parental home, the smaller is the perceived

increase in space, privacy and/or comfort. Not surprisingly, it turns out that the type of housing one accepts when moving out also affects the anticipation of negative or positive changes, with an apartment or single-family unit apparently promising more advantages than living in lodgings or doubling-up do. Negative consequences for comfort, privacy and space are perceived to be smaller when the acceptable number of rooms is larger. The ones who intend to move to the eastern part and Randstad area of the Netherlands expect significantly less improvement in their housing situation than individuals from other regions do. This links up with the finding on the expected difficulties in finding accommodations that was reported above. Apparently, Dutch young adults believe that the housing market in the eastern part of the Netherlands is not very well adjusted to the housing needs of nest-leavers, and offers rather unattractive housing.

When we turn to the evaluation of the housing characteristics, it appears that men do not value comfort, space and privacy as highly as women do, especially when they are still studying. Income appears to be negatively related to the evaluation of quality of housing: the higher one's income, the less importance is attached to comfortable housing. Yet, the effect, even though significant, is very small: with every $f100$ increase in income, the average evaluation decreases by only 0.02 points.

Furthermore, it turns out that if either one or both parents obtained a degree from a vocational college or university, the quality of housing is valued significantly higher by the young adults ($B=0.21$) than if their parents have not studied. As it is likely that children of more highly educated people have experienced good housing during their childhood, they apparently have come to appreciate comfortable housing more than the average person.

Young adults who (intend to) leave home for educational reasons, score significantly less positive ($B=-0.20$) than individuals who leave for other reasons do. This seems to reflect the effect of socialisation: children who during their years of secondary schooling planned to pursue higher education, have probably also grown familiar with the idea that leaving home for educational reasons implies less attractive housing and were therefore prepared to place less value on comfortable and spacious accommodation.

Last, it appears that the more rooms a young adult considers acceptable, the more he or she values comfortable housing ($B=0.05$). The causality in this relationship, however, is probably reversed; it is more likely that individuals who attach great importance to comfort, privacy and space will try to find housing with relatively more rooms, than the other way around.

To summarise, a large majority of young adults believe that when they move out, their housing situation will improve considerably as far as comfort, space and privacy is concerned. On average, young adults score extremely positive, although the perceived increase in housing comfort appears to vary strongly with motive for departure, with the

living arrangement that is chosen, and with the characteristics of the parental home and the individual's beliefs regarding acceptable housing. Yet, the perceived consequences of leaving home with respect to the housing situation cannot be seen to influence the decision to leave home. In fact, the data seem to suggest the opposite as leavers expect the least favourable changes in comparison to planners and dwellers, although the difference is not significant. On the other hand, differences in the evaluation of comfortable housing do appear to be related to the difference between leavers on one side, and planners and dwellers on the other. However, this effect only becomes apparent when interpreting the evaluation scores in combination with the score on 'expected change': Then it appears that if individuals do not value convenient housing highly, they probably do not mind too much if their housing situation does not improve as much, and as a consequence are more likely to leave the parental home.

7.5 The impact of normative expectations

A third factor besides financial and housing considerations that is believed to exert a certain influence on the decision to leave home relates to the social expectations that are expressed by relevant others in the young adults' environment. In line with the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the impact of social pressure can be studied by using the concept of 'subjective norm'. The subjective norm reflects what the subject believes that important others think about the behaviour in question, as well as his or her motivation to comply with these important others. Although the concept may provide a useful and straightforward indication of social pressure and of the push or pull effect that it exerts, it is regrettable that such a global measure does not inform us about the specific expectations that underly the perceived social pressure. In this section we will therefore not only focus on the subjective norm as defined by Ajzen and Fishbein (section 7.5.1), but also study the content of the social expectations which may guide the individual's decision to move out (section 7.5.2 and 7.5.3).

Youth sociologists, who study patterns in the transition to adulthood, assert that social norms concerning the timing and order of life course transitions are increasingly losing significance, and they maintain that standard biographies will gradually be replaced by choice biographies (Du Bois-Reymond, 1992; Bilden & Diezinger, 1984; De Hart, 1992; Fuchs-Heinritz, 1990). Nowadays, young adults are given more freedom to decide for themselves when the time has come to make important life transitions such as moving out, and consequently are no longer bound to follow generally accepted pathways or normative rules.

By giving a detailed description of the prevailing norms, as perceived by the individuals concerned, we will try to determine whether the reference groups of young adults, notably parents and friends, are perceived to have explicit expectations about leaving home, and whether these expectations are experienced by many or rather a restricted number of individuals. Apart from that, we will analyse whether prevailing norms are reflected in the young adult's personal norm by comparing the personal norm with the perceived expectations of parents and friends respectively. When the personal expectations differ considerably from those of parents and peer group, it is assumed that the young adult is not affected by social norms and that self-determination has replaced normative influences.

Furthermore, in line with the comparative design of this chapter, we will then compare the social expectations that are reported by each of the behavioral groups, and thus try to get an impression about the push or pull-effect of each norm. The results of such comparisons may give some evidence for the suggestion that social expectations are important determinants in the decision to leave home and that diverging expectations may explain why some young adults decide to leave home and others have not yet done so.

To avoid any misapprehension, it must be stressed once again that in this study we are interested in determining whether young adults *feel* that parents or peers have certain expectations with respect to their leaving home, and whether these subjectively experienced expectations affect their behaviour. It therefore suffices to ask the young adults about the opinions that they personally believe prevail, and we need not worry about what important referents *actually* think. This implies that the parental and peer norms displayed in this study need not accurately describe the real norm held by parents or peers, but rather reflect the norm as perceived by the respondent.

7.5.1 Social pressure

If someone highly appreciates the views of important others, it can be expected that his or her behaviour will be more strongly affected by the expectations of these reference groups. Consequently, one may expect that these individuals are more likely to be normatively influenced than are young adults who do not attach a great importance to the opinions of relevant others.

Of course, young adults will not take notice of everyone's opinions. As discussed in a previous chapter, only parents and friends may be influential to the individual who plans to leave home. To measure the motivation to comply with these two reference groups, respondents were asked if they find it important what their parents and their friends say about leaving home. They could state their answer on a 4-point bipolar scale, ranging from 'not at all important' and 'not very important' to 'quite important' and 'very important' (see part A of Table 7.5.1).

Table 7.5.1 Social pressure from reference groups

	Leavers	Planners	Dwellers
A. Appreciation of the opinion of others			
"opinion of parents is important to me"	68.1%	73.4%	77.1%
"opinion of friends is important to me"	24.3%	22.5%	18.1%
B. Perceived opinion of others (mean scores)			
My parents feel I should leave home	1.04 **	0.34	-0.91 **
My friends feel I should leave home	1.70 **	1.07	-0.14 **
C. Subjective norm (mean scores) ¹⁾			
perceived social pressure from parents	3.08 **	0.90	-2.76 **
perceived social pressure from friends	3.49 **	2.05	-0.28 **

1) subjective norm = perceived opinion x appreciation of opinion
 * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01 (Leavers compared to planners, and planners compared to dwellers)

In the top section of Table 7.5.1, it can be seen that the parents' opinion about the decision to leave home is important to as much as 75% of the respondents. How their friends think about the event, on the other hand, is considered important by approximately 20% of the respondents. The remaining 80% do not care much or not at all what their friends say about leaving home. It can therefore be expected that friends will not exert as strong an influence on the decision to leave home as parents will.

An interesting pattern emerges when comparing the three behavioral groups although the differences between leavers and planners, and between planners and dwellers are not significant. Among leavers, the proportion who values the opinion of their parents is smaller than among planners, whereas the percentage that cares what their friends think is relatively high. For the dwellers the opposite is true; among them the proportion who acknowledged the importance of what their parents think is highest (the difference between dwellers and leavers is significant, $p=0.02$), whereas the proportion that cares about the opinion of their friends is smallest.

Although leavers seem less affected by the opinion of parents and care more about the opinion of their friends, one must also take into account of the specific standpoint that is communicated in this matter. Only then can we determine whether the decision of young adults to leave home or to postpone the transition is (partly) guided by social pressure. Respondents still living at home were asked therefore whether their parents or friends would approve or disapprove if they decided to leave home right now. Respondents who had recently left home, were asked whether their parents or friends had approved or disapproved of their leaving home at that time. The respondents could react by completing the next sentence with one of the six categories: "My parents/friends feel I should [absolutely not; really not; better not; better; really; absolutely] leave the parental home." The response categories were rated from -3 to +3.

The average scores on this question (presented in section B of Table 7.5.1) make clear that the reference groups of leavers, planners and dwellers had significantly different views on the acceptability of moving out. Both parents and friends of leavers tended to stimulate departure more strongly than the parents and friends of planners did, whereas the reference groups of dwellers most strongly felt that the respondent should not leave home yet. On average, parents are perceived to be more reserved in approving the departure, whereas friends are perceived to promote home-leaving more strongly.

Of course, to get an impression of the strength of the subjective norm, the two components discussed above must be combined. This has been done in section C of Table 7.5.1. A negative score reflects the fact that the reference group functions as a retaining factor, that is, leaving home is socially discouraged; a positive score reflects a push factor: young adults feel a strong social pressure to leave home. The average scores of the three behavioral groups on the subjective norm even more strongly support the hypothesised effect of social pressure. It is obvious that the behaviour of the young adults corresponds to the social pressure that is exerted: leavers experience a strong social pressure to leave home; among planners the social pressure is also in the direction of leaving, although not as strongly as for leavers and, lastly, dwellers score highly negative, indicating that social pressure compels them to linger home. This finding can be interpreted as evidence that social groups have a significant influence on the decision to leave home, and on the intention to do so.

It is interesting to see from the results of a regression analysis on the global measure of social pressure (Table 7.5.2), that the amount of social pressure exerted by parents varies with gender, with motive, and with age. We can see that the social pressure on women to

Table 7.5.2 Regression analysis with the global measure of social pressure by parents as the dependent variable

	B	T
GENDER		
male	-0.76	(2.7)
female	0.00	
MOTIVE		
education	2.80	(5.8)
work	0.00	
union formation	-0.70	(2.3)
independence	0.00	
AGE	0.72	(11.5)
	F= 38.59	
	R ² =0.13	
B is sign. different from zero at the 0.05 level if T ≥ 2.0, and at the 0.01 level if T ≥ 2.6		

leave the parental home is stronger than on men. Young adults who (intend to) leave for education experience(d) a relatively strong pressure to move out, whereas young adults leaving for union formation feel a retaining pressure. As people get older, the social pressure to move out increases.

7.5.2 Prevailing age norms

We now know that social groups indeed exert quite a strong influence on the decision to leave home. We do not know, however, what the opinions of relevant others are based upon, and what the normative expectations underlying the standpoint of parents or friends exactly are.

Life course sociologists often refer to the existence of age-norms which appear to offer a basic behavioral guideline in life course decisions. To obtain an idea of the age span that is generally considered appropriate with respect to the process of leaving home, respondents were asked the next questions: "Some people think that the decision to leave home depends on the age of young adults. Can you tell me at what age you think someone is old enough to leave home? Can you also tell me how your parents think about that? And your friends?" The same set of questions was asked with respect to the maximum age limit: "At what age do you (your parents/your friends) think a person is too old to be living at home?" Table 7.5.3 first presents the relative number of people who feel that age is not a criterium on which the decision to leave home should be based ("age does not matter"). Second, for those who did report specific age limits, the (perceived) mean minimum age and mean maximum age were calculated (second part of Table 7.5.3).

It is interesting to see that a majority of young adults feel that their parents and their friends relate leaving home to a certain age; only between approximately 24% and 38% of respondents said that age is not relevant. The proportion of parents indicating a minimum age is slightly higher than the proportion of parents who set a maximum age. The opposite is true for members of the peer group, who apparently proclaim more strongly that one should not be living at home any more when having reached a certain age (that is, of course, in the eyes of the respondents). Respondents themselves more often think that age is not relevant than their reference groups do.

From the combined examination of both the minimum age and the maximum age, it turns out that 52.6% of the parents holds both a minimum and a maximum age norm, whereas only 24.7% of the parents has neither. For friends these percentages are 63.9% and 19.5% respectively. Only 11.8% of the parents sets a minimum age and does not have an opinion about the ultimate age to move out. On the other hand, 10.9% does not pose a minimum age limit, but does hold a maximum age norm. For friends these percentages are 4.7% and 11.8%.

Table 7.5.3 Prevailing age norms

	Leavers	Planners	Dwellers
Percentage indicating that age does not matter			
There is no minimum age			
to parents ¹⁾	30.1%	31.8%	38.5%
to friends ¹⁾	32.7%	29.6%	31.5%
to respondent	41.0%	31.7%	43.1% **
There is no maximum age			
to parents ¹⁾	33.6%	36.1%	37.5%
to friends ¹⁾	25.3%	25.8%	23.5%
to respondent	28.2%	22.7%	27.2%
Mean normative age (in years) ²⁾			
Mean minimum age handled by			
parents ¹⁾	20.0	20.1	21.2 **
friends ¹⁾	19.3	19.4	20.2 **
respondent	18.9	19.3	19.9 **
Mean maximum age handled by			
parents ¹⁾	26.3	26.2	27.7 **
friends ¹⁾	25.8	25.7	26.5 *
respondent	26.2	26.6	27.5 **
¹⁾ as perceived by the respondent ²⁾ calculated for those who reported a minimum/maximum age * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 (leavers compared to planners, and planners compared to dwellers)			

In summary, it can be concluded that age probably serves as a valuable guideline in the decision to leave home, at least in the view of the young adults involved.

The differences between leavers, planners and dwellers are not significant. The proportion of leavers who state that they, their parents, or their friends hold an age norm as a criterium for leaving home is practically the same as for planners or dwellers. However, one should not overlook the probability that a significant variation in the age norm that is held may exist between the three behavioral groups, and that this factor may explain differences in home-leaving behaviour.

When examining the reported mean ages, presented in the lower part of Table 7.5.3, there seems to be a relationship between the expected age level and the inclination to leave home: the average minimum age as well as the average maximum age, expressed by parents and friends, is significantly higher for dwellers than for leavers and planners. This can be interpreted as an indication that the dwellers do not consider leaving home yet, because they fail to meet the age criterium. Postponement of the transition can be considered a consequence of prevailing age norms.

A similar relationship cannot be found when comparing the leavers and planners. The age norms perceived by leavers practically equal those reported by planners, and therefore cannot be considered to be responsible for the behavioral difference between the two.

When comparing the perceived age levels expressed by parents and friends, it is interesting to see that, in the eyes of the respondent, peer group members expect their friends to leave at younger ages than parents do. It may be that young adults in general consider themselves to be grown-up, and therefore ready to leave, sooner than parents do, and that they express their opinions about the appropriate age to be moving out accordingly.

With respect to the minimum age at which leaving home is considered acceptable, young adults themselves appear to set an age limit that lies somewhat below the limit thought appropriate by their friends and well below the age limit set by their parents. For the maximum age, however, the age norms of young adults correspond more closely to the parental age norm, whereas friends are believed to expect that one should not remain in the parental home too long. This also implies that for themselves individuals think a more extended age span appropriate, whereas they feel that important referents hold a narrower range of ages when departure is acceptable.

Correspondence in age norms

In the previous section, agreement between the perceived age norms and the personal norm was examined at group level. Now, the question whether the age norm held by young adults matches the opinions of their personal reference groups will be examined at the individual level, that is, the age norms reported for parents, friends and self will be directly linked for each respondent.

When agreement between the opinion of young adults and the perceived opinion of their reference groups is observed (that is, both the reference groups and the respondent hold an age norm, or neither one holds an age norm), it is assumed that young adults are affected by social expectations. On the other hand, disagreement implies that individuals do not copy the opinion of relevant others, but hold dissenting views of their own. It is asserted that this suggests a choice biography.

Part A of Table 7.5.4 shows very clearly that the level of agreement between parents and children is very high, as is the case for reciprocal friends. Less than one quarter of the respondents reported disagreement, that is, their parents/friends were perceived to hold an age norm while they themselves did not, or vice versa. For about 25% of the respondent-parent or respondent-friend dyads, an absence of age norms is shared, and for approximately 50% there is agreement in the sense that both the young adult and his or her referents use age as a criterium for moving out.

Of course, the fact that both young adults and their parents or their friends have an age norm does not imply a complete mutual understanding about the proper timing for leaving home. The young adults may consider quite another age to be appropriate than their parents or their friends do. Therefore, the level of agreement was further determined for this group by confronting the specific age limits expressed by the respondent with the

Table 7.5.4 Conformism in age norms

A	Opinion of parents		Opinion of friends		
Opinion of self	age norm no	age norm yes	age norm no	age norm yes	
Minimum age					
age norm no	26.2%	14.4%	25.5%	15.3%	
age norm yes	9.6%	49.8%	5.8%	53.3%	
Agreement	76.0%		78.5%		
Disagreement	24.0%		21.5%		
Maximum age					
age norm no	19.0%	7.9%	16.2%	10.4%	
age norm yes	17.8%	55.3%	8.2%	65.2%	
Agreement	74.3%		81.4%		
Disagreement	25.7%		18.6%		
B					
Correspondence in the age that is handled ¹⁾	Disagreement score ³⁾				
	0	1,2	≥ 3	-2,-1	≤ -3
minageP - minageS ²⁾	49.3%	25.7%	16.6%	5.8%	2.6%
minageF - minageS	59.0%	12.0%	5.9%	16.7%	6.5%
maxageP - maxageS	53.6%	12.5%	13.2%	7.7%	13.0%
maxageF - maxageS	52.7%	7.2%	6.8%	11.8%	21.5%

1) in case both respondent and parents (or friends) handle a (minimum/maximum) age norm
2) minage = minimum age; maxage = maximum age; P = parents; F = friends; S = self
3) a score of 0 means that respondent and reference group handle the same age norm; a score of 1 or 2 means that the age norm of the reference group lies 1 or 2 years above the age norm of respondent; a score of ≥3 means that the difference between the age norm of the reference group and respondent is more than 3 years; a score of -1 or -2 means that the age norm of the reference group lies 1 or 2 years below the age norm of respondent; a score of ≤-3 means that the age norm of the reference group lies more than 3 years below the age norm of respondent.

perceived age limits of parents and friends respectively (see part B of Table 7.5.4). When the age reported by the young adult matches the age perceived as the norm of parents or friends, the disagreement score equals zero: there is complete agreement. A positive disagreement score signifies that the young adult sets a lower age limit than his or her reference groups do, whereas a negative score implies that the young adult presumes a higher age limit than the important referents. Low disagreement scores (1 or 2) indicate that the opinions of the young adult and his reference groups do not differ much, high disagreement scores (≤-3 or ≥3) imply a large discrepancy in opinions.

It appears that for approximately 50% of the group, in which both referents and respondents share the notion of an age norm, the perceived age norm equals the personally expressed age norm (disagreement score is zero). Judging from the high percentages that have a positive score as compared to the percentages with a negative score, it is more common that young adults assume a younger age to be appropriate than their parents do,

than that parents expect their children to move out at a younger age than the young adult does. The opposite is true for the discrepancy between personal norm and perceived norms of friends: friends are perceived to set a lower age limit than the young adults do (reflected by negative disagreement score).

All in all, for a very large proportion of the respondents there appears to be a close match between opinions held by the young adult and those of his or her reference groups. Apparently, awareness of social norms is indeed very much alive and internalised in the individual's personal opinion, at least with respect to the matter of age. We will now consider other behavioral expectations that may prevail and possibly influence the young adult's decision.

7.5.3 Normatively defined conditions

Thus far, we have looked for evidence that age serves as a normative guideline in the timing of leaving home. However, it may very well be that people also have behavioral expectations regarding the proper timing to move out that are related to domains other than age. As we saw in chapter 5, these expectations often refer to conditions which are considered necessary to live independently, or to acceptable pathways out of the parental home.

In this section, the prevalence of the social expectations that were defined previously will be examined in order to find out which of these norms are shared by relatively many people and which are less prevalent. The results of the factor analysis on the normative items in chapter 6 showed that six of the nine items that were defined actually represent three distinguishable domains and could thus be encapsulated in three factors. The remaining three items did not score high on either of the factors, and consequently should be excluded from analysis. We will, however, not only focus on the factors but will start off by examining the separate items as well. Of course, the normative expectations prevailing among the leavers, planners, and dwellers will be compared subsequently.

The questionnaire contained a question, which asked: "Some people think that young adults should meet certain criteria before leaving the parental home. A number of such criteria will be enumerated to you now. Can you tell me, for each of them, how your parents feel about it: which criteria do they consider to be important, and what do they consider less so?" Respondents could indicate the perceived opinion on a 7-point scale from -3 (not at all important) to +3 (extremely important). The same question was asked in order to obtain the opinions of friends, as perceived by the respondent. Also, the personal opinion of the respondents was rated, which allows for an examination of the level of agreement between young adults and their reference groups.

Table 7.5.5 Prevailing normative expectations expressed in terms of preconditions: percentage of respondents indicating to believe that a specific item is important to their parents or their friends (scores 1,2,3)

	All	Leavers	Planners	Dwellers
Perceived opinion of parents				
In order to leave home it is important ...				
... to have adequate living accommodations	84.9	81.8	78.8	87.6 **
... to be able of functioning independently	84.0	86.5	80.8	84.3
... to have an income	70.0	60.0	62.1	75.1 **
... to have a job	60.9	46.1	42.2	70.4 **
... to marry	59.7	42.1 **	60.1	64.4
... to be old enough	50.6	56.9 *	43.8	50.9
... to have finished high school	49.3	56.1	51.1	46.9
... to start living with steady partner	47.0	34.2	44.3	51.3
... to start advanced education	32.9	38.0	33.1	31.5
Perceived opinion of friends				
In order to leave home it is important ...				
... to have adequate living accommodations	77.2	71.7	72.3	80.1 *
... to be able of functioning independently	66.8	61.8	66.8	68.2
... to have an income	62.4	49.0	54.8	68.3 **
... to have a job	53.5	35.5	39.6	62.5 **
... to marry	53.6	38.6	48.3	59.2 **
... to be old enough	42.5	36.5	42.0	44.3
... to have finished high school	33.5	34.8	36.6	32.3
... to start living with steady partner	51.1	34.4 **	49.1	56.1
... to start advanced education	28.1	30.0	32.7	26.2

* p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 (Leavers compared to planners, and planners compared to dwellers)

In Table 7.5.5, the normative expectations that were measured are listed in descending order of prevalence as observed for the parental opinions prevailing in the total group. Evidently, a place to live, as well as the ability to function independently are generally regarded as important preconditions to leaving the parental home. Judging from the high percentages, one might say that these two items represent fundamental preconditions, which apply to the majority of young adults. According to the respondents, financial independence is also considered important by quite a large proportion of parents and friends, followed by marriage. Although it was observed in section 7.5.2 that more than 75% of parents and more than 80% of friends have some idea about the appropriate age at which to leave home, only 50% of parents and 42% of friends think that age is an important guiding principle in the timing of the departure. Expectations which relate to educational commitments appear less common, in that they are perceived to count as an important occasion to leave home by only a relatively small number of parents and friends (30%).

It is interesting to see that young adults feel that their friends are more permissive than their parents are, in the sense that the relative number of friends that is reported to stress certain conditions is systematically lower for each item, with the exception of 'unmarried cohabitation'. Comparison of the percentages observed for the criteria of "marriage" and "steady partner" seems to indicate that, in comparison to parents, friends relatively more often regard married and unmarried partnership as equivalent occasions to leave home: the proportion of friends that is of the opinion that leaving home should concur with marriage is nearly the same as the proportion of friends who think that unmarried cohabitation is an important occasion (54% versus 51%), whereas the proportion of parents who relate leaving home to unmarried union formation is much smaller than the proportion of parents who relate it to marriage (47% versus 60%).

Yet, despite these differences the resemblance between the perceived opinions of friends and parents is remarkable. The relative frequencies, reported for parents and friends respectively, do not differ much and, judging from the correspondence in the order of the items, the respondents apparently think that the two reference groups agree in their opinions about what is considered important and what is not.

When we compare the frequency patterns for the three behavioral groups, some interesting differences can be observed, which seem to indicate that the *nature* of the prevailing expectations affects the decision to move out. It can be seen that significantly fewer leavers than planners reported that their parents relate leaving home with union formation. Instead, the parents of leavers significantly more often seem to regard age as an important guideline. Dwellers, on the other hand, are confronted with parents who expect financial independence as a vital precondition to moving out more frequently than planners or leavers are, whereas adequate accommodation is also significantly more often considered to be an important issue among dwellers. Furthermore, it can be seen that expectations related to educational status are given more consideration by the parents of leavers than by the parents of planners, whereas the parents of dwellers stress this issue even less, most likely because other expectations are given greater emphasis instead. More or less the same pattern can be observed for the perceived opinions of friends.

Although strictly speaking the following argument is based on reverse reasoning, the above findings can be interpreted as supportive of the idea that social expectations can function as a push or a pull factor. After all, it can be reasoned that if one is supposed to move out at the onset of advanced education, one is likely to move out at an earlier age. On the other hand, if one is supposed to let the transition concur with union formation or if one is supposed to wait until one has a job, the decision will be deferred until a later age. The finding that expectations concerning the educational career are

indeed more prevalent among leavers than among planners and even more than among dwellers, and that expectations which relate leaving home with having a job or with union formation is significantly higher for dwellers than for planners and leavers respectively, is in line with this reasoning. Therefore, it seems justified to assume that normative expectations have some influence on the young adult's decision to leave home and the timing of that decision.

Agreement between young adults and their parents or their friends

The impact of social expectations of important referents can also be deduced from the level of agreement. When agreement between parents and children is high, it can be argued that the young adult has internalised the parental norm and will therefore be more inclined to act accordingly. The level of agreement between parents or friends and the young adults is assumed to be a measure of conformism. To determine the level of agreement, a disagreement score was computed by distracting the score on the personal norm from the score on the perceived norm. Recall that the scores on the question about the perceived importance of the various items range from -3 to +3. Consequently, the disagreement score ranges from -6 to +6. To give an example, when young adults believe that their parents think a specific issue is not at all important, whereas the young adult himself thinks it is extremely important, the disagreement score will be -6. On the other hand, a score of +6 reflects that the parents are perceived to attach extreme importance to a specific item, while the young adult does absolutely not. A disagreement score of -2 or -1 or 1 or 2 reflects minor disagreement.

The percentages in the column reflecting agreement between young adults and their reference groups are fairly high; this is true for the parents as well as for friends (see Table 7.5.6). Especially with respect to marriage as an important impetus to leave home, a large proportion of young adults share the opinions of their parents and their friends. The least agreement exists with respect to the precondition of age.

In case parents and their off-spring, or young adults and their friends, do not agree on specific items, it is usually a matter of minor disagreement. Also, it is usually the young adult who attaches greater importance to the conditions, while the parents appear to be more indifferent to the matter or consider it less important. This can be inferred from the fact that practically all percentages in the columns with negative disagreement scores are higher than the percentages in the columns with positive disagreement scores, with the exception of the items which state that one should finish high school before leaving home and should have reached a certain age. Apparently, these aspects do not constitute viable arguments to young adults, while they do to parents.

Table 7.5.6 Conformism: percentage agreeing or disagreeing with (perceived) expectations of parents, and of friends.

	score ¹⁾ =	minor		major	
		agreement	disagreement	disagreement	
	0	[-2,-1]	[1,2]	[-6,-3]	[3,6]
Discrepancy with opinion of parents					
To have adequate living accommodations	49.5	33.6	12.6	3.2	1.0
To be able of functioning independently	50.3	25.2	19.5	2.8	2.4
To have an income	46.7	30.9	13.4	7.1	1.7
To have a job	47.5	28.3	14.7	6.6	2.9
To marry	64.9	16.2	12.7	3.7	2.5
To be old enough	35.7	25.9	25.9	5.4	7.1
To have finished high school	42.9	20.0	26.8	3.6	6.7
To start living with steady partner	49.1	27.4	10.1	10.7	2.8
To start advanced education	44.3	24.0	23.0	3.8	4.8
Discrepancy with opinion of friends					
To have adequate living accommodations	48.7	34.1	8.4	8.0	0.8
To be able of functioning independently	39.0	40.5	9.5	9.7	1.2
To have an income	41.6	35.1	9.1	12.8	1.3
To have a job	37.4	34.3	12.3	13.1	2.8
To marry	64.1	19.8	8.2	5.8	2.1
To be old enough	36.8	26.9	22.1	8.9	5.3
To have finished high school	41.0	28.5	16.9	8.7	4.8
To start living with steady partner	50.2	22.2	15.0	10.1	2.6
To start advanced education	43.5	25.4	19.0	7.4	4.7

1) perceived norm - personal norm.

A negative score implies that parents/friends find the issue less important than the young adult himself;
a positive score implies that the parents/friends find the issue more important than the young adult.

The remarkably high percentages of agreement are an indication that social expectations are still strong among a large proportion of young adults, and that transition norms have not yet completely lost their meaning. Moreover, the observed differences in the type of normative expectations that prevail among leavers, planners and dwellers, suggest that social expectations are indeed reflected in the behaviour of the young adults. In the next section, additional indications for this suggestion will be explored.

To which individuals do the prevailing expectations apply?

We have seen that differences in parental expectations lead to differences in the propensity to leave the parental home. In addition to this finding, we like to know which young adults are confronted with which normative expectations, and whether specific expectations are perhaps more prevalent among some social groups than among others. This may give more insight into the effect that specific changes in background factors may have on the event of leaving home.

A regression analysis with the social expectations of parents as the dependent variable may shed some light upon this issue. As the influence of friends on the the matter of leaving home is much smaller than the influence of parents (see Table 7.5.1), and because parents are likely to have a more profound effect on the socialisation of children, attention is restricted to parental expectations.

The factor analysis on the normative items in chapter 6 has shown that various items can be combined, apparently reflecting a similar domain. Recall from chapter 6 that the items concerning high school and advanced education make up one factor (factor Educational career), as do the items on job and income (factor Financial independence), and the items on marriage and partner relationship (factor Union formation). The three remaining items are excluded from the following analyses, because they did not load high on either of the factors. A factor score was computed by adding the scores on the separate items and dividing the resulting sum by the number of items that represent the factor.

The average factor scores in Table 7.5.7 show once again that union formation is significantly less important among the group of leavers than among the group of planners, whereas it is considered most important among dwellers. For dwellers, the prerequisite of financial independence is significantly more important than it is for planners or leavers. The three behavioral groups do not differ with respect to expectations that relate leaving home to educational activities.

Table 7.5.7 Average scores on the normative factors (parental expectations)

	Leavers	Planners	Dwellers
Leaving home is expected to be related to			
educational career	0.28	0.10	0.05
financial independence	0.39	0.42	1.20 **
union formation	-0.39 **	0.27	0.64 *
* p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 (Leavers compared to planners, and planners compared to dwellers)			

By employing regression analysis it becomes clear which individuals are confronted with certain expectations relatively more often. The results of the regression analyses on each of the normative factors are presented in Table 7.5.8.

Especially the effect of motive on the prevalence of each of the normative factors deserves special attention here, because it points towards an interesting conclusion. Young adults who leave home for educational reasons score significantly higher on the factor which reflects expectations concerning educational career than young adults who leave for other reasons do. On the other hand, young adults who leave home for a job or to establish independence score significantly higher on the factor 'financial independence',

Table 7.5.8 Regression analysis with the three normative factors as dependent variables

	Educational career		Financial independence		Union formation	
	B	T	B	T	B	T
GENDER						
male			-0.52	(3.5)		
female			0.00			
MOTIVE						
education	1.44	(5.8)	-1.60	(6.2)	0.00	
work	0.00		0.00		1.03	(3.3)
union formation	-0.27	(1.8)	0.00		1.51	(7.5)
independence	0.00		0.00		0.00	
PARSTUD						
parent(s) has studied	0.20	(1.2)	-0.78	(4.4)		
parents have not studied	0.00		0.00			
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL						
high			-1.13	(6.5)		
low			0.00			
AGE	-0.12	(4.0)				
	F=17.86		F=41.87		F=29.67	
	R ² =0.07		R ² =0.17		R ² =0.06	
Eliminated from equations: living arrangement, economic status						

whereas the ones who leave home for union formation score relatively highest on the factor 'union formation'. This consistency between prevailing expectations and actual (or intended) behaviour, can be interpreted as an indication that normative expectations are indeed a guiding principle in the decision on when and how to leave home.

Financial independence is not considered a crucial issue for young adults who leave home for education. Surprisingly, males are significantly less pressed to secure financial independence in order to leave home than females are. This is not what would be expected considering the gender-specific role of provider that is still more common for men than for women.

In families where either or both parents have pursued higher education (university or vocational college), expectations regarding the concurrence of leaving home and the educational career are more strongly stated, whereas the precondition of financial independence is considered less important. These findings are consistent with the assumption that parents who have themselves studied at a university or a college will prepare their children for advanced education as well, and will gear their expectations about leaving home to the context of the educational career, which involves leaving home while financial independence is not guaranteed. The effect of parental educational level on the prevalence of expectations concerning the educational career is not vary large and not significant, however.

7.6 The impact of the Hotel-Mama factor

A belief which is increasingly adopted by several researchers, and which is often expressed in the media as well, is that more and more young adults prefer to stay in the parental home for a longer period of time. Some authors believe this trend to result from the financial problems or limitations on the housing market they are faced with, while others argue that it stems from the fact that living in the parental home gives the young adult many advantages. It is asserted that young adults who live at home will receive a great deal of parental attention, which engenders a feeling of security. Moreover, they do not have to worry much about daily matters and responsibilities, because the parents (mother) will usually take care of that. At the same time, young adults nowadays experience a great deal of autonomy and freedom while living in the parental home. It is argued that, due to a "culture of bargaining" (Du Bois-Reymond, 1990) and the fact that a wide range of behavioral options are more easily accepted, generational conflicts between parents and children have diminished, and as a consequence young adults do not feel a strong urge to escape from parental authority. Instead they stay and enjoy the psychological and practical support and the comfort that are part of living in the parental home. To the young adults it is therefore quite appealing to linger in "Hotel-Mama" (Herms-Bohnhoff, 1993) a little longer, also because they are financially better off as they enjoy great financial freedom, usually getting to keep the money they earn on weekend jobs (De Zwart & Warnaar, 1993).

As far as I know, however, the plausibility of this mechanism was solely shown on the basis of historical comparisons, where changes in home-leaving behaviour were linked to the cultural and material shifts that have taken place. To my knowledge, no study has directly measured whether young adults refer to such considerations when thinking about leaving or staying home. It would therefore be interesting to look for more precise clues that this kind of consideration really influences the decision of young adults to leave home and lead to differences in the propensity to depart from the parental home.

It was interesting to see that some of the high school graduates who wrote an essay on leaving home, indeed described to consider some of the aspects that are related to the Hotel-Mama feeling when imagining living independently. However, it remains to be seen how common these arguments are among young adults, and whether they have a large impact on the decision to leave home.

According to the factor analysis performed in chapter 6, the arguments which will be highlighted in this section appeared to constitute five different aspects: the sense of security (which is subdivided in emotional security and parental support), autonomy (which is ascribed to enjoying the adult status), daily care, social contacts, and mental commotion (i.e. conflicts with parents and loneliness).

As discussed previously in section 7.4.4, the item concerning the 'freedom to do as one likes' will be discussed here as well. Just to refresh our memory, the separate items which make up the factors are listed here again:

Emotional security: being in familiar circumstances, experiencing home sociability, getting respect from parents, having a confidant;

Parental support: receiving daily support from parents, being nursed when ill, having parents arrange daily matters;

Responsibilities for daily care: having to do domestic chores, having kitchen duties, taking care of own health;

Autonomy (related to adult status): being responsible for one's own decisions, being responsible for payments, being viewed as an adult, being independent of parents;

Freedom: having the freedom to do as one likes;

Social well-being: getting to meet new friends, keeping up contacts with old friends, getting respect from friends;

Mental commotion: having conflicts with parents, feeling lonely.

For each of the items that were defined as a potential argument in the decision to move out, the respondents were successively asked to indicate a) how much they value the item (important or positive), b) how much they dispose of it in the parental home, and c) how much they expect it to change (decrease or increase) when moving out. The reactions to each of these questions were rated on a 7-point scale from -3 to +3.

In the following analyses, we will not only focus on the subjective perceptions and anticipated consequences, but also on some objective characteristics of the situation in the parental home, that are believed to be related to a Hotel-Mama feeling.

Objective and subjective determinants

It can be reasoned that the degree of non-material advantages in the parental home is dependent upon the specific situation of the individual. For instance, the number of competing siblings or the fact that the mother is working may limit the personal attention that is provided, or it may increase the responsibility for daily care (Waite & Spitze, 1981), whereas feelings of security and domestic responsibilities may also vary with family type. Children from single-parent families may gain adult responsibilities at an earlier age than children from two-parent families do (Corijn, 1995), and thus feel like leaving earlier. It may also be that in non-intact families traditional family values are emphasised less strongly and that children from such families are therefore likely to leave home sooner (Zhao *et al.*, 1995).

Table 7.6.1 The effect of a Hotel-Mama situation on the propensity to leave home (objective determinants)

	Leavers	Planners	Dwellers
Number of siblings at home (mean)	1.00	0.94	0.95
Labour market participation of mother			
employed	45.0%	39.3%	40.0%
unemployed	2.9%	5.9%	3.2%
not in labour force	49.5%	53.0%	56.0%
not present	2.5%	1.8%	0.8%
Labour market participation of father			
employed	79.9%	73.3%	78.2%
unemployed	8.8%	11.9%	10.0%
not in labour force	5.2%	11.6%	5.4%
not present	6.1%	4.2%	6.3%
Family type			
two-parent family	78.1%	85.3%	85.6%
two-parent step family	7.4%	2.5%	5.9%
single parent family (father)	2.3%	4.3%	0.8%
single parent family (mother)	10.7%	7.5%	7.6%
guardian family (orphan)	1.5%	0.4%	0.1%

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ (leavers compared to planners, and planners compared to dwellers)

It is striking to see that the objective determinants which are believed to influence the sense of security do not account for differences in home-leaving behaviour. It is true that on the average leavers come from families with more siblings, where the mother is relatively more often employed in the labour force and therefore not available to her children all day, but the situation is not significantly different from the situation of planners or dwellers. Labour market participation of the father does not differ significantly between the three groups either. Relatively fewer leavers than planners or dwellers come from two-parent families, and relatively more leavers lived in a single-parent household with their mother, which supports our assumption, but again the differences are not significant.

However, for some of the *subjective* indices, presented in Table 7.6.2, a Hotel-Mama effect can be at least partly observed. It appears that, on the average, the leavers received significantly less emotional security from their parents than both planners and dwellers did, which may be the reason why they felt less tied to the parental home. The same appears to be true for the amount of parental support that young adults receive when living at home; however, although the mean scores for leavers, planners and dwellers

Table 7.6.2 Subjectively experienced Hotel-Mama situation in the parental home (mean scores)

	Leavers	Planners	Dwellers
Emotional security	1.41 **	1.72	1.73
Parental support	1.05	1.18	1.28
Responsibility for daily care	-0.23	-0.23	-0.17
Autonomy	0.51 **	0.77	0.81
Freedom	1.12 **	1.54	1.54
Conflicts and loneliness	-0.93 *	-1.22	-1.34
Social well-being	0.96	0.90	1.10 *

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ (leavers compared to planners, and planners compared to dwellers)

point in the expected direction (with dwellers on average receiving most support from their parents, and leavers receiving least), the differences between the three behavioral groups are not significant.

The low mean scores on the factor representing daily care show that on average the respondents do not carry much responsibility for daily household chores. Besides, no significant differences between leavers, planners, and dwellers can be observed which may explain the decision to stay or move out.

On the other hand, leavers feel that, when they were living at home, they had significantly less autonomy and personal freedom than the group of planners and dwellers do. Assuming that these are aspects that are generally sought after by young adults, it seems plausible that the decision to leave home may be partly inspired by the anticipated promise of more autonomy. Also, the group of leavers felt they had significantly more conflicts with their parents or were more lonely than planners did, whereas dwellers lived in most harmonious relationship with their parents and were the least lonely, although the difference with planners is not significant.

Only with respect to maintaining social contact do dwellers differ significantly from planners: they feel that, while living in the parental home, they can satisfy their need for social contacts significantly better than the planners or leavers can, which is consistent with the fact that they are least inclined to leave home. Leavers and planners, however, do not show significant differences with respect to the aspect of social well-being.

Expected changes

Evaluation of the situation in the parental home is only one side of the coin. When either one of these aspects is a matter under consideration, the young adults will simultaneously assess the changes that are likely to occur when moving out, thus picturing the relative favourableness or unfavourableness of the transition in these terms. Differences in anticipated change may then explain the propensity to leave the parental home.

Table 7.6.3 Subjectively anticipated changes in the Hotel-Mama components, and subjective evaluation of these components (mean scores)

	Leavers	Planners	Dwellers
Anticipated changes			
Emotional security	0.40 **	0.69	0.39 *
Parental support	-0.91 **	-0.65	-0.61
Responsibility for daily care	1.14	1.24	1.21
Autonomy	1.64	1.56	1.56
Freedom	1.94	1.72	1.53
Conflicts and loneliness	-0.80	-0.75	-0.62
Social well-being	0.86	0.84	0.90
Evaluation			
Emotional security	1.57	1.59	1.73 *
Parental support	0.86 **	0.40	0.72 **
Responsibility for daily care	0.37 *	0.58	0.78 **
Autonomy	1.35	1.53	1.58
Freedom	1.85 *	2.14	2.02
Conflicts and loneliness	-1.04 **	-1.75	-1.49 **
Social well-being	1.53	1.71	1.59

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ (leavers compared to planners, and planners compared to dwellers)

Table 7.6.3 makes clear that the data do not provide convincing evidence that any of the aspects distinguished in this paragraph significantly influences the decision to leave or linger. In some instances the results even point to the opposite of what was hypothesised. We will discuss the results for each factor successively.

It appears that on the average the respondents expect a slight increase in the amount of *emotional security* they will receive when moving out. Apparently, home sociability, the parents' appreciation and having a confidant are features that are not restricted to living at home. The fact that on the average respondents anticipate a positive change makes it clear that they expect that moving out will increase their parents' appreciation of them and that they believe that, when living independently, other people can take care of their emotional well-being just as well. Naturally, we must not forget that many young adults start living with a partner, who is likely to share and provide emotional care, whereas young adults who start living with others than their partner are also likely to find emotional security from housemates or (new) friends, and apparently in even larger amounts than at home. We will check this thought later by running a regression analysis on it.

The observed differences between the three behavioral groups with respect to the level of change in emotional security is not completely in line with our assumptions. On the one hand, we can see that dwellers score significantly lower than planners, while they appear to appreciate the aspect significantly more. This finding matches our assumption that the

anticipation of a positive change will positively affect the propensity to leave home. However, when comparing the planners and leavers, this presumed effect is not observed. It turns out that the mean change in emotional security which is anticipated by leavers is significantly lower than that anticipated by planners. This unexpected finding is not counteracted by a difference in the subjective evaluation of emotional security, as we can see that the two groups do not differ in their evaluation-score. This means that the combination of the expectancy and the evaluation component points towards a more positive attitude among planners than among leavers.

The observed effect of the probable changes in emotional security thus only partly confirms our assumptions: it can explain the transition from 'no-intention' to 'inclined', but it does not agree with the transition from inclined to actual moving.

Getting *parental support* is likely to be more directly related to living at home, and it is thus not surprising that on the average young adults expect the amount of parental support to diminish once they live independently. It is remarkable, however, that the group of leavers expected parental support to decrease most strongly; yet, this prospect did not prevent them from moving out. This is contrary to our expectations, which hypothesised that a reduction in something worthwhile would detain the transition. But perhaps this is due to the fact that 'parental support' is not valued extremely positive by young adults: on a scale from -3 to +3, the average evaluation score was 0.68, which may imply that all in all it has only a marginal effect in the decision to leave home. Among the group of dwellers the appreciation of parental support was significantly higher than among planners, which implies that the reduction would indeed be more unfavourable. But this relation does not hold for the leavers, who had a mean score of 0.86, which is significantly higher than the mean score for the planners. The combined effect of the two elements once again show that planners indeed have a more positive attitude than dwellers do, but that the opposite is true for the leavers.

On the average, all respondents expect that their responsibility for *daily care* (domestic duties), their *autonomy* and their *freedom* will increase considerably, whereas they believe that *conflicts* with their parents will decrease and that they will feel less *lonely*. No significant differences between the average scores of leavers, planners and dwellers can be detected, even though the mean scores on 'anticipated change' for the three behavioral groups support the hypothesised effect: it appears that leavers expect the smallest increase in domestic responsibilities, the greatest increase in autonomy and in freedom, and the greatest decline in conflicts and feelings of loneliness, thus making the transition most favourable in their eyes. Dwellers, on the other hand, expect the smallest increase in freedom, and the smallest decline in parental conflicts. However, as said before, the differences between the three groups with respect to these issues are not significant.

When also taking into account the subjective evaluation of these aspects, it appears that the significantly lower appreciation of domestic duties among leavers would make the transition relatively less attractive, whereas it would be more attractive to dwellers; yet, the latter decided to remain at home for the time being, which is not consistent with our expectations. The same inconsistency can be observed for the evaluation of autonomy and freedom: although these aspects are valued more by both planners and dwellers, it did not induce them to actually move.

The data show that young adults on average expect that their opportunities to be with friends (*social contacts*) will increase slightly when living independently. There are no significant differences between the leavers, planners, and dwellers in this respect. Moreover, the three groups do not score differently with respect to the evaluation of maintaining social contacts. This aspect thus does not seem to influence the decision to leave or stay home.

Which young adults expect relatively major changes?

The absence of significant differences between the three behavioral groups on many of the issues discussed above does not automatically imply that all young adults think alike about the possible psychological and practical consequences that leaving home might bring about. It may well be that certain individuals really cherish the convenience of living in Hotel-Mama and are reluctant to give up these advantages.

Table 7.6.4 displays the results of a series of regression analyses, with the anticipated changes in each of the seven Hotel-Mama components as the dependent variable. Only the B-coefficients that were selected during the backward procedure are presented, plus the coefficients for the behavioral groups when they appeared to be significantly different from zero.

The B-coefficients reveal that young adults who leave home for education or a job anticipate a smaller increase in *emotional security* than those who leave for union formation or to obtain independence. This seems to confirm the previously suggested mechanism that when people move out to start living with a partner, the partner will effectively provide the necessary emotional support. Although the dummies for living arrangement appear to be not significant and therefore do not support the proposed mechanism, the coefficients for housing type can be interpreted to confirm the hypothesised effect: the B-coefficient suggests that those who move into an apartment or single-family house expect a relatively greater increase in emotional security than those who will live in lodgings or double-up. Considering the fact that apartments and houses are more often inhabited by young adults who live with a partner, this finding thus supports the suggested effect that a partner can have on the amount of emotional security.

Table 7.6.4 Regression analyses with anticipated changes in the Hotel-Mama components as the dependent variables

	Emotional security		Parental support		Daily care		Autonomy	
	B	T	B	T	B	T	B	T
GENDER								
male			-0.16 (2.6)		-0.19 (4.1)		-0.14 (2.5)	
female			0.00		0.00		0.00	
MOTIVE								
education	-0.38 (3.3)		0.00		-0.22 (2.6)		0.00	
work	-0.28 (2.7)		0.00		0.00		-0.23 (2.6)	
union formation	0.00		0.13 (1.8)		-0.11 (2.1)		0.00	
independence	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	
LIVING ARRANGEMENT								
alone					0.10 (1.9)		0.00	
with partner					0.00		-0.25 (4.5)	
with others					0.00		0.00	
ECONOMIC STATUS								
studying								
working								
unemployed								
MUMWORK								
yes			0.12 (2.0)					
OWNROOM in parental house								
yes					0.37 (3.0)			
ACCEPTABLE HOUSING								
in lodgings or doubling-up	-0.39 (5.6)		-0.25 (3.7)		-0.18 (3.4)			
apartment or single-fam.house	0.00		0.00		0.00			
PARSTUD								
parent has studied	0.25 (3.4)				0.34 (4.9)			
parent has not studied	0.00				0.00			
BEHAVIOUR								
leaver	0.12 (1.4)		-0.32 (3.8)					
planner	0.39 (4.8)		-0.08 (1.1)					
dweller	0.00		0.00					
Constant	0.60		-0.52		1.14		2.06	
	F=18.45		F=7.60		F=7.65		F=7.94	
	R ² =0.10		R ² =0.05		R ² =0.09		R ² =0.08	

(Continued)

	Freedom		Conflicts & loneliness		Social contacts	
	B	T	B	T	B	T
GENDER						
male	-0.11	(1.3)	-0.27	(4.0)		
female	0.00		0.00			
MOTIVE						
education	-0.48	(3.1)			-0.30	(2.8)
work	-0.31	(2.2)			-0.26	(2.7)
union formation	0.00				0.00	
independence	0.00				0.00	
LIVING ARRANGEMENT						
alone	0.00		0.00		0.00	
with partner	-0.55	(6.2)	-0.23	(3.2)	-0.28	(4.2)
with others	0.00		0.00		0.00	
ECONOMIC STATUS						
studying			0.00			
working			-0.26	(3.5)		
unemployed			0.00			
MUMWORK						
yes	0.26	(3.1)	-0.11	(1.7)		
OWNROOM in parental house						
yes			0.53	(3.0)	0.55	(3.5)
ACCEPTABLE HOUSING						
in lodgings or doubling-up					-0.16	(2.3)
apartment or single-fam.house					0.00	
PARSTUD						
parent has studied						
parent has not studied						
BEHAVIOUR						
leaver	0.45	(3.7)	-0.24	(2.6)		
planner	0.25	(2.2)	-0.17	(2.0)		
dweller	0.00		0.00			
Constant	1.96		-0.25		0.91	
	F=7.94		F=10.51		F=6.80	
	R ² =0.08		R ² =0.08		R ² =0.05	

The coefficients for the behavioral groups only partially disclose an effect of emotional security on the propensity to leave home. Leavers expect to experience a slightly greater increase in emotional security than dwellers do (not significantly), but it is especially the planners who expect great gains in emotional security by leaving home.

On the average, young adults expect that they will receive less *parental support* after moving out. Males foresee a relatively greater decrease than females do, which suggests that girls for some reason expect to be looked after by their parents more than boys do when they have moved out. Motive for departure does not invoke significantly different perceptions of the probable change in parental support. Although the participation of the mother in the labour market did not seem to directly affect the inclination to leave home, it does seem to have an effect through the anticipated change in parental support. Young adults with a working mother expected a relatively smaller reduction (positive B-coefficient) in the amount of parental support than young adults do whose mothers did not work. A working mother will probably have less opportunity to arrange daily matters for her children, so that when they leave home the change is relatively small. This finding thus seems to point indirectly at a Hotel-Mama effect.

On the other hand, however, the coefficient observed for the group of leavers clearly contradicts our assumption that the anticipation of a relatively more favourable situation would induce young adults to leave home, and a relatively unfavourable situation would keep them from leaving: leavers expect a significantly greater reduction in parental support than planners and dwellers do, whereas the coefficients for planners and dwellers do not differ significantly. Of course, this finding may also implicitly refer to quite another aspect, namely the urge to be emancipated from parental influences. As leavers expect a greater reduction in parental support, they may also expect to effectuate an independent position more accurately than do planners or dwellers who expect a relatively smaller reduction and may therefore be less motivated to move out in order to become independent. The amount of change in parental support that is anticipated appears to vary with gender, labour market participation of the mother, and housing type.

The anticipation of an overall increase in *domestic duties* is not different for leavers, planners, or dwellers. Women, however, are prepared for a relatively larger expansion of household chores than men are, despite the fact that women on the average already help out in the parental household more than men do. Men probably do not plan to spend much time on domestic activities, or they assume that somebody else in their household will take care of them. This is also reflected in the negative coefficient for those who leave home for union formation, as well as in the positive coefficient for the ones who will be living alone. Both these figures indicate that when sharing a household with others, the expected increase in household tasks is less. Individuals who leave home for

educational reasons think that the domestic burden will not press as hard as do individuals who leave for other reasons do. One can imagine that students, who find themselves in a less-settled and a more transitional situation of semi-independence, do not worry about these issues as much as other groups do. The suggested effect of a transitional living situation is also illustrated by the negative coefficient for those who start living in lodgings or double-up, which are good examples of a transient situation.

It is not quite clear why children who have a room of their own in the parental house, on average expect a greater increase in domestic duties. It may be that, because they have already experienced the nuisance of tidying their own room, they can more vividly imagine what it will be like when they have to run an entire household.

It is remarkable that participation in the labour market does not affect the perceived change in domestic duties. After all, it can be reasoned that when the mother is out to work, the children have to take over more household chores, so that the transition to an independent household will be smoother. This argument is not supported by the data, however.

Although girls expect a relatively smaller reduction in parental support after moving out, they also expect to become relatively more *autonomous* and have more responsibilities than men do. Young adults who start living with a partner expect a smaller increase in autonomy, probably because they will share some of the responsibilities with their partner, whereas those who start living alone or with others have to manage everything by themselves. I cannot think of a plausible reason why young adults who leave home for work believe they will experience a smaller increase in autonomy than their fellows do who leave for other reasons.

The three behavioral groups do not differ with respect to the change in autonomy they anticipate.

When considering the amount of *freedom* they will enjoy, women again expect to gain relatively more by leaving home than men do. Young adults who leave home for education or work expect to gain less freedom than young adults who leave for union formation or independence do. It may be that a departure which is triggered by competing activities, is so strongly related to new obligations, that the individuals in question feel that the increase in freedom will be limited. It is not surprising, on the other hand, that the ones who leave home to gain greater independence, also expect a relatively large increase in freedom. Individuals who leave for union formation do not differ from those who leave for independence. However, people who start living with a partner do not expect such a large increase in freedom. Perhaps they feel that they will have to gear their acts to their partner, have to reckon with their partner's preferences, thus narrowing down the scope of their own freedom. Living with a partner is a less individualistic option.

The effect of the mother's labour market participation is contrary to our assumptions. One would expect that young adults whose mother works outside the house, already have more freedom while living at home; the increase after moving out will therefore be less substantial. The positive sign of the B-coefficient suggests otherwise, however. Of course it is also possible that children of working mothers have more domestic responsibilities in order to stand in for their absent mother; when they move out they are freed from these responsibilities, thus rendering a relatively large increase in perceived freedom. However, this suggestion is not supported by the coefficient for 'mumwork' under the column of domestic care. It may also be that a working mother has less time to interfere in the lives of their children when they live (far) away. Whatever the reason, children with working mothers apparently expect to gain more freedom when they move out.

It is with respect to the aspect of personal freedom that the three behavioral groups differ most convincingly, and in the expected direction. Leavers expect the greatest increase in freedom when moving out, followed by the planners, who in turn expect a larger increase in freedom than dwellers do.

When we turn to the column *conflicts and loneliness* in Table 7.6.4, we can see that males expect a larger decline in conflicts with their parents when they move out. Young adults who leave home and start living alone or with others believe that arguments with their parents will not lessen as much as young adults do who start living with a partner. Perhaps, living with a partner more closely agrees with parental expectations, thus giving no cause for arguments, whereas a decision to move out without settling down with a partner may not be approved of by parents, thus giving rise to new arguments. Young adults who participate in the work force expect a greater improvement of the relationship with their parents (or, expressed in terms of the B-coefficient, a stronger reduction of conflicts) than do students and unemployed individuals. It may be that working people are less dependent upon their parents than students are, who may still experience the pressure to answer to their parents and to conform to their expectations even though they no longer live under the same roof. Unemployment, on the other hand, may in itself be a stressful situation which gives rise to disagreements between parents and their off-spring, even after they have left home.

Young adults with working mothers expect a relatively stronger decline in conflicts with their parents than do children of non-working mothers, but the difference is not significant. Young adults who have a room of their own expect a relatively smaller reduction in arguments with their parents than do children who have no room of their own. This may be attributed to the fact that children with a room of their own have more opportunity to withdraw and thus escape more easily conflicts with their parents while living at home.

Although leavers and planners do not differ in the relative change in conflicts with their parents, they do expect a significantly stronger mitigation of conflicts than the dwellers

do. This finding can be considered as evidence for the assumption that avoidance of arguments with parents will lead to a stronger inclination to get away from the parental home.

Finally, let us consider the anticipated changes in *social contacts* (the last column in Table 7.6.4). On the average, young adults expect an increase in social contacts when they move out. It appears that young adults who leave home for union formation or independence expect a smaller increase in their social relationships than the ones who leave home for education or a job do. On the other hand, those who start living with a partner believe that their social contacts will not increase as much as people who start living alone or with others. Perhaps the couples-to-be expect that friends will no longer stop by or invite them as often as they used to because the two are together now. It is not unusual that friendships become less intense when a relationship is formed.

Young adults who move into lodgings expect a more limited increase in social contacts than those who move into an apartment or a house do. It may be that they feel that their living quarters are not adequate to invite many friends, although of course contacts with friends are not restricted to indoor activities.

Leavers, planners, and dwellers do not differ with respect to the changes in social contacts they anticipate.

7.7 Summary and conclusions

In this chapter we tried to gain more insight into the question whether the decision to leave the parental home, or the formation of the intention to do so, is influenced by financial factors, by housing factors, by normative expectations, and/or by more practical and psychological factors, which were briefly termed the Hotel-Mama factor. By successively comparing the leavers with the planners, and the latter with the dwellers, it became clear which aspects affect the transition from not-inclined to inclined, and which factors affect the subsequent transition from intended to actual behaviour. Moreover, in this chapter it was also examined whether any variation among different subcategories could be observed. This would enhance our understanding of the impact of each of the factors on the decision making process as a whole regarding the transition to living independently.

In line with the starting-point of this study, we did not only focus on the *objective characteristics* of the individual's situation. As it is believed that the impact of objective characteristics will be mediated by the subjective interpretation of this situation, attention was also focused on the subjective components of perception and evaluation of the situation. Furthermore, it was hypothesised that young adults are likely to contrast the

situation at home with living independently. Relatively favourable conditions in the parental home with respect to the aspects distinguished will function as a retaining force, leading to a preference for staying home, whereas relatively favourable perceptions of independent living will function as a push factor, inducing a stronger propensity to leave the parental home.

We will now discuss the findings that emerged from the analyses in this chapter.

Financial situation

When living in the parental home, young adults may enjoy the financial benefits of getting pocket money that can be spend freely. This parental contribution is likely to be stopped when they move out, whereas at the same time the capacity to spend freely will be seriously limited as a consequence of the costs of daily life that have to be dealt with. Thus it was hypothesised that pocket money would more often lead to postponement of the decision to leave home. Barker (1972) even suggested that parents may employ this type of monetary subsidy in order to keep the young adults at home. However, the data in this study do not support the assumption that direct parental contributions in the form of pocket money cause differences in the decision to leave home. Apparently, the mechanism of 'keeping close' by providing economic benefits is not strong enough to make young adults decide to remain in the parental home.

On the other hand, it was also not found that young adults are driven away from home by the obligation to compensate for the costs of living in the parental household by paying board.

To infer the possible effect of income position on the transition to independent living, it appeared necessary to distinguish between young adults who still participate in the educational system, young adults in the work force, and young adults who are unemployed. For students, income level does seem to affect the transition from planner to leaver. However, one must be aware of the fact that the amount of a scholarship for students is directly related to household status, that is, living with parents, or living away from home. Consequently, the transition may not have been triggered directly by (the prospect of receiving) more financial resources, especially because the rise⁷ in the scholarship probably is not large enough to cover the considerable increase in the costs of living entailed in moving out. Instead, the decision to leave home may be carried back to the mere fact that one pursues higher education, that is, the distance between the parental home and the educational institution may necessitate moving out, or departure from the

⁷ In the period 1993/1994 (the year that this survey was conducted), the base scholarship for university and college students who were living with their parents amounted to f228 per month, and students who lived independently received f563 monthly (NIBUD, 1993).

parental home may be prompted by normative expectations which associate (the onset of) advanced education with moving out.

For working young adults, income level plays a role in the transition from dweller to planner, but not in the transition from planner to leaver. This seems to suggest that young adults will become inclined to leave home when their income passes a certain critical level. Only then will they seriously undertake the necessary actions to effectuate their intention to leave home.

Within the group of unemployed young adults, the hypothesised effect of income level is not observed. However, when examining the effect of economic status, it appeared that unemployed individuals are relatively less anxious to move out. This pattern seems to suggest that it is not income per se that affects home-leaving, but rather that it is a sense of income security that matters.

All in all, the impact of the objective income situation on leaving home is thus only partially confirmed by the data.

The *subjective evaluation of income*, however, certainly turned out to affect home-leaving behaviour in a way that is consistent with our assumptions: on the average, the group of young adults who decided to stay home more often felt that their income is insufficient, and they also reported the highest level of acceptable income. The ones who had actually left the parental home were most satisfied with their level of income, even though the acceptable income level they reported was not much higher than the acceptable level among planners. The crucial element in explaining the effect of income position on the transition to independent living clearly emerges when confronting the actual income level with the income level that is considered acceptable. Among leavers the income discrepancy is much smaller than among planners, whereas among dwellers the income discrepancy amounts to as much as f800.

The variation in acceptable income levels that was observed makes it clear that it will not be easy to give a straightforward indication of the income level that will make young adults seriously consider the step to independent living. For one, the results of the regression analyses showed that the subjective evaluation of income is dependent on the context of leaving home. Young adults who leave home for education and those who start living alone are more satisfied with their current income. This is related to the finding that they consider a relatively smaller amount of money acceptable to live on. Obviously, the financial needs and thus the effect of financial position on the propensity to leave home varies with the motive for departure and with the living arrangement that is chosen when leaving home.

It was also investigated whether different perceptions of the financial consequences that leaving home may bring with it will influence the decision to leave home. Although there is considerable variation in the perceived consequences for the financial position, no systematic differences between leavers, planners and dwellers were observed. However, the subjective evaluation of having spending capacity appears to cause a difference in home-leaving behaviour. People who do not care as strongly about a cut-back in their ability to spend apparently are not discouraged from leaving home, despite the financial consequences they expect to occur. This seems particularly true for young adults who leave home for educational reasons, who place significantly less importance on abundant financial means.

Housing situation

It is assumed that individuals who enjoy comfortable housing conditions when living with their parents (a spacious house, a large room of their own), will be less inclined to move out. The data confirm this suggestion by showing that, when living at home, leavers more often lived in an apartment and less often had a room of their own, whereas dwellers more often inhabited a single-family house with a room of their own. The differences between the three behavioral groups are not significant though. Furthermore, it appeared that dwellers are significantly more satisfied with the living conditions in the parental house than planners and leavers are, and considering the significance of the B-coefficients, this can be attributed to objective housing characteristics. However, the proportion of variance in housing satisfaction that can be explained by these objective housing characteristics is so small ($R^2=0.07$), that the effect of housing type, housing capacity and a room of one's own is not reflected in differences in home-leaving behaviour. It must be concluded that the housing situation in the parental home does not significantly affect young adults in their decision to leave home or to postpone doing so.

The type of housing that young adults move into when they split off, is closely related to the motive for departure and to the age at leaving home. Those who leave for educational reasons almost exclusively end up in lodgings or in shared housing (doubling-up), whereas practically all individuals who move out for union formation inhabit an apartment or single-family house, in many instances even as an owner-occupier. When leaving after the age of 21, the proportion of young adults that occupies a room in lodgings or that shares accommodations declines sharply, whereas the proportion that opts for moving into an apartment rises.

In the discussion on the possible effect of housing situation on the intention to leave home it is often stressed that starters on the housing market usually occupy less attractive housing and may therefore be reluctant to move out. The data partly show otherwise.

That is, many nest-leavers in fact move into living quarters that cannot really be regarded as poor housing. On the other hand, we also found that the proportion of young nest-leavers that is not satisfied with their housing is indeed twice as high as the proportion of dissatisfied people in the total Dutch population. This relatively high level of discontent may stem from the fact that the proportion of starters that has to put up with relatively modest accommodations, in which they have less space or comfort, is indeed relatively high.

Yet, as much as 80% of nest-leavers reports being satisfied with their housing. It seems plausible to assume that young adults are probably well aware of their opportunities on the housing market and of their specific circumstances. In reaction, they have beforehand adapted their housing aspirations to their specific life style. Consequently, for a large proportion of home-leavers the actual housing situation agrees with the housing situation that is considered acceptable by them. When aspiration and reality concur, there is no reason for discontent.

The assumption that young adults have tuned their housing aspirations to their specific circumstances can also be inferred from the finding that on the average young adults expect a considerable improvement in terms of comfort, space, and privacy. This implies that they have an adjusted aspiration level. Obviously the anticipation of having independent housing is experienced as a positive change in itself, even though for many (but certainly not all) home-leavers the housing quality is relatively poor. It can be argued that moving into independent housing probably serves to meet the strong need of young adults to gain independence vis-a-vis their parents. Independent housing - no matter how meagre - thus becomes a symbol of freedom, autonomy and adulthood.

Judging from the discrepancy between acceptable housing and actual housing, it can be concluded that leavers certainly differ with respect to the degree to which they had to adjust their housing aspirations. Individuals whose departure is related to union formation are able to effectuate their housing aspirations most effectively, whereas young adults who leave home for work had to adjust their housing aspirations relatively more often. It is possible that the former can more easily decide to defer the transition until they have found housing that is to their liking, whereas the latter experience more time pressure to find a place to live, because they are forced to migrate to a (new) job, and cannot afford to await better housing opportunities. It is argued, however, that for these leavers, as well as for young adults who leave for education, these initial living quarters may be regarded as temporary and transitional, which allows for a lowering of housing requirements, at least for the time being.

After all, the results also provided several indications that the probability of moving out is related to the type of housing young adults aim at, and is affected by the (perceived)

accessibility of the housing market. First, from examination of the differences between leavers, planners, and dwellers with respect to the type of housing aimed at, it became clear that looking for housing in the informal segment of the housing market (in lodgings or shared residences) increases the individual's chances of finding a place to live; on the other hand, a preference for two- or three-room apartments or houses may lead to postponement of the decision to leave home.

Second, the data revealed that the young adults' intention to move out is influenced by the amount of difficulty they expect to encounter when looking for housing. It was found, that on the average dwellers anticipate much more difficulty than planners do, which is consistent with the hypothesised pattern. However, contradicting our hypothesis is the finding that, on the average, the leavers were much less confident about finding housing accommodation than the planners were. It may well be that inaccurate retrospective questioning, where an exact temporal indication was missing, is responsible for this.

Third, the crucial effect of the supply on the housing market emerges from the results of the regression analysis, which showed that the amount of difficulty in finding a house is related to the region (that is, the housing market) to which one is oriented. It appeared that young adults believe that it will be harder to find housing in the eastern, central, and Randstad regions of the Netherlands than in the northern, southwestern and southeastern regions. The central region and the Randstad are known for their tight housing market.

Social pressure

The young adult's decision to leave the parental home may also be guided by social expectations that are expressed by important reference groups. These expectations are sometimes based on some age norm and sometimes on ideas about certain preconditions or criteria that should be met in order to leave the parental home. It appeared that as many as 75% of the parents and 80% of the friends hold either a minimum age, or a maximum age, or both. Of course, this may imply nothing more than that people have a more or less general conception of the appropriate age, and does not necessarily mean that they actually use age as a direct guiding principle. But, as it turned out from the question about the importance of a series of conditions, age actually appeared to serve as an important criterion to leave home for 50% of the parents and 42% of the friends. These percentages are quite high, so it seems justifiable to conclude that age still functions as a normative guideline for many young adults.

Comparison of the age norms for dwellers and planners revealed that the prevailing age norm is indeed reflected in the behaviour of the young adult. On the average, the reference groups of dwellers use significantly higher minimum and maximum age criteria than the reference groups of planners do, so it may be concluded that the age norm is, at least partly, responsible for the deferral among dwellers. Age norms cannot explain the difference between planners and leavers, however. It is possible that age regulates the

formation of an intention, which implies that no actions will be undertaken to leave home before reaching that age; after that, a successful transition is dependent upon other factors.

However, age is not the only principle on which the appropriateness of the timing of leaving home is based. It appeared that expectations that deal with other domains, such as the educational career, economic independence, and union formation are also often referred to by the young adults' reference groups. We have seen that expectations which relate leaving home to the educational career are observed mostly among leavers, whereas expectations regarding union formation and economic independence are more prevalent among planners and even more so among dwellers. As we know that leaving home for educational reasons takes place at an earlier time than leaving home for work or union formation does, the above finding can be interpreted as an indication that normative expectations act upon the decision to leave home or to postpone the transition for a while. The actuality of transition norms also becomes clear from the finding that, on the one hand, it is particularly young adults who leave home for education who experience social expectations that are related to their educational career (while financial independence is not an issue for them), and that on the other hand it is particularly those who leave home to establish a relationship who experience social expectations concerning union formation. Of course, not all adults will be primarily guided by such social expectations, but it is evident that social expectations have not yet died out in this modern, individualised society. This can also be inferred from the remarkably high level of correspondence in norms between children and their parents. Apparently, many young adults share normative notions regarding the proper timing to leave, and seem to be affected by the prevailing normative expectations.

Of course, the social expectations that direct an individual's decision to leave or remain in the parental home, may not always be based on such concrete and specific issues as those described above. Instead, the social pressure that is experienced by the young adults may be expressed in general terms. Yet, such an implicit social pressure may just as effectively influence a person's behaviour as clear, well-defined expectations can. After all, the data clearly demonstrated that whatever the specific underlying message of the social expectation, social pressure that is exerted upon young adults significantly influences home-leaving intentions and behaviour. It must be noted that young adults care more about the views of their parents than they do about the opinion of friends. The average score on the global measure of social pressure (i.e., the 'subjective norm') showed that, compared to the other two behavioral groups, leavers are most strongly stimulated to leave home; planners are also mildly pressed to leave but not as strongly as leavers, whereas dwellers typically experience a negative social pressure which implies that they are compelled to linger at home.

These findings clearly support the suggestion that leaving home is also and significantly influenced by the social context of an individual. An extra merit of this study is that, besides showing the effect of global social pressure, it also contains a more detailed description of the type and prevalence of norms that underly the social expectations.

The Hotel-Mama factor

Living in the parental home is often relatively comfortable and rather convenient where domestic care is concerned. It may therefore be quite attractive to the young adult to stay home, especially when a certain amount of individual freedom is warranted. These aspects may create the feeling of living in Hotel-Mama. Aside from financial benefits and comfortable housing, which have been discussed before, the number of siblings, family type and the mother's labour market participation have been mentioned in the literature as relevant aspects which may mediate the development of such a Hotel-Mama feeling. But although the effects of these three elements pointed in the expected direction, the differences between the three behavioral groups were far from significant. The hypothesised effect of these objective indicators of a Hotel-Mama feeling therefore have not been confirmed by this study.

When asking about subjective perceptions of the situation in the parental home, it appears that for all of the items that were defined as representative of the Hotel-Mama factor, the leavers reported these aspects significantly less than planners did, which is consistent with the hypothesis that they are more likely to leave because they will gain most by leaving home. However, when simultaneously considering the changes that they expected to occur when leaving home, it turned out that the leavers did *not* anticipate the most favourable improvements. For each of the aspects, leavers have a less favourable attitude than planners and dwellers do, which is rather remarkable, and certainly not as hypothesised. Yet, in the transition from not-inclined to inclined, it appeared that differences in anticipated changes or in the evaluation of emotional security, parental support, and conflicts with parents could explain why some individuals decided to postpone the decision for the time being, while others had formed an outspoken intention to move out. Apparently, the items defined merely affect the transition from no-intention to intention, but do not have an effect on the subsequent transition from intention to behaviour. This effect was observed in the preliminary survey as well, where it was attributed to problems in recall.

It seems more plausible, however, that the arguments that were distinguished here may at some point lose their significance in the decision making process, that is, once the intention to leave home has been formed, these practical and psychological considerations are no longer relevant. Instead, other considerations may come to mind, which will

supersede the relevance of arguments that were important before. This conclusion is contrary to the theory of Ajzen and Fishbein, which assumes a direct link between intention and behaviour, implying that the set of factors that can be found to affect the formation of an intention should have an identical impact on the performance of the behaviour. Instead, we found that some factors affect the first transition in the decision-making process in which an intention is formed, but that they do not necessarily affect the second stage in the process, in which an intention is effectuated into actual behaviour. This conclusion underlines that a separate examination of the two stages in the decision-making process is crucial in understanding the determinants of home-leaving behaviour - or any behaviour, for that matter.

	PLANNER — / LEAVER		DWELLER — / LEAVER	
SOCEC status	unemployed show higher transition rate	-	unemployed less inclined	+
INCOME	leavers have higher income	+	no difference	0
studying	leavers have higher income	+	no difference	0
working	no difference in income	0	planners have higher income	+
unempl	leavers have slightly lower income	-	no difference	0
INCOMCHANG	leavers less often experienced pos. income change	-	planners more often had pos. income change	+
INCOMSAT	leavers are more satisfied	+	planners are more satisfied	+
ACCEPTINCOM	no difference	0	planners have lower income standard	+
DISCREPINCOM	leavers show smallest discrepancy	+	planners report smaller discrepancy	+
CHANGFINC	leavers expect a weaker retrogression	+	planners expect a stronger retrogression	-
EVALFINC	leavers find it less important	+	no difference	0
PARHOUSE	no difference	0	no difference	0
ACCHOUSE	leavers more often in room or (large) house	+	dwellers more often look for apartment	+
ACCRROOM	leavers look for more rooms	+	dwellers more often look for 2/3 rooms	+
ACCFACIL	no difference	0	planners more often accept joint facilities	+
FINDHOUSE	leavers expected to encounter more trouble	-	planners expect to encounter less trouble	+
CHANGHOUSE	leavers expect less improvement	-	no difference	0
EVALHOUSE	leavers find it less important	+	no difference	0
NORMPARENTS	leavers experience more parental pressure to leave	+	planners experience more pressure to leave	+
NORMFRIENDS	leavers experience stronger peer pressure to leave	+	planners experience more pressure to leave	+
MINAGEparents +/-	no difference	0	planners more often experience an age norm	+
mean MINAGEparents	no difference	0	planners experience a lower minimum age norm	+
MAXAGEparents +/-	leavers less often experience an age norm	+	no difference	0
mean MAXAGEparents	no difference	0	planners experience a lower maximum age norm	+
PAREXP-education	leavers face stronger educational norms	+	no difference	0
PAREXP-econ.indep	no difference	0	planners face weaker economic norms	+
PAREXP-union	leavers face weaker union-formation norms	+	planners face weaker union-formation norms	+
SIBLINGS	leavers have slightly more siblings	+	no difference	0
MUMWORK	mothers of leavers are employed more often	+	no difference	0
FAMTYPE	leavers more often come from 1-parent families	+	planners more often come from 1-father family	+
CHANGEMO	leavers expect smaller increase in emotion.security	-	planners expect stronger increase in emo.security	+
CHANGSUPP	leavers expect a stronger decline in parent.support	-	no difference	0
CHANGAUTO	leavers expect a stronger increase in autonomy	+	no difference	0
CHANGCARE	leavers expect smaller increase in daily responsib.	+	no difference	0
CHANG01	leavers expect a stronger increase in freedom	+	planners expect a stronger increase in freedom	+
CHANGCONF	no difference	0	planners expect stronger reduction in conflicts	+
CHANGSOC	no difference	0	no difference	0

+ = in accordance with hypothesised effect ; - = contradicting expected effect ; 0 = no effect

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

Chapter 8. Main predictors in the explanation of leaving home

8.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the results of a systematic and comprehensive examination were reported of the various factors that were assumed to influence the formation of an intention to leave home, and the actual decision to move out. For many of the explanatory variables, a significant difference between dwellers and planners, or between planners and leavers was found. It was concluded that these aspects apparently affect the decision making process and can explain why some young adults are willing to move out while others are not, and why still others actually moved out during the period of observation. Some other factors appeared to have only very small or insignificant effects. Appendix I in chapter 7 presented a summary overview of the main findings of the previous chapter.

In addition, it was observed that the effect of many of the main explanatory factors varies with several mediating factors. Especially motive for departure, living arrangement, and gender appeared to be relevant variables which cause significant variation in the impact of the main factors. Apparently, not all young adults look upon leaving home and its possible consequences in the same way.

At this point, however, the question arises which of the factors that were found to have an effect are most important in understanding, or predicting, the decision to leave the parental home. Were all factors considered simultaneously, the resulting multivariate model would be very difficult to interpret and would therefore yield only suboptimal insight. Instead, it will be more constructive to strive for parsimony and search for the variables that most adequately predict the transition to independent living. A convenient analytic tool to discover the most important distinguishing factors is the so-called CHAID-analysis, which stands for Chi-square Automatic Interaction Detection (Kass, 1980).

In line with the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which asserts that behaviour is always preceded by the intention to perform the behaviour, two stages will again be distinguished in the process of decision making: an initial stage of intention formation, and a subsequent stage in which the intention is effectuated into overt behaviour. Accordingly, the CHAID-analysis will be performed for the two stages successively. First, however, the basic principles of CHAID-analysis will be discussed.

8.2 The CHAID-analysis

8.2.1 Basic principles of CHAID-analysis

The CHAID technique is explorative in nature, and is designed especially for the analysis of (large numbers of) categorical variables, both nominal and ordinal. The analysis typically aims to reduce the information in the dataset, without losing explanatory power, by detecting the most informative subdivision of cases in mutually exclusive segments. It does so in two ways.

First, CHAID tries to reduce the number of categories in the predictor variables: categories which (given a specific user-defined significance level for χ^2) are not significantly different in their effect on the dependent variable are merged together. This allows for the identification of relevant subcategories in the predictor variables, and adds to a more efficient prediction of the behaviour under study.

Second, CHAID breaks down the total sample into nested subsets on the basis of the strongest association between the predictor variables and the dependent variable. In doing so, the most important predictors for the behaviour in question emerge successively as the analysis proceeds. Moreover, the further split of identified subsets discloses the interaction effects, making clear how explanatory factors interact with each other in their effect on the dependent variable (Magidson, 1993).

Tree diagram

The results of the CHAID-analysis are presented in a tree diagram, whose branches (or *nodes*) correspond to the subgroups that were split off (Magidson, 1993). A tree diagram contains the following information. First, it shows the names of the predictors on which the population and its subsequent subgroups are split. For each subgroup the tree diagram then displays the values of the categories that represent the subgroups, the number of respondents in each subgroup, as well as the relative number (%) of individuals in the subgroup that are coded 1 on the dependent variable. In other words, in the tree-diagram investigating the transition from dweller to planner (see section 8.3), the percentages refer to the relative number of respondents who intend to move out within the subgroup of dwellers and planners. Likewise, in the tree-diagram which investigates the transition from intention to behaviour (section 8.4), the percentages refer to the number of respondents who have actually left home as a percentage of the total number of planners and leavers in the subgroup. Thus, the percentages in the tree-diagram can be understood as *transition rates*.

Segment description

The results of the CHAID-analysis can also be shown in an overview containing a column with segment descriptions, followed by a column with the transition rate for cases in that specific segment (this is also called the score), and a column with the index. The index

for a given segment measures the average response score for that segment relative to the average score for the total sample. An index of, say, 340 means that the transition rate for this segment is 240% higher than average (Magidson, 1993), or, stated otherwise, that this segment has a relative risk of 3.4. The segment description that results from the CHAID-analysis thus makes it possible to identify the population subgroups that are most likely to have the intention to leave home or - once having formed an intention - are at the highest risk of leaving home.

8.2.2 The CHAID-algorithm

A staged procedure

To perform the analyses, the CHAID-procedure in SPSS for Windows was employed. The segmentation algorithm proceeds in a step-wise manner, and consists of two stages (Kass, 1980; Magidson, 1993), which are repeatedly performed in successive steps. In the first stage, CHAID merges nonsignificant categories of each predictor, thus looking for the best partition for each predictor. In order to do so, each pair of categories of each predictor is cross-tabulated with the dependent variable, whereupon a Likelihood Ratio χ^2 -statistic is calculated for each contingency table. If the χ^2 of any pair of categories is not significant (that is, the transition rates in the distinguished categories do not differ significantly), the categories will be combined. If a joint category ends up containing more than 3 categories, CHAID will subsequently test if any category should be unmerged. To prevent that CHAID enters a loop, the α -level for unmerging is set higher than the α -level for merging.

In the second stage of the algorithm, the significance of each optimally merged predictor is calculated and the most significant predictor, that is the predictor having the lowest p -value¹, is selected. The p -value represents the probability that the observed relationship between a predictor and the dependent variable will occur if the two variables were statistically independent. A very small p -value thus means that the probability that the two variables are unrelated is very small. In other words, the predictor with the smallest p -value shows the strongest relationship with the dependent variable, and CHAID chooses this variable as the most distinguishing predictor². The group will then be split according to the (merged) categories of this predictor variable, producing a number of distinctive subgroups.

¹ When some categories of the predictor are merged together, the Bonferroni adjustment is used in the calculation of the p -value. If no categories are merged, the unadjusted p -value is used; if all categories are merged, the p -value is set to 1.

² In Table 8.3.1 and 8.4.1, an overview of the predictor variables and their significance in the initial split is presented. Calculation of the significance of predictor variables for subsequent splits is then performed again in each successive step.

Automatic mode and stopping rules

After the initial split, the procedure of merging and splitting is automatically repeated for each of the subgroups independently. Each subgroup will be analysed to determine the relevance of further subdivisions of the sample, thus expanding the tree diagram.

The procedure during which the tree diagram is generated, continues until there are no more significant predictors to split on, or until a user-defined limit is reached. The stopping rules that can be controlled by the user relate to the level of significance and to the minimum segment size. In the present study, the level of significance for both merging and the selection of predictor variables was set at 0.05. Additionally, the 'before merge group size' (that is, the minimum subgroup size required to allow splitting) was set at 50³, and the 'after merge group size' (that is, the minimum number of cases in a segment after the split) was set at 10.

Interactive mode

CHAID can also be performed in interactive mode instead of automatic mode. This enables the investigator to select a predictor variable other than the one that CHAID would choose automatically as the best predictor. In this case, the (sub)group will be split on this user-selected predictor variable. Moreover, in interactive mode it is possible to rearrange categories that CHAID would not combine automatically when adhering to the significance criterium of 0.05.

At any point in the analysis, one can return to automatic mode, and CHAID then automatically starts expanding the tree below the current node in which automatic mode is restarted. Existing splits in higher-level nodes will be maintained. Splits which are based on user-selected predictor variables are marked in the tree diagram with an asterisk.

Classification of variables

In CHAID-analysis, both the dependent variable and all predictor variables must be categorical. When continuous variables (like income) are to be analysed, they must first be recoded and transformed into categorical variables. Categorical variables may be nominal or ordinal. It is essential for CHAID to know which predictor variables must be treated as nominal variables and which are ordinal in nature, for this affects the merging procedure and the calculation of significance levels. For nominal variables any combination of categories is possible; for ordinal variables the natural ordering of categories must be maintained and categories can therefore only be combined when they are adjacent to each other.

³ Because the minimum group size criterium is likely to be reached very quickly when a sample of only 837 and 366 respondents respectively will be broken down, the before-merge group size was set as low as possible.

Before starting up the CHAID-algorithm, CHAID invites you to classify the predictors either as 'free' (for nominal variables), or as 'monotonic' or 'float' (for ordinal variables). The float-option differs from the monotonic-option in that it allows the final category (which usually is the category containing missing values) to be combined with any other category. When there are no missing values, the ordinal variable should be defined as monotonic (or else the final category may be merged with any of the other categories, thus disturbing the natural ordering of the variable). Ordinal variables with missing values, on the other hand, are usually treated as float-variables. The advantage of this option, where missing values are treated as a separate category⁴, is that at the beginning of the analyses all cases will be included in the sample, even when they have missing values on one or two of the predictor variables. This precludes useful information on other predictor variables, for which these cases do have valid observations, being unnecessarily lost beforehand, simply because they have missing values on predictors which may not even emerge as an important determinant. Yet, when the CHAID-procedure selected a predictor variable with missing observations, the researcher manually unmerged the cases with missing values, so that these cases would not distort the results of subsequent splits.

Besides selecting the dependent variable and the predictor variables to be included in the analysis, it is also possible to assign a weight⁵ variable in SPSS-CHAID. As the sample in the present study is a stratified sample, the weighting of the observations guarantees that the results of the analyses reflect the situation of the base population of Dutch young adults. When a weight variable is used, the contribution of a case in the analysis is weighted in proportion to the number of population units that the case represents in the sample.

8.3 The transition from no-intention to intention

The variables

In this section, we start by examining the most important determinants of the first stage in the decision making process, the stage of intention formation. A dichotomous variable BEHAV01 has been specified as the dependent variable for the CHAID-analysis. This variable was coded 0 for cases who had no short-term intention to leave the parental home, and 1 for those who intended to leave home within twelve months.

The predictor variables that were included in the analyses are listed in Table 8.3.1. This table shows the symbolic names, a short description of the variables, the values of the categories, and the significance of each predictor variable before the initial split of the

⁴ CHAID also treats missing values of nominal variables as a separate category.

⁵ Whenever a weight variable is defined, a weighted loglinear modeling algorithm (WML) is used.

Table 8.3.1 Overview of the predictor variables and their significance before the initial split in the analysis of intention formation (in order of significance)

Variable name	Variable label	Categories	Sign.
NORMPAR	Normative pressure by parents	-4,-3,-2,-1,+1,+2,+3,+4	2.5 e-14
NORMFR	Normative pressure by friends	-4,-3,-2,-1,+1,+2,+3,+4	2.1 e-12
EDUCLEV4	Educational level	univ, hbo, vwo/mbo, mavo/lbo ¹⁾	4.9 e-6
INCOMSAT	Income satisfaction	-2,-1,0,+1,+2	4.1 e-5
PARSTUD	Educational level of parents	high (acad/coll), low	5.4 e-5
LIVARRAN	Living arrangement after leaving home	alone, partner, with others	1.6 e-4
MOTIVE	Motive for leaving home	educ, work, union, indep	0.003
CHANCONF	Expected change in conflicts	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	0.010
ECONSTAT	Economic status	studying, working, unempl	0.014
FINDHOUS	Expected trouble in finding a house	0,1,2,3,4	0.028
CHANEMO	Expected change in emotional security	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	0.034
GENDER	Gender	male, female	0.048
DISCINC	Discrepancy actual-acceptable income	categories increasing by f250	0.066
OUTREGION	Region of destination	north,east,centre,randst,sw,se	0.072
CHANGFREE	Expected change in freedom	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	0.10
ACCINCOM	Acceptable income level	categories increasing by f250	0.15
AGE	Age	18,19,...,26	0.28
INCOME	Income level	categories increasing by f250	0.32
CHANGSUPP	Expected change in parental support	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	0.48
ACCFACIL	Acceptable facilities	private, shared	1
ACCHOUS	Acceptable housing type	room, apartment, house	1
ACCROOM	Acceptable number of rooms	1,2,3,4, ≥5	1
CHANGAUTO	Expected change in autonomy	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	1
CHANGCARE	Expected change in daily care	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	1
CHANGFINC	Expected change in financial situation	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	1
CHANHOUS	Expected change in housing situation	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	1
CHANGSOC	Expected change in social contacts	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	1
INCHANG2	Income changes during past year	decrease, no change, increase	1
MUMWORK	Labour market participation of mother	yes, no	1
PARHOUS	Housing type of parental home	house, apartment	1
SIBLINGS	Number of siblings	0,1,...,8	1

1) hbo = vocational college; vwo/mbo = secondary prepar./intermediate vocat.level; mavo,lbo = lower formative/vocat.level

sample. The list of predictor variables includes the independent variables that were defined in the previous chapter to represent financial, housing, normative, or Hotel-Mama considerations, as well as the mediating variables which were found to influence several of these four independent factors, such as gender, motive, living arrangement, age, economic status, educational level of both respondent and parents, and region of destination.

There are two exceptions, however. To examine the effect of the normative context, it was decided to confine ourselves to the global measure of social pressure⁶ as proposed by the Theory of Planned Behaviour, and to disregard the specific nature of the normative

⁶ Global measure of social pressure = 'subjective norm' = perceived opinion x importance attached to the opinion of the relevant other.

expectations underlying the global normative pressure (these have been described extensively in chapter 7). The rationale behind this is that for some of the items it is not indisputably clear whether their effect is a pushing or a retaining one, and this problem is avoided when just the overall measures (*normpar* and *normfr*) are included.

Also, the evaluation component is left out from the analyses. It is felt that a correct interpretation of the effect of a positive or negative evaluation should always occur in connection with the score on the related expected-change component, or else it might lead to the wrong conclusions⁷. Inclusion of the change-component, on the other hand, will certainly provide useful insights regarding the effect that the subjective anticipation of the consequences of leaving home may have on the decision making process. The alternative option of including a combined attitude-measure is rejected, because there are no empirical grounds to justify the assumption that the two components have an interactive effect (Liefbroer, 1991; Fokkema, 1996).

Examination of the tree diagram

The tree diagram in Scheme 8.3.1 shows the result of the splitting procedure, based on the predictor variables in Table 8.3.1. The root node in the tree diagram represents the total undivided population sample (node 0), and displays the average transition rate. Of the 837 individuals who were living at home at the time of the interview, 22.9% reported that they intend to leave home within one year; 77.1% is not yet willing to leave.

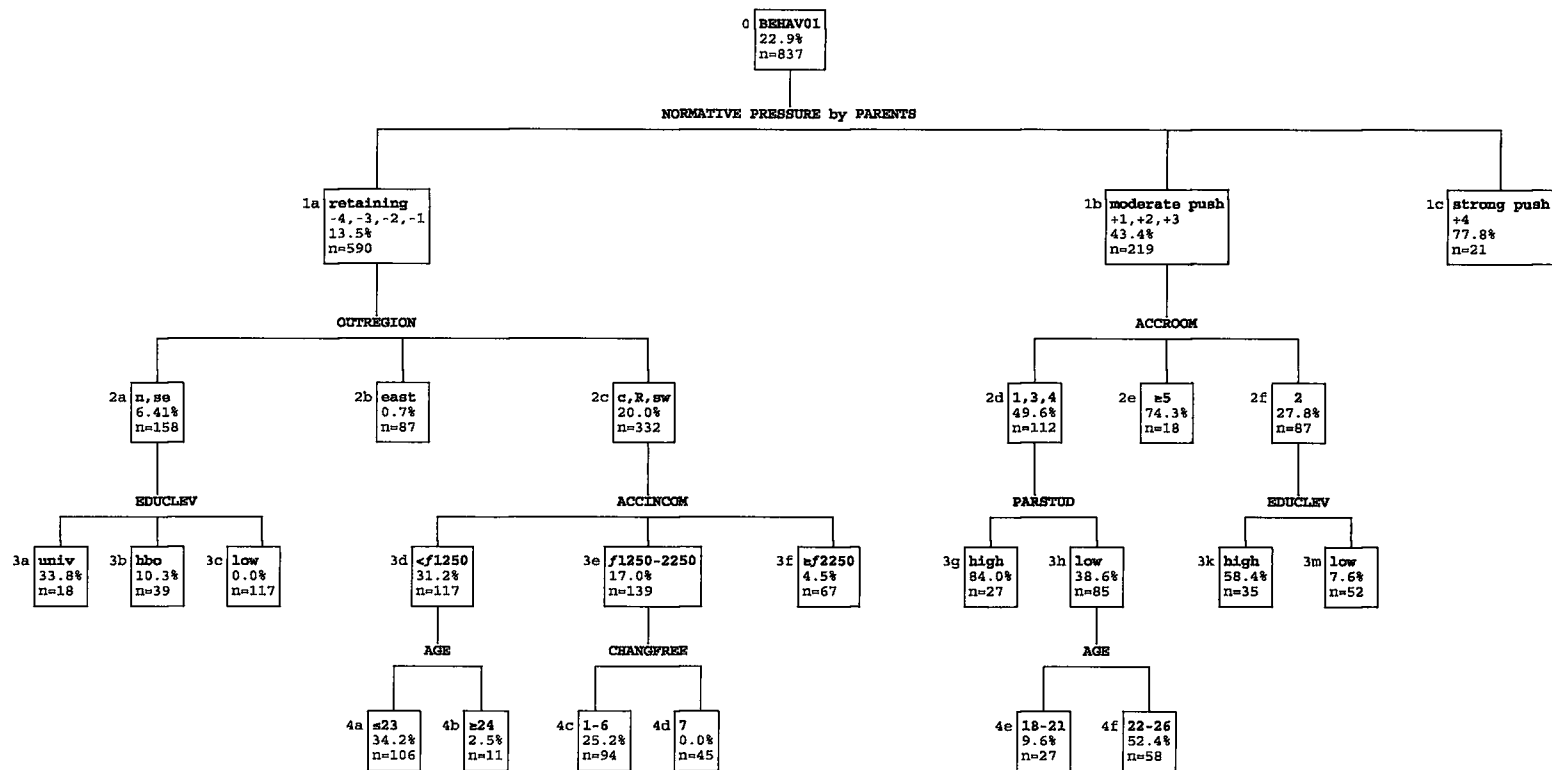
The most important factor influencing the intention to leave home appears to be the **normative pressure** that is exerted by parents. Among those whose parents feel that they should not leave home yet (node 1a, the largest group), not even 15% shows the intention to leave home. When, on the other hand, parents are felt to exert a moderate pressure to move out (node 1b; scores 1,2,3), the percentage rises to about twice the average rate (43.4%). In the third group, which is represented by individuals who experience an extremely strong pressure to move out, it is even as high as 77.8% (node 1c). This pattern matches our expectations about the retaining or pushing effect of normative opinions.

For those in the first group, the **region of destination** is the most important factor which further determines the willingness to move out. Those who plan to move to the eastern region of the Netherlands are not very eager to leave home yet: not even 1% has the intention to move out (node 1b). If one plans to move to the northern or south-eastern region of the Netherlands (node 2a), the proportion is slightly higher (6.4%), but still

⁷ For instance, a relatively low evaluation of, say, autonomy would lead to the impression that individuals may thus be less motivated to leave home, whereas a combination with a relatively high degree of expected change may in fact result in a stronger motivation to leave.

Scheme 8.3.1

Tree diagram of the most distinguishing factors to predict intention formation among the group of nest-stayers.



well below the average transition rate. However, within this group the willingness to move out is strongly influenced by **educational level**: among the ones who have not had a higher education (node 3c), none intends to leave home against their parents' will. In contrast, of the ones who (will) pursue(d) an education at advanced vocational level (node 3b), 10% has definite plans to move out shortly, and of the ones who have entered (or will enter) a university (node 3a), 33.8% has the intention to leave shortly. This suggests that participation in higher education more easily tempts individuals to ignore the retaining normative pressure of their parents.

It is also interesting to see that where academic and vocational level were combined in the previous chapter, CHAID demonstrates that a further subdivision between university and vocational college can be useful in predicting intention-formation. Apparently, when it comes to the decision to leave home, attending a university is somewhat different than pursuing an education at college level, at least in the northern and southeastern regions. This is probably related to the fact that college-institutions are geographically more widespread than universities, thus reducing the need to migrate.

In the other regions that were distinguished here, educational level apparently does not play a decisive role. Perhaps the probability of moving to the central or Randstad region of the Netherlands is higher altogether, because these regions have more job opportunities which attracts many working young adults, causing the differentiation by educational level to disappear.

Individuals whose parents think their children should not leave home yet and who expect to move to the central, Randstad, or southwestern region (node 2c), show a relatively stronger propensity to leave home (20%) than young adults moving to other regions do. It appears, however, that their enthusiasm may be tempered by the level of **income** they consider to be **acceptable**. Just those who think that an income below f1250 will be sufficient to live on independently (node 3d) appear to be willing to move out relatively more often: 31% of them reported having the intention to leave within 12 months. Interesting enough, when the young adults in this subgroup are 24 years of **age** or older (node 4b), only a very small proportion of them (2.5%) intends to leave home. Of course, we are dealing with an exceptionally small number of respondents here, which may distort the finding. In the younger age group (node 4a), we see that the percentage reporting to be willing to leave home practically equals the average rate observed in the higher-node subgroup from which they are split off.

When young adults feel that they need an income between f1250 and f2250 (node 3e), the proportion of planners drops sharply to 17%, and when individuals think they need more than f2250 (node 3f), the transition rate falls far below the overall average rate of 22.9%: only 4.5% of the respondents in subgroup 3e has short-term plans to move out. The pattern observed in the distinguished categories for acceptable income match our assumptions as stated in chapter 7, that higher income aspirations will discourage young adults from considering moving out.

The group of individuals who aspire to an income between $f1250$ and $f2250$ is further subdivided on the **change in freedom** they expect (nodes 4c and 4d). However, the merging procedure has generated a combination of categories which do not provide an informative distinction between subgroups: only those who anticipate an extremely strong increase in freedom are split off from all other cases. Surprisingly enough, none of these cases intends to leave home, which is contrary to our assumption that anticipation of an increase in freedom would more often lure young adults out of the parental home.

Turning back to the second group that was determined in the initial split (node 1b, that is, the group which experienced a moderate pressure to move out), we can see that the **number of rooms** that is considered **acceptable** further determines the propensity to leave home. It appears that young adults who aim at housing with 2 rooms (node 2f) are most reluctant to move out; only 28% of them has the intention to leave home. This reluctance particularly applies to those with a low **educational level** (node 3m): only 7.6% of them reported having definite plans to move out. In contrast, when individuals in this subgroup have a high level of education (node 3k), as much as 58.4% has the intention to move out.

Among young adults who aim at housing with 1 or 3 or 4 rooms (node 2d), the proportion of planners is nearly twice as high as in subgroup 2f which aims at two rooms. Among individuals who feel that housing with more than four rooms is acceptable, the proportion of individuals that intends to move out is even almost three times as high (node 2e). These findings concerning the effect of acceptable number of rooms largely match the conclusions in the previous chapter, that availability or shortage of specific types of housing affect the decision to move out. However, where in the previous chapter both 2 and 3-room accommodations were found to restrict home-leaving opportunities, it appears here that especially housing with two rooms invokes a stronger reticence to move out, and that 3-room dwellings are combined with 1-room dwellings (probably in lodgings or shared residence) and four room housing, which implies that the propensity to leave home among individuals aiming at 3-room housing is not significantly different from that among individuals who consider one or four rooms acceptable.

According to the subsequent split of this subgroup, **educational level** of the **parents** may further increase or temper the willingness to leave home. When the parents of young adults in this subgroup have not studied (node 3h), the proportion that plans to leave home is significantly lower than when parents have attained a high level of education (node 3g). Especially when the young adults are younger than 22 (node 4e), in which case only 9.6% of subgroup 3h intends to leave, in contrast to the 52.4% of those in subgroup 3h who are 22 or older (node 4f).

When the parental pressure to leave the parental home is extremely high (node 1c), no other factors are seen to mediate the intention formation. Apparently, the social pressure from the parents is a strong enough incentive to induce the intention to leave home.

Table 8.3.2 Segment description, identifying the segments with an above-average and a below-average rate in the transition from dweller to planner (BEHAV01)

Description	Score	Index	% of all
- young adults experiencing moderate pressure to leave, who aim at 1, 3 or 4 room housing, and whose parents have high education	84.0	367	3.2
- young adults experiencing extremely strong pressure to move out	77.8	340	2.5
- young adults experiencing moderate pressure to leave home, who aim at housing with more than 4 rooms	74.3	324	2.2
- young adults experiencing moderate pressure to leave home, who aim at housing with 2 rooms, and who have high educational level	58.4	255	4.2
- young adults experiencing moderate pressure to leave home, who aim at 1, 3 or 4 room housing, whose parents have not studied, and who are 22 or older	52.4	229	6.9
- young adults experiencing pressure to stay home, who will move to central, Randstad, or southwestern region, who feel that an income of less than f1250 is sufficient, and are younger than 24	34.2	149	12.7
- young adults experiencing pressure to stay at home, who will move to northern or southeastern region, and have university degree	33.8	148	2.2
- young adults experiencing pressure to stay home, who will move to central, Randstad, or southwestern region, and who feel that an income between f1250 and f2250 is sufficient	17.0	74	16.6
- young adults experiencing pressure to stay at home, who will move to northern or southeastern region, and have vocational college	10.3	45	4.7
- young adults experiencing moderate pressure to leave home, who aim at 1, 3 or 4 room housing, whose parents have not studied, and who are younger than 22	9.6	42	3.2
- young adults experiencing moderate pressure to leave home, who aim at housing with 2 rooms, and who have low educational level	7.6	33	6.2
- young adults experiencing pressure to stay home, who will move to central, Randstad, or southwestern region, and who feel that an income of more than f2250 is sufficient	4.5	20	8.0
- young adults experiencing pressure to stay home, who will move to central, Randstad, or southwestern region, who feel that an income of less than f1250 is sufficient, and who are 24 or older	2.5	11	1.3
- young adults experiencing pressure to stay home, and who will move to the eastern region	0.7	0	10.4
- young adults experiencing pressure to stay at home, who will move to northern or southeastern region, and have not studied	0.0	0	12.1

The results of the CHAID-analysis can also be summarized in a segment description. The overview in Table 8.3.2 shows that all but two population segments which experience a (moderate or strong) pressure to leave home, have an index above 100, which indicates that in these segments the propensity to leave home lies above the average rate. The acceptable number of rooms, the educational level of self and of parents, and/or age may further mediate the propensity, but not to the extent that, in case of a relatively lowered desire to move out, the rate falls below average. In contrast, most individuals who experience a normative pressure to stay at home, display a transition rate below average, with the exception of those who intend to move to the northern and southeastern region and have an academic degree, and the 18-23 year olds who will be moving to the central,

Randstad or southwestern regions and who feel that an income of less than f1250 is sufficient.

The segment description and accompanying index scores thus ever so clearly demonstrate the decisive influence that parents exert on their children in the decision to leave home.

8.4 The transition from intention to behaviour

As a second stage in the decision making process, the transition from intention to actual behaviour will be analysed. The dependent variable in this analysis, BEHAV12, was coded 1 for cases which had the intention to leave home shortly, and coded 2 for cases which had recently left the parental home. In Table 8.4.1, the predictor variables to be entered in the analysis are presented in order of their significance for the prediction of home-leaving behaviour before the initial split.

Table 8.4.1 Overview of the predictor variables in the analysis of the transition from intention to behaviour (in order of their significance for the initial split)

Variable name	Variable label	Categories	Sign.
INCOME	Income level	categories increasing by f250	2.9 e-14
INCOMSAT	Income satisfaction	-2,-1,0,+1,+2	2.7 e-12
NORMPAR	Normative pressure by parents	-4,-3,-2,-1,+1,+2,+3,+4	1.3 e-7
NORMFR	Normative pressure by friends	-4,-3,-2,-1,+1,+2,+3,+4	1.4 e-6
DISCINC	Discrepancy actual-acceptable income	categories increasing by f250	8.6 e-6
ACCINCOM	Acceptable income level	categories increasing by f250	0.002
MOTIVE	Motive for departure	educ, work, union, indep	0.003
ACCHOUSE	Acceptable housing type	room, apartment, house	0.004
PARSTUD	Educational level of parents	high (acad/coll), low	0.005
CHANCONF	Expected change in conflicts	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	0.025
LIVARRAN	Living arrangement when moving out	alone, partner, with others	0.030
CHANGFINC	Expected change in financial situation	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	0.046
CHANGFREE	Expected change in freedom	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	0.047
GENDER	Gender	male, female	0.049
CHANGSUPP	Expected change in parental support	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	0.073
CHANGHOUS	Expected change in housing situation	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	0.082
CHANGEMO	Expected change in emotional security	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	0.12
ACCROOM	Acceptable number of rooms	1,2,3,4, ≥5	0.31
AGE	Age	18,19,...,26	0.33
OUTREGION	Region of destination	north,east,centre,randst,sw,se	0.38
ACCFACIL	Acceptable facilities	private, shared	1
ECONSTAT	Economic status	studying, working, unempl	1
CHANGAUTO	Expected change in autonomy	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	1
CHANGCARE	Expected change in daily care	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	1
CHANGSOC	Expected change in social contacts	-3,-2,-1,0,+1,+2,+3	1
EDUCLEV	Educational level	univ, hbo, vwo/mbo, mavo/lbo	1
FINDHOUS	Expected trouble in finding a house	0,1,2,3,4	1
MUMWORK	Labour market participation of mother	yes, no	1
PARHOUS	Housing type of parental home	house, apartment	1
SIBLINGS	Number of siblings	0,1,...,8	1

The variable which measured recent income changes was disregarded, because it was argued in the previous chapter that for the group of home-leavers this factor will presumably have operated more than one year ago, thus obscuring the effect it may have on the behaviour.

Interesting enough, **income level** appears to be the most important factor to influence the decision to leave the parental home (see Table 8.4.1). However, in the previous chapter it was observed that the effect of income will be distorted when no distinction is made between students and non-students. This distortion results from the fact that the amount of a scholarship for students depends on their household position (that is, with parents or away from parents), which is exactly the variable to be explained in this study. To avoid a mis-identification of the factors that predict home-leaving behaviour, it was decided to maintain the distinction between students and non-students here as well, and perform the CHAID-analysis for the two groups separately. The results of this strategy are presented in the tree diagram in Scheme 8.4.1. The asterisk in the variable label in the first node indicates that this predictor was user-specified and not selected automatically.

The tree diagram for students

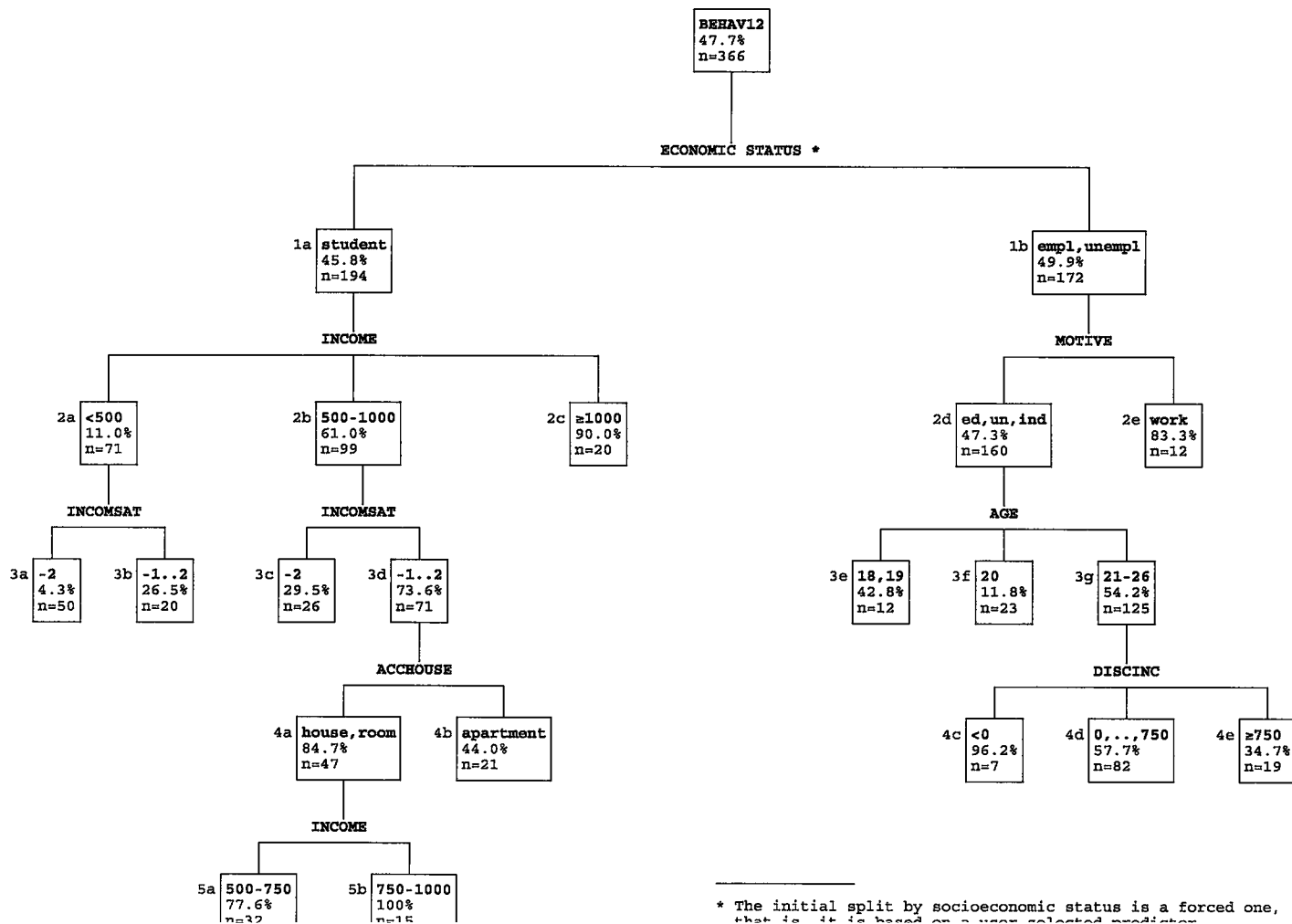
When we first examine the subsample of students in Scheme 8.4.1 (node 1a), the variable **income** again emerges as the most important predictor affecting the decision to move out. Of the students who receive less than *f*500 a month (node 2a), only a very small proportion (11.0%) decided to leave home. The transition rate increases considerably when the level of income is more than *f*500. When receiving between *f*500 and *f*1000 per month (which is the income level for 51% of all students), more than 60% of students decided to leave the parental home (node 2b), and when monthly income lies above *f*1000 (node 2c), the proportion who left home rises to 90%.

For students whose income is less than *f*1000, the effect of income on their decision to move out is further mediated by the subjective measure of **income satisfaction**. Individuals in this income group, who feel that their income is not at all sufficient (node 3a), will rarely decide to move out. Compared to this group, the transition rate of individuals who are not extremely dissatisfied or who are plain satisfied (node 3b) is relatively high (26.5%), although it must be noted that the proportion of home-leavers within this subgroup still remains well below the average rate of 47.7%.

Within the second income group of *f*500 to *f*1000 (node 2b), the effect of income satisfaction appears to be more substantial, and within the subset of individuals who score between -1 and +2 (node 3d) the transition rate rises to almost 1.5 times the average rate.

Scheme 8.4.1

Tree diagram of the most distinguishing factors to predict the transition from intention to behaviour.



In subgroup 3d, however, the decision to move out can be thwarted by the type of **housing** that is aspired to. Separation from the parental home seems to be more troublesome for students who are looking for an apartment (node 4b) than for those who are or were aiming to move into a house or into lodgings (node 4a). Where only 44% of those looking for an apartment actually moved out, as much as 84.7% of respondents looking for a room or a house apparently succeeded in finding a place to live, and moved out. This finding supports one of the conclusions in the previous chapter, that the supply on the housing market, which is characterised by a relative shortage of apartments, affects the probability of leaving home. Especially when the income of young adults lies between £750 and £1000 (node 5b), the probability of moving out reaches 100%, whereas for those who receive between £500 and £750 (node 5a), the transition is effectuated less often.

The tree diagram for employed and unemployed young adults

Among the group of young adults who have entered the labour market⁸, the **motive** for departure is the most distinguishing factor determining the probability of leaving the parental home. It appears that young adults who leave for job-related reasons (node 2e), show a significantly higher transition rate (83.3%) than do individuals who leave either for education, union formation or independence (node 2d: 47.3%). This seems to suggest that individuals whose departure is triggered by an urgent reason such as work indeed leave home relatively more often than individuals who have less urgent reasons to move out and who can therefore more easily decide to postpone the actual departure they planned. The occurrence of the motive 'education' among non-students seems somewhat puzzling. However, it involves only 6 persons, and it may be that these persons temporarily entered the labour market but intend to pursue further education in the (near) future. Where job-related reasons appear to be the only and decisive factor in the decision to leave home, for young adults who leave for other reasons **age** further determines the probability of moving out. Remarkably, it is the age group of 20 year-olds (node 3f) who strongly hesitate putting their intention to move out into effect: only 11.8% of them has departed from the parental home. Among the subgroup of 18 and 19 year olds (node 3e), the proportion of home-leavers is much higher (although still below the average rate), whereas it is highest for those who are older than 21 (node 3g).

For the oldest age group, the subjectively experienced **income discrepancy** is an important factor influencing the decision to leave home. When the actual income is higher than the aspired income (a negative value), the probability of leaving home is close to 1 (node 4c). However, as the gap increases, the transition rate decreases, and if the discrepancy grows to more than £750 (node 4e), the rate falls below the average.

⁸ Both employed (n=164) and unemployed individuals (n=8).

8.5 Summary and conclusions

The objective of this chapter was to identify the most important predictors of intention-formation and of home-leaving behaviour respectively. Detection of the primary predictors would provide an answer to the main question of this study, whether financial considerations, housing considerations, normative considerations, and/or other considerations play an important role in the decision to leave home. The analyses were performed by using the CHAID technique, which aims at detecting the variables which most adequately predict the transition. Moreover, the segment identification that results from the analysis enables us to determine more precisely the groups that experience a relatively high risk of planning or actually leaving home and those that are least likely to (have the intention to) leave home within a year.

The transition from dweller to planner

In the transition from dweller to planner, the normative pressure of parents appeared to be the most important factor. When the pressure to move out is extremely strong, it even appears to be the only influence, and no other factors further mediate the willingness to move out. The strong effect of parental pressure that is found here, is a particularly interesting finding when viewed in the light of the discussion regarding the emergence of 'choice biographies' (Du Bois-Reymond, 1992; Chrisholm & Du Bois-Reymond, 1993; Fuchs-Heinritz, 1990). In this discussion it is stressed that in decisions regarding the timing and arrangement of important life course transitions, the normative context increasingly loses its significance. The results of the analyses in this study, however, show quite the opposite, as they demonstrate that social pressure is of crucial importance in the stage where the intention to leave home is formed.

The impact of financial considerations, on the other hand, which is often stressed in literature as the most important factor, appears to be very limited, at least in the initial stage of the decision making process. The effect only emerges within the subgroup of young adults whose parents urge their children to remain at home and who want to move to the central, Randstad, or southwestern region. Moreover, the financial variable that is identified as an important predictor, typically reflects a subjective element, and not the objective income position as such. This corresponds with the findings in the previous chapter, where the subjective measures of income were also found to be more strongly related to the propensity to leave home than the objective income level.

For a large proportion of young adults, housing characteristics appear to be an important issue as well. When parents exert moderate pressure to move out, the young adult's readiness to comply is strongly influenced by the number of rooms he or she considers acceptable. The finding that young adults who aim at housing which is relatively scarce

(2 rooms) seldom have plans to leave home, in contrast to those who aim at more current or accessible housing, seems to suggest that the supply on the housing market suppresses the willingness to move away from parents.

In the formation of a home-leaving intention, the Hotel-Mama aspect does not come up at all. This contradicts the assumption of some authors, who asserted that an increasing number of young adults do not wish to leave home because they do not like to give up the advantages and conveniences related to living in Hotel-Mama. The analyses show otherwise and make clear that the probability to become inclined to leave apparently is not decisively influenced by such Hotel-Mama considerations.

In addition, three mediating variables were found to influence the stage of intention formation. Apparently, it is significant whether the young adult has studied at a university or vocational college, whether his or her parents have studied or not, and how old the person is.

To summarise, the factors that were found to have an impact on the formation of an intention include: normative pressure exerted by parents, region of destination, educational level, acceptable income level, acceptable number of rooms, educational level of parents, and age.

The transition from planner to leaver

The results of the CHAID-analysis unmistakably demonstrate that in the transition from intention to behaviour, income is a crucial element for the majority of young adults. We have seen that it is decisive for young adults who are still enrolled in the educational system, and that it affects the decision of persons who are older than 21 and who leave home for other than job-related reasons. All in all, this involves almost 90%⁹ of all young adults who intended to leave home in 1993.

Again, as in the transition from dweller to planner, the subjective component of income appears to be extremely important. Among the group of students, not only actual level of income, but also the subjective income satisfaction strongly determines the probability of their leaving home. If they feel that their income is not at all sufficient, the transition is more likely to be postponed. Among non-students, the financial factor that has been identified as an important predictor - namely income discrepancy - also contains a subjective component, in combination with an objective component. That is, both actual income and the subjectively assessed acceptable income appear to be considered by young adults, which indicates that it is not an absolute income deficiency that determines the decision of

⁹ That is, 194 students, plus 125 employed persons of 21 and older leaving for non-job-related reasons.

young adults, but rather a relative income deficiency. It was found that as this discrepancy increases, young adults are less likely to leave the parental home.

Besides income, housing also plays an important role in the actualisation of the home-leaving intention of students. Again, it can be seen that if the housing that is sought for is relatively scarce in the Dutch housing stock (apartments), the probability of their actually leaving home is significantly reduced. The observed impact of housing considerations, which was also detected to be important in the stage of intention formation, obviously calls for more deliberate efforts on the part of housing policy makers to tackle the relative shortage of specific types of housing and specifically increase the supply of cheap two- and three-room apartments, so that young adults have the opportunity to depart from the parental home and achieve the independent position that is linked with becoming an adult.

For young adults in the work force (that is, non-students), it is interesting to see that the motive for departure is the main factor to influence the probability of leaving home. This finding fits in well with findings from research in the field of residential mobility (Goetgeluk, 1992; Mulder, 1996). Among others, these authors noticed that moves that are triggered by urgent motives (like work) will more often result in residential mobility than migrations that are induced by less urgent motives. The same effect can be observed here. It can be argued that individuals who leave home to accept a job cannot easily afford to postpone the transition and consequently have a higher probability of leaving than those who leave for less urgent reasons like union formation or independence. For the majority of individuals in the latter subgroup, we have seen that perceived lack of income further influences the decision to leave home or postpone the transition.

Housing aspirations, however, do not seem to cause a delay in home-leaving behaviour of employed and unemployed young adults. Factors related to a Hotel-Mama feeling neither emerge as significant predictors of home-leaving behaviour.

The CHAID-analyses clearly demonstrated that the set of variables that were observed to determine the transition from no-intention to intention is rather different from the variables that are most decisive in the transition from intention to actually leaving home. Obviously, the relative influence of either the situational context (that is, financial and housing situation) or the normative context differs with the very stage in the decision making process. Normative pressure is decisive in the initial stage, when the intention to move out is formed. In the subsequent stage, however, financial considerations have been found to be the major determinant, although this does not mean that normative considerations have absolutely no influence (see chapter 7). It is quite clear, however, that the subjective assessment of a particular income is more determining than the objective income per se. Housing considerations, finally, affect young adults both in the stage of intention formation, and in the stage of actualisation of the intention, but its overall influence is relatively small as it appears to be an important issue for specific subgroups only.

In addition, the results again proved that the link between intention and behaviour is obviously not a direct one, as is assumed by the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Instead, even when an intention is formed, there are several other factors which may still thwart the actual departure from the parental home. The results thus endorse the relevance of making a distinction between the two stages in the decision making process. Eventually, this will yield a deeper understanding of the significant factors that play a role in the decision to leave the parental home.

Evaluation of the method of analysis

Notwithstanding the usefulness of the findings that were obtained by employing CHAID-analysis, it is important to note that CHAID only produces the *most important* predictor variables which can explain home-leaving behaviour. This does not imply, however, that the other variables that were discussed in the previous chapter are not influential. This also becomes apparent from the tables 8.3.1 and 8.4.1, which show that many other predictor variables significantly affect either the transition from dweller to planner, or the transition from planner to leaver. Most of these variables, however, do not emerge as one of the main determinants within the specific subgroups that were formed on the basis of the first most important predictor variable. Nonetheless, they may very well have an additional effect on the decision to leave home and must not be ignored when trying to get a full grasp of the behaviour. Therefore, the findings of chapter 7 surely are valuable in themselves as supplementary information which enhances our understanding of the process of leaving home, its determinants and relationship with other (background) variables.

Chapter 9. Summary and conclusions

9.1 Considerations leading to the formulation of the research model

Young adults leaving the parental home certainly is not a new issue in scientific research. The question of what factors affect the departure from the parental home has already been addressed in previous studies. The growing interest in this issue in demographic studies probably has its origin in the remarkable changes in the patterns of leaving home that have occurred during the last couple of decades. Scientific analysis of these patterns and speculation on underlying mechanisms have certainly provided very useful insights regarding relevant determinants of the behaviour. What then was the motivation for setting up yet another study on the subject and how does the present study contribute to the body of knowledge already existing about it?

In this chapter the specific features of this study and its main results will be reviewed. First, the considerations and perspectives which led to the formulation of the research model will be reviewed. This research model was based on four suppositions, two of which concern relevant determinants to be studied (the situational and the normative contexts), and the other two relate to the theoretical perspective, in which the behaviour and its determinants are examined at the individual level, and in which the mediating effect of subjective perceptions is highlighted. Next, the elaboration of this research model and the operationalisation of the analytical model will be discussed, whereupon a short overview of the main results will be given. Some implications of these results and the need for future research will be discussed in the last section of this chapter.

Macro-analysis of the situational context

It is probably intrinsic to the historical examination of the shifts in home-leaving behaviour that a mainstream in theoretical thinking focused on the historical changes that occurred in modern society. It is asserted in these studies that the economical and societal transformations that took place in the modern welfare state affected the opportunity structure of young adults in a number of ways, leading to changes in the behavioral patterns. The insights derived from these studies led to the first supposition of this study, namely that *leaving home is affected by the opportunities and constraints of the situational context*.

To enhance our understanding of the interplay between economic, social, cultural and demographic factors, chapter 2 presented a detailed overview of the social changes that have taken place in Dutch society since the 1950s, and that are believed to have led to behavioral responses reflected in home-leaving. Explicit attention is focused on the crucial effect of an expanding economy and the trend of prolonged education, and on the altered social and economic position of young adults, which were interpreted to be a consequence

of the structural and cultural changes. In the period between 1950 and 1980, young adults acquired a number of rights which, in addition to the expanding economic situation, favoured their opportunities to move out and set up independent households. Next, it was shown how the changes in the societal context and in the socio-economic position of youths were accompanied by changes in the transition from parental co-residence to residential independence. In the period between 1950 and the mid-1970s young adults started to leave home at ever younger ages, and increasingly started to live alone or in unmarried cohabitation. Simultaneously, the popularity of marriage had been waning, while the desire for independence and autonomy increasingly became the motive for leaving home.

The discussion in chapter 2 helps us to understand why many demographers and economists stressed the relevance of the economy and the housing market as important determinants of home-leaving behaviour. The underlying rationale of these authors is that economic, social and cultural circumstances define the opportunities and constraints facing young adults when they wish to leave the parental home.

During the 1980s, new fluctuations in macro-economic conditions and in housing market opportunities were observed. These were also described in chapter 2. Several studies at the time reported a delay in the process of leaving home during the first half of the 1980s. Most of these based their conclusion on a comparison of behavioral patterns among successive birth cohorts, and did not cover the temporal shifts during the second half of the decade, when economic conditions improved again. A first aim of the present study, therefore, was to examine on an aggregate level how the patterns in home-leaving behaviour changed throughout the 1980s and to test whether they can be considered to be related to periodic fluctuations in the situational context.

This question was addressed in chapter 4. It was argued that, instead of a cohort approach, a period approach should be used to more accurately unravel the link between short term changes in situational context on the one hand and behavioral responses on the other. Three successive national Housing Demand Surveys (WBOs), conducted at the end of 1981, 1985 and 1989, provided the necessary data. For each year of observation, the odds of leaving were determined by relating the number of persons that had left the parental home during the one-year time interval to all 18-26 year olds living at home at the beginning of the interval. The period-specific odds of leaving could then be compared. Moreover, it was checked whether fluctuations in the situational context, as known from the descriptions in chapter 2, were reflected in the motive for leaving home, in the living arrangement, and in the housing arrangement that was entered into by home-leavers.

To our surprise, the results in chapter 4 did not unambiguously endorse the observation of other authors that leaving home was seriously delayed as a consequence of restricted economic and housing market opportunities. It appeared that between 1981 and 1985 the odds of leaving only decreased for those older than 21. Among persons between 18 and

20 years old, an increase in the odds of leaving was observed. Closer examination of the fluctuations in motive of leaving suggested that this could well be explained by more young adults fleeing into education. Moreover, fluctuations in the living arrangement and the type of housing suggested that when economic conditions deteriorated, relatively more young adults chose to live alone and/or to accept less attractive housing. Apparently, the relatively unfavourable circumstances of the early 1980s did not simply keep all young adults from leaving home.

It was thus concluded that although the fluctuations in the situational context were indeed reflected in behaviour patterns, it was also evident that not all young adults react to a specific set of opportunities and constraints in the same way. Limited opportunities do not necessarily lead to a postponement of the transition, but in many instances rather to an adjustment of behavioral choices instead.

Normative context

The findings in chapter 4 were cause for three further suppositions which, besides the supposition that the situational context is a crucial determinant, were essential for the design and approach of the continuation of the study.

First of all, as not all individuals appeared to be affected by fluctuations in the situational context as hypothesised, it was questioned whether economic and housing factors are the only aspects that are taken into account by young adults who are about to leave the parental home. Very likely, other factors may be influential as well. This idea found support in existing literature which criticises the strictly economic standpoint of rational choice theory. More culturally oriented scientific viewpoints maintain that people will not only consider the opportunities and constraints offered by the situational context, but that they are embedded in a social context as well. Consequently, as a second supposition it was hypothesised that *normative expectations also play a major role in the decision to leave the parental home*. Within life course theory, the notion of normative expectations affecting demographic behaviour is further elaborated by focusing on the concept of transition norms. According to these theorists, life course transitions are regulated by prevailing social opinions regarding the proper timing and sequencing of these events. Evidence for the existence of such social norms is usually deduced from the observation of regularities in behavioral patterns. It has, however, rarely been determined at the individual level whether young adults are aware of such specific normative expectations, what, in the case of leaving the parental home, these expectations entail, whether these are a factor in their choices regarding timing and arrangements, and, if so, for which young adults they are important. Besides, it has been argued by some that, due to social and cultural changes, the traditional influence of social norms on individual choices has been waning, and that personal preferences and situational factors have become the main determinants of individual behaviour. In fact, this theoretical standpoint may explain why

in previous research the main emphasis has been on the influence of the situational factor. However, empirical evidence to date showed at best an increased variation in life course biographies and in this author's opinion this does not mean that social norms as a guiding principle have become irrelevant.

To improve our understanding of the factors affecting the decision to leave home it therefore seemed essential to extend the design for the present study and include both factors as elaborated in the first two suppositions. The research question was then formulated more specifically: *To what extent is the decision to leave home affected by economic factors, by housing factors, and/or by normative factors?*

Individual situation and subjective perception

The third supposition underlying the design of the present study stems from the presumption that no sound conclusions about the presumed impact of either the situational or the normative contexts can be derived from analyses on an aggregate level, as was the case in much previous research. Instead, it was felt necessary to move down to the individual level, and to *explicitly focus on the personal situation of individuals*. After all, in a given macro-context the personal situation in which individuals find themselves will vary considerably, and consequently not all people will be affected by a specific set of circumstances in the same way. Thus, they are not all equally affected by the sets of factors noted above. Likewise, the observation of behavioral regularities at the aggregate level do not give accurate evidence of the presumption that normative expectations are at work. Thus, getting to know the effect of the economic position, the housing situation and the normative context requires measurement of the personal situation of young adults and the prevailing normative expectations at the individual level.

Moreover, the fourth supposition central to the study design deals with the argument that people differ in their *subjective perception* and subjective evaluation of the circumstances in which they find themselves. In other words, it is assumed that *the effect of the situational and the normative context operates via subjective responses of the individual*. This implies that the research model should not only objectively consider the personal situation, but that a subjective component should be included as well. The subjective perceptions and responses were hypothesised to be dependent on the social background of an individual, and on the specific context of leaving home, as defined by the motive for departure and the living arrangement at departure).

The combination of considerations discussed above made clear that in order to come to understand the decision to leave the parental home, the research problem should be approached from the perspective of the individual decision-maker, whose decision is based on subjective considerations regarding the economic and housing situations, and/or any normative expectations.

9.2 A theory of individual decision-making

The basic design of this study being delineated, the challenge was to find a decision-making model which is an adequate instrument for the operationalisation of the subjective component in our research model, and which also recognises that behavioral choices may be affected by both situational considerations and normative considerations. Such a theoretical framework was found in the Theory of Reasoned Action, developed by Ajzen and Fishbein. A basic premise of this theory, which is a representative of the so-called SEU¹-models, is that on the one hand people will consider the possible consequences of the behaviour in question (the behavioral beliefs underlying a person's attitude), and on the other take account of the opinions of relevant others (the normative beliefs which constitute a person's subjective norm). The behavioral beliefs involve the perceived consequences as they are believed to result from a specific situation. In this way, the model accurately reflects the individual's subjective perception and evaluation of the situational context, which is central to our research model. According to the model, the combination of attitude and subjective norm is assumed to determine the intention to perform a specific behaviour; actual performance of the behaviour can then be predicted directly from the behavioral intention.

Although the model offers an adequate instrument with which to measure the subjective evaluation of the personal situation, the theory was also criticised for totally neglecting the (disturbing or facilitating) effect of the objective situational context as an additional independent effect. In presenting a revised Model of Planned Behaviour, Ajzen admitted that an intention may not always directly result in behaviour. Instead, he stated, it is more accurate to redefine an intention as a person's plan to engage in specific behaviour, and to acknowledge that such plans will also be affected by the additional component of 'perceived behavioral control'. In our view, however, the proposed extension of the original model with control beliefs was not an acceptable alternative for dealing with the hypothesised effect of the situational context. After all, people may misinterpret their personal situation, and may therefore misjudge the consequences of specific choices or their opportunities to act out their intention. Besides, it was argued here that the subjective assessment of a person's opportunities and constraints on engaging in specific behaviour are already reflected in the behavioral beliefs. It was stressed, therefore, that the personal situation of individuals cannot be substituted for by a subjective estimate of their objective conditions, and that 'personal situation' should be explicitly included into the model. The theoretical model adopted in this study to direct data collection and analysis can thus be understood as a modified version of the Model of Planned Behaviour.

¹ SEU stands for Subjective Expected Utility

The complete Model of Planned Behaviour comprises general measures for attitude and subjective norm, as well as the sets of underlying beliefs (i.e. the behavioral and the normative beliefs). In this study we were first and foremost interested in coming to understand the arguments that affect the decision to leave home. In our opinion, measuring a person's attitude towards a behaviour will teach us nothing about the considerations that motivate him or her. Such insight can only be obtained when addressing the underlying beliefs. It was therefore decided to concentrate explicitly on the belief-based measures rather than on the general attitude measure.

Another issue to think about was how to measure the behavioral beliefs. It is remarkable that in Ajzen and Fishbein's formulation the model exclusively focuses on one particular choice alternative. However, it is more realistic to assume that people choose between different alternatives (in this case, the alternatives of leaving versus staying home). In other words, people will consider the consequences of leaving home as opposed to the consequences of not doing so. To most effectively capture the simultaneous assessment of the situation at home and the (anticipated) situation of living independently, it was decided to ask respondents about *changes* that they believed leaving home might bring about.

As hypothesised in the research model, changes in financial position and in housing situation were believed to be an essential argument in the young adults' decisions. However, there may also be other considerations, which have not shown up in previous research, or the effect of which has never been examined empirically before. Obviously, before the Model of Planned Behaviour could be applied successfully, it was necessary to identify the variety of arguments that are relevant in the case of home-leaving behaviour. In addition, it was felt that our understanding of the effect of normative pressure on the timing of leaving home would benefit from more detailed information about the kind of expectations that are related to the transition.

9.3 Empirical elaboration of the theoretical model

To identify the behavioral beliefs and the social norms that are relevant in the case of leaving home, a qualitative approach was employed. The procedure is described in chapter 5. High school graduates from twelve different schools (two different school types) were asked to write an essay on the topic of leaving home. In this essay, they had to elaborate a number of open-ended questions, some of which pertained to the consequences of leaving home, and others to prevailing social expectations. Interpretative reading of the written material (more than 300 essays) revealed a number of different aspects that the beliefs could relate to, and eventually led to the formulation of 28 statements regarding possible consequences, and 9 statements regarding normative preconditions. Some of the statements mentioned by the young adults indeed referred to the financial consequences and to the consequences for their housing situation. In

addition, however, the essays revealed a number of beliefs that are also relevant in the decision to leave home. These beliefs refer to social-emotional and practical aspects. Moreover, the information gathered on prevailing social expectations clearly showed that social norms are indeed very much alive. Supporting the notion of life course theorists, these normative expectations were found to be expressed in terms of preconditions to be met before moving out, although it also turned out that some of them operate as direct incentives to do so (having a job, or closing off the period of schooling).

In a preliminary survey conducted among 100 young adults it appeared that all these items could be considered 'modal salient beliefs', that is, all of them appeared to be relevant to at least 50% of the respondents, and should therefore be included in the main survey of this study. Considering that Fishbein and Ajzen stated that usually only five to ten beliefs will be salient to a person, this large number of salient beliefs may be somewhat puzzling. However, a factor analysis, which was later performed on the data of the main survey, revealed that the 28 items on behavioral consequences basically represent seven different dimensions. These dimensions were identified as relating to financial situation, housing situation, emotional security and parental support, responsibilities for daily care, autonomy (related to adult status), social well-being, and to conflicts and loneliness. The intrinsic connotation of the last five dimensions, which reflect social-emotional and practical considerations, closely corresponds with what in existing literature is termed the Hotel-Mama phenomenon. Some authors argue that the comfort, convenience and freedom of living at home nowadays tempts young adults to remain there longer. As these arguments actually emerged from the written material, it was possible to operationalise this aspect in concrete statements and to test empirically whether Hotel-Mama considerations really influence the decision to leave home. This implies that altogether four sets of independent variables were analysed in this study, namely the economic, the housing, the normative, and the Hotel-Mama factors.

Factor analysis was also carried out on the normative items, and it appeared that six of the nine normative statements basically reflect three different domains. These referred to educational career, financial independence, and union formation. The remaining three items (independent functioning, age, and acceptable housing) did not combine with either of these normative factors. It may be, as is suggested by the high proportion of young adults reporting these aspects to be relevant, that these items serve as some sort of ultimate precondition which applies to practically all young adults, thus eliminating variation between individuals. The regression analyses performed in chapter 7 were restricted to the three factors, leaving out the remaining three normative items.

9.4 Empirical elaboration of the research problem

The survey

The way in which the survey sample was constructed reflects the objectives of this study, which aims to unravel the *process* of decision-making and the determinants affecting this process. Following the Theory of Planned Behaviour, it was assumed that the decision to leave home will be reached in two successive steps: in the first stage, a person forms the intention to do so; in the second stage, the intention is actualised and overt behaviour is observed. Ideally, a longitudinal approach is needed to touch upon the complete process of individual decision-making. However, the time and costs involved in setting up a longitudinal research are considerable. It was decided that a cross-sectional comparison of individuals who are at different stages of the decision-making process was a highly practical alternative, generating the closest approximation of a longitudinal design. This implied that a cross-sectional sample ($n=1012$) had to be constructed, in which three groups were represented: young adults who had recently left the parental home (leavers), young adults who had expressed the intention to leave home within one year (planners), and young adults who had no intention to move out yet (dwellers). By comparing the personal situation and the subjective considerations of leavers with those of planners, and the situation and considerations of planners with those of dwellers, empirical evidence emerged as to the factors that affect the transition from dweller to planner and the subsequent one from planner to leaver. In case significant differences between the behavioral groups were observed, these were interpreted as an indication that the variable concerned plays a crucial role in the decision to leave home.

Of course, it was essential that for leavers an adequate measure of the situation and subjective considerations at the time of departure was obtained, or else it could not be determined in what respect these individuals differed from those who had not yet left home. They were asked retrospective questions about their situation and their subjective perceptions at the time just before moving out. Planners and dwellers were asked questions about their current situation and perceptions.

A disproportionally stratified sample was composed to make sure that relevant subcategories would be represented by a sufficient number of respondents. The analyses were then carried out with weighted observations so that the results could be considered representative of Dutch 18 to 26 year olds living at home at the beginning of 1993.

In chapter 7, the effect of each factor that was hypothesised to influence the decision to leave home was investigated separately. In addition, by using regression analysis it was also examined which background or contextual variables explain the variation in subjective perceptions. This yielded more insight into the relative influence of the determinants that were found to have an effect. As a final step in the analyses, chapter 8 aimed to pinpoint the most important determinants of home-leaving behaviour. This was done with the aid of CHAID-analysis. In repetitive steps, the CHAID-procedure splits the total sample

according to the predictor variables which have the strongest association with the dependent variable. The technique not only identifies the most informative predictor variables, but it also merges categories in the predictor variables which do not have a significantly different effect on the dependent variable.

The results of the analyses performed in chapter 7 and chapter 8 clearly showed the relevance of breaking down the process of decision-making in two subsequent stages. This yielded a better and more complete understanding of the complex of factors affecting the final decision. For, even when an intention is formed, it is not always immediately acted upon. The second transition was also found to be dependent on a number of factors, which are not similar to or as important as the factors affecting the first stage.

Results and conclusions

First of all, our analyses focused on the role of **income position** and **financial considerations**. In order to investigate the effect of income in the transition to independent living, it was necessary to consider students and non-students separately, because the income of students is directly related to their household position, that is, living at home or away. The data made it clear that objective income level in itself is not the critical element determining a person's willingness to leave home. Instead, the subjective evaluation of the adequacy of this income appears to be crucial, as can be inferred from the results with respect to the perceived income discrepancy. Among leavers the discrepancy between acceptable income and actual income is smallest, whereas it is highest among dwellers. Regression analysis showed that the financial needs of young adults vary with motive for departure and with living arrangement: the income that is deemed acceptable by those leaving for education is significantly smaller than that of individuals who (intend to) start living with a partner when moving out. There is, however, a limit to the financial modesty of students. The analyses in chapter 8 showed that when the monthly income of students drops below £500, the probability of their leaving home declines strongly.

The findings also provide some very clear indications that the decision to move out is affected by the (perceived) accessibility of **housing**. First of all, it was found that the more difficulties one expects to encounter in trying to find a place to live, the less likely one is to form the intention to leave home. In other words, one will not even attempt to enter the housing market. The subsequent transition from intention to behaviour, however, does not appear to be influenced by an anticipated difficulty on the housing market. In addition we learned that young adults who (intend to) start living alone anticipate relatively more difficulty, except when they leave home for educational reasons, in which case they are more strongly oriented to shared accommodations or a room in lodgings.

Second, the regression analysis showed that the amount of difficulty one expects to encounter is related to the type of housing and to the region to which one is oriented. This outcome reflects the effect of (regional differences in) the availability of housing. Young adults searching for housing in regions which are known for their limited supply (central and Randstad area) or who are looking for housing which is relatively scarce (a small apartment or a small single-family dwelling) anticipate more trouble in finding housing.

Third, the results provide strong evidence that the type of housing that young adults aim at influences their chances of finding a place to live and thus of effectuating their intention to move out. Comparison of the housing aspirations of leavers, planners and dwellers suggests that two different forces are at work here. On the one hand, it appeared that people who search for relatively modest housing on the informal housing market (in lodgings or shared residences) have a higher chance of moving out than do young adults with 'higher' housing aspirations; apparently, for the latter it is harder to find acceptable housing. On the other hand, the findings made it clear that opting for housing types that are less common in the formal segments of the Dutch housing stock (2 and 3 room apartments and houses) will put young adults in a more difficult situation, thus causing a delay in the transition to independent living. We also know from the data that it is particularly individuals leaving for education or for work who move into lodgings, whereas those leaving for independence relatively more often aim at 2 or 3 room apartments, and those leaving to form a union primarily look for 4-room dwellings. This implies that, contrary to what would have been expected from the annually recurring media reports concerning the precarious situation of first-year students on the housing market, they in fact have better chances of finding a place to live and leave home than do young adults looking for other types of housing. The suggestion of a problematic situation probably derives from the immediacy with which students need a room, as their studies often require instant departure. The same holds for young adults who have to move because of a job. For other home-leavers the problem of finding adequate housing is probably less acute, because they can wait until they have found something to their liking.

This may also explain why the generally prevailing idea that most young adults occupy relative unattractive housing is not confirmed by this study. Of course, the idea appears to be true in part: many young adults end up in lodgings or in cheap, small apartments, and in comparison to the Dutch population in general, the proportion of home-leavers that indicates being dissatisfied with their housing is relatively high (18% versus 9.5%). One must not forget, however, that many young adults feel that their housing does not have to meet such high standards. Nevertheless, there is also a considerable proportion of home-leavers who move into quite acceptable housing. The quality of their housing appears to be closely related to their motive for departure and to their age.

Next, the **normative context** appeared to have a crucial influence on the decisions of young adults. It was interesting to see that in our supposedly individualised society the decision to leave the parental home really is not entirely an individualistic matter. It was convincingly shown that notably the parents exert a strong influence on the decision. In fact, chapter 8 made it clear that normative pressure is the most important determinant in the first stage of the decision-making process. In the second stage, parental pressure also has a significant effect, although apparently not a decisive one. A large proportion of young adults indicated that they attach much importance to the opinion of their parents concerning their leaving home and this is evidently reflected in their behaviour; that is, the behaviour of the young adults corresponds with the social pressure that is exerted by the parents: leavers on average experienced a strong pressure to do so, planners are also pressed to leave although not as strongly as leavers, and dwellers indicated to feel considerable pressure to stay. The social influence of friends appeared to be much weaker.

In addition, we obtained empirical information about the nature of the normative expectations that regulate the social pressure and about the prevalence of these expectations. Age apparently serves as a valuable guideline in the decision to leave home, supporting the notion of age-norms described by life-course theorists. The majority of respondents feel that their parents or friends relate leaving home to having reached a certain (minimum or maximum) age. However, as a guiding principle in the timing of leaving home, expectations regarding union formation and financial independence appeared to be more essential, being mentioned more frequently. Expectations which associate leaving home with attainments in the educational career are less frequent.

The results not only show that the normative expectations are recognised by young adults, but also that there is a strong tendency to conform to them. This can first of all be inferred from the high level of agreement in opinions between young adults and their parents and friends respectively. It appears that depending on the normative item concerned, between 40% and 65% of respondents share the opinion of their parents. The high level of agreement is interpreted as a sign that social norms have not completely lost their significance and that the decision to move out has not become a matter of strictly individualistic self-determination. Second, the high correspondence between the kind of expectations and actual home-leaving behaviour is taken as an indication of the influence of social norms: the regression analysis has shown that particularly young adults who (intend to) leave for education experience social expectations which are related to educational career more strongly, while financial independence is not considered an important issue. Contrarily, those leaving to establish a relationship are exactly the ones who more strongly experience expectations concerning union formation. The consistency between prevailing expectations and (intended) behaviour suggests that normative expectations are indeed a guiding principle in the decision on when and how to leave the parental home.

Evidence that **Hotel-Mama** factors influence the decision to leave home is rather weak. As far as the objective indicators of a Hotel-Mama situation are concerned (number of siblings, labour-market participation of the mother, and family type), no significant differences were observed between leavers, planners and dwellers. In addition, dwellers do not anticipate significantly fewer favourable changes in Hotel-Mama aspects than planners or leavers do, although they can be seen to value emotional security and parental support significantly more positively and conflicts significantly less negatively than planners do. Thus, in this sense it can be concluded that these three aspects offer an explanation why some young adults are willing to move out while others are not (yet), but in combination with the score on anticipated changes, the evidence of a Hotel-Mama effect is not convincing. Moreover, the only two aspects in which leavers differ significantly from planners do not point in the hypothesised direction, and it appears that for each of the aspects defined, leavers hold a less favourable attitude than planners and dwellers do. In addition, the results of the CHAID-analysis revealed that none of the Hotel-Mama items emerge as a decisive determinant, neither in the first stage nor in the second. It must therefore be concluded that Hotel-Mama considerations do not significantly affect the decision to leave home, and are not likely to cause postponement of the transition to living independently, as has been suggested by several authors.

What, then, can be considered to be the most important determinants of home-leaving behaviour? In the initial stage of intention formation, normative pressure exerted by parents appears to be the most influential factor. Financial considerations are only significant for those who experience a strong pressure to stay home and those who intend to move to the central region, the Randstad or the southwestern region of the Netherlands. Housing considerations come up as an essential factor among those who experience a moderate push to leave home: their willingness to move out is influenced by the number of rooms they consider acceptable. If they aim at two-room dwellings, they are less likely to form the intention to move out. In our opinion, this reflects the impact of a relative shortage of 2-room housing on the Dutch housing market. In addition, the educational level of the young adult, their age, and the educational level of the parents emerge as important determinants in the formation of an intention to leave home.

In the subsequent transition from intention to behaviour, income undoubtedly is a dominant factor for the majority of young adults. Again, it appeared that the subjective evaluation of income is the crucial factor, as it are 'income satisfaction' and 'perceived income discrepancy' that emerge as important predictors. The results also show that motive for departure plays a crucial role in the decision to leave the parental home, directly affecting the probability of a person actually doing so. Although in chapter 7 housing was certainly found to affect the transition from intention to behaviour, the

CHAID-analysis showed that it does not have a major impact on the final decision, except for students who receive between *f*500 and *f*1000 a month and who are not extremely dissatisfied with their income.

9.5 Implications for policy, theory and future research

The results of this study yielded detailed insights into the factors and considerations that affect the decision to leave the parental home and into the way their influence varies among subgroups. Even though the decision-making process was studied at the individual level here, such knowledge may help to create a clearer picture of the large-scale impacts that specific macrolevel changes may have on aggregate patterns of home-leaving behaviour. After all, in assessing the overall impact of certain factors it is significant to know to which groups of young adults the factors are particularly relevant. In this respect it was important to observe, for instance, that the *motive for departure* and the *living arrangement* that is chosen are crucial variables mediating the effect of many of the independent factors. As such, the results support the hypothesis that the context of leaving determines the relevance and significance of specific issues, the type of consequences that it will bring about, and the way that the event is viewed. For instance, it is shown that the financial needs of young adults leaving for educational reasons are lower than those of individuals establishing a household with their partner. This implies, that young adults leaving home to form a union will be more affected by changing economic conditions than are young adults whose departure is related to education. In other words, in case of a macroeconomic downturn, it can be expected that postponement of departure will occur more often among those who wish to form a union than among those continuing their education. Yet, even among students, a minimum of *f*500 a month is a crucial limit, below which the probability of their moving out is strongly reduced. Considering the fact that in 1997/98 the base scholarship for students living independently was as low as *f*410 (NIBUD, 1997), it can be expected that an increasing number of students, especially those who are not entitled to an additional scholarship or do not wish to turn to their parents for financial support, will consider staying home. This not only puts back on the agenda the debate on the desirability of financial independence of students vis-a-vis their parents, which was supposed to have been settled with the introduction of the renewed Study Financing System in 1986 (De Regt, 1993), but also the question whether individuals who are legally of age should be given the opportunity to attain residential independence. Obviously this is a political issue, which, by the way, not only affects students. The unemployed, for instance, will be similarly affected by measures in the field of social security, so for this category the government's position regarding the question if and when young adults should be granted the (financial) means to live independently is equally relevant.

Housing policy

In addition, possible state intervention would not only have to be directed at measures which guarantee a financial basis, but would also have to be concerned with the question of adequate housing. Again, the type of housing young adults are looking for was found to vary with motive and living arrangement. Yet it is important to know that inexpensive 2 and 3 room housing in the rental sector is relatively often sought by starters. In the Dutch housing market this type of housing is relatively scarce, and threatens to become even scarcer as public housing policy has shifted its objective from building in sufficient quantities to qualitatively improving existent housing (VROM, 1997a,b). Such a policy implies that the supply of the cheaper and smaller accommodations will be reduced, which does not favour individuals with limited financial means, such as starters. To safeguard the housing market position of starters, the government should thus recognise that preserving sufficient amounts of housing of lesser quality also remains essential. In addition, we concluded that the informal segments of the housing market - lodgings and shared residences - offer a pivotal alternative to many young adults, particularly to those leaving for education or for work who, it is asserted, do not want to or cannot easily delay their departure. Considering that this segment therefore serves as an important buffer, releasing the pressure on the formal housing market, the government should regard it as an alternative deserving equal political attention.

Culturally planned life course

The context of leaving home is not the only factor that affects the way that the event is viewed. There is also the social background of the individual. It was interesting to see how motive, living arrangement, level of education, educational level of the parents and age are related to the prevalence of specific normative expectations and to the evaluation of income and of housing. An interesting conclusion from these findings is that behavioral patterns and values concerning the transition are *culturally transmitted* from parents to their off-spring. A similar mechanism was observed in studies focusing on other behavioral domains, such as the orientation toward the labourmarket and motherhood of daughters as compared to that of their mothers (Peters, 1992), the choice of a specific system of financial management (Hira, 1997; Vogler, 1994), or the way in which people's involvement with their grandchildren is affected by their past childhood experiences with grandparents (King & Elder, 1997). It can be argued that in their upbringing children are being prepared to follow specific pathways, and as a consequence their expectations and perceptions are geared more to some behavioral choices than to others. To the extent that patterns of leaving home are culturally transmitted, and considering that educational level of Dutch youth has been rising, it can be expected that in the future more young adults will leave home for educational reasons, which in turn has consequences for the demand for specific types of housing. This shows how the relative impact

of specific factors becomes more predictable if one takes account of the existence of culturally planned life courses.

This is not to say that a person's behavioral choice, or the considerations and beliefs underlying the decision are unchangeable. In fact, the results of the macrolevel analyses in chapter 4 led to the conclusion that fluctuations in the situational context may lead to postponement (mainly among older individuals leaving to form a union) or to adjustment of behaviour. The analyses in chapter 7 provided more direct evidence for the hypothesised *adjustment* mechanism and its effect on the decision to leave home, particularly with respect to housing preferences. The comparison of the actual housing situation of leavers and the housing they considered acceptable revealed that a considerable proportion of leavers adjusted their choice of housing and settled for less than the conditions aspired to, especially as far as the number of rooms was concerned. This seems to have increased their chances of actually moving out. The ability of people to adjust their housing needs to the actual housing situation was also described by Priemus (1969). Also with respect to income level there is evidence that adjustment helps young adults to surmount financial barriers, leading to a higher probability of leaving. As the data indicated, however, it must be realised that some individuals are more liable or willing to adapt their housing aspirations or income standards than others are. Particularly students and people leaving for work are more open to adjustment, whereas young adults settling down with a partner are least inclined to do so. This differentiation seems to suggest that particularly those who cannot easily postpone their departure have to adjust their aspirations.

On the other hand, these individuals can be said to enter a *transitional stage* (Mulder & Manting, 1994; Goldscheider & Da Vanzo, 1989) and, knowing that the situation will be a temporary one from which they will move on, they more easily acquiesce to a less than optimal situation. This suggestion is supported when comparing the housing situation of home-leavers with that of all 18-24 year olds living independently. Where it was found in this study that among home-leavers the proportion moving into lodgings or dwellings with shared facilities was as high as 30%, it appears that among all 18-24 year olds only 8% occupies such housing (CBS, 1997). This indicates that soon after leaving many young adults change their initial arrangements and that a rapid moving up the housing ladder is very common at this stage of life. One can imagine that this determines the degree to which one is prepared to adjust one's preferences to the opportunities available.

Besides adjustment of subjective evaluations, the shifts in motive and living arrangement during the 1980s observed in chapter 4 also pointed at the possibility of people deciding to leave home for another reason, or to opt for another living arrangement. It could not be tested, however, with the available data whether a change in plans had indeed occurred in order to adapt to the available opportunities.

Longitudinal study design

Of course, the question arises at which moment in the process of decision-making such adjustments or changes in plans will take place. When do individuals decide to divert from the behavioral pattern initially planned or adjust their subjective assessment of the event, and in what respect or to what degree will they adjust their behavioral choice or their expectations? Unfortunately, these questions cannot be answered on the basis of the cross-sectional data available in this study. Instead, a longitudinal study design is required, which allows the adoption of a dynamic approach and follows the decision-making process within one individual. This would also eliminate the drawbacks of the present study design, which are related to the retrospective questioning of leavers and the possible distortion of the findings which may result either from recall problems, or from cognitive dissonance, or from the fact that values and evaluations are liable to change in reaction to a new situation (Moors, 1997). For a longitudinal follow-up study it is essential to measure the initial orientations of young adults with respect to the timing and arrangements of leaving home, and then repeatedly (preferably at one-year time intervals) get an update of their plans, their personal situation and their subjective perceptions and evaluations. It will then be possible to determine which individuals stick to their original plans and which do not and in the latter case, when and in what respect they decide to divert and which factors prompt such changes. A longitudinal approach would also enable the researcher to detect the impact of unforeseen events, which may unexpectedly delay or expedite one's departure from the parental home. All this would still further enhance our understanding of the factors affecting the decision to leave home.

In addition, considering the fact that many young adults find themselves in a transient situation, it would be recommendable to extend the period of observation beyond departure and keep following their choices and behaviour after they have left the parental home. How long do they stay in their initial housing, how long do they live alone before establishing a relationship with a partner? Ceasing to observe the moment they leave the parental home, and disregarding subsequent steps in the demographic or housing career, makes the prediction of, for instance, the housing demands of young adults less accurate because it does not take full account of the temporariness of some positions.

Joint decision-making

In this study, the decision to leave the parental home is regarded purely as an individual decision by the young adult. However, it can be argued that a decision such as this is really a family affair and that the parents' considerations and preferences may also affect the outcome of the decision-making process. Indirectly, the parents' influence on the young adult's decision has become evident from the observed effect of parental expectations. However, in future research the parents should perhaps be explicitly included as a separate party, and the subject of leaving home should be considered as the result of a

joint decision of both the parents and the young adult (Whittington & Peters, 1996; Ott, 1986; Hagestad & Neugarten, 1985). Moreover, in case the young adult intends to leave home to form a union, the partner of the young adult has to be included as yet another party in the decision-making process. In this study, characteristics and opinions of an eventual partner have been ignored, mainly because the analysis of the contribution of different parties in a decision-making process requires a rather complex game-theoretic approach, in which a joint utility function has to be specified (McElroy, 1985). However, it is obvious that a person's decision to start living with a partner may also be dependent on that partner's resources, opportunities, and expectations. For instance, absence of adequate resources may be compensated by the partner's income and if a partner has independent housing, the problem of finding a place to live is not a matter of concern. On the other hand, if one of the partners is not yet willing to move out, the departure of the other must be delayed, provided that he or she does not decide to start living alone. When including both parties in the analyses, the differences between young adults moving out to live alone and those moving out to live with a partner, that have been found in this study, may become even clearer.

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Samenvatting (Summary in Dutch)

De beslissing om uit huis te gaan: voor, op en over de drempel.

Het is in onze westerse samenleving de gewoonste zaak van de wereld dat jongeren op een gegeven moment het ouderlijk huis verlaten en zelfstandig gaan wonen. Iedereen weet dat het zal gebeuren en dat het past in de levensloop van mensen. Ondanks de vanzelfsprekendheid van de gebeurtenis blijkt de overgang echter niet voor iedereen hetzelfde te verlopen. Sommige jongeren gaan al op jonge leeftijd uit huis, anderen pas als ze ouder zijn; sommigen gaan alleen wonen, anderen met een partner; sommigen gaan op kamers wonen, anderen betrekken een etage of een huis. Bovendien blijken zich in de afgelopen decennia enkele belangrijke verschuivingen te hebben voorgedaan in het proces van uit huis gaan.

De variatie en de verschuivingen in uit huis gaan hebben de vraag opgeroepen welke factoren een rol spelen bij de beslissing om uit huis te gaan. In de bestaande literatuur worden met name twee verschillende benaderingen gehanteerd om patronen in uit huis gaan te verklaren, een economische en een culturele. In de op economische theorieën gebaseerde verklaring wordt het belang van de situationele context benadrukt. Volgens deze benadering zijn de economische omstandigheden en de omstandigheden op de woningmarkt bepalend voor de mogelijkheden en beperkingen van jongeren om uit huis te gaan. Sinds de jaren 50 hebben zich in de Nederlandse samenleving belangrijke maatschappelijke veranderingen voorgedaan. Hoofdstuk 2 laat zien hoe deze veranderingen een duidelijke weerslag hebben gehad op de economische en sociale positie van jongeren, en hoe de verschuivingen in uit huis gaan in de jaren 50, 60 en 70 kunnen worden begrepen in het licht van deze veranderingen in de situationele context die de *opportunity structure* van jongeren bepaalden.

In de jaren 80 doet zich echter een kentering voor in de situationele context: de economische positie van jongeren en hun situatie op de woningmarkt verslechteren. In de tweede helft van de jaren 80 lijken de economische omstandigheden weer te verbeteren. In hoofdstuk 4 is op geaggregeerd niveau bestudeerd hoe de patronen in uit huis gaan zijn veranderd in de loop van de jaren 80, en is gezocht naar aanwijzingen voor de hypothese dat verschuivingen in uit huis gaan gerelateerd zijn aan fluctuaties in de situationele context. Voor de beantwoording van deze onderzoeksvraag is gebruik gemaakt van de Woningbehoefteonderzoeken (WBO's) van 1981, 1985 en 1989. Uit de resultaten van deze analyses komt naar voren dat verslechterende omstandigheden niet zonder meer leiden tot een uitstel van uit huis gaan. Wel blijken de mogelijkheden en beperkingen van de situationele context aanleiding te geven tot verschuivingen in de gekozen bestemming

en in de wijze van huisvesting. Het is echter duidelijk dat niet alle jongeren op dezelfde manier reageren op de situationele omstandigheden waarmee zij geconfronteerd worden. Wellicht spelen ook andere factoren een rol.

Een tweede theoretische stroming die zich, vanuit een levensloopbenadering, bezighoudt met uit huis gaan van jongeren legt de nadruk op de rol en het effect van sociale normen. Volgens deze theorieën worden het tijdstip en de wijze van uit huis gaan gestuurd door heersende normatieve verwachtingen en is de overgang dus meer cultureel bepaald. Aanwijzingen voor het bestaan van dergelijke 'transitienormen' zijn tot nu toe vooral afgeleid uit het voorkomen van bepaalde vaste gedragspatronen. Er is echter nooit op individueel niveau onderzocht wat dergelijke verwachtingen behelzen, op welke aspecten ze betrekking hebben, in hoeverre jongeren zich bewust zijn van het bestaan van zulke sociale normen en in hoeverre zij er in hun keuze rekening mee houden. Het is daarom interessant om in dit onderzoek niet alleen de invloed van de situationele context te bestuderen, maar ook de rol van sociale normen. Door beide theoretische perspectieven te belichten, beoogt dit onderzoek een antwoord te geven op de volgende onderzoeksvraag: *In hoeverre wordt de beslissing om uit huis te gaan beïnvloed door de situationele context (dat wil zeggen door economische factoren en/of door huisvestingsfactoren) en in hoeverre speelt de normatieve context een rol?*

Behalve de bovengenoemde sets van factoren, zijn er twee theoretische overwegingen die richting hebben gegeven aan de opzet en uitwerking van het onderzoek. In de eerste plaats is besloten om af te dalen van geaggregeerd naar individueel niveau; in een gegeven macro-context kan de *persoonlijke situatie* van individuen immers aanzienlijk verschillen, en het is dus zaak om de individuele omstandigheden in beschouwing te nemen. Mensen kunnen bovendien verschillen in de subjectieve perceptie en de subjectieve evaluatie van bepaalde omstandigheden. Een tweede uitgangspunt dat in het onderzoeksmodel is uitgewerkt stelt dan ook dat het effect van de situationele en de normatieve context verloopt via de *subjectieve perceptie* van de individuen.

In hoofdstuk 3 is vervolgens gezocht naar een adequaat theoretisch model dat onderkent dat gedragskeuzes beïnvloed kunnen worden door situationele overwegingen dan wel door normatieve overwegingen, en dat bovendien een bruikbaar instrument biedt voor de operationalisatie van de subjectieve component in het onderzoeksmodel. Zo'n model is gevonden in de *theory of reasoned action* van Ajzen en Fishbein. Volgens dit model is het gedrag van mensen gebaseerd op een afweging van de mogelijke consequenties van het gedrag in kwestie (de 'behavioral beliefs'), alsmede op de gepercipieerde verwachtingen van andere mensen uit hun sociale omgeving (de 'normative beliefs'). Het model is toegepast in vele onderzoeken, maar bleek niet altijd tot accurate voorspellingen van toekomstig gedrag te leiden. Als oorzaak voor het ontbreken van een, door het model veronderstelde, consistente relatie tussen intentie en gedrag is door diverse auteurs naar voren gebracht dat de theorie totaal geen rekening houdt met de mogelijk verstorende

invloed van de objectieve situationele context. Naar aanleiding van deze kritiek heeft Ajzen later in zijn *theory of planned behaviour* een gereviseerd model gepresenteerd, waarin hij als additionele component de 'control beliefs' introduceert. De auteur dezes is echter van mening dat een subjectieve inschatting van iemands mogelijkheden niet gebruikt kan worden om de invloed van de objectieve context te meten. In dit onderzoek is er dan ook, in afwijking van de theorie van Ajzen, voor gekozen om de objectieve persoonlijke situatie van het individu expliciet in het onderzoeksmodel op te nemen en niet te benaderen via control beliefs.

Alvorens het theoretisch model toe te passen, en te analyseren door welke factoren de keuze om uit huis te gaan beïnvloed wordt, is het zaak om een gedetailleerd beeld te krijgen van de heersende sociale verwachtingen rond uit huis gaan en van de mogelijke consequenties die jongeren aan zelfstandig wonen verbinden. De in hoofdstuk 5 beschreven kwalitatieve analyse van 300 opstellen leidde tot de formulering van 28 uitspraken over mogelijke gevolgen van uit huis gaan en 9 uitspraken over de normatief gestelde voorwaarden om uit huis te gaan. Een pilot-studie bij 100 jongeren maakte duidelijk dat al deze items beschouwd kunnen worden als 'modal salient beliefs' en in het hoofdonderzoek meegenomen kunnen worden. Uit een factoranalyse op de data uit het hoofdonderzoek bleken de 28 items over mogelijke consequenties betrekking te hebben op een achttal dimensies. Twee dimensies verwijzen, zoals verwacht, naar de gevolgen voor de financiële positie en voor de huisvestingssituatie. Maar daarnaast hebben de uitspraken te maken met emotionele veiligheid, ouderlijke ondersteuning, verantwoordelijkheid voor dagelijkse zaken, autonomie, sociaal welzijn, en conflicten en gevoelens van eenzaamheid. De laatstgenoemde zes factoren, die verwijzen naar sociaal-emotionele en praktische zaken, sluiten inhoudelijk goed aan bij wat in de literatuur wel de 'Hotel-Mama'-factor wordt genoemd. Sommige auteurs veronderstellen dat dit aspect van invloed is op de beslissing van jongeren om uit huis te gaan of thuis te blijven wonen.

Ook op de normatieve uitspraken is een factoranalyse uitgevoerd. De uitkomst hiervan laat zien dat zes van de negen items betrekking hebben op drie verschillende domeinen: opleidingscarrière, financiële zelfstandigheid, en relatievorming.

Om de benodigde data te verzamelen is in 1994 een groot survey gehouden onder 1012 jongeren van 18 tot en met 26 jaar (zie hoofdstuk 6). De onderzoeksgroep bestaat uit jongeren die recentelijk uit huis zijn gegaan (de huisverlaters, die dus al over de drempel zijn), jongeren die serieus van plan zijn om binnen 1 jaar uit huis te gaan (de planners, die óp de drempel staan om uit huis te gaan), en jongeren die nog geen concrete plannen hebben om uit huis te gaan (de blijvers, die nog vóór de drempel staan). Met deze opsplitsing van de respondenten is het mogelijk de twee opeenvolgende fasen in het proces van besluitvorming te onderscheiden, en zo kan nauwkeuriger en vollediger vastgesteld worden welke factoren een rol spelen in de beslissing om uit huis te gaan. Om te garanderen dat relevante subcategorieën voldoende vertegenwoordigd zijn, is een

disproportioneel gestratificeerde steekproef getrokken. De analyses zijn vervolgens met gewogen data uitgevoerd, zodat de uitkomsten representatief geacht kunnen worden voor de Nederlandse jongeren die begin 1993 bij de ouders thuiswoonden.

In hoofdstuk 7 zijn de situatie en de subjectieve overwegingen van de huisverlaters vergeleken met die van de planners; ook zijn de planners vergeleken met de blijvers. Wanneer een significant verschil tussen de drie groepen werd gevonden, dan is dit geïnterpreteerd als aanwijzing dat de betreffende variabele van invloed is op de beslissing om uit huis te gaan. Bovendien is middels regressieanalyses bekeken voor welke groepen jongeren bepaalde overwegingen een rol spelen en voor welke jongeren die overwegingen niet of veel minder gelden.

Om te beginnen bleek niet zozeer het objectieve inkomensniveau een rol te spelen, maar gaat het veeleer om de subjectieve evaluatie van dit inkomen, zoals kon worden afgeleid uit het significante effect van de variabele inkomensdiscrepantie. Bij de huisverlaters was de discrepantie tussen het feitelijk inkomen en het acceptabel geachte inkomen gemiddeld veel lager dan bij de planners, terwijl de blijvers gemiddeld de hoogste inkomensdiscrepantie ervaarden. De financiële behoefte van jongeren bleek te variëren met het vertrek-motief en met de gekozen bestemming (alleen, met partner, of met anderen).

De gegevens laten ook duidelijk zien dat de beslissing om uit huis te gaan beïnvloed wordt door de (gepercipieerde) beschikbaarheid van woonruimte. Naarmate men meer moeilijkheden verwacht om woonruimte te vinden, is de geneigdheid om uit huis te gaan kleiner. Ook de soort huisvesting waar jongeren naar zoeken blijkt hun vertrekgeneigdheid te beïnvloeden. Jongeren die zich op de informele woningmarkt richten en relatief eenvoudige huisvesting zoeken (d.w.z. op kamers of gedeelde woonruimte) hebben meer kans om uit huis te gaan. Mikken ze op woonruimte die relatief weinig beschikbaar is op de formele woningmarkt (goedkope 2- en 3-kamerflats), dan is het moeilijker een woning te vinden en deze jongeren blijken het vertrek uit hun ouderlijk huis relatief vaker uit te stellen. Het soort woonruimte dat men zoekt hangt samen met leeftijd en motief van vertrek.

De normatieve opvattingen van de ouders oefenen ook een grote invloed uit op de beslissing van de jongeren. In de eerste fase van de besluitvorming, waarin de intentie om uit huis te gaan gevormd wordt, blijkt de normatieve druk van de ouders zelfs de meest doorslaggevende factor te zijn. Ook in de tweede fase heeft de sociale druk van de ouders een significant effect, zij het niet doorslaggevend. Er is een grote mate van overeenstemming gevonden tussen de persoonlijke opvattingen van de jongeren zelf en de gepercipieerde opvatting van hun ouders. Bovendien blijkt er een opvallende consistentie te bestaan tussen de aard van de verwachtingen van de ouders en het (geplande) gedrag rond uit huis gaan. Deze twee bevindingen zijn op te vatten als indicatie dat sociale normen niet aan betekenis hebben ingeboet, maar nog steeds als leidraad fungeren bij de beslissing om uit huis te gaan.

De Hotel-Mama factor tenslotte blijkt geen overtuigende rol te spelen in de beslissing om uit huis te gaan.

In hoofdstuk 8 is met behulp van CHAID-analyse vastgesteld welke variabelen kunnen worden aangemerkt als de meest belangrijke determinanten bij de beslissing om het ouderlijk huis te verlaten. Zoals hiervoor al staat aangegeven, is in de eerste fase van de besluitvorming de sociale druk van de ouders doorslaggevend. Wanneer de ouders aangeven dat de jongere nog niet uit huis moet gaan, zal 90% van hen ook geen plannen in die richting hebben; vinden de ouders dat hun kind echt uit huis moet gaan, dan is bijna 80% van plan binnen een jaar het ouderlijk te verlaten. Verder blijken, afhankelijk van opleidingsniveau en regio van bestemming, financiële overwegingen een rol te spelen, terwijl voor sommige jongeren huisvestingsoverwegingen van belang zijn in deze fase. Ook leeftijd behoort tot de belangrijkste predictoren van vertrekgeneigdheid. In de tweede fase blijkt het inkomen voor vrijwel alle jongeren een cruciale rol te spelen bij de realisering van het voorgenomen gedrag: inkomensatisfactie en de mate van inkomensdiscrepancie bepalen de kans om uit huis te gaan. Verder zijn vertrekmotief en leeftijd doorslaggevend in de overgang van intentie naar gedrag.

In het laatste hoofdstuk wordt een samenvatting gegeven van dit onderzoek en haar voornaamste bevindingen. Bovendien wordt ingegaan op de implicaties van de bevindingen voor theorie, beleid en toekomstig onderzoek.

Curriculum Vitae

Arianne Nicole Baanders is op 19 februari 1961 geboren in Rotterdam. In 1980 behaalde zij haar eindexamen Gymnasium Beta aan het Montessori Lyceum te Rotterdam. Aan de Landbouwwuniversiteit Wageningen volgde zij de studie Huishoudwetenschappen, oriëntatie gezinssociologie, waarin zij in 1987 afstudeerde.

Van oktober 1987 tot oktober 1988 was zij als toegevoegd onderzoeker verbonden aan de vakgroep Wonen van de Landbouwwuniversiteit, waar zij een onderzoek verrichtte in opdracht van het ministerie van VROM. Vervolgens heeft zij gedurende ruim een half jaar vrijwilligerswerk gedaan bij de Stichting Gastouderproject Wageningen.

In augustus 1989 werd zij aangesteld bij de vakgroep Huishoudstudies van de Landbouwwuniversiteit Wageningen als toegevoegd onderzoeker en toegevoegd docent. In deze periode schreef zij een voorstel voor een promotieonderzoek en was zij betrokken bij het verzorgen van enkele colleges.

Tevens was zij van november 1989 tot maart 1992 werkzaam bij de vakgroep Epidemiologie van de Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht, waar zij een onderzoek deed naar borstkanker in Europa.

Per 1 maart 1992 kreeg zij een aanstelling als projectmedewerker bij de Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO/ESR), en verrichtte zij bij de vakgroep Huishoudstudies van de Landbouwwuniversiteit Wageningen een promotieonderzoek naar uit huis gaan van jongeren. Deze dissertatie vormt de neerslag van haar onderzoekswerkzaamheden. In 1997 heeft zij in de redactie gezeten van het tijdschrift Huishoudstudies.

