TRIAL, ERROR AND A TIME OF ONE'S OWN. ENROLLING ANEW IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AS AN ELEMENT OF THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD IN CANADA

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Abstract
In many societies, the transition to adulthood has become a protracted process. Postsecondary education is typically seen as a cause of this protraction. However, contemporary research on the transition to adulthood shows that attending postsecondary education is not a 'mechanical' cause of the protraction, but an element in the process by which young people build, drive or correct their own transition to adulthood. One of the ways by which they do this is enrolling anew in a postsecondary education programme after having interrupted their studies.

We focus on one such society, Canada, and look into the process by which young graduates and young non-graduates enrol back in postsecondary education.

We use data from a panel survey that enables us to follow a probabilistic sample of young Canadians from the moment they interrupt postsecondary education until the moment they enrol back or up to the age of 27. We use hazard models to test hypothesis about the process that leads them to enrol back or not.

Our results show that, in Canada, enrolling anew is massive and that its timing and circumstances are compatible with the view that postsecondary education is not merely a 'mechanical' cause of the protraction.

Key Words:
Transition to adulthood; Young adult; Higher education; Life course; Canada

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Résumé
Dans de nombreuses sociétés, le passage à l'âge adulte s'allonge. On imagine souvent que les études postsecondaires sont une des causes de cet allongement. La recherche actuelle sur le passage à l'âge adulte montre plutôt que les études postsecondaires ne sont pas une cause « mécanique » de l'allongement, mais plutôt un élément du processus par lequel les jeunes élaborent ou corrigent la trajectoire de leur passage à l'âge adulte. S'inscrire à nouveau dans un programme d'études postsecondaires après avoir mis fin à ses études est une étape de ce processus.

Nous nous concentrons sur une société, le Canada, et nous y examinons le processus par lequel les jeunes qui détiennent un diplôme d'études postsecondaires et ceux qui ont abandonné les études postsecondaires en viennent à entreprendre un nouveau programme.

Nous utilisons les données d'une enquête par panel qui nous permet de suivre un échantillon probabiliste de jeunes Canadiens du moment où ils quittent les études postsecondaires jusqu'à celui où ils les reprennent ou jusqu'à l'âge de 27 ans. Nous utilisons des modèles de risque pour estimer els effets des variables dont on suppose qu'elles interviennent dans ce processus.

Nos résultats montrent qu'au Canada, s'inscrire à nouveau dans un programme d'études postsecondaires est très répandu, et que le calendrier et les conditions dans lesquelles les jeunes reprennent ces études correspondent à un processus dans lequel le rôle des études postsecondaires dans l'allongement du passage à l'âge adulte n'est pas mécanique.

Mots clés :
Passage à l'âge adulte; Jeunes adultes; Jeunesse; Études postsecondaires; Biographies; Trajectoires; Parcours de vie; Canada

INTRODUCTION

In many societies, the transition to adulthood has become a protracted process. In such societies, postsecondary education is typically related in several ways to this protraction. The most obvious is that attending postsecondary education deters the moment an individual can live from his work and face the responsibilities of family formation. However, contemporary research on the transition to adulthood shows that in many societies, attending postsecondary education is not simply a 'mechanical' cause of the protraction, but an element in the process by which young people build or drive their own transition to adulthood. One of the ways by which they do this is enrolling anew in a postsecondary education programme after having interrupted their studies.

In this article, we focus on one such society, Canada, and look into the process by which young graduates who stop studying after having completed some postsecondary programme and young non-graduates who stop studying by quitting a postsecondary programme enrol back in postsecond-ary education. We are especially interested to assess to which extent enrolling back in postsecondary education is common among the Canadian youth, and whether the process by which young Canadians enrol anew in postsecondary education can be interpreted as is suggested by contemporary research on the transition to adulthood. This could mean that a significant portion of the students involved in postsecondary education in Canada are neither the very young adults typically found in undergraduate programmes nor the older individuals coming back to school and typically attending night classes in a rather conventional continuous education fashion. They would rather be people in their mid and late twenties still having the lifestyle of somewhat younger people, but using education and the education system in their own way.

We use data from a panel survey that enables us to follow a probabilistic sample of young Cana-dians from the moment they interrupt postsecondary education until the moment they enrol back or up to the age of 27. We use hazard models to test hypothesis about the process that leads them to enrol back or not.

The article starts with an overview of the current knowledge on the transition to adulthood and a short discussion of the evolution of the age composition of the university student population in a Canadian province. We provide some background information on the organisation of postsecondary education in Canada, an overview of recent comparative studies on postsecondary education and the transition to adulthood, and an overview of a selection of recent research on postsecondary education in Canada. This introduction enables us to develop our empirical hypotheses. The rest of the article follows the plan typical of empirical research.

THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD AND THE COMPOSITION OF THE POSTSECONDARY STUDENT POPULATION

The transition to adulthood

Over the last decades, the transition to adulthood has attracted attention from sociologists and demographers partly because of the growing interest in the life course perspective and partly because, for a variety of reasons, this portion of the human life has become less simple that it once had been or, at the very least, is perceived to have changed in such a way. Two widely cited reviews provide an overview of the research done on the topic since the beginning of the 1960s: Hogan and Astone (1986) and Shanahan (2000). Although centred on the US experience, Berlin, Furstenberg and Waterstook (2010: 3-6) provide a brief, but excellent overview of the basic aspects of the current vision of the schedule of the transition to adulthood.

Becoming an adult was a protracted process in the traditional agriculture-based economy, but occurred early and quickly after World War II: secondary education had become a mass phenomenon, but postsecondary education was still uncommon; the economic boom made well-paid and unionized jobs easily available to young men just finishing high school. This pattern of early and quick transition to adulthood truly held no more than two decades. By the mid-1960s, a variety of factors had set in motion a process by which the transition to adulthood was to become 'delayed' relative to the short-lived pattern that had emerged after 1945. A series of factors contributed to the postponement of adulthood. Liefbroer (1999) provides a list of such factors, grouped in two categories: changes in the economic and social structure (the expansion of the educational system, the increase in the labour force participation of women, economic development, the creation and revision of the welfare state, and changes in the economic structure) and cultural factors (the decrease in the normative controls of behaviour, increasing individualisation, and the re-emergence of feminism). On one point, Berlin, Furstenberg and Waterstook (2010) are more precise: it is not the expansion of the educational system as a whole that played a role in the delaying of the transition to adulthood, but really the expansion of higher education.

Postponement, delay, or protraction is only one of the two main changes that affected the transition to adulthood over the last decades. The second one, following Beck (1992: 127-150) and in the context of life course research, is thought of as de-standardization or individualization and sometimes, more descriptively, as mere diversification. Much of the research on the transition to adulthood is done with reference to a set of moves, or 'markers', that are routinely used to define the transition to adulthood itself: leaving school, starting a full-time job, leaving the home of origin, getting married, and becoming a parent for the first time (e.g. Shanahan 2000: 667, Galland 1996). According to the quick and early pattern of the post-war period, these moves

were occurring not only early and over a short period, but pretty much in the very order they are canonically listed. Nowadays, they do not occur necessarily in that order and some moves that were deemed to be irreversible aren't so anymore. Many young people live as a couple before having completed their studies, couples are not made for life, some students become parents before completing their studies, mixing work and study is general, going back to one's parents' home is not uncommon, etc. This is not to say that the subjective experience of the transition to adulthood has changed drastically. Goodwin and O'connor (2007) stress that the experience of the transition from full-time education to 'whatever follows next' was characterized by complexity, uncertainty and risk even when the economic conditions were more favourable to the youth. However, the number of steps and decisions as well as the period over which complexity, uncertainty, and risk are to be tackled with has increased.

Researchers recognize that the transition to adulthood is now a process that may span up to almost two decades. Stokes and Wyn (2007) even argue that during this period, the boundaries of youth, adult, student, and worker are so blurred than the term 'transition' doesn't fit the period nor the process. Gaudet (2007: 3) lists a few words devised by researchers to refer to whole or part of the span of life over which this new range of the transition to adulthood is spread: 'adulescence' *(sic)* a portmanteau word mixing adulthood and adolescence coined by Anatrella (1988); 'postadolescence' (Galland 2001) and 'emerging adulthood' (Arnett 2004), referring to the period ranging from 18 to the mid-twenties; and 'youthood' (Côté 2006) for the second half of the twenties. Over this long youth, the individualized biography evolves as the product of a set of processes governing a set of trajectories: an educational trajectory, an occupational trajectory, a conjugal trajectory, and so on. These processes and trajectories are related. Each trajectory may be a sequence of apparently forward and backward moves. Leaving school is likely followed by starting a new job, but having a job does not preclude going back to school. Gaudet (2007: 11) has also a word for the new pattern in which the academic and occupational trajectories of youths are intertwined: 'yo-yo' transitions.

The composition of the postsecondary student population

The evolution of the age composition of the university student population in Quebec—one of the ten Canadian provinces— is a good way to illustrate the interaction between the transition to adulthood and the postsecondary student population. In the mid-1970s, students aged 24 or less were more numerous than students aged 25 or more, but the difference was slight. From that time up to the beginning of the 1990s, the number of students aged 25 or more increased faster than the number of younger students. The two groups reached the same size during the 1997-1998 academic year. Since then, the proportion of students aged 24 or less remains higher and the two curves are parallel. Overall, the evolution of the number of students aged 24 or less is driven by

the size of their cohorts in the population and by the increase of the proportion of youth that attends university. The evolution of the number of students aged 25 or more is a more complex phenomenon. Before 1997-1998, the number was driven by the size of their cohorts in the population—they are baby-boomers—, but they were attending university later in life than the following generations would do because higher education was just starting to become available to portions of the population who previously would not have entered into higher education. Some of the young people from these cohorts entered university at a relatively late age because the opportunity did not exist a few years before or because they had not realised earlier that it was available to them: the 'bump' is a trace of this catching-up. After 1997-1998, the students aged 25 or more are no more baby-boomers and they are not catching up: most of them are graduate students. During the catching-up years, older students were likely to be going back to school after having completed most of the steps of the transition to adulthood. Today's older students are likely to be a mix of graduate students who move on directly from undergraduate to graduate studies, of students who enrol in a new programme sometime after having completed a first diploma, of students who go back to university after having quit postsecondary studies, and of some students who start attending university later in their life like many did in the 1980s and 1990s. The crucial point is that unlike the older students of the 1980s who were basically going back to school after having completed their transition to adulthood and thus truly fit with the notions of continuing education and enrolled in continuing education programmes, most of today's older student may still be going through the process of transition to adulthood: they may cohabit or being married before completing their first postsecondary diploma, they may have a child before having their first serious job, etc. In other words, many of them are likely to be 'adulescents' rather than full-blown adults.

The interaction between the transition to adulthood and the size and age composition of the postsecondary student population may be seen in two different but complementary ways. The first one views this interaction as a relation between micro- and macrosociological dimensions. The individual biography's is a series of events (leaving school, going back to school) which are moves between states (being at school, not being at school) and the population dynamics is basically the aggregate of the events or moves between states that make the individuals' biographies. The second one looks at the phenomenon from the point of view of the postsecondary education system. From this perspective, people are moving out then back into the system, and as they do so, they are moving out from and into the student population. In this view, 'system' may be understood with is usual meaning, i.e. the social organization of postsecondary education, but also with the special meaning it takes in systems theory (e. g. Luhmann and Schorr 2000): the postsecondary education system is a social system and individuals are psychic systems who are part of the environment of this social system and, at times, interact with it in the role assigned to students by the system. Interest in the size of the student population may arise from

the postsecondary system as a social organization and based on economic motivations: the greater the population, the larger the organization. Interest in the composition of the student population is more likely to arise from the postsecondary system as a social system—or from people studying it as a social system: changes in the age composition of the student population, and thus of the psychic systems it interacts with, may force the social system to change the role it assigns to students and may even alter the goal of the system.

Practically speaking, the processes that govern the move back into the student population, or back into interacting with the system, can only be studied using individual data and this is what we do. This limitation does not erase the meaningfulness of the aggregate or systemic views: conceptually at least, from the perspective of the postsecondary education system, the biographical process is akin to a gate keeping process.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND PREVIOUS STUDIES

Postsecondary education in Canada

The Canadian Constitution makes education a provincial responsibility. Consequently, there are notable differences between the postsecondary education systems across provinces. In English-speaking provinces, high school ends after 12 years of schooling; in Ontario, the most populated Canadian province, until 2002, high school could end after 13 years of schooling. After high school, students may enrol in postsecondary education either in a university or in a college. Universities and university programmes are quite comparable across Canada, but the word ‘college’ encompasses a wide variety. Typically, colleges offer postsecondary programmes shorter than typical university programmes and leading to vocational or technological occupations rather than to professional or scientific ones. In some provinces, e.g. British Columbia and Alberta, students may take up to two years of university level courses in a college, and move afterwards to a university to complete a university programme (Andres 2001). This allows students whose family does not live close to a university to stay home longer. In Ontario, the college system had been designed as parallel to universities., but things are changing Ontario’s Colleges of Arts and technology offer a wide variety of vocational and technical programmes and even four-year programmes leading to a bachelor degree granted by the provincial government; some colleges developed partnerships with universities and offer degrees as well as diplomas. In Quebec, the French-speaking province, high school ends after 11 years of schooling. After high school, students proceed to ‘college’ (actually a ‘collège d’enseignement général et professionnel’ or ‘cégep’) where they may enrol in a two-year pre-university programme (‘enseignement général’) or in a three-year technical programme leading to the labour market (‘enseignement professionel’). They enrol in a university programme after having completed the pre-university programme. However, a non-negligible number of students enter

university after having completed a three-year technical programme. In English-speaking provinces, undergraduate university programmes typically last four years; in Quebec, they typically last three. In all Canadian provinces, the bachelor's degree is typically granted after 17 years of schooling.

The transition to adulthood and postsecondary education in a comparative perspective

Comparative research (e.g. Blossfeld *et al.* 2009, Corijn and Klijzing 2001) has shown that the prolongation and the individualization of the transition to adulthood is a common feature of advanced societies. It has also shown that the way in which this feature develops in advanced societies and the pace of this development varies greatly among societies. When looking for an explanation of this diversity within the common trend, research tends to focus on the role institutional factors, especially but not exclusively welfare-state regimes.

Obviously influenced by Esping-Andersen (1990, 1999) and Ferrera (1996) although he does not cite them, Vogel (2002) relates the differences in the rhythm and diversification of the transition to adulthood across European countries to differences between their welfare state regimes. Using data from household surveys, he shows that the enrolment rate in the labour market among the youth is related to social protection expenditures and what he labels a 'traditional family index'. He groups countries in three categories based on their rank in these linear relationships: Nordic (Denmark, Finland, and Sweden, with Netherlands as a close neighbour), Central (Belgium, France, Germany, Norway, and UK) and Southern (Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain). Entry into the labour market, partnering, birth of the first child occur at a younger age in the Nordic countries, which have the highest social protection expenditures and the lowest score of the 'traditional family index' than in the Central countries, which spend less in social protection expenditures and have higher values of the 'traditional family index'. They occur even later in the Southern countries, which have the lowest social protection expenditures and the highest values of the 'traditional family index'. Unfortunately, Vogel does not examine postsecondary education.

Although he refers mainly to United States and other liberal-type welfare-state regime countries, Settersten (2007) summarises in an interesting way the respective roles of state support and family support in the transition to adulthood, and their variation across welfare-state regime types as they evolve nowadays. As he puts it, 'welfare states are powerful forces in determining the transition to adulthood, providing different packages of resources that create stronger or weaker scaffolding for young people as they navigate entry into adult life. […] They serve as sources of exploration or drift, of resilience or risk, depending on their provisions'. According to him, welfare states emerged as 'major creator of life-course markers' through their mandatory and

universal programmes as well as their legal entitlements. Referring to a variety of authors, he stresses the 'emergent emphasis of modern welfare states on equipping individuals and families to actively manage their own lives through their own actions', […] consistent with human and social capital perspectives, in which investments in human capital (e.g., education and training) and social services (e.g., assistance with child and elder care) are primary means for achieving this because they facilitate participation in the market'. He contrasts this type of intervention with the more traditional protective action of the welfare-state, stressing that investment aimed fostering action by the individual and his family without the mechanisms that protect individual and families from risks may lead to promoting either ill-considered risk taking or, on the contrary, make people hesitant to take as many risks as they would if they could rely on some form of protection. The current trend at transferring to families the burden of the cost of the transition to adulthood takes its toll. According to him, in some societies, notably in the United States, families are overburdened in extending support to young adults. Although such flows are expected in privileged families, they have become significant in middle-class families and have become a source of strain. 'The increased reliance on families raises special concerns about the plight of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, whose skills and resources may be less adequate or relevant going into the transition. […] The theme of overburdened families is tied to cultural ideas about independence and about where the new risks and costs associated with these changes are to be absorbed (e.g., markets, families, or governments)'. (Settersten 2007: 252-253).

In an article aimed at fostering empirical research, Billari (2004) suggested focusing on the extreme cases of the European diversity as a strategy to understand better the importance of cultural and institutional factors in the transition to adulthood. In his view, comparing the 'latest-late' pattern of Southern Europe and the 'earliest-early' pattern of the Nordic countries could be the best way to pinpoint the factors behind the diversity. However, his article is rather suggestive than conclusive.

Aassve, Davia, Iacovou, and Mazzuco (2007) seem to follow the strategy Billari suggested, at least in interpreting their data. Their study focuses on a single event of the transition to adulthood—home leaving—and its relation to poverty. Except for the already poor, moving out from home to start living on one's own usually involves a higher risk of becoming poor: the household income of a young student living on scholarships and maybe part-time work is almost always lower than the income of the household he just left. Using data from the European Community Household Panel, they show that indeed, leaving home increases the probability of becoming poor. Their most interesting result is that the strongest effect of leaving home on poverty is found in the Scandinavian countries, where home leaving occur the earliest, whereas the weakest is found among Mediterranean countries, where home leaving occur the latest. As they put it, their 'estimates suggest that young individuals in Scandinavian countries, though

experiencing higher poverty rates on leaving home, realise that for most individuals this is a temporary state, and is alleviated through good job prospects and a generous welfare system protecting young individuals from adverse economic events and long-term poverty. ' (Aassve, Davia, Iacovou, and Mazzuco, 2007: 317). On the contrary, young individuals from the Mediterranean countries apparently stay home longer as a strategy to avoid what could be a long period of poverty, notably because of limited state support and limited job availability. For this event of the transition to adulthood, the effect of institutional factors seems quite clear.

In her comparative study of the transition to adulthood in Denmark, France, Spain and the UK, Van de Velde (2008: 42-61) finds a striking difference between Denmark and the other countries. In France, Spain and the UK, the proportion of youth going back to school decreases from 1% or 2% at 18 to less than 0.5% around 21, then slowly decreases until the end of the twenties. In Denmark, this proportion peaks over 3% from 18 to 22, then decreases to 1.5% at 25 and remains around that value till the end of the twenties. Going back to school is actually one side of what appears to be a distinctively Danish pattern in Europe. First, young Danes typically take a 'gap' year between secondary and tertiary (postsecondary) studies. Second, between the age of 18 and 30, young Danes actually move massively back and forth between three states: studying, working and studying, and working, apparently in no particular order. The pattern crosses social classes and is part of a notion of youth that allows and values experimentation, and is made possible, among other things, by the availability of jobs for the youth. The Dane 'yo-yo' pattern is not a curse, not even for the underprivileged. In the Danish case, apparently, low youth unemployment does not necessarily foster a fast transition to adulthood.

Van de Velde's view of Denmark is quite different from that of Vogel. According to Vogel, the level of social protection ensures the Danish youth a faster transition to adulthood. According to Van de Velde, social protection and labour availability allow the Dane youth to take their time. However, given that the birth of the first child arrives younger and total fertility is higher in Nordic countries that in Central or Southern countries, the 'yo-yo' transitions between school and work apparently do not really delay the transition to adulthood. As Van de Velde put it, contrasting views from Brannen and Nilsen (2000) and from Chauvel (2001), the protraction of the transition to adulthood is quite universal in advanced societies, but it may be chosen or imposed. In some countries, it is chosen by the affluent, but imposed on the underprivileged, lived as experimentation by the former and as coping by the latter. In Denmark, all youth seem to live it as if they were affluent; in the Southern countries, most are really coping. Massive 'yo-yo' transitions between school and work seem to be a sign of a society in which the youth basically make the most of the transition to adulthood.

Although she does not refer to this literature, the difference Van de Velde finds between the Danish pattern and the other European countries' patterns fits very well with the views on the transition to adulthood in the context of the family formation process developed by Lesthaeghe and Surkyn (1988) and based on the work of R. Inglehart on the shift in values in Western societies (Inglehart 1977, 1990; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). The Danish pattern fits closely with what Lesthaeghe and Surkyn (1988: 40) label the 'work later' response to economic opportunities that would be typical of societies where people give precedence to self-expression over survival in Inglehart's terminology. People who would give precedence to survival over self-expression would, on the contrary, seize any opportunity to insure their income. From this perspective, finding in Denmark a pattern that fits with self-expression is not surprising: according to Inglehart and Welzel (2005), Denmark is among the societies where the score on their self-expression rather than survival score is the highest. Giving precedence to self-expression over survival in general and especially in choices related to education and work requires conditions in which mere survival is no more a concern: the Dane pattern would hardly be imaginable outside of a society where people are protected against the consequences of not making choices that primarily insure themselves against social risks. Both the precedence of self-expression and the Dane pattern are likely consequences or by-products of the rather social-democratic Dane welfare regime.

Comparative research on education and the transition to adulthood that includes Canada is not common. One rare example is Fussell, Gauthier, and Evans (2007), which focus on the differences between Australia, Canada and the USA, three mainly English-speaking countries having rather liberal welfare regimes. The comparison is done using a methodology (entropy analysis) that allows an overall comparison of the rhythm and level of diversification of the transition to adulthood. The authors find that postsecondary education has become increasingly important in all three countries—labour markets require more and more skilled workers—and strongly structures late adolescence and early adulthood, but that differences emerge in its concentration in traditional postsecondary ages and the absolute level of participation: a larger proportion of the Canadian youth attain postsecondary education and do so at non-traditional ages, whereas these figures are lower and concentrated at traditional ages in Australia and the United States. Overall, and despite its being prolonged in all countries, United States youth experience a more uniform and shorter transition to adulthood than their peers in Australia or Canada, largely due to the concentration of education in traditional school ages. Although they do not discuss this point, their findings suggest that Canadian youth may be attending postsecondary education after some experience in the labour market.

The circumstances in which students may leave school or delay completion of their studies in the USA and Canada may shed some light on the differences between the two countries. Bound, Lovenheim, and Turner (2010) show that in the USA, quitting and the time to degree completion are related to social origin through attending underequipped or ill-staffed institutions. We do not know of any directly comparable study in Canada, but Canadian postsecondary institutions are not as numerous and not as organized in a hierarchy as they are in the USA, and almost all of them depend largely on provincial funding which greatly levels their resources. Quitting postsecondary studies is certainly related to social origin in Canada (e.g. Shaienks, Gluszynski, and Bayard 2008: 25-27), but, perhaps not surprisingly, Day (2010) finds that in Canada, and contrary to what is found in other countries, high school resources and outcome in postsecondary education are not related in a significant way, whereas Frenette (2008) finds that high-school quality only accounts for a small proportion of the difference in attendance related to social origin. Twenty-five years after Chilman's (1980) review of research on adolescent childbearing, Sandefur, Eggerling-Boeck, and Park (2005) still see early out-of-wedlock motherhood as an important cause of early school leaving in the USA. Adolescent motherhood is not as widespread in Canada as in the USA: in 2006, the latest year for which the data are available for the two countries from the Human fertility database (HFD), the sum of age-specific fertility rates up to 19 was 0.068 in Canada and 0.216 in the USA. Perhaps not surprisingly, up north, the gender gap is rather about girls outperforming boys (e.g. Frenette and Zeman 2008, Drewes 2010).

Recent research on postsecondary education attendance, persistence and outcome in Canada

There has been a flurry of large-scale survey based research on postsecondary education in Canada since the mid 2000's because of the availability of a panel survey on the transition to adulthood (more below) and of research funding from the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. Diallo, Trottier and Doray (2009: 36-38) provide a review of some of this research. Much of it has been done by government agencies and a large fraction of the research done by academics is still only available as research reports. Most focus on access and persistence. Most has been mainly descriptive (e.g. Shaienks, Eisl-Culkin, and Bussière 2006, Finnie and Qiu 2008, Shaienks, Gluszynski and Bayard 2008), or focused either on the influence of aspiration, grades and behaviour, or on the economic conditions surrounding postsecondary attendance, with a special interest for loans. Most of the research is mainly policy oriented. One notable exception is the work of L. Andres who has been investigating the topic for a long time and has a broader sociological with a special interest for rational action theory and cultural reproduction (Andres 1998, Andres and Wyn 2010).

Recent research on persistence in and return to postsecondary education in Canada

Persistence in education is routinely estimated using administrative data. This leads to view people who leave a programme before completing it as leaving the education system without a diploma. Finnie and Qiu (2008: 195) examine persistence in postsecondary education in Canada using data from a panel survey. This allows them to estimate persistence based on the individuals' trajectories: getting a diploma after having switched from one programme or one institution to another or after having truly quit and got back is not counted as it would be in a study based on administrative data. They find that after five years, 73.1% students who started in a college programme had graduated, 8.8% were still enrolled in postsecondary education, and 18.0% were not in postsecondary education and had not graduated; the corresponding proportions were 69.4, 20.4% and 10.2% for students who had started in a university programme. The proportion of students actually getting a diploma in much higher from this perspective than from the one based on the use of administrative data. This should not come as a surprise: they—rightly—estimate the proportion of graduates at the end of a time interval as the proportion of graduates among people rather as the proportion of graduations among attempts.

Whereas the study by Finnie and Qiu is descriptive, Martinello (2008) uses the same data source to investigate what leads students to quit their first programme or to switch from their first postsecondary programme to a second one. Outcomes and students decisions vary according to how the students finance their education: students who receive government sponsored loans or non-repayable help from the family are more likely to complete their studies, but less likely to try again if they did not complete their first programme. Parents' educational background has no effect on the probability of completing the first programme, but increases the probability of attempting a second programme if the first is not completed. His interpretation is worth citing: 'Surprisingly, parents with more education did not appear to help students make better initial decisions about their PSE. [...] Thus students whose parents have more education appear more able to adjust to adversity or surprises within their PSE, and any overall relation between parents' education and PSE completion occurs via this mechanism'. (Martinello 2008: 235).

Using the same data source as Finnie and Qiu and Martinello and a purely descriptive approach, Shaienks, Eisl-Culkin, and Bussière (2006: 15) look at the life events that seem associated with persistence and 'late' enrolment in postsecondary education. Enrolled students are less likely to be married and have children than graduates and dropouts. Enrolling for the first time after age 21 seems rare: 8% of youth age 22 enrol for the first time, 5% of youth age 23, and 3% of youth age 24. Many of those who enrol as such ages continue working either full-time or part-time and enrol in a 'non-traditional' institution, i.e. not in a college or a university.

Although their report is mostly descriptive, Shaienks, Gluszynski and Bayard (2008: 25-28) use a multivariate approach to look at the effect of a series of variables on dropping out of postsecondary education. They estimate four logistic regressions of the probability of having dropped out by the end of December 2005 among the respondents of the survey who had ever been enrolled in postsecondary education; at this time, all the respondents were aged between 34 and 26. Male students are more prone to drop out from university than female, as well as students aged 26 rather than 24, those having parents with some postsecondary education and those devoting three hours or less a day to homework. Students still living with their parents, even in single parent family, are less prone to drop out than those living by themselves are. Male students are more prone to drop out from college or cégep (technical and pre-university programmes were not treated separately), as well as students who live with a single parent and devote less than three hours a day to homework. Having a student loan, not being Canadian by birth, and having parents who had completed postsecondary education reduce the odds of dropping out of college. High school grades over 80% reduce the odds of dropping out from college as well as from university. Dropping out from university is more common in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, which is interpreted as a consequence of the very favourable labour market conditions in these provinces; Alberta and, to a lesser extent, Saskatchewan are oil and gas producers whereas British Columbia benefits from Asian trade. The odds of dropping out from 'cégep' are comparatively high in Quebec, whereas dropping out from university is the lowest in Quebec, which is interpreted as a consequence of the spread of university level education over two distinct levels of programmes and institutions. This explanation makes sense for the low odds of dropping out from university (students who 'have' to drop out from university style programmes have dropped out before reaching university proper) , but is less convincing for the high odds for dropping out from 'cégep' as the analysis groups together students attending technical and pre-university programmes.

As can be seen from this overview, most of the recent Canadian research on postsecondary education done using longitudinal data is policy oriented. It is driven by the goals of a policy that fosters access to postsecondary education in general, especially for those whose parents have no postsecondary education, fosters persistence and success, etc. It relies mainly on human capital ideas: postsecondary education is an investment made by the student, his family, and the State with the purpose of acquiring knowledge and know-how that have a definite value on the labour market. The motivation of the students and their parents is an assumption rather than a hypothesis. Martinello's 'surprising conclusion' we cite above seems to the furthest from human capital discourse. For this reason, such research is of little help in discovering anything about how Canadian youth uses postsecondary education and how this use is related to the composition of the postsecondary population and its transformation.

Insights from qualitative research

Some insight can be found in qualitative research on transition to adulthood and learning trajectories. Charbonneau (2006) uses interviews with 33 young adults from Montreal to investigate how the possibility of moving between school and work in their transition to adulthood became institutionalised, and how this possibility fosters altering one's trajectory. The background section of her article details how the possibility of moving easily from school to work and of mixing school and work took ground in Quebec. One key factor was the setting up, by the provincial Ministry of Education in the 1980's, of special classes intended to make completion of high school easier for adults who had not completed it. Over time, these classes attracted young dropouts and this use of these classes by the youth became a step in the institutionalisation of the move between school and work. The split over cégep's pre-university programmes and university programmes of what is offered in a single set of programmes elsewhere in Canada is a structural factor that fosters 'taking a gap' within post-secondary studies. The economic difficulties of the 1980s made parents quite uncertain about the ability of their children to insert with success on the labour market. In France, which has experienced the same difficulties, parents reacted by focusing on the selection of the best course of study. In Quebec, where the education system already allowed getting back to school after one or even several failures on the labour market, postponing the final choice of a career and multiplying experiences to ensure the best choice rapidly emerged as the reference strategy. Another decision by the Quebec government in the 1990s, despite being completely unrelated to education, contributed to the institutionalisation of the move between school and work and the mix of the two: allowing retail stores to open all weeknights and all day long on week-ends. This created almost instantly high demand for part-time unskilled work, mainly outside regular school hours, which youth started filling and is still filling happily as it became a way to get some independent income. With time, this kind of early and progressive integration into the labour force became interpreted by potential employers, parents and youth themselves as a normal step in the process of becoming an adult. From her analysis of the interviews, she concludes that the general setting is being used in different ways by different people. One clear thing is that young people have integrated, into their personal strategies, the information relating to the flexibility of the school system and the weakness of sanctions social when they choose to deviate from the expected trajectory: they deliberately expand their youth. Within this general framework, other factors are likely to intervene in the process that leads to altering a trajectory, such as the influence of past experience or what she labels a 'capital of inherited memories', as in the case of young people living in the nostalgia of the model of the self-made-man and use it to justify their dropping out of school. Three features seem to characterise the dynamics of the moves between school and work for today's Quebec youth: the construction of a new stage in the transition to adulthood, that of a 'time of one's own'; a strong belief, sometimes excessive, in the value of

experimentation and of the ‘trial and error’ approach; and social exclusion, for those who do not adapt to the new rules of the labour market. She sums up her view writing that ‘Things look as if the Quebec society was attempting to reconcile two apparently incompatible cultural norms: belief in the value of early work experience and belief in the value of extended attendance of the school system’.

Charbonneau’s view of the moves between school and work by the Quebec youth is quite similar to Van de Velde’s view of the same moves by the Dane youth. The tone is certainly different: Charbonneau does not relate what she finds in Quebec to the combination of job availability and Nordic style welfare regime—of which some elements can be found in Quebec, especially affordable postsecondary education—as Van de Velde does, but rather to a specific setting created by economic uncertainty and a series of unrelated government decisions. Van de Velde’s view suggests interpreting the Dane pattern as an element of a society which favours self-expression over survival; Charbonneau’s allows the same interpretation—after all, Quebec youth is giving itself a ‘time of one’s own’—, but she stresses the contradiction between the cultural norms of the society she looks at rather than celebrates its postmodernity. One thing is clear though: from Settersten’s perspective, the features of the Quebec education system that almost always insure the possibility to go back to school are the kind of protection against the consequences of risk taking that should accompany any state action aimed at equipping the individuals and their families.

Charbonneau’s account of how experimentation and ‘trial and error’ became the reference strategy for education and career choice in Quebec makes Martinello’s surprise look a bit naïve. The analogy with marriage immediately comes to the mind. Marriage can be defined as the institution by which a family or a society perpetuates itself and organises the transmission of wealth from one generation to the next, but in contemporary Western societies—and likely elsewhere—, it has become primarily a way to organise one’s sentimental, sexual and everyday life. Marriage can be arranged by the parents, but in contemporary Western societies—and likely elsewhere—, finding the right spouse is done through experimentation and using a ‘trial and error approach’. The view that decisions about postsecondary education should be motivated primarily or solely by the will to get a highly profitable job, should strongly guided by parents and should be right on the first time could be as out-dated as the traditional view of marriage. One wonders why economists, who routinely think of marriage as a matching process done through experimentation and a ‘trial and error’ approach, apparently have yet to think of education and career choice in the same way.

Charbonneau’s view also suggests a line of interpretation for the findings by Fussell, Gauthier, and Evans on Canada, where a larger proportion of youth attain postsecondary education and do so at non-traditional ages, whereas these figures are lower and concentrated at traditional ages in

Australia and the United States. One interpretation is that what Charbonneau has found in Quebec exist as well in the English speaking provinces. In such a case, the difference between Canada and the other countries would be due to the combination of job availability for the young, lack of sanction for deviation from a given trajectory, belief in the value of early work experience, and belief in the value of postsecondary education. Another interpretation is that the difference between Canada and the two other countries is mainly due to Quebec. Fussell, Gauthier, and Evans use aggregate data, which could lead to believe that Canada is slightly different from the two other countries when the real difference could be between one portion of Canada and the rest, the English speaking provinces being similar to the two other countries. Unfortunately, we know of no study similar to that of Charbonneau on the other Canadian provinces.

ENROLLING ANEW AS AN ELEMENT OF THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

As we have already mentioned most large-scale survey based research on postsecondary education in Canada has been done using data from the Youth in Transition Survey, a panel survey conducted by Statistics Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), and much of this research has been funded by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. As we have already seen, most if this research is mainly policy oriented and with few exceptions, it is conducted assuming that postsecondary education is an investment made by the student, his family, and the State with the purpose of acquiring knowledge and know-how that have a definite value on the labour market. Human capital ideas are quite widespread today, notably in policy-oriented milieus, more generally among public sector managers, and certainly among education economists—who by far a large are the most numerous among the researchers who can handle quantitative research—, to the extent that it seems to be hold as the common sense view. This, by itself, could be enough to explain the role such ideas play in contemporary Canadian research on postsecondary education. However, another factor is likely at work. As we have already explained, according to the Canadian Constitution, education is a provincial matter of which the federal government is supposed to stay clear. However, the Constitution does not forbid the federal Parliament to spend money in matters that the constitution otherwise reserve to provincial legislatures. This feature is a key element in the relations between the two levels of government. Over the years, the federal government has used its ‘spending authority’ to implement policy in matters, that the 1867 Constitution—actually an Act of the Imperial Parliament—had reserved to the provinces. The federal government cannot subsidize directly schools, colleges, or universities: the provincial authorities would not allow them to receive directly federal funding. However, it can implement policy in training, which is deemed different from education: HRSDC, the federal department of Human Resources and Skills Development, is heavily involved in work force training, largely provided directly to individuals. The federal

government also managed to implement a Canada-wide scholarship programme on the assumption that it had the power to transfer money directly to individuals. In other words, in education, the federal government gets around the Constitution by interacting directly with individuals. As much as the current status if human capital ideas, this may explain why most recent research on postsecondary education funded by the federal government and done using data from the Youth in Transition Survey has been conducted from a definitely individualistic perspective.

The core of the article is an attempt at looking at one possible element of the transition to adulthood—enrolling anew in postsecondary education—using data from this survey from a different perspective. We are interested in checking whether the information gathered by the survey on the spells during which young people have left postsecondary education and could go back to college or university is consistent with the contemporary views on the transition to adulthood.

As we pointed out earlier, at least in Quebec for which we have the data, university students aged at least 25 are almost as numerous as students aged less than 25, and this cannot be accounted for by the kind of massive catching up that happened in earlier decades. Most of these older students are likely to still going through the process of transition to adulthood. Fussell, Gauthier, and Evans (2007) finding that a larger proportion of youth attains postsecondary education in Canada than in the USA and Australia, and does so older than in these two countries suggests that, in Canada, the choice of education and career is done in a way that postpones the decision and, at the very least, gives time for the choice being made through experimentation and 'trial and error'. The findings by Charbonneau (2006) are even more precise: in Quebec, the combination of economic conditions and decisions by the provincial government favoured the development and acceptance of experimentation and 'trial and error' as the common way to make decisions about education and career.

We use a lifecourse perspective. We are especially interested in checking whether going back to school in early adulthood in Canada can be interpreted as part of an experimentation and 'trial and error' process of education and career choice.

We oppose the traditional pattern and the 'protracted' pattern—for lack of a better term. In the traditional pattern, postsecondary education is chosen in a careful way, as it is for instance in France according to Charbonneau, and concentrated in the 'traditional' ages—i.e. it comes immediately after high school and does not last much after age 20—, as it is for instance in the USA and Australia according to Fussell, Gauthier, and Evans. Postsecondary education is assumed an investment in human capital made by the individuals, their family, and the State whose purpose is getting the most from the labour market. It should be completed in as little time

as possible and use resources it the most effective way. Ideally, it should be completed before other steps in the transition to adulthood. Once the training completed, postsecondary education ends. It may be followed by some new training later, but in a continuous education perspective, with the purpose of further human capital investment. In the protracted pattern, postsecondary education is an instrument of self-development as much or more than an investment in human capital. The self-development through and during postsecondary education is as important as the knowledge and know-how it provides. Enrolment in postsecondary education may be extended, interrupted by periods of full time work or coexist with part-time work. Other events of the transition to adulthood, especially those related with family formation, may occur during enrolment.

We allow the traditional pattern a modest amount of experimentation and 'trial and error' that occurs through reorientation and programme changing without interrupting studies. We do not look at reorientation or programme changing, and exclude short interruptions that could be mixed up with these; on the contrary, we look only at longer interruptions (more details in Model below).

The traditional and protracted patterns should lead to different in schedules of enrolment—i.e. the enrolment rate as a function of the number of time elapsed since leaving postsecondary education— and to different patterns of relation between enrolment rate and age.

If the traditional pattern prevails, enrolling anew in postsecondary education should be a rare event until reaching the point at which career development requires a new investment in human capital. The rate of enrolment should be low, and decrease as the number of semesters elapsed since leaving school increases. It should increase with age, or at least be low at the ages at the traditional ages of postsecondary education—we are looking at enrolling anew, not at fist enrolment—and higher at ages compatible with the need for further human capital investment driven by career development.

If the protracted pattern prevails, enrolling anew in postsecondary education should be common. The rate of enrolment should be relatively high and remain so as the number of semesters elapsed since leaving school increases, even though some decrease could be expected. It should vary little with age, at least until the end of the twenties.

The two patterns should also lead to different patterns of relation between enrolment and other states related to the transition to adulthood. If the transition to adulthood still follows a traditional pattern, living with a spouse or a partner should come after school completion. Being married or cohabiting should reduce the hazard of going back to school whatever the type of programme and whether or not the previous programme has been completed. If the transition to adulthood

follows the protracted pattern, there should be no association between being married or cohabiting and enrolling anew. If being married or cohabiting increases the hazard of going back to school, it could be either that a new pattern is emerging, in which some form of postsecondary studies still part of primary training rather than part of continuous education is done after the first steps of family formation, or that the continuous education process has begun by the mid-twenties. Being a parent or not should be interpreted in the same way.

Part-time work is typical of 'youthood' and combining part-time work and attending school is typical of the protracted pattern. Holding a full-time job, especially one with high income, high qualification, or responsibilities is typical of a completed transition to adulthood. Given that we observe people aged up to 27 years, we do not expect enrolling anew in postsecondary education to being motivated by a need for further human capital investment driven by career development. Thus, if the traditional pattern prevails, holding a position that provides high income, requires high qualification, or involves responsibility should reduce enrolment. If the protracted pattern prevails, holding a part-time job should increase enrolment.

The two patterns should also lead to different relations between enrolment and social origin as well as the previous step in postsecondary education.

In theory, non-university postsecondary programmes lead to the labour market and do not lead to nor prepare for further studies. In the traditional pattern, people who have completed a non-university programme should enrol anew after some work experience and in order to move ahead in their career, typically being older than the age up to which we observe people in this study. If the traditional pattern prevails, having completed a non-university programme should reduce enrolment strongly. If the protracted pattern of experimentation and 'trial and error' prevails, having completed a non-university programme should not reduce enrolment to the point of making it rare.

Undergraduate programmes may lead directly to the labour market and prepare as well for further studies. In the traditional pattern, students who have completed their undergraduate programme should move directly to graduate studies; we do not look at such cases. The former university students we include in our study have interrupted their postsecondary education after graduation or after having left their programme without graduating. If the traditional pattern prevails, the enrolment rate should be low in both cases. If the protracted pattern of experimentation and 'trial and error' prevails, enrolment should be a real possibility in both cases.

In the traditional pattern, the relation between social origin and enrolling anew should be similar to what Martinello was expecting. Highly educated parents should have assisted their children in choosing their postsecondary programme thus increasing their chances of success. Graduate

students wishing to pursue education further should enter graduate studies right after graduation. Students somehow in need of reorientation should move between programmes without interrupting their education. Leaving school before having completed whatever should be completed is assumed a consequence of poor resources, whether economical—lack of money—or intellectual—lack of guidance. If the traditional pattern prevails, enrolling anew should be more common among young people whose parents are less educated. If the protracted pattern prevails, things should look more as what Van de Velde found. Moving between school and work should be quite common. If Canada is more like Denmark, enrolling anew should vary little according to social origin. If Canada is more like countries of Southern Europe, enrolling anew should be more common for young people from highly educated parents.

Charbonneau's analysis leads to expect that enrolling anew should be common in Quebec. Fussell, Gauthier, and Evans found that Canadian youth enrols in postsecondary education more and at a letter age than youth from USA and Australia. The null hypothesis is obviously that things are similar within the whole country and thus vary little across provinces.

The next section details the method we use and lists specific hypotheses for the variables we use in our model.

METHOD

We faced modelling problems from the onset, the first one being the very notion of programme. The main distinction within postsecondary education is between university education and non-university postsecondary education. The distinction is grounded in that the former typically lasts longer, has higher tuition, leads to professional or scientific occupations and, at least in principle, to high income and, eventually, to managerial positions whereas the second typically should not last very long, should not cost as much, leads to technological occupations and middle level income, and does not really prepare for management. Once secondary education is completed or after having left a postsecondary education programme as in the case in our study, students may enrol either in a university programme or in a non-university programme. Enrolling in a university programme or in a non-university programme are competing risks (see Model below) and thus define different equations. In other words, the distinction between the two is part of the definition of our dependent variable.

The second issue was the circumstances in which students leave postsecondary education. Individuals become at risk of enrolling anew in postsecondary education when they leave the first postsecondary programme they had enrolled. They may leave this programme either by graduating or by quitting before graduating. Whether they become at risk as graduates or as non-graduates, they may go back to postsecondary education by enrolling in a university programme

or by enrolling in a non-university programme. Given our hypotheses about experimentation and the 'trial and error' process, we need to estimate these effects separately for graduates and for non-graduates. Being a graduate or a non-graduate thus defines separate groups for which we estimate our equations separately.

A third issue was the schedule of the process. The probability of going back to school if not having done it already varies as a function of the time elapsed since leaving school. In other words, over and above the effects of the factors that are believed to explain whether individuals go back to school, in what type of programme and when they do it, the probability of going back to school is likely to vary from one semester to the next. Furthermore, there is no reason to assume that the effects of the factors that may increase or decrease this probability remain constant from one semester to the next.

Another was age. The probability of going back to school if not having done it already varies as a function of age as well as a function of the time elapsed since leaving school.

In short, the instantaneous probability of going back to school if not having done it already depends on the time elapsed since leaving school, on age, and on several other factors (level of previous programme, parents' education, conjugal status and parenthood, employment and income). The effects of the time elapsed since leaving school, age and the other factors all depend on how an individual has left school—achieving or quitting a programme. Analyses must be conducted using data and statistical models that take this kind of complexity into account.

Gender first seems an obvious issue. However, a study on the participation of women in adult education by Bélanger, Doray, and Levesque (2004) confirms results from previous research: the participation rates in adult education, and especially the decision to return to studies, varies little according to gender. We have no reason to expect gender to play a different role in the process we are interested in, but we include it as a control variable in our equations.

Data

We use data from the Youth in Transition Survey (YITS), a panel survey conducted by Statistics Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). The YITS questionnaires gather data on significant aspects of the lives of young people, including most education and employment spells. These allow studying a number of important transitions that typically occur at this time of life, such as finishing high school, embarking on postsecondary studies, obtaining a first job, leaving home, and so on. The questionnaires also collect data on the factors liable to affect these transitions, some of which are 'objective'—including family

background and previous educational experience—and others 'subjective'—aspirations, expectations, and so on (Statistics Canada 2007: 83).

YITS was launched in 1999. The first wave—'cycle 1'—gathered information about a single year, 1999. Subsequent waves covered two-year periods: 'cycle 2' collected information on 2000 and 2001, 'cycle 3' on 2002 and 2003, and 'cycle 4 on 2004 and 2005'. YITS has gathered data up to the end of 2009. At the time we realized our study, the available data allowed us to follow respondents' lives over seven years.

The YITS sample design excludes people living in the three territories (i.e. parts of Canada that are not provinces), on First Nations reserves, on Canadian Forces Bases, and in remote areas. YITS follows two cohorts of young people. The cohort we use comprises young people born between 1979 and 1981 inclusively and aged 18–20 on December 31, 1999. Our analyses are based on respondents living in the ten Canadian provinces who responded to all first four cycles of the survey. They focus on going back to school after having completed a postsecondary programme or dropped out of a postsecondary programme. The observation period covers the years 1999 to 2005. The sample we use includes 5613 individuals of which 3314 left school having completed a postsecondary programme and 2299 by quitting their programme.

Details on the variables and the statistical model are in the technical appendix.

RESULTS

Schedule

Figure 2 shows the cumulative proportions of graduates and non-graduates who enrolled anew in a postsecondary programme according to the number of semesters elapsed since leaving, and to the type of programme they enrolled in.

Going back to school is more common among those who quit than among graduates. Nearly 20% of graduates and 30% of those who quit went back during the first two semesters they were considered at risk. In the fifth semester (i.e. seven semesters after leaving), the proportions were at around 30% and 50% respectively. The two groups continue to show a difference until the end of the observation range: eleven semesters, or six years, after leaving school, 45% of graduates and 66% of those who quit were back to school.

Graduates were more likely to enrol in a university programme, particularly when going back earlier rather than later, while 'quitters' showed a stronger tendency to enrol in a non-university programme.

Age

For each semester, we estimated what amounts to age-specific rates according to the type of the previous programme and statistically adjusted for gender and province of residence. This leads to 22 sets of 8 coefficients. Figures 3 to 5 show these sets of rates for a selection of semesters.

In the first semester, among non-graduates, the rate of enrolment in a university programme is very high up to age 20, reasonably high from ages 20 to 23, and fairly low among older respondents; among graduates, the rate increases from ages 19 to 22 then falls. The rate of enrolment in a non-university programme is relatively high up to age 20 among non-graduates, it falls from ages 20 to 22 and is quite a bit lower among older respondents; it is fairly low for graduates of all ages, but slightly higher up to age 20.

In the third semester, the rate of enrolment in a university programme among non-graduates is relatively high at age 19, somewhat lower between ages 20 and 22, and low thereafter; it is low among graduates and does not appear to vary according to age. Among non-graduates, the rate of enrolment in a non-university programme is high at age 19, lower but still significant between ages 20 and 22, and low thereafter; it is low for graduates of all ages, but, interestingly, seems a bit higher than the rate of enrolment in a non-university programme up to age 22.

In the sixth semester, the rate of enrolment in a university programme is low among non-graduates and does not appear to vary according to age; the same is true for graduates. The rate of enrolment in a non-university programme is low at all ages among non-graduates.; it is high among graduates at age 19 but low at every other age.

In short, in most cases, the rate of enrolment decreases with age. Its relation with age, where it exists, appears to diminish with the amount of time elapsed since leaving. There is one notable exception: the rate of enrolment in university programme increases between ages 19 and 22 during the first semester where individuals are at risk of going back to school after graduating.

Gender

There are no statistically significant difference between men and women, even at the 0.01 threshold, when controlling for schedule, age, province of residence and type of the previous programme. It is possible that some differences between men and women be mediated through one or several control variables. It is also possible that the effects of some of these variables, or of some the variables we are interested in, vary according to sex. The sample size does not allow for estimating conditional relations or separate equations for men and women.

Conjugal status and parenthood

Living with a spouse or partner reduces the hazard of enrolling, among graduates as among non-graduates. Being a parent does not appear to have a significant effect on the hazard of going back to school.

Employment and income

By itself, employment reduces the hazard of going back to school whether in a university or a non-university programme. Going back is least likely when individuals spend most of their time at work, e.g. 25 hours per week or more; this result holds both for graduates and non-graduates, and does not vary as time elapses. The hazard of enrolling in a university programme is higher when individuals work 9 to 16 hours per week; again, this is true for both graduates and non-graduates, and holds steady over time. Graduate employees, whether holding a permanent or a temporary job, were less likely to enrol in a university programme during their first semesters after leaving. Among non-graduates, only holding a permanent job decreases the risk of going back to school.

Holding a professional, paraprofessional or intermediate occupation reduces the hazard of enrolling in a university programme. Holding a paraprofessional or intermediate position with a middle level income reduces the hazard of enrolling in a non-university programme. Having a permanent job with middle or high level income reduces the hazard of enrolling in a university programme.

Previous programme

Up to the fifth semester after leaving school, graduates from non-university programmes are less likely to enrol in a university programme than university graduates are; the lack of significance of the difference between the two categories in the third semester could be an artefact. Up to the fourth semester, graduates from pre-university programmes are as likely as graduates from university programmes to enrol in a university programme are; in the fifth semester, they are significantly less likely to do so. People who quit a university programme are more likely to enrol in a university programme than people who quit a non-university programme during the first three semesters after quitting; the difference between the two groups vanishes afterwards. The nature of the previous programme does not seem to be related to enrolling in a non-university programme.

Parents' education

Parents' education has a significant effect on the hazard of going back to school. Graduates and non-graduates whose parents have attended university have a higher hazard of enrolling anew in a university programme; their hazard of doing so is two to three times that of students whose parents have not attended university. Having parents with non-university postsecondary education increases the hazard of enrolling in a non-university programme after dropping out. Overall, going back to school is both more likely and faster among youth whose parents have attended university.

Province of residence

There are little differences across provinces and they are concentrated in the three first semesters. In the Prairie Provinces, graduates are more likely to enrol in a non-university programme in the first semester, and less likely in the third than in Ontario, the reference category. Non-graduates are also less likely to enrol in a non-university programme in the first semester at risk. In Quebec, graduates are more likely to enrol in a university programme, especially in the second semester at risk.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

At the end of the eleven semesters over which our data allow following them, 45% of the young people who had stopped postsecondary education after graduating and 66% of those who had left without graduating had enrolled anew in a postsecondary programme. Enrolling anew is massive. The high figure among non-graduates supports the notion that in Canada, quitting postsecondary education is not an irreversible failure. The still high figure among graduates supports the notion that taking a pause between the steps or stages of postsecondary education is common and institutionalized. Enrolment is higher in the semesters that follow leaving and decreases as time goes by; this result is more compatible with a pattern in which young people extend their education over their extended youth rather than with a pattern in which enrolling anew would be driven by career development. Where the young people end up is definitely related to the circumstances in which they left. Graduates are more likely to enrol in a university programme, particularly when going back earlier rather than later, whereas 'quitters' show a stronger tendency to enrol in non-university programmes.

Overall, the enrolment rate decreases with age, and the relation between rate and age vanishes as time elapsed since leaving school increases and the rate itself decreases. Again, this result does not fit with a pattern in which going back to postsecondary education would be driven by career development: in such a case, the rate would increase with time elapsed since leaving and with age. However, it fits very well with the protracted pattern of extended youth pattern.

The timing process of enrolling into a university programme among graduates is especially revealing. Enrolment is higher in the first semester at risk, which means roughly one academic year after having graduated. The relation between enrolment rate and age is strong: it is centred on age 22 and quite evenly spread around it. Graduates are the successful, and among them, those who enrol anew in a university programme are likely to be those who have the highest control over their destiny of all the young people we are looking at. What we see here is likely to be an institutionalized pattern among them, mainly driven by their own decisions rather than by uncontrolled circumstances, something similar to the Dutch gap year, but between undergraduate and graduate studies and not as generalized. This definitely looks like youth extension wished for and relished, a real piece of 'time of one's own'. By contrast, the other enrolment patterns could be more adjustment to events, reactions to circumstances rather than a planned leisurely cruise. Graduates sail where they want to go at their own pace, others seem to be adjusting themselves, maybe changing course, using their time and the flexibility of the education system to repair something that may need to be fixed. This said,

Living in a stable relationship reduces enrolment, as holding a job that has any of the characteristics of a serious adult-type job. Enrolment is lower when working part-time that when not working at all, but still higher than when working almost full-time. Having a stable relationship and holding a 'real' job means that two important steps of the transition to adulthood have been achieved. Apparently, having achieved them means that the 'time of one's own' period or the 'trial and error' period are over, and enrolling anew in postsecondary education is not relevant anymore; it could become relevant as part of the career development process, but at a later age.

Graduates from a university or a pre-university program are more likely to enrol in a university programme than others are, but this is true during the four of five fist semesters at risk. The lack of differences between the various groups after the fifth semester could simply be due to low frequencies, but it consistent with a meaningful pattern: these programs lead to university programmes, but enrolment has to be done not too long after graduation. After a year or two, the interruption is not a pause anymore, but a real stop. This is very similar to what see for graduates in general. The difference between pre-university and university programmes is interesting: it becomes significant after the fourth semester; apparently, the pause turns into a stop a bit faster for graduates from pre-university programmes than for graduates from university programmes. Furthermore, going back remains a real possibility among graduates from university programmes—if it were not, there would be no significant difference between the coefficients—whereas it seems to become almost impossible among graduates from pre-university programmes.

We find no difference between Quebec and the other provinces that would suggest the difference between Canada, on one side, and USA and Australia on the other, found by Fussell, Gauthier, and Evans could be due to a difference between Quebec and the rest of Canada. The difference between Quebec and Ontario is likely to be related to the importance of pre-university programmes in the former. The special attraction of non-university programmes in the Prairie Provinces is likely a consequence of the importance of their oil industry, which offers a large number of well-paid technical jobs. Therefore, our results are likely valid for all of Canada.

Parents' education plays as social reproduction. Young people whose parents have attended university are more likely to enrol anew, whether they have graduated or not. The result we get is similar to Martinello's, but, of course, we look at it in a slightly different way: In the Canadian context, 'trial and error' has emerged as a 'rational' approach to education and career choice, and 'having a time of one's own' is truly institutionalized. Highly educated parents support their children in this process, through guidance or with material resources, as they probably know more about the process from their own experience or relations, and as they more likely to have the means to support their offspring for a long time. From this perspective, the 'time of one's own' may be viewed as an element of the prolonged education of the well-off, akin to the Grand Tour, but less exclusive. It is leisurely, but it is part of a process of social reproduction. Unlike the Grand Tour, it does not occur after the completion of formal studies, but sometimes before. The children who haven't done yet must go back to school to get the education level their parents had.

Young people who dropped out from postsecondary education are more likely to enrol anew in a non-university programme if their parents have non-university postsecondary education: these parents are likely to have a limited knowledge of postsecondary education and limited material resources as well.

Overall, in Canada, enrolling anew in postsecondary education is a process that follows a protracted pattern of transition of adulthood and, more specifically, of relation to education and career choice, similar to what Van de Velde found in the Netherlands, although with more social inequality, but probably not as much as in Southern Europe. The successful young people, i. e. the graduate students who take what amount to a gap year between undergraduate and graduates studies, clearly are in control of their destiny, making the most of the 'time of one's own'. Others seem to use the flexibility of the education system to 'repair' a trajectory that somehow went off course, enrolling anew being the 'second chance' in a 'trial and error' process. Stable relationships seem incompatible with both types of education related youth extension.

Given this pattern, it is no wonder that the university student population be old. Pre-university graduates may take a one or two-year pause before entering university, university graduates may take a one or two-year pause before entering graduate studies. These pauses increase the mean age and the proportion of students aged 25 or more. Two-thirds of non-graduates enrol anew after some time: the time elapsed translates into a higher mean age and a higher proportion of students aged 25 or more. This pattern is not the only factor that contributes to the age structure of the Canadian postsecondary education population: career development driven enrolment and part-time studies certainly contribute as well. However, given the high proportions of graduates and non-graduates who enrol anew, the phenomenon is an important factor. For education as a system, a significant proportion of 'adulescents' is not an insignificant matter: such students, whether they are successful graduates wishing to make the most of their youth or less successful non-graduates who try to adjust their trajectory, are neither the regular young undergraduates who get their diploma in due time, nor the regular adults who attend night classes. They have a pace of their own and may have requirements or live under constraints that do not fit well neither with what is expected from the regular young undergraduates or the regular adult student.

Fussell, Gauthier, and Evans do not discuss the factors that may explain why young Canadians attain postsecondary education in a greater proportion than their counterpart in the USA or Australia does. Charbonneau, in her analysis of the factors that played a role in the emergence or experimentation and the 'trial and error' approach as a rational way of dealing with the education and career choice problem are proportionally omits what could be a key factor: affordable postsecondary education. Although things are changing right now, university education and other forms of postsecondary education were comparatively very affordable during the years covered by the YITS panels. As we mentioned already, Canadian universities are not as organized in a hierarchy as they are in the USA. Moreover, because of their heavy reliance on government funding, tuitions did not vary greatly between institutions for comparable programmes. As a result, the 'trial and error' approach did not impose an extreme burden on the student and his family. If the current trend towards higher tuitions continues, one of the factors that likely made possible the emergence of the 'trial and error' approach and, therefore, made possible a certain portion of youth extension could disappear and put Canada youth in conditions similar to their USA counterpart.

This potential transformation is for the future. In the period covered by the YITS panels, the Canadian youth was clearly living the transition to adulthood in a protracted pattern, especially in its moving out and back into postsecondary education. As we pointed out earlier, most of the research conducted using the YITS data has been done assuming a traditional form of the transition to adulthood and, more specifically, assuming that education and career choice is done pretty much as marriage were arranged by parents a long time ago. Canadian policy agencies are

not unaware of the contemporary knowledge about the protracted pattern of transition to adulthood: for instance, Gaudet's report has been funded and published by one of these agencies. However, YITS data are user-unfriendly and using them requires strong statistical and programming skill. Not surprisingly, economists have done most of the quantitative research done using these data. As mentioned earlier, the economists' intellectual tool-kit includes models, for instance those used for marriage as a matching process, that are based on a trial and error process as a rational process for decision making. Despite the availability of the knowledge about the importance of the protracted pattern of the transition to adulthood, economists have stuck to the traditional pattern and apparently have yet to adjust their assumptions. One may wonder if this delay in accepting new knowledge is disciplinary enclosure or, maybe, ideological bend.

Limitations. The effects of the independent variables related to the substantive hypotheses are net of the effects of schedule, age, gender, and province, but are not net of the effect of each other. The sample size did not allow doing better given that we chose not to impose the effects to be stable over time. Sample size imposed limitations on the number of conditional relations as well and we were not able to estimate some that were potentially interesting. For instance, there are reasons to believe that separate estimation for Quebec and the rest of Canada could have modified some results, especially enrolling in a university programme after a university programme. We chose to focus on our substantive hypotheses. Variation across gender or language, immigration status, visible minority status which are on interest in Canada, but could not be studied seriously given the size of the sample and the focus on the substantive hypotheses. We modelled the competing risks using a 'classical' approach in which the competing processes assuming they are independent; unfortunately, there is no realistically convenient way to take the possible correlation between the two processes into account given the size of the sample and the detailed modelling of the processes. In theory, it could have been possible to model the variation of the effects of the independent variables over semester in a more parsimonious manner, notably by using cubic splines. We chose a simpler and faster although less elegant method because of its known robustness and because the sampling design of YITS requires the use of replication weights.

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TECHNICAL APPENDIX

Variables

Age. Age is measured in completed years ranging from 19 to 26, and treated as a categorical variable. Time-varying.

Programme. Most studies group all Quebec's cégep programmes with college programmes from the rest of Canada; this is quite misleading since about half of cégep students are enrolled in pre-university programmes and are attending courses that are given in the first year of university in other provinces. There is no perfect solution for this problem. When defining the competing risks, we group cégep's programmes that lead to the labour market with the college programmes from other provinces into a 'non-university postsecondary programmes' category and cégep's pre-university programmes with undergraduate university programmes into the 'university programmes' category. When using the level of the previous programme as an independent variable, we use a separate category for pre-university programmes.

Conjugal status. Whether or not the respondent is married or cohabits. This information is recorded once every two years. Time-varying.

Parenthood. Whether or not the respondent has biological children. This variable was derived by considering the children's birthdates. Categories are 'yes' and 'no', yes meaning having at least one child. Time-varying.

Employment. Whether the respondent is employed or not in a given month. Time-varying.

Detailed employment status. Combines employment status (whether employee, self-employed or not working) and job status (whether a job is permanent or temporary) as job status is defined only for employees. Job status is known only at the beginning of a job spell. Categories are permanent, temporary, self-employed, not employed, and not stated.

Occupational skill level. In YITS, occupations are coded using the National Occupational Classification (1991) developed by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC, 2006: viii). The NOC coding scheme allows to group occupations according to skill level: managerial, professional (requires a university degree), technical, paraprofessional and skilled (non-university postsecondary training or high school followed by long apprenticeship or long on-the-job training), intermediate (high school followed short apprenticeship or short on-the-job training), labouring and elemental (no formal education, but short work demonstration or on-the-job training), not employed, not stated. Time-varying.

Number of hours worked weekly. Average hours worked per week in all jobs during a month. This variable is derived using the number of hours worked per month at the start of employment and the number when last employed. Categories are: 1 to 8 hours, 9 to 16 hours, 17 to 24 hours, 25 hours or more, not employed, not stated. Time-varying.

Employment income. Total monthly income received from all jobs during a month. This variable was derived using monthly earnings recorded at the start of employment and when last employed. Categories are: low income (up to $1000), medium income ($1000 to $2400), high income (over $2400), not employed, not stated. Time-varying.

Parents' education. This variable describes the highest level of schooling attained by one or both parents. In YITS Cycle 1, each parent was asked to specify his or her highest level of schooling. Categories are no postsecondary experience, non-university postsecondary, university and not stated.

Province of residence. Respondent's province of residence. This is the province where the respondent's job was located if the respondent had worked during the month, or the province where the respondent's postsecondary institution was located when the respondent attended postsecondary studies during the month. If the respondent is neither working nor studying, the province of residence is known only once every two years. The categories are Atlantic Provinces (Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick), Quebec, Ontario, Prairie Provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta) and British Columbia. Respondents who lived outside of Canada were excluded from the analysis during their periods of stay outside Canada. Time-varying.

Model

As we explained earlier, individuals become at risk of enrolling anew in postsecondary education when they leave the first postsecondary programme they had enrolled in. They may leave this programme either by graduating or by quitting before graduating. Whether they become at risk as graduates or as non-graduates, individuals may either go back to postsecondary education by enrolling in a university programme or a programme that leads to university (UP) or by enrolling in a non-university programme (NUP). As such, they are subject to two competing risks: the risk of enrolling into a UP and the risk of enrolling into a NUP. Individuals remain at risk until they enrol in either a UP or a NUP or until the data run out, that is until the analysis reaches the end of the period for which data has been gathered.

We need a model that allows estimating the effects, for each semester, of the independent variables on the hazard of enrolling in a UP and on the hazard of enrolling in a NUP. Given our hypotheses about experimentation and the 'trial and error' process, we need to estimate these effects separately for graduates and for non-graduates.

The academic calendar does not allow considering someone who has not been enrolled in a programme for one or two semesters as having left school. For this reason, individuals are deemed having left school only if they have not been enrolled for at least three semesters and are considered at risk of going back to school from the beginning of the third semester following the last semester they were enrolled.

We use a discontinuous time setting and we estimate the base hazard and the effects of the independent variables using multinomial logistic regression. In discrete time models based on logistic regression, the instantaneous rate is defined as—or approximated as, depending on the reader—the ratio of the number of events occurring within a time interval but assumed to occur at the end of the interval to the number of people still on the state of origin at the end of the same interval. In our model, 'time' refers to age. Our model can thus be expressed as

$$h^R(t \mid \mathbf{x}, z) = h_0^R(t)\exp(\mathbf{x}\boldsymbol{\beta}^R)$$

and

$$\boldsymbol{\beta}^R = g(t \mid z),$$

where $h^R(t)$ represents the instantaneous rate (or instantaneous probability or instantaneous risk) of going back to school by enrolling in a UP or a NUP, depending on the value ascribed to R; $h_0^R(t)$ is the 'base' rate of going back to school either in a UP or a NUP in a given semester; t is the number of semesters elapsed since the individual was considered at risk, i.e. the number of semesters since leaving school minus 2; $\mathbf{x}$ represents the vector of the factors that increase or decrease the rate; $\boldsymbol{\beta}^R$ is the vector of the effects of these factors on the rate of going to school in a UP or a NUP, depending on the value of R; and z represents the fact of having left school either by completing a programme or by quitting. The effects ($\boldsymbol{\beta}^R$) of factors ($\mathbf{x}$) vary based on the time elapsed since leaving school (t) and the manner in which school was left (z).

To better understand the analysis strategy that we used and how our results are presented in the next chapter, it helps to reformulate the model by distinguishing both the factors we consider significant and the characteristics we control, in order to estimate the net effect of each significant factor. While purely conceptual, this distinction is useful to make explicit. Thus reformulated, our model becomes

$$h^R(t \mid \mathbf{x}_1, \mathbf{x}_2, z) = h_0^R(t) \exp(\mathbf{x}_1\boldsymbol{\beta}_1^R + \mathbf{x}_2\boldsymbol{\beta}_2^R),$$

$$\boldsymbol{\beta}_1^R = g_1(t \mid z) \text{ and } \boldsymbol{\beta}_2^R = g_2(t \mid z),$$

where $\mathbf{x}_1$ represents the vector of factors deemed the most significant and which we have already listed (conjugal status and parenthood, employment and income, level of previous programme, parents' education), $\boldsymbol{\beta}_1^R$ represents the vector of the effects of these factors, while $\mathbf{x}_2$ represents the vector of the characteristics we control (gender and province of residence) to estimate the net effect of the most important factors and $\boldsymbol{\beta}_2^R$ represents the vector of the effects of these characteristics.

To complete the presentation of our model, we need to explain how we designed the base rate, noted as $h_0^R(t)$ in the equation. This problem can be solved in a number of ways, but given the phenomenon under study, and considering that the model's coefficients are assumed to vary depending on the time elapsed since leaving, the more natural choice is to use the age of the individual to construct the rate—i.e. designing the baseline rate as a function of age.

Age varies from year to year; its value for a given individual is thus a function of the time elapsed since leaving school. The composition of the at-risk respecting to age varies from one semester to the next: some individuals are no more at risk, the others are older, and some of them actually move from one age group to the next. There is no reason to believe that the baseline rate of going back to school for individuals of a given age cannot differ from one semester to the next. In the context of multinomial logistic regression, this may be expressed as

$$h_0^R(t) = \exp(\mathbf{x}_0(t) \cdot \boldsymbol{\beta}_0^R)$$

and

$$\boldsymbol{\beta}_0^R = g_0(t \mid z),$$

where $\mathbf{x}_0$ represents the individual's age during the semester, measured in complete years and specified as a series of discrete values, and $\boldsymbol{\beta}_0{}^R$ the baseline rate associated with each of these values. Accordingly, our model becomes

$$h^R(t \mid \mathbf{x}_0, \mathbf{x}_1, \mathbf{x}_2, z) = \exp(\mathbf{x}_0(t) \cdot \boldsymbol{\beta}_0^R + \mathbf{x}_1\boldsymbol{\beta}_1^R + \mathbf{x}_2\boldsymbol{\beta}_2^R),$$

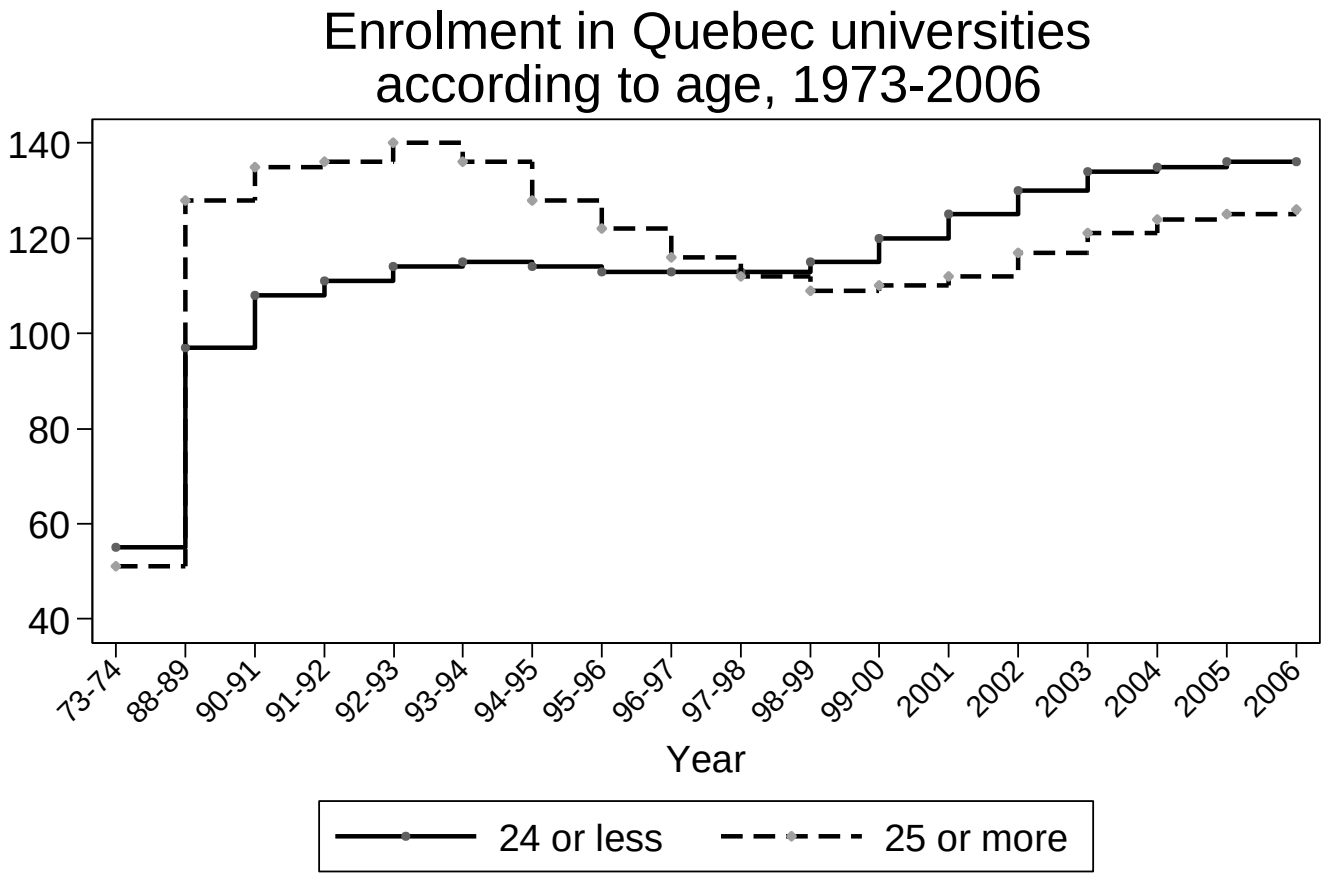
where the other terms retain the meanings and interpretation described above. This model provides the equivalent of a different intercept for each age and a different set of intercepts for each semester (t).

In theory, it should be possible to take into account the full complexity of the model by estimating one pair of equations—one equation for enrolling in a UP and one equation for enrolling in a NUP—for graduates and another pair for non-graduates; theoretically, this would be the most effective mean of so doing. In practice, however, it would be clumsy and would likely lead to problems in interpreting the net effects of the factors we are interested in. It is far easier to estimate several equations, and then compare the coefficients associated with the same factors in different equations, in order to interpret the variation of these effects according to the manner school was left and to the time elapsed since leaving. We adopted this latter approach.

	Table 1					Hazard of enrolling anew in postsecondary education															
	Previous programme					Parents' education					Conjugal status					Parenthood				
		Graduate		Non-graduate			Graduate		Non-graduate			Graduate		Non-graduate			Graduate		Non-graduate	
		UP	NUP	UP	NUP		UP	NUP	UP	NUP		UP	NUP	UP	NUP		UP	NUP	UP	NUP
S_1	PU	1.851	2,567	0,692	0,707	UN	2.036[2]	0.963	2.383[3]	2.484[3]	LS	0.180[4]	1.177	0.308[3]	0.495[1]	Y	0.060	2.020	0.122	0.807
	NU	0.153[4]	1,435	0,145[4]	1,345	NU	1.384	1.380	1.205	2.146[2]	NS	0.464	0.000	1.025	0.310					
	UC	0.924	0,968	0,996	0,000	NS	1.488	2.115	0.667	2.493[1]										
S_2	PU	0.771	0.635	0.523	1.189	UN	3.942[4]	0.668	1.852	1.016	LS	0.525[2]	0.519	0.431	0.497[1]	Y	0.603	0.297	0.091	1.398
	NU	0.234[4]	0.657	0.237[3]	1.193	NU	1.878	0.949	1.179	0.888	NS	0.836	0.264	1.265	0.432					
	UC	0.181	0.000	0.000	1.564	NS	2.807[1]	1.039	0.324	0.483										
S_3	PU	4.209	2.374	0.286[1]	0.688	UN	3.112[2]	1.226	3.075[3]	2.234	LS	0.374[1]	0.467	0.229[3]	0.349[2]	Y	0.322	0.204	0.539	0.189[2]
	NU	0.479	1.464	0.205[4]	1.432	NU	0.641	1.068	1.833	2.636[3]	NS	0.000	0.000	0.455	1.396					
	UC	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	NS	1.836	0.626	1.300	1.415										
S_4	PU	0.304	3.375	1.442	0.182	UN	1.174	1.196	1.357	2.473	LS	0.600	0.650	1.428	0.381	Y	0.154	0.048	0.000	0.540
	NU	0.210[4]	1.285	0.619	1.039	NU	0.731	0.982	1.594	3.057[2]	NS	1.594	1.258	1.860	0.175					
	UC	0.074	0.000	0.000	0.000	NS	0.762	1.088	0.436	2.152										
S_5	PU	0.001[4]	4.104	0.855	2.956	UN	0.754	0.449	3.818[1]	1.005	LS	3.624	0.404	0.361	0.828	Y	0.380	0.017	0.128	0.608
	NU	0.194[3]	2.007	0.578	1.822	NU	3.754	1.771	1.443	0.989	NS	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.890					
	UC	0.000	2.329	0.000	0.000	NS	0.000	1.716	0.480	0.184										
S_6	PU	0.565	0.049	2.271	0.163	UN	1.353	3.868[2]	0.560	1.411	LS	0.299[2]	0.819	0.543	0.425	Y	0.464	1.095	1.944	0.059
	NU	0.965	0.288	0.262	0.760	NU	1.074	1.076	0.901	1.811	NS	0.000	0.000	0.303	0.536					
	UC	0.000	0.000	2.319	1.602	NS	1.088	3.836	0.000	3.573										
S_7	PU	7.499	1.774	0.030	0.943	UN	0.719	0.262	1.108	0.853	LS	0.443	0.359	0.132	0.205	Y	0.084	1.771	0.307	0.883
	NU	2.634	0.794	0.214	1.235	NU	0.278	2.774	0.192	8.061	NS	0.000	0.000	22.65	0.803					
	UC	0.000	0.000	0.000	10.91	NS	0.000	7.497	8.170	5.991										
	Ref: University					Ref: High school or less					Ref: Not living with spouse or partner					Ref: Does not have a child yet				
	PU: Pre-university					UN: University					LS: Living with a spouse or partner					Y: Has at least one child				
	NU: Non-university					NU: Non-university postsecondary					NS: Not stated									
	UC: Unable to classify					NS: Not stated														
	[1]: $p < 0.100$; [2]: $p < 0.050$; [3]: $p < 0.010$ [4]: $p < 0.000$																			
	Data from the Youth in Transition Survey, cycle 4, Statistics Canada. The observation period spans from 1999 to 2005. The sample includes 5613 individuals aged 18-20 on December 31st, 1999, who had undergone some post-secondary education and became at risk of enrolling anew during the observation period. Of them, 3314 had completed their postsecondary programme and 2299 had not. The estimation was done a competing risks setting and using multinomial logistic regression. The estimation was weighted using longitudinal sampling weights. The effects of the independent variables expressed as time-varying relative risks.																			

	Province					Work					Employment status					Hours of work				
		Graduate		Non-graduate			Graduate		Non-graduate			Graduate		Non-graduate			Graduate		Non-graduate	
		UP	NUP	UP	NUP		UP	NUP	UP	NUP		UP	NUP	UP	NUP		UP	NUP	UP	NUP
S_1	AT	0.582	0.890	0.626	1.024	WO	0.402[4]	0.423[2]	0.352[4]	0.195	PE	0.260[4]	0.503[1]	0.350[4]	0.666	8	0.946	0.899	0.386	1.249
	QC	1.547	0.251	1.359	0.871	NS	0.160	0.353	0.437[1]	0.552	TE	0.509[1]	0.448	0.609	0.519	16	3.095[2]	1.328	1.703	1.099
	PR	0.956	2.308[1]	0.578[1]	0.317[1]						SE	1.597	0.538	0.285	0.422	24	0.604	0.638	0.660	1.286
	BC	1.003	0.634	1.129	0.513						NS	0.164	0.324	0.353	0.703	MO	0.150[4]	0.427[2]	0.235[4]	0.494[2]
																NS	0.000	0.000	0.461	0.547
S_2	AT	1.333	1.041	1.444	0.761	WO	0.136[4]	0.372[2]	0.601	0.456[2]	PE	0.139[4]	0.482[1]	0.642	0.513[1]	8	1.903	1.828	3.222[1]	1.174
	QC	2.702[2]	0.407	1.802	0.611	NS	0.162	0.367	0.315	0.310	TE	0.144[4]	0.194	0.927	0.398	16	0.655	1.733	1.332	1.396
	PR	0.851	1.150	1.322	0.651						SE	0.460	0.086	1.388	0.238	24	0.330[3]	0.718	3.248[1]	1.485
	BC	0.582	1.524	2.648	1.574						NS	0.244[2]	0.681	0.704	0.409	MO	0.088[4]	0.361[2]	0.413[2]	0.317[3]
																NS	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
S_3	AT	1.435	0.312	1.091	1.065	WO	0.292[2]	0.297[3]	0.286[4]	0.384[3]	PE	0.233[3]	0.253[3]	0.258[4]	0.252[3]	8	2.410	0.000	1.697	0.701
	QC	2.600	0.158	1.011	0.316	NS	0.605	0.504	0.375	0.456	TE	0.482	0.122	0.750	0.144	16	0.697	0.443	0.966	0.676
	PR	1.200	0.329[3]	1.245	0.757						SE	0.176	0.000	0.054	0.320	24	0.508	0.545	0.339	0.304
	BC	1.167	0.805	1.071	2.076						NS	0.377	0.417	0.382	0.389	MO	0.224[3]	0.205[3]	0.214[4]	0.204[3]
																NS	0.000	0.000	0.388	0.354
S_4	AT	0.849	0.949	1.510	0.382[1]	WO	0.213[4]	0.189[4]	0.485	0.639	PE	0.262[4]	0.242[3]	0.617	0.490	8	0.967	0.855	2.245	3.952
	QC	1.800	0.518	0.524	0.164	NS	0.334	0.328	0.050	1.768	TE	0.281[2]	0.344	0.817	1.002	16	2.971[1]	1.833	2.093	2.156
	PR	1.032	1.896	0.479	1.259						SE	0.315	0.226	0.148	1.252	24	1.285	0.177	0.736	0.613
	BC	1.060	1.049	0.978	0.580						NS	0.370	0.242	0.053	1.138	MO	0.151[4]	0.194[4]	0.486	0.419
																NS	0.000	0.000	0.567	1.600
S_5	AT	3.262	0.303	0.707	0.347	WO	0.671	1.715	0.331[1]	0.221[2]	PE	0.321	1.994	0.295[2]	0.261[1]	8	0.000	0.000	0.471	0.000
	QC	4.882	0.165	0.550	0.140	NS	0.000	0.185	0.601	0.259	TE	0.846	1.684	0.119	0.444	16	2.110	6.325	0.725	0.000
	PR	1.044	0.580	0.430	1.330						SE	0.000	0.000	0.125	0.000	24	0.687	4.478	0.704	0.445
	BC	0.700	2.045	0.092	0.000						NS	0.000	0.107	0.298	0.295	MO	0.310	1.594	0.207[3]	0.279[1]
																NS	0.000	0.000	0.538	0.299
S_6	AT	0.952	0.614	1.018	0.440	WO	0.180[2]	0.0774	0.113	0.534	PE	0.222[2]	0.079[4]	0.161	0.873	8	0.677	0.294	2.248	0.000
	QC	2.049	0.463	0.526	0.225	NS	0.623	0.279	0.293	0.826	TE	0.000	0.250	0.352	0.000	16	0.204	0.291	0.169	0.000
	PR	1.531	0.654	1.301	0.798						SE	1.074	0.088	0.000	0.000	24	1.507	0.350	0.296	1.195
	BC	7.429	0.070	0.218	0.461						NS	0.474	0.210	0.193	0.638	MO	0.162[2]	0.067[4]	0.118	0.748
																NS	0.000	0.000	0.401	1.071
S_7	AT	0.000	0.177	0.460	1.597	WO	0.407	0.046[1]	0.314	1.297	PE	0.510	0.036	0.476	1.338	8	15.60	0.000	0.000	8.993
	QC	0.000	0.289	14.77	0.258	NS	0.507	0.000	12.83	2.711	TE	1.554	0.478	0.000	4.559	16	0.000	0.000	0.000	8.278
	PR	0.000	0.101	1.355	0.728						SE	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	24	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.655
	BC	0.000	0.000	1.527	0.705						NS	0.565	0.000	12.40	2.231	MO	0.285	0.068	0.426	1.106
																NS	0.000	0.000	15.50	2.933
	Ref: Ontario BC: British Columbia					Ref: Not working					Ref: Not employed					Ref: Not working NS: Not stated				
	AT: Atlantic					WO: Working					PE: Permanent employment					8 : Up to 8 hours				
	QC: Quebec					NS: Not stated					TE: Temporary employment					16 : 9 to 16 hours				
	PR: Prairies										SE: Self-employed					24 : 17 to 24 hours				
	[1]: $p < 0.100$; [2]: $p < 0.050$; [3]: $p < 0.010$ [4]: $p < 0.000$										NS: Not stated					MO: More than 24				

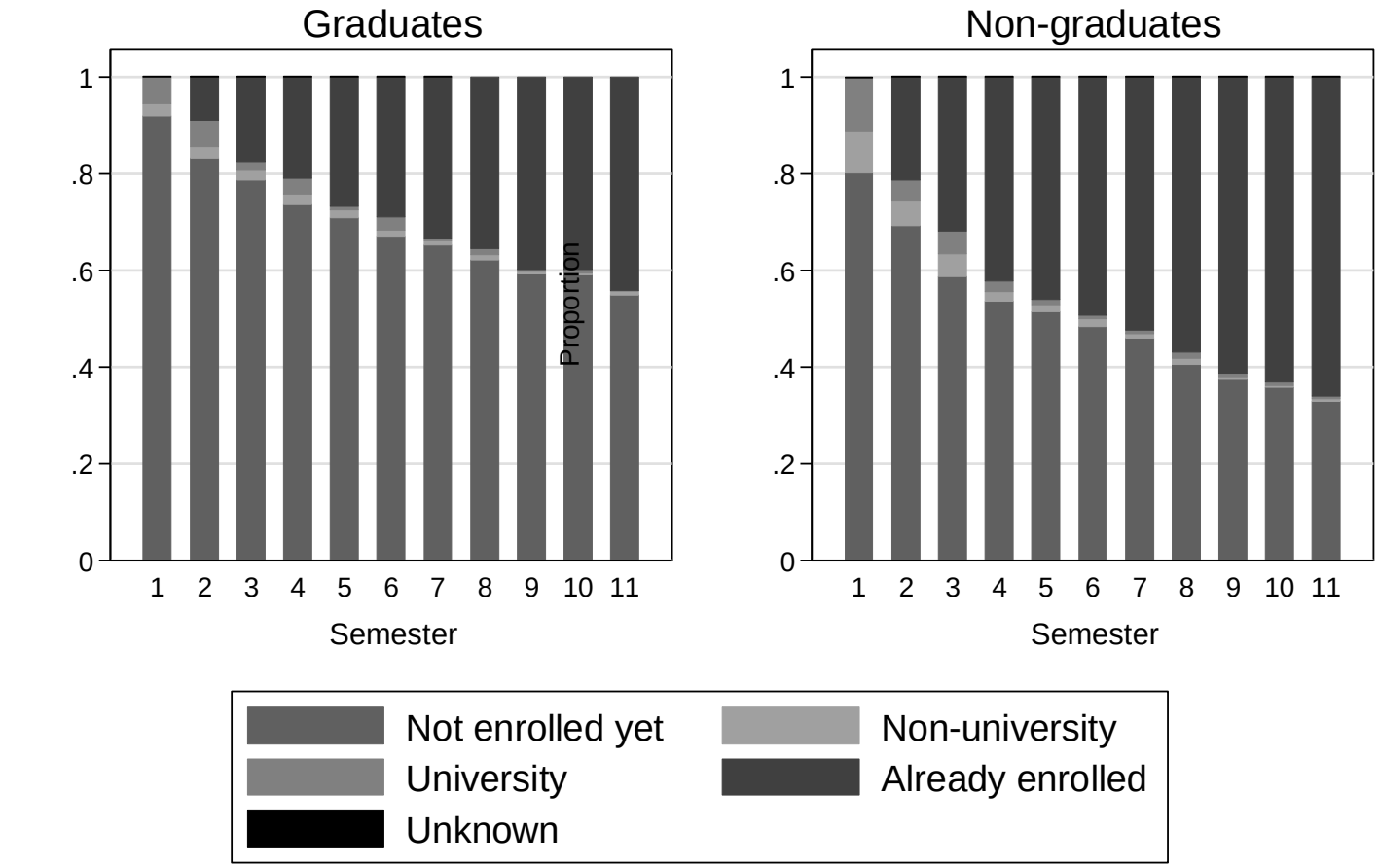
	Skill level						Skill level						Income and status						Income and status				
		Graduate		Non-graduate				Graduate		Non-graduate				Graduate		Non-graduate				Graduate		Non-graduate	
		UP	NUP	UP	NUP			UP	NUP	UP	NUP			UP	NUP	UP	NUP			UP	NUP	UP	NUP
S_1	MA	0.018	0.867	0.357	0.369	**S_5**	MA	0.173	0.000	0.000	0.496	**S_1**	PH	0.077^{2}	0.216	0.114^{3}	0.355^{1}	**S_5**	PH	0.288	1.595	0.463	0.445
	PR	0.384^{2}	0.201	0.311	0.281		PR	0.726	0.764	0.109	0.448		PM	0.198^{4}	0.538	0.209^{3}	0.465		PM	0.190	1.301	0.102	0.111^{2}
	TP	0.336^{3}	0.439	0.295^{3}	0.390^{2}		TP	0.356	2.000	0.219	0.022		PL	0.905	1.203	0.744	1.276		PL	2.206	11.47	0.779	0.503
	IN	0.325^{3}	0.485	0.389^{3}	0.919		IN	0.073	2.022	0.512	0.277		TH	0.310	0.264	0.071	0.000		TH	0.858	0.062	0.000	0.312
	LE	0.711	0.999	0.529^{1}	0.617		LE	0.000	3.515	0.000	0.663		TM	0.504	0.579	0.354	0.669		TM	0.301	2.042	0.000	0.833
	NS	0.120	0.424	0.369^{2}	0.460		NS	0.000	0.180	0.500	0.297		TL	0.986	0.166	1.432	0.564		TL	5.852	27.19	0.522	0.000
													SE	1.578	0.526	0.283	0.422		SE	0.000	0.000	0.130	0.000
													NS	0.167	0.319	0.361^{1}	0.706		NS	0.000	0.103	0.318	0.299
S_2	MA	0.072	0.283	0.037	0.386	**S_6**	MA	0.326	0.000	0.000	0.416	**S_2**	PH	0.108^{4}	0.232^{2}	0.111	0.119	**S_6**	PH	0.243	0.006	0.036	0.587
	PR	0.285^{3}	0.327	0.716	0.256		PR	0.237	0.000	0.499	1.839		PM	0.076^{4}	0.477	0.435^{1}	0.370^{2}		PM	0.087	0.107	0.115	1.214
	TP	0.107^{4}	0.430^{1}	0.719	0.187^{3}		TP	0.197^{1}	0.044	0.072	0.591		PL	0.551^{2}	1.421	1.802	1.156		PL	0.916	0.335	0.628	0.452
	IN	0.118^{4}	0.435^{1}	1.008	0.590		IN	0.168	0.227^{3}	0.142	0.643		TH	0.038	0.000	0.094	0.326		TH	0.000	0.076	0.100	0.000
	LE	0.309^{1}	0.931	0.635	0.762		LE	0.270	0.181	0.329	0.683		TM	0.125^{4}	0.060	0.253	0.198		TM	0.000	0.382	0.870	0.000
	NS	0.211	0.358	0.366	0.343		NS	0.694	0.263	0.566	0.989		TL	0.661	2.688	4.579	1.010		TL	0.000	2.905	0.000	0.000
													SE	0.474	0.092	1.380	0.233		SE	1.076	0.090	0.000	0.000
													NS	0.243	0.647	0.733	0.403		NS	0.477	0.187	0.191	0.622
S_3	MA	0.971	0.927	0.368	0.142	**S_7**	MA	4.360	0.000	0.000	0.280	**S_3**	PH	0.208	0.257^{3}	0.120	0.359	**S_7**	PH	0.000	0.045	0.402	1.559
	PR	0.205	0.043	1.216	0.100		PR	1.230	0.000	0.000	0.000		PM	0.134^{3}	0.185^{2}	0.200^{4}	0.182^{3}		PM	0.334	0.022	0.639	0.570
	TP	0.141^{4}	0.1712	0.158^{4}	0.287^{2}		TP	0.295	0.057	0.353	1.952		PL	1.145	0.596	0.661	0.375^{1}		PL	3.223	0.046	0.000	4.399
	IN	0.342	0.370^{2}	0.324^{3}	0.177^{3}		IN	0.568	0.056	0.327	1.008		TH	0.176	0.119	0.120	0.000		TH	1.520	0.000	0.000	10.69
	LE	0.344	0.000	0.301	0.383^{1}		LE	0.000	0.276	1.489	3.118		TM	0.950	0.000	0.970	0.211		TM	1.311	1.354	0.000	0.000
	NS	0.481	0.418	0.299	0.346		NS	0.643	0.000	15.26	3.612		TL	0.736	1.496	1.463	0.215		TL	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
													SE	0.168	0.000	0.051	0.323		SE	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
													NS	0.377	0.414	0.381	0.384		NS	0.520	0.000	12.38	1.997
S_4	MA	0.294	9.017	0.215	0.000							**S_4**	PH	0.157^{3}	0.129^{3}	0.143	0.432						
	PR	0.273^{2}	0.232	0.095	1.111								PM	0.292^{2}	0.290^{2}	0.693	0.503						
	TP	0.307^{3}	0.103^{3}	0.256	0.627								PL	0.960	0.735	1.555	0.552						
	IN	0.245^{3}	0.478	1.257	0.573								TH	0.183	0.484	0.000	0.086						
	LE	0.113	0.160	0.668	0.587								TM	0.319	0.182	2.090	1.973						
	NS	0.373	0.378	0.043	1.358								TL	2.053	0.000	1.092	2.059						
													SE	0.313	0.229	0.141	1.190						
													NS	0.361	0.231	0.055	1.088						
	Ref: Not employed						IN: Intermediate						PH: Permanent and high income						TL: Temporary and low income				
	MA: Managerial						LA: Labouring and elemental						PM: Permanent and middle income						SE: Self-employed				
	PR: Professional						NS: Not stated						PL: Permanent and low income						NS: Not stated				
	TP: Technical and paraprofessional												TH: Permanent and high income										
													TM: Permanent and middle income										
	^{1}: $p < 0.100$; ^{2}: $p < 0.050$; ^{3}: $p < 0.010$ ^{4}: $p < 0.000$																						



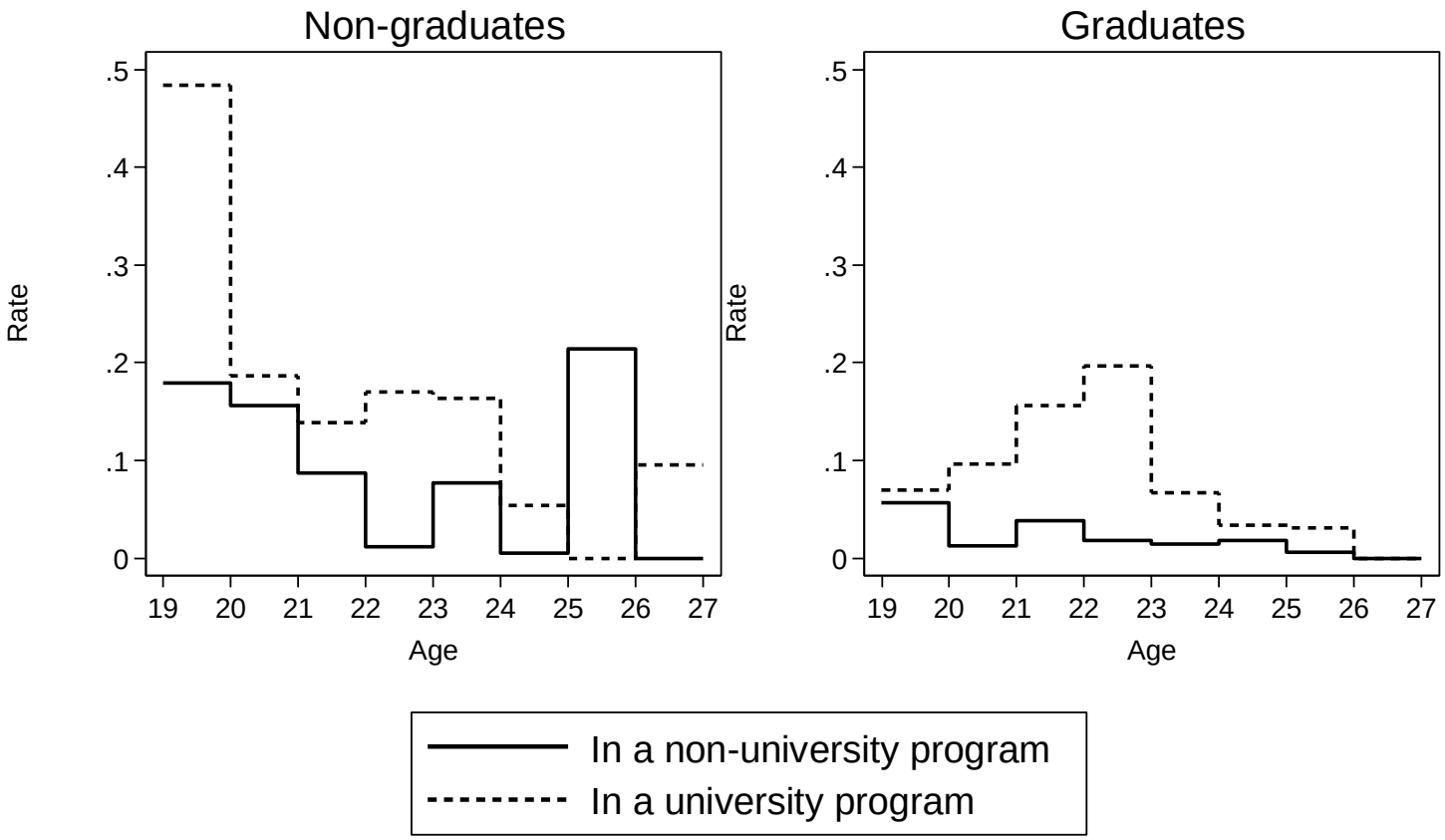
Source: Ministère de l'Éducation du Loisir et du Sport du Québec
(Quebec Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports)

Figure 1

Enrolment by semester

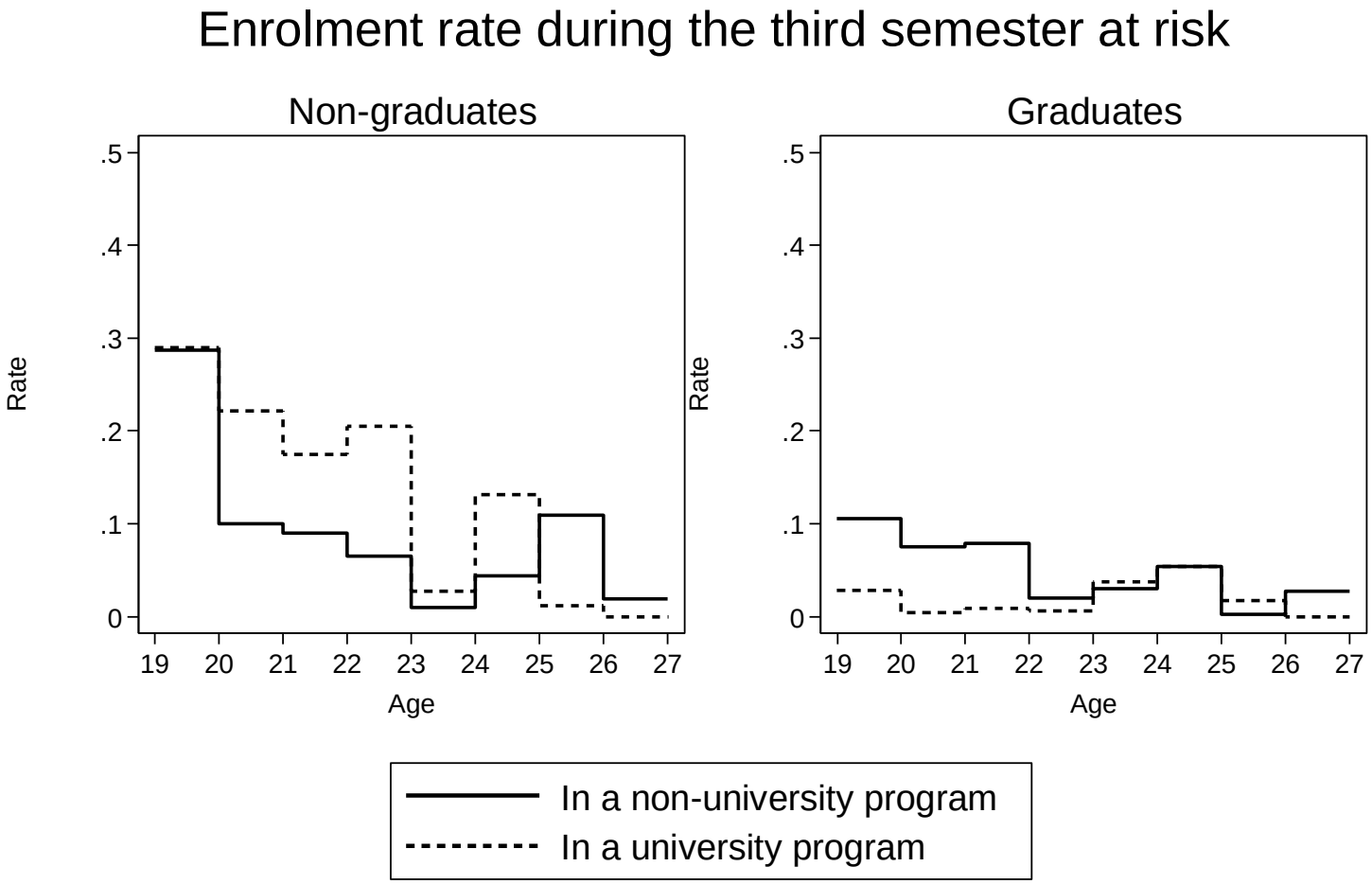


Source: Youth in Transition Survey, Statistics Canada



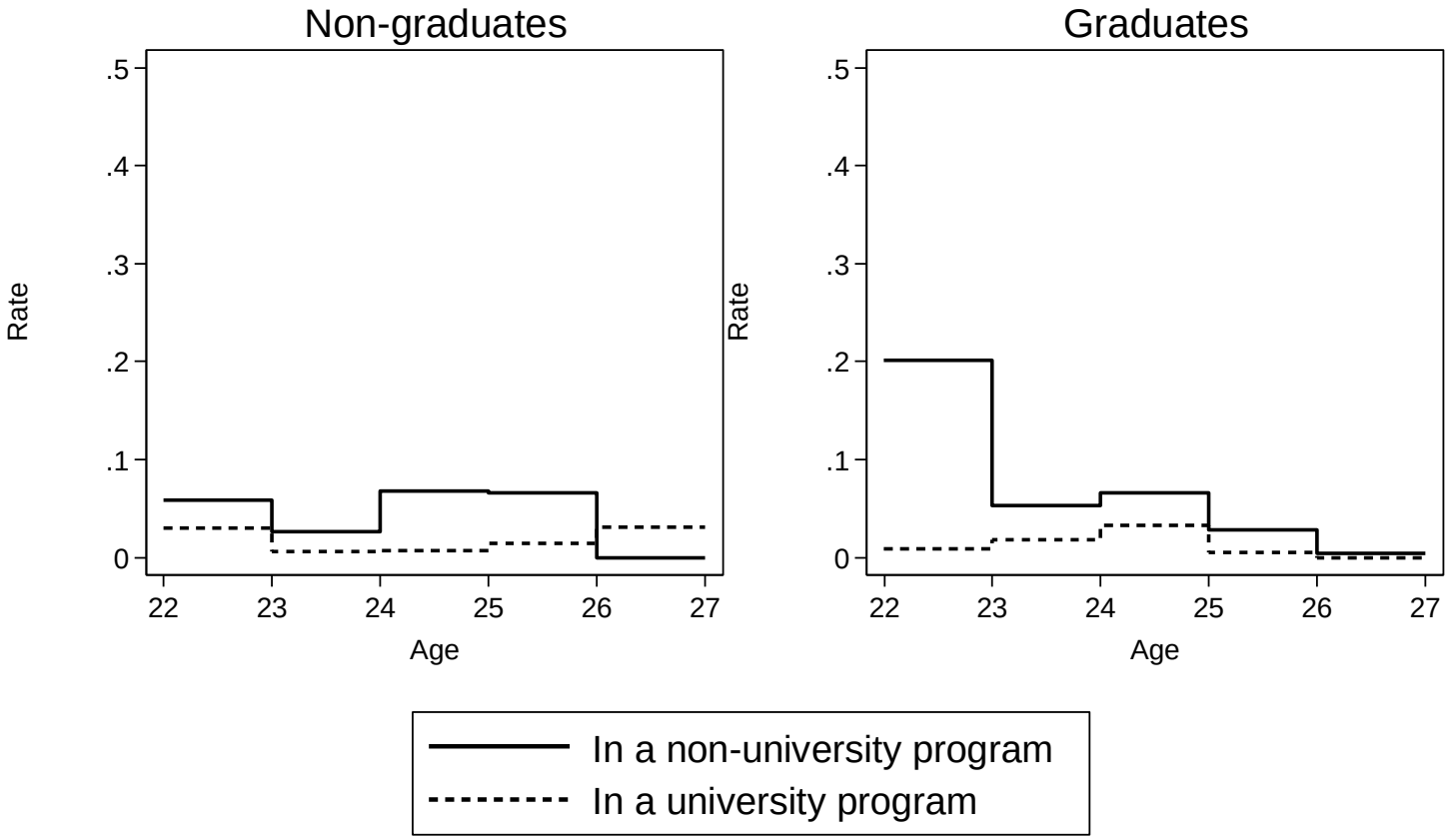
Source: Youth in Transition Survey, Statistics Canada

Figure 3



Source: Youth in Transition Survey, Statistics Canada

Figure 4



Source: Youth in Transition Survey, Statistics Canada

Figure 5