



TIMESCAPES FINAL REPORT ARCHIVING PROJECT:
Making the Long View: Sharing the Inventing Adulthoods project

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Introduction

This project brought an ongoing qualitative longitudinal study of youth transitions, Inventing Adulthoods, into Timescapes, to play a part in the Archiving Strand as precursor and model for archiving the Timescapes data. Inventing Adulthoods itself was an initially unplanned QLR study, funded in a range of contexts since 1996. The core research team throughout have been Sheila Henderson, Janet Holland, Sheena McGrellis, Sue Sharpe and Rachel Thomson. This was the team for MLV Timescapes, with extra assistance for differing periods with different tasks from: Jorge Camacho, Deborah Holder, and Melanie Walters.

Dates	Title	Funding/initiative
1996-99	Youth Values: Identity diversity and social change	ESRC Children 5-16: Growing into the 21 st Century
1999-2001	Inventing Adulthoods	ESRC Youth, Citizenship and Social Change www.lsbu.ac.uk/inventingadulthoods
2002-2007	Youth Transitions	Families and Social Capital ESRC Research Group www.lsbu.ac.uk/families
2005-2006	Making the Long View I (Negotiating the Long View)	Qualitative Data Sharing and Research Archiving Initiative http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/inventingadulthoods/archiving/mlv1/index.shtml
2007-2012	Making the Long View II	Timescapes www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk
2008-2010	Growing up in NI	JRF grant to Sheena McGrellis www.jrf.org.uk

Sample

The young people in this study (121) were aged between 11 and 17 in 1996, and are now in their late twenties, early thirties. They were located in five socio-economically contrasting sites in the UK:

- A leafy affluent commuter area near a town in the south of England (largely middle class and white);



- An inner city area in a major city in the south of England (economically disadvantaged, working class and ethnically diverse);
- An economically disadvantaged estate in the north of England (working class and largely white);
- An isolated rural area in the east of England (mixed social class - professionals, rural labourers, farmers);
- A city in Northern Ireland (communities mixed re social class and religion)

Methods

Youth Values involved over 2000 young people in these five locations, studied with a range of methods, questionnaires (1800), focus groups (62), individual interviews (57) and research assignments which they undertook for us (272). These young people formed the basis for the longitudinal study, and provided the sample for the qualitative longitudinal research which commenced with *Inventing Adulthoods* in 1999. The basic method employed in this research was repeat biographical interviews, but other methods included focus groups, memory books, lifelines and questionnaires (details available at www.lsbu.ac.uk/inventingadulthoods). The gaps between interviews varied with the nature of our funding, but those remaining with us will have had up to six interviews, in the case of Northern Ireland, recently revisited with Joseph Rowntree Foundation funding, up to seven. This constitutes an extremely large dataset requiring preparation for archiving. Early in the study we considered the data too sensitive, intimate and multiply interconnected to be suitable for archiving and re-use. But we came to see an archive as an essential and valuable research output of the study, and were able to explore the practicalities and possibilities with ESRC funding for a project on the QUADS (Qualitative data Demonstrator Scheme) initiative.

Quads: Making the Long View 1 (Negotiating the Long View)

In this 18 month project on the QUADS Initiative, we explored creative ways of overcoming ethical and practical problems related to representing, contextualising and providing access to the *Inventing Adulthoods* dataset, produced an estimate of cost for the process of archiving an existing large qualitative longitudinal dataset, and established a group of secondary users. The methods we developed for archiving the data protected anonymity whilst maintaining richness of detail. By the end of this project we had archived the anonymised interview transcripts for ten participants (up to six per person) with Qualidata at UKDA. We worked closely with UKDA during this process. The Final Report to the ESRC received an 'Outstanding' assessment and is available on <http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/inventingadulthoods/neglongviewfinal%20report.pdf>

Timescapes: (Making the Long View of Inventing Adulthoods)

Aims and research questions

Our aims on the Timescapes initiative were to produce a further 40 archived cases; to extend the group of academic and non-academic users of the archived data; to maintain contact with our



group of young people in the hope of revisiting them at some point; and to further develop our method-in-progress for analysing and representing longitudinal case histories. We planned to produce ten fully written up long longitudinal case studies. Following on from our work on QUADS the research questions were:

- What strategies are best adopted in the process of establishing an ethically sound, contextualized and accessible archived resource and encouraging academic and non-academic use and re-use of this resource?
- What methods of in-depth case analysis are most effective in the context of QLL studies involving 5-6 interview sweeps?
- What are the best means of maintaining links with a longstanding longitudinal sample to maximize the potential for further sweeps of data collection?

MLV key activities on Timescapes

The MLV team was closely integrated into the Timescapes research team and its activities, with Holland as co-director of Timescapes, and Henderson on the management team as director of Making the Long View, and joint co-ordinator of the Archiving Strand.

The Inventing Adulthoods website (<http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/inventingadulthoods>)

We have seen the Inventing Adulthoods website as a major research and publishing output of the study, and continued to develop, maintain and update it during Timescapes, with the assistance of Jorge Camacho, who also contributed to the technical side of our archiving work. The website provides a detailed ongoing account of all component studies of Inventing Adulthoods. As such it contextualises the archived data extensively, and can reach a wide audience. During MLV the website was re-designed to include more visual content and make navigation easier. For each of the constituent projects the research process is written up, and the final reports and accounts of and tools for all methods used made available. We are exploring the options for actively archiving the website long-term. The website and the many publications produced during and prior to Timescapes constitute an important contribution to qualitative longitudinal methodology. The study has also made theoretical/conceptual and substantive contribution, particularly in relation to the understanding of time and process, and the lives and experiences of young people (see outputs).

Enhancing and anonymisation of individual interviews

This work is an essential and, in our case, very time consuming and onerous part of preparation for archiving, not only because it was conducted retrospectively at the end of six rounds of interviews but also because of our 'belt and braces' approach: the only method we felt allowed us to safely 'let go' of our data. We found that, as the number of interviews for each participant increases, there are advantages to doing this work at the end of a sequence, when intersecting information which might threaten the anonymity of participants becomes more apparent over time (e.g. the importance of an informal meeting place, or club to numbers of the participants in



the same site). Early on in Timescapes, whilst waiting for procedures and templates to be agreed, a process which we wanted keep in line with as well as inform, this work slowed.

Archiving

The MLV experience and guidelines re transcription and anonymisation, consent forms and information sheets for participants were a reference point for the development of Timescapes guidelines on these topics. We had also developed a four stage model of access to our archived material, which was informative for the Timescapes model. We needed to return to our participants to obtain consent for archiving, since it was not a part of the original access. This also contributed to our continuing efforts to contact and maintain our sample. Our approach, including our technical input, constituted a prototype or 'gold standard' from which lessons were learned for Timescapes. As Timescapes' strategies developed, we learned from the advances achieved by the Timescapes' Archiving Team.

The ten cases processed for archiving during QUADS were archived with Qualidata, and were an early input for the Timescapes Archive, used for setting up the archiving system. We have successfully completed the entire process for the 40 further cases we aimed for, and they are now archived.

Along with 50 cases in our digital archive at Qualidata, we have archived hard copy of questionnaires, lifelines, research assignments and memory books. Feedback indicates growing and varied use, including methods teaching and learning, graduate and post-graduate theses and research on bereavement, masculinity, youth fitness, housing, violence and crime. Forty five (with permissions) of the 50 cases archived have unanonymised embargoed audio that will be released in 2058.

Development of Qualitative Longitudinal Case Analysis

The accumulating data generated in *Inventing Adulthood* led us to develop a number of data management and analytic techniques to handle the increasing body of material, particularly in a situation when this material must be processed to feed earlier analysis and interpretation into a fast arriving next round of interviews. Initially the analyses followed a pattern of synchronic cross cut analysis at a moment in time in relation to theoretically derived factors, followed by diachronic analysis of cases through time, and merging the two in writing in various ways (e.g. Henderson et al. 2007). As the longitudinal study developed, our objective was to examine how biographies are shaped by structural factors (location, social class, gender and family formation), and expressed through changing subjectivities as the self is made and remade over time. This biographical turn required a focus on the development of longitudinal case analysis. Our approach builds on a technique used in IA to handle the data in process, the case profile, a tool for managing and condensing data for each individual participant, and providing initial analyses, interpretations and understandings from the original interviewer. Upon this basis, and the work of Rachel Thomson in *Unfolding Lives* (2009) and the Dynamics of Motherhood project on Timescapes, we further developed a method of qualitative longitudinal case analysis - case



histories. This is a method through which individual archives (the dataset generated for individual participants through time) are transformed into an analytic narrative (Henderson et al. 2012). The method has the capacity to capture multiple temporalities where (1) participants reflect on the past, present and future serially over time, in a changing present; in a context where (2) biographical, generational, and historical timescapes coexist and intersect. Case history analyses are characterised by the identification of biographical motifs in the narratives, metaphors that aid representation, and multiple voices in the data.

This method continues to be developed, and ten qualitative longitudinal case histories have been produced. These have centred on one site in the study, Northern Ireland, with a view to producing a book which will attempt a novel approach to the representation of social science data. This objective has been considerably enhanced by the award of a grant from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to revisit a subsample of the NI Inventing Adulthoods sample in 2008-2010.

Growing up in Northern Ireland

In 2008-2010 Sheena McGrellis revisited 21 participants in NI (18 face to face and 3 telephone interviews, they are now aged 25-33). She also undertook a review of policy for young people over the previous ten years (<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/growing-up-northern-ireland>), and focus groups with policy makers and practitioners involved with young people in NI. The findings of the report are related to policy, and policy gaps for young people identified. The report drew on the ten longitudinal case histories supplemented by other short case studies, covering the whole period of the IA study and this updating visit to provide a complex picture of young people growing up through a period of considerable social and political change. Although not by design, the research for IA coincided with significant moments in the recent political history of NI, including the signing of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, the Referendum (May 1998), the establishment of the devolved government (1999) and its suspension (2002) and subsequent re-introduction (2007). The NI revisit has demonstrated the value of revisiting the unique IA sample.

Problems arising in the course of the study

Three problems have arisen in the course of the study. (1) Our Director was unwell for a period. This was dealt with by others in the team taking up some of her work during her absence, and extra input from her once she had recovered. (2) Our two very part time research assistants, both making excellent input to the study (Jorge Camacho and Deborah Holder), were obliged to leave for personal reasons. Again their work merged into that of the rest of the team, and for a brief time we had further assistance from Melanie Walters. (3) Due to under-funding at the beginning of Timescapes and HERA decisions made about the researcher on the other LSBU project, the LSBU projects were obliged to cover a salary bill of over £30,000, not provided in the original budget. The only source was the MLV budget for our researchers. So we have managed to cover the planned work despite losing a chunk of our budget. (The Faculty of Arts



and Human Sciences at LSBU generously provided us with a small grant (£8100) to aid us in this task.)

Impact

Academic: The IA study has had considerable academic impact on methodology (qualitative longitudinal), theory relating to the lives of young people and beyond, and substantive material about those lives. This is exemplified by the recognized academic status of the study and its extensive outputs, including the website, and the invitations that team members have received to talk about the work, and to support and mentor others in pursuing related studies. The team members have given presentations in national and international settings, with many prestige invitations related to the work (e.g. to Melbourne University to assess the Youth Studies Centre, a visiting fellowship to Melbourne, Plenary for the NYRIS Conference, Norway 2008). MLV itself has made important contributions to the practice of archiving, clearly within Timescapes, and beyond.

Policy/Practice: In a long standing relationship with the National Children's Bureau, much of the work of IA in general has fed into policy, and been used in their publications (e.g. Blake, S. Henderson, S. and McGrellis, S. (2005) *Cards for life*. London: NCB; Sharpe and Thomson, (2005) *All you need is love?* NCB). Members of the research team have given many talks to practitioner groups working with young people. During the course of MLV all presentations have made reference to the archive, the website and its development, and the future and use possibilities of the archive. This has generated considerable interest in its use for research, teaching and policy. In a user consultation meeting, response from academics was extremely positive, and policy/practitioner participants pointed out areas for which the archive would be relevant and useful, including youth organizations and government departments. For the NI study, McGrellis has been presenting the material widely, with considerable interest in the value of case histories to demonstrate the impact of policy on young lives for decision makers on policy (e.g. Presentation to Advisory Group of Policy/Practitioners 2009).

Future Plans

Funding application for another round of data

We are awaiting the outcome of a bid to the ESRC, in collaboration with the Your Space project team: 'Good times and hard times: tracing trajectories into adulthood through a linked qualitative longitudinal and mixed methods comparison'. This involves a substantive comparison of two samples of young people and their trajectories into adulthood with a particular focus on the impact of the recession, each across time and comparatively at different points in time. If funded, the generation and archiving of a new wave of data for each the two pre-existing project data sets involved (Your Space! and Inventing Adulthoods) will add longitudinal value to potential reuse of the already archived data.