

Timescapes Conference

Understanding & Supporting
Families Through Time

Research Policy & Practice

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timescapes

An ESRC Qualitative Longitudinal Study



Moving into Adulthood in an Economic Recession

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Context

- Increases in U.K. youth unemployment from under 12% in 2000 to over 18% in 2009 (ONS, 2009).
- Legacy of previous large-scale youth unemployment.
- Anxieties about long-term effects.
- Direct extrapolation of the consequences of mass unemployment from the 1980s is problematic.

‘Your Space!’ A Timescapes Study

- **Aims:** Explores how relationships relate to young people’s sense of self as their individual and family biographies unfold.
- **Sample:** Over 50 participants, born between 1989 and 1996, from across Britain.
- **Methods:** Three Waves of data collection using interviews and a flexible range of tools:
 - 2003/05 (*Economic prosperity*)
 - 2007 (*Credit crunch*)
 - 2009 (*Recession*)

Processes Over Time

Economic:

- 'Lost generation'
 - Knocked off course.
 - Little sense of opportunities.
 - Long term 'scarring'.

Social relations:

- *Familialisation* – dependent on parents for longer periods.
- *Institutionalisation* – longer period of education.
- *Individualisation* – responsibility for own destiny.

Youth/Adulthood Transition Typology (Brannen and Nilsen, 2005)

- **Long period of youth:**
Financial dependency on family and mutuality mentality.
- **Young adults:**
Semi financial independence from family and contingency mentality.
- **Early adulthood:**
Precarious financial independence and 'getting by' mentality.
- **Short youth:**
Financial independence and planning mentality.

Long Period of Youth

ALISHA

- British Pakistani, Muslim young woman.
- Middle-class.
- Privately educated.
- Mother has own businesses.
- Lives in an affluent gated community in South-East England.



Young Adults

STEVEN

- White British young man.
- Working-class.
- Mother and father work in the public sector.
- Lives in a suburban area in the metropolitan South-East.



Early Adulthood

ROONEY

- White British young man.
- Working-class.
- Both his parents are long-term unemployed.
- Lives in a small city in the South-East.



Short Youth

KATE

- White British young woman.
- Working-class.
- Mother previously a support worker, now not working due to ill health.
- Lives in a rural area in central England



Conclusions

- People enter economic recession with prior resources, and the crisis accentuates whatever it is that they bring to it.
- *'long period of youth' or 'short youth' trajectories* – deeply embedded over time, despite attractions of other trajectories or educational setbacks.
- *'young adult' and 'early adulthood' trajectories* – shifts towards/away from other potential trajectories already in play.
- Importance of structural backdrops.

For Further Information:

- For a full version of this paper please see:

Edwards, R and Weller, S. (2010) Trajectories from youth to adulthood: Choice and structure for young people before and during recession, *21st Century Society*, 5(2): 125-136.

- For more details about the project please visit:

www.lsbu.ac.uk/families/yourspace