

UK Data Archive

Study Number 5777

Inventing Adulthoods: the Showcase Archive, 1996-2006

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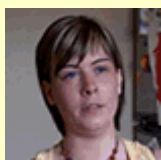
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A qualitative longitudinal dataset on young people growing up in England and Northern Ireland between
1996-2006.

Inventing Adulthoods is a [qualitative longitudinal study](#) of young people growing up in [five areas](#) of England and Northern Ireland at the turn of the 21st century. Its rich biographical material, contributed by young people who were 11-17 years old at the start of the study, provides a unique window on most aspects of growing up during an important period of social change in the decade 1996 – 2006. We continue to try and stay in touch with the young people in the study but have no plans to interview them again for the foreseeable future. Since Spring 2005, we have been concentrating on the not-inconsiderable task of archiving [this dataset](#) so that other people can apply to access it and help realise its considerable potential for methodological and theoretical advance and for application to policy and practice.

QUICK INTRO TO THE STUDY



The Inventing Adulthoods data set was used in a collaborative venture with the Open University to produce a DVD: 'Young Lives'. In this film, five young people from the study revisit and reflect on their interviews.

View the introduction to the film [HERE](#).

This website is the public face of [the archive](#) we are creating. It gives you the opportunity to take a detailed look at [the study](#), see [publications](#) generated to date, meet the [research team](#) and view an ongoing account of our [archiving process](#).

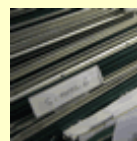
It also tells you how you may be able to [use data](#) from the study and gives you a taste of the [biographical data](#) that have been anonymised and included in the archive so far. If you took part in the study, you can also [visit your own part of the website](#) to find out what's been happening and keep in touch.



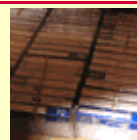
THE STUDY



USE THE DATASET



ARCHIVE OVERVIEW



OUR ARCHIVING PROCESS



STUDY PARTICIPANTS'
ZONE



GET THE BOOK!

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Inventing Adulthood, Families and Social Capital, London South Bank University, 103 Borough Road, London SE1 0AA

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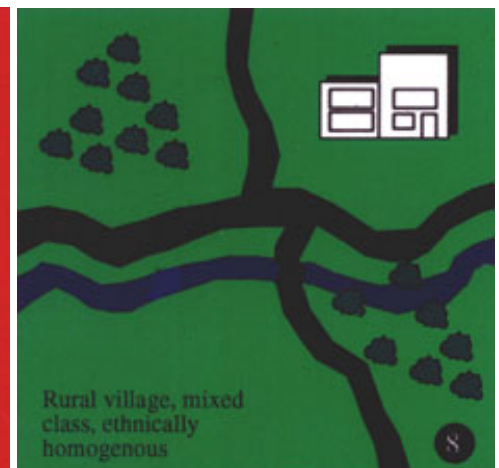
Exploring the significance of where young people grow up in shaping their transitions to adulthood was an important feature of this study. The five research sites were chosen to capture socio-economic differences and other diversities:



An affluent area near a commuter belt town (largely middle class and white)

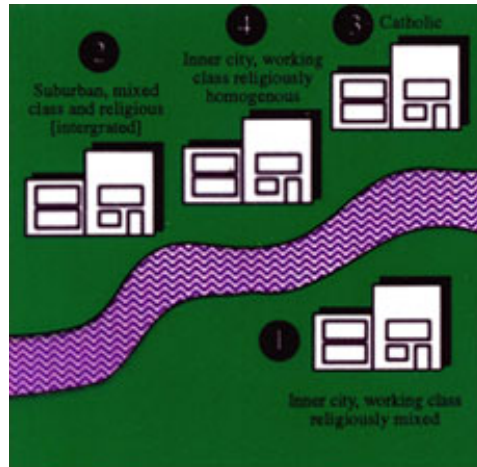


An inner city site situated in the south of England (working class and ethnically diverse)



A disadvantaged estate in the north of England
(working class and white)

An isolated rural area (mixed social class
(professionals, rural labourers, farmers)



A city in Northern Ireland (communities mixed re social class and religion)

Methodology

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The sampling process for the whole study (comprising three studies building on the same sample) was as follows:

School questionnaire sample: schools selected on basis of diversity of demographic features, sample selected on basis of appropriate year groups (age 11-16) and teacher co-operation.

Focus group sample: volunteer sample recruited from questionnaire sample from above mixed ability tutor groups. The composition of groups was decided on the basis of a number of criteria, including representativeness of key demographic characteristics within the research site (sex, age, social class, ethnicity) as well as factors relating to group dynamics (for example the inclusion of young people who were: identified as 'leaders' by researchers, teachers and pupils).

Follow-up individual interview sample: volunteer sample recruited largely from above and according to similar criteria.

INVENTING ADULTHOODS	Age	Interview	Focus Group	Lifeline	Memorybook	Questionnaire	Research Assignment
Youth Values 1996-1999	11-17	Int1 57	356 62 grps			1800	272
Inventing Adulthoods 1999-2001	14-23	Int2 121		104			

		Int3 98			49		
		Int4 83		Revisited at this round			
			4 grps				
Youth Transitions 2002-2006	17-28	Int5 70					
		Int6 64					

INVENTING ADULTHOODS	Total Sample	Age	M	F	Eth	Wc	Mc	Ni	Dep. Est.	Inner City	Leafy Suburb	Rural Area	Extra Groups
Youth Values 1996-1999	Int1 57	11-17	25	32	4 (1)	44	13	20	8	7	9	6	7
Inventing Adulthoods 1999-2001	Int2 121	14-23	58	63	19 (2)	85	36	42*	21	14	20	18	6
	Int3 98	14-24	40	58	12 (3)	66	32	34	17	12	19	15	1
	Int4 83	15-25	38	45	11 (4)	53	30	28	11	12	18	14	-

Youth Transitions 2002-2006	Int5	17-26	28	42	9 (5)	43	27	27	5	9	17	11	1
	70												
	Int6	19-28	26	38	9 (6)	39	25	27	7	8	14	8	-
	64												

- (1) 1 AC, 1 Viet, 1 MR, 1 BB.
- (2) 3 AC, 3 Viet, 2 MR, 2 BB, 1 African, 6 SA, 1 SEME, 1 Mauritian.
- (3) 2 AC, 3 Viet, 2 MR, 1 BB, 1 African, 2 SA, 1 SEME.
- (4) 2 AC, 3 Viet, 2 MR, 1 African, 2 SA, 1 SEME.
- (5) 2 AC, 3 Viet, 1 MR, 1 African, 2 SA.
- (6) 2 AC, 3 Viet, 1 MR, 1 African, 2 SA.

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Research Design

Theoretical Approach

Theories that have influenced our approach have been those of post or late modernity and their critiques; and the concept of social capital. We have also developed concepts in interaction with our data, including that of critical moments with consequences in young people's trajectories (Thomson et al. 2002). Our biographical model identifies the fields of activities - education, work, the domestic and leisure - in which young people build their identities and adulthoods through the exercise and recognition of competence, and consequent investment in the field (Thomson et al. 2004). We have thought about Giddens 'detraditionalisation, and Beck's 'individualisation', where a transformation of the relationship of the individual to society leads to a process of moving from 'normal biographies', with pre-existing roles and life plans, to 'choice biographies' where we are responsible for who and what we become. Drawn into youth studies, these approaches emphasise intergenerational change, where the predictable patterns of the past, powerfully shaped by gender and social class are eroded. But Nilsen and Brannen for example argue that the distinction between normal and choice biography is too simplistic and draw attention to the continuing significance of structural inequalities, gender, social class, ethnicity, which provide the parameters within which individual choices are made.

A general theme in critiques of these theories is that whilst there have been fundamental social changes in the recent past, these have led to the reconfiguring and reworking of class, gender and ethnicity and related inequalities, rather than their erosion or eradication. Although we returned to the ideas of Giddens and Beck, working with and against them to make sense of changes over time and differences between young people's lives, we also drew on increasing critical scholarship in relation to these theories in the area of gender studies, social class, 'race' and ethnicity as well as a growing body of debate within the field of youth studies as to the value of late modern theory (Henderson et al.

2007).

Throughout the study we have used Bourdieu's typology of capitals, economic, cultural, social and symbolic as an analytical frame to understand the access to resources that characterised the young peoples lives and trajectories (Thomson, Henderson and Holland 2003). In the most recent phase we have considered the concept of social capital as elucidated by Coleman, Putnam and others - with emphasis on networks, norms and reciprocity - in relation to Bourdieu's version, where the emphasis is on the production and reproduction of inequalities. Along with colleagues in the [Families and Social Capital Research Group](http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/families) (www.lsbu.ac.uk/families) we have considered and criticised Putnam's elaboration of inward looking bonding social capital that ties people to families, groups and communities, and outward looking bridging social capital, which fosters connections cross heterogeneous groups (Holland 2007).

Recently there has been a move to bring social capital and late modern perspectives together in an attempt to capture empirically and to describe everyday practices of 'sociality', how people do 'people work' or social affinities, shaped as has been suggested they are, by situated class cultures. Valerie Hey for example has written about the 'offensive' sociality of the new middle class (involving self conscious networking) and the 'defensive' sociality of the disadvantaged in which practices of sociality first secure survival, and can sometimes reinforce exclusion. This shift in distinction echoes that between bridging and bonding social capital, but the shift in language reflects a political shift from understanding inequality as located in individuals and communities towards an understanding of how inequalities are made and remade.

Methodological Approach

The value in the approach adopted in the study lies in it being longitudinal, biographical and holistic. Longitudinal in that we walk alongside these young people through the changes and vicissitudes in their lives. Young people are faced with the task of 'inventing adulthood' because material and social conditions have shifted significantly in the course of a generation. Biographical, in that we listen to their narratives of self and lives, narratives that develop and change over time in the construction of self and identity. Holistic in that we do not fragment these young lives into categories, education, work, health, crime, drugs, but are interested in all aspects of their lives and how they interact in a dynamic process. We have tried to gain insight into the relationship between the unique life (biography), the context within which it is lived (structural dimensions), and the processes of which it is part (for example history,

social mobility, intergenerational transfers).

Ethical Approach

The ethical concerns bound up in the processes of qualitative research generally are amplified in the QLR context through repeated intervention, these are for example: consent; confidentiality; anonymity; the potential impact of the research on both researched and researchers; intrusion; distortion of life experience; emotional involvement (Holland et al. 2004a). The QL context necessitates an ongoing process of re-negotiation and consultation throughout the research period, rather than being a one-off event (Holland et al. 2004a). We have thus taken a collaborative and iterative approach to consent, and sought the young people's participatory involvement and consent at every stage of the project, drawing on the ethical standards laid down by the professional and institutional bodies of which we are part. In our archiving project, Making the Long View, these ethical issues come even more to the fore, and three key issues recently identified in the ongoing debate over the nature and extent of informed consent guide our endeavours: the appropriateness of information given; the voluntariness of participation; and the assessment of understanding. Our view is that these ethical issues cannot be addressed without the active participation of the original research participants and we have returned to our participants, developing collaborative approaches to address these issues and concerns effectively and with integrity.

Research Team Structure

In the first stage of the study (Youth Values), the core research team undertook most research tasks to a greater or lesser degree: interviewing, running focus groups, recording and storing data, analysis, interpretation, and writing. Three were located in the office based at London South Bank University, two largely responsible for organisation (of the research process and data) and communication and coordination, as well as the research tasks. When we moved to a biographical and longitudinal method, individual researchers became responsible for specific research sites in a decentralised organisational structure. They were responsible for contacting and maintaining the sample in their site (s), for interviewing and for collecting and producing contextualising material about their sites, as well as the research

tasks delineated earlier. In most cases they were based within easy access of their site(s). This was also designed to enable research relationships with the young people to develop, in that the same researcher would return each time to interview them. Those in the office maintained administrative functions, as well as engaging in the research tasks, except for interviewing individual participants.

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Strategy over time: hindsight/foresight

Our situation has changed over time in the Inventing Adulthoods study. In the initial study (Youth Values), all data was transformed into machine-readable form. The quantitative dataset from the questionnaire was coded, cleaned and subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS PC. Focus group and individual interview data were fully transcribed and coded on NUD*IST. The class work and the research assignments that some of the young people completed were coded and analysed and linked to the main data set as off-line data. Our analysis drew on all of these sources to produce answers to our research questions. By the end of the project we realised we had a unique sample and sought to follow the young people longitudinally, using a biographical approach. Here we moved into different analytic territory. Biographical methods attempt to capture a temporal process, usually achieved retrospectively, through a reconstruction of events. But the prospective longitudinal method we now adopted involved 'walking alongside' a research participant and the research became open-ended and lacked analytic closure. Each new round of data collection challenged the authority and stability of previous interpretations. The 'cultural habitus' of both researcher and researched shifted at each stage of data generation and analysis and this produced an exponential reflexivity on the part of both – a reflexivity that recognized change and avoided fixing any actors and aspects of the research process in the past. For us, this process of constant recontextualisation of biographical data over time increased the need to acknowledge that interpretation was integral to data generation as well as analysis. Making our process of interpretation explicit as the research process progressed became important. We have been engaged in secondary analysis of our own data, continuously revisiting and recontextualising our participants, our data, ourselves, our theoretical and methodological approaches and substantive interests over the course of the study.

Members of the research team analysed their own interviews and those of others. We became increasingly aware of

issues of context and reflexivity in QL research, and of the implications for perspectives on archiving and reuse of qualitative data.

A qualitative longitudinal analysis requires both synchronic analysis (cross sectional analysis of cases at one point in time) and diachronic analyses (case history analysis through time) and some form of articulation of the two, which took place for us in the revisiting and recontextualising process referred to here.

Cross-cut analysis

We continued to code each round of interview data descriptively and conceptually using NUD.IST and subjecting it to a cross-cut analysis, enabling us to make comparisons at different moments in time in our research (repeat cross cut analysis, in our case with the same participants). Memory book, lifeline and questionnaire data have been analysed in their own right as well as being integrated into individual case profiles. The cross-sectional analysis captures a particular moment in time, often highlighting biographically structured temporal themes, such as waiting for examination results and leaving school, as well as wider cultural and political contexts. These included different moments in the Northern Ireland Peace Process (McGrellis 2002), the World Cup, the Millennium, and the changing face of the teenage mobile phone market (Henderson et al. 2002) The analyses highlight differences and similarities within the sample, and by accumulating further rounds of analysis begin to identify the relationship between individual narratives and wider social processes.

Case analysis

A case analysis was undertaken in order to follow the narratives of a single individual over time, simultaneously identifying the continuity of an individual's narrative resources and the contingency of each 'occasioned account'. This captured processual features of the narrative (for example: narrative style, pacing/structure, subject positions taken, audience, absences, and formal elements of the structure) as well as substantive content (for example: conceptual categories such as agency, linked lives, time and place, timing). From the narrative analyses a 'summary narrative analysis' for each location at each round was produced, identifying local themes in young people's accounts.

Researchers also recorded their personal reflections on the interview and their hopes, fears and predictions for each young person at each round of interviews. After interview rounds 4 and 6, narrative analyses for each young person were drawn together to produce a [`case profile`](#).

We have drawn on case studies extensively in our published work but, by and large, these are 'sketches' that dramatically condense the rich body of material that we have for each individual. We have coined the term 'case history' for a more in-depth and extensive use of longitudinal personal archives (Thomson, 2004).

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Sample maintenance

Once in longitudinal flow, an important aspect of a study of this type is to maintain the sample and avoid attrition.

The periods of return varied in each study, and between those data sweeps it was important to keep the young people on board, for which we used a number of techniques. The researchers responsible for the specific sites maintained contact by phone, (including mobile phones and text as they became prevalent in the sample, see Henderson et al. 2003), email and post (including birthday, Christmas and post-cards) to differing degrees at different points in the study. Such contact was particularly important in the gap before the Youth Transitions phase began, but was important throughout. We had a website, and tried a discussion forum, since the young people expressed an interest in others who were part of the study, although this was never particularly successful with them. We ran competitions to maintain interest in the project and increase response to different project initiatives, 'prizes' included T shirts with the research logo and music vouchers. We produced periodic newsletters, feeding back to them findings from the data, and news about our activities. Our knowledge of the communities, and others in the community who might have been their friends or ex-school friends was helpful in tracking people down when necessary. We were least successful in maintaining the sample in our most hard to reach and working class site, which was also the most geographically distant from the researcher, and with the particularly vulnerable, such as young people being looked after in care.

Engaging young people in the research

We took a participatory approach and involved the young people in the process of the research from the start. In the first stage of the study (Youth Values) we consulted on our methods and approach, setting up groups of young people as advisers, and following their advice. We contacted them once again about the methods to employ in the biographical longitudinal study, using their advice to hone our memory book approach, and other activities (Holland et al. 2001). Clearly the repeated returns for interviews required their active participation, and this did vary as their lives became more complicated and busy through time. Some dropped out at one round and returned later, perhaps related to the spotlight we threw on their lives for them. We asked them through the method to reflect on their lives and experiences, and this clearly emerges in the data. We also asked them explicitly what they thought about the research and the research process at certain points. Most were relatively positive, and valued the opportunity to reflect on their lives, suggesting that it made them think about things that they might otherwise not have done. They described feelings of being 'special', being selected for the project giving them a positive sense of themselves and self-confidence in an interview, and sometimes improving their status with peers. Others focused on the emotional benefits of being able to talk about personal matters to someone in confidence (although we were clear that this was not a therapeutic situation). They also valued participation for allowing their voice to be heard, and were often very interested in what young people in other sites thought and said. Cynthia suggested 'So it's showing like an outline of how we feel you know, and not how people think we feel'.

Gatekeepers

Our major source for the sample in the first stage of the study (Youth Values) was schools in our selected sites. We offered, and provided them with a report of quantitative findings from the questionnaires for use in the school. Good relationships with schools and teachers contributed positively to sample maintenance, and gaining the support of the school secretary was often an important resource in accessing changing contact addresses or telephone numbers, and providing space within the school for interviews. We continued to meet the younger people in school for the biographical interviews, but as they left school moved to their homes and other sites. In attempting to contact sometimes elusive young people after they had left school and were in college, university or work, we often had considerable telephone contact with parents. One or two parents made it clear that they would prefer if their child no longer took part (due to exam pressures), but most were helpful in this process, and also provided space in their

homes for interviews. The other organisations in which we met some of the young people facilitated our entry and access to their members or participants, for example a young gay and lesbian organisation.

Researcher reflections on the interview process

The case profiles produced for each individual included a section that was essentially field notes, but also asked for the researchers' reflection on the interview process. This feedback was pragmatically useful for deciding what triggers to include in the subsequent interview. It was also useful in the interview when for some cases a memory book was employed as a trigger. But more generally this researcher reflection became part of the whole process of longitudinal research and analysis, part of the revisiting and recontextualising of ourselves and our participants in the research. The researcher and her responses becomes part of the research. The accumulation of such data, along with data on the research relationship, interpretative labour and speculation, contributes to a rich methodology where lived lives, storied lives and researched lives combine and resonate. The promise of a QL data set such as *Inventing Adulthood* is that it might show how, over time, possible lives cede and real lives cohere.

Maintaining a research team

We regard our study as an accidental longitudinal study, since it was not our original intention to undertake qualitative longitudinal research in what became the first stage of the study (*Youth Values*), but emerged as an idea when we saw the rich possibilities that such an approach could provide in the light of our diverse and unique sample. Practically, we have been able to maintain the core team through the consecutive grants we have obtained from the ESRC, and input from our university workplaces, particularly London South Bank University. But equally important has been the willingness and interest of the researchers in pursuing the research in a variety of changing personal and professional life situations over a long period of time. Commitment to the research has been a critical factor in its continuation. We are also grateful for the input of the many researchers who have worked with us at different times in the research, engaging in a supportive, collaborative approach.

You can read more about our research process [here](#).

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In turning to a longitudinal approach, the research relationship was seen as an important part of the process, and so we decided to have dedicated researchers for each of the research sites. This meant that the same researcher would return to interview the young person at each round of interviews. While these relationships grew and the researchers were concerned and involved with their interviewees, it was still a professional and ethical relationship. Each of the researchers had their own personal style, which also influenced the ways and degree to which they maintained contact with the young participants, and the balance that they kept in the research relationship, maintaining enough, but not too much involvement.

Researcher reflections on 'walking alongside'

The researchers involved in interviewing the sample over the years took part in a focus group in 2006 that explored their experiences and reflections on the research, thoughts about managing power, feelings, concerns, disclosures and changes over time. This data has been transcribed but awaits analysis, and will be posted on the website as soon as it is available.

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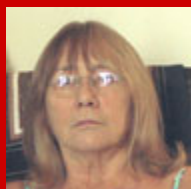
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Research Team

We managed to maintain a core team of five researchers throughout the ten years of the Inventing Adulthoods study, although a number of other people also contributed along the way.

Inventing Adulthoods Core Team



Janet Holland

Professor of Social Research, Co-Director of the Timescapes qualitative longitudinal Study and of the Families and Social Capital Research Group at London South Bank University. Her research interests centre around young people, education, gender, sexuality and family life. She is also interested in feminist theory and methodology. She has published widely in these areas, most recently with colleagues in the Inventing Adulthoods team,

Inventing Adulthoods:

a biographical

approach to youth

transitions , 2007, Sage, (with Caroline

Ramazanoglu, Sue Sharpe and Rachel Thomson) *The*

male in the head:

Young people,

heterosexuality and

power , Second Edition 2004, the Tufnell Press; (with Jeffrey

Weeks and Matthew Waites (eds.) *Sexualities*

and Society , 2003, Polity Press; and (with

Caroline Ramazanoglu) *Feminist*

Methodology:

*Challenges and**Choices*, 2002, Sage.

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Rachel Thomson has a background in policy and practice development as well as social research. She has conducted research into many areas of young people's lives and has published widely in the areas of sexuality, youth studies, biography and qualitative methods. She is currently conducting a 5 year study into 'The making of modern motherhood' (begun in 2005 and funded as part of the ESRC's Identities and Social Action programme and the Timescapes initiative). The study involves talking to 60 first time mothers and undertaking intergenerational and longitudinal case studies with grandmothers, great grandmothers and significant others.

Recent publications include *Researching*

social change:

qualitative

approaches to

personal, social and

historical processes

(with

Julie McLeod, forthcoming 2009, Sage), and Thomson, R. (2007) 'The

qualitative longitudinal case history: practical, methodological and ethical

reflections', *Social Policy and*

Society

, 6(4): 571-582. She is Professor of Social Research

in the Faculty of Health and Social Care at the Open University.

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Rachel Thomson



Sheila Henderson

Sheila Henderson is a freelance researcher whose interests and experience have involved the development and evaluation of youth policy and practice (particularly in the field of substance use); youth culture, gender, identity and social change; the practical application and representation of research; and the role of the visual in all of these areas. Additional interests include biographical and qualitative longitudinal methods, urban and rural contrasts and the archiving and re-use of qualitative data. She has published in all these areas. Publications include: *Women, HIV, Drugs: Practical Issues* (ed. 1990. Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence, London); *Ecstasy: Case Unsolved* (1997. London: Pandora); *Inventing Adulthood: A biographical approach to youth transitions* (with Holland, J. McGrellis, S. Sharpe, S. and Thomson, R. 2006, London, Sage); and 'Making the long view: Perspectives on context from a qualitative longitudinal (QL) study' (with Holland, J. and Thomson, R. 2006 *Methodological Innovations Online*, 1:2 Available [here](#)).

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Sue Sharpe

Sue Sharpe is a freelance social researcher whose interests have involved many aspects of young people's lives and their experiences, such as gender and education, family life, and young motherhood, and has published various books from her research including *Just*

like a girl: How

girls learn to be

women (Penguin, 1994), and (with Mike O'Donnell)

Uncertain

masculinities:

Youth, ethnicity and

class in contemporary

Britain (Routledge, 2000). She is also currently working

on 'The Dynamics of motherhood' project with Rachel Thomson (see above)

based at the Open University. Recent publications include (with Rachel

Thomson), *All you need is*

love: Sexual

morality through the

eyes of young people

(National Children's Bureau, 2005), and (with Henderson et al.)

Inventing

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Making the Long View Team

Deborah Holder joined the Making the Long View Project as a part-time Research Assistant in 2005 and is now working on a freelance basis. For the last 15 years she has worked as a freelance journalist, writer and editor for a wide range of national newspapers and magazines producing issue-driven features on gender, family dynamics, youth culture, crime, education and parenting. Much of her journalism has been led by research in the social sciences and she was drawn to the Project by its potential for practical application and a longstanding interest in making academic research accessible to a wider public. She is also a part-time Lecturer in feature writing at Brunel University.



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Jorge Camacho

Jorge Camacho joined the Making the Long View Project in June 2005 as a part-time Research Assistant. He is also working on a PhD in the School of Social Sciences, Media and Cultural Studies at the University of East London.

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Past Team Members and Contributors

Tina Grigoriou was a researcher on the Inventing Adulthoods study for two and a half years from 2002. She is currently studying for a Doctorate Practitioner in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapeutic Studies at the University of Surrey. Her research interests have been focused on friendship and relationships. For her thesis, she will explore the impact of individual psychotherapy on the couple relationship.



Tina Grigoriou



Robert Bell

Robert Bell was a researcher on the Inventing Adulthoods study for three years from 1999. He then worked as a senior researcher in the Cabinet Office and in the Children and Young People's Unit in the Department for Education and Skills. He is now Director of the Carnegie Young People Initiative (CYPI) www.carnegie-youth.org.uk. CYPI promotes the greater involvement of children and young people in decisions that affect their lives, and coordinates the Participation Works online gateway (participationworks.org.uk). As well as writing with *Inventing Adulthoods* colleagues, he has published articles and reports in the last few years on children's participation in public decision making, and various aspects of youth policy.

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Rebecca Taylor was a research assistant on the inventing adulthoods study between September 2000 and May 2002. Whilst working on the project she collaborated on two publications: (2002) 'In Touch: Young People, Communication and Technology', *Information, Communication and Society*, 5(4) with Sheila Henderson and Rachel Thomson and (2005) Between Cosmopolitanism and the Locals: Mobility as a Resource in the Transition to Adulthood, *Young* 13(4) 327-342 with Rachel Thomson. She is currently Research Fellow in the Qualitative Team at the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) and her research interests include voluntary work, other forms of work outside employment, those on the margins of formal employment and qualitative longitudinal research methodology sparked by her involvement in Inventing Adulthoods. Her publications include: (2004) 'Extending Conceptual Boundaries; Work, Voluntary Work and Employment', *Work, Employment and Society* 18(1) 29-49, Cambridge: Cambridge University press; (2006, forthcoming) *A New Sociology of Work?* Oxford: Blackwell. Pettinger, L., et al (eds.).

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Rebecca Taylor

Quite a few other people have also helped us out on the study, including: Isabel Walter, Sean Arnold, Emerson Jackson, Amy Lenderyou, Helen Membry, Fergal Barr and Ian Draper.

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Capturing Change Over Time: HISTORICAL TIME

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[Capturing Change Over Time](#)

[Research Time](#)

[Biographical Time](#)

[Historical Time](#)

This section of the website is concerned with contextualising the study historically and providing a 'taster' for the cross-sectional aspects of the Inventing Adulthoods dataset. Data collected in waves of fieldwork and organised and coded cross sectionally privileges historical time – the chronological passage of events that frame the entire data set and provide the common thread that gives each successive wave a distinct and contemporary character. We want this section to reflect the temporal structure of the fieldwork, introduce the potential data user to the cross-sectional data and contextualise the entire dataset historically. However, it has yet to be fully developed.

This is in no small part due to the concentration of our resources on preparing our data so that it can be interrogated by case - where, we feel, its strength and richness lies. However, it is also due to the complex issues involved both in providing access to cross-sectional qualitative data and in predicting the historical contextual needs of future data users.

'Taste' the cross sectional data from the study.

We have a number of data sources to consider for possible inclusion:

- Six rounds of interview data, coded and stored in NVivo
- Questionnaire data, coded and stored in SPSS
- A 'big picture' database (providing an 'at a glance' overview of case data according to key topics and themes of the study)
- NVivo analyses for interview rounds 2 and 4
- Summary narrative analyses (narrative accounts of locality based on narrative analyses of individuals)

We have concerns around confidentiality and anonymity in relation to NVivo data because, whilst case transcripts have been anonymised, NVivo data have not (and the task would be enormous). The technical potential for sharing data in this form is also still in development.

Currently, the 'tasters' we can offer for the cross-sectional data are:
 NVivo data the coding frames for certain interview rounds: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [5](#).
 A copy of the [Questionnaire](#), [Code Book](#) and [Factor Analysis](#)
 A copy of the [Big Picture coding frame](#).

The study in historical context.

We also aim to include contextual information on the historical time the young people grew up in during the study in this section. Our initial thoughts were along the lines of selecting and describing some key moments in youth policy, youth culture etc and key aspects of social change (e.g. the Information and Communication Technology revolution; the Northern Irish Peace Process; the Millennium) and linking these in some way to relevant cross-cut findings from the study. However, we have yet to develop a conceptual selection framework. Our experience of writing up this data has shown us that conjuring up an historical context is crucial to any attempt to represent the data to an audience. However, the kind of historical context needed depends entirely on the purpose of the representation. In our view, most academic users of the data will come to the archive with their own intellectual projects, imagined audiences and historical narratives with which to frame the material. However, it may also be the case that this kind of historical context is more important for non-academic users.

Additionally, we would like to 'show' something of how the research localities changed over time but aware that this is complicated by questions of anonymity and confidentiality. We already have

some material available but this exercise would also involve returning to the local archives of the five research sites.

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Anonymisation

The degree to which data *need* to be anonymised in relation to archiving is still a topic of debate and methods of anonymisation are in development - a process to which we are making a contribution. Making the dataset available for use by others raised important questions about how to maintain the anonymity we had guaranteed our young participants throughout the study and about how to protect their sensitive data without undermining its richness. As an important starting point, we commissioned an independent review of the case data we were considering for inclusion in the showcase archive by a journalist with no previous contact with the study and a commitment to making academic studies more widely accessible. This process convinced her of the need to anonymise this data for archiving (and confirmed our own instincts). What followed was, once again, a staged and labour intensive process:

[Enhancing transcripts](#)

[Anonymising transcripts](#)

[Tracking changes](#)

[Cross-checking and standardization](#)

[Researcher process notes](#)

[Negotiating a break with anonymity](#)

Enhancing transcripts

View/Download: [Transcription guidelines](#)

Transcription can be an inaccurate process, complicated by a range of factors including the (in)ability to understand different accents and dialects. Re-listening to tapes to rectify serious errors or gaps has always been

an important part of the qualitative research process. However, we found a further need to 'clean up' our transcripts. After each round of interviews, audio tapes were transcribed according to a set of guidelines we devised in 1998. These involved a very rudimentary mark-up system that would, for example, make real names readily identifiable. A number of transcribers were used over the ten years of the study with the result that there was some variation in the way in which the guidelines were followed.

Over time, we came to describe this process of restoring the transcripts to an accurate record of the audio tape and standardizing mark-up as 'enhancing'. This was a result of presenting our work in seminars and conferences and getting feedback that the term we used previously - 'cleaning' - led to an assumption that we had somehow changed and impoverished our data.

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Anonymising transcripts

View/Download: [Anonymisation guidelines](#)

When publishing our own analyses and interpretations of the data, we used the normal devices of the pseudonym, the red herring or changing / omitting any identifying detail as anonymisation tools. This experience, together with a review of existing advice, served as a basis for developing an initial set of guidelines for anonymisation . However, preparing the data for others to use whilst maintaining the fine balancing act between keeping the richness and essence of the story and protecting the individual from unnecessary exposure proved much more complex in the QL context - since identifying detail is accumulated and considerable 'flesh' added to the 'bones' of each biography over time. An increasing awareness of the need to protect against this cumulative effect within any given case and across-cases within a particular research site meant we had to adapt our approach over time. Getting the whole picture of a case (all interviews) before anonymising and tuning into the significance of different people, places and events over time became essential. So much of what is of broad social interest and significance in a person's narrative can lie in the fine detail and minutiae. In isolation, mention of a hobby or a place or a job or a family incident may not necessarily identify the person - but put all this information

together and the jigsaw starts to build. Information picked up in interview 6 may influence the way in which certain facts are anonymised in interview 1. Their significance to the stories of other young people in the same research site also has to be considered and weighed. The picture keeps building as other interviews from the same research site line up on either side.

Specific issues in the QL

context

[Read more...](#)

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Tracking changes

View/Download: [Tracking table](#)

Carefully tracking all changes was important to us for two main reasons: the first was for our own reference purposes; the second related to use of the dataset in the distant future, when un-anonymised transcripts may be available. Basically, the user would need to publish data in the anonymised form – and would have a ready-made guide for doing this.

The tracking process involved logging the identity number for the relevant young person, the interview number, the page number of the change, the original and the change it had undergone as well as logging any possible future changes. XML-based mark-up tools were in an early stage of development at this time and consequently we worked in Microsoft Word. The decision to log page numbers – for easy reference – threw up technical issues (how to ensure everyone who accessed the transcripts would be presented with the corresponding page number). These were resolved by standardising and recording the page formatting (see 'Anonymisation Guidelines').

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Cross-checking and standardization

View/Download: [Cross checking notes](#)

Close communication and comparison between anonymisers was essential to the anonymisation process. Once all cases were enhanced, anonymised, each case was thoroughly cross-checked by another team member (usually, the original interviewer). Finally, one researcher reviewed all enhanced transcripts and all enhanced and anonymised transcripts. This involved a 'speed read' to identify any anomalies that had slipped through the net: e.g. real names, incorrect fonts and margins, hangovers from previous method of mark-up, and researcher' notes or queries left in the body of the text. It was also a final opportunity to make final decisions on outstanding queries: some were taken to the team meeting, others discussed with the relevant interviewer.

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Researcher Process Notes

View/Download: An example of [researcher process notes](#)

Capturing the anonymisation process as it developed over time was an important consideration for us and team member conducting the work kept process notes as they went along.

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Negotiating a break with anonymity

At the same time as we were developing our archiving strategy, we were also expanding on another model for re-use of the Inventing Adulthoods dataset: one in which we, the research team, maintained more control over the data sharing process by working collaboratively with others. In collaboration with a course team and a film maker at the Open University, we produced a [course dvd](#) in which five young people from the study were filmed: talking about their lives and their involvement in the study, and listening to and reflecting on their interview tapes. In these short films, the young people's anonymity was no longer protected (e.g. by their study pseudonym) – as they used their real names and revealed details about their lives. This departure meant re-negotiating with them the basis for their informed consent – a process that continues as we use short clips from these films in an increasing range of contexts to illustrate our work on both the study and the archive.

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Youth Values: Identity, diversity and social change

Schedule for Individual Interview 1

1. Welcome

The Respect: phase 1 questionnaire, phase 2 focus group; phase 3 interview
Confidentiality

Anything that you say will be treated in confidence. This means that the tape will only be heard by researchers and any quotes from the interviews will be anonymised so that they cannot be identified

2. The interview

We want to explore some of the issues in more detail. We are interested in what they think is right and wrong, moral and not, how they have developed their ideas, and how they think they may change in the future.

3. Your first memory:

We want to begin by asking you to go back as far as you can to when you were a child, and ask you to remember the first time that you were aware that something was either right or wrong (prompts: give example of own memory of right or wrong)

- what was the situation, who was there?
- how did you know
- prompt on the opposite (first time knew something was right)

4. Your own process of moral development

We would like to talk about how you have got to where you are now, how you have developed in terms of your morality.

First - could you describe the sort of person that you are - what your values are, what you believe in (this could go here or later)

People: *Which people do you think have had an important influence on you, how, why*
(Prompt: Parents, siblings, teachers, priests; friends, adults/ young people)
How do they teach? (Prompt: telling, showing, by example etc.)

Events *Are there any events, experiences or moments that you think have effected the way you think/ what you believe?*
(Prompt: primary/secondary shift; moving house; family change, seeing something on the news etc.)
How did this affect you?

Peers *In what ways do you think you are affected by what other young people think is right and wrong - is it ok to be different?*

Media *In what ways do you think you have been influenced in your values by the media*
(Prompts: news, films (inc violence), technology (computers, Internet, mobile phones), music, fashion and style, magazines)
Do you identify with the values in your favourite media - does this change with time. (In selected cases use questionnaire)

5. Now

In the questionnaire we asked you about your moral dilemmas - those things where it is hard to know what is right and wrong. You said ref questionnaire. Why are these important now (have they changed), how have you changed?

6. Moral authority

We are interested in finding out about who young people admire and what it is that they admire.

- Who gets *admired* and why?
 - Who gets *respect* and why? (Is this different)
 - Who are the *leaders*? Who has *authority*?
 - Is this different for adults and young people
 - Is it different for girls and boys
- Are you admired by others, if so why, what does it feel like - responsibilities?*
(Prompts: Check their heros from questionnaire - are they still their heros?)

7. Difference

Do you see yourself as being different to other young people

What are good differences, what are bad differences

Gender: Is it more less difficult for boys/ girls to be different/ probe on traditional and non traditional masculinity and femininity

Race/ culture - are these differences rewarded?

Studying hard/ ambition? I this rewarded

Do you expect to be different to your parents?/ community?

8. The future

We are interested in the ways in which you may change in the future. In particular, your ideas about right and wrong, fair/ unfair, justice etc, do you think that they will change in the next 3 years? How

9 Optional

Imagine that you are a parent, and raising a child. How would you go about teaching them right from wrong? Would you do it differently?

10. The next project

We are going to continue this study and will be tracking young people over another three year period. Would they like to take part? Keep in touch by keeping us informed of their address

11. *What did you think of the interview?.*

THANK YOU

Inventing Adulthoods: Young People's Strategies for Transition

Schedule for Individual Interview 2

1. LOOKING BACK - mapping the changes since last interview

Education

- * What stage at now in educational process? Get detail on what exams taking and what expect
- * Changing relationships with teachers and view of education
- * Staying on/ leaving - what advice available, received, any regrets?
- * Local options for education - who does what
- * Short term plans

Work

- * What work experience since last time we saw them, details of current post, hours and income
- * How did they get the work - networks
- * What is it like, workmates, interesting?, has it met expectations
- * how it fits with education and leisure
- * What spend wages on - Income - how much money do they get in a week from where
- * unemployment - contact with social services/ training schemes

Leisure

- * How spending their time and money - what do they get from it
- * Travel and geographic mobility
- * mixing with new people
- * Communication - how do they keep in touch with friends (mobiles, face to face, internet)
- they meet new people
- * drugs and alcohol, how do they fit in, any new experiences to report?

Relationships

- * Shifts in friendships since last saw them, prompt school/ non school / workplace/ leisure
- * Romance and love - any action.
- * Have relationships become sexual. How, why. can they sleep together at home??
- * tensions between friendship and romance

Home life and family

- * Living relationships - where is home, has this changed, who lives there
- * Relationship with parents/carers
- * Support from offered, accepted, given parents/ carers - emotional, financial, material, reciprocal obligations (ref Finch and Mason 1993)

Other

- * health - their own, relatives
- * births/deaths, marriages etc.
- * trouble - court appearances, contact with police etc., detentions at school

project of self

- * Has their outlook/ values changed, are they the person they want to be, will they change and how, personal agency and the limits of agency

- * Do they see themselves as different to their peers - in what ways, how did they become so.
- * Critical moments: Any important moments/ people/ experiences in this process of change

3. **LOOKING FORWARD - Lifelines (see cover sheet (b))**

Prompts:

Home/housing: prompt on willingness to move, who living with, financial aspects (renting, buying etc.), size of home

Education: expectations re being a life long learner, personal development as well as qualifications.

Work: Full time, part time, money/ earning capacity, unemployment?, career breaks, changes etc.

Relationships: Lover, children, family and friendships - how do they change and how fit together. Responsibilities for ageing parents? Changing friendship networks.

Travel: Travelling/ adventures, holidays, moving for work, urban/rural, living abroad.

Values: what will be important to you at this time, can read down life line to put remind them of expectations re home, ed, work, relationships etc. Possible values: money, others (children, parents etc), fun, time, safety, education, health, working at relationships, freedom etc.

4. **Chances**

How do you see yourself doing in the future (prompt on better/ worse)

- (a) compared to your friends
- (b) compared to other people in general

Do you think things will be easier or harder for you than your parents/ grandparents

6. **Identity, adulthood**

Do you want to be an adult? - What does it mean to you?

Do others treat you as adult - parents, teachers, workmates, lovers, friends

[Prompt on discrepancies between different dimensions of adult status: voting, driving, alcohol, benefits, wage earning, sex etc)

When do you feel adult/ when do you expect to - what are the milestones

7. **The research process -**

How was the interview re time, content, venue, interest

- 8. What do you **hope** will happen by the time we meet again
- What do you **worry/ fear** will happen by time we meet again

Inventing Adulthood: Young People's Strategies for Transition

Schedule for Individual Interview 3

MEMORY BOOK LED INTERVIEWS

1. Discussion of Memory Book content

Themes to pick up on throughout interview:

Advice,

Role Models

Tensions

Trust

Project of Self

Critical Moments

Nationality

2. Other Topics to cover if not already covered in MB discussion:

(Look to proper interview schedule for fuller prompts)

Education

Work

Leisure

Relationships

Home Life and Family

Other

Health – their own, relatives, friends...

Birth, marriages, deaths

Trouble – court appearances, polices, politics and nationality

Round 2 Individual Interview schedule

NON- MEMORY BOOK LED INTERVIEWS

Throughout the interview:

Advice and where it comes from

Role models

Resources for imagining the future

Tensions between different roles and responsibilities at home and elsewhere

Issues about Trust – who they can trust, examples

‘Project of self’:

Has their outlook/ values changed, are they the person they want to be, will they change and how, personal agency, the limits of agency

Do they see themselves as different to their peers? – in what ways?

Critical moments

1. LOOKING BACK - mapping changes since the last interview

Education

At what stage in educational process (detail on exams, results, plans)

What educational opportunities available to them? (national/local/FE/HE)

Where is it likely to lead?

Staying on or leaving – Who advises? Any regrets? Going back to school?

What impact leaving/staying on made?

Details on formal Work Experience – how set up/chosen/links to career choice?

Work

What work experience since last time (current/past jobs, details on hours, wages) – including training schemes

How did they find work/are they looking for work – networks

Experience of work – tasks, responsibilities, workmates, future?, expectations

How does job fit in with education, leisure, friendships etc

Spending – what spend wages on –

Income – sources of income

Unemployment – experience of, views on, social security/training schemes

Unpaid work – chores/housework and Informal Economy

Leisure

How spending their time and money

Travel and geographic mobility – including cars

Mixing with new people/changing friendships

Communication – mobiles, internet, how do they keep in touch

Drugs and alcohol – any new experiences/changes?

Relationships

Shifts in friendships – links to changes at school/workplace/college etc

Relationships with parents and grandparents, carers, step-parents

Relationships with siblings and step-siblings

Romance and love – any action

Sexual relationships – experiences, views on, parenting rules...
Tensions – friendships and romance?
Attitudes towards marriage, divorce, co-habitation, long-term commitments
etc

Home Life and Family

Living relationships – make up of household, any changes?
Responsibilities at home – caring, chores, reciprocity
Support – given/received, emotional, material, financial, other forms?

Other issues to integrate into interview if possible

Health – body issues, their own health, friends and relatives
Births, marriages and deaths

Trouble – court appearances, police, trouble at school

Violence –

Nationality – probe on this, e.g., parents of different nationalities, identity

Politics – formal and informal, single issue, link to national identity

2. CHANCE, HISTORY AND GENERATION

How do you see yourself doing in future? – compared to friends
Compared to people in other places
(Local/global and chances?)

Do you think you are lucky? Compared with other people?

What obstacles/opportunities do you face in your life?

Do you think things will be easier/harder for you than for previous generations?

3. THE RESEARCH PROCESS

How was the interview – timing, venue, subjects

Has being involved in the research had any impact(s) on you?

How did you feel doing the Lifelines from Round 1

Hopes for next 9 months

Fears for next 9 months?

Inventing Adulthood: Young People's Strategies for Transition

Schedule for Individual Interview 4

1. UPDATE

1. Education
2. Work
3. Leisure
4. Relationship
5. Home Life and Family
6. Health, Wealth and welfare

2. CHANGE OVER THE RESEARCH PERIOD

Since the research started (over the past 4 years or so)

1. What have been the *key points* in each of above areas?
2. *Critical moments* - what have been the key times?
3. *Who/What* has had *crucial* impact?
4. What have been the *worst things* that have happened since the research started?
5. What have been the *best things* that have happened?
6. How have *you changed* over the years?
7. Who has been important for you in terms of *advice, role models, trust, key people*?
8. Looking back have you had *any regrets* - are there things you would do differently?

3. RESEARCH PROCESS

1. When you first started the research what were your *first impressions* (April 97 - questionnaire)?
2. *How* did that *change over the time?* - focus groups. Individual ints.
3. Did the research have any *influence* or impact?
4. How were particular *aspects* experienced? Interviews and settings, questionnaires, memory books, focus groups, newsletter and website.
5. Do you remember doing the *lifeline*?

4. LIFELINES

1. Looking back at round one lifeline ...
Are your *plans the same*? Reflections from Interview 2.
2. What has changed and why?
3. Would you complete it the same way again? Which elements the same/different?
4. Did this exercise have any impact on you?

5. CONCEPTUAL

Adulthood

1. Have your ideas about adulthood changed? Are there defining features?
2. Different aspects of - *institutional and normative* criteria and their experiences of both (maturity, feelings, treatment).
3. Is *adulthood important*? What are the positive and negative aspects?
4. Do you feel *independent/dependent*- in what context/roles?
5. Do you think you are a *woman/man* yet?
6. What *sort of woman/man* do you want to be?
7. How will that *differ* from your *parents*?
8. Do you want/plan to have *children*? What sort of parent will you be?

Identity

1. How would you describe yourself *in a sentence*?

personality characteristics; nationality, sexuality; ethnicity; gender; roles; religion

Social exclusion

1. How do you see your *progress and chances* in life?

probe fortunate or lucky
privileged
disadvantaged
discriminated against

2. What do you understand by the term *social exclusion*?
3. Who would you identify as *poor* ? *Rich*? Where do *you* fit into that?
4. Do you use anyone or anything as a *marker* to measure your progress in life?

6. CHECKLIST

1. **Education** - details of formal and informal education
2. **Employment** - details of current job, hours pay and other income
3. **Home life** - family details, structure - who lives where. Money paid towards keep , reciprocity
4. **Relationships** - status, any pregnancies, sexual relationships
5. **Hopes and Fears**
6. Two sets of **contact details** for round 5 if interested

Youth Transitions and Social Change

Schedule for Individual Interview 5 18 September 2002

1. Introduction: renegotiating consent, explain interview structure (not just catchup) OFF TAPE

2. Mapping changes:

Education:

- Revising ambitions, have things gone as planned
- Looking back, how has the role of education changed in shaping your ambitions and your social life
- Regrets, relief, reassessing worth
- Future plans

Work and money

- earnings and hours
- how they spend their money: keep/ travel/ fun-
- debt and feelings about debt (do they expect it – eg student loans)
- skills, training
- identity and relationships at work

Leisure

- juggling time, how they do it, how easy and/ or chaotic this feels
- socialising, with whom and where – changes
- drink, drugs, transport, communications (phones, emails etc)
- Friendships – are they changing, keeping in touch, are they a resource? How?
- Media and consumption as a resource

Home life, relationships and intimacy

Romance – Is there something special about a couple relationship vs other kinds of relationships?
(inc if not in a couple – get views of a couple relationship)
What tensions does it bring with it, do you miss out?
How does it affect relationships with the family/ friends?
Impact on other other life plans: work, education, housing?
How does sex make a difference, issues re pregnancy contraception etc.?
Feelings: security, vulnerability, dependence/ independence/ reciprocity
How does relationship act as a resource?

Home life Changes re dependence/ independence since research began (last 3 years) including money, housework/chores, freedom etc.
Leaving home – plans and actual
Feelings: security, taking chances, risks (does having a secure home life make it more possible to take risks)
How does family act as a resource?

Looking at these changes – in what new ways do you feel that you are becoming **adult**? Are there any **critical moments** in this?

Community

Do you see yourself as being part of a community / communities? Has this changed since you left school/ town/ home?

Definition: *'could be your neighbourhood, a religious or ethnic community, a group of young people who like the same music, or attend the same college, just any group that you identify with'*

In terms of your local community, what *activities* (if any) tie you in? Eg – volunteering, helping neighbours, your family, working. Is there a role for young people in the community? How do adults see young people?

What do you think your reputation is in your community? Family reputation, sexual reputation, work reputation, trouble reputation. How can you change a reputation? What does it mean to be popular now? How has this changed from your school days?

What does the prospect of leaving your locality feel like for you? What would make it difficult to leave, why? Do many people leave? Do they return?

What does the word 'Home' mean to you? Could you make your 'home' anywhere?

Networks

What are your networks – do you see yourself as being 'well networked' compared to others in terms of work, leisure etc.? Are these networks intergenerational? Are they family based or wider?

Where do you go for support? Emotional; social; material, opportunities, ideas, careers

Social mobility and social change

Do you expect to do better /same/ less well in life than your parents? How might this be linked to gender? For example have the lives of women changed more than men?

Is their lifestyle still relevant/ possible? How has the world changed between their generation and yours?

Prompt around family – parenting style, family as a resource, gender roles.

Hopes and fears

Next interview in 12-15 months. What do you hope will have happened by then? What do you fear?

Offer opportunity to have / give previous interview tapes back.

Youth Transitions and Social Change

Schedule for Individual Interview 6

- Before interview: Check case profile for holes, any missing links
- Check case profile for feasibility and angle of 'reality check' section
- Check Interview 2-5 hopes and fears

1. Introduction

Consent and plans for the future

2. Update on changes and fill in any holes or gaps in case profile

Education

Work, unemployment and money

Leisure and Locality

Relationships and intimacy

Home life

Health welfare and trouble

Spirituality

Adulthood

3. Reality check

the tapes

our feedback to them

any questions

4. Hopes and Fears

5. What next and contact details

Interview transcription notes and annotations

If used, the '@' symbol highlights text that has remained unchanged in transcript.

'&' prefixes text which has been changed or omitted

[indicates overlapping speech

Dots in parentheses (...) To indicate elapsed time. One dot (.) for short pause Two dots (..) for longer and (...) longer again.

CAPS for emphasis - change in pitch and /or volume

Empty parentheses () to indicate transcribers inability to hear what was said

Parenthesised (words) possible hearings

Group dynamics [LAUGHS]

Interruptions [MOBILE PHONE RINGS] [SIDE ONE ENDS]

Transcription Notes (3rd edition)

Overlapping speech:	indicated using [
Elapsed time:	Dots in parentheses (...) One dot (.) for one second. Two dots (..) for two secs
Emphasis:	CAPS for emphasis - change in pitch and /or volume
Inaudible:	Empty parentheses () to indicate transcribers inability to hear speech
Possible hearings:	Parenthesised (words) possible hearings
Group Dynamics:	CAPS in square brackets eg [LAUGHS]
Interruptions:	Interruptions and notes CAPS in square brackets eg [MOBILE PHONE RINGS] [TAPE ONE SIDE ONE ENDS]
Tags:	
Anonymised text:	All anonymised text tagged using- @@anonymised text in this space##
Omitted sensitive text:	Omitted (regarded as too sensitive or identifying or about other people etc) Tagged using- %%OMITTED TEXT ## (omitted text recorded in the Tracking table)
Sensitive Text:	Sensitive Text flagged using \$\$sensitive text##



Inventing adulthoods: young people's strategies for transition

Traditionally, social policy has taken a problem-based and issue-led approach to the young; focusing, for example, on teenage pregnancy, drug use or unemployment. Yet increasingly policy makers and practitioners are becoming aware of the need to take a holistic approach to young people's lives. New research from South Bank University explores how different combinations of factors can create or constrain opportunity. The study charts the pathways and reflections of young people living in five distinct areas of the UK. It identifies strategies, situations and experiences that transcend local differences, while understanding how local values and conditions shape young people's lives. The research found that:

- Young people forge adult identities in different areas – education, work, leisure and domestic life. The more competent young people feel and the more recognition they receive in a particular area, the more they are likely to invest in that aspect of adult identity.
- Location is a key factor in shaping participants' transitions, with young people tending to follow locally-accepted 'routes' to adulthood.
- Young people who pursue social mobility often have to reject their family's values and launch themselves into unfamiliar territory.
- A key influence on young people's transitions is their ability to access a broad range of adulthood role models.
- The impact of global culture can facilitate mobility. Geographical mobility may be a prerequisite for social mobility and reinvention.
- Most young people associate adulthood with parenthood and an independent home.
- Some factors traditionally associated with adulthood (e.g. sexual activity, drinking, drug taking, mobility and consumption) are now seen more as symbols of youth.
- Young people expressed ambivalent attitudes towards adulthood, often seeking to delay it. Support from parents played a significant part in determining this outcome.
- There are two different models of adulthood: an individualised model in which young people stress feelings of maturity and autonomy, and a socialised model focusing on responsibilities and care for others.
- Critical moments, such as leaving school or suffering a bereavement, play a key role in shaping young people's transition to adulthood. The timing of such events, and the resources available, are crucial to eventual outcomes.

Background

What it means to be a young person living in the UK today varies enormously. Differences of class, culture, locality and identity provide young people with dramatically different resources and opportunities with which they must invent their adult identities. The lives of a working class Protestant girl in Northern Ireland, a middle class boy in the Home Counties and a young mother living in care will be very different. Yet although each young person has a unique story, they also share many values, experiences and dreams.

Paradoxically, although this generation faces increasing social inequality and less room for social mobility, there may also be greater opportunities for individual agency and entrepreneurialism.

In the twenty-first century there is great uncertainty about many of the traditional roles and identities that have shaped our history. The experience of youth has been transformed, with longer periods of dependency for some and unsupported early independence for others. Does ‘adulthood’ mean being a parent, having a home or job, or no longer having fun?

This research investigates the impact of different factors on young people’s transitions into adulthood, including their feelings of control over their own lives, the resources available to them, and the wider influence of society. By interviewing participants on three separate occasions, researchers were able to explore how young people’s identities, strategies and pathways change over time in response to varying conditions and different experiences.

The aims of the study were:

- To document young people’s accounts of their own transitions to adulthood over a five year period, in five contrasting locations of England and Northern Ireland
- To identify ‘critical moments’ in the construction of adult identities and analyse how they may open up or close down opportunities
- To explore the relationship between social factors (e.g. social class, locality, gender, race and family support), individual life events, and the broader social processes of individualisation and globalisation
- To contribute to knowledge about: agency and the ‘reflexive project of self’; values and the construction of adult identity; and the impact of globalisation on the individual
- To develop innovative methods to capture young

people’s changing values, evolving stories of adulthood, and their reflections on processes of transition

Forging identities: Competence, recognition and investment

Young people forge identities in different areas of their social world – education, work, leisure and domestic life – and there may be contradictions between these identities. For example, it is possible to be simultaneously a ‘bad student’ within education, a ‘trusted worker’ within the field of part-time work, a ‘mother’ within the domestic arena and a ‘child’ within leisure.

The extent to which young people invest in different aspects of adult identity is related to their sense of competence and recognition. For example, a young person who feels incompetent at school is more likely to invest in an adult identity in a romantic relationship, work, consumption or in alternative leisure or criminal careers. This process of ‘competence – recognition – investment’ can help make sense of the choices that young people make, without reducing them either to individual psychology or social factors.

Young people’s investments in their various identities have implications for the strategies and tactics they subsequently employ. Strategies are based on power, and imply the ability to plan ahead, whereas tactics are shaped by constraints rather than possibilities. Young people’s strategies and tactics depend on social factors, and have important implications for social inclusion and exclusion.

Resources and social mobility

The identities that young people invest in also depend on the resources that are available. Attempts at achieving social mobility often require young people to renegotiate their resources. This may entail:

- Rejecting the forms of adulthood they see around them
- Disentangling themselves from the values of their family and wider community
- Propelling themselves into uncharted territory

Young people may need to employ very different

tactics if they are aiming for social mobility or social reproduction (reproducing the social circumstances they inherited). In the current context of change, there is increasing pressure on the individual to be inventive with the resources at their disposal.

Importance of location

In comparing participants' accounts across the sample, the importance of location in shaping young people's transitions to adulthood stood out. Young people were 'embedded' in their geographical areas. For instance, the extended dependency demanded by participation in further and higher education could clash with local patterns of adulthood, particularly in working class communities.

Key factors in transitions to adulthood

Young people's accounts of adulthood are shaped by many different factors, social class being the most compelling, linked to the material, social and economic resources to which young people have access. Yet there were important differences between young people from similar class backgrounds, which can be accounted for by diverse locations. For example, there is a clear contrast between growing up middle class in Northern Ireland and in the Home Counties. These differences are underwritten by:

- Material differences (such as transport infrastructures and local labour markets)
- Cultural differences (homogeneity, diversity and mobility)

The research also showed important differences within the same location related to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, family formation and experience. Some of these differences cut across location, although gender, ethnicity, sexuality and disability are affected by location. Young people's ability to access a broader range of role models, and their response to these different identities, is key to the way their lives develop.

Over the course of the study, new opportunities and constraints emerged, caused by factors such as physical maturation, others' ageing, leaving school, and access to age-related rights and responsibilities.

Inventing adulthood

The study investigated how young people shape their transitions to adulthood, by:

- Exploring how young people anticipate their own future, using a 'lifeline'
- Asking young people to reflect on the extent to which they feel adult in different areas of their lives
- Tracking changes in young people's accounts of adulthood over the course of time
- Comparing accounts of adulthood across the sample

Symbols of maturity

Parenthood and an independent home appear to be at the centre of most young people's understanding of adulthood. Some factors traditionally associated with adulthood (such as sexual activity, drinking, drug taking, mobility and consumption) are now seen more as symbols of youth. Where young people were caught in an extended economic dependence on parents, they were more likely to invest in consumption and lifestyle based 'youth' identities. Where they had moved directly from school to the world of work, they tended to invest in more traditional aspects of adult identity.

The researchers found a contrast between two different patterns:

- An individualised model of adulthood in which young people stress feelings of maturity and autonomy
- A relational model of adulthood in which young people stress responsibilities and care for others

While most young people move between the two patterns, young working-class women are particularly likely to assume responsibility for economic independence and caring.

Not surprisingly, young people expressed ambivalent attitudes towards adulthood. A significant proportion sought to delay adulthood, associating it with onerous responsibility. Others saw themselves as having fast-tracked their way to adulthood, which could be a source of pride, grievance or both. The extent of parental support – as well as the impact of experiences such as bereavement, caring responsibilities and parental conflict – had a significant effect.

Critical moments

The researchers identified critical moments that play a key role in shaping the transition to adulthood. Such moments may be defined by an institution (e.g. leaving school) or by an individual (e.g. bereavement). The distribution of critical moments may reflect the uneven distribution of risk in the lives of young people. Timing and resources are crucially important, with similar events in young people's lives giving rise to very different consequences. For example, two young people in one location lost one of their parents during the course of the study. While this was the dominant critical moment in both of their lives, the consequences for each differed dramatically. One young man went into a downward spiral of family conflict, educational failure, drinking and fighting while the other was drawn into more equal relationships with adults through the bereavement process and was able to maintain his educational progress.

Conclusions

The study follows a diverse sample of young people over five years, generating a rich and unique body of data that documents young people's lives and understandings of themselves over time.

The data suggests a complex relationship between the individual, the networks and resources available to him or her, and the constraints and opportunities offered by society.

The research is particularly relevant for policies relating to citizenship education, work experience, careers advice and mentoring, and educational support.

About the Study

The research team was Rachel Thomson, Janet Holland, Sheila Henderson, Sheena McGrellis and Robert Bell at South Bank University, and Sue Sharpe at the Institute of Education.

The study builds on an existing sample of young people involved in the Youth Values project. Youth Values studied young people growing up in five contrasting areas of the UK: an inner city area; a Home Counties commuter town; a deprived housing estate in the North West; an isolated rural village; and contrasting communities within a Northern Irish city.

The researchers interviewed 120 (falling to 83) young people aged 16–24 on three occasions at nine monthly intervals. Other methods employed included memory books, lifelines and focus groups.

Further information

The full report **Inventing Adulthood: Young People's Strategies for Transition** by Rachel Thomson and Janet Holland is available on the ESRC database REGARD at <http://www.regard.ac.uk>

Related publications are:

Henderson, S., Taylor, R. and Thomson, R. (2002) 'In touch: Young people, communication and technologies', *Information, Communication and Society* 5 (3).

Thomson, R., Bell, R., Henderson, S., Holland, J., McGrellis, S. and Sharpe, S. (2002) 'Critical moments: Choice, chance and opportunity in young people's narratives of transition to adulthood', *Sociology* 6 (2), pp 335–354

Thomson, R. and Holland, J. (forthcoming 2003) 'Imagining adulthood: Resources, plans and contradictions', *Gender and Education* 14 (4)

Thomson, R., Henderson, S. Holland, J. (2003) 'Making the most of what you've got? Resources, values and inequalities in young people's transitions to adulthood', *Education Review*, 55, 1

For more information about *Youth, Citizenship and Social Change* see the programme's website: <http://www.tsa.uk.com> or email the Programme Director on: lcatan@tsa.uk.com



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and Social Change**



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Inventing adulthood: young people's strategies for transition

Summary of research results

From the individual to the social and back again:

At the heart of this study is a theoretical and empirical investigation of the dynamic relationship between the individual and the social. Building on an earlier study of Youth Values, 120 (falling to 83) young people aged 16-24, living in five contrasting socio-economic and geographical locations in the UK were interviewed three times at nine monthly intervals. Other methods employed included memory books, lifelines and focus groups. The longitudinal character of the method drew attention to how identities, strategies and pathways *change over time* in response to changing conditions and the accumulation of experiences

The individual:

There may be consistencies and/or contradictions between identities forged by the young people in the interlocking fields of their life (education, work, domestic, leisure), for example simultaneously being a 'bad student' within education, a 'trusted worker' within the field of part time work, and a 'little mother' within the domestic. By looking at individuals across time we found that young people are likely to have different levels of responsibility and autonomy in these different areas. The extent to which young people make investments in these different fields at any time can be understood through the extent to which they experience themselves and are recognised as *competent*. The investments they make in particular identities have implications for the *strategies* and *tactics* they subsequently employ, which themselves have consequences for the kinds of identities that are available to them. Such strategies and tactics are themselves socially structured, and have important implications for processes of social inclusion and exclusion.

Mediating resources

The identities young people invest in depend on the resources they can draw on, and attempts to achieve social mobility require young people to renegotiate the resources with which they are faced. This may entail rejecting forms of adulthood that they see around them, disentangling themselves from the values of their family and wider community and propelling themselves into uncharted territory. The strategies and tactics demanded by projects of *social (re)production* and *social mobility* may be quite different. In the current context of change, there is increasing pressure on the individual to be inventive with the resources at their disposal.

Structuring dimensions

There are many dimensions through which young people's accounts of adulthood are structured, which intersect in individual biographies in particular ways. Social class is perhaps the most compelling, but we have observed important differences between young people from similar class backgrounds. Some of these differences can be accounted for by the particularities of locality, and these differences are underwritten by material differences (e.g. transport infrastructures, local labour markets), and cultural differences (homogeneity, diversity, mobility). Within localities we found important differences related to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, family formation and experience. Some of these differences cut across locality, but gender, ethnicity, sexuality and disability are also structured in local terms.

Through the longitudinal method we can see how time and timing structure the configuration of resources. Over time new opportunities and constraints emerge, structured by the temporal flow of the life course. Timing also has a structuring role where a given set of resources are reconfigured, making available different identities, tactics and strategies.

Wider Social process

Processes of globalisation are particularly evident in shaping the cultural resources available to young people, and this can be seen in their engagement with youth cultures and its consequences for identifications and mobility. Processes described through the concept 'individualisation' are manifested in many different ways. It is possible to distinguish between individualised 'can do' *cultures*, being associated with particular forms of social, cultural and symbolic capital, and individualised *conditions*, associated primarily with material conditions and the presence of risk and absence of structures of support.

Inventing adulthood?

By comparing accounts of adulthood across the sample, we have found locality central in shaping young people's orientation to adulthood. The model of extended dependency demanded by participation in further and higher education can be in tension with local models of adulthood, particularly in working class communities.

We found parenthood and an independent 'home' to be at the core of most young people's understandings of adulthood, and little evidence of *reinvention* or resequencing, or that detraditionalised models of adulthood have gained moral legitimacy in our sample. We did find that some of the markers traditionally associated with adulthood (e.g. sexual activity, drinking, drug taking, mobility, consumption) were being reworked as markers of youth. Where young people were caught in an extended economic dependence on parents they were more likely to invest in consumption and lifestyle based 'youth' identities. Where they had embarked directly into the world of work from school they tended to invest in more traditional aspects of adult identity. These investments can alter according to changing circumstances.

This was reflected in tensions between an *individualised model of adulthood* in which young people stress feelings of maturity and autonomy and a *relational model of adulthood* in which young people stress responsibilities of care for others. Our data suggest that adulthood can be both gendered and individualised with young people (especially young working-class women) assuming responsibility for economic independence and caring.

We identified 'critical moments' as a central narrative device in the construction of adulthood. These may be institutionally defined (for example leaving school) or individually defined (for example bereavement) and may be more or less in the control of the individual. We suggest that the distribution of critical moments may reflect the uneven distribution of risk in the lives of young people. Timing and resources play an important role here, with similar events in young people's lives giving rise to very different consequences. We have explored the relationship between critical moments and young people's responses to them through the conceptual frame of the 'fateful moment' (Giddens 1992).

Young people expressed ambivalent orientations towards adulthood. A significant proportion sought to *delay* adulthood associating it with onerous responsibility. Others saw themselves as having *accelerated* passages to adulthood, and this could be a source of pride, grievance or both. The extent of parental support as well as the impact of experiences such as bereavement, caring responsibilities, parental conflict etc. was significant in shaping these orientations.

2. Full report of research activities and results

2.1 Background

This study of young people's accounts of adulthood is situated within a historical and theoretical account of social change. A range of commentators have pointed to the salience of theoretically defined processes of individualisation (Beck 1992, Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg 1994), detraditionalisation (Lasch and Urry 1987, Heelas *et al.* 1996), and disembedding (Giddens 1991) that are transforming the relationship between the individual and social structures. In terms of young people's transitions to adulthood these processes are underwritten by an extension of economic dependency, 'structured contradictions' between different markers of adulthood (Chisholm and Hurrelman 1995, Jones and Bell 2000) and an uncoupling of 'youth' and adulthood' from material and embodied markers (Lury 1996). In a UK context we have also witnessed increasing inequality with diminishing opportunities for upward social mobility (Schoon et al 2001, Walkerdine et al 2001). So young people are faced with biographical problems: problems of *social mobility* (defending against a loss in social status relative to parents, as well as seeking to increase status relative to parents), and problems of *social (re)production* (creating forms of adulthood that are similar or different from those of their parents and significant others).

These biographical problems are structured by a range of factors that include locality, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and disability, each providing young people with access to particular resources and identities and constraining access to others. The rapidity and particular character of social changes mean that young people are forced into projects of *reinvention* as well as reproduction which may demand new kinds of resources and skills in the short term - such as fluidity and reflexivity (Giddens 1992, Bauman 2000) - as well as the transmission of more traditional forms of social, cultural, symbolic and material capital (Bourdieu 1986), that most often takes place over generations (Bertaux and Thompson 1997:19). So although there is less room for social mobility than in a previous generation it is possible that there may also be a greater role for individual agency and entrepreneurialism in the formation of new social positions.

The paradox of increasing social inequality together with new possibilities draws attention to the relationship between individual agency, the structuring of resources available to the individual, and wider social processes. To examine the micro-processes that contribute to the diverse biographical projects of social production and reinvention in which young people engage, we have adopted a longitudinal, qualitative approach. We follow young people through the transition to adulthood, collecting, comparing and interpreting their changing accounts of adulthood over time. A number of other researchers have adopted a similar methodological approach of 'walking alongside' young people (Neale, 2002), (for example Ball et al. 2000, McLeod 2000a, Du Bois Reymond 1998). Others have engaged with these questions through intergenerational studies (Bjerrum Nieslen 2000, Brannen work in progress), by following up earlier samples (Walkerdine et al. 2001) and by engaging adults in retrospective biography (Drancourt described in Bertaux and Thompson 1997). In exploring these questions we are charting new methodological and theoretical terrain and as part of our study we have engaged in on-going dialogue with other scholars to realise the methodological potential of the study.

2.2 Objectives

The aims and objectives of the research remain as originally stated. Each has been met although analysis and interpretation of the data.

- 1. Building on the Youth Values study, to document young people's accounts of their own transitions to adulthood over a five year period, in five contrasting locations of England and Northern Ireland.**

We have held together a diverse sample of young people over five years, generating a rich and unique body of data which documents young people's lives and understandings of themselves over time. We have managed this dynamic data set (transcribing, coding and analysing each round of data before the next arrives), grappling with the lack of analytic closure characteristic of longitudinal investigations. Our decision to conduct our analysis on a labour intensive ongoing basis has enabled us to realise some of the more exciting methodological dimensions of the data set. We have succeeded in securing two further rounds of data collection with this sample as part of the Families and Social Capital ESRC Research Group based at South Bank University.

- 2. To identify 'critical moments' in the construction of adult identities and how these may be implicated in processes of social inclusion and exclusion by both opening or closing pathways to further imaginative opportunity**

Young people and researchers identified critical moments in their transitions at each interview, and these have been collected, sorted, mapped, compared, theorised and reflected on in the light of further data. We have distinguished between critical moments as 'narrative devices' and 'fateful moments' as theoretical constructs (see Thomson et al. 2002a¹). We have also reflected on this data and our initial analysis in the light of two more rounds of data collection (See Thomson and Plumridge 2003 forthcoming)

- 3. To explore the relationship between social structured opportunities (e.g. social class, locality, gender, 'race' and family support), the contingencies of individual biography, and broader social processes of individualisation and globalisation.**

Our data set is ideally suited to the exploration of these questions, being both comparative and longitudinal. Bertaux and Thompson (1997: 12) suggest that the comparative case study is the closest that the social sciences are able to get to the natural science 'experiment'. The explanatory power of such an approach is extended through a longitudinal design. Several forms of comparative analysis have been undertaken, for example comparisons *between locations* (Thomson, 2000); *within a single locality* (Thomson et al. 2002b²); *across localities* (Thomson and Holland forthcoming) and *over time* (Henderson et al. 2002 forthcoming, McGrellis 2001). In each of these papers we have focussed on the relationship between the individual biography and socially structuring factors, locating our discussions within wider theoretical debates about individualisation, detraditionalisation and globalisation.

- 4. To produce new bodies of data in all these areas and to develop theory and contribute to knowledge in relation to: agency and the 'reflexive project of self'; values and the construction of adult identity; the impact of globalisation on the individual.**

The wide ranging/holistic nature of our interviews has meant that we have developed new bodies of data in many areas of young people's lives (for example: education,

¹ Nominated publication.

² Nominated publication.

work, domestic, consumption, relationships, intimacy, travel/mobility) – not all of which we originally intended to explore. For example we found that our fieldwork coincided with historic developments in the mobile phone market (Henderson et al. 2002 forthcoming) as well as in the Northern Irish peace process (McGrellis 2001). We have been using the data to develop theoretical work in a number of areas:

Theorising tensions between social change, social reproduction and reinvention:

Our data suggests a more complex relationship between the individual, the networks and resources available to them and socially structured constraints and opportunities, than offered by the conceptual frameworks of individualization and detraditionalisation. We have pointed to the gendered character of individualisation, the heteronormativity of imagined adulthoods, and sought to explain the surprising absence of alternative models of the sequencing of adulthood, and challenges to normative understandings of ‘success’, ‘competence’ and ‘social inclusion’.

Theorising the subject in process/the reflexive project of self:

The longitudinal and qualitative character of our data has led us to theorise the subject-in-process. We have explored the potential for operationalizing aspects of Giddens (1991) theoretical model of the ‘reflexive project of self’ and associated concepts (for example fateful moments), as well as alternatives such as ‘habitus in time’ (McLeod 2000 following Bourdieu) and the ‘magic writing pad’ (Bjerrum Nielsen 1996 following Freud). In doing so we are developing an empirically grounded critique (Thomson and Plumridge 2002) as well as offering alternative conceptualisations based on a more grounded theory – in particular a dynamic model of ‘investment’ based on the experience and recognition of competence which assumes a more constrained and situated understanding of agency (Thomson 2002).

The dynamic relationship between locality and global identities and resources:

Our data has drawn attention to the importance of ‘global’ resources and identities to processes of social and geographical mobility. Young people are situated differently to the local and global culture in different research sites. Resources such as global forms of youth culture (house music and associated club and drugs cultures, gay culture, youth subcultures such as skaters’ and ‘goths’) draw young people into identities and practices that transcend and potentially transform localities and facilitate mobility of many kinds. Only a relatively small minority of young people are involved in such activities, the majority engage with popular and consumer culture in ways that tie them back into local relationships and identities (Henderson forthcoming, Henderson et al. 2002). Ethnic resources can also operate as conduits for social and geographic mobility, and there is significant interplay between diasporic and global cultures. The extent to which young people are tied into their localities has great biographical significance and appears to be an important dimension of social inclusion and exclusion. From our data it is apparent that physical mobility may be a prerequisite for social mobility and social reinvention (Hannerz 1996, Bauman 2000).

5. To develop innovative methods to capture young people’s changing values, evolving stories of adulthood, and their reflections on processes of transition.

We have made a significant contribution to the development of longitudinal qualitative research methods, devising new strategies for data collection and analysis, and identifying and bringing together others working in this field. The applicants organised a seminar at South Bank University in April 2002, which drew together an international group of researchers who are currently developing these methods. Papers presented at the seminar will be published in a special issue of *the International Journal of Social Science Methodology: Theory and Practice* in 2003, edited by the applicants.

The longitudinal character of the study has demanded innovation in many areas, including:

- a research design which privileges *continuity* in the research relationship and *locality* as a dimension of analysis
- A three pronged strategy of data analysis in which the data set is analysed (a) cross sectionally at each wave of data collection, (b) at the level of location and (c) at the level of the individual over time (narratively).

Many aspects of our data collection methods have been innovative including the development of the 'Memory Book' and the repeat use of 'lifelines' within interviews. For further discussion of all these see 'Methods' below and Appendix 1.

2.3 Methods

The research design

The Inventing Adulthoods study is a longitudinal qualitative study, building on an existing sample of young people involved in the Youth Values project, also funded by the ESRC (L129251020). Over the two studies young people were followed for five years between 11-19 to 16-24. Both studies draw attention to the significance of locality in shaping young people's values and transitions to adulthood, representing five contrasting localities in the UK: inner city London; a home counties commuter town; a deprived housing estate in the Northwest; an isolated rural village and contrasting communities within an Northern Irish city.

The study documents processes in the transition to adulthood in real time through young people's own narratives, employing diary methods and individual interviews at nine monthly intervals. A 'devolved research design' was employed, in which individual researchers took responsibility for fieldwork and locality based analysis in specific research areas. This helped to strengthen research relationships, minimise attrition and facilitate local understanding. Researchers met regularly to compare emergent findings, share learning/ support and to encourage consistency in approach. Data were transcribed, coded and subject to cross-site analysis centrally.

The sample

The initial sample, drawn from the volunteer sample in the Youth Values study, consisted of 118 young people, with up to 20 in each research site, and 40 in the larger Northern Irish site. By the third round of interviews we had an interview sample of 83 (See Appendix 1 for details of the sample and attrition).

Wave	Youth Values	FF 1 ³	FF 2	FF 3
Date	1996* - 1999	April – Sept 1999	Feb – July 2000	Dec 2000 – June 2001
Age of sample	* 11-19	14 - 22	15 - 23	16-24
Total sample		120	98	83

Each fieldworker took responsibility for a particular research location and group of young people. Researchers maintained telephone contact with participants between interviews, arranged interviews and kept up to date records of contact details. Regular mailings were sent to all research participants by the central research administrator. These included: information

³ The informal title of the study (used within the team and in all our communications with research participants) was 'Fast Forward'. The different waves of field work are referred to as ff1, ff2, ff3

about the study; a consultation on expectations about the research and research methods to be employed; Christmas cards; regular newsletters; competitions; and the development of an interactive web-site.

The methods employed in the study were interviews, focus groups, memory books, lifelines and questionnaires. Appendix 1 gives details of these methods.

The interviews

Each participant was interviewed three times, usually by the same researcher, who was at each round responsible for between 30 and 40 interviews. Interviews were guided by a schedule designed to meet several objectives. These included: generating data relevant to our research questions; facilitating comparison between interviews; catching up on the period between interviews; recognising the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the interviewee; and enabling comparability between our study and that undertaken by our Finnish collaborators. Interviews became progressively longer as young people became increasingly confident in guiding the course of the conversation, and this could create tensions between the schedule and the story the young person wanted to tell. (See Appendix 1 for interview schedules.)

Focus groups

We undertook four emergent focus groups towards the end of the study, two in London and two in Northern Ireland bringing together young people from different research sites. These were highly productive and valued by the young people. They were very resource intensive and difficult to organise. We had planned more focus groups at an earlier stage, but since attrition was less than originally anticipated, reallocated resources into interviews.

Memory books

One of the methodological innovations of the study was the use of **Memory Books**. The method builds on the theory and practice of 'memory work' (Crawford *et al.* 1992); the use of photographic albums in oral history/cultural studies (Spence and Holland 1991); the use of photographs in autobiographical work with young people (Cohen 1989; Towers 1986); and methods employed in child therapy (Jones 1985; Harper 1996; Barnardos 1992). We invited young people to include material they saw as relevant to their current and future identities and records of their experiences in whatever form they saw as appropriate. We hoped that the books would represent examples of the 'reflexive project of self'. When completed (N=49) the books were used as a basis for second round interviews. (For details see Appendix 1)

Lifelines

One of our main interests in the study was to explore and understand how young people project themselves into the future through planning, aspirations and imagination. To this end we constructed the lifelines as a research tool introduced in the later part of the first interview and revisited at the third. The lifelines included a number of discrete elements (home/housing, education, work, relationships, travel and values) and interviewees were invited to predict their situations in terms of these elements in three years time, at the age of 25 and the age of 35. The discussion, which arose from the lifelines, was part of the interview and was recorded, transcribed and coded in the normal way. (See also Appendix 1.)

Questionnaires

All of those drawn from the original Youth Values study (N = 108) had completed a values questionnaire in 1997. We planned to repeat this questionnaire twice in *Inventing Adulthood*

and they were distributed at the first interview, 80 being returned. After the third interview questionnaires were sent by post, and only 20 have been returned to date. We draw on questionnaire data as a source of information on individuals, rather than seeking to make generalisations over the sample.

Methods of analysis

The complexity of the interview data set has demanded a number of complementary strategies for analysis. Polkinghorne (1995) has distinguished between the analysis of narratives and narrative analysis. In this study we have employed both approaches (see Thomson and Holland 2002).

Narrative analysis of individual cases over time and within localities:

In order to capture the narrative character of individual interviews and changes in these narratives over time, the interviewers conducted a 'narrative analysis'. This captures processual features of the narrative (for example: narrative style, pacing/structure, subject positions taken, audience, absences and formal elements of the structure) as well as substantive content (for example: conceptual categories such as agency, linked lives, time and place, timing (Giele and Elder 1996)). Researchers also recorded their personal reflections on the interview and their hopes, fears and predictions for each young person at each round.

A 'summary narrative analysis' for each location was produced from the narrative analyses at each round, identifying local themes in young people's accounts. After the third interview, researchers drew together the three narrative analyses for each young person to produce a 'case profile' tracing their narrative over time.

Analysis of narratives across the sample

Each round of interview data was transcribed. The first and second rounds of data were coded descriptively and conceptually using NUD.IST and subject to a crosscut analysis. A comprehensive analysis of the key coding categories of the first round of interview data was completed, resulting in an unpublished report used internally by the team, to inform papers. The second and third rounds of data have been coded and stored on NUD.IST and are subject to ongoing cross-cut analysis.

Memory book, lifeline and questionnaire data have been analysed in their own right as well as being integrated into individual case profiles.

Interpretation and understanding

The conceptualising of youth transitions has been conceived primarily in terms of typologies. Examples are life concepts (Du Bois Reymond et al. 1998), biographies (Furlong and Cartmel 1997), orientations to time (Brannen et al. 2001), to adulthood (EGRIS 2001), to education (Ball et al. 2000) and different pathways (Bynner et al. 1997). While we have found these typologies useful, we have been loathe to reduce the complexity of the young people's accounts, wishing to point towards the dynamic interplay between the individual, the resources available to them and the structuring effects of time, locality, class, gender etc. We have sought to reduce our data in a way that preserves a sense of 'understanding' of the particular social location of the individual and their responses to it – In Bourdieu's words:

Sociologists cannot be unaware that the specific characteristic of their point of view is to be a point of view on a point of view. (...) It is solely to the extent that they can objectify themselves that they are able, even as they remain in the place inexorably assigned to each of us in the social world, to imagine themselves in the place occupied by their objects (...) and thus to take their

point of view, that is, to understand that if they were in their shoes they would doubtless be and think like them.’ (1999: 626)

To illustrate our findings here we use extracts from case profiles.

2.4 Results

The research questions:

- 1. What accounts do young people in five different locations in the UK give of their own transition to adulthood?**
- 2. What are the material, social and cultural resources available to young men and women growing up in different environments and how do they affect their life trajectories?**
3. Can ‘critical moments’ in the construction of adulthood be identified and if so what part do they play in processes of social inclusion and exclusion?
4. What is the relationship between socially structured opportunities, the contingencies of individual biographies and broader social processes of individualisation and globalisation?

These research questions are closely interconnected. Rather than dealing with each research question in turn, in presenting our main findings we will provide an overview of our theoretical approach to the central relationship between the individual, resources, structures and wider social processes, consider how young people construct adulthood and the part played by ‘critical moments’ in this process.

From the individual to the social and back again:

At the heart of this study is a theoretical and empirical investigation of the dynamic relationship between the individual and the social. Figure 1 suggests the dimensions of this relationship, and lists some of the categories we have generated from our data and our theoretical models. Our ongoing theoretical project is to develop an understanding of the interrelationships within and across these categories, but at the moment this understanding is incipient. This discussion relates directly to research questions (2) and (4).

Figure 1

INDIVIDUAL	MEDIATING RESOURCES AND MECHANISMS	STRUCTURING DIMENSIONS	WIDER SOCIAL PROCESSES
Identities	Habitus/ logics of practice	Time and timing	Individualisation
Investments and competence	Parenting styles	Experience	Globalisation
Tactics, Strategies and Methodologies	Exemplars: people, local	Social class	Heteronormativity
		Locality	

	narratives Reputations Experiences Forms of capital: economic, social, cultural, symbolic	Gender Sexuality Ethnicity Disability	
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The individual:

Identity: At each wave of research we encounter the individual and the identities that they are forging in different arenas of their lives. In many cases young people operated simultaneously with a range of different identities formed within the different fields of their social world: education, work, leisure and the domestic. There may be consistencies between identities in different fields and/or contradictions. For example it is possible to be simultaneously a ‘bad student’ within education, a ‘trusted worker’ within the field of part time work, a ‘little mother’ within the domestic and a ‘child’ within leisure.

Competence: The extent to which young people make investments in these different fields at any one time can be understood through the extent to which they experience themselves and are recognised as competent (see construction of adulthood model in Appendix 2).

Strategies, tactics and methodologies: Skeggs (1997) and others draw on De Certeau's (1984) distinction between strategies and tactics. Strategies, he suggests, are informed by power, even if the connection is implicit or concealed. The presence of power is manifest through the strategic orientation to time and space, so a strategy has a starting point and a destination and can be understood as a plan that imposes itself on a social space. In contrast, a tactic is determined by the absence of power, and is shaped by constraint rather than possibility. Tactics are the tools of the powerless, and while they may exhibit agency and invention, they are ultimately contained. ‘Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into “opportunities”’ (De Certeau 1984: xix). The investments that young people make in particular identities have implications for the *strategies* and *tactics* that they subsequently employ, which themselves have consequences for the kinds of identities that are available to them. Such strategies and tactics are themselves socially structured, and have important implications for processes of social inclusion and exclusion. But there is always room for disruption and change in these processes depending on changing circumstances, experiences, resources and configurations.

Mediating resources and mechanisms

The kinds of identities that young people invest in and the forms of strategies and tactics they engage with are in large part dependent on the resources on which they are able to draw. While these resources are highly structured, there is no clear line between the individual and the social in their deployment. Concepts such as ‘habitus’ have been employed in order to capture the location of the individual within social relations in a way that avoids reducing either to the determination of the other (Bourdieu 1977). The family is perhaps the most important site of resources for young people, and economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital are transmitted through parenting practices, practical support, social networks, aspirations etc (Bell 2001a/b). These resources are likely to facilitate social reproduction. Attempts at achieving social mobility require young people to renegotiate the resources with which they are faced. This may entail rejecting the forms of adulthood they see around them, disentangling themselves from the values of their family and wider community, and propelling themselves into uncharted territory (Ball et al. 2000). The strategies and tactics demanded by projects of social reproduction and social mobility may be quite different and are subject to policing through conservative mechanisms such as the creation and

maintenance of reputations (Holland et al. 1996, Mistral 2000). As Bertaux and Thompson note: 'Most people take the structure they see as given and circulate within it, filling a space; but a significant minority contribute to the momentum of change by either creating new spaces within the old structures or by moving on' (1997: 23)

Structuring dimensions

There are many dimensions through which young people's accounts of adulthood are structured, which intersect within individual biographies in particular ways. Social class is perhaps the most compelling, yet our sample enables us to observe important differences between young people from similar class backgrounds. To a certain extent, these differences can be accounted for by the particularities of locality - for example, there are important differences between growing up middle class in Northern Ireland and in the Home Counties. These differences are underwritten by material differences (such as transport infrastructures, local labour markets), and cultural differences (homogeneity, diversity, mobility). Yet within localities we also find important differences that may be related to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, family formation and experience. Some of these differences cut across locality, although gender, ethnicity, sexuality and disability are structured in local terms. Whether young people are able to access more global models of relevant identities and their responses to them, is one of the central questions of their own particular biographies.

Through the longitudinal method it is possible to see how time and timing structure the configuration of resources. Over time new opportunities and constraints emerged, structured by the temporal flow of the life course through factors such as physical maturation, the ageing of others, leaving school, access to age related rights and responsibilities. Timing also has a structuring role where a given set of resources are reconfigured in changing circumstances, making available different identities, tactics and strategies.

Wider Social process

Individual and collective biographies are played out against the backdrop of wider social processes, and have, in turn, a constitutive part to play in these. Processes of globalisation are particularly evident in shaping the cultural resources available to young people. The way in which they access these resources and what they do with them has consequences for processes of globalisation as well as for individual biographies. This can be seen clearly in terms of young people's engagement with youth cultures that circulate globally, yet which are articulated locally (Henderson under review, Henderson et al. 2002 forthcoming). Processes that have been described through the concept 'individualisation' are changing the relationship between the individual and social structure, yet the consequences of these processes are manifested in many different ways. It is possible to distinguish between individualised *cultures*, associated with particular forms of social, cultural and symbolic capital, and individualised *conditions*, associated primarily with material conditions, the presence of risk and the absence of structures of support. Paradoxically, those with the mostly highly individualised cultures may experience the least individualised conditions.

Inventing adulthood? The socially located subject in process

This discussion relates directly to research questions (1) and (3). We have approached the questions of how young people construct adulthood in a number of complementary ways including:

- Exploring how young people anticipate their own future, using a lifeline (see Thomson and Holland 2001).
- Asking young people to reflect on the extent to which they feel adult in different areas of their lives.

- Tracking changes in young people's accounts of adulthood over the three interviews and relating these to their unfolding biographies
- Comparing accounts of adulthood across the sample.

Looking across the sample:

By comparing accounts of adulthood across the sample, we have been struck by the centrality of locality in shaping young people's orientation to adulthood as well as the variations in the 'embeddedness' of young people within their localities. The model of extended dependency demanded by participation in further and higher education was often in tension with local models of adulthood, particularly in working class communities, even where the conditions for these adult identities have largely disappeared (Thomson, Henderson and Holland 2002). The following extract from a case profile provides a strong sense of the way in which locality frames the meanings of adulthood for young people, and the contingent nature of this embeddedness.

Cheryl framed her life, initially, in the same picture as the adult world around her. She subscribed to the political and social mores available, and promoted in her community. She had no reason to question or confront these. She accepted and conformed to the rules of her tight knit community. She toyed with the idea of moving out through education but was never sure where she wanted to go or what she wanted to do - there were few local alternative adulthoods to model on. Instead she worked on what she saw and knew - the part-time job, house, home and kids, husband out working. While she gave up on education as a route out and opted for a full-time local job. By her third interview she was drawing on other accounts of adulthood. She had been exposed to alternative paths, or to people on other pathways, from other backgrounds and was using this as a way out. She had moved into a more flexible, broader world, where she might train and work, go to university at some time in the future, travel at some point and generally build up life experiences. How long she will be able to sustain this life or idea is questionable, depends very much on how things work out for her in the immediate future [case profile: RQ: adulthood 409128]

By looking across the sample we found that although many of the markers of adulthood are fragmented and contested, parenthood and an independent 'home' appear to be at the centre of most young people's understandings of adulthood. We found little evidence of reinvention or resequencing, or that detraditionalised models of adulthood have gained moral legitimacy (Thomson and Holland 2002). But we did find that some of the markers traditionally associated with adulthood (such as sexual activity, drinking, drug taking, mobility, consumption) were being reworked as markers of youth (Henderson under review, Thomson 2001). Where young people were caught in an extended economic dependence on parents they were more likely to invest in consumption and lifestyle based 'youth' identities. Where they had embarked directly into the world of work from school they tended to invest in more traditional aspects of adult identity. We illustrate this with extracts from case profiles of two young people, Jimmy and Tara

Jimmy's version of adulthood revolves around being in a particular clique of grunge rock lovers - it's all about trusting close friends, a 'them and us' mentality, being different, and takes place in houses, rooms, garages - playing music, pool, smoking a bit of dope. Education and employment careers seem to take a back seat compared to friendships and social life - that's what really seems to be driving him over these 3 interviews. No real sense of longer term planning, apart from what comes out in lifeline, but he's fairly consistent that he wants to get away from the area. [extract from case profile - Jimmy 408097]

Tara's idea and experience of adulthood has been one of increasing pressure, stress and responsibility over time. She entered the part time job market at 17, the permanent market at 18, and continues, despite herself, to look to education for opportunities to further or define her adult pathway. Her position as eldest daughter still at home is central to how she has taken on adulthood - she has set herself up as a replacement breadwinner and partner for her mother. In her social life she has met a steady boy friend and is looking towards a traditional relationship, living with mum until marriage. She is saving now (although not sure what for) but is buying 'mad adult things'. The accumulation of serious commodities also represents a move towards a certain kind of traditional adulthood - one she sees (but is strongly resisting) as fully fledged in her work place - older gossiping women who shop in sensible adult shops and are concerned about houses and weddings, who have to stay in because they have children to look after and have to at 17 give up their social life [case profile: RQ adulthood 310257]

We found tensions between an individualised model of adulthood in which young people stress feelings of maturity and autonomy and a socialised (relational) model of adulthood in which young people stress responsibilities of care for others. While most young people move between both, there is evidence that these discourses are both classed and gendered with working class young women being particularly tied into socialised models (Thomson 2001). Our data suggest that adulthood can be both gendered and individualised with young people (especially young working-class women) assuming responsibility for economic independence and caring (Thomson and Holland forthcoming).

Not surprisingly young people expressed ambivalent orientations towards adulthood. A significant proportion sought to delay adulthood associating it with onerous responsibility. Others saw themselves as having accelerated passages to adulthood, and this could be a source of pride, grievance or both. The extent of parental support as well as the impact of experiences such as bereavement, caring responsibilities, parental conflict etc. was significant in shaping these orientations.

By looking across at individuals across time

Young people are likely to have different levels of responsibility and autonomy in different areas of their lives (education, work, domestic, leisure). The extent to which they invest in different aspects of adult identity is both a response to the recognition of their competence in these arenas and a response to their perceived incompetence in other areas. For example a young person who experiences themselves as incompetent in education is more likely to invest in a adult identity within a romantic relationship, work, consumption or in alternative leisure or criminal careers (Thomson 2001, 2002, see also MacDonald and Marsh 2001, Jones and Martin 1999). This process of '*competence – recognition - investment*' can make sense of the choices that young people make, without reducing these either to individual psychology or to the determination of social structures. We have developed a model of the construction of adulthood that reflects the importance of the different areas of young people's lives at any one time, and have suggested that this kind of biographical approach may have value in the exploration of citizenship (see Appendix 2).

Social structures manifest themselves within individual biographies in term of events, experiences and responses. We approached our data with the express intention of identifying 'critical moments' in the construction of adulthood. Such moments may be institutionally defined – for example leaving school can be understood as a critical

moment of transition that is experienced collectively or individually defined (for example accounts of emotional crises) and may be more or less in the control of the individual concerned. We have plotted such moments on a choice/fate continuum, suggesting that the distribution of critical moments may reflect the uneven distribution of risk in the lives of young people. In analysing our data we have come to recognise that ‘critical moments’ themselves are important narrative devices, and in comparing accounts over time we have been able to distinguish between these and accounts of events that endure over time as having biographical significance. Again this has drawn our attention to the centrality of both timing and resources, finding that what seem to be very similar events in young people’s lives may give rise to very different consequences. For example, two young people in our sample lost one of their parents during the course of the study. While this was the dominant critical moment of both of their lives, the consequences for each differed dramatically. One young man went into a downward spiral of family conflict, educational failure, drinking, and fighting while the other was drawn into more equal relationships with adults through the bereavement process and was able to maintain his educational progress.

We have explored the relationship between critical moments and young people’s responses to them through the conceptual frame of the ‘fateful moment’ (Giddens 1991) (see Thomson et al. 2002a) as well as reflecting critically on our initial interpretations in the light of more rounds of data (Thomson and Plumridge 2002).

Conclusion:

The research has significant applications in areas of methodology, theory and policy/practice (for example, policy applications to date in areas of citizenship education, work experience, careers advice and mentoring, educational support). The data collection, analysis and interpretation are ongoing and we anticipate that we will increasingly focus on issues of leaving home, the establishment of couple relationships, the transition to full time employment and in some cases parenthood.

Activities

This study has benefited from a large research team, each with particular areas of expertise and interest. Individual team members have specialised in different areas of analysis and have engaged in dissemination through specialist networks. For example: Sheila Henderson has taken a lead on analysis and dissemination in areas of consumption including drugs, alcohol and youth culture; Sheena McGrellis on analysis and dissemination of the Northern Irish data set focussing on issues of sectarianism, national identity and violence; Robert Bell on analysis and dissemination in the area of work, work experience and post 16 education; Rachel Thomson and Sue Sharpe on analysis and dissemination in areas of gender, sexuality and violence and Rachel Thomson and Janet Holland on the development of theory and dissemination to academic audiences.

The team has disseminated the research through a number of *networks*:

ESRC supported: Including the Youth Citizenship and Social Change Programme (contributing to 2 seminars on Citizenship and Education/ Work transitions), contributions to the ESRC programme on violence and to two ESRC funded seminar series: ‘Interdisciplinary Youth Research: New Approaches’, and ‘Sexuality, Representation and Lived Experience’.

British Sociological Association supported: Including annual BSA conferences and conferences and events organised by the BSA Youth Studies group.

International Research Networks: Including an ongoing collaboration with Finnish and Latin American colleagues (2 joint papers and one translation); participation at NYRIS 2000 and ESA 2001, and a Council of Europe Initiative for young social scientists.

Through an ongoing partnership with the National Children's Bureau – including collaborations with the Sex Education Forum (presentation and 2 publications), the Children and Violence Forum (presentation and publication in production) and planned work with the Drugs Education Forum.

Methodological: Over the period of the study the team has brought together a group of researchers engaging in longitudinal qualitative methods, facilitated by a Research Fellowship that Rachel Thomson had in Australia and New Zealand in Sept. 2001. This has resulted in a research network, a seminar held in April 2002 and a journal special issue to be published in 2003.

Over the period of the study member of the team have presented aspects of the research at five national and six international *conferences* and 18 seminars/workshops in the UK and abroad (see Appendix 3).

Outputs

A list of outputs is attached in Appendix 3. Here we wish to highlight particular areas of activity and planned publications:

Methodology: Special Issue of the *International Journal of Social Science Research Methodology: Theory and Practice* on longitudinal qualitative methods 2003, the research network drawn together through the seminar are also planning to submit a proposal to the ESRC for a seminar series on the themes of 'researching time, memory and social change'. Our methods have been taken up by a network of youth researchers in Latin America as a result of a study visit by Jose Fernando Sernao Amaya to South Bank University in 2001/2. Rachel Thomson will be contributing to a doctoral training programme on 'Researching time and social change through biographical methods' at the University of Bergen in Sept 2002. Priorities for future publications include a paper on the Memory book methodology.

Policy publications: The research team has an ongoing partnership with the National Children's Bureau Children and Young People's Personal Development Unit. Collaborations to date include a curriculum resource based on the Youth Values Research (In production), a policy publications on young people's views of marriage and divorce (Sharpe 2001), sexuality and violence (both work in progress) and drugs (in initial planning stage). These collaborations have entailed presenting research to policy makers and practitioners who then develop policy and practice recommendations from these. The outputs have been published, marketed and disseminated by the National Children's Bureau. Sheena McGrellis has engaged in active dissemination of findings with relevant policy and practice bodies in Northern Ireland and Sheila Henderson with drugs policy audiences.

Substantive academic outputs: The team has been involved in intensive academic dissemination (see publication list and conference list). Papers currently planned include work on: national identity (2 papers currently in development, one based on 'Inventing Adulthoods' data and one a collaboration with Finnish colleagues) and the

relationship between physical and social mobility ('Cosmopolitans and locals'). The team are developing a book proposal based on the study, however we are keen to include at least one of the further two rounds of data collection that are planned in the analysis that will form the basis of the book.

Impacts:

In our view the impact of this study will increase over time, as we are able to realise the full potential of the longitudinal method. We are already gaining insights that would have been impossible through other methodologies, and we expect these to be amplified and enriched through further rounds of data collection.

We have established relationships with policy makers in a range of fields and will continue to disseminate the ongoing results of the study to them over time. In addition our data set is a resource for policy makers who may wish to develop questions that can be asked of the data through a form of 'secondary analysis'. We have already begun to develop this approach with the National Children's Bureau who have funded a number of specialist analyses and reports of policy/ practice questions. The team also has a relationship with the private sector through ongoing collaborations between Rachel Thomson and Unilever Research, which request occasional briefings drawing on the data set.

The research is already having an impact on social science methodologies pioneering the use of longitudinal qualitative methods.

Future research priorities:

We have been successful in securing two more rounds of data collection with this sample through the Family and Social Capital ESRC Research Group based at South Bank University. This funding will enable us to continue our ongoing analysis of the data set. We will be seeking additional funding to conduct specialist secondary analyses of the data set for organisations with special interests in particular aspects of the data set.

2.7 Ethics

Being involved in such an intense longitudinal study is an 'extraordinary' experience for the young people and the researchers alike. From the outset we have recognised that the research will inevitably be an intervention into young people's lives and have sought to attend to the quality of the research relationship, ensuring that participation is a positive experience for young people and that their consent to be involved is renegotiated over time. This has involved a devolved research design and frequent consultation with the sample about methods and their interests in the study. We have communicated regularly with our sample, involving them in an interactive web site (<http://www.sbu.ac.uk/fhss/ff/>), in competitions and sending them regular newsletters and research summaries. The use of the memory book method has raised a number of ethical issues concerning ownership of data. The guidance to participants is included at the end of Appendix 1. In the presentation of data we faced practical and ethical

problems in balancing the need for in-depth in case study material with the young people's rights to confidentiality and anonymity. We have sought to monitor the effects of the research on the lives that we seek to research by inviting young people to reflect on the impact of the study at each interview. After some deliberation we have decided to offer young people copies of their tapes at our next meeting, so that we can take responsibility for the impact of this material during the life of the study. Longitudinal qualitative research raises very particular ethical questions, shedding new light on the research relationship. We are seeking to understand these issues and to develop positive ethical practices in consultation with other colleagues using the method.

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APPENDIX 1 - Methods and Sample

Sample

The Inventing Adulthood study drew on the volunteer sample from the Youth Values study. The Youth Values study was based on a questionnaire sample of approximately 1800 young people aged 11-16 attending one of the 8 study schools, located in 5 contrasting social locations. In each school between 200-300 young people in mixed ability tutor groups completed the questionnaire. In this questionnaire young people were invited to volunteer to participate in focus groups and individual interviews. Selections for focus group participants were made on the basis of representativeness of key demographic characteristics (e.g. ethnicity, age, gender, social class) as well as a consideration of group dynamics. Selections were made from the focus group sample for young people to participate in individual interviews on the basis of a number of criteria including the identification of those that the researchers and others (including teachers and pupils) identified as 'leaders', as well as a range of others including young people who were quiet in focus groups and those who were seen to have particularly unique experiences. Additional groups of young people were included in the study, such as those excluded from school, young offenders, young people in care and young people attending a lesbian and gay youth group some of whom were older than the school sample.

In order to identify a target sample of 100 for the Inventing Adulthood study, a letter was sent to a list of 152 young people from the eight schools and additional groups. This list included all the original focus group and individual interviewees in the requisite age group (years 9-11), as well as a number of volunteers who had not been selected for the second stage of fieldwork in the Youth Values study who were in the requisite age group. In addition a smaller number of focus group participants who were outside the target age were also invited to participate. Of the 152 who were invited to become part of the study 140 expressed interest and 108 took part. In addition 12 young people were brought into the study, who had not been in contact with the research previously, but who were located in the relevant institutions in the study locations. The sample at the first round of interviews (ff1⁴) was composed as follows

Location	School year and age group						Sex		Ethnicity				Soc Class	
	Yr 7 (14-15)	Yr 8 (15-16)	Yr 9 (16-17)	Yr 10 (17-18)	Yr 11 (18-19)	Yr 14 (21-22)	m	f	esw	A/ ac	a	me d	mc	wc
NI (protestant)	1	3	2	6	2	-	6	8	14	-	-	-	5	10
NI (Catholic)	1	6	8	4	3	-	8	14	22	-	-	-	9	12
<i>NI (other relig)</i>	-	-	1	2	-	-	3	-	1	-	2	-	2	1
<i>NW estate</i>	5	4	1	9	1	-	10	10	20	-	-	-	5	15
<i>Inner city</i>	1	3	5	5	-	-	5	9	3	6	4	1	2	12
<i>Home counties</i>	4	3	2	6	5	-	9	11	18	-	-	2	18	2
<i>Rural village</i>	3	8	6	-	1	-	8	10	18	-	-	-	11	7
<i>PRU / marginal</i>	-	2	-	3	-	-	5	-	2	1	2	-	-	5
Leaving care	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1
Lesbian and gay	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	-	3	-	-	-	-	3
TOTALS	15	29	25	35	14	3	57	63	102	7	8	3	52	68
Overall total														120

⁴ The informal title of the study (used within the team and in all our communications with research participants) was 'Fast Forward'. The different waves of field work are referred to as ff1, ff2, ff3.

Inventing adulthood sample at first round of interviews April 1999

Attrition amongst FF sample

	FF1	details	FF2	details	FF3
Northern Ireland	39	lost 8	31	<i>Picked up 1 of the 8 lost at FF2, but lost 4 more</i>	28
NW estate	20	lost 3	17	Lost 6 more	11
Inner city	14	lost 2	12	-	12
Home counties	20	lost 1	19	lost 1 more	18
Rural village	18	lost 3	15	<i>Picked up 2 of the 3 lost at FF2, but lost 5 more</i>	12
Extra Groups	7 (+ 2 added at FF2)	lost 3	4	Lost 1, Still to interview 5	2
totals	120	Lost 20	98	Lost 19, picked up 3, still to interview 5	83

Attrition Details

Age and Gender profile of those lost - (excluding those we still aim to interview)

	Lost by FF2	Lost by FF3	Total lost
Year 7	1m	3f	1m, 3f
Year 8		1m, 1f	1m, 1f
Year 9	2m, 2f	2m, 1f	4m, 3f
Year 10	4m, 2f	2m, 7f	6m, 9f
Year 11	3m	1f	3m, 1f

Reasons given by young people for withdrawing from the study included being too busy and lack of interest. Factors contributing to attrition included age (when they left school young people were more difficult to contact and much more busy), mobility (moving house/country) and marginality.

Methods

The interview schedules – summaries

Ff1 April – Sept 1999

Looking back – mapping changes since the last interview in areas of education, work

Leisure, relationships, home life and family, project of self (including critical moments of change), health, welfare and trouble.

Looking forward – here we introduced a formal exercise of the ‘Lifeline’ where young people were invited to predict their lives in 3 years time, at the age of 25 and the age of 35, in the following areas: home/housing; education; work; relationships; travel/moving; values/priorities.

Chances – how they see their opportunities compared to those of friends, others.

Adulthood - meaning, experience, milestones.

Ff2 Feb 2000 – July 2000

At the second wave of interviews some young people had completed ‘Memory Books’ (see below). In these cases a discussion of the book formed the basis of the interview, while also ensuring coverage of any developments in areas of: education, work, leisure, relationships, home and family life, health, welfare and trouble.

Where young people had not completed a ‘Memory Book’ the interview schedule concentrated on mapping changes since the last interview in these key areas. It also included a question about nationality, and further questions on their perceptions of their opportunities with a emphasis on generation.

Ff3 Dec 2000 – June 2001

Looking back

- mapping changes since last interview in key areas: education, work, leisure, relationships, home life and family, health, welfare and trouble.
- Mapping key changes since the research started, critical moments, regrets, role models etc.

The research process - Perceptions of research process, impact

Lifeline – Young people were given their ‘Lifeline’ from ff1 and asked to comment on whether they would complete it in the same way now.

Adulthood - If and how perceptions of adulthood had changed, maturity, independence

Identity - invited to describe themselves in a sentence

At each interview researchers were asked to collect factual details of the following:

Education: Relevant qualifications

Employment: Job, hours, pay

Home life: Family structure, who lives with them, contributions towards keep etc.

Relationship: Status, sexual relationships, pregnancies

Focus groups

In our original research design we planned to use focus groups more extensively, conducting initial location based focus groups at ff1 and then conducting ‘emergent focus groups’ later in the study – bringing together groups of young people from across the study. We decided not to conduct the initial round of location based focus groups for a number of reasons, including: research overload on the part of interviewees and scheduling problems. By building on the Youth Values study we already had rich background information on the research sites. Given that our sample was larger than anticipated, we decided to reallocate resources from focus groups to interviews. Three emergent focus groups were conducted towards the end of the study, one in London and two in Northern Ireland. These groups were highly productive and were valued by those young people who took part. In bringing together young people from different research sites these groups also proved to be very resource intensive and difficult to organise.

The groups employed a method used successfully in the *Youth Values* study, the Values continuum. Here young people would discuss contentious statements and locate themselves

on a continuum from agree to disagree. Topic areas explored in the groups focused on themes that had proved to be more difficult to explore in an interview context (e.g. national identity) as well as areas of common experience among the sample (for example leaving school, leaving home) and areas in which their experiences were markedly different (for example travelling, resources etc.)

Memory books:

We undertook a consultation with the sample group on the kind of approach that we should take to the memory book project. Young people welcomed the idea and indicated their preference for a 'scrap book' format. The research team debated the advantages and disadvantages of having some form of structure for the books, and developed the strategy of providing stickers with trigger words printed on them, which could then be used to structure the book as desired (blank stickers were also provided). We initially piloted the prototypes on ourselves, each producing memory books of differing quality, quantity and character. This helped us to gain a realistic expectation of what young people might produce and helped us to think through how the second round interview might best capture these 'projects'. We also reflected on the ethical dimensions of treating these books as 'data', including questions of ownership and confidentiality. As a result of these discussion detailed instructions were produced for young people guiding them on how to approach the task of the memory book and explaining how we would treat the material they produced. from them. The prototype was then reviewed and the books and guidance were piloted with a small number (4) of young people in the study.

A package including the Memory books and accompanying stickers and glue were distributed to all young people at the end of their first interview. Researchers made periodic contact with the young people in the interim and enquired about progress. Those who had started compiling a book were encouraged to bring it to their second interview. Not all those who made memory books brought their books to the interview. Some sent their books, or copies of them to us at a later date. Others decided not to share them with us. In total 43 young people brought their memory books to their second interview and in these cases the interview was structured around the book, with young people being invited to talk the interviewer through the contents.

For each memory book seen by a researcher a checklist was compiled recording the style and content. Where possible copies were made of memory books, or parts of them. Choices of what to copy were made by the researcher who was guided both by the young person's wishes, resources and their judgement as to the interest of the content. In total checklists were completed for 49 memory books. In terms of age more of the younger people in the sample completed and returned the books and in terms of gender the method proved more popular with young women (37:12). Memory books varied in length from 50 to 3 pages. Some young people had kept their books regularly over the full 9 month period between interviews with weekly or monthly entries. However, most had kept their books in a more haphazard manner. Most had their most intense period at the beginning. For example a few, who were given disposable cameras, tended to take all the pictures on the first few days and then compile a memory book with them. In several cases the approach of the next interview encouraged another period of activity. Holidays also tended to be well covered as these were periods during which young people tended to be 'bored' and had time to devote to their memory books. In one case a young woman kept her book retrospectively, including important events that had taken place before she came into contact with the project. The period over which they had their memory books ran roughly from June 1999 to Spring 2000 so most were marked by the key events of summer holidays, Xmas 1999 and the millennium.

The two dominant forms that influenced young people's use of Memory Books were the written diary and the scrapbook – the former generally followed a temporal trajectory with

entries dated, and including written descriptions of events and feelings. In many cases young people would use the stickers provided with the book in order to structure their entries and in some cases added themes of their own using blank stickers. The scrap book form was also popular. Here young people drew together a range of artefacts including photographs, newspaper cuttings, memorabilia, correspondence, and others cultural artefacts. These would usually be stuck into memory books or organised under themes. In some cases these scrap books would be organised temporally and in others in relation to themes. Many memory books combined elements of both the diary and scrap book styles. Ten young people produced memory books with only writing (and some use of the stickers) and only three used no writing. Some of the styles, as recorded in checklists are as follows: appointment diary, 'Dear diary', show case for writing 'Adrian Mole', autograph book/ school year book, and school project 'all about me'.

A range of material was included in the memory books including the following: print outs of emails, valentine cards, love letters and postcards (including from the research team), a personal testimony (religious conversion), a family tree, autographs, train tickets, exam results, club flyers, stickers, tickets for cultural events, party invites, newspaper cuttings, artwork, poems, entries by friends, lists (of friends, of favourites etc.), pub mats, brochures and a hair extension. In addition many young people included photographs. Some had only photographs, and in couple of cases these were not even stuck into the book. Those who had been given the disposable cameras tended to have taken pictures of all their friends of the first day and stuck them all in. One young woman turned her memory book into a photograph album with captions. Other illustrated their memory books with occasional pictures throughout. Some filled the back of the books with pictures.

Memory books varied in terms of the audience that they seem to have been written for/with in mind. In several cases (known to us) young people declined to share their memory books saying that they were too private. In most cases young people were happy to have their books looked at and copied. Few made any provisions as to areas of content that should be kept confidential. Some of the participants explained that they already kept a personal diary and that they recorded their most personal thoughts in this, noting that their memory books were more public. The tone of the books ranged considerably. In some cases the books were clearly written to the researchers, with explanatory comments and greetings included. In other cases, books seemed to be quite personal, written as a 'conversation with oneself'. In a few cases (3) it seemed that memory books were shared between friends. The memory book of one young woman included entries to her written by friends. Another group of research participants (all friends) spoke to the interviewer about how their memory books compared. One young man used his memory book as a vehicle for his own creative writing, producing what the researcher called an 'Adrian Mole' type account of some 50 pages long, that was witty and 'journalistic'. Although this account took the form of a 'stream of consciousness' in fact the young man explained that he would draft the entries in rough before editing and finally writing the polished version in the book. Yet, perhaps despite intentions, young people found that their memory books gained a life of their own, and that they found the experience of keeping one enjoyable and one that encouraged them to reflect on changes over time.

On the basis of the checklists we were able to undertake a simple analysis of the forms and contents of the books. Copies of individual memory books have been added to individual's files as 'off-line data' and are drawn on in the development of case studies. The discussions that the memory books gave rise to in interviews have been coded and are integrated into the main data set on NUD.IST.

Lifelines

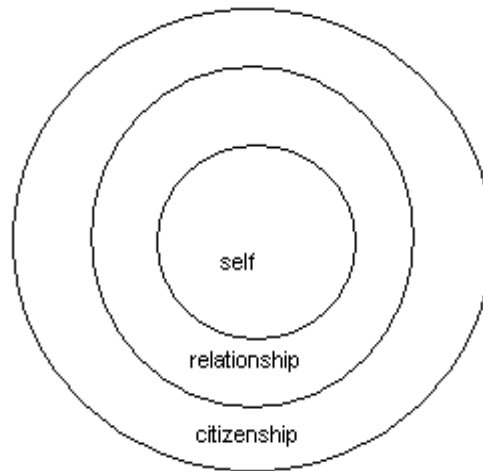
We constructed the lifelines as a research tool introduced in the later part of the part of the first interview. The lifelines included a number of discrete elements (home/ housing,

education, work, relationships, travel and values) and interviewees were invited to predict their situations in terms of these elements in three years time, at the age of 25 and the age of 35. The discussion which arose from the lifelines was part of the interview and was recorded, transcribed and coded in the normal way. In addition, researchers recorded on paper the main features of the discussion on the lifeline as the discussion unfolded. Lifelines were completed for the majority, but not all of the interviewees (112/120). In several cases there was not sufficient time, in a couple the interviewer did not consider it to be appropriate

Our hope for the lifelines were that they would operate as a 'prop' in the interview, supporting discussions of the future in a structured way and giving rise to systematic data that might facilitate some comparison across the sample. In practice, the lifelines were received by researchers and young people in a range of ways. For example, as the extract from the following field note suggests, the lifeline could tap into elements of a young person's identity, otherwise not presented in the interview; it could disrupt the flow of the interview; it could suggest a structure to ideas of the future and it could reveal layered meanings and ambiguities in young people's plans. This 'testing' out of the coherence of plans for the future demanded by the structure of the lifelines could be both positive and uncomfortable for young people who might feel exposed. In terms of analysis, the lifelines presented us with a range of challenges. As qualitative data the lifeline discussions were coded with the rest of the interview material using the same coding scheme, although we have also identified them under as specific lifeline discussions under the relevant elements of home/ housing, education etc. In addition, we have explored the extent to which it is possible to compare lifelines across the sample. For a full discussion of the methodology see Thomson and Holland (forthcoming).

Young people often remarked on the lifelines as interesting, challenging 'making them think' or as fun. Some asked for copies of their lifelines. We returned to the lifeline method in the final (third) round of interviews. Here we presented young people with their original lifeline and asked them to consider whether and how their plans have changed, and whether and how the exercise had had an impact on them.

APPENDIX 2 – The construction of adulthood – a model



In analysing young people's discussions of adulthood we identified a number of interlocking DIMENSIONS in their understanding and experience of autonomy and relationship which we represent them in graphic terms. The first of these can be understood as SELF, here we would expect locate their discussions of the ways in which maturation affects their sense of self, what they talk of in terms of 'personality' and emotions. Encompassing and framing the dimension of self we locate the dimension of RELATIONSHIPS and PRACTICES, within which we would find interactions, negotiations and communication with others. Encompassing and framing both relationships and the self we find the dimension of CITIZENSHIP, within which we locate structural, institutional and legal dimensions that bring the individual in contact with the state and civil society. It is important to recognise that these dimensions exist in dynamic relation to each other. So for example the reciprocal practices of the parenting relationship are central to young people's changing sense of self. Institutional practices and legal definitions impinge on these relationships, being drawn on as imaginative resources as well as having a material impact.

In addition to the identification of Dimensions in young people's constructions of adulthood, we have also identified FIELDS within young people's lives, which can be understood as locations within adult identities can be developed. Relevant FIELDS include the Domestic, Leisure and consumption, Work, and Education. While we have distinguished these fields for analytic purposes, in practice they are permeable and overlap. For example leisure may be a feature of relationships at school, college, work and home. While the basic relationship between dimensions and fields holds for all the young people in the study, each particular case has a different weighting and balance. The size of each field relates primarily to its significance in the construction of identity, rather than to the amount of time spent in each, although there may be a relationship between the two. Through this model it is possible to see a relationship between dependence and independence in different areas of young people's lives. The model represents only a snapshot in time. The balance between competence and recognition in these areas changes over time as a result of changing circumstances, but also importantly as a result of INVESTMENTS made by young people in response to their experiences.

Here we present two contrasting empirical applications of the model. The first from Monique a 17 year old working class young woman living in an inner city location, the second from Edward a 17 year old middle class young man living in the home counties. For a full discussion of these cases see Thomson and Holland (forthcoming) and Thomson (2001).