

# **Youth Values and Transitions to Adulthood: An empirical investigation**

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February 2004  
Published by London South Bank University

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ISBN 1-874418-39-X

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# Youth Values and Transitions to Adulthood: An empirical investigation

Rachel Thomson and Janet Holland

## 1. Introduction

This paper presents findings from two ESRC funded studies, *Youth Values: A study of identity, diversity and social change*, and *Inventing Adulthoods: Young people's strategies for transition*.<sup>1</sup> The two studies have been followed by a third, *Youth Transitions*, currently underway in the Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group at London South Bank University. The three studies form an initially accidental, but latterly very purposive, longitudinal qualitative study<sup>2</sup> following a sample of young people drawn from five different sites in the UK. These sites are an inner city site; an affluent area in a commuter town; a disadvantaged housing estate in the north west; an isolated rural village, and contrasting communities within a Northern Irish city (details in McGrellis et al. 2000). Across the three component studies the major focus for investigation has shifted from values, to adulthood, to social capital, but our concern has always been to investigate: agency and the 'reflexive project of self' (Giddens 1991); values and the construction of adult identity; how the social and material environment in which young people grow up acts to shape the values and identities that they adopt; and the impact of globalisation on the individual.

In the first study we used questionnaires to 1800 young people across the five sites, followed by focus groups and individual interviews with volunteers from the questionnaire sample. In the second, we moved into a more dedicated biographical approach documenting how young people constructed their expected or desired adulthoods. We selected 116 young people across the sites in the first study, and employed a range of methods over a period of two and a half years to investigate their understandings of and strategies for transitions towards adulthood. These included repeat biographical interviews, memory books and lifelines. The third component of the study continues the biographical interviews, and we have just completed a fourth round of interviews with the young people, with a fifth round to follow in 2004. The young people were between 11 and 18 years at the start and are currently 18-26. This paper reviews the aims and objectives of the first and second studies, and reports some of the findings and theoretical insights that have emerged. In addition to the references made in the working paper, a publications list from the three studies is appended, which includes articles and papers that follow up in more detail some of the findings reported here.

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<sup>1</sup> The paper is drawn from the two final reports on the studies.

<sup>2</sup> Details on the three studies are: (1) *Youth Values: A study of identity, diversity and social change*, ESRC funded on the programme *Children 5-16: Growing up in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (L129251020) (McGrellis et al. 2000) ([www.lsbu.ac.uk/fahs/ssrc/youth.shtml](http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/fahs/ssrc/youth.shtml)); (2) *Inventing Adulthoods: Young people's strategies for transition*, ESRC funded on the programme *Youth Citizenship and Social Change* (L134251008) (Thomson, Henderson and Holland 2003) ([www.lsbu.ac.uk/fahs/ff](http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/fahs/ff)); and (3) *Youth Transitions* funded as part of the *Families & Social Capital ESRC Research Group* at London South Bank University (Edwards, Franklin and Holland, 2003; Holland, Weeks and Gillies, 2003) ([www.lsbu.ac.uk/families](http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/families)).

## **2. Youth Values: A study of identity, diversity and social change**

### **Background**

In an essay 'On methods and morals' A H Halsey (1985) observes that a range of disciplines have brought many methods to bear on the definition and explanation of values, only ever developing partial and provisional responses to an infinitely complex term. By keeping an open mind about what we mean by values and how they may be defined we tried to situate this study creatively within a divergent literature in the following way:

#### **Values and social change**

A body of empirical work has documented movement in values in Western cultures over time, identifying a 'culture shift' from material to post material values (Inglehart 1990) and the development of increasingly tolerant and individualistic interpersonal morality (Harding *et al.* 1986, Ashford and Timms 1992). This empirical material lends some support to theoretical studies which point to the progressive decline in the influence of tradition and social institutions in the formation of values, a process variously described as 'detraditionalisation' (Heelas *et al.* 1996), 'individualization' (Beck 1992) and 'disembedding' (Giddens 1991). A belief in the efficacy and value of the self has grown in parallel with this decline (Giddens *op cit.*) with authority increasingly located in the individual, who is responsible for making decisions about what is right and wrong. Commentators have pointed to the emergence of new ethical stories and communities (Weeks 1995, Plummer 1995, Tronto 1993) and warned of rising anxiety. In Bauman's terms the ethical paradox of the postmodern condition is that it 'restores to agents the fullness of moral choice and responsibility while simultaneously depriving them of the comfort that modern self confidence once promised' (Bauman 1992: xxii).

#### **Young people as moral agents**

Influential theorists such as Giddens and Beck point to the erosion of generation as a legitimate marker of authority, but there has been relatively little sociological work that seeks to document or explain the values of children and young people within this context. Such studies as exist are primarily descriptive (Roberts and Sachdev 1996, Francis and Kay 1995) or speculative (Wilkinson and Mulgan 1995). There is a body of psychological literature concerned with documenting and theorising the processes of moral development in children and young people. This work has developed some important insights on the importance of age, gender and the relative complexity of a young person's environment to their learning process, but has tended to develop models of moral development that exist outside of particular times, cultures and gender relations. Harvey (1993) has observed that attendance to the specificity of place thwarts the development of meta-theories, and some of the most interesting studies of the young as moral agents are those that seek to document the processes of identity-making in small scale local cultures, demonstrating the importance of community (Back 1997), friendships and reputations (Hey 1997), the family (Brannen 1996), and consumption (Miles 1997) as sites of moral meaning.

#### **Values, identities and capital**

In seeking to bridge the gulf between these literatures, we found it useful to think of values as implicated in beliefs, discourses and identities, but also as representing commodities or resources that are given worth within particular economies or communities. In understanding value discursively we have built on the view that sources of moral authority have proliferated, resulting in an 'aestheticisation of the ethical' (Tester 1992, Shusterman 1988). Not only has there been a proliferation of moral discourses between which one can move in the construction of a moral self (Tronto 1993) but in moving

between these discourses, or economies, one is involved in the appropriation and transformation of meaning. This process has been documented clearly in the field of consumption, where young people have been shown to appropriate and transform the material value of consumer products such as computer games. By drawing these games first into the moral economy of the household, and then into the public sphere through their knowledge, expertise and ability to talk about the games within friendship cultures, young people effectively transform their value between different economies (Silverstone *et al.* 1992). A body of more ethnographic work achieves a similar end by adopting the theoretical tools of Pierre Bourdieu (1986) (in particular the concepts of social, cultural, material and embodied capital) in order to understand the relationship between what individuals value, their identities and their social environments (Skeggs 1997, Connolly 1998, Thornton 1995).

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To contribute to theory in the area of the social construction of identity by examining how young people position themselves in relation to different contemporary value systems and to understand how this positioning relates to processes of identity formation including experiences of social inclusion and exclusion.
2. To produce new data providing qualitative and quantitative documentation of the variety of moral world views within and between groups of young people aged 11-16 in the UK with particular reference to differences of age, gender, ethnicity, faith, social class, family formation and location.
3. To produce knowledge of the factors that contribute to moral development and of the strategies that young people employ to cope with moral dilemmas and diversity. We planned to develop understanding of how social and intergenerational change have affected the legitimacy of sources of moral authority for young people.
4. To make a major contribution towards youth policy in the areas of health, education, parenting and criminal justice by providing an understanding of young people as active moral agents, documenting the range of their moral world views and elaborating their understanding of moral legitimacy. The study aimed to make a practical contribution to educational practice and methods, and identify potential strategies for the support and guidance of young people from different social environments.

### **Sample and Methods**

The methods demanded a reflexive and incremental research design, encouraging and responding to young people's participation throughout the research process. To do this we:

- consulted young people initially about the focus and methods of the research through developmental pilot groups
- incorporated young people's own voices, ideas and language into the research tools;
- were aware of the research process as an ethical intervention into young people's lives in the 'present tense' as well as the longer term. This entailed development of participatory research techniques, observation and recording of group dynamics, negotiation of ground rules and careful negotiation of consent.

We conducted 5 pilot focus groups in order to achieve these requirements. The methods employed in the study were questionnaires, focus groups and individual interviews with young people aged between 11 and 16, drawn from schools, and further young people aged up to 18 drawn from pupil referral units,

gay and lesbian groups, and young people in care. The numbers involved for each method were: questionnaire (1800), focus groups (56), and individual interviews (54).

### **The questionnaire**

The questionnaire was developed in consultation with the developmental pilot groups who contributed ideas to the content, wording and design (see Appendix). We also adapted questions from a number of existing studies including the *European Values Study* (Ashford and Timms 1992), the *West of Scotland 11-16 Study* (Sweeting and West 1995), the *British Social Attitudes Young People's Survey* (Roberts and Sachdev 1996) and the *ESRC 11-16 Adolescent Identities Study* (Banks *et al.* 1992), which had the advantage of allowing comparison with other studies. The questionnaire was administered to 1800 young people in eight different schools and in the extra sites. Young people were given the same set of instructions across all sites and encouraged to request help from the researchers present as needed. Confidentiality was emphasised as was the fact that responses would not be fed back to teachers or carers on an individual level. The majority of queries on the questionnaire were on the meaning of a few questions: 'euthanasia', 'pornography', and 'cloning'. The questionnaire included an evaluation and the comments made were, on the whole, favourable.<sup>3</sup> Some young people, however, felt it was too personal: 'Too personal at the start (demographic questions) I don't like being asked to give information about my family and friends'. A word search at the end of the questionnaire was also popular and was a good time filler for those who completed early.

### **The focus group**

The group discussion method used in the study was an adaptation for research purposes of a game used in training and personal and social education. The values continuum provides a means for participants to 'explore values and attitudes in a group and to enable participants to acknowledge similarities and differences in values' (Lenderyou 1994:19). This method enabled researchers to observe group dynamics as well as generate opinion and discussion on relevant themes. Contentious statements were given to the group, who were asked to place themselves individually on a continuum from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', and then discuss together their views. Participants read out the statements in turn. They included: 'it's wrong to have a child unless you can support it', 'It's good to be different', 'older people should be respected' (see Appendix for list of statements used and full description of the method).

Sessions, with between 4-6 participants, were usually one hour long and most were held in schools. Some took place in other locations, for example youth clubs and children's homes. Two researchers were present, one facilitator and one observer, and each session began with introductions followed by agreement of ground rules, and clarification of the meaning of confidentiality and anonymity. The entire session was tape-recorded and coded on NUD\*IST to be analysed, and the observer made notes on group dynamics and interactions.

### **The individual interview**

The research team themselves engaged in regular sessions of memory work throughout the project (see Crawford *et al.* 1992) as a mean of developing insight and reflexive awareness about the research topic and this work informed the individual interview schedule (Thomson *et al.* 2003a). The primary aim was to gain insight into young people's perceptions of their own process of moral development. We employed a biographical approach, asking them to recall their earliest memories of good and bad and the key people, places and events of their moral development, reflecting on leadership, moral authority

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<sup>3</sup> Some comments were: 'Very thorough and well presented', 'Good questionnaire dude', 'Thanks this has helped me to be independent and make my own decisions'.

and difference in relation to others. Interviews took on average one hour and were tape-recorded. Issues of consent, confidentiality and anonymity were reconfirmed at the start and end of the interview. Data included the transcriptions of interviews and researcher's field notes.

### **Research assignments and class work**

Research assignments were semi-structured interview schedules encouraging young people to interview an adult about what the world was like 'when I was your age'. 272 assignments were returned from seven schools. While the administration of the method means that systematic analysis or interpretation is difficult, the research assignments have been subject to content and qualitative analysis and provide us with rich illustrative material (Thomson et al. 2003a). Schools were also invited to undertake class work in relation to the themes of the research. Again, participation in this method was voluntary and we received 'problem page' responses from young people in four of the eight schools and creative work based on trigger words from one school.

### **Methods of analysis**

All data was transformed into machine-readable form. The quantitative data set 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 were coded and analysed and linked to the main data set as off-line data. An analysis of the media-related data was also undertaken, including a selected content analysis.

We drew data from each of our analyses to realise the aims of the study, and here we give some of the findings from all of these sources, related to our research questions

### **Some findings from Youth Values**

Our central finding has been that young people have sophisticated value systems and that they are deeply engaged in the emotional and ethical labour involved in constructing their identities and their lives. We are able to show and explore this in many ways drawing on data produced by our different methods of investigation.

### **The structure of youth values**

By comparing our questionnaire sample to relevant baseline data we found that these young people's values did not differ significantly from those documented for adults. Issues appear to fall into three areas: those about which there is a *consensus* (for example the overwhelming majority believe that stealing, drug taking, racism and joyriding are wrong), those about which there is widespread *uncertainty* or diversity in opinion (for example abortion, suicide, euthanasia and pornography) and those over which there is *controversy*, i.e. where views are polarised, (for example attitudes towards homosexuality).

Our quantitative analysis enabled us to see how the values of young people differ according to age, gender, social class, location and their orientation towards authority. For example we identified an overall age pattern where young people's responses to ethical issues become more circumspect and tolerant with age. On most issues there are small gender differences, with young women tending to be slightly more disapproving than young men. In some areas (including attitudes towards divorce and sex outside marriage) this pattern is reversed, and in others (such as attitudes towards homosexuality), we find a polarisation of view taking place along the lines of gender, with boys having more negative views. A factor analysis of responses identified an internal structure to young people's values, confirming and

complicating that identified by Ashford and Timms (1992), showing for example that attitudes towards 'Life Issues' (such as abortion, suicide, euthanasia) not only 'hang' together but may be shaped more by social class than gender or religion. We also found that location had a profound impact on certain values, enabling us to identify a discrete structure of values in Northern Ireland as well as significant local variations elsewhere. Further discussion of the content of the factors and their relationship to key demographic data can be found in McGrellis *et al.* (2000) and a list of the factors appears in the Appendix to this paper.

The quantitative data gave us an overview of young people's values, but also questions with which to approach our qualitative data. For example, questionnaire responses indicated that the most tolerant attitudes towards drug taking occurred in the rural site and the least tolerant in the inner city site. We could make sense of this only through qualitative case studies for example where relative proximity to drugs and related risks may result in more intolerant attitudes, as found in the questionnaire responses (Henderson, 1999). Similarly, the identification of dramatic gender differences in sexual values in the middle-class commuter belt site and their relative absence in the isolated estate provided a route into mapping the contrasting economies of values of the two communities and the place of early parenthood within this (Thomson 2000a, Sharpe 2001). Below we briefly report those findings most directly relating to our original research questions, drawing on all our sources of data as relevant.

### **The research questions**

1. *What or who do young people recognise as sources of moral authority and what factors contribute to the legitimacy of moral authority?* (related to objective 3 above)

#### *Distinguishing power and authority*

Authority has been described as power with legitimacy, i.e. power that needs neither to be explained nor defended (Rose 1996). We found that young people were questioning the legitimacy of many forms of power. The line between legitimate and illegitimate power in young people's moral worlds is complex and contested - most tended to distinguish their own personal morality, the values of their particular friendship groups, the informal and formal values of the school and the values of the wider culture. While they were able to exercise some degree of control over the first two levels, they experienced themselves as subject to systems of collectively enforced values that informed the maintenance of reputations, popularity and fashion. Young people also distinguished between value systems (usually embedded within rules) that were formal and accountable and those that were informal and assumed.

Traditional authority figures, such as the police, religious leaders and the royal family received very little automatic respect from young people. They explained that respect must be earned, authority won and merit proven. This *ethic of reciprocity* was particularly apparent in young people's discussion of the purpose and application of school rules and the behaviour of teachers. While young people did not always invest teachers with moral authority, they watched them closely to see if they were worthy of it. The factors that contribute in young people's view to being a 'good teacher' provide insight into the factors that they see as contributing to the legitimacy of moral authority, such as consistency, care, the ability to listen and practical skills.

#### *The individualisation of authority?*

The sources of moral authority recognised by young people are consistent with (an uneven) shift from traditionally ascribed authority to its negotiation and location in the individual. Young people were quick to defend their moral autonomy, stressing self-determination, but the legitimate moral agent (self or other) could be complicated. First, the moral self was also understood as the 'true' self and young

people talked a great deal about the need to pursue self-knowledge and authenticity in friendships and as individuals. It is also possible to identify a tension in young people's discourse between an assertion of moral individualism and a lived morality in which they are implicated in structures, identities and loyalties that transcend the individual. An example of such tensions can be found in young people's relationship with the cultural authority of the media. Young people tended to deny suggestions that they were influenced by the media, since it implied lack of agency or independence. Negative influence from the media was more likely to be mentioned when young people took on an adult position in relation to younger siblings, in stories of younger brothers and sisters acting out sequences or fantasies from cartoons, movies and games. But in less direct discussions, the media emerged with a significant place in their own moral landscapes - as a source of information, a resource for the development of moral identities, and a source of pre-packaged moral discourses.

### *The family as a haven of obligation*

As a group parents were the most respected and unquestioned sources of authority, and of parents, mothers the most commonly admired and defended. In many ways parents and the family appeared to be relatively exempt from the reworking of authority that is evident more widely. While there is some evidence that young people are compelled to renegotiate family relationships (Finch and Mason 1993) from necessity (through family conflict) or choice (friendship relationships with mothers) they tend to describe the family in terms of its difference from wider relationships based on choice, consent or more explicit relations of authority. So parents have the right to hit children, there is an obligation to fight for family honour, you can only really trust family members, and 'telling' is honourable only when it involves the family. A number of those in our study were alienated from their families, either living away from home independently or in the care of the local authority. Yet in most of these cases moral authority was still attributed to the family of origin, particularly in response to the alternative assertion of authority by the state in the form of social workers. The one exception to this was in the case of a group of lesbian and gay young people where the notion of a 'community' and 'a family of choice' (Weeks, Donovan and Heaphy 1999, 2001) was posed as a positive alternative. Whether or not these ideals translated into practice, the family clearly played a symbolic role in moral landscapes - a haven of obligation in a world of choice (see Sharpe 2001 and 2004 forthcoming).

### *2. How do they perceive changes in values across generations? (see objectives 1 and 3)*

We asked young people to undertake research assignments, interviewing a significant adult about changes and continuities between the worlds of their childhood and now. In focus group discussions and in the questionnaire we asked young people about their hopes and fears for the future.

### *Narratives of loss and gain*

Many of the same themes characterise the accounts of adults and young people. Most are double-edged, speaking of both loss and gain, with the voices of the young accentuating the positive. One key theme identified by both was change to the family. On a positive note a greater openness in relations and communications between parents and children, and greater equality between the genders in terms of leisure and freedom was observed. On the negative side an erosion of parental authority, family breakdown, sexual pressure and lack of family time were mentioned. The condition of 'kids today..' was a way in which adults identified wider changes related to consumption, authority, and gender equality. Notions such as 'children today have no respect', 'have too much freedom', 'are spoiled for choice', simultaneously grieved a lost golden age while expressing concern about new risks faced by the young. Both young and old expressed positive views about improvements in the quality and standards of education. Continuities were discussed less frequently and in less detail than changes, and included comments on the enduring structures of everyday life - schooling, work and family life.

In discussions we found that young people were able to move within and between these narratives of loss and gain, taking up different positions, observing decline as well as progress, attributing blame as well as asserting hope. Their hopes speak of continuities between the generations. Young people generally wanted to find love (often marriage), have children, a steady job, and good health for themselves and their families. While most young people's hopes and fears centre on those things over which they felt they have some control, they are particularly fatalistic and resigned about those they see as beyond their control, such as the politics of the environment, the peace process in Northern Ireland, the economy. It is here rather than in the intimate spheres of family life and friendships that young people blame adults, expressing frustration with their failures, their 'short termism' and their greed.

### 3. How do they respond to diversity in contemporary value systems? (see objectives 1, 2 and 3)

We approached this question in a number of ways: Young people experience diversity very differently according to where and how they grow up. Pilot work exploring the language of values revealed dramatic differences in the *linguistic repertoires* available to young people for moral discourse. While young people in the inner city site generated an excess of words for making judgements of right and wrong, and expressing ambivalent positions in between, young people in our rural site were able to report few such words. The different levels of complexity of language in these two sites could be seen as reflecting the relative complexity of the moral worlds they represent: the former a varied, socially mobile community, ethnically diverse and relatively privatised beyond the shared spaces of schools and shops; the latter an ethnically homogeneous, relatively stable community where all are known to each other. The young people could appear inconsistent, but we theorised that they were able to switch between *value regimes*; a strategy for dealing with diversity. For example, discussing issues of parenting, such as whether it is appropriate to have a child if you cannot support it, we found that young people moved between value regimes of personal choice and self-sufficiency, and within regimes between the subject position of the child to that of the parent and back. Rather than acting to resolve ethical uncertainty and complexity, young people's moral discourse tended to capture and reflect it.

Many young people responded positively to research methods that facilitated the expression of differing views, noting that this was an unusual experience. While only a small minority expressed hostile reactions to diversity, it became apparent that few young people felt confident about expressing private opinions publicly, observing that in their social worlds it is usually only popular people that 'get a say in how things are'. Others may refrain from expressing views that they consider to be out of step with dominant public values, or may prefer to keep their discussions within smaller, safer friendship groups. Yet the meaning of 'difference' called for closer investigation in discussion with young people. At one level there was a consensus among most people in most research sites that 'it's good to be different'. But this endorsement of difference in principle did not stand up to interrogation. It emerged that only some differences are good - those that are chosen and acquired (for example the cultivation of a unique personality and music tastes) rather than embodied or ascribed (for example having a body that falls outside of the normative aesthetic standards of youth, being considered to be poor, to be insufficiently masculine or feminine etc). It can be argued that in their immediate endorsement of difference young people were evoking a discursive formation, *consuming difference* rather than being different (Miles, 1997). So while it may be 'good to be different' it is neither good, nor safe to be 'weird'.

While the consumption of difference was for some a means of accessing a common culture, a number of young people employed '*strategies of distinction*', deliberately aligning themselves with values, identities and cultural resources that were not shared by the majority. Media consumption (especially music) played an important part in this process, and 'distinction' in consumption was associated with a more cosmopolitan identity. In many cases these young people were making plans to leave their local

area, and their strategy of drawing on alternative values and resources can be seen as part of a process of social and geographical mobility.

*4. How do young people understand the processes of their own moral development and how does this contribute to adult identity? (See objectives 1, 3 and 4)*

From our quantitative data we could see a pattern in young people's values with attitudes becoming less judgemental and more tolerant with advancing age. By plotting the moral dilemmas reported by young people in relation to age we noted how these varied by age in different places, enabling us to give very grounded feedback to schools to facilitate curriculum planning. Our primary aim was not to elaborate any particular theory of moral development but to document young people's own perceptions of the process, and to do this we employed focus group discussions of parenting, learning and punishment, as well as inviting young people to tell their own stories of development through individual interview accounts.

#### *Adult subjectivity*

When describing the process of moral development young people tended to take the position of the adult subject and were often more comfortable talking about the development of younger siblings than their own development. The acquisition of moral autonomy was closely aligned with the development of physical and emotional competence (Thomson *et al.* 2000) and they considered it was when children had developed confidence in and control over their bodies that they were able to be responsible for the consequences of their actions. As with other dimensions of moral development, the relationship between the efficacy of choice and the development of moral autonomy was also associated with the acquisition of gendered identities. As we have argued elsewhere:

    Becoming a moral agent for these young people involved being able to make and to be accountable for their own choices, a process of maturation in which moral and physical competence are entwined. More generally, it is through the embodiment of social practices, or the embedding of social practice in the body, particularly control over the body and its functions, that the child becomes civilized (Elias, 1982) and a competent social agent (Goffman, 1971, Merleau-Ponti, 1962). This process is gendered, as we see in the work of Skeggs (1997) on working class women, Prendergast (1995) on menarche, and Holland *et al.* (1998) on sexuality. The process is also sexualised and classed (Bourdieu 1977, Holland *et al.* 2000: 274)

#### *Trusting, testing and 'teaching'*

Young people had contradictory views on parenting, punishment and the learning process, but at the centre of the learning process they identified the need for a person who defines and polices moral boundaries, a 'teacher' from their perspective. It is vital that this person has the power to punish and that they are trusted to use this power appropriately. While parents were rarely criticised directly for their failures in parenting, actual teachers were commonly taken to task for failing to find the required balance in this role. With developing experience and autonomy young people describe internalising moral boundaries and becoming less dependent on the 'teacher' for guidance. They also describe a similar process of experiential learning within their friendships where the creation and the testing of trust (through the testing of confidentiality) lies at the heart of the development of social relationships (Holland *et al.* 2000, Misztal 1996).

One of the strongest emergent themes in the study concerns the ubiquity of violence in many young people's lives and its significance in their understanding of moral development. Young people described a wide range of forms of violence that they were familiar with from the chastisement and punishment of children by parents, the verbal violence of teachers, peer violence in the form of bullying and fighting, domestic violence, street and community violence associated with crime, gangs, and territorial borders, and violence associated with policing, which in Northern Ireland includes the actions of paramilitaries, and political violence. Young people described violence as undermining the process of becoming an autonomous moral subject. Although they had very different experiences of violence, they expressed relatively similar views about its effects and place. First they considered violence to be a high-risk strategy as children learn by doing - if they are hit they will hit, leading to escalation, a loss of control, and a cycle of violence. They also observed that if the perpetrator of violence can see its effects they are unlikely to stop, and so the only way to escape violence is to 'firm up' and hide its effects. This was discussed primarily in terms of bullying, but the idea of embodying punishment as a way of learning is echoed in young people's discussions of the learning process at home. Physical punishment by parents tended to be seen as 'necessary violence', although talking was always considered to be more effective. Some thought that parents could be trusted to use such 'necessary violence' for the right reasons, but that the line should be drawn at 'battering'.

*5. What is the relationship between young people's values and their expectations and experiences of social inclusion and exclusion. (See objectives 1, 2 and 4)*

We found that young people's values and the values of their communities were deeply implicated in processes of social inclusion and exclusion. One way in which we have explored this relationship is in a case study of sexual values in two contrasting communities (Thomson 2000b). Here we have shown the way in which post-material values and cultural capital of the middle class commuter belt - equality, authenticity, educational achievement and androgyny - are consistent with socially mobile futures in which sexual experience and risk taking are deferred. In contrast, young people living in an isolated public housing estate are tied more directly into values of embodied capital (hardness, good looks, risk taking, experience) that are valued in the present, but which may thwart mobility. Unlike the first group, it is difficult for these young people to exchange their social and cultural capital in other cultural fields, thus confirming and reproducing their exclusion. In this instance class and location reinforce difference and inclusion/exclusion.

Although young people draw on a number of explanatory models to account for processes of social exclusion (for example poor parenting, the cycle of deprivation) we have been struck by the individualisation of failure in their moral discourse. This is particularly the case around education, but is also evident in relation to poverty and resources that might be translated into 'family support'. Our data provides some confirmation of what Furlong and Cartmel (1997) have posed as the epistemological fallacy of modernity where individuals increasingly take responsibility for the outcome of social processes that are beyond their control.

## **Conclusion to Youth Values**

This study has made a contribution to work on the social construction of identity by examining how young people relate to and position themselves through different contemporary value systems, and indicating how processes of identity formation are implicated in this positioning. Through a range of methods we have been able to produce a broadly based picture of how young people understand the process of moral development. We have explored their strategies for coping with moral diversity both directly (through focus groups, questionnaires and interviews) and indirectly through an analysis of the diversity of our sample and observation of their practice in groups. Our methods have also provided insight into the effect of intergenerational change on legitimacy of sources of moral authority for young

people. There have been significant policy implications in the findings of this study for many areas of young people's lives, including health, education, families and parenting, work and criminal justice. A major conclusion is that young people have sophisticated value systems, and engage in considerable emotional and ethical work in constructing their identities and living their lives.

Towards the end of this study we realised that having generated such a diverse sample of young people, it would be valuable to pursue an investigation of their transitions to adulthood, and were fortunate to be funded to do so. Our focus then changed from values, to the young people's understanding and experience of adulthood, and the processes through which they constructed their identities and futures. Economic, physical, material, cultural and symbolic resources had played a part in the way that young people constructed their value systems, but in the pursuit of adulthood these concepts and resources came much more to the fore. We were also interested in examining the relevance and purchase of current concepts aimed at capturing broader social processes as they affected young people, for example detraditionalisation, individualisation and globalisation. We adopted a biographical approach to the study of *Inventing Adulthoods*, which we now go on to contextualise and elaborate.

### 3. Inventing Adulthoods: Young people's strategies for transition

#### Background

This study of young people's accounts of adulthood is situated within a historical and theoretical account of social change. A number of commentators have pointed to the salience of theoretically defined processes of individualisation (Beck 1992, 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 and 'structured contradictions' between different markers of adulthood (Chisholm and Hurrelman 1996, Jones and Bell 2000). In a British 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 a range of 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 multiplicity of factors that include locality, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and disability, which combine in various ways to provide young people with access to particular resources and identities and constrain access to others. The rapidity and particular character of current 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 adopted a longitudinal, qualitative approach. We followed 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 and Flowerdew 2003), for example Ball et al. (2000), McLeod (2000), Du Bois Reymond (1998). Others have engaged with these questions through intergenerational studies (Nielsen and Rudberg 2000, Brannen 2003), 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 have charted a 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 work.

#### Objectives of the study

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 the UK.*

We were able to hold together 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.

It was difficult to manage this dynamic data set (transcribing, coding and analysing each round of data before the next arrived) and we were challenged by the lack of analytic closure characteristic of longitudinal investigations. Our decision to conduct our analysis on a labour-intensive, ongoing basis enabled us to realise some of the more exciting methodological dimensions of the data set. We succeeded in securing two further rounds of data collection with this sample as part of the Families and Social Capital ESRC Research Group at London 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 were collected, sorted, mapped, compared, theorised and reflected on in the light of further data. We distinguished between critical moments as 'narrative devices' and 'fateful moments' as theoretical constructs (see Thomson et al. 2002a). We have also reflected on this data and our initial analysis in the light of two more rounds of data collection (Plumridge and Thomson 2003).

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, since it is 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, 2000a); *within a single locality* (Thomson et al. 2003); *across localities* (Thomson and Holland 2002) and *over time* (Henderson et al. 2002, 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 meant that we have developed new bodies of data in many areas of young people's lives (for example: education, work, the domestic arena, consumption, relationships, intimacy, travel/mobility) – not all of which we originally intended to explore. For example we found that our fieldwork coincided with critical moments in the mobile phone market (Henderson et al. 2002) 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 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' (Thomson, Henderson and Holland, 2003).

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

The longitudinal and qualitative character of our data led us to theorise the subject-in-process. We explored the potential for operationalising 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 (Plumridge and Thomson 2003) 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, Thomson et al. 2003b).

*The dynamic relationship between locality and global identities and resources:*

Our data draws 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 2002, 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. Mobility is a central motif in young people's accounts of adulthood, but the different ways in which it is manifest reflects inequalities and power relations. Notions such as cosmopolitanism and localism (Merton 1968, Hannerz 1996, Bauman 2000) are useful in making power visible, and suggesting a more nuanced configuration of 'exclusion' that combines material inequalities with the specificities of place and the creativity of agents (Thomson and Taylor 2003).

*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. See the special issue of *the International Journal of Social Science Methodology: Theory and Practice* (2003), edited by Thomson, Holland and Plumridge.

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

- a research design that 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 (Thomson and Holland 2003, 2003b).

## Sample and Methods

The Inventing Adulthoods study is a longitudinal qualitative study, building on an existing sample of young people involved in the Youth Values project. 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.

The study documented 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 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.

Wave	Youth Values	FF 1 <sup>4</sup>	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		118	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 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 website.

The methods employed in the study were interviews, focus groups, memory books, lifelines and questionnaires.

### The interviews

Young people were interviewed three times, in most cases by the same researcher, each researcher being 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<sup>5</sup>. 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.

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<sup>4</sup> 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

<sup>5</sup> Tuula Gordon and Elina Lahelma, in a study *Tracing Transitions*, are undertaking a parallel study to this, re-interviewing young women and men in Helsinki, drawn from an earlier ethnography (Gordon et al. 2000a, Gordon et al. 2000b).

## Focus groups

We undertook three emergent focus groups towards the end of the study, one 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. More focus groups were planned at an earlier stage of the research, but since attrition was less than originally anticipated, available resources were re-allocated to interviews.

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 strongly agree to strongly disagree. Topic areas explored in the groups focused on themes that had proved to be more difficult to explore in an interview context (for example 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 available to them).

## 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, Barnardo's 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.

We have mapped the main characteristics of the memory books, in terms of style, content, and audience. We also used the memory books as data within our wider project of understanding how young people 'invent' their emergent adult identities.

In a discussion of the use of diaries, biographical objects and visual data as 'documents of life' Plummer (2001) distinguishes the role that such data may play in terms of *documentation*, acting as *resources* for further explanation and as a *critical tool* for understanding identity. These three terms reflect some of the different ways that we have drawn on the memory books in our work (See Thomson and Holland 2003b for detailed exposition of the method).

## 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. 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 that arose from the lifelines was part of the interview and was recorded, transcribed and coded in the normal way.

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 (see Thomson and Holland, 2002).

## **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 2003).

### **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 interviewer conducted a 'narrative analysis'. 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). Researchers also recorded their personal reflections on the interview and their hopes, fears and predictions for each young person at each round of interviews.

From the narrative analyses a 'summary narrative analysis' for each location at each round was produced, 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 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 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 the words of Bourdieu:

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.

## Some findings from Inventing Adulthoods

### 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, to present the main findings we will provide an overview of our theoretical approach to the central relationship between the individual, resources, structures and wider social processes, considering 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. 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 and strategies	Exemplars: people, local narratives	Social class	Heteronormativity
	Reputations	Locality	
	Experiences	Gender	
	Forms of capital: economic, social, cultural, symbolic	Sexuality	
		Ethnicity	
		Disability	

## **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 Thomson et al. 2003b).

*Strategies and tactics:* 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 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, and aspirations (Bell 2001a, b). These resources are likely to facilitate social reproduction. Attempts at achieving social mobility requires 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, Thomson, Henderson and Holland 2003). 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, Mizzal 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 the configuration of resources as being structured by time and timing. 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 is reconfigured in changing circumstances, making available different identities, tactics and strategies.

## Wider social processes

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. How 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 and the consequences of this for their identifications and mobility (Henderson 2002, Henderson et al. 2002). 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 2002).
- 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 2003). 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 alternative local adulthoods to take as a model. Instead she worked on what she saw and knew - the part-time job, house, home and kids, husband out working. 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, ff3]

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 2001, Thomson 2000a). 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 Una:

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. [case profile, ff3]

Una'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, ff3]

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 et al. 2003b). Our data suggests 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 2002).

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, or parental conflict for example, was significant in shaping these orientations.

### **Looking 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 a response both to the recognition of their competence in these arenas and 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 an adult identity in a romantic relationship, work, or consumption or in alternative leisure or criminal careers (Thomson et al. 2002, 2003b; 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 (Thomson et al. 2003b).

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.

## **Ethics**

Being involved in such an intense longitudinal study is an 'extraordinary' experience for the young people and the researchers. 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 website (<http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/fahs/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. In the presentation of data we faced practical and ethical problems in balancing the need for 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 decided to offer young people copies of their tapes and some accepted. 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.

## **Conclusion to Inventing Adulthoods**

The research has significant applications in areas of methodology, theory and policy/practice (for example, policy applications to date have been in the areas of citizenship education, work experience, careers advice and mentoring, educational support). The data collection, analysis and interpretation are ongoing and in the latest manifestation of the study (Youth Transitions in the Families and Social Capital ESRC Research Group) we focus on social capital, identity, intimacy, family and community.

#### 4. Conclusion

It is difficult to draw conclusions in what is an ongoing study, and a basic characteristic of longitudinal qualitative work is lack of closure. All interpretations are provisional, but in this case any interpretations you make are at risk of being overtaken or made redundant by changing events and lives, as a new interview comes along. When we completed the *Youth Values* study, we had findings (as reported here) and drew conclusions related to our research questions and theoretical approach. During the course of the *Inventing Adulthoods* project we were already into the barely charted waters of qualitative longitudinal investigation, and towards the end, recognising the value of the method, knew that we planned to keep our unique sample and try to continue to follow these young people's lives. We developed ways of analysing the data which preserved the basic elements of the investigation as laid out in our objectives and research questions, but allowing for contingency and the open-ended nature of the study. We have reported here again on the findings and conclusions we drew with these considerations in mind.

Our research approach from the start placed the young people at the centre of activity, calling on them for ideas on the content and conduct of the research. Once we were into a continuing research relationship with them, and given our interest in *their* reflexive projects of self, reflexivity became a key aspect of the study. The longitudinal method does not necessarily introduce anything new into the research relationship, but the extension of this relationship over time demands (even produces) a high level of reflexivity on the part of both the researchers and the researched. This draws analytical attention to the effects of the research intervention on both. This has become an important part of our findings, and the researchers themselves have become incorporated into the research in a more explicit way, one that can be more easily avoided (or contained) in a one-off study.

The time stream of the study itself becomes a resource for the investigation, as we move backwards and forwards through this data, and each study builds on the findings, analytical and theoretical insights of the earlier studies. The process continues and we have already completed another round of interviews in the *Youth Transitions* study.

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## **Appendix 1**

### *Questionnaire for Youth Values*

## Appendix 2

### *Youth Values: identity, diversity and social change*

ESRC funded study, co-applicants: Holland, J., Thomson, R. South Bank University

#### The focus group discussion method

The group discussion methodology used in the *Youth values* study is an adaptation of a game used in training and personal and social education. The values continuum (described in Lenderyou 1994) provides a means for participants to 'explore values and attitudes in a group and to enable participants to acknowledge similarities and differences in values' (Lenderyou 1994:19). This educational method was adapted for research purposes. The key components of the method were as follows:

Time:	Sessions were usually of one hour in length
Size of group	Ideally 4-6, however will work with more or less participants.
Seating	The group were seated in a circle. This could be around a table or facing each other directly. Ideally the discussions would take place in a private room.
Roles	The facilitator would sit in the circle with participants and a note taker would sit outside the circle, monitoring the tape recorder, making a seating plan and taking detailed notes enabling the identification of speakers during the transcription of tapes (see example sheet attached).
Ground rules	Each session would begin with introductions followed by the agreement of Ground rules which were stuck to the wall. The Ground rules used in the <i>Youth values</i> study were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* listen to each others views</li><li>* no interrupting</li><li>* treat each other with respect</li><li>* treat all personal statements as confidential</li></ul>

The role of the note taker was explained, tape recording negotiated and some time was then spent clarifying the meaning of confidentiality and anonymity.

#### Statements

A set of statements was produced for the purposes of the research. For the *Youth values* study these statements were developed from the initial questionnaire stage of the research. To be most effective, these statements should be strong assertions of particular opinions and values. Statements should be structured in such a way that it would be easy for participants to disagree with them. Statements can also be used to introduce ideas and opinions that might be relatively taboo, or difficult to introduce in normal conversation. A list of the statements developed for use in the youth values study follows. Statements were printed and pasted onto coloured card. A selection of statements was made for each group. The order in which statements arise in the group can also be controlled by asking participants to draw from the top of the pack.

The statements used in the youth values study were generated in the first stage of the research process, primarily through the identification of dilemmas collected through the questionnaire as well as issues identified as having particular salience in local areas as a result of pilot work and the analysis of questionnaire data. Although a core of statements were used in each research site (to facilitate comparisons), statements were also 'made to measure' to reflect and capture local issues.

### The game

On the floor or on the table in the middle of the circle a large sheet of flip chart paper was placed. On this paper were five lines, at one end the words 'strongly agree' were written and at the other 'strongly disagree'. The values continuum:



Each member of the group is then given a set of 'post-it' stickers, these stickers are numbered according to the person's place in the seating plan.

The rules of the game are then explained to participants. Each will be invited in turn to pick and read aloud a statement from a pack of coloured cards. On hearing this statement, participants were asked to think about their own response, and before talking, to stick a post-it onto the first line of the values continuum, towards the left if they agree, towards the right if they disagree and in the middle if they are unsure or if they have a mixed view. [It was sometimes necessary to clarify that participants could stick their post-its on top of each others if they shared the same view].

When all participants have stuck their post-it onto the first line, the facilitator invites each to explain their view and their position. In most cases participants engaged each other directly in debate. The role of the facilitator is to keep time, to ensure that all members of the group make a contribution and to encourage interesting avenues of discussion. The facilitator can move the discussion on by asking another member of the group to read out the next statement and inviting participants to mark their views on the second line of the values continuum. Approximately 5-7 statements were used in each one hour session, ideally each participant will have the opportunity to read out a statement.

The last five - 10 minutes of the session was used to wind the group up. Each participant was invited to contribute one thing that they liked about the session and one thing that they did not like. The ground rules were reiterated as were assurances of confidentiality and anonymity

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**Focus Group Statements 1 - 92**

1. ABORTION IS ALWAYS WRONG
2. ALL BABIES SHOULD BE WANTED
3. IT IS A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE ABORTION
4. BEING BULLIED TOUGHENS YOU UP
5. BULLIES ARE ALWAYS COWARDS
6. CANNABIS SHOULD BE LEGALISED
7. SOME DRUGS ARE LESS HARMFUL THAN OTHERS
8. ONLY LOSERS TAKE DRUGS
9. TAKING DRUGS IS FUN
10. IF IT FEELS GOOD IT CAN'T BE WRONG
11. BUYING STOLEN GOODS IS AS BAD AS STEALING THEM YOURSELF
12. SMOKING IS COMMON
13. PEOPLE WHO SMOKE BECAUSE THEIR FRIENDS SMOKE ARE LOSERS
14. PEOPLE WHO WON'T TAKE RISKS CAN'T BE TRUSTED
15. IT IS WRONG TO HAVE A CHILD UNLESS YOU CAN SUPPORT IT
16. EVERYONE SHOULD BE ABLE TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES
17. GENETIC ENGINEERING IS LIKE PEOPLE PLAYING GOD
18. MESSING WITH THE LAWS OF NATURE ALWAYS ENDS IN TROUBLE
19. PARENTS SHOULD STICK TOGETHER FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR CHILDREN
20. CHILDREN NEED TWO PARENTS
21. BOYS ARE MORE HOMOPHOBIC THAN GIRLS
22. HOMOSEXUALITY IS NORMAL
23. HOMOSEXUALITY IS ONLY A PHASE
24. IT IS OK TO STEAL FROM A BIG COMPANY

25. OLDER PEOPLE SHOULD BE RESPECTED
26. PEOPLE WHO DROP LITTER MUST LIVE LIKE PIGS
27. ANIMALS SHOULD HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS AS HUMANS
28. THE MAIN ROLE OF ANIMALS IS TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF HUMANS
29. THE ONLY WAY TO STOP POLLUTION IS FOR EVERYONE TO STOP DRIVING CARS
30. YOU SHOULD ALWAYS IGNORE BEING CALLED NAMES
31. SOMETIMES VIOLENCE IS THE ONLY WAY TO GET THINGS DONE
32. VIOLENCE IS THE COWARD'S WAY OUT
33. PORNOGRAPHY EXPLOITS THE HUMAN BODY
34. PORNOGRAPHY IS JUST A LAUGH
35. THE AGE OF CONSENT FOR SEX SHOULD BE LOWERED TO 14
36. IF A GIRL SAYS NO TO SEX SHE DOESN'T REALLY MEAN IT
37. YOU SHOULD ONLY HAVE SEX IF YOU LOVE SOMEONE
38. PROSTITUTION IS A GOOD WAY OF EARNING QUICK MONEY
39. WHEN IT COMES TO RELATIONSHIPS PEOPLE SHOULD STICK TO THEIR OWN CULTURE
40. MOST WHITE PEOPLE ARE RACIST
41. ONLY WHITE PEOPLE CAN BE RACIST
42. THE ONLY WAY TO END THE TROUBLES IS FOR CHILDREN TO BE EDUCATED TOGETHER
43. RELIGION ALWAYS CAUSES CONFLICT
44. VIOLENCE IS THE ONLY WAY TO GET RESPECT
45. TWO WRONGS DON'T MAKE A RIGHT
46. PEOPLE WHO ARE GOOD LOOKING DON'T HAVE TO WORK SO HARD IN LIFE
47. ANYTHING A GIRL CAN DO A BOYS CAN DO BETTER
48. WOMEN ARE MORE CARING THAN MEN

49. WOMEN ARE STRONGER THAN MEN
50. YOU SHOULD NEVER STEAL FROM SOMEONE YOU KNOW
51. THERE IS NOTHING WRONG IN STEALING FROM BIG SHOPS
52. PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO CONTROL THEIR OWN DEATH
53. THERE'S NO POINT GETTING MARRIED THESE DAYS
54. THERE'S NO POINT GETTING MARRIED WHEN YOU CAN LIVE TOGETHER
55. TELLING ON A BULLY IS EASY
56. IT'S NEVER OK TO GRASS
57. IF YOU DON'T STICK UP FOR YOURSELF YOU ARE GOING TO GET PICKED ON
58. FRIENDS NEVER TELL ON EACH OTHER
59. YOU CAN ALWAYS TRUST A FRIEND
60. YOU CAN ONLY EVER TRUST YOURSELF
61. SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO TAKE THE LAW INTO YOUR OWN HANDS
62. RULES ARE MADE TO BE BROKEN
63. EVERYONE CHEATS SOMETIMES
64. PEOPLE WHO STUDY HARD ARE NEVER POPULAR
65. PEOPLE WHO DON'T TAKE RISKS ARE BORING
66. STAYING ON IN EDUCATION IS A WASTE OF TIME
67. A GOOD EDUCATION IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE
68. THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE YOUNG PEOPLE BEHAVE IS TO BE REALLY STRICT
69. TEENAGE MAGAZINES ARE A BAD INFLUENCE ON GIRLS
70. COMPUTER GAMES ENCOURAGE VIOLENCE
71. YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T KNOW WHAT IS IN THEIR OWN INTERESTS
72. CHILDREN DON'T KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG
73. PARENTS SHOULD NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO HIT THEIR CHILDREN

74. IT'S GOOD TO BE DIFFERENT
75. IT'S HARD TO BE DIFFERENT
76. YOU SHOULD ALWAYS SPEAK YOUR MIND
77. THERE ARE NO ROLE MODELS FOR YOUNG WOMEN
78. THERE ARE NO ROLE MODELS FOR YOUNG MEN
79. ADULTS CAN'T BE TRUSTED
80. ANYONE CAN MAKE IT IF THEY TRY HARD ENOUGH
81. YOUNG PEOPLE LIVE IN A FANTASY WORLD
82. MONEY DOESN'T BRING HAPPINESS
83. YOU SHOULD ALWAYS BE YOURSELF
84. PLASTIC SURGERY IS ALWAYS WRONG
85. THE AGE OF CONSENT SHOULD BE RAISED TO 18
86. WITHOUT A RELIGIOUS FAITH YOU CANNOT KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN  
RIGHT AND WRONG
87. IT CAN BE FUN TO LOSE CONTROL
88. POLITICS ARE A WASTE OF TIME
89. IT'S GOOD TO BE BAD
90. YOU SHOULD ALWAYS STICK BY YOUR FAMILY
91. THE WORLD IS CHANGING FOR THE BETTER
92. SMOKING LOOKS GOOD



12 January 1998

**School One – TM Group 2, 1/9/g/2, SMG on her own. Girls group**

59. *You can always trust a friend*

A\* .....2.....5.....3.....4.....1.....D\*

44. *Violence is the only way to get respect*

A\* .....\* .....\* .....\* .....2.....4/3/5.D\*

64. *People who study hard are never popular*

A\* .....\* .....4..5.3..1.2.....\* .....D\*

34. *Pornography is just a laugh*

A\* .....\* .....\* .....\* .....4/3/5/1/2.D\*

54. *There's no point in getting married these days*

A\* .....\* .....5/4/3.....1.2.....D\*

21. *Boys are more homophobic than girls*

A\*2/4/1/5.....\* .....3.....\* .....D\*

40. *Most white people are racist*

A\* .....\* .....4.....\* .....2/5/1/3D\*

69. *Teenage magazines re a bad influence on girls*

A\* .....\* .....\* .....1/5.....2.....3...D\*

Notes on each of the participants (physical description, how they spoke, role in the group, beliefs etc.):

### Appendix 3

Which changes do you think have been good and which changes do you think have been bad? Explain why.

Any other comments??????

## RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT

### ‘When I was your age...’

#### The task

Talk to an adult (it can be a member of your family, a friend, someone you know) about what the world was like when they were your age.

Try and find out about the VALUES that they were brought up with, (ie.e. what they were brought up to believe was right and wrong).

*You may want to talk about the following things:*

Family	Relationship with parents, responsibilities within the family
Relationships	Girlfriends and boyfriends, love and romance, sex and marriage
Education	How important was education, why?
Work	How important was work, why?
Fun	How did they enjoy themselves?
Trouble	What counted as trouble? How were they punished? Did it work?

AFTER this conversation we would like you to complete the following worksheet

### ***Vital Statistics***

Who did you interview? (What relationship to you, e.g. auntie, friend's dad, youth worker etc.)

---

Was this person                      male / female                      (circle)

About how old was this person (circle)

20-30                      30-40                      40-50                      50-60                      60-70  
70-80                      80+

### **CHANGES**

What are the main changes between now and when this person was your age?

What things have NOT changed?

## Appendix 4

### Factor Analysis of Ethical Attitude Items

Certain patterns seem to exist in the way in which young people responded to these questions on ethical issues. A factor analysis carried out on the responses, identified a number of underlying value dimensions which we have characterised as follows:

- Illegal Consumption
- Illicit Convention
- Trust and Interpersonal Values
- Exclusion and Resistance
- Self Interest Values
- Sexual Values
- Life Issues
- Environmentalism

Table 1: Rotated factors and factor loadings for ethical attitude items (n=1727)

Factor and factor items	Loading
<i>Factor 1. Illegal Consumption (25.1%)*</i>	
Buying drugs for friends	0.782
Dealing drugs	0.761
Taking the drug Ecstasy	0.704
Taking the drug heroin	0.739
Taking the drug cannabis	0.687
Shoplifting	0.593
Glue-sniffing	0.571
Joyriding	0.525
<i>Factor 2. Illicit Convention (5.2%)</i>	
Using violence in self-defence	0.665
Carrying a weapon	0.579
Drinking alcohol	0.570
Taking revenge	0.550
Fighting	0.534
Sexual intercourse under the age of 16	0.437
Spray painting/graffiti	0.399
<i>Factor 3. Trust and personal values (4.7%)</i>	
Calling people names	0.614
Two-timing	0.552
Lying to your parents	0.494
Divorce	0.387
<i>Factor 4. Exclusion and Resistance (3.8%)</i>	
Racism	0.659
Religious discrimination	0.676
Using violence for political ends	0.582
Fighting with the police	0.399

<i>Factor 5. Self-interest values (2.8%)</i>		
Avoiding a fare on a fare on public transport	0.582	
Keeping money that you have found	0.557	
Buying something you knew was stolen	0.527	
Lying to a teacher	0.476	
<hr/>		
<i>Factor 6. Sexual Values (2.6%)</i>		
Watching/reading pornography	0.652	
Pressuring someone to have sex		0.546
Prostitution	0.558	
Sexism	0.450	
Unsafe sex	0.446	
<hr/>		
<i>Factor 7. Life issues (2.6%)</i>		
Suicide	0.614	
Abortion	0.609	
Euthanasia (ending the life of the terminally ill)	0.588	
Cloning animals	0.433	
<hr/>		
<i>Factor 8. Animal Rights (2.3%)</i>		
Eating meat	0.537	
Doing medical experiments on animals	0.581	
Wearing real fur	0.716	

\*Percentages indicate common variance accounted for.

The first four of these attitude clusters accounted for 39% of the variance. While the remaining four were not as significant, they represented important and coherent response patterns.

In order to explore the differences across groups, a further analysis was carried out on the factors identified. Since the variables loading on Factors 1–8 made up comprehensive clusters, a score was derived for each factor by summing the raw scores of those variables that contributed to the factor (i.e. had a loading of over 0.4). The resulting distributions were then recoded into a three-point scale representing low, medium, and high positions. These were then examined by carrying out a chi-square test with demographic and other relevant variables. The results of which are detailed in Table 3.7.

#### *Factor 1. Illegal consumption*

Within this one factor (which contained the majority of consensus issues) were two distinct sets of variables: 'drugs' (buying drugs for friends, dealing drugs, glue-sniffing and taking the drugs Ecstasy, heroin and cannabis); and 'illegal activities' (shoplifting, stealing, claiming benefit not entitled to, and joyriding). For the purposes of secondary analysis on the factors, the variables contributing to each aspect were summed separately.

Significant differences in attitudes emerged across groups. With regard to drugs issues, less approving attitudes, were found among young women, young people in Northern Ireland, younger age groups, young people with pro authority orientation, those with stricter parents, those without part-time work, those who belonged to a religion, and those who regarded themselves as religious. Attitudes towards drugs were most liberal among young people in affluent commuter belt town and in the rural location.

Disapproval for the items within the second aspect in this factor was high overall, but was greatest among the younger age groups, young women and those with a positive orientation towards authority. Just over half (53%) of all young people with anti authority orientation had a sum score indicating strong disapproval compared with 97% of those with high orientation towards authority.

#### *Factor 2. Illicit conventions*

The issues within this factor did not meet with the same level of disapproval as those in factor one. Fewer young people consistently rated the items as 'always' or 'usually wrong,' the majority opting for

the middle choice. Statistical significance in responses overall point again to greater disapproval among the younger age groups, young women, young people in Northern Ireland, young people with positive orientation towards authority and those whose parents were 'not at all strict' or 'very strict.'

#### *Factor 3. Trust and interpersonal values*

The values of friendship and relationships were key for the majority of young people, but were particularly central to young people in years 7 and 8. Those who defined themselves as being religious were more likely to espouse these values, and having a positive orientation towards authority was associated with high disapproval of the items within this factor.

#### *Factor 4. Exclusion and resistance*

Attitudes towards racism, religious discrimination, political violence, and fighting the police all contributed to this factor. High levels of disapproval were expressed across all groups, although young women were more disapproving than young men were, as were young people in England and those who did not belong to a religion. Anti authority attitudes were associated with much lower levels of disapproval.

#### *Factor 5. Self interest values*

The evidence from analysis on this dimension of young people's values again suggests that young women have consistently less accepting views on many value issues than do young men. This is a difference which was consistent across age groups, (greatest in year 11  $m=66\%$ ,  $f=85\%$ ), and also across all but one of the schools (in the northern estate) young men were more disapproving than young women,  $m=63\%$ ,  $f=59\%$ ). Overall young people in Northern Ireland expressed less approving attitudes than young people in England, as did young people who belonged to a religion and regarded themselves to be religious (irrespective of site). Disapproval was also associated with being white, younger, and having a positive orientation towards authority.

#### *Factor 6. Sexual values*

Young women across all schools and in all year groups were less approving on sexual values than were young men. The difference between the two groups was greatest in the older cohorts; 26% of young men in year 10, and 30% in year 11 gave responses which reflected less approval, compared with 62% and 64% of young women in these year groups. Attitudes among young people in Northern Ireland were less approving than among young people in England, and among those who were positively orientated towards authority. Having a part time job was associated with more approving attitudes across all age groups, although the difference diminished by year 11. Belonging to a religion and being 'religious' were also associated with less approving attitudes.

#### *Factor 7. Life values*

Attitudes towards 'life values' were primarily related to location, age, and religiosity. Young people in Northern Ireland, the younger year groups, and those belonging to a religion and regarding themselves as religious generally expressed greatest disapproval of the issues within this factor. Neither ethnicity, nor authority disposition differentiated on the items constituting this factor. Young people from a middle class background were more accepting than were those from a working class background, as were those who had a part time job.

#### *Factor 8. Environmental values*

Age and ethnicity were the only two demographic variables that differentiated patterns of response on this factor. Young people in year 8 were most environmentally concerned (against wearing fur, eating meat and medical experiments), those in year 9 the least. Young people who identified as white were more disapproving of these items than those who identified as Black or Asian.

There was no significant relationship between the type of family unit to which young people belonged (single parent headed, both biological parents, reconstituted family, other family headed, and non-family headed) and the main factors.

Table 2: Values dimensions – differences across groups

Factor	Gender	Age	Place	Class	Authority Orientation
Factor 1. Illegal consumption	Female more disapproving <0.001	Younger more disapproving <0.001	N. Irish more disapproving <0.001	Ns	Pro authority more disapproving <0.001
Factor 2. Illicit conventions	Female more disapproving <0.001	Younger more disapproving <0.001	N. Irish more disapproving <0.001	Ns	Pro authority more disapproving <0.001
Factor 3. Trust and interpersonal values	Ns	Younger more disapproving <0.001	N. Irish more disapproving <0.001	Ns	Pro authority more disapproving <0.001
Factor 4 Exclusion and resistance	Female more disapproving <0.001	Ns	English more disapproving <0.05	Ns	Pro authority more disapproving <0.001
Factor 5. Self interest values	Female more disapproving <0.001	Younger more disapproving <0.001	N. Irish more disapproving <0.001	Ns	Pro authority more disapproving <0.001
Factor 6. Sexual values	Female more disapproving <0.001	Younger more disapproving <0.001	N. Irish more disapproving <0.05	Ns	Pro authority more disapproving <0.001
Factor 7 Life issues	Ns	Younger more disapproving <0.001	N. Irish more disapproving <0.001	WC more disapproving <0.001	Ns
Factor 8 Environment	Ns	Ns	Ns	Ns	Ns

**Appendix 5**

**LIFELINES**

**Date.....**

**IN 3 YEARS**

**25**

**35**

HOME/HOUSING.....

EDUCATION.....

WORK.....

RELATIONSHIPS.....

TRAVEL/MOVING.....

## Appendix 6

### *Youth Values and Inventing Adulthoods*

#### 1. PUBLICATIONS

Bell, R. (2001). 'Finding and 'managing' part time work: young people, social networks and family support'. *ESRC Youth, Citizenship and Social Change Newsletter*, Autumn 2001

Bell, R., Thomson, R., Henderson, S., Holland, J., McGrellis, S., and Sharpe, S. (2001) 'At this point everyone turned against me': Critical moments in young people's narratives of transition' in *Youth research in Europe: the next generation - Perspectives on transitions, identities and citizenship*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, pp. 163-171.  
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- Thomson, R., Holland, J., McGrellis, S., Sharpe, S. and Henderson, S. (2001) "From Peter Andre's six pack' to 'I do knees': The body in young people's moral discourse', in Milburn-Backett, K. and Mckie, L. (eds) *Powerful bodies: Gender, sexualities and embodiment*, London: Macmillan.
- Thomson, R., Bell, R., Holland, J., Henderson, S., McGrellis, S. and Sharpe, S. (2000) 'En ese momento todos estaban contra mi: Momentos criticos en las narrativas de transicion de los jovenes, *Nomades*, (Departamento de Investigaciones Universidad Central, Santafe de Bogota), 13: 30-39.
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## 2. CONFERENCE PAPERS

### 2000

Thomson, R., Bell, R., Holland, J., Henderson, S., McGrellis, S. and Sharpe, S. (2000) 'At this point everyone turned against me': Critical moments in young people's narratives of transition' *Making and Breaking Borders, Nordic Youth Research Symposium 2000*, University of Helsinki, June 7-10, 2000.

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### 2001

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Holland, J, Gordon, T., Lahelma, E. and Thomson, R. (2001) Imagining gendered adulthood: anxiety, ambivalence and denial, *Divisions and Visions, 5th European Sociological Association Conference*, Helsinki, 28 Aug- 1 September, 2001.

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## **2002**

Thomson, R. 'Young people, social change and the negotiation of moral authority' *Demoralization: Morality, Authority and Power*, Cardiff University, 5-6 April, 2002.

Holland, J. 'Competence, recognition and investment: A biographical approach to understanding youth citizenship', Young People 2002 Conference, Keele University 22-24 July.

## **2003**

Gordon, T., Holland, J., Lahelma, E. and Thomson, R. 'Young female citizens in education: Resources, agency and emotions' paper presented at European Sociological Association conference, Murcia Spain, Sept 2003.

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Thomson, R. and Taylor, R. 'Cosmopolitans and locals: Mobility as a resource in young people's transitions to adulthood' research' paper presented at European Sociological Association conference, Murcia Spain, Sept 2003.

Thomson, R. 'Locating intimacy for young people: Authority, boundaries and competence' Paper presented at Youth work and citizenship: Inclusion, exclusion, transformation, Manchester Metropolitan University, Didsbury Campus July 4<sup>th</sup> 2003.

Thomson, R. 'Locating intimacy for young people: Authority, boundaries and competence' paper presented at Young People Intimacy and Everyday Life, BSA Youth Studies Seminar, University of Southampton, 22 Jan 2003.

### **3. INVITED PAPERS**

#### **2000**

Bell, R., (2000) 'How young people experience current policy' *Engaging Disaffected Youth Seminar*, Local Economy Policy Unit (LEPU), South Bank University, 6th July 2000.

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## 2001

McGrellis, S. (2001) Making a path through: The experience of some young people growing up in Northern Ireland. Graduate School of Education, Queens University Belfast, seminar series. 7 December 2001.

Thomson, R. (2001) 'Legal, protected and timely: Young people's perspectives on the heterosexual age of consent', *ESRC Seminar Series: Interdisciplinary Youth Research: New Approaches*, University of Southampton, 16th Feb, 2001.

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Sharpe, S. (2001) 'Young people's views on aspects of violence'. Presentation to the Children and Violence Forum, 5 December 2001.

## 2002

Thomson, R. (2002) 'Competence, recognition and investment: A biographical approach to understanding youth citizenship', *Tomorrow's Citizens workshop* organised by Youth Citizenship and Social Change Programme, Carnegie Young People's Initiative, London, 24 January 2002.

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## **2003**

Holland, J. and Edwards, R. 'Families and Social Capital: Inventing Adulthoods' paper given in Robert Putnam's Social Capital Seminar Series at St. John's College Cambridge in May 2003.

Holland, J. and Edwards, R 'Families and Social Capital: Making the most of what you've got? Resources, values and inequalities in young people's transitions to adulthood, paper given in Social Capital Seminar Series, Kings College, London, October 2003.

Thomson, R. 'When will I see you again? Strategies for interviewing over time, public lecture given at seminar/workshop 'Reflexive methodologies: interviewing revisited', Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, Helsinki University, 30 October.

Holland, J. 'Hindsight, foresight and insight: Analysing and interpreting longitudinal qualitative data', public lecture given at seminar/workshop 'Reflexive methodologies: interviewing revisited', Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, Helsinki University, 31 October.

## **4. EVENTS**

Organisation of *Seminar on Longitudinal Qualitative Methods*, South Bank University, April 8th 2001. Papers presented at the seminar form a special issue of the *International Journal of Social Research Methodology: Theory and Practice*, published in 2003.