Young People’s Development and the Great Recession

The 2008 financial crisis and subsequent “Great Recession” particularly affected young people trying to make their way from education into the labor market at a time of economic uncertainty and upheaval. This volume examines the impact of the Great Recession on the developmental stage of young adulthood, a critical phase of the life course that has great significance in the foundations of adult identity. Using evidence from longitudinal data sets spanning three major OECD countries, the chapters examine the recession’s effects on education and employment outcomes and consider the wider psychosocial consequences, including living arrangements, family relations, achievement orientations, political engagement, health and well-being. While the recession intensified the impact of preexisting trends toward a prolonged dependence on parents and, for many, the precaritization of life chances, the findings also point to manifestations of resilience, where young people countered adversity by forging positive expectations of the future.

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Young People’s Development and the Great Recession

*Uncertain Transitions and Precarious Futures*

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Preface

This book was inspired by the path-breaking study of Glen Elder, *Children of the Great Recession* (1974/1999), which prompted the work on the current book in the aftermath of the 2008 Great Recession. Walter Heinz developed the idea – taken forward with Glen Elder, John Bynner, and Ingrid Schoon – of a comparative project to investigate the effects of the post-2008 banking collapse on young people and their families, using secondary analysis of comparable longitudinal data in Germany, the UK, and the USA. The focus was on transition experiences – especially regarding the impact of the recession on the transition from school to work and its consequences for other transitions and functioning, including achievement motivation, interactions with parents, partnership and family formation, as well as health and well-being. The choice of countries was motivated by their comparable labor markets coupled with contrasting cultural assumptions and institutional structures for managing youth transitions. Another important factor was the existence of comparable national household panel and other longitudinal datasets supplying the evidence base on which to found the comparative analysis.

Bringing together networks of researchers to form a consortium to undertake the work and shape the research plans was achieved by a series of workshops taking place in Germany (at the Youth Institute (DJI) in Munich and at the University of Bremen), the UK (Institute of Education, University College London), and the USA (Institute for Social Research, Ann Arbor, Michigan). At these meetings research ideas were presented, which were then further developed by the individual research teams.

From a promising beginning, we had, however, to change our ambitious plans. The original intention was for a collaborative project with a strong comparative design in mind, involving experts from the three countries, and entailing the harmonization of longitudinal data from nationwide studies of socioeconomic, social-emotional, and health outcomes. We submitted a number of proposals to funding agencies across the three countries, but financial support for the large-scale comparative
cross-country study was not forthcoming. Instead we moved on with a dedicated core group, who produced reports from independently run projects around the agreed themes as played out mainly in their own national economic contexts.

Making best use of the resources available, the collaborative approach facilitated the comparison of evidence regarding the same central questions. The unevenness in coverage of topics reflects changes in the core team or lack of funding. Yet, the chapters complement each other in different ways, bringing to the fore key aspects of the experiences of young people coming of age in different cultural contexts. The book’s main contribution lies in the reporting of very rich findings and the comparative insights gained across all of them.
Abbreviations

BHPS    British Household Panel Survey (UK)
BIBB    Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Germany)
CDS     Child Development Supplement (USA)
CEE     Central and Eastern European
CPS     Current Population Survey (USA)
ESS     European Social Survey
ET      education and training
EU-SILC European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
GDP     gross domestic product
HBSC    Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children
HE      higher education
ICT     information and communications technology
ISCED   International Standard Classification of Education
IT      Information Technology
JTPA    Job Training Partnership Act (USA)
MNC     multinational corporation
MOOC    massive open online courses
MSC     Manpower Services Commission (UK)
MTF     Monitoring the Future Study (USA)
NEET    Not in Education, Employment, or Training (UK)
NEPS    National Educational Panel Study (Germany)
NLSY    National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (USA)
NRI     Network of Relationships Inventory
NVQs    National Vocational Qualifications (UK)
OECD    Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS     Office of National Statistics (UK)
PSID    Panel Study of Income Dynamics (USA)
SAS     Survey of Adult Skills
SES     socioeconomic status
SIPP    Survey of Income Participants (USA)
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<td>TA</td>
<td>Transition into Adulthood Study (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNC</td>
<td>transnational corporation</td>
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