

Young People's Development and the Great Recession

Uncertain Transitions
and Precarious Futures

Edited by Ingrid Schoon and John Bynner



'This outstanding, must-read volume chronicles how young people around the globe are coping with the most devastating economic crisis since the Great Depression. Using top-notch research, renowned experts describe how the consequences of this event are penetrating all aspects of young people's lives and affecting their future educational prospects, employment, health, and social relationships.'

Barbara Schneider, *Michigan State University*

'Given the challenges arising from political transformations and socioeconomic crises at the beginning of the twenty-first century, this book on how young people negotiate emerging adulthood is long overdue. It is a must-read for every scientist and practitioner interested in pathways to adulthood and their cultural, social, and personal variation, as well as a source of insight for every policy maker involved in helping to avoid a lost generation of young people.'

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Ingrid Schoon is Professor of Human Development and Social Policy at the Institute of Education, University College London, and Research Professor at the Berlin Social Science Centre (Wissenschaftszentrum).

John Bynner is Emeritus Professor of Social Sciences in Education at the Institute of Education, University College London, and Executive Editor of the international journal *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies*.

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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.

Ingrid Schoon is Professor of Human Development and Social Policy at the Institute of Education, University College London, and Research Professor at the Berlin Social Science Centre (Wissenschaftszentrum).

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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.