



An ESRC Qualitative Longitudinal Study

Timescapes Project 11 Making The Long View Of Inventing Adulthoods

www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk

www.lsbu.ac.uk/inventingadulthoods



INTRODUCTION

Inventing Adulthoods is a qualitative longitudinal study of young people growing up in five areas of England and Northern Ireland at the turn of the 21st century. Its rich biographical material, contributed by young people who were 11-17 years old at the start of the study, provides a unique window on most aspects of growing up during an important period of social change from 1996 – 2006. A rare research enterprise, it has involved the development of innovative methods and the maintenance of a core research team of five women. A decision to try and stay in touch with the young people involved but not interview further changed in summer 2008 with a two year project (funded by the Joseph Rowntree Trust) that involves re-interviewing some of the young people in Northern Ireland for a seventh time.

Making the Long View In Spring 2005, we began the task of archiving this dataset so as to more fully realise its potential for methodological and theoretical advance and for application to policy and practice. This has involved exploring creative ways of overcoming ethical and practical obstacles to creating wider access to and representing the dataset. Since February 2007, this work has been funded under Timescapes and made valuable contributions

to Timescapes' archiving strategy. All of this work has been funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

The archived data can be accessed via application to Qualidata and the Timescapes Repository in Leeds. It currently comprises anonymised interview transcripts for twenty young people.

The Inventing Adulthoods website is the public face of and taster for our expanding archive. It is organised according to the different dimensions of time that emerged during the study: *Research Time* documents the processes of the IA study in detail (e.g. the general methodological and theoretical story of the research over time, the research tools and methods of analysis, what it was like to be in the study for both researcher and researched, how we worked and stayed together as a team); *Biographical Time* gives a taste of the archived data; and *Historical Time* gives a flavour of the cross sectional data. The website also follows our progress over time through the minefield of issues involved in archiving, such as managing data, ethical selection, gaining consent for archiving, and whether and how to anonymise the data.

OTHER MODELS OF SHARING INVENTING ADULTHOODS DATA

Whilst archiving our data, we also developed another model for data re-use in which we, the research team, maintained more control over the data sharing process by working collaboratively with others. A collaboration with a course team and a film maker at the Open University, resulted in a dvd showing short films of five young people from the study talking about their lives and their

involvement in the study, and listening to and reflecting on their interview tapes. The revelation of details about their lives and use of real names in this context meant re-negotiating with them the basis for their informed consent – a process that continues as we use short clips from these films in an increasing range of contexts to illustrate our work on both the study and the archive.

THE ARCHIVING EXPERIENCE: A RESEARCHER'S VIEW

Ours is a very specific archiving experience: that of a longstanding team of researchers specifically funded to explore how to prepare and represent a QL dataset retrospectively. There's an important story to tell of how it feels as a researcher to 'let go' of one's data by preparing it for archiving; to explore

creative ways of representing a decade's worth of research work; to experience the contrast between the daily grind of enhancing and anonymising transcripts and the creation of a resource with historical interest for future generations.

