

WP8 Family and Cultural Drivers of youth unemployment and adult transitions

WP8 has identified an important area for investigation, and some rich datasets and advanced techniques to do so:

- SILC, SHARE, Generations and Gender Survey
- Cross-sectional and longitudinal data
- Statistical methods – multiple regression, event history analysis, sequence analysis, MLM etc.

Like all important questions the challenge is to refine and focus the analytical framework and data requirements – including country selection – before going too far with the data crunching.

Hence the group needs to discuss and set out the theoretical frames, hypotheses and indicators that will be used in the different tasks. Particularly in relation to the influence of ‘culture’ and elaborating – and measuring – the role of family resources.

- The current focus is on family material resources. This is fine, but then the WP title needs to be modified to reflect this:
 - Family resources are wider than material (economic) – although many – myself included - would argue that the economic differences are at the heart of the family resource ‘package’
- The WP title mentions cultural drivers – but this is rather absent from the project description. Either drop or elaborate culture in the analytical frame

I want to outline a few issues which will show the complexity of the topic of ‘family and cultural drivers’ and to suggest how the early stage of work might consider narrowing and refining the focus a little more.

1. Family resources – evaluate and develop a theoretical frame of the role of family resources on young peoples’ labour market opportunities, entry, transitions and progression - social mobility – over the lifecourse.

- There is clearly the material resources and economic support that parents may provide to their children
- But there are other resource flows as well.

For example Bourdieu identifies different types of capital which we obtain with the help of our parents

- Human capital – education, skills, experience
- Social capital e.g. networks to find jobs, work placements
- Cultural capital - the other stuff which helps us ‘fit in’ and connect with the gatekeepers to labour market opportunities. How to perform at interview for elite universities, for employers. The stuff which makes us comfortable moving in some circles and not others (eg Finishing school skills, also implicit/explicit in some charities to help disadvantaged into jobs – ‘how to walk the walk’ and present

→ So, which aspects of family resources will you focus on? If it is a focus on material/economic resources then be explicit that this is your focus.

→ If you decide to bring in different types of capital there is a practical question - what can be measured using the datasets you have (human capital easier to derive direct indicators for than social or cultural capital)

→ More precisely – to specify the hypothesis re the influence of family background

2. Class inequalities in the different material and other types of resources we can access from our families. This is a familiar story to all scholars of class and social mobility.

→ How will you measure class? Fathers' current/most recent occupation? What about mothers'? To what extent does occupation capture class background/standing eg if both have lost their jobs or been downwardly mobile due to economic recession? They may have lost economic resources but retain cultural capital?

3. Intersectionality

- Class (education) articulates with gender. And with other characteristics to shape labour market prospects and transitions....
- But in youth labour markets in some countries while gender is a salient axis of differentiation it is not the dominant factor of exclusion/segmentation/differentiation...
 - Migrants (new arrivals)
 - BME – differentiations between migrants (new arrivals) and 2nd or 3rd generation youth face different opportunities and obstacles to migrants
 - Other aspects – youth raised by the state because families unable to (in childrens' residential homes or with foster parents in the UK), young people with disabilities (including learning disabilities)

→ Which characteristics will you focus on? Can they be measured adequately in the datasets you have?

4. Point at which young people leave parental home or continue to reside with parents varies nationally, and within countries by class and ethnic background

- Multi-generation households – young adults living with their parents + perhaps their own children – more common in some countries than others (and in families with different class and ethnic backgrounds)

➔ Is this an important part of the analysis you plan to conduct [yes - is explicit in Task 1 &3, but also in T2+4+5]? Can you capture it in the datasets?

5. Magnitude of class inequalities vary across countries in magnitude and effect on life opportunities

- Amplified in neo-liberal welfare states (Anglo-Saxon) where social inequality is higher than in most of rest of European (and industrialised world)
- Narrowed in social democratic welfare states eg Nordic
- Local labour markets & regional inequalities – these are particularly salient for the fortunes of disadvantaged youth – the magnitude varies within countries
- And thinking about the project's focus on youth – the point of expected independence varies across welfare states.
 - Expected to leave the parental home and become independent much earlier in Nordic countries, in UK (although changing under austerity) than Italy and Spain
 - These normative expectations are reflected in the welfare state design, and also shaped by reforms in the welfare state design.

- ➔ So how does the type of labour market/welfare state which the youth are navigating shape how family background/culture is mobilised, shaped etc.
- ➔ Which aspects of the welfare state are salient for this question – school-to-work transition; social assistance and income support for unemployed youth and low income families; and at what point is the young person treated as independent of the family in terms of access to income-related benefits (housing benefit, social assistance...) See Knijn edited collection as one resource to build on for this welfare state mapping for youth transitions
- ➔ Which countries will you select to explore this?

6. What is culture?

The WP mentions cultural drivers in the title but if it is to remain in the WP it needs an explicit working definition and to be incorporated into the analysis.

Or is it a residual category – everything which is left once various economic/financial and demographic variables are taken into account in models?

Culture is not easy to define and measure

- Culture – everyday habits and practices, social norms and values about what is acceptable/expected behaviour, our responsibilities, obligations, freedoms → what we do/should do ‘the way we do things, the way we live /should be done’
 - How we raise our children e.g. childcare, supporting them later in life
 - What we expect from our children – responsibilities, obligations

And culture at what levels?

- Institutional policy regimes are seeded/infused with culture – political settlements, historical legacies and path dependencies re the states' social values and expectations....
- But within this national – or even EU – frame culture operates at different levels
- Hegemonic/national values
- Local variations 'habitus' (Bourdieu)
- Peer group reference points– family, friends, neighbours, workplace colleagues – what do they do, what do they endorse as acceptable behaviour or aspirations? We learn by observing others, conforming (copying) or resisting and 'breaking away'
- Generational differences, esp parents and youth

➔ Clearly, this frame of culture is far too ambitious for the scope of this WP. So some delineation and focus is needed. Or the reference to 'cultural drivers' needs to be dropped.

WP9 Vulnerable Voices and Cultural Barriers – attitudes and aspirations

Task 1

- ➔ Causal relationship between attitudes, aspirations and unemployment?
- ➔ How to infer from x-sectional data?

Task 2 Trust experimental. Innovative in labour market studies (used more often in psychology and some economics game theory experiments)

Task 3 co-production is another innovative research design and a welcome qualitative focus to counterbalance the quantitative dominance of many of the WPs.

Task 4 ditto. With a clear focus on a small and manageable sub-set of countries