

PATHFINDER



The Pathways to Adulthood Newsletter



In Brief

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Capacity building and advancing the understanding of productive youth development in an international context are the objectives of the PATHWAYS Post-Doctoral Fellowship Programme which is funded by the Jacobs Foundation. In our biannual newsletter, the PATHFINDER, we report on research conducted by the PATHWAYS fellows and the PATHWAYS team. Issue number 11 focuses on variations in the transition to adulthood and passion for activities.

Jake Anders is a research fellow at the National Institute of Economic and Social Research in London and joined the PATHWAYS network in 2015. He reports on his research comparing transition experiences among four cohorts of young people born in 1958, 1970, 1980 and 1990 respectively, asking how transitions have changed over the past 30 years. Using sequence analysis he identifies three major transition patterns: a group entering the labour market directly after compulsory school leaving, a group continuing in higher education, and a group who encounter problems in establishing themselves in the labour market. Moreover his findings suggest that the previously dominant experience of entering work straight after school is receding in favour of transitions involving higher education. Most worryingly an increasing proportion of young people in the youngest cohort encounter precarious employment transitions, especially young white males from a disadvantaged background. The findings point to the need for policies to smooth the education to employment transition, with focused attention on transitions following compulsory school leaving.

Mark Lyons-Amos, who became a PATHWAYS

Fellow in 2013, was based at the Institute of Education before joining the London School of Economics in 2015. He reports findings from a study using data collected for the British Household Panel Survey and Understanding Society, comparing fertility transitions among women before and after the 2008 Great Recession. His findings suggest a counter-cyclical pattern among women born in 1980/4, i.e. increased fertility rates after the recession. For younger birth cohorts this effect was not significant. Furthermore, relative disadvantaged women, especially those with low levels of education and precarious employment have relative high fertility rates compared to their more privileged peers. However, this effect disappears after the recession, suggesting that lacking economic resources reduce fertility rates among disadvantaged women. Together these studies suggest that a changing socio-historical context impacts on the behaviours and experiences of young people.

This volume of the PATHFINDER also includes a report from Julia Moeller, who had been a PATHWAYS fellow between 2013 and 2015, working within a collaborative project linking the Universities of Helsinki and Michigan State. Within this project Julia studied student engagement in STEM fields and approaches to learning. Her research highlighted that positive and negative emotions often co-occur - a finding which led her to the study of passion - which can have harmful, obsessive features as well as beneficial and harmonious manifestations. She reports on her latest research conducted at the Yale Centre for Emotional Intelligence, which she joined in 2015.

Please visit our website to find out more about our work and the team:
www.pathwaystoadulthood.org

How have young people's routes from school to work changed over the past 30 years?

**Jake Anders and
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Making a successful transition from education into the labour market is important for young people's long-term economic success. We know, for instance, that periods of early unemployment may have scarring effects on later employment and earnings prospects (Gregg, 2001). Furthermore, there are reasons to suspect deep-rooted and structural problems are preventing some young people from achieving a successful transition. We see this from the fact that NEETs – young people not in education, employment or training – have been a fairly constant feature of the youth labour market in the UK for as long as records exist.

Our recent research, published as a LLAKES Research Paper (Anders and Dorsett, 2015), considers the question of how young people's transitions out of compulsory education have changed as the labour market around them has evolved. We analysed the experiences of four cohorts of young people; born in 1958, 1970, 1980, and 1990, respectively. In doing so, we build on previous research which had considered only the 1958 and 1970 cohorts (Schoon et al., 2001), providing a major update to the literature.

We use sequence analysis (Abbott, 1995) to compare and quantify the differences between young people's month by month activities for a period of 29 months following the September after their 16th birthday (i.e. when education is no longer compulsory). Sequence analysis provides a means of measuring the similarity between individuals' experiences of different states such as education, unemployment and NEET over this period. At its simplest, for any two individuals, the measure of similarity is calculated as the number of month both have the same status. In practice, we weight particular types of differences to reflect perhaps that some states may be more similar than others (Lesnard, 2006); our paper gives more detail.

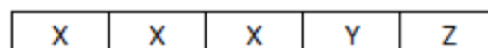
We use the measures of similarity obtained in this way to distinguish three broad groups of individuals:

1. An "Entering the Labour Market" (ELM) group, who move quickly from school into work without completing much education beyond that which is compulsory.
2. An "Accumulating Human Capital" (AHC) group, who remain in full time education throughout the 29-month period that we observe them.
3. A "Potential Cause for Concern" (PCC) group, who appear to leave education but without successfully moving into stable employment. They may move in and out of work, report being consistently unemployed, or report being economically inactive.

Figure 2 shows how the distribution of these three groups has evolved over time. The most obvious change is hardly surprisingly. The dominant experience has gone from being a direct transition between school and work to a transition involving at least two additional years of education beyond that which is compulsory. More than 90% of young people in our earliest cohort were in the ELM group, but less than 40% in the most recent. Over the same period, the AHC group grew from 4% to over 50%. This reflects the changing nature of the labour market, in which there are now fewer jobs available that do not require additional education.

However, another more worrying trend has accompanied this change. An increasing proportion of young people experience a transition that we characterise as being a "potential cause for concern".

Sequence A



Sequence B

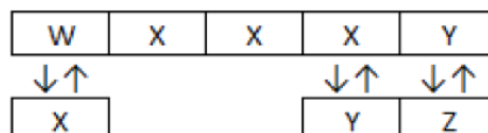


Figure 1

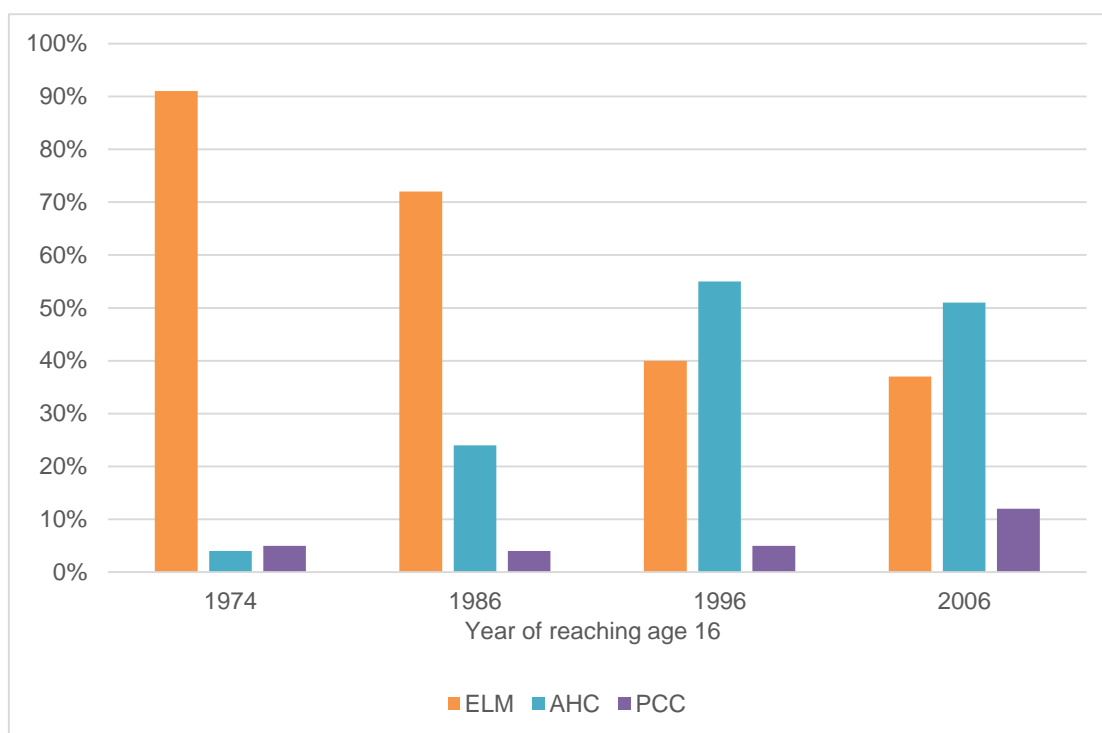


Figure 2

The proportion categorised as potential cause for concern (PCC) has risen from 4% in the earliest cohort to 12% in the most recent one. In the earlier cohorts, young women and those from non-white ethnic background are more likely than their male or white peers to be categorised as PCC. However, by the later cohorts, these positions have reversed, with young women and those from non-white ethnic background less likely to be in this group than their male or white peers.

By contrast, coming from an advantaged background has remained a strong predictor of avoiding the PCC route across all four cohorts. It seems likely that the changes described stem from the higher likelihood of staying in education for young women and those from non-white ethnic backgrounds, leaving them better-placed, on average, to avoid a difficult transition into the labour market.

Our research has highlighted fundamental changes over the past 30 years in the early experiences of young people beyond compulsory schooling. It suggests a clear need for policies to help smooth the school-to-work transition (Dorsett and Lucchino, 2014; Schoon, 2015). It does not appear to be the case that early difficulties will generally prove to be temporary. For our earliest two cohorts, we are able to examine this by considering also experiences up to age 24. We find that PCC status in the short run is strongly predictive of PCC status in the longer-run. Consequently, effective support at age 16 has the potential to bring lasting benefits.

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Variation in fertility: Recession and heterogeneity

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General trends

Economic conditions have dramatic influences on fertility, and the 2008 Great Recession was no exception. The effect of economic slumps is well documented. For example fertility rates in the UK fell below replacement during the 1920s Great Depression (Hinde 2003). Also the economic trauma experienced by Eastern European countries following the fall of Socialism saw fertility levels crash to lowest low levels (e.g. Sobotka *et al.* 2011). Yet, it is debatable whether similar falls in fertility are applicable to the UK following the 2008 Great recession. The UK was experiencing an upsurge in fertility prior to 2008 and in contrast to much of Europe there has been remarkably little response in terms of fertility patterns following the economic downturn. The total fertility rate for the UK since 2000 increases from just above 1.6 to nearly replacement level in 2010, and continues to increase following the 2008 crash albeit at a slightly slower rate.

Variations at the individual level

While variation in fertility patterns in response to economic conditions are well documented at a population level, there remains scant evidence regarding individual responses and how these differ for subgroups in the population (e.g. Kreyenfeld 2005). Macro level changes (such as GDP growth or unemployment) are often operationalised as sole predictor variables of interest, yet the assumed homogeneity in responses to the recession does not capture vital differences in fertility behaviour. For example- the most dramatic responses in terms of both partnership and fertility behaviour tend to be concentrated among the most disadvantaged (e.g. Vikat 2004, Kreyenfeld 2005) defined by age, gender, education, and socio-economic status. Similar to many other European countries, the United Kingdom has been experiencing falling fertility rates among younger women, with the increases in fertility being primarily driven by increasing birth rates among older women. UK fertility is also increasingly polarised, with fertility among younger women being concentrated among those who are not involved in higher education (Ni Bhrolcháin and Beaujouan 2012).

Focussing on heterogeneity

To address the evidence gap we analysed heterogeneous responses to the exposure of economic adversity. We examined the direct effects of individual and regional economic instability on first birth rates with unobserved indirect effects (due to factors beyond conventional economics variables). Moreover, we examined variation in fertility behaviour in the pre- and post-recession period, using data collected for the British Household Panel Survey and Understanding Society, comparing fertility patterns among women born in 1980-84; 1985-

1990; and 1990 or more recently. We measure the effect of the recession testing the significance of an indicator variable designed to capture any residual effects, for instance perceptions of economic uncertainty. Furthermore, we allow the effects of the recession to vary according to individual characteristics. We test for variations in response by cohort, age, education, and socio-economic status. This allows us to determine differential effect of the recession, and identify those groups who were able to withstand economic trauma, and those most affected by it.

Results

Recession effects

We found a significant effect of the recession, indicating a difference in pre- and post-2008 fertility profiles which is robust to the introduction of other explanatory variables. However, the effect is predicted to increase, rather than decrease fertility, and is consistent with counter cyclical fertility patterns. That said, the only significant effect is for women in the oldest birth cohort (1980-84), while for the other birth cohorts the effect is not significant in the main effect models. The findings reflect both the relative ageing of the UK fertility profile, and the fact that older age groups are more likely to be resilient to economic shock compared to younger cohorts due to greater labour market entrenchment and accumulated wealth (Kravdal 1994)

Covariate effects

We also found a pattern of heightened fertility among disadvantaged women. Women who are unemployed have higher predicted fertility than women who are in work, while women not in the labour force have considerably higher cumulative fertility rates (OR=8.56). Women enrolled in education demonstrate extremely low first birth rates, while we observe higher fertility among women with lower educational attainment. However, in the post 2008 period this effect disappears: the incidence of fertility is now consistently low across all categories of education (see Figure 1).

Considering the effect of the labour market, we note that there are relatively limited effects for women in full time employment (2% point fall) and women in full time education (<1% point fall), although in both the pre and post-recession periods the cumulative probabilities are very low. Rather larger effects can be seen for women who are unemployed, with the cumulative probability nearly 50% lower in the post-recession period than in the pre-recession period. The most dramatic effect is for women not in the labour force, where cumulative fertility falls by 16% points in the post-2008 period compared to the pre-2008 period.

Figure 1: Cumulative first birth rates for women pre and post recession by a) educational level and b) labour market activity

Note: Estimated probability of having first birth by age 21. Models control for age, age square, birth cohort, educational attainment, labour market status, pay (categorised), housing tenure, regional unemployment rate and regional pay rate using clustered standard errors.



Implications

The findings suggest that there is a recession effect on fertility rates, which is significant net of other explanatory variables. The manifestation of this effect is highly dependent on birth cohort as older women seem to be relatively immune to the effect of the recession, indeed they show a significant increase in cumulative fertility post-2008. In contrast, among younger women the effect of the recession is not significant. The most disadvantaged women, characterised by less than degree qualifications and peripheral labour market attachment are in general most likely to make the step into parenthood while women with degree level education and a full time job are least likely to. However, testing the interactions between the individual level variables and recession indicators suggests that these patterns might indicate pre-recession trends, which dissipate in the post-recession period.

In conclusion, while the most advantaged women appear to be not affected by external economic shocks, disadvantaged women seem to be highly sensitive to external economic circumstances, as reflected in lowered fertility rates. We find significant interactions between our recession indicator and employment status, suggesting that economic resources are critical to establishing a family (Kravdal 1994, Mills and Blossfeld 2003) and that lacking economic resources reduce the rate of transitioning to motherhood among disadvantaged women.

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Passion for Activities: Co-occurring Pain and Joy

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Of motivation and aversive experiences

Do you feel a passion for research or another activity? If you do, then you might know the odd combination of the urge to engage in this activity, the gratification and happy feelings related to it, and the occasional aversive feelings of frustration, anxiety, and anger, that sometimes occur when something is really important to us but does not go as planned.

This mixture of intrinsic motivation, negative emotions, and persistence in the face of obstacles is highly interesting to motivation researchers. Much of the previous research focuses on the beneficial outcomes of intrinsic motivation and the suboptimal and sometimes harmful consequences of extrinsic motivation. But what happens if a person experiences both? The research on passion helps understanding this riddle.

How to define passion?

Passion describes the inclination of a person to an activity that the person likes, finds important, and invests time and energy in (Vallerand et al., 2003). Experiencing a passion implies being committed and intending to practice the activity regularly. Many passionate individuals identify with their passion, and develop long-term plans related to their passion. In addition to such rather stable aspects, passion also includes fluctuating emotional experiences and approach motivation (Moeller, 2014). Traditionally, the term passion referred to harmful and uncontrollable desires and suffering (Dixon, 2003). The current literature has seen many different definitions of passion (for an overview, see Moeller, 2014; and Moeller, Eccles, et al., 2015) and distinguishes between the beneficial harmonious passion, and the harmful obsessive passion.

How to measure it?

Passion can be measured with self-report scales. In my dissertation, I developed the ‘commitment and passion scale’ to measure essential passion components as identified in the previous literature. This scale assesses stable aspects (identification, long-term goals) and more fluctuating components (action plans, desire). The scale was used to study relations between passion, personality traits and emotions in samples from Germany, Brazil, and the US (Moeller, 2014). Based on this scale, I also suggested a measure of situational passion to disentangle state and trait aspects of passion (Moeller, Dietrich, Eccles, & Schneider, under review).

The bright and dark sides of passion

Previous studies found that harmonious passion (HP) correlated with intrinsic and desirable experiences while obsessive passion (OP) correlated with aversive and harmful experiences. Based on that it has been stated that “people with an HP are able to decide to terminate the relationship with the activity if they

decide it has become a negative factor in their life” (Vallerand et al., 2003, p. 758), and “people with an obsessive passion can thus find themselves in the position of experiencing an uncontrollable urge to partake in the activity they view as important and enjoyable” (Vallerand, 2012, p. 3).

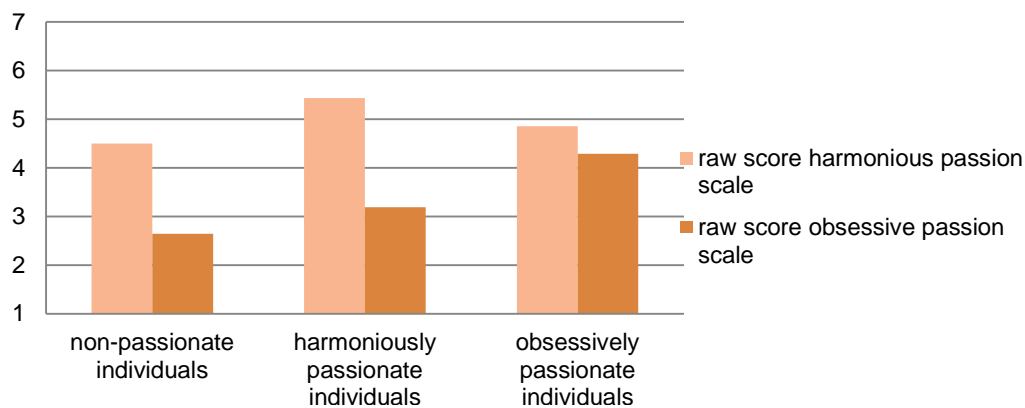
However, in my recent studies I found that such interpretations are often not supported if we examine individuals’ profiles of harmonious and obsessive passion. Individuals with higher obsessive than harmonious passion very rarely existed in my samples. Most individuals experienced stronger harmonious than obsessive passion and harmonious and obsessive passion were aligned within most individuals, meaning both were relatively high, or both relatively low, in relation to their sample distribution (Moeller, Keiner, & Grassinger, 2015).

I discovered that beliefs about differences between harmonious versus obsessive individuals were in part due to the fact that z-standardized scores can mislead interpretations in the analyses of group differences, which is widely unknown and relevant to many other research fields. Examine for instance Figure 1, which compared the raw and z-scores of harmonious and obsessive passion for three groups of differently passionate individuals (based on Philippe et al., 2009). The first group comprises individuals classified as non-passionate. The second group comprises individuals who were classified as passionate and had higher z-scores in harmonious than obsessive passion. The third group depicts individuals who were classified as passionate and had higher z-scores in obsessive than harmonious passion. While the z-scores reflect these intended group differences between mainly harmonious and mainly obsessive individuals (see lower graph), the raw scores show that *all* groups reported in fact higher harmonious than obsessive passion when responding to the scale from 1 = *not agree at all* to 7 = *very strongly agree* (see upper graph). This shows that z-scores can obfuscate information about the participants’ item affirmation and information about mean score differences (for further problems, see Moeller, 2015; Moeller, Keiner, & Grassinger, 2015).

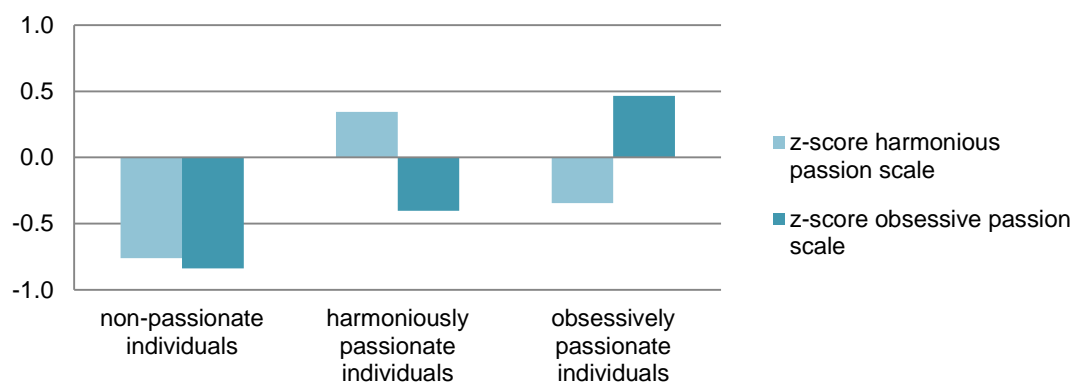
Currently, I investigate co-occurrences of passionate activities, intra-individual profiles of passion, and entrepreneurial passion with Dr. Zorana Ivcevic, Professor Katariina Salmela-Aro and team, Professor Scott Barry Kaufmann, Dr. Magdalena Grohmann and Professor Martin Obschonka.

raw scores of passion scales

Figure 1



z-scores of passion scales



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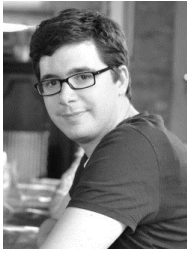
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Author profiles



Dr Jake Anders is a Research Fellow at the National Institute of Economic and Social Research and Honorary Research Associate at UCL Institute of Education. He is shortly to take up a post as a Senior Research Associate in the Department of Learning and Leadership at UCL Institute of Education.

Jake completed his PhD in Economics of Education at UCL Institute of Education, University College London, with a thesis entitled “Socioeconomic Inequality in Access to Higher Education in England”. This focused on three separate strands of this issue: the extent of inequality, the pre-cursors to this during the teenage years, and aspects of the admissions process itself. On completion, in 2014, Jake joined the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, working alongside Dr Richard Dorsett, and at the same time joined the Pathways programme as an Associate Fellow. During this time, Jake has continued to build a research profile which focuses on understanding the causes and consequences of educational inequality, and evaluating policies and programmes aiming to reduce it. This has included producing work with other Pathways fellows and alumni, including articles recently published in Developmental Psychology, the Journal of Youth and Adolescence, and European Sociological Review. Jake has received grants for his work from the Nuffield Foundation, the Sutton Trust and the Education Endowment Foundation.



Dr Mark Lyons-Amos is an LSE Fellow in Population Health at the Department of Social Policy, London School of Economics and Political Science

Mark completed his PhD at the University of Southampton, using longitudinal methods to study reproductive health. He subsequently joined the Centre for Multilevel Modelling (University of Bristol) and Centre for Population Change (University of Southampton), studying partnership and fertility interactions in a cross national context. He joined the Pathways programme in 2013. As part of the programme, he has produced research articles examining the effect of the Great Recession on the demography of early adulthood, as well as broader evaluation of the effects of the Recession on youth labour market outcomes. These research projects have produced three articles which have been presented at international conferences and been accepted for forthcoming publication. Mark joined the London School of Economics in 2015 and continues to work on youth demography, with a focus on complex demographic transitions and selection.



Dr. Julia Moeller is a postdoctoral researcher at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

Dr. Julia Moeller studied Psychology at the Free University of Berlin and completed her Ph.D. in Psychology at the University of Erfurt, Germany. Her summa cum laude dissertation investigated passion for activities. In 2013, she joined the Pathways Program and started post-doctoral research with Professor Katariina Salmela-Aro, Professor Jari Lavonen (University of Helsinki, Finland), and Professor Barbara Schneider (Michigan State University, US). The team studied situational student engagement and anxiety in STEM subjects in Finland and the US with experience sampling methods.

In 2015, Julia joined the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, where she works with her mentors Dr. Zorana Ivcevic and Professor Marc Brackett. The team studies emotions in academic and work settings, and currently examines relations between students' emotions and their academic and social experiences in 21,000 US high school students. Julia's research bridges the psychology of motivation, development, and personality and focuses on learning-related emotions and motivation, with a particular focus on situations and individuals in which positive and negative experiences occur together. Furthermore, Julia explores methodological particularities of measuring and analyzing intensive longitudinal data, also in collaboration with other Pathways members.



- The major objective of the programme is to promote the next generation of researchers through funding, mentoring and collaboration
- The mission of this Collaborative Post-Doctoral Fellowship Programme is to stimulate innovative, interdisciplinary, and comparative research of productive youth development.
- Our programme brings together experts from the UK, Germany, Finland, Sweden and the US
- We engage with different stakeholders in how best to equip young people or mastering the challenges of growing up in a changing social context.

Principal Investigators and participating institutions

- Lars Bergman – Stockholm University
- Jacquelynne S. Eccles – University of Michigan
- Katariina Salmela-Aro – University of Helsinki
- Barbara Schneider – Michigan State University
- Ingrid Schoon – Institute of Education, University of London
- Rainer K. Silbereisen – University of Jena
- Ulrich Trautwein -University of Tübingen

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