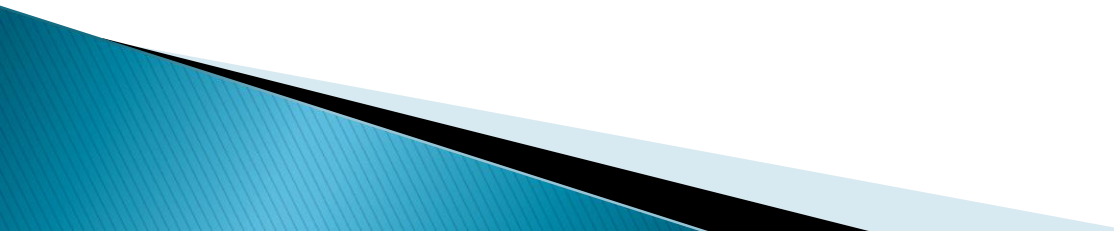





# Hopes for the Future: Parents' and Children's Understandings of Children's Future Employment Orientations

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# Work and Family Lives: The Changing Experiences of 'Young' Families'

- ▶ Explore how families reconcile work and family life over time, drawing on the changing experiences and perceptions of a sample of families with primary school-aged children.
  - ▶ Investigate processes of negotiation between parents and children in addressing issues raised by working parenthood, how such issues impact on everyday family practices, and how these may change over time in response to changes in work and family circumstances, including those in the lives of children.
  - ▶ Deepen understanding of how work and family issues are constructed and 'worked out' by parents and children living under very different socio-economic and labour market conditions.
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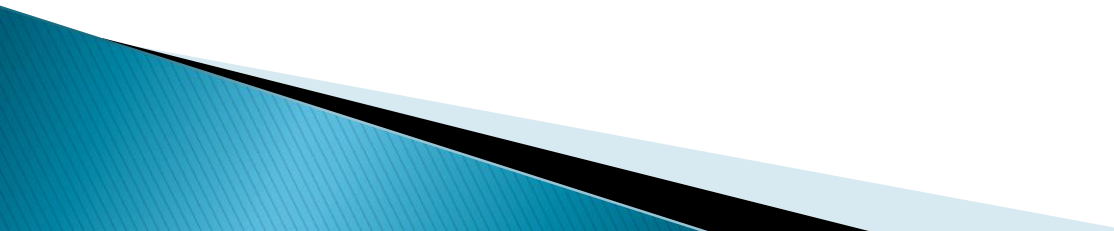
# Participants

- ▶ 14 families (15 children and 22 parents)
  - ▶ Located in Edinburgh and Lothians
  - ▶ 9 couples, 5 single-mothers
  - ▶ 11 full-time, 10 part-time, 2 retired parents
  - ▶ 11 in public sector, 7 private sector, 3 third sector
  - ▶ Household income from £20K – +£60K.
  - ▶ 10 more affluent (+£30K) and 4 lower income families.
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# Methods

- ▶ Sought multiple perspectives to build up complex understanding of family life and dynamics
- ▶ Three waves of data collection:
  - Waves 1 and 3: individual interviews (with parents and children)
  - Wave 2: family group interviews

# Into the future

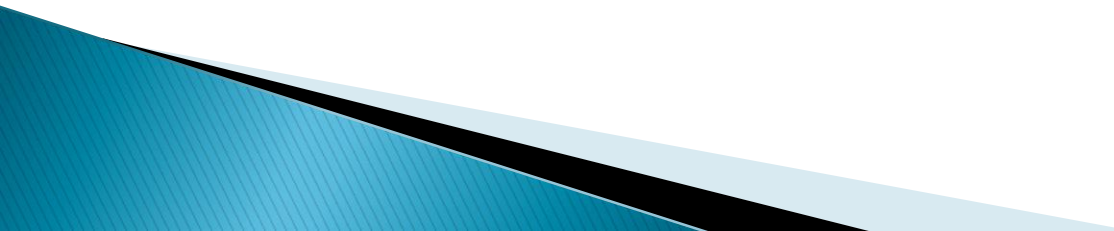
- ▶ Futures, uncertainty and risk
  - ▶ Reflexive biographies and life planning
  - ▶ To plan or not to plan?
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# Young adults' employment futures

- ▶ The 'extended present' (Nowotny 1994)
- ▶ This “not only stops people from imagining the future; it stops them from doing anything about it or creating changes in the future” (Brannen 2005: 117).
- ▶ What is 'planning'?
  - Plans, hopes and dreams (Nilsen 1999)
- ▶ Aspirations (Devadason 2008)
  - wishes, hopes, blue sky plans, precise plans

# WFL findings

Conceptions of the future:

- ▶ The future as a potentially progressive temporal modality.
  - ▶ The future as risk laden but navigable.
  - ▶ The future as a moral process involving negotiation of responsibility and values.
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# The future as a potentially progressive temporal modality?

- ▶ Generational progression
  - Well you always want better for your bairns. You always want your bairns to not have it as hard as what you've got it. (Alan Clarke)
  - He says he'd rather I'd stick it in – same as my mum basically. He'd rather I stick it in and get a better job than he's ever got....Because they think I should be treated better than what they've been treated, because they'd rather me get more money to spend on my family, than they are doing right now. They'd rather get me to have a better educated brain. (Ryan Clarke, 9)
- ▶ Generational maintenance
- ▶ Significance of socio-economic position
- ▶ Hopes – change and continuity



# Is the future unknown?

## ▶ The work imperative

- Well, basically I've always worked, realistically, fae (from) she went to school, and she's always seen aunties, uncles, cousins. It's just in our nature to be working. (Jane Heath)
- He's struggling to get himself a job, to get himself into full time employment, he's realising that with the qualifications that he left school with it doesn't open very many doors, so he's having to think about what he wants to do with his future. (Alan Clarke)
- Because Dean doesn't have a good job and if you could see the state he is in now you would be surprised....He doesn't have a job yet and he's 21. He's had quite a few jobs but he got fired for not turning up early enough, or getting a good education. (Ashley Clarke, 9)

## ▶ Not working – Disaster scenarios

- Well she needs to save up and without the money she gets from her work she can't pay for our food, or, or like the bills, or the house... and we couldn't keep the house, then we would have to live out in the streets or something (Jack Erskine, 8).

# Dreams of the future

- ▶ Vague about specific employment futures
- ▶ Limiting dreams
  - I said to Charlotte, ‘What do you want to be then?’ ‘I want to be unemployed.’ ‘Pardon?’ ‘I want to be unemployed.’ ‘Why do you want to be unemployed?’ ‘I would like to have a dog and we can’t have a dog because you’re at work and if you’re unemployed, you get money for doing nothing and if I run out of money, you’d give me money wouldn’t you?’ ‘So you think I’m going to go to work to earn money, to give to you, because you want to stay at home and look after the dog?’ ‘yes.’ I said ‘You might be mistaken about that.’

# A good job

- ▶ Distinctions drawn between different forms of employment often around pay:
  - Well, not a dustbin cleaner. Like, something that pays decently so you can, like, get a, like, an okay house, like, not one of these, like, flats and live in a flat all your life. Like actually get a proper house. And, like, so you have enough money to, say, if you want kids and you have a family, so you can look after your family. And, you know, just something that pays decent. (Hannah Phillips, 10).

## Distinctions around control and status:

- Manual labour, I mean it's that sort of just no control, turn up, this is what you do and you just do one thing and you do it for forty hours a week and then and you get a crap wage as well. (Graham Reid)
- A job with a bit of satisfaction. Not working for a supermarket chain, or companies like that. A bit more than shoving things in boxes or boxes into cages. That's just about what I've done all my life: manual jobs (Alan Clarke)
- Getting treated better and getting good enough pay for what you're doing....There's less people going about saying, 'you're stupid' and that. And you dinnae ken anything at all, and stuff like that. Treated like - 'well hi, Ryan 'how are you doing?' and stuff like that. (Ryan Clarke, 9)

# The right path

- ▶ Assumed trajectories: a good education as the pathway to a good job
  - I'm not saying this happens to everybody, but the majority of people who leave school at sixteen, you're not going to have the best of degrees, and you're probably going to end up working in McDonalds or in a shop, which doesn't really give good money, and it just won't be a very financially stable good life, you know what I mean?... 'cause you'll be rewarded later on in your life if you do work hard... You'll have a nice house, a nice car, it'll just be a happier life instead of living in, like... I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it, but living in, like, a council estate for the rest of your life, and not having the good stuff, just has to be the low ranking of everything. (Calum Ritchie, 10)
  - If you don't have the qualifications you might become trapped in something, you know, and you could be 35, the kids have gone to school, they've grown up they've gone to secondary school and then you've got... you think to yourself, well what do I do now..? (Archie Ritchie)

# The wrong path

- ▶ Non educational trajectories are more risky
  - They do need to understand if they don't do well at school, then the chances of getting a good job might be quite slim, because not very many people fall into a really good job with a bad education, it's usually by chance or luck they came across something and make a fortune. (Emma Phillips)
  - But she doesn't know that, that she'll win the lottery. She thinks she might win the lottery, but she might be somebody that's on the street, that's got no money if she doesn't pay attention at school...She might marry a millionaire, but the guy, the millionaire might be horrible to her and be nasty, and maybe threaten her. So money doesn't like really bring happiness because he can maybe threaten her to kill her and stuff . (Lisa Heath, 11)

# A future out of control?

- ▶ Undermining assumptions in the context of economic change:
  - ▶ In this day and age, I don't think it's necessarily that way, I mean, yes, if you work hard, you'll get the qualifications, but unfortunately these days, qualifications don't necessarily guarantee you a job of any kind. (Sally Shaw)
- ▶ Reinforcing assumptions but with heightened uncertainty
  - I suppose where we are now means that there is a much smaller job market, a much smaller market with more people going for the jobs and so, you know, there's going to be much more competition for every job that comes up...so it's really important to get yourself as well skilled and as well educated as you possibly can (Jan Ritchie)
  - The credit crunch, 'cause the credit crunch'll still be on when I'm an adult, like just when I'm nearly adult, and I won't have a lot of money when I'm like eighteen and that (Calum Ritchie, 10)

# Who is in control?

## ▶ Parental responsibility

- There's a lot of responsibility on your shoulders to try and help them to find something that they're going to be good at and to find them a career, to help them to set up a home, to help them to learn how, how to stand on their own two feet, and that can be very difficult.... as a parent you kind of worry about the future, you're constantly worrying about the future. (Maggie Clarke)

## ▶ Contradiction between responsibility and lack of control

- What a parent's value puts on something is not what a child will because you can give them a framework but they can come out with something that's going to be quite different. (Fiona Christie)
- If that's what I really did want to do, they wouldn't want to be part of me, in my life, because my mum said if I leave school at sixteen, I'm going to be out of the house, or I have to pay my mum and dad if I want to stay here, so pay for my part of the food, like a bed, so that's what they've...they've said that to me already. (Calum Ritchie, 10)

# Future oriented values

## ▶ Work ethic

- I'm very much of the work ethic, that you do what you're asked to do and you do it to the best of your abilities and you don't take the sloppy, easy way out all the time... as long as you reflect what you're truly capable of then whatever you get from that, whatever you gain from that, is what you deserve. (Rachel Erskine)

## ▶ Children as becoming

- We would certainly have a conversation about work ethic and just about the importance of having your own job and having your own money and, you know, just the importance of making it in this life by yourself. (Jan Ritchie)
- I think the most important thing in life is to have goals and go for them even if you don't necessarily get there, just to get up and keep trying and not give up. (Debra Grieve)



# Conclusion

- ▶ Children's futures remained vague but we can also see evidence of 'planning': trajectories mapped out.
  - ▶ Reflexive practices as children and parents navigate their way to a 'good' future.
  - ▶ Individualised narratives
  - ▶ Structural factors shaping future narratives
    - Socioeconomic position
    - Economic change
    - Generation
  - ▶ Children's employment futures were significant in families' lives not simply as a far off imagined time, but one which was firmly embedded in present everyday practices, values and past experiences.
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