

“Under”grad Depression: Economic Anxiety and the Construction of Young Adult Identity



Saint Mary's College
Department of Sociology
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Jessica Doherty

Research Questions



- ❧ What is the economic impact of recessions on young adults' expectations for their future?
- ❧ How do differences in socioeconomic status and education shape the construction of a young adult's role in society?

Thesis



- ❧ Despite socioeconomic differences, young adults facing economic anxiety are more likely to socially construct identities dominated by powerlessness, insecurity and corruption.

Literature Review



- ❧ Shifts In Adulthood
 - ❧ Arnett (1998)
 - ❧ Furstenberg et al. (2004)
 - ❧ Settersten & Ray (2010)
 - ❧ Shanahan (2000)

Literature Review



- œ Entering the Workforce
 - œ Fitzpatrick & Turner (2009)
 - œ DeMarco & Cosner-Berzin (2008)

Literature Review



- ❧ Emotional Impacts of Economic Hardships
 - ❧ Stein et al. (2011)
 - ❧ Konstam (2007)

Theory



- ❧ Berger & Luckmann (1966)
 - ❧ Social Construction of Reality

- ❧ Elder (1998)
 - ❧ Life Course as Developmental
 - ❧ Principle of historical context and human agency

Methodology



- ❧ Qualitative Study
 - ❧ Eight Interviews
 - ❧ Convenience Sampling & Snowball Effect
 - ❧ Open-ended Coding
- ❧ Demographics
- ❧ Strengths & Weaknesses

Findings



∞ Education & Employment History

∞ Defining Adulthood

Findings



☞ Job Insecurity

☞ “Honestly, I don’t pay attention to all that all that much. I don’t listen to news, I don’t stay current, I know I should I just feel very depressed. I mean it’s something I should learn about but it’s not something I want to worry constantly about or focus on too much. What I hear is very different, people say there’s no jobs, others say there are jobs. But if the current job market is pretty bad then it could only get better, but like I said I don’t know much.” – James, age 21

Findings



∞ Generational Concerns

∞ “The current generation has declined in values and like um, we dress inappropriately, we say vulgar things, we act inappropriately, um we have changed a lot of the customs. Like back in the day it would be unheard of...how moral-less and scandalous people of our generation can be and it just makes me think like, if you’re going to do this now, what are you going to do when you have more freedom later on?” –Anna, age 19

Discussion



- ❧ Future-focused
- ❧ Generation of Corruption
- ❧ Change People vs. Change Societal Structures
- ❧ No Voice

Questions? Comments?



Thank you.