

Adolescent Growth and Transitions

Life Course Perspective and Longitudinal Analysis

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Adolescence in Life Course Perspective

- The life course is a sequence of life stages
- Adolescence is a volatile stage
- Adolescent growth
 - Cognitive
 - Social emotional
 - Physical health
- Adolescent transitions
 - Salient life events within adolescence
 - Events signifying transitions to young adulthood

Persons and Institutions in Life Course Research

- The interplay of personal and institutional dynamics
- Major institutions and their changes
 - Family of origin
 - Education
 - Labor market
 - Policy
- Increasing adolescents' ability
 - To negotiate the life course
 - Under new opportunities and constraints

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Institutional Regulations: The Normative Sequence

- Socialization institutions
 - Family and school set regulations regarding age and gender
- Age
 - Age norms
 - Age markers of life stages
 - Age grading of sequences of status positions
- Gender
 - Fixation of male and female life-course patterns
 - Related to deeply rooted gender order

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- Things have been changing
- How to understand changes?

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Three levels of time

- Historical time
 - Industrial vs. post-industrial period
 - Affect everyone in similar ways
- Cohort time
 - Salient historical events surrounding
 - the birth year or
 - years when transitioning to next stages
 - Affect persons in a birth cohort in similar ways
- Individual time
 - Chronological age

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Research Approaches

- Historical time
 - Period effects
 - Compare personal dynamics between two historical times
- Cohort time
 - Cohort effects
 - Compare cohorts who experience different historical events at a fixed age
- Individual time
 - Event history analysis of individual trajectories
 - Age as the clocking time

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Previous Research

- How do institutions and individuals adapt to the restructuring and transformation of society
- Examples
 - Elder (1974): a study of personality development of two cohorts born during the Great Depression
 - Furstenberg et al. (1987): a longitudinal study of teenage mothers
 - Sampson and Laub (1993): a longitudinal study of juvenile delinquents through adulthood
 - Gerson (2001): a longitudinal study of youth from different family types

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Emerging Theme 1

- Increasing variability in pathways to adult roles through historical time (Hogan 1981; Stevens 1990)
 - Changing opportunities and limitations that define pathways
 - Changing patterns of standardization

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Emerging Theme 2

- Heightened attentions to transition behaviors (Hogan 1981; Giddens 1991)
 - Active efforts of young people to shape their biographies
 - Planful competence (Clausen 1991)
 - Bounded strategic coping and adaptation (Mortimer 1994)

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Emerging Theme 3

- Flexible Timing of Transitions
 - Discrepancy between cultural norms and actual behavior
 - Off-time transitions from school to work
 - Extensions and changes of transition processes
 - between the life spheres of education, family and work

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Ex 1. Family Dynamics and Behavior Problems

- Research question
 - Do family dynamics through childhood affect adolescents' social emotional development?
- Hypothesis
 - The timing and duration of childhood exposures to unfavorable family conditions can have long-term detrimental effects on children's behavior problems

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(Ex 1 cont) Data and Dependent Variable

- National Longitudinal Survey of Youth Matched Mother and Child data
 - Female respondents aged 14-21 of NLSY79 have been followed annually till 1994 and biennially since then
 - Children of NLSY females are followed from birth biennially
 - Panel data on children with measures for the full dynamics of family of origin
- Dependent variables
 - Externalizing and internalizing behavior problems

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(Ex 1 cont) Key Explanatory Variables

- 4 aspects of family conditions
 - Poverty status
 - Family structure
 - Welfare use
 - Living with grandparents
- 3 sets of measures of dynamics
 - Early childhood exposure
 - Years of exposure ages 0-5
 - E.g., years living in poverty
 - Current exposure
 - Status when behavior problems were assessed
 - E.g., current poverty status
 - Family stability
 - Years of current spell
 - E.g., years of current poverty spell

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(Ex 1 cont) Unobserved Family Heterogeneity

- Unobserved pre-existing differences
 - marital discord
 - parents' personality
 - genetic predispositions
- If not controlled, it may render the effects of observed family dynamics spurious

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(Ex 1 cont) Sibling Models and Fixed Effects

- Panel data on individual children
- Families with at least 2 siblings in the sample
- Specify family fixed effects
 - Repeated observations of individuals
 - Multiple siblings from the same family
- To address the potential bias arising from
 - Correlation between family dynamic measures and unobserved family heterogeneity (in the error term)

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(Ex 1 cont) Summary

- Unique features
 - Simultaneously examine effects of four family conditions
 - Account for timing of exposure
 - Controlling for unobserved family heterogeneity
- Findings
 - Strong and robust detrimental effects of early childhood poverty
 - No consistent findings for other aspects of family dynamics

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Ex 2. Policy Environment and Transitions

- Research question
 - Do state variations in welfare reform policies affect adolescents' school enrollment and formal employment?
- Why welfare policy matters for adolescents?
 - Signaling hypothesis: the importance of schooling
 - Labor market competition hypothesis: adolescents are crowded out
- Examine two types of transitions simultaneously
 - In and out of school
 - In and out of labor market

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(Ex 2 cont) Data and Measures

- National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97)
 - Panel data for respondents aged 14-18 during 1994-1999
- Longitudinal data on state welfare policy 1994-1999
- Dependent variable
 - Transitions within or between enrollment and employment
- Key explanatory variable
 - State welfare policy stringency
 - Controls
 - Other state policy
 - State labor market conditions
 - Unobserved state heterogeneity

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(Ex 2 cont) Methods

- Monthly longitudinal data
 - start from age 14
 - cross-classify enrollment and employment
 - specify 18 movers and stayers
 - E.g., a mover was in school and working in month t but no longer working in month $t+1$
 - E.g. a stayer remains in school and not working from month t to $t+1$
 - Right censored at high school graduation or age 18
- A transition model for stayers and movers
 - Multinomial logit estimator
 - Random effects for unobserved state characteristics

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(Ex 2 cont) Summary

- Unique features
 - Address spatial variation in policy
 - Individual adaptation to policy variation
 - Decisions about schooling and formal employment
 - Model the sequence of transitions of two processes
- Findings
 - No support for signaling hypothesis
 - Evidence for labor market competition hypothesis
 - Stronger for low-income dropouts

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Ex 3. Cohort Analysis

- Research question
 - Does welfare reform create cohort differences in teenage pregnancy/birth and school dropout?
- Hypothesis
 - Welfare reform deters teen pregnancy and school dropout
- Comparing the life events of two cohorts with or without welfare reform experience
 - A pre-reform cohort
 - A post-reform cohort

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(Ex 3 cont) Data and Design

- National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97)
 - A pre-reform cohort of girls who reached age 16 before the law implementation
 - A post-reform cohort of girls who were aged 14 after the law implementation
 - Person-month event history data
- A quasi-experimental design
 - The “experimental group” is the post-reform cohort
 - The “control group” is the pre-reform cohort
 - The “Treatment” is the welfare reform law
 - Isolate the treatment effect from confounding factors
 - State policy on abortion and child support
 - State secondary education policy
 - State labor market opportunities
 - Family conditions
 - Individual characteristics

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(Ex 3 cont) Methods

- Identify policy-target subpopulation
 - Distinguish between adolescents from low- vs. high-income families
- Dependent variable
 - Entry into first pregnancy
 - Entry into first birth
 - Entry into first school dropout
- Discrete-time hazard models
 - A logit estimator for the timing of the event
 - A difference-in-differences method

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(Ex 3 cont) Summary

- Unique features
 - Address social change and cohort experience
 - Individual adaptation to social change
 - Decisions about pregnancy and schooling
 - Quasi-experimental design to identify policy effects
- Findings
 - No positive or negative effects of welfare reform on teen fertility and school dropout
 - Welfare reform did not reach its goal to affect adolescents' fertility and school decisions

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New Method 1: Complex Pathways

- Latent transition analysis (von Eye & Clogg 1996)
 - Transition markers are indicators of latent classes
 - E.g., LCA in Wagmiller et al. (2006)
 - 4 latent classes capture timing, duration, and sequencing
- Optimal-matching strategy (Abbott 1995)
 - Transition to adulthood as a sequence of events
 - Identify the normative sequence
 - classify cases by degree of dissimilarity to the normative sequence

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New Method 2: Complex Combinations of Precursors

- Configuration of factors using Boolean algebra (Ragin 1987)
- Detailed life histories gives rise to patterns of precursors (Singer et al. 1998)

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New Method 3: Genetics

- Genetics and life course
- E.g., Guo et al. (2008)
 - Incorporate biosocial paradigms
 - Genotypes and the interaction between genotypes and environment
 - Effects on delinquency

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Future Direction: Cross-Cultural Comparisons

- How to comparison Taiwan to other societies?
- Institutional connection between school and work
 - Germany and Japan vs. U.S. and Britain
- Interplay between institutional and personal dynamics
 - Divergent pathways
 - Germany's system reduces divergence
- Unique comparisons among East Asian societies?

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