



Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland



Children's attitudes towards old age: findings from Kids' Life and Times Survey 2014

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Today's Presentation

- Why do we need to study population change?
- Methods and approach
- Children's Imagined Futures at age 40 and 70
- Age Segregation
- The Northern Ireland policy context
- Conclusion: the life course approach



<https://populationpyramid.net/united-kingdom/1966/>

<https://populationpyramid.net/united-kingdom/2016/>

<https://populationpyramid.net/united-kingdom/2027/>



Why should we study the impact of population ageing on children?

1. Fundamental shift in the demographic balance;
2. Age segregation has been identified as ‘a root cause of ageism’ (Hagestad and Uhlenberg, 2006);
3. The family is the only social institution which allows meaningful engagement between generations (Hagestad and Uhlenberg, 2006).

Chronological Age in Policy Making

1. Education is seen as an investment in children.
2. Work and employment systems and benefits are designed from 16-67.
3. Pensions are for the elderly, who no longer work.

‘The segmented life course’ (Kohli, 1988).



The Bookend Generations

Research Questions:

What do children think about old age?

What do children expect to be doing at 40?

What do children expect to be doing at 70?



The survey



2014 *Kids' Life and Times (KLT) Survey* asked 2,312 10/11 year olds about ageing and older people

When do children think old age begins?

What are their hopes for later life?

How do they view older people?

- Evidence base of inter generational contact, understanding and attitudes



When does old age begin?

Kids' Life and Times (10 and 11 year old's responses)

Lowest: 30 years old

Mean: 54 years old

31% answered 'do not know'

'I think of them as old when they are 48. Sorry to those who are 48'

'I don't think of them as old people. I just think of them as people who have lasted longer'



Attitudes towards Older People

Majority (77%) felt older people were respected in Northern Ireland:

‘I always respect all ages’

‘People may be disrespectful to you’

Older people more respected in society than teenagers, children and other adults



Imagining the Future

Do children see a clear path through the segmented life course (education, work and retirement) in their own future?

What do you think you will be doing when you are 40?

What do you think you will be doing when you are 70?

20% didn't know how to respond



Life at Age 40...



Life at 40: Work, work, work

- Work – freedom for money, escape from school, dreams
 - ‘At NASA, training to be an astronaut and going to the moon’
 - ‘My dream would be a sports star – but in reality a geography teacher’

Children seemed very aware of the demands of this busy time of life, with multiple roles in the public sphere.

Life at Age 70...

to include both letters and...

Section 5 – Employment status

Full time employment Part time employment Self employed
 Unemployed Student Retired

Occupation: **ENJOYING LIFE!**

Your total annual income
(Includes annual salary, pension, maintenance payments, rental income and any other regular income you receive.)

Section 6 – Residential status

Living...

Life at 70: private sphere

Positive vision – leisurely retirement:

‘Sitting on a green armchair with a waistcoat and black shoes watching the television all fit and well’

Intergenerational contact:

‘Living with my husband, and children and grandchildren visiting me every weekend’

Knowledge of policy:

‘The law won’t let you retire until you are 67 now so by the time I am 67 the number will have increased so probably still working’

Detailed visualisations of future

- Some very specific visualisations of life at 40:
 - ‘I believe I will have a fairly good job, hopefully a scientist, and be living in a good house still taking life by the hand. I believe you are only as old as you feel.’

Such detail was less common at 70

Age Segregation



Age Segregation

Leading thinkers (Hagestad and Uhlenberg, 2005) have argued that modern lives leave little room for intergenerational contact, outside the family.

Age segregation is a root cause of 'ageism' as it allows for distance and misunderstanding to develop between generations.

Age Segregation

Intergenerational contact was seen as a desirable thing for 69% of the children.

Most children thought that teenagers were the group most likely to be dismissed because of their age.

Policy context in Northern Ireland

Active Ageing Strategy 2016-2021 (Northern Ireland Executive, 2016)

Our Children and Young People – our pledge: a ten year strategy for children and young people 2006-2016 (OFMDFM, 2006).



The Life Course Approach

A third way, which takes account of cohort and generation effects:

- As chronological age is used to define and design policy we need to be aware of how it might increase or diminish solidarity between generations.
- Viewing each citizen as an individual with developmental potential from birth to death.

Conclusion

Are there ways that we can think creatively about working together?

The life course approach suggests that the problems of old age are often linked to childhood deprivation.

The potential of living a long and healthy life is dependent on investment in children.



Conclusion

One possible way forward is to use what we have learned about the importance of segregation across communities to engage citizens from different generations in community building.

<http://www.ark.ac.uk/ap/>

<http://linkinggenerationsni.com/>





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