

**Life-course transitions, social class, and gender:
a 15-year perspective of the lived lives of
Canadian young adults**

A Submission from Lesley Andres and Maria Adamuti-Trache
Department of Educational Studies, University of British Columbia to
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Abstract

In this paper, through the theoretical lens of life-course research and reproduction theory, we employ 15 years of longitudinal data from the British Columbia, Canada Paths on Life's Way project to examine the extent to which educational and career pathways of this cohort of 1988 high school graduates are gendered, individualized, prolonged, diversified; to determine marriage and parenthood patterns in relation to educational and occupational participation and outcomes across time; and to assess the extent to which social class still matters. We employ a transition probabilities analysis to follow the journeys of over 730 individuals from high school through the post-secondary system and work by identifying a sequence of significant stages. We then correlate these transition rates with relevant factors that influenced respondents' lives. We demonstrate quantitatively that although the life courses of young women and men are experienced differently, there is an overall regularity in outcomes. Their 'choices' at key transition points are to large extent shaped by external structures and social class and gender differences are evident.

Keywords: higher education; work; young adulthood; social class; transition

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Bios

Lesley Andres is a Professor in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. She is the principal investigator of the Paths on Life's Way Project, a 15 year longitudinal study of B.C. young adults. A 20 year follow-up is currently underway. Recently, she has completed a book with Professor Johanna Wyn (Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne) entitled *The Making of a Generation: Young Adults in Canada and Australia* (under review) based on longitudinal comparative analyses of the Paths on Life's Way Project and the Australian Life Patterns project. Professor Andres' research and teaching interests include the sociology of education, foundations of higher education, issues of inequality and access, the transition from high school to post-secondary education and to work, life course research, and quantitative and qualitative research methods. Also, she is the Editor of the *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*.

Maria Adamuti-Trache obtained a doctoral degree in theoretical physics from the University of Bucharest (Romania), where she taught physics for fifteen years. She also received an MA in higher education from the University of British Columbia and is currently a PhD candidate in Educational Studies. Maria has expertise in life course research, which explores the impact of gender, age, social class and immigrant status on education and work transitions. Her current research focuses on the socio-economic integration of recent immigrants, further education and labour market outcomes of university graduates. Also, she continues to do research in math and science education, gender, and science-related careers. Currently, Maria is Research Manager with Edudata Canada, and Statistical Consultant in the Faculty of Education, UBC.