

## Social Inequalities in Rural England: Impacts on young people post-2008

### **Abstract**

This paper investigates the cumulative impacts of the 2008 economic crisis and its aftermath (including policy changes) on young people in a sparsely populated rural area of northern England. The paper locates the research in the context of youth studies, Bourdieu's theory of practice, concepts of welfare regimes and welfare mix, and studies of the impacts of the crisis and austerity policies on the distribution of social and societal risk. The empirical findings reveal the challenges which faced young people in rural England before the financial crisis still persist. Moreover, the overwhelming reliance of young people on family for support generates further inequalities through what might be termed 'secondary impact austerity': young people feel indirectly and unevenly the economic effects and policy changes which impact on parents' and communities' ability to offer them support. Thus, changes to the welfare system, loss of services and less secure forms of employment exacerbate the transfer of social risk and the deepening of poverty for vulnerable groups. This is worsened in this rural area by the moral imperatives which stigmatise access to state and charitable support. Thus, moral capital and local habitus intersect with social, economic and cultural capitals in structuring inequalities.

**Keywords:** social exclusion; rural; youth; inequality; economic crisis; austerity; habitus; moral capital; local habitus.

### **1. Introduction**

Remarkably few studies have reported on the cumulative effects on rural Britain of welfare reform, the 2008 economic crisis and ensuing changes in government policies and public expenditure, often characterised as 'austerity'. This contrasts with rural studies in North America (Sherman 2013; Smith and Tickamyer 2011; Tickamyer et al 2017) and in other parts of Europe (Gkartzios 2013; Murphy and Scott 2013; Zavras et al 2012; Zografakis and Karanikolas 2012), as well as with the burgeoning 'austerity urbanism' literature (Peck 2012; Hastings et al 2017). Across the EU, young people have been particularly affected by the recession and its aftermath, with sharp increases in youth unemployment in many countries among other impacts. Young people across the world face far-reaching economic, political and social changes and "are being locked out of the labour market, forced to pick up steep bills for their education, and face difficulties in accessing suitable housing" (Furlong 2015, 24). The cumulative effect of such changes in an urban area has been shown to lead to "further inequality, hardship and polarisation" for certain social-economic groups (Asenova et al 2015, 38). This paper reports on research which investigated these cumulative impacts on young people in a sparsely populated rural area of northern England. The paper locates the research in the context of youth studies, Bourdieu's theory of practice, concepts of welfare regimes and welfare mix, and studies of the impacts of austerity policies on the distribution of social and societal risk. The empirical findings are then presented and discussed, and conclusions drawn.

## **2. Youth Transitions and Cultures in a Risk Society**

Two approaches – transitions and cultures - have dominated youth studies for some years (Furlong et al, 2011; Woodman and Bennett 2015). The transition approach focuses on how patterns of inequality may structure the transition from childhood to adulthood. The cultures approach focuses on youth cultural forms, subjectivity, creativity and resistance. Debates have continued around the relative merits and limitations of these “twin tracks” of structure and agency (Cohen 2003), but Furlong *et al* (2011) argue that in late modern contexts, where relationships between social class and subjectivities have become more complex, neither approach is fit for purpose any longer. Some have sought a ‘middle ground’ using concepts such as bounded agency (Evans 2007) or structured individualisation (Roberts 2003), or through alternative formulations (Woodman and Bennett 2015): for example Furlong et al (2011) promote a ‘social generational approach’. In this paper, we argue that structural inequalities still have a profound effect on the life course of young people and therefore see merit in a youth transitions approach, but one which is integrated with a recognition of agency, local experience and culture, informed by Bourdieu’s theory of practice.

The youth transitions approach emerged during the 1970s as neoliberalism usurped Keynesianism as the dominant economic narrative, subsequently hastened by globalisation. The post-war welfare state operated as a risk-pooling mechanism, underpinned by values of solidarity. However, the reconfiguration of welfare regimes ‘towards an increasingly personalised responsibility for managing life’s adversities’ (Asenova et al 2015, 14-15) has contributed to a theory of a modern ‘risk society’ (Beck 1992, 2000) characterised by profound uncertainty which compels the self-organisation of individual biographies. The pace of change, the increased role of impersonal systems and institutions, notably global markets, and the rise of insecure employment means that the ability to survive and prosper has become more precarious for many (Standing 2011). In the structural context of high youth unemployment, young people are required to resolve collective problems (a lack of jobs) through individual action and hold themselves responsible for any failure – a phenomenon dubbed “collective individualisation” (Furlong and Cartmel 1997). Young people may feel more pressure to make ‘correct choices’ at early stages in their lives, for example about which subjects to study at school and how to accrue credentials. Moreover, there is no longer a ‘standard sequencing of life events which mark transition stages to adulthood’ (Chisholm et al 1990, 7). Researchers argue that semi-dependence on parents (e.g. ‘yo-yoing’) is the new norm (Antonucci et al 2014, 17) and point to an arrested, delayed, fractured or extended non-linear journey into adulthood (Arnott 2004, Coles 1995).

Previous studies in rural Britain have found that young people become integrated into one of two distinct labour markets – the national (distant, well-paid, with career prospects) and the local (often poorly paid, insecure and with fewer prospects) (Shucksmith 2004; Jentsch and Shucksmith 2003, 2004). Education, social class and social networks were the key elements that influenced employment paths. In addition the interplay between wage levels and the accessibility and affordability of transport and housing were distinctive aspects of rural labour market integration and opportunities, mediated also by class and gender dimensions (Storey and Brannen 2000). Young people (like all people) are differentiated by a range of structural and agential factors and although individuals are increasingly held accountable for their own fates, and demonstrate agency in determining their own life paths, life transitions continue to be influenced by social class, race and gender, among other factors.

*Bourdieu, young people's differential resources and the significance of place.*

Bourdieu is particularly interested in the mechanisms through which inequality is transmitted intergenerationally. His Theory of Practice (Bourdieu 1977) deploys concepts of: *habitus* – a set of individual ‘dispositions’; *capital* - extending this notion from the accumulation of economic advantage to include social, cultural and symbolic capital; and *field* - a social context in which capitals are accumulated and deployed and power is played out. This was Bourdieu’s attempt to explain the reproduction of privilege and power across generations and to reveal how differential resources, capacities and power interact to reproduce inequality, so transcending the structure/agency binary. Social actors have goals and interests (to gain capital and to transmit this inter-generationally), and these are pursued often instinctively, so long as habitus and field remain adapted to one another. Numerous studies show that possession or lack of these various capitals, and their transmission intergenerationally, gives young people differentiated capacities to make their way in the world. Interestingly, Rainsford et al (2017, 5) found that, in the post-2008 UK context, “the current generation of young people is more likely to rely on their parents for financial support than the parental generation” and faces an increased risk of downward social mobility to a lower socio-economic position than their parents. We return to this point in discussing our findings below.

In Bourdieu’s framework, young people’s possibilities are shaped not only by differential capitals but also by their *habitus*, an acquired system of generative schemes deriving from social interaction and adaptation throughout the life course but especially in the early years. In this study we are particularly interested in the roles of family and of place, often bound together in terms of identity and belonging. Bourdieu himself focused on social space and people’s place in that, only very rarely connecting this to physical place and space (Hillier and Rooksby 2005). Nevertheless, Bourdieu (2005b) is clear that habitus is mutable: people adapt their habitus to the people and places in which they grow up and as they move or the context changes. Moreover, Savage et al (2005) identified a collective ‘local habitus’ which valued practical labour skills in their study of Cheadle.

There has been a surprising neglect of ‘place’ in discussing youth transitions, according to Gieryn (2000), Geldens and Bourke (2008), Farrugia (2013) and Wyn and White (2015). Addressing this, Wyn and White (2015, 32-33) argue that place “constitutes social relations” and they emphasise the importance of recognising *belonging* - the interconnections between biography and social context. Drawing on both Bourdieu and Beck, they propose a ‘triple helix’ conceptual framework comprising individual transitions, social transformations and enactments of identity and belonging in different contexts and circumstances (subjectivity). We argue that such aspects of place identity or local culture (familiar to rural studies), are highly significant to those negotiating their youth transition.

A majority of young people will typically leave rural areas in their 20s and 30s, leaving a smaller proportion of young people in the population than in urban areas and this is likely also to affect youth transitions of those who stay, those who leave, and those who return. Recent ethnographic work in rural America shows that those who remain in rural communities may describe themselves as “the left behind” in both a symbolic and literal sense (Wuthnow 2018). Living in a rural area may add further elements, including differential access to transport and leisure, issues of identity and belonging, along with the visibility of living in small communities. In Sherman’s studies of poverty, morality and family in rural America (Sherman 2009, 2013) belonging and identity were bound up with a strong moral imperative toward work, and antipathy towards state assistance. Studies in poor rural settings “have consistently found preferences for informal self-provisioning activities and reliance on social networks

over the use of public aid, because of the desire to avoid shame and stigma in highly cohesive settings” (Sherman 2103: 414). This was so important that Sherman added a fifth element, ‘moral capital’ in her deployment of Bourdieu’s system of capitals, as both an enabling and constraining factor. Cuervo and Wyn (2012) found that education and employment decisions of young people in rural Australia were strongly influenced by their strategies to live in a rural context where they felt comfortable, where they could continue to interact with parents, wider family and friends, and where they felt an affinity with the landscape and society.

In the UK, traditional social commitments and assurances, cultures and social norms persist in many rural societies, to varying degrees, but more affluent incomers may bring contrasting connections to place through elective belonging to enchanted places where they can ‘put down roots’, often identifying primarily with landscape and physical features rather than social belonging and deploying very different symbolic and cultural capital (Savage 2010). “To counter the moral claims of the newly arrived” to these enchanted places, established residents with fewer resources then deploy narratives of disenchantment and loss, according to Savage (2010, 33). In many rural areas those with claims to ‘localness’, ‘local authenticity’ or ‘culture bearer’ have distinctive cultural capital through their relationship to place. These further sources of differentiation between young people growing up in rural areas will also influence habitus and practice.

This brings us to one further aspect of Bourdieu’s theory of practice which is relevant to this paper, namely *symbolic violence* and its relationship to place, social norms, family and moral capital. Symbolic violence may be defined as the power which is exercised over people with their complicity. Those with most power tend to impose their own values and way of life as the legitimate way of doing things, through discursive power, to the extent that people accept this as self-evidently right. This not only furthers the interests of the dominant class (so exacerbating inequalities and social exclusion) but also masks the power relations implicit in the process, making it appear legitimate and natural to those who ‘misrecognise’ it. The social construction of rural settlements in England as unsustainable is an example of this (Sturzaker and Shucksmith 2011), and Sherman (2013) also sees work status and the stigmatising of benefit receipt as symbolic boundary formation amongst marginalised populations.

In this paper, we present research which investigates how the cumulative impact of austerity policies in the UK have impacted on the complex terrain of young people’s life paths in a rural area. We use a youth transitions approach but present this within a fully integrated account of local cultures and, crucially, of family context. We investigate the differences in young people’s experience of family support to understand more effectively the differentiated and often hidden or secondary impacts of austerity on young people. We draw on Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice as it offers a way to recognise how these complex factors interact and to bridge both structural and agential factors.

### **3. The Economic Crisis, Austerity Policies and Rural England**

The economic and social context for young people in rural areas at the turn of the millennium in the UK may be considered relatively benign compared to the post-2008 context. Employment and housing were challenging issues but the economy was growing and various social protection measures were being introduced, notably tax credits, under the Labour government after 1999. This led to quite rapid declines in poverty in rural and urban areas alike (Danioli 2010). However the introduction of

'activation' had also begun (Bonoli 2011) through Welfare to Work<sup>i</sup> which brought greater conditionality and toughening of sanctions for welfare benefit recipients.

The austerity which followed is widely understood to go "beyond the immediate management of a global financial crisis and is rather a fundamental aspect of a longer-term neoliberal project which aims to re-shape and redefine the state at a national and local level" (Hastings et al 2017, 2008). In this context, the global financial crisis is viewed as 'a justifying mantra' (Levitas 2013) for aims and practices which include disempowering and dismantling systems of social protection; restructuring, rescaling and downsizing the state; and shifting risk and responsibility on to the public and specifically the poor (ibid). For the purposes of this paper we will set out the context of public spending reductions, welfare reform and changes in the welfare mix.

### *3.1 Public funding reductions*

Following the immediate impacts of the economic crisis, and a change in government, there was a significant reduction in departmental spending of 12.8% between 2010 and 2015 with further cuts proposed (Treasury/IFS 2015). The largest cuts were imposed on the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and then the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). Of particular relevance to young people is the imposition of higher tuition fees for tertiary education, the withdrawal of Educational Maintenance Allowances and Connexions<sup>1</sup>, as well as cuts to welfare provision, housing investment, public transport and other public services. Much larger cuts in public spending have been imposed at local authority level, leading to pressure on all non-statutory council services (including child and school care, transport, further education, and advice services) and to redundancies. During 2010-15 local authorities in England lost 27% of their spending power (Hastings et al 2015) with further cuts of 56% over the next five years announced in 2015 (Hastings et al 2017). The cuts were uneven with poorer areas hit hardest: "the most deprived all-purpose authorities saw cuts of more than £220 per head compared with under £40 per head for the least deprived." (Hastings et al 2015, 6) Services have been reduced, closed or transferred 'with multiple implications for service providers and users' (Asenova et al 2015, 17). The austerity urbanism thesis posits that cuts are focused on cities, and that within cities local authorities download these on to the poorest in society. Notwithstanding this thesis, rural councils have also experienced drastic cuts in central government funding and complain of lower funding per head than in cities: indeed, the first two English councils to face financial crisis (Northamptonshire and East Sussex in 2018) are county councils, not cities. Central government's contribution to Northumberland County Council (where our case study sits) has been cut considerably since 2009, and will fall from £90.5m in 2013/14 to £11.3m by 2019/20.

Scant research exists of the impacts on young people in rural England of the 2008 economic crisis, other than quarterly reports prepared by the Commission for Rural Communities for DEFRA during 2008-11. These showed that youth unemployment in rural areas was already rising in 2009 (CRC 2010a) alongside tightening public expenditure constraints as local services were reduced or cut, sometimes threatening the survival of voluntary and community organisations (CRC 2010b). The reports also pointed to impacts on affordable housing and personal finance, drawing attention to the lack of debt

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<sup>1</sup> Connexions was the UK government's information, advice and support service for young people aged 13-19, withdrawn as a national service in 2012. Local centres offered support and advice on topics including careers, education, housing, health, relationships, drugs and finance.

advice services in rural England (CRC 2010a). CRC (2012, 3) noted that “since the onset of recession in 2008, the number of young people (aged 16-24) not in education, employment or training (NEET) in England’s rural areas has increased from 9.4% to 12.9% of all young people living in rural areas<sup>2</sup>”

### *3.2 Welfare Reform*

Alongside these public spending reductions, and related to them, the UK Coalition government (2010-2015) and then the Conservative Government (2015-time of writing) pursued a programme of welfare reform. The purpose has been twofold, to reduce public spending and to intensify work activation. Welfare reforms will reduce working-age welfare spending by £36 billion<sup>3</sup> by 2019-20 (House of Commons Library, 2016). Young people are affected both directly and indirectly by these reforms which include: reductions in working tax credits; changes to the local housing allowance (such that those under 35 can only claim for a single room in shared accommodation, in March 2017 housing benefit was withdrawn altogether from young people aged 18-21.); the so called ‘bedroom tax’ (which penalises recipients with spare bedrooms); council tax benefit (now at the discretion of each council); capping of benefits; and the introduction of universal credit (an attempt to streamline benefit claims but which can only be claimed online and requires a waiting period of several weeks during which no benefit is paid). Another worrying aspect for rural areas is the introduction of the minimum income floor (MIF) for self-employed people (including farmers) which disadvantages those on fluctuating incomes through the year.<sup>ii</sup> Benefits have not kept pace with living costs. A report by the National Audit Office (2018) has been highly critical of these reforms and their impact on the most vulnerable. The cumulative effect of these measures has been a redistribution of social and societal risk, with young people, people with disabilities and solo parents (90% women) particularly disadvantaged.

### *3.3 Sources of Support: the Welfare Mix*

The main sources of support for young people are generally considered to be the labour market, the family and the state (Antonucci et al 2014). Different national mixes of these are often referred to as ‘welfare regimes’ (Esping-Anderson 1990), but the relative contribution of each of these (the ‘welfare mix’) may change through time as well as across space. Much is written (Standing 2011) about the flexibilisation of labour markets, with insecure jobs more common, often with part-time or variable hours of work (eg zero hours contracts). There is evidence (ibid) that such jobs are especially prevalent amongst young people. Low pay is another barrier to young people’s transitions to independence, and this is known to be a feature of rural labour markets, particularly in tourism and the land-based industries (Shucksmith 2000, 2010). On the other hand, many new jobs are being created in rural areas, perhaps with new technologies creating opportunities which favour young people. The emphasis by successive UK governments on individual choices in competitive markets (Sealey 2014; Crompton 2010) has meant a focus on supply-side measures (from the 1980s Youth Training Scheme onwards) and a growing conditionality to welfare support (JRF 2014; Dwyer and Bright 2014, 2016) rather than employment creation. There is an assumption by the state that young people could, and perhaps should, be dependent on their families for support, and indeed research confirms the important role of families for support in rural areas (Shucksmith 2004, Fabiansson 2015) particularly in countries with a conservative welfare regime (Gkartzios 2013; Murphy and Scott 2013). This intergenerational support is not only material, for example providing the deposit for a house or car or paying university

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<sup>2</sup> Q4 2007 to Q4 2011 – FE Data and Statistics, BIS, 2012 (independent figures obtained by CRC).

<sup>3</sup> (real terms 2016/17 prices)

tuition fees, but extends to the important role of families' social networks in finding local employment or rented accommodation. At the same time, young people who don't go on to further or higher education may be restricted in their future transitions by such mechanisms reinforcing the 'bounded horizons of the immediate locality' (Sealey 2014; Green and White 2007). Proximity to family may also be crucial in helping with young people's caring responsibilities at family formation. In short, the youth transition is increasingly and inextricably bound up with family in relation to both jobs and housing.

The next two sections introduce the case study and the primary findings from this research.

#### **4. Study area and Methods**

##### *4.1 Study Area*

Glendale is a remote rural area within the county of Northumberland, in the far north of England. It covers approximately 250 square miles yet has a population numbering only 5,106 in the 2011 census (Glendale Gateway Trust 2015). Around 2,000 of Glendale's inhabitants live in the town of Wooler, the hub for the area, with the remaining residents living in villages, hamlets and isolated dwellings. Young people (aged 16 to 30) are under-represented<sup>4</sup> in the population of Glendale compared to surrounding areas with concerns regarding the out-migration of this age group and an influx of older people (Johnston *et al.* 2013). The population has increased slightly in recent years due to a rise of 23% of those aged forty-five and above from 2001-11. Figures from the 2011 census show that the population aged above forty-five is almost double that of under forty-fives (*ibid*).

Incomes in Northumberland are highly polarised between former industrial areas and rich commuter villages, and Glendale's are slightly below average. Salaries paid by Alnwick and Berwick employers are among the lowest in the county (Dowson 2013). The Glendale economy was formerly dominated by agriculture and forestry but the numbers employed in these industries has declined rapidly. Tourism plays an increasingly important role but employment tends to be part-time and casual. Both land-based and tourism sectors have a high Location Quotient<sup>5</sup>. The number of microbusinesses in Glendale is rising, many through home and internet-based working (14.5% of all businesses in 2011). Availability of work beyond Glendale has been affected by the economic crisis, with job losses at nearby major employers such as the Jus-Rol factory in Berwick which closed with 265 redundancies in 2016. Many jobs have also been lost in public services, which is the largest employer in the county as a whole (31% of all jobs) (Northumberland County Council 2015): the council alone shed a fifth of its staff (equivalent to 843 full-time jobs) from 2010-15. The remote position and low population density of Glendale restricts access to such jobs, as well as limiting the range of services locally, so necessitating travel out of the area to access broader provision, for example for further and higher education, secondary health care and culture and leisure opportunities. There are a few buses each day to Berwick and Alnwick, but only two buses a week to Newcastle, the nearest city.

##### *4.2 Research Methods*

The research used a case study approach focussed on one rural area to gain a rich insight into the complex intersection of issues affecting the lives of young people from their perspective, and to understand what cumulative effects of austerity and welfare reform there may have been. We worked

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<sup>4</sup> In the 2011 Census, 16-24 year olds make up 8.2% of Glendale's population.

<sup>5</sup> "Location Quotients are calculated by dividing the share of a given sector's share of employment in Northumberland by the share of that sector's employment in England (excl London)" (Northumberland County Council 2015)

closely with a charitable community development organisation, Glendale Gateway Trust (GGT), who facilitated initial connections and access to information. Access to local and regional reports lent insight into opportunities and resources available for young people within Glendale (Council 2011, Pierce 2013, Glendale Gateway Trust 2015). Document analysis provided an overview of regional statistics and context, for example local labour market, population distribution and predominant housing type. Document analysis, site visits and literature reviews on youth welfare, transitions and rural resources informed the development of an interview schedule organised into six themes: employment, training and education, housing, connections (transport and digital), welfare and support, and leisure. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with young people and key informants (1 -1.5 hours) were recorded and transcribed. More concise interviews (15 -20 minutes) at a local festival were textually recorded in situ owing to practical constraints.

Data analysis followed a qualitative inductive method suited to a case study approach, concerned with recognising complex processes, overlapping issues and multiple views of phenomena. All interview data (young people and key informants) was initially coded thematically using the interview schedule themes. These findings were then discussed in team meetings and transcripts read by a second researcher to allow close discussions grounded in the data itself. Any inconsistencies in the data sets were considered and new emergent themes were analysed. This analysis foregrounded particular themes subsequently developed in research memos prior to re-grounding in the transcripts, literature and field observations. These methods were intended to allow the researchers to develop theoretical analyses whilst at the same time systematically and rigorously grounding the findings in the empirical data.

#### 4.3 Sample<sup>6</sup>

Research was conducted with 42 young people aged 16 -29 years (see Table 1) who either live in Glendale or originated there and moved away. Data collection comprised individual interviews (n=11) and focus groups (n=31 in five groups). Respondents were initially contacted by targeting meeting places for young people (suggested by GGT or through internet searches), discussions with key informants and field observation. All formal groups in the area open to young people were approached to reach a diversity of respondents. Snowball sampling and ‘cold calling’ along the High Street brought additional individual respondents. A similar targeting and snowballing approach was used to obtain a sample of 9 key informants (KIs) who worked in the education, public or voluntary sector providing services for young people from Glendale. Apart from two family support workers, these KIs held senior or managerial positions in the following organisations: a local sports club, Parish Council, Sure Start, Youth Drop-in, Cheviot Medical Centre, Berwick Academy and Berwick upon Tweed District Council.

Respondents by gender and age															
Age	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	Total
Female	5	9	0	0	2	2	1	2	0	0	1	0	1	2	25
Male	5	3	4	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	17

Table 1. Young people respondents by gender and age

<sup>6</sup> Abbreviation Key: YP = Young Person Interviewee; KI = Key Informant Interviewee; suffix letters refer to individuals



## 5. Findings

To some extent the data echo the findings of previous research on the experiences of young people living in rural Britain prior to the economic crisis (for example Davis and Ridge (1997), Dax and Machold (2002) and Shucksmith (2004, 2012). Considering the problems identified over 15 years ago, the finding that these challenges persist is sobering enough, but the data also reveal a number of factors exacerbating those challenges and some new tendencies, specifically in terms of transport and connectivity; a decrease in local opportunities to secure a reasonable livelihood; and an increasing focus on family to fill widening gaps in social protection provision. Due to our focus on cumulative impacts, but also for clarity on individual issues, we have interspersed vignettes of four young people within our thematic presentation of the findings. These vignettes, we hope, give a picture of the way these issues intersect and these young people's perceptions of opportunities and support.

### *Perceptions of Glendale – belonging and longing to escape*

Glendale is mostly perceived by respondents as “very tight knit” (YPM, YPP), friendly and supportive but by the same token “everybody knows your business” (YPP), with little anonymity. The data revealed how many respondents perceived local society: ‘you’ve got people on benefits...and then you’ve got the posh people, farmers, then old people and then normal people’ (YPB); ‘a relatively middle class kind of place, there’s no bother’ (YPA). Respondents acknowledged the pattern of out migration of young people from the area and that this “has always happened” (YPR), “it happened when I was a kid” (KID). However, young people perceive Glendale as being an ageing town: “everyone knows that Wooler’s changing into a retirement town” (YPC) where increasingly housing and other facilities are geared towards an ageing population. Although some young people were more positive than others about local facilities, services and opportunities, there was a general consensus across the data that these were not attuned to young people. Some saw this as getting worse, reinforcing the existing perception that you need to ‘leave to achieve’ (KIF) which characterised the majority of young people’s interviews: “you leave or work in the Coop” (YPT). One respondent described young people being “like spiders trapped in the bath, you have to get up the side quick or you’re stuck there” (YPB). However, those from farming communities presented a noticeably greater sense of belonging and love of the area and desire to stay, citing landscape, freedom, friendliness and family/farming networks of support, and continual access to work including acting as a cushion when other plans didn’t work out (YPJ, YPK, YPL, YPM).

Place and relative isolation can favour a more traditional pathway, and dependency on closely bonded connections is perceived as “familiar, supportive and safe” (KIH). The positive support offered by family and community in times of need was frequently referred to in the interviews, particularly within the farming sector. Participants also recognised the reverse of this attitude, leading to a disinclination to seek help and support outside the family through reasons of mistrust, pride and fear of exposure within a place where “nothing happens but when it does, you know about it!” (YPU). Participants described the support networks offered within the family and community as being both positive and negative, reflecting subjective experiences and access to a range of support available. Strong social networks may encourage a course of action such as joining the forces either through role modelling or peer norms: “it seems like there’s real support here for me to do it. Everyone’s boosting us on for it” (YPD). Role models could also be restrictive, for example in choices of higher education: “my parents didn’t go and they didn’t know anything about it. No one talked about it” (YPI). The range of role models for young peoples’ transition into adulthood was recognised as “limited” in the area (KIB,

KIF) owing to a lack of mentors and peer career role models which increased reliance on parents. Several of the participants were intending to follow the career paths of their parents, particularly in entering the forces (YPD, YPE), in working in agriculture (YPJ, YPK, YPM) and in the majority of interviewees in choosing whether or not to enter higher education. Conversely, a number of the young people interviewed described needing to “move away” from the influence of home before they were able to make independent choices in transition (YPI); “it’s only since I’ve left home, and gone, and thought I don’t want to do this for the rest of my life” (YPH).

### **Vignette 1**

This young person is aged 16 and lives outside the town in a very rural area with his family. He left school after GCSE’s “I didn’t want to stay at school any longer...I kept being kicked out of school, it wasn’t for me.” He expressed positive feelings about living in the area, the friendliness of people and knowing everyone locally (helped by a Saturday job in Wooler). He perceives that ‘there’s limited hours work generally round here’ beyond his part time job: ‘It was mum who got me the job...she also gives me a lift into work.’ A main bugbear was transport: “The worst bit is the lack of buses. If you want to go anywhere it’s quite expensive. It costs me £6 to get to Alnwick’. He expressed a reluctance to leave the area but saw it as a necessity: ‘School wasn’t very helpful. I just thought if I wanted to do something I need to leave the area.’ He is joining the forces, influenced by his dad’s career, but this necessitates a move away. “I cried at the thought of leaving mum. It’s fear of the unknown really – I’m anxious about leaving the area....My mum and my nana were the main sources of advice. There’s nowhere in Wooler. The school weren’t helpful ...I wouldn’t really want to go to the doctors in such a small town – there’d be too much gossip.’

### *Changing landscapes of work and expectations*

Glendale is predominantly a place of underemployment rather than unemployment, with low pay, low hours and often “unreliable” or ‘unstable’ employment (YPO, YPA), typified by part-time or ‘zero hours contracts’ (YPA, YPB), and often seasonal in the service industry, tourism and the land-based sector. Many perceived that this had changed in recent years and that full-time work is “really difficult to find [today]. When I left school you could virtually walk out of the school gates and into a job within the town or surrounding farms. It isn’t like that now” (KID). Employment changes have resulted from impacts of wider rural restructuring, the decrease in land-sector/increase in tourism-sector include a rise in self-employment (YPA, YPU, KIC, KIF, KIG). These “micro-businesses” were seen as ephemeral - “a couple of years and then move on” (KIG) and to be “predominantly run by older people” (KIF). Recent local industry closure has increased employment competition in the area, particularly for young people: “my students are competing against a lot of experienced [redundant] staff with a skill set” (KIF); “generally the job market has decreased in volume and so jobs that might have been taken by students have been taken by ‘normal’ people, grownups who need a job (YPB). Young people and KIs described how a tendency to work part-time hours necessitated multiple jobs to maintain a “reasonable standard of living. And I’m not talking holidays every year, I’m talking about making ends meet” (KIC). Although some of these changes affect young people wherever they live, we found that rural young people are vulnerable to withdrawal of, or centralisation of, information and advice services, local training and education opportunities, school facilities and support. Family support therefore assumes greater importance.

The data showed clearly the importance of the family/friend network in accessing local work in an area where there was a predominance of family businesses and agricultural work. One participant commented that “a lot of those job opportunities will never get advertised, somebody will mention it to somebody” (KIG). Farm work was often obtained through networks such as the Young Farmers and is particularly dependent upon family networks, recommendations and experience, thus making it difficult to access from outside the farming community. Nevertheless, most respondents amongst this group believed that the problem was not job availability: “there’s no shortage of farm jobs available but people don’t want to do them. People can’t be arsed to be on their feet all day” (YPJ).

Influence of place was noticeable in the predominant tendency amongst the young people interviewed that it was “obvious” that they would seek work (YPT), “I’ll try to get any job I can” (YPN), and that “we’re all ready to go out there and get a job, which is another aspect of growing up in a rural community where it’s drummed into you that work’s money and you’ve got to work, you don’t get anything handed to you” (YPM). One young person mentioned disagreeing with parents who give children pocket money without expecting work in return.

There was evidence to show that among those young people from Glendale who leave the area for work or education there is a tendency to stay within, or close to, the region, this was often interpreted as a deficit in ambition due to background: “the East Coast Mainline mentality” (KIF). “It’s the small-town-mentality ... you’re influenced by what you’ve got” (YPB). Those who moved away mentioned anxiety, stress of a big city and desire to return, and a ‘culture shock’ (YPB, YPE, YPL).

## **Vignette 2**

This young person is 26 and grew up in Wooler in a ‘supportive’ family environment. His ‘generous’ parents had the means to help him access amenities and opportunities outside the area but even then: ‘YP who can’t drive and can’t afford cars we always did feel very isolated. But it’s all about budgets, they’ve slashed the transport...if you haven’t got a car it’s very hard basically.’

He went to university and described how most of his friends did the same but others he went to school with (people he described as having ‘less money’ and from families who have always lived in Wooler) stayed in Wooler and will ‘never leave’. He sought work in his university city afterwards, but after a few months on benefits and worried about rising debts, he moved back to his parents. He secured some project work, using his degree experience, in a large organisation. He describes the ‘golden age’ of the organisation ‘when we weren’t facing austerity’ and describes how he felt that ‘university was starting to pay off’. However, this work diminished after the financial crisis: now ‘I work mainly in a bar...we’re all on zero hours contracts there. It fluctuates between two and four shifts a week and then I’ve got bits of work for [organisation]. I don’t have anything consistent right now. But that’s got a lot to do with [organisation] not having money’.

He has ‘flip-flopped’ between periods of unemployment and insecure work, living at home (where he received financial support) and independently for a few years. He witnessed a change between two periods of claiming welfare benefits in 2010 and 2015: ‘You’d be in there a long time getting grilled. Far more conditional now. And I think it was too much ‘cos clearly I was trying to find work and there were other people in there who were too, but there was no way they were having it...much further into austerity Britain.’ He and his girlfriend, who is in a similar position, have decided to start a business together in a nearby city but are finding it difficult: ‘It’s being able to find the time between all our manual jobs, between the bar work, can we get something going?’

### *Housing and living costs*

Access to housing in Glendale, while regarded as relatively affordable by many respondents (in comparison with urban areas) partly due to the provision of social housing by Glendale Gateway Trust, was nevertheless perceived by many young people as increasingly geared towards the older population: “affordable but not for our age” (YPU). Many young people felt that housing in itself was not a limiting factor in being able to stay in Glendale, but the income to housing cost ratio was. Housing availability was seen as symptomatic of people leaving the area due to the lack of well-paid jobs and other opportunities and facilities. The young people interviewed with permanent employment and higher income levels (four respondents) had mortgages and owned their homes; the remainder rented in shared houses or still lived with their families and expressed anxieties towards being able to move out or own a house: “who could afford a house on our wage at our age, or anything, a caravan even?” (YPT); to live on your own you’d have to be earning £2K a month and you’re not going to do that as a waitress (YPB). This was connected to high costs of travel and higher costs of shopping in rural areas.

#### **Vignette 3**

Young person aged 22 has lived in the area since she was two years old. Her mum was in a low paid job, now runs a small home business. She describes how her mum travelled abroad when she was younger and had always encouraged the YP; ‘she always told me make something of your life...I’m glad she pushed me’. The young person feels she didn’t get much help and support in the area outside the home. ‘It’s up to you to find things and travel to them. It’s all up to you, and having an amenable mum to take you.’ She described how she was ‘reliant on my mum’ for transport, ‘if she didn’t have the time or couldn’t or didn’t want to I’d just not go.’ Her mum would always give her lifts to formal activities but seeing friends or going out in the evening was harder, ‘I probably had about 3 nights out...it was too much effort and too much money’.

She is currently working full time in the service industry in Newcastle as a stop gap until she decides if she wants to study further. ‘I thought there’s nothing I’m set on enough to warrant four years of £40K.’ Staying in Wooler wasn’t an option she considered: ‘There was no night life in Wooler, no men my age in Wooler and no jobs. I didn’t want to be one of those people who end up living with mum at age 27.’ She perceives that in Wooler generally the job market has tightened...so jobs that might have been taken by young people are now being taken by ‘normal people, grown-ups who need a job’. She got a job in sales which was ‘naturally awful’ but enabled her to leave Wooler for Newcastle where she stayed with a family friend. After a while she secured a fulltime job and now commutes to this from another rural area where she lives with her boyfriend. She considers herself lucky to have a full time job, despite the variable hours and a difficult commute, but it’s not ideal and is necessary stop gap until something better comes up or she goes to university: ‘I don’t want to leave as I don’t want to get out of a pothole and fall off a cliff...it’s all zero hours contracts...there’s loads of my friends coming out of university and can’t get work. The opportunities aren’t maybe as rife as we were led to believe. And they’ve got huge debts.’ She expressed concern about the future and not being able to afford to buy a house unlike the previous generation: ‘...and everyone my age [22] and even older, it’s like nobody’s fully grown up, they can’t afford to be grown up.’ (YPB).

### *Access, isolation and transport*

Transport was a primary concern of almost all KIs and young people, who perceived this to be worsening because of an increase in the cost of private motoring and public transport; a decrease in

local services and opportunities; and increasing expectations for opportunities and leisure for young people outside of the locale. KIs discussed the number of local services closing and therefore necessitating travel: “there’s not a job centre in Wooler now” (KIB). KIs referred to the following impacts: timing/insufficient transport connections, “intimidating to walk into a support group late” (KIH); cost, “you spend money waiting for a bus with a child” (KII) and “cost of shopping locally is greater” (KIH) and health impacts “travel sickness on public transport, particularly with young children” (KII). Correspondently, car ownership is increasing while access to public transport is decreasing.

Young people viewed public transport very negatively remarking on the inequality between urban and rural dwellers (for example Teenfare is only available on urban services); the lack of services; and the low quality of the service. KIs echoed these sentiments, describing public transport as ‘negative’, “desperate” and “not flexible enough for YP” (KIC, KID, KIG). Evidence was given by KIs that dependence on public transport has an increasing impact on young people accessing welfare and support services including benefit claimants (disability and job seekers’ allowance), domestic violence support and child health. Impacts include missing appointments, cost and health impacts. Data showed that cost of transport for young people was as much a concern as the distance/time taken. This impacts on those in compulsory education, particularly through the removal of post 16 educational transport allowances (coinciding with the extension of the age of compulsory education). Government incentives have produced some increase in the number of apprenticeships but these entail substantial travel costs: “if you get an apprenticeship in Newcastle you can’t afford to get there, you’re not earning any money, all your money’s going on transport” (KIF).

Evidence of the increasing necessity for car ownership was cited by both young people and KIs. Many of those interviewed referred to being able to drive as an imperative for gaining work, both locally and further afield: “you’re stuck without a car” (YPL); “it’s essential” (YPG) “vehicles are a necessity” (YPJ). The expense of a car was referred to by most YP, whatever their travel status: “I can’t afford to learn to drive” (YPT); “it’s too expensive” (various YP) whilst concurrently referring to the isolation felt without a car. No alternative option exists beyond buses in remote rural areas and this increases reliance on parents/friends for lifts: “I couldn’t get around without my parents to take me places” (YPK); “I rely on lifts” (YPS); “I go with my mum. Couldn’t get there via public transport” (YPD). On the other hand, the young people may find access to transport is restricted and their movements controlled, whether by a parent or a partner. Some young people mentioned it being hard to see friends (YPA, YPN, YPC) ‘it’s quite hard to see your friends (YPN), perhaps requiring more negotiation with parents. Hitching was common in rural areas in the past but has largely disappeared.

Changing attitudes and access to travel means long distance travel becomes normalised to access facilities and services beyond local boundaries. “Perceptions of distance have changed...it’s what they [YP] do” (KID). However, while young people feel the necessity to travel long distances, several commented on the negative impact of travelling these distances; “I had to give it [training] up. It was too much, the driving” (YPI); “I didn’t go out much. it was too much effort to travel there” (KIB).

#### **Vignette 4**

This young person is aged 16 lives with mum and two step brothers, ‘my dad left when I was two’. He had recently attended a local consultation about the future of the area but feels ‘no-one listened to me’ and during the interview expressed a number of deep frustrations. He has noticed that ‘the population’s ageing’ and pupil numbers have dropped at school over the years and perceived that there was a lack of funding for rural schools: “the school is falling apart”. He expressed annoyance

at the cost and unfairness of transport: “I hate, detest the fact that I have to pay for an adult fare when I don’t get an adult minimum wage, can’t buy alcohol. On what grounds are you calling me an adult?! It costs £6 to Alnwick and £6 to Newcastle so it’s already £12 before I’ve thought about anything in Newcastle. I’m banned from driving at this age so they should supplement public transport for us. “

He described the lack of facilities in ‘this pathetic rural place’ where there is ‘very little for young people to do... I occasionally play football with my friends at the bus stop because the ground’s flat. We do have football pitches but they’re awful. And old people near the bus stop complain.’

At the end of the interview he discussed his feelings about support and encouragement. He describes being the only one in his family to want to access further and higher education ‘and I’ve no doubt, 100% that I’ll not live in Wooler when I leave”. Although Newcastle University outreach had been informative, he had to find out everything about university courses for himself ‘I’ve had to do all the searching on the internet...the internet is key...you can get 3G but it depends on the network... Wooler’s signal isn’t great” .

“Most of my friends aren’t going to university from Wooler... Living in a place like Wooler does kind of dampen any dream...If there was someone who could come...show them what they could become...make sure they don’t grow up with a negative attitude to life, if you allow them to be happy so they make better decisions.”

### *Digital Connectivity*

While most of the young people interviewed stated that they sought support and advice primarily from family and close community they also reiterated an increasing pressure to find things out for themselves, predominantly on-line. Digital connections were widely regarded as a necessity and young people increasingly see the internet as a “first port of call” for information (KID, KIF) where this is lacking from school or family. Young people access the internet for education and social activity as well as information around university courses and training: “you’ve got to do all your own research” (YPI), “you’ve only got your phone, there’s nowhere” (YPB) and as one stated, “I’ve had to do all the seeking out via the internet. And I’m lucky because I am [inspired] and I knew where to go” (YPC). Although access to information on-line was seen as key, only a small number of young people interviewed spoke positively of using the internet for welfare advice and career information.

YP’s experiences of digital access were mixed - ranging from “it’s the worst internet in existence” to “it’s good” (DHSA fg)- depending where you live. Despite some improvement, access to the internet and mobile phone signal remains very varied in strength and availability. Connections depend on physical place and weather conditions which, even in the town, can cause the electricity supply to be “erratic” (KIC). Despite widespread ownership of smart phones and computers, KIs stated that some young people do not have access to home computers and/or internet through phone connections which then limits many services including accessing benefits (KIF, KIG). While young people referred to poor connections and signal, none specifically stated they had no physical access to a phone or computer. This contradicted the experience of KIs (KIH,KII) who cited the stigma attached to not having internet connection as the reason we didn’t find this out from young people themselves. ‘YP feel stigmatised by not having internet on their phone when mum and dad can’t afford it. They get labelled by that” (KII).

## *Welfare Mix*

The overwhelming perception of respondents was that family was the main means of support and welfare in Glendale, “there’s nothing else” (YPG, YPI). This also seemed to be a gendered landscape of support with a number of respondents focussing on the support of mothers, some being solo parents: “My mum got me the job.” (YPH), ‘even X who’s moved to Newcastle is still reliant on mum for things...to rent a room, run a car to get backwards and forwards to work and goes back with a little red cross parcel from the fridge (KIA). Many young people perceived that school offered little support and if it did young people were reluctant to access it due to complex school relationships: “there was some [support] at school but no one wants it at school. And if you’re pried off at school then there’s nowhere else to get help after that” (YPB).

While family support was seen as ‘the norm’ and ‘expected’ in a rural area many also acknowledged that ‘if you’re someone who doesn’t have a supportive family, where do you go?’ (YPB). In these circumstances (hardship and/or a lack of family support) young people also displayed low inclinations towards seeking independence (YPS, YPT, YPW).

Greater dependency on families for financial support (whether unemployed or underemployed) created conditionality to stay in the area: “Income can be quite low ... they [families] do support them a lot and that affects the staying in Wooler thing as they are tied to them, totally reliant on them. People are reliant on family more and more since I’ve been there (since 1998)” (KIA). There was evidence in the data that dependence on the family is on the increase at the same time that families are under increasing strain. A local Food Bank was set up approximately 4 years ago with increasing demand (KIC) and professionals related increasing amounts of time spent in pastoral assistance for students at risk of poverty and eviction (KIF KIH, KII). KIs described increasing levels of stress and depression in both young people and families (KIC, KIE, KIF).

“It’s an extremely difficult time financially for lots of families and that’s getting worse...I can’t overstate how much strain social services are under. There are instances of families in really dire need who are not being picked up by social services as they simply do not have the staff to pick them up. And that’s gone into sharp decline in the last few years...I’m seeing a huge knock on effect for instance on cases of homelessness which I’ve not seen before. I’ve had six cases this year of families being evicted while students were in the middle of studies.” (KIF)

Unsurprisingly, the changes and impacts of the decline in state support and public services locally was discussed more by KIs who often saw the more ‘hidden’ aspects of need and who had worked in the area for a number of years and witnessed change. Young people might have been too young to notice changes, reluctant to talk about personally sensitive issues, or had limited direct experience of a range of issues. The fear of exposure was highlighted many times in the data, even for trusted services: for example a Citizens Advice Service comes to the area fortnightly if it has been requested but “there are issues around anonymity. All done very quietly, you don’t know who’s listening” (KIC). We must also recognise that severe hardship may necessitate a move away, “You know that in rural areas if someone becomes street homeless, they move to the cities as that’s where the provision is.” (KIG)

Some young people did perceive changes too, mentioning a harsher welfare benefits climate, the withdrawal of EMA, reduced local transport budgets with fewer services, reduced funding to local schools, services closed or relocated to areas of greater population. The local Job Centre has closed and benefit claimants must travel approximately 20 miles to Berwick for their nearest service. Other

local closures include the Connexions career support. KIs reported an increase in younger people caring for older people in their family (KIC, KII, KIG), but with decreasing support. “Children’s Services used to fund a support scheme for young carers but that’s largely been unfunded this year and also there was an outreach service for people with special needs that’s been cut” (KIG). KIs referred to the significant decline of care services locally including closure of the Sure Start centre, nursery provision and a sheltered housing facility. One KI reported that churches are seeking to fill some of the gaps left in funding, “The funding ran out. There isn’t actually a youth club for middle school age kids ... so one of the churches is trying to develop that.” Churches also anticipate emerging needs arising from welfare reform: “We haven’t got universal credit yet and won’t it be a nightmare when you don’t have IT... The churches are in every settlement...Is there a way we can use the churches with IT?” (KIG).

In terms of claiming state support directly, only two young people (YPA, YPP) mentioned claiming benefits and both had negative experiences due to a perception of distrust by job centre staff, a sense of unreasonable conditions imposed, and difficulty signing on due to travel, with the perception that the climate for receiving support was getting harsher. Amongst many YP, particularly in farming communities, a strong work ethic was coupled with a somewhat disparaging view of those on unemployment benefits. Claiming benefits is “frowned upon in the countryside” (YPJ) with a noticeable tendency amongst some of the young people to consider welfare recipients as “radgies” (YPB), “bone idle” (YPK) or “spongers” (YPH). Participants’ attitudes to welfare were related to personal experience of being either directly, or indirectly, in receipt of benefit: those employed in the land-based sector were less familiar with claiming state welfare and more critical of those who do. Even those who were not outwardly critical of claiming state benefits did tend to make assumptions and characterise social groups in a revealing way, for instance implying those who live in council houses claim benefits.

## **6. Discussion**

### *Direct and indirect effects of the economic crisis and austerity measures*

It is apparent that young people in Glendale are unevenly affected both directly and indirectly by the economic crisis and austerity. Direct effects include fewer secure, full-time jobs and instead more ‘precarious’ work opportunities; closure of local services such as the job centre, Connexions career support, youth club, SureStart, nursery provision and support for young carers; diminished public transport provision; withdrawal of educational maintenance allowances; a harsher welfare benefits climate characterised by conditionality and hostility; and little prospect of home ownership. Many of these impacts are common to rural and urban youth transitions, but some are specific to rural youth. For example, one of many sore points for respondents is the perceived inequity of subsidised Teenfare being available only to young people travelling on urban buses.

In addition to these direct impacts are less visible, *indirect* impacts whereby families become less able to offer support to their young people, whether as a result of family members’ redundancy, illness, loss of benefits, earnings falling behind increased costs of living (notably rents) or taking over carer responsibilities as services are withdrawn. During the interviews, it became apparent that the overwhelming, and increasing, reliance of young people on family for support generated further inequalities through the unevenness of such ‘secondary impact austerity’. There were significant differences in the support available from families, some of whom faced the impacts of the economic



crisis and austerity policies more directly than their offspring, with consequences for family support and relationships. In this respect, our data confirm Asenova et al's (2015, 38) finding of challenging cumulative and ripple effects, as young people feel indirectly the economic effects and policy changes which impact on their parents and communities.

In this rural area, as in the urban area (North Lanarkshire) studied by Asenova et al (2005), changes to welfare, cuts in services and shifts towards less secure forms of employment exacerbate the transfer and individualisation of social risk and the deepening of poverty for vulnerable groups. In an area like Glendale, the impact on those already disadvantaged may be heightened by moral imperatives which stigmatise access to alternative means of support, such as food banks, as considered further below. These constraints on family support were found to affect young people unevenly in relation to employment and training, transport, digital connectivity, housing and social networks. They also influence young people's assessment of life chances, often dampening their expectations.

The relationship between family support and youth transitions would bear further investigation. We found some evidence that a diminution of family support may be associated with risk aversion and lower levels of self-confidence, and this may be cumulative where there are low levels of financial, social and cultural capital. Where families continue to give support despite increased hardship or financial insecurity, KIs suggested this may mask inequalities in the short term but ultimately increases pressure on the family until a crisis may arise. Where stronger family support is feasible, it has been suggested that much depends on whether this involves bonded or bridged networks (Sealey 2014). Bonded social networks may offer help into (bounded) local job markets, while bridged networks may facilitate entry into higher education and then national job markets. In some cases family support may carry with it an expectation (implicit or explicit) of reciprocity, such as fulfilling a carer role, with many of our respondents expressing such a reciprocal commitment to place and family. It is important to recognise the social context within which support is given and the impact this may have on freedom of choice and transitions into adulthood.

The reliance on women for social support in families that we noticed may reflect traditional gender roles in farming/rural communities, in addition to solo parenthood or socio-cultural factors affecting family relationships, but this has many additional implications for the availability of family support in rural areas due to austerity. It is well documented that over 70% of public spending cuts in the UK have come from women's incomes, at the same time as increased burdens on them for social care due to local provision reducing, with single parents faring very badly (see for example Scott and Masselot 2017). However, very little research has looked at the impact on women of cumulative impacts of austerity in rural areas, which are likely to be more severe due to a number of issues highlighted here already, and how this then affects support dynamics in families.

#### *Place, local habitus and moral economy*

It was noted in section 2 that, from a rural studies perspective, there has been a surprising neglect of place in youth transitions research, while Bourdieu very rarely incorporates physical place and space into his writing either: yet the significance of place resonates through our respondents' accounts of youth transitions in Glendale. One aspect of this is shared community cultural norms and belief systems, which Sherman (2009) considers in terms of Bourdieusian 'moral capital', and which Savage et al (2005) interpret as 'local habitus'. Both are linked to place identity and belonging.

In developing the concept of local habitus, Savage et al (2005, 96) refer to detecting “dominant local lifestyles and shared dispositions, sustained by local neighbouring relationships as well as by common experiences... People’s sense of belonging to the area is related to the way that they share these dominant values.” In Cheadle this makes “a moral virtue out of their reliance on practical skills and their capacity to ‘get by’” (ibid, 121), while in Glendale a moral economy of hard work and independence was seen by young people as intrinsic to rurality itself, most fervently among those from farming families. Not only is this a shared disposition, however: it is also a form of individualised capital as Sherman suggests, in that possession of this moral virtue is an asset and transgression carries stigma. Those who have claimed welfare benefits or visited a food bank are labelled as lazy, bone idle or spongers, whether in the rural US or in Glendale, and are less able to deploy bonded social capital in seeking work or rented housing, for example.

This shared disposition or moral economy was presented by many respondents in Glendale as rural resilience, independence and community spirit but this was more heavily promoted by those who have social capital to access work and may mask reductions in opportunities for others, characterised as morally deficient if they avail of state benefits or charity. This discursive framing is an instance of symbolic violence in so far as those affected are complicit in this exercise of power over them, accepting a narrative of self-reliance and stigmatising of welfare as self-evidently right. Moreover, the impact of an economic crisis on those already disadvantaged may be greater where such a moral economy stigmatises and restricts access to non-family means of support, and the question arises whether this extends to other rural (and urban) areas or is specific to Glendale.

Most respondents in Glendale also drew attention to how the place is changing through in-migration of older middle-class residents, and Savage et al (2005) suggest the concept of local habitus may also be useful in exploring such processes of residential sifting and change, as incomers bring other kinds of habitus, creating tensions with the local habitus which may cause them to adapt, or to move away or indeed to produce change in the (mutable) dominant habitus. Young people from incomer families may be less attuned to the local habitus (with its social norms and moral imperatives) while enjoying instead their parents’ network of ‘bridged’ connections to the world beyond. Young people are affected by their social interactions, whether from more local or incomer families.

#### *Structure, agency and intersectionality*

Two perennial challenges in qualitative research are incorporating both structure and agency, and respecting the integrity and intersectionality of individual lives while pursuing a thematic analysis.

This study sought to bring together the two main traditions of youth studies – youth transitions and youth cultures – through a Bourdieusian approach which transcends structure and agency. Specifically, the study combined a youth transitions approach (commonly associated with structural factors) with examination of place-based culture, identity and belonging (associated in youth studies with agency). Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, field and capitals facilitate this bridging, and here Bourdieu’s theory of practice is augmented by deployment of additional concepts of local habitus and moral capital, as part of a more place-based approach. This may offer new avenues for youth studies to explore ‘middle ground’ approaches to transcend structure and agency, consonant with Wyn and White’s proposed triple helix of individual transitions, social transformations and enactments of identity and belonging.

A further contribution may be to suggest ways in which place and space can be incorporated more centrally into Bourdieu’s theory of practice. One aspect of this is the mutability of individual habitus

and its relation to local habitus and field: if young people adapt their habitus to the people and places in which they grow up, their habitus will reflect both local and trans-local interactions (in situ) as well as adapting in the course of migration to new contexts and interactions (social and spatial). Capitals may also be associated with place, as we have seen in Glendale. Specifically, cultural capital is not only a matter of education and taste but is associated in many rural studies with claims to localness and local authenticity: some residents may even be viewed as 'culture bearers'.

Finally, this study employed a thematic analysis and presentation of the data, as common in qualitative analysis, but complemented this with the use of vignettes to try and convey as well a sense of how these elements are fundamentally interconnected in any young person's transition to adulthood in place. Enabling us to see beyond the thematic analysis, these reveal the complex interplay between family support, transport, education, employment and housing, as well as the non-linear, fractured and extended nature of youth transitions and some of the immediate effects of the economic crisis and austerity policies in individualising risk and exacerbating inequality. These young people face barriers and opportunities, structured by the local context and by changing policies, but all exert agency as they try to navigate their ways ahead in challenging times.

## **7. Conclusion**

This study set out to investigate the impacts of the 2008 economic crisis and its aftermath (including policy changes) on young people in a sparsely populated rural area of northern England. The findings reveal that the challenges which young people in rural England faced before the financial crisis still persist. They also uncover several factors exacerbating those challenges and some new tendencies, specifically in terms of transport and connectivity; a decrease in local opportunities to secure a reasonable livelihood; and an increasing focus on family to fill widening gaps in social protection provision. Digital exclusion has emerged as a new and important issue during the last two decades, reflecting not just the patchy provision of high-speed broadband but also its high cost for low income families. Another aspect which came out more strongly in 2016 than in 2002 was the stigma attaching to state welfare support.

Most notable was the overwhelming, and increasing, reliance of young people on family for support which generated further inequalities through what might be termed 'secondary impact austerity'. Austerity measures, the prevailing moral economy and an increasing dependency on family support are leading to greater inequality in life chances amongst young people in relation to employment and training, transport, digital connectivity, housing and social networks. There were significant differences in the support available from families, some of whom faced the impacts of the economic crisis and subsequent austerity policies more directly than their offspring, with consequences for family support and relationships. Welfare reforms, reductions in the provision of services and shifts towards less secure forms of employment exacerbate the transfer and individualisation of social risk and the deepening of poverty for vulnerable groups. These findings demonstrate conclusively that austerity and its impacts on poorer households are not exclusively urban phenomena.

The roles of moral capital and local habitus merit further exploration. Sherman (2013) has observed in rural America that moral capital is unequally distributed between local and less wealthy families, forming important symbolic boundaries such that belonging, identity and social status were bound up with a strong moral imperative toward work. This is also evident in this study, along with what Savage

et al (2005) have termed local habitus – a shared disposition of dominant values, in this case of hard work and independence, along with the denigration of those who receive welfare benefits or charity. What is apparent is that these moral expectations and shared dispositions constrain choices: as state support shrinks and employment becomes more precarious, additional pressures are placed on family resources resulting in increasing levels of stress for both young people and families.

Finally, this study has implications for youth studies and its twin tracks of transitions and cultures which recent studies have sought to bridge through, for example, middle ground concepts. This study followed a youth transitions approach but has integrated within that a culture perspective, not in terms of youth cultures but in terms of local place-based cultures (moral capital, local habitus and belonging). There has been a surprising neglect of place in mainstream youth studies (Wyn and White 2015) and this study demonstrates that using a Bourdieusian lens to situate a youth transitions approach within a context of place and belonging can marry together considerations of transition and culture in interesting new ways. This paper also suggests ways in which place and space might be incorporated more centrally into Bourdieusian analysis.

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<sup>i</sup> The New Deal for Young People (2002) was the Labour Government's flagship welfare-to-work programme. It focussed on helping 'long-term unemployed young people aged 18 to 24 to move away from dependency on unemployment and social security benefits and into worthwhile employment'. <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2002/02/0102639es.pdf> (accessed 3 August 2017)

<sup>ii</sup> This means that level of benefit is assessed monthly on the previous month's income, rather than the previous tax year. This is onerous and will lead to cash flow problems and an overall decrease of benefit to this group. This is expected to decrease welfare spending by £1.1 billion in 2018-19 (Office of Budget Responsibility <http://obr.uk/box/universal-credit-4/> accessed August 2018) and has been widely challenged including by farmers' organisations such as the National Union of Farmers (for example see. <https://www.nfuonline.com/news/latest-news/farmers-must-continue-to-receive-support-under-universal-credit-nfu-says/> accessed August 2018)