# Early adulthood income trajectories: the intergenerational transmission of (dis)advantage through the transition to adulthood

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How does the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage come about? This study aims to broaden our understanding by examining the extent to which income trajectories in later stages of young adulthood are influenced by the work- and family-related pathways young people take into adulthood. The transition to adulthood is a demographically dense period, in which individuals make important decisions regarding their future career and family life, which in turn are likely to have a large impact on their future earnings. This study assesses to what extent the influence of family background, in terms of parental income, education, family structure and race, is mediated by the career and demographic pathways that youths choose during the transition to adulthood. It is examined to what extent incomes diverge between those opting for different pathways to adulthood and whether within groups choosing for the same pathway to adulthood, family background remains to have an influence on these income trajectories. This study uses panel data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youths of 1997 (N=4966). Sequence analysis is used to define different career (based on education and employment) and demographic clusters (based on household, relationship and parenthood status) between age 17 and 25, separately for men and women. The growth curve model contains family background and relative distances to medoids of each career and demographic cluster as independent variables, with annual income between age 25 and 32 as the dependent variable. Results indicate that the effects of family background variables mostly disappear once the career and demographic trajectories are included. Career trajectories appear to be more important in explaining differences in income trajectories in early adulthood than demographic trajectories. Incomes diverge for individuals who are in career clusters with longer 4-year college enrollment compared to those who are in clusters that have little college education.

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