Generation Y, Gender and Labour Market Precarity

Johanna Wyn
Youth Research Centre
The University of Melbourne
With Hernan Cuervo and Jessica Crofts
Surprising outcomes from the ‘gender education revolution’ of the early 1990s
“Almost 43% of the global youth labour force is still either unemployed or working but living in poverty.”

ILO, 2015.
Effects

• Longer job search time and poorer quality jobs
• “Scarring”
  o Loss of earning power
  o Distrust of socio-economic and political systems
  o Dissatisfaction with work
• Denial of the resources to build a life
  o Low rates of marriage and fertility
  o Increasing rates of mental health problems (anxiety disorders and depression)
The new adulthood

Earlier engagement with ‘adult’ practices
• Increased investment and time in education
  o Education is a key strategy for achieving security
  o Transitions to work aged 25

• Increase in precarious work
  o Even for the educated

• Job mobility
  o “If you stay in one job for more than three years it looks bad”

• High value on secure, meaningful work, on personal relationships and on ethical practice

• Unintended reversion to gendered patterns
The Life Patterns Program in 2016

- **Cohort 1**
  - **Generation X**: born in early 1970s. Left secondary school in 1991
    - Sample size 2000 in 1996, now 258
    - Currently aged 42 - 43
    - Representative by gender, type of school attended, rural/urban
    - Victoria

- **Cohort 2**
  - **Generation Y**: born in late 1980s. Left secondary school in 2006
    - Sample size 4000, now 583
    - Currently aged 26-27
    - Representative by gender, type of school attended. Over-sampled in rural
    - VIC, ACT, TAS, NSW
Life Patterns
Ten years following Generation Y
http://web.education.unimelb.edu.au/yrcl/
FIGURE 1. “HOW DO YOU RATE THE FOLLOWING AS GOALS TO AIM FOR THROUGHOUT YOUR LIFE?” (BY ‘VERY HIGH’, IN 2006 & 2015 (AGED 17/18 - 26/27), COHORT 2, %)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>High - Very High Importance for Job Security</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SINCE 2010, 68% OF PARTICIPANTS HAVE HAD 2 TO 5 JOBS AND 12% HAVE HAD OVER 5 JOBS. FURTHERMORE, ONLY 23% OF PARTICIPANTS EXPECT TO BE IN THEIR CURRENT JOB FOR LONGER THAN 5 YEARS.
FIGURE 2. WORKING CONDITIONS - IRREGULAR SHIFTS: “YOUR WORK INVOLVES…”
(BY ‘AGREE’, 2009 (AGED 20/21) TO 2015 (AGED 26/27), COHORT 2, %)
FIGURE 3. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING IS LIKELY FOR YOU IN 5 YEARS FROM NOW? (BY ‘VERY LIKELY’, IN 1996 & 2011 (AGED 23 YEARS OLD), COHORT 1 AND COHORT 2, %)
Looking back at hopes you had in school, how satisfied are you with the way things have turned out, by ‘very satisfied’, aged 25, (C1) 1998 & (C2) 2013, (%)
Gen X Women and the Gender Revolution: Pioneers or Traditionalists?

Hernán Cuervo, Johanna Wyn & Jessica Crofts
November 2012
Research Report 36
“Both women and men are treated equally in the tertiary education setting.”

“There is no reason why women can’t fully participate in tertiary education – even for mothers, there are part-time and off-campus options.”

At the age of 23 (in 2011) eight out of ten men and women believed that the relationship between further education qualifications and ‘securing a better job in the future’ was ‘strong’.
The education gender revolution

In 2014, 42% of females and 31% of males between 25 and 29 years of age had attained a bachelor degree or above (ABS, 2015)
Full-time work by year, gender and place Cohort 1 aged 17-19 to 40-42 (%) n=302.
Women and work in Australia

A postgraduate woman aged 25 years would earn just two-thirds of her male counterpart’s lifetime earnings and women with post-graduate qualifications would earn only as much on average over their lifetime as men with a certificate or Year 12 qualification (Cassells et al., 2012: 30)
• While education is supported by policy frameworks that enhance equality in education, work claims exclusive power over the time economy. There is relatively poor provision of state support for reproductive, or caring work. From 1992 to 2006 both Labour and Coalition governments preferred not to intervene in workplace arrangements for how carers balance their time between work and care.
Full-time work for parents and non-parents 2000 to 2011, N= 282 (%)
Brittany

2011 aged 23 (student):
“women can do anything with education”.

2013 aged 25 (working):
“I think once you get to the workforce the opportunities are a little different compared to university. Like the glass ceiling is still there and just the way people perceive females in the workforce. You know you could go get pregnant and then oh see you later there's our CEO gone”.
Concluding remarks
Thank you