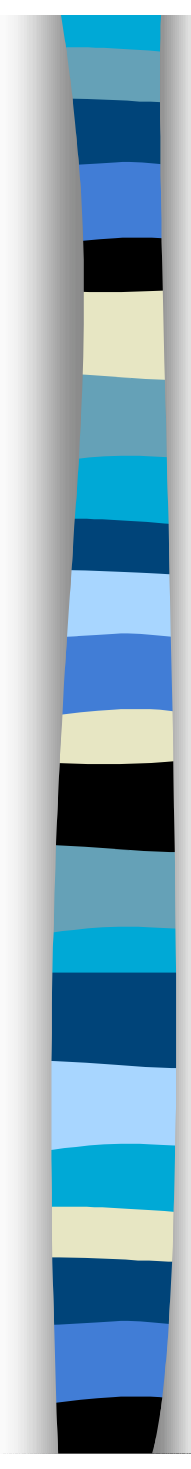


Work and Care futures: What young Australian's say about work, care and their own future



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A Work/Life collision perceived by adults - What do young people think? Does it matter?

■ Policy

- fertility debate
- future work/family preferences
- future work/family outcomes
- how do institutions and cultures need to change?

■ Theory

- Are gendered patterns of domestic work converging?
- Or does a cloak of pseudo-mutuality still prevail?
- Will the double day be less for the next generations?
- Is today's conception of a collision sustained for tomorrow's citizens?



The data

- Collected in late 2003
- By Jane Clarke and self
- 21 focus groups, 93 young people (YP)
- 60/40 female/male
- 52% higher income, 34% lower, 14% country
- 57% dual earner households, 22% single earner, 20% single parent
- Selected schools based on index of relative socio-economic disadvantage, then approached schools, then parents, then kids
- Year 6 (10-12 years), year 11 (16-18)
- Weaknesses and strengths of focus groups
- Schools:
 - Country (primary and high school)
 - Strive (primary and high school, western Sydney)
 - Leafy (primary and high school, north shore, Sydney)
 - Struggle (primary and high school, northern Adelaide)
 - Comfort (primary and high school, south eastern Adelaide)



Four themes

1. How parent's jobs affect kids
2. Having children and a job
3. Looking after children
4. Housework

Some implications



1. What do young people think about parent's jobs?

- Kids are pragmatic - they know why parents work
- But if there is enough 'basic money', they prefer more time over more money from parental earnings
- No differences by household type: breadwinner, dual, single
- A 'hyper-breadwinner' in breadwinning households? Many fathers in sole income couple families are away from their families for long periods
- However, long or unsocial parental hours drive a strong preference for more time
- Parent-specific 'time hunger': one parent at home, *doesn't make up* for the one who is absent a lot

- Kids notice and are affected
- They say they will won't work like that...



Job ‘Spillover’

- Spillover from parent’s jobs is very significant in kids lives
- Some spillover is positive, some negative
- Positive:
 - *Money*
 - *Use of skills*
 - *‘stuff’ (pens, paper, riding vehicles...)*
 - *Parent’s skills flow onto kids*
 - *Many parents enjoy their jobs: kids can see that*
 - *Social - friends, fun, laughs, networks*
- Positive spillover is strong in blue and white collar and working and more middle class households



Negative spillover

- physical injury
- emotional or mental injury
- bad moods
- stress
- tiredness
- sadness
- Fear, insecurity

- **Kids are very alert to negative spillover**
- **They are 'acute observers'**



We have been asking the wrong question about parent's jobs

- ***It's not whether, or how much parents work, but the state in which they come home, that really counts***
- Kids can see when parent's like their jobs and get pleasure out of work - and when they don't
- They are negatively affected by grumpy parents
- Instead of whether mothers work, we should focus more on fathers, and more on the fit between what parents *do*, and *what they want to do*.



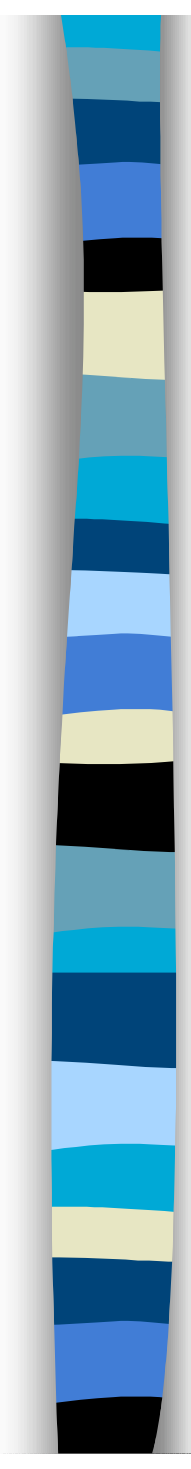
2. Having children and a job

- All plan to have jobs. Many name occupations
- Most envisage a partner (none explicitly same sex, not surprisingly given peer context)
- Young women expect to have jobs, and (like boys) they expect and want to enjoy them (they see their parents often do)
- Majority plan kids: 90% expect to have kids (83)
- Some very specific ('2 boys and a girl'; when I'm 26)
- A fertility gap?
 - Only 10% expect to, or 'may be', childless
 - But ABS predict 25% childlessness (at least) for them
 - There is a gap between youthful *expectations* and *predictable* reality
 - Suggests that the roots of 'the fertility crisis' do not lie in early plans for childless: but in twenties and thirties they meet institutional and cultural realities?



Of those who are uncertain about kids

- Of the 10% (n=9) not clearly expecting, 1 boys said 'no', 2 boys said 'maybe' and 6 girls said 'maybe'.
- 7 of the 9 who said no or maybe, were from higher income areas
- All the 'maybe' girls were from higher income areas
- Reasons for uncertainty:
 - Household and job stability
 - Financial concerns
 - Risk of loss of time for self or relationship
 - Risk of loss of career (females)
 - Risk of end of partying (one boy)
- Very little trace of a 'new Australian wife' (Susan Shapiro Barrera, 2004) who wants to be kept by well paid partner.

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- Mike was very clear about financial issues. His father had told him that each of his three kids had cost him ‘about \$250,000’. Mike was initially scathing about having children because he wanted to ‘be rich’ instead. Even he, however, felt that children were not entirely out of his picture. But like many young people, especially in Sydney, he was concerned about money:
 - *Basically you wouldn’t want to have kids for the first few years of your adult life because you need to get yourself started, you know what I mean – house, wife, furniture, all that other stuff, and when you’ve got kids, where are you going to put them? You’ve got to pay for babysitting, pay for all this crap ... (Mike, 17, Leafy High)*
 - In the same group, Smithy plans to defer having kids until he has ‘done partying’ which he acknowledges he can do a lot longer than the young women in the group: ‘until I’m 50’.



3. Who will care for kids?

Most will be trying to juggle kids and jobs

Five main ways:

	Males		Females		Persons	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
Sharing between partners,	13	39%	20	40%	33	40%
Intermittent maternal care,	5	15%	14	28%	19	23%
Traditional maternal care	12	36%	8	16%	20	24%
External care by family or formal institutions.	3	9%	7	14%	10	12%
Male care,	0	0%	1	2%	1	1%
Total	33	100%	50	100%	83	100%



Data only indicative:

- Most want to share care - four out of ten young men and young women
- However, similar proportion of young men want maternal care
- Not matched by young women's preferences - two in ten expect maternal care
- But more expect to intermit it around their jobs and share it with others
- Familial care is most favoured, over external
- A lot of reliance upon their own mothers



Implicit in the data, are household types:

- Continuing growth in dual earner households (75%; 61% at present)
- Continuing decline in male breadwinner (25%; around a third at present)
- Dual earner households feel the work/life/care pressures - so likely to be more widespread in the next generation
- A gendered mismatch on male breadwinner household types
- How will this be settled? Whose preferences will prevail?
- Many plan joint decision making. Women's preferences don't necessarily dominate.



Young men's preferences to actively parent are strong....but contingent

I think it will pretty much depend on the financial situation. When I have kids I would love to be able to take a few years off and not work and spend it with my kids and with my wife and just starting a family and like being there for my kids for the first few years of their life. But then I'd definitely go back to work when they start school, but I'd make sure I was there for them in the evenings, help them with their homework and on the weekends take them, do sporting activities and all that, and when they're older and think I'm just boring and not cool, let them do their own thing, but still try and sneak in some quality time. (Smithy 17, Leafy High)

They say 'if', 'I'll try...'

They will lean against the door to workplace flexibility, but if it doesn't fall open - as they expect it may not - they are ready to concede.

Their female partners are the default carers.



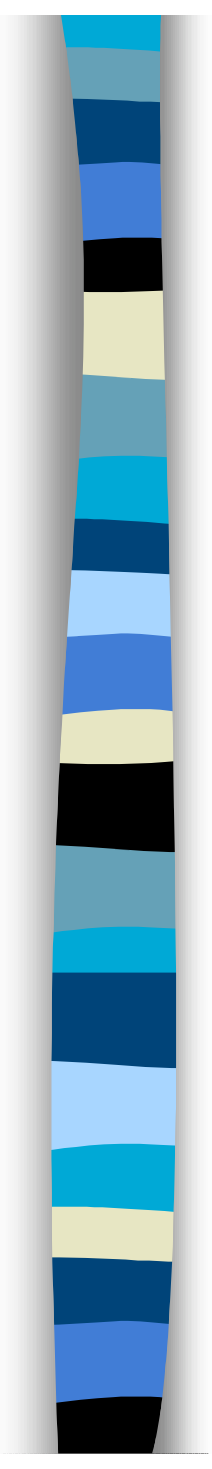
4. Housework

	Males	Males	Females	Females	Persons	Persons
Sharing housework	15	47%	33	59%	48	55%
External help will do it (cleaner, maid)	2	6%	13	23%	15	17%
My wife will do it (male)	13	41%	0	0%	13	15%
I will do it (female)	0	0%	9	16%	9	10%
My husband will do it (female)	0	0%	1	2%	1	1%
Other (eg robot)	2	6%	0	0%	2	2%
	32	100%	56	100%	88	100%



Preferences

- Over half of all want to see it shared
- More women than men
- And not always 50/50, against women
- Nearly half young men want to share but four in ten think their wives will be doing it (although one thought a robots would be within 5 years!)
- Gender mismatch on 'my wife will do it': less than two in ten women thought they would be doing it
- Many young men are open 'minimisers':
 - *Either I suggest my wife is a good cleaner and does all that, or she hires a cleaner, because I'm not doing anything. (Smithy, 17, Leafy High)*
 - *My lady is doing the cleaning. I'll just be on the porch having a beer! (Mike, 17, Leafy High)*
- Male resistance to sharing obvious to young women
- Young women's brothers and peers already actively minimise, and they see their mothers struggling with it

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- These young women will continue their mothers' 'turn to the market': women in lower and higher income areas planning to use cleaners and help
 - They have plans to deal with this:
 - Anger, persuasion, education, bribing, blackmail
 - A gender struggle over housework far from over
 - Both sexes have considered tactics:



Young Men

You've got to share, otherwise she'll divorce you. You should be able to help for the first few years [of marriage] then it might wear off... (Kevin, 17, Country High)

Most girls today, they're not as into doing housework as 60 years ago. It was expected that housework would be their whole job, but I suppose nowadays they're not as 'Oh yes - I'll do the housework'. It's sort of share, work rate evenly, sort of thing. Maybe not quite evenly. (Kyle, 16, Country Hi

Interviewer: So do you think you'll be sharing but not quite evenly, is that your plan?

Yeah, we hope we do. (Kyle, 16, Country High)

Young Women

There needs to be a balance. I think it is disgusting the way it is. (Kate, 16, Country High)

I was thinking the other day... I didn't want to end up like Mum, having to do everything so ... if they are good at home economics or something, they can cook maybe three times a week and I'd do the other bit, and make it balanced ... (Judith, 18, Country High)

[You need to share] from the start – because my parents started [not sharing] as they are from the start ... I'm not marrying him unless he does the dishes. (Kate, 16, Country High)



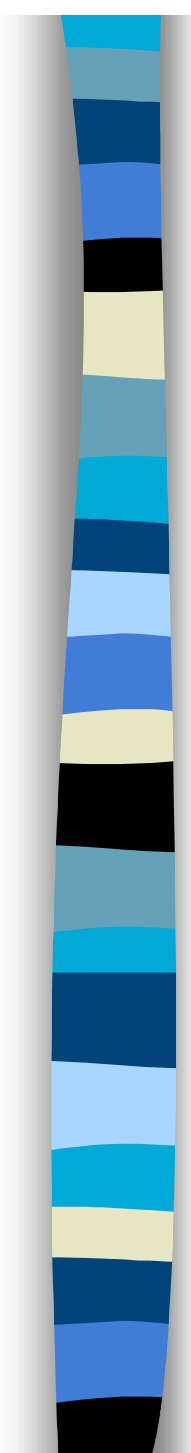
Socio-economic background matters

- Women from lower socio-economic backgrounds and country more likely to assert a fairness discourse, show anger and talk tactics
- Young women from higher socio-economic areas more likely to do it themselves because:
 - It ‘cleanses the soul’
 - Don’t trust standards of cleaners
 - Think they ‘should’ do it themselves
 - ‘men are useless’
 - They are more resigned, less stroppy
- Flinty resistance or resigned pragmatism on the female side, meets wily minimisation on men’s?
- Young men are critical of women’s ‘control’ patterns around housework. Might be convenient cover, but sounds sincere.



Implications?

- A fertility gap exists between youthful preferences and predicted fertility outcomes
- Finances and security are prominent sources of uncertainty around children
- Both sexes expect work, and most to have kids
- The male breadwinner is likely to continue his long term decline
- No sign of a 'new Australian wife' living in happy dependence on men
- While the busy dual earner household is likely to continue its rise...
- ...Fueling a more widespread work/care/life collision, fraying individuals, households and community

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- Men seem as equally 'care-centred' as young women
 - But their plans are more contingent
 - Their higher expectations of more maternal care than women plan to supply are likely to disappoint young women
 - And where they cannot rely on their own mothers, they will be relying upon formal childcare more than they expect
 - A cascade of care to women as default carers, more than they plan and expect
 - There are implications for grandmothers
 - For childcare provision
 - And for the institutions of work: men's plans (and consequently women's) are dependent upon workplaces and labour law that permits and protects part-time work, gives flexibilities, and provides paid and unpaid leave
 - Study gives no succor to the optimistic hope that housework is briskly moving to a fair allocation between the sexes: young women have much work ahead in moving the masculinist culture that sees this as their lot. The discussion will be heated.