The Impact of Education and Labour Market Policies on a Generation: Young Adults in Canada and Australia in the 1990s and 2000s

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Young people's transitions through education to work and beyond have become of increasing importance in educational research in both Canada and Australia. In both countries interest has been sparked by the increasing complexities of the transition process from school to work, leading to a new literature on young people's transitions (Anisef & Andres, 1996; Dwyer & Wyn, 2001; Krahn & Lowe, 1998; Looker & Dwyer, 1998; Wyn, 1996). Educational research on transition processes as also been a focus in educational policy in which education is positioned as crucial to the production of highly skilled labour markets that meet the needs of post-industrial economies (McLaughlin, 1999). Research on the outcomes and effects of education can provide an important evidence base for decisions about curriculum and the organisation of education and can improve our understanding of the relationship between education and the labour market. Longitudinal studies are especially relevant to the development of knowledge about all of these dimensions of youth transitions. Longitudinal studies that compare the transition processes in different countries are able to demonstrate the impact that social policies and social conditions have on the nature of the transitions and the ways in which they are experienced by young people.

To date, the majority of educational research on transitions is based primarily on cross-sectional studies of national or local populations. Investigations of educational transitions or school to work linkages often use single, snapshot studies with retrospective questions to impute temporal causation (*e.g.,* (Ainley & McKenzie, 1999; Anisef & Andres, 1996). Alternatively, when longitudinal research has been conducted, frequently it has relied on official records (e.g., Finnie, 2001), and while adequate for describing patterns, it is usually not rich enough to provide explanatory details. Many researchers interested in youth transitions have drawn attention to the need for theoretical and analytical complexity when considering transitions (Andres, 1999; Dwyer & Wyn, 2001; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). Principally because of funding limitations, research spanning significant time periods in the individual lives of young Canadians and Australians has been very rare and comparisons of young people in these two countries is even rarer.

There is, however, a small body of Canadian and Australian educational research that has employed longitudinal methods to track individuals over a substantial period of time. These studies have had an important impact on both knowledge production and social policy. Work in this tradition has paid particular attention to school to work transitions (e.g., Dwyer & Wyn, 2001;

Krahn & Lowe, 1999) Qualitative aspects of longitudinal educational research have also played an important role in expanding our knowledge (Gaskell, 1992).

Longitudinal data sets which follow cohorts over time offer a wealth of information and allow researchers to seek answers to complex research questions. The two data sets on which this paper is based are relatively unusual in that they permit detailed comparative analyses of the lives of today's young adults – one based in Victoria, Australia and one in British Columbia, Canada. They were developed independently, but the similarities between the two data sets are striking. Both studies have survey and interview components, contain representative state and province wide samples, and span 15 years. Because both of these studies are informed by the body of research on the life course and youth transitions, our data allow us to examine the lives of the individuals in our study from multiple perspectives and to address theoretical, policy, and practice-based questions. The detail that is contained in these studies of individual lives over 15 years or more has enabled the researchers to gain unique insights into the effects of educational and labour market policies and to test the assumptions made by policies which were put in place over a decade ago. The data also provide an opportunity to reflect on the usefulness of different theoretical approaches and to develop new understandings of this generation. The most challenging though, is the opportunity that the two data sets provides to undertake the first detailed comparative analysis of Canadian and Australian youth. We begin this paper by describing these data sets.

Description of the Data Sets

Paths on Life's Way Project

The *Paths on Life's Way Project* (1988-1998) has examined the lives, choices, and post-secondary education and work experiences of high school graduates from British Columbia, Canada. The *Paths on Life's Way* project is the only study on the transition of youth to adulthood in British Columbia that combines extensive qualitative and quantitative data to examine the lives, actions, and social and cultural contexts of individuals both longitudinally and at contextually specific time periods.

The project began as one of a series of "Access for All" initiatives by the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education. This study of the transitions of young people was in response to

low post-secondary participation rates, particularly of high school graduates into the post-secondary system. **Phase I** of the *Paths* project began in 1989, when a large sample of British Columbia Grade 12 graduates of the 1988 cohort were sent a survey questionnaire entitled the "Grade 12 Graduate Follow-up." The initial purpose of the study was to collect baseline data on a sample of this cohort and to determine respondents' post-secondary attendance patterns within one year of high school graduation. Questionnaire data provided information about family background, high school experiences and plans for further study, views about education and work, educational aspirations and expectations, academic achievements and post-high school status one year after high school graduation. High school and post-secondary records provided demographic information such as sex, geographic location, curricular differentiation and grade point average achieved in high school, and post-secondary institution attended. Respondents to this survey included 5345 individuals from the Class of '88. Also, in 1989, Andres conducted two sets of in depth, face-to-face interviews with students who were currently in Grade 12. Theories of rational choice and cultural and social reproduction were used to examine the processes underlying the decisions people made in choosing whether to pursue a post-secondary education (Andres, 2002b).

In 1993, Andres carried out a second follow-up of the 1989 survey sample (**Phase II**). Survey questionnaires were sent to respondents to the 1989 study; 2030 (38%) responded, representing 9% of the entire cohort of B.C. 1988 Grade 12 graduates. In 1993, the third in a series of semi-structured interviews was conducted (n=39). The purpose of the follow-up study was to collect longitudinal data about students who remained in the post-secondary system, those who had graduated or left the system, and those who had never participated in formal post-secondary education. The Phase II questionnaire focussed on the educational paths of respondents, experiences within the post-secondary system, occupational experiences, and views about the relationships among education, work, and skills, and life long learning. Its theoretical focus was an examination of how social and cultural capital transmitted by the family, how the school system influenced individuals' actions and affected their eventual educational and occupational attainment (Andres, 2002c),

In 1998, **Phase III** of this project was carried out. At this time, mail out survey questionnaires were sent to 1988 high school graduates 10 years following high school graduation who had participated in Phases I and II. In addition to the themes explored in the first two phases, the Phase III survey included detailed questions about skills and training, geographic mobility, and health and

wellbeing issues. The 1055 survey respondents to Phase III represents 5% of the entire graduating cohort and 20% of respondents to the original 1989 survey sample. Also in this phase, interviews were conducted with 32 of the original interviewees. From a theoretical perspective, Phase III undertook to examine the relationships among continuously evolving institutional structures, the endurable nature of the various forms of capital, and the ability of individuals as purposive agents to act on their resources in relation to changing social structures and conditions (Andres, 2002d).

In Phase IV, 32 interviewees who have participated in the four previous interviews were reinterviewed. In 2003, respondents to the previous phases of this study were sent another follow-up survey. The response rate was 733, a full 70% of respondents to Phase III. The theoretical objectives of this phase are as follows: 1) to ascertain what transitions participants made over time and determine what they view as "normative," "discontinuities," and "turning points" for themselves and members of their generation; 2) to determine how participation in one or more life spheres at one point in time (particularly participation in post-secondary education) influences participation in subsequent life spheres (*e.g.,* education, work, child care, parent care) and eventual life chances; and, 3) to assess how historical events, circumstances, and experiences of this generation are being transmitted as cultural and social capital to their children (Andres, 2009).

Life Patterns Project

The *Life Patterns Project* of the Australian Youth Research Centre (1991-2002) has developed a data base through the collection of survey and interview data with high school leavers from Victoria, Australia to determine educational, occupational and other life outcomes. The goals of the *Life Patterns* project are as follows:

- to examine the changing experience of youth in a changed world;
- to move beyond localised national perspectives and develop an international perspective on young people's lives and educational experiences;
- to take seriously the impact of globalisation on the life experiences of the post-1970 generation; and
- to reflect on what the main findings tell us about how young people are responding to change.

Drawing on a commitment to exploring issues of youth transitions that began in the 1970s, the *Life Patterns* research was designed to provide a critical perspective on current post-compulsory education and training policy formation. The pathways metaphor, derived from OECD policy programmes and goals, became widely used in Australian educational policies of the 1980s. These policies were directly concerned with the relationship between educational participation, attainment and employment outcomes. Although initially guided by the "pathways" metaphor, the early findings of complex and non-linear trajectories lead us to adopt the term "Life Patterns" instead. The research has been influenced by and has also contributed to critical approaches to the concept of youth (*e.g.,* (Lesko, 1996; Stenner & Marshall, 1999; White & Wyn, 2007).

The Youth Research Centre's *Life Patterns* project is a ten year study of 2000 young people in Victoria who left secondary school in 1991 at about the age of 17 years. Phase 1 began with 29,000 school leavers, who completed a 1992 follow-up survey on what they had done since leaving school. In 1996 a representative sample of 11,000 was constructed and re-surveyed. From this sample, a subsequent annual interview sample of 100 and a questionnaire sample of 2,000 were constructed. The sample included both urban and rural youth, covering a representative range of schools (60% from government schools) and ethnic groups (one-third of parents were born outside Australia) and a range of parental educational attainment (nearly half of the parents had not completed secondary school). These included a "Studying" sub-set who went on to further study at the end of secondary school and a "Non-Study" subset who chose an alternative to study as the next step from school.

The research has involved two phases. **Phase One** followed the students annually through the years 1991 to 2000, generating a ten-year record of young people's transitions into adult life. This phase focused on their pathways through further education and employment, and documented their responses and adaptations to changing labour market conditions. The concept "post-1970

generation" was coined in an attempt to characterise the way in which this cohort of young people were evidently shaping new life patterns and understandings of adulthood. **Phase Two** was developed in response to issues developed at the end of Phase One: rethinking careers and mixed patterns of life priorities and was conducted between 2002 – 2004. The analysis is providing convincing evidence for the emergence of a "new adulthood." This contrasts with the traditional "youth transitions" literature which proposes that the period of youth is becoming an increasingly extended period of life. Phase **Three**, 2005 – 2009 is currently being completed. In this phase, the Life-Patterns program introduced a second cohort, of 3,000 young Australians who left secondary school in 2006. The aim of the introduction of the new cohort was to explore the choices and trajectories of a new generation against the assumptions of existing policies and to test the findings of the previous research to validate the extent to which their experiences represented long-term, enduring changes in approaches to education, careers and to life. During this phase, the collaboration between the Australian and the Canadian data bases was consolidated through the integration of both data bases.

Throughout the project, the processes of reflective practice have been employed in order to allow the participants' understandings and definitions to influence the research questions. This has been achieved through the interviews with the sub-set of 100 participants and through integrating both quantitative and qualitative forms of data collection in the surveys. Participants have been invited to comment specifically on the relevance of the questions asked. At several points in the project, these participant comments have shaped the next round of questions. Data generated from this longitudinal study have provided unique insights into the experiences and perspectives of a fairly representative group of young Victorians over more than a decade, for some of their most important years.

Given the similarities in the *Paths on Life's Way* and *Life Patterns* projects, the insights provided by each of these studies have been extended further through comparative analyses. Canada and Australia share many common characteristics. Both countries are settler dominions and are similar in their traditions and formal educational and political systems. The state of Victoria and the province of British Columbia are part of the Pacific Rim. Victoria and British Columbia are multi-ethnic societies with influences predominantly from Britain, Europe and Asia. However, there are several important differences in the structure of the educational system and labour market in each

country. By comparing their experiences and outcomes over a 15 year period of time, we have been able to reveal how Australian and Canadian young adults negotiate the life course in specific cultural, social, and economic contexts.

More specifically, our data sets contain the following information that allows us to carry out detailed comparative work which has produced a book: *The Making of a Generation: Young Adults in Canada and Australia* (Andres & Wyn, forthcoming, 2010) This paper provides a snapshot of some of the key findings of our comparative analysis.

The Policy Context

The policy setting against which our cohorts in Canada and Australia began their post-secondary trajectories in life was the transformation of industrially-based, national economies into globally competitive, post-industrial economies. In both countries, educational policies played a very significant role in this economic transformation, creating the new mass education sector of post-secondary education and bringing with it the normative expectation that a significant majority of young people would complete secondary education and gain some sort of post-secondary qualification. At the same time, in both countries labour market policies were also being implemented to ensure global competitiveness and economic transformation, largely through labour-market deregulation that enabled the development of more flexible employment practices. Hence, the young people in our studies became the unknowing pioneers of new expectations and patterns of transition to adulthood. They were about to enter a world that would be very different from that of the previous generation. Indeed, Wyn and Woodman (2006) have argued that the nature and meaning of adulthood itself was transformed during this time. .

Our analysis of policy documents from the late 1980s shows that both Canada and Australia took up the OECD policy language and frameworks that saw the need for higher levels of education in order to ensure that Canadian and Australian labour forces would be able to contribute to the development of knowledge societies. Education became a highly valued form of cultural capital, in which individuals would invest (i.e., pay for privately). Although the two countries were committed to implementing education and labour market policies that followed OECD frameworks, there were historical differences in their situation and differences in the ways in which they implemented these policies.

a) By the 1980s, Canadians in British Columbia had achieved significantly higher levels of education than Australians in Victoria. This is illustrated in Table 1. The comparison of mother's level of education between Canadian and Australian participants in our studies reveals that across all areas the Canadian participants were more likely to come from families where the mother had completed secondary education and had achieved some form of post-secondary qualification. One of the implications of this is that significant proportions of the Australian participants in our study were achieving levels of education that were well beyond that of their parents.

b) Young people in schools in British Columbia were expected to plan for further study and for careers that might involve certification and qualifications, and schools played a role in providing young people with career and further study advice into pathways that were already established by a previous generation. By contrast, Australia in 1991 saw unprecedented numbers of young people leave secondary school for too few places in higher education and trajectories for which they had not been prepared. This meant that they had to use their own resources to forge post-secondary educational pathways. Tables 2 and 3 show that one of the effects of this was lower levels of post-secondary educational participation by the Australians compared with the Canadians.

c) In both countries labour market deregulation was implemented creating a new era of precarious work and of longer working hours for young Canadians and young Australians. However, in Australia the extent of deregulation in the form of the 1996 Workplace Relations Act created especially difficult employment conditions for young adults, characterised by short-term contracts, an erosion of workers' rights to sick pay, maternity leave, and other conditions.

Our analysis of the policy backdrop to the young people's lives also reveals an ongoing concern about the need to address traditional patterns of inequality, based on socioeconomic status, geographic location, and gender (Ball, 2003; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007)

The impact of these policies, and the different ways in which they were implemented in each country is reflected very directly in the ways in which the young Australians and Canadians were able to live their lives.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for our analysis in this paper draws on the insights of social theorists into the dynamics of social change (drawing on the work of Bauman (2000, 2001) Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (2002), and Beck and Lau (2005), 2005,) and on the dynamics that create inequalities (drawing especially on Bourdieu, (1987) and others, including Ball (2006) and McLeod and Yates (McLeod & Yates, 2006) who have used his work).

The ideas provided by social change theorists who explore the shift to late modernity have been especially helpful in providing a framework for understanding our participants' experiences of work. For example, Bauman's concept of *Unsicherheit*, describes the precariousness, lack of stability, safety and certainty of the labour markets that our participants entered (Bauman (Bauman, 2001). According to Bauman, while uncertainty has always been part of employment, in the past the work place allowed for more collective protection and action. He argues that "the present-day uncertainty is a powerful *individualizing* force" (p. 24) where "individualization is a fate; not a choice" (, p. 44). Mills and Blossfeld (2003) support this view, arguing that young people are particularly vulnerable to the adverse elements of precarious labour markets because lack experience and seniority. The labour force of the late 1990s was described as flexible, mobile, disordered, and even chaotic. Because capital became, in Bauman's terms "exterritorial, light, disencumbered and disembedded to an unprecedented extent" (p. 25), jobs have become precarious and employers are able to increase the demands they make of employees.

We have also found Rosa's (Rosa, 2003) concept of the acceleration of time useful in understanding the experiences of our participants. Our work supports other research findings on the acceleration of work for employees in Canada (Duxbury & Higgins, 2003) and Australia (Morehead, Steele, Alexander, Stephen, & Duffin, 1997), mainly experienced as an escalation in stress through the difficulty of managing to balance work and family life.

Bauman (2000, 2001) advances the argument that for those who are "disencumbered," able to reinvent themselves as necessary, who thrive in chaotic and creative disorder, and who work

regardless of location or relocate as necessary, the freedom of flexibility is ideal. However, those who find themselves immobile (e.g., due to limited or outdated skills, family ties, or other constraining forces such as a disability), flexibility leads to precarious employment, vulnerability, and lack of freedom.

We have found Bourdieu's conceptual frameworks to be especially helpful in understanding the links between family background and educational achievement (see Tables 2 and 3). Indeed, we found that family background was one of the most significant elements that structures their experiences, especially with regard to their educational careers. Yet we agree with Ball's (2006) assessment that "it is often difficult to read classed individuals as though their experiences were transparent concomitants of the social category they are allocated to" (p. 6). He draws our attention to the nuances and ambiguities of class positionings through education. Ball comments that Bourdieu's (1987) thoughts that social boundaries of theoretical social classes are not clear cut should be thought of as "lines or imaginary planes," and suggests "a flame whose edges are inconstant movement, oscillating around a line or surface" (p. 13) is a more appropriate metaphor. The planes on which class dynamics are played out are specific to space, place and time, because "class gets done" differently in different places and times (Ball, 2006). While the profile provided by our survey data reveals the strength of class processes, it is important to acknowledge the complex dynamics that produce these patterns. We agree with Ball that class is productive and reactive, it is a "longitudinal process rather than a cross-sectional one," it is "achieved and maintained and enacted" and is also "realised and struggled over in the daily lives of families and institutions, in consumption decisions, as much as in the processes of production" (p. 6).

Findings

The following discussion provides a brief summary of the impact of education and labour market policies on the young people in our studies. It shows that policies do matter and that they can have unintended consequences that are perhaps as significant as their intended outcomes.

We have already referred to the importance of understanding the family background of the two cohorts through a brief discussion of Tables 1, 2 and 3. We return to this theme to highlight the evidence that there has been both change and continuity in patterns of inequality. Our data reveal

that the policy push to increase educational levels is evident in the educational achievements of young people in both countries.

Insert Table 1 here

Table 2 demonstrates that in Canada having at least one parent who completed university education is associated with slightly higher levels of university education by their children. In Australia, the pattern is slightly stronger, possibly reflecting the low level of parental education of the Australian sample compared with the BC sample. While socioeconomic status continues to predict educational outcomes, a new pattern has appeared in this generation. Tables 2 and 3 indicate that young women from families in which one parent also has a university degree are the most likely to have a university degree, and overall young women from all backgrounds, in both countries, have been the most responsive to the policy imperatives of the 1990s.

Insert Tables 2 and 3 here

The picture is not straightforward however. Table 4 shows that young women were more likely than young men (in both countries) to experience unemployment. Higher levels of education provided some protection from unemployment, but the precarity of employment at that time is shown in the higher proportions of those (Canadians) who had university credentials and who were not able to get work – or to get full-time work – when they wanted to, compared with their less credentialed counterparts.

Insert Table 4 here

One of the important messages that our data reveals is that in one sense the policy-makers in the 1990s were right: educational credentials are necessary in order to obtain employment in the skilled and professional sectors, where there was the greatest likelihood of having job security, benefits, and future prospects. Tables 5 and 6 demonstrate that university education is directly related to being employed in professional jobs. In Canada, young women have been especially responsive to this. The data also show that in both Canada and Australia the labour markets at the

less-skilled end of the spectrum remain segregated by gender, with young men taking unskilled jobs as labourers and young women taking up unskilled clerical and service work.

Insert Tables 5 and 6 here

The relationship between qualifications and employment is complex. As Table 7 reveals, significant proportions of Canadians and Australians felt that they were overqualified for the jobs they got. In our book we have been able to expand on this theme, drawing on the interview data, to highlight that many of the young people felt a sense of betrayal in the failure of the labour market to live up to the implicit promises of the educational policies of the early 1990s. For a significant minority, their investment in education has not resulted in achieving fulfilling, secure jobs that offer them future development.

Insert Table 7 here

This finding was particularly poignant in the Australian data. Especially for those young people whose families had not previously been educated at university, the financial burden of paying fees to go to university was a considerable sacrifice, made by them and their families. Table 8 indicates that even quite early on, the Australians valued financial security well above making a lot of money. Education was a conscious strategy to secure a stable lifestyle, rather than to be socially mobile.

Insert Table 8 here

Table 9 demonstrates similar patterns for the young Canadians. They emphasised security and living well as their top priorities. Both groups placed a high priority on having good relationships with their family and on establishing a relationship with a spouse or partner.

Insert Table 9 here

The final tables demonstrate that there has to a certain extent been a disjuncture between their hopes and the way things have turned out. Tables 10 and 11 in some respects tell a shocking story, and bring our discussion back to the policy issues identified at the start of this paper. The comparison of marriage and childbearing 12 and 15 years after leaving secondary school reveal in stark profile the challenges the Australians have faced compared to their Canadian peers. They are in one sense the casualties of education and labour market policies that favoured market forces, the principle of "user pays" and the withdrawal of the state from responsibility for civic society, through the neo-liberal, deregulatory policies enacted in Australia under the Howard Government and in Victoria specifically under the Kennet Government.

Insert Tables 10 and 11 here

The lower rates of marriage and child-bearing – across all educational groups – reveal the impact of long working hours, unstable and insecure employment and the challenges of finding the right balance between work, study, and personal life. Although space does not allow us to elaborate here, in the book we document the dominant narratives of stress, a feeling of failure to manage complex lives, and disappointment that they have not been able to achieve their goals.

The Canadian data reveal the importance of having socially responsible policies. In British Columbia, although the government also raised levels of educational participation in order to meet the needs of an economy transforming from an industrial to a post-industrial base, employment conditions continued to allow young adults to have enough security to establish themselves in relationships and families and to have children.

The data in Table 11 reinforce our interpretation. It is common to point out that young people's mental health has reached crisis point in many countries, in particular in the form of anxiety disorders and depression. Table 11 starkly portrays that a significant minority of our participants were concerned about their mental and physical health. However, the Australians rate their physical and mental health as far worse than the Canadians. We argue that this is a direct outcome of the challenging circumstances that this group have been forced to manage.

Twenty-five percent of young Australians aged 18-24 years in 1997 experienced a mental health disorder (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007). Ten percent of young Australians aged 18-24 years in 1997 were diagnosed with depression and a total of 14% experienced anxiety

disorders (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007). Concern about mental health has continued to be an issue for young Australians. A recent study of young Australians aged 20-24 years identified depression as the issue of most importance to young people (34.2%) (Mission Australia, 2007). The mental health of young Canadians has also emerged as an issue of concern (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2006). A comprehensive study of the mental health of the Canadian population in 1994-1995 showed that 7% of 20-29 year olds were depressed, 38% experienced high levels of distress and 17% said that this affected their lives (Stephens, Dulberg, & Joubert, 2000). This study demonstrated that 72% of Canadians aged 20-29 in 1994-5 were happy and interested in life. It also showed that (across all age groups) those with higher levels of education were the most likely to be mentally well and 33% of those with less than a high school education experienced high levels of distress compared with 23% of those with a university education, and that Canadian men had slightly better mental health levels than Canadian women.

It needs to be remembered that, overall, young people are the healthiest group of the population (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007; Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2006) and we acknowledge the finding by other studies that increased educational participation generally correlates with improved health outcomes (World Health Organization, 2004). Given that this cohort of young Australians and Canadians were the most highly educated generation; yet, their subjective concerns about their health and wellbeing and the objective evidence that some health problems, especially mental health, are on the increase appear to represent a paradox, because higher levels of educational participation, at a population level, are generally associated with health improvements.

Conclusion

Our research demonstrates that policies do have a significant impact on individual lives. Policy effects accumulate over time to impact on the very nature of a generation and on the social fabric. Indeed, as we have seen from our analysis of higher education policy in the 1990s in both Canada and Australia, it was the explicit goal of governments to create whole scale change in the educational levels of the young population in order to ensure global competitiveness and national prosperity through economic change (see Chapter 3). Although policy domains are discrete, real

lives do not correspond to these abstractions. Education and labour policies impact on other areas of life in ways that are unintended but inevitable. We would add our voice to the extensive literature already advocating for greater collaboration between government jurisdictions in policy and program development, in order to a) ensure that unintended outcomes are minimised and b) bring a broader, more realistic perspective to policy development (Tett, Crowther, & O'Hara, 2003).

To illustrate this, we highlight two examples of the unintended consequences of education and labour policies on the lives of our participants: low fertility and poor mental health. Our analysis is sharpened by the comparison of different approaches to policies in Canada and Australia that were aiming to address the same basic issue: ensuring global competitiveness and economic prosperity by increasing human capital through education.

The comparison with Canada enables us to see that the costs the Australians bore – high rates of mental illness, poor physical health, low rates of marriage, and childbirth compared with the Canadian cohort – were not *necessary*. Canada's economic prosperity was not jeopardised by having (relatively) more socially just workplace conditions and more effective articulation from secondary to post-secondary educational pathways.

These two examples highlight processes that create adverse outcomes for individuals. It is important to remember that individuals are "vulnerable" or "at risk" (to use contemporary policy buzz-words) because they are positioned in this way by policies. Government policies, combined with conditions not in the control of governments (e.g., global financial and economic processes) make some groups of people vulnerable. As Bennett (2006) argues, "social exclusion and inequality are not an exception to the rules that operate differently 'within the mainstream'" but should be seen as an example of "the ways in which cultural and economic capital – education and occupational class –also work to produce cultural inequalities within the mainstream" (p. 239).

We suggest that young people who are without strong family support to sustain the long years of gaining educational qualifications are the most in need of systematic, long-term, sustained support through government programs. In our studies, in both countries, those who found it most difficult to achieve their goals were young men from lower socioeconomic families. They found it difficult to learn "the moves" of a dance routine to which they did not relate. Educational programs that focus on skills and academic outcomes do not provide them with the capacity to live within a subjective domain in which reflexivity (stepping back into life from a different direction) is routine. It also needs to be recognised that policies promoting personal debt (for example, Australia's

Higher Education Contribution Scheme and the Canada Student Loans Program – see Chapter 5) place young people in this group in a double jeopardy. The risks of debt for them are greater than for any other group because they have fewer resources in the first place (both material and cultural) to enable them to respond to changing circumstances. Investment is always a risk, but when the line between education and employment is far from "straight," investment in education is indeed risky, especially for those who are already disadvantaged.

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Table 1. Mother's Educational Level by Post-secondary Status and Sex, Canada and Australia

	Canada					Australia				
	Non-participants		Participants		Total	Non-participants		Participants		Total
	Females %	Males %	Females %	Males %	%	Females %	Males %	Females %	Males %	%
Less than secondary graduation	19	25	20	15	*19*	63[1]	72	59	50	58
Graduated from secondary school	26	32	25	27	*26*	7	14	10	16	12
Apprenticeship, trade, or vocational school	9	5	14	14	*13*	9	0	4	2	4
Post-secondary non-university	31	23	21	20	*21*	10	10	10	15	11
Bachelor's degree or higher	16	14	21	23	*20*	12	3	22	16	15
Total	**58**	**56**	**296**	**197**	***607***	**59**	**29**	**289**	**134**	**512**

Table 2. Canada – Highest Credential Earned by 2003 by SES and Sex, Age 33

	Neither parent with university		One or both parents with university	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
	%	%	%	%
Non-participant	6	7	1	3
Non-completer	10	12	3	9
Certificate	17	10	11	12
Diploma	18	12	13	14
Associate degree	0	1	2	0
Ticket	2	8	0	2
Bachelor's degree	26	31	39	38
Professional degree	15	11	19	14
Master's degree	7	8	11	9
Doctoral degree	1	1	1	0
Total	**320**	**219**	**88**	**58**

Table 3. Australia – Highest Credential Earned by 2002 by SES and Sex, Age 28

	Neither parent with university		One or both parents with university	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
	%	%	%	%
Non-participant	15	16	9	6
Some apprenticeship	0	0	0	0
Trade qualifications	1	9	2	6
Other (unspecified)	8	7	5	11
Some TAFE 5	4	6	0	
Some university	5	5	1	3
Undergraduate diploma	6	8	4	14
Bachelor's degree	13	12	12	17
Post-graduate diploma	42	36	53	34
Master's degree	3	4	7	6
Doctoral degree	2	1	2	3
Total	**291**	**132**	**86**	**35**

Table 4. Unemployment History by Sex

	Females			Males			Total
	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	%
% yes:							
Canada (September 1989 to April 1993, up to age 23)							
Unemployed when you wanted to be employed	29	50	59	60	49	47	51
Unemployed for at least 3 consecutive months	42	47	41	45	50	50	47
Working part-time when you wanted to be working full-time	29	48	43	15	43	29	42
Received unemployment insurance benefits	53	32	13	55	32	10	26
Received social insurance or welfare income	0	9	6	20	6	4	7
Received child care subsidy (MSSH)	6	4	1	0	0	0	2
Australia (1991 to 1996, up to age 22)							
Drawn unemployment benefits	35	33	30	35	35	20	30

Table 5. Canada – Current or Most Recent Occupation (Pineo-Porter-McRoberts) by Post-secondary Completion Status, 2003, Age 33

	Females			Males			Total
	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	%
Farm labourers	0	0	0	0	2	1	1
Unskilled manual	0	1	1	10	8	3	3
Unskilled clerical, sales, services	23	15	4	5	3	1	7
Total Unskilled	**23**	**16**	**5**	**15**	**13**	**5**	**11**
Semi-skilled manual	5	2	0	5	7	1	2
Semi-skilled clerical, sales, services	27	12	3	10	6	3	7
Farmers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Semi-skilled	**32**	**14**	**3**	**15**	**13**	**4**	**9**
Skilled crafts and trades	0	0	2	33	17	5	5
Skilled clerical, sales, services	9	11	6	0	4	1	6
Forewomen/foremen	0	1	0	0	3	1	1
Supervisors	5	5	2	0	10	1	4
Technicians	0	8	3	5	6	4	5
Total Skilled	**13**	**25**	**13**	**38**	**40**	**12**	**21**
Middle management	5	11	5	24	12	11	10
Semi-professional	18	25	40	5	15	24	27
Total Semi-professional	**23**	**36**	**45**	**29**	**27**	**35**	**37**
High level management	0	4	5	0	2	2	3
Employed professionals	5	5	26	5	6	33	18
Self-employed professionals	5	0	3	0	0	10	3
Total Professional/Managerial	**10**	**9**	**34**	**5**	**8**	**45**	**24**

Table 6. Australia – Current or Most Recent Occupation by Post-secondary Completion Status (ANZSC0), 2004, Age 30

	Females			Males			Total
	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	%
Labourers	0	2	1	20	0	0	2
Machinery operators & drivers	0	0	0	7	0	0	0
Sales workers	3	3	3	7	4	0	3
Clerical & administrative worker	47	27	15	20	18	13	22
Community & personal service workers	13	5	5	0	5	3	6
Technicians & trades workers	0	3	4	7	20	3	6
Professionals	31	53	63	27	38	68	51
Managers	6	7	10	13	13	13	10

Table 7. Are You Qualified for Your Job? by Post-secondary Completion Status and Sex

	Canada, 2003, Age 33							Australia 2004, Age 30						
	Females			Males			Total	Females			Males			Total
	No PS	Non-univ	Univ	No PS	Non-univ	Univ		No PS	Non-univ	Univ	No PS	Non-univ	Univ	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Underqualified	0	4	2	0	4	1	3	7	6	5	9	8	5	6
Adequately qualified	96	79	76	86	75	85	79	79	85	83	83	81	77	82
Overqualified	5	17	22	14	21	14	18	14	10	12	9	11	18	12

Table 8. Australia, 2004, Age 30 – How Do You Rate the Following as Goals to Aim For in Your Adult Life

	Females		Males	
	Low %	Very high %	Low %	Very high %
Less than University Degree				
To have financial security	0	73	0	64
To make a lot of money	10	10	9	14
To be better off financially than my parents are	13	24	15	16
To have a special relationship with someone	1	74	0	68
To care and provide for a family	7	68	5	65
To pursue a life of pleasure	8	14	14	18
To live up to religious or spiritual ideals	54	15	54	7
To help people who are in need	13	9	15	10
To be active in working for a better society	18	11	12	10
University Degree or Greater				
To have financial security	0	74	0	67
To make a lot of money	20	5	15	9
To be better off financially than my parents are	20	17	24	18
To have a special relationship with someone	0	80	1	58
To care and provide for a family	13	65	9	56
To pursue a life of pleasure	15	11	25	8
To live up to religious or spiritual ideals	47	11	54	11
To help people who are in need	6	15	20	6
To be active in working for a better society	10	15	15	4

Table 9. Canada, 2003, Age 33 – How Important are each of the Following Values to You?

	Females		Males	
	Not at all important %	Very important %	Not at all important %	Very important %
Less than University Degree				
Succeeding at work or a career	2	37	1	40
Having enough money to live well	1	46	2	38
Time together with my spouse/partner	1	76	1	70
Quality time to spend with my children	4	73	4	67
A good relationship with my parents	1	71	2	51
Developing and maintaining friendships	0	65	2	60
Developing an independent lifestyle	1	27	5	28
Living a physically healthy lifestyle	1	61	2	49
Living a psychologically healthy lifestyle	3	67	1	49
Achieving a balance between work & non-work activities	1	61	4	54
Regular involvement in organized learning activities	2	8	6	10
Involvement in community affairs	2	6	4	7
Participation in religious activities	33	13	40	16
Time for leisure activities	1	46	1	45
Living in a culturally diverse community	4	14	8	12
Respect for the natural environment	1	40	1	40
A socially just society	1	38	2	38
University Degree or Greater				
Succeeding at work or a career	1	52	1	50
Having enough money to live well	0	44	0	35
Time together with my spouse/partner	1	76	1	71
Quality time to spend with my children	2	72	6	64
A good relationship with my parents	0	72	1	60
Developing and maintaining friendships	0	76	1	55
Developing an independent lifestyle	1	37	1	26
Living a physically healthy lifestyle	1	68	1	54
Living a psychologically healthy lifestyle	1	77	1	61
Achieving a balance between work & non-work activities	0	78	1	66
Regular involvement in organized learning activities	1	14	5	7
Involvement in community affairs	0	10	4	9
Participation in religious activities	26	16	40	9
Time for leisure activities	2	53	1	54
Living in a culturally diverse community	1	21	5	18
Respect for the natural environment	1	46	1	40
A socially just society	0	56	1	42

Table 10. Marital and Parental Status Fifteen and Twelve Years out of High School by Sex, Canada and Australia

	Canada 2003, age 33							Australia 2004, age 30						
	Females			Males			Total	Females			Males			Total
	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	%	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	%
Single	0	14	23	29	33	22	22	20	34	25	33	24	37	28
Living in a marriage-like rel'p	14	13	11	5	8	11	11	23	19	23	26	26	23	23
Married	82	67	63	57	56	66	64	55	47	52	44	49	40	49
Divorced	0	2	1	5	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	1	0	2
Separated	1	4	2	5	3	0	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Children	86	64	47	48	48	46	52	27	30	24	15	14	13	22

Table 11. Physical and Mental Health by Post-secondary Completion Status and Sex, Australia and Canada

Physically Healthy, Australia 2002, age 28

	Females			Males			Total
	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	%
Very unhealthy	0	4	3	7	1	0	2
Unhealthy	21	13	12	7	6	5	11
Neutral	21	34	28	40	33	32	31
Healthy	38	35	36	27	52	39	39
Very Healthy	21	15	21	20	9	24	18

Mentally Healthy, Australia 2002, age 28

	Females			Males			Total
	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	%
Very unhealthy	0	4	4	0	3	0	3
Unhealthy	17	15	11	13	7	10	12
Neutral	14	23	28	20	26	19	25
Healthy	48	39	40	40	44	50	42
Very Healthy	21	18	18	27	20	21	19

Physically Healthy, Canada 1998, age 28

	Females			Males			Total
	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	%
Very unhealthy	0	3	0	5	1	2	2
Unhealthy	5	10	6	0	5	2	6
Neutral	5	18	16	0	15	14	15
Healthy	57	41	37	43	43	40	41
Very Healthy	33	28	38	52	36	42	37

Mentally Healthy, Canada 1998, age 28

	Females			Males			Total
	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	No PS %	Non-univ %	Univ %	%
Very unhealthy	5	3	0	0	2	0	1
Unhealthy	5	9	8	10	8	6	8
Neutral	14	18	18	14	16	12	16
Healthy	38	37	45	24	43	50	43
Very Healthy	38	33	30	52	31	32	32