

Andres, Lesley, & Wyn, Johanna (2010). *The Making of a Generation: The Children of the 1970s in Adulthood*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press. Pages: 271. Price: 32.95 USD (paperback).

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In this book the authors set out to discover how a generation is made. In order to do this without sacrificing complexity, they wanted longitudinal data at macro and micro levels. They needed analyses of the impact of policies on educational and occupational outcomes as well as factors affecting those outcomes such as gender, academic capital, and socio-economic status. In addition, they needed data on general life factors such as relationships and family. They found these data sets through independently developed projects: one called Paths on Life's Way, a project concerning the lives of young adults in British Columbia, and the other called Life Patterns, another project about young adults, based in the state of Victoria, Australia. Both projects collected survey and interview data from provincewide and statewide representative samples. The work covered time spans of 14 and 15 years respectively, and both projects focused on the life course and transitions of youth, which allowed the authors to explore a generation from multiple perspectives. The depth and breadth of the data gave the authors a unique view of a generation of individuals.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's ideas of cultural capital and *habitus*, the authors theoretically situate individuals within changing social spaces that are constituted by both the individuals themselves and broader social processes. From this data and theoretical standpoint, Andres and Wyn were able to consider the impact of local and historical factors on the lives of youth born in the early 1970s in Australia and Canada.

For this particular generation, several changes characterized the social context. During this time, both in Australia and Canada, there was a growth in participation in post-secondary education: "Post-secondary education became a normative experience, an expected part of growing up" (p. 23). At the same time educational policies in both countries increasingly aligned with economic needs to produce the

type of human capital that was perceived necessary for each country to compete at a global level. These policies are significant because they changed the education environment, and youth from this generation “faced fundamentally new realities that marked them as being very different from the previous generation” (p. 63). The “education generation,” as they have been called, experienced access to education being extended to cohorts who were previously excluded, such as women, low-income youth, marginalized youth, and those living in rural areas.

Employment patterns also changed for this generation, and the context was one of unpredictability. Stable full-time work was increasingly replaced with part-time work, casual contracts, and non-standard working hours. At the same time skills development was more emphasized in the job market. Both high-skilled and low-skilled jobs increasingly required educational qualifications. More women entered the workforce but overwhelmingly in part-time positions. Work-life balance began to emerge as a major concern for the employed. In addition, significant changes in household patterns occurred, with an increase in single-person households. Women delayed having their first children until they were over 30 to accommodate work and education priorities.

Andres and Wyn show how across both countries, as the youth of this generation grew older, they experienced increasing individualization. In other words, the focus of their lives became oriented more toward personal goals (work and education) and away from community or political goals. A further interesting argument that Andres and Wyn make is that women generally benefitted from the widening access to education and employment, so much so that they were termed “generation makers.” Some groups of men, on the other hand, were less able to reinvent themselves and take advantage of the flexibility of the precarious nature of labour markets, and they have become positioned as “outsiders”: “they are refugees from a changing world” (p. 92).

One of the defining features of the members of this generation is their relationship to the labour market and their attitudes toward work. Long-term employment and stable personal-work relationships have become things of the past. These workers have to be variably educated, flexible, and willing to embrace a changeable work environment. The longitudinal data showed that young people struggled to establish a livelihood and that job stability came late in their lives.

A consequence of being flexible and mobile and keeping their options open is that young people tend to remain in the family home until their late 20s or early 30s. They have become the stay-at-home generation. Some even return to the family home after leaving. Living patterns have changed so that young people partner later, have families later, and have more diverse patterns of living, including group households. More women are choosing education or a career over having children. A key challenge for this generation is managing “an increasing and competing range of life options” (p. 187). Andres and Wyn argue that many young people started out with traditional ideas about marriage and family, but that social conditions resulted in different life choices. The study found that young men from university-educated

families were the slowest to move out of the family home, while young women from university-educated families were more likely to live independently earlier. Having a family, however, was still important for this generation.

The studies assessed whether these young people felt that they had achieved their goals over the years. Generally the majority felt a sense of satisfaction with their lives and their goal achievement by the time they were in their 30s. Educational qualifications have been crucial in ensuring goal achievement and success, and the data show that this generation has, in general, successfully negotiated the changeable environment. However, the toll is that more people are unwell. Statistics show increasing levels of mental illness, particularly from the Australian study. Work-life balance has become the holy grail for this group.

This book provides a unique view, in both its time frame and its breadth of complexity, of a generation. Significantly, it shows how educational and economic policies affect the day-to-day lives of young people. The two authors asked the key question: Has the generation born in the early 1970s taken distinctive pathways and formed new attitudes and priorities? They show that generations come into being through shared and often unconscious forces that shape their choices. This generation has taken a distinctive path, and their world is very different from that of their parents.♣