PARENTING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION OF AUSTRALIANS FOR UNCERTAIN FUTURES

Eric Fu, Jenny Chesters, and Hernán Cuervo
Acknowledgments

This phase of the Life Patterns research program titled “Learning to make it work: education, work and wellbeing in young adulthood” is led by Johanna Wyn, Dan Woodman, Helen Cahill (Chief Investigators), and Carmen Leccardi (Partner Investigator) with Hernán Cuervo, Jenny Chesters and Eric Fu. It is funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC).

This Life-Patterns program has maintained a tradition of a strong participatory approach to research, through regular written and verbal feedback by participants, which shaped the progress and outcomes of the research program. We deeply appreciate the generosity, willing engagement and honesty of our participants.
The Life Patterns research program is designed to follow patterns in people’s lives over time in order to gain a longitudinal and holistic understanding of the ways in which two generations of Australians are responding to our rapidly changing world (Tyler, Cuervo & Wyn, 2011). The program is based at the Youth Research Centre, in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne.

The generosity and ongoing support of the Life Patterns participants has meant that this study has built up a unique picture of the reality of the lives of two generations.

The Life Patterns program:

• follows two generations of Australians - one that left secondary school in 1991 (corresponding to the popular notion of ‘Gen X’) and another that left secondary school in 2006 (corresponding to the popular notion of ‘Gen Y’ or the ‘Millennials’). Multiple comparisons can be made between the two cohorts across different points in their lives.

• explores the pathways through different areas of life taken by Australian young people including their experiences in education, the labour market, their family and personal relationships, attitudes to life, concerns, and health and wellbeing.

• provides a unique picture, very different from the stereotypes of smooth transitions from education to work, or of the narcissistic or complacent generation often described in public discourse. We have argued for the importance of paying attention to the diversity of experiences that characterise young people’s lives.

• allows for insights to be drawn that feed into policy advice and also into public debate. Our work is often in the media disputing the simplistic claims about young people.

• was designed to follow patterns in young people’s lives over time in order to gain more than a static glimpse. We are interested in developing a more dynamic picture of young people’s lives rather than a single snapshot in time.

The Life Patterns project is ongoing, thanks to the continued engagement of the participants, and the support of the University of Melbourne and the Australian Research Council.
In this report, we present findings from survey data collected in 2011, 2014 and 2017 from participants of one Life Patterns Program cohort who were aged 43 – 44 years (corresponding to the popular term, Generation X) in 2017. In these three surveys, we included the same set of questions asking our participants about their level of life satisfaction since becoming a parent and their concerns for the future of their children. In this report, we focus on the responses from 152 parents who completed all three surveys.

Overall, we found that levels of life satisfaction declined over time. When we examined levels of satisfaction with various aspects of parenting, we discovered that parents were least satisfied with material issues; such as the availability of quality/affordable childcare; the availability of maternity/paternity entitlements; and with their ability to balance paid work with family commitments. We also examined parents’ concerns about the future of their children, finding that the top two concerns were also about material aspects, such as the cost of living and the cost of education. Other concerns included: environmental issues; health care costs; and their children’s ability to develop positive relationships. It is also worth noting that parental concerns about their children’s mental health increased significantly between 2014 to 2017.

Parents’ concerns have a gendered pattern. Male parents tended to have a higher level of concern about children’s access to quality education, health care costs, development of good characters and values in a changing society; the impact of social media and technology; the general cost of living and housing affordability; and access to quality and affordable education. Preoccupation with the impact of social media became one of the three most frequently mentioned concerns in the comments that parents provided in the 2017 survey (together with development of good values in life and housing affordability).

In this report, we argue that parental concerns highlighted above illustrate parents’ woes with the impact of the acceleration of social and economic change and, particularly, the impact of social media on their children’s everyday life. It also reveals their perceptions of an increase in the material costs of educating their children and the difficulties in accessing resources that might contribute to their healthy development.
2. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

This report is based on the responses of Life Patterns cohort 1 participants to a set of questions about their parenting experiences. Table 1 provides selected demographic characteristics of the participants who completed the survey in 2011, 2014 and 2017. In 2017, almost 70% of cohort 1 participants were women. Three-quarters of our participants held a bachelor degree or higher qualification, revealing the high level of investment in education made by this generation (Chesters et al. 2018). The majority of the participants were living in metropolitan areas, with two-thirds living in capital cities, reflecting the high degree of urbanisation in Australia. Three-quarters were either married or in a de facto relationship.

Table 1 Demographics of cohort 1 participants in 2011, 2014 and 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011 N=285</th>
<th>2014 N=269</th>
<th>2017 N=256</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a Capital City</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a Regional City</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a Country town</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural, not in town</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parental status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>68.77%</td>
<td>71.38%</td>
<td>71.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a parent</td>
<td>30.53%</td>
<td>28.62%</td>
<td>28.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.78%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>University/post-graduate degree</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>73.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other tertiary qualification</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Certificate</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>3.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than Year 12</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>0.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital status</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De facto/ married</td>
<td>77.2%</td>
<td>70.25%</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age of youngest child</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years old</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years old</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years old</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years or older</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** data unavailable

Learning across the life course 5
3. LEVELS OF SATISFACTION WITH PARENTING

We identified 152 parents who completed all the three surveys. Figure 1 shows their level of satisfaction with their experiences of being a parent. Levels of satisfaction declined in general between 2011 and 2017. The only dimension associated with an increase levels of satisfaction was “returning to the workforce”. This might correspond to women returning to work after a period of staying home with young children. In previous analysis, we found that after investing heavily in further and higher education, our female participants parenting in their thirties were significantly affected by the collision of work and family (Cuervo, Wyn & Crofts, 2012).

The three aspects that parents were the least satisfied with were: the availability of quality/affordable childcare; the availability of maternity/paternity entitlements; and balancing paid work with family commitments.

Although most of the parents (over 80%) were (very) satisfied with the support from their partner and family, levels of satisfaction decreased on almost all indicators across the three surveys. Satisfaction with access to services, such as quality/affordable childcare and the availability of maternity/paternity entitlements, declined over time. One consequence of this maybe an increase parents’ need for support from their partners and families. Although the graph in Figure 1 shows that initially parents were satisfied with the level of support they received from their families and partners, levels of satisfaction decrease over time – perhaps revealing the strain of parenting. Similarly, satisfaction with one’s personal health declined over these years.

Figure 1 Parents’ level of satisfaction from 2011-2017
4. CONCERNS FOR FUTURE

In this section, we examine the associations between concerns for children’s future and gender, and age of youngest child. We asked parents to indicate their level of concern for their child/children’s future across 11 indicators. The figures below show the levels of concern of the 152 parents who completed all three surveys in these aspects in general and by their gender, and the age of their youngest child.

As shown in the Figure 2, material aspects in family life, such as the cost of education and general cost of living were consistently the top two concerns across these three surveys. The third concern changed from children’s development of good values and character in 2011 to the availability of quality education in 2014, and to environmental issues in 2017. Issues associated with health and wellbeing, for example, children’s mental health and health care costs, increased between 2011-2017. Finally, there was a steady increase in the level of concern about the political climate.

Figure 2 Parents’ levels of concerns about children’s future
Concerns about children’s futures according to gender of parent

In accordance with the general picture, parents of both genders held a high level of concern about the cost of education and the general cost of living. Male parents tended to be more concerned than female parents about children’s access to quality education, children’s health issues, health care costs, the development of life values and their ability to develop positive friendships. While female parents tended to be more concerned than male parents about environmental issues and the political climate. There was a sharp increase in the level of concern about children’s mental health for both male and female parents—see Figure 3.

Figure 3 Concerns about children’s future according to gender of parent
Concerns about children’s futures according to age group of youngest child.

By grouping parents according to the age of their youngest child in 2017, we were able to examine whether age of youngest child was associated with the type of concerns parents held for their children’s futures- see Figure 4. Parents of younger children (age from 1-5 years) had higher levels of concern than other parents for 10 of the 11 aspects. The exception being concern for children’s mental health. Parents with a youngest child aged between 11 and 15 years were most concerned about their children’s mental health.

Figure 4 Parents’ concerns about the future of children by age of youngest child in 2017
When we asked participants to comment on their parenting experiences, many of them referred to their concerns about their children’s futures. Comments were provided by 23 parents in 2011; 34 parents in 2014; and 54 parents in 2017. Although not representative, their willingness to provide comments indicates an intensification of parental concern about different aspects of their children’s future. The most frequently noted concerns were: cultivating their children’s good character and values; the impact of social media and digital technology on the lives of their children; housing affordability; and access to quality and affordable education - see Table 2. Concerns about the impact of social media and technology increased sharply; perhaps signalling the fears they have as their children start to be more involved with social media technologies and platforms.

### Table 2 Most frequently mentioned concerns about parenting experiences

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultivating good character &amp; values</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of social media &amp; technology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General cost of living and housing affordability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality/affordable education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 5.1 Cultivating good characters and values in a changing society

Cultivating good characters and values of children is a major concern for parents. Participants said that they pay significant attention to supporting their children’s emotional development; cultivating qualities such as positive mental health and wellbeing; having the appropriate moral values, respectfulness, confidence, resilience and adaptability; and having the ability to develop strong meaningful relationships. For example, one parent (Female kindergarten teacher, 2014) stated: *I worry most about her keeping a positive mental state throughout the trials of the teenage years.* Another parent (Female lecturer, 2014) stated: *I worry a lot about whether they will grow to be good, respectful men. We talk to them a lot about ideas of bodily autonomy and consent.*

It seems that preoccupations with making sure that their children grow up to be robust, resilient and respectful individuals is attached to the view of a future that seems more unequal and unpredictable than the present (see also Chesters et al. 2018; Crofts et al. 2016).

*I can’t imagine the world my daughter will be an adult in - but I can see the trends - towards a less equitable society in user pays, environmental segregation reducing living standards, smaller government. Let’s hope the generation after Gen Y can fix our messes!* (Female academic, 2011)

*The current reactionary political climate and its attendant social and environmental destruction are of the profoundest concern possible. As the parent of a girl, I have particular concern regarding her ability to promulgate and develop socially transformative, politically progressive feminist values in such a regressive culture.* (Male administrator, 2014)

*The way that society has become less about others and all about the cult of me worries me tremendously as to the world my children will be living in.* (Female manager, 2017)

*My concern is for developing children with strong moral values to enable them to make sensible choices amidst the chaos!* (Female nurse/midwife, 2017)

*I believe my children will live in an era of rapid world change, and I encourage them to be adaptable, resilient and intuitive.* (Male environmental manager, 2017)

They have also shown a sense of helplessness in how to prepare their children for a future of uncertainty in a time of accelerated change. For example, one parent (Female school teacher, 2017) commented that: *What will the world be like in twenty years? Things happen and change so fast. How can I equip them to cope with this and help their resilience?*
I feel the future, for example in 10-20 years' time will be very different to now. Less food, less fuel, rationing, more polluted. Need to try train/prepare children for possible change. (Female doctor, 2011)

The world is changing at such a fast pace that I feel very unprepared to help my kids transverse their way through it. (Female practice manager, 2011).

Anxiety over what is perceived as a less stable and more unequal world has been documented in the literature (Leccardi, 2012; Leccardi, 2014). The comments presented in this section also reveal that parents feel an urgent need to equip their children to be resilient in the face of a future that seems poorer in social, political, economic and environmental issues.

5.2 Concerns about the impact of social media

With the expansion of digital media into everyday life, parents expressed a high level of concern about the effect of social media on their children. This concern intensified between 2014 and 2017. For example, one parent (Female architectural drafter, 2017) stated that: (I am concerned about) the impact of social media with regards to bullying, trolls, image, “likes” or “dislikes”, “FOMO” (fear of missing out).

Comments from other parents included:

I am concerned about the role and influence of the internet and influence of technology in my children's lives. I want them to live life and be engaged in meaningful activities in life. I want to, therefore, minimise their use of and engagement with a ‘screen’ of any sort, but this is proving difficult! (Female psychologist, 2014).

(I am) concerned about social media & the influence of technology on young people. I think iPhone/iPad (& their over-use) have created more problems than solutions. We were better off without them. (Female social worker, 2017).

The above comments show that parents are reminiscent of a past where other activities were pivotal in a child's life; as well as demonstrating an awareness of the negative consequences of children's interaction in the digital space and its potential consequences on their offsprings' wellbeing. In addition, parents struggle to find ways of supporting their children to make proper use of digital technology and to get the most out of their screen time. Working longer hours and/or non-standard hours also has an effect on parents' ability to deal with what they perceive is an ubiquitous use of technology.

Technology is a huge issue. I do not know how to handle it with my children. I struggle with this every day and I have a child approaching his teenage years and starting year 7 next year. He is a sensible child but is addicted to technology and I don’t know how to fix it with the limited time, energy and resources I have. (Female book keeper, 2017).

I know that excessive use of technology is affecting my children in negative ways but I feel powerless to change it. (Female kindergarten teacher, 2017).

Parents are at work and children left at home without supervision, and technology has far too greater input into our children's lives - it is a tool they rely on to entertain them. (Female human resource coordinator, 2017)

5.3 Concern about the general cost of living and housing affordability

In accordance with the quantitative data presented in section 4, cost of living was a key factor in decision making and general wellbeing of the household. This resonates with studies showing that Australians are experiencing the negative effects of rising living costs (see Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018; Haylen, 2014). For example, one parent (Male animal technician, 2017) commented: Cost of living is outstripping ability to provide for all the things that the family needs and this impacts on general wellbeing of household and decisions made.

Housing affordability was one of the key factors in parents’ worries about the general cost of living. Buying a house has often been regarded as a milestone in young people’s transition to adulthood (Cook & Cuervo, 2018). These days, with rising property prices, it has become increasingly challenging for young people to achieve this milestone on their own. Some parents expressed their frustration with comments such as: How will they ever afford a house? Housing prices are ridiculous, especially in major cities. [Female administrator, 2017]; and I know there is little chance of our children owning houses until we pass, and I do hope this doesn’t affect them too much emotionally. [Female manager/owner in hospitality, 2017].

Recent literature has demonstrated the increasingly important role played by families providing intergenerational support during young people’s transitions to adulthood (Cuervo & Wyn, 2011; White, Wyn, & Robards, 2017; Wyn, Lantz, & Harris, 2011). This role also featured in participants' comments. Together with their concern about rising property prices, parents also expressed their willingness to provide a safety net for their children if necessary. Their considerations about how to help their children to purchase a property shows that owning a house has now become a family project rather than an individual project that the younger generation can achieve themselves. For example, one parent (Female public health worker, 2017) commented: Cost of housing is a concern, but I assume they can always find a place on our farm if they can’t make it into housing as they reach that age.
Housing affordability is a major issue for the kids. Expecting the kids to stay at home until they eventually get married. Also starting to think of ways to help them afford their first home as it is very unlikely they will be able to purchase their own home themselves. (Female business manager, 2017)

5.4 Concerns about access to quality and affordable education

Parental concern about accessing quality and affordable education is associated with disparities in the distribution of educational resources across geographical locations.

I worry about the availability of quality education in the country and what happens at university level if/when they don’t want to move to Melbourne which is a high possibility. (Female primary school teacher, 2017)

We live in the zone of a poorly performing government high school, and I am already investigating alternatives (in grade 1!). (Female primary audiologist, 2014)

Access to tertiary education was also a significant concern for parents especially for those who live outside major cities. They not only worry about their children’s access to quality university education, but also about the cost this education may incur.

I am concerned about the affordability of higher education and the future job market for my children. We can’t afford to buy a house, how could we put our children through university? (Female teacher, 2017)

Access to quality university education is more difficult living outside a major city. I think higher education is vitally important for a person to develop critical thought and not just believe what the media/politicians say! (Male geographer, 2011)

Cost of education is a very high concern when contemplating tertiary education for students from country schools (e.g. my children). I do not know how we can afford accommodation while they are attending Melbourne Universities. (Female teacher, 2014)

Levels of educational support provided to parents with children who have special needs was also a concern. Parents are grappling with how to best use their limited resources for their children’s education. For example, one parent (Female research assistant, 2014) commented that: I have a child with mild health and developmental issues for which we receive limited support. Currently considering whether a private school would be more suitable or whether we need to help them finance tertiary education.

Concern about children’s education is often expressed together with parents’ perceptions about social and policy changes at local and national levels.

The current reactionary political climate and its attendant social and environmental destruction are of the profoundest concern possible… Decline in educational standards and opportunities as a result of attacks on public education are a large part of this concern. (Male administrator, 2014)

The population boom in my area the year my first child was born and since then has meant that accessing child care, kindergarten and school places has been difficult and will continue to get worse. (Female medical science liaison officer, 2014)

No state secondary college nearby. Investment options for education savings wrecked by recent law changes aimed at tax evasion by parents investing disingenuously in their children’s names. (Male music teacher, 2014)
6. CONCLUSION

In this report, we examined two aspects of the parenting experiences of a cohort of Australians who left secondary school in 1991 (broadly corresponding to the popular notion of Generation X): that is, their levels of life satisfaction since becoming a parent and their concerns for the futures of their children. Our aim was to shed some light on people’s experiences of being a parent in Australia in the new millennium.

It is important to note that satisfaction with levels of support from partners and family was consistently above 80 per cent between 2011 and 2017. Nonetheless, across the three surveys conducted in 2011, 2014, and 2017, parents’ levels of satisfaction with their parenting experience generally declined. The only aspect parents felt more satisfied with in 2017 than in 2011 was ‘returning to workforce’. This may because of labour market changes generating more part-time jobs allowing young parents, and in particular, women, to combine part-time employment with parenting. As mentioned above, this cohort entered parenting later than their parents’ generation after investing heavily in further and higher education (see Cuervo et al. 2012). By the mid-2000s, when participants were in their early to mid-thirties, we found a significant worsening of mental health conditions in women who were parenting and not engaged in the workforce. Some female participants even equated their situation with motherhood in the 1950s and signalled their frustration on having to choose between their careers and their families (Wyn et al. 2017).

Access to material support and resources was also at the top of parents’ woes. Parents were least satisfied with the availability of quality and affordable childcare and with increases in the cost of living in modern life. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that the cost of life’s basic essentials, such as transport and fuel, has outstripped wage growth (ABS 2018). The qualitative data add to this complex scenario of parenting after investing heavily in further and higher education (see Cuervo et al. 2012). By the mid-2000s, when participants were in their early to mid-thirties, we found a significant worsening of mental health conditions in women who were parenting and not engaged in the workforce. Some female participants even equated their situation with motherhood in the 1950s and signalled their frustration on having to choose between their careers and their families (Wyn et al. 2017).

Their low levels of satisfaction with their maternity/paternity entitlements and the balance between their paid work and family commitments illustrated an unfavourable/unsupportive working environment for parents. Elsewhere we have commented on the poor support provided by workplaces and public policies in contributing to gender equality in the workforce which is a source of anxiety and frustration for our participants (see Cuervo & Wyn, 2011; Cuervo, Wyn & Crofts, 2013). Parents’ levels of satisfaction with their financial situation remained stagnant over the period, while their levels of satisfaction with personal health and support from their family and partner decreased over the three surveys; perhaps signalling the challenges faced while parenting.

In terms of parents’ concerns about the future of their child/children, access to quality and affordable education and general cost of living were the top two concerns across all three surveys. Other concerns which were ranked high include children’s development of good values and characters, the availability of quality education, environmental issues, and housing affordability. Our analysis also shows a gendered pattern in these concerns. Male parents tended to be more concerned than female parents about their children’s access to quality education, health issues, the costs of health care, development of values in life and their children’s ability to develop positive friendships. While female parents tended to be more concerned about environmental issues and the political climate.

In the qualitative responses about their parenting experience, participants frequently expressed their concerns about the quality of education and with cultivating appropriate values. These concerns were all expressed against the backdrop of accelerated social change and with a sense of disorientation in terms of how to prepare their children for a future of uncertainty. This high anxiety over the future, in terms of rising inequality, housing affordability, mental health issues, political climate and climate change, is also shared by younger generations (such as Gen Y) (see Chesters et al., 2018; Franceschelli & Keating, 2018). It seems that to future-proof their children against many of these structural challenges, parents are attempting to instil individual values and skills; as they appear to be sceptical that there will be any immediate collective solution to these problems. In other words, rather than rely on the community to solve these social, economic and environmental issues, some parents are attempting to prepare their children for the uncertain times that lie ahead.

Social media also plays a significant role in the anxieties and concerns of this cohort of parents. Some parents expressed concerns about the over-use of digital devices and the impossibility of making sure that their children were not negatively affected by this use. Interestingly, the demands of modern work, longer working days and non-standard hours of work (see Cuervo et al. 2013), were also perceived as hindering the possibility to share time with their children and make sure that digital interactions would not affect their health and wellbeing.

This cohort also reflected on the cost of living and particularly the unaffordability of housing for younger generations. In this latter case, we find an intergenerational symmetry with our younger Life Patterns cohort (currently aged 30 years) and their deep concerns that they have been excluded from the housing market (see Cook & Cuervo, 2018). Interestingly, this housing crisis generates, in different generations, solidarities and emotional and material support (see Cuervo & Wyn 2011); contradicting the media portrayal of generational conflict over materiality. Finally, the material cost of life was also presented in affordability and access to tertiary education, which was considered critical to navigate what is seen as a complex labour market landscape. Claims of spatial inequality in access to higher education are not new (see Commonwealth Government, 2008; Cuervo, 2014). What seems to be more prescient and changing is an overall unease about how their children will navigate what is perceived as an uncertain future.
7. REFERENCES


Chesters, J., Cook, J., Cuervo, H., & Wyn, J. (2018). Examining the most important issues in Australia: Similarities and differences across two generations. Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne.


FIND OUT MORE

Participant reports and Research reports:

education.unimelb.edu.au/ycr/research/life-patterns#publications
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