Generation Y and Expectations for the Work-Life Interface

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What is ‘Generation Y’?

- Millennials, “Generation Me”, Echo Boomers, etc.
- Characterised as more leisure-driven, placing less value on work, having weaker work ethic (Twenge, 2010)
- ‘Making a life’ vs. ‘making a living’ (Zhang et al., 2007)
- Importance of work-life balance, flexibility (Asthana, 2008; Gerdes, 2009)
But…

RECESSION
Research questions

1. In a time of economic crisis, what are the work and family role expectations of Britain’s Generation Y?
   - Are there gender differences?

2. To what extent do these role expectations determine plans for combining work and family?
   - Are there gender differences?
Identity theory

• People occupy a variety of social roles

• An identity is the self-perception based on a social role and its expectations for our behaviour

• We organise our various identities into a hierarchy based on their importance
  – Roles that we identify with more strongly are more salient and more likely to be invoked across various situations

• Role salience may dictate distribution of resources
  – We may allocate more resources to a role that is central to our self-definition, because success in a highly-identified role is more gratifying than success in a less-identified role

(Bagger & Li, 2012; Stryker & Serpe, 1982; Thoits, 1992)
Overview of sample

• 2,000 respondents
• Evenly distributed across UK
• 50% men, 50% women
• Age range 16-24
• Still in education
Role expectations

- Family role reward value (Amatea et al., 1986)
  - “My life would seem empty if I never had a partner and children.”
  - “I expect my family to give me more real personal satisfaction than anything else in which I am involved.”

- Occupation role reward value (Amatea et al., 1986)
  - “It is important to me that I have a job in which I can achieve something of significance.”
  - “I expect my job / career to give me more real satisfaction than anything else I do.”
Plans and expectations

• Occupational role commitment (Amatea et al., 1986)
  – “I expect to devote a significant amount of my time to building my career and developing the skills necessary to advance in my job.”
  – “I expect to make as many sacrifices as are necessary in order to advance in my work / career.”

• Incorporating future family in career plans (Ganginis, 2008)
  – “When considering a future career, I will choose a job that does not include travel so that I can be at home with my family.”
  – “I will find a job where I do not have to work full-time after I have children.”
Expectations

• Anticipated work-to-life conflict
  – “I expect that my work will interfere with my family or personal life.”

• Anticipated life-to-work conflict
  – “In the future, my personal or family life will probably interfere with my job.”

• Anticipated work-to-life enrichment
  – “In future, the job that I do will probably enrich my personal or family life.”

• Anticipated life-to-work enrichment
  – “I expect that my family or personal life will help me to be a better worker.”
## Gender differences in expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family role reward value</td>
<td>5.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occupation role reward value</td>
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<td>Occupation role commitment</td>
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<td>Anticipated work-to-life conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anticipated life-to-work enrichment</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>5.09</td>
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</tbody>
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Delving a bit deeper

• Occupational role commitment high amongst men and women, similar average scores
• But… bifurcation of responses
• Extreme items:
  – “I expect to make as many sacrifices as necessary in order to advance my work / career”
  – “I expect to devote whatever time and energy it takes to move up in my job”
• Moderate items:
  – “I value being involved in a career and expect to devote the time and effort needed to develop it”
  – “I expect to devote a significant amount of time to building my career and developing the skills necessary to advance”
Incorporating future family in career plans

• Biggest gender difference is in responses to items regarding choosing...
  – part-time work after having children (46% of women, 28% of men)
  – flexible hours that enable being at home when children return from school (43% of women, 34% of men)

• At present, mothers more likely than fathers to change work schedules to accommodate family responsibilities (Bygren & Duvander, 2006)

• Approx. 13% of men in employment work part-time in UK (ONS, 2012)
Hypotheses

- Family role reward value
- Occupation role reward value
- Occupation role commitment

Anticipated work-to-life conflict

Incorporating future family in career plans

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Results

Family role reward value

Occupation role reward value

Occupation role commitment

Anticipated work-to-life conflict

Incorporating future family in career plans

Age

No significant gender differences.
3-way Interaction, part I

Occupation role commitment x Anticipated work-to-life conflict in predicting Incorporating future family in career plans (at low levels of Family role reward value)
3-way Interaction, part II

Occupation role commitment x Anticipated work-to-life conflict in predicting Incorporating future family in career plans (at high levels of Family role reward value)
Conclusions

• Work role salience stronger than family role salience for this age group
  – Economic crisis / austerity
  – Closer to starting careers than starting families
  – Might be different for those at the upper end of the age spectrum?

• Gender differences exist, but are not as pronounced as might be expected
  – Evidence of changing attitudes among men re: combining work and family

• Family role salience trumps career commitment when work is expected to interfere with family life