youth in focus
Background to the Youth in Focus Project: Opportunities for Understanding Children of Migrants

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OVERVIEW

The project studies the consequences of growing up in a family with a history of income-support (welfare) receipt. Specifically, we are interested in the mechanisms through which disadvantage is passed from one generation to the next.

Methodology

This is a longitudinal study, with two key data sources:

- a trans-generational dataset based on the administrative income-support records of a cohort of 18 year olds matched to those of their parents.

- a longitudinal survey of 18 year olds – and a cross-sectional survey of their “parents” – identified in the administrative data.

In 96.5% (98.6%) of cases, we interviewed natural mother (parent) for interview. In more than 95% of cases, individuals consented to having their survey responses matched to their administrative data.
Reference Population

All 18 year olds born between October 1, 1987 and March 31, 1988 who appear in Centrelink administrative records at any point between 1991 and the present.

An 18 year old might appear in the administrative data for two reasons:
- He or she receives payments from the government in their own right;
- At some point since 1991, the 18 year old was listed as a dependent of an adult who received a government benefit. (In the vast majority of cases, the adult received a Family Tax Benefit or Family Allowance.)

The Centrelink Administrative Data
This administrative data source provides the sampling frame for the survey. These data provide accurate information about the history of benefit use (since 1991) allowing us to explore questions related to the level, type and timing as well as the incidence of benefit receipt.

Given the generosity of the family payment system in Australia, we believe that approximately 85 percent of the entire birth cohort is represented in the Centrelink data because one or more parents would have received a family payment on their behalf. Only kids from the top 15 percent of wealthiest families would not be represented.
Time Frame
The first wave of the survey for youths and their “parents” was collected at the end of 2006, with a subsequent interview of youths taking place in 2008.

Survey Content
We asked a wide range of questions on education, health, LM experiences, expectations, attitudes, locus of control, etc. See the background paper.

Youth with Immigration Backgrounds
This is not an immigrant survey. However, we do capture a number of children (and their parents) with migration backgrounds.

- In wave 1, there are 433 child migrants and 1,182 second generation for a total of 1615 youth with immigration backgrounds.
- We have 958 immigrant parents in wave 1.
- We have 862 children with immigration backgrounds matched to their parents.
- The total sample includes approximately 4,000 youths, 4000 parents, and around 2,400 matched parent-youth pairs.
What do we know?:

- Country of birth (parents and youths)
- Year of arrival (parents and youths)
- Language other than English at home (parents and youths)
- Self-assessed English (parents only)

Preliminary findings from initial (non-immigration) research

- Sons and daughters of NESB immigrants are significantly less likely to engage in risky behaviour – in particular hanging out with a bad crowd (girls) and risky drinking (boys and girls). No significant effect for ESB immigrants.
- Sons and daughters of NESB immigrants are:
  - More likely to complete Year 12 (11.8 percentage points);
  - Obtain a university ENTER score (7.0 percentage points);
  - Have higher ENTER scores (2.8 points);
- NESB youth are significantly less likely to oppose the public provision of generous unemployment benefits.