

Supplemental Materials 3

Are the roles of work and union formation destabilizing between the ages of 18 and 24?

With respect to destabilization, findings for employment noticeably differed by data source for the age 18-24 age group, with MTF suggesting a stabilization (i.e., decrease in instability across birth-year groups) in full-time employment and PSID suggesting a destabilization (i.e., increase in instability across birth-year groups). This notable difference by data source is likely due to differences in measurement. Whereas MTF is based on employment status during the previous March, PSID is based more generally on current employment status. Because data collection occurs year-round in PSID, whether those aged 18-24 are currently employed full-time likely varies sharply depending upon whether data were collected during the summer or during the academic year. Consequently, wave-to-wave variation in the time of year that data were collected for PSID amplifies wave-to-wave instability in full-time employment. However, the same is not true for MTF because regardless of wave-to-wave variation in the time of year that data were collected, employment status was consistently based on employment during last March. Thus, compared to MTF, PSID's measure of full-time employment is more sensitive to instability due to seasonal variation in full-time employment status common among college-attending young adults. Because PSID's measure is more sensitive to seasonal variation in full-time employment status among college-attending young adults, it is not surprising that role instability in full-time employment status for the 18-24 age group increased across cohort groups within PSID, given that the proportion of those 18-24 year-olds attending college has sharply increased historically.

With respect to union formation among the age 18-24 age group, both MTF and PSID indicated that role instability was relatively flat historically, suggesting neither stabilization or destabilization. The absence of historical changes in union formation instability as well as the stabilization in full-time employment (as measured during the month of March in MTF) are likely a product of well-documented delays among more recent cohorts in romantic partnership and career formation (Settersten & Ray,

2010). Thus, because recent 18-24 year-olds are delaying entry into committed romantic partnerships and careers, within this age group instability in these social roles has either remained flat across cohorts (in the case of union formation) or been displaced to the 24-30 age group (in the case of full-time employment within MTF).