

THE INFLUENCE OF INCOME EQUITY ON THE TOTAL FERTILITY RATE

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Introduction

There is no greater threat to Western Society than the decline in fertility. Whole nations face the prospect of social collapse and even extinction within a century or two. The relentless arithmetic of below replacement birth rates means, for example, that in one hundred years the descendants of the current population of Italy and Spain will be less than one quarter the number of their forebears alive today.

Of course, the looming social catastrophe is not postponed for a century; in the meantime, as each generation is substantially smaller than its predecessor, the proportion of the population which is over 65 and therefore, on the whole, dependent on Government support of one kind or another gets larger and larger. Longer life expectancies, driven by improved and more expensive medicine will only exacerbate budgetary pressures.

The potential for intergenerational conflict is plain. In some European countries which endeavour to plug their diminishing workforces with larger and larger numbers of immigrants the generational conflict may be tinged with cultural conflict if the working (and tax paying) part of the population is in large measure composed of those with different cultural backgrounds to those in the dependent part of the population.

As Lucy Sullivan observes, a society which cannot reproduce itself has surely embraced a cultural deathwish, or at least a culture of decline. She challenges a number of the prevailing orthodoxies in demography arguing for example, that societies which are held up as being examples of a continuing “male breadwinner” culture (such as Spain) are in truth a “childfree” culture because they neither enable a single breadwinner to support a family, nor sufficient support or flexibility for women to work and be mothers. The real issue, she contends, is that we have created a society that pays too little attention to families and rewards individuals regardless of their family obligations.

Her observations will appear conservative to many readers. But all should agree that she has put her finger on one key point: children are a social good. We all have an interest in each other’s children, and none more so than the childless. As Lucy shows in the following pages and in her other writings, Western society has forgotten its organic nature and far from recognising the vital national interest in children and their upbringing, we have tended to treat children as a personal indulgence.

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The demographic challenge is unquestionably the overarching social and political issue of this century. The Prime Minister, John Howard, describes these family issues as “barbeque stoppers”. He is right to do so. Lucy Sullivan’s monograph will inform the lively debate which is proceeding in Australia. While her views are her own, and not those of the Menzies Research Centre; we are delighted to be able to publish them and encourage others also to contribute their views to this most important issue.

Malcolm Turnbull

Chairman, The Menzies Research Centre

Abstract

Australia, like most Western nations, has suffered a dramatic fall in fertility rate in the course of the last three decades, reversing the earlier concern with population growth to one with population fall. In an attempt to understand the decline, comparisons have been drawn between family policies in countries with higher and lower fertility rates, within the general decline. A “gender equity” model, represented by countries like Sweden where women’s retention in the workforce after having children is subsidized via such measures as paid maternity leave and fully-funded childcare, has been favourably compared with a “male breadwinner” model, represented by countries like Spain, in which there is no such provision. Australia, with its limited provision of maternity leave and childcare, sits somewhere between the two. However, Australia’s Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has been consistently higher than that of Sweden and other gender equity countries.

It is argued here that “male breadwinner” is a misnomer for countries which, as well as providing no gender equity assistance, also provide no income support for male breadwinner families. This model of non-intervention would be better described as a “child free” model. Australia and other Western countries had their highest birthrates of the 20th century when male breadwinner income was subsidized by a variety of measures such as higher wages for adult males, Child Endowment, and tax deductions for family expenses, all of which were withdrawn or severely curtailed across the West in the last few decades of the century, which also saw falls in TFR.

A factor which characterizes English-speaking countries showing comparatively high TFRs despite low levels of gender equity provision, and which is not accounted for by these models, is quality part-time employment for women. Its special characteristic is that it both raises family income and allows women to retain a central role in the care of their children. Nevertheless, in the absence of genuine male breadwinner provisions, it does not produce a TFR at or above population replacement level.

It is argued here, using comparative statistics, that in order to maintain replacement level TFRs, it will be necessary to combine gender equity provisions and part-time employment of women with genuine male breadwinner provisions, in a manner that sustains family income when women withdraw fully or partially from the workforce to care for

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children, thus allowing them to exercise personal choice in the balance of their child-rearing and career commitments.

Introduction

Australia's total fertility rate (TFR), an estimate (based on current parity) of the number of children women will bear on average in their lifetimes, has been falling since 1960. It fell rapidly from about 3.5 in that year to a little below 3 at mid-decade, remained at about that level until 1970, then fell even more rapidly to 1.9 in 1980. Since then it has fallen slowly, with some acceleration in the last few years, to 1.75 in 2000. 2.1 is the level needed for replacement of the current population, and this means that the Australian birthrate has now been at below replacement level for over two decades.

It is saddening to contemplate this apparent manifestation of a cultural death-wish, to say nothing of the problem of maintaining standards of living in an "ageing population" as an accompanying condition. Australia is, however, far from alone in finding itself in this situation. Virtually all the countries of Europe and of the English-speaking world, with the recent notable exception of the United States, now have TFRs well below replacement level. Many have TFRs below 1.5. Australia's, for the industrialized world, is comparatively high, although more or less standard for the English-speaking countries as opposed to Europe.

Why has this apparent failure of nerve occurred at this point in time, while the countries concerned enjoyed half a century of virtually uninterrupted peace and increasing prosperity? In the longer view, a falling birthrate can be seen as a more or less invariant accompaniment of industrialization which, however, up to the last few decades, has not meant an actual fall in population: the improvements in mortality rate which accompany industrialization have more than outweighed the falls in numbers of infants born. It is possible that ideals of family size have altered little, and even today most men and women in the afflicted nations express a preference for at least two children, and many would like to have three or even four. In a time of plenty – for Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and average weekly earnings (AWE) in relation to Consumer Price Indices (CPI) have risen across the period – why are they not doing so?

In an attempt to understand the decline, comparisons have been drawn between family policies in countries with higher and lower fertility rates, within the general decline. A "gender equity" model, represented by countries like Sweden where women's retention in the workforce after having children is subsidized via such measures as paid maternity leave and fully-funded childcare, has been favourably compared with a "male breadwinner" model,

represented by countries like Spain, in which there is no such provision. Australia, with its limited provision of maternity leave and childcare, sits somewhere between the two. It has been suggested that Australia should adopt the full gender equity model, which facilitates women's employment, as a solution to our falling TFR. Let us examine the details of this comparison, bearing in mind that Australia's TFR has been consistently higher than that of Sweden and other gender equity countries.

Gender equity and male breadwinner Models: Sweden and Spain

The gender equity model takes as its premise that all, or at least a large majority of women, aspire to gender equity in career and employment, as promoted by second wave feminism. In practical terms, this implies that women will wish to remain full-time in the workforce throughout their adult lives, competing for position and salary on an equal basis with men, and that the birth and rearing of children should, if properly managed with government assistance, cause scarcely a ripple in their working lives. The gender equity model assumes that women will continue to have children in sufficient numbers for population replacement provided their care does not interfere with their mothers' careers or capacity for full-time employment. The cost of rearing children is not viewed as a problem in itself for family income, although it is an injustice if disposable income is diminished by having to pay for pre-school and after school childcare, or through taking leave in late pregnancy and in the first few months after the birth.

According to this diagnosis, the measures required to halt or reverse falling fertility are such as will enable women to remain in full-time work, with as little disruption as possible from births and care of children, and will protect them from penalization for such disruption as is inevitable: namely, paid maternity leave, readily available and free childcare and out-of-school care, job retention during brief breaks demanded for care of children, and extra sick leave for care given to sick children. Part-time work should be available but should be eschewed as far as possible or be only minimally part-time (say 30 to 35 hours per week) for, despite keeping women in the workforce, it hinders the furtherance of their careers. The presumption is that women can have both unhindered careers and several children. With both parents working, a family income appropriate to socioeconomic status (SES) will be maintained. Nevertheless, the gender equity model requires heavy social welfare expenditure, as the measures necessary for the substitute care of children and maternity leave are to be

paid for by the state. The gender equity model is considered to be “family-friendly”, and international comparative statistics are said to indicate that it is conducive to a healthy birth rate.

The comparison model, which is associated with much lower birth rates, is dubbed the male breadwinner model, and provides none of these aids and equities for female participation in the workforce. As a result, women must leave the workforce if they have children, and the family must rely entirely on the husband’s/father’s earnings. Under this model, women must choose between children and careers, and today’s liberated women will, it is hypothesized, choose the latter, hence the low birthrate in countries where it obtains. Paradoxically, this is also presumed to be the model of our recent past, when the birthrate was much higher than at present. This model does not require social welfare expenditure, as the male breadwinner provides for the family. That the whole family has to manage on the husband’s wage alone is not identified as any part of the cause of the very low birthrate associated with this model.

The contrast between the two models has been summarized as follows:

“[Countries] which through their social institutions, make it difficult or unrewarding for women to combine work and family, or which provide incentives for mothers to stay at home rather than be employed, are the countries that have a very low fertility. Faced with a choice between an uninterrupted career or having a child and withdrawing from the workforce for an extended period, women in those countries often make the decision not to have a child. In short, where countries continue to support or promote the male breadwinner model of the family, fertility falls to very low levels.” (McDonald & Kippen, 2000, pp. 4-5)

Note that this exposition suggests that it is a dislike of withdrawing from the workforce, in itself, that commands women’s choice not to have a baby, with no suggestion that the loss of income attached thereto has any role in motivation. There is also a problem with the accuracy of the implication that policies that *assist* mothers to stay at home are currently in place in these so-called male breadwinner societies. In fact, the societies so identified characteristically lack the key feature of the genuine male breadwinner society as it existed in the mid-20th century, namely a male wage adequate for the support of a family, coupled with a lower female wage, and/or significant financial subsidies, either through reduced taxation or direct benefits, for a dependent wife and children.

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It is generally agreed (Hugo, 2000) that Sweden is the finest exemplar of the gender equity model, and Spain has been instanced as a best example of the male breadwinner model for purposes of comparison. Sweden moved early to instate gender equity, and most of the key measures were in place by the early 1970s. But Sweden was also early to show that fall to below a TFR of 2.1 with which we are concerned. The governmental response was to *increase* assistance to women who stayed in the workforce while continuing the process of dismantling support of the old male breadwinner kind; as a result, by 1980, the average annual wage in Sweden was 40% below what would be the poverty line for a family of four (Muehlenberg, 1992). In the 1980s, an increase in child benefits (genuine male breadwinner model), independently of mother's workforce involvement, resulted in a brief period of revival of the TFR, followed by further decline, as their value diminished while mothers' workforce attachment remained the focus of assistance. In 1995, for example, eighteen months maternity leave with close to full-time pay was available, but then it was back to the workforce at only two hours per day less than full time until the child is eight, and thereafter full-time work. Care of the child is thus engineered to be early handed over to subsidized childcare, freeing mothers to pursue their careers.

Despite these supposedly Elysian provisions, the TFR for Sweden was 1.7 in 1980, and 1.5 in 1999, while Australia, for which these measures were recommended, had a TFR of 1.92 in 1980 and of 1.76 in 1999. Perhaps for this reason, attention has more recently turned to France and Norway for alternative versions of gender equity to meet Australia's needs. Both these countries have shown small rises in TFR in the last couple of years, and are now placed slightly above Australia. These rises, however, have followed the introduction of male breadwinner, rather than gender equity, measures – that is, of measures that assist mothers to stay at home. France, like Sweden, had followed the path of gender equity paired with neglect of earlier male breadwinner policies, and this was accompanied by a falling TFR. France's TFR in 1980 was 1.95, and by 1997 had fallen to 1.71. A return to direct family income support in the form of a “mothers' wage” (that is, a direct subsidy of family income when the mother does not work) resulted in a rise to 1.77 in 1999 and 1.9 in 2001. A similar policy in Norway resulted in a rise in the TFR from 1.7 in 1980 to 1.8 in 1999 and 2001.

These reforms are not enhancements of gender equity (that is, they are not measures to keep women in the workforce), but rather, a return to the old male breadwinner policies which made it easier for a mother to stay at home while the father became the sole income

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earner. Termed a “mother’s wage”, the benefits are not dependent on her continued workforce attachment, and so are identical in function to the old male breadwinner model’s dependent wife and child benefits.

Nevertheless, neither of these improvements in TFR even approaches the gold standard of population replacement, 2.1. They merely look good in comparison with countries like Spain and Italy, in which the TFR is much lower, about 1.2, and which are wrongly identified as representing male breadwinner models. Spain, like most industrialized nations, provided genuine male breadwinner support in the middle decades of the century when, under Franco, child subsidies were substantial; but, as in most industrialized nations, from the middle of the 1970s, in a decade of galloping inflation, family benefits were not adjusted and became of minimal value (Canto-Sanchez & Mercader-Prats, 1998). The TFR in Spain fell from 2.79 in 1975, to 2.2 in 1980, to 1.19 in 1999. Spain, and other southern European countries with similarly low TFRs, would more properly be characterized as representing a Child Free model, making no allowances for the demands of time in bringing up children nor their costs. The absence of provision is best adapted to the working couple or single person without dependents.

Thus the comparison of countries like Spain, Italy and Greece with Sweden, France and Norway does not in fact demonstrate that the male breadwinner model subtends very low TFRs, but rather that, in the absence of male breadwinner style family income support, gender equity provisions can compensate to some extent. They nevertheless fail to maintain TFRs at or above the population replacement level previously achieved under the full male breadwinner model.

(The comparison of Spain with industrialized Western nations is probably improper, in that it is not yet a fully industrialized or post-industrial country providing open opportunities for the employment of women, although it has made great progress in this direction since receiving European Union support. A more appropriate comparison, on these grounds, would be with the less industrialized countries of Eastern Europe, such as the former USSR satellites, Romania and Bulgaria, which have similar TFRs of about 1.2.)

The English-speaking Countries: United States, United Kingdom, Australia

The English-speaking countries have, to date, generally the best record on TFR in the industrialized world, despite falling below Scandinavian and French standards of gender

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equity. Britain and the United States have not had state policies of subsidized childcare or maternity leave, but their TFRs in 1980, 1997 and 2001 were, respectively, 1.9, 1.7 and 1.7 (Britain), and 1.8, 2.1 and 2.1 (US). The United States, after an earlier fall, is phenomenally the only Western nation to have returned to a TFR at replacement level. Australia, by contrast, has provided partially and increasingly subsidized childcare since the mid-1970s, and short-term (six weeks) maternity leave in some areas of employment (particularly the government sector) since the mid-1980s. Thus, despite some attention to policies of gender equity, Australia's TFR has merely retained parity with Britain's, and has fallen lower than that of the USA – 1.9 in 1982, 1.7 in 1997, and still 1.7 in 2001. These data are entirely at odds with the predictions of gender equity-Male breadwinner theory, according to which the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) should have TFRs comparable with Spain and other so-called male breadwinner countries at around 1.2; and Australia's should fall somewhere between the latter and the Atlantic seaboard countries, which are classified as high gender equity and have TFRs between 1.5 and 1.9, whereas it falls well into the range of the latter.

Eastern Bloc Industrialized Countries

In the immediately post-World War II period, while under Communist rule, industrialized Eastern European countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary were gender equity regimes, exhibiting all the characteristics conducive to sustained workforce participation of women. Women were expected, like men, to have full-time, life-long working careers. There was less segmentation of the labour force than in the West, and women made early strides in professionalism in areas like medicine. This policy was backed by provision of long-day care for all infants from the age of one.

While workforce participation of women was not obligatory, male wages were insufficient to support a family, and family income support was not provided for the extra costs of a dependent wife and children. Thus in the period when the West was at the height of its male breadwinner model era, and fertility was rising substantially for the first and only time in the century, TFRs in these gender equity model countries fell to the strikingly low levels seen in the Mediterranean countries today – in the 1960s they were at around 1.2. Concern at these falls in the birthrate led to the introduction of family benefits, so that couples with more children were less disadvantaged financially compared with those with

fewer or none, but not to changes in the expectation of full-time workforce participation of mothers. TFRs rose somewhat, to about 1.5, but did not reach those then current in Western Europe (apart from low-level Sweden). Since the break up of the USSR, the level of gender equity provision has probably fallen, since Hungary, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic show female employment rates of only about 50%, and it is likely that family benefits also have waned (reliable information is not available). TFRs have again fallen to about 1.2 under these Child Free model circumstances.

The Part-time Employment Factor

A prominent feature of the reorganization of women's workforce participation in Britain and Australia (and New Zealand), countries which have sustained relatively high TFRs compared with those of the more exclusively gender equity countries, was the attention given to women's part-time work. Part-time work was the major growth area of women's workforce participation in the 1970s, '80s and '90s, in both Britain and Australia, and their employment, as compared with men's, is still characterized by a high proportion of part-time. In Australia, between 1970 and 1980, the percentage of employed females working part-time rose from 26% to 38%, and by 2000 it had risen to 44%. By contrast, male part-time employment in the same years was 4%, 5% and 13%, respectively. The greater the percentage of married women in the workforce, the greater has been the percentage of part-time work.

Although part-time work for women was not approved by government femocrats of the 1980s, as contrary to gender equity, it was eagerly embraced by married women themselves and proved to be equally appealing to employers in a period of recessions, particularly in employment areas where the workload fluctuates on an hourly or daily basis, or where out of normal working hours labour is essential to the industry, as in the service industries. Industrial relations effort was put, not into keeping women full-time in the workforce in the months and years after childbirth, but into ensuring conditions for part-time workers comparable with those for full-time. That is, part-time work should offer permanency, on a *pro rata* pay and conditions scale, with holiday pay, sick leave, long-service leave, and employer-funded superannuation, and part-time jobs should be integrated with full-time career structures. These conditions were sought by both voluntary lobby groups (such as *Future Lobby* in New South Wales, set up specifically for this purpose,

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which operated in the 1970s and early 1980s, and disbanded when its goals were achieved), and by Unions.

Mothers saw (and see) this provision as beneficial in that it permitted them to devote the personal care they desired to their children and homes, while maintaining workforce skills and (increasingly a driving force) contributing to family income. If they were able, financially, to bridge the pre-kindergarten years after a child's birth, it meant that they had no need for childcare, and part-time work could often be kept within pre-school and school hours (women with younger children tend to work shorter part-time hours), or consigned to evenings and weekends when the father was at home to care for the children.

Considerable participation in part-time work is, then, a characteristic of women's employment in English-speaking countries (other than the US) which, for most of the period of decline below replacement level TFR, maintained higher TFRs than the purely gender equity Western countries. Of the countries on which we have focused, in the 1990s Australia and Britain had women's part-time employment at about 40%, Norway about 35%, Sweden at about 30%, and France and Spain at 20-25%, while in Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Republics it was less than 5%. (Sweden's 30% is not strictly comparable with Australia's 40%, for part-time in Australia tends to mean half-time (20 hours) or less, while in Sweden it means 30-35 hours.)

Obviously there is no clear and direct association between percentage part-time work and TFR, but if we take into the balance the other factors considered so far – measures of gender equity and family income support – a picture tends to emerge wherein countries have higher TFRs to the extent that they partake of some or all of them. Thus today France and Norway have the highest TFRs, offering both gender equity and family income support, and Norway part-time work; Australia and the UK are next, with part-time work and some family income support (as we shall see later); Sweden is lower with gender equity and also some family income support; and Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Republics, with perhaps some degree of gender equity and family income support, share the lowest level with Spain, which lacks both gender equity and family income support, but outdoes them in percentage of part-time work.

The Family Income Support Factor: Compeer equity

The genuine male breadwinner model, as seen in its full flowering in Australia in the 1950s and early 1960s, was founded on the acknowledgement that families require more income to maintain a given socioeconomic status (SES) – whether professional, business, middle or working class – than do single persons. Thus the male breadwinner model of this period was built on the concept of horizontal or compeer equity. Family income support was acknowledged as necessary at all levels of income if families were not to exist in relative poverty – relative, that is, to the childfree of similar SES.

The central measure for creating income equity was Child Endowment, a payment to families on a per child basis, which would go some considerable way to meet the cost of their upkeep. Child Endowment was lobbied for in the period leading up to World War II, and was adopted by the Commonwealth in 1941. The cost of supporting a dependent wife was already largely covered by the differential in male/female adult wages, the higher male wage based on the assumption that the majority of males drawing adult wages would be supporting a wife in addition to the earner himself. Tax deductions and rebates for child and wife related expenses, such as Municipal Council rates, medical care and education, were a third approach, introduced at the beginning of the 1950s. Some or all of these measures were employed in most Western European countries in the immediately post-war decades, and coincided with a period of relative stability or even rise in TFRs, making birthrate a matter of little concern, and thus paving the way for the confidence of the 1970s environmentalists' cry for zero population growth (ZPG).

The measures which supported family income equity were abandoned in most Western European countries in the course of the 1970s in the conjunction of two processes. Firstly, feminism, allied with a contemporaneous change in the focus of social security from social compact to individual rights, led to the abolition of the male/female wage differential, and this in the longer term meant an intermediate level of wages for both sexes. The adult wage was no longer an income for a couple, let alone a family, while it was considerably more generous as an income for a single person than the previous female and youth standard. And secondly, with the focus off the needs of families, Child Endowment was allowed to diminish to a tiny proportion of its original value through non-indexation during the galloping inflation of the 1970s and early 1980s. Childcare and mothers working were meant to take care of the family income problem in its place.

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In the early 1980s, it became clear that families were in serious poverty if both parents could not or would not find work, and in some countries (including Australia, Sweden and the US) child and family benefits were reintroduced, no longer as a measure of income equity, but as part of the society's total welfare package. Thus this assistance became subject to income tests and was available only to bring family incomes up to a given minimum standard, now necessarily well above minimum adult (single) wages. The concepts underlying the earlier goal of compeer equity between families and the childfree were lost to awareness. Under the new conditions, family compeer equity was again achieved for low-income earners or welfare dependents, but not for the full range of family incomes. As a result, those higher up the SES scale were required to face, if they had children, financial sacrifices not required of those at the bottom; as we shall see, this situation had differential effects on TFR at different levels of the SES, within a single country.

The population response to this *targeted*, or welfare based, family income support is reflected in the TFRs for Australia and Sweden after its introduction in the 1980s; in both cases it resulted in a steady or slight rise in overall TFR, which subsequently reverted to further decline as benefits for families at higher income levels continued to decline. The contrasting effect of *universal* family income support, which includes compeer equity, is seen in Norway and France today, where the return to substantial family benefits for *all* levels of SES (a Home Care Allowance substituting for the mother's earnings, in place of the earlier Child Endowment) has, to date, achieved a significant rise in TFR. The subsidy of family income that, in the 1950s, was construed as a subsidy of the working father's earnings now, in the 2000s, is presented as a mother's salary, a replacement of her lost earnings; but the mechanism and outcome, in a family in which there is only one full-time earner, is the same.

As in the case of part-time work, family income support enhances the effects of other factors, all of which contribute to a higher TFR. The Mediterranean and Eastern European countries which offer nothing on a significant scale to assist family income, neither self-won nor by government subsidy, have the lowest TFRs, just above 1. Sweden, which offers support for mothers full-time employment so that the parents' incomes may be jointly sufficient, but only welfare-level (targeted) family income support (so that full-time employment by the mother is necessary to maintain economic standards), has a low medium at 1.5, as did the Atlantic seaboard countries Norway and France when they were in that category; the English-speaking countries, Britain and Australia, which offer good part-time

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employment, making space for family life and some self-earned income improvement, good welfare family income support, but little compeer equity, have high medium TFRs of 1.7; and Norway and France, which offer the best package with a choice of supported full-time and part-time employment and compeer equity via family income support at all levels of SES, have higher TFRs of 1.8 and 1.9.

The United States, however, which offers only welfare family income support, and none of the universal measures, has a TFR of 2.1, and New Zealand, with a package very like Australia's, has a high TFR of 2.0, but differs in being more generous with its welfare family income support. This suggests the possibility that the percentage of families on welfare family income support may be another factor in the TFRs of nations.

Women's Employment Rates

If, as is proposed in the gender equity-Male breadwinner contrast, the major determining factor for high or low TFRs is indeed women's determination to remain in the workforce, one would expect to find similar levels of workforce attachment everywhere, but higher or lower TFRs depending on the degree to which gender equity is addressed. In fact, the level of female employment varies greatly across the countries under discussion, between approximately 45% and 80%, and the association between gender equity provisions and female employment is irregular. In 2002, the US, with non-existent gender equity, had 65% female employment (with 81% full-time), while in Spain, also with no gender equity, it was only 45%; and Sweden's, with best fit of the pure gender equity model, was a little over 70% (but with only 70% full-time). It has been claimed that the "French" system of access to low cost childcare "has enabled France to maintain fertility rates while still having most women working full-time" (McDonald, Sydney Morning Herald, 21/6/01, p.14), but in fact France has comparatively low female employment (55%), and within that percentage the part-time rate is 25%. Australia, with far less gender equity provision than France has 60% female participation, and the UK, with none, has 65%.

Any picture of a consistent relationship between female employment and fertility is equally illusory. The high female employment rates of the US, Hungary and Sweden occur alongside very different levels of gender equity, and produce TFRs in opposite directions to its predicted effect: (i) high female employment occurs in the absence of gender equity provisions in the USA and yet is associated with a high TFR, but in combination with gender

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equity in Sweden, produces a fairly low TFR; (ii) an intermediate level of female employment occurs in association with high gender equity in France, with partial gender equity in Australia, and with no gender equity in Britain, and is associated with relatively high TFRs in all three cases; and (iii) both a low level of female employment, in Spain, and a moderate level in Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Republics, combined with low gender equity, are associated with very low TFRs.

If the real conflict is between work and children, one would expect high female employment to occur in association with a low TFR (that is, women have few children because they want to, and do, work), but in Spain, Italy and Greece, where fertility is lowest, female employment is also very low. As these are countries which lack both family income support and gender equity provisions, it appears that the crux of the problem is not women's desire to work (since they do not, even without children), but inadequate income to support a family. Neither female employment nor family income support are available as means to the maintenance of compeer income equity.

The mirror image of this state of affairs is observable in the low fertility found in Sweden with its high female employment level and high gender equity (and also in Eastern European countries in the period when they, like Sweden, had high female employment and high gender equity provision), but where, because of poor family income support, there is little option for *not* working. This suggests that when compeer income equity is made possible through gender equity provisions only – that is, is dependent on high female participation in the workforce – then a deficit in time for and participation in parenting becomes the operative factor in lowering TFRs.

The Mothering Deprivation Factor

The “Gender equity versus male breadwinner” modelling of fertility levels presupposes that the prime consideration in women's lives is employment and career, and that caring for and raising their children is something of a recreation, which is perhaps desirable but will only be engaged in if it does not seriously impinge on successful participation in employment. Weekday time given to child rearing is necessarily time taken from career development. The obvious solution to this problem of mothers, for second-wave feminists, was care of one's children by someone else, and one of their first demands, in the early 1970s, was for 24 hours a day, seven days a week childcare. This extreme demand has since faded into oblivion, but

long-day, five days a week, 52 weeks a year Childcare Centres had become a reality by the 1980s.

Against this view, women in Australia and in Britain continue to cite the daily love and care of their children as a primary goal in their lives. The Australian contributors to the *Worldwide Attitudes* series (Evans, 1995) found that 96% of Australians were not in favour of mothers of pre-school children working full-time, and 65% thought they should stay at home entirely. Even when children were at school, only 16% thought that full-time employment was acceptable. Seventy-three percent were in favour only of part-time work throughout the school years, meaning that in their out-of-school hours children should, for the most part, be in parental care. These opinions did not change between surveys in 1989 and 1995, despite rising use of childcare. In Britain, a poll by *Mother and Baby* magazine in 2000 found that 81% of pregnant women and mothers of infants and toddlers would give up work if they could, and only 6% indicated a preference for full-time work (cited in *News Weekly*, 22/4/00, p.10).

These two poles of women's concerns are given further statistical definition in the research findings of Catherine Hakim on the attitudes of British women to work while child-rearing, and there is no reason to believe that the profile of women's preferences in Australia would not be similar. Hakim's earlier work (1995) showed that the revolution in women's workforce attachment was not as presented by feminist academic writing and used by femocrats to influence family policy – namely, that most mothers now remained in the workforce full-time. She pointed out that in fact only a minority of British women continue in full-time work after having children; that most move in and out of the workforce as prompted by family needs (both for care and income); and that when in, they mostly choose part-time work.

In her recent book, *Work-Lifestyle Choices in the 21st Century* (2001), she identifies three broad groups of women, who place different emphases on these two components of women's lives. One minority group is “work-centred” women, comprising between 10% and 30%, who want to work full-time throughout their lives. They are least likely, of the three groups, to be married, most likely to be childless, and on average have fewer children than the other two groups.

A second minority group is the “home-centred” women, also between 10% and 30%, whose devotion is to raising children and to family life. They are more likely to be married

than work-centred women, have twice as many children, and would prefer not to work at all once they have a family. The majority group, about 70% of women, Hakim calls the “adaptive” group; they gain pleasure from both work and child rearing, and hope to maintain enough workforce attachment to satisfy their career needs without detriment to their role as mothers. They are likely both to spend time entirely out of the workforce and considerable periods part-time. They too have more children than work-centred women, and are more likely to be married.

None of these three groups entirely satisfies its aspirations under current conditions in Britain. Only two thirds of the work-centred women are working full-time, while one third of the home-centred and the adaptive women do so, and only half of the home-centred women are entirely out of the workforce. Childcare appeals mainly to work-centred women. Both adaptive and home-centred women prefer to look after their pre-school children themselves, and disapprove of the lack of financial support for families during this period of heightened responsibility.

The patterns of workforce attachment of Australian mothers indicate the presence of the same array of preferences here. Cathy Sherry (*The Age*, 17 November, 2002) discredits the “myth” of mothers’ preference for full-time workforce participation in Australia, with the following statistics:

‘Of women in a couple household where the father works full-time and there are one or more dependents up to the age of 24, one third of women are not in the labour force.’ If there is a child under school age, half of such women are not in the labour force, and three times as many women with pre-school children are not in the labour force as work full-time. The majority of women who lack husbands who work full-time, work full-time even less. The majority of women with children at school work only part-time. Their average working hours are 16 per week, though they may work as many as 30 or as few as two and be counted as part-time. Women engaged in very part-time work are often counted in the statistics of working mothers but, as Sherry says, ‘They work part-time specifically to ensure their at-home status – to be hands-on mothers. To be present most of the time. To use their part-time status to suggest that almost no women are at home skews reality.’

Even in the US, with an entirely different work profile for women, preferences seem to be much the same. A 1995 study by the *Families and Work Institute* (cited in *News Weekly*, 26/2/00) found that although women overall contribute 45% of family income, only

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15% would work full-time if it was not necessary to maintain the family, 35% would like to work part-time, and 31% would prefer not to be in the workforce. In Europe, the high take-up rate of the Home Care Allowance, once it became available in France, Norway and Finland, in preference to sticking with the gender equity measures on offer which permit a return to work, indicates the previously hidden presence of large groups of adaptive and home-centred women in these countries also.

Thus a concentration on gender equity measures – on free or heavily subsidized provision of childcare and on short-term paid maternity leave which presupposes a prompt return to the workforce – caters only for the minority group of work-centred women who, because of their presence in the public sphere and particularly in the government bureaucracy, have a disproportionate ability to be heard in the media and in policy formulation. In Australia, their childcare needs are already well met, but the brief period of paid maternity leave they require is not yet universally available. They appear to be fiercely opposed to any recognition of the wishes and needs of the other two groups, but they have been able, in the recent debate on paid maternity leave, to enlist their aid with the lure of an extended period of availability of maternity leave. But the 14 weeks they have in mind is not nearly enough for even the adaptive group, and a number of voices, including Jackie Kelly, a successful Liberal politician, have been raised in protest. Expressing the adaptive group position perfectly, she wrote, ‘Nothing is going to change the fact that the more you work the less time you spend with your children.’ (SMH, 6/9/02) If paid maternity leave could be extended to two or three years it would begin to meet the needs of the home-centred and adaptive groups as regards the period of child-rearing which is most threatened in current circumstances, when these women are least willing to leave their children to the care of others.

The concentration of policy attention on this high conflict period, which affects all three groups, leaves unaddressed the continuing problems of inadequate income for adaptive and home-centred women in the later years of child rearing. Since these women are unwilling to work full-time, they cannot supplement family income to the extent that work-centred women can. Financial necessity is likely to selectively curtail their fertility, while work-centred women in any case are likely to choose to have fewer children. Faced with the double bind of financial hardship versus the inability to provide personal care, the solution for these women is to have fewer children than they would ideally like – as surveys comparing

preference and reality show. The new French and Norwegian measures, providing a mothers' replacement income in the first few years, have taken care of the obstacles to birth in the first place, but have not achieved a return to replacement level. Family income support on a per child basis as a universal measure throughout the later years of child dependency will be necessary if adaptive and home-centred mothers are to be enabled to have the number of children they would wish, without incurring unacceptable falls in lifestyle for their SES.

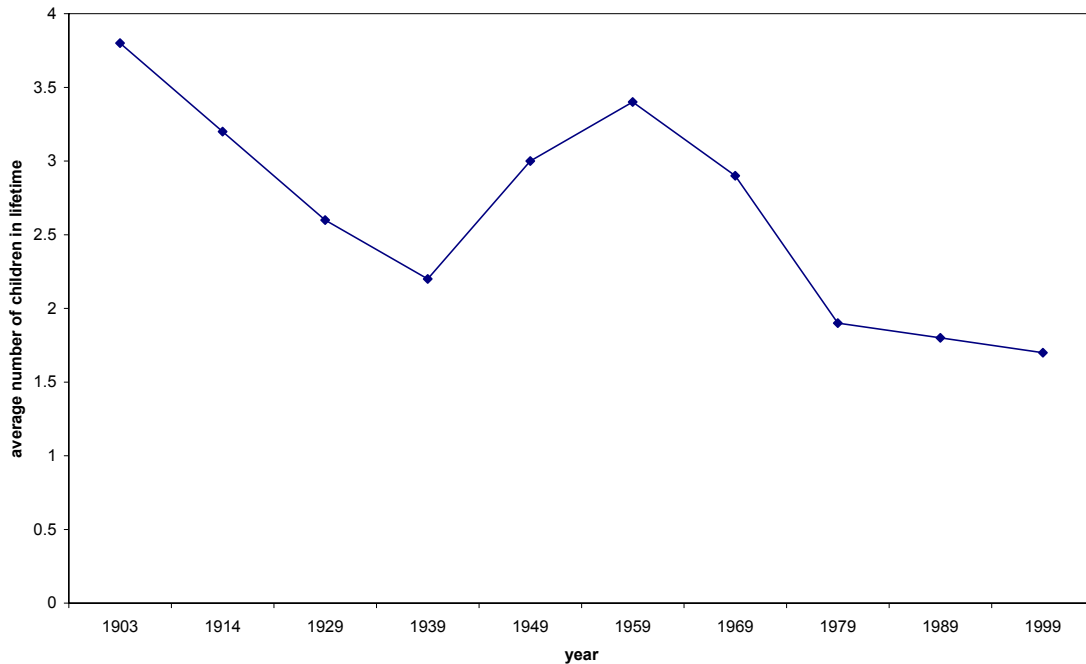
Australia: a longitudinal analysis

Analysis of the interaction of gender equity and TFR has been based almost entirely on international or cross-sectional comparisons, and although international comparisons can be useful, they can also be misleading. Within apparently fairly similar countries can lurk significant differences in social organization which profoundly affect, or even predominate over, the factors chosen as significant for comparison. Australia's non-contributory age and unemployment pensions, as compared with the almost universal contributory state-run insurance schemes of Western Europe, are a case in point when levels of welfare expenditure are compared. I have suggested that differences in levels of industrialization, which it is difficult to gauge accurately, may be unaccounted for variables in our present comparisons, as may be the presence and size of migrant groups with higher TFRs than the background population of the host country. Important variables can be overlooked because of an insufficiently detailed knowledge of the specifics of a family income support or gender equity policy, particularly as regards its level of universality. There is considerable room for misinterpretation of the real purchase of apparently straightforward provisions, when international comparisons are made.

An alternative methodology is that of the longitudinal national comparison, for which we have good material in Australia. Graph 1 shows Australia's fertility, over the last century, in terms of number of children per marriage in 1902/3 and 1914, and as TFR at decade intervals from 1929 to 1999.

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Graph 1. Fertility of Women 1902/3-1999



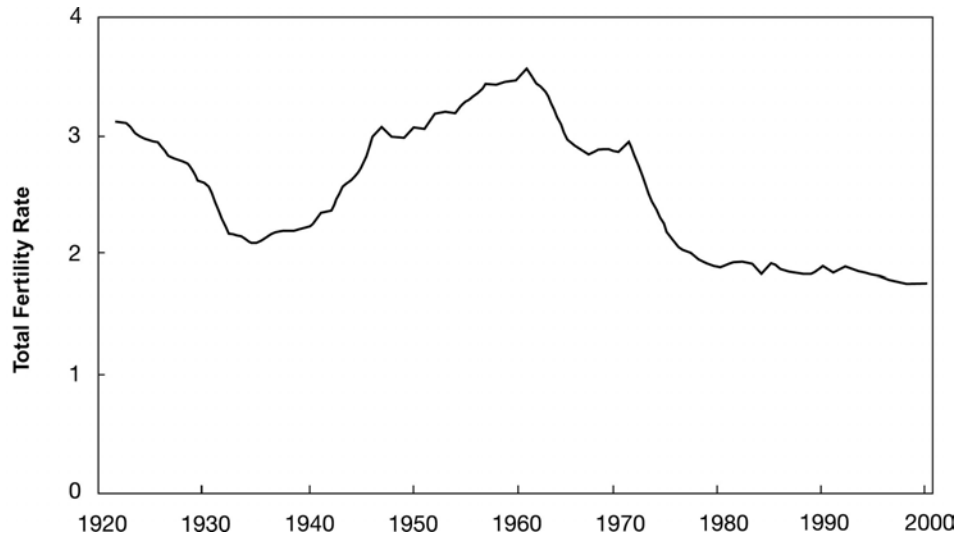
Source: Yearbooks, Australia (ABS Cat. 1301.0)

Graph 2 (see overleaf) shows the TFR on an annual basis from 1920 to 2000. From a high point of 3.8 in 1902/3, Australia's fertility rate fell persistently to reach 2.1, replacement level, in 1934; it then rose persistently to reach a new peak of 3.6 in 1961; but it fell steeply in a stepwise manner to 1.9 in 1979 (passing 2.1 in 1976), followed by a slow decline to 1.7 in 2000.

The figure of 3.8 in 1902/3 marked a considerable fall over the previous few decades. The average number of children per marriage fell from 6 in 1860 to 4 in 1901, and the concern of 19th century feminists with the poverty and strain on women's health caused by large families (to solve which, birth control was recommended), was replaced by a national alarm at the falling birthrate, for which birth control was partly blamed (*NSW Royal Commission on Birthrate*, 1904, cited in Gilding, 1988.) The fall was greatest in wealthier and more educated families, and was part of a world-wide trend which fuelled the eugenics movement, as it seemed logical that such a development threatened the "quality" of a country's population.

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Graph 2, Total fertility rate, Australia, 1920 - 2000



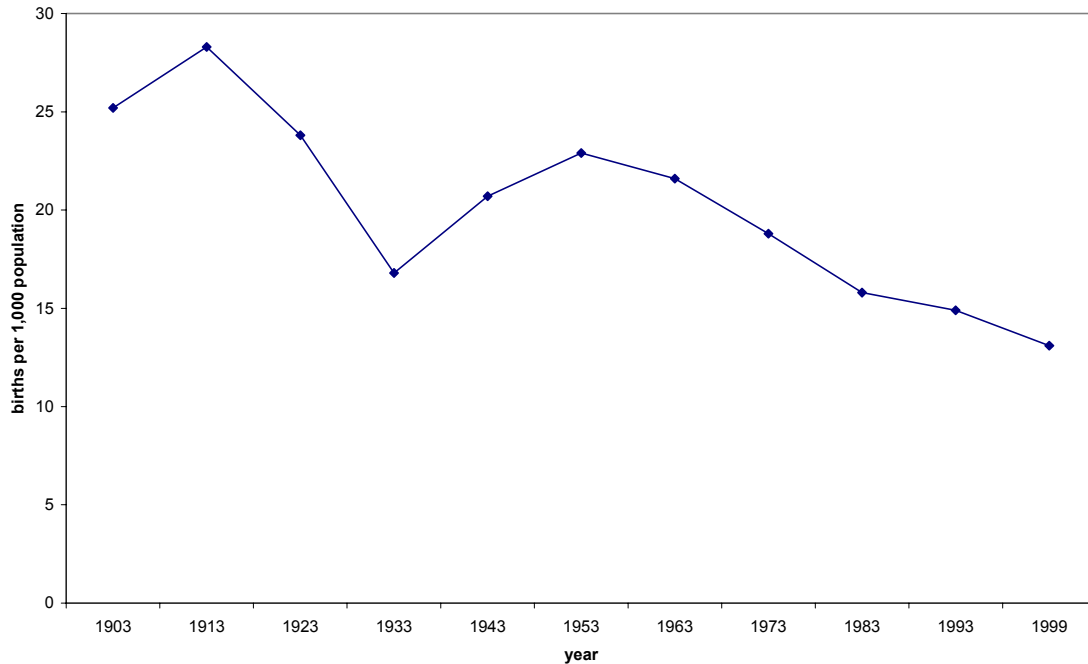
Source: Dept of Family & Community Services, *Ministerial Fact Sheets-Work and Family* (July 2002). Fertility Rate 1.1

The effect the economy can have on fertility is clearly demonstrated in the figures for number of births and birthrate over the same period, as shown in Graph 3 (see overleaf). The birthrate fell well below trend in correlation with the drought-caused depression at the beginning of the 20th century. It plunged to a then all-time low at the height of the Great Depression in the early 1930s, and there was also a lesser fall coinciding with the recession of the 1980s. On all these occasions there was an actual fall in the numbers of births, despite rising population. The fall in the late 1990s is of particular significance as the only occasion of a fall in birth numbers not associated with economic recession.

The recovery after 1903 is associated temporally with the introduction of the Basic Wage (1907), which ensured an adequate income for modest but comfortable living for a family of five (couple and three children) dependent on the father's earnings alone (the male breadwinner model). As this was the award on which higher wages for more skilled workers was built, it also provided for family equity higher up the wage scale, although it did not offer benefits to self-employed tradespeople or professionals, and this is commensurate with a sustained birthrate at lower SES levels and a falling one at higher SES levels, resulting in a slowly falling rate over all.

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Graph 3. Birth Rate 1903-1999



Source: Yearbooks, Australia (ABS Cat. 1301.0)

As the century progressed, the Basic Wage became divorced in value from family income needs, falling well below the original template in the depression years of the 1930s. In this period a campaign began for a specific “child endowment”, a family payment on a per child basis. New South Wales, for example, introduced a Child Endowment scheme in the 1930s, and this was subsumed in the Commonwealth Child Endowment scheme introduced in 1941. This was a substantial payment on a weekly basis for every child after the first, thus recognizing that the male Basic Wage was now only adequate for a couple with one child. The response in the birthrate and the TFR was immediate. This rise has often been attributed to the wartime circumstances (post-war baby boom), but no similar effect occurred after World War I, so the improvement in family financial circumstances is a more likely cause. The rise in fertility showed signs of flattening in the late 1940s, but then a whole new battery of family income support via tax deductions was introduced, which delivered income equity for families at all levels of income and SES – compeer equity. It was, in effect, a more efficiently targeted version of the male breadwinner model first introduced with the Basic Wage’s differentiation of male, female and youth wages. Its period of sovereignty is

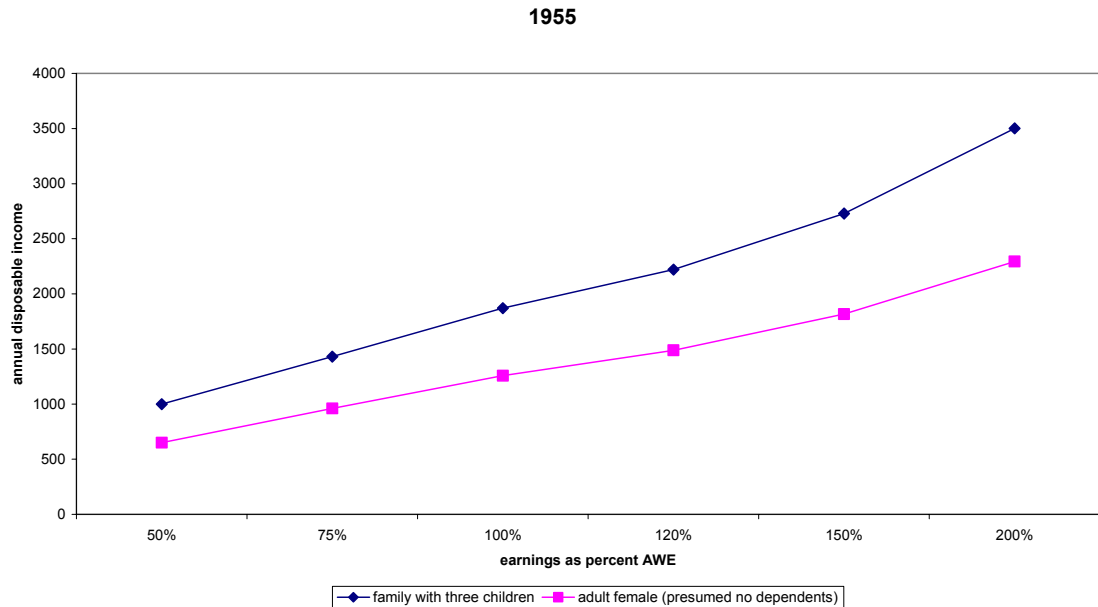
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contiguous with a new and sustained rise in both birth rate and TFR, culminating in the high point of 3.6 in the early 1960s.

This package of measures was unique for the century in acknowledging the effects of raising children on higher as well as lower income families and on the SES-associated lifestyle expectations of parents. It made use of the novel tax liability of middle and lower income earners (who did not pay income tax until the middle years of World War II) in order to privilege family incomes by making them, in effect, tax-free. From 1950, in addition to Child Endowment, the value of which was not maintained against inflation, there were tax deductions (that is, deductions from taxable income) for a dependent wife and each dependent child, with larger deductions for older children, which, in the later years of the decade, were extended to apply to dependent upper secondary and tertiary students. There were also deductions for a range of expenses which multiply with family size – education, medical and pharmaceutical expenditure, and water and council rates. As these were deductions from taxable income, not tax rebates, they meant greater exemptions from taxation (in absolute though not in proportional terms) for higher than for lower income earners, in that the former would have paid tax in a higher tax bracket without the deductions. This approach meant that, for the first time, middle and higher income families achieved a parity with their dependent-free compeers on a scale similar to that intended for low income families at the introduction of the Basic Wage. Graph 4 (see overleaf) shows the outcome for disposable incomes in 1955. For the first time in the century, fertility in higher income groups began to outstrip that in lower income groups. (This reversal occurred in Britain, too, which introduced similar family income support measures at the same time, and in the US.) Thus these new measures not only maintained the birth rate in working class families, but produced a rise in the birth rate in middle class families too, an effect observable in the continually rising TFR across the 1950s and into the 1960s.

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Graph 4. Family and Single (adult female) Disposable Incomes



Source: Lucy Sullivan, Taxing the Family

There was, however, an unnoticed effect which, by the early 1960s was beginning to undermine the financial equity of families – this was the falling value of the Basic Wage, which in the 1960s became instead the Minimum Wage. It was no longer geared to be adequate as a family wage, as is seen in the increase in the female wage (conceived as adequate for a person without dependents) to 75% of the adult male Basic Wage in the 1950s and the progressive abolition of differential male and female rates across the 1960s and early 1970s. Additionally, Child Endowment and the tax deductions for dependent wife and children were not adjusted for inflation, so that the family income support afforded a family, above the accepted single income, became increasingly inadequate. (Kewley, 1973; Smith, 1993).

The TFR fell sharply in the latter 1960s and early 1970s (although the fall in age at first birth gives an impression of arrest around 1970). In 1976, the brief period of compeer equity awarded to middle and higher income earners via tax deductions was brought to an end. The major form of family income support became again a Child Endowment or Family Allowance, now without the advantage of a family, rather than a single, wage base, and the remaining tax deductions for specific expenditure were changed to rebates (which are not

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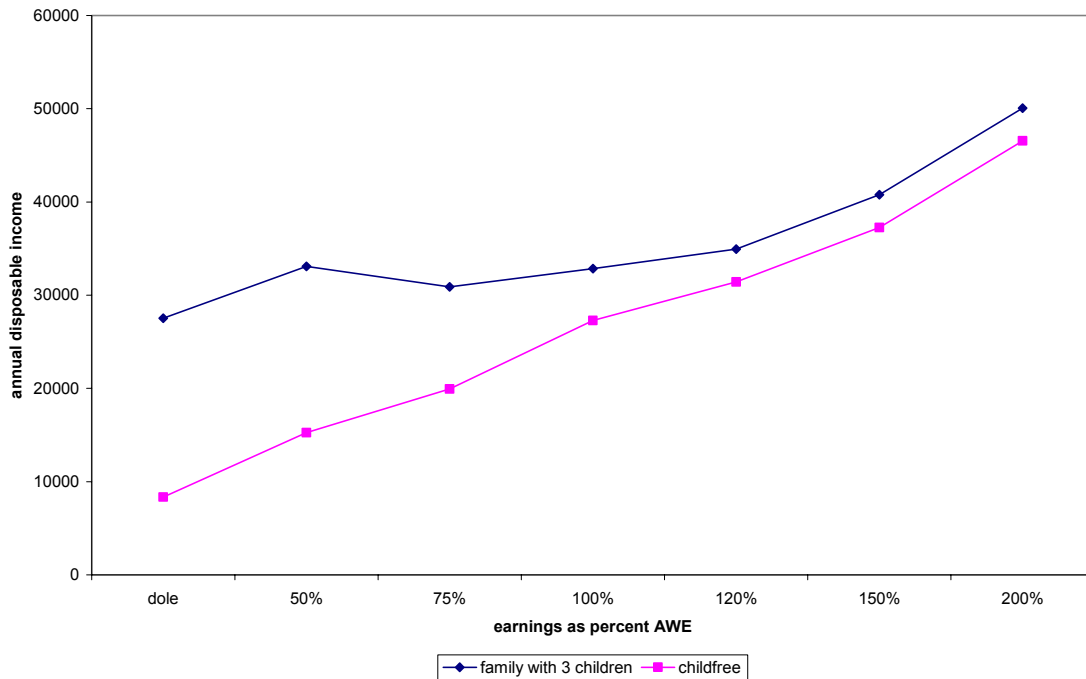
sensitive to level of earnings) and then withdrawn. The TFR fell rapidly to below replacement level. The Family Allowance was scarcely adjusted at a time of unprecedented inflation, and child poverty became a recognized problem for the first time since the introduction of the Basic Wage. The response, in the mid-1980s, was the provision of family income support, in the form of welfare, to low income families only. This was necessarily of generous proportions as the Minimum Wage was now well below family income needs. In the preceding decade, the attention of Social Security had turned from the worker to the unemployed, and targeting and tapering of the new family income support was geared to maintain earned family incomes at the welfare (unemployment and sole parent) level, and no higher.

The effect of this approach was that family incomes over a large bracket, if only the father worked, were at the same level as welfare incomes for equivalent size families. Incomes well above average weekly earnings were reduced to the family welfare level via taxation, but this group because of their pre-tax incomes, received little in the way of child benefits to create a degree of parity with childfree earners of similar SES. Graph 5 (see overleaf) shows the effect on disposable incomes in 1997.

Higher income earners also, were heavily taxed, and were increasingly bereft of compeer equity. In response, in order to maintain their SES lifestyle expectations, mothers in middle and higher income families entered the workforce, some full-time, but mainly in part-time work. The availability of childcare had been taken little advantage of, other than by professional women whose chief interest was in maintaining their careers, up till this point. The pressure of financial need now induced mothers across the range of incomes, except at the lowest levels where their earnings would merely result in loss of welfare payments, to re-enter the workforce. Only at this stage of neglect of family financial equity did childcare usage in Australia assume significant proportions. While the adoption of this strategy could successfully raise family incomes in middle and higher range SES families, it was also associated with falling TFR in this section of the population. By contrast, welfare dependent families, for whom compeer equity was sustained without the mother needing to work, and to whom maternal employment meant only loss of child benefits, sustained TFRs at above replacement level.

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Graph 5. Family Income - 3 children vs childfree 1997



Source: Lucy Sullivan, *Taxing the Family*, CIS 2001. Fig.5, p41.

In the mid-1990s, a smallish increase in family income support for middle-income families, particularly for single-income families with a pre-school child, was introduced, but fell far short of compeer equity. The combined effect of gain and loss was that the overall TFR remained steady until the further shock of the GST in 2000, which further disadvantaged higher income groups, who were excluded from the family compensation package. Throughout this period, the major assistance available to this group was in the form of childcare subsidy, not of direct family income support. This meant that although family income could be maintained if full-time work was undertaken by the mother, the counterproductive factor of mothering deprivation was always there to counteract any gains it might have produced in family size.

This longitudinal survey of social policy and fertility in Australia indicates the same complex of factors influencing fertility as this analysis has extracted from cross-sectional international comparisons, and thus serves to confirm its validity. Yet another factor, which did not come under consideration in the international analysis, remains to be considered. This

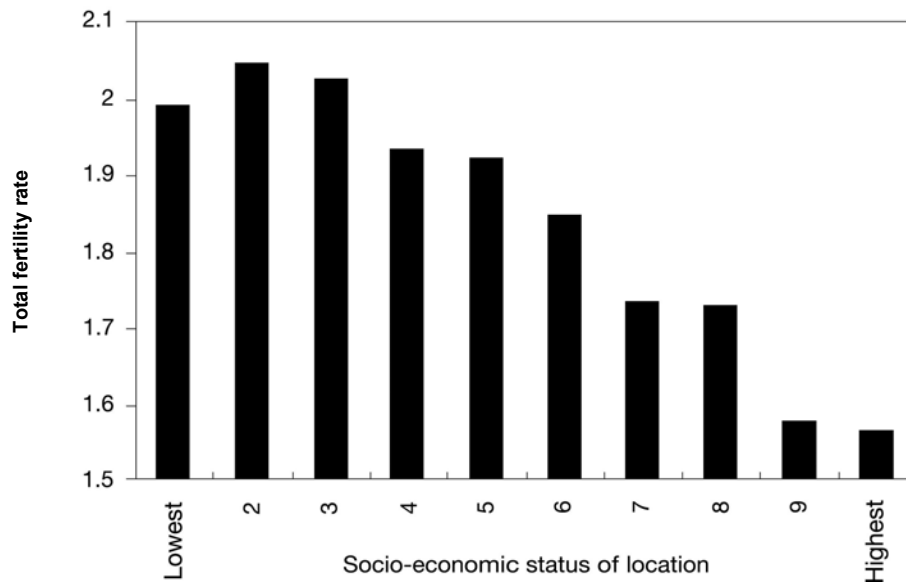
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is the factor of targeted family income support – that is, its restriction to only a sub-set of the population by the application of an income test, with higher income groups excluded.

The Welfare Factor

In 1996, the TFR for women living in the three lowest SES locations (many of whom would be sole parents) was over 2, while in the three highest it averaged about 1.7 (see Graph 6).

Graph 6. Fertility By Socio-economic Status of Location



Source: Dept of Family & Community Services, *Ministerial Fact Sheets-Work and Family* (July 2002). Fertility Rate 1.5

Similarly, women with no educational qualifications and aged 30 and over averaged 2.5 children, and those with a qualification less than university degree averaged over 2, while those with a degree or higher were at 1.7. There is a strong association in Australia between level of education and welfare dependency, and also a clustering of welfare recipients by location of domicile. The higher fertility in the less educated and in lower SES locations suggests that it is a feature of welfare dependent families, whether sole parent or merely unemployed. The “no child in poverty by 1990” campaign achieved its goal in financial terms by increasing mother and child welfare benefits to a level such that an unemployed family with three children was as well off as a working family on AWE (Sullivan, 2001). The persistence of replacement level fertility in welfare dependent women may be associated with

the absence of economic disadvantage in comparison with welfare compeers who are without children. Regardless of number of children, families on welfare are not just as well off as their childfree welfare-dependant compeers, but much better off.

The same cannot be said of employed families earning anything above about 75% AWE. The latter are much worse off than their childfree compeers because they must share their only marginally higher post-tax incomes among several individuals. If South Australia is typical, in Australia the number of abortions is about a third of the number of births, and the majority are carried out for married women. These are the women most likely to be attempting to maintain family income by participation in part-time work, who know that an additional child will exacerbate the no-win trade-off of mothering deprivation and sufficient family income.

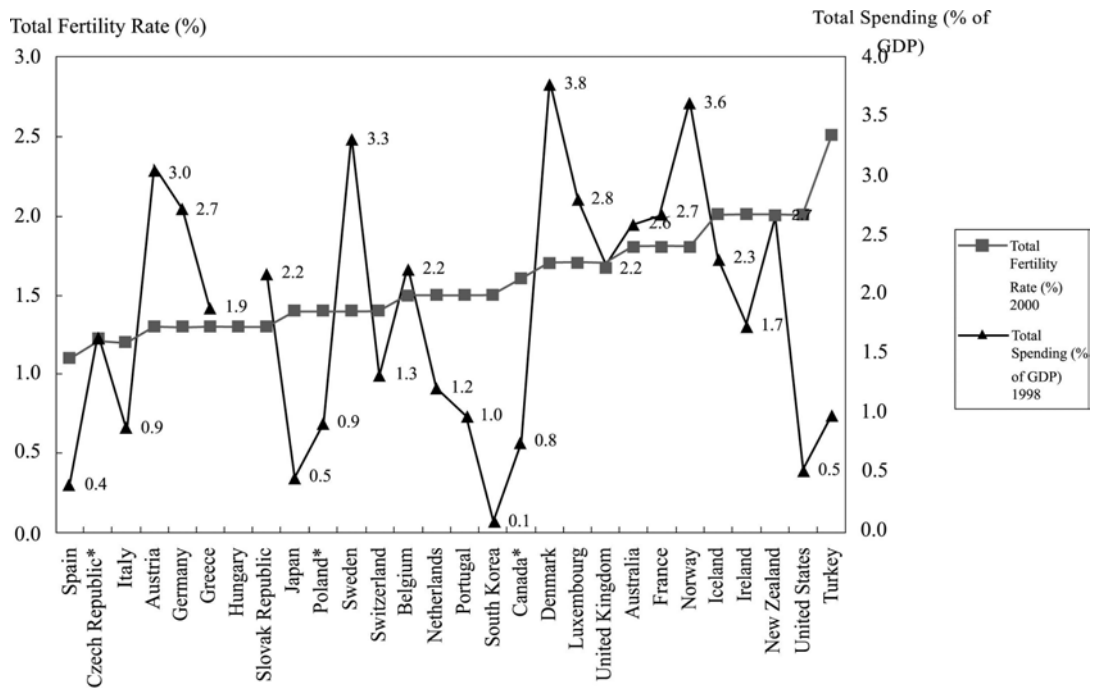
If this same polarization of TFR by SES occurs in the Atlantic seaboard European countries and in the other English-speaking countries which show medium level TFRs like Australia, then it is possible that the removal of family income support from earning and middle income families in order to benefit unemployed and very low income families, which certainly occurred in some of these countries at about the same time as in Australia, has played a major role in the overall lowering of TFRs. It could also account for the lack of correlation between government spending on families and TFRs (see Graph 7 overleaf).

If Sweden's massive "family spending" is primarily devoted to gender equity measures, it would do little for its TFR, explaining Sweden's comparatively poor outcome with very high spending, and Britain's better result with much lower expenditure primarily devoted to welfare family incomes.

Thus the major factor for the higher TFR countries may be neither gender equity measures, nor the availability of part-time work, but rather the provision of welfare family incomes which create compeer equity for some part of the population. The eastern and southern European countries – Spain, Italy, Czech Republic etc – are low in welfare provision generally, while the Western European and English-speaking countries accomplished much the same shift of focus as Australia – that is, from universal to targeted – at much the same time. Even the US, with a general dearth of welfare, introduced targeted family welfare early in this period, and their higher TFR may reflect the much greater contrast between welfare provision for families and for the childfree, for whom welfare income is not just less generous, but absent.

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Graph 7. Total Fertility Rates and Government Spending on Families



* Data for family services not available.

Source: Dept of Family & Community Services, *Ministerial Fact Sheets-Work and Family* (July 2002). Government and Economic Factors 4.1.

Conclusion

This analysis of possible factors underlying the falls in TFR in industrialized countries in the last three to four decades suggests the interaction of two fundamental human aspirations: for material well-being or a lifestyle commensurate with one's view of an acceptable or achievable station in life, and for nurturing and shaping the next generation in the being of one's own offspring – the productive and reproductive instincts. Under conditions of industrialization, unless financial support is provided, fulfilment of the second impacts deleteriously on the first. In the attempt to balance the two, reproduction falls to a level below population replacement.

In this model, women's desire to be in the workforce is a minor player, although not without influence. Gender equity provisions assist women's income earning capacity, but their utilization diminishes the rewards of mothering. Those women for whom career is the

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major issue represent a minority of the female population, and are those least likely to have children anyway. For other women, Hakim's home-centred and adaptive women, the relative poverty induced by having children depresses their fertility, and if they have children, their nurturing drive depresses their workforce participation. This interaction accounts for the varying ability, depending on their proportional mix, of childcare, maternity leave, and part-time work integrated into full-time employment conditions, to raise the TFR somewhat, but not to replacement level.

Only when both family lifestyle expectations and maternal nurturing aspirations can be satisfied do we find replacement level fertility in industrialized societies, either in subgroups or in the population generally. This was achieved for the whole population in most Western countries in the period after World War II, when family income support was universal and ensured childfree compeer equity for families; and it is still extant in the welfare population in Australia and probably in many Western countries, where welfare incomes for families are similar to or better than they could achieve for themselves in employment, or would receive if unemployed but without dependent children: low SES women on welfare can care for their children without loss of anticipated lifestyle. Neither the gender equity model of the European Atlantic seaboard, nor the English-speaking model of career part-time work, has proven capable of sustaining fertility at replacement level. The evidence of a variety of sources now points to the unique importance of a universal family income support that ensures compeer equity at all SES levels.

In countries like Australia, which have taken the path of part-time work for women with children, a key obstacle to fertility is bridging the first five years of a child's life – the period when exclusive maternal nurturing is valued most, so that recourse to even part-time work to maintain family income is not acceptable. This problem requires redress in the form of a "mothers' salary" or "home care allowance", a solution recently adopted with apparent success in France and Norway. School hours mean that part-time (but not full-time) work is acceptable without threat to maternal nurturing in succeeding years, but family income needs can only be partly met from this source. Therefore family income support, directed more at costs of children than at a mothers' replacement salary, needs to be assured over this later period of child rearing. With the extended dependency of children throughout their teenage years and often beyond, family income support should not be terminated until they are

accepted by the state as adults in their own right, and eligible as individuals for such benefits as are then appropriate.

There are, of course, other, more broadly sociological, factors that are likely to have added their ounce or more in the individual balancing of production and reproduction which emerges as a central process in the foregoing analysis. Divorce, birth control, ex-nuptial birth, abortion, extended years of formal education (not just of women, but of men also) – all have risen exponentially in the last few decades, compared with earlier in the century, and all (except perhaps “safer” birth control, which notably has not resulted in fewer ex-nuptial births or less demand for abortion) interact in some way with the factors that have emerged as likely to be of primary importance in the foregoing discussion. Several of them function as independent variables, feeding the growth of sole parent welfare dependency, which has played, and continues to play, a significant role in determining the underfunding of universal family income support (Sullivan, 2000). Other striking demographic changes, such as the rise in age at marriage and at birth of first child, and the increase in percentage of childless women, are more likely to be dependent variables, deriving from the factors examined above.

These primarily sociological or cultural factors, which forcefully express the *Zeitgeist* of the later 20th century – the combined spirit of sexual liberation and individualism – are for the most part resistant to direct government intervention. However, it is almost certainly true that their fulsome expression was facilitated by government action, such as the introduction of no-fault divorce and sole parent pensions. Now that this spirit has run its course, and a new generation recognizes some of its follies, there is probably room for governmental shaping of behaviour in constructive rather than destructive directions by modification and remodelling of some of the policies of that era.

By contrast, the factors discussed in this paper are comparatively open to, and suitable for, direct government action. The factor which appears most likely to be of fundamental importance, the provision of universal family income support, has never lost community support other than in academia, was withdrawn deviously and without community consultation in the 1980s, and despite continuing protest has to date been only partially readopted.

Lucy Sullivan

1939-

Lucy Sullivan took a degree in English Literature at the University of Queensland and read Psychology and Anthropology at London University. She took a PhD at Macquarie University, her fields being Learning Theory and Cognitive Psychology. She retired from the workforce for 13 years to bring up her three children and has never returned full-time. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, she worked and published in the fields of medical ethics and drug epidemiology and policy, and in the latter 1990s began to pursue her interest in family income and welfare policy. She has published in leading overseas academic journals, including *The British Journal of Sociology*, *The Journal of Medicine and Law*, and *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*. Her publications on social policy in Australia include *Rising Crime in Australia* (1997), *Behavioural Poverty* (2000), and *Taxing the Family* (2001). She was the initiating author of the social demographics section of the Centre for Independent Studies' periodic statistical collection, *State of the Nation*.

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