

Female Careers between Employment and Children

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Introduction

The growth of women's employment has been one of the most sustained and widespread changes within European societies over recent decades (Rubery et al. 1999). Between 1960 and 1990 the European labour force grew by 30 million; 25 of those were women (CEC 1994:44). Thus we have seen a profound restructuring of social organisation where all European countries have moved in the direction from the breadwinner-housewife system to a system characterised by dual-earner households. Different countries have moved along different trajectories and at varying speed (Rubery et al. 1999), so we find different levels and different patterns of female labour force participation in different countries. Currently, among the 15 EU countries, about two-thirds of women in the age group 25-49 years are employed. The lowest rate is found in Spain (50 percent) and the highest in Sweden (close to 80 percent)¹. The differences are even more pronounced when it comes to the percentage working part-time (of all employed women 25-49 years): from 8 percent in Greece to 75 percent in the Netherlands.

One reason why the issue of women's employment has attracted increased attention in recent years is the fact that when the large cohorts from the 1940s and 1950s will retire from the labour force in the coming decades, they will not be replaced by equally large cohorts of entrants into the labour force (Auer and Fortuny 2000). This is true to a greater or lesser degree in all EU countries. If employment targets are to be hit, women (and especially mothers) will need to be mobilised (Rubery et al. 1999). It is therefore necessary that EU and European governments take seriously their commitment to make equal opportunities a fourth pillar of its employment policy, according to the common guidelines adopted by the 1997 Luxembourg Jobs Summit. In a recent resolution from the Council of the European Union and of the ministers for employment and social policy (issued June 6, 2000), this commitment was expressed in the following way:

The principle of equality between men and women makes it essential to offset the disadvantage faced by women with regard to conditions for access to and participation in the labour market and the disadvantage faced by men with regard to participation in family life, arising from social practices which still presuppose that women are chiefly responsible for unpaid work related to looking after a family and men chiefly responsible for paid work derived from an economic activity.

The growing necessity of reconciling work and child care has been the focus of much social science and policy research and debate during the 1990s (for some examples, see Becker and Moen 1999, Bernhardt 1992, Dex and Joshi 1999, Ellingsaeter and Rønsen 1996, and Wetzels 1999). The emphasis has mostly been on the different strategies that women (or couples) with children pursue, once they have become parents. Much less attention has been given to 1) the extent to which, and under what circumstances, women will refrain from becoming mothers or having additional

¹ Figures from the 1999 European Labour Force Survey. For further details, see table 1.

children, and 2) what effects children have on women's career advancement. To shed some light on these two issues is the main purpose of this paper.

Adaptive or coping strategies

Let us, however, start by taking a look at what is known about women's (or couple's) adaptive strategies. There is an extensive literature on dual-earner couples (for a review, see Spain & Bianchi 1996), most of which frames the "problem" of the dual-earner couple as a woman's problem of balancing work and family. Another body of theory and research has focused on "the processes through which family members actively construct and modify their roles, resources and relationships" (Becker and Moen 1999). The concept of family adaptive strategies is discussed in an enlightening article by Moen and Wethington (1992). Families develop strategies because "there exist constraining economic, institutional, and social relations in the larger opportunity structure". Women with pre-school children working part-time is one example of an adaptive strategy that is commonly used in many countries. Men can stop working over-time or try to get more flexible working hours. Björnberg (1994) found in a study of Swedish fathers of five-year olds that 60 percent of the men had made some adjustment of their work situation in order to accommodate having a family. But wives disproportionately do the "scaling back", which is the expression used by Becker and Moen (1999) in a recent American study of dual-earner couples' work-family strategy.

This study is based on interviews with middle-class dual-earner couples in upstate New York. The authors identified three separate scaling back strategies: placing limits, having a one-job one-career marriage, and trading off. Examples of placing limits are limiting the number of hours worked, refusing to put in over-time, turning down jobs with more travel and turning down promotions requiring relocation. Two-thirds of those placing limits were women. The job versus career strategy meant that there was one primary breadwinner who pursued a career, while the other partner had a "job", that is it was more about making money than about intrinsic satisfaction. The person with a job was primarily responsible for home and children, willing to move to follow spouse's career opportunities, also mostly involved in part-time work. This is often a gendered strategy, that is "male career – female job". Trading off, finally, meant that partners trade off job and career statuses over the life course (most often this means that the female partner has a job while the children are small, but resumes a career later on when the children are older).

Women's work in Europe

Despite that the above-mentioned study refers to American middle-class conditions, I feel that these scaling back strategies are also frequent on the contemporary European scene (and perhaps not only in middle-class families). The gendered nature of these strategies is not likely to be less pronounced here. One can draw this conclusion just from looking at women's types of activity during the pre-school years of their first child (see table 2) or the differences in expected years in employment for men and women (see table 3). Even if gender differences may be smaller today, in the beginning of the 21st century, they are certainly far from negligible.

Kempeneers and Lalièvre (1993) have analysed women's career profiles, based on Eurobarometer data from the 12 EU countries in 1990. The results show that 83 percent of European women had worked for at least 12 months once in their life.

Some countries (for example Denmark and Great Britain) had maximum rates, similar to those of men, while in Southern European countries like Greece or Spain about 40 percent of the women had never worked. The authors define a “continuous career” as one, which is not interrupted for periods of more than one year. With this definition, 60 percent of European women, who had ever worked, claimed to have been in continuous employment. Notably high figures were found in Portugal (80 percent) and Italy (75 percent), while in East Germany and Great Britain only about 40 percent had had a continuous career (see table 4). Several career profiles were identified, where that of the Scandinavian countries (Denmark) was characterised by massive enrolment, an employment career punctuated by interruptions, and where part-time work is common. This can be contrasted to countries in Southern Europe where a smaller proportion of women had ever entered the labour force, but for those who did work, careers were continuous, with practically no part-time working.

As pointed out by Dex and Joshi (1999), women’s reproductive role has been thought to conflict with lifetime employment for women, with negative implications for either market productivity or fertility. They review the main changes in women’s labour force participation in Britain, and note that the main source of increase in women’s participation rates has come from mothers returning to work after childbirth after progressively shorter intervals. Thus childbearing no longer causes the long absences from the labour force as it used to. Confronted with the choice between three labour market possibilities (to participate part-time, full-time, or not at all), a new mother in Great Britain, and in many other countries, is much less likely today to quit her job for an extended period of time. According to Dex and Joshi (1999), her decision will be conditional on alternative possibilities of childcare, the intrinsic satisfaction of market and domestic work, and her own employment and earning power until retirement. Women who can earn a high wage are likely to take short breaks from employment and to sustain employment continuity. This is of course related to her educational level. We also find substantial differences by education in expected years in employment after age 25 (OECD, via European Observatory on Family Matters webpage). Dex and Joshi (1999) found a polarisation in women’s labour force participation following childbirth: a divergence between highly educated mothers with high wages and those with the least education and low wages. They conclude that in Great Britain a mother will be more likely to continue full-time participation, the higher are the earnings potentially foregone by ending or interrupting her full-time employment. This mechanism is likely to apply in other European countries as well.

It is clear that women’s employment activity in all European countries, and most notably in Scandinavia, is more and more often characterised by continuity. Continuous work patterns among mothers have been shown to be correlated with the expansion of parental leave arrangements (Ellingsaeter and Rønsen, 1996). A strong legitimacy of women’s individual right to work is a distinctive feature of the Scandinavian countries, compared to the rest of Europe (European Commission, 1998). More continuous work practices among women have been followed by a shift in people’s attitudes, workplace norms, and judicial practices (Ellingsaeter 1999). In a recent European survey (1997), Sweden and Denmark had the lowest proportions agreeing with and the highest proportions disagreeing with the statement “A husband’s job is to earn the money and a wife’s job is to look after the home”. At the other end, with the highest proportions agreeing and the lowest proportions

disagreeing, were Greece and Portugal. There was, however, no clear relationship between the response pattern and the female activity rate in the country. For example, Spain and Ireland, with relatively low female labour force participation rates, were not among the countries with high rates of agreement with this statement favouring a traditional division of work between men and women. It is interesting to contrast the two neighbouring countries of Spain and Portugal. Portuguese women have a relatively high rate of employment, but public opinion is very traditional. By contrast, Spanish women are less likely to be employed, despite the fact that public opinion is much more in favour of egalitarian gender roles.

It has been argued that the high female participation rates in the Scandinavian countries give an exaggerated picture of women's contribution to the total work effort in the country. It is true that, particularly in the age group 25-35, a non-negligible proportion of the employed women is actually at home, taking advantage of the generous parental leave system. This is particularly true in Sweden. In addition, a high proportion of mothers of pre-school children (of those who are not on parental leave) work part-time. In a recent study, comparing family policy, working life, and the third births in France and Sweden (Corman 2000), the author concludes that the comprehensive system of family benefits, child care services and flexible work practices makes a continuous working life a natural choice for young Swedish women. However, as comes out very clearly in a recent study of the Swedish labour market (Hoem, 1997), Swedish men and women have different conditions and different behaviour in the labour market, in almost all other respects than the employment rate as such. The labour market in Sweden is still strongly gender-segregated, to the extent that one can say that men and women have more or less divided the labour market into non-overlapping segments. Women have stuck to their traditional occupations, such as personal care, teaching and services. Moreover, young women continue to choose such educational curricula, which will almost inevitably lead them into jobs and workplaces, which are dominated by women. Women no longer interrupt their working life when they have children. However, they adjust their labour force participation to their role in family building and child rearing, by taking at least a year of parental leave for each child, by working part-time when the children are not yet in school (and maybe longer), and by choosing occupational careers which are most easily compatible with part-time work and temporary absences at childbirth or when the children are sick. The result is that in career terms and in economic terms, men almost always come out on top. I will return to this issue later, when I discuss women's career prospects more generally.

Paid and unpaid work

Women generally divide their time between home chores and paid work in quite a different way than men do. Gender differences in paid work, housework and leisure have been the focus of much attention in the 1990s (see for example Shelton 1992, Goodnow 1994, Baxter 1997 and 1998, and Tijdens 1997). Even if men are found to increasingly share household chores and child care with their wives (or partners) – more so in some countries than in others – the pervasive picture of women doing more unpaid work and less paid work than men has not really changed. Goldscheider and Waite (1991) in their study of the transformation of the American home, found that wives are increasingly resisting the double burden of employment and housework, while husbands often resist the demands to share in family tasks. The authors speculate that in the future an interest in sharing parenting and home life

may become a competitive advantage for men in looking for a partner. Certainly, the double burden of paid work outside the home and almost complete domestic responsibility will be less appealing to younger generations of women, socialised in the 1980s and 1990s.

It has generally been found that women's domestic work time declines when they are in the paid labour force, while men only marginally increase their housework even if they have a wife working full-time. Thus, the gap has narrowed, not because men do that much more housework but because women do less. Consequently, we have been moving toward somewhat greater gender equality in household work (Baxter 1998). Many studies have found that most household chores are heavily sex-typed. In a recent study of Swedish couples with and without children (Ahrne and Roman, 1997), it was found that men's participation in household work was most common with regard to food shopping, cleaning and washing dishes, while in most households women take more or less the whole responsibility when it comes to cooking and doing laundry. In $\frac{3}{4}$ of the households women did all or almost all the cooking. The households were divided into four different family types depending on the degree of sharing of household tasks: egalitarian, semi-egalitarian, conventional and patriarchal. Couples without children were found to be the most egalitarian – almost $\frac{3}{4}$ were classified as egalitarian or semi-egalitarian.

The largest proportion of conventional and patriarchal families – also $\frac{3}{4}$ - was found among couple with children of school age. Not surprisingly, a dramatic change in gender equality often occurs when the first child is born. The reason for this, according to the authors of the report, is clearly related to the fact it is the woman, not the man, who changes her attachment to the labour market after childbirth. In the overwhelming majority of cases, mothers take all or almost all of the parental leave. When they return to their job, they usually work part-time.

Thus, the situation in the period following the birth of the first child either creates or strengthens an already existing asymmetrical relation between the parents. The new gender contract in Sweden has been described in the following way: women and men are supposed to take an equal responsibility for the support of the family. Thus both women and men are expected to work and to contribute to the family economy. But women need not work full-time, and men should not work part-time for any length of time.

It seems, therefore, that even in a relatively gender-equal society like Sweden the majority of women are willing to give priority to the family (and the children), and let their working life play a secondary role, during a certain phase of their lives. Gender equality (defined as giving men and women the same possibilities, rights and obligations in all essential areas of life) is a priority area in Sweden. In a recent governmental report to the parliament, it is emphasised, however, that the first rank position reached by Sweden “should not mislead us to think that we have reached the goal”. Even if there has been considerable progress made towards a gender-equal society, persistent gender structures from a society characterised by male dominance and female subordination continue to influence the choices that men and women make with regard to work and family life.

For example, the decision on who will concentrate on an occupational career and who will take the main responsibility for the children when they are small is likely to

have considerable consequences in the long run, consequences which may often be unintentional. The gender division of labour leads to a gendered division of incomes. Women generally work for fewer hours and have lower earnings than men. Thus the gender division of labour concerns not only the distribution of tasks, but in addition it affects the distribution of income (Nyberg 1997). Therefore, the outcome of the negotiations in the family about the use of time will ultimately affect earnings. It has become increasingly common to view the family as an arena of negotiations covering the distribution of time and money. The result of this process, where disagreements are settled either through compromise or by one party conceding, depends on the negotiating power of the parties (Nyberg 1997). Women increase their negotiating power through higher education and a higher (potential) personal income. It is decreased the higher the income of the husband, and if there are children in the family (Ott 1992, Dex and Joshi 1999). From a sociological rather than an economic perspective, however, it can be argued that the resource theory approach to the balance of power in a family has some serious limitations (Roman 1999). It overlooks the importance of ideological and cultural factors, in reinforcing or counteracting the effects of differences in economic power between the spouses. Thus, in studying marital negotiations in heterosexual couples, one has to take account both of economic and normative power relations (Ahrne and Roman 1997). Normative power derives from cultural ideas (for example about motherhood versus fatherhood) and economic power has to do with different access to alternative options. Norms about motherhood and fatherhood influence who takes most of the parental leave and who usually works part-time when the children are small. Men's economic and normative powers in a relationship therefore usually work in the same direction.

Women's careers – and men's

Men's working life and occupational careers are by and large not affected by their family situation. However, when women get married (or start a cohabiting relationship) and, even more, when they have children, they will allocate more time and more energy to unpaid housework and less to paid work outside the home, which in turn means that their career possibilities are reduced compared to the men. Hörnqvist (1997) has studied changes over the life course in hourly wages for men and women in Sweden. He found that women's hourly wages increase up to age 30, but then they level off. For men, on the other hand, wages increase during the whole family building phase, then start declining somewhat after around age 45. The author concludes that family responsibilities have a two-edged effect on gender inequality: it decreases women's chances in the labour market, while it increases men's. This is because men with families can put more energy into promoting their own career, at the same time as they meet with less competition from female co-workers who are involved in different types of scaling back activities.

Married men not only earn more than married women, they also usually earn more than unmarried men (the so-called marriage premium) do. A recent report from the Swedish Office of Labour Market Policy Evaluation (Richardson 2000) shows that the wage premium earned by married men has declined since 1968. One interpretation of this is that specialisation within households has decreased over time, since women do more paid work outside the home than they used to, and men do more unpaid work in the household. However, the marriage premium does not increase with time married, as would be implied by the specialisation hypothesis. Whether there is a

marriage premium or a marriage penalty for married versus unmarried women is less clear.

In a recent Ph.D. dissertation from the Netherlands, with the telling title "Squeezing birth into working life" (Wetzels 1999), the author asserts that young women in Europe increasingly educate themselves for a lifelong labour market career. How is it possible to fit births into a planned career trajectory, which does not allow for long workforce interruptions? The most important factors influencing the decision on *if, when and how* to enter market work after a birth are, according to the author, the following: whether taxes are jointly or individually assessed, day care subsidies, availability of good quality child care, the duration and replacement ratio of parental or maternity leaves, the organisation of the school day and after school care, the availability of (part-time) jobs, and finally the regulation as regards leave for sick children. Of the four countries compared in this study, namely Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Sweden, Sweden is the country which has chosen the policy mix which most benefits the two-earner family, while Germany on the other hand has chosen policies that most benefit the one-earner family. It was found for all the countries, that the longer the education of the woman and the more labour market experience she had before birth, the more likely she is to have a continuous labour force career. Labour force participation, hours of work and wages in the period around childbirth were found to be crucial for the woman's later lifetime career. The human capital accumulated before first birth determines earnings during and after mothering.

Career costs for women who have children consist of the direct loss of earnings during the time when she has left the labour market in connection with a birth, but also, and maybe more importantly, of the loss of returns for the rest of her working life because of human capital investments foregone during the period of home time. It was found that Swedish women go through the childbearing process with only a small drop in earnings². Swedish women are able to combine work and family also with fairly small amounts of human capital. On the contrary, German and Dutch women remain in continuous employment (with only maternity leave interruptions) only if they are well educated. If not, the breadwinner ideology and the institutions put them into a homemaker position.

Returns to human capital are likely to be greater in full-time than in part-time jobs (Dex and Joshi, 1999). However, the consequences of part-time employment after childbirth have been found to vary by country. In Great Britain, part-time jobs are mostly found in low-level occupations. Many women therefore accept a convenient job with reduced hours but lower status, in order to be able to combine paid work and family responsibilities. In Sweden, on the other hand, job protection in connection with childbirth is combined with a right for parents to work part-time while they have small children. Also, part-time jobs have the same social benefits as full-time jobs. Therefore, there is not the type of general downward mobility for women who switch

² Interestingly enough, Albrecht et al. (1999) using Swedish data, found that time out of work has negative effects on both male and female subsequent wages. However, for women, household time and unemployment had significant negative effects, while parental leave time did not. For men, on the other hand, parental leave time had a significant negative effect on their wages. This was interpreted as a signal effect to the employer, who would regard men taking parental leave as less "committed" and "career-oriented".

to part-time work after childbirth, as is often found in other countries. In this way, women's careers need not be derailed when they have children (Dex and Joshi 1999); nevertheless, it is likely that women who start working part-time will lose out on promotion possibilities, and therefore have a slower career advancement than those working full-time.

What will be the effect on career advancement for highly educated women of having children? It is generally found (ILO, 1997) that women hold very few top jobs in corporations (2-3 percent). Moreover, even if they manage to rise to the top, female executives almost always earn less than men do. The extent to which this phenomenon is due to their presumed or actual family responsibilities is hard to assess. It is often found that female managers are less frequently married and/or have children than is the case with men in executive positions (see Billing, 1991, for Denmark, and Hemström, 1998, for Sweden). An American study of MBA graduates (Lee and Menon 1998) found that there was a cost associated with being a dual-career parent, regardless of gender. Having a partner was a career resource, rather than a burden, as long as either there are no children or the partner takes the responsibility for them.

Hemström (1998) has studied gender differences in pay among young professionals in Sweden. She finds that children and career interruptions are very important in determining career outcomes in this group. Firms know that their female employees are statistically more likely than their male counterparts to go on parental leave for an extended period and to work part-time when they return to their job. Their conclusion, therefore, is that men should hold valuable job assignments and positions, which are incompatible with employees being totally or partially absent from their jobs. Female employees, on the other hand, should be in positions where they are easily replaceable. This results in a dual labour market, even among professionals, where women to a large extent voluntarily choose less demanding jobs that are more compatible with childrearing possibilities. The end result is that men receive huge returns to experience, women almost none.

Fertility and employment

Do women restrict their fertility in order to be able to work? There is little reason to doubt that people respond to anticipated future conditions. Most young childless women can realistically expect considerable difficulties in combining continued workforce participation, at least at an unchanged level, with domestic and family responsibilities (Bernhardt 1993). It would not be surprising if this has a subduing effect on fertility plans, unless these young women are willing to resort to some serious scaling back strategy, with likely negative implications for their future occupational career and earnings.

However, taking a look at the contemporary Swedish scene does not seem to confirm the hypothesis that high work ambitions have a negative effect on birth plans (see table 5). Among childless young adults (26 and 30 years old) high work ambition generally had no effect on birth plans (if anything it made women less likely to hesitate about having children). What matters is a) age (being 30 rather than 26 significantly increases hesitation and promotes a totally negative attitude), b) whether the respondent lives with a partner (at the time of the survey), and c) a pro-familistic attitude, which has the expected positive attitude on birth plans. A medium or high

education either has no significant effect or it increases the likelihood of the respondent planning to have children in the future.

Clearly, young adults in Sweden are confident that they will be able to reconcile work and family life. Of course, these young adults have not started their family-building yet. Reality may turn out to be quite different from their expectations. As I will be able to follow them in the population registers in the coming years, I will be able to tell whether high work ambitions among young women increases the likelihood that they will abstain from having children, after all, or if they are more likely to stop after one child, or possibly two children. Pinelli et al. (2000) found some evidence of a negative effect of employment on third birth fertility in Sweden. This was a comparative study with FFS data from Italy, France, Hungary, Sweden and the USA, analysing first, second and third births. The results show that in Hungary and Sweden, where it is more common for women to work and where women's work has more support from the institutions in terms of services and working conditions, it is possible for women to work without giving up maternity. In Italy, France and the USA, on the other hand, the situation is the reverse: not only do fewer women work, but those who do work also have lower fertility. The authors conclude that in the countries of Southern Europe, here represented by Italy, "modern" patterns of behaviour have higher individual costs, while in the Scandinavian countries, here represented by Sweden, "modern" patterns of behaviour are more compatible with fertility, but the third child represents the limit to this compatibility.

Corman (2000) has studied the determinants of third birth fertility in Sweden and France. For Sweden, she had access to complete employment biographies, and she could therefore analyse the impact of employment on third births in a more detailed manner than Pinelli et al. (2000), who were forced to use a rather crude measure. Corman found that women who worked full-time and those who worked on a part-time basis had quite similar patterns of third births. Moreover, persistent homemakers had only 10 percent higher third-birth rates than persistent jobholders. On the other hand, French working parents were found to have a lower progression to a third birth than Swedish working parents do. This was interpreted as a result of fewer flexible work arrangements available on the French labour market, which puts a lot of pressure on French women to choose between working life and family life. From life table proportions of French and Swedish mothers who bear a second and a third child, it is apparent that much higher proportions of French women stop childbearing after the first birth, while the overall level of progression to third birth is not that different between the countries. It seems, therefore, that many French women abstain from having more than one child, maybe because one child is what they can fit into their planned working trajectory.

That conditions relating to the employment of mothers are much more favourable in Sweden compared to Italy and Germany has recently been demonstrated by Chesnais (1996). In general, countries, which have low levels of part-time work for women, also have very low levels of fertility. McDonald (1997) asserts that where social and economic institutions have adapted more rapidly and more persuasively to the gender equity model (meaning that specific roles are not determined on the basis of gender), as in the Nordic countries, in the English-speaking countries and perhaps in France, fertility has not fallen to very low levels. Fertility will remain at a precariously low, long-term level as long as women are on the one hand provided

with opportunities similar to men's in terms of education and market employment, but at the same time these opportunities are severely curtailed by having children. Women who want to work will then restrict the number of children, or maybe not even become mothers.

Concluding remarks

I propose that it would be useful to identify three different types of women's lifetime career strategies in relation to childbearing:

- 1) *The career strategy*: Women who go in for a demanding career will restrict their fertility. These women will have no children or possibly one child.
- 2) *The combination strategy*: Women who want to be in continuous employment but who are willing to adopt some sort of scaling back strategy, at least while the children are of pre-school age. These women will have more children in a more family-friendly society.
- 3) *The homemaking strategy*: Women who quit working at the birth of the first child, or at least make a long workforce interruption (over many years). These women will have more children than women with continuous employment, without necessarily having large enough families to counteract the effects of (1) and (2).

The homemaking strategy will become an increasingly unlikely option, even in countries where it is now relatively common, if nothing else for economic reasons. Public policies to make this a more feasible option are thinkable, but are likely to be so costly that they are unrealistic. In addition, such policies would be contrary to the aims of gender equality accepted by the countries in the European Union. From a demographic point of view, replacement fertility, or the possibility of ensuring that a parent generation is followed by an equally large child generation, is more likely in societies with public policies that strive to make the combination strategy an attractive option.

Currently, all countries in Europe have labour markets that are too gender segregated to ensure the best use of available human resources (Smith 1999). A recent OECD conference on "Changing labour markets and gender equality: The role of policy" (October 1998 in Oslo) concluded that lifelong on-the-job training and other efforts to improve the competence of individual workers, males and females, is not enough. It has to be complemented by family-friendly workplaces and effective commitment, not the least on the part of employers, to offer women better career prospects. Labour market policies in many countries strive actively to create a working life without gender differences and discrimination. In order to make replacement fertility a reachable goal, it is, however, crucial to create satisfactory societal arrangements to take care of our dependants – children and the elderly. In the future, labour market policies will have to cope with a world where both male and female employees have active family responsibilities, which they want to combine with their commitment to the labour market. One can hope that young men in the future will become sensitive not only to the impact that a child will have on their *partner's* work force participation, but also to the potential impact of a child on their *own* career. Then we can expect some real changes in the gender structure of the society. It is my conviction that this will also have a positive impact on fertility levels.

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Table 1. Employment rates for women 25-49 years in different EU-countries, and part-time employment as percentage of total employment (women 25-49)

	Rate of employment	Percent part-time
15 EU countries	65,9	32,5
Belgium	70,1	39,8
Denmark	80,5	27,4
Germany	70,8	38,3
Greece	54,2	8,3
Spain	50,0	16,2
France	69,1	31,1
Ireland	62,9	42,6
Italy	51,7	13,5
Luxembourg	62,6	24,7
Netherlands	72,4	75,3
Austria	74,6	34,9
Portugal	74,5	27,7
Finland	77,1	14,6
Sweden	79,5	38,7
United Kingdom	73,0	50,5

Source: European Social Statistics - Labour Force Survey Results 1999, Eurostat 2000

Table 2. Types of activity during the pre-school years of their first child (women 22-60 years)

	Not worked	Worked part-time	Worked full-time
EUROPE	51,5	18,5	30,0
Belgium	39,1	16,0	44,9
Denmark	24,0	25,8	50,1
W. Germany	64,0	18,4	17,6
E. Germany	19,3	20,0	60,7
Greece	45,3	17,5	37,2
Spain	59,8	13,3	26,9
France	41,3	11,3	47,4
Ireland	73,8	7,8	18,4
Italy	43,2	16,6	40,2
Luxembourg	71,4	9,3	19,3
Netherlands	76,3	18,5	5,2
Portugal	28,5	15,8	55,7
Great Britain	60,5	28,8	10,7

Source: Eurobarometer 1990, as presented in Kempeneers and Lalièvre (1993)

Table 3. Expected years in employment, men and women 25-64 years (1995) EU-countries

Men Women

Belgium	29,0	19,3
Denmark	30,8	26,8
Germany	31,9	23,4
Greece	32,8	17,0
Spain	28,4	13,7
France	29,8	23,1
Ireland	30,0	16,2
Italy	29,7	15,4
Luxembourg	31,1	16,7
Netherlands	30,7	20,1
Austria	31,4	22,7
Portugal	32,3	24,0
Finland	26,6	25,1
Sweden	33,6	32,5
United Kingdom	31,0	26,2

Source: OECD (via the European Observatory on Family Matters webpage)

Table 4. Women's involvement in the labour force (22 to 60 years old). Percentages.

	Ever worked	No interruptions
EUROPE	82,7	59,7
Belgium	83,6	72,2
Denmark	97,3	65,6
W. Germany	91,8	54,7
E. Germany	99,4	42,0
Greece	62,2	68,3
Spain	63,4	72,3
France	86,4	63,0
Ireland	86,9	66,7
Italy	66,9	75,4
Luxembourg	87,8	71,9
Netherlands	85,7	73,7
Portugal	63,3	81,2
Great Britain	96,1	40,3

Source: Eurobarometer 1990 (as presented in Kempeneers and Lalièvre, 1993).

Table 5. Determinants of birth plans among childless Swedish young adults¹

	Men		Women	
	Hesitant	No	Hesitant	No
Age 30 (vs 26)	2,03**	1,25	1,81*	6,61*
Living with a partner	0,37**	0,37^	0,35**	0,96

Paper presented at the seminar "Low fertility, families and public policies", organised by the European Observatory on Family Matters in Sevilla, September 15-16, 2000

Education					
	Medium	0,55*	0,75	0,65	0,73
	High	0,41*	0,30	0,29*	0,16
Familism scale		0,74**	0,60**	0,71**	0,43**
Work ambition scale		1,06	0,96	0,92^	0,88

1) Hesitant or No, versus Yes to the question "Do you think you will have children in the future?"

** $p < 0,01$, * $0,01 < p < 0,05$, ^ $0,05 < p < 0,10$

Explanation: *Familism scale* = a composite measure of the following 4 statements

- 1) To have children is part of what gives meaning to life
- 2) Something is missing if a couple never has children
- 3) Importance to respondent of living in a a good cohabiting or married relationship
- 4) Importance to respondent to have children

Work ambition scale = a composite measure of the following 4 statements

- 1) How important is work in your life?
- 2) Importance to respondent of being successful in his/her work
- 3) A good job means that it offers good possibilities to advance
- 4) A good job means that I get a high salary and/or other benefits

Data source: Survey on Family and Working Life in the 21st century, Center for Women's Studies, Stockholm University

Changing Values among the Future Parents of Europe

Walter Bien

1.0 Low fertility in relation to values of future parents

Discussing low fertility rates in Europe and prospective views on future demographic trends is strongly related to the anticipated behaviour of future parents. So it may be useful to discuss information about values and attitudes of such future parents in the belief that future behaviour is somewhat related to actual values. If there are consistent value patterns among young Europeans and if there are changes in this value patterns compared with other age groups, this may help us understand the processes leading to low fertility and maybe assist us in to thinking about future developments.

2.0 Future parents in Europe

To give the main results of the analysis in advance:

1. It is well known that there is a high variation in living circumstances of (young) Europeans according to regions (urban, rural, north, south) and countries. Very often, the living situations vary more within one country than between countries.
2. It is well known that the behaviour of (young) Europeans also varies strongly depending on the regions and/or countries but shows less variety related to living circumstances.
3. Our analysis shows low to no variation of attitudes and values of (young) Europeans between regions and countries.
4. If there is are a high variation of behaviour and no such variation of values and attitudes, the result is that there is no correspondence between behaviour and attitudes and values. Of course, this result is related to the available data, i.e. reported values and attitudes in comparative surveys. Maybe other norms or values decisive for behaviour, but not reflected in comparative surveys are of some relevance in real life.
5. When selecting future parents from other groups, the differentiation of age groups also shows low to no variation, the same holds for gender.

Apparently the idea that results based on attitude research can help to explain low birth rates was wrong. Therefore the results shown here could only illustrate and comment the discussion on low fertility but were no help in forecasting the future of European society.

3.0 Methodological problems in comparative research on attitudes and values

Collecting international comparable data is extremely difficult, expensive, and time consuming. Therefore it was only possible to conduct our research in the form of a new analysis of currently available data sets. Not everything that would be profitable is possible. In particular the interrelationship between living situation (context), behaviour (managing (un)employment) and attitudes (or opinions) is not reflected in the data available to us. We did our best to take this background into account when doing our comparative analysis. To make the paper readable and understandable, we have just given a few examples, showing only part of the whole analysis. However, our findings are based on a much broader field of work and discussions.

We'll briefly describe the data sets that we used. More detailed descriptions can be obtained directly from the sources or from EUROSTAT or the national statistical offices in the respective countries.

In order to describe attitudes we have utilised a comparative European survey focussing on historical consciousness and political attitudes among adolescents. The aim of the survey was mainly to investigate young people's historical consciousness: What does history mean to young people? Are they interested in historical topics? What is their understanding of attitudes and associations in history? The survey also included several questions concerning their expectations, attitudes, values and opinions. The *Youth and History* survey was carried out among almost 32,000 young Europeans, aged 14 and 15, in 26 different countries in 1994/95.¹ The students filled in a questionnaire with about 280 questions. Their history and social studies teachers participated in the project and answered a similar questionnaire.

*The ISSP*² is a continuous annual programme of cross-national collaboration on surveys covering important topics of social science research. It brings together already existing social science projects and co-ordinates research goals, thereby adding a cross-national, cross-cultural perspective to the individual national studies. 29 countries are members of the ISSP. Data concerning questions of family and changing gender roles were collected in the years 1988 and 1994. Although this survey was not specifically related to young people (age range 18 to 65), the data are pivotal for the discussion.

In 1993, some information about family life was collected in Eurobarometer 39.0 in addition to European community policies³. Youth for Europe, a community action programme in the field of youth work, began in 1995. The programme addresses young people between 15 and 25 years of age who reside in the 15 Member States of the European Union. At the request of the European Commission, an opinion survey among young Europeans between 15 and 24 was conducted by Eurobarometer in 1997.⁴

The ISSP data and the Eurobarometer 1993 data on family values and changing gender roles are collected about a wide age range. We re-analysed the surveys for gender and the age groups <24, 24-34, and 34-44 to contrast a group of young people (potential parents) and two groups of young and middle-aged (potential or real) parents for the participating EU countries.

¹ Source: Magne Angvik, Bodo von Borries (eds.): "Youth and History" – Hamburg: Körber –Stiftung, 1997 – Vol. A. Descriptions, Vol. B. Documentation, CD-ROM data sets.

² Source: "The International Social Survey Programme ISSP 1985–1995" (CD-ROM) GESIS ZA Daten Service. Special edition for the international conference on *Large Scale Data Analysis* at the Zentralarchiv, Cologne, May 25–28, 1999.

³ Source: Eurobarometer 39.0, European Community Policies and Family Life. March–April 1993. Principal investigators: Karlheinz Reif, Anna Melich – Commission of the European Community, ICPSR 6195; ZA 2346, collected by INRA. Third ICPSR Edition January 1997 (ZA Version)

⁴ Source: Eurobarometer 47.2 "Junge Europäer für die Generaldirektion XXII erstellt durch INRA (EUROPE) – Bericht – 29. Juli 1997" and CD-ROM with data sets.

Paper presented at the seminar "Low fertility, families and public policies",

organised by the European Observatory on Family Matters in Sevilla, September 15-16, 2000

4.0 Behaviour — birth rates of adolescents and young adults

Before discussing values of young Europeans, let me give you some facts about the bearing behaviour of young European women.⁵

Development of birth rate from 1985 to 1995 per 1000 women aged 15-19 and 20-24

EU-15	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
15-19	14.2	14.2	13.7	13.7	12.9	12.9	12.5	11.8	11.1	10.2	9.8
20-24	80.5	77.9	75.0	73.5	68.9	67.4	63.3	59.8	56.0	52.5	49.9

Birth rates - abortion rate per 1000 for young Europeans

1997, otherwise year of collection (birth, abortion)	per 1000 women aged 15-19		per 1000 women aged 20-24	
	Birth	Abortion	Birth	Abortion
Austria	10.7		66.2	
Belgium (1995)	6.7	5.7	54.5	9.1
Denmark (1997, 1996)	6.2	15.9	50.2	23.7
Finland	6.2	10.2	55.8	15.0
France (1997, 1995)	6.7	8.9	53.3	18.2
Germany (1997, 1995)	9.5	3.1	55.6	7.5
Greece	9.5	1.3	51.7	14.9
Ireland(1996)	12.7		48.6	
Italy (1995, 1995)	5.3	5.9	32.6	12.6
Luxembourg	6.5		58.7	
Netherlands (1997,1993)	4.4	4.2	34.2	7.4
Portugal	17.0		57.9	
Spain (1996,1997)	6.1	5.0	23.3	8.1
Sweden	5.0	17.8	48.1	27.0
UK (1997, England and Wales (Scotland) 1996)	22.9	21.7(16.6)	74.8	25.5(19.5)
EU-15(1995)	9.8		49.9	

Teenage pregnancy and the birth rate of young mothers is declining (abortion rates over the different countries vary but overall they have been more or less stable over the last years (with an increase in Belgium, Spain and Great Britain)). The variation across the different EU Member States is high and specific for the different age groups and for birth and abortion. The birth rate per 1000 varies from a minimum of 4.4 (Netherlands) to a maximum of 22.9 (UK) for teenagers and from 23.3 (Spain) to 74.8 (GB) for young women, the data on abortion rates per 1000 vary from 1.3 (Greece) to 21.7 (England & Wales) for teenagers and 7.4 (Netherlands) to 27 (Sweden). There is no direct connection between teenage birth rate and abortion rate. For nearly the same birth rate (6–7), the abortion rate varies from 5.0–15.9. On the other hand, the highest birth rate and the highest abortion rate can be found in

⁵ Source: "Bericht über die gesundheitliche Situation der jungen Menschen in der Europäischen Union. Arbeitspapier der Kommissionsdienststellen GD Gesundheitsförderung, Gesundheitsberichterstattung und Verhütung von Verletzungen 2.2000; s.a. H. Hackauf & G. Winzen: "On the state of young people's health in the European Union." Deutsches Jugendinstitut, München, 1.9.1999.

the same region. As is the case with research in other topics, whenever one looks at behaviour, one can find a wide range of variation among young Europeans.

5.0 Values of (future) parents

5.1 General values

We used the “Youth and History” (Y&H) data to explore the emotions, attitudes and opinions of young Europeans. These results are related to the analysis of Eurobarometer data (EB93, EBY97) and ISSP data: The data show low variation between rural and urban areas and low to medium variation between countries.

5.1.1 Life in own country/life in Europe after 40

In some questions (Y&H), the students were asked about their expectations as to what future life in their own country and in Europe would be like (“What do you expect life will be like in your country 40 years from now?” / “What do you expect life will be like in Europe 40 years from now?”). They were asked to rate the likeliness of the following alternatives:

- peaceful (3.0)
 - **overpopulated (3.4)**
 - exploited by a foreign state (2.6)
 - prosperous / wealthy (3.1)
 - democratic (3.5)
 - polluted (4.1)
 - torn by conflicts between rich and poor (3.2)
 - torn by conflicts between ethnic groups (3.1)
- (categories: 1=very unlikely / 5=very likely)

Comparing the young people’s expectations of what life in their own country will be like in 40 years to what they think it will be like in the whole of Europe, they tend to think that their own countries will be better off, at least in some aspects. The threat of pollution seems to be the most common fear of young people in their own countries (4.1) as well as in Europe (4.1), followed by fear of **overpopulation**. At least this attitude contradicts the results of demographic research. If this belief were of any relevance, it would lead to lower fertility.

5.1.2 Family as value

“How important are the following to you?” (Y&H)

- **family (4.7)**
- friends (4.5)
- hobbies / personal areas of interest (4.1)
- my country (3.8)
- my ethnic group/nationality (3.5)
- money and wealth for myself (3.6)
- my religious faith (3.2)
- European co-operation (3.1)
- democracy (3.5)
- freedom of opinion for all (4.3)
- peace at any cost (4.2)
- solidarity with poor people in my own country (4.0)
- solidarity with poor people in the Third World (3.8)
- welfare and social security (4.0)

- environmental protection (4.4)
(categories: 1=very little importance / 5=very much importance)

Least important among these concerns was “European co-operation” (3.1), most important was **“family”** (4.7) with just over 1.5 points difference between these issues.

The overall pattern seen in the different countries is very complex; sometimes understandable (e.g., young Italians having the highest regard for “my religious faith”), sometimes hard to understand (e.g., major differences between East Germany and Estonia on the question of “peace at any cost”). The differences between countries for any given variable ranged between a half and a full point on our scale, with two exceptions: there was very strong agreement across the board (a difference of only 0.2 points) on **“family”** and “welfare and social security”.

Differences between young people’s opinions in rural and urban areas were very small. The biggest difference related to **“family”** (with rural young people ranking it 0.2 points higher than their urban counterparts); otherwise the differences were less than 0.1.

The same results were found in the 1993 Eurobarometer study. “Family” and “work” are most important, “politics” and “religion” are less important.

5.1.3 Personal life in 40 years’ time

One question (Y&H) concerned young people’s expectations for their own future (“What do you expect your life to be like 40 years from now?”). They were asked to rate how likely the following events were in their opinion:

- a meaningful job (3.7)⁶
 - a high income (3.4)
 - **a happy and harmonious family life (3.8)**
 - good friends (4.1)
 - personal political freedom (3.7)
 - participation in politics (2.3)
 - sufficient leisure time to practise interesting hobbies (3.5)
- (categories: 1=very unlikely / 5=very likely).

Regarding their personal future expectations, the majority of the young students expected to have good friends (4.1), a **happy family** (3.8) and a meaningful job (3.7). By way of comparison, young Finns are most optimistic about getting a meaningful job (4.0), while young Estonians seem to be on the more pessimistic end of this scale (3.3). Getting a high income in the future is considered possible, but perhaps not very likely by most of the young people (3.4).

5.2 Family related values and attitudes

5.2.1 Reasons for not moving out (EBY97)

Young people in Europe know the discussion about young people staying a longer time at home, only 3% reject the fact. The most important reason named for not moving out is: “Young people can’t afford to move out”. This is true for each of the observed 15 EU countries, although there is a relevant variation between the

⁶ Mean of categories: 1=very unlikely to 5=very likely

countries e.g. Luxembourg (52%), Austria (58%) and Sweden (95.3%). The second important reason that was stated is: "They want all the home comfort without all the responsibility" (35.6%).

5.2.2 Partnership

(EB93)

Asking what is important in order to live successfully with a partner, the young people stated the following as most important:

- to respect one another (1.1)
- to love one another deeply (1.2)

This was followed by

- not having too serious financial problems (1.5)
- not living with your in-laws (1.56) and
- sharing the same ideas, the same interests (1.8)
- having children(1.8)

1= very important, 2=somewhat important, 3= not at all important

Other items are less important. Love is more important for the youngest, most other items are less important for the younger groups as compared to the older groups. Remarkably, Greece has the highest values for importance in all items (except "living with in-laws"), the lowest values are spread across the whole of Europe. Because the expectations in Greece are very high, there is a high probability that young people have problems with the everyday reality of marriage.

5.2.3 Premarital sex

In the Youth Eurobarometer-study (1997),.86.5% of the respondents find premarital sex acceptable (min: Ireland 74,9% / max: Sweden 92.6%) – this being the point of clearest agreement. Asked about living together without getting married in Eurobarometer (1993), about 65% of all people below age 45 answered "not for others to judge", 26.5% said "it is a good thing" (32% of those under 24, 27% in the age bracket 25-34, 21% of those aged 35-44; women on average 2% less than men).

Only about 35.9% of young people accept such innovations in sexual morality as giving homosexuals the right to adopt children. Cloning, the reproduction of identical living beings, is the issue that found the least acceptance among young people, with an average of only 5.4% being in favour. 34.8% want to limit the number of children of people earning low incomes. There are some small differences between young people's attitudes in rural and urban regions. For example, among the urban youth, 9% more are in favour of homosexuals having the right to get married (53.4% vs. 44.4%) and nearly 7% more in favour of homosexuals having the right to adopt children (30.4% vs. 22.9%).

"Do you think it is wrong or not wrong for a man and a woman to have sexual relations before marriage?" (ISSP)

Sexual relations before marriage (m<24 = 3.6; f<24 = 3.5) (std. deviation .9)

Sexual relations teens under 16 years (m<24 = 2.4; f<24 = 1.5) (std. deviation 1.0)

Sexual relation other than spouse (m<24 = 1.7; f<24 = 2.11) (std. deviation .9)

1= always wrong, 2 = almost always wrong, 3 = wrong sometimes, 4 = not wrong at all

The acceptance of such issues varies from country to country. Even attitudes towards premarital sex (showing the clearest agreement between all countries) vary in a range of 17%. Nevertheless, the main tendencies are similar, premarital sex is highly accepted.

5.2.4 Marriage (EB93)

When asked about marriage and what it means to get married, the highest agreement was obtained for

- committing yourself to being faithful to your partner (1,47)
- the best way to guarantee the rights of the children (1,77)

The lowest agreement was given for the options

- marriage is to get stuck in routine (2.98)
- marriage is to live in social routine (3.07)

(1= agree completely, 2= agree somewhat, 3= disagree somewhat, 4= disagree completely)

without significant variation regarding sex, age, countries.

For future and actual parents, it is also sure that marriage is not an obstacle to working life of men (1.95) and women (1.91), and children are not seen as an obstacle for men (1.91), but somewhat for women (1.42),
(1= yes, a child is an obstacle, 2= no he/she is not an obstacle)

5.2.5 Divorce

“Divorce is the best solution for marriage problems” (m<24 = 2.7; f<24 = 2.7) (std. deviation 1.2)

“Parents with a child should stay together” (m<24 = 3.3; f<24 = 3.7) (std. deviation 1.1)

(1= strongly agree to 5= strongly disagree (ISSP))

Divorce as solution for marriage problems is more accepted than children as a reason for staying together.

Accepted reasons for divorce are (EB93)

- one of the partners is violent (1.08)
- one or both partners are unfaithful (1.24)
- there is no longer any communication between partners (1.21)
- the personalities are incompatible (1.31)

Reasons not accepted are:

- there are serious problems between one of the partners and any of the children (1.74)
- a partner is not satisfied with the way roles are divided (1.81)
- one of the partners is consistently too wrapped up in his/her work (1.83)
- the couple cannot have children (1.95)

(1= rather get divorced, 2= rather not get divorced)

The three reasons stated most frequently for encouraging people to not get divorced are:

- it is not advisable if there are young children
- it is to run away from your responsibilities
- is finding yourself alone again

with low variation regarding sex, age, countries.

The attitudes to divorce are not clearly structured and reasons for divorce are sometimes rather related to an ideal than to real expected behaviour, e.g. the high relevance of unfaithfulness.

5.2.6 Role development

EB93

Is it better, if

- mother stays home (1) or better if mother continues to work (2) 1.22
- if the father is involved (1) or bringing up is above all the responsibility of the mother (2) 1,07

Young Europeans want fathers to be involved in bringing up children, but also see the main responsibility for mothers.

(ISSP) Do you agree:

“A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work” (m<24 = 2.5; f<24 = 2.2) (std. deviation 1.2)

“Should women with a pre-school child work?” (m<24 = 2.4; f<24 = 2.3) (std. deviation .7)

“Should women work, if kids are left at home” (m<24 = 1.3; f<24 = 1.2) (std. deviation .6)

(1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree)

“A job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children.”

Table: Mean for different sex- age groups over different countries for 1994 (1988)

	m <24 1994(1988)	m 25-34	m 35 -44	f <24 1994(1988)	f 25-34	f 35 -44
D-W	3.2 (3.3)	3.5	3.4	3.6 (3.7)	3.6	3.6
D-E	3.5	3.9	4.1	3.8	4.0	4.0
GB	3.2 (3.5)	3.6	3.3	3.7 (4.0)	3.7	3.7
A	2.9 (2.8)	3.3	3.0	3.5 (2.9)	3.3	3.1
I	3.2 (3.0)	3.0	3.2	3.3 (3.2)	3.3	3.2
IRL	3.3 (2.9)	3.0	3.2	3.6 (3.1)	3.3	3.1
NL	3.3 (3.4)	3.5	3.4	3.5 (3.6)	3.6	3.4
S	3.0	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.3
E	3.1	3.2	3.1	3.3	3.4	3.1
East Europe	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.4
Non Europe	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.5	3.3	3.3
Total	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.2	3.2	3.1

The cell frequencies for countries vary from 32 (m<24, GB) to 268 (m25-34, W-D).

The young Europeans (<24) are ambiguous regarding this statement: the mean is almost 3, meaning “neither agree nor disagree”. The variation of means is around a half of category in the direction of disagreement (min 1994 (<24) = 3.0 (S) max 1994 Paper presented at the seminar “Low fertility, families and public policies”, organised by the European Observatory on Family Matters in Sevilla, September 15-16, 2000

(<24) =3.7 (GB) (Overall data std. deviation = 1.2). Slight gender differences can be found as a general pattern in the direction of “agree”. We could not find a stable difference pattern between the age groups and the two dates.

The ambiguity of role definition and the changing role definition is also visible in the relation to household activities.

List of household tasks which may be completed by the father, the mother or by both.

% named	Mainly father	Mainly mother	Both
Playing sport with children	15 m<24 20%	1	84
Bringing the children to activities	4	7	89
Changing the baby's nappies	1	24 m=28% f=20%	75
Dressing children, choosing clothes	1	34	65
Taking the children to the doctor	1	18	80
Helping children to their schoolwork	2	7	81
Feeding the children	0	20	77
Buying toys for the children	3	8	89
Given pocket money to the children	11	5	84
Punishing the children	5	3	91
Putting the children to bed	1	13	86
Answering to important questions	2	3	95

The major result is that the responsibility of both is the most frequent category. Gender differences can only be found in the responsibility for changing the baby's nappies, which 28% of the men and only 20% of the women see as the responsibility of the mother.

Role equality is much more popular as a political topic than as real behaviour.

What would you vote for and what would you vote against?”(Y&H)

- **Full equality for women in professional life, house-keeping and public life (1.4)**

(categories: 1 = would vote for, 2= undecided, 3 = would vote against, 4 = would not vote⁷)

5.3 Children

5.3.1 To have or not to have children?

EB93

Having a child is “somewhat important” (2.9, m 3.0, f2.8) for young Europeans, but varies from West Germany m<24 (3.1) to Greece f 25-34 (1.88).

⁷ This scale is not in a strong ordered. It can be interpreted that the explicit decision “would not vote” is related to the issue being considered to be highly difficult.

(1= essential, 2= very important, 3= somewhat important, 4=not very important, 5= not at all important)
(EBY93)

5.3.2 How many children?

“All in all, what do you think is the ideal number of children for a family to have?”
(ISSP)

Table: Mean ideal number of children for different genders and age groups across different countries for 1994 (1988)

	m <24 1994 (1988)	m 25-34	m 35 -44	f <24 1994 (1988)	f 25-34	f 35 -44
D-W	2.2 (2.0)	2.2	2.2	2.3 (2.1)	2.1	2.3
D-E	2.0	2.1	1.9	2.1	1.9	1.9
GB	2.4 (2.4)	2.3	2.3	2.4 (2.5)	2.3	2.2
A	2.1 (2.4)	2.2	2.2	2.2 (2.4)	2.1	2.2
I	2.1 (2.3)	2.2	2.2	2.3 (2.3)	2.2	2.2
IRL	3.5 (3.5)	2.6	3.0	3.2 (3.5)	2.8	3.0
NL	2.2 (2.3)	2.4	2.4	2.4 (2.5)	2.6	2.7
S	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.4
E	2.4	2.3	2.1	2.3	2.3	2.4
East Europe	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.2
Non Europe	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.8
Total	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.5	2.4	2.4

The cell frequencies for countries vary from 32 (m<24, GB) to 268 (m25-34, W-D).

With one exception (Ireland), Europeans think of an ideal number of children around the reproduction rate of a stable population. The variation of means (for 1994, without Ireland) is equal to or lower than 0.5 (min 1994 (<24) = 2.0 (D-E) max 1994 (<24) =2.5 (S) (Overall data std. deviation = .9). Small gender differences can be found, but not a stable difference pattern between the age groups and between the two collection dates. However, without West-Germany, the numbers given in 1994 are lower than in 1988. Ireland shows the highest numbers: about 0.5 higher than the average. Ireland also shows a very high number (3.5m, 3.2f) for the youngest group, the middle-aged groups are lower. This number is stable for the eight-year interval and stable over gender.

Especially the ideal number of children compared with the real birth rate shows the, sometimes low connection of attitudes with behaviour. Everybody in Europe wants (at least sometimes in biography) children and everybody thinks of two to three children an ideal. But the real decision or rather the realised behaviour does not correspond to this ideal.

EB93

The four main factors influencing the number of children are:

- the level of family allowances
- availability of suitable accommodation
- the economic crisis and unemployment

Paper presented at the seminar “Low fertility, families and public policies”,
organised by the European Observatory on Family Matters in Sevilla, September 15-16, 2000

- cost of children's education

This is true as two of the most important reasons were not listed in the 1993 Eurobarometer. In 1997, these reasons — which show the importance of stability in the discussion of child bearing — are included.

(EBY93)

Asked for three relevant conditions for bearing children, young Europeans named a secure job as their primary concern (65.1%, with a variation between France (78.9%) and Denmark (43.1%)), followed by a stable relationship with one's life partner (54.4%). The third major concern, shared by an average of 44.7%, is the ability to provide the child with a good education, followed by "finding suitable housing" (40.7%). Only 1.8% of the young people spontaneously stated that they do not want to have children (min: Sweden 0.3% / max: Austria 6.3%).

5.4 Attitudes on elderly

(EBY97) Asked for three attitudes describing the relation to elderly people in Europe, 34.6% of the young people named personal responsibility for elderly family members (min: Belgium 22,3% / max: Denmark 51,8%) and 35.5% would not accept their parents living in a nursing home (min: Denmark 12.2% / max: Greece 54.6%), but still 38.8% of the respondents agreed with the statement that elderly people do not understand how much things have changed in our society (min: Denmark 26.2% / max: Spain 48.4%). Only 5.8% thought that their generation should not have to pay for the pensions of elderly people and 5.3% decline responsibility for the elderly members of their own families.

Negative attitudes towards having children or taking responsibility for the elderly are rare.

6 Relevant findings

Young peoples' lack of interest in politics is obvious, but they still tend to have strong opinions and major concerns regarding many typical "political" questions. The majority considers solidarity with the poor, social welfare and security, freedom of opinion and peace to be rather important. The environment and environmental protection are also a great concern of young people.

One of the most significant findings of our analysis of the "Youth and History" study is the surprising level of homogeneity among European young people in their opinions concerning contemporary issues. The authors of the "Youth and History" study included a very broad range of relevant issues, so one would expect to find significant differences between the different countries surveyed. However, the results show only minor national variations. Looking at these variances, one does not find a consistent pattern of national differences. Some differences seem predictable, others not.

Also relevant is the low variance between rural and urban areas. Whereas cultural identities varied very slightly from country to country, the differences were virtually non-existent on the regional level.

So there is no decline in relevant (good) attitudes and values, explaining the declining of birth rates and there is no specific value pattern of the future parents compared with other age groups which should be changed for a better future.

There are huge differences in the situation of young people living in Europe, both between countries and between the different regions in one and the same country. One could also find major differences in the behaviour of young people within Europe. There are also some differences in attitudes of young people living in different countries of EU, but there are no consistent patterns of such differences. On the other hand, there seems to be a common pattern in the responses to each of the different topics. Perhaps it is useful and possible to talk about a latent common European attitude (with some topic-specific local differentiation), and in particular about the value of children and family as a European cultural identity that is not significantly differentiated between countries and rural and urban areas. Maybe this common identity is triggered by the power of TV and mass media (music, movies and books) with nearly identical information all across Europe. The young people must find their specific way (behaviour) between a (European) media-based value system and a very (region-)specific context (situation).

Discussant Paper

[Wilfried Dumon](#)

0. A preliminary remark

The two papers presented by Peter McDonald and by Sirpa Taskinen are very informative and well constructed. Yet, they address basic issues such as e.g. "motivation" which have bearing and impact on policies (as will be illustrated in this discussion paper). However, this discussion paper will be limited and only address the "policy impact" aspect.

1. What is in a name? Population policy versus family policy

The policy measures "concerned with *low* fertility (MacDonald, p. 12), such as "alternative child care policies" can be discussed under the heading of *family* policy as well as under the heading of *population* policy. Indeed, both notions overlap, though this overlap is only partially.

Overlap

It has been suggested that in some countries, e.g. France, the notion family policy is advanced to disguise "population" policy: (read: natalist policies). Two remarks:

- It means "population policy" needs disguise, either because it is not "popular" or because it not regarded as "appropriate" (ethically/politically).
- Both notions do overlap; at least "part" of family policy can be identified as population policy.

Differentiation

In his paper, McDonald identifies measure to address the issue of "*low*" fertility. (policy tool-box, p. 16-22). Two examples:

- "financial" incentives (p. 17-19)
- work and family initiatives (p. 19-20).

Financial incentives

Financial incentives can have some (limited) effect as has been suggested by Ann Gauthier (raising fertility level). Yet, the impact is not so simple neither is it so linear. Two remarks: E.g. the financial incentive (under the heading of family policy in the former GDR) had more impact on the timing (first birth) than on the number of children. So the TFR (Total Fertility Rate) was raised, yet, the F.F. (Final Fertility) was not higher. Women had their children at an earlier age, but not more children (Amarov). Although *Child Allowances* feature in any PPA (Population Policy Acceptance) study, in most EU Member States they can hardly be put under the heading of PP (Population Policy) on two accounts:

- (1) Many studies have failed to demonstrate any clear impact of C.A. (Child Allowances) on fertility. Yet, it has been suggested that they can be identified as preventing poverty, not raising fertility to the effect that they hardly can feature under P.P. measures.
- (2) If C.A. do have any impact on poverty (on family scale), it is reasonable to expect that they might even have an adverse effect on fertility since poverty (under certain conditions) can be associated with large families (proletarians). The paper by Sirpa Taskinen addresses the same issue. It reads: ...often "the fertility of different cohorts has not much changed" (p. 6).

Work and family initiatives

The issue of work and family can be addressed under the heading of "pro-natalist" policy. Yet, the measures can hardly be identified as *direct* "population" policy. The policies related to balancing "work and family" (and social life) have a strong impact on the gender issue (cementing gender differences) if they are not counter balanced by specific measures involving fathers (Fagnani). Therefore, it is necessary to identify the goals (objectives) set by policy measures as well as to identify its results.

Conclusion: Analysis of policy measures needs a broad perspective. It might be a strategy to address the "same" measure under the headings of "welfare" policy, "family" policy, "gender policy" and "population" policy rather than to address them from a mere "population"-policy perspective.

2. Population policy (p.p.) and p.p. analysis

In McDonalds paper we read: "Countries should have some notion about what it is that they are aiming to achieve. Inevitably, demographic sustainability (at least zero population growth) is an ultimate aim for all countries. (p. 2) On p. 14 he quotes Demey: fertility behaviour was "a legitimate object of attention for collective and, in particular, governmental actions". Several issues are at stake here:

It might be strategic to differentiate between identifying what *is* legitimate for governments to do and identifying the legitimation *by* government for taking action or expressing concern in fertility matters. The role and moral/ethical "obligations" and intrinsic value of the scholarly profession are at stake here. In the role of scholars identifying issues of social importance (e.g. fertility) a distinction is to be made: between (a) identifying the problem/the issue and (b) identifying appropriate action. The relationship between (a) and (b) is not a simple one, and requires a process of "interfacing" mechanisms.

Identifying the problem

Differentiated scholarly stands can be identified. One can take the position that scholars can take sides to the effect that they can express concern in the matter: countries should take interest in demography (fertility). McDonald's paper says: "it may not be long before most of these countries begin to express concern about the level of their fertility". Quite different a position and proposition is *not to* express a personal or scholarly concern but to try to identify and analyse (descriptive/analytic versus prescriptive/engineers position). In the latter case, one tries to "understand" what is happening and why it is happening, rather than to express concern. E.g. one tries to identify different strategies: (W. Dumon) adaptive strategy versus (social) engineering strategy.

Appropriate action

At least two questions are at stake here:

- the role of scholars as political advisers, "experts"
- the issue of impact studies: "family impact", "demographic impact"; evaluation of policies.

The role of scholars as advisers and the role of experts tend to increase in our society. However, as already stated above, this represents a complex issue. Next to

ethical and political considerations, the techniques of developing “transfer mechanisms“ are at stake. The limits of scholarly knowledge to be transformed into/adapted to political action, the issue of "social engineering" are still far from being resolved.

Family impact studies and the evaluation of policy action has developed in quite differentiated ways, ranging from evaluations of effectiveness (in relation to the policy goals set/the target groups reached etc.), to satisfaction studies and analysis of the side effects and unintended impacts of measures. Population impact studies are not (yet) very well developed.

Conclusion: The role (and status) of scholars in population issues is a matter of concern by itself.

3. Macro-micro level analysis

Both papers show that fertility and population/fertility policy can be analysed from a macro- as well as from a micro-perspective and that the merits of these two approaches should be recognised. Several issues are at stake here:

Methodological differences

For demographers, the problem created by the difference between the micro- and macro-level for analysing fertility behaviour might not be as dramatic as it might be for sociologists. Demographers tend to measure fertility as an individual behaviour of women, parameters are e.g.: age of the mother at first (and subsequent) birth, number of deliveries etc. For sociologists (and social psychologists), fertility is not so much the result of individual behaviour but of interaction: sexual interaction between persons of different genders. In this respect, a footnote should be added: modern technology makes it possible to focus on child-bearing as a personal action (self-insemination). Yet, in general, even medically assisted fertility is — from a sociological (social psychological) perspective — to be analysed as a group process (also involving the medical profession in the decision process). Moreover, methodologically, sociologists hardly compose individual behaviour but focus on group-interactive behaviour. From a sociological perspective, the differentiation between a micro and macro approach tends to be more clear-cut and to be perceived as a "problem" to be analysed.

Family as a key variable in fertility behaviour

McDonald identifies "family" (p.12), and more specifically family organisation (p.10), as a key factor in fertility behaviour. This is a very crucial element, in particular in relation to the "tool box of policies" on two accounts:

- the merit of the theory in itself
- the relation between the macro and micro level

Marriage and relationship supports (p. 21)

I quote only one measure as an example of almost all other measures listed under the heading quoted above, namely "incentives to marry". Many of the examples, including the latter one have two characteristics: they tend to counter-act "new" types of relationship behaviour such as unmarried cohabitation and turnover of partners and they represent forms of policy that can be characterised as types of social engineering. It might be strategic to expand the hypothesis of McDonald and enlarge

the "gender issue" to other forms of social "discrimination" such as being born in and out of wedlock, differences in lifestyle, etc.

Level of analysis

On the one hand, family/families can hardly qualify as "adequate" (re)production systems/units in regulating or achieving a desired level of fertility in a given society. On the other hand, governments (and other actors in P.P. such as the market: corporate F.P./P.P.; civil society etc.) can hardly exercise a *direct influence* on fertility behaviour by families (couples) and or individuals. Yet as the tool-box illustrates, there are some incentives. However, the modernisation theory as well as the post-modernisation theory offer clues to the hypothesis that the social engineering by direct governmental action (fertility behaviour) might — at least in the short run — become less mechanistic in its effect but more complex and even more problematic. The modernisation theory has been addressed adequately in both papers. The post-modernisation theory might give some support to the thesis rejected by McDonald (p. 12) that people (families) might behave quite differently in different spheres of life. Even the old (Parsonian) functionalist theory would suggest this differentiated behaviour not to be problematic but qualify it as "evident" and expected.

Conclusions

- 1) Both papers have addressed the issue of "fertility behaviour" and "fertility policy", it is a pity that they are scheduled at the end of this seminar and not at the beginning since they do raise so many questions. In this respect, they are challenging. Moreover, they offer substantive hypotheses and conclusions that merit further elaboration and testing.
- 2) From a p.p. perspective one might wonder if it remains strategic to focus on "fertility" as a separate and isolated parameter. One might wonder if fertility and mortality changes, as expressed in the second demographic transition, are not the exponents of even more dramatic changes such as "quality" of the population.

WARNING

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The Southern Countries of the European Union: a Paradox?

*[Juan Antonio Fernández Cordón](#)
[Giovanni B. Sgritta](#)*

Premise

One of the most significant features of recent demographic evolution is the decline of fertility, which has been experienced by all developed countries including European Union member States. All these countries share some common demographic characteristics. In spite of a level of life expectancy among the highest in the world, the natural growth rate of the European population is very small (the EU average is 0,8 per thousand in 1998), and even negative in Germany, Italy and Sweden. Population increase is mainly due to a net immigration flow that accounts for 60% of the total growth rate of the population of the Union and explains that population is not declining in any of the member countries (except Germany for the first time in 1998). Increasing population ageing can also be observed in all countries. Fertility level, however, shows considerable differences among E.U. countries. The lowest total fertility rate¹ can be found in Italy and Spain (1,19 and 1,15 child per woman, respectively in 1998) and other southern countries are getting close to these very low levels. The decline of fertility has started as late as 1980 in Greece (as opposed to 1975 in Spain and 1965 in Italy) but TFR has gone as low as 1,30 in 1998, just above Spain and Italy. Portugal may be considered a southern country in many respects (to begin with the geography) but is not a Mediterranean country. Facing the Atlantic, turned to England and the north, it appears to be quite different from the three southern Mediterranean countries. Portugal offers many contradictory and intriguing features that would be worth analysing in great detail. In this paper, we will be mentioning them but it we will mainly focus on the three Mediterranean southern countries: Greece, Spain and Italy.

The demographic situation of these southern countries, and specially Spain and Italy, is often treated as surprising and considered to be a paradox. Why a paradox?

The idea of a paradox appears first in relation to *what it used to be*. In 1975, after ten years of fertility decline experienced by the central and northern countries of the EU, the highest fertility rates in the EU were found in Spain (2,79) and Greece, Italy and Portugal (around 2,20). Fifteen years later, at the beginning of the nineties, there was an inverse situation: the southern countries were then the ones with the lowest fertility rates and as the decline has continued during the last decade, they have now reached levels that have never been experienced before by any other member country. Such a dramatic change in such a short period of time took aback the analysts that had previously attributed the higher rates of southern countries to the economic and societal characteristics of these countries. South was different and so was its fertility level.

¹ Total fertility rate (TFR): xx

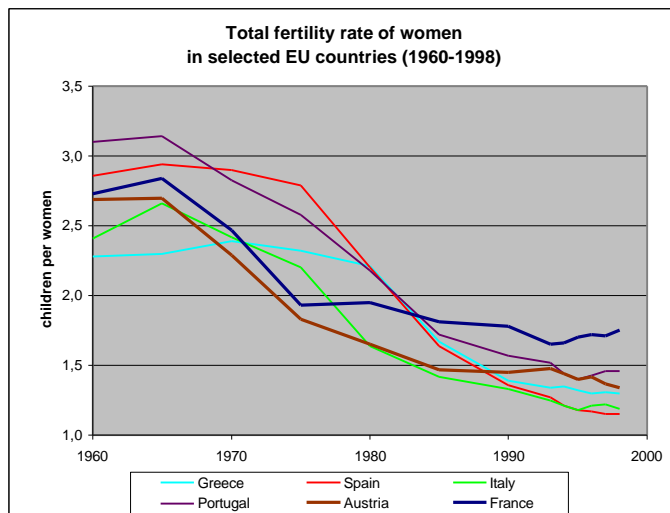
The second reason why the situation may appear as a paradox is related to *what it should be*. The existing low fertility level seems in fact in contradiction with the apparent reality of a less economically developed and more traditional South. On the economic side, a more archaic productive structure, low incomes level, if compared with other EU countries, together with more inequalities. Society is seen as more traditional than in the rest of the EU, with religious background, a strong family orientation and low participation of women in the labour force. In short, South is different but the expected relations between fertility and income (inverse), fertility and proportion of working women (also inverse) and fertility and tradition (positive) do not seem to work. Hence the paradox.

Discovering a paradox, however, is not a great step for understanding and, if any, resolving a problem. It calls on the contrary for a reappraisal of the basis for such a diagnosis which may be summarised in two statements that are implicitly or explicitly at the bottom of this view. The first one is that fertility decline in the southern countries only differs quantitatively from what other countries in the EU have experienced before. The second one is that southern countries are not yet engaged, or so little, in the latest and general process of modernisation, that when applied to the family and demographic fields is called the second demographic transition. In this paper we would like to address these two issues, consciously limiting the scope of the second to what is strictly related to the fertility level, in order to pinpoint the factors that, in addition to the general determinants of low fertility all over Europe, explain the especially low levels that can be found in the southern countries. In the first section, this paper analyses the special characteristics of fertility in Italy and Spain. Whether the South is as different as it seems and what differences are really relevant is examined in the second section. In a third section we discuss the two factors that are at the core of low fertility: the situation of the young and the difficulties in reconciling work and the family. Future policy implications are considered in the conclusion.

Fertility level and structure

Italy and Spain has been for many years now in a state of very low fertility, as compared to central and northern countries of the European Union. The same is beginning to happen in Greece and possibly in Portugal, which may follow a similar path. From an average of 3 children per woman in 1975, the highest level after Ireland, to 1,15 in 1998, the fall in Spain has started late but has been deep and rapid. In Italy the fertility decline had begun earlier (already 2,2 in 1975) but accelerated after 1975 and reached a similar level in 1998 (1,19). In no other country of the EU such a low levels have ever been reached. The decline started in Greece around 1980, approximately five years later than in Spain and present fertility level is roughly equal to the one in Spain or Italy five years ago (1,3). In Portugal, fertility was very high at the beginning of the sixties and has been decreasing since 1965 without reaching the low levels found in Italy, Spain or

Figure 1

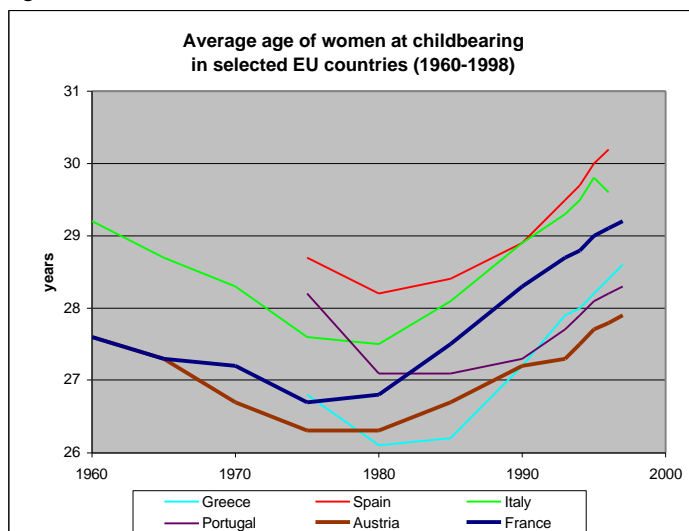


Source: EUROSTAT - Statistiques démographiques - Données 1960-1999.

even Greece. Since the beginning of the nineties there is a certain stability slightly above 1,4 children per woman (Fig 1).

With the decline of the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) changes appear in the timing of fertility, summarised by the mean age of women at childbearing (Fig 2). In all countries, we find a first period of decrease of the mean age followed by an increase, starting in 1980 in the majority of countries (around 1985 in Greece and Portugal). In

Figure 2



Source: EUROSTAT - Statistiques démographiques - Données 1960-1999.

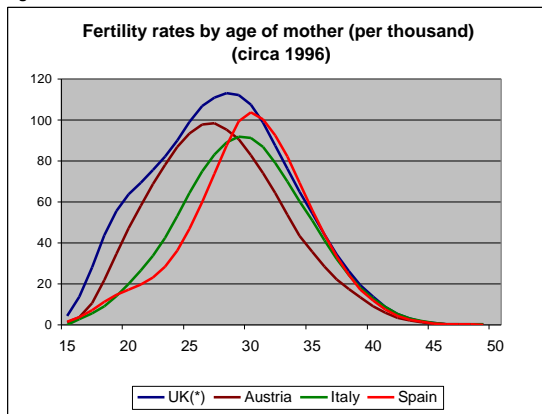
the last year with comparable data, 1997, Spain and Italy were the countries with the highest mean age at childbearing (around 30 years).

In Spain, taken as the best example of rapid evolution, the process has been, at its beginning, a classical one, based on a reduction of family size leading to an almost complete disappearance of births of orders above 3 and a considerable reduction of the frequency of the third child. All this resulted in a younger average age at childbearing. In the last ten years, the situation has been dominated

by what appears to be now the most important characteristics of fertility in Spain: the very low level of fertility in the younger ages (20-29 years group) and the increasing delay in childbearing.

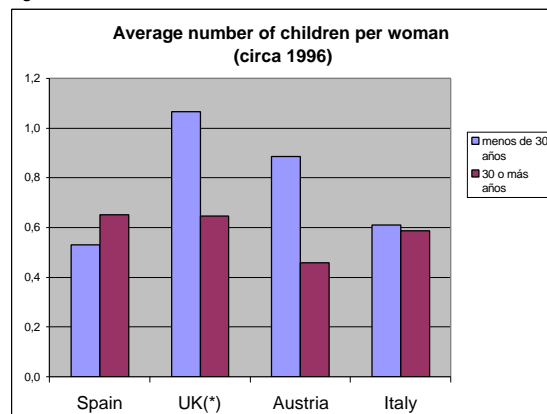
The following figures (Fig. 3 and 4) illustrate the age structure of fertility in four countries of the EU, including Spain and Italy. Spain appears to be the country of the EU with the lowest young women fertility. In 1997, the average number of children among women below 30 was 0,53 in Spain, as opposed to 1,07 in the United Kingdom² and 0,9 in Austria. In Italy, with approximately the same total fertility level, the fertility of the young is only slightly higher (0,61) than in Spain. Differences between countries are less important when considering only first births and much wider for higher order births. For instance, from the second birth on, the fertility of young Spaniards amounts to one third of that of young women in the United Kingdom.

Figure 3



Source: Observatoire démographique européen (France)
(*) data only for England and Wales

Figure 4



Source: Observatoire démographique européen (France)
(*) data only for England and Wales

As a contrast, women above thirty have higher fertility rates in Spain and Italy than in the two other countries we are using for comparison, evidencing the importance of the delay in childbearing age, more in Spain, where there are less births of young mothers and more births of mothers over thirty than in Italy.

In the past decades the principal reason for the constant decrease in fertility in Italy (but this stands also for Spain) has been the *postponement syndrome* which “has hit Italian society to a greater degree than other European societies, postponing almost pathologically the age of taking on responsibilities and making reproductive choices” (Livi Bacci, 1997: 1005). The second Italian Fertility Survey, carried out between the end of 1995 and the beginning of 1996 shows that the cohorts born in the 1950s have progressively lengthened the interval between births, while those born in the 1960s - now at the reproductive age - “have increased the proportions of unmarried subjects at every age and put off the birth of the first child even longer, experiencing lower levels of fertility in all orders of birth (parity)” (De Sandre *et al.*, 1997: 117-118). The results of the survey leave no shadow of a doubt on the long-term trend: the proportion of women without children rises from the 9% of the generation between the ages of 45-49 to the 17% of the generation aged between 35-39; the average age at the birth of the first child increases constantly in the course of time: age 25 for women born before 1955, 26 for those of the 1956-60 cohorts and 27 for those born between 1961 and 1965; finally, the proportion of women aged 45-49 who have had a third child is 37%, among women aged 40-44, 32% and among the 35-39 year-olds, 25% (*Ibid.*: 120-122).

Traditional explanations of differences in fertility level seem no longer valid: more children are born in countries with higher marital instability and higher women

² This figure applies only to England-Wales

participation in the labour force. It does not mean that these two circumstances are now favouring fertility: marital stability is still a desired state for motherhood but it is no longer associated with marriage. On the contrary, paid work is still considered by the majority of women as an obstacle for having and raising children. In fact, more than the level of women's involvement in the labour force, it is the varying possibility of reconciling working and the family that explains the differences between countries.

Is the South as different as it seems?

The first two comparative surveys conducted by the statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat) in 1994 and 1995, allow us to cluster the main demographic features of the Member States in a limited number of "families of nations": the Scandinavian area, the countries of Central-Northern Europe and the countries of Southern Europe to which Ireland is often assimilable. Risking somewhat, this grouping can be reduced to two extreme models: the countries of the South (Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal, plus Ireland, which, for many reasons, constitutes an anomaly) on the one hand and those of Central and Northern Europe on the other. This simplification is in fact particularly appropriate if one considers, for instance, the level of family instability or the percentage of out-of-wedlock births, both lower in Southern Europe plus Ireland (Whitten, 1998); the percentage of women between the ages of 25 and 59 outside the labour market (in general, very high in the countries of Southern Europe; once again Ireland included); the quota of young people who cohabit without being married (much lower in the countries of the South) or the age at which young people move out of the parental household (again, much later in the South) (Iacovou, 1999).

The European Panel provides moreover two indicators of income distribution, one of the total income of the households (which includes income from work, private income and social transfers) and one of the total personal income for all persons aged 16 or more; both have been converted, in order to make the comparison between countries, in terms of "purchasing power standards" (PPS)³. As could logically be expected, the differences between the countries are very great. What is striking however is the difference between the countries of Southern Europe and the others. On average, the households of the former have an average income (still in terms of PPS) equal to 16,621 while the latter reach, still on average, 24,121. The difference between the two groups is of 7,500 purchasing power standards which goes down to 5,600 if Luxembourg is excluded from the evaluation of the incomes of the latter. Furthermore, things do not change if instead of the income per household one considers that of persons over the age of 16.

The Eurostat survey also provides interesting information on not strictly monetary aspects of the standard of living. On average, for the whole E.U., 49% of the interviewees state that the household is only able to make ends meet "with difficulty" and 51% "easily". However, here again the countries are not all equal; 70% and more of the citizens of Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Ireland find it difficult to make ends meet compared with only 37% of the citizens of the remaining European countries; and 74% of the households do not as a rule have any money left to save (51% in the other countries).

³ The Purchasing Power Standard (PPS) converts every national monetary unit into a common reference unit of which every unit can buy the same amount of goods and services across the countries in a specific year (see, Eurostat, 1999: 13).

It is thus no surprise that in reply to the question of whether they were happy with their financial situation almost twice the number of people interviewed in the South replied in the negative compared with the North: 65% vs. 33%.

All these difficulties become particularly acute with regard to families which include old people and children, in one-parent families and in families with a larger number of children.

Southern countries are undoubtedly different from other member countries of the EU in crucial aspects of economic life. There are also very obvious differences in some key indicators that would allow to qualify the former as "traditional societies". These are: the feeble incidence of cohabitation, the low proportion of births outside the wedlock, the low divorce rate, some structural household and family indicators (more extended families, less lone parent families, etc.) and a low participation rate of women in the labour force. All these indicators are at the core of what some researcher have labelled as the second demographic transition. But before deducing from them that this new transition has not yet occurred in the southern countries we must look more closely to some of the indicators. For instance, the household size has diminished in all countries of the EU but still important differences remain: from 2 persons per household in Denmark or Sweden to around 3 in Spain (or Ireland). One of the reasons is the higher proportion of the elderly living with their families in the Southern countries, although it does not happen in Italy. This may be considered less a structural feature than a cross sectional view of an evolutionary process. It must be recalled that changes have begun later in southern countries and that the very rapidity of social changes leads to the coexistence of generations that are not very far in age but have experienced very different histories. This is specially the case of the very old, for whom changes in mentalities and the improvement of the pension system have arrived too late, and who live with sons and daughters that were already adults when changes began at the end of the seventies. The other reason for more extended household is that young people are delaying their residential autonomy. In Spain, only 1% of young people below 30 live alone (around 20 % in Sweden or 15% in France). This explains the high proportion of couples with children in Spain or Italy. If we compare the proportion of couples with children below 16, the percentage is the same in Spain (10%) than in France or Denmark (9%).

Statistical facts cannot be considered without a reference to dynamics, because the simple comparison between countries at a given point of time is misleading. All changes characterising the second demographic transition are apparent in the southern countries, although with a much smaller incidence but with strong differences between coexisting cohorts

The family structure is also dependent on the fact that families and in general relations of primary solidarity have played the role of "social shock-absorbers" in the southern countries, taking the place of the poor assistance and services supplied by the State, as we shall see in the third section of this paper.

We will now turn to two important factors more directly related to the fertility level: nuptiality and union formation and women participation in the labour force.

Union formation and the young

Following a common trend in all developed countries, nuptiality has experienced a considerable reduction since 1975 both in Spain and Italy. Since 1992 there is a certain stability in Spain and a very small reduction in Italy in the Total Nuptiality Rate (TNR) for single women, this being the result of a persistent drop in nuptiality rates of the young and an increase in the marriage rate of women over 30.

Again a demographic indicator is indirectly pointing to the situation of the young and their lack of participation.

Marriage is no longer the generalised phenomenon it used to be during the sixties in Europe and up to the seventies in Spain or Italy, when over 90% of women and men were getting married. Today, only Greece and Portugal show relatively high levels (a TNR of 0,7 and 0,76 respectively) and all other countries have levels between 0,55 and 0,6, except Denmark which is above average (0,64) and Sweden which is well below (0,42). Differences in nuptiality are not as wide among countries of the EU as they are for fertility indicators, because there are important differences in the proportion of births outside the wedlock among the countries of the EU. This explains that countries with similar nuptiality rates could have very different general fertility levels.

Age at first marriage has also increased in all countries but it is now higher in the northern ones (average for women is almost 29 years in Sweden and less than 27 years in Spain and Italy). One of the reasons is that marriage is often preceded by a period of cohabitation in central and northern countries and very seldom in the southern countries (see "Summary measures for selected life events" in FFS Standard Country Reports).

In Spain or Italy young people that do not marry do not go into cohabiting and they do not have children. Less than 12% of births (data for 1996) are outside marriage in Spain and even less than that in Italy (9% in 1998). By contrast the percentage is quite high in other countries with higher fertility rates: in Sweden 54,6% in 1998, 45% in Denmark (1997), 40% in France (1998). Even in Ireland, known for its catholic tradition, the proportion was above 26% in 1997⁴.

The decline of nuptiality rates has not the same meaning in central and northern countries than in Spain or Italy. In the former there has been an important change in the meaning of cohabitation. Initially it was considered as a sort of "provisional or test marriage" which was formalised when a child was born or expected, now it tends more and more to be considered as an alternative to marriage, allowing the coming of children (according to FFS, in Sweden 58% of young women were cohabiting at the births of their first child). A process like this has not yet even started in our countries, as the incidence of cohabitation is still very small.

The real incidence of cohabitation is very hard to know, at least in a country like Spain. Many different sources exist and they are often quite different. According to Eurostat (Eurostat, 1998a), in 1994, in Spain 16% of couples formed by at least one of the partners aged less than 30 years lived together without being married as compared with 72% in Denmark or 46% in France, p. 60). The situation is similar in Italy and also in Ireland and is to be related to both the importance of traditions in these countries and the difficult situation lived by the young. As was mentioned before, nuptiality level is similar in almost all countries of the EU but in the southern ones we find fewer unions if we count both married and cohabiting couples.

The small incidence of cohabitation existing in the four southern countries does not cover the same social reality. In Greece and Portugal, cohabitation is low because marriage is high, whereas in Italy and Spain, cohabitation is low because there are fewer unions, the proportion of women marrying being similar to what is observed in central and northern countries. In Italy and Spain, young people are not forming any union and this is the population group that enters cohabitation in the rest of the EU.

⁴ This could also be an effect of the absence of divorce.

Considerable importance is given in the literature to the lack of cohabitation practices in the southern countries, taken as an indicator of the persistence of traditional or moral barriers, in any case associated with cultural factors. This fact adds to the paradox as a seemingly traditional behaviour (as far as mating is concerned) coexists with a very low fertility. Without pretending to give satisfactory answers to such a debated question, we would in the following consider the meaning of the low nuptiality rates and the small incidence of cohabitation for our particular concern.

Young Italian and Spaniards neither marry nor cohabit. Not marrying does not mean that recent generations are rejecting marriage. Instead, Italian women, for instance, especially the younger ones, have a very positive opinion of marriage; and the same can be said for men: 85.9% of women aged 20-24 do not consider that "marriage is an outdated institution". Would it exist, rejection of marriage for reasons of "modernity" would mean adopting the alternative of cohabitation, which does not happen. The underlying (generally non stated) opinion is that they *cannot* marry due to their situation in the labour market and housing shortage, and that they *refuse* to cohabit for basically cultural reasons (the weight of traditions and the role of the parental family). This explanation assumes that cohabiting is *easier* than marrying when there is no job and no housing, which is obviously not true, specially when cohabitation is becoming an increasingly acceptable alternative to marriage. It is true that the attitude of young Italian women towards marriage is still strongly traditionalist (73.3% of unmarried young women aged 20-24 would be against "cohabiting without considering marriage" and 71% do not consider it acceptable to "cohabit instead of marrying"); even though attitudes more open to innovation are not lacking: e.g. 44% of the younger women would not be against a period of cohabitation before getting married and about half approve of living as a single. We must note that these opinions are the attitudinal reflection of the *first stage* of cohabitation that was usually followed by marriage ("marriage à l'essai", in French) which is the path that young people from southern countries should follow if they enter cohabitation in the future. Thus, they are consistent with the idea that there is not a strong ideological rejection of cohabitation (in Spain, only 25% of those preferring marriage for themselves believe that cohabitation is a morally unacceptable option). But should such a rejection exist, it remains to be explained why they do not marry.

The meaningful fact is the low level of unions in the two major countries of the South of the European Union: Italy and Spain. As it may be considered the major factor explaining the low level of fertility in these countries, it is important to stress that the material condition of the young may have prevented them from getting into a partnership, whether marriage or cohabitation.

In Spain, and also in Italy, concern over the situation of the young has been directed to the reduction of their high unemployment rates. Their situation has been improving (although not everywhere: there are still considerable regional differences) and will most probably improve in the future due to increasing job opportunities associated with a reduction of new cohorts entering the active population. What could be the consequence of these changes for fertility?

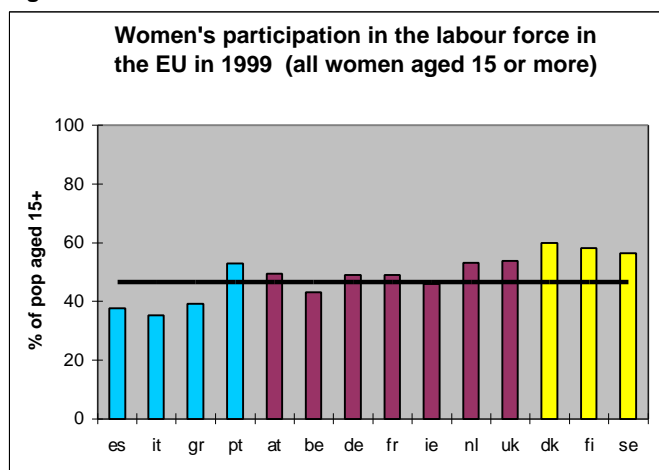
When analysing the situation of the young, the debate opposing "material" causes (scarcity and precariousness of jobs, housing out of reach...) and psychological or even "societal" causes (different "preferences" of the young, a different conception of the family...) is not central. Both are true but they do not stand at the same level. The kind of family that exists in southern countries is able to absorb the problem that real difficulties in finding a suitable job and a suitable

housing poses to young people. It may even be right that the cosiness of the family nest prevents young people to adapt themselves better to changing conditions of the labour market and to change their preferences in relation to housing. In that way the role of the family may be part of the problem. But this argument is not very different from the conservative one about the perverse effect of some social protection measures (like high unemployment allowances, for instance) on the willingness to find a job. Even if admitting the fact, one cannot say that these allowances “create” unemployment. The southern countries have a special situation because the parents of these young belong to generations with possibly stronger family values. Once more, the meaningful question must be addressed to the future. As things change for better in the labour market (as they are already and will hopefully continue to in the future), young people will get jobs more easily and their view on stability may also change (even if it does no longer mean keeping the same job for ever). Will they keep staying at their parent’s al long as now? Or is it not more probable to think that they will act as their fellow of the rest of Europe? What seems difficult to believe is that the important differences now existing between southern countries and the rest of Europe will remain. Attitudes and opinions of young people are very similar in all member countries, including some seemingly traditional attitudes as the importance given to the family or the persistent desire to have children. But it could happen that the “southern model” of staying longer at the parental home will spread to other countries in Europe. Of course, these questions have no easy answers but it does not seem, if one listen to what young people say, when interviewed in Italy or Spain, that the present situation has been adopted as a new normality.

Women participation in the labour force

In the southern Mediterranean countries (not in Portugal), women participation in the labour force is lower than in the rest of the member countries of the European Union. This is considered to be a very significant element of difference, one of the bases sustaining the idea of the existence of a specific southern model. Differences

Figure 5



Source: EUROSTAT - Labour Force Surveys, 1999.

between countries are important, ranking from 35,4% to 60% (Figure 5). At the lower end, in 1999, 35,4% of women aged 15 years or more were active in Italy and 37,5% in Spain; the higher participation rates are found in Finland (58,1%) and Denmark (60%), the average for the EU being 46,6%. Northern countries are well above average, southern countries are well below average (with the exception of Portugal) and the rest of the countries, the group of Central countries, are close to average (Netherlands and the UK are somewhat above and Belgium is slightly below). Once again we find the three known groups of countries.

Spain is a country that has changed considerably since the middle of the eighties. In 1986, the participation rate was only 27,7%, well below Greece (34,1%) and Italy (34,6%) and far behind any other country in the EU. At present, all three Mediterranean countries stand at the same level. This is an example of the more

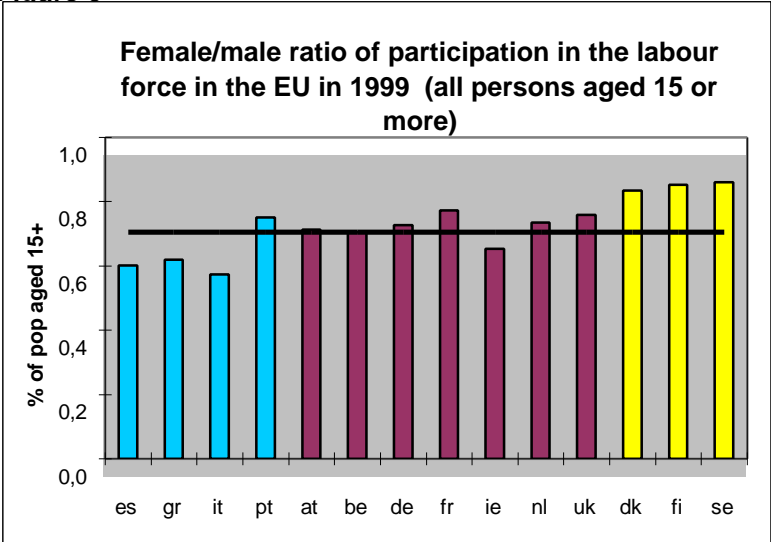
general fact that social change has been very rapid in Spain, following a long period of stagnation that ended with the return of democracy in 1976 and the entry in the EU in 1986.

Are these persistent differences sufficient to establish the existence of a southern model of women participation in the labour force? We believe they are not, because they cannot be interpreted as structural. To show this we have to enter into a more detailed analysis stressing more the dynamics of ongoing changes than the existing differences at a specific moment of time. We will point first that all differences between countries do not reflect the diversity of women situation; then we will argue that average indicators are less meaningful than detailed age analysis, that a cohort approach is essential and that differences are related to family status of women and finally we will discuss the reasons for that.

When comparing women participation we should consider disparities that are not related to gender, like those due to differences in the general level of activity of each country, shown by the fact that male and female activity rates are highly correlated: the higher the male activity rate the higher the female one. We will use, when necessary, an improved index for comparing the situation of women in each country: the Female/male activity ratio (or, for short, simply the activity ratio) obtained by dividing the female activity rate by the corresponding male activity rate (for the whole population or for specific subgroups), Although the use of the activity ratio does not change dramatically the relative situation of the countries (Figure 6), it takes into account the fact that the general activity level is lower in the southern countries. For instance, the male activity rate is around 72% in the Netherlands and in Denmark, whereas it is only around 62% in Italy and Spain. Ireland appears now closer to the southern countries. Even if the male activity rate is not necessarily representative of the general activity level, the activity ratio is a more suitable index to analyse and compare the relative situation of women in relation to men. This is important, when going into more detail, because the age structure of male activity rates is quite stable, (except for the youngest and the oldest age group due to

changes in the timing of entering and exiting the labour force) whereas women are experiencing an important transition from a model of exclusion from the labour force to one of full participation.

Figure 6

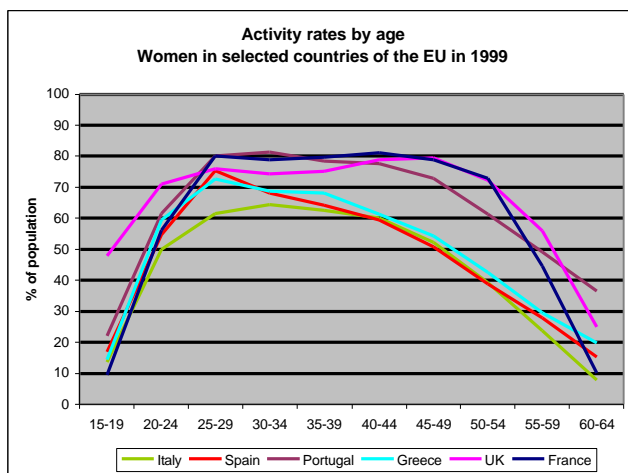


Source: EUROSTAT - Labour Force Surveys, 1999.

Let us consider first the age of the women. The bigger dissimilarities among countries are found in rates for women aged 30 years and more. At younger ages, rates are very similar, and when they differ, especially at age 15-19, the reasons have much less to do with gender than with the diversity in the age of leaving the educational system, applicable to women as well as to men of the same country (which appears when using the activity ratio), or even with some statistical specificities related to working status of the young. An exception appears to be Italy, with a particularly low rate at 25-29. In 1999, the distance between the southern Mediterranean countries and other countries (like France or the UK shown in Figure 7) widens after the 30-34 age group. In 1986, differences were important at all ages, although somewhat smaller among the younger women. The reason for that is that the rationale for women participation in the labour force is related to birth cohort, rather than age. Young women enter the labour market after school in growing proportion and over all leave the working force in smaller proportion after marriage and motherhood. Their behaviour is different from their mothers', whose participation dropped dramatically after they reached 25. The new behaviour has long ago been adopted by women in the Nordic countries (end of the sixties) and since a little less in the Central countries of the EU (around the middle of the seventies) has begun to be followed very recently (in the second half of the eighties) in the southern countries and Ireland. The important increase of women in the labour force (as happened

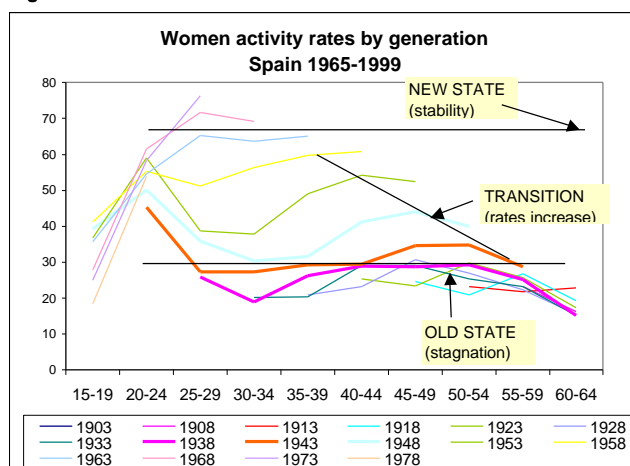
recently in Spain, for instance) is not due to the arrival in the labour market of women of all ages but to the fact that women tend more and more to remain in the labour force instead of returning home and be counted as inactive in the labour statistics. As generations grow older, i.e. as time passes, the increase of activity rates reaches older women. Thus, countries that have entered a similar path at different moments of time will show higher differences in older women than in young ones.

Figure 7



Source: EUROSTAT - Labour Force Surveys 1999

Figure 8



Source: data from INE (EPA)

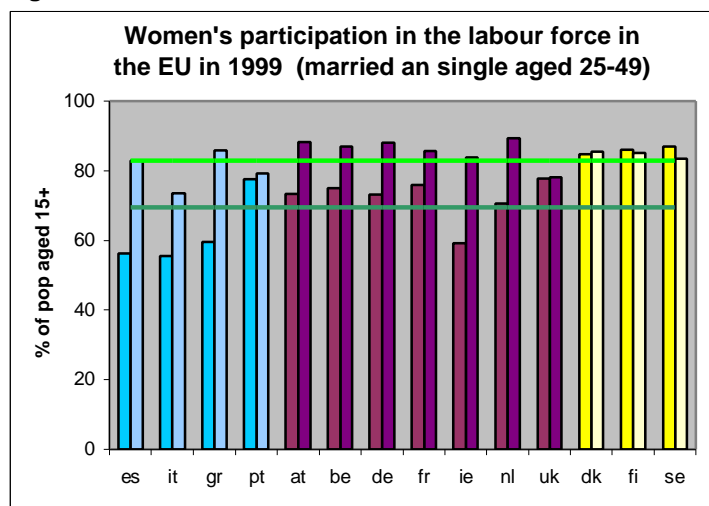
This is why differences between Central countries and Nordic countries are especially important in women over 40, whereas differences between southern countries and central countries are important after 30. Figure 8 illustrates the path followed by generations of women in Spain, showing the increasing propensity to remain in the work force by younger generations. In the period of transition, that has started not very long ago, the meaning of the average

participation rate is misleading because it hides the great diversity among generations, which is the really meaningful phenomenon. In a period of changes, analysis must necessarily be based on dynamics.

The distance between countries would then measure the biographical diversity of the generations of women involved, basically determined by the socio-economic history of the country they live in. The influence of cultural specificities cannot be discarded, but they seem to be less important than expected considering the simple average participation rate. In the southern countries, there is no effect on the participation rate strictly related to gender that could be due to a specific cultural behaviour assigning a differentiated social role to women. Even if this could have happened in the past, it is now slowly disappearing as a consequence of cultural convergence among EU countries. This may be seen when comparing activity rates of women aged 25-49 (ages of maximum participation). For single women, rates are always higher than for married ones and are very similar, almost identical, all over the EU. Existing differences do not fall in the traditional grouping of countries. Italy, Portugal and the UK have rates below average and single women from some Central countries have higher rates than women in Nordic countries. Although not completely conclusive, as single women may include a varying proportion of cohabitants, these data show that the specificity of southern countries is related to the family status of women and not to gender: young women and single women have at present very similar behaviours all over the EU. If we take out differences between countries that affect both men and women, by using the activity ratio, the similarities are even greater.

In all countries of the EU, except in Nordic ones, married women have lower participation rates than single women. The gap between them is wider in the

Figure 9



Source: EUROSTAT - Labour Force Surveys, 1999.

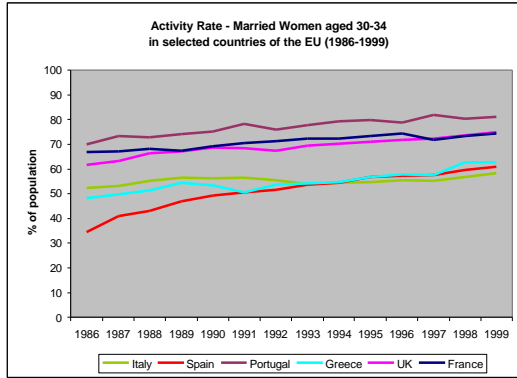
Southern countries and Ireland, but low activity rates among married women do not appear as a specific characteristic of these countries. Further, it appears that the gap has been narrowing in recent past, as rates for married women in southern countries are approaching those in other countries of the EU (Figures 9 and 10). The question could again be if existing differences should be considered as basically cultural, relating to a specific conception of

marriage in the Southern countries that implies a higher propensity for married women to stay at home, or if they are mostly a reflection of special difficulties in reconciling working and having a family for women in the Southern countries.

To help explaining this question we will take as an example recent evolution of women's participation in Spain, according to their family status.

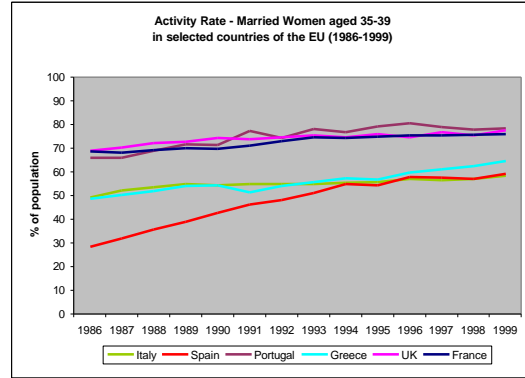
In 1981, the age structure of female participation depended on the family status of the woman. Those with partner and care of children (i.e. with children below 18) were completely out of the labour force with activity rates around 20% at all ages.

Figure 9



Source: EUROSTAT - Labour Force Surveys, various years

Figure 10



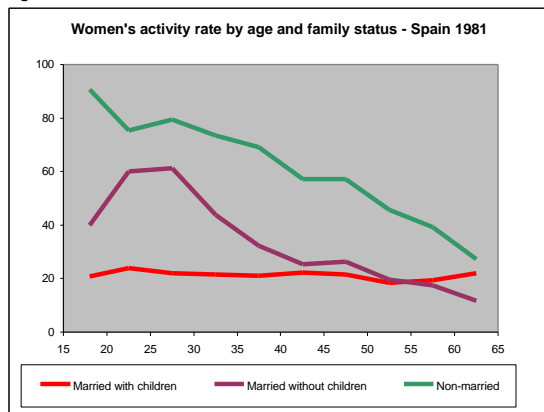
Source: EUROSTAT - Labour Force Surveys, various years

Separation between the role of mother and the role of worker was then total. Women without partner or care of children showed high activity rates while young and diminishing with age. Between these two categories, women with a partner but no child had intermediate participation rates at young ages (up to 35-39 years), between women with children and non-married women.

Since then, non married women has come very close to the masculine pattern, following the cohort rationale of change that has lead to the present situation of full participation of women without family obligations: no cultural discrimination is attached now in Spain to the simple fact of being a woman. Having a partner has also lost most of its previous importance as a factor of low participation in the labour force and, at present, practically only the caring of children below 18 appears as a cause for non-activity of women.

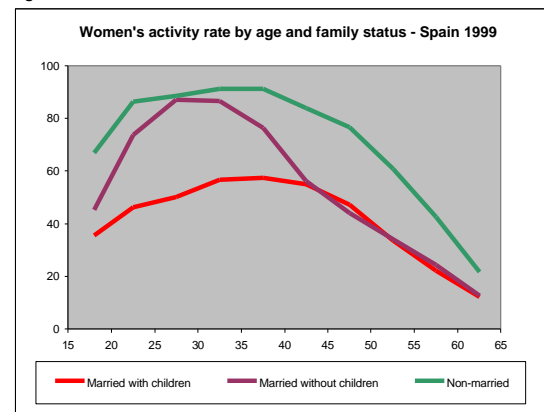
Again we could turn to the question we have been asking ourselves throughout all this paper. Does the above mean that women in Spain are more culturally inclined to stay at home to take care of their children or do they experience

Figure 11



Source: data from INE - EPA 1981

Figure 12



Source: data from INE - EPA 1981

more difficulties in coping with their domestic tasks and an outside job?

The perception of Spanish society of women's work has changed dramatically in the last two decades. A survey in 1982 showed that a majority of the people were opposed to the working of mothers with small children, and at about the same time, 86% of a sample of married women agreed with the statement that "women can work only if it does not affect the caring of the family" (Martínez Quintana, 1992). Ten years later, in 1994, the majority of national representative Survey agreed to the working of women if children were grown up and only 52% of respondents agreed

with the statement that “a pre-school age child would be prejudiced if the mother works” while young people and educated persons were clearly opposed to it. Another earlier Survey showed that women considered working as very important, even more than marrying and being a mother (Cruz Cantero, 1995). This is consistent with the opinion expressed by working mothers in an European Survey: working is the most important thing in their life for 42% of Spanish women while the average for all European women is 25% (Whirpool Foundation, 1996). In a recent Survey (Tobío, Fernández Cordón y Aguiló, 1998) to working mothers only 20% of them adopted the traditional view that mothers with young children should not work, while two third of them would never leave their work. The type of work is an important differentiating factor: 80% of high level working mothers would not voluntarily leave their work but only 44% of low qualified has the same attitude. The possibility of not working when children are small is seen as a socially acceptable option, and even a valued one, and may be preferred by women not satisfied with the type of job they are doing. The real obstacle is then the money problem, the need for two salaries in the family, that will prevent women to quit their job while children are small, as there is no paid parental leave in Spain.

The majority of the women consider that the ideal solution for them is working part-time while children are small, a preference that could be taken as evidencing a tension between the importance that women give to their work –they don’t want to leave it completely even if the children are small- and the personal care they wish to give their children. The reason why this preferred solution is not actually adopted is the reluctance to give up part of the family earnings (less than 30% of working mothers wishing to reduce their working hours are prepared to accept a reduction in their earnings).

The positive opinion that the majority of women express about paid work is considerably reduced when asked about what would be the ideal from the child point of view. Almost half of them consider that the best for children is that the mother does not work. There appears to be in working mothers mind a contradiction between what is desirable for them (to work) and what is desirable for the children (a full dedication to them).

Leaving the job to take care of a child might be a desired option for some women but is a difficult one to fulfil, as there is no paid parental leave. A mother that remains working has to afford tough living conditions. There is a lack of financial aid or adequate services (insufficient number of kindergarten and non convenient time schedule) to help them taking care of their children without leaving their job and sharing domestic tasks with their male partner is not a very extended practice. Our survey (Tobío et al.) has shown that their living conditions are simply terrible, with long hours dedicated to the care of the family when back from working outside and a permanent availability in case of problems with their children.

One of the strategies to cope with the difficulties in reconciling working and the care of young children is to adapt fertility by postponing or reducing it (or both). This is reflected in the fact that, at all ages, the proportion of women with children is lower among active women than among non active women, a fact that agrees with the traditional negative correlation between fertility and women participation in the labour force. The difference in the level of fertility between active and non-active decreases with age, an evidence of the postponement of childbearing by active women, and the number of children at the end of the fertility period is also smaller in active women.

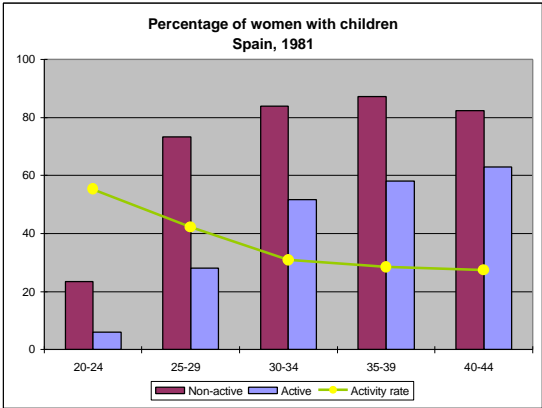
One of the most surprising facts is that the situation has practically not changed from 1981 to 1999 (Figure 13). The only important change is the reduction

of fertility among young women: the proportion with children is almost zero women aged 20-24, but the ratio between active women with children and non-active women with children has remained practically unchanged in all these years. It seems that reconciling working and the family is as difficult now that it was twenty years ago and has a similar effect on the level of fertility.

What has changed is that the fertility behaviour of active women is now considerably more extended, as the proportion of women in the labour force has rapidly increased. The persistence of this negative effect, the partial incompatibility between childbearing and paid work, during a two decades period of intense social change, is an indication that reconciling the two aspirations of women, which should stand also for men, working and taking care of their children, is not an easy target that will be not be attained spontaneously, but calls for positive measure to favour it.

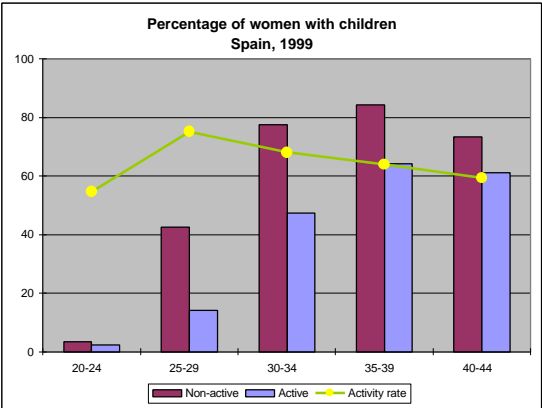
The impact of the lack of work-family conciliation on the level of fertility, an indirect consequence of the increasing participation of women in the labour force, makes it one of the main objectives of public policies. The possibility given to women and men to reconcile their paid work with a normal family life, without personal

Figure 13



Source: data from INE - EPA 1981

Figure 14



Source: data from INE - EPA 1999

sacrifices, appears as one of the important condition for a raise in the fertility level.

Family policies: opposing models

We have seen that Southern countries are engaged in a process of social change that approximates many of their behaviours related to fertility to those of other EU countries. What is, in this context, the role of the State and the impact of family policies?

In this respect, three models or “families of nations” stand out. To the first belong those countries in which social protection is a right of citizenship; family obligations are reduced to a minimum and political action is usually addressed to the individual. This model is typical of the Scandinavian countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. To the second group belong those countries - Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, plus Ireland and the United Kingdom - which mainly assign the obligations of maintenance to the members of the nuclear family, with some slight differences between the continental and non-continental countries (Ireland and the United Kingdom) which we can ignore for the moment. The last “family of nations” groups together the countries of southern Europe (Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain) where generally the rule holds good that the obligations of maintenance and care of the weaker and more dependent subjects fall within the perimeter of the extended family, meaning by this the nuclear family and its wider kinship (Millar, 1996).

On the whole, the Scandinavian countries place the emphasis on the rights and prerogatives of the individual, guaranteeing those rights by means of universalistic type procedures. In these countries, in fact, the family is seen as an institution based on the equality and economic independence of its members. The entire equilibrium of the system depends, in this as in other spheres, on the complementary responsibility of the State and the parents with regard to the children.

In the countries of the second group, on the contrary, the obligations of care and maintenance fall mainly on the nuclear family: “Individuality is relatively little developed; benefits and taxes almost always recognise the reciprocal obligations between the husband and wife and between parents and children; as far as the services are concerned, they are mostly considered auxiliaries to the care given by the family” (Millar, 1996: 6). There are relatively few services on behalf of children and policies tend rather to encourage one of the two parents, as a rule the mother, to curtail their own working activity while the children are small and in greater need of care. This model is consistent with a private, familial idea of childcare. The community, although it supports it, does not take the place of the family but encourages the temporary absence of the parents (almost always the mother) from their work during the crucial phase of the child’s development. The main difference with respect to the Scandinavian countries is that while in the latter the care of children is seen as a collective responsibility, in the former it is a private one, assigned essentially to the family; centred on the maternal role and as such - that is as an activity worthy of protection - indirectly supported by the State.

As for the southern European countries, the characteristics of this latter family of nations are not all that different from those of the continental model. What distinguishes them is the residual role of state intervention and a strong emphasis on the responsibilities and obligations of the family even beyond the strict limits of the nuclear family. In no other context is the rule of *tertium non datur* so well applied; according to this rule social policy is based “on the premise that there are two natural (or socially given) channels through which an individual’s needs are properly met: the private market and the family. Only when these break down should social welfare institutions come into play and then only temporarily” (Titmuss, 1974, pp. 30-31).

With respect to the rest of continental Europe what is lacking or at least extremely inadequate in these countries is a system of income maintenance, especially for young people or at any rate for those who have not yet joined the labour market. A second common aspect is the marked “particularism”, which characterises the way they function, in the field of both the intervention and financing: “The low degree of *stateness* of the Latin welfare system is one characteristic which isolates this family of nations from others present in Europe” (Ferrera, 1995: 9).

As things are, it is not surprising that in the southern European countries families and in general relations of primary solidarity have played the role of “social shock-absorbers”, taking the place of the poor assistance and services supplied by the State. But it is not because the family has been ignored that state intervention in the field of family policies is poor or residual in these countries. On the contrary, the exact opposite is true: in political discussion the family has been absolutely *sanctified*, its praises have been sung on every possible public occasion and its “staying power” has been extolled and glorified as providential. Although it is paradoxical, if the State has not considered intervention indispensable it is precisely because the ability of the family to adapt was taken for granted or at least did not seem problematical for a long period of time; just as the division of work and family responsibilities between men and women and intergenerational solidarity were taken for granted (Saraceno, 1994; Sgritta, 1995). As we shall see, many of the problems that are assailing Italian society and the Southern European countries in general arise precisely because of this; that is they are caused by the failure of this illusion: the illusion that these “natural” resources are limitless and the family’s capacity of reaction can be counted on indefinitely.

As a rule, Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal (plus Ireland, which for many reasons constitutes an anomaly) are mainly described in social research as societies in which welfare policies are reduced to the bare minimum and child maintenance is the responsibility of the family and of a larger or smaller informal sector.

Table 1 Average number of children per woman in selected EU countries (circa 1996)

countries	Women below 30		
	1st order births	other births	total
Spain	0,36	0,17	0,53
Italy	0,40	0,21	0,61
UK*	0,53	0,54	1,07
Austria	0,50	0,39	0,89
countries	Women 30 and over		
	1st order births	other births	total
Spain	0,24	0,41	0,65
Italy	0,21	0,37	0,59
UK*	0,18	0,46	0,65
Austria	0,14	0,32	0,46
countries	All women		
	1st order births	other births	total
Spain	0,60	0,59	1,18
Italy	0,61	0,58	1,20
UK*	0,71	1,00	1,71
Austria	0,63	0,71	1,34

Fuente: Observatoire démographique européen (St Germain)

* Data refers only to England and Wales

Table Total social benefits and family/children benefits in selected EU countries in 1997

	Social benefits			Family/Children benefits		
	SPP * per capita	% of EU-15	% of Sweden	SPP* per capita	% of EU-15	% of Sweden
Greece	2.807	53,8	44,1	230	52,5	33,5
Spain	3.214	61,6	50,5	64	14,7	9,4
Italy	5.001	95,8	78,6	175	39,9	25,5
Portugal	2.523	48,3	39,7	134	30,5	19,5
France	5.782	110,8	90,9	578	131,9	84,2
UK	4.806	92,1	75,6	437	99,7	63,7
Sweden	6.359			687		
EU15	5.220			438		

Source: made using data from EUROSTAT - Dépenses et recettes de protection sociale (données 1980-1997)

* SPP: estándar purchasing power

Presentation of the Concept for the Report: "The Social Situation in the EU"

Constantinos Fotakis

Nine months have already passed since we renewed this cooperation between the European Observatory on Family Matters and the Commission. My feeling is that this new approach is now well established. The excellent organisation of this Conference provides a good measure of the progress made.

Today more than ever before, it is generally accepted that economic and social conditions are closely interrelated. The Observatory represents for us, the Commission, our main advisor on demographic and family issues. It can help us by providing valuable first-hand empirical observation about the developments on demography and family at national level. In addition, the Observatory has another significant role to play at national and European level by feeding the debate on the implications of demographic and family trends. This is not an easy task. It is often hard to persuade the policy makers on the importance of these social trends but there are some clear signs that this situation is starting to change. The Social Report represents an excellent platform to convey these messages to policy makers across Europe.

In my presentation, I will briefly present the Social Situation Report of this year. Since we have provided for the distribution of this report to all the participants, my presentation will pinpoint only the main points of the report. Then, I will briefly inform you on the progress made since our meeting last March in Brussels concerning our preparation of the next Report for the year 2001.

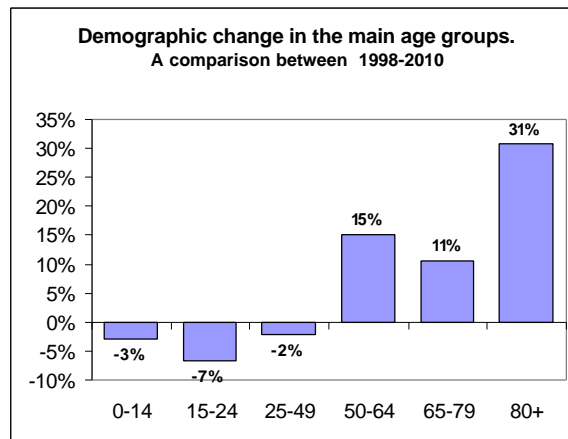
I will start with some introductory points concerning the purpose of this report. The Report presents a broad description of the social situation of Europe based upon harmonised information. This allows reliable, comparative analysis of different social developments across Member States and promotes the debate on prospective social policy issues at European level. Furthermore, the analysis of the social situation provides the necessary background for deepening the analysis of the employment situation and social protection and thereby establishes a link with the Employment Report and the Social Protection Report.

The first section of the Social Situation Report 2000 presents a set of harmonised social indicators ranging from demographic related issues to employment and income conditions for each Member State. The indicators provide an overview of the social situation. In addition, they serve as a powerful tool for the monitoring of social developments over time.

Section two provides a more in-depth look at the main social developments. Analysis and research is presented on four thematic areas that are closely related to societal development – population, living conditions, income and social participation. These presentations provide the reader with background information for the discussion of the evolving needs of tomorrow which follows in section 3.

What are the main social trends?

The European population is ageing. In most EU Member States both fertility and mortality rates are falling. The number of babies born in the EU fell in 1998 to around 4 million – a new post-war low. Indeed, the total fertility rate for the EU has fallen from 2.59 in 1960 to 1.45 in 1998 and is now among the lowest fertility rates in the world. During the same period, the proportion of older people (65 years and over) in the population has risen from 11% to 16%. All the signs are that this trend will continue well into the next century. In ten years time, there will be twice as many older people (69 million) as in 1960 (34 million).



Changes in household type and family size and structure have also been very significant. People are marrying less and at a later stage in their lives. Divorces are more frequent than in the past. These changes mark a departure from the conventional model of the married couple with children towards smaller sized and more frequently changing household forms such as childless couples, one person and single parent families.

Another important behavioural trend, within this context, has been the **changing role females in economic and social life**. The combination of increasing education and changing attitudes means that employment rates of women are converging to those of men. Between 1988 and 1998, they rose from 45% of the working-age population to 51% whereas those of men declined from 74% to 71%. At European level, this increased participation of females is likely to continue. However, women still have particular problems in gaining equal access to the labour market, in career progression, in earnings and in reconciling professional and family life.

However, some inequalities persist. In terms of earnings, despite the progress made over the last 20 years, research shows that there are still considerable inequalities. In 1995, on average, the gross monthly earnings of a woman were 26% less than the earnings of a man. In addition, the inequality structure of earnings by age shows that pay differences between men and women increase rapidly with age. This is mainly due to the occupational structure of older women which is more concentrated in lower-paid clerical positions than the average.

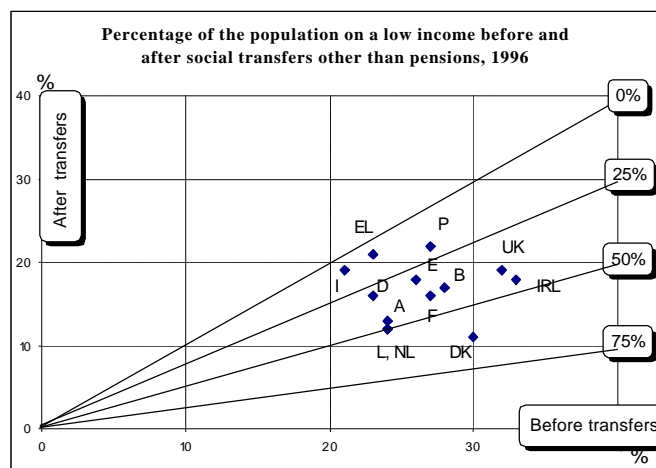
Income inequalities also exist...

Overall income inequality rose in most Member States over the period 1980-1995 after a decline occurred in the decades before 1980, but the recent rise in inequality was not universal. Income inequalities are closely linked to the risks of social exclusion and poorer living conditions. If income inequalities widen as forecast, the proportion of people in low-income groups, like the elderly and single-parent families, will grow too. Low-income groups are vulnerable. They tend to have poorer health and less access to health care. This may generate additional demand on welfare systems.

...but social welfare is reducing inequalities

Expenditure on social protection in 1996 accounted for 28.7 % of Community GDP, compared with a figure of 25.4% in 1990. The bulk of this is spent on pensions and health care.

Social benefits, excluding pensions, reduce the percentage of "poor" people in all the Member States, but to very differing degrees. More recent figures (1996) show that social transfers other than pensions reduce the percentage of the population on a low income in the European Union from 26% to 17%.



Some implications for the future

The pace of change that we are undergoing in relation to globalisation, demographic change, new forms of work and family life, the transition to a knowledge-based society, is raising the profile of the social dimension in achieving economic efficiency and social equity.

Europe's systems of social transfers have been quite effective in containing household poverty. However, social exclusion remains a major concern for Europe. The report indicates that particular groups of society are still facing social problems. Investing in people is proving to be an effective way of building inclusive societies where everyone can contribute, and benefit.

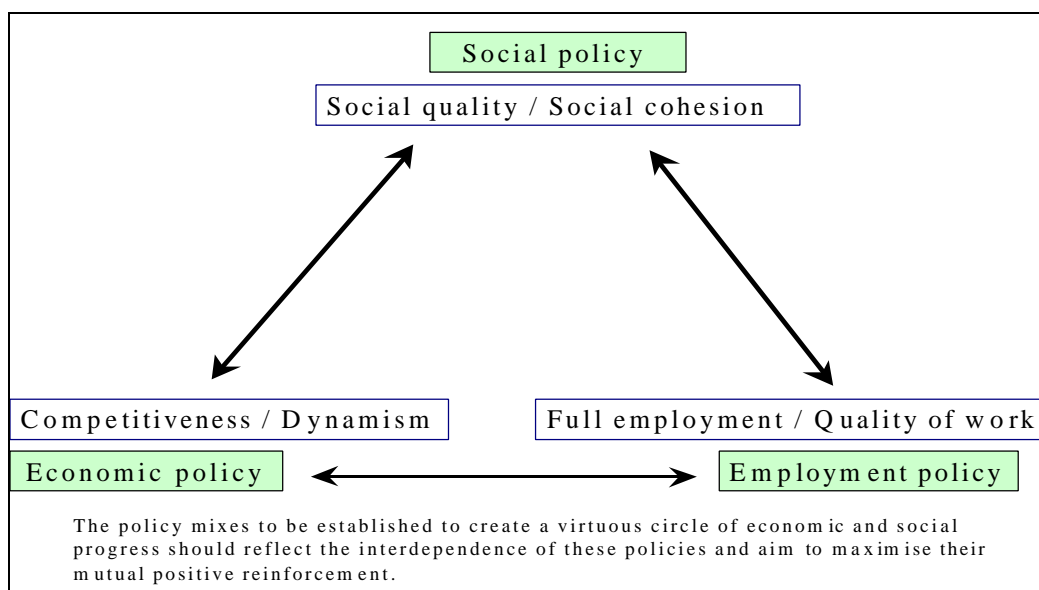
In conclusion, the Report has shown that socio-demographic trends may exert increasing pressures on the overall balance between the demand and supply of social services. This will imply a substantial increase in the demand for a wide range of services such as social care, human resources development and health care. Europe has a potential opportunity to respond both to the growing social needs and promote economic growth and social cohesion since these trends also provide a stimulus for job creation in the services sector. However, particular attention should be given to the affordability of these services for the more vulnerable groups in society. The role of the growing 3rd sector could be of particular importance in this respect.

The Report has received very positive comments from both the academic community and the policy makers. In addition, in the beginning of the year, we have had some encouraging developments at European level. The Lisbon extraordinary Summit, "Employment, Economic Reform and Social Cohesion – towards a Europe of Innovation and Knowledge" clearly recognised the importance of social policy in the strategy for the European Union. By setting social cohesion as one of the main elements of the European strategy for the future, and by calling for a monitoring of the social developments by a set of social indicators, the Lisbon Summit has reassured the European citizen that the Union remains fundamentally committed to an inclusive and cohesive society.

It is worth mentioning that the Commission took note of our first edition of the Social Situation Report in drafting its proposals for the Lisbon Summit. Our editorial called "Social Trends: Prospects and Challenges" based on the main findings of the Report has been included in the Commission contribution papers to the Summit. Upon close reading of the Conclusions of the Presidency, we can easily identify the influence of both the Report and the Communication in setting up the social aspects of the Presidency document.

This is the policy context within which we have started preparing our next steps concerning the next edition of the Report "The social situation in the European Union, 2001". This year the report will be devoted to social quality. According to our approach, social quality represents the outcome of a fair and inclusive society. It is a dynamic concept, integrating the multiple determinants of the quality of life for the people living in Europe. It puts the people in the heart of the agenda. Within this context, our task will be to show the extent to which people in Europe are able to participate in the social, economic, cultural and political development and to live under conditions which enhance their well being or quality of life.

The concept integrates multiple dimensions of life: economic, social, cultural, political, etc. It puts light not only on individual determinants, but also on the interplay between the policy action in different fields and external factors (globalisation, ageing, etc). The approach is presented in the following diagram:



A few words now about the structure and content of the Report 2001. As in last year's edition, the Report will present a broad description of the social situation of Europe based upon harmonised information. This approach allows for a comparative analysis of different social developments across Member States and aims at promoting the debate on prospective social policy issues at European level.

Section 1: Social portraits

The first section of the Report presents a set of harmonised social indicators ranging from demographic related issues to employment and income conditions for each Member State. The indicators provide an overview of the social situation. In addition, they serve as a powerful tool for the monitoring of social developments over time. The presentation of the indicators will be based on the set used in the Report 2000. This is necessary to preserve the comparability from year to year. However, we envisage some changes. An additional fiche will be added presenting in short the economic trends providing the economic background. In addition, Eurostat will examine the possibility of presenting the corresponding 5-year trends for the indicators. Where appropriate the indicators will be presented by gender and/or age cohort. We also examine the possibility of adding in a more systematic way, some measure of the regional dispersion in relation to some of the indicators.

Section 2: Thematic chapters

Section two provides a more in-depth look at the main social developments. It will include 4 thematic chapters setting up the background of the main issue chosen for the concluding policy-relevant chapter which will follow.

As in last year's report, the thematic chapters will be the following:

- Population,
- Living conditions,
- Income distribution,
- Social participation.

These chapters (of approximately 10 pages each) will develop the corresponding themes through quantitative and qualitative analyses with a view to identifying

significant trends which ultimately affect "social quality". Each of the thematic chapters will focus on developments and trends having an impact on the main constituents of social quality namely socio-economic security, social inclusion, social cohesion and individual autonomy. The focus of the above chapters should facilitate establishing the link with the theme "Social quality in a changing society" to be developed in the concluding section 3.

Population trends

The chapter on population trends will present historical and projected time series of different population aspects and trends affecting the constituents of social quality (socio-economic security, social inclusion, social cohesion and individual autonomy). In particular, the analysis will focus on the following 3 areas:

1. Changes in population age/size structure: The main objective here will be to examine the population trends in terms of age/size structure and their impact in terms of the social quality for the specific age groups (Children, Young, Working age population, Elderly and Very Old) or the society as a whole. Emphasis should be given to :
 - socio-economic implications from changes in the intergenerational balance,
 - the questions related to: The challenge of population ageing in preparing for the knowledge-based society; Ageing and social quality, Age/sex groups and employment behaviour; Dependency and social quality(elderly, disabled);
 - population and education level
2. Changes in family/household structure: This part will deal with the trends in family/household structure with emphasis to:
 - changes in size, composition, fertility and their determinants,
 - trends in lifestyle. Family life, employment, social life;
 - implications for the most vulnerable groups e.g. elderly, disabled, lone parents, children
3. Population movements: This part will present an overview of population trends with emphasis on:
 - the regional dimension (demographically growing/declining regions, urbanisation) namely the implications in terms of social quality;
 - the trends in interregional mobility, analysis of the trends by reasons for movement (education, employment, health, retirement) and implications for social quality.
 - migration trends including both trends and issues related to intra-community and extra-community migration (namely analysing the trends in terms of nationality, duration of stay, reason for migrating);

Living conditions

Given the presentation of population trends in the previous chapter, this chapter will attempt to bring the dimension of living conditions into the picture. The analysis will opt for a descriptive approach focusing on trends related to different aspects of living conditions affecting social quality. More specifically the questions to be examined are the following:

1. Social developments related to Employment conditions: In particular, the analysis will focus on developments related to the following aspects:

- job status/security,
 - job satisfaction/stress,
 - work accidents,
 - gender and age related issues;
2. Trends in Crime and Safety: This part will be threefold:
- accidents (including different categories such as road accidents, accidents at work etc)
 - delinquency: Focusing on the link between criminality and the feeling of insecurity, i.e. the urban criminality (delinquency) as well as on its main determinants (economic aspects, social elements, family influence).
 - violence inside the family and against women: Kind of violence (physical, psychological,...).
3. Issues related to the access to goods and services: Emphasis will be given to the range, the level and the accessibility of social goods and services as well as to socio-economic institutions and other societal aspects affecting social quality. This part will cover the following areas:
- Issues related to Education and human development particularly in relation to knowledge based society;
 - Accessibility and quality of social welfare (goods and services);
 - Trends in Housing and other amenities such as Communication and Transport (including commuting);

Health conditions and their determinants

One of the main concerns of the people is their state of health. What's the situation? How does it evolve? Link to the problematic of ageing. Is health care accessible to all? Health disparities (state of health, access to health care) linked to social status. Incidence on the costs of the health system.

- This part will cover trends in health conditions and their determinants (nutrition, education, environment, prevention etc).
- Particular attention will be devoted on equity issues and the situation in relation to the most vulnerable age and income groups;

In analysing these themes emphasis will be paid in the main trends and how each of them affects social quality in terms of its main constituents (socio-economic security, social inclusion, social cohesion and individual autonomy)?

The analysis will take account of both the statistical evidence (mainly from the European Community Household Panel) and subjective indicators of intentions, preferences and satisfaction levels expressed by the EU citizens in the context of recent Eurobarometer research.

Income distribution

This chapter will present an analysis of income levels and income distribution at household level and will aim to establish the link between income and social quality. An analysis of trends in income distribution will be presented mainly in relation to socio-economic security and social cohesion. Some subjective analyses from Eurobarometer will also be included in relation to people's reported developments/expectations of income and their views on income inequalities.

The analysis will take account of both the statistical evidence (mainly from European Community Household Panel) as well as subjective indicators of intentions, preferences and satisfaction levels expressed by the EU citizens in the context of recent Eurobarometer research. In particular the analysis will include:

1. Income levels and main sources of income by socio-economic groups.
2. Receipt of social transfers by socio-economic group;
3. Trends in income distribution and analysis of the main determinants of change, the role of social transfers, analysis of relative poverty dynamics in relation to social inclusion and social cohesion;
4. Subjective views on general financial situation and perceptions in relation to income inequalities within a society;
5. Access to information society by income group. From Eurobarometer, access to PC/internet by income levels;

Social participation

This chapter will attempt to present the multiple aspects of social participation focusing on the implications of social quality. The main analytical theme will be on the relationship between social participation and social cohesion. The analysis will refer to the different forms of social participation including trends in social participation and specific characteristics by gender and age. It will also cover specific forms of social participation relevant to social policy, namely community and third sector activities. More specifically, the chapter will focus on the following points:

1. Networks in which individuals are inserted, and their contribution to socio-economic security, social inclusion and social cohesion. It will document levels of participation, by gender and age, where data allow,
2. Specific issues related to social participation by gender and age (Questions related to the changing role of women and the age groups in terms of economic and social participation);
3. Subjective importance of participating in activities, events, where people act together (sport, culture, etc.) education (link between educational level and political participation, adherence to norms and values).
4. Knowledge based society and new forms of participation;
5. The relationship between subjective quality of life and participation.
6. Specific issues related to those groups which are vulnerable to exclusion and isolation.

Section 3: "Social quality in a changing society"

The structure of this section will include a synthesis of the arguments developed in the thematic chapters in 4 subchapters related to socio-economic security, social inclusion, social cohesion and individual autonomy. In particular, this chapter will provide:

12. A synthesis of the findings of the thematic chapters, enlightening the most relevant conclusions within each theme and illustrating the transformation of the European society and the impact on the quality of life of the people living in Europe.

2. A comparative analysis between social trends and the attitudes and beliefs of the European citizen, through relevant Eurobarometer research on the determinants of social quality and their appreciation concerning different aspects of social welfare.

Finally, the report will be completed by a statistical appendix containing a set of tables including a collection of related statistics by Member State (and EUR-15 as a whole).

This is our project for the Report 2001. We hope we will in a position to send you a final draft for comments in the second half of October.

Before I close my presentation, I would like to add a few words concerning the subject of this Conference. Today, in the beginning of the new century, there is a growing awareness that we are entering a new era. The European population is ageing. Changes in life-style have also been very significant. Across Europe, women have a new role to play in the economic and social life. At European level, this increased participation of women is likely to continue. However, women still have particular problems not only in gaining equal access to the labour market, but also in reconciling professional and family life. People are marrying less and at a later stage in their lives. Divorces are more frequent than in the past. Combined with the low fertility levels, these changes mark a departure from the family model of the married couple with children. The number of smaller sized and more frequently changing households is growing.

However it would be a big mistake to think that the role of family is declining in importance. Social trends prove quite the opposite. With increased life expectancy, it is not unusual today to find three or four generations living at the same time, and increased demographic ageing is set to make this even more common. Moreover, recent family statistics show that nowadays young people are staying at home much longer with their parents.

Last but not least, a recent study in several EU member-States shows that, the increasing pressure on families with children and particularly on working mothers may be one of the causes, together with youth unemployment, explaining the increase in delinquency and higher crime rates among the youngsters.

These are some aspects showing that the role of the family remains particularly important for the future of our Society. As the future unfolds, we need to ensure that these positive developments, like those provided by the technological revolution and the globalisation are exploited to the full, and not allowed to create tensions in our societies.

The European Observatory on Family Matters could help the Commission to develop and promote a comparative analysis across the Union. This could further stimulate the debate on the subject of the family, by encouraging Member States to share information and pool their experiences while, at the same time, respecting the principle of subsidiarity. The new political climate following the European Council of Lisbon has created more favourable conditions for promoting the debate on all issues

related to social cohesion and social inclusion including population trends and family issues. I am confident that with your help we can respond to this opportunity.

Public policies affecting fertility and families in Europe: A survey of the 15 member states

Paper prepared for the European Observatory on Family Matters; Annual Seminar 2000: 'Low Fertility, Families and Public Policies'; Sevilla (Spain), 15–16 September 2000

Anne H. Gauthier (University of Calgary)¹

This paper surveys the recent trends in public policies affecting families in the European Union. The survey is however not restricted to conventional family policy indicators, and instead also includes the analysis of the context in which changes in policies have been taking place. I indeed strongly believe that a proper understanding of family policy trends requires the examination of the economic, social, and political context in which families and governments operate, as well as the examination of the opinion, values, and concerns of the different societal actors. To do so, the paper begins with a rapid discussion of the scope of family policies (Section 1), and then follows with a review of the trends in conventional family policy indicators (Section 2). The paper then moves beyond a standard monitoring exercise in placing the family policy trends in their economic and political context (Section 3).² The paper follows with a discussion of the state of family policy research (Section 4) and concludes with a discussion of convergence in national family policies (section 5). Throughout the paper, I probably prematurely raise some points that will be discussed later in the seminar. I however strongly believe that any 'survey of public policies affecting families' needs to move away from conventional family policy analysis in order to gain a better understanding of the determinants and effects of family policies.

1. PUBLIC POLICY OR FAMILY POLICY?

There is no agreement in the literature as to how to define family policy (Gauthier 1996a). According to a narrow definition, family policy could be said to include benefits and services that are exclusively targeted to couples with children and/or to single-parents. Such a definition encompasses cash and in-kind benefits such as direct cash transfers to families, tax relief for families with children, maternity and parental leave, childcare facilities and subsidies, as well as family law. According to a broad definition, family policy can be expanded to all public policies that may potentially affect the well-being of families including policies and services related to public transport, immigration, food safety, etc. Most family policy studies have tended to opt for a narrow definition, partly for reasons of data availability, and partly for reasons of space (see for example the work of Gauthier 1996a; Baker 1995; Kamerman and Kahn 1978, 1996). Figure 1

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² The demographic context is discussed in Coleman's (2000) paper and will not be discussed in this paper.

summarizes the different components of family policies following a narrow and a broad definition.

[Figure 1 here]

It is obviously beyond the scope of this paper to analyze the trends in all these components.³ Consequently, the next section is restricted to the analysis of conventional indicators of family policies for which there are extant cross-nationally comparable data. The sources of data to construct these conventional indicators are numerous and are listed in Table 1. Unfortunately, no source is complete, and data on family policies tends instead to be scattered over numerous sources. Considering the Observatory's mandate to 'monitor and analyze developments affecting families and family policies', and considering the current sources of information on family policies, I believe that the Observatory could play a much more important role in monitoring and reporting changes in family policies. I will come back to this point in Section 4 of the paper.

[Table 1 here]

2. RECENT TRENDS IN FAMILY POLICIES

Three main types of family benefits are covered here: cash benefits, maternity and parental leave and benefits, and childcare facilities. For reasons of space and/or data availability, I do not cover benefits related to housing, health, and education, nor do I cover services for families and family law.⁴

Cash support

On average, total cash expenditures for families with children have been relatively constant since the early 1980s. Figure 2 reports trends since 1980 in public expenditures on family cash benefits, expressed as a percentage of the countries' gross domestic product. Most countries display an either stable or even declining trend since 1980. Only in Denmark, Finland, and Luxembourg has a significant increase been observed. In terms of cross-national differences, as of 1996 (last year of observation), the highest cash expenditures were observed in Finland, France, Luxembourg, and Sweden.⁵

[Figure 2 here]

The above trends are based on total cash expenditures and therefore do not reveal anything about the actual composition of expenditures, in terms of universal and means-

³ For a review of data and methods of family policy research, see Gauthier (1999).

⁴ In view of increasing divorce rate, several countries have changed their law regarding the custody of children and regarding mediation. I do not cover this component of family policy. I do not cover either initiatives related to child abuse or initiatives related to special populations (e.g. refugees, disable children).

⁵ The index is cross-nationally comparable in that it uses the same numerator and denominator. It however does not control for cross-national differences in population composition, for example in the share of children in the total population, or in the percentage of single-parent families.

tested benefits. This composition has actually been considerably altered since 1980. While the 1950s and early 1960s had been characterized by universal benefits, the decades since then have instead witnessed a significant increase in the share of means-tested benefits, as a proportion of total cash expenditures for families (Gauthier 1996a). This move away from universalism was achieved through the addition of means-tested benefits, and through the imposition of means-tests on previously universal benefits. For example, in recent years a means-test has been imposed on previously universal family allowances in Italy (in 1988), on the APJE (Allocation Parentale pour Jeunes Enfants) in France (in 1996), and on parental leave cash benefits in Germany (in 1994). This trend is not unique to Western Europe. Increasing national debts, competing demands (especially, unemployment benefits), and increasing poverty have led governments in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand to also opt for more income-targeted benefits (Gauthier 2000).

In order to provide a different viewpoint on the recent trends in cash support for families, Table 2 presents figures based on the disposable income of families (i.e. income available after taxes and cash transfers). The index shows the additional disposable income of families with children as compared to their childless equivalents. Three family types are considered: single-earner two-parent two-child families (type 1), dual-earner two-parent two-child families (type 2), and single-earner one-parent two-child families (type 3). Trends over time are however only available for Type 1 and suggest, once again, a relatively stability. Only in Belgium, Denmark, and Germany has a sustained increase been observed. In terms of cross-national differences, as of 1997 the highest support for Type 1 families was observed in Belgium, Germany, and Luxembourg. For Type 2 families, the highest support was observed in Austria, Belgium, and Luxembourg, while for Type 3 families it was observed in Austria, Denmark, and Ireland. Across all family types, cash support for families tends to be low in Portugal, Spain, and the UK.

[Table 2 here]

Maternity, parental, and childcare leave⁶

Maternity leave and maternity benefits have a long history, dating back to the end of the 19th century (Gauthier 1996a). Parental and childcare leave, on the other hand, has a much shorter history.⁷ While in the early 1970s, only Austria and Italy were offering childcare leave, by 1999 all countries were offering an optional extended leave after the period covered by maternity/parental leave. And while as seen above, cash support for families has stagnated during recent decades (even decreased), maternity and parental leave and benefits have been considerably increased. Table 3 traces the trends in

⁶ I do not cover here paternity days (i.e. days restricted to fathers and distinct from the maternity/parental leave scheme) nor do I cover leave for sick children.

⁷ The term maternity leave refers to the paid leave during the period immediately prior and after childbirth. In some countries, this leave is called parental leave as both parents are eligible to it. In some countries, this maternity/parental leave is followed by an optional extended leave to take care of young children. In some countries this leave is referred to as childcare leave and in others as parental leave. To avoid confusions, in this paper I will use the term maternity/parental leave to describe the former type of leave, and I will refer to the latter as childcare leave.

maternity/parental leave and benefits since the mid-1970s, while Table 4 summarizes the childcare leave schemes as of 1999. For comparative purposes, the maternity/parental benefits are expressed in terms of percentage of regular earnings.⁸

[Table 3 here]

Across all 15 countries, the duration of maternity/parental leave has increased from 16 weeks in 1975 to 24 weeks in 1999, while cash benefits have increased from 78 percent of regular earnings in 1975 to 84 percent in 1999. In terms of cross-national differences, the largest increases have been observed in Denmark, Finland, Portugal, and Sweden. As of 1999, the most generous maternity/parental leave schemes were found in Finland and Sweden (in terms of duration of the leave).

The country provisions for childcare leave appear in Table 4. This is undoubtedly the component of family policies that has experienced the fastest change since the 1980s. As of 1999 all countries were offering some forms of childcare leave. In about half the countries, the leave is unpaid while in the others a combination of means- and non-means-tested benefits are payable. The duration of the leave varies enormously, from 3 to 36 months, and so is its flexibility. While in some countries the leave is restricted to the period immediately after the period covered by the maternity/parental leave, in others it can be spread over time. For example, in Sweden and Denmark, the leave may be taken until the child reaches eight years old.

[Table 4 here]

In order to give a more accurate overview of the provisions provided under both the maternity/parental leave and childcare leave, Figure 3 shows the total duration of leave, broken down by component. The 'zero' on the y-axis corresponds to the birth of the child. Any negative value on this axis therefore corresponds to leave prior to childbirth. As of 1999, the longest combined leave schemes were observed in Finland, France, Germany, and Spain. A large proportion of the Spanish leave is however unpaid.

[Figure 3 here]

Childcare facilities⁹

The provision of childcare facilities and its related cash benefits and subsidies are some of the most difficult components of family policies to accurately measure and compare cross-nationally. The set up of the European Commission Childcare Network in 1986

⁸ Expressing maternity benefits as a percentage of regular earnings is a standard method used in the literature and in the legislation. The resulting index is however limited in that it does not take into account the fact that some countries impose a maximum on maternity benefits. The index does not either take into account the eligibility criteria --- that vary significantly across countries.

⁹ The term 'childcare' is here used to refer to daytime facilities, mainly used by working parents. It should not be confused with the British concept of childcare that refers to services offered by children in difficulty and which is part of the child welfare services.

tremendously helped such an analysis in providing unique data.¹⁰ Data in Table 5 refers to the number of children enrolled in publicly financed childcare institutions, as a percentage of total preschool age children, as of 1993 (latest year available).

[Table 5 here]

As of 1993, more than 90 percent of children age 3-to-schoolage were enrolled in publicly financed childcare institutions in Belgium, France, and Italy, while it was the case of less than 60 percent of them in Finland, Ireland, Portugal, and the UK. The coverage of children less than 3 years old is much lower in all countries. Only in Denmark is half the children of that age enrolled in publicly financed childcare institutions.

Since the 1980s, public provisions for childcare have increased substantially in all countries --- in great part as a response to an increasing demand for such services. The level of governmental involvement remains however widely different across the European Union. While in Finland children have a 'right' to a place in day-care, the provision of publicly financed childcare is still the subject of much discussion in countries, such as Britain, where until recently a much more private ideology prevailed.

The analysis of the conventional indicators of family policies suggests some common trends across the countries of the European Union including an increased emphasis on targeted benefits, an accrued support for low-income families, and significant increases in the level of support for working parents including maternity and parental leave schemes and childcare facilities. I will come back to the issue of cross-national convergence in the last section of the paper. In the next section I instead focus on less conventional indicators of family policies that allow one to better understand the general context of family policies.

3. THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

It is not possible to fully understand the above trends in family policies without placing them in their relevant economic and political context, and without examining trends in other components of the welfare states. For instance, it is obvious that the overall slow economic growth of the 1980s have prevented rapid expansions of the welfare state. References to welfare retrenchments and welfare re-structuration have in fact been numerous in the literature (see for example Mishra 1990). However, despite such budget restrictions, it is interesting to note that total expenditures on family cash benefits have not significantly declined since the early 1980s, and that state support in the form of maternity and parental leave and benefits has instead been strongly expanded. State support for families has apparently been shielded from drastic cuts.¹¹ Having said this, it should however not be forgotten that in recent decades state support for families and

¹⁰ The Network was terminated in 1996.

¹¹ Some programs have been reformed, and some specific benefits have been reduced or frozen. However, when total expenditures on cash benefits are considered, no drastic decline is observed.

children has been growing at a much slower pace than state support for the elderly (Kamerman and Kahn 1991). It should not be forgotten either that the nature itself of state support for families has been significantly altered in recent decades, especially in terms of its greater emphasis on means-tested benefits. In order to better understand trends in state support for families, it is therefore important to expand the analysis beyond the conventional indicators of family policies. It is here that I turn to ‘softer’ indicators such as studies, reports, commissions, and other initiatives in order to assess the importance devoted to family issues by national governments and by various other actors. While not all initiatives have the same impact on governmental legislation and programs, they are key elements that shape the political agenda and that are therefore part of the policy-making process (Banting 1979).

A selected list of initiatives launched by international bodies, including the European Council and the European Commission,¹² appears in Table A1 in appendix, while a selected list of initiatives launched by national governments appears in Table A2. At least three main themes dominate these two lists: children’s rights, gender equality, and reconciliation of family and work responsibilities. The theme of children’s rights is best illustrated by the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the United Nations in 1989 and its amendment in 1995. Both were landmarks and were followed by initiatives in all countries. As of 1999, all the EU member states had ratified the Convention.¹³ Related initiatives include studies of children’s well-being, visibility, and participation, including the set up of the European Forum for Child Welfare in 1991.¹⁴

The theme of gender equality has been recurrent on the political agenda of governments since the 1970s. Relevant initiatives include the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979, its amendment in 1995, and its optional protocol in 1999,¹⁵ the 1975 EU Council directive on the principle of equal pay for men and women,¹⁶ and the 1976 EU Council Directive on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions.¹⁷ Since then, various reports, communications, and programs have emphasized the theme of gender equality both at the international and the national levels.¹⁸ This includes, for example, the Swedish ‘Policy

¹² For reasons of space, I do not cover systematically the initiatives of non-political organizations such as the International Forum for Child Welfare and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, even though some of their funding may come from the European Commission.

¹³ See: <http://untreaty.un.org/English/sample/EnglishInternetBible/partI/chapterIV/treaty15.asp>

¹⁴ For the European Forum for Child Welfare, see: <http://www.efcw.org>. For examples of national studies, see in Finland: <http://www.stakes.fi/vye/family.htm>

¹⁵ See: <http://untreaty.un.org/English/sample/EnglishInternetBible/partI/chapterIV/chapterIV.asp>

¹⁶ See European Commission: <http://www.europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10905.htm>

¹⁷ See European Commission: <http://www.europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10906.htm>

¹⁸ For the EU, see: <http://www.europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c00006.htm> and <http://www.europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/s02205.htm>

for gender equality in the 21st century’ (in 1999)¹⁹ and the Portuguese conference on equality organized by the Commission for Equality in Employment and Work (in 1999).

In recent years it is however the theme of family and work that appears to have dominated the political agenda of international and national governments. This includes the ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (1981), the EU Pregnancy directive (1992), the EU recommendation on childcare (1992), the EU parental time directive (1996), the EU part-time work directive (1996), and the EU Resolution on the balanced participation of women and men in family and working life (2000). Initiatives at the national level are also numerous including the Luxembourg National Action Plan for Employment (which covered the theme ‘reconciling work and family life’) (1998-9), the Dutch ‘Strategies for work-family balance’ (1999) and the Portuguese Campaign for family and work reconciliation (1999). In view of this emphasis on ‘family and work’, one understands better the significant increase in support for working parents that was noted in the previous section.

This emphasis on ‘family and work’ is in fact also found at the individual level. For instance, respondents to a Eurobarometer survey carried out in 12 EU countries in 1989²⁰ identified family and work among the top factors influencing fertility decisions, and among the top governmental actions that could improve family life. ‘Women working outside their home’ and the ‘availability of childcare arrangements’ ranked respectively third and fourth among the most important factors influencing the decision about family size,²¹ while ‘availability of suitable childcare arrangements’ ranked second among the top priority actions for governments (Commission of the European Communities 1990).²²

4. REFLECTION ON THE STATE OF FAMILY POLICY RESEARCH

As argued earlier, the conventional family policy research has focused on quantifiable indicators to monitor trends in family policies. Expanding the analysis to ‘softer’ indicators, as done in the previous section, is one way of going beyond this conventional research, and one way of better understanding some of the determinants and dynamics of family policies. In this section, I want to take this discussion yet a step further in outlining some of the areas that have so far been mostly overlooked in comparative family policy studies. Three such areas are discussed below: (i) Children’s and parents’ outcomes; (ii) Eligibility and take up rate; and (iii) Private benefits.

¹⁹ See: Bernhardt (2000).

²⁰ A more recent Eurobarometer survey on the same topic was carried out (in 1998). At the time of writing this paper, the report from this survey was not available.

²¹ The first factor was ‘uncertain economic prospects’ and the second ‘availability of suitable housing’.

²² The first one was ‘availability of suitable housing’.

Children's and parents' outcomes

Despite the fact that one of the main objectives of family policies is to improve the well-being of families, surprisingly few studies have been devoted to the analysis of the impact of family policies on families' well-being. We obviously know that higher levels of cash support for families tend to be associated with lower levels of child poverty (Rainwater and Smeeding 1995), which can in turn have beneficial impact on children's development (Duncan et al. 1998). And there is evidence to suggest that the provision of family friendly policies can reduce the incompatibility between work and family responsibilities (Clement 1992; Vanderkolk and Young 1991). However, there are very few cross-national studies that have directly addressed the issue of the impact of family policies on children's and parents' outcomes. Some well noted exceptions include Phipps' (1999) cross-national analysis of the impact of policies on a variety of children's outcomes including children's health and happiness, Gornick, Meyer, and Ross' (1997) cross-national analysis of the relationship between family policies and women's labor force participation, and Savolainen et al.'s (2000) analysis of the impact of policies on parents' mental health. The lack of outcome studies may partly be explained by a lack of appropriate data: most compendia of family policy indicators do not include data on parents' and children's outcomes, and most family and children's surveys do not include data on policies. This gap has however started to attract attention. In the United States, the report of the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2000) contains a large series of indicators on the well-being of children, as well as some policy-related indicators (e.g. percentage of children receiving welfare, and percentage of children covered by health insurance). Similarly, the Annie Casey's Kids Count series provides data on a series of child well-being indicators for each state (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2000a) and for large urban areas (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2000b). No cross-national equivalent is however available.^{23,24} Ironically, although the title of this paper (which was imposed by the organizers) refers to policies that 'affect' families, the current state of family policy research in Europe has clearly not devoted enough attention to the measurement of this assumed 'effect'.²⁵

Eligibility and take up rate

The analysis of the average cash support received by families, and the analysis of the legal provision for maternity and parental leave, provide information about the provision of family policies from a governmental perspective. Such analyses provide however no precise information about the support actually received by families. This distinction is important as it would be erroneous, for instance, to assume that all families that are eligible for benefits actually claim them (especially means-tested benefits), just as it would be erroneous to assume that the maternity leave benefits (expressed as a

²³ This may well soon change in view of the 'International project on indicators of children's well-being' led by Asher Ben-Arieh (see: <http://www.worldbank.org/children/design/starting/61.htm>).

²⁴ I should also mention the cross-national WHO survey on children's health. See WHO (2000).

²⁵ For a review of the literature, see Gauthier (1996b).

percentage of regular earnings) accurately reflect the actual benefits received by all women. Not only is there evidence that suggests that a substantial proportion of families do not claim benefits (Miller and Sanders 1997), but the nature itself of the policies often restricts eligibility and/or imposes a ceiling on benefits (including maternity leave benefits). Again, a lack of available data is partly to blame. For instance, we have very little data on the take up rate of key means-tested benefits, and we have very limited data on the percentage of families that actually take up parental leave. Not surprisingly, a recent report on parental leave in the EU noted that many countries were not able to provide figures on the actual take up rates of parental leave (EC 1998).²⁶ Such a lack of data is troubling, especially if one is concerned about measuring accurately benefits received by families, or is concerned about measuring the impact of policies on families.

Private benefits

Finally, there is also the issue of public versus private benefits. Conventional cross-national family policy research focuses on benefits provided by national governments. Benefits provided by regional or local governments, and benefits provided by employers are usually not considered. And yet, scattered evidence suggests that there are considerable regional variations,²⁷ and that there are also considerable variations across employers in the level of support for families. In recent years, the European Commission has devoted considerable effort to the promotion of family-friendly policies among employers (especially via its Family and Work Network). We have however no comprehensive source of information to assess the extent of employer-provided benefits, especially from a cross-national perspective. And yet, if we think again in terms of the impact of policies on families, it is clear that we need information on all benefits received by families and not only on those provided by national governments.²⁸ In particular, the analysis of public and private benefits is likely to reveal large inequalities among parents both within and between countries. Surveys are probably the best instrument to capture that type of information. Unfortunately, recent surveys (including the United Nations 'Fertility and Family Surveys') have collected information on parents' values and on their preference for various policies, but not on their actual receipt of benefits.

In short, family policy research has made tremendous progress over the recent decades with increasing data on key family policy indicators. However, family policy research would highly benefit from an expansion of its scope (with the inclusion of private benefits), the adoption of a family perspective (in order to capture benefits actually received by families), and the analysis of outcomes (in order to assess the impact of policies).

²⁶ A recent report (Moss and Deven 1999) contains such information on the take up rate of parental leave in some countries. This data is however not systematically reported year after year.

²⁷ This includes variations at the cantonal, provincial, 'lander', and local levels.

²⁸ For further discussion on this topic, readers are referred to Gauthier (1999, 2000).

5. CONCLUSION: CONVERGENCE WITHIN THE EU?

In lieu of a formal conclusion, I want to address the issue of cross-national convergence in European family policies. There have been major discussions in the literature about the quest or emergence of a European welfare state (Hagen 1992) and about the Europeanisation of social policy (Doogan 1992). And while the creation of a common economic and monetary market has been viewed as a major determinant of convergence (Cochrane and Doogan 1993), the large cross-national variations in welfare states have ruled out the possibility of any rapid harmonization (EC 1992). Obviously the possible convergence of national family policies is not on the EU's political agenda as the Community has no direct competence in this area. In practice, however, some of the domains that are within the mandate of the European Community, such as workers' rights, protection of workers, and gender equality, all have a family dimension. They have consequently been an ideal platform to launch initiatives related to families.²⁹ But what about their convergence?

The analysis of hard and soft indicators presented in this paper suggests indeed some convergence, not so much in the actual level of support for families, but in the nature of state support for families, and in the prioritized items. In particular, the emphasis on the theme 'family and work' was found in all countries. All countries launched some initiatives on this theme, and all discussed the issue of reconciliation between work and family responsibilities. Such a cross-national consensus is unique in the history of family policy. Only in the immediate post-World War II period was a similar consensus observed, at the time with regard to universal state support for families and children (Gauthier 1996a). Over the following decades, on the other hand, ideological differences were wide, and family policies evolved in diverging ways. For instance, while the Scandinavian countries opted for a high level of state support for families, that emphasized the issue of gender equality, Germany continued to support a much more traditional gender division of labor, instead emphasizing a male breadwinner-housewife model. And while France's family policy was driven by pronatalist objectives, Britain opted for a non-interventionist model, restricting its intervention to cases of abuse or severe distress.³⁰

These large cross-national differences in the nature and level of state support for families were very visible throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Since then, the convergence noted above, has increasingly blurred the distinction between these different 'models' of family policies. There are still major cross-national differences in the actual level of support provided for families, but the recent emphasis on family and work, and the related changes in maternity and parental leave schemes, have brought closer countries belonging to different 'models' of family policies. Britain for instance no longer perfectly exemplified the liberal non-interventionist model, and Germany has started to move away from a model based on a traditional gender division of labor. It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze in details the determinants of this convergence. But several factors

²⁹ This approach was reiterated in a recent editorial by Odile Quintin (1999).

³⁰ These models are discussed by Gauthier (1996a). Variants of these models may also be found in Kamerman and Kahn (1978), Lewis (1993), and Sainsbury (1999).

are obvious including the major role played by the European Commission in seeking 'windows of opportunities' (Cram 1994) and in pushing ahead the theme of family and work. The cross-national similarities in the demographic and economic trends, especially the persistence of below-replacement fertility and the continuous increase in women's labor force participation, have also undoubtedly raised the visibility of the family and work theme.

Having said this, one has to acknowledge that the convergence in the governments' agendas has been observed in the area of state support for working parents --- for which the European Commission has a clear mandate. Much less (if any) cross-national similarities have been observed in the area of general cash support for families, and especially support for low-income families or single-parents. And yet, considering the current unemployment rates of 8 to 9 percent in the EU,³¹ it is clear that support for non-working parents and support for parents who are temporarily out of work ought also to receive a high level of attention. This is an area that will require careful monitoring, and one for which the European Commission and the Observatory on Family Matters will hopefully play a major role.

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³¹ Eurostat on-line statistics: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/Public/datashop/print-product/EN?catalogue=Eurostat&product=1-un020in-EN&mode=download>

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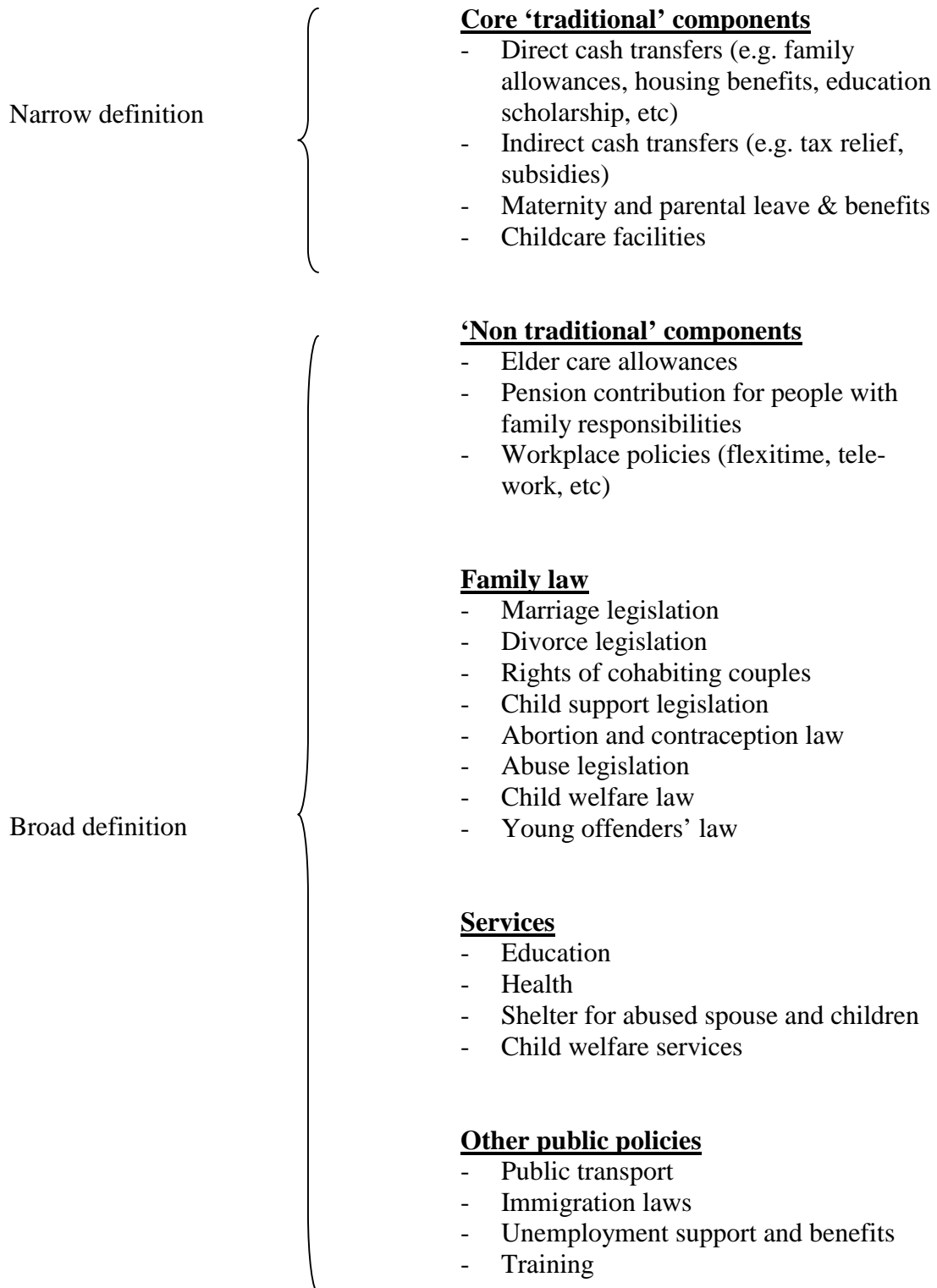
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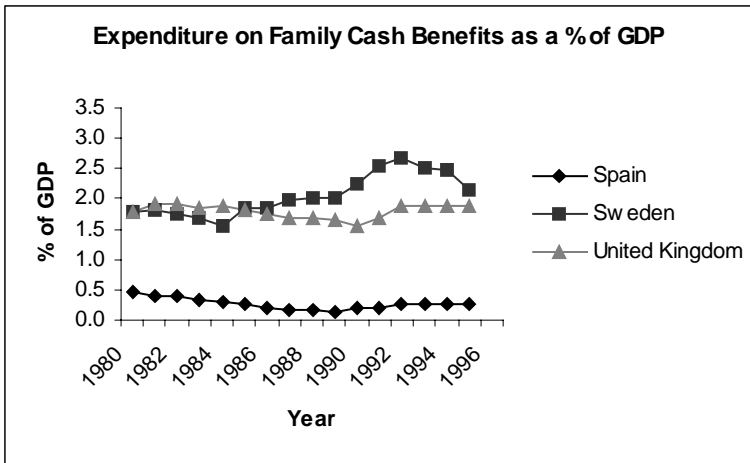
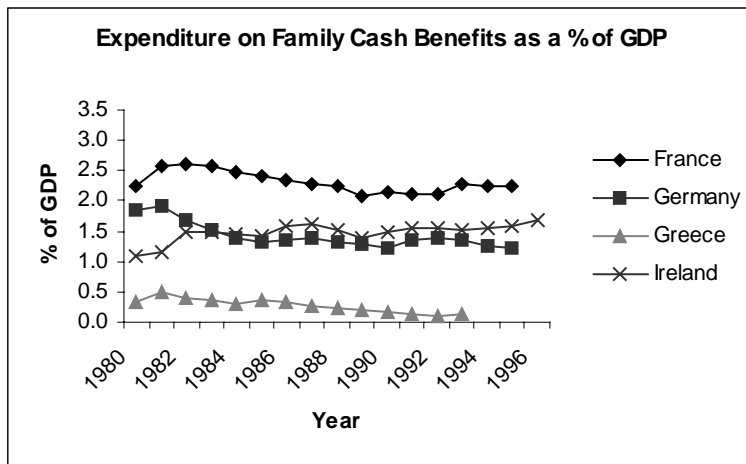
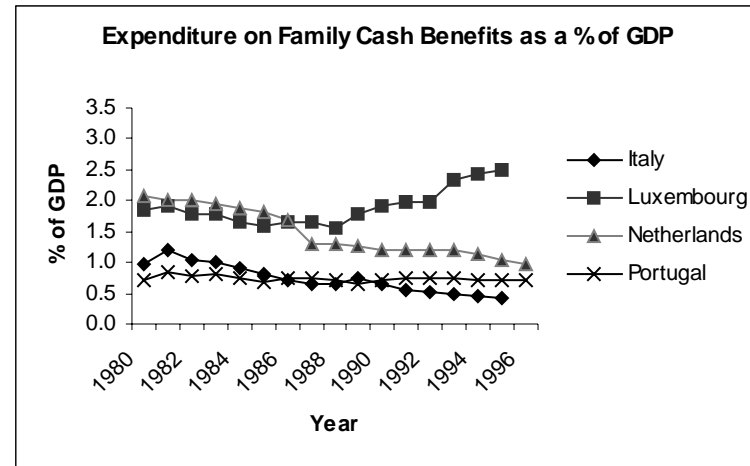
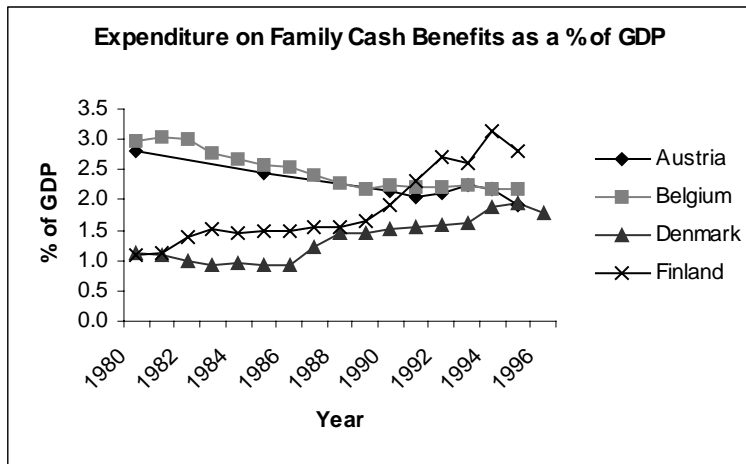
World Health Organization. (2000). 'Health and health behaviour among young people'. On-line <http://www.ruhbc.ed.ac.uk/hbhc> [PDF file <http://www.ruhbc.ed.ac.uk/hbhc/download/hbhc.pdf>]

Figure 1: Components of family policy



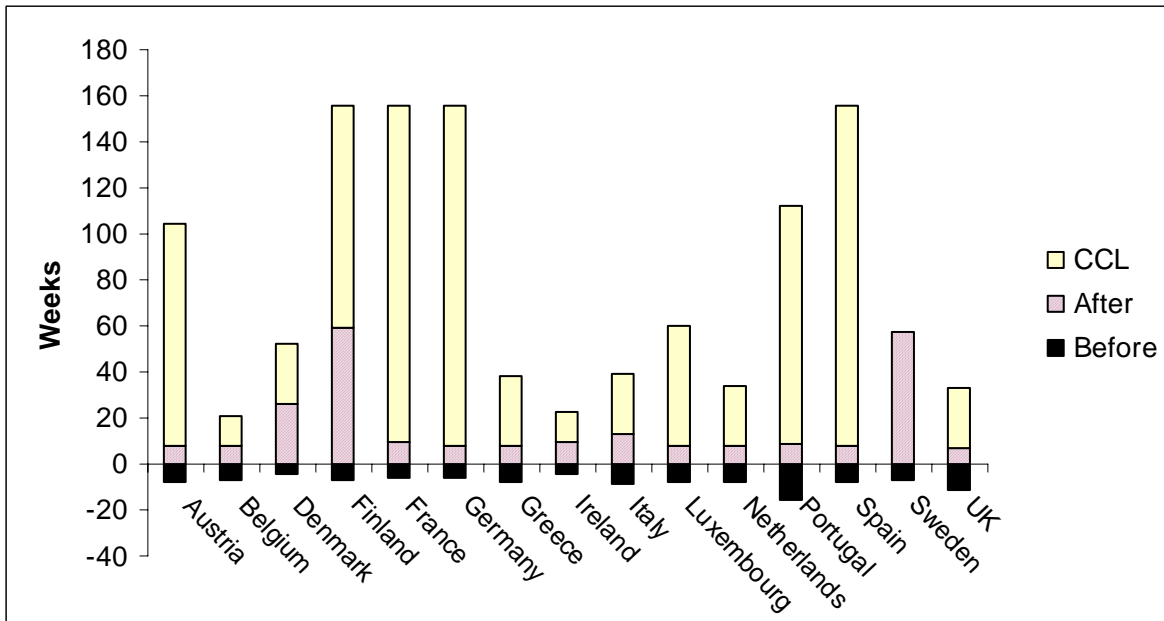
Source: Adapted from Gauthier (1999).

Figure 2. Public expenditures on family cash benefits (as a percentage of GDP), 1980—96



Source: Author's graphs from data reported in: OECD. Social expenditure database, 1980—96.

Figure 3: Maternity, parental, and childcare leave, 1999



Where: CCL: childcare leave, AFTER: maternity/parental leave after childbirth; BEFORE: maternity/parental leave before childbirth

Notes:

- The 'zero' on the y-axis corresponds to childbirth. The negative numbers correspond to weeks prior to childbirth.
- In the Netherlands and Spain, the period prior to and after childbirth was not specified. It was assumed to be split equally.
- In Austria, Greece, Luxembourg, and the UK, the childcare leave represented here includes the period that may be taken by the father.

Sources: See Tables 3 and 4.

Table 1. Sources of data on conventional indicators of family policies

Type of policies/benefits	Source
Social expenditures	OECD. (1999). <i>Social Expenditures database 1980/1996</i> . CD-Rom. ILO (serial). <i>The Cost of Social Security</i> . (Geneva: ILO). ¹ On-line version: http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/socsec/publ/css/cssindex.htm European Commission (2000). <i>Social Protection Expenditure and Receipts; Data 1980--97</i> . (Luxembourg: Eurostat).
Cash benefits and maternity leave and benefits	USA (serial). <i>Social Security Programs Throughout the World</i> . ² On-line version: http://www.ssa.gov/statistics/ssptw99.html Council of Europe (serial). <i>Comparative Tables of the Social Security Schemes</i> . (Strasbourg: CoE). (latest edition: - 9th edition, published in 1999). ³ Missoc (serial). <i>Social Protection in the Member States of the Community</i> . (Brussels: EC). ⁴ On-line version: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-prot/missoc99/english/f_main.htm
Cash benefits only	OECD (serial). <i>The Tax/Benefit Position of Production Workers</i> . (Paris: OECD). ⁵
Maternity/ parental leave only	ILO (1988). <i>Work and the Family: The Child Care Challenge</i> . Vol. 7 of <i>Conditions of Work Digest</i> . (Geneva: ILO).
Childcare facilities	European Childcare Network. ⁶
Other information, including laws ⁷	European Commission. <i>Euro-Lex database</i> (European laws). On-line: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/index.html International Social Security Association. <i>Social security worldwide database</i> . On Line: http://www.issa.int/engl/homef.htm ILO. Database of national labour laws (NATLEX). On-line: http://natlex.ilo.org/scripts/natlexcgi.exe?lang=E European Observatory of Family Policies (occasional). Annual reports. ⁸ The International Survey of Family Law (Co-publication with The International Society of Family Law) ⁹ Allen Guttmacher Institute (serial). <i>Induced Abortion: A World Review</i> . ¹⁰

Notes and sources:

- 1- The current on-line version covers the period 1994-1996 and is based on a 1997 questionnaire (15th international inquiry). Early editions are available in printed format.
- 2- The latest (1999) edition is available on-line. Earlier editions are available in printed format.
- 3- The title of this series has changed over time. For example, the 1992 edition was entitled *Comparative Tables of Social Security Schemes in the Member States not Members of the European Communities, in Australia and in Canada*.
- 4- The title of this series has changed over time. Earlier editions were published by the European Commission under the title: *Comparative Tables of the Social Security Schemes in the Member States of the European Communities*.
- 5- The title of this series has changed over time. The latest edition (published in 1999) covered the tax benefit situation in 1997 and was entitled: *The Tax/Benefit Position of Employees*. Earlier editions appeared under the title: *The Tax/Benefit Position of Production Workers, The Tax/Benefit Position of a Typical Worker, and the Tax/Benefit Position of Selected Income Groups*.
- 6- Key publications of the Network include: Phillips and Moss (1989) and Tietze and Cryer (1999).
- 7- Although this paper does not systematically covers the area of family law, some of the major sources are reported for the benefit of the reader.

- 8- The titles of the reports have changed over time. The latest report was published in 1998 under the title: *A Synthesis of national family policies 1996*. (by John Ditch et al for the European Commission).
- 9- The latest edition was published in 1999 and was edited by A. Bainham.
- 10- These reports have been published under different titles and co-authored by various people. The 6th edition (1986) was co-authored by Tietze and Henshaw. A more recent version is Henshaw (1990).

Table 2: Index of cash support for families,¹ 1975—7

	Type 1				Type 2	Type 3
	1975	1985	1990	1997	1997	1997
Austria	23.0	24.5	23.6	24.5	16.0	36.3
Belgium	21.1	27.2	39.1	36.4	15.7	33.5
Denmark	15.6	19.3	26.3	25.2	8.4	46.5
Finland	21.5	17.6	20.8	15.9	11.2	29.0
France	23.5	19.2	19.2	17.9	8.7	15.3
Germany	15.9	18.4	21.2	35.0	11.1	29.3
Greece	2.4	21.4	23.2	19.3	7.2	11.2
Ireland	16.5	21.4	17.1	15.4	4.6	34.8
Italy	12.6	12.2	14.5	16.9	4.8	25.6
Luxembourg	26.4	32.9	34.1	34.2	15.9	30.9
Netherlands	15.8	17.4	12.3	18.7	7.8	26.9
Portugal	9.2	5.5	11.9	10.7	6.7	12.1
Spain	5.6	6.3	6.5	8.7	1.8	8.0
Sweden	16.9	17.0	15.0	11.2	8.3	16.3
UK	14.4	18.6	12.7	10.5	5.9	18.6

Na: non available; Apw: average production worker

Notes:

1. The index corresponds to the additional disposable income (after taxes and transfers) of families with children as compared to their childless equivalent.
 - **Type 1:** Married couples with 2 children, with one principal earner with earnings equal to 100% of apw and no secondary earner--- vs. single earner without children with earnings equal to 100% of apw.
 - **Type 2:** Married couples with 2 children, with one principal earner with earnings equal to 100% of apw , and one secondary earner with earnings equal to 33% of apw----- vs. married without children with same earnings.
 - **Type 3:** Single parent with 2 children with earnings equal to 67% of apw ----- vs. single earner without children with same earnings.

SOURCE: computation by the author from data published in the OECD series ‘The Tax/Benefit Position of Workers’ and the ‘Tax/Benefit Position of Employees’.

Table 3: Maternity/parental leave and benefits, 1975-99

	Duration of leave ¹					Cash benefits ²				
	1975	1985	1990	1997	1999	1975	1985	1990	1997	1999 ³
Austria	12	16	16	16	18	100	100	100	100	100
Belgium ⁴	14	14	14	15	15	60	80	80	77	77
Denmark ⁵	14	28	28	28	30	90	90	90	100	100
Finland ⁶	35	52	53	63	63	39	80	80	70	70
France ⁷	14	16	16	16	16	90	84	84	100	100
Germany	14	14	14	14	14	100	100	100	100	100
Greece ⁸	12	12	15	16	16	50	50	50	50	50
Ireland	12	14	14	14	14	65	70	70	70	70
Italy ⁹	22	22	22	22	22	80	80	80	80	80
Luxembourg	12	16	16	16	16	100	100	100	100	100
Netherlands	12	12	16	16	16	100	100	100	100	100
Portugal ¹⁰	9	13	13	21	24	100	100	100	100	100
Spain ¹¹	12	14	16	16	16	75	75	75	100	100
Sweden ¹²	30	51	51	64	64	90	70	71	62	66
UK	18	18	18	18	18	30	30	45	45	44

Notes:

1. The duration is expressed in number of weeks of paid leave immediately before and after childbirth. In most countries, this leave is restricted to mothers.
2. Cash benefits are expressed as a percentage of regular wages. In some countries, the benefits are instead paid as flat-rate benefits. They were converted into a percentage by using data on the average female wage in manufacturing, as published in the ILO Yearbook of Labor Statistics. An average of 40 hours of work per week was assumed. When the data by sex was not available, it was estimated using other sources.
3. The wages data for 1999 were not available. They were estimated using data on the consumer price index for the latest year available. For the countries where flat rate benefits are paid, the index will be subject to revision when the 1999 wage data becomes available.
4. Belgium: Benefits have been consistently paid at different rates for the first month and subsequent ones. A weighted average was computed.
5. Denmark: From 1991, benefits have been paid as flat-rate benefits. They were converted into a corresponding percentage using the rule indicated in #2 above. When the resulting index exceeded 100%, we simply reported 100.
6. Finland: The duration of leave is stated in number of days. This was converted in number of weeks by assuming 7 days of leave per week.
7. France: Since 1981, the duration of the leave has been of 26 weeks for the third and subsequent children.
8. Greece: The duration of leave is stated in number of days. This was converted in number of weeks by assuming 7 days of leave per week.
9. Italy: In 1975, the duration of the leave varied between 19 to 31 weeks depending on the type of work. Since 1980, the duration of the leave has been of 5 months.
10. Portugal: The duration of leave is stated in number of days. This was converted in number of weeks by assuming 7 days of leave per week.
11. Spain: In 1999, the benefit was expressed as 100% of benefit base. This may not therefore mean 100% of wage.
12. Sweden: Since 1980, the benefits proportional to wages are available for the first 9 months, while flat-rate benefits are paid for the subsequent months. The flat-rate benefits were converted into a corresponding percentage using the rule indicated in #2 above and a weighted average.

13. UK: Until 1987, flat-rate benefits were paid. Since then, benefits proportional to wages are paid for the first 6 weeks, followed by flat rate benefits. These flat-rate benefits were converted into a corresponding percentage using the rule indicated in #2 above and a weighted average.

Sources: computation from the author from data published in the USA series '*Social Security Programs throughout the World*' and data published in the ILO '*Yearbook of Labour Statistics*'.

Table 4. Childcare leave schemes, 1999

	Duration (months) ¹	Cash benefits ² (as % of wage)	Flexibility ³	Father's entitlement	Other details
Austria	24 *	31%	----	Father entitled to 6 months non-transferable leave.	Part time leave also available.
Belgium	3	37%	Up to the child's fourth birthday.	Both parents entitled to a separate leave.	
Denmark	12 *	63%	Up to the child's eight birthday	Father entitled to simultaneous leave.	
Finland	36 *	66%	---	Father entitled to the same leave.	Lower cash benefits for people who were not previously employed
France ⁴	36 *	39%	---	Father entitled to leave (instead of mother).	Lower cash benefits for part-time leave.
Germany	36 *	24%	---	Father entitled to leave.	Means-tested cash benefits
Greece	7	Unpaid	Up to child's third and a half birthday.	Each parent is entitled to a non-transferable 3.5-month leave.	
Ireland	3	Unpaid	Up to the child's fifth birthday.	Both parents entitled to leave.	
Italy ⁵	6	30%	Up to the child's ninth birthday	May be taken by father or mother.	The duration is doubled in the case of twins.
Luxembourg ⁶	12	63%	May not be taken in installments.	Each parent is entitled to a non-transferable 6-month leave.	The leave is longer for families with 4 and more children. The cash benefits are paid only to one parent.
Netherlands	6	Unpaid	Up to the child's eight birthday	Both parents entitled to leave.	Part-time leave only.
Portugal	24	Unpaid	Up to the child's third birthday	Father entitled to leave.	
Spain	36 *	Unpaid	---	Only one parent can make use of the benefit.	
Sweden	15	See maternity leave	Up to the child's eight birthday	Each parent entitled to leave.	See maternity leave
UK	6	Unpaid	Up to the child's fifth birthday	Each parent is entitled to a 3 month leave	6 months for each child in the case of multiple births.

Notes:

- 1- Duration marked by a '*' are cases for which the duration includes the post-childbirth period covered by the maternity leave.
- 2- In some countries, the benefits are paid as flat-rate benefits. They were converted into a percentage using data on the female average wages in manufacturing (from the ILO *yearbook of Labor Statistics*). When the wages for 1998 were not available, they were estimated using the latest data available and data on the consumer price index. The flat-rate benefits, in national currency, were as follows (in 1998): Austria: 185.50 ATS/ day;

Belgium: 20,000 FB/ month; Denmark: 70% of unemployment benefit; France: 460 ECU/ month (for full-time leave); Germany: 600 DM/month; Luxembourg: 60,000 LF/month (only paid to one parent)

- 3- Flexibility: In some countries, the parental leave has to be taken immediately following the period covered by the paid maternity leave. The information that appears in this column corresponds to cases for which the leave may be taken at any time during a longer and more flexible period.
- 4- France: The Parental leave benefits (allocation parentale d'éducation, APE) are paid to parents with at least 2 children, including at least one under the age of 3.
- 5- Italy: There are plans to extend this leave to 10 months.
- 6- Luxembourg: The cash benefits correspond to more than 100% of the average earnings of wage earners in manufacturing, but 63% of the average earnings of salaried employees in manufacturing.

Sources: Various documents were used to compile this information including country-specific on-line documents, a series of national reports submitted to the Council of Europe (1999), and the information contained in the MISSOC on-line document.

Table 5: Percentage of children in publicly funded childcare and education institutions, 1993

	Under the age of 3	Age 3 to school age
Austria	3	75
Belgium	30	95
Denmark	50	79
Finland	27	43
France	23	99
Germany	5*	65*
Greece	3	64
Ireland	2	52
Italy	6	97
Luxembourg	2*	68
Netherlands	8	69
Portugal	12	48
Spain	5	84
Sweden	33	79
UK	2	53

*: 1988 data

Note: The data comes from the European Commission Network on Childcare. It covers children in pre-primary schools, day care centers, kindergartens, crèches, and family day care --- as long as the service was partly or fully publicly funded.

Sources: Moss (1990); Tietze and Cryer (1999).

Table A1. Selected European and international family-related initiatives¹, 1990-2000

Organization	Year	Title ²	Details of organization	Source
EU/CEC	2000 Jul 28	Draft Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union	Council of the European Union	http://db.consilium.eu.int/dfddocs/EN/04422en.pdf
	2000 Jun 6	Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers for Employment and Social Policy on the balanced participation of women and men in family and working life	Council of the European Union and the Ministers for Employment and Social Policy	http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/decision/rescons6-00_en.html
	1999	European Observatory on family matters is established (previously called Observatory on National Family Policies and set up in 1989)	European Commission	
	1999 May 21	“Towards a Europe for all ages - promoting prosperity and intergenerational solidarity” (report)	European Commission	http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/employment_social/key_en.htm
	1999 Mar	“Social audits – an European model: Equality and reconciliation of family and work” (report)	European Network ‘Family & Work’	http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family-net/pdfdata/1_98_uk.pdf
	1997 Dec 15	The 1998 Employment Guidelines, Council Resolution (including “reconciling work and family life”)	Council of the European Union	http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/elm/summit/guideen.htm
	1997 Dec 15	Council Directive 97/81/EC concerning the Framework Agreement on part-time working concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC.	Council of the European Union	http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10416.htm

Organization	Year	Title ²	Details of organization	Source
	1997 Nov	Luxembourg Jobs summit (four main pillars including Pillar 4: Equal opportunities - reconciling work and family life)	European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs	http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/empl&esf/pilar_en.htm#Pillar4
	1997	European Network Families, Work and Intergenerational Solidarity (is established) (originally called Family & Work network and set up in 1994)	European Commission	http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c32701.htm
	1996 Jun 3	Council Directive 96/34/EC on the framework agreement on parental leave	Council of the European Union	http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10911.htm
	1994	European Network Family & Work (is established)	European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs	http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family-net/en/frameset.htm
	1993 Dec	White Paper: European social policy: Away forward for the Union (including Reconciling employment and household/family life)	European Commission	http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10112.htm
	1992 Oct 19	Council Directive 92/85/EEC concerning the implementation of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of pregnant workers, women workers who have recently given birth and women who are breastfeeding	Council of the European Union	http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10914.htm
	1992 March 31	Council Recommendation 92/241/EEC on childcare	Council of the European Union	http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10916.htm

Organization	Year	Title ²	Details of organization	Source
	1991--1996	Network on childcare and other measures to reconcile employment and family responsibilities of women and men (is established) (originally called EC Network on Childcare and set up in 1986)	European Commission	
CoE	2001 Jun	Reconciling work and family life (27 th Session Conference)	European Ministers responsible for Family Affairs	http://www.coe.fr/cm/divers/when.2.html#mmf27
	1999 Jun 14-16	Towards a child-friendly society (26 th Session Conference)	European Ministers responsible for Family Affairs	http://www.coe.fr/dase/en/cohesion/fampo/stockholm/communiq.htm#FN3
	1998 Dec 23	European strategy for children (Recommendation 1286)	Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly	http://stars.coe.fr/index_e.htm
	1998 Sep 18	Recommendation No. R (98) 8 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Children's Participation in Family and Social Life	Council of Europe Committee of Ministers	http://www.cm.coe.int/ta/rec/1998/98r8.htm
	1997 Jun 16-18	Adolescence: a challenge to the family (25 th Session Conference)	European Ministers Responsible for Family Affairs	http://www.cm.coe.int/reports/cmdocs/1997/97cm137.html
	1997 Feb 13	Recommendation No. R (97) 4 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Securing and Promoting the Health of Single Parent Families	Council of Europe Committee of Ministers	http://www.cm.coe.int/ta/rec/1997/97r4.html
	1996 Jun 19	Recommendation No. R (96) 5 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Reconciling Work and Family Life	Council of Europe Committee of Ministers	http://www.coe.fr/cm/ta/rec/1996/96r5.html

Organization	Year	Title ²	Details of organization	Source
	1996 Jan 25	European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights (European Treaty No. 160)	Council of Europe	http://www.coe.fr/eng/legaltxt/160e.htm
	1994 Nov 22	Recommendation No. R (94) 14 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Coherent and Integrated Family Policies	Council of Europe Committee of Ministers	http://www.coe.fr/cm/ta/rec/1994/94r14.htm
	1992 Jan 13	Recommendation No. R (92) 2 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Making Family Benefits Generally Available	Council of Europe Committee of Ministers	http://www.coe.fr/cm/ta/rec/1992/92r2.htm
	1991 Sep 9	Recommendation No. R (91) 9 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Emergency Measures in Family Matters	Council of Europe Committee of Ministers	http://www.coe.fr/cm/ta/rec/1991/91r9.htm
ILO ³	2000	Maternity Protection (Revised) Convention	International Labor Organization	http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/scripts/convde.pl?query=C183&query0=C183&submit=Display
UN	1995	Amendments to Convention on the rights of the child (originally adopted in 1989)	United Nations	
	1994	Year of the Family	United Nations	

Notes:

- 1- These initiatives were drawn from a longer list. They were considered the most relevant ones in terms of their family dimension.
- 2- The text between parentheses is not part of the formal title of the initiative.
- 3- In 1981, the ILO also adopted the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (source: <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/scripts/convde.pl?query=C156&query0=C156&submit=Display>)

Table A2. Selected family-related initiatives from national governments¹, 1990-2000

Country	Year	Title/Description of Initiative ²	Organization	Source ³
Austria	1998	Family & Work Audit (companies review their pro-family activities within scope of an additional module for ISO certification)	Ministry of Environment, Youth and Family Affairs	“Family Observer: Equality between women and men” http://www.cm.coe.int/ta/rec/1998/98r8.htm
Belgium	1995 Dec	“Men, Time and Work, Family and Household” seminar	Ministry for Employment and Work	“New Ways: Dual-Earner Families” http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family-net/pdfdata/4_98_en.pdf
	1994 Jul 1	Bill for greater protection of pregnant employees (in line with EU Directive)	National government	See below: Ditch, Bradshaw and Eardley (eds). (1995).
Denmark	1995-1997	Campaign on the social obligations of companies	Ministry of Social Affairs	“New Ways: Media Campaigns” http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family-net/pdfdata/2_99_en.pdf
	1994 Jul 1	National Council for Children’s Rights (is established)	Ministry of Social Affairs	See below: Ditch, Bradshaw and Eardley (eds). (1995).
	1994	Legislation for protection of mothers has been implemented (in accordance with EU Directive)	National government	See below: Ditch, Bradshaw and Eardley (eds). (1995).
	1993	Action programme to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life	Inter-Ministerial Committee on Children	“Family Observer: Equality between women and men” http://www.cm.coe.int/ta/rec/1998/98r8.htm

Country	Year	Title/Description of Initiative ²	Organization	Source ³
Finland	1996-1998	Combining Work and Family Life (project)	National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES), Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	“New Ways: Media Campaigns” http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family-net/pdfdata/2_99_en.pdf and http://www.stakes.fi/vye/family.htm
	1996-	Indicators of well-being of children (project)	National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES), Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	http://www.stakes.fi/vye/family.htm
	1998	“Children, Families and the Welfare State: Studies on the Outcomes of the Finnish Policy” (report)	National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES), Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	http://www.stakes.fi/tietovarannot/tu92.htm
France	2000 May	Ministry of Child and the Family (is created)	National government	National Expert Report, August 2000
	1998 Jun 12	Conference on the family	National government	“New Ways: Dual-Earner Families” http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family-net/pdfdata/4_98_en.pdf
	1997 Mar 17	National Conference on the Family	National government	“New Ways: Intergenerational Solidarity” http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family-net/pdfdata/1_97_uk.pdf
Germany	1999	Women and Profession (action programme)	Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth	“New Ways: Media Campaigns” http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family-net/pdfdata/2_99_en.pdf
	1999	Dialogue of the Generations (initiative)	Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth	“New Ways: Media Campaigns” http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family-net/pdfdata/2_99_en.pdf

Country	Year	Title/Description of Initiative ²	Organization	Source ³
	1998	Initiative! Women! (media campaign and initiative)	Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth	“New Ways: Media Campaigns” http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family-net/pdfdata/2_99_en.pdf
	1995 Aug 21	Pregnant Women and Family Assistance Amendment Law	National government	See below: Ditch, Barnes, and Bradshaw (eds). (1996).
	1994 Sep 1	Law for the Implementation of Equal Rights for Women and Men (to contribute to the reconciliation of family and work for women and men)	National government	See below: Ditch, Bradshaw and Eardley (eds). (1995).
	1994 May 26	Care Insurance Law (social care insurance which supports home care)	National government	See below: Ditch, Barnes, and Bradshaw (eds). (1996).
Greece	1993 Jun 3	General National Work Agreement (includes protection of motherhood arrangements)	National government	See below: Ditch, Bradshaw and Eardley (eds). (1995).
Ireland	1999	National Childcare Strategy	National Government	National Expert Report, July 2000
	1998 Dec	Parental Leave Act	National government	“New Ways: Media Campaigns” http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family-net/pdfdata/2_99_en.pdf
	1998	Strengthening Families for Life (report)	Commission on the Family	http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-prot/missoc99/english/socprot/irl.htm
	1995	Commission on the Family (is established)	National government	See below: Ditch, Barnes, and Bradshaw (eds). (1996).

Country	Year	Title/Description of Initiative ²	Organization	Source ³
	1994 Feb	Child Care Facilities for Working Parents (report of Working Group)	Ministry for Equality and Law Reform	See below: Ditch, Bradshaw and Eardley (eds). (1995).
	1994	Maternity Protection Bill	National government	See below: Ditch, Bradshaw and Eardley (eds). (1995).
	1991	Child Care Act	National government	See below: Ditch, Barnes, and Bradshaw (eds). (1996).
Italy	1998 Feb	“The numbers of Equal Opportunities. What is changing” (convention)	Minister on Equal Opportunity and ISTAT (National Statistics Institute)	“New Ways: Media Campaigns” http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family-net/pdfdata/2_99_en.pdf
	1997 Nov	Technical-Scientific Committee for the Promotion of Family Policies	Department of Social Affairs, Ministry for Social Solidarity, Ministry for Equal Opportunity	“New Ways: Dual-Earner Families” http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family-net/pdfdata/4_98_en.pdf
	1995 May	Standing Committee on family affairs (is set up)	Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity	See below: Ditch, Barnes, and Bradshaw (eds). (1996).
Luxembourg	1999 Mar 1	Law on parental leave (right to parental leave and job security)	National government	National Expert Report, July 2000
	1999	National Action Plan for Employment (reconcile working and family life)	National government	http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/empl&esf/naps99/naplu_en.pdf
	1998 Jun 19	Law on dependency insurance	Minister of Social Security	National expert report, July 2000
	1998	National Action Plan for Employment (Reconciling work and family life)	National government	http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/empl&esf/naps/lux_en.pdf

Country	Year	Title/Description of Initiative ²	Organization	Source ³
Netherlands	1999	Strategies for work-family balance	Ministries of Social Affairs and Welfare	National Expert Report, July 2000
Portugal	1999 Nov	Family and Aging (conference)	National government	National Expert Report, July 2000
	1999 Jul & Oct	Law on Equality (conference)	Commission for Equality in Employment and Work (CITE)	National Expert Report, July 2000
	1999 Apr 25	Family-friendly companies (initiative)	His Excellency Dr. Jorge Sampaio, President of Portuguese Republic	“New Ways: Media Campaigns” http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family-net/pdfdata/2_99_en.pdf
	1999 Mar	National Campaign of Conciliation (of family and work)	National government	“New Ways: Media Campaigns” http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family-net/pdfdata/2_99_en.pdf
	1999	National Campaign on Reconciliation - Sharing Domestic Chores – the Necessary Reconciliation	High Commissioner’s Office for the Promotion of Equality and the Family	National Expert Report, July 2000
	1999	Renovating Policies for the Conciliation of Work and Family Life and for Equality of Opportunities between Men and Women	Programme of the XIV Constitutional Government, Presidency of the Council of Ministers	National Expert Report, July 2000
	1999	Ministry for Equality (is established)	National government	National Expert Report, July 2000
	1995	High Commissioner for the Promotion of Equality and the Family (is established)	National government	See below: Ditch, Barnes, and Bradshaw (eds). (1996).

Country	Year	Title/Description of Initiative ²	Organization	Source ³
Spain	1999	Laws for the Reconciling of Family and Working life (includes maternity leave, parental leave and specific aspects of legal protection of pregnant workers)	National government	National Action Plan for Employment http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/empl&esf/naps00/napes_en.pdf
	1998	National Action Plan for Employment - Reconciling of Family and Working life	National government	http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/empl&esf/naps/es_en.pdf
	1994	Parliamentary Commission on the Family (is established)	National government	See below: Ditch, Barnes, and Bradshaw (eds). (1996).
Sweden	1999 Oct	Policy for gender equality in the 21 st century	National government	National Expert Report, July 2000
UK	1999	National Childcare Strategy	National government	“New Ways: Family Services and Employment” http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/family-net/pdfdata/fse.pdf
	1995	Child Support Act	National government	See below: Ditch, Barnes, and Bradshaw (eds). (1996).
	1993	Child Support Agency (is established)	National government	National Expert Report, August 2000

Notes:

1. These initiatives were drawn from a longer list. They were considered the most relevant ones in terms of their family dimension.
2. The text between parentheses is not part of the formal title of the initiative.
3. The source ‘National expert report’ refers to reports submitted by national experts for the Annual seminar of the Observatory on Family Matters.

Other sources:

Ditch, J.; Barnes, H. and Bradshaw, J. (eds). (1996). *European Observatory on National Family Policies: Developments in National Family Policies in 1995*.

Commission of the European Communities, Social Policy Research Unit. York: U. of York.

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PLAN INTERINSTITUCIONAL DE APOYO A LAS FAMILIAS CON HIJOS Y CONCILIACIÓN DE LA VIDA LABORAL Y FAMILIAR DE LA COMUNIDAD AUTÓNOMA DEL PAÍS VASCO

[Anjeles Iztueta Azkue](#)

1.- DIAGNÓSTICO Y PUNTO DE PARTIDA

La Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco cuenta con una realidad incontestable:

A. Unos índices de natalidad y fecundidad de los más bajos de Europa.

Este año la tasa de fecundidad se sitúa en 0,96 por mujer, muy lejos del índice 2,1 que garantiza el relevo generacional. Por otra parte el índice de natalidad es del 7,7 por mil habitantes, tres puntos por debajo de la Unión Europea que supone según los últimos datos el 10,8 por mil.

B. Los vascos y vascas desean tener más hijos e hijas.

Según una encuesta realizada en Julio de 2000 el 54% de la población vasca, considera que dos es el número ideal de hijos e hijas y el 18% piensa que lo ideal son tres.

De entre las razones presentadas por las que los padres y madres de hoy no tienen el número deseado de hijos e hijas, una es citada por el 68% de la población general: todo está muy caro y criarlos cuesta mucho dinero. Después aparecen como más mencionadas: si trabajas no los puedes atender (32%), pierdes comodidad, tranquilidad y libertad (26%) y ahora se comienza a tener hijos e hijas muy tarde, cuando la madre es ya mayor (23%)

C. Las mujeres se han incorporado en la Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco muy recientemente al mercado de trabajo, siendo las tasas de actividad y ocupación femeninas todavía de las más bajas de Europa.

Según los últimos datos la tasa de actividad femenina es sólo del 41,3% y de la población ocupada sólo el 37,4% corresponde a las mujeres.

En el País Vasco la fuerte crisis económica, el acceso de las mujeres al mercado de trabajo, el escaso desarrollo de servicios especiales de apoyo a la familia, la normativa del mercado de trabajo, y la dificultad de conciliar la vida laboral y familiar han retrasado la edad de tener hijos y en muchos casos incluso ha provocado la renuncia expresa a la maternidad- paternidad.

2.- LINEAS BÁSICAS DEL PLAN

A. RESOLUCIÓN DEL PARLAMENTO VASCO

El Parlamento vasco en la sesión del 5 de mayo de 2000 y tras un debate parlamentario aprobó una proposición no de ley que literalmente se transcribe:

" El Parlamento Vasco insta al Gobierno Vasco, en el contexto de la concepción de la familia como una prioridad política, a realizar y remitir el Parlamento un informe en el que se refleje:

- 1) La situación de las familias con hijos en la Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco y la atención que se les presta por los poderes públicos en sus ámbitos de actuación en materias tales como la fiscal, laboral, educativa, vivienda, transporte, etc. en relación a la incidencia que pudiera tener en el fomento de la natalidad.*
- 2) Las posibilidades de actuación de dichos poderes públicos para mejorar el sistema de protección de las familias con hijos, independientemente de su composición, y acercarlo a los estándares de la Unión Europea".*

B. PLAN INTERINSTITUCIONAL.

El Plan será liderado y coordinado por el Departamento de Justicia, Trabajo y Seguridad Social y tendrá las siguientes características:

Abordar, en el plazo de un año, un Plan Interinstitucional Integral de apoyo a las familias con hijos y conciliación de la vida familiar y laboral, con el objetivo de fomentar la natalidad y facilitar la conciliación de la vida laboral y familiar.

El Plan incluirá objetivos, medidas, calendarios, responsables institucionales y valoración económica.

La comisión política encargada de la elaboración del Plan tendrá representación de los tres niveles institucionales: Ayuntamientos, Diputaciones Forales y Gobierno Vasco. A nivel horizontal también participarán responsables políticos de las áreas de Hacienda, Asuntos sociales, Empleo, Vivienda, Educación e Instituto Vasco de la Mujer.

Asimismo, el Plan contará con participación de asociaciones y organismos representativos de la sociedad civil.

Una vez elaborado el Plan y aprobado por el Consejo de Gobierno del Gobierno Vasco, será remitido al Parlamento Vasco como comunicación para su debate.

C. RESOLUCIÓN DEL CONSEJO DE LA UNIÓN EUROPEA

El plan tendrá en cuenta las orientaciones de la Resolución del Consejo de la Unión Europea de 6 de Junio del 2000 en cuanto a participación equilibrada de hombres y mujeres en la actividad profesional y en la vida familiar.

D. ÁMBITOS DE ACTUACIÓN

1. MEDIDAS ECÓNOMICAS Y FISCALES

Concesión de prestaciones económicas directas, prestación gratuita o subvencionada de determinados servicios relacionados con las cargas familiares,

establecimiento de deducciones fiscales con el fin de aligerar determinadas cargas familiares, etcétera.

2. SERVICIOS SOCIALES DE APOYO A LAS FAMILIAS CON HIJOS

Desarrollo de servicios de apoyo al cuidado de menores, redes de guarderías y escuelas infantiles, redes de guarda volantes, comedores, armonización de horarios, etcétera.

3. MEDIDAS DE CONCILIACIÓN FAMILIAR- LABORAL

Desarrollo de normativa en cuanto a permisos de maternidad- paternidad, reducciones de jornada de trabajo, excedencias, flexibilidad horaria, etcétera.

4. SENSIBILIZACIÓN Y VALORES

Campañas de sensibilización en cuanto al valor de la maternidad- paternidad, la corresponsabilidad en las responsabilidades familiares, la igualdad de oportunidades de hombres y mujeres, etcétera.

Social Support and the Decision to Have Children

[Wolfgang Lutz](#)

We have just heard that the evolving demand for social support and social services is not only the topic of the 2000 Social Report of the European Commission, but will also constitute a key challenge to the European society and its policy-makers over the coming decades. The specific topic of this Seminar concerns the questions and challenges associated with low fertility in Europe. Are these two issues — demand for social support and concerns regarding low fertility — related or are they only artificially connected in the context of this Seminar? (Well, there had better be a real connection, because this seminar is being justified and funded in the context of the Social Report and, more specifically, the related research agenda of the European Observatory for Family Matters!) Indeed there are very important connections at different levels.

Let me start with some of the most fundamental relationships. Under a biological and evolutionary perspective, humankind has always depended on social support for reproduction. We are a so-called “k-species,” with a mode of reproduction that produces only few offspring requiring intensive long-term care. Since we are also “herd animals” living together in groups rather than in isolation, support in the rearing of children has always been shared by other family members, most importantly grandmothers and aunts, the wider kinship and through the organisation and infrastructure of the group to which the child belongs. Throughout human history, support for childrearing, socialisation and later education have been key functions of the group. Social support for reproduction was just as important as support for the defence against external enemies and the quest for food because survival and the longer-term well being of the group depended on it. This social support for reproduction has taken on very different forms in different historical epochs and in different cultures. Many volumes have been written on these issues. Here it is only important to note that from a historical point of view, the now frequently expressed opinion that the bearing and rearing of children should be the exclusive responsibility of the parents is a very recent product of the societal tendencies of nuclearisation and privatisation. This is a legitimate view which is also attractive because of its emancipatory and liberal intentions, if we assume that the private decision to have children does not have significant externalities, as the economists say, meaning that there are now consequences of the private decisions for the rest of society. Whether this is the case will be discussed extensively later in the Seminar.

Let us go back to the notion of social support in response to changing needs, as mentioned in the 2000 Social Report of the European Commission. It seems to me that here we must distinguish between the needs of individuals and the needs at the level of society. There is a large range of all kinds of individual needs, and it is inconceivable that any government could attempt to meet all the needs of its citizens. The State, as represented by governments, must set priorities and decide what needs should be considered, and under which conditions the tax money of those who are not in need should help the needy. Think of the case of disabilities, which is largely uncontroversial, where those who are able to work help those who are unable to do so. The reason is solidarity (and an element of insurance in the case that I should become disabled myself) and the hope for improved social cohesion, as the

Social Report says. Social cohesion is a goal, a need at the level of society. Hence it is clear that the priorities in meeting individual needs are being set in accordance with societal-level goals and needs.

Think of a young couple with four children, which in Europe today puts you into the highest risk group for poverty. These days, such a European couple receives certain benefits which actually differ significantly from one country to another, but under the title of poverty aversion and social cohesion, and not as a direct reward for having children. Anne Gauthier will talk about this. Similarly, if governments pay maternity leave and help to provide child-care facilities, this is done because of another social goal of equal opportunities for women and men, and not as an incentive to have children. The main question that we want to address in this Seminar is: Should the obvious need of young children and their parents continue to be met under policies exclusively derived from the societal-level goals of social cohesion and equal opportunities? Or is there, in the context of very low European fertility and the resulting heavy population ageing, an upcoming new societal-level need for slowing the process of population ageing by making moderately higher levels of reproduction a societal-level goal?

Although this Seminar is not designed to discuss the consequences of ageing — there have been and will be many seminars on this topic — let me show a graph of the future trends in the proportion of elderly to that in working age, to quickly illustrate what I am talking about.

Figure 1 gives a probabilistic forecast of the so-called old-age dependency ratio (not a very nice-sounding term), which here is simply the total population above age 60 in the European Union divided by the total population aged 20 to 60. This ratio certainly does not give an adequate representation of the “burden” associated with pay-as-you-go pension systems, since it does not consider exact ages of entry and exit from labour force, unemployment, productivity etc. However, it does give a representation of the underlying population shifts, i.e., the changes in the relation of those age groups that are the potential contributors to the pension system to those that are the potential beneficiaries. In Europe, this ratio presently stands at 38 %, i.e., there are 38 persons above age 60 for 100 persons aged 20 to 60, or more than three working-age people for one person above age 60. By 2040, this ratio is likely to more than double, to more than 70 %. As early as 2018, there will only be two working-age people for one person above age 60. In view of this virtually certain strong increase (the yellow area in Figure 1 gives the 95 % confidence interval for the projection) which is a direct consequence of the ageing of the baby boomers and the subsequent low fertility, it is irresponsible to limit the time horizon of any social policy reform to 2010 or 2015 as is often done. If fertility continues at a very low trajectory we will be on the upper side of the distribution. If it increases to some degree, we will be on the lower side. The difference between the two parts of the distributions will mean hundreds of billions of Euros of transfers between the generations. In this sense, the investment to bear and rear a child who will later pay for the pensions of others may well be interpreted as an indirect contribution to the pension fund that might be considered in addition to direct payments when it comes to the calculation of entitlement. We should keep this aspect in mind when talking about monetary transfers to children and families.

Alternatively, could birth be replaced by immigration? What may look like an obvious alternative at first sight turns out to be a very complex question and, unfortunately, a highly ideological one. There have been and will be many other Seminars on migration, and migration is not the topic of this one. At this point, it suffices to state that migration can only temporarily and under certain conditions ameliorate some of the feared negative consequences of ageing. Migration is a highly emotional and controversial issue that should be approached in a more rational manner. From a demographic perspective, it is fair to say that migration alone cannot offer a sustainable solution to population ageing under continued very low fertility conditions. The level of fertility remains key to the process of population ageing, and the topic of this Seminar is whether and by what means governments could influence the level of fertility, should they wish to do so.

In conclusion let me point to an important synthesis document by a highly distinguished panel of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences published just a few weeks ago. In the context of assessing likely future fertility trends in today's low fertility countries, they write (p. 107):

Further steep falls in fertility to very low levels are possible but unlikely to be sustained. Homeostatic mechanisms may begin to operate, although possibly with considerable lags. Societies have the capability to encourage and reward childbearing, by providing incentives or by removing disincentives for behaviour that has social benefits... In various ways, industrial societies already provide various rewards, but using them to deliberately manipulate fertility is a sensitive issue, potentially involving substantial economic transfers, and likely to be contested. Whether such policies will be adopted in specific countries depends on the indeterminate outcome of political struggles that are difficult even to visualise at this time.¹

In other words, this distinguished panel of international experts says that fertility is unlikely to stay at very low levels for long because governments will be forced to do something about it due to the problems associated with massive ageing. They foresee political struggles that actually are already starting in Europe (e.g., see the German "Kinder statt Inder" – children instead of Indian immigrants – or the fierce struggle around vested interests and so-called earned rights in the context of pension reforms). One purpose of this Seminar is to prepare for this likely struggle, to help move it away from a destructive emotional and ideological battle (war of the generations, war of the childless against those with children), and guide it into a more rational, science-based channel. In doing so, I propose that we should distinguish between the question of the desirability of fertility-enhancing efforts and the questions of whether such efforts actually work and result in higher fertility. In this context, you often hear circular arguments: "You should not try to have pro-natalist policies because they will not work in any case." Because it is often used as an argument in the discussion of the first question, it seems to make sense to attack the second question first: How and under what conditions can public policy affect the level of fertility in a low-fertility setting? There has not been a systematic treatment of this question for many years, and I am eager to see the results of our discussions here.

¹ Panel on Population Projections, John Bongaarts and Rodolfo A. Bulatao, Eds. 2000. *Beyond Six Billion. Forecasting the World's Population*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

The “Toolbox” of Public Policies to Impact on Fertility – a Global View

Peter McDonald

Introduction

In the 1999 round of the United Nation’s periodic survey of population policies (United Nations 2000), 28 countries with below replacement fertility considered that their fertility rate was ‘too low’. Since the previous survey in 1996, seven countries had shifted their view about fertility from ‘satisfactory’ to ‘too low’. The seven additions to the list were Armenia, Austria, the Czech Republic, Italy, Lithuania, Poland and, our host nation, Spain. All the English-speaking countries and all the Nordic countries, along with Belgium and the Netherlands remain satisfied with their levels of fertility, as are three Eastern European nations, Slovenia, Yugoslavia and Moldova. With falling fertility in most of the countries now satisfied with their fertility rates, it may not be long before most of these countries, including the more liberal Western countries, begin to express concern about the level of their fertility. In Australia, where fertility has fallen from 1.9 births per woman to 1.7 in the past eight years, concern is now expressed in many quarters ranging from the Greens political party to the Business Council of Australia. Thus, does low fertility matter?, is now a question more and more answered in the affirmative. This is a shift from the relative complacency of governments noted by Demeny (1997) in a paper just three years ago. Greater certainty about the issue of low fertility, however, is not matched by certainty about the appropriate range of policies to address low fertility.

This paper aims to describe a wide range of policies that might be used to stop or reverse the downward slide of fertility rates. In advance, however, several points need to be made:

1. Low fertility exists in countries with widely differing institutional structures. Policies to support fertility must work from these pre-existing structures. For example, if child care provided by low-wage, undocumented immigrants is a factor related to higher fertility rates in the United States, this does not mean that this is a policy to be recommended for Sweden which has a long-established, high-quality, state-subsidised child care system. In other words, there can be no single cross-national model for success. Each country must seek its own institutionally-appropriate approach. Also, each country must deal with the realities of its own political economy. Strategies will not be accepted if they are not supported by the populace. For example, while I argue that changes in the level of gender equity within the family are an essential element of a fertility strategy in any country, family organisation is fundamental to cultural identity and revolutionary change is rarely a possibility (McDonald 2000a; McDonald 2000b).
2. Second, as far as possible, policies to support fertility should be based upon a theory or theories as to why fertility has fallen to low levels in a particular setting. Given that fertility-support policies are likely to be expensive in one way or another, some understanding of the nature of low fertility will provide greater efficiency in policy implementation. Below, I review several possible general theories relating to low fertility. Beyond this, it is my view that well-designed market research also has a place in the definition of new policies. That is, we

should ask young people what they think would make a difference to their decision-making.

3. Countries should have some notion about what it is that they are aiming to achieve. Inevitably, demographic sustainability (at least zero population growth) is an ultimate aim for all countries. The question is how far into the future is 'ultimate'? Or expressed differently, how much of a decline in the size of the population or the labour force is the country willing to sustain before demographic sustainability is achieved? The example of Italy is used to illustrate this point.

Achievement of demographic sustainability: the example of Italy

Demographic sustainability will be achieved, of course, if fertility eventually rises again to replacement level and remains at that level. In Italy, this would mean, on average, that about 80 per cent of all women would need to have one more child than current cross-sectional fertility rates imply they are having. Given that the only advanced countries that currently have replacement level fertility are 'special cases'¹, the achievement of replacement level fertility would seem to be an unrealistic target. If fertility is to remain below replacement level, then demographic sustainability will only be achieved through a combination of below replacement fertility with some positive level of net migration. Espenshade, Bouvier and Arthur (1982) demonstrated that, if fertility is below replacement, a constant number and age distribution of immigrants (with fixed fertility and mortality schedules) lead ultimately to a stationary population. Of course, the lower is the fertility rate and the lower is the level of migration, the lower will be the size of the ultimate stationary population. Here, I use seven different combinations of future fertility and migration to indicate potential population futures for Italy.

The seven scenarios are as follows²:

1. TFR is constant at 1.2, migration rises from 80,000 per annum in 1999 to 400,00 per annum by 2029, thereafter remaining constant.
2. TFR rises from 1.2 in 1999 to 1.6 in 2019 and then remains constant, migration is constant at 200,000 per annum.
3. TFR rises from 1.2 in 1999 to 1.8 in 2024 and migration is constant at 100,000 per annum.
4. TFR rises from 1.2 in 1999 to 1.4 in 2009 and then remains constant, migration is constant at 200,000 per annum.
5. TFR rises from 1.2 in 1999 to 1.6 in 2019 and then remains constant, migration rises from 20,000 in 1999 to 150,000 in 2034 and then remains constant.
6. TFR rises from 1.2 in 1999 to 1.6 in 2019 and then remains constant, migration is constant at 100,000 per annum.
7. TFR is constant at 1.2, migration is constant at 100,000 per annum.

The consequences for total population size of these seven scenarios are shown in Figure 1. The outcomes for the proportion of the population that would be aged 65 years and over are shown in Figure 2.

¹ The special cases are the United States and New Zealand. In the United States, the higher fertility of Hispanic women and the higher fertility of teenagers currently add about 0.3 to the US Total Fertility Rate. In New Zealand, the higher fertility of Maori adds about 0.2 to the NZ Total Fertility Rate.

² All scenarios have a common mortality assumption in which expectation of life rises by one year every ten years commencing with expectations of life in 1999 of 75.5 for men and 82.0 for women.

If the aim is to keep the total population around its present size, this is achieved by Scenarios 1, 2 and 3. As expected, the scenarios in which fertility rises lead to a lower percentage aged 65 years and over than the projection that relies solely on migration to achieve a constant population size. Under Scenario 1, Italy would be expected to absorb two million immigrants every five years into the endless future, an extremely unlikely eventuality. The scenario serves to indicate that, for Italy, avoidance of population decline necessarily involves a rise in fertility³. However, even when fertility rises from 1.2 to 1.6 births per woman (Scenario 2), Italy would still require migration of 200,000 per annum (starting immediately) to maintain its present population size. Absorption of one million new residents every five years (again into the endless future) would also be a substantial task for a country not accustomed to high levels of immigration⁴. If this level of immigration is still not a reasonable possibility, the only other option consistent with maintaining a constant population size would be an even higher fertility rate. Scenario 3 with fertility at 1.8 births per woman has a migration rate of 150,000 per annum, a level that is very high in historical perspective, but may be manageable. With Scenario 3, the issue becomes the likelihood of the future path of fertility. Virtually all European countries have fertility rates that are below 1.8 births per woman, and many are in the process of falling further below this level. Nevertheless, the scenario allows 25 years for fertility to rise to 1.8.

If the increases in fertility or migration required to maintain Italy's population at its present level are considered to be too high, an alternative option is to allow the population size to fall for a time until it becomes stationary at a lower level than the present population. Suppose, for example that Italy was prepared to let its population fall by about ten million over the next 100 years or so, then Scenarios 4 and 5 would be consistent with this pathway. Of the two, raising fertility to 1.6 births per woman plus a slow rise in migration to 150,000 per annum (Scenario 5) is probably a more acceptable objective than the immediate rise of net migration to 200,000 per annum implied by Scenario 4. In addition, the proportion aged 65 years and over would be significantly lower for Scenario 5 than for Scenario 4. The impact of a fall in population size on labour supply can be offset through rises in labour force participation rates (McDonald and Kippen 2000). As participation rates in Italy are low, there is considerable scope for pursuing this approach. For example, if Italy were to follow Scenario 5, labour supply could be maintained at its present level if the participation rates of Italian men returned to what they were 30 years ago and if the participation rates of Italian women rose to those now applying for women in Sweden. However, the combined rises in fertility and labour force participation rates of women imply changes in the current organisation of work and family in Italy, a policy approach discussed extensively below.

Finally, Italy could aim for stationarity of its population at even lower levels. In Scenario 6, the total population would fall slowly over the next 100 years to about 43 million in 2099. The population would continue to fall after 2099 and would ultimately

³ Other countries with below replacement fertility, such as Australia, can achieve some population growth through manageable levels of migration without any rise in fertility. For these countries, the issue is sustaining fertility at present levels.

⁴ To provide perspective, 200,000 annual net migration for Italy is a rate of migration of 0.35 per cent per annum. This is a level well below that absorbed by countries such as Canada and Australia over the past 50 years.

achieve a stationary population of about 28 million. In Scenario 7 (continuation of Italy's current demography), the total population would fall fairly rapidly over the next 100 years to about 29 million in 2099. Stationarity for this scenario ultimately would be achieved at a population of 15 million. Scenario 6 is instructive in that many observers would consider its demographic elements, an increase in fertility to 1.6 in combination with 100,000 migrants per annum, as a good result for Italy given its current demography.

Italians themselves can decide upon the future population course that they consider the most favourable. Of course, constant conditions will not hold over such long periods of time, but continual reassessment of the intended pathway is possible.

The persistence of below replacement level fertility implies that countries need to be considering strategies for their population futures, strategies for demographic sustainability. This involves at least vague but broadly reasonable targets for future fertility and migration, as well as notions about desirable future population size. It is likely also to involve targets for labour force participation rates for both men and women. As pointed out in a previous paper, optimal strategies are likely to vary substantially across the advanced countries (McDonald and Kippen 2000). For most European countries, however, increases in fertility rates are certain to be part of the package.

Theories of low fertility⁵

If countries are to embark on a strategy to increase their fertility rates (or to stop the rate falling any further), an understanding of the possible reasons for low fertility is fundamental. Here, I provide theoretical perspectives under four headings: rational choice theory, risk aversion theory, post-materialist values theory, and gender equity theory. These theories, though separately presented, should not be considered as mutually exclusive alternatives. All have relevance and there are distinct dimensions of overlap between them.

Rational choice theory

Rational choice theory states that, in deciding to have a child, people make the considered calculation that the benefits of an additional child outweigh the costs. While much of the cost may be figured in dollar terms, there are no dollar benefits. Instead, the benefits consist of dimensions of a psychological nature that are not readily quantifiable. Coleman (1998) refers to these benefits as 'immanent values'. One way to think about the benefits of a child in this circumstance is in terms of net benefit thresholds (the psychological benefits less the psychological costs). That is, people have some calculus of the psychological gain to them of having the next child. This will be highly variable across individuals. If the economic costs of children rise, some individual psychological thresholds will be crossed and decisions will be made not to have the next child.

The dimensions of the psychological benefits of having a child will vary according to the birth order of the child. Having the first child provides benefits including the status

⁵ The argument here is largely repeated from McDonald (2000c) and McDonald (2000d), both contributions to the debate on low fertility in Australia.

of being a parent, 'being a family', having offspring who will carry on the family, meeting the expectations of others, having a baby who will be fun and will grow up and love you, fulfilling childhood dreams, or providing vicarious pleasure from the child's success. The decision to have a second child may be more related to the strength of the notion that each child should have at least one sibling, or to having a child of the other sex. Those who have a third child may value at least three children as a 'real' family, or they may be still trying for a child of the sex that they don't have. Those who have a fourth child may simply love children. It is likely that the level of the net psychological benefits threshold falls as birth order rises. That is, the highest psychological threshold relates to the first child. Also, it is very likely that the level of the threshold falls as people get older. That is, all other things being equal, a woman at age 29 may feel more inclined to have a second child than a woman at age 39. Psychological costs probably rise with age or, perhaps, increased age leads to downward rationalisation of the perceived benefits. Accordingly, as the age at childbearing increases, people will be less likely to have additional children.

Demographic research to this point has given too little attention to changes in and determinants of the numbers of children that women are having; that is, to the proportions who have no children, one child, two children, and so on. Differences between the average fertility levels across contemporary industrialised countries appear to be less due to differences in the proportions of childless women than in the proportions that have three or more children (McDonald 2000a). It is worth contemplating that among a group of women, if 25 per cent have no children and 15 per cent have one child, the group will only achieve replacement level fertility on average if the remaining 60 per cent of women have an average of 3.2 children each. This scenario is not unlike the experience of generations of women born early in the 20th century, but the very high parities implied for some women by this scenario and achieved in the past are extremely unlikely to recur in the foreseeable future.

Rational choice theory implies that, if we wish to have a positive impact on fertility decision-making, we should try to raise the psychological benefits thresholds or to reduce the economic costs of children. The first is not readily amenable to policy, although a general sense that a society is child-oriented or child-friendly probably has some effect in raising thresholds. If children are always portrayed as a negative (a threat to a good relationship, an obstacle to having a good time, as potential drug addicts or delinquents) or if social institutions do not make allowances for the possibility that a person has children (no dogs or children allowed), then thresholds will tend to be lower. Encouragement of earlier childbearing could also be a way in which psychological thresholds might be raised. There is no question that the remarkably different history of fertility in the United States in the 1990s and its maintenance at a higher level than in any other industrialised country is related to the much earlier onset of childbearing in the USA (Lesthaeghe and Moors 2000; Frejka and Calot 2000). Recently, Singapore considered the introduction of a large tax rebate that would be paid to women if they had their first child before the age of 28 years.

Coleman (1998) gives his main attention to the other side of the equation, lowering the costs of children. He contrasts the welfare state approach to achieving this end (Sweden) with the market approach (USA). In fact, Folbre (1999) has shown that, in regard to the state taking on the costs of children, the United States is more of a

welfare state than is often thought. The welfare state approach is to provide financial transfers to those who have children through the tax-transfer system or to provide free or subsidised children's services to parents. Hoem and Hoem (1997) assert that fertility in Sweden did respond to positive welfare state initiatives in the late 1980s and has responded in the opposite direction with the rolling back of the welfare state in the 1990s. Coleman (1998) makes the point that the Swedish case indicates that dependency upon welfare state initiatives may not be sustainable and, in these circumstances, development of market-based approaches may be a better option. He points to the provision of child care in the United States by the market as an example of this possibility. He does not report, however, that child care tax credits and employer-sponsored dependent care pre-tax accounts can provide American parents with child care reimbursements ranging from \$480 to \$2,000 per year (Folbre 1999). Also, there is an issue in the United States about the quality of care provided in child care. A great deal of child care in the United States is provided by undocumented immigrants who work in a black economy that is characterised by very low wages. Furthermore, change from a welfare state approach to a market approach is constrained by considerable institutional and cultural inertia. For example, as already mentioned above, Swedish parents have become accustomed to a particular child-care system that they see as affordable and of high quality. A switch to a new market-oriented system staffed by undocumented immigrants would be unlikely to have popular appeal. In the intermediate term, rolling back the welfare state involves additional costs to parents who wish to maintain their use of good quality child care.

Costs of children can be divided into two categories, direct and indirect costs. The direct cost of a child is the actual dollar expenditure on the child less any financial benefits that are received through the tax-transfer system because of the presence of the child. Free or subsidised services reduce the expenditure that parents would otherwise have incurred. I would argue that parents and potential parents are well attuned to changes in the direct costs of children within their own society. If they perceive that children have become more expensive then psychological benefit thresholds will be put to the test.

The indirect cost of a child is the earnings lost because of the need to spend time bearing and caring for the child. Research in several countries has shown that the indirect cost of the first child is considerably greater than the indirect cost of later children (Joshi 1998; Beggs and Chapman 1988). Direct costs are also higher for the first child but direct costs are flatter than indirect costs as the number of children rises. Indirect costs fall as society is organised in such a way that parents can combine work and family. This may partly explain the fact that countries with high labour force participation rates for mothers have relatively high fertility and countries with low participation of mothers have very low fertility (Coleman 1998). There is a strong argument that indirect costs are more significant in determining whether a woman has a first child than direct costs, while direct costs are more significant in decision-making about later children. Chapman et al. (1999) have shown that indirect costs have fallen in Australia from the 1980s to the 1990s as more mothers have been able to participate in the labour force and, hence, to lower the earnings forgone through having a child. This trend has probably kept first birth rates at a higher level than would otherwise have been the case.

The above discussion has a couple orientation. A rational choice calculus might also be considered in relation to having a birth outside of marriage or to decisions about marrying.

Risk aversion theory

Risk aversion theory adds another dimension to rational choice theory. The assumption of rational choice theory is that people have a good knowledge or understanding of the costs and benefits of having the next child. Risk aversion theory takes off from the point that the costs and benefits are all future costs and benefits and, accordingly, we cannot know with certainty what those costs will be. In having a child, people are making a decision to change their future life course and hence their decision depends upon their future orientation (McDonald 1996). If there is a perception that economic, social, intimate or personal futures are uncertain, decision makers may err on the side of safety in order to avert risk. Hobcraft (1996) and Coleman (1998) point to the rise of economic uncertainty. Jobs are no longer lifetime jobs. There is a strong economic cycle of booms and busts. Geographic mobility may be required for employment purposes. Interest rates can be expected to shift by large amounts in short periods. Housing prices fluctuate, but we are never exactly sure what part of the cycle we are on. Risk aversion theory implies investment in economic security (education, attachment to the labour force, long hours of work, savings) rather than in the insecurity that accompanies having children (low income for a period, uncertainty of return to the labour force, higher consumption expenditure, economic responsibility for dependants). B. Hoem (2000) has reported that during poor economic circumstances in Sweden, involvement in full-time education for 21-24 year old women rose from 14 per cent in 1989 to 41 per cent in 1996. At ages 25-28 years, the rise was from 9 per cent to 22 per cent. This surely is investment in self and investment in future security on a large scale. Hoem also adds that widespread cut-backs in government services spread a climate of pessimism among young people that encouraged them to adopt risk-averse behaviours.

Risk aversion might also be applied to the social, intimate or personal spheres. There is a risk that children will disrupt the relationship of the parents. There is a risk that children will follow pathways that cause parents considerable anxiety. There is a risk that some harm will come to the child. There is a risk that the relationship will break up and we will be left alone to support the child. There is a risk that we shall have enough trouble coping with a difficult world on our own, let alone with children. There is a risk that the social trend towards child-unfriendly societies will continue. There is a risk that public supports for families with children will be rolled back. We can avoid all of these risks by limiting the number of children we have.

Risk aversion may also affect whether people marry. While rates of childbearing outside of marriage are rising, rates of childbearing within marriage are certainly still much higher. A fall in the proportion of people marrying will therefore tend to lower the birth rate. Young women in Japan see marriage itself as a risk to their future employment. In Italy, it is suggested, perceived economic risks are a determinant of the low marriage rates.

Risk aversion is not readily amenable to policy initiatives. Insurance is a conventional approach to other forms of risk, but its use is certainly not common in regard to the

risks associated with raising children. Generally, families with children spend almost all of their money or they spend more than the money they have (dis-savings). Thus, the prospect of substantial expenditure on insurance against the broad range of risks of having children is difficult to contemplate. A well-developed welfare state is a more common way of smoothing out risks of this sort. Job loss is covered by social security arrangements, services for children are costless or subsidised, unforeseen health costs are covered, and so on. The present direction of social policy, however, is to pass the risks and the costs back on to individuals and families and away from the state. Greater employment security would also reduce the risks involved in having children, but, again, the direction of industrial policy is to release the employer from obligations to the employee. The direction of social and economic policy in almost all industrialised countries is to increase the risks that people face, rather than to reduce them.

Post-materialist values theory

Post-materialist values theory is associated with Second Demographic Transition theory (Lesthaeghe and Moors 1996; van de Kaa 1997). This theory stipulates that changes in social and demographic behaviour have been driven by the growth of the values of individual self-realisation, satisfaction of personal preferences, liberalism and freedom from traditional forces of authority, particularly religion. This, following Inglehart (1977), is all made possible by emancipation from material concerns in modern prosperous societies. These values have been shown to have been associated with increases in divorce rates, cohabitation and ex-nuptial births. There is little doubt that these forms of behaviour are much more prominent in the more liberal societies of Nordic countries and English-speaking countries than in the more traditional family cultures of countries of Southern Europe, Germanic countries and Asian developed countries. However, as Coleman (1998) indicates, it is evident that, among the advanced countries, fertility is higher in the liberal societies than in the traditional societies. Thus, societies that maintain traditional behaviour seem to be considerably less well able to reproduce themselves than the more liberal societies. I consider that the gender equity theory described below provides an explanation of why it is that societies that hold fast to traditional family systems are societies that have very low fertility. Indeed, it is my strong view, based on gender equity theory, that attempts to restore 'traditional family values' – the male breadwinner of the family – will entrench low fertility. Descriptions of women as selfish or not prepared to do their national duty was an approach to falling fertility prominent in the past. It was incorrect then but is now counter-productive because it is divisive and because it reduces the policy debate to a trivial level easily lampooned in the popular press. Yet, this viewpoint is still evident in some countries. In Japan, young people who delay marriage and childbearing are frequently described in the media as 'parasite singles' and, in Austria, a minister of government has called upon women to fulfil their national duty of reproduction. Japan's and Austria's fertility continue to languish at very low levels.

Another finding that is counter to the theory that low fertility has been due to the growth of post-materialist values is the survey evidence from many advanced countries that women in their early twenties express preferences for numbers of children that are, on average, above replacement level (van de Kaa 1997; McDonald 1998; FFS references). As they age through their twenties, preferences fall but

remain well above actual behaviour. This suggests a willingness on the part of women to have more children than they eventually actually have. That is, it is costs, uncertainty and the nature of social institutions that combine to limit the number of children that women have, not values that they develop before their early twenties.

The theory that post-materialist values encourage low fertility is a classic example of the 'ecological fallacy'. Within any one society, on average, individual women who are more highly educated, less religious, more urban or more liberal in their attitudes and values have lower fertility than the less educated, the more religious, the more rural and the more conservative. This finding is then used to draw the fallacious conclusion across societies that more liberal societies will have lower fertility than more conservative societies. The lesson from this ecological fallacy is that a country's low fertility should not be addressed by laying the blame selectively upon a sub-group of women within a given society, those with low fertility. Rather low fertility is a societal phenomenon related to the structure of social institutions. Indications of the role of social institutions in the construction of low fertility are evident in the above discussions of rational choice theory and risk aversion theory. Gender equity theory provides the rationale for an emphasis upon the structure of social institutions in addressing low fertility.

Gender equity theory

I have addressed the association of gender equity and fertility in two recent publications (McDonald 2000a; 2000b). The hypothesised association is summarised in Figure 3. The essential feature of this work is the division of gender equity into two components: gender equity in family-oriented institutions and gender equity in individual oriented institutions. I argue that fertility falls from high levels to moderate levels in association with a shift from low to moderate levels of gender equity within the family. The essential feature here is the extension of decision-making power within the family, especially power in regard to fertility determination, to women. Moderate fertility and extended control by women over their own fertility is then associated with a rapid increase in gender equity in individual-oriented institutions that, in turn, leads to very low fertility rates. Very low fertility is the product of the combination of high gender equity in individual-oriented institutions with the persistence of only moderate gender equity in family-oriented institutions, that is, the continuation of the male breadwinner model of the family as the base of family-oriented institutions. Finally, it is hypothesised that fertility will only rise from very low levels if gender equity moves to high levels in family-oriented institutions, that is, if the male breadwinner model of the family ceases to be the assumption upon which family-oriented institutions are founded. Figure 3 depicts two transition paths that in broad terms could describe the difference in transition between societies that are more liberal in their family orientation (labelled 1) and those that are more conservative (labelled 2). The transition from very low fertility to low fertility will be easier for the liberal countries. Indeed, some countries that are more liberal in their family orientation may never actually experience very low fertility (Norway is probably the leading candidate for this description).

In less theoretical terms and focusing on the issue of this seminar, gender equity theory can be described in the following way. Social institutions in advanced countries, until recently, have been founded upon an assumption of the male bread winner model of the family under which the father goes out to work while the mother stays at home to look after the children. The principle underlying this model is that there is a natural differentiation between men and women that requires the man to be the provider and protector and the woman to be the carer and reproducer. Since the 1960s in particular, women have asserted their rights as individuals in areas such as education and market employment to the extent that these social institutions are now characterised by a high degree of gender equity.

The thrust of gender equity theory is that very low levels of fertility in advanced countries today can be explained in terms of incoherence between the levels of gender equity applying in different social institutions. In countries with very low levels of fertility, it is postulated that the levels of gender equity in institutions that deal with people as individuals, such as education and market employment, are high while, on the other hand, the levels of gender equity applying in institutions that deal with people as members of families, such as industrial relations (the terms and conditions of employment), family services, the tax system, social security and the family itself are low. Put more simply and in terms similar to those expressed by Chesnais (1996, 1998) and Esping-Andersen (1996), if women are provided with opportunities near to equivalent to those of men in education and market employment, but these opportunities are severely curtailed by having children, then, on average, women will restrict the number of children that they have to an extent which leaves fertility at a very low, long-term level. While gender equity in individual-oriented institutions has progressed in all advanced countries, the male breadwinner model still underpins family-oriented social institutions. The more traditional the society in regard to its family system, the greater is the level of incoherence between social institutions and the lower is fertility. This can explain why the lowest fertility rates in the world are found in the countries of southern Europe and in other societies with traditional, male-dominated family systems.

The new market-based economy and its impact on fertility

It can be argued that the achievement of increases in fertility is made more difficult by the organisation of the new market-based economy. Since the 1980s, the industrialised countries of the world have restructured their economies in line with a philosophy that the free operation of the market is the most efficient and effective form of economic organisation. Regulations and restrictions have been reduced so that capital can flow easily in the direction that maximises business efficiency and profit. The theory is that profitable businesses mean improvements in employment and wages and, hence, in economic wellbeing. The characteristics of this new economic regime are small government and low taxation, free flow of capital across international boundaries, free trade, freedom for employers and workers to determine wages and working conditions, and curtailment of government-funded social welfare. In distributional terms, the system rewards innovation and hard work and, hence, provides incentives for

both. Government, both national and international, takes on a new role as facilitator and regulator of this system.

In the 1990s, this system has produced lower levels of unemployment in many industrialised countries and, on average, greater prosperity. However, there are questions about its distributional outcomes. The system is unforgiving of its casualties whether they be individuals, companies or nations. Companies and nations are penalised for failure through out-flow of capital at short notice. Individuals are penalised for failure by loss of their income source. The rewards may be greater under this system than under the former system of protection, but the risks are also greater. Most countries deal with the casualties of the market through their welfare systems, but these are increasingly seen as being under threat. In the prospect that the welfare safety net is not guaranteed, people adopt risk-averse behaviours.

In continental Europe, accommodation to the workings of the new market economy has been particularly problematic because of the prior existence of high fixed costs of labour and low labour force participation, both outcomes of the organisation of continental European welfare states (Esping-Andersen 1996: 78-84). Esping-Andersen argues cogently that the continental European welfare state in adjusting to the new market economy has inhibited job growth particularly the growth of service-sector jobs and part-time work. There is a very strong tendency among those in mainstream jobs to protect their rights in the welfare system. The result is an insider-outsider labour market in which the insiders tend to be middle aged males and the outsiders are women and younger people. The safest strategy for women and young people is to become an 'insider' and to delay or eschew family formation. The system is one of a conservative, family-wage, welfare state still based on the presumption of the male breadwinner model of the family. Esping-Andersen is pessimistic that these states can extricate themselves from this situation because of the vested interests of the insider males.

The market approach deals with individuals as inputs to the system of production. Consequently, in order to protect themselves from risk, individuals must maximise their utility to the market. This means that they need to focus upon the acquisition of saleable skills, work experience and a marketable reputation. At the same time, they need to accumulate savings or wealth as a personal safety net. They also need to maintain flexibility of time and place so that they can react to opportunities as they arise. The risk-averse individual in a world that rewards market production is unwise to devote time or money to social reproduction. Social reproduction involves altruism, that is, time and money devoted to others or to the society at large. For the risk-averse in a free market economy, altruism is equivalent to foolhardiness.

Family is at the heart of social reproduction. It is the place where altruism abounds. There are people and politicians who believe that the public world of the market economy and the private world of the family can be separate worlds; that an individual can be highly competitive, individualistic and risk-averse in the market but then be self-sacrificing, altruistic and risk-accepting within the family. The only explanation I can give for this logic is that these are people who still

believe in the separation of the roles of men and women; that market production is a male responsibility and social reproduction is a female responsibility. A worker with a family can be flexible to the demands of market production if he has a wife at home taking care of social reproduction. Indeed, conservative reaction to low fertility sometimes takes this direction.

However, young women today are equipped for market production at a level at least equivalent to young men and employers are very happy to employ women in the market economy. Where human capital counts, the free market will employ a skilled woman before an unskilled man, even before a man slightly less skilled than the woman. The risk-averse woman of today will ensure that she is able to support herself and, given the chance of relationship breakdown, will be careful not to put herself in a position of dependency upon a man. Couples recognise that dual employment provides a hedge against job loss for either one and banks reinforce this by providing housing mortgages on the basis of two incomes. Parents and schools encourage young women to accumulate skills that will enable them to remain attached to the labour force. As a result, there are very few young women today who see their future lives in terms of finding a husband and never thereafter being engaged in market work. Reinforcement of the male breadwinner model of the family is not the solution to the dilemma that we now face in maintaining social reproduction in combination with a free market approach to economic production.

The foundation of social reproduction is the birth, nurture and socialisation of the next generation. The failure of the social and economic system that we have today is most evidenced by our failure to be able to establish this foundation. For the past 20 years, almost all industrialised countries have had rates of birth that are below the level that reproduces the population. What kind of society cannot even reproduce itself? The answer is the society based on the new market economy.

The market is not interested in this issue because the market is very short-term in its orientation. Firms and governments become caught up in this short-term vision and with good reason because they tend to be punished by the financial markets for any short-term lapse. The 1994 Angel Plan in Japan which supported family-friendly work policies is said to have failed because it was undermined by corporate attitudes (JOICFP News August 2000: 7). The Council on Population Problems of the Government of Japan (1997: 21) called for the need to combat personnel practices that discriminate against those who put family first.

With focus on the short term, long term investment tends to fall off the agenda for both firms and governments. In the neo-classical economic model, social organisation is exogenous, well covered by the assumption of *ceteris paribus*. The long term is in the lap of the neo-classical god, the price mechanism. We can have faith that, in good time, it will correct for whatever we need. As children become scarcer, their value to society will increase and we will pay more to those who produce them. This may be so but, if the market is reacting to a shortage of workers induced by previous low birth rates, an increase in births does not feed into the labour force for around 20-25 years. That is, the lag

time to response can be very long indeed and major demographic problems can be created in the interim. Population policy is policy for the very long term. We can project ahead now and see that very low birth rates such as those that apply in Japan and most of Europe today will lead to age structures that are unsustainable. There is no sign at all that the market price mechanism is about to correct for this situation in Japan or Europe. Indeed, the opposite is true. The market continues to produce risk-averse workers for whom children are a considerable risk. Employment structure in many countries still remains wedded to the male breadwinner or family wage model.

Thus, even if the market were to have highly favourable outcomes such that unemployment fell to very low levels and real incomes rose, this would not necessarily stimulate an increase in fertility. The reason is that fertility decision-making in the market economy has much more to do with relative wellbeing than with absolute wellbeing. No matter how successful the market is, under present arrangements in most countries, it will always provide lower benefits to those with children than to those without children. Likewise the benefits of the market will fall as the number of children increases. The collapse of birth rates in most industrialised countries is telling evidence of the failure of the market approach to allow social reproduction to proceed. There is an argument that what is required is a new social contract that enables the market approach to proceed but which, at the same time, provides just rewards to social reproduction. Thus, although in the next section I describe a range of policy initiatives that might be used to address very low fertility, the argument in this and the previous section is that successful policy will almost certainly involve changes in social and economic organisation on a much wider scale. These changes must involve an invigoration of the concept of horizontal equity. That is, allowing for income-earning potential, society must attempt to equalise the economic outcomes for different family configurations. This is equivalent to a strong assertion that children are a social good and not merely a private, optional pleasure. The new social contract also must be one that is based in gender equity and not in the male breadwinner model of the family. An argument that there is a need for new social arrangements that reward altruism has been made by Folbre (1997).

Nevertheless, if the market is able to improve the economic wellbeing of women and young people, as it has done to a large extent in the United States, this is a highly desirable end. In many European countries, particularly Eastern European countries, there is a strong argument that low fertility is related to poor economic conditions.

Some principles of action

The realignment of economic outcomes and gender equity between those with children and those without children necessarily involves the intervention of government, especially when we are concerned about the quality of outcomes for children. The market alone, as argued above, is likely to be a highly inadequate mechanism to achieve the desired outcome. On this point, Demeny (1986: 476) argued that fertility behaviour was 'a legitimate object of attention for collective and, in particular, governmental action':

When socially advantageous modification of demographic behaviour is beyond the capacity of private markets to provide, it assumes the character of a public good that must be acquired, if at all, through the political market place.

While leadership must inevitably come from government, the ideal arrangement is a partnership between government, employers and families, a whole-of-society approach. Policy will not work if it has to deal with a recalcitrant corporate sector or if it becomes bogged down in divisive social debate.

As argued above, we should have a broad target for the fertility level that we would like to achieve. For example, the target for Italy may be an increase in the TFR from 1.2 to 1.6 over the next 15-20 years. Modest targets can provide demographic sustainability while being more likely to gain social acceptance and more likely to be successful. An increase of TFR from 1.2 to 1.6 means that, on average, 40 per cent of women will have one additional child, or an additional 10 per cent for each five-year period over the next 20 years. The implication of this relatively modest aim is that attention should be focused on those people who would like to have a child or an additional child if circumstances were more favourable. This same point has been made recently by the Council on Population Problems of the Government of Japan (1997: 20) in its report on future fertility policy for Japan. Survey evidence suggests that there are sufficient people of this description in most low fertility countries today (Retherford et al. 1996; Kiernan 1998; Coleman 1998; van de Kaa 1998; McDonald 1998; Ichimura and Ogawa 2000; Van Peer 2000). Chesnais (1998; 83), somewhat ironically, refers to this group as having a 'latent demand for family support'. The policy effort will be dissipated very quickly if those who are highly committed to remaining childless or to not having another child become the targets of the policy debate. The argument is not about the committed childless person being morally pressured to have a child but about all of society providing just support to those who do have children. Labelling of the childless or sections of the society who have low fertility as selfish or hedonistic will fail⁶; providing economic benefits, a more secure future and gender equity to those who want to have a child or an additional child has a chance of success.

Inevitably, new arrangements that support fertility will involve winners and losers compared to present arrangements. As already indicated, middle-aged males may need to be convinced to give up some of their privileges. Also, there may be a need to consider a restructuring of intergenerational transfers. Social insurance systems tend to provide major benefits to middle-aged and older people at the expense of the young. The ageing of the population is putting severe fiscal pressure upon these systems. One policy approach to this situation has been to cut back government expenditure on family and children's services, to increase taxes or social security contributions or to reduce benefits provided by employers. These are all approaches that are not fertility-friendly. An analysis of social security spending in Japan in 1997 revealed that funding for children and families was 2.3 trillion yen compared with 45.1 trillion yen for benefits for the elderly (reported in JOICFP News, no. 314, August 2000: 7). A per capita comparison would be even more startling. The same article reports Japan's TFR falling to 1.34 in 1999. Massimo Livi-Bacci is reported in The New York Times (Special report by Michael Specter, July 10 1998) as characterising Europe as 'Rich old people supported by the labour of poor young people. No

⁶ The campaign waged by the Japanese press against 'parasite singles' is a case in point.

wonder nobody wants to have children'. A more subtle blow to young people is the lowering of progressivity in income tax rates. Less progressive taxation systems provide relatively higher benefits to higher income earners who tend not to be young people on the verge of family formation⁷.

Good fertility policy also involves widespread access to a full range of methods of fertility control. While the Pontifical Council for the Family (1998) in a declaration relating to low fertility decried the spread of chemical methods of contraception, the Council on Population Problems of the Government of Japan (1997) found that women in Japan were reluctant to marry because the methods of contraception available were mainly male methods. That is, if women are not in a position to control their own fertility, they may not form a relationship with a man. Thus, greater access to the contraceptive pill in Japan is considered to be a pronatalist policy because it would promote marriage.

Finally, fertility policies should be considered in the context of non-fertility population and labour supply policies. For most countries, a package involving increased fertility, increased immigration and an increase in labour force participation rates is likely to be a more successful approach than reliance on one of these alone.

However, in all countries, all of these principles of action will be resisted to a varying extent by sections of the population. In the end, social acceptance of the proposed policy direction may be a greater obstacle to progress than formulation of the appropriate policies.

The policy tool-box

The long background that I have provided in arriving at the topic of this paper serves to indicate that I believe that reversal of low fertility is about inventing a new machine, not about the kinds of tools that are required to keep the present machine running. In like manner, Demeny (1997: 10) states that societies facing depopulation must move 'from the domain of ordinary economic calculus to the domain of political economy: from redistributive jockeying to agreement on fundamental changes in the constitutional contract that sets the rules of societal interaction in a polity'. The right tools will not work on the wrong machine. More fundamentally, the right tools will not work unless there is widespread social support for what it is that the machine produces.

Caldwell et al. (1998: 10, 18) conclude there are very few available tools that have not already been used in some context and they report a long list of papers and reports that have canvassed potential low fertility policies. Other recent studies that have reported the list of possible policies are United Nations (1999), Hoem et al. (1999) and Hugo (2000). The list is sufficiently long to benefit from some classification. Heitlinger (1991: 350-359) reviewed the various classifications that have been used in the literature. Her own classification, with some modifications, is probably still applicable. With modifications to Heitlinger (1991:353), three categories of fertility policy can be described:

⁷ For example, the new tax system introduced in Australia in 2000 has provided considerably higher benefits to high-income earners than to those with 'beginning of career' incomes. It cannot be expected to have beneficial outcomes for the falling Australian fertility rate.

1. Financial incentives,
2. Support for parents to combine work and family,
3. Broad social change supportive of children and parenting

With a great deal of overlap, these three categories can be seen as corresponding to the three theories, respectively, rational choice theory, gender equity theory and risk aversion theory.

1. Financial incentives

Periodic cash payments

This includes all child-related payments made in the form of cash. Principally, this takes the form of regular payments to parents for each child. The payments might vary according to the age of the child. For example, it could be considered that a higher payment should be made when a child is very young to compensate for the expected loss of income of parents at that stage. Alternatively, payments may be higher when children are older and more expensive. The payment may also vary by birth order. If the third child is considered to be the important child as far as fertility policy is concerned, then a much larger payment could apply to this (and subsequent) children. Hoem et al. (1999) discuss the importance of measures to support the third child using Sweden and Austria as examples. Essentially, these payments are a form of horizontal equity, that is, recognition through the tax-transfer system of the additional costs of raising children. Some vertical equity might be applied if the payments are income-tested, that is, if they are reduced or eliminated as income rises. It should be noted, however, that income-tested payments can operate as a work disincentive for second earners which, in turn, could be a disincentive to have the child. Cash payments have the advantage that they can be directed to the child's principal carer. While the ultimate aim may be gender equity in parenting roles, studies in Australia have indicated that cash payments to the mother of the child are more likely to be used for the child's benefit than tax cuts for the father of the child. Heitlinger (1991; 353) points out that direct financial incentives typically benefit the individual with the higher income, usually the man. 'As such, these policies tend to reflect an empirically incorrect assumption that per capita income is shared and pooled equitably within families'.

Lump sum payments or loans

This can include payments at the time of birth of a baby (baby bonus, maternity benefit), at the time a child starts school or at some other age. An establishment loan (family founding loan) may be provided at the start of a marriage (relationship) with segments of the loan being written off as the couple has each child. There could be endowment schemes contributed to by the government and the family to spread the costs of children across the lifetime. Repayments of loans might be tied to a small percentage of earned income, that is, child costs might be paid off as incomes rise. Births might be deemed to be equivalent to (large) lump sum contributions to social insurance or retirement pension schemes. However, immediate benefits are more likely to be successful than deferred benefits. That is, assistance with current housing costs is probably more likely to affect fertility decision-making than the promise of free university education or a higher age pension.

Tax rebates, credits or deductions

This includes tax reductions or credits based on the presence of a child. Again, these measures can be targeted to children of different ages or different birth orders. Rebates and credits allow for social equity; deductions are generally socially inequitable with the rich benefiting most. Tax measures, as discussed in the previous section, may not be as effective as cash payments because they tend to be directed to the father rather than to the mother. The United Kingdom has recently introduced a Working Families Tax Credit (Cabinet Office, United Kingdom 1998) while the Australian Government has recently extended tax rebates on the basis of the presence of children. In the Australian case, however, rebates are much more beneficial to one-income families than to two-income families and this has created major work disincentives for second earners that are very unlikely to be favourable to fertility. The classic case of the use of tax rebates is Singapore (Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore 2000). Singapore provides for very large tax rebates for families who have a second child before the mother turns 32. If the second child is born before the mother is 28 years old, the rebate is Singapore\$20,000. Additional rebates are provided to working mothers for third and fourth children if the mother elects to be taxed separately. Finally, the rebates can be claimed within a period of nine years following the birth of the child. While cash payments may be more closely targeted to the need (more likely to be spent on the child) than benefits delivered through the tax system, tax expenditures are less visible to those concerned with fiscal restraint than are cash expenditures. Tax approaches may thus be more politically sustainable in certain contexts than cash approaches.

Free or subsidised services or goods for children

Instead of providing cash or tax benefits, child benefits may be provided in the form of free or subsidised services. The likely services are education at all levels, medical and dental services, public transport, recreation services such as sporting, entertainment, leisure or artistic activities. Child care fits in this category but is probably more properly classified under work-family supports. Subsidised goods could include textbooks, educational materials, leisure and sporting equipment. This category might also include rebates on services such as electricity, petrol, car registrations and insurance, and so on. Perhaps families could carry a card that gave them varying entitlements (depending on numbers of children) to reduced consumption taxes, though such a scheme is probably unworkable.

Housing subsidies

Surveys of young people in Europe suggest that housing costs are a major consideration in family formation decisions. For example, one third of the 20-39 year old respondents in the Austrian Population Policy Acceptance Survey said that inadequate housing conditions were an important reason for not having children or not having another child (Hoem et al. 1999: 23). Hence, housing subsidies are singled out here for specific consideration. Housing subsidies can take all of the forms of the subsidies listed above: periodic cash payments such as housing benefits (The National Social Insurance Board, Sweden 1999), lump sum cash payments (first home buyer grants or mortgage reductions at the birth of each child), tax rebates or deductions for housing costs, or subsidies to housing-related services. If there are taxes associated with housing, tax exemptions are another possible approach. Governments may also subsidise construction costs or provide public housing on a priority basis to those with children. Reductions on mortgage interest rates or

spreading of mortgage repayments across the lifetime are other possibilities. Tax incentives to suppliers of housing (e.g. negative gearing of rental properties) are another option or there could be government intervention in the housing market to influence prices. Some of these housing measures may be poorly targeted or be considered to be too interventionist as far as the operation of the market is concerned.

2. Work and family initiatives

Maternity and paternity leave

The right of return to a position following leave related to the birth of a child is a common form of work-family support. The policy has many nuances such as its duration, whether the leave is paid and at what level, how much of the leave is available to mothers or to fathers, whether fathers are 'forced' to take some part of the leave, and whether there is a right of return to part-time work. Norway, for example, permits a return to part-time work with a continuation of partial leave benefits (the time account scheme). Indeed, leave policies are most highly developed in Norway which argues that work and family initiatives are much more reliable policy approaches than financial incentives (Berget 1996). Norway 'forces' use of leave by fathers in the sense that some of the parental leave entitlement cannot be taken by the mother. It is argued that this has the additional benefit of encouraging discussion on responsibilities for the care of the child between the parents. An issue is the question of restriction of eligibility for parental leave. Often, workers only become eligible for such leave if they have worked for the employer for a particular period of time and if they are regular or permanent employees as distinct from casual or contract employees. Eligibility criteria can have the effect that employers do not hire people who might have a baby in positions that would make them eligible for such leave. If the leave is paid, should it be paid by the employer, by social insurance or directly by the government? Payment by employers presents a major obstacle for small businesses. Finally, where a mother or father is not employed prior to the birth of a child, should there be some form of basic payment for them as an equity consideration? A European Union directive has established minimum requirements in respect of parental leave 'as an important means of reconciling professional and family responsibilities and promoting equal opportunities and treatment for women and men' (European Union 1998).

Child care

Another fundamental policy in this area is the provision of free or subsidised child care or high quality. This approach has been pursued by the present Government of the United Kingdom which, like Norway, has also put a major emphasis on family-friendly employment policies. Child care should also be equally available to those who are not employed as this may provide them with opportunities for training or for job-seeking. Furthermore, provision of high quality child care and early childhood education could be considered to be a right of the child and so there should not be discrimination among children on the basis of their parents' employment status. Besides free provision, the main forms of support include capital grants to centres and subsidised child-care fees. As an alternative, some countries provide tax breaks for child care expenses (USA). Child care expenses might also be exempted from goods and services taxes or, if paid by the employer, from employee fringe benefit taxes. Singapore charges a levy on the import of foreign maids but then gives a

substantial reduction in the levy for families with children (Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore 2000). Child-care services are also provided in the USA by undocumented immigrants at very low wage rates. Arrangements might be made to facilitate the care of children by their grandparents. Child-care eligibility is often tied to the age of the child especially where there is an emphasis upon parental leave in the child's earliest years. Policy needs to address this balance between parental leave and child-care provision according to community standards. Child care includes the need for 'out-of-school-hours' care. This can be provided at a neighbourhood centre or at the child's school.

Flexible working hours and short-term leave for family-related purposes

Where possible, working hours might be negotiated between the employer and the employee with a view to the employee's family responsibilities. Also, provision might be made for short-term absences related to the care of a sick child, school occasions, or taking children to unavoidable appointments such as dental treatment. If the nature of the occupation allows work to be done at home, appropriate provision might be made for this option from time to time.

Anti-discrimination legislation and gender equity in employment practices

There should be employment legislation that prohibits discrimination in employment on the grounds of gender, relationship status or family status. Beyond legislation, there is a need to ensure that such discrimination is not practised in a clandestine way through treats or through peer pressure. Individual rather than family taxation is likely to prevent the emergence of work disincentives for second earners in the tax system and hence is to be encouraged.

Work hours

Given the complication of family arrangements, employees should not be expected to have their work hours changed at short notice, to have meetings or work-related social occasions scheduled at times that those with responsibility for young children would have difficulty meeting. The latter is mentioned as a problem in the report of the Council on Population Problems of the Government of Japan (1997: 21). The spread of the ethic of additional hours of work provided freely to the employer lowers the competitiveness of workers with family responsibilities. Work hours need to be set in concert with school hours. This is reported to be a problem in Austria and Germany (Hoem et al. 1999:32).

3. Broad social change supportive of children and parenting

Employment initiatives

Notions of security can be enhanced through stimulation of jobs for women and young people especially jobs in the service sector. Part-time work with pro rata employment benefits and job security is also likely to provide more options for parents. There should be ease of re-entry to the labour force following periods of absence related to the care of children. This might be facilitated by continued attachment to the labour force albeit at a low level while children are very young or through continued education and training during child-related leaves. This can now be done through home-based electronic means (Council on Population Problems of the Government of Japan 1997: 25). Protection of workers from summary dismissal

and provision of retraining opportunities for retrenched workers add to a climate of job security.

Child-friendly environments

The built environment needs to be child-friendly. This may involve traffic calming, safe neighbourhood policies, public recreational facilities such as playgrounds, provision for children in places of entertainment and in shopping centres, and so on. Also, the more that employment is located close to home, the more likely it is that couples can balance work and family responsibilities. The location of child-care centres and schools are also relevant in this regard. Thus, urban design may be a pronatalist policy.

Gender equity

There is evidence that the division of duties within the household and general gender equity within the family unit has a bearing upon family formation decisions (Mathews 1999; McDonald 2000b). Thus, the promotion of gender equity in all social institutions especially in the family itself is likely to be favourable to fertility. This would include non-gender specific workplace policies, gender neutral tax-transfer policies including social insurance, support of workers with family responsibilities irrespective of gender, removal of institutional remnants of the male breadwinner model of the family, acceptance of fathers as parents by service providers, and more general recognition and support to fathers as parents. As Mathews (1999: 27) says there is a need for a society that is accepting of 'involved' fathers. Gender equity is prominent in European policies related to fertility and has been given prominence as an area for reform in Japan. However, it is almost non-existent in Singapore's pronatalist policies. Perhaps the availability of foreign maids circumvents the need for gender equity on the part of mothers.

Marriage and relationship supports

It is clear that in Japan and the countries of Southern Europe in particular, low fertility is related to slowness in the formation of relationships. Other policies already listed may give young people greater encouragement in the formation of relationships but there may also be more direct initiatives. Relationship education may be helpful as well as relationship counselling. The Singapore Government has arranged parties at which young people can get together. There may also be room for economic incentives to marry such as housing assistance. Earlier marriage is likely to mean earlier childbearing and a greater likelihood of having a third child. Divorce may also lower fertility if a new relationship is not formed. A high divorce rate may inhibit marriage.

Development of positive social attitudes towards children and parenting

Chesnais (1998) emphasises the political nature of debates about pronatalism. He states that there is a prior need to establish social understanding of the financial and political priority of demographic sustainability. Market research can play a role here. Policies should be in accordance with social demand and be consistent, as far as possible, with the prevailing economy and culture. There is a need to avoid inequities to the childless, voluntary or involuntary. Such inequities would mobilise political opposition. On the other hand, there is a need to forthrightly confront arguments that children are merely an optional private pleasure and, therefore, that those without children should not be expected to contribute to the costs of other people's children.

There may also be a political debate between conservatives and liberals regarding the proper role of mothers. This debate can also destroy good policy making because of the felt-need not to offend either side. This is very much the case in Australia where governments have provided maximum child benefits to those who take the extreme choices of either staying at home with children throughout their childhood or returning to full-time employment at the first opportunity. As both these options are far removed from what most Australians actually do or want to do, the policy effect is minimal. Finally, there is a need for the standard tests of public policy to be applied to pronatalist policies: simplicity, efficiency, equity, quality, affordability and accessibility. A clear and simple message that the society will support you if you have children, formulated in terms of good public policy is a sound political approach. It is remarkable that in the democracies of industrialised countries there has been so little political mobilisation of young people for a better deal.

Conclusion

While there are a large number of studies that describe the range of tools available to the policy maker concerned with low fertility, there are very few studies that have evaluated the effectiveness of policies. Some exceptions are Hohn (1987), Buttner and Lutz (1990), Sundstrom and Stafford (1992), Chesnais (1998), Olah (1999) and Hoem et al. (1999). These studies all suggest some level of success for particular policy initiatives in particular places at particular times. In fact, it will usually be inappropriate to attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of particular individual policies because the effectiveness of any policy will depend on the broader setting. The condition of *ceteris parabis* is unlikely to be fulfilled across time or across cultures. The proof of effectiveness is whether or not fertility follows the planned course. However, in the end, as stated earlier it is not so much the individual policies that matter but the nature of the society as a whole. For example, a range of brilliant gender equity policies will be ineffective if unemployment rates for young people of child-bearing age are high. Work-family policies can only work if there is work. Likewise, these same gender equity policies would be put under strain if the direct financial costs of children were very high or if the general tenor of the social setting was child-unfriendly. Societies facing very low fertility need to investigate the particular reasons for low fertility in their country. The next step is to define a broad policy to address the reasons for low fertility. The policy might be based on market research conducted among young people. The final step is to mobilise political support for the new policy direction. Like the recommendations of the Council on Population Problems of the Government of Japan (1997), the changes envisaged are likely to be very comprehensive and radical.

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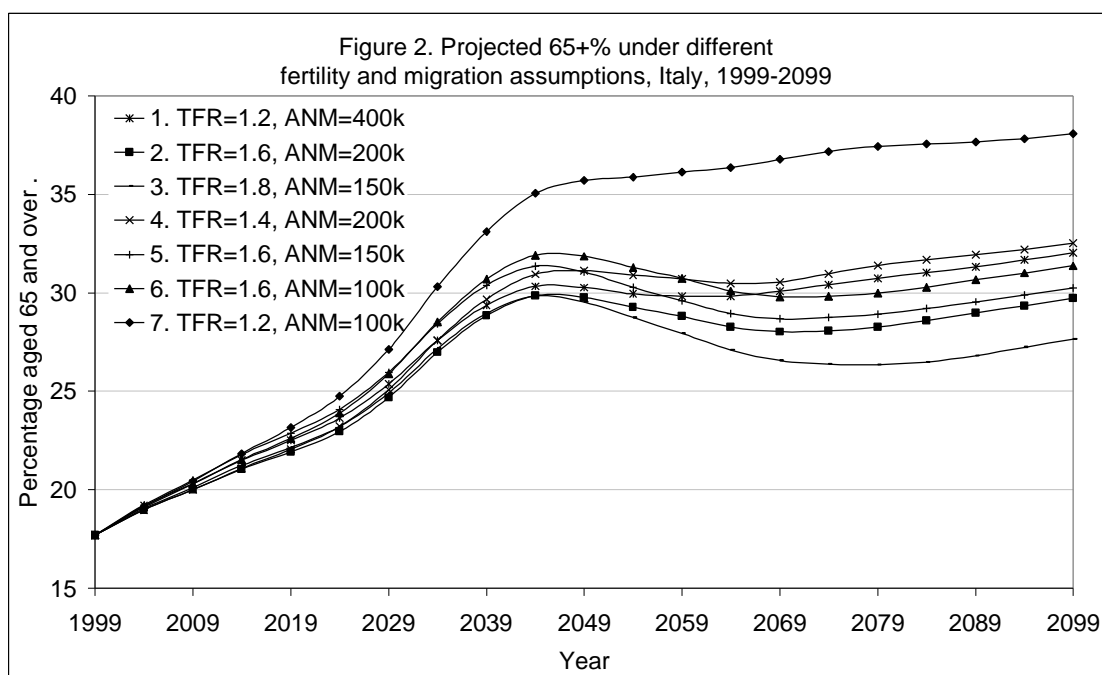
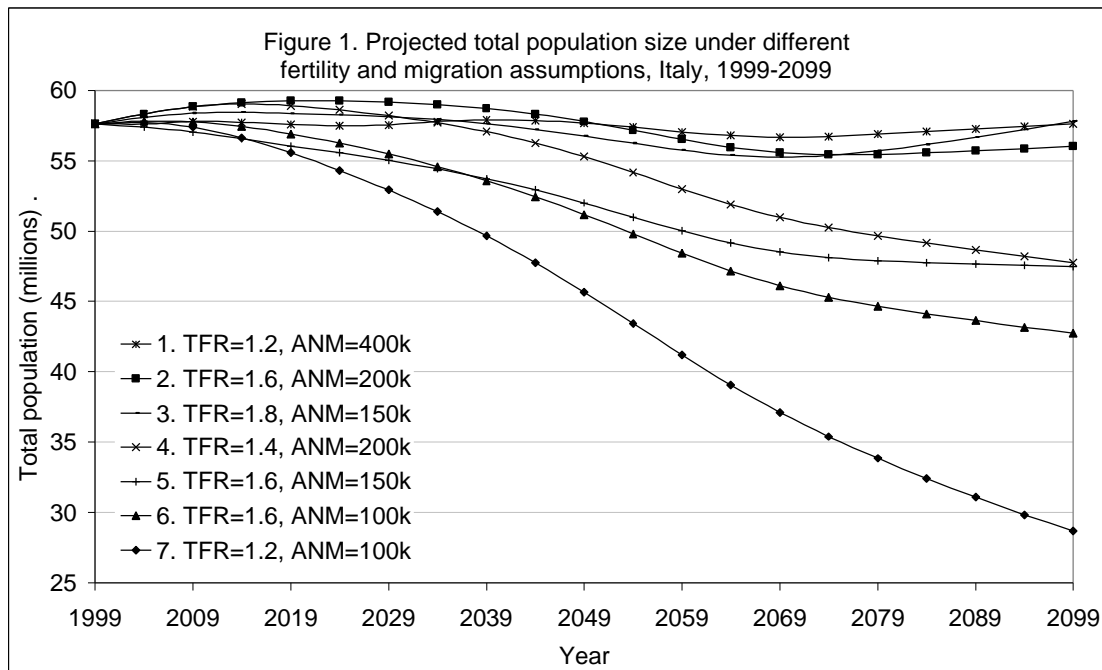
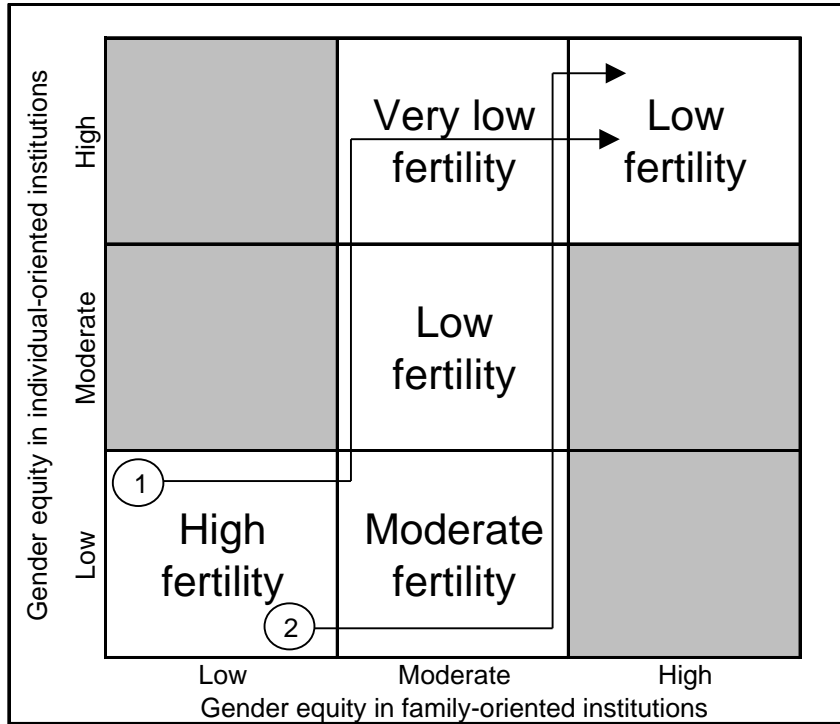
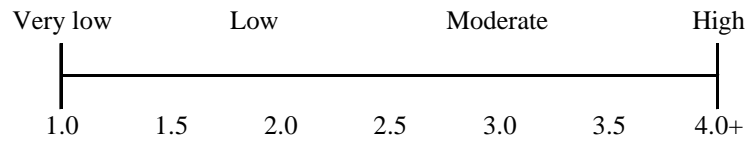


Figure 3.



Scales

Fertility



Gender equity in family-oriented institutions

Low:

Moderate:

High:

Gender equity in individual-oriented institutions

Low:

Moderate:

High:

Public Opinion and the Role of the Media

Maura Misiti

Introduction¹

After a brief overview of the complex relationship between the media and public opinion, I will try to focus attention on some of the problems attendant on that relationship. My field of observation will be the relationship between public opinion and demographic information, and then I will consider how the information is transmitted by the media. Questions of evaluation, of how to measure the effects of the media on the attitudes and behaviour of their audiences, of individuals and social groups are still open. Those who study communication from various angles and academic disciplines are carrying on a lively debate which has not arrived at hard and fast conclusions. It is also impossible to close discussion at the moment because communication technology is evolving so fast and is reaching a wider segment of the public, while the media, both technically advanced and traditional, are fast reaching global proportions. There is therefore a great deal of literature on the subject and it offers many hypotheses and interpretations².

From studies on population we have acquired knowledge about the relationship between attitudes, perceptions and values in demographic behaviour (Leete, 1999; Moors and Palomba, 1995, 1998). We have also learned more about the relationship between demographic transition and the post-modern evolution of society. In addition the diffusion of knowledge about population issues (Baccaini and Van Peer, 1999; Menniti *et al.*, 1997) has been studied among specific segments of the population, as has the gap between ideals and real behaviour with regard to the fertility rate (Moors and Palomba, 1995; 1998; Bonifazi *et al.*, 1998, Futuribles, 1995). There is one question particularly, which I would like to emphasise: most people have a very scarce and uneven knowledge about demographic problems, because our society has not developed a solid demographic culture able to communicate and support knowledge in this field. This is true, even though the attitudes, strategies and choices connected to these facts touch the lives of all of us. In addition, the sources of information available to the general public are generic articles and programs

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² The relationship between public opinion and the media intuitively seems very simple. It quickly becomes complicated however when we try to conceptualise it or force it into a rigorous and clear relation. First of all, we are talking about two categories which are familiar to most people, but which are rather vaguely defined. We therefore have to attempt a definition, however approximate. We will use public opinion to mean the opinions expressed in sample surveys carried out on specific groups of people. This is in any case the meaning of the phrase in current use, and one which reduces the social complexity for us. In addition, this extremely synthetic definition of public opinion is particularly appropriate for an analysis of the relationship between public opinion and the media because it offers a means for representing "a generalised public, spectator and actor in a mass society in the full space of rapid change". The term "media" will be used for the full gamut of communication systems. The most important of these are printed matter (books, newspapers, magazines), and television/radio, followed by new means such as multimedia, computers, internet. This second category compounds and intersects information available by traditional means. In our presentation of the results of our survey, we will limit our comments to daily newspapers and magazines on the one hand, and to television on the other.

distributed by the media. Only scholars and students have access to more articulate information.

There are two types of problems related to this state of general knowledge. The first concerns the communication of information which is complete and correct, while the other concerns the form in which the information is communicated. Another way of saying this is that we need to consider both the contents and the language of an article or a broadcast. A third question concerns how the information is received and understood. We want to understand what effects the information transmitted by the media has on those who read it or hear it. We want to see how individual values are formed, evolve and develop. We want to know how these values operate in the family and in the social context. Finally, we want to understand how the process of compromise between the individual and society is affected by the incessant stimuli of communications systems.

The results of a survey carried out by IRP occasioned by the birth of the earth's 6 billionth inhabitant are used in this paper to discuss a few specific concerns, which are only a part of all the problems raised by our research. We intend to evaluate the impact of the media on knowledge about the event, to discuss the ways in which people put the information to use, their learning strategies, and finally to identify the characteristics of the various segments of the population which participated in the survey.

The last part of this paper concerns the other side of the coin. We wanted to know what information is communicated, how the media treat demographic information, what emphasis they add, the balance given to articles and broadcasts, how deeply questions are probed. A textual analysis of press articles on "day 6 billion" completes this report, with the hope that in a small way it will clarify the mechanisms which inform the complex relationship between public opinion and the media.

1. Public opinion and demographic problems

The demographic changes in western countries over the past 20 – 25 years, described as *the second demographic transition* (van de Kaa, 1988), have contributed to a new demographic regime characterised by a stable fertility rate below replacement level, by a large ageing population, and, in the longer term, by the decline of population size. It is generally agreed that the demographic changes taking place are to a large extent the result of social changes. At the root of these changes is a progressive shift in values and social rules towards greater individualism, with increasing emphasis on individual rights and self-fulfilment (Lesthaeghe, 1992). Naturally, although the demographic trends and their causes are similar throughout Europe, there are differences between European countries, so we cannot talk about demographic uniformity. In fact, numerous surveys demonstrate that demographic models differ among countries, as does the way in which they are distributed. This is true also above all for the norms and values which underpin these models (Palomba and Moors, 1998; de Moor, 1995).

As is to be expected, the researchers have held discussions on these changes, and governments periodically express their opinions, usually because some crisis caused by population problems rallies them to do so. Very rarely however does anyone ask the average person what he or she thinks about them. National surveys, often coordinated across Europe, now allow us to compare public opinion with government policies or with the opinion of scholars, and this comparison offers us a new prospective for studying and analysing demographic phenomena.

The results of the PPA survey allow us to know and compare what ordinary people think about present and future population trends, about how the composition of the population will change, and about foreigners in their country. Very briefly, those who worked on the survey agree that there is a close relationship between a country's own demographic history, its government policies, and the opinions expressed by those interviewed. It is not surprising therefore that countries like France with a long tradition of public intervention on population matters, consider the natural birth rate of 4 per thousand too low, and would like to have it higher, while countries like Italy, Spain, and Austria, which experienced population policies under totalitarian regimes, approve a birth rate under 1 per thousand (Bonifazi and Kamaràs, 1998).

The important demographic changes which have affected all of Europe have not yet produced a uniform reaction, a single government policy, or a common public opinion. National differences remain related to the recent past of the single countries. In order to explain the persistence of these differences, we must remember that there are important diversities of culture, history, and tradition, not only between countries, but also within single countries. European unification is still far too recent to effect these sectors, especially because the process of unification has been much more concerned with economic unity than with social or cultural integration.

The European Value Survey (EVS) carried out in European countries in 1981 and 1990, investigated the fundamental values of European culture and followed their evolution in time. The idea was to use opinion surveys to identify a European system of values. This approach uses both psychological and sociological perspectives and considers individuals' desires and attitudes towards important present-day problems of institutions and norms. What interests demographers is the connection between cultural models, their evolution in time, their relationship to behaviour, particularly behaviour connected to fertility – marriage, relations within the couple, parenting – that is to say the very stuff of demographic studies.

Analysis of the results has given rise to a great deal of literature, which I can only give very brief account of here, especially since many different interpretations have been offered. I want to point out that one of the elements which emerges from an analysis of the data is discontinuity – the relationship between values, opinions, and behaviour. This lack of consistency seems particularly relevant when we talk about values related to the family, marriage, childbearing, and the sphere of sexual relations. L. Roussel commented on the results of the two surveys aimed at identifying uniformity, similarities and divergences among European countries. He suggests that there is a long term trend towards uniformity with regard to general patterns of family behaviour, but also notes that it is impossible to know what direction it will take, what model will dominate, or to predict behaviour (Roussel, 1995). Other studies on the same data confirm that there is inconsistency between the values individuals express and those which define the social norm. An example comes from Mediterranean countries where divorce and cohabitation are infrequent, but individuals take very permissive positions on sexual freedom that are distant from a European mean and from the opinions expressed in Northern Europe. Simons brought different analytical instruments and a different point of view to bear on the same surveys. He believes that at a national level “the cultural determinants of non-conformist sexual behaviour were not the same as the determinants of fertility, that ideas about forms of partnership could vary independently of ideas about parenthood, and, that, although there had been a shift towards pragmatism,

fundamentalist ideas about childbearing remained influential in most countries” (Simons, 1999).

So there is still much discussion about the mechanisms which connect opinions, values, and behaviour. Research has not been able to clarify completely how changes in values and traditions affect behaviour. It has proved difficult to define a theory or a model to resolve the question of how values influence social behaviour, especially because it is also influenced by economic circumstances and interpersonal relationships (Tchernia, 1995; Roussel, 1995).

The problem becomes even more complicated if we introduce another variable: the mechanisms which bring about a change in values. We are used to explaining change in terms of socio-economic variables, but how important are cultural factors? How important is mass communication for interpersonal relationships in the family? In general, the function of mass communications and the media in the transmission of values and life styles, and in the formation of opinions is a very relevant question which opens up new areas for analysis and interpretation, but which at the same time compounds the difficulties.

2. Opinions, knowledge, sources of knowledge, and information

Until recently population was considered a ‘political’ objective, and even today demographic policies do not seem to be based on exact knowledge (PPA, Palomba R., Righi A. 1993, Rand, 2000). Recent European surveys among high school students show that young people know very little about demographic facts, nor do they have the information they would need for a critical interpretation of demographic data (Baccaini and van PEER, 1999; Menniti *et al.*, 1997, Rossi, 1995). For fifteen years IRP has been carrying out scientific research into what Italians know and what they think about various areas connected to population. On some questions, like the decline of fertility and the general dynamics of population, ordinary people have access to quite good information, while on other more emotionally involving questions, like the presence of foreigners and the decline in population in Italy, they are influenced by ideological bias which suggests a lack of knowledge (Bonifazi *et al.*, 1998, Palomba, 1987, Palomba R. 1991).

Virtually the only source of information and knowledge that people have about demographic issues is mass media. Even the political decision-makers show that they lack regular access to scientific information, in so far as their policies are not informed by correct and complete data regarding important questions like ageing, immigration, and more generally the dynamics of demographic change. Newspapers, radio, and television have become the most important sources of information on these questions, even though by definition journalists have to be concerned with news rather than information. And of course, even when the news is accurately reported, it has to be interesting, captivating, and closely enough connected to specific events to justify the space it occupies. Certainly the Italian media have become quite interested in demographic issues, particularly on highly visible questions like the arrival of numbers of immigrants in Italy, the impending pension crisis, and the progressive decline in fertility. It is therefore important to see whether this increase in coverage is synonymous with an increase in effective communication.

However, behaviour in the couple, in the family, and as parents are questions which do not require a particular approach or scientific support, since these situations are part of our daily lives. They are the daily bread of magazines and radio and television programs, whether information programs, or soap operas, serials, and the columns of women’s magazines, which share many of the interests of those who

study population questions. Later on we will see if or how the messages broadcast are received, transformed, and assimilated by the consumers of every single medium. The convergence of interest between researchers and popular programs has received very little attention, but it can contribute important information. During the last 40 years, women's magazines have certainly helped to change behaviour patterns in the family and to introduce new attitudes towards parenting in Italy. They have communicated new values and behaviour to a vast female audience. They have helped to disseminate these values which were informed by laws inspired by feminist and youth movements. (Palomba, 1994).

Mass media can play a role in conveying messages about family planning. This is a new role, which rightly belongs to this field of enquiry. This is well shown by the Westoff experience in developing countries (Westoff, 1999). Even the private sector produces radio and television soap operas designed "to motivate individuals to adopt new attitudes and behaviours that foster reproductive and sexual health, gender equality, and environmental protection" (Population Communication International).

Studies on the recent demographic transition in Brazil point up the strategic role played by television institutions - most of them private companies - produce radio and television soap operas, in particular by the famous telenovelas, in disseminating, reinforcing, and institutionalising new patterns of value orientation and behavioural norms related to family size and preferences and to fertility control (Faria and Porter, 1999).

We find then a diversified gamma of roles and effects exercised by the various media: from journalistic information to messages directed at influencing life styles to still more profound and emotional messages. Each mean of communication has its particular specific target in the information market, with messages calibrated for the chosen audience and transmitted in the specific language of the medium.

2.1 The role of the media as a source of knowledge and information

Among those important changes which characterise our period, the change in communications is certainly very significant, not only because transformations and innovations are happening so rapidly in this sector, but especially because its social impact is so great. Given the global scale mass communication has assumed, this impact has been and will be very great in the west, but also in other societies, distant from our own. Developments in the media during the last part of the 20th century have profoundly changed the way we communicate and interact socially. Means of communication create new ways of acting and interacting socially, new types of relationships, and new ways of presenting ourselves. We are passing from face to face dialogue to asymmetrical mass media communication (Thompson, 1995). The most recent theories no longer hold with the commonplace belief that the viewing public is totally passive and unable to make critical evaluations. This model was recently re-proposed in Italy during the debate about the political influence of television, and is still widely believed to be accurate. During the course of the 20th century, the critical definition of the public as passive and irrational has been refined and developed by a school of thought which includes Adorno, Horkheimer, and Popper (Ortoleva, 2000).

Sociology of the media, psychology, semiotics, anthropology, and ethnology have all contributed to a field now crowded with theories. Models of the effect of communications have been proposed and administrative research on quantitative data and audience analysis has also made its contribution. Very briefly, the tendency

now is to reject the idea of a linear relationship between transmission and reception. In fact the recipient of the message is more and more seen as playing an active role. Viewing is, first and foremost for 'cultural studies scholars', an active and social process. Television audiences actively and creatively construct their own meanings rather than passively absorbing pre-packaged meanings imposed upon them (Ang, 1991). Viewers' active interaction with television texts turns reception into a site of struggle and not simply a site of domination.

To simplify a complex and much discussed idea, we could agree with J. B. Thompson that the interaction between the media and the public always includes a creative process of interpretation by which the recipients make sense of the message, using the resources available to them. This process can have effects in the short or in the long term, and may be intentional or unconscious. In addition, every mean of communication acts in a different way, and I will return to this point in a minute. It is also important to consider the combined effects of different types of communication working together.

2.2 Which media

Communication systems proliferated at an astonishing speed in the 20th century, and this trend has become significant and irreversible with the introduction of electronic technologies. The press historically was the first widespread mean of communication, followed by cinema, radio and the television broadcasting. Today we have all sorts of new media (broadband cable TV, the pay TV, mobile phones, the Internet). Our whole system of information is continually being forced to reorganise towards a greater integration of the various types of communication.

Characteristically, both television networks and researchers have tried to define and categorise the viewing audience. This type of study has slowly moved into the area of marketing, and its analytic techniques have become more sophisticated. This process has been due in part to the end of a public monopoly in European television and the subsequent commercialisation of the sector, which has resulted in increased competitiveness. We should be aware that with the arrival of the new media, it has become more difficult still to classify audiences, whatever we may think of the mass-media concept of audience. In fact, we can imagine that in the future individuals will choose the numbers and types of programs they watch. (Andò, 1999). This personalization will invest both new and traditional means of communication. We therefore have to consider the audience no longer in terms of a single type of communication, but in terms of many offers.

Television viewing always seems to cause an increase in the consumption of other media, in a sort of "circular process". So the various media are no longer in competition, but actually reinforce each other. The more people watch or read the more they develop interests which can only be satisfied by other types of cultural consumption. (Sorice, 2000).

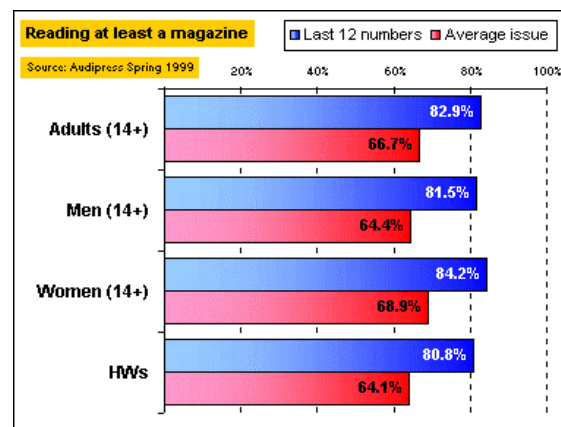
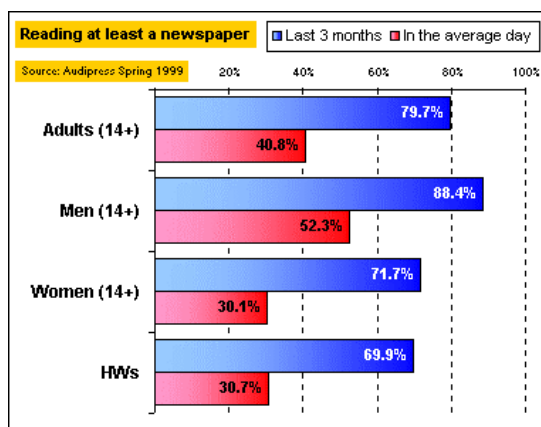
If we look at the Italian situation, for example, recent data from ISTAT show that there are various "multimedia diets" (Andò, 1999) even though the cultural development here with pronounced differences along geographic fault lines, is not typical of Europe as a whole. We can imagine a "consumption pyramid" with 5% of the population which does not use communication systems at all, 25% which relies exclusively on television, 30% which uses two different systems (TV/radio or TV/printed matter), and 40% which uses at least three types of media (TV, films or radio or TV, printed matter and radio) and up to 3 traditional types of media plus new technologies (Morcellini, 1988).

Although audiences are complex and diversified, it is still possible to identify the outstanding characteristics of the users of the main media like television and newspapers, which continue to dominate the market, even in the presence of new technologies.

2.3 The press

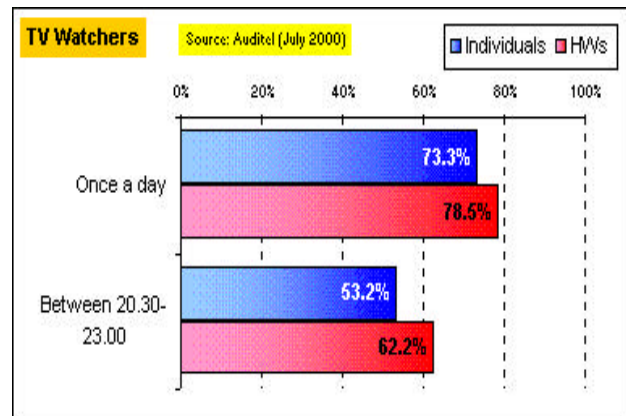
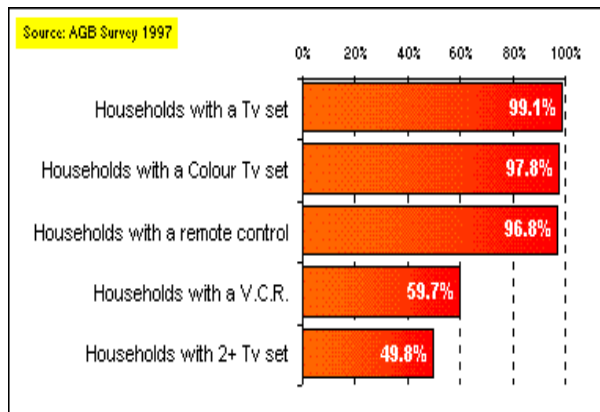
Daily newspapers were the first easily reproduced form of mass communication, and until the arrival of the radio and then television, they dominated the field. The neat division between the 'popular press' and the daily newspapers of the élite typical of English speaking countries is less clear-cut Italy. Here the great daily newspapers have historically been addressed to a public which in theory is universal ("public opinion"), but in practice is highly selective on the basis of level of education (Ortoleva, 2000).

In these countries politically oriented newspapers, with their mixture of propaganda and education, have played a parallel role. In Italy, the function of the penny press in English speaking countries has partly been absorbed by "gossip" magazines, one of the specialised types of magazines aimed at a particular audience of consumers. If we look at the graphic designs used by the press, we can easily understand that it is divided for men and women. The daily newspapers generally cater to men, while magazines are aimed at women. ISTAT surveys give us a profile of the average male reader, who has a high school or university degree and is middle-aged. This consumer base has not changed much over the years, so although the number of readers is going down in Italy, this hard core remains.



2.4 The television

The wide distribution of television and its broadcasting system have defined a new type of public (audience) and use, and have also brought about a specific organisation of messages, "the flow" (Williams, 1974). The advent of television altered the way in which cultural contents (information, entertainment, education) are structured. Consequently it has become necessary to calculate the audience available for any given program, using sophisticated instruments to identify the target audience. In the US and Europe radio and television were not immediately available in all countries and to all sectors of society, but they spread extremely rapidly. Television in particular reached the vast majority of households in these countries within ten years. It quickly became the central and symbolic medium for entire national cultures (Ortoleva, 2000). The following graphs give some data on the spread and use of television in Italy. They really require no further comment.



The most typical group among all those possible is made up of people whose only source of information is television. This is the TV hard core made up of the elderly, housewives (always referred to in audience analyses because they watch a lot of television), people with little formal education, and the poor. From the early days of broadcasting this group has had a unique relationship to television. They are the audience of soap operas, TV films, and entertainment programs. Their fidelity to specific programs has been eroded by competition, and in addition members of this group are becoming less stereotypical and more interested in constructing their own personal TV flows. This type of "traditional" TV is in a moment of transition. It is unable to attract the young (15-24 years old), whom television is in danger of losing to other alternative cultural attractions. The older segment of the viewing audience of the "traditional" TV is also dwindling, as competition among networks renders programs more similar and more mediocre.

In this situation it is difficult to understand what impact television has on the formation of public opinion, personal values and behaviour, considering how changeable audiences have become. On the other hand there is no doubt that television continues to have an enormous potential for influencing opinion. In the 1960s television played an essential role in the construction of an Italian identity, by spreading a national language, making cultural phenomena known, and promoting reading and writing (Morcellini, 2000). Later, but still in a monopoly position, it served an educational function in line with the dominant Roman Catholic culture. Throughout western Europe the advent of competing television networks and the fixation on ratings spelled an end to the pedagogical principles which originally characterised public television. This situation means that broadcasting companies prefer to offer stereotypical programs with a broad appeal rather than riskier innovative programs with less appeal. Entertainment programs dominate all other types, in order to keep the public tuned in. Finally television has to reflect the average values of society, according to the Lop principle (Least Objectionable Program) (Menduni, 1996). If this is the logic that governs television programming, especially in Italy, then the images broadcast by television with reference to sexual behaviour, the family, and parenthood are shared, socially accepted models. At this time then, the role of traditional (non-specialised) television is neither very stimulating nor innovative. In other words, television tends to reassure its audience and validate their existing values and behaviour. New forms of television (satellite, pay TV, broadband cable TV) which are aimed at particular consumer niches, and are therefore less tied to average values, open new possibilities for television. Communication advertising also tends to be more flexible and open to new ideas, although its aims are always commercial.

3. A case study: the IRP survey on 6 billion day

It is fairly difficult to determine how much influence the media have on public opinion and on the individual value systems, unless we can measure the impact of a particular piece of limited and circumscribed information. The case study we look at here began with a public opinion survey carried out by IRP in the autumn of 1999. We wanted to find out how much people knew about population issues and what their opinions were in conjunction with the birth of earth's 6 billionth inhabitant, an event which the United Nations had said would occur on 12 October 1999. Interviews were conducted both before and after 12 October, in order to find out how much impact the media had on knowledge about demographic questions. We also collected a portfolio of articles on the event in the Italian press, in order to analyse the contents of the articles and have a way of evaluating the information which appeared in the Italian press. Unfortunately it was not possible to collect the texts of television broadcasts as well, although this is the source of information for most Italians, because the task would have been extremely complex.

Our analysis of the survey combined with a textual analysis is aimed at reconstructing certain phases of the communication process: transmission (by measuring coverage of the event), its impact on knowledge (the cognitive processing of information on the superficial level of storing, but not of elaborating it), analysis of the contents of a text (in order to identify the structure of the message). Naturally, this type of textual analysis will not tell us anything about the objectives or the resources of the people who produced it, nor about how it was received, used, or understood. Although, as we have seen, there are limits to this type of analysis, these were compensated by the fact that we were dealing with a unique event, which was very much of the moment and symbolically significant. It afforded us the opportunity to follow an event and make a coherent analysis of it. It offered us a partial, but important, illustration of a communication sequence.

We know that this approach focuses on a mere fragment of the complex learning process, but we also thought it was important to take advantage of the rare and interesting opportunity of this symbolic celebration of the birth of the 6 billionth inhabitant of the earth, because we know so little about the ability of pure demographic information to capture the public imagination.

3.1 The survey

In the period around 12 October media coverage of "the birth of the world's 6 billionth inhabitant" was high all over the world, especially since this event coincided with presentation of the UNFPA Report, and in Italy with publication of the IRP Survey results.

By comparing the number of correct answers to the question about the world population before and after the information about *day-6 billion* appeared on television and on newspapers, we were able to evaluate the impact of the media broadcasts. In this report we will consider only some of the results of our survey, specifically those concerning how well the information was understood. We then relate these data to the particular sources of information, various attitudes and behaviour of the people interviewed, and to some other characteristics which help us understand why some people find it easier to remember certain types of information. Various surveys (Baccaini and Van Peer, 1999; Menniti *et al.*, 1997; Moors and Palomba, 1995; 1998; Bonifazi *et al.*, 1998; Adamson *et al.*, 2000) show that, on the average, people do not know much about demographic facts, and that only a small well-educated segment of

the population is relatively well informed. As a consequence, only a small minority (11%) of Italians answered the question correctly. Therefore our data are fairly representative of how well informed people are about basic facts on any given day. Newspapers and broadcasting networks gave ample space to the news. All the Italian newscasts broadcast the information and commented on it. The following table contains data regarding prime time news casts around 12 October. Data regarding newspapers and magazines appears in paragraph 4.

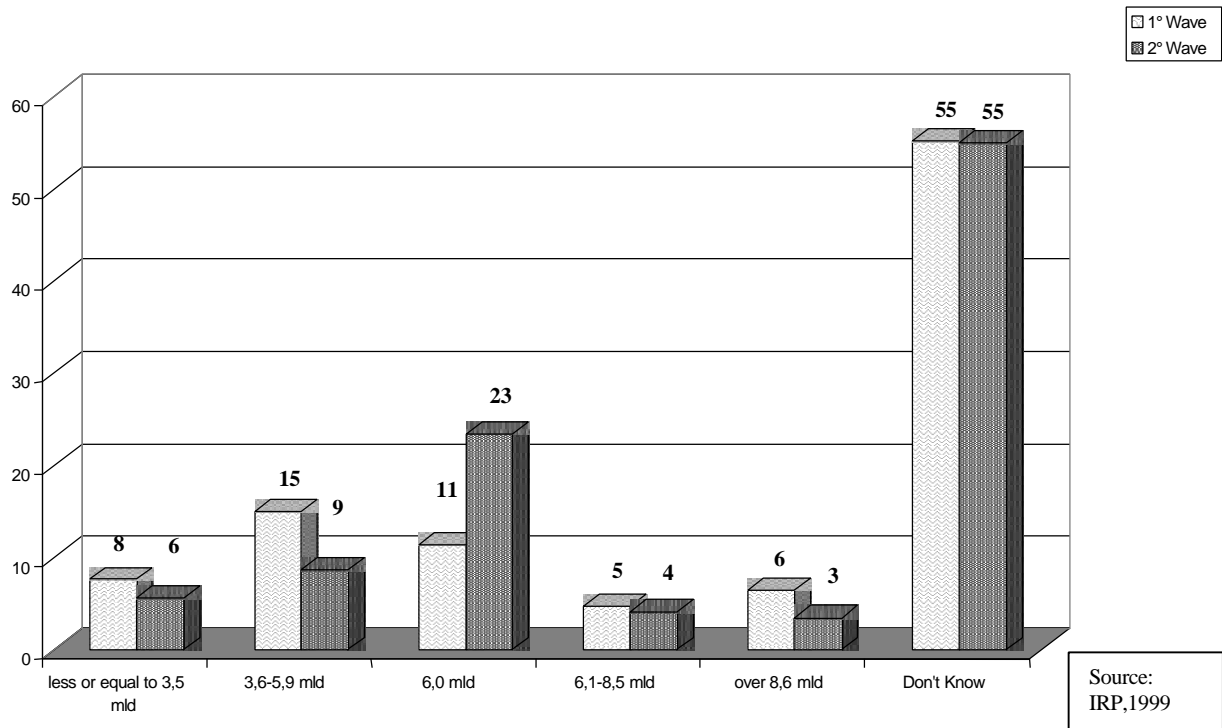
Date	Time	Channel	Title	Duration (")
09/10/99	8:18 pm	Mediaset TG5	6 Billion People on Earth	128
11/10/99	8:28 pm	Mediaset TG4	UN says baby born tomorrow in Belgrade brings world population to 6 billion	117
12/10/99	8:31 pm	RAI/TG1	6 billionth inhabitant of the world born in Sarajevo	47
12/10/99	8:53 pm	RAI/TG2	Earth's 6 billionth inhabitant born	30
12/10/99	7:27 pm	RAI/TG3	6 billion people in the world according to demographic estimate	21
12/10/99	7:20 pm	Mediaset TG5	A baby born in Sarajevo brings the world's inhabitants to 6 billion	125
12/10/99	7:27 pm	Mediaset TG4	Interviews on the future of the world	99

3.2 The impact of media on knowledge

As we can see in graph 1 the media communication had an effect, since the number of correct answers went up by 12 points. The newscasts and the newspapers helped focus attention on the correct figure and corrected wrong information for those people who already had some idea about the world population. The media information had no effect however on those people who knew nothing or could remember nothing about the world population. This result is interesting because it demonstrates that people who are already aware of a problem acquire specific information about it, while people who are unaware of a problem, or not interested in remembering

Information, are unaffected. We will return to this aspect when we examine the combined effect of the different sources of information.

Graph 1: Knowledge about the world population: first and second wave



3.3 Sources

Television and newspapers are the main sources of information for a basic knowledge about a population issue like the birth of the 6 billionth person, which has important implications for the present and the future, even as a mere statistic. Schools seem to play a very limited role, though this is no surprise since it confirms the results of the EOPEI survey (Baccaini, van Peer, 1999). Internet as an information source is not relevant as its use is still strictly limited to specific segments of the population.

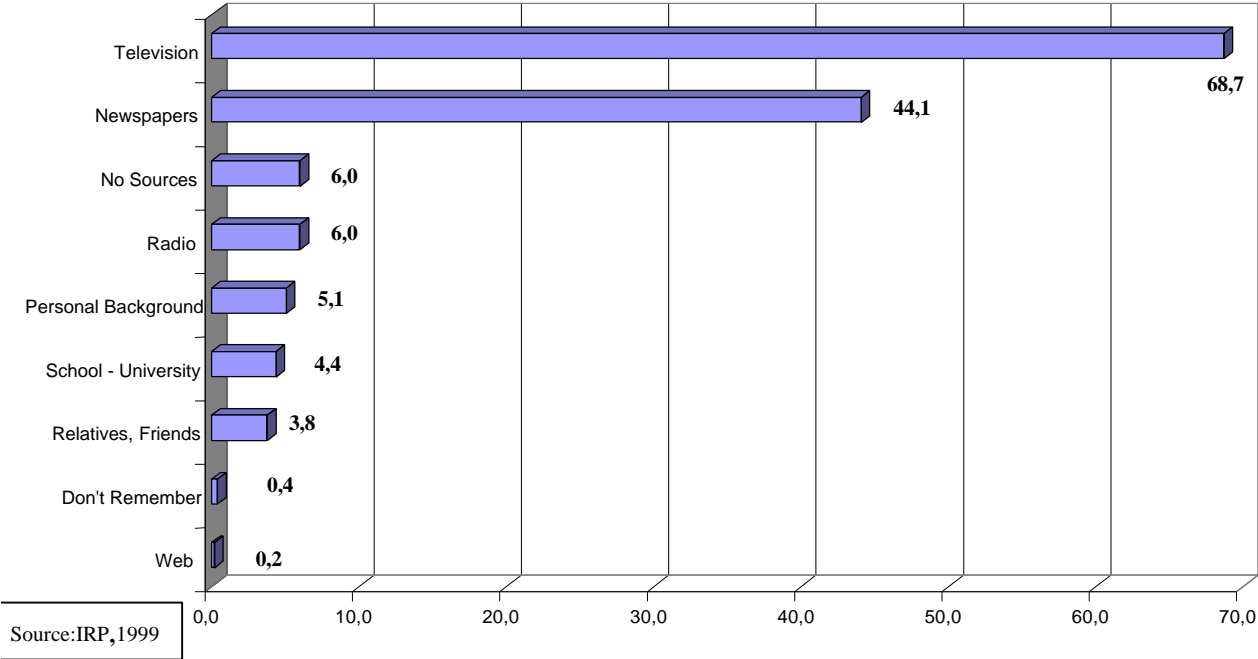
It's obvious that the information about the 6 billionth person was broadcast in the main by newscasts and commentaries (78% and 15%). Other types of programs, including entertainment programs (8%), also referred to the information, though perhaps more superficially. It is worth noting that 10% of the people interviewed did not remember which television program had broadcast the information, and this is typical of television viewers.

Among the publications we considered, daily newspapers were the main sources of information for most people (85%), due to their wide distribution, while magazines covered a more limited market segment (35%).

How do people combine what they see or read with information they have already acquired in order to arrive at their own personalised and complex position on an issue? One of our questions was designed to bring the plain fact together with problematic aspects which are often related to population problems. The answers (spontaneous) covered a range from stereotypes and/or simplifications like "world hunger" (27%) to more articulate complex expressions like "the unbalance between rich and poor countries" (13%). Further down the scale we find concern about over-population ("there are too many of us"), to a more neutral interest in the world population growth, to the relation with increased poverty. Fewer people made a connection with aspects of our own reality like ageing (2.6%), or unemployment

(2.4%), although these problems were noted. Small percentages noted connections with policies of family planning and support for the economies of less developed countries. The attention concentrated on the platitude about world hunger indicates a superficial approach to the information. On the other hand, the wide range of responses is positive, especially because they include answers which indicate that some people thought about the bare statistics, even when they did not delve further into the questions raised. A high percentage of people (87%) indicated that they were “very or quite interested” in the news item. They need more information and identify television and newspapers as the most appropriate sources to obtain it. There seems to be a need for information, which has not yet been met. This may mean that people would be receptive to more information about demographic issues, or about scientific issues generally. Since our survey focused on people who learned about world population through television and the press, we also wanted to know more about how these two sources worked together to give information. We felt that this was an important consideration because today people tend to combine information from various sources to reach a personal position on issues. The survey shows that most people (62%) had not heard or read anything about the 6 billion. This is similar to the percentage (55%) who answered “I don’t know”. Among those who had heard or read about the issue 18% heard it on television alone, 13.5% from both television and the press, and 6.4% from newspapers only. The characteristics of these four sub-groups can help us define our target for future information campaigns to improve knowledge about population issues or specific policies.

Graph 2 - Sources of information about the world population (in percentages)



The first group (neither television nor newspapers) is made up for the most part of women between 51 and 65, without much education, living in the south. Those who learned about the issue from television alone are younger (20 – 24), have

a medium level education, and live mostly in the northeast of Italy, and include men and women. The groups of those who got their information from newspapers or from a combination of television and newspapers are made up mainly of men, between 35 and 50, with a university degree. The former group is concentrated in the northwest, while the latter extends to central Italy.

3.4 Profiles and path of knowledge: Answer trees technique

Besides routine analysis based on the frequency of responses, we can extend our study of the data derived from opinion surveys by the use of answer trees. This is a technique which uses particular algorithms to subdivide data, thus allowing us to identify those people interviewed who share certain pre-selected characteristics (Kass, 1980). As we will see later, the technique calls for us to choose a variable from among those we are most interested in, called *the target variable*, and a set of variables that we believe determinant for interpreting the results of the objective variable, called *predictors*. The algorithm produces a result in the shape of a tree, where the nodes represent the possible subdivisions determined by the predictor variables of the people from homogeneous groups interviewed. The leaves of the tree contain the data on the objective variable within the group which is represented by the leaf itself. The tree allows us to identify the most interesting profiles rapidly. We will not mention all the possible applications that answer trees might have for our data, in order to save time, but there are at least two very interesting results. The first uses a target variable constructed ad hoc which allows us to distinguish between those who answered the question about the size of the world population correctly, and those who answered incorrectly, or who did not answer at all. The predictors chosen are the following:

- a variable indicator that permits us to identify the people interviewed who claim that they got their information regarding the size of the world population from newspapers or magazines;
- a variable indicator that permits us to identify the people interviewed who claim that they got their information regarding the size of the world population from television;
- the level of education of the people interviewed.

Naturally the first two variables are not mutually exclusive, since it is possible that some of the people interviewed got information about the world population from more than one source, and indeed this did happen.

See Figure 1 for the results, which are quite interesting.

Figure 1 - Answer tree on Knowledge about World Population, Sources and 3.5 Education

The predictors on the source of information are among the most important variables in so far as they give us a profile of the answers in a certain set. In fact, the first and second level subdivisions are determined by these answers, and immediately group the people interviewed according to whether they got their information from 1) printed sources, 2) television, 3) both, or 4) no source. These groups are very different from a structural point of view. The leaf representing those people who had more than one source of information has a much higher percentage of right answers than the overall average of right answers (70% against 23%). The two leaves that represent people with one of the two sources of information considered have very similar answer profiles, in line with the overall average, as long as no one in these two groups refuses to answer the question. Finally, the leaf that represents those people who claim that their information does not come from either

of the two sources has a very high percentage of no answers, as might be expected. Level of education is a useful predictor only at the last level, and only for those people who claim that they only heard about the world population on television. Among these people, the percentage of error was very high for those with few years of schooling.

These easy-to-read results do not contradict the hypothesis already stated in the previous paragraph, which says that today information comes about as the result of different components acting simultaneously. This technique tells us what kind of impact a particular source of information makes, and how accurate the information itself is. People who are interested in a particular piece of information will tend to turn to various sources and in the end will be able to form quite an accurate opinion. On the other hand, people who do not delve more deeply into a particular piece of information, will continue to harbour ideas similar to the general average opinion. The group of people most interested is largely made up of rather well educated men, while the group of people who got their information exclusively from television has more women than men. Among those people who had no information at all about the question there is a particularly large group of elderly women, especially from South Italy, which indicates the low level of education and the general backwardness so prevalent among that social group.

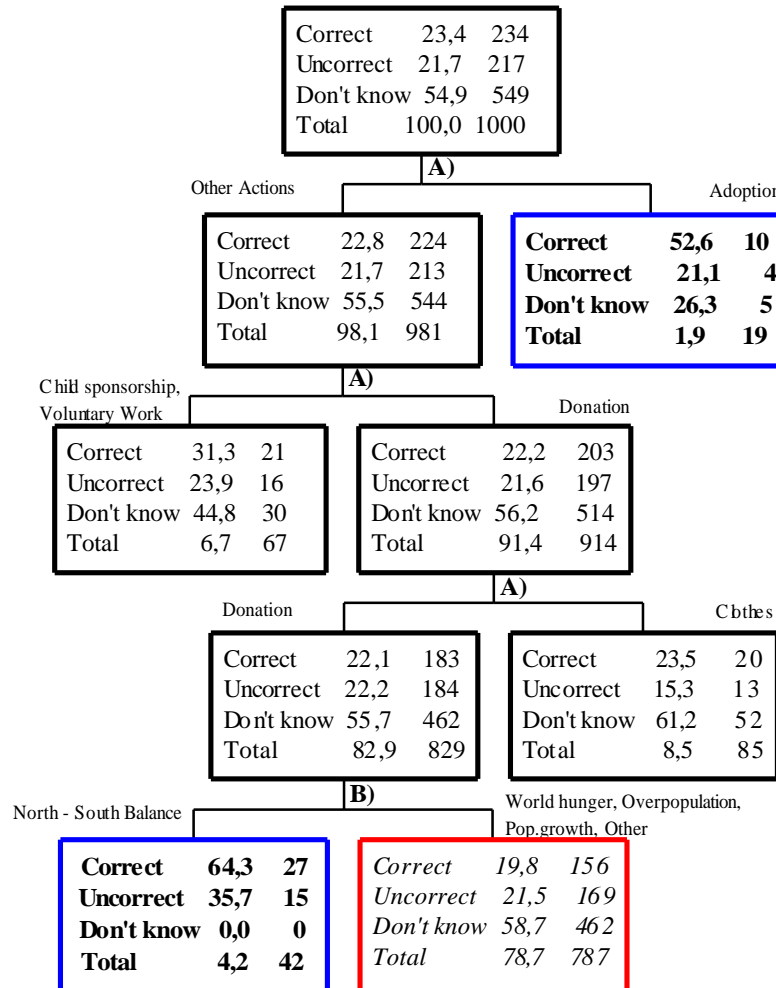
Figure 2 illustrates the results of the second answer tree which I want to discuss. The target variable is the same as in the preceding tree, while the predictors were chosen so as to verify the relation between knowledge, willingness to act, and perception of the demographic phenomena which are the object of this study. The following predictors were chosen:

- a variable which specifies the actions taken by the people interviewed in order to face the problems resulting from world population growth;
- a variable to identify the general problem connected to world population growth which the person interviewed felt most strongly about.

At the very lowest level of the tree a small group separates from the trunk. This is the small percentage of people interviewed who have considered adoption in the past. Characteristically a much higher percentage of people in this group gave the correct answer to the question on world population than was true for the interviewees as a whole. The left-hand side of the tree includes those people who have undertaken some specific commitment. They responded correctly to the question on world population in approximately the same percentage as the overall group. Even among this group however, we can distinguish between a less committed group whose information about the world population is not very precise, and a much more committed group. This second group identifies the imbalance between rich and poor countries as one of today's most important problems, and is made up of informed, involved individuals, who refer to a specific problem and do not share common prejudices.

Figure 2 - Answer tree on Knowledge about World Population and Commitments

Knowledge on World Population Amount



A) Committed actions

B) Major issue related to world population

* Child Sponsorship, Voluntary Work, Donation, Clothes

The number of people in this last group who correctly answer the question about the world population is naturally much higher than the overall average. We can therefore confirm that there is a close relationship between knowledge, committed action, and the perception of problems and phenomena connected to the population problem. More aware and accurate answers correspond to committed action and an awareness of related problems, based on appropriate information. In this sense we come back to the question of how correct our information is, since these results demonstrate that awareness of the extent and gravity of the question can only develop as a result of correct information. It is likewise true that people need correct information before they can decide what actions to take in order to better the world and lessen the gap between rich and poor.

4. What information

Most people get their information on this subject from newspapers and television, and demographic information is easily manipulated, so it is important to find out how well people understand the information from these sources. In this

instance we are going to look at the language of the press, because it is an important source of information, and we know what the target group is. It is fairly easy to study newspapers and magazines using the techniques of the statistical linguistic analysis, although we should remember that while we can study the approach, language, and “message” of the writer, we cannot formulate hypotheses about how well the message is received. Following the very interesting results of the statistical approach of textual data (Bolasco, 1999; Bolasco, Lebart, Salem, 1995; Lebart and Salem, 1994) and the positive results the Institute has had with analysis of demographic information (Misiti and Iezzi, 2000; Misiti, 1999), we decided to apply the same techniques of textual analysis to collected articles, published just before and just after 12 October.

The articles were first grouped according to type of publication (local and national newspapers, news magazines, women’s magazines), and according to political colour, so that our results would be easier to read and so that we could identify language typical of the group considered and consequently also the particular message transmitted (see below).

Newspapers Magazines	Articles (number)	Occurrences (total number of words)	Distinct words	Vocabulary (%distinct words/oc c.s)
Press agencies	5	1567	766	48.8
Catholic	7	4378	1807	41.3
Independent	8	1783	862	48.4
Left papers	4	1142	681	59.6
Centre papers	4	521	347	66.6
Right papers	2	2671	1152	43.1
Local papers	22	1849	257	67.1
Women’s mag.	1	383	886	47.9
Magazines	4	6687	1443	21.6

There are three important results we want to emphasise here: the basic structuring of the news by newspapers, the differences and similarities in the way information is treated in the various newspaper groups, the characteristics and typical language of each newspaper group. Each of these results was obtained by means of a specific technique of statistical analysis, analysis of correspondence, cluster analysis, and analysis of the specificity of forms and phrases of a text according to the frequency with which they occur.

The overall communication model becomes evident as we read the results of the analysis of correspondence carried out on the texts in question, in particular from an interpretation of the first three factorial axes which emerge from the analysis (60% of the variance explained, Figs. 3, 4, and 5). We interpret the first axis, responsible for absorbing most of the variability (28%), as an expression of a particular **approach** to the news. On the positive side of the axis, the words indicate reporting from a European or industrialised country's point of view. In this area of the plot we find words like: *only child, parents, couple, family, mortality* associated with words like *reduction, reproductive health, Christians, work, economic, spend, poorest fifth*, which emphasise the concerns of the developed world (including the United States

and Japan) with regard to world population growth. At the opposite end of the axis, we find a more journalistic approach, with human interest stories (*6 billionth baby, 12 October, hospital, light, earth, born, Sarajevo, UN*), and comment (typical of news magazines which indeed fall into this area of the factorial plot). We also find scientific words (*model, forecast, increase, demographic growth*), but also typically journalistic emphasis like *bomb* and *demographic explosion*.

[FIG: 3, 4, 5]

The second factorial axis represents the **source** of information, with reference to the two research reports presented at the press conferences in conjunction with the UN date of 12 October. The positive side of the axis represents reference to the UNFPA report, and is characterised by reference to the UNFPA report, by its *international* dimension, by reference to *developing countries*, by problems raised in the report like *poverty, reproductive health, human beings*, by verbs like *give, do, come*, and by words like *choice, campaign, organisations, conference, consequences*, characteristic of the UNFPA report.

On the opposite side of the axis are clear references to the IRP survey on the level of knowledge about world population issues among Italians. There are technical terms like *response, sample, interview, demography, fertility rate*, as well as reference to questions raised, like *retirement pay, immigration, assistance*. We also find expressions related to Italy as the object of analysis (*Italian population, number of inhabitants*), verbs like *consume, spend, amount to, know/not know* which refer to specific local reception of the information given. Naturally at this end of the axis we find press services which report local Italian news. The journalistic style is sober, with little space given to interpretation. The use of adjectives or emphatic expressions is rare.

The third factor we wanted to account for is the contrast between the **North and South** of the world and the attendant problems as presented in the articles we chose. On one side of the axis we find *India* and *China*, the two demographic giants, opposite *the United States*. Associated with these geopolitical connotations, we find words which express problems connected with population increase in each area: *work, child, woman, birth, food, north and south, access, assistance, war, fertility rate* for the first area, and *spend, consume, dollars, reduction, campaign, reproductive health*, the expression *too much* and the adjective *poor*.

The distribution of groups of newspapers/magazines on the factorial planes chosen show that there are at least three different attitudes towards the news, corresponding to three different types of publication (magazines, Roman Catholic papers, and press agencies). On the first factorial plane (see Figs. 3, 4, 5) these three groups are clearly distinguished from other groups situated around the centre of gravity of the axes. Independent newspapers occupy a specific position for the international slant they brought to the issue. This is the third factor in our analysis. Differences and similarities in the way different groups of newspapers treated the question are taken up in our analysis of the results of classification below.

The factorial analysis helps us to identify the latent linguistic structure used by the press about a specific demographic event. The first thing we notice, is that the issues raised by the journalists and communicated to their readers are, on the whole, complete and correct. These include the global international aspect of the main issue and its connection to broad local issues. The result is not at all provincial, but reflects a European economic and cultural point of view towards the problems of the southern hemisphere. There is some effort to make a connection between particular events and their geographic, social and economic consequences.

The journalistic style with its restrained use of emphatic adjectives or emotional expressions helps to guarantee an approach which is neither stereotypical nor superficial. The use too of technical words extends the journalistic language to include scientific words which are not easily misunderstood or manipulated.

Since we included many different publications, we felt it was important to analyse the way groups of newspapers and magazines treated demographic information. We grouped publications by type and cultural or political orientation. We wanted to find out whether there are differences, biases, or interpretations which translate into a different use of information or a specific type of language. We used two techniques of textual analysis, the analysis of characteristic language and classificatory analysis. By combining these types of analysis we were able to observe any differences and also evaluate our groupings.

As we have already seen, press agencies focus on the human interest of an event, with emphasis on the local or national side. The language tends to be descriptive and connected to the IRP survey (*Irp, know, interviewed, Italians, tomorrow*). News agencies use *son/daughter* and *baby* less than the other groups, since these are specifically linked to the global context of the 6 billionth human being. Newspapers and magazines with a Roman Catholic orientation use particular words, which sometimes express this link (*Christians, Catholic, campaign*), and at other times focus on questions of interest to the Roman Catholic church, like the *debt* of developing countries and *contraception* as corollary to a Catholic reading of the problem of demographic growth. The words *symbolic* visit of *Kofi Annan to Sarajevo*, which most publications use, appear much less often in this group. Words referring to large aggregates like: *population, land, inhabitants, city* do not appear often in this group.

Publications with a leftist orientation prefer to use light-hearted words like *Mr./miss 6 billionth*, which create appeal, but do not go beyond the surface. However other words like *fertility rate* and *assistance* also appear. Newspapers of the political centre have an interesting focus. They offer an economic and historical reading of the event. The name *Malthus* appears together with *theories*, and we also find expressions like *over-population* and *policy of control*, as well as *disaster* as an evaluative-emotional element. Since the orientation of these publications is towards analysis, they give less space to the human interest aspect and so use words like *6 billionth, baby, UNFPA, and Italians* less than other types of publications.

The group of widely distributed newspaper with national coverage pointed up the global implications of the problem. They made a connection between population growth and problematic international policies. Words which appeared in these papers more frequently than in the others are: *child* together with the specification *Chinese* and *Indian, war*, and the adjective *fatal* which emphasises the dramatic aspect of the issue.

Women's magazines concentrated on the question of *fertility rate*, and compared *Italy* with its demographic "oddity" to countries of the southern hemisphere and their high birth rates and over-population.

As we already saw when we looked at the factorial axes, news magazines took a broad view of the issue. They conveyed the information and offered an analysis, using technical and scientific words like *dynamic, demographic, and birth rate*. This is an interesting characteristic, due to the type of publication, with their particular attitude to the news as a phenomenon subject to interpretation. Local newspapers treated the news as a media event "constructed" by the UN. In fact we find frequent use of words describing the visit of *Kofi Annan* to the *hospital* in

Sarajevo. They gave much less space to problematic aspects of the issue, including any connection to Italy. They described the event, but did not interpret it.

The results of cluster analysis give us indications which are coherent with the analyses we have already considered. They confirm that some groups of news papers and magazines gave a specific slant to the information. On the other hand they also show that other groups chose to describe the same points and used similar language in doing so. Three of the five clusters selected show a high degree of similarity with three groups of newspapers: the magazines and group 2, the press agencies and group 3, the Catholic press and group 5 (see Figures 6, 7, 8). We have already seen how each of these is characterised by particular language, choice of theme, and source of information. Together these elements equal a very clear position on the factorial graphs, that is to say, in relation to the three factorial axes chosen.

The two “mixed” groups put together the independent newspapers, local newspapers, and women’s magazines on the one hand, and political newspapers (leftist, rightist, and centre) on the other. This second group demonstrates an aspect of political publications which has not been noticed before. Party newspapers and other politically inspired papers use the same particular language, no matter what their political orientation is.

[FIG 6,7,8]

Conclusions

It may be obvious to say that the mass media in general, and television in particular, have a huge cultural significance, since television is the most popular and ubiquitous popular medium, offering a diversity and availability unmatched by the press. The way in which the audiences of mass media and television interpret the world shapes their existence and their participation in society. Television can be considered “the site of convergence that joins the private world of the home with the larger public worlds beyond the front door” (Moores, 1993).

Along with this increased importance we find it also increasingly difficult to identify the effects and to define the audiences. Our job is not only to consider and analyse the changing characteristics of media consumers, in a sector which is itself in constant mutation, but also to consider the global aspect of the communications system (the global village) and the implications of “westernisation” for culture and for non-western populations.³

³ Although there is a lot of talk about the progressive “globalisation” of communications, there are still important differences between western countries and developing countries. For example, in developing countries (Westoff , 1999; Faria, 1999) substantially linear relationships have been observed between exposure to the media and reproductive behaviour, while western audiences display more complexity in the ways they receive, metabolise, and elaborate the messages and the information broadcast by the media. Undoubtedly, at the root of these differences are differences in the structures and technologies of the communications systems, as well as cultural and educational differences. All of these differences taken together mean that the programs produced and the reception they are given by their audiences differ decidedly from the “evolved” consumer experience of the west. But we can also suppose that the educational function of popular media will tend to evolve toward commercial programming, even more rapidly than was the case in the west. At that point networks will be less interested in educational programs, and will be subject to the same mechanisms we observe in our own television. Actually, the processes of appropriation and personalisation of media messages is already taking place in the “fourth world”. The reactions are complex and articulated, and in order to interpret them we have to go beyond the idea that everything is being homogenised into a sort of westernised culture. We have to understand how non-western viewers are

From the point of view of people who do research into population questions, there are several interesting elements here, including the influence of media on family behaviour, and the use of the media to disseminate values, messages, and knowledge. Another way of expressing this last idea would be to say that the media could spread "policies" inherent in the population.

We will need to modify our approach according to what we want to find out. With regard to the first type of problem, we surely have to enlarge our theoretical field of vision and the type of analysis we use, in concert with disciplines that study communications and their effects. If instead we want to use media for specific communications questions, we must understand the mechanisms specific to each type of medium, so that we can gather information about the ways information is received and the impact of communications. These mechanisms will include such things as targeting user/consumers, content analysis, and linguistic analysis. Our experience at IRP and the process we followed in presenting the case study on Italy and the 6 billion day survey indeed goes in this direction.

Obviously it is largely the job of the media to spread information about the world population, but the role of population specialists is also indispensable, since they can see to it that information is detailed and accurate. Their role is particularly important since the school system has so far neglected to foster interest in and sensitivity to these questions. Two types of intervention are needed: on the one hand we need to raise the consciousness of people working in the various media so that they will give this information the emphasis it deserves. They also have to insure that it reaches segments of the population, which have so far been indifferent to the population question, and so have not really become fully aware of it. On the other hand we have to act at the very basis of culture by introducing these issues into the school program.

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redefining their own cultural identity through their interaction with the media products they consume (S. Pack, 2000).

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Women's Perspectives on Childbearing: Challenges in Need of Creative Solutions

[Jo Murphy-Lawless](#)

Recent Feminist Commentary

Recent commentaries and critical thinking by feminists have begun to retrieve for public debate the problematic realities of difficult and demanding compromises which characterise contemporary women's experiences of childbearing and childrearing. At least half a dozen full-length books published since 1994 have begun to speak honestly about the failure of the state and society to match women's commitment (Benn, 1997; Buxton, 1998; Drew et al., 1998; Folbre, 1994; Franks; 1999; Freely, 2000, Walter, 1998). Previously, liberal feminists argued that gender relations had been significantly changed because of the way the drive for equality and the building of equal opportunity programmes for women reformed and removed some of the most restrictive legislation and constraints to which women had been subject up to the 1970s. Thus the increasing inclusion of women in the labour market across Europe and the shorter break for rearing young children, on average five years by the mid-1980s, as a result of what Sylvia Walby termed the growth of public state-led patriarchy marked an overall improvement in women's circumstances (1990: 193-5).

This is not how it feels at present for women who are now asserting that the state requires a far more explicit social contract if women are to undertake family work and paid employment. Melissa Benn, one of these recent writers, calls for a 'new politics of motherhood' because, she argues, women do not want to choose to become mothers as a sort of adjunct to their working lives. She writes:

I do not think our society/culture possesses a genuine understanding – or more to the point, a care – for what it means to raise a child, the quality of that experience, the quantity of effort involved.' (Benn, 1997:18).

In the British context, Benn offers a lucid description of how the state has largely abandoned women on the issue of childrearing and the value of this work. For her, if we are to get serious about women's needs and the needs of their children, there must be a significant redistribution of wealth in favour of parents, especially mothers and very especially poor mothers who are increasingly single parents, living on marginal levels of income, many of whom have been forced out of the labour market because of the additional cost of childcare (1997:186-7).

In similar vein, Natasha Walter (1998: 24) tells her readers that she wanted to 'record the growing power and self confidence of women' but kept finding herself 'up against other stories: women who despite their talents and desires' have not benefited from the perceived 'genderquake' of equality legislation which we have assumed to be so comprehensive. Walter writes: 'there are too many of them, too many women who are cut off from fulfilling their potential'; the 'reality gap' between women and what she terms the 'shining rhetoric' of equality discourses is nowhere clearer than when it comes to women and young children. Women's greater risks of living in poverty are inexorably linked to the issues of low wages, childrearing and the burden of childcare. And with an increasing fragility of relationships, it is mostly women as single parents who soldier on with the work of supporting children but in such a way that they experience what Walter terms 'a sensation of invisibility, of having dropped

off the edge of society' for there is no way that the state appears truly interested in their plight (ibid.:27).

Suzanne Franks (1999) puts it even more succinctly: 'Choice, what choice?' she asks:

The choice allegedly open to women between children or childlessness, work or home, full-time or part-time employment is often just an illusion of real choice (1999:174).

Franks argues that for the majority of women who have entered the workforce over the last two decades, who have come from low and middle-income families, their 'choice' is in fact a necessity, and they do this double burden without any of the support networks which higher-income women can purchase for themselves. If they have a partner, the partner more and more frequently no longer has a job for life.¹ And so the woman who is supposed to 'have it all' leads an increasingly strained and precarious existence, leaping uncertainly from shaky situations of short-term low-paid childminders to low-paid workplace settings to family chores, hoping to bridge all the gaps. The social psychologist Penelope Leach has said that 'parenting a child and particularly mothering a child has been squeezed out and made to feel to feel an extra' (quoted in Franks, 1999:213). This challenging scenario is why Franks cautions us to remember that one-fifth of all women of child-bearing age in Europe are now choosing not to give birth at all (Franks, 1999). The stress and expense, the lost opportunity costs appear not to be worth it for these women. Maureen Freely (2000:79-80) points out that the 'work/life campaigners' attempt to argue in all this that if employers and planners deal seriously with the importance of caring work and build it into their equations, establish flexible mechanisms, and encourage parents to share caring work equally, all will be well. Freely is very unsure about that for any attempt to make the shadow work of the domestic economy more visible, runs the risk of 'challenging the central ideas on which our economic system is based'. She points to the often negative portrayal of the trend for women to postpone childbearing until their mid to late 30s. In England alone between 1976 and 1998, conception rates for women between ages 30-34 rose by 62 per cent. The response from the medical scientific community, Freely argues, is to emphasise the increasing risks of miscarriage and infertility problem women face. This woman/potential mother becomes 'the problem' while the social and economic contexts which frame women's realities and thus their decision-making remain unaddressed.

Nancy Folbre (1994), the feminist economist, argues that the state has to be at the centre of the solution, for only the state can respond adequately to the steep increase in the real costs of having children and the extreme tensions these escalating costs have produced for parents, whether in the context of marriage or never-married mothers. Folbre whose book is aptly titled *Who Pays for the Kids? Makes* exactly that point – the costs do not vanish, whether individuals struggle to pay them or whether the state intervenes. But if the state does not intervene and women falter in the face of overwhelming burdens, then society as a whole pays dearly in the future for this lack of investment at the critical points in a young child's development.

¹ The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1998:52-53) observes that in order to maintain international competitiveness, there is now a reliance on downsizing and the shedding of an expensive permanent labour force, along with the growth of automated industries in developed countries, all of which has changed our relationship with the meaning and identity once conferred by that order of work.

Women economists are so concerned about this issue that earlier this year, a special issue of the journal, *Feminist Economics*, was compiled on children and family policy. Nancy Folbre and Susan Himmelweit (2000:1-3) in their editorial state this deep concern that as women move into what has traditionally been a male labour market, the 'importance' and the 'vulnerability of the traditionally female sphere of family care' becomes ever more apparent. In strict economic terms, the problem is that

market work is remunerated in terms that have some relationship to its productivity; non-market work is not. The opportunity cost of time devoted to family care is going up, intensifying a long-standing distributional struggle over who should pay the costs of rearing and maintaining the next generation of workers and citizens (ibid).

Covering a range of policies in seven different developed countries, the contributors to the journal bring out through their comparative analysis what the editors term a remarkable common denominator: the pressure placed on women to maintain their traditional care responsibilities while also increasing their hours of paid work (ibid).

Franks (1999) and Folbre (1994) argue that there are three central issues up for debate here:

- the lost opportunity costs for women if they do not have paid employment vs. the dual burden if they engage in paid work and have children;
- the problem of reconciling what are deemed non-market principles of family life in a market which often sees costs and competition in far too narrow a focus;
- and the problem of whether parenting is meant to be a central part of our lives as women.
-

Ireland: a Case Study

In this deepening crisis about women, childbearing and work in developed countries, Ireland represents an astonishing and very relevant case study. Our more distant history was always strange by European standards: outsize rates of women who never married,² who, if they married, did so very late, and who then had astonishingly high rates of fertility. Even in 1961, a fifth of all births were to women who had five to nine previous live births (Murphy-Lawless, 1993). However, the conclusive drop in Irish fertility rates over the last two decades, from a Total Fertility Rate of 3.55 in 1975 to 1.87 in 1995 ended Ireland's position as the demographic outlier in Europe (Murphy-Lawless and McCarthy, 1999). But the fact that this steep decline caught demographers and planners completely by surprise is probably the most disquieting element in this dramatically changed environment. Even by the late-1980s, more than fifteen years into a concerted struggle on the part of the Irish women's movement to achieve reproductive rights and personal autonomy, the notion of Ireland slipping below replacement fertility and the meanings this would hold for Irish society went largely unremarked. Through two embittered referenda campaigns rejecting legalised abortion and divorce and the return of large-scale emigration, women were making different choices and were emphatically rejecting the post-Famine ideology of 'chaste motherhood and unregulated fertility' (T. Inglis, quoted in Murphy-Lawless, 1993) but the complexity of their decision-making and their efforts

² Twenty-five per cent of all women in the generation born between 1896 and 1900 never married, for example.

to redefine their goals for themselves, to establish personal agency was lost on a state that saw (male) business as usual and which was in no hurry to amend restrictive legislation on women's reproductive health care, including full and legal access to all forms of contraception, let alone to plan ahead with supportive provision for the increasing numbers of women in the workforce who were also dealing with young children. Full access to contraception finally arrived in 1993 (with legal access to abortion the political hot potato on which there is still no legislative progress).

By that time, Irish women were beginning to catch up with their European counterparts in respect of labour force participation. For example, married women, aged 25-34, comprised only 4.8 per cent of the active labour force in 1961. This had grown to 39 per cent by 1989 and 58 per cent by 1996 (O'Connor, 1998:208). The rates for all married women's labour force participation have increased to 45.7 per cent, bringing us into line with European averages (CSO, 2000).

But we have had to rely on the same strategies that characterise women's working lives elsewhere in Europe once they have children; an undue reliance on part-time, low-paid, less skilled work, and on lower overall participation rates with three or more children, fairly describe the feminisation of the Irish labour force, as much as the European labour force (O'Connor, 1998; Plantenga, 1997).

Women's Voices

So how are women with young children coping? What kinds of decisions are women making about future childbearing? In order to establish the contexts of women's actions, I want to present some data on three distinct sub-groups of women:

- Women who have returned to birth after maternity leave;
- Women who left the workforce to care for small children and who are now trying to re-enter the labour market via second-chance education and training;
- Young women who have career paths and who have not yet had children.

This data will contribute to an understanding of the huge gulf that currently exists between state family policies and women's realities.

New Mothers

In a recent exploratory study I carried out for our national Employment Equality Authority on women returning to work after the births of their babies (Murphy-Lawless et al., 1999), there were a number of disturbing findings. The qualitative study comprised 30 women who had permanent, pensionable employment in large-scale companies with rapidly expanding market potential. Each woman was married with a husband also in full-time employment. The companies were

- a financial services provider
- an IT company
- a specialist manufacturing company

Each employer offers a full maternity package to women: this includes top-up pay between statutory maternity allowances and individuals' usual rates of pay; optional use of holiday and unpaid leave time to top up the statutory maternity leave of fourteen weeks – four weeks before the baby is born and ten after its birth; and a guaranteed return to the employment duties women had prior to maternity leave. Each company has a human resources manager who in interview indicated the company's full commitment to retaining women employees after maternity leave

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because of their value to the company as highly trained workers. In other words, this level of provision is top-of-the range and far more than women working in SMEs can expect.

Nonetheless, quantitative and qualitative findings indicated that:

- Women found difficulty around the adjustment of work duties and hours to accommodate the physical changes of pregnancy.
- Just under half the sample did not reveal the true date of expectant delivery to their managers because they wished to adjust their maternity leave to maximise the amount of time they could spend with the baby.
- Women with moderately serious to serious symptoms of pregnancy were reluctant to ask for the reallocation of duties to deal with these problems. Their strong perception was that calling for more flexible arrangements to accommodate their pregnancy would send the signal that they were less able for work.
- Women who were breastfeeding encountered difficulties in relation to a sufficiently long maternity leave, lack of facilities for breastfeeding, and lack of support amongst colleagues.³
- Half the sample recorded difficulty in accessing childcare and out of the fifteen who did not record difficulty, ten had older children indicating that childcare arrangements may be particularly problematic for first time mothers.
- Despite demonstrating strong and continuing commitment to their jobs, women expressed concerns about the impact of their status as new mothers on promotion prospects.
- Twenty-two women reported experiencing a variety of symptoms after birth, many of them experiencing multiple symptoms; eight of these reported symptoms continuing after their return to work.
- Physical exhaustion and depression were the most common symptoms women were dealing with on their return to work.
- Eleven women said they needed more flexible work packages to smooth their return to work in line with their new responsibilities as mothers.
- Several women indicated that the pressures of the dual burdens of work and new motherhood were too difficult to sustain on a full time basis and they were therefore withdrawing reluctantly from the workplace.

Many of the women drew attention to the fact that pregnancy and childbearing left them with something to prove in the workplace. They had to try and work longer and harder hours so as to continue to be considered serious players on the company team; or they had to rule themselves out of the promotion stakes because they felt they could no longer put in the very long hours which are implicitly required to attain promotion. In extended case study interviews, respondents stated their distress at the lack of policy attention to the following problems:

- Sufficiently long maternity leave;
- Secure, affordable and accessible facilities for infantcare;
- Support for women whose babies had special needs as a result of birth problems;
- Facilities in the workplace for the breastfeeding mother;

³ Fewer than 35 per cent of Irish women attempt to breastfeed at all; in the most recent study, 33 per cent reported having breastfed. Almost 75 per cent of interviewees reported that breastfeeding was less easy than bottle feeding, especially if women were returning to paid employment (Centre for Health Promotion Studies, 1999).

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- Support in the workplace for breastfeeding.

Here is how they expressed some of these dilemmas:

I feel that this lying about the date of the birth of their child... everybody does it because there's no way you will take an extra month before hand...Imagine the baby is two weeks overdue and you have taken a month before, you lose six weeks out of the precious 14 weeks and you have only 8 weeks with the child.

I think maternity laws should be changed in this country to reflect the demand of the parents. When one income is not enough to make a decent living, a society has to think over its values. We are talking about the next generation here. We want them to be healthy and strong and for this the first steps should be breastfeeding and a protected, calm environment.

Maternity leave is too short and does not support the needs of the working mother, of the child or breastfeeding.

Expressing at work has been difficult, reaction by colleagues and managers not very positive.

Paid maternity leave should last for six months. Three months is too short as the baby is only beginning to settle and mother is still exhausted from night feeds. Also it would allow mothers to breastfeed for longer instead of trying to organise expressing milk etc.

It is very difficult to find a trustworthy person to leave a baby with. Also, all forms of childcare are extremely expensive. After our mortgage, childcare costs are the biggest expense in our budget.

A more senior position became available during my 2nd pregnancy in 1998 but I was advised by my senior manager not to apply as I would not be eligible because of commitments at home. This would 'get in the way' of doing the job. I did not actually apply for this job.

I found that after my first pregnancy people in the work place still treated me the same as before but after my 2nd pregnancy things changed. I have recently accepted to take a redundancy package. This was not something I would have considered before my 2nd pregnancy. Lack of child care in the workplace, no designated breast feeding / expressing areas plus not having the option to work either a 3 day week or job share has forced me to make this decision to leave. I currently have a 2 year old and a baby 4 months, whom I am still feeding. I have to express in the evenings for the following day and this has greatly affected my milk supply.

What comes across above all is the sense of isolation and the feeling from women that they must solve these problems on their own.

Women Returning to Second-Chance Education and Training

Women continue to be over-represented amongst the lowest paid employees in Ireland (O'Connor, 1998: 196-197). Leaving the workplace becomes a sensible

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decision if women face insuperable difficulties in maintaining home life for young children while working in settings of poorly-paid low-skilled work, in a situation overall where the provision of safe affordable childcare is a rarity.

This is not however, a real 'choice' as Franks (1999) has indicated. In a recent evaluation of a second-chance education programme set up to serve women from two communities in one of the more isolated rural counties of Ireland, County Donegal, women from just this background explained what it has been like for them to try and engage in ongoing education, training and coursework, many of them for the first time in their lives, in order to improve their future chances (English and Murphy-Lawless, 2000). Again, the total lack of a supportive framework emanating from the state means that women must make difficult decisions about whether they can take time from their young children's needs and care, to attend to their own education and training needs. Over half of the women involved in this project had children aged between 0-4 years of age, with just fifty per cent of the women being in the 18-35 year age range. Just one-third of the women had completed second-level schooling, although this was hardly a choice, where wages were needed from older siblings to help support younger siblings. As one woman in her early 30s explained it:

Education was very limited and very basic...From the age of eight, we were sent...to gather spuds in the harvest season so if it was wet, we could go to school. And I might have only been at school three months in the year...I was the eldest. I looked after the rest. I didn't look on it as work, do you know what I mean, I was just there for the rest of them and that's it. I did what had to be done and just took it for granted.

Most had followed a pattern of semi-skilled work in the catering and hotel industries, factories, shops and contract cleaning until their children were born, at which point it became difficult for them to sustain home and work, given low wages and no childcare facilities. The unsupportive nature of small-scale SME workplaces for new mothers was a decisive factor in their withdrawal from paid employment:

I enjoyed working in the hospital and I enjoyed working in the factory but when I got pregnant with my children, it wasn't the same. I found it very hard to keep up with the work and if you were off sick, you had to explain yourself why you were sick.

Now although they are reassessing their situations, family responsibilities and childcare problems were stated by two-thirds of the respondents to be the reasons preventing them from taking up longer-term courses which could provide them with better qualifications in the labour market. And yet local access to personal development courses have given the women who are often deeply isolated space and time away from their young families, to be to be something 'other than a mother,' as one woman put it. None expressed regret at having children but all of them have negotiated difficult decisions about reconciling family and caring duties with other dimensions of themselves and their lives, including paid employment. At the same time, they feel they have lost out for themselves. Especially compelling and disturbing were women's responses about their lack of self-confidence, once they had chosen to stay at home full-time with very young children. So enforced full-time motherhood, the consequence of a lack of supportive structures by the state in education, training, family policies and childcare, is as difficult in its own way for women as it is to strive to remain in the workforce.

Younger Career Women Assessing the Problem of Work and Childbearing

Ireland has never had the resource of a full national fertility study. A group of my colleagues and I have proposed the need for such a study, but we have also emphasised the importance of building in a qualitative component, in order to better understand how individual women are making their decisions about childbearing, and the social contexts of these decisions, including the impact that state policies or the lack of them have on women's needs and desires relating to fertility and reproductive health.

Quantitative demographic methodologies measure cumulative actions. They cannot however capture meanings of those individual actions. By contrast, a great deal of methodological work within feminist inquiry is qualitative, an exploratory set of tools to enable us to get beneath the skin, to build an understanding about how women perceive the complexities of their lives, to see natural and social life from the viewpoint of where women are, and what we identify as producing our experiences (Smith, 1988). Young women are negotiating complex multiple layers of identity as they take on adult life:

- Their sexual identities
- Their identities as workers and earners
- Their identities as consumers
- And in choosing to have children or not, their identities around motherhood

As part of a scoping exercise to explore the potential themes for qualitative work on these issues, I have been carrying out case studies with women under the age of thirty who have come to adulthood in this most recent phase of the Irish demographic transition. I want to present data from two of these here.

Both women are university graduates with additional professional qualifications. One woman is a health care professional and works in an institution in Dublin, while the second woman has a higher management position in public relations. Both women were asked about childbearing, and what were their thoughts on it, given that both were in a strong position to pursue enviable careers of their choice and equally could choose whether and when they wanted to become pregnant.

The woman working in the health services expressed her dismay that within the medical, psychology and ancillary health care professions, there is actually no official support given on the issue of pregnancy and return to the workplace above that of the minimum statutory regulations. Her first inkling of this was when she was on placement. She described seeing her supervisor come into work after the statutory fourteen weeks maternity leave 'grey every morning' and went on to criticise the complete lack of sympathetic support and provision for women once their statutory maternity leave is concluded:

That is something that surprised me, just seeing that. She'd be up every night with this small child and she was working full-time and supervising students. She's an incredible woman, extremely competent. But very shortly after I left, she cut back to part time and hob-shared. But just the fact that she was doing that. She was in bits when she came in. Just looking at the workplace where I am now, it struck me as kind of ridiculous, really ironic. The whole ethos is of caring for people, but you don't get flexitime, I know that, for a longer maternity

leave and shifts in schedules once the baby is born. Quietly, unofficially, people are a lot more flexible but at the same time the stats have to be worked round and fixed up.

Of course this in turn leads to the culture of lying mentioned earlier on. This young woman has been in a long-term relationship for several years now. She loves her work and has excellent opportunities ahead of her. But as she has begun to look at what she might do around having children, she has come to some deeply uncomfortable conclusions about how constrained she and her partner would be, just on the issue of the price of housing alone:

I've been thinking about this over the last while, the whole Celtic tiger and the opportunities it has opened up. In a way these have been a double-edged sword because I was just thinking about it and realised that compared with my mother, I have so far fewer options. Okay, she had to give up work when she married. But just in terms of property, it's a situation now where if I made the decision that I wanted to have kids, okay, I'd have a mortgage but in the present climate, it would mean that I would have to work to have the kids and to have the background I would want and the situation I would want around that. I would have to work. In a way this is the exact opposite of what feminism fought for in your generation. Okay, it was great, you were fighting for women to be able to go out and work but now it's a situation where we have to and it's a sinister feeling that we're being kept there to feed this stupid economy and that we're being forced to stay there, like of course we're being forced to stay in the workforce, because they need the labour, they need the people. The scary thing about all this is that I would feel very much that if I were to go down that road [to have children] in the next few years, there are so few options, unless we moved down the country and lived in a shed, there would have to be two people in the house working. Okay, I might be able to negotiate and do job-sharing and part-time which is great and flexitime work, but the fact is the option isn't there to do what my mother did, to give us a good quality of life on one salary.

Her thinking illustrates the feminist analysis of the increasing pressure women are under to do it all, with no support from the state (in this case support over the issue of affordable housing).

The second woman was crystal clear from what she has seen in her industry that working and rearing children at the same time is not an option for her.

I don't think you can do it. I think you can be ambitious and careerist and headstrong and really push yourself, and try and excel, try and do better for yourself. And then there comes a juncture where you start thinking about children which I have for the last several years. So broodiness has just taken over me and I just want to stop work, stop work, and I want to have children and I want to look after them and that's what I want to do. You can't do both. You just can't do both. You can't re-enter the job market, you can't re-enter at a level where you are accorded the same respect, you can't re-enter at a level whereby all your male colleagues have been elevated above you. I think you have to choose, you either to choose to have kids or you choose to have a career. I don't want to go get right back into the job market and be really stressed,

uptight and unhappy and be farming the kids out. I couldn't live like that. What's the point of having them then? So to me, it is a simple choice.

Asked about whether efforts at obtaining equality have simply failed or whether there needs to be a different model of equality, not a gender-neutral model which assumes no difference between men and women, she replied as follows:

Women in the workplace and women having children are two very different issues. In my industry, women in the workplace are working twice as hard to be half as good as any man. I look about me and women in positions of power are clinging on by their fingernails, stressed to the eyeballs, workloads that would kill anybody. Yet you see the way their male colleagues interact with them and there's still this general thinking that 'You look very pretty today'; it's wrong, it's bad and I don't think women will ever get to the point where they are equal with men in the workplace. Then you introduce the issue of having children into that. And I think women's perspectives are very different on that, there is a real need to care and to nurture which the modern working environment doesn't allow and doesn't afford.

These were far bleaker assessments than I was expecting, coming from two extremely articulate, highly skilled women. They have seen what lies ahead of them in the examples of older women in their respective workplaces and their conclusions indicate that the future is a greater conundrum than ever for women on this issue.

Currently, amidst concerns about a shortage of workers for the Irish economy, it is estimated that 50,000 jobs are vacant and that at least 50,000 more women will be needed in the workforce over the next several years (IBEC, 1998:1). If only 20 per cent of the women currently not working were in the workforce, these jobs could be filled. But there is a shortage of at least 35,000 childcare places and that is well before the issue of affordability is discussed. Current costs for childcare are anywhere from IR£50 (Euros 63.49) a week upwards per child. The price of a current modest-sized second-hand house in Ireland ranges from IR£170,000 to IR£200,000 (Euros 215,855 to 253,948). The current average industrial wage is just under IR£18,000 (Euros 22,855). Even if it the position asserted by Pat O'Connor (1998:137), that Irishwomen are still finding sufficient power and identity in family and caring work, can be validated, it may be near its expiry date. Young women are doing the sums and are not optimistic about combining home, children and work.

The State and the Production of Different Models of Equality

The Dutch economist Janneke Plantenga argues that women across Europe have worked exceptionally hard in their efforts to prove their commitment to engaging in paid work outside the home while still trying to deal with their unpaid caring responsibilities. But Plantenga also argues that with a market driven by the imperatives of deregulation, neither employers nor governments have matched this commitment:

The lower activity rates of women, the large number of women filling part-time jobs and their unequal pay all point to gender-specific social assumptions about the responsibility for providing care. (Plantenga, 1997: 94).

It is already clear from both recent Swedish trends and the trends in East Germany before and just after the fall of communism, that the state plays a critical background

role to women's patterns of individual decision-making around fertility and that a withdrawal of state support for the family seems to be linked to a drop in fertility rates (Hoem and Hoem, 1996; Reinheckel et al., 1998).

At the beginning of the 1990s, the sociologist Cynthia Cockburn (1991:228) argued that in order to achieve real equality in the workplace which benefited everyone, the state urgently needed to redistribute resources 'towards women as a sex and towards support for those caring for human health and reproduction'. Even management gurus like Charles Handy argue that the balance between paid work and 'gift' or caring work must be recognised as vital for individuals and society alike.

Or, as one woman I interviewed put it:

Maternity laws should be changed in this country to reflect the demand of the parents. When one income is not enough to make a decent living, a society has to think over its values. We are talking about the next generation here.

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Does Burden Sharing of Women and Men Affect the Decision to Have Children?

[Hans-Joachim Schulze](#), Jan Künzler and Alois Herlth

This contribution does not report on research set up with the aim to explain fertility or to treat it as an outcome variable. The intention of the contribution is to give a hypothetical answer to the question presented in the title, though it is based on empirical results of recent research.

In the first step, a formal analysis of the problem is given. It leads to a general and a specific hypothesis. In the second step, research on the macro-level is being presented, and in the third step, research on the micro-level is the focus. For reasons of space we shall reduce the references to a minimum.

A formal analysis of the question

Let us suppose that there is a woman and a man who live together as (married) partners; they have settled for a life where one of the partners is at home most of the time, doing the housework, the cooking, and good deal of communication with relatives. The other partner participates in the labour market, leaves the flat or the house every morning in order to go to work and to earn money.

Let us suppose that there is another woman and another man who live together as (married) partners; they have settled for a life where both partners do the housework, the cooking, share the communication with relatives and participate in the labour market. Both leave the flat or the house every morning in order to go to work and to earn money.

In both cases, tasks (or burdens) are shared but they are shared in different ways. The first case is a complementary division of labour; the second case is a symmetrical division of labour. Whereas a complementary division of labour is based on specialisation (i.e. every partner has her/his own field of competence and both fields can be seen as a requested ensemble of tasks), a symmetrical division is based on the principle of equality (if we do not take into account possible differences in their paid work and their housework) whose sum yields the total of the couple's tasks.

With respect to the question raised in the title, it is important to make an explicit assumption about the way the couple defines the relation between the partners and that to a future child. The assumption is that the logics of the (spousal) couple are transcending the logics to be summarised under the formula 'do ut des', or to say it positively, the members of the couple and their possible children at least intend to show each other affection, respect and support. In short, we think about a relation based on love (Tyrell 2000, 9).

Let us assume that both couples follow the love pattern. Both decide in favour of having a child and are able to realise their intention. The 'complementary couple' could allocate most of the child-related care to the partner at home, the 'symmetrical couple' could share the child-related care. Whereas the 'complementary couple' only has to make an arrangement within the couple, the 'symmetrical couple' has to make

an arrangement that includes one or both work organisations. By way of plausibility, one could say that both types of task sharing are compatible with parenthood. In the complementary case, there is a partner at home who can take care of the child. In the symmetrical case, both partners can (alternately) take care of the child. As it is necessary to make more arrangements in the second case, the question: "Does burden sharing between husband/father and wife/mother increase the chance to decide in favour of a(nother) child?" may be answered by saying that the symmetrical case probably will have more hurdles on its way to family formation. Thus the hypothetical answer is "yes" if the two kinds of burden sharing are compared and continuity in the style of burden sharing is assumed.

The reader will have noticed that we have implicitly changed the title question in three respects without making it explicit up to now. The reformulated question runs as following: Does symmetrical or complementary division of labour at home and outside home show a stronger link to a decision in favour of a child if the burden sharing principle is maintained? The hypothetical answer is that the fertility decision is skewed with respect to complementary division of labour (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Division of labour in couple and probability to have a child

Complementary division of labour between married partners or a heterosexual couple, i.e. one of the partners is the housekeeper and the other is the breadwinner	Symmetrical division of labour between married partners or a heterosexual couple, i.e. both partners do household tasks and paid work
Probability to have a child = X	Probability to have a child < X

Up to now, we have not taken into account how the two partners allocate paid work. Again, we shall sketch the possible solutions and ascribe probabilities for having a child (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Division of labour, allocation to gender and probability to have a child

Complementary division of labour between married partners or a heterosexual couple		Symmetrical division of labour between married partners or a heterosexual couple
A) male partner at home, female partner outside home	B) female partner at home, male partner outside home	C) both male and female partner at home and outside home
Probability to have a child = X	Probability to have a child = X	Probability to have a child < X

Again, we ascribe a higher probability for having a child to both cases of complementary division of labour because they rely on a consensus of the partners, whereas a third party is involved in the symmetrical case.

The question that guides our attention gets more challenging if we pay attention to the prerequisites of the cases we sketched. These are:

- a) the basic idea that the (married) partners have reached consensus on a given arrangement to live and to work,
- b) that they live according to this agreement,

- c) that the anticipated change, which is implied in a possible parenthood, is compatible with their ideas of leading their lives and
- d) that the anticipated change can be realised within the given environment.

If we have a look at conditions (a) and (b), it seems straightforward to allocate them primarily to the level of the couple (Kiely 2000) — at least in modern countries where equal rights are granted to women and men and where a couple decides on its way of life. If we look at conditions (c) and (d), the picture gets different at the level of the couple's environment.

If we come back to case A in Figure 2, the question arises whether a man in a given culture is acknowledged as a parent in the same way as a woman and/or if there are gender-specific laws and regulations which are unequal and disadvantageous for a male homemaker. If this is the case, the chosen division of labour could be linked to anticipated disadvantages and make the continuation of the given pre-parental division of labour and the transformation to parenthood less probable. The improbability is eventually enhanced, if the income that the female partner can earn on her job is relatively small in comparison to a male income on the same level.

If we turn to case B in Figure 2, the transformation to parenthood is less dependent on environmental conditions because the female partner continues and extends her labour at home, while the male partner keeps to his activity as someone who is bringing home the money for a family household. The gender-specific allocation of work is culturally and legally supported in conservative countries where roles are primarily ascribed and not defined by people themselves. Still, we have to take into account that the economic situation depends on one income and this may be experienced as (too) low.

If we turn to case C in Figure 2, the transformation to parenthood must be discussed by taking two alternatives into account: a) the parents continue their work outside home or b) they reduce the amount of work. In case C/a, the surrounding setting has to deliver care for children and in case C/b the parents take care of the child themselves. The enforced dependency on the surrounding setting in case C/a is possible only if there are informal, market or state-based day-care provisions and/or parental rights to suspend work for some time (parental leave for both parents). Case C/b is necessarily tied to a sharp reduction in income and the possibility to reduce the contribution to the labour market according to the requests of the parents.

We have now outlined four scenarios for the transformation from partnership and parenthood. They are different with respect to cultural preferences and environmental demands — a lot of which are politically defined. Given this set of scenarios, the question of the partners' division of labour and its possible link to the decision to have a child can be taken up again.

The general hypotheses is that the decision to have a child is more probable where parenthood is culturally supported and where the chosen lifestyle of the couple optimally matches with the cultural (e.g. definition of gender roles and lifestyle of the majority), legal (e.g. rights of women and men with respect to parenthood), economic (income, tax, allowances) and environmental conditions (e.g. informal and formal child care; flexibility of work organisation; housing) in which this couple is situated.

During the last decades, the complementary and conservative division of work between women and men who live together and anticipate or share parenthood has come under pressure from two sides. Most women want to participate in the labour market and they want men to participate in the housework. Where the wish of women to participate in the labour market is realised and neither the political measures nor the men's contribution to the housework and childrearing tasks is (anticipated as) significant, the women's readiness to decide in favour of a(nother) child will be relatively low.

We may thus develop a more specific hypothesis: **Where female and male work and family participation is in line with the public measures and men's contribution to household chores and childrearing is (anticipated to be) significant, the women's readiness to decide in favour of a(nother) child will be relatively high.**

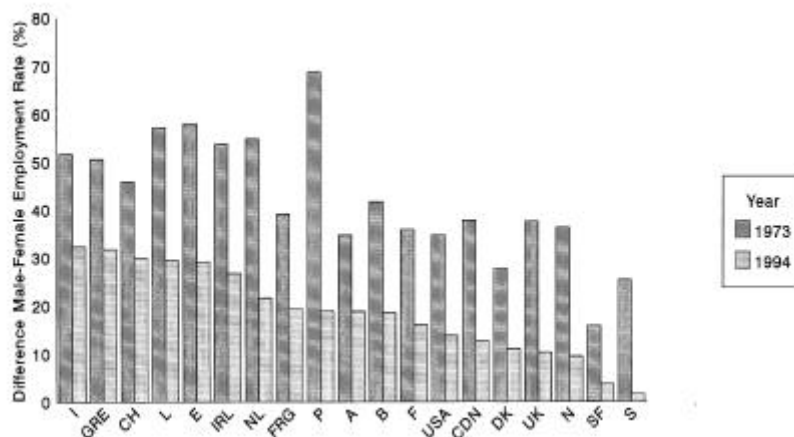
In order to support this assumption, we shall present evidence on the macro-level and thereafter on the micro-level. The macro-related part highlights the relation between family and its environment.

Evidence in favour of the hypothesis on the macro-level

The confrontation of normative family models — and in particular those pertaining to the division of labour between women and men who have children — with different types of welfare states yielded the following results. They are based on data of the OECD countries that participated in the 1994 ISSP survey. With their differing degrees of modernisation in practices and in national family and equal opportunity policies, the selected countries fitted well into Siaroff's typology of welfare states. In the social democratic welfare states of Scandinavia, the support of the model of continuous employment converges with a policy that, at least in part, favours equality between women and men and the modernisation of gender relationships in most other areas of society. Even in 1994 — four years after German unification — the high support of the model of continuous employment in East Germany corresponded to the situation of Scandinavia. The differences in attitudes between the two parts of Germany could hardly be greater. West Germany's conservative family policy was transferred to East Germany without any modification. The decline in the number of child day-care facilities was enormous. German national family policy favours the traditional family model: Joint taxation makes up a major part of the family policy transfers. The poor supply of day-care facilities for all ages proves that politicians putting emphasis on the three-phase model are only paying lip service. The realisation of the three-phase model, let alone the model of continuous employment, is possible only against all odds in an environment that is structurally thoughtless to say the least (Kaufmann, 1995). With regard to family policies, West Germany seems to be a late female mobilisation country. In the light of these findings, German family policy is in agreement with the opinions of less than a fifth of its addressees in the west, and only three percent in the east. Not a cultural but a societal lag is also to be found in the Netherlands. Here, too, the modernisation of family models is further advanced and resembles the pattern found in Scandinavian countries. However, social modernisation and the modernisation of family policy lags behind so far that — in this respect — the Netherlands to some extent resemble the late female mobilisation. Yet a late modernisation is still modernisation. However, it is anything

but certain whether the distinctive path of West German family policy will lead to a modernisation at all. Modernisation or preservation of gender inequalities has consequences: The new conditions after German unification forced large numbers of women and men in East Germany to forgo having children. In 1988, in the last year of the GDR, there were 215,734 births in East Germany. With 76,277 in 1994, births had almost reduced to one third of 1988. Total fertility rates fell from 1.56 in 1989 to an incredibly low 0.77 in 1994.

Figure 3. Differences between employment rates of women and men in OECD countries, 1973-1994 (source: Künzler 2000, 132)



According to Gauthier, the Scandinavian countries have shown an increase in their total fertility rates since the middle of the 1980s and now feature the highest fertility rates in the EU. In contrast, Germany and the south European countries have the lowest fertility rates in the EU. At the same time, the difference in employment rates of women and men in Scandinavian countries is the lowest in all OECD countries, while in some of the advanced Christian Democratic countries as well as in late female mobilisation countries there are still important differences (see Figure 3). Fertility and gender differences in employment have a strong negative correlation. Contrary to popular assumptions, a comparison between OECD countries shows that the smaller the differences in employment rates, the higher the fertility rate. More effectively than other policies, the promotion of gender-role modernisation through an equality-oriented family policy creates the conditions that make work and family life compatible. A decisive contribution is made by the supply of day-care for children aged one to three years. The better the degree of provision for this age group, the smaller the difference in employment rates between women and men. The difference between the rate of employment and the degree of child-care provision is negatively correlated. Comparative research on families' division of labour in the household shows that the societal modernisation of the role of women may also have a modernising impact on the participation of men in families: The Scandinavian countries (and the Netherlands) consistently hold high rankings with regard to the participation of men in family work. Germany and late female mobilisation countries consistently hold rankings on the other, traditional, end of the scale. France, Belgium and Great Britain hold middle positions.

In an analysis of Eurobarometer data from 1990, the EU countries were ranked according to the percentage of fathers regularly participating in two or more (out of six) household tasks in the 1980s: The following order was found: Denmark, Netherlands, France, Belgium, East Germany, Greece, Great Britain, Italy, Ireland, West Germany, Spain, Portugal. In a meta-analysis of studies from ten European countries, participation of men in household tasks was ranked as follows: Denmark, Netherlands, East Germany, Sweden, France, Ireland, Great Britain, Switzerland, West Germany, Italy. Rankings from a score of traditionality of the division of household tasks in two fulltime-earner families in the 1994 ISSP survey show the following order: Canada, USA, Sweden, Norway, Great Britain, East Germany, Ireland, West Germany, Austria, North Ireland, Italy, and Spain.

The social-democratic welfare states of Scandinavia appear to have created conditions that allow a co-existence and co-evolution of family with modernised gender relationships. The consequences of deficits in modernisation appear just as clear in the late female mobilisation countries (including Germany). These findings refute the scenario of family's decline and doom as a result of modernisation, and especially of modernising gender relationships — a scenario that has accompanied family sociology and family research from its very beginnings up to the present day.

We can summarise the results in the following thesis: Modernisation of family policy and fertility go together well on the macro-level.

We shall now turn to Germany, a country that has a traditional family policy, i.e. a policy that supports a complementary division of labour between women and men — or mothers and fathers — on the macro-level. The focus of interest is on the role of the husband and father on a micro-level.

Evidence in favour of the hypothesis on the micro-level

The data of 315 families in Germany were analysed using a linear structural approach (LISREL) with a view to the guiding question: What are the consequences of a clear-cut family orientation of fathers with respect to the spouse on the one hand, and the child's development on the other? The model of the possible effects was based on a path analysis. It was designed to show the importance of father's family orientation both with regard to its direct and indirect influences. The latter refer to marital quality as perceived by the mother, and the idea that marital quality should influence the quality of the father-child relationship. The model also assumed direct effects on parenting from the father's family orientation and household participation.

The proposed model was tested successfully and confirmed by the results. We may therefore argue that the modernisation of the father's role, as indicated by family orientation and participation in household activities, can be regarded as an important factor of the quality of the father-child relationship. It is not only striking that the two indicators of modernisation have independent effects on parenting, but also that the degree of household participation does not influence maternal marital satisfaction.

The father's family orientation, however, is not only a valid predictor of the father-child relationship, but also, though a bit weaker, of the mother-child relationship. Not only in bivariate correlation analysis, but also in multiple regression analysis with maternal power behaviour as the dependent variable, could we verify direct effects of

the father's family orientation. However, the participation in household activities is not important: The maternal parenting style cannot be predicted by the father's engagement in the household. Contrary to the explanation of the quality of the father-child relationship, maternal parenting does not seem to be influenced by the quality of marriage. The most important influencing factor is maternal depression. A second model was also tested and we obtained an excellent adjusted 'wellness-of-fit' index. This model underscores that maternal parenting can be explained by the father's family orientation. There is a reasonable direct effect on maternal behaviour as perceived by the child and a strong direct effect on the wife's marital satisfaction. The latter influences maternal parenting only indirectly and is actually mediated by maternal depression. All path coefficients were statistically significant. The present results emphasise that, in many respects, the father's family orientation is of considerable importance as a familial factor influencing the development of the child. An increased engagement for the family on the part of the fathers, indicated here by the variable, should therefore promote the development of children's competence. Moreover, it has a positive effect on both the parent-child relationship and the parents' relationship.

The introduction of further paths in the model did not lead to an improvement of the model's estimate. This can be regarded as evidence for the assumption that the role orientation of the father only takes affective effect through the appraisal of marital quality by the mother and therefore only indirectly influences the psychological condition of the mother. In conclusion, the described results can be quoted as empirical foundation for the frequently expressed assumption that a rigid fixation of the fathers on a traditional role description has become the central bottleneck of family functioning.

Of course the preceding reflections on the 'effects' of the father's role orientation go beyond what can actually be substantiated on the basis of cross-sectional data. Considering this, results at the level of assumptions about effects still remain, which are nonetheless made additionally plausible by an interpretation of relations through path analysis, while their respective direction of effect assumed here has not yet been assured. Based on existing research results, however, there is considerable support for the relation of variables proposed in the present contribution.

Family-oriented fathers are most probably also child-oriented fathers. They also participate to a greater extent in the housework. However, household participation as such is not a valid predictor for the mother-child relationship or for the development of children's competence. What is crucial is the father's role orientation, i.e. the concept of male involvement in everyday family life that he accepts as a norm. The consequences of a modernised gender-role orientation of the father for the mother's marital satisfaction and supportive behaviour are not the result of the father's greater participation in the household.

It would not be plausible, however, to understand family orientation as addressed here only as an expression of changed role comprehension with regard to household and children. Though the present study employed an operational definition of endorsement of egalitarian, gender-unspecific distribution of family work, it appears more likely that family orientation in a wider sense expresses an increased 'interpersonal sensitivity'. It can be assumed that men who are aware of their

responsibility as husbands and fathers are generally more interested in intrafamilial matters and concerns and invest more effort in partner- and child-relationships. Men with a more traditional attitude will probably be less prepared to invest in the relationship, a characteristic women frequently complain about. This hypothesis is supported by the strong positive correlation between family orientation and a responsive-supportive attitude towards the family by the fathers ($r = .65$) in the present data. Though these considerations remain speculative due to a lack of empirical investigation, they nonetheless offer a possible explanation for the detected direct effects of men's modernised attitudes on women's marital satisfaction. Belsky and Rovine found, for example, that marital satisfaction of the woman was strongly influenced by the interest of her partner in her own feelings and in the relationship. A modernised gender-role orientation of the man may therefore not only include aspects of intrafamilial task sharing, but also the significance he attaches to affective bonds within the family.

The present finding that father's family orientation has not only indirect consequences (via the marital satisfaction of the mother) but also exercises a direct influence on the mother's supportive behaviour can be explained primarily by the instrumental support given to the mother. It can be assumed that fathers with a marked family orientation participate to a greater extent in the rearing and care of the children and by this relieve their partner in these tasks. The finding which emerges clearly from the present results is that a modernisation of the familial role arrangements does by no means have to be regarded as a threat to the family's capability, provided it includes a modernisation of the paternal role. An increased family orientation of fathers as a feature of familial modernisation has numerous positive consequences for family life and creates new, additional possibilities, especially for the development of the children. The present results give the opportunity to introduce not only normative arguments relating to an 'egalitarian community' into the current discussion about the 'dual lifestyle', but also to include the perspective of basic familial conditions of children's development. It seems very likely that, in the future, a double orientation not only of the mothers, but also of their male partners will form the basis of a functioning family life. This, however, makes it essential for the fathers to put into effect the necessary changes of their role orientation. The success of such role revising is likely to determine to which extent the frequently postulated disintegration of the family as a result of modernisation processes can be avoided or even be reversed.

The results show that family orientation and its expression in intrafamilial communication with spouse and child is sufficient — at least in a conservative cultural setting — to enhance the marital quality and the developmental aspects of the child's self-definition on the micro-level of the particular group of family.

Conclusion

Our formal analysis of the question whether burden sharing between women and men affects the decision to have children led us to the following hypothesis: Where female and male work and family participation is in line with public measures and men's contribution to household chores and childrearing is (anticipated to be) significant, the women's readiness to decide in favour of a(nother) child will be relatively high.

The results that pertain to the macro-level clearly show a link to fertility. We may say that we have presented evidence in favour of the hypothesis. Where public policy succeeds in shaping the conditions for family life more according to the requests of normative orientations of women and men, a higher degree of fertility can be observed.

As fertility was not observed as a dependent variable, the results that pertain to the micro-level can be used as indirect arguments in favour of our hypothesis. If men in a conservative national environment engage as fathers and show a high degree of family orientation, women, children and men themselves profit from this commitment and the couple has a reason to have (an)other child.

Our results support the assumption that a family policy in line with the expectations of women and men and a policy-supported re-definition of the roles of husband and father can improve the quality of family life and form the basis for a relatively high level of fertility.

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Alternative Child-care Policies and Fertility

[Sirpa Taskinen](#)

Family planning

Thinking that family policy or especially child-care policies would affect fertility, we make at least three assumptions:

- 1) that people are planning to have a baby,
 - 2) that they are rational in their family planning and
 - 3) that they are taking external conditions into consideration in their plans.
- Alternatively, we can think that reproductive behaviour is at least unconsciously affected by the family policies of the respective countries.

Not all, or maybe none, of the above mentioned assumptions are true for all families. For instance, even in countries where there are advanced family planning services available, a great part of the children is still born without special planning. They just happen to come, but — in the majority of cases — the future mother and father have nothing against the "accident" or grow accustomed to the situation during pregnancy. More usual, however, are *contraceptive intentions*, i.e. when *not* to have children. This naturally also means adjusting to the reality: Not to have children is what people really often can decide, and there are many alternative ways of implementing it — by refraining from intercourse, by contraceptives or by abortion.

Of course, there also exists *proceptive behaviour*. Many families responsibly plan how many children they want to have and what would be the best timing for them. Family planning is often used to help in deciding *when* a new baby would be welcome. In the analysis of Miller and Pasta (1995), the most important intention in fertility behaviour proved to be child-timing intentions. Though, once a first child is born, timing loses some of its importance. However, babies are not something you can "order" even if you would like to have them. Lately, the medical techniques for assisting people with their fertility problems have rapidly advanced, but still nobody can guarantee the birth of a baby. Children are not always born according to the wish of people.

This does not mean that family planning would be useless, quite the contrary. If the mother has her say whether and when to have a baby, the future of the child will be much more beneficial than if there is no such possibility. Children born against the definite wish of their mother are not in a happy position. In Hungary, a study on children of those mothers who had been refused an abortion in two different tiers, showed that the children had a heightened risk of behavioural disorders, criminality and even early death (Congress of the European Society of Social Paediatrics 1985).

Motives, desires and intentions

What are the reasons for people to have children? Of course, the procreative drive is mainly a biological urge, but psychological and situational factors also come into play.

From the perspective of the individual, there is a general psychological and behavioural sequence that leads to conception and the other fertility events that follow it, such as childbirth, induced and spontaneous abortions (Miller and Pasta

1995). This sequence begins with a variety of psychological traits, such as childbearing motivations, attitudes and beliefs. These latent traits are activated in the form of fertility desires, which in turn are translated into fertility intentions. Finally, these intentions are implemented in the form of various instrumental behaviours, which themselves determine whether or not a fertility outcome occurs.

Fertility research continues to be based primarily on the views of women. Miller and Pasta (1995) point out that the husband's and wife's intentions interact in the determination of reproductive behaviour. Thomson (1997) found out that when couples disagree about wanting a child, each partner's intentions were shifted toward not having a child; and disagreement in desires or intentions were reflected in birth rates that were lower than average.

Obviously, the desired number of children is not the same as the realised number. One way of studying the prospective of family policy is to compare these two numbers. If there is a wide gap between them, it can be assumed that better conditions and benefits would make a difference.

In Finland, the most important reasons that women themselves give for having or not having more children are related to interpersonal relations, especially to the relation with the partner (Turunen 1998). The more stable the relationship between the parents, the more children are planned. It thus makes a difference if the parents are married, cohabiting or not living together.

Many external reasons have an effect on the timing of the children. The older the woman, the fewer children she still wishes to have. In higher social groups, larger families are desired. Even the place of living has an impact on the wishes regarding the number of children.

Evidently, family-oriented women want to have more children than those with individualistic and self-fulfilling values do. The dividing point seems to be on the level of two children. Religion also makes a difference, and women with at least four children are usually more religiously oriented than the others (Turunen 1998).

According to Chesnais (1996), young Italian women, having experienced equality from their childhood on, will not tolerate subordination in their relationships. He argues that there is a direct link between these attitudes and fertility behaviour.

Alternative child-care policies

In societies where the labour market participation of women is high, day-care facilities are a necessary condition for raising children. Combining work and family is on the agenda of many Governments and international organisations.

There are three basic alternatives for child care:

1. By the parents
 - mother
 - father or
 - both.
2. By somebody else:
 - at home by grandmother, nurse etc.

- at day-care services
- 3. Combination of the above:
 - flexible working hours
 - tailored day-care services.

In Finland, there are several possibilities for the families to take care of their children — and the crucial thing is that there are several alternatives. What suits one family is not necessarily good for another. Parents can choose to look after the child themselves with the help of the child home-care allowance, or they can place their child in a day-care centre run by the municipality. It is also possible to choose the private day-care allowance and arrange for child care privately in a private nursery or have a nurse at home — which, however, has become more and more rare.

Child care alternatives

- o paid maternal & paternal & parental leave
- o unpaid / partially paid leave
- o shortening of working hours
- o flexible working hours
- o home-care benefit
- o private care benefit
- o subsidised day-care services by the municipalities
 - day-care centres
 - evening and night care for the children of shift workers
 - child minders (caring for children at her own home)
 - staffed playgrounds
 - after-school clubs

None of the benefits or services has been universally accepted politically or by the general public. Almost in regular intervals, there is a public discussion about the "right" form of day care for children and the "right" place of the mother of young children — nowadays also of the father.

Municipal day care. Provision of child day care has a long history in Finland. The 1973 Law on Day Care made child day care a part of public social services. The law decrees that the municipalities have to make the services available to all families with children. Child day care is given at day centres, by child minders and on staffed playgrounds. Most municipalities also run evening and night care facilities for children of shift workers, and afternoon care for school children. Since 1996 the children below school age have had a subjective right to a municipal day care placement if the parents so wish.

The charges for day care depend on the parents' income, the size of the family, and the time spent in care. The highest rate for one child is Euro 168 a month. Free day care may be granted on certain conditions.

Especially the right-wing political parties opposed the idea of municipal day care, and there were campaigns against what was called "institutionalisation" of children. In the early period after the law took effect, municipal day care could be provided to only 10 % of the children under school age, but the situation rapidly improved.

Nowadays, practically all children in need of day care can be placed. A great majority of parents (85 % in a recent survey) were content with the day care system (Reuna 1999). However, less than half (46 %) of all children under school age do actually use municipal day-care facilities. The number gets higher with the age of the children. 70 % of the six-year old children use municipal day care facilities, about one fourth is cared for at home, and some 5 % attend a private day-care service (Takala 2000).

There are several reasons for this. The maternal & paternal & parental leaves have been lengthened several times, and in total amount to about ten and a half months. After that, one of the parents may stay at home and use the right to unpaid leave. Thus there are very few public nurseries for babies under one year since the families most often want to take care of their small babies at home. Also the following other benefits greatly affect the use of municipal day-care facilities.

Home care and private care allowances. In 1985, a new benefit called home care subsidy was introduced for children who were not placed in municipal day care. The purpose of this benefit was to support the care of the child at home even after the period of the parents' benefit had ended. Parents with children under three years of age were granted the right to choose, on a subjective basis, whether they wanted a municipal day-care arrangement or a home care subsidy.

If the child is not placed in municipal day care, parents can choose to receive child home care allowance provided that they have a child under age 3. In this case, they can get financial help with the child-care costs of any other children under school age they may have or private day care allowance, if their child (who must be under school age) is looked after by a private childminder recognised by the municipality (either a private child-care centre, a family child-care provider or a caregiver whom the parents have hired).

Child home-care allowance and private day care allowance are not available at the same time. The allowances consist of a flat-rate benefit (Euro 254 for home care allowance and Euro 119 for private care allowance), as well as an income-related supplement and a sibling rise. In addition, some municipalities might grant an extra supplement for home care. The allowances are payable from the end of the parenthood allowance period until the time the child starts school.

When introduced, home care allowance was — and still is — a very controversial political issue. The Conservatives and the Centre Party favoured home-based care; the parties of the left (Forssén 1998) supported municipal day care.

The opponents of the home-care allowance argue that — in spite of a partial means testing - it favours wealthy people and farmers who would in any case care for their children at home. Some also see favouring home care as a dangerous tendency to push women back home and make them lose their career opportunities. Others see the benefit as an important possibility for the family to choose the most suitable alternative for their situation. Even if the sum is rather small, it facilitates both the economy and the day-care problems of the family. It lets the children stay at home and not be "dragged out of their beds early in the morning when the parents go to work". The opponents, however, point out that not all homes are ideal places for

children and that even the small ones would benefit from the company of peers and day-care education.

Child care leave. When the parenthood allowance has ended, parents can take a child-care leave with full employment security to look after a child under age 3, though both parents cannot be on leave at the same time.

Employers are not required to compensate employees who are on child-care leave. After the leave, employees are entitled to return to their previous job or a comparable position. Credits for paid annual leave do not accrue during childcare leave. The minimum length of childcare leave is one month. Under law, employees are entitled to one or two leaves, but additional periods are possible with the employer's consent.

Shorter working hours. Part-time working is not common in Finland. However, parents can choose to take a partial child-care leave, i.e. to reduce their working time until the end of the year in which their child starts school. This reduction is not financially compensated. The minimum length of the part-time child-care leave is six months, the specific arrangements being subject to agreement between the employee and employer.

Only one of the parents can be on partial childcare leave at any given time. The parent taking a partial child-care leave is required to have worked outside the home for at least one year before taking the leave, with regular working hours totalling at least 30 a week. There also exists a so-called temporary child-care leave, which is meant for taking care of a sick child for some days.

Flexible working hours. Many companies and offices use flexible working hours, where people can come later or leave earlier if they have accumulated working hours in their personal follow-up account. In the EU-funded research and development project on *Reconciling Work and Family*, the most common wish concerning working hours among employees in Finland was the possibility to save overtime hours for a longer break, i.e. to have a kind of "working hours bank" (Lammi-Taskula 1998).

Effect on birth rates

For family policy, it is important to know to what extent people do take external conditions into consideration when planning for a new baby or the size of the family. Besides the biological aspect, it can not be assumed that the reasons to have children would be universally the same. As the birth rates differ so greatly from one country and one region to another, there must be cultural and psychological differences in the desires, intentions and motives of both European women and men to have a small or large family or no children at all. Also, studies imply that women (and probably also men) at different phases of life have different wishes and preferences.

It is easy to understand that in problematic situations of society, there would be much to be gained with family policy measures. In low fertility regions of Yugoslavia, a study showed that the improvement of the existing policies would at least create the space for the realisation of the intended reproductive behaviour (Rasevic 1999). If conditions were changed, 15 % of the interviewed women believed that they would have a desired number of children and every seventh woman would consider having

another child. As almost all of the women already had children, the researcher concluded that as a result of the implementation of pro-natalist population policy, women would be having their second child or a child of higher birth-order.

In the study, the majority of the women desired that the Yugoslav government would support families financially. The highest significance was attributed to the provision of housing facilities; access to cheap credits and tax benefits for children's footwear, clothing and toys. One of the most popular measures connected to the improvements of the parenthood was a longer maternity leave. Also, better and cheaper possibilities for child care were much valued. However, the ideal solution for most of the interviewed women would be to stop working while the children are small. Other forms of measures like flexible working hours, part time jobs and house-cleaning services were only rarely mentioned. The explanation might be that they are almost totally lacking in Yugoslavia, and thus their utility is hard to imagine.

In welfare states, the situation is quite different. In Finland, surveys show that economic matters do not have any greater impact on family planning (Salmi 1994, Turunen 1998). Only in cases where more than the "usual" two children are planned does economy pay a role. However, according to a recent barometer, only 37 % of families found the present family benefits sufficient (Reuna 1999).

In Finland, surveys imply that the benefits do not very much affect the decisions of the families to have the first child, and even not very much for the second one. (At least this is what people report of their conscious behaviour.) Among the services, day-care facilities do have an impact on the decision to have more than one child.

Causal relations are always problematic to prove. With so many intervening factors, it is difficult to differentiate the effect of family-policy measures from all the other changes in the lives of people. Analysis shows, that although better family benefits and services have somewhat affected the birth rates, the increase has usually evened out in three or four years (Ilmakunnas 1994). New family benefits can increase the number of births for some years while families consider the proper timing for the (next) child. In Sweden, the age difference of siblings has shortened due to family-policy measures (Hoem, cited by Ilmakunnas 1994) but the fertility of different cohorts has not changed much (Walker, cited by Ilmakunnas 1994). The general fertility rate is not easily raised especially due to the smaller cohorts of fertile women, and the higher age of the delivery of the first child.

However, it is interesting to observe that the total fertility figures in Finland — which had gone down rapidly since 1950s — evened and even rose in the middle of 1970s (Figure 1). At that time, the Day Care Act had come into force after a couple of years' hectic public debate. Ever since — noting also the introduction of other services and benefits above mentioned — the total fertility figures have not lowered to the level of the years before the Act.

In the beginning of this paper, I argued that family planning is used more often for *contraceptive* than *proceptive* intentions. It seems that day-care arrangements work the same way. One cannot conclude that good day care would tempt people to have more children — to be sure, nobody will have children in order to put them into

kindergarten. What is obvious, however, is that lacking day-care facilities do prevent families to put their childbearing intentions into practice.

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