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The viability of pronatalism as a response to population growth decline in the Canadian context

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ABSTRACT

A decrease in fertility over the last thirty years has led to projections for population growth decline and possible population decline in the near future. Although immigration has traditionally been seen as a source of growth for Canada, current demographic trends suggest a more comprehensive approach may be needed. A pronatalist policy may help offset the long term effects of population decline if used in tandem with increased immigration and increased support for arriving immigrants. In order to be successful such a policy would need to address both the direct and indirect barriers to fertility as experienced by women and families while encouraging increased labour force participation by women.

Key words:

Pronatalist; population decline; fertility; immigration; Ageing; Aging; Canada

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Abstract

A decrease in fertility over the last thirty years has led to projections for population growth decline and possible population decline in the near future. Although immigration has traditionally been seen as a source of growth for Canada, current demographic trends suggest a more comprehensive approach may be needed. A pronatalist policy may help offset the long term effects of population decline if used in tandem with increased immigration and increased support for arriving immigrants. In order to be successful such a policy would need to address both the direct and indirect barriers to fertility as experienced by women and families while encouraging increased labour force participation by women.

Introduction

Among suggestions offered for ways in which to increase population growth and offset population decline in coming generations are: extending working years (Bermingham, 2001; Foot & Gibson, 1993; Keely, 2001; Peterson, 1999); increasing labour force participation (Bermingham, 2001; Foot & Gibson, 1993; Keely, 2001; Passaris, 1998; Peterson, 1999); increasing immigration (Bermingham, 2001; Peterson, 1999); increasing fertility (Peterson, 1999; Vukovich, 1992); investing in future workers (Peterson, 1999); reinforcing intergenerational bonds (Peterson, 1999); supporting Canadians in need (Bermingham, 2001; Passaris, 1998; Peterson, 1999; Vukovich, 1992); tax reform (Passaris, 1998) adapting to a smaller population (Keely, 2001); pension reform (Bermingham, 2001; Foot & Gibson, 1993; Passaris, 1998; Vukovich, 1992); healthcare reform (Bermingham, 2001; Passaris, 1998; Vukovich, 1992) and encouraging retirement savings (Peterson, 1999). Timmerman (2005) adds that it is crucial that we plan ahead and learn from the baby boom and the silent generation in order to better protect ourselves for the future. While these are all noble endeavors, each must be

examined in regards to its ability to address Canadian population concerns now and in the future. In order to avoid further decline it is likely best to implement a variety of initiatives

What follows is an argument for the inclusion of pronatalist policies in a comprehensive response to population growth decline. An increase in fertility, it is argued, would help offset the anticipated effects of high immigration while ensuring higher, preferably replacement or above, levels of fertility in the future. In order to increase fertility it is important that policies are developed not only to address the direct or financial barriers to fertility but also those less viable obstacles associated with children such as opportunity costs for women, and societal attitudes that lead to the high valuation of labour force participation and the devaluation of childbearing and child care roles for both men and women.

In an effort to create a space for the discussion of a pronatalist policy in the larger context of population policy every effort has been made to isolate pronatalism from other, complimentary approaches. As such pronatalism is presented as separate from immigration. The discussion that follows does not have within its scope the cultural intricacies of fertility nor the unique barriers experienced by immigrants considering parenthood in Canada[1]. The intention is not to ignore the role of immigrants in a potential pronatalist scheme, only to provide the barest of introductions to the possibility of pronatalism in Canada so as to initiate a dialogue.

[1] For more on barriers faced by immigrant parents see Dua (1999), Enang (2001), Liamputtong & Naksook (2003), Nzegwu (2004), Ralston (1991), Small, Lumley & Yelland (2003), Tirone & Shaw (1997), Tsolidis (2001), or Tummala-Narra (2004)

Dynamics of Population Growth Decline

The best argument to explain the need for a population policy is that without one Canada stands to be forced to react to the results of population change individually as they arise instead of being able to attack them as components of the same phenomenon. This is true regardless of one's view of population decline as positive or negative for Canada and the question of whether or not there is an impending problem since a population policy would simply lay out guidelines for action should a series of situations arise and provide guidance on how to avoid those occurrences deemed detrimental. At the very least the policy development process would allow for a full and thorough debate about how Canadians would like to see Canada proceed in the face of population decline and establish some long term directives. At most, a population policy for Canada would establish concrete goals for growth including the strategies to be employed in reaching them. If Canada continues to ignore the value of a comprehensive population policy there is much evidence to show future governments will have to find ways to address the resulting demographic changes.

The current population climate in Canada is marked by low fertility, slow growth and population ageing. This is largely the result of decreased cohort fertility balanced with an increased life span and an increase in child survival rates ("Too many or too few…", 1999). Whereas in the 20th Century low fertility was the result of a small number of births combined with high infant and mother mortality, the current situation is predominantly the result of low fertility alone (Chesnais, 1996). Since the baby boom Canada's fertility rate has been steadily dropping, from 1.8 in 1974 to 1.57 in 1987 with a slight increase to 1.7 in 1990 (Passaris, 1998). By comparison, over the 20th century only

22% of population growth was attributed to migration while the remaining 78% was the result of natural increase (Beaujot, 1996). This balance began to change in the 1970's and Canada has seen below replacement fertility in every year since.

Where once there were seven Canadians in the labour force for every one in retirement, there are now fewer than one in five and we are moving towards one in three (Beaujot, 2002). This shrinking ratio means that if our current social service programmes are to continue as they have, some solution other than immigration must be sought since it would require a constant stream of immigrants to maintain the current age ratio (Metropolis, 2003). Compounding the problematic nature of this situation is the fact that the world's population is ageing and by extension so are Canada's immigrants (Beaujot, 2002). This translates into an under projection of Canada's population ageing (Beaujot, 2002) as well as diminished fertility among immigrants (Beaujot, 1993).

Canada is far from alone in regards to the current demographic shift. In fact all of the components of Canada's predicament (lower fertility, lower mortality, increased ageing, higher percentages of immigrants relative to population and urbanization) are common concerns across the developed world (Vukovich, 1992). Caldwell and Schindlmayr (2003) note that this trend has moved us towards a world in which by the end of the 20th Century half of the world's population lived in urban areas, a number that jumps to three quarters in the developed world. Of the world's six billion inhabitants, 1.7 billion inhabit urban areas (Flynn, 2004). As Flynn (2004) succinctly states, more people live in urban areas now than lived at all in 1960.

The results of this demographic shift are beginning to materialize around the world and traditionally restrictive countries like Japan and China are realising there is a

price to be paid for failing to recognize the changing tide. Japan, known for its restrictive immigration, is expected to lose twenty five percent of its work force under the age of thirty between 2000 and 2010 (Peterson, 1999). On the opposite end, China, which spent decades trying to reduce a population glut, is taking strides to loosen the one child policy to avoid a drastic ageing of their society ("Too many or too few…", 1999). What is most prevalent perhaps is that this demographic shift is not only a phenomenon of the developed world. Flynn (2004) reminds us that twenty nine of the UN's less developed nations are now listed as having below replacement fertility rates. The world population as a whole is ageing. Near twenty years of age at the start of the 20th Century, the median age of the world's population is projected to reach 40 by the mid-21st Century ("Please come, we need you…", 2002a).

In the short term the growth decline in the developed world will be largely offset by over population in less developed nations. This, according to some authors, poses its own problems. Peterson (1999) raises the suggestion that in this prospective demographic climate, non-traditional countries may hold positions of power on the world stage. Among his examples are China and Iran which currently stands to double its population within twenty six years (Peterson, 1999). Peterson (1999) also notes that there may be specific, potentially huge demographic shifts that could alter the political arena of the future. Peterson's (1999) example is the Gaza Strip which has a birth rate of 7.3 and could soon dwarf its neighbour and nemesis Israel which has a birthrate around 2.7. Flynn (2002) echoes this concern about a political shift, noting that many of the nations and regions of the world still boasting above replacement birth rates are engaged in hostilities either with the West or with neighbouring nations. Russia serves as a good

example of a former power that faces real challenges as it goes forward in maintaining its primacy and autonomy in a climate of decline. From 1993 to 2005 Russia's population declined by 4% or 5.8 million people, in 2005 alone the nation reduced in size by 735,500 people (Yasmann, 2006). Compounding Russia's challenge with population growth decline and ageing, the country is also facing an increase in the rate of unnatural deaths an increasing maternal death rate and a rise in the number of abortions (Yasmann, 2006). All of these factors combine to produce a life expectancy for men of 58 years and for women 72 years, with 30% of Russians failing to live to pension age (Yasmann, 2006).

What is not up for debate is the fact that Canada's fertility is declining and without intervention of some kind this will result in a progressively older society that relies on immigration for replenishment. What is left to decide is whether or not this scenario is deserving of intervention. Here it is important to distinguish between what is anomalous and what is part of a larger trend in the industrialized world. Although it is true that the end of the baby boom is often named as the beginning of Canada's fertility decline in reality it only appears this way because by comparison with the record high fertility of the boom, the decline appears abrupt and specific. The reality is that the rest of the industrialized world, including a number of countries less affected by post WWII fertility booms, is also facing a decline in fertility and the baby boom did not in fact instigate the decline, it masked it. The bloating of Canada's population through the baby boom is the reason that Canada hasn't yet seen the record low fertility rates of Western Europe although now that children born in the boom have moved through their child bearing years these numbers are likely to surface. This eventuality dispels the objections

of those, like Bissett (2002) who argue there is no crisis of population since Canada still has a fertility rate above those of most of Europe and the rest of the industrialized world.

One of the most common criticisms of the existence of a crisis in population growth is the long term nature of the problem. Projections for the onset of decline vary although many researchers seem to have circled around the conclusion that decline could begin within the next five to twenty-five years. A difference of opinion arises when it comes to deciding whether or not this timeline requires immediate action. Some ("Please come, we need you...", 2002a; Bissett, 2002) see a population decline eventually, a quarter of a century down the road, and suggest there is time to craft a response while others (Cassils & Weld, 2002; Conway-Giustra, Crowley & Gorin, 2002; "Please come, we need you...", 2002a; Foot & Gibson, 1993; Peterson, 1999) estimate the amount of time required to implement a response is limited and conclude there is little time left.

One argument that dismisses the idea of a crisis in Canada's population growth revolves around one of the underpinnings of the population debate, labour force participation and composition. As discussed earlier many researchers (McDonald & Hakim, 2002; "Urban clusters...", 2004; Denton, Feaver & Spencer, 1999) point to a need to address population decline in order to maintain the size of Canada's workforce. There are also those (Bissett, 2002) who argue that Canada would benefit from a smaller workforce. Bissett (2002) argues that it is not the number of people that should be the issue but the quality and education of the workforce. As confirmation, he points to poverty statistics for immigrants to Canada that indicate that of those arriving since the 1980's, 52% are living below the poverty line. He seems to be attempting to argue that Canadians are somehow better equipped to participate in the workforce than their

immigrant counterparts and while this may initially be true without these immigrants there would be a subsequent void in the next generation since their children would also not be numbered among the Canadian population.

Some authors (Denton, 2003; "Please come, we need you...", 2002a) also see hope for the Canadian labour force in the prospect of an older population. An article in the Economist (2002a), a conservative monthly publication, argues that an older working population would be more educated and better paid and would therefore pay more taxes. Denton (2003) echoes this prediction stating that an older workforce would be more experienced. By measuring productivity as demonstrated by income Denton (2003) concluded that since income increases with age, an older workforce is more productive. What this argument fails to acknowledge is that this simple reasoning is not true of all people and currently there are many seniors who are working in their retirement years simply because they are not financially able to retire. As noted by McClelland (2001) there is some discussion that this need to continue working may also not pose a problem since many expect a greater number of part-time employment opportunities in the future. Unfortunately McClelland (2001) herself states that women over the age of 65 had the lowest average annual incomes of any cohort at $10,000. Likewise it is important to note that the flexible part-time jobs that McClelland are advocating will not provide job security or likely benefits for this largely health care dependent segment of the population.

Castles (2000) answers these arguments with a look at the costs of an ageing population in relation to the contribution potential of a smaller workforce. Canada's pension programme (Canada Pension Plan) ensures that our workforce will carry a larger

burden for income maintenance than that of a country without a comprehensive pension programme. The Economist (2002a) echoes this concern and adds the costs of increased health care costs for an ageing population. Combine these with an increased need for nursing homes and home help services (Castles, 2000) and the intergenerational balance of costs and benefits begins to seem disproportional. If the projection that the current ratio of one in eight Canadian's over the age of sixty-five will increase to one in four by 2035 ("Please come, we need you…", 2002a) is accurate than this discrepancy is only going to grow. One possible result of this will be a form of intergenerational stress. Lutz, O'Neill and Scherbov (2003) describes this phenomenon as the inevitable result of a smaller workforce attempting to carry the costs of a much larger older demographic and the subsequent reduction in overall productivity.

This greater dependency burden would continue to rise as a decrease in population in combination with low fertility cycled around to result in an even smaller workforce in the future (Denton, Feaver & Spencer, 1999). We are already seeing the possibility of this kind of labour force shrinkage and a shortage of workers may arise in as few as three years by some estimates ("Urban clusters…", 2004).

Drolet (2003) even manages to integrate low fertility into the picture by noting that delayed motherhood leads to decreased fertility and by extension greater participation in the labour force. The flip side of this however is that it is cyclical. As such Lutz, O'Neill and Scherbov (2003) present the exact same chain of events wherein an older population results in diminished fertility and even slower growth. Any way you phrase it the result is even lower fertility and even those who encourage slower growth must acknowledge that there is a point when growth becomes too slow for survival.

This is especially true in urban centres. Canada's largest cities depend on large tax bases to subsidize the costs of transit systems, transportation infrastructure, social services and proportionally larger immigrant populations. Many argue that Canada's cities are already under too much pressure trying to provide affordable housing and transportation services to their current citizens ("Please come, we need you…", 2002a). From an ecological perspective Cassils and Weld (2002) caution that if the current growth explosion continues in Canada's urban centers the result will likely be increased urban poverty and all its associated dangers such as widespread disease and a deterioration of the quality of life. They make this argument by zeroing in on the idea of Canada's limitless resources and the common opinion that there is a responsibility to share these resources with the rest of the world. Over population they suggest would deplete these resources leading to an eventual population crash. Although this projection takes us many decades into the future it is a cautionary picture of what could happen were we to answer the current slowing with too aggressive a policy response.

Even without the evidence of long term forecasts it is clear that Canada's urban areas may stand to suffer from policies that demand high immigration. Since more than half of those arriving in Canada since 1996 have settled in Ontario, and two thirds of those in and around Toronto, the city now boasts a population that is 40% foreign born ("Please come, we need you…", 2002a). Kunz (2003) suggests continued high immigration to urban centres will eventually make them unlivable. Although many immigrants arrive in Canada with the intention of settling outside of the major urban centres, their larger populations, greater economic opportunities and established immigrant communities make them attractive to those who want to establish themselves

in Canadian society. This has resulted in a situation in which in 1996 42% of Canadian born lived outside the major urban areas whereas of those immigrants arriving between 1991 and 1996 only 6% lived rurally (Beaujot, 2002).

In some respects Canadian society is already reflecting a move towards relying on immigration for population growth. For the first time since 1945 the majority of Canada's population growth is coming from immigration ("Please come, we need you...", 2002a). With this shift already underway it is important to evaluate whether or not relying on immigration for population growth is either sufficient or appropriate in Canada's case. Although the immigration solution has its proponents (Canada & the World, 2004) it also has its doubters (Beaujot, 2002, 2002b, 2003; Bermingham, 2001; Bissett, 2002; Canada & the World, 2002; Denton, Feaver & Spencer, 1999; "Please come, we need you...", 2002a; Foot & Gibson, 1993; Metropolis, 2003). In a Metropolis Conversation Series report on immigration levels dated 2003, participants raised the most common counter to the immigration argument, that the immigration numbers required to replace the missing births and to rebalance the ageing population would be too high to be reasonably accomplished.

The potential drawbacks associated with immigration as a solution to population growth decline suggest that it would be useful to look for another means of supporting growth. The most overlooked of our options is a direct attempt to increase fertility to the replacement rate. Often dismissed as an area closed to policy interference, increased fertility offers Canada one thing above all other options, a direct reversal of the trend towards decline. If Canadians had not retreated from their preference for larger families since the end of the baby boom, we would not be looking today at such a fast rate of

decline. In 1995 Canadian men wanted, on average, 2.28 children and women, 2.46 (Dupuis, 1998). If we were able to support Canadians in attaining their fertility goals we would be far closer to our population targets.

Over all the research seems to indicate that population decline will, for better or worse, forever change the face of Canada. As Chesnais (1996) notes, the trend seems unlikely to change as we have not yet seen any long lasting reversal of the fertility decline. The question to be answered here is how should Canadian policy makers react to the growth of a larger proportion of older Canadians. Population replacement is more complex than employment or education. It involves the complicated way in which economic relationships are mitigated through our socioeconomic system. In essence, influencing fertility requires the policy maker to subtly sway a person's perceptions of child rearing and society in such a way that they will see themselves having children and more importantly having more than one child. Creating an effective population policy also involves walking the fine line between relying on immigration to boost growth and creating so great an influx of immigrants that public opinion turns against it. Aside from those who see immigration as a quick fix to declining growth it is generally understood that a series of policies will be required to mediate a change in fertility (Beajuot, 1993, 1996; Bermingham, 2001; Foot & Gibson, 1993; Keely, 2001; Passaris, 1998). Passaris (1998) explains the policy intervention process required here as an attempt to correct or fine tune the demographic trends that have created the social and economic challenges to fertility. As such, a pronatalist response would need to take into account the slow changing nature of social trends and would have to be put into place shortly in order to attain the most benefit.

No Canadian government has ever established a population policy (Canada & the World, 2002). Not only does Canada not have a population policy it has no family policy and no concrete demographic goals either (Weinfeld, 1998). In general when targets have been set they have been concerned only with labour force size (Beaujot, 1996) and the number of immigrants needed to sustain it. This absence of policy exists even though Denis Coderre, Minister of Immigration under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien stated that immigration would remain a central component of government policy (Kunz, 2003). Canada is not alone however in this regard. In contrast, countries like France, Australia and Japan have been active in developing various policies intended to influence their populations over the coming years.

Perhaps there is some hesitation on the part of politicians to recognize the reality of population growth decline. Vukovich (1992) states that governments have had a long time to react to the decline. That said, even though fertility levels have been below replacement since 1976, in 1985 the Canada Pension Plan was still quoting a birth rate of 2.0 in its forecasts (Beaujot, 2002). Maybe, as Beaujot (1993) suggests, the decline may simply appear inevitable leading policy writers to assume no changes can be made.

Possibly as Beaujot later suggested in 2002, immigration policy, Canada's substitute for a population policy, is sometimes used by politicians as a tool to garner potential support. Beaujot's (2002) example was the Conservative's decision to continue to increase immigration levels during the recession of the early 1990's. The Conservatives were under pressure on the issue since they had chided the Liberals for reducing immigration during a similar period in the 1980's but Beaujot (2002) posits we should not be quick to dismiss the role of political strategy in the decision. At the time in

question the Conservatives were at an all time low in the opinion polls and Beaujot (2002) suggests that the decision to maintain immigration growth may have been the result of a desire to attract the votes of immigrants.

This suspicion that the reluctance to address population concerns is political in origin is prevalent. As stated in a Metropolis (1999) report about the absorbative capacity of Canada, many demographic decisions, often immigration related, are announced for seemingly political rather than purely analytical reasons. The political nature of such decisions is compounded by the potentially sensitive nature of the decisions themselves. As is explored later on, there is always the assumption by some that attempts to alter demographics through immigration reform amount to racism (Cassils & Weld, 2002). While this is not inherently true those who have suggested drastic reductions to the family and refugee class for instance have certainly met such objections.

Likewise, policies to encourage fertility are often avoided because they risk entering what many consider to be our most private sphere. Beaujot (2002) addresses this point by stating that even though Canada has preferred in the past to focus efforts on helping Canadians exercise their own reproductive choices it is appropriate to encourage behaviour that would be in the best interest of the public at large. Vukovich (1992) warns however that this avoidance exists at the risk of further problems. Even if government is able to distance itself from policy development in the area of population growth they will be unable to avoid the political fallout that will result in overburdened income redistribution programmes (Vukovich, 1992).

The lack of a population policy may be a great deal simpler than any of these earlier explanations. Sinding (2000) puts forward the theory that the lack of response to the Cairo conference on population and development may have simply been the result of less interest on the part of politicians and governments in the area of population policy. In truth the lack of population policy is likely a combination of all these components. Whatever the reason, it must be acknowledged that the Canadian political system poses several integral challenges to those seeking to create population policy. Beaujot (2002) cites the lack of long term planning, the focus on individual welfare, the power of lobby groups and the attention to smaller, specific policies rather than comprehensive ones.

During the period from the 1960's to the 1980's there was an attempt on the part of governments to use immigration to reinvent Canada as a middle power in the world (Metropolis, 2003). Given the vast geographic size of the country many thought that with sufficient population Canada could become a stronger political and economic player. Over the last decade or so this focus seems to have dropped away with the new idea of Canada as a niche market beside the United States coming to the forefront. This shift can be seen in the emphasis on economic and skilled immigrants and efforts to recruit based on individual skills.

For a population policy to be complete there must be a clear goal both in the short and the long term that serves to unify efforts and which can be used as the test against which all initiatives can be measured. In the short term this goal must be the lessening of the imminent effects of population ageing. Starting the process this late in the game has left Canada with little choice as to where to begin.

In the mid and long terms, however, there is room for some debate. Should there be an attempt to increase fertility? Should we rely on immigration for growth? Or are decline and ageing inevitable and should Canada focus on adapting to a smaller, older population? Likely it is a combination of both immigration and an increase in fertility that will best help Canada address its population future. The following is an argument for the inclusion of a pronatalist component in Canada's population discussion.

Prospects for Population Ageing

Compounding the problem of low fertility rates of recent years and in fact contributing to these low rates is the second characteristic of current demographic trends, our ageing population. The changed age structure of the Canadian population is beginning to reverse the traditional age pyramid creating high levels of dependency within older age groups in relation to those of working age. The results of this trend are disparaging to those who are looking at both the burden that this population will put on the social services, pension and healthcare systems (Bermingham, 2001; Bradshaw & Mayhew, 2003; Castles, 2000; Conway-Giustra, Crowley & Gorin, 2001; Too many or too few…", 1999; Foot & Gibson, 1993; Martel & Bélanger, 2000; McDaniel, 1986; Peterson, 1999) as well as those who argue that these seniors are not in a position to carry the burden of their own care (McClelland, 2001; Timmerman, 2005; Yakoboski, 1996). In 1966 Canada experienced its lowest median age, 25.5 years; by 1978 it was 36.5 years (Foot & Gibson, 1993). The resulting median age of the labour force in 1980 was 33.6 years (Foot & Gibson, 1993). Beaujot (1993) notes that the average age of the Canadian population has risen from 32 to 45 years and that the number of Canadians over the age of sixty five has risen from one in ten to one in four. McClelland (2001) projects that the number of Canadians over the age of sixty five will amount to twenty percent of the country's population by 2021 compared with twelve percent in 1998. The question is, where does this leave us? And is that place really so bad? Here opinions differ.

As McClelland (2001) suggests seniors in the coming decades are expected to be either wealthy consumers or a financially strapped drain on health care and social services. McClelland (2001) predicts that many seniors will have to continue working

long after the traditional retirement age of 65 and that women stand to be at the greatest disadvantage in their old age. This discrepancy arises from a difference in annual income across the genders and the fact that pensions are commensurate with income. McClelland (2001) demonstrates this discrepancy by noting that the average annual income for women in 1997 was $19,800 a mere sixty-two percent of their male counterparts. This translates to an annual income of $16,000 for women over sixty-five compared with $26,000 for men in the same category (McClelland, 2001).

McClelland (2001) raises some doubts about the baby boomers preparation for retirement. Less than 40% of boomers are covered by company pension plans (McClelland, 2001) and although RRSP contribution rates are high (Fougere, 2002) record numbers are also taking advantage of withdrawal options for down payments on homes (Giles & Maser, 2004).

One of the potential dangers of an ageing society arises because the relative size of the elderly population relative to other groups and the resulting power dynamics. If the American elderly population is set to increase from 37% of the size of the working population to 51% by 2020 and 72% by 2050 as suggested by Bradshaw and Mayhew (2003) the political power of the older demographic is set to increase as well. This is of particular concern to the other dependent population, children who have no political power of their own and are already underrepresented in American government spending.

This inflated political power has led to problems for governments attempting to impose pension reforms in several countries. In Italy Silvio Berlesconi's government was defeated in 1995 over pension reform as was the Dutch parliament (Peterson, 1999). In the Dutch case a Pension Party rose from nowhere to defeat the government over

pension cuts. In France a similar initiative led to riots (Peterson, 1999). Clearly the political power of the elderly demographic cannot be ignored.

We are at an interesting point in our history when most of the major fatal diseases of the past century have been reduced to treatable illnesses and many avoidable causes of death are in decline. The rates of mortality for infants, youth and active adults have been reduced impressively over the past century and are unlikely to shrink further in the near future (Martel & Bélanger, 2000). In the future most gains in life expectancy will likely be the result of medical technology developments (Beaujot, 2002) the improvements in sanitation and access to medical care that had such impact on mortality over the last century. Currently the Canadian life expectancy for men is 81.5 years and 85 years for women (Beaujot, 2002) these figures are the result of more improvements to lifespan in the last fifty years than in the last five hundred (Peterson, 1999). While Beaujot (2002) notes that life expectancy may continue to increase at a rate of 2.5 years per decade, this prolonged life comes at a cost.

The greatest success of the medical extension of life expectancy has been the eradication of many fatal illnesses from the population. For those diseases that continue to threaten our health the increase in treatment options are more likely to translate into a prolonged period of illness prior to death. McClelland (2001) argues that compressing the period of illness prior to death must be a priority in our new, ageing society. Martel and Bélanger (2000) agree, stating that aiding the elderly to maintain their autonomy through better health is the best response to increasing health costs in an environment of decreased health spending.

This suggestion is particularly timely given the expected increase in health care costs as a result of population ageing. While a link between increased health care costs and older populations is clear (Martel & Bélanger, 2000; Castles, 2000) this is particularly true of the oldest cohorts. Peterson (1999) estimates a nearly seven fold increase in the number of Americans over the age of 85 by the year 2050 and an increase of those over the age of 100 from 135,000 to 2.2 million over the same period. This oldest cohort is particularly important to the understanding of the impact of ageing since they are twenty times more likely than their younger counterparts to be in nursing care (Peterson, 1999).

Aside from the economic implications of population ageing and the shifting dependency ratio this prolonged period of illness also has a direct relationship with lowered fertility. Researchers (Vukovich, 1992; Conway-Giustra, Crowley & Gorin, 2002) argue the responsibility for the care of elderly Canadians which has traditionally fallen to younger relatives will be increasingly the responsibility of the state as smaller families translate into fewer available familial caregivers. Also women are sicker for longer before death (Martel & Bélanger, 2000) a fact which is particularly devastating to a population whose childbearing and caring roles lower their earning potential and by extension their pension or other retirement incomes. In younger cohorts the pressure to care for older generations in times of illness and prolonged old age can lead to a delay or deferral of fertility (Conway-Giustra, Crowley and Gurin, 2002). In order to offset these challenges to fertility and family support there must be a conscious effort to balance the needs of competing demographics in order to meet the needs of each population without doing so at the expense of another.

The demographic split between the old and the young also impacts on pronatalist efforts. If increased spending is being allotted to programmes to benefit the elderly population funds are likely being diverted away from children's programmes in order to foot the bill. Bradshaw and Matthews (2003) note that in the U.S. 8% of GDP is spent on the elderly and only 2% on family benefits and services. Likewise, with a drastic increase in pre-mortality illness expected with the ageing baby boomers, the increased funds for hospital beds and residential care beds will need to be rerouted from somewhere. In such cases children are often penalized because they lack a political voice with which to argue their needs.

Canada's Declining Fertility

The primary cause of the current trend in decreased population growth is nearly universal low fertility. Beaujot (1996) has argued that low fertility is expected in a modern society, however, this does not mean it is something that need not be examined. Canada has not come to this point of low fertility without warning or clear causes. While in 1970 the fertility rate sat at a healthy replacement rate of 2.0 it had dropped to between 1.75 and 1.54 for the years between 1977 and 1998 (Beaujot, 2001). Although the vast majority of Canada's growth over the 20th Century was attributed to natural increase if the years between 1966 (the end of the baby boom) and 1991 (the end of the baby boom echo) are isolated, it is apparent that immigration is already contributing to 41% of population growth (Beaujot, 1996). In such a climate it is important to investigate what can be done to support Canadians in reaching their fertility goals. What follows is a discussion of the challenges to pronatalist policies as well as a look at possible barriers to fertility and some examples from Canada and abroad of programmes that have sought to increase fertility.

A look into Canada's population history demonstrates that the current climate is one of a chain of societal changes that have redefined the family as we know it. Beaujot (2002) outlines these changes in his fertility process. Beginning in 1960 and continuing until 1970 the Canadian family saw the end of the baby boom and a trend towards younger marriages and the beginnings of a rise in the number of divorces. The second phase, which stretches from 1970 to 1985 and is characterized by the growth of common law relationships and an increase in the number of children born in cohabiting relationships. After 1985 we experienced a leveling off of the incidence of divorces, an

increase in post marital cohabitation, and the resulting decrease in remarriage. These changes have been compounded by a steadying fertility rate and an increase in births to women over 30. This final change, the rise in delayed first births, has been suggested by Beaujot (2002) as the beginning of a possible fourth phase in the fertility process. This model allows us to situate ourselves in the midst of a continuum of change, giving credibility to the claim that fertility is not a trend that will right itself naturally but a force that may need guidance from policy. This challenges the once widely held assumption that fertility would always return naturally to the rate of replacement (Beaujot, 2002).

This trend towards lower fertility has created a situation in which without a rise in fertility immigration will continue to play a larger role in Canada's growth than natural increase. In this scenario population growth will continue to be slower and there will be continued prospects for decline (Beaujot, 2003). Changes in fertility however do not stand alone as the cause nor do they arise without the interaction of multiple socio-economic factors. Many researchers (Beaujot, 2002; Bélanger & Oikawa, 1999; Drolet, 2003; Dupuis, 1998; Folbre, 1983; Joshi, 1997; Mullin & Wang, 2002; McDonald, 2004; Nock, 1987; Sousa-Poza, Schmid & Widner, 2000) have linked decreases in fertility with women's higher status in society, women's increased participation in the labour force, and greater access to education. This is particularly true of the present situation as the 1980's saw the baby boom generation flood the labour force temporarily increasing its size and increasing women's participation in the workforce (Foot & Gibson, 1993). In the 1980's this created a younger work force in which women played a larger role than ever before (Beaujot, 1993). Since then the inflated impact of the baby boom generation

has meant that Canada has compounded the low fertility trend with an ageing labour force and by extension an ageing population.

The result of this progressive trend towards greater female participation in the workforce has been a shrinking in the average family size since the 1960's (Bélanger & Oikawa, 1999). Bélanger and Oikawa (1999) note that the concern is not so much that women are not having children, although the percentage of childless women has risen from 8% to 18% within a generation (Ryder, 1993), but that there has been a reduction in higher order births. This is to say that the greatest impact is that women are choosing to have fewer children. In large part this can be attributed to workforce participation and increased access to education and the resulting delayed timing of first births.

One of the obstacles to the adoption of a pronatalist policy for Canada revolves around the hesitance on the part of government to interfere in issues of fertility. This is evidenced in The Democratic Policy Secretariat's *Toward a Demographic Future for Canada* which stated that the government was not interested in attempting to manipulate the fertility rate (Beaujot, 1993). Likewise many authors have noted the perceived private nature of fertility matters and the associated reluctance of government to involve itself in these matters (Krull, 2001; Beaujot, 2003; Vukovich, 1992). It could be argued, however, that a pronatalist policy that seeks to help Canadians realize their ideal family size would only be following the lead of many initiatives both past and present that attempt to assist individuals and families in asserting control over their own fertility.

Why not Rely on Immigration for Population Growth?

One often made complaint about pronatalist policies is the time they take to produce growth, specifically labour market growth. While incremental change may occur in the meantime, at least one entire generation is required to benefit from attempts to increase fertility. Immigration by comparison could potentially return near immediate results. The reality is however that those nearly immediate immigrants are not necessarily those best suited for the Canadian labour force. Similarly the labour force may not be well aligned for their arrival.

The most convincing argument in regards to the economic impact of high immigration revolves around the economic success of immigrants themselves. Of those arriving since the 1980's Bissett claims 52% are living in poverty. Beaujot (2003) puts this into perspective by reporting that among immigrants who arrived in Canada between 1981 and 1990. Using data from the 1996 census, Beaujot (2003) reported men as being disadvantaged by 25 to 35% and women by 15 to 25% in relation to their Canadian counterparts. This disadvantage is largely universal although Beaujot (2003) found that among immigrants of European or American origin the margin of difference was between 20 and 35% whereas for those of other origins it was 40 to 50%. These numbers illustrate a change that happened after the 1986 census in which immigrants showed a higher level of labour force participation than the Canadian born. By 1996 the trend had reversed with the exception of one cohort and immigrants were now reporting lower levels of participation (Beaujot, 2003). This occurred even though the immigrant population was better educated than the comparison Canadian population (Beaujot, 2003). In fact Beaujot (2003) found that from 1990 to 2000 the number of skilled

workers accepted as immigrants rose resulting in a comparable decrease in the number of family and refugee class immigrants. Even with this shift, and the fact that the 23% of arriving immigrants who came within the economic class made up 43% of those intending to participate in the labour force, their eventual success in the labour market was limited (Beaujot, 2003). Even though the immigrant men arriving were more educated than Canadians in every cohort with the majority university educated and speaking a minimum of one official language, at the time of the 1996 census they reported widespread unemployment and a disproportionate number were represented within the lowest income groups (Beaujot, 2003).

These statistics are backed by a claim in Canada and the World Backgrounder (2002) stating that visible minority neighbourhoods are more likely to be poor and unemployed than their Caucasian counterparts. Yet immigrants are drawn to established immigrant enclaves where they are more likely to find community, religious and cultural support. Kunz (2003) has linked the poverty in these areas to low initial incomes in part due to a failure to recognize the credentials of arriving immigrants.

Canada's urban areas demonstrate another problem in relying on immigration to correct population growth decline. In 1956 56% of Canadian's lived in urban areas, today the number is more than 80% ("Please come, we need you…", 2002a). Canada's immigrants are settling or, in some cases, resettling in Canada's urban areas resulting in little demographic rejuvenation of rural areas. Ontario, the most popular destination for immigrants received half of all those arriving after 1996, two thirds of which went to Toronto ("Please come, we need you…", 2002a). This trend towards urban destinations has even expanded beyond the three largest cities to include Calgary and Edmonton.

Since 1996 this corridor has seen 12.3% growth and now houses more people than the four Atlantic provinces combined ("Please come, we need you…", 2002a). Although this growth has been largely beneficial for the economies of these regions there have also been associated costs including language, employment and settlement services for newcomers. That said, the impact of immigration on Canada's past and future must not be ignored. Beaujot (1996) projects that had there been no immigration after 1871 the population in 1991 would have been only 41.4% of the 27 million actually seen.

A further argument against relying on immigration arises from a more socially based perspective. Lutz, O'Neill and Scherbov (2003) suggest that increasing the contribution of immigration to population increases may have the detrimental effect of challenging social cohesion. This would be characterized by a diminished national identity and a change in the way Canada is viewed in international political and economic circles (Lutz, O'Neill & Scherbov, 2003). It is also important to understand the issue of societal cohesion on an individual level. Simon and Lynch (1999) compiled public opinion survey results from Canada, the United States and Australia to ascertain how immigration and immigrants were being received by existing populations. Only 17% of Canadians reported being in favour of increasing immigration. Palmer (1999) examined survey results obtained between January of 1996 and October of 1998 and found that, dependent of the province of residence, between 39 and 47% of Canadians reported immigration as having had a positive effect on Canada while a similar 37 to 47% stated that there were too many immigrants in the country. In 1993 Canadians were asked their opinions about the increase in immigration from Asia, the West Indies and other developing nations and only 20% stated their support (Simon & Lynch, 1999). When

you contrast this with Bélanger and Malenfant's (2005) report of the findings of *Population Projections of Visible Minority Groups Canada, Provinces and Regions: 2001 – 2017* which anticipates the highest growth rates for immigration from West Asia, Korea and Arab groups and a significant increase in immigration from South Asia it is not difficult to see that social cohesion may be challenged for some Canadians.

Although it may be desirable to believe that social cohesion is more pertinent in some European countries where immigration is seen as a clear threat to national identity and that this argument may be harder to make in Canada where a greater percentage of our population is made up of recent immigrants and where we are far closer to our roots as an immigration based nation it is clear from the reports of Palmer (1999) and Simon and Lynch (1999) that opposition to immigration exists and should be addressed. For that reason it is important to take social cohesion into account when considering changes to Canada's immigration policy.

Barriers to Fertility and Possible Responses

We are currently living in a time when women not only have better control of their fertility than ever before but also have lived with the example of their mothers' ability to control fertility. Unlike the early days of birth control we no longer have the strict social pressure of older generations ensuring that most women will eventually fulfill the role of wife and mother. In the absence of this model of expected motherhood there has developed a contingent of the population that does not value motherhood and in fact feels it should be avoided. While we are most interested in encouraging second and third births it is worth exploring why some women rebuke childbearing completely.

Nock (1987) puts forth an interesting, although rather simplistic comparison between women who choose to bear children and those who don't. He contends that more traditionally minded women strive for motherhood and accept lowered employment status as a part of that goal. By contrast non-traditional women value employment and educational success and delay or avoid marriage and fertility (Nock, 1987). It is not surprising given these profiles that traditionally minded women would have higher rates of fertility than non-traditional women. In essence these non-traditional women have come to see children as if they were a commodity to take or leave, a far cry from the expected obligation of only a few generations ago.

In this new reality in which motherhood is more choice than social obligation women have begun to assert their preference for success in other areas of their lives. This pursuit of personal fulfillment has redefined the onset of adulthood away from the traditional transitions of marriage and parenthood towards more solitary goals of self actualization in the form of employment success and the acquisition of material goods.

This shift towards individual aims has, as Joshi (1997) claims, weakened the idea of marriage as a partnership aimed at the production of a family and reduced it to an agreement between likeminded adults. In this new marriage gender roles and expected divisions of labour are up for debate. Whereas it was once understood that a woman would take the time to devote herself to the care of children now women are faced with delaying or avoiding fertility if their spouse is unwilling to bear the costs associated with having one parent out of the paid labour force (Joshi, 1997).

One must not however mistake these changes for a universal trend but neither can we fail to recognize the eventual results of such a trend. Joshi (1997) cautions that while men are beginning to seek a more nurturing role in child rearing this change is slow and plodding at best. While generation Y speaks the language of equality with more fluency than any generation before them, traditional gender roles die hard in practice.

In order to devise a way to encourage larger family sizes it is important to first understand how we have arrived at this situation of declining population growth. In van de Kaa's (1996) examination of various narratives contributing to the dialogue of fertility, two arise as particularly pertinent to this discussion. The idea of fertility change as related to a larger cultural or ideational change is particularly interesting as it addresses the fertility change associated with changes in the valuation of children (van de Kaa, 1996). Likewise the changing function of the family narrative offers insight into how life course transitions have moved away from child and family centred events towards more individualistic milestones.

This final narrative is supported by proponents of the second demographic transition who see population growth decline in part as a result of a move away from the

family unit of production towards a more individualistic focus. This phenomenon has led to a delay in marriage with a resultant reduction in intended children and a further decrease in actual children (Dupuis, 1998). The recent trend has shown that Canadians in their 20's and 30's are increasingly interested in establishing themselves in careers and in the financial aspects of their lives in advance of children with the intention of equipping themselves to better provide for their future family. It seems, in light of fertility rates, that in this new age of individual achievement, traditional childbearing demographics are agonizing themselves into childlessness.

This development is the result of a number of shifts in societal values In particular those ascribing decreasing worth to the domestic and familial roles of women, the increasing pressure on women to contribute in the paid labour force and the resultant decrease in the value of large families. In any discussion of this shift, the underlying power relations between the sexes and throughout society at large must not be forgotten. Traditional gender roles pose a very real problem for fertility. Although the last four decades have seen great strides towards feminist goals of equality in the workforce there still remains a very real gender divide in employment. Of interest here are the difficulties encountered by women attempting to balance paid work and motherhood and the role played by men in perpetuating the gender divide in childrearing.

In light of all the reports of an increase in women's participation and success in the workforce (Winkler, McBride & Andrews, 2005) one may be forgiven for failing to recognize the realities of this situation. Working against mothers entering or returning to the paid work force is the long held perception that so called working mothers are somehow less than their 'non-working' counterparts (Thompson, 1980). In fact the

research on the topic has established that mothers in the paid labour force show little difference in their involvement with their children, instead taking their work time out of their leisure and sleep time instead (Joshi, 1997).

As Johnson (2001) discusses quite succinctly the term 'working mother' implies that the paid employment somehow qualifies or detracts from their role as mothers. In effect society has created a paradox in which women are expected to be 'working' and mothering and yet the two have been constructed as mutually exclusive. As long as the stay at home model of mothering is hailed as superior to paid employment women will be stuck negotiating competing expectations. This paradox does not exist for fathers. Even though there has been documented rise in the participation of fathers in child rearing it seems that this has not translated into a sharing of roles. Joshi (1997) reports that the increasingly high number of women in the paid labour force has not translated into any change in men's labour force participation. That is to say, men are not dropping out or even cutting back on their workforce participation to stay home with children in place of mothers, in most situations both parents are in the paid labour force. Joshi (1997) reported that the percentage of families in which a woman is the primary earner and the spouse's absence from the work force is not due to illness, unemployment, study or retirement as being less than 1%. Families in which two parents work part time jobs and could potentially share domestic responsibilities occur less than 3 times in 1000 (Joshi, 1997). Landau (1992) asks why men are never depicted as missing their child's first year the way that women often are. This perceived primacy of women in all things domestic and child related is echoed by Nock (1987) who reports that in interviews it is extremely

common to have reference made to a husband helping his wife with the children but never has he heard of a wife helping her husband with the same tasks.

How does this reliance on traditional gender roles impact fertility? The simple answer is that if all of the burden for child rearing is put on the shoulders of women and this pressure is doubled by societal pressure to join the paid labour force, women will inevitably feel forced to choose between the two. The result has been a generation of women who have limited their fertility in an effort to attain some success in both areas. The conditions are not only limited to child rearing either. As more and more children are called to care for ageing parents, the family pressures on many women are beginning to double.

Fertility decisions can also be swayed by external group pressures. The example of this singled out by Dupuis (1998) as being the most highly indicative of a positive correlation with fertility is religious affiliation and attendance. While those with no religious affiliation had the lowest rates of intended children, those who attended a religious institution once a week had the intention of 0.5 more children than their non-religious peers (Dupuis, 1998). This discussion of religious affiliation and fertility raises serious concerns about the ability of policy to sway fertility rates. A policy dictating religious group participation, is not likely to be acceptable or successful, nor is it likely governments would be able to adopt policy to encourage a decrease in women's levels of education while maintaining high levels for men, a solution we have already seen could meet a demographic criteria shown by Dupuis (1998) to increase intended births in both sexes. Nor is it likely governments would encourage a drastic increase in births to young mothers, another factor found by Bélanger and Oikawa (1999) to correspond with a

higher likelihood of third births. However, this does not mean there are no avenues for policy to encourage an increase in fertility.

Among those contemplating their first child economics are key (Mullin & Wang, 2002). This is not however to say that money does not factor into decisions about further children. Bélanger and Oikawa (1999) also found that third births are greatly reduced not only by women returning to work between children but also by the time they waited between children. Those who delivered a second child within 30 months of their first were three times more likely to have a third child than those who waited more than 53 months between children (Bélanger & Oikawa, 1999). This indicates that once women reenter the paid labour force for a sufficient period they are more reluctant to again negotiate the opportunity costs of further children. It may also be the case that women who have returned to work for a longer period of time are less likely to risk losing any professional gains they have made by taking a third leave from the paid labour force.

In the example of the Netherlands it is important to note that even with the strides in labour force participation, and a fairly comprehensive leave programme, many women still quit their jobs or reduce their working hours after having children (Abrahamson & Wehner, 2006). By comparison, 90% of men effected no change in their working arrangements after the birth of a child (Abrahamson & Wehner, 2006). Similarly, when asked about their preferences around the distribution of paid work, women in the Netherlands and Denmark responded that they would prefer both parents worked part time while men wanted a dual full time arrangement (Abrahamson & Wehner, 2006). Given that men and women often differ in their intended number of births and in expectations about paid labour force participation, and given that men are often able to

use their role as provider to impose their own preferences of family size it is important that we explore further the power imbalances in men and women's roles as both providers and parents both within the family and in the larger society in order to explore possible avenues for policy intervention.

For those women who have tried to balance motherhood and paid employment a series of barriers have arisen to their future fertility. Beaujot (1993) attempts to categorize the factors that influence fertility. Broken down into four categories, proximate, economic, cultural and structural factors, this model provides a clearer picture of the ways in which one might influence fertility. Among proximate factors Beaujot (1993) includes a decrease in the trend towards marriage and an increase in the use of contraception. Neither of these he argues are areas for policy intervention for the purpose of increasing fertility (Beaujot, 1993). Economic factors, however, include the increased costs of bearing and raising children (Beaujot, 1993) and have historically been addressed by pronatalist policies. Cultural factors pertain to the cultural trends that influence choices around fertility. In this category Beaujot (1993) notes the primacy of individualism and self gratification, freedom of choice, the acceptability of divorce and cohabitation and the trend towards not having children. Structural factors encompass changes such as increased participation by women in the workforce and the subsequent increased opportunity cost of children as well as the changing gender balance (Beaujot, 1993).

For our purposes these barriers can be divided into direct (proximate and economic) and indirect (cultural and structural) barriers. A direct barrier for our purposes is any mechanism, policy or cost that poses a clear barrier to childbearing. Indirect

barriers are the perceived obstacles that could sway a woman's decision about future children.

Direct Barriers to Fertility

Economic strategies to encourage increased fertility are common and include such measures as the Canada Child Tax Benefit and the Ontario Child Care Supplement for Working Families. Various suggestions for economic incentives to higher fertility include: larger tax credits ("A guide to womenomics", 2006), increases in social benefits ("A guide to womenomics", 2006), longer parental leave (Beaujot, 2002), part time work that carries benefits (Beaujot, 2002) and an increase in subsidized health care (Beaujot, 2002). As is becoming clear, pronatalist policies tend to be expensive although this expense is relative to the success the initiative has in increasing the birth rate if any.

An economy based pronatalist programme was introduced in Quebec by the provincial Liberal party in 1988. The Allowance for Newborn Children (ANC) is of particular significance since the province of Quebec has suffered the lowest fertility rate and immigration rate among the provinces in recent years. The ANC was designed to increase the pay out to parents with the birth of each subsequent child meaning that the more children the greater the benefit (Milligan, 2002). Over the first seven years of the programme's existence the pay outs, totaling $1.4 billion, an average of $15,000 per child born in the province (Milligan, 2002). Cancelled in 1997 due to its high cost by the Parti Quebecois, the ANC was successful in increasing the birthrate during its existence. The Quebec birthrate stood at 1.4 births per woman in 1988 (ISQ, 2003) and rose to 1.5 by 1997 (ISQ, 2001), this is not particularly impressive, however at the ANC's peak in 1991-1992, the birthrate had risen to 1.7 (Milligan, 2002). In combination with the ANC, Quebec parents were offered 27 weeks paid leave above and beyond the 15 weeks offered at that time by the federal government as maternity leave benefits upon the birth of their

third child and a $7000 interest free loan towards a first home should they have two or more children (Krull, 2001). Over the seven years 90,000 births can be attributed to the ANC and given Quebec's annual birth rate of 80,000, this contribution can not be ignored (Milligan, 2002).

The ANC programme was replaced in 1997 by the Parti Quebecois with a child allowance initiative that was based on the number of children in the home and family type (single or two-parent). Maternity and paternity leave were also extended and the subsidized daycare programme commonly known as 'five dollar daycare' was introduced. These programmes were targeted predominantly to low income families meaning that some who had received benefits through the Liberal initiative lost entitlement. This new bundle of initiatives was also heavily targeted towards families in which mothers worked in the paid labour force rather than those at home with children. The result of this shift in programmes can be seen in the rapid drop in fertility post-1997. The record (for the period) high birth rate of 1.7 in 1991-92 dropped to 1.6 in 1996 and 1.43 in 2000 (Milligan, 2004).

Although Milligan (2004) notes that there was a natural (unaffected by the ANC) rise in fertility prior to the onset of the benefit, his analysis of relevant census data offers significant evidence that the ANC is at least partially responsible for the increase in fertility during its existence. In his conclusion Milligan (2004) asserts that a $1000 increase in benefits within the first year was found to increase the likelihood of having a child by 16.9%. This would certainly seem to indicate that economic incentives may be a viable option for increasing fertility. Milligan (2004) does, however, caution that the success of the ANC cannot be fully understood until the women in a position to benefit

have completed their childbearing years. This final postmortem will demonstrate whether the ANC triggered new births or simply accelerated them.

Germany has also managed to affect fertility rates through financial incentives. In 1976 Germany began offering money and housing provisions to single mothers (Vukovich, 1992). Although begun as an attempt to support single mothers the programme soon changed form as women began avoiding marriage in order to collect the benefits (Vukovich, 1992). Since married women are known to have more children the benefits were later extended to all mothers in order to avoid greater fertility decline (Vukovich, 1992). Over all, economic responses to low fertility have been inconsistent at best in increasing the number of births. In general economic benefits may be better used to support those who already have children than in attempting to sway fertility decisions. This inefficiency suggests that there are significant indirect costs associated with children that require some discussion.

Indirect Barriers to Fertility

Although there is a great deal of interest in monetary incentives to increase fertility, economic measures often ignore the more elusive aspects of increasing fertility. The indirect barriers to fertility are slightly harder to define since they may vary from woman to woman and family to family. What is of interest here is what are the opportunity costs of children for women, how these costs contribute to lowered fertility and what could be done to alleviate or lessen the opportunity costs associated with bearing and raising children.

Biologically speaking, women's prime childbearing years are when they are also peaking in terms of their paid work productivity. The result for women is that time spent away from the paid labour force raising children amounts to lost productivity or an opportunity cost. Opportunity costs are loosely defined as the lost potential incurred by having children. In this discussion the focus is more on the less attainable opportunity costs as the defined financial costs have already been discussed. The opportunity costs concept is unique to a woman's experience since there remains such a strong societal assumption that women will bear the brunt of child rearing and because of the biological realities of childbearing.

Among initiatives taken to counter opportunity costs for women are Canada's maternity leave and tax relief programmes. What has yet to be addressed is the uniquely female dynamic of the often noted cycle of disadvantage experienced by women who have started in a paid labour force and with employers that expect them to be inconsistent employees over their careers and punish them with diminished opportunities at higher levels of responsibility and lower wages than their male counterparts. This diminished

opportunity in turn helps to justify the decision to leave the workforce to raise children. Upon their return to the paid labour force these women not only experience all the barriers felt by the average woman at work but also the added challenge of having been away for a period of time, a fact which in a rapidly changing labour force can severely disadvantage those choosing to take time out to parent.

In order to address the problem of opportunity costs there must be a comprehensive response to change societal and workplace attitudes as well as find a balance between employer's fears of employing potential mothers and the rights of women to receive adequate compensation for their efforts. In order to complement these Beaujot (2002) would provide more support for parents and families, encourage gender equality and multiple family types and improve access to flexible employment. Beaujot (1993; 2002) suggests success may be achieved by supporting different types of families beyond the traditional nuclear family with its fixed gender roles. This suggestion is based on his finding that low fertility is often found in societies in which women have greater access to education and employment but are still encouraged to uphold traditional gender roles (Beaujot, 2002). Beaujot (2002) reports that when women are expected to balance dual roles they are more likely to choose to participate in the workforce instead of taking on a double load. In order to address this Beaujot (2002) suggests that pronatalist policies attempts to reestablish parenting and childbearing as important social goals.

Thomson (1980) suggests that if men were to increase their domestic contributions some of the opportunity cost to women would be lessened. While this may be incrementally true there will always be components of childrearing that are uniquely

the purview of women, childbirth and nursing certainly qualify, and could not be alleviated simply by having male assistance.

What is likely to be more effective is a recognition on the part of workplaces that women in their 20's and 30's are interested in finding a way to balance child care and work and the institution of some strategies for encouraging such an arrangement. For women this could provide an opportunity to devote the desired amount of time to child rearing while maintaining involvement in the paid labour force. For employers it would be possible to decrease the costs of training interim employees and retraining returning mothers as well as maintaining a continuity of experience within the workplace.

In past generations it was traditional for men to work to support their families and for women to stay at home raising children and tending to the domestic needs of the house. As time passed, women have been encouraged to enter the workforce in order to supplement family incomes but somehow no provision has ever been made for those previous domestic tasks. The result is generations of women who have been expected to carry all the responsibilities of paid labour force participation while at the same time tending to children and caring for older relatives and their homes. This has created the opportunity cost discussed above and the reluctance on the part of some women to take on the dual role of child rearing and employment and a subsequent decline in fertility. While there has been some increase in men's participation in child rearing in recent years (Sousa-Poza, Schmid & Widmer, 2000) men are still far from matching their spouse's efforts in the domestic arena.

In order to support women's fertility goals fathers must be prepared to negotiate increased costs, decreased income and non-traditional divisions of labour. If women and

families are to be encouraged to reproduce at or above replacement rate there needs to be change within the societal and family units in regards to a father's role in the care of children. As Beaujot (1997) has stated men are more than five times more likely to state a preference for full time work as opposed to part time work, a preference that clearly does not assume a large contribution to child care and domestic responsibilities. That said, it will take more than making the choice available to men to force a change in attitude towards what has been traditionally seen as a woman's role. Looking at the Swedish example of parental leave, Landau (1992) notes that just because leave was made available to fathers did not guarantee that they took advantage of the option. Although there has been some change in the last few decades, the role of father is still largely defined by an ability to provide financially for the family. As we have seen, fathers are, in this capacity, less likely to alter their work to accommodate time to care for children as they are unlikely to take leaves from work after the birth of a child. Fathers are also frequently referred to as 'assisting' or 'helping' the mother in areas of child care or other domestic roles (Abrahamson & Wehner, 2006). That said, the role of fathers is beginning to change as men in younger cohorts are beginning to assert their desire to share in the nurturing role (Abrahamson & Wehner, 2006).

Fatherhood, as motherhood, is a socially constructed concept that is reinforced by cultural traditions and processes and formalized by institutions. As such notions of father participation are based on the economic, political and cultural pressures that exist in society (Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006). The complex nature of fatherhood requires an equally complex shift in societal values in order to effect any change. Since men's gender ideologies are crucial to their willingness to participate in child care (Matta &

Knudson-Martin, 2006) it is important to examine how men and women view each other as potential nurturers.

Abraham and Wehner (2006) have reported that women often impede a father's participation by doubting their abilities in child care. By extrapolation from Kleinberg (1999), it can be assumed that this bias is the result of the longstanding hypervaluation of mothers as carers and fathers as providers. Johnson (2001) describes this difference in her discussion of the linguistic analysis of the power dynamics of the term 'working mother'. Johnson (2001) compares the act of mothering (as in 'she mothered the child') to the act of fathering. While 'to mother' implies an act of caring and nurturing, 'to father' implies only the contribution of genetic material (Johnson, 2001).

In order to encourage the responsivity of fathers to the needs of women and children Matta and Knudson-Martin (2006) have put forward four conditions that should be met. An egalitarian gender ideology with a strong understanding of child care sharing, a high valuation of the paid and unpaid work of women, a perception of choice in employment and equal power and indebtedness between parents are all raised as key to supporting long lasting father participation (Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006). The authors also note that once a father has begun to participate in what they call 'child centred behaviour' they are more likely to support women and children in other ways as well (Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006).

As we have previously seen, the availability of parental leaves and financial benefits are not sufficient to convince fathers to take a more active role in the care of children (Ambrahamson & Wehner, 2006) suggesting that a larger attitudinal shift is

required to balance the relative contribution of men and women. Since our institutions, including workplaces and benefit granting agencies, are reflections of the society in which they were created, it must be acknowledged that current benefit arrangements that pay benefits to mothers and favour a mother centred view of child responsibility serve to perpetuate the traditional breadwinner role of fathers. In order to overcome this Kleinberg (1999) suggests we strive for shared child care between parents, child centred social policy and an increase in the power of women to assert choice. This is echoed by Abrahamson and Wehner (2006) who call for a move towards replacing the woman friendly orientation of social policy with a family friendly orientation that acknowledges and expects the full participation of both parents in activities related to children.

In asking men to take time away from their careers to assist in the care of children and to extend their family responsibilities into the domestic realm we are asking them to reject traditional gender roles that led to the current division of labour. More research is thus needed to determine how men's attitudes towards child care could be changed and what might be a viable way of effecting such change at a societal level.

In Canada's most recent federal election the issue of a national child care programme was raised among other things, by more than one party as a potential solution to reducing the financial burden of Canadian families. With two thirds of women with children at home in the paid labour force and thirteen percent in lone parent families (Beaujot, 1997) it is clear that providing nationally subsidized child care could potentially make a large impact in the lives of a great number of children. Of the three major parties the NDP and the Liberals were seeking some form of national child care programme. The Liberal plan, brokered in the final months of their term in office, was based on

agreements between the federal government and individual provinces. The Conservatives, led by now Prime Minister Stephen Harper, advocated individual choice and offered a monthly cheque be issued to families to help offset the child care arrangement of their choice. In all, the Liberal plan promised to provide 625,000 daycare spaces, the Conservative plan 125,000.

Daycare spaces across Canada are limited primarily by funding and access to those spaces depending on family resources, availability and family support (Thomson, 1980). Beaujot (1997) reported that of those wanting daycare for their children, only 43% were actually using it. This discrepancy was attributed to availability and cost (Beaujot, 1997). For the critical infancy period (0-17 months) 3.8% of children were in daycare while 14.1% of mothers indicated they would prefer their child to be in daycare. Given that the threshold for maternity leave is 13 to 52 weeks of work over the months leading up to the birth (dependent on the province), making it possible for women to return to work after the birth of their first child could potentially increase the likelihood of a second child.

Universal child care has also been associated with fertility through the labour force in another way. While Beaujot (1997) indicates that a lack of child care influences women's labour force participation, The Economist (2006), a completes the cycle by reiterating that labour force participation is positively related to fertility. Likewise Caldwell and Schindlmayr (2003) and The Economist (2006) have both associated the availability of child care with an increase in fertility. This argument for child care must however be tempered on one front. In many cases, as was seen with the German example, a policy that sets out to sway individual choice can backfire if it does not meet

the real needs of the recipients. In regards to child care it is important to note that if daycare is subsidized on a national level and no support is offered to families who would rather their children be home with a parent or other family member, the programme will serve only to alienate parents seeking an alternative form of care for their children.

One of those alternatives may involve one or both parents adopting a flexible work schedule that allows them to provide in home care for their children. Of women surveyed, 43.6% of those working full-time would have preferred to work part-time while 13.4% would have preferred to not work at all (Beaujot, 1997). Likewise in dual earning families nearly half of all women were working part-time in order to accommodate children (Beaujot, 1997). In fact when asked what they would like their employers to provide as supports, those responding with flex hours, greater parental leave or part-time hours made up 35% of all women surveyed (Beaujot, 1997). What is clear from these results is that some sort of flexible work schedule would be welcomed by a large number of women with children. As we have seen it is women who are most likely taking on the double role of primary parent and wage earner and it is women who are most interested in finding a balance between work and home. What is important to this discussion is the number of parents who are unsatisfied with their current employment arrangements. Beaujot (1997) found that the majority of parents would rather a different arrangement than the one they have with fathers preferring full-time employment and mothers part-time[2].

The danger of relying to heavily on increasing labour force participation is the resulting institutionalization of child care. Without traditional extended family

[2] This is however not true of lone parent mothers who overwhelmingly prefer full-time employment, likely out of financial necessity (Beaujot, 1997).

participation in the care of children modern families are increasingly relying on day cares to care for children further increasing the cost of each child. Abrahamson and Wehner (2006) discuss the idea of 'transferring care' of children to the state, as has been done in Denmark, and frames the proposal as being supportive to families, particularly as being a help to mothers. Abrahamson and Wehner (2006) go on to refer to 'outsourced' and 'institutionalized' care for children, terms that belie and economic analysis of child care options. What is not discussed are options related to extended family care options or reliance on fathers to adapt their working arrangements to absorb some of the child care responsibilities (Abrahamson & Wehner, 2006).

The idea of helping parents and prospective parents meet their employment ideals needs further examination since both Caldwell and Schindlmayr (2003) and The Economist (2006) have linked flexible work arrangements with increases in fertility. In the long term an increase in fertility to at or above replacement levels would result in less reliance on immigration to support growth. Canadian born workers also have the benefit of Canadian educations and work experience, two characteristics already identified as impediments to immigrant success. An increase in fertility would also mean more incentive for investments in determinants of success for all Canadians such as education and employment skills training.

There is some evidence to support a look at the ethics of the high level of immigration required to create any real demographic change. A number of researchers have highlighted the impact of high immigration on sending nations (PRD, 2006; Vukovich, 1992; Kunz, 2002; Abernethy, 1995). The primary arguments revolve around the impact of emigration on sending economies and societies including the fertility of the

sending nation. Among the potential impacts of high emigration from developing countries, to fulfill the immigration requirements of the developed world, is the societal and economic impact of losing young, educated members of their population. In a discussion about immigration as a solution to population decline the Policy Research Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs Canada (2006) cited the lost educational investment and subsequent retraining costs as being a potential burden to sending nations. Likewise Vukovich (1992) references the loss of young, educated members of society as being an area of potential ethical concern.

In addition to the lost current and future tax revenue these emigrants may have produced, the sending nation also suffers a brain drain of sorts as highly skilled citizens seek employment elsewhere (PRD, 2006; Vukovich, 1992). Vukovich (1992) similarly discusses the potential for replacing receiving countries' native born workers with cheap immigrant labour suggesting that this could turn government attention away from making investments in sending nations. One must consider then how ethical it is for Canada, a country that prides itself on its international development efforts to be drastically increasing the number of skilled immigrants it is looking to attract away from the developed world.

Abernethy (1995) presents an interesting perspective in a letter to Environment in response to their coverage of the Cairo Conference in 1994. The letter makes a link between high emigration to the developed world and high fertility in the developing world. Abernethy (1995) argues that high emigration gives the impression that there is ample opportunity in the developed world for immigrants thereby relieving the concern about overpopulation. If emigration is possible in large numbers it can be assumed that a

nation need not support its own children leaving parents free to have more children than they can reasonably support into maturity (Abernethy, 1995).

Another ethical consideration arises in the literature regarding the impact of high immigration on current residents of Canada. In particular, it seems some are raising concerns about Canada's responsibility to its current population and the potential impact of high immigration (Bissett, 2002; Beaujot, 2003; Vukovich, 1992). Bissett (2002) raises an interesting point when he suggests that with high immigration Canada may turn its attention away from providing employment and education opportunities for Canadians, instead relying on immigration to meet the country's labour force needs. This would, Bissett (2002) argues, lead to a decline in investment in education and training of Canadians. Beaujot (2003) expands this argument by suggesting that the entire focus on immigration as the answer to population decline may undermine the potential of other options such as education and increasing labour force participation. Referencing the example of Sweden, Beaujot (2003) argues that when less of a focus is put on guest workers, as compared to other European nations, the result has been a greater investment in the native born population.

Conclusion

While immigration would clearly increase the population far faster than an increase in fertility it is not without its drawbacks. In regards to the changing dependency ratio, immigration is a poor solution (Beaujot, 1996; Beaujot, 2003; Bermingham, 2001; Canada & the World, 2002; Denton, Feaver and Spencer, 1999; Denton, Feaver and Spencer, 2002; Keely, 2001; UNPD, 2000). Although Beaujot (2003) reports that the median age of immigrants was lower than that of the Canadian population from the 1960's into the 21st Century, he also notes that these immigrants make up such a small percentage of the overall population that their impact is barely felt. Likewise immigrants are less well distributed geographically than births which means that immigration has a specific impact on one geographic area or municipality in a way that births never do.

Poverty as the result of decreased opportunities for immigrants is also of major concern. If immigration is increased in reaction to the potential for decreased population growth it would likely be done before governments and employers have been able to put in place mechanisms to ensure that arriving immigrants will be well utilized in the labour force. As the number of immigrants increases so does the likelihood of immigrant poverty and as a result a backlash from Canadian society. Although increasing fertility in and of itself may not be the solution to all of Canada's demographic problems it would likely be able to offset some of the anticipated drawbacks of population decline and high immigration.

Births while spread over the country, are also small comfort for those concerned about our ageing society in the present tense. In order to see a change in the dependency

ratio several generations of relatively high fertility would be needed. As of yet no pronatalist policy has been able to create the needed numbers of new births to offset such a demographic shift. What is possible, however, is to increase cohort fertility into the future in an effort to avoid so drastic a discrepancy as we are currently experiencing. This approach would attempt to rely on increased immigration and increased support for immigrants while actively encouraging fertility in all possible cohorts to ensure replacement rate fertility in future generations.

One of the often cited drawbacks of increasing fertility as a response to decreased population growth is that the results come slowly to fruition. Unlike immigration increases or decreases as government priorities shift, fertility requires at least on full generation to produce results in the labour force and more likely two or more to reach acceptable levels. This is not to say that no benefit can be seen in the short term, only that the full benefit comes more slowly than with increases in immigration.

When it comes to the viability of a pronatalist policy for Canada there are three major considerations that need to be examined beyond those discussed above. First, the issue of the time required to see the results of increased fertility as compared to the rapid turnaround of immigration. Second, the cost of pronatalist policies as compared with immigration and finally the short and long term benefits of each approach. This discussion asserts that a set of pronatalist policies would be of value to Canada's continuing population goals, however it is important to recognize the potential failings of such a strategy and attempt to tailor a response that combines the best of all possible solutions.

A comprehensive pronatalist policy was attempted recently in Sweden which balanced societal, family and professional development in order to encourage an increase in fertility. This initiative involved ensuring equal opportunities for women in the paid labour force and emphasized sociological goals over demographic ones (Vukovich, 1992). Sweden was able to increase their birthrate to 2.13 in 1990 (Vukovich, 1992) up from 1.7 in 1980 (Council of Europe, 2001). Most significant, however, is that in this model neither unmarried status nor labour force participation hindered an increase in fertility (Vukovich, 1992). Vukovich (1992) determined from the Swedish example that it was more successful to support families in their desire to bear children than to attempt to manipulate their choice.

Another caution for policy makers comes from the Netherlands where it was found that emphasis on labour force participation by women concurrent with pronatalist policy may create a climate in which women are reluctant to reproduce. In the Netherlands a rise in women's labour force participation has resulted in a concurrent rise in part time employment (Abrahamson &Wehner, 2006). This has led to an economy where women are employed in record numbers but their income is still considered to be less than equal to their male counterparts. In Denmark a similar rise in labour force participation by women has led to record numbers of children in day care (Abrahamson & Wehner, 2006). This example serves to illustrate that labour force participation and fertility must be treated carefully in order to avoid encouraging one at the expense of the other. If too much is done to facilitate women's participation in the paid labour force without attention to making workplaces friendlier to those with children we may end up with a situation in which women are reluctant to have any children at all (Powell, 2004).

What should be paramount is creating a policy environment in which women, and families, feel free to negotiate their own fertility goals and feel supported in achieving them.

It is clearly not definitive that a pronatalist policy could completely replace immigration as a solution to population growth decline. It can, however, support immigration in maintaining desired population growth. Ideally such a programme would combine the best aspects of each solution resulting in a comprehensive approach designed to create a Canadian population that meets both short and long term goals for growth and avoid the recurrence of the current phenomena of low fertility and inadequate and inappropriate immigration in response. Such a policy would take advantage of the immediacy of immigration while valuing the greater societal impact of strengthening families and supporting parents in realizing their fertility goals.

Kleinberg (1999) asserts that a society's view of motherhood is a barometer of the fundamental valuation of women within that society. Currently, when motherhood, among those with the luxury of choice, is hailed as a virtuous and morally superior endeavor, it is easy to mistake the enthusiasm about children for a high valuation of women's child raising roles. It would, however, be a mistake to overlook the role of longstanding power differences between the sexes and their impact on factors that influence fertility decisions. If Canada is to be successful in incorporating a pronatalist component into its overall population strategy, it is crucial that steps be taken to support and encourage legitimately shared parenting alongside equal labour force participation in order to ensure women are not left carrying an inflated opportunity cost as a result of bearing children. Likewise, it is important that any attempt at increasing fertility be

carried out with the intention of supporting Canadians in achieving their fertility goals, primarily by ensuring that they are not forced to decide between children and employment success or financial stability.

As discussed earlier, Canada is unique in the population policy arena because of its multicultural nature. As such this diversity must be addressed in any overreaching policy. A pronatalist policy for Canada would not be complete unless it addressed the experiences of immigrant families. The this end more research is required to determine how immigrant families are arriving at fertility decisions and to develop supports for immigrants already in Canada and those arriving who are contemplating increased fertility. Such discussion is also crucial to developing an immigration environment that supports immigrants in achieving all of their goals, be they in education, employment or fertility, thereby facilitating settlement and attempting to reverse the poverty and isolation experienced by many immigrants.

Further research is also required to examine the potential costs of a pronatalist policy and how such a policy could be implemented nation wide so as to avoid one province putting resources into children that may later move elsewhere. Likewise, more research is needed to ascertain why Canadians are exhibiting a lower level of fertility than they desire and what specific policies would encourage them to have more children.

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