

# Fab Abs

## Recent Research Abstracts

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### *FERTILITY DECISION MAKING*

Weston, Ruth (2005): "Having children or not", *Family Matters*, No 69 Spring/Summer 2004-2005, pp. 4-31

While population replacement level in Western countries requires that women have 2.06 babies, the total fertility rate in Australia has fallen from 3.55 in 1961 to 1.73 to 1.76 between 1998 and 2003. The pressure to reverse this decline has prompted researchers to look into the factors that influence couples in making the decision whether or not to have children. Among factors cited for the decline in fertility rates are advances in reproductive technology, increases in relationship breakdowns and the increased financial independence of women. Economic factors play a significant role; moreover, many such economic trends are well beyond the control of most people. These include increases in house prices requiring couples to sustain a dual income and a dramatic reduction in secure, adequately paid jobs for early school leavers. This results in a need to invest heavily in higher education and career thus often leading to delayed child-bearing and an increase in the risk of involuntary childlessness. The Fertility Decision Making Project, examined in this article, looks at how broad social changes translate into individual decision making.

McDonald, P (2002): "Low fertility: Unifying the theory and the demography", Paper prepared for Session 73, Future of Fertility in Low Fertility Countries, Meeting of the Population Association of America, Atlanta, 9-11 May  
<http://demography.anu.edu.au/Publications/PAA%20Paper%202002.doc>

The market is very short-term and favours flexible, childless people averse to risk, while the private world of the family requires them to be self-sacrificing and prepared to accept risks. These two areas, which some still consider separate, attest to the old division of labour between men and women. The reinforcement of the male breadwinner model of the family is not the solution to the dilemma that we now face in maintaining social reproduction in combination with a free-market approach to production. What is required is no less than a new social contract asserting that children are a social good and not merely a private, optional pleasure. The new social contract also must be one based on gender equity.

Miller, W.B. (1994): "Childbearing motivations, desires and intentions: A theoretical framework", *Genetic, Social and General Psychology*, vol.47, no.3, pp. 291-326

Accumulated scientific evidence indicates that the motive force behind human childbearing is governed by a complex set of biological, psychological, and social-normative factors. The author reviews approaches in the social and behavioural sciences to conceptualise the reasons why humans become motivated to bear children and then presents a theoretical framework incorporating many elements of the approaches. The framework is based upon a four-step psychological sequence: the formation of traits, the activation of traits into desires, the translation of desires into intentions, and the implementation of intentions in the form of behaviour.