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Recent Research Abstracts

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CHILDLESSNESS

Wheeler, Janet. (2005). *Decision-making styles of women who decide not to have children*. Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference (9th: 2005: Melbourne), In: Families Matter: 9th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Melbourne, February 2005 - proceedings. Melbourne, Vic: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Recent figures estimate that approximately 24 per cent of Australian women will never have children. Of those, it is estimated that around 7 per cent are due to natural infertility, while the remaining 17 per cent are explained by circumstance (such as relationship breakdown) or a deliberate choice to remain childless. The author argues that, with childlessness apparently on the increase, there is a need to gain a better understanding of fertility decision-making processes of women who make an active choice not to have children. Based on a study in 2000 and 2001 of 16 Anglo-Australian women aged between 29 and 42 years of age who had either decided not to have children or were in the process of doing so, the author concluded that there is more than one type of 'childless-by-choice' woman in terms of the decision-making process that leads them to forego motherhood. It also showed that career aspirations were not the driving force behind their motivation to remain childless.

Cannold, Leslie. (2005). *What, no baby? Why women are losing the freedom to mother, and how they can get it back*. Fremantle, WA: Curtin University Press.

This book contends that low fertility rates in western countries reflect what women are getting rather than what they want. It is argued that most of the falling fertility rates in the developed world can be put down to circumstantial childlessness and not childlessness by choice. Based on interviews with Australian and American women, the author explores the lives of childless women and argues that the circumstances many women face today severely restrict their freedom to choose when and whether to mother. It looks at the people, institutions and organisations that stand in the way of women building lives that include stable partnerships, challenging work and children.

Parr, Nicholas J. (2005). Family Background, schooling and childlessness in Australia. *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 37 (2), 229-243.

Using data from Wave 1 of the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, this paper analyses the extent to which childlessness among Australian women aged 40-54 years varies according to the size and type of family in which they were brought up, and the level and type of schooling they had. Multilevel logistic analysis shows that having been educated in a non-government school, having stayed at school to year 12, having a small number of siblings, at age 14 having a father who was either dead or absent, at age 14 having a father who was employed in a professional occupation, or being a migrant from North or West Europe, North America, East Asia or South-East Asia, all are significantly associated with higher rates of childlessness among women in the 40-54 years age range. The implications of the findings for fertility trends and for Australia's public debate are discussed.
