

HOW DO WE MEASURE UP?

Comparing child care policy in Canada to other nations

Don't Get Fooled by Child Care Research: spotting the flaws

The Child Care Conundrum
The response from Canadians

Research Obscured by Politicized Debate

Deconstructing Marriage

Less freedom and more inequality

Building a Healthy Nation

Policies to encourage strong marriages and stable families

Family: The natural starting point for Canada's foreign policy

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FROM THE IMFC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the first issue of *IMFC Review*, the semi-annual policy publication of Canada's newest think-tank, the Institute of Family and Marriage Canada (IMFC). There are always some obvious questions that arise with a new initiative like this. Let me try to answer some of those questions for you.

What is the IMFC? IMFC focuses on social policy research that affects marriage and family and, in turn, ensures that those research findings are widely available to Canadians.

Why marriage and family issues? The IMFC was created because governments too often overlook the impact public policy has on family life. Whether buying a new house, balancing family time with work demands, or simply choosing a video to rent, millions of Canadians base their big and small decisions on what is best for their family. Yet policy-makers usually focus on how individuals or large organizations are impacted by policy. At the IMFC, we want the family to be front and centre when public policy is being made.


What does the IMFC plan to do? Through a variety of research projects, publications, and events, the IMFC will focus on research and disseminating information. The *IMFC Review* and our website, imfcanada.org, will make these findings widely available to Canadians.

Who is behind the IMFC? IMFC is an initiative of Focus on the Family Canada. Focus on the Family Canada aims to support, strengthen and encourage Canadian families through education and resources. It is therefore natural for Focus on the Family Canada to bring forward research and policy innovations to help policy-makers address issues that impact marriages and families.

Check out our website at imfcanada.org to find out more about us or to read the *IMFC Review* in French. But before you do, please continue to read through this issue as we have brought together top-notch researchers and writers on a variety of topics but with a special emphasis on child care.

Over the next few months, we will announce staff appointments, release research reports, and hold special events-including our grand opening. In the meantime, we would love to hear your feedback. You can reach us at info@imfcanada.org.

Yours Truly,



Dave Quist
Executive Director, IMFC

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Jennifer Roback Morse has a PhD in economics from the University of Rochester and has taught economics for 15 years at Yale University and George Mason University. She joined Stanford University's Hoover Institution as a Research Fellow in 1997. Her book, *Love and Economics: Why the Laissez-Faire Family Doesn't Work*, shows why the family is the necessary building block for a free society and why so many modern attempted substitutes for the family have been unsuccessful. Her public policy work has appeared in *Forbes*, *Policy Review*, *The American Enterprise*, *Fortune*, *Reason*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Vital Speeches*, and *Religion and Liberty*. She was a founding member of the Academic Advisory Boards of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, the Institute for Justice, and the Women's Freedom Network. She currently lives in Vista, California.



Derek Rogusky

Derek Rogusky was recently appointed senior vice-president of Focus on the Family Canada, responsible for marketing, communications and family policy. Previously he held the position of vice-president of family policy and community impact. Since joining Focus on the Family Canada in 1999, he has appeared before several government committees and is regularly asked by the media to comment on family and life issues. Before joining Focus on the Family Canada, Mr. Rogusky was the assistant director for the Master of Business Administration program at the University of Alberta School of Business, and a research analyst at the Alberta legislature. He has also served as a part-time lecturer and instructor at the University of Alberta and Trinity Western University. He has a Bachelor of Management degree in economics from the University of Lethbridge and a Masters of Business Administration degree from the University of Alberta.



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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

KEEP CLICKING YOUR HEELS, DOROTHY



In the wake of the federal government's decision to allocate \$5 billion in funding for children in paid child care, many family advocates are wondering why some children are left out in the cold.

We want to shed light on the needs of parents who care for their own children at home—at great personal expense and career loss, as well as those parents who seek other alternatives to paid child care. What about my husband who commutes five extra hours a week to bring our

son to Grandma and Grandpa? Child care policies need to address the diverse situations of families and not squeeze them into a one-size-fits-all solution that creates more inequity in the system.

We have drawn inspiration from international examples of policies that include concrete examples of family policy at work for the benefit of all children and parents.

Also in this issue we have a first-hand account from Latvia of how to craft

policies that help families grow in the context of an emerging democracy. We also have a paper that presents how family can be the locus of foreign policy development for Canada. This piece provides recommendations for ensuring our foreign aid helps strengthen families worldwide.

And back home, Canada has been embroiled in one of the most divisive debates to affect our country in over a decade. Libertarian Jennifer Roback Morse brings insight to the impact redefining marriage will have on freedom. Plus, you'll find the latest in research, book releases and more inside the covers of the *IMFC Review* for Fall/Winter 2005.

We hope you enjoy this premiere issue and will be back again to catch the Spring/Summer 2006 issue of the *IMFC Review*.

Warm regards,

Anna Marie White



ON THE COVER:

Madelyne Baker is as perplexed as we are as to why her child-care providers (a.k.a. Mom and Dad) do not fit in our government's current plan to value paid care-givers only—especially when the rest of the world sees Mom and Dad's role much differently.
pg 11

Photo by Tommi Lintinen.

RESEARCH ROUNDUP

Evaluating Health Options

Prenatally diagnosed Down syndrome: mothers who continued their pregnancies evaluate their health care providers

Skoto, Brian G. *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 192 (3), 670-676.

Objective counsel from health professionals is not something that can be taken for granted, according to a study by Brian Skotko from Harvard Medical School. The study, published in March 2005 in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, reveals that not all women who undergo prenatal screening or diagnosis for Down syndrome (DS) desire to terminate their pregnancy even though that is sometimes the option encouraged by the health care provider. The study also found that health care providers often emphasize the negative aspects of DS and break the news to a parent with insensitive language and with only one parent present.

Down syndrome can be diagnosed in a fetus as early as the first trimester of a pregnancy. Skotko's study revealed that only 12.5 per cent of respondents to his survey, which was sent to 2945 mothers of DS children, received a prenatal diagnosis of their child's condition. One possible reason for this is that many parents who did decide to have a prenatal diagnosis chose to terminate the pregnancy.

The Bigger Picture

Self-esteem of adolescents who were born prematurely

Lambert, M., Russ, C., Hoult, L. (2002). *Pediatrics*, 109 (3), 429-433.

Dr. Saroj Saigal from McMaster University, along with Michael Lambert, Chad Russ, and Lorraine Hoult conducted a study to determine the difference in self-esteem between adolescents who were born very premature and other youth who did

not share this experience. Their research was conducted on 132 adolescents who had been born with an extremely low birth weight (ELBW) and 127 other adolescents who displayed similar socio-demographic traits but were not born with an ELBW. The youth were born between 1977 and 1982 and lived in southern Ontario.

The study revealed that the self-esteem ratings of adolescents who had been born with ELBW were very similar to those of teenagers who had not been born prematurely. This quality of life rating was given despite the fact that many of the teenagers who were born prematurely were born with mental and/or physical disabilities.

The findings of this study counter the common misperception on the part of parents, health care workers and policy makers that children born with an ELBW end up having a poor quality of life because of the disabilities with which they may have to contend.

An Educational Jump-Start?

The relative age effect and the development of self-esteem

Thompson, A., Barnsley, R., & Battle, J. (2004). *Educational Research*, 46 (3), 131-320

Is it in the best interest of a child to start grade one at age five or age six? A new Canadian study by Angus Thompson, Roger Barnsley and James Battle has added more support to those who believe it is best to not rush children into school. Their research, as published in 2004 in the journal *Educational Research*, examines the negative emotional, physical and academic effects of starting a child in school early.

The authors cite numerous studies which reveal significant differences in academic and athletic achievement between youth who enter schools and sports teams, corresponding to the month in which they were born. One of the authors of this study, Angus Thompson, went a step further in his previous research and drew a connection between the age at which

a child starts school in Alberta and the corresponding rate of suicide. Now, in this study, Thompson and his co-authors reveal that entering school at a young age is linked to poorer self-esteem among children later in life.


The results of the study were based on an analysis of over 1129 students between grade one and grade nine. Referring to the trend of sending talented children to school at a younger age, the study observes: "As ability and self-esteem interact in direct and subtle ways to influence long-term achievement, risk-taking and, ultimately, life successes, it is paradoxical, and should be of great concern, that these potentially highly achieving children are perhaps being impeded, rather than advantaged."

Maybe They Just Need Love

Links between symptoms of depression among young people and relationships with others

Statistics Canada. (2005, 16 February). The Daily. Retrieved February 16, 2005 from <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/050216d050213a.htm>.

Statistics Canada published a study in February 2005 which examined adolescents with symptoms of depression and their relationships with their mothers, fathers, and friends. Based on information from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, this study found that young people with a close connection to their parents show higher levels of mental well-being.

An increase in healthy adolescent-parent relations as well as adolescent-peer relations corresponded with a decrease in adolescents' depressive symptoms. Furthermore, young people believed that they were closer to and felt more affection for their mothers than their fathers. These results were not affected by factors such as single- or two-parent households, age, or household income. However, the study did note a difference in the results for mothers and fathers which "support[s] the idea that young people may interact differently with each parent." 



Inese Slesere

On May 5, 2005, Member of Parliament from Latvia, Inese Slesere, addressed a gathering of Canadian parliamentarians in Ottawa. She spoke with IMFC about recent initiatives by the Latvian government to strengthen family policy in the context of an emerging democracy.

IMFC: You are quickly gaining an international reputation for your advocacy on behalf of family policy. What motivates you?

Inese Slesere: I am concerned about what I see happening to the institution of the family in my country and around the world. It is threatened by the opinion that families no longer matter to society. The value of the family as a fundamental unit of every society is lost among other values such as career, financial and social status and the misguided notion that human rights and personal freedom can exist without any emphasis on personal responsibility.

IMFC: For the benefit of readers who may not be aware, can you tell us a little about the recent history of Latvia?

IS: Fourteen years ago, Latvia regained its independence, after 50 years of Soviet occupation. Since regaining independence we have believed that the development of our nation's economy through a strong monetary system and healthy GDP growth rates would automatically solve all the other problems, including the well-being of families and children. Yet now, our economy is flourishing and our GDP rate is one of the most rapidly rising in the European Union, but Latvia, like many other countries in Europe, is experiencing a demographic winter.

Our population has decreased from 2.6 million in 1989 to 2.3 million in 2004. In addition, the number of children aged 17 years and younger has decreased by almost 30 per cent, from 681,000 in 1989 to 469,000 in 2004.

Meanwhile, other indicators are rising: our divorce rate is one of the highest in Europe, with 61 per cent of marriages ending in divorce. And, in 2003, 39 per cent of children were born to unmarried parents as compared with 17 per cent in 1990. We now have a staggering 691 abortions for every 1000 live births.

IMFC: How do these trends relate to the history of your country?

IS: During the Soviet period, personal independence and initiative were discouraged by the state, and people became accustomed to receiving and obeying political orders instead. Since 1991, when Latvia regained its independence, people have had to determine their own value system and begin to make their own independent moral choices.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, we were unprepared to discern between positive and negative influences from the West. Although we embraced such basic human rights as freedom of speech and freedom to determine our own future, we learned that the principles of freedom could be easily misinterpreted as freedom from tradition, from family, from community and from personal responsibility.

These new pseudo-values pose a great threat to Latvia and raise serious concerns about their effects on our society.

IMFC: What kind of challenges are families facing in Latvia?

IS: I think the problems we are addressing in Latvia are not unique to our country. In fact, as a result of declining fertility rates, like us, many countries are facing a so-called demographic winter. Low birth rates are creating a heavier economic burden on the work-aged population in caring for the elderly. Various solutions have been suggested in many countries to improve the demographic situation, such as changing immigration policies, increasing total fertility rates, increasing state allowances, and enhancing all kinds of social guarantees. All of these measures are, of course, very important, but we believe that such an approach is merely treating symptoms rather than curing the root problem.

IMFC: What has your government done to begin to turn the tide on these trends?

IS: We believe that in order to build a strong nation and solve the problems of demography, we must concentrate all our efforts on strengthening families and trying to eliminate the threats that endanger the well-being of the family.

IMFC: What does that look like on a practical level? How has your government responded?

IS: Firstly, meeting the needs of families and children has been put at the top of the political agenda. The first step in putting families first was the establishment of a new government ministry: the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. Much like your current situation in Canada, before a ministry

portfolio was created, the responsibility for children and families was divided among several ministries, such as Welfare, Education and Justice. The Children and Family Affairs Ministry's responsibility is to draft and implement family-centred policies and promote the value of family to our society. As well, it is tasked with addressing our demographic problems and ensuring that families have sufficient financial, educational and institutional support.

Secondly, we have drafted a National Action Plan on family policy to direct our activities over the next decade. It contains more than 60 practical steps towards the creation of a family-friendly infrastructure for our country.

IMFC: What are some of the steps contained in the Plan?

IS: The National Action Plan sets forth goals, such as the creation of family-friendly infrastructures, municipalities and companies, and introduces a new certificate for family-friendly enterprises, thus encouraging companies to support the families of their workers. We have also created tax incentives that will increase the basic non-taxable income on the basis of the number of children in the family.

A special child-support maintenance fund has been formed. This fund provides interim child-support to single parents who may experience financial hardship due to lack of support from a non-custodial parent.

In 2004, a new initiative was introduced to stress the importance of the father's role in the family. The paternity allowance and vacation for fathers is in addition to the current "mother-wages" that allow a new mother to spend a year at home with a new baby and receive her full pre-birth salary.

To address the alarming divorce rate, we have proposed a mediation or reconciliation institute that would counsel families and couples who are on the verge of separation or divorce.

IMFC: What is happening with family policy in Latvia?

IS: In Latvia I would say we are in a time of policy transition: from child- and individual-centred policy to family-centred policy. That means returning to principles stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Family is the fundamental unit of the society and as such should be given special attention. It should receive all possible protection and support by the state and society."

Latvia at a glance

Population:

2,290,237 (July 2005 est.)

Gained independence:

August 21, 1991

GDP:

2004 - \$26.53 billion (US)

GDP growth rate:

7.6% in 2004

Inflation:

2004 - 6.4%

Percentages of marriages ending in divorce:

1995 - 70.6%

2000 - 66.6%

2004 - 50.8%

Median age at first marriage 2004:

27.8 male, 25.6 female

Fertility rate:

1998 - 1.11

2003 - 1.29

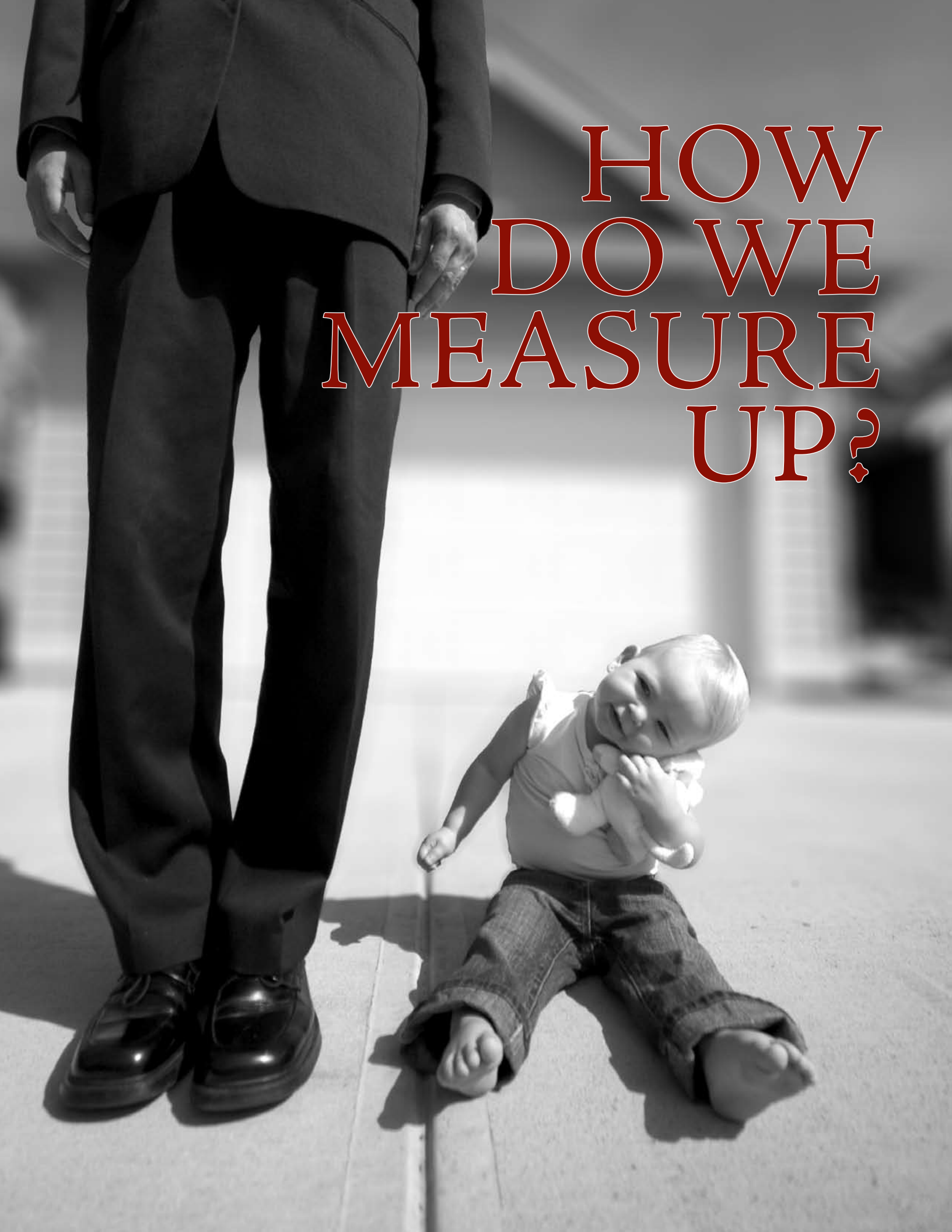
Source: Latvian Bureau of Statistics, CIA World Factbook



We recognize that it is within the family that people learn to love, to care, to respect each other, and to share. Social science evidence clearly shows that children who grow up with their married mom and dad are more likely to become responsible citizens who are able to contribute more to the community's well-being than those who have not had a strong family environment.

IMFC: What kind of advice would you offer to others facing a similar situation?

IS: We are trying to be careful not to take over the duties of parents who have the responsibility of raising their children. As I mentioned earlier, the State must help families by creating favourable conditions so that they can fulfill their roles. The State should not encourage families to live from budget handouts, but rather help them understand the parents' duty to provide for their families. 🍁



HOW
DO WE
MEASURE
UP?

Comparing Canada's family policy to other nations

by Peter Shawn Taylor

Family policy debate in Canada in recent years has focused almost exclusively on the lack of a national child care program in this country. Groups such as the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada have argued that Canada should match the efforts of European nations such as Sweden in creating a universal system of publicly-funded, unionized, non-profit daycare centres across Canada. With this end in view, the Liberal government of Prime Minister Paul Martin established a \$5 billion-five year pilot program for a national child care strategy in its 2005 budget. The ultimate cost of a completed national daycare program could exceed \$13 billion per year, using the standard of 1 per cent of GDP set by Sweden.¹

Family policy in Canada: A lack of choice

While it is true that family policy in Canada differs significantly from other countries, this difference is not solely due to the lack of a national child care program. While child care is a component of many countries' family policy, there is more to family policy than child care. Other countries offer a wide range of policies that support parental choice in how their children are raised.

For instance, several countries provide payments exclusively for stay-at-home parents in recognition of the sacrifices one-income families make to raise their children and to compensate for government subsidies provided to parents who use formal child care. Other countries offer extended paid parental leave programs—up to three years—that

permit working parents to take time off to raise their children at home. Some countries also allow families to file their income taxes jointly, which can substantially reduce the overall family tax burden. Finally, there are countries which permit parents broad choice in non-parental care for their children, including the ability to use government subsidies to pay relatives or neighbours, as well as for-profit or non-profit daycare centres, for child care services. Canada's federal government currently provides none of these policies.

Given this diversity of family policies in other countries, it seems obvious that the current debate in Canada would benefit from a closer examination of family policies worldwide. With this in mind, we will begin with a review of Canada's current federal family policy. Then we will examine family policies in other countries. Rather than systematically and exhaustively covering all major nations, this survey will focus on a few countries with innovative programs that have proven popular with families.

Differences in demographics and government structure present obvious difficulties in comparing federal family policy across borders in close detail. For instance, it is the case in many countries, including Canada, that lower levels of government provide family programs in addition to the federal government. However, given the many long-standing similarities between Canada and Australia in terms of history, culture, population and political structure, a more detailed and up-to-date comparison is possible between these two countries, with interesting results.

Finally we will point out the gaps in Canada's family policy that are revealed by these international comparisons and

make recommendations to fill these holes.

Family policy in Canada: A lack of choice

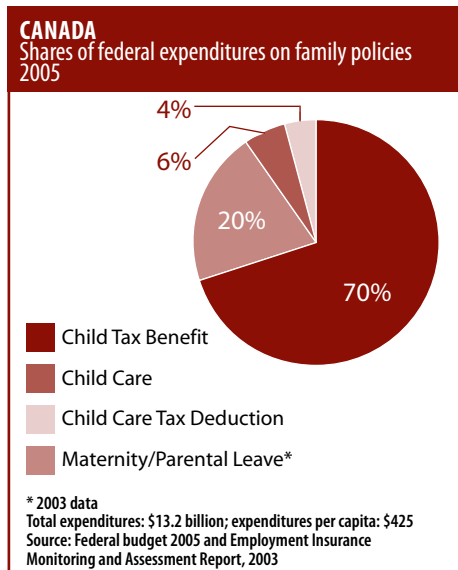
There are three main federal government programs to assist families with children. The centerpiece is the Canada Child Tax Benefit, a means-tested, refundable tax credit with a maximum value of \$1,471 per year for a child under the age of seven. This basic benefit is received by 82 per cent of all Canadian families with children. A supplemental benefit for low-income families, worth an additional \$1,722 per year, is provided to 40 per cent of households. This year the Child Tax Benefit will distribute \$9.3 billion to Canadian families.

In addition, some Canadian parents are eligible for paid maternity and parental leave benefits of up to 50 weeks. In 2003, this amounted to \$2.7 billion. However, it is important to note that these benefits are not actually provided by the federal government, although the OECD considers them to be a federal program. Maternity and parental benefits are paid for through employee and employer contributions to the Employment Insurance Fund. Only working parents are eligible for this benefit and they pay for it themselves through payroll deductions.

With respect to child care, the federal government offers a tax deduction for parents with receipts from a daycare centre. The Child Care Expenses Deduction is worth \$550 million in foregone taxes, according to Department of Finance estimates. In addition, the government has promised to spend \$5 billion over the next five years to establish a national child care strategy with the provinces. For 2005, this

¹While the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada promotes a 1 per cent of GDP expenditure on child care for Canada, the group misrepresents the actual cost of this as only \$10 billion. In fact Canadian GDP is \$1.3 trillion and 1 per cent would be \$13 billion.

allocation amounts to \$700 million. Several observations on Canada's federal family policies are in order. First, at less than \$11 billion in actual federal spending (since the maternity and parental leave program is not an expense) the actual outlay on family policy is rather modest. Second, Ottawa does not support parental choice in child rearing through its policies.



The Child Tax Benefit is available to all parents based on income, but only parents using outside-the-house care are eligible to claim the child care tax deduction or stand to benefit from the national child care strategy. And, a \$13 billion per year national daycare program of the sort being promoted by child care advocates would ultimately overtake the Child Tax Benefit as the largest single component of family policy. This in spite of the fact that child care centres are the least popular form of child care in Canada. According to Statistics Canada, only 13 per cent of children between six months and five years old are placed in formal child care.

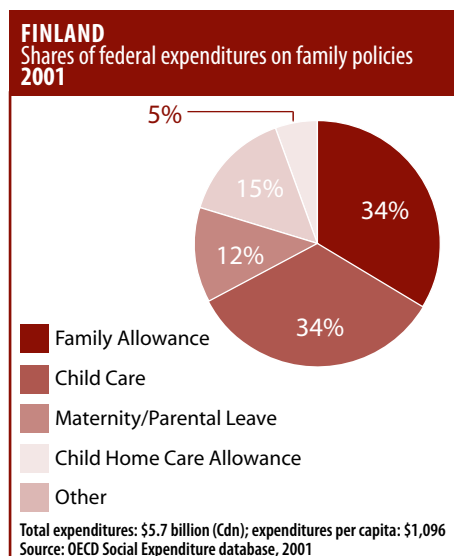
The most popular form of child-rearing in Canada, again according to Statistics Canada, is stay-at-home parenting. For children between six months and five years of age, 47 per cent are raised in a home setting by parents. However, the federal government has no programs that recognize or compensate this group, despite the fact it comprises nearly half of all families in Canada.

Our comparison with other developed countries will show that, like Canada, all offer some form of universal or means-tested family allowance, a maternity and parental leave or benefit program and government subsidies for formal child care. However, these other countries also offer additional forms of family support based on parental choice, particularly with respect to at-home care, that do not exist in Canada.

Family Policy in Finland: Child care yes, but home care too

The assumption that all Nordic countries follow the Swedish model of universal daycare for all children over the age of one is misplaced. Finland does offer a heavily-subsidized, municipally-run, unionized system of child care to parents. However, Finland also offers parents real choices in child rearing by making benefits available to stay-at-home parents. For babies up to one year of age, Finnish parents can receive a parenthood allowance to compensate for at-home care. For children aged one to three, there is a Child Home Care Allowance, which currently pays \$475 (all figures converted to Canadian dollars) per month. Together, these two programs account for 72 per cent of all children up to the age of three. Municipal daycare centres serve only 11 per cent of children this age.

Because formal school does not begin until age seven in Finland, the percentage of children in daycare rises sharply for ages three to six. Nonetheless, the vast



majority of children are raised at home in their early years due to the existence of the Child Home Care Allowance

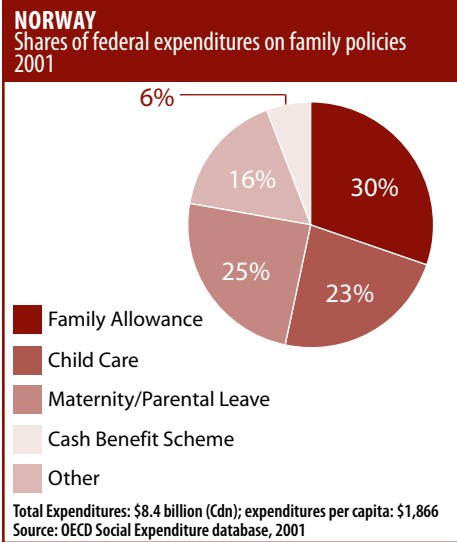
Family Policy in Norway: Recent reforms let parents stay home

Like Finland, Norway also provides true choice in child care. Family programs include a universal family allowance, a generous one-year maternity and parental leave program (including a four week portion available only to fathers) and a municipally-administered daycare system. In 1998, Norway introduced a Cash Benefit Scheme for parents who choose not to use state-subsidized child care. It is available to parents of children between the ages of one and three and the current maximum monthly rate is \$730. This amount is reduced if parents choose to enroll their children in daycare part-time. It is fully clawed back if a child attends daycare more than 33 hours per week.

The Cash Benefit Scheme provides an important element of choice for Norwegian parents. This money can be used however a family chooses—as income for a non-working parent or to pay a relative, nanny or neighbour for child care—however government surveys report that two-thirds of the recipients are stay-at-home parents.

Government surveys also reveal that the popularity of the Cash Benefit Scheme has increased the prevalence of children raised in a home environment. The average hours per week of non-parental care per child has fallen 2.4 hours per week since 1998. The magnitude of the response from Norwegian parents to this program was unexpected by the government, suggesting parents are eager for greater choice in how they raise their children. According to Laila Dävøy, the Norwegian Minister of Children and Family Affairs: "I do believe that the cash benefit reform has improved the freedom of choice for parents who want to care for their children at home."

In spite of the program's popularity and high rate of take-up, the Cash Benefit Scheme is the least costly of all the government's major family policies. Norway also offers married families the option to file income taxes jointly.



Family Policy in France: A tax system for the whole family

In addition to a universal family allowance and subsidized child care, many parents in France are eligible for the “Allocation Parentale d’Éducation.” The APE consists of up to three years of paid parental leave for families with two or more children. Qualifying parents must have worked in two of the past five years. The payment is currently set at \$775 per month. The explicit goal of the APE is to compensate families who choose to raise their children at home.

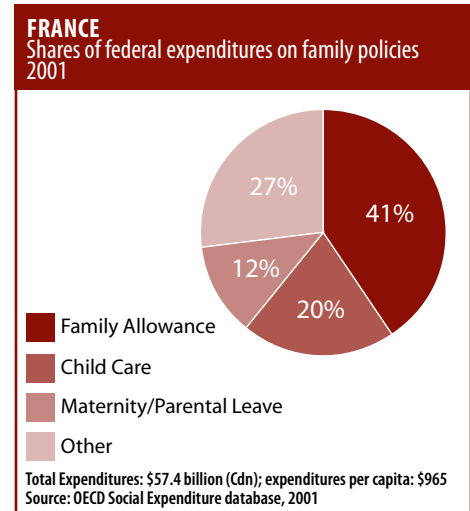
The popularity of the three-year parental leave in France is such that a majority of children are cared for at home, by a parent, in their first three years. According to 2002 figures, 64 per cent of children under the age of three are cared for primarily by their parents.

Another innovative feature of France’s family policy is the provision for joint-filing of income tax and the calculation of tax owing based on family size. Allowing spouses to file jointly can have the effect of reducing tax paid by families in a progressive tax structure. In effect, the total family income is pooled between spouses for tax purposes. While the U.S. system of joint filing has famously created a “marriage tax” in cases where spouses earn equivalent incomes, this is not the case in France due to its design.

France’s income tax is calculated on family size using a quotient system. Husband and wife together are assigned

two adult shares. The first two children in a family are each assigned a half-share. Third and subsequent children are treated as full-share adults. Total tax is then calculated according to a tax schedule using the family quotient. The impact of this system is that an adult in a one-income family of four faces a marginal tax rate 11 percentage points lower than a single individual earning the same income. France offers one of the most family-friendly tax systems among major nations.

It is interesting to note that the Canadian tax system imposes a marginal tax rate on an adult in a one-income family of four that is 18 percentage points *higher* than that of a single individual earning the same income. This is the third highest such differential among major countries.



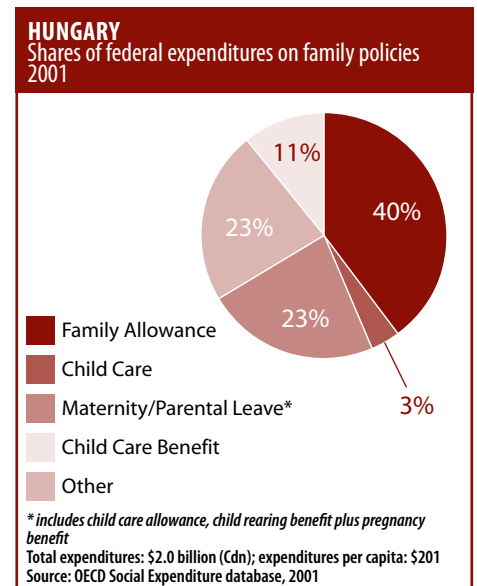
Family Policy in Hungary: Democracy supports at-home care

While it may not be as rich as other European nations, Hungary has a long history of government support for families. Of note, Hungarian children have been offered kindergarten programs since 1806.

During communist rule (1949-1990), the predominant feature of the national family policy was factory-provided daycare. During these years, child care was seen as a means to boost the female labour supply and increase economic production. In 1980, there were nearly

70,000 Hungarian children enrolled in formal child care. Since the collapse of the Soviet Empire, child care usage has fallen dramatically in Hungary due in part to greater preference for at-home care. In 2000, the number of children in formal child care stood at 30,000. (Similar observations about the prevalence of formal child care can be made in other communist countries. Shortly after the reunification of East and West Germany, for example, child care usage in communist East Germany for children up to three years old was 41 per cent, compared with 2.2 per cent in West Germany.)

Currently, all mothers in Hungary receive a pregnancy benefit of 24 weeks. Parents also receive a universal family allowance and have access to a subsidized child care system. As an alternative to formal child care, the Hungarian government provides three separate benefits for parents who choose to stay at home to raise their children. There is a means-tested child care benefit which permits modest part-time work along with a non-means tested child care allowance. Further, there is a child rearing benefit for families with three or more children. The rates for the child care allowance and the child rearing benefit are each set equivalent to the old age pension benefit (\$128 per month). The child care benefit is a percentage of past earnings, with a statutory maximum.



Family Policy in Australia: Something for everyone

Australia provides a family allowance with broad coverage for Australian families. Unlike most countries, this Family Tax Benefit has two parts. Part A is paid to all families, is subject to a means test, and has a maximum value of approximately \$4,000 per year. Part B is available only to single-income families—that is, single-parent families or two-parent families with one parent working and one staying at home with children. The maximum amount for this benefit is \$3,000 per year. A means test is applied only to the spouse with the lower income for Part B.

In lieu of a maternity and parental leave program, Australia offers a one-time maternity payment of \$3,000 per child, payable in a lump sum. This is scheduled to rise to \$5,000 by 2008. Unlike maternity/parental leave programs in other countries, such as France, Norway or Canada, this payment is not conditional on the work status of the parent.

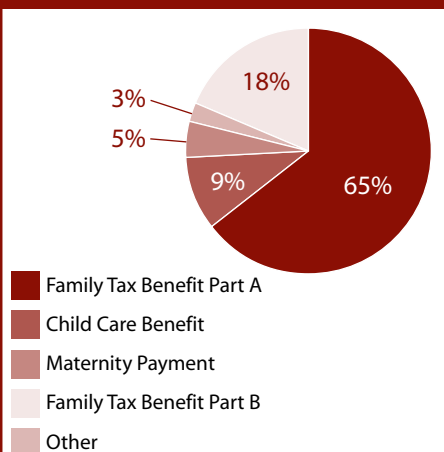
Australia also offers a Child Care Benefit (CCB) which may be used by parents for the child care service of their choosing, including non-profit, for-profit or family daycare (also called home daycare) facilities. In rural areas, it can be used to pay for in-home child care services. This voucher-style feature distinguishes the CCB from federal subsidies for child care programs in other countries, such as Finland and Hungary, that flow directly and exclusively to government-mandated, non-profit child care centres.

A closer look at Australia and Canada: Cousins with a difference

Given the historical and cultural similarities between Canada and Australia as well as the age structure and shared responsibilities of federal and provincial/state governments, a closer comparison of federal family policies in these two countries is possible.

The adjacent chart shows the total expenditures in each of four main categories of federal family policies in Canada and Australia: broad family

AUSTRALIA
Shares of federal expenditures on family policies 2005



Total Expenditures: \$16.6 billion (Cdn); expenditures per capita: \$860
Source: Federal budget 2005 and Melbourne Institute

A program for low-income single parents called the Parenting Payment, Single has been excluded from Australia's family policies. While it is worth over \$5 billion per year and is considered by the OECD to be a family policy, in fact it is a transitional welfare program and not a broadly available family policy.

allowance, support for at-home care, child care subsidies and maternity/parental leave payments. All figures are expressed in current Canadian dollars and come from 2005 budget documents. The expenditures are also expressed in per capita terms based on zero -14 age populations in each country for greater clarity.

The results show a large difference between the two nations in terms of support for family policies. In sum, Australia's federal government offers 78 per cent more funding per child than does Canada. If the maternity and parental leave figures for Canada are

removed (reflecting the fact that they do not represent an actual expenditure by the federal government), the Canadian total would be reduced even further. It is true that the federal government provides transfers to the provinces for the purpose of funding social programs, which includes child care. However, adding total provincial expenditures on child care (\$2.4 billion in 2003) and deducting EI maternity and parental leave expenditures would not change the results in a meaningful way.

Australia also provides its families with considerably more choice in making child care decisions. Both at-home and out-of-the home care is supported through the Family Tax Benefit Part B and the Child Care Benefit respectively. Additionally, the maternity payment in Australia is not dependent on work status, as the EI-funded program is in Canada. In terms of freedom to choose and financial support, Australia is clearly more generous to its families than is Canada.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This survey highlights several themes with respect to Canadian family policy. Canada does not offer a maternity/parental leave program of the length or generosity of other countries. France, for instance, offers a three-year paid leave. And the 50 weeks of benefits available in Canada are only accessible by parents in the work force and thus available only to a subset of Canadian families. This is in contrast to the Australian maternity payment which is provided

Major federal government family policies	Canada (2005 budget)	Australia (2005 budget)
Family allowance (CTB and FTB Part A) Per 1,000 children	\$9.3 billion \$1,631	\$10.7 billion \$2,743
At-home allowance (FTB Part B) Per 1,000 children	\$0 \$0	\$3.1 billion \$792
Maternity/Parental Leave Per 1,000 children	\$2.7 billion \$471	\$778 million \$199
Child Care Per 1,000 children	\$1.25 billion \$219	\$1.6 billion \$371
Total Per 1,000 children	\$13.25 billion \$2,324	\$16.1 billion \$4,148

regardless of employment status. Further, Canada's program is offered through the Employment Insurance Fund and, as such, is self-funded by employees and employers through a payroll tax.

Canada also does not permit parents to jointly file their income taxes. Joint filing, as is the case in the United States, France, Germany, Norway and several other countries, can improve the tax treatment of families as compared to single individuals. The ability to split income across all family members, as is the case in France, provides a further and substantial benefit to families with children. Given that most family benefits in Canada (such as the Child Tax Benefit) are calculated on the basis of family income, it is incongruous that adult family members are required to file their income taxes separately.

Finally, Canada is deficient in providing families with choice in how they raise their children. While federal and provincial government support for child care centres is substantial and rising, there is nothing to compensate parents who choose not to use formal child care. This emphasis on formal child care, in the face of evidence that shows nearly half of all parents choose to raise their children at home, is curious. Most countries studied, including Hungary, Norway, Finland and Australia, provide a compensatory benefit for parents who do not use child care. And these programs have proven to be very popular with families, typically accounting for a majority of children under the age of three.

With respect to recommendations, it seems clear that Canada's national family policy should reflect international practice and serve all parents.

The first step in providing real choice for families would be to abandon any further plans for a national child care strategy. Rather than targeting the small minority of parents who use formal child care centres, that money could be put to better use funding programs that meet the needs of all parents.

Next, families should be provided with the ability to file taxes jointly, or on a

family basis as is the case in France. This would address the current inequities in the tax system between single individuals and family members.

Finally, the federal government should permit greater choice in parental decision-making by compensating families that choose not to use subsidized child care. This could be accomplished through the creation of a home care allowance for stay-at-home parents, as is the case in Finland, Norway, Hungary

and Australia. Alternatively, the federal government could establish a universal tax deduction of approximately \$2,000 per child per year as has been advocated by tax experts. The tax savings thus generated could be directed by parents to whatever form of child care is most appropriate for that family: at-home care by a parent, care by relatives, neighbourhood home daycares or formal child care centres. It should be the family, and not government, that makes child rearing decisions. 🍁

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THE CHILD CARE CONUNDRUM:

THE RESPONSE FROM CANADIANS

by Stephanie Carroll & Anna Marie White

Earlier this year, Alberta MP Rona Ambrose created a brief firestorm of media commentary with her remark to Social Development Minister Ken Dryden in the House of Commons about “old white guys” telling young women what to do. Dryden was responding to a report which showed nearly 100 per cent of all young parents would choose to stay out of the workforce to care for their children if they could. Despite this, Dryden insisted that “The real choice is the opportunities [*sic*] for men and women across the country to have the choice of high quality early learning and child care.”

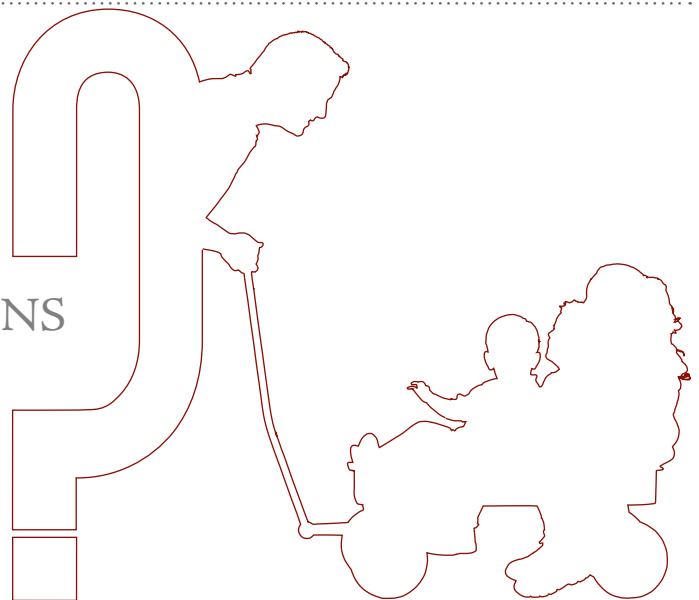
His response is typical of many in the child care field who refuse to acknowledge what parents know is in the best interests of their children: parental care. A public opinion survey conducted for IMFC in May 2005 shows that parents are firm in their desires to care for their children whenever possible, and to have care options available when they must be away from their children.^{1*}

Determining the best type of care for their children is a tumultuous decision for many parents as they weigh the advantages of two-incomes versus one, parental care versus care outside of the home, private child care versus public daycare. However, the only option for which there is any government support continues to be institutional daycare settings despite clear evidence that Canadians want more child care choice.

The work-family merge

With daycare as the main option, many find few ways to balance work and family. In a 2002 Strategic Counsel poll, 69 per cent of respondents reported feeling stressed trying to maintain work and family balance. In another poll, 62 per cent expressed that government has a role to play in achieving that balance² and responded that, as an alternative to a national child care system, the “government should provide funds to all parents to help them raise healthy children.”³ The role these Canadians envision is not one of a ‘nanny state’—with out-of-home child care provided by the government—instead respondents want real choice in child care.

*A report on the survey’s complete findings will be released by the IMFC later in 2005.

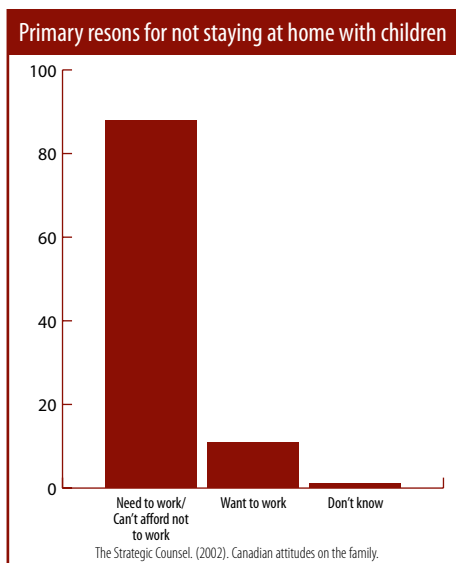


In 2003, public opinion showed the same concern. In a Compas poll, 54 per cent of Ontarians thought that government child care funding should be given directly to parents to use.⁴ Subsequently, parents could make the best child care choice that uniquely benefits their family situation.

For the majority of Canadian families, the current situation involves two working parents. However, there is a dissonance between the actual situation parents face versus their ideal reality. A Strategic Counsel poll reported that 76 per cent of working married or common-law parents with children in child care would prefer to have a parent provide in-home care.⁵ The same poll found that 88 per cent of parents were not in the financial position to be able to leave work to provide in-home child care.⁶

Daycare door wide open

Statistically, an increasing amount of Canadians are using the current daycare



system.⁷ But are these numbers merely reflective of parents taking advantage of the only financially subsidized child care option available? In the report, *Values and Preferences for the “Best Policy Mix” for Canadian Children*, 92 per cent of Canadians wanted a combination of child care and parental leave programs “to help families balance work and family responsibilities.”⁸ With additional child care options, parents could choose alternatives to the daycare system alternatives that would better suit their specific family and work circumstances.

Flex parenting

There is an increasing amount of mothers and fathers who are joining together to share the demands of child rearing. However, 87 per cent of husbands maintain employment regardless of their children’s age.⁹ Meanwhile, mothers’ employment rates are significantly affected by the age of their children, as 60 per cent of mothers maintain employment when their children are under two years old, while 75 per cent are working when their children are between the ages of 15 and 24.¹⁰ As opposed to fathers, many of these working mothers are likely to choose non-standard employment options—part-time, self-employment, second jobs—while their children are in the home.¹¹

Working mothers choose non-standard jobs in order to help meet the demands of both work and family life. Forty-five per cent of part-time working wives say they do so to accommodate child care needs.¹² Unfortunately these alternative situations are accompanied by different family-life challenges. For example, a part-time or self-employed mother usually does not have the same benefits as a full-time employee. This is a further financial burden to the family, which is compounded by the fact that part-time and self-employed workers tend to earn less than full-time employees.¹³

The less time-consuming, and sometimes

more flexible, work schedule is a benefit for part-time and self-employed parents. However, the time restrictions of the current daycare system—with one child per ‘space’—do not easily adapt to work patterns that are different from the typical nine to five, Monday through Friday workweek. It is not financially feasible for daycares to reserve a space for a child who only uses it for half the time available.

One way parents avoid the frustration of daycare scheduling is to stay out of the workforce and provide in-home child care.

92% of Canadians want a combination of child care and parental leave programs.

Michalski, J.H. (1999). Values and preferences for the “best policy mix” for Canadian children. Ottawa Canadian Policy Research Networks, Inc.

In fact, 42 per cent of wives left their jobs altogether, citing “personal and family reasons.”¹⁴ However, the stay-at-home parent relinquishes both career and income in order to meet child care needs, and, in the current taxation structure, receives no financial recognition for such sacrifice.

Mothers choosing to maintain standard full-time employment would prefer options other than the daycare system. A Pollara study of working women in Canada provides evidence that, rather than having child care or daycare facilities in their workplace, they would prefer options such as working from home several days a week, having a four-day workweek, having paid dependent care days, and job mentoring.¹⁵ This suggests that, rather than a daycare system, these women would favour options that enable them to spend more time caring for their children themselves.

Parents want to provide care

IMFC’s recent survey found that Canadians recognize the pivotal role of parents in the child care forum. Seventy-nine per cent of respondents with a child under six years old would like to have one parent stay at home to care for their child.¹⁶ Respondents who did not have a child under six years old in the home were asked the same question and 83 per cent thought that a parent providing child care would be the most preferable option.¹⁷ When both polled groups were asked if the government should compensate parents providing in-home care for the first three years of their child’s life, regardless of previous employment history, 69 per cent of respondents favoured this.¹⁸

Three years ago, a Strategic Counsel survey

discovered similar results. Seven out of ten respondents (71 per cent) agreed that “The best child-care is a parent who does not work and stays home to raise the children.”¹⁹ It is important to note that this response rate was equal among those who had children in the home and those who did not. Thus, there is an overall perception across the population that in-home parental care is the “best” child care option. Specifically, a majority of Canadians believe that, ideally, one parent should not work outside of the home while their children are young.²⁰

What about grandma?

Canadians also see the benefit of non-parental family members providing child care. The recent IMFC survey found that 51 per cent of parents with children under six years old in the home would like a relative to provide child care if parental care was unfeasible.²¹ Also, of parents without a child under six years old in the home, 55 per cent thought a family relative providing care would be the next best solution to parental care.²²

Likewise, a 2003 Compas poll found that 62 per cent of Ontarians believe that family or relative child care is preferable to care by a non-relative in a daycare, and feel that the government should “assign daycare money directly to parents instead of to daycare institutions.”²³

Many Canadians have been putting this preference for relative child care into practice. More than a decade ago, in the 1988 National Child Care Survey, approximately two in five children in child care were looked after by a relative, which was frequently a grandparent.²⁴

Empowering parents with choice

What do parents want in child care? They want to be able to choose the best care for their children. Whether a mother, father, grandparent, extended relative, or daycare employee, Canadian parents seek the freedom to decide who or what system works best for their family. Loving parents are far better positioned than the government to choose what is in the best interests of their children.

A one-size-fits-all daycare paradigm does not meet the individual needs of families of all shapes and sizes. Canadians have clearly indicated that increased care options are necessary. When Canadians acknowledge the importance of parental care, government resources and tax incentives should reflect this by optimizing child care choice instead of channeling parents into a single stream. Providing such child care alternatives would open necessary doors in the narrow hallway of a national daycare system. 🍁

ENDNOTES

¹Institute of Marriage and Family Canada. (2005). National survey on child care policy. Telephone survey of 2012 Canadians on May 6-8 by GPC Public Affairs.

A report of the complete findings will be released by the IMFC later in 2005.

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¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Pollara. (2001, July). Moving forward 2001: The experiences and attitudes of executive women in Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.pollara.ca/new/Library/SURVEYS/movfrwdprt.pdf>

Preferential analysis: 69% would like a 4-day work week, 69% prefer being able to work from home, 67% would like paid dependant care days, and 74% would participate in mentoring programs.

¹⁶Institute of Marriage and Family Canada. (2005). National survey on child care policy, telephone survey of 2012 Canadians on May 6-8 by GPC Public Affairs. *A report of the complete findings will be released by the IMFC later in 2005.*

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹The Strategic Counsel. (2002). Canadian attitudes on the family. Retrieved from <http://www.fotf.ca/familyfacts/attitudes/report.pdf>

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Institute of Marriage and Family Canada. (2005). National survey on child care policy, telephone survey of 2012 Canadians on May 6-8 by GPC Public Affairs.

A report of the complete findings will be released by the IMFC later in 2005.

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²³Compas Inc. (2003, May). Ontario provincial election report for Global TV, National Post, Ottawa Citizen and Windsor Star. <http://www.compas.ca/data/030521-GlobalOnProvElection-E.pdf>

²⁴Statistics Canada. (1988). National child care survey.

Don't Get Fooled By Child Care Research

Spotting the flaws in the universal child care argument

by Peter Shawn Taylor

While much of the rhetoric of child care advocacy is presented in scientific terms, it is not always the case that the arguments in favour of child care are as sound or as scientific as they may appear.

Research into child care, particularly that focused on universal or publicly-provided care, tends to be ideologically motivated and researcher bias is frequent. The child care community often produces work that over-states or misrepresents the results in its favour. Valid counter-arguments are frequently dismissed or ignored and economic assumptions are misguided or plain wrong. Finally, where results do withstand rigorous investigation, it is often the case that they lack broad applicability to Canada. In short, the area of child care research is a mine field of dubious and misleading work. Beware.

Researcher bias

Almost all research on child care is subjective in nature. Ratings on the quality of child care centres, for instance,

¹Between January 1, 2004, and January 1, 2005, Martha Friendly had 130 Infomart print media citations in Canadian publications regarding child care.

involve a researcher sitting in a daycare making judgments about the interactions of children and teachers. While these results are typically presented as objective facts, they should properly be considered opinions.

It is also the case that most researchers in the field tend to double as advocates for child care policies. The federal government-supported Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) at the University of Toronto, for instance, is the dominant voice in Canadian child care research and self-publishes much of its work in support of universal child care. The group's co-ordinator, Martha Friendly, is a frequent commentator in the Canadian media¹ with a strong bias towards government-funded, non-profit daycare.

This predisposition towards institutional child care is observable internationally as well. While the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is a reliable compiler of economic data, it also produces a series of studies on daycare in member countries. These reports are of one voice in demanding that each country should operate a national, publicly-funded, unionized child care system. (The report on Canada was released in September 2004.) The reports consistently ignore evidence on the benefits of home parenting and criticize any nation that offers financial support for stay-at-home parents. The OECD report on Finland, for instance, describes that country's popular Child Home Care Allowance as "counter-productive" because it could "impede enrolments" in public child care in that country. A similar program in Norway is also subject to lengthy criticism.



Misleading studies

A 1998 study by University of Toronto economists Gordon Cleveland and Michael Krashinsky: "The Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care," published by the CRRU, uses the framework of economic benefit-cost analysis to claim that a universal child care program for Canadian children aged two to five would provide \$2 in benefits for every \$1 invested by government.

Because of this two-for-one result, the Cleveland and Krashinsky study is frequently held up as evidence in favour of such a program by Canadian politicians and child care advocates. Yet a close examination of the study reveals that its conclusions are without merit. Not only are many of its assumptions highly controversial and ideological in motivation, but it also fails to meet the basic standards set out by the Treasury Board of Canada in its "Benefit Cost Analysis Guide" for studies of this kind.

Like all benefit-cost studies, the authors begin by estimating the cost of their proposal. This is approximately \$8 billion per year. After subtracting existing government expenditures and planned parental contributions, the net cost in 1998 dollars for a national daycare system is estimated at \$5.3 billion. Then they attempt to quantify the benefits: both economic and in terms of child development.

Economic benefits of child care arise from the increased paid work by mothers whose children are now being raised in public child care. This is given as \$6.2 billion. However, to achieve this figure the authors double their actual findings for the increased wages of working

mothers. This mathematical maneuver is justified by a claim that the economy will gain added benefits from the new skills of employed mothers in the future, but they provide no evidence as to why a doubling is appropriate. Of even greater controversy is their estimate of \$4.3 billion in developmental benefits to children accruing from daycare.

Cleveland and Krashinsky argue that child care imparts developmental benefits on children and that the value of this is equal to the price paid by parents for child care. This is a debatable assumption to begin with, as not all child development experts accept that child care is beneficial. Nonetheless, the authors then increased their figure by 50 per cent, using similar sleight of hand as above, to achieve a healthy \$3,600 per year benefit for every child removed from the home and placed in a state-run child care centre. Thus their study assumes that raising a child at home has no developmental value. Such a claim would likely come as a surprise to stay-at-home parents.

Beyond their questionable assumptions and ideology, however, the Cleveland and Krashinsky paper contains a fatal flaw that renders the whole study invalid: the authors ignore opportunity cost in their calculations. Opportunity cost is the economic concept that recognizes that every choice involves a sacrifice of some sort – and each sacrifice has a cost. If you choose to go on a Hawaiian vacation, for instance, the opportunity cost could be the fact that you don't have that money for a downpayment on a new house. The MIT Dictionary of Modern Economics calls opportunity cost “perhaps the most fundamental concept in economics.” Economists Cleveland and Krashinsky do not seem to be aware of it.

To recap, the authors claim that the developmental value of child care is equal to the price parents pay for daycare. If so, then it must be similarly true that the developmental value of home care is equal to the costs incurred by parents who choose to quit work and stay at home to raise their children. In other words, the opportunity cost of stay-at-home parenting is the value of a job foregone. And in most situations, the cost to a mother or father of giving up a

full-time job to raise a child is far higher than \$3,600 per year. The Treasury Board guidelines warn against ignoring opportunity cost when performing a benefit-cost analysis for the federal

The study assumes that raising a child at home has no developmental value.

government; this sin of omission renders the study's results irrelevant.

Studies of dubious applicability

Child care advocates frequently justify universal child care programs by citing an American study that claims \$1 in early childhood education spending can yield between \$7 and \$17 in long-term social benefits, a figure even larger than produced by the Cleveland and Krashinsky study. It is worthwhile examining these results a bit closer.

The famous High/Scope Perry Preschool Study ran from 1962 to 1967. It involved 58 low-income Black children from Ypsilanti, Michigan who were placed in preschool classes with very low teacher to pupil ratios. All teachers held graduate degrees and the children also received weekly home visits.

Regular follow-up studies have shown that the children involved in this program have grown up with noticeably higher employment rates and better educational outcomes than a control group of 65 similarly situated children

who did not receive the preschool attention. The large benefits come from the increased taxes collected by governments throughout the students' careers, reductions in their welfare use, and lower rates of criminal involvement. In fact, nearly 90 per cent of the benefits of the preschool students. (But while 36 members of the control group have been arrested five or more times since 1967, it is still the case that 21 Perry Preschool students have also been arrested that many times.)

In summary, the Perry Preschool study involved only a few dozen children from a very narrow section of the American population who were given a level of educational support that would be extremely expensive to replicate on a large scale today. It is also unclear how this relates to a national daycare program that would predominately serve middle and upper class families. The relevance of this study to Canada should be considered extremely limited.

Conclusion

Given the highly politicized and ideological nature of the debate over universal child care, readers should be extremely careful when considering any research that purports to prove the benefits of child care or disprove the value of at-home care. There is a dearth of reliable and dispassionate research on the effects of child care in Canada and much of what passes for research is either of little interest to the Canadian situation or deeply flawed. 🍁

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Research Obscured by Politicized Debate

by Mark Penninga

Dr. Jay Belsky never thought he would be at the centre of a socio-political controversy that would classify him as an ‘anti-daycare’ academic. In fact, the well-known daycare researcher had no interest in defending or opposing the ethics of daycare. Little did he know that his findings would clash with popular social and political ideology that promotes daycare over parental care, making him something of a pariah in the field of child care research.

Belsky, now the director of the Institute for the Study of Children, Families and Social Issues in London, England, detailed his experiences in an article for *Family Policy Review* in 2003.¹ He explains how he started his research on daycare back in the 1970s when he helped with a report that was prepared for the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Based on the limited research available, this report was seen as giving daycare a gleaming “green light” and was consequently given much public support.

After gaining popularity, Belsky published a review in 1984 on child care and its effects on child development.² To the delight of daycare proponents, his findings supported high-quality daycare. His research led to an award from the American Psychological Association. However, as more research was carried out on the effects of daycare in subsequent years, Belsky began to notice more evidence “linking nonmaternal care in the first year of life with greater levels of insecure infant-parent attachment and increased level of aggression and disobedience when children were three to eight years of age.”³ He published some of his findings in an article in 1986⁴ which resulted in scores of protest from fellow academics and controversy with daycare advocates in the popular media.

This response was only amplified in the following years as he conducted more research. Looking back on the many years of opposition to his findings, he concludes:

“It has become my view that all too often social policy – politics – corrupts the process of science and the scientific imagination. It does this by making certain

findings ‘wrong’ and others ‘right.’ As a result, the scientist who is willing to report unpopular results is all too frequently blamed for generating them and accused of wanting to find them and designing his or her research to reveal them. These blame-throwers thus routinely commit the very sins they accuse others of – in the service of what they presumptuously regard as good causes.”⁵

Throughout his many years as a researcher and academic, Belsky had no intention of either promoting or opposing the subject of his studies. He writes, “I had never written about daycare in order to curry favour with my colleagues or anyone else, and I did not change my views simply because others were displeased with them. My research was the result of the same kind of analytic skills and reasoning that had previously led me to conclusions that had pleased so many.”⁶

Belsky is not alone in his child care observations. More studies conducted in recent years support his findings. In an article produced by the Early Child Care Research Network and the US National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in 2003,⁷ the authors sought to answer the question that forms the title of their report: “Does amount of time spent in child care predict socioemotional adjustment during the transition to kindergarten?”⁷ The study examined data from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care which tracked more than a thousand children through the first four and a half years of their life.

The findings revealed that the more time

children spent in non-maternal care, the more conflicts they had with adults when they were four and a half years old as well as when they were in kindergarten. Further, the more time a child spent in child care, the more likely he or she was to be at risk of displaying problem behaviour, disobedience and aggression. Caregivers, teachers and mothers provided the reports of the children. The study accounted for the quality, type and instability of child care as well as for factors involving the background of the family in which the child was raised.

Another study that added more fuel to the daycare controversy was conducted by Sarah Watamura, Bonny Donzella, Jan Alwin and Megan R. Gunmar, also in 2003. This study explained how the context in which a child or infant is raised has a significant impact on the psychological and physical health of the child. The authors examined the levels of saliva cortisol, a hormone that can indicate levels of stress, in 20 infants and 35 toddlers who were in daycare.

Normally, the level of cortisol will peak about 30 minutes after a person wakes up and then declines through the rest of the day. However, this study revealed that in the child care context, 35 per cent of infants and 71 per cent of toddlers had cortisol levels that increased through our the day. The study warns that “the most likely consequence is that daily increases in cortisol may contribute to the heightened susceptibility to illness that is well documented particularly among toddlers in childcare.”⁸

Belsky’s experience indicates that when topics of objective research have implications for politically-correct values—or go against the current zeitgeist within unions, government or lobby groups—objectivity faces the risk of becoming secondary to ideology. Motivations and interests that skew research to support a political or social agenda only further weaken the dialogue and lead to poor policy decisions. Maintaining as high-quality research as possible is essential for a debate that has significant implications on the well-being of children. 🍁

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BUILDING A HEALTHY NATION:

POLICIES TO ENCOURAGE STRONG MARRIAGES AND STABLE FAMILIES

by Derek Rogusky & Mark Penninga

The family in Canada has undergone a dramatic transformation in the last 35 years, with major consequences for society. In the early 1960s over 90 per cent of children were born to parents who were married for the first time and who had not cohabited - with anyone - prior to marriage. Most of these children could expect to survive their teen years with both their mom and dad in the home. How times have changed! These days, fewer than 40 per cent of children can expect to be born to married parents who have not cohabited before marriage.¹ And since 1981, the number of children between the ages of zero and 14 who live with common-law parents has more than quadrupled!² What has happened in the span of one generation?

Family Erosion

The divorce revolution has failed to deliver on its promise of greater happiness. The long-awaited reduction in dysfunctional families has never come. Instead, divorce has wreaked havoc on our children and has left many adults disillusioned.³ The trend towards unwed childbearing has not resulted in greater freedom or equality. Instead, unwed mothers are more likely to live in poverty and hold low paying jobs.⁴ Cohabitation has not turned out to be a good way to prepare for marriage or to avoid divorce, either. On the contrary, "living together" increases the risk of divorce once the decision to marry has been made, and increases the risk of domestic violence as well.⁵ Furthermore, Statistics Canada reports that women who chose to live common-law in their first union were twice as likely to separate as those who chose marriage as their first union.⁶ The marriage license has proven to be much more than just a piece of paper.

That said, the once rock-solid institution of traditional marriage has lately been weakened dramatically. Today 38 per cent of marriages are expected to end in divorce before the thirtieth wedding anniversary. Furthermore, of the divorces in Canada in 2003, the number of husbands who had been previously divorced has tripled since 1971 (16.2 per cent vs. 5.4 per cent).⁷ In the Canadian Census (2001) only 68 per cent of children between the age of zero and 14 lived in homes with married parents (not even taking into consideration whether their parents had previously cohabited).⁸ A 2003 study by Statistics Canada indicates that these statistics will likely increase. In this study, when asked whether they would agree to live common-law at some point in their lives, 74 per cent of men and 64 per cent of women between the ages of 15 and 29 thought they would.⁹ Marriage, for many, has become merely an option—and a

very temporary one at that.

Costs of Family Erosion

It continues to be argued that this is just the innocuous and inevitable evolution of family relationships and consequently not a major concern. But the empirical evidence is clear: family breakdown rarely benefits the adults involved, it victimizes our children and is a crisis for Canadian society as a whole. Policy-makers who ignore this reality place the very social fabric of our nation in danger.

As the authors of the Marriage Movement state, "Whether an individual ever personally marries or not, a healthy marriage culture benefits every citizen.... Marriage is a universal human institution, the way in which every known society conspires to obtain for each child the love, attention, and resources of a mother and a father."¹⁰

Society

Governments around the world are waking up to the fact that promoting marriage and strengthening families is much more than religious moralising—it is good public policy. Consider the example of the country of Latvia which had fallen into a “demographic catastrophe” despite its robust economy. [See page 8 for further details.] The Latvian population is falling quickly and 61 per cent of marriages in that country end in divorce. Latvian Member of Parliament Inese Slesere makes it clear just how important family policy is to building a healthy nation:

As Latvian policy-makers confronted these grim realities, we candidly acknowledged that more than ordinary measures would be needed to secure the survival of our nation. We realized that all Latvians must unite in returning to the old and sacred values of traditional families, the values implicit in the culture of love. Today we as Latvians understand that unless we support the family with strong and integrated policies and with appropriate financial investments, we will find it hard (perhaps impossible) to reverse the country’s demographic slide and to build a strong nation.¹¹

Also, consider the example of former Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating, who asked the State Chamber of Commerce and the two state universities to provide a report on what was holding back the state’s economy. The report he received predictably implicated regulatory and taxation issues, but it also identified high levels of divorce among parents with children and out-of-wedlock births as being obstacles to economic growth.¹²

The Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee of the Australian parliament reported that the direct cost to Australian taxpayers from family and marriage breakdown is at least three billion dollars per year. In the United Kingdom family breakdown is estimated to directly cost taxpayers between five and 15 billion British pounds.¹³

Stats & Facts

- Among Canadian-born adults aged 20 to 44, more than 80 per cent of those from two-parent biological families completed high school, compared with 71 per cent of those from lone-parent families. Those who lived in blended or step-parent families at age 15 fared no better, with a 70 per cent graduation rate.¹⁷
- Canadian high school graduates from two-parent families were more likely to attend university than those from single parent-families (44 per cent v. 35 per cent).¹⁸
- Reflecting the greater stress, children from single-parent families are roughly twice as likely to receive special education as children from two-parent families.¹⁹
- Not only do children whose parents were divorced put off marriage relative to children from intact families, but once married they are more likely to suffer separation or divorce.²⁰
- Canadians living in lone-parent families are almost seven times more likely to live with low income continuously [four consecutive years] than the overall population.²²
- Four percent of [men and women] living in common-law unions reported spousal violence compared to only one per cent of those who were married.²³
- The rate of spousal homicide for women in common law marriages was 25 per million common-law unions, more than eight times higher than married couples.²⁴

Adjusting for population and currency, that translates into approximately 4.8 to 15.3 billion dollars in direct costs to Canadian taxpayers stemming from family breakdown.¹⁴

Children

If good economics are not a sufficient incentive for policymakers to act, then the personal and emotional trauma that family breakdown causes children and adults should be.¹⁵ The research is clear: the breakdown of the family and the weakening of the institution of marriage comes with a very dramatic cost to Canadian society. The impact on children is devastating.

As opposed to children who are born to parents that are not married, or who are affected by separation and divorce, children who are raised in healthy families with a father and mother are more likely to experience:

- + better new-born health,
- + faster cognitive and verbal development,
- + higher educational achievement,
- + higher levels of job attainment,
- + fewer behavioural and emotional problems,
- + decreased dependency on welfare,
- + better financial well-being,
- + decreased exposure to crime,
- + a smaller risk of being sexually abused, and
- + less probability of having marital problems of their own.¹⁶

In April 2004, the federal government released its latest children’s agenda, *A Canada Fit for Children*. While it referenced the importance of families, it stayed completely clear of encouraging healthy family structures. Children who are raised in a home with a married mother and father are by far the most advantaged when compared to children in other family situations. Thus, in the best interests of children, everything possible should be done to encourage this situation.

Adults

The benefits of a healthy family for adults are very encouraging. Parents who are divorced, single or living common-law do not share the many positive outcomes that married people do. Married couples benefit in that they:

- + have better physical health,
- + have a higher life expectancy,
- + are happier,
- + have fewer mental and emotional health problems,
- + are better off financially,
- + have more satisfying sex lives,
- + have more stable relationships, and
- + experience less domestic violence.²¹

Hope for Families

While the trends are disheartening, there is evidence that Canadians are beginning to evaluate the impact this past generation of changes has had upon the national fabric. Although Canadian

society has suffered the consequences of family breakdown, we still care deeply for the institution of the family and long for successful marriages that last. The Vanier Institute of the Family performed *A Survey of Canadian Hopes and Dreams* and determined that 97 per cent of Canadians say the family is essential to personal well-being and 95 per cent believe that the family is essential to a healthy nation. In 1967, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson said “the strengthening of family life in Canada [is] the basis on which our nation’s moral strength and vitality depend.” In the same Vanier Institute survey, 94 per cent of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the former Prime Minister’s statement.²⁵ Canadians long for stable, intact families. We cannot expect governments alone to solve the problems of family and marital breakdown. The same message of restoring healthy families must be heard from our business leaders, our religious communities and our civic associations. However, governments do have a major role to play. It will take the efforts of all corners of society to once again restore a culture that supports and cherishes marriage, and government must play a vital role. The enormity of the task should not be an excuse for inaction.

The Policies

The following are the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada’s recommendations for policies and initiatives that governments could put in place to halt—and even reverse—current negative trends for the family:

1. **Set objectives:** On a wall of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa a visitor can read the following inscription: “Where there is no vision the people perish.” Governments continuously set goals for all kinds of economic and social initiatives. But they have been reluctant to set goals for strong marriages and two-parent families, even though the evidence of their social value is overwhelming. This is an area where governments can and should provide more leadership.

2. **Collect accurate data on marriage and families:** In Canada we fail to collect adequate data on marriages and families. We know very little about the people who get married or divorced, the family settings children are growing up in, the

characteristics common among strong families or the impact of marital status on domestic violence or poverty. These are important facts that must be known if we are to make wise public policy choices. Governments need to produce regular reports combining all the current data on family matters and redirect research funding into projects that examine marriage and family.

3. **Clearly define marriage in the Canadian Constitution as between one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others:** Previous to the passing of the Civil Marriage Act there was no formal legislation defining marriage

IMFC Policy Recommendations

1. Set objectives
2. Collect accurate data on marriage and families
3. Clearly define marriage in the Canadian Constitution
4. Reform divorce laws
5. Introduce family impact legislation
6. Promote family-friendly taxation
7. Promote family and marriage education
8. Enforce child support
9. Confirm the role of parents/protection of family interests

in Canada. Although marriage was clearly understood by the vast majority of Canadian society and was firmly entrenched in our common-law history, this was clearly not enough to protect the institution of marriage. Canadian courts were more than willing to erase centuries of common-law history in the name of political correctness. Canadians should be given the opportunity to restore marriage and enshrine it in our constitution. This would signal that the historical understanding of marriage is foundational to our society and even activist judges should not be allowed to tamper with it.

4. **Reform divorce laws:** Since 1986 Canada has allowed “unilateral no-fault divorce” which permits a husband or wife to end a marriage after one year separation for absolutely no reason. Marriage is the most important relationship two people will ever enter into, yet a business contract has more legal protection. Divorce laws should be reformed to indicate the importance society places on marriage. Divorce should be more difficult to obtain, especially when contested or when children are involved. When contested, the waiting period should be longer, providing a greater opportunity for reconciliation. Parents who wish to end

their marriage should be fully informed of the impact their decision will have on their children; if they still choose divorce, they should receive instruction on how to minimize the impact.

5. **Introduce family impact legislation:** Whether through design or ignorance, laws that deal with very specific problems or issues sometimes have detrimental impacts on the family. Every policy proposal should therefore take into consideration the potential negative effects in that regard. By making family issues a central concern in the development of new policies, policy-makers would be forced to consider

beforehand the detrimental effects their policies might have.

6. **Promote family-friendly taxation:** Our tax system should at least be neutral on family matters, if not weighted in favour of the most stable family structure. This is not currently the case in Canada. For example, in 2005 a one-income family of four, earning \$60,000, pays over twice as much federal income tax than a two-income family earning the same amount.²⁶ Parents who decide that one of them should stay home to raise their children should not be penalized. Fair and family-friendly tax reform has tremendous popular support among Canadians.²⁷

7. **Promote family and marriage education:** It is a tragic irony that we teach sex education in schools, but little if anything is taught about marriage and family. Fortunately some governments are starting to recognize the need – and are doing something about it. Florida has passed the Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act that requires a “marriage and relationships course” for high school students. The state also reduces the cost of a marriage license for couples who take an approved marriage-preparation course. As a positive development, similar legislation has also

been passed in the province of Ontario.

8. Enforce child support: In Canada, one of the strongest indices of poverty is the category of single women with children. In almost all instances, children are a result of consenting relationships. If one parent chooses not to live up to his or her responsibilities, then society must act on behalf of the child. It should be clear that once someone has a child, parenting is no longer optional. The British government has set out a plan to improve its child support system. It aims to ensure that support is collected, children benefit from greater enforcement, non-custodial parents have greater access to their children, and taxpayers are not forced to pay for absent parents.

9. Confirm the role of parents/ protection of family interests: In Canada we have seen the encroachment of governments and courts upon the role of parents in caring for their children as they see fit. Governments need to recognize that they are a poor substitute for parents and should not interfere in normal family life. Child neglect and abuse laws should be vigorously enforced, but the state should not superintend the parenting process. If parents are expected to be responsible for their children's behaviour, then they must be empowered to choose how their children will be raised. Governments should support parents, not replace them.


Conclusion

These are policies that can help strengthen marriages and families. They are policies that encourage families as they fulfill their vital roles in society; policies that recognize marriage as a unique relationship that cannot be replaced by a government program.

Troubled marriages in turn create troubled families, but government must reach out to help people in those situations while not supplanting the societal role played by families. As many single parents and the children of divorce will attest, overall, marriage is by far the best relationship for adults and the best environment for raising children.

Strong families built on stable marriages are the foundation of a productive and

vibrant society. If, as Canadians, we truly want to implement a "Children's Agenda" then we must pursue a "Marriage

Agenda." If our aim is the "best interests of children" then the "best interests of families" must be our priority. 

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Deconstructing Marriage:

Less Freedom More Inequality

by Jennifer Roback Morse

Freedom and equality are the hallmark values of advanced western democracies. The case for deconstructing marriage in Canada is based largely upon these ideals. It is said that adults are entitled to the freedom to determine the gender and number of their sex partners, as well as their own living and child-rearing arrangements. "Privileging" marriage has come to be seen as an unacceptable infringement upon freedom and an unlawful imposition of inequality.

The contrary view defends the traditional position that marriage is the appropriate context for sexual activity and childbearing, precisely to protect freedom and equality. While the modern trends appear to bring about more freedom and equality, abolishing marriage as a privileged institution will result in less freedom and less equality for the next generation.

Marriage is society's normative institution for regulating both sexual activity and the rearing of children. The modern alternative idea is that society does not need such an institution: no particular arrangement should be legally or culturally privileged as the ideal context for either sex or childbearing. Although gay marriage is the current hot-button topic, it is a parenthetical issue. The more basic question is whether society needs the institution of marriage at all.

Marriage is a natural, pre-political social institution

Marriage is an organic, pre-political institution that emerges spontaneously from society. People of the opposite sex

are naturally attracted to one another, couple with each other, co-create children, and raise those children. The little society of the family replenishes and sustains itself. Humanity's natural sociability expresses itself most vibrantly within the family.

Even though societies vary in the definition of marriage, all societies have some set of arrangements that are "privileged" over others. Some societies permit polygamy, while modern western societies do not. This fact does not mean that polygamous societies have no preferred or privileged context for sexual

Although gay marriage is the current hot-button topic, it is a parenthetical issue. The more basic question is whether society needs the institution of marriage at all.

activity and child rearing. The social and legal permission for men to take multiple wives does not create space for anyone to do anything they want sexually. Islamic societies, for instance, ruthlessly punish deviations from the marital norms. The fact that lifelong monogamy is not the universal form of marriage does not refute the point that every society has some institution for channelling sexual activity and governing the responsibility for childrearing.

The sexual urge is an engine of human sociability. Our desire for sexual satisfaction draws us out of our natural

self-centredness and into connection with other people. Just as the desire to make money induces business owners to try to please their customers, so too, the desire to copulate induces men to try to please women, and women to try to attract men. The attachment of mothers to their babies, and women to their sex partners, tends to keep this little society together. The man's possessiveness of his sexual turf and of his offspring counterbalances his natural tendency toward promiscuity. These desires and attachments emerge naturally from the very biology of sexual complementarity, with no assistance from the state.

But this is not the only sense in which the institution of marriage arises spontaneously. In every known society, communities around the couple develop customs and norms that define the parameters of socially acceptable sexual, spousal and parental behaviour.¹

This culture around marriage may have some legal or governmental elements. But by far, the greater part of that cultural machinery is more informal than legal, and is based more on kinship than on law. We do things this way because our parents did things this way. Our friends and neighbours disapprove of us if we go too far outside the norm.

Government does not create marriage, any more than government creates jobs. Just as people have a natural "propensity to truck, barter and exchange one thing for another," in Adam Smith's famous words,² we have a natural propensity to couple, procreate and rear children. People instinctively create marriage, both as couples and as a culture, without



any support from the government whatsoever.

The new idea about marriage claims that no structure should be privileged over any other. This will by definition, mean the abolition of marriage. The institution formerly known as marriage will be replaced by a set of legal entitlements and requirements. The organic social reality of marriage will be gone.³

However, abolishing organic marriage will reduce both freedom and equality. Freedom will be reduced because both the taxation and regulatory power of the state will expand. Equality will be harmed because some types of family structures create systematically better life chances for children than others. Even massive investments by the state are unlikely to fully equalize the life chances of children from different types of families.

The state can not be fiscally impartial among family forms.

Some kinds of families objectively function better than others. The children of unmarried or divorced parents are more likely than other children to have emotional, behavioural and health problems. As these children become old enough to go to school, they have lowered school achievement, poor school attendance, and discipline problems. As these children mature, they are more likely to get into trouble with the law, commit crimes, abuse drugs, and end up in jail.⁴

These systematic differences between the children of married parents and other children have consequences for both equality and for freedom. The parents may be treated “equally” by the state in the sense that the state attempts to be impartial among family forms. But the life chances of the children are not equal.⁵ The children of unmarried parents are more likely to be poor and less likely to go to college. These kinds of differences persist over the lifetime. The state can respond to this situation in one of two ways. The state may take the “leave us alone” attitude to its logical conclusion. The parents have made these life-style decisions; the state will not interfere with the consequences of those decisions. This government policy simply allows the income inequality

among the children to persist.

In today’s political climate, this is not a very likely or very stable policy outcome. The more likely alternative government response is that the state will pump resources into the alternative families, to try and offset some of the disadvantages the children face. Direct income support for the children of unmarried parents is only the tip of the iceberg, because the costs are more than purely private costs to the mother and father. The costs of health care, schooling, and mental health care are not entirely private in modern society. A child who can not behave in school is a cost to the local school district as well as to all the other children in

Government does not create marriage, any more than government creates jobs.

the classroom. A seriously depressed person, or a substance dependent person is likely to make demands on the public health sector. If the child ends up in the criminal justice system, as the children of unmarried parents are significantly more likely to do, they will be a significant cost to the state.

And for all the intervention and public expenditures that these children will demand, the outcomes are still inferior to the outcomes of married parents. The evidence shows that even controlling for income differences, the children of married parents do better in life.⁶ Even in Sweden, a country with a generous social safety net, the children of single parents have higher rates of mental illness, are more likely to abuse drug and alcohol and are more likely to attempt suicide.⁷

The state does not and can not respect the privacy of “alternative families.”

This tension between freedom and equality for adults and freedom and equality for children is not confined to the fiscal sphere of government. The great irony of family law is this: in the name of personal privacy, we have weakened the social norms that govern family life. When families dissolve, we allow the state to intervene in the most personal areas of family life. Let me

describe a hypothetical example that illustrates the point.

A man and woman have a child. The mother and father have no permanent relationship to each other, and no desire to form one. When the relationship ceases to function to their satisfaction, it dissolves. The mother sues the father for child support.

The couple argues through the court system over how much he should pay. The woman wants him to pay more than he wants to pay. The court ultimately orders him to pay a particular amount. He insists on continuing visitation rights with his child. She resists. They argue in court, and finally settle on a periodic visitation schedule to which he is entitled.

The agreement works smoothly at first. Then the parents quarrel. At visitation time, the mother is not home. He calls and leaves a nasty message on the answering machine. They quarrel some more. She says his behaviour is not appropriate. He smokes too much, and over-indulges the child in sweets. She says the child, who is now a toddler, is impossible to deal with after visits. He quits paying child support. The court garnishes his wages to force him to pay. He goes to court to try to get his visitation agreement honoured. The court appoints a mediator to help the couple work out a solution. The mother announces that she plans to move. He goes to court and gets a temporary order to restrain her from moving. She invents a charge of child abuse and gets a restraining order forbidding him from seeing the child.

Say what you like about this sort of case. You may think this is the best mere mortals can do. You may think this contentiousness is the necessary price people pay for their adult independence. You may blame the mother or the father or both. Or perhaps you think this is a nightmare for both adults as well as for children. But on one point we can all agree: this is not a free society in which the state honours people’s privacy. Agents of the government actively inquire into, pass judgments upon and intervene in the most intimate details of this couple’s life.

The state solicitude for the mother and her child is a direct result of father

absence. Without a father's assistance, this woman and her child are more likely to become dependents of the state. The state believes, quite reasonably, that it is more cost-effective to help the mother extract assistance from the father, than to provide taxpayer-funded financial assistance. Aggressive programs for tracking down "dead-beat dads," become a substitute for providing direct payments through the welfare system as conventionally understood.

A radical individualist might argue that the state should allow this couple to sink or swim on its own. If the man abandons her, tough luck for her and her child. If she kicks the man out, for good reason or no reason, tough luck for him. The social order simply can not afford to indulge people who can't get along with their closest and most intimate family members. If the state would get out of the family business, or charge people the full cost for the use of its services, fewer people would get into these contentious situations. People would be more careful in forming their intimate childbearing unions.

But our current ideological environment makes this position impossible, however much it might appeal to the radical individualist. The political pressures for the state to intervene on behalf of the unmarried mother are simply overwhelming. The welfare state is so entrenched that singling out unmarried mothers at this late date is not plausible. Given that reality, it is not realistic to expect the state to cease and desist from all the activities of the family court, no matter how intrusive or highly subsidized they may be.

Nor does the sense of financial entitlement exhaust the entitlement mentality. Unlimited sexual activity is now considered an entitlement. Marriage is no longer the only socially acceptable outlet for sexual activity, or for the rearing of children. It is now considered an unacceptable infringement on the modern person's liberty to insist that the necessary context of sexual activity is marriage, with rights and responsibilities, both implicit and explicit. It is equally unacceptable to argue that having children outside of marriage is irresponsible. Women are entitled to have as many children as they choose in any context they choose. In this

sense, children have become a kind of consumer good. Choosing to have a child is a necessary and sufficient condition for being entitled to have one. Given this social and cultural environment, it is completely unrealistic to think that we can muster the political will to deprive unmarried parents of the use of the courts to prosecute their claims against one another.

Contrast this scenario with intact married couples. Not deliriously happy married couples, with stars in their eyes at all times. Just ordinary, everyday, run of the mill, married couples.

No one from the state forces them to pool their incomes, if they both work. If they have the traditional gender-based division of household labour, no one forces the husband to hand over his paycheque to his wife to run the household. No one makes the wife allow him to take the kids out for the afternoon. No one has to come and supervise their negotiations over how to discipline the children. When he's too tough, she might chew him out privately, or kick him under the table. When she lets them off the hook too easily, he might have some private signal for her to leave so he can do what needs to be done.

The typical married couple has regular disagreements over money, child rearing, the allocation of household chores, how to spend leisure time and a hundred other things. Every once in a while, even a stable married couple will have a knock-down, drag-out, (usually) private quarrel. But they resolve their disagreements, large and small, perhaps a dozen a day, completely on their own,

with neither supervision nor subsidy from any court.

Conclusion

We all recognize that a free market needs a culture of law-abidingness, promise-keeping and respect for contracts. Similarly, a free society needs a culture that supports and sustains marriage as the normative institution for the begetting, bearing and rearing of children. A culture full of people who violate their contracts at every possible opportunity can not be held together by legal institutions, as the experience of post-communist Russia plainly shows. Likewise, a society full of people who treat sex as a purely recreational activity, a child as a consumer good, and marriage as a glorified roommate relationship, will not be able to resist the pressures for a vast social assistance state, and for an overbearing family court system. The state will irresistibly be drawn into parental quarrels and into providing a variety of services for the well-being of the children.

The "leave us alone" ethos that lies behind the demand for the acceptance of all alternative families does not properly apply to the sphere of the family. Trying to equalize the outcomes for children requires that married couple families and childless people provide subsidies to those parents who dissolve their marriages, or who never form marriages. The state will be taxing the married to pay for the children of the unmarried. This is why the demand that the government be neutral among family forms is unreasonable. 🍁

ENDNOTES

¹Doherty, W., et al. (2002). Why marriage matters: Twenty-one conclusions from the social sciences. New York: Institute for American Values, p. 8.

²Smith, A. (1976). The wealth of nations. E. Cannan (Ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 17.

³Canada is leading the way in recreating marriage. The Law Commission of Canada issued a report entitled, Beyond conjugality: Recognizing and supporting close personal adult relationships. (2000). Ottawa: Law Commission of Canada. It recommended that the legal structure attempt to codify state impartiality among family forms. More recently, however, Canadian law has moved in more radical direction of favouring an understanding of marriage as a "close personal adult relationship." This redefinition actively disfavours the traditional understanding of marriage as a conjugal relationship, focused on children. See Daniel Cere's, The future of family law: Law and the marriage crisis in North America. (2005). New York: Institute for American Values, pp.12-15 and 18-20.

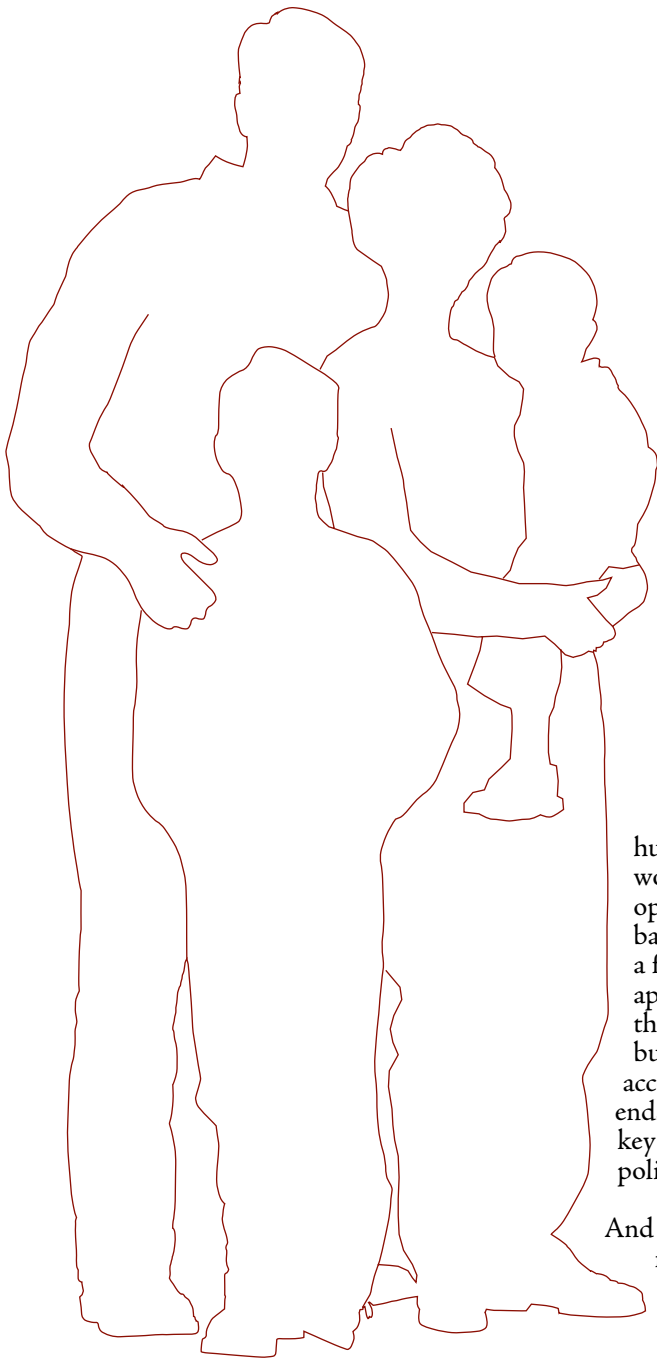
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⁵David Blankenhorn (1995) argues that having married parents or not is creating the new and most long-lasting forms of inequality. See his Fatherless America: Confronting our most urgent social problem. New York: Basic Books.

⁶McLanahan, S., & Booth K. (1989, August). Mother-only families: Problems, prospects and politics. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 51(3), p. 565.

⁷Weitoft G. R., Hjern, A., Haglund, B., & Rosen, M. (2003, January 25). Mortality, severe morbidity, and injury in children living with single parents in Sweden: A population-based study. *Lancet*, 361(9354).

FAMILY: THE NATURAL STARTING POINT FOR CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 21ST CENTURY



The following is adapted from a paper submitted to the "Dialogue on Foreign Policy" launched by the Department of Foreign Affairs in January 2003. The complete text is available online at www.imfcanada.org/foreignpolicy

human condition. Making the world more peaceful, ensuring opportunity for all, awarding basic human rights for all are a few examples. The most appropriate means to achieve these ends are hotly debated, but the ends are widely accepted. And in fact, those ends have consistently been key themes in Canada's foreign policy.

And yet, the family—the institution through which so many of us have first learned about these concerns—does not factor in to the debate. This is in spite of the fact that the themes of security, prosperity, values, and culture identified by the Government of Canada in the 2003 Dialogue on Foreign Policy discussion paper begin with the family. The family is the first guarantor of human security and the place where the building blocks of prosperity are constructed. It is the first forum where children learn values and develop their cultural identity.

Perhaps it is because they are so obvious at one level or another that these facts go unaddressed in debates on foreign policy.

Yet the time to challenge that prevailing omission, and to encourage a dialogue on explicit recognition of the role of family could not be better. Certainly if our foreign policy framework is to be representative of Canadian values it needs to make reference to the family

International antecedents

Family—if it is at all a part of a nation's policy framework—is generally assumed to be a domestic priority, as part of the range of social concerns that are often the focus of domestic political activity. In contrast, foreign policy, from a traditionalist view, is about the issues of "hard power"—the rivalries of nation states for influence and power—not about the issues of "soft power" affecting mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, and children. Whereas family is micro, foreign policy is macro. Whereas family is personal, foreign policy is political. Whereas family is local, foreign policy is global, or at least regional. In short, the link between family and foreign policy is not immediately obvious.

And yet, the United Nations, that most macro, political, and global of institutions, in its principal document, the Universal Declaration of Human

The time for dialogue

The war in Iraq has prompted Canadians to reflect closely on the role of Canada in the world. Emotions run high as we are faced with difficult issues such as how and when one chooses to cooperate with historic allies, the justness of military intervention in foreign nations, and the role of multilateral institutions in political and military decision making. These are all serious concerns that merit public debate. All of these concerns, however, turn towards the more fundamental concerns about the

Rights, makes explicit mention of the family:

The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State. (UDHR Article 16, 1948)
The drafters of the UDHR were a remarkable group of individuals from a range of backgrounds, led by outspoken human rights activist Eleanor Roosevelt. The debates they had in the drafting of this charter, the first global charter of human rights, were long and intense.¹ Many issues were suggested for inclusion, but ultimately not included as they were deemed less worthy of specific mention in the UDHR. Family, however, was included. Moreover, the family is described in three very specific ways that deserve attention.

First, the family is described as something that occurs naturally in society—i.e., it is not the creation of the state, but pre-exists the state. Family is a social organization which pre-figures all other social organizations. In fact, it has historically formed the basis of those other organizations. In societies around the world, kinship ties have historically been the principal basis for political entities—clans, tribes, and communities have had the blood ties of family at their core. Where those blood ties have been absent, these other entities often took over their role.

The significance of these ties is still apparent in today's world, where complex political organizations have evolved. In the course of our daily conduct we refer to parent organizations, to fraternal societies, to family-owned enterprises. In many global societies, ties of kinship remain fundamental in political and business organizations, so much so that we often feel obliged to institute laws against nepotism to avoid undue favours being afforded to those to whom we are naturally bonded.

Second, the family is defined as being the fundamental group unit of society. In other words, the institution of the family is the single most important building block of other social organizations. The family is the school in which one first learns social behavior, rights and responsibilities, and how to live and work with others. It is the forum in which one

first learns about human relationships and the rewards and demands of living with our fellow human beings. Fathers, mothers, their children, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, other blood-related and adopted kin are all defined by their relationship to the family—to this basic social entity.

The primary responsibility for the protection, upbringing and development of children rests with the family.
(UN Special Session on Children)

Third, the family is defined as being entitled to protection by society and the State. In other words, each of us as individuals in society are called upon to protect the institution of the family, and the State itself is compelled to explicitly protect this institution. In terms of individual protection, the idea is manifested daily, as people speak of and respect the family obligations they have and that others have. In terms of state protection, the laws protecting the family, or laws that have their roots in protecting the family, are myriad—in respect to child care, taxation regimes and property, for example.

The institution of the family was identified in 1948 as the building block of societies around the world—irrespective of race, culture, creed or any other distinguishing characteristic. But that idea is not a dated one. In one of the most significant recent international conventions, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the essential role of the family is recognized:

Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community...” (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Preamble, 1990)

And more recently, in 2002, at the UN Special Session on Children marking the 10th anniversary of efforts to implement

the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the theme was reiterated, and given stronger emphasis:

The family is the basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened. It is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support. The primary responsibility for the protection, upbringing and development of children rests with the family. (UN Special Session on Children, Outcome Document, Para. 15, 2002)

These and other explicit references to family in international documents give one a deeper appreciation of how family has become a consistent subject matter for international dialogue.

Domestic antecedents

In its most recent foreign policy “mission statement,” *Canada in the World* (1995), the Government of Canada identified the promotion of Canadian cultural values, including respect for human rights, as the third “pillar” of Canada’s foreign policy:

A priority field of international concern and action for Canadians has been and remains that of human rights. The Government regards respect for human rights not only as a fundamental value, but also as a crucial element in the development of stable, democratic and prosperous societies at peace with each other. From the drafting of the UDHR to that of the recently concluded Convention on the Rights of the Child, Canada has been in the vanguard of the international consensus to uphold human freedoms and dignity.

This was simply the last in what has been a long series of efforts by Canada to promote the values of its citizens abroad. This perhaps demonstrates how the nation has internalized the point made by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, in 1877, that, “The only way to defend one’s ideas and principles is to make them known.”²

Consistent with that approach, the Dialogue asked Canadians: which values and what aspects of our culture do we wish to project today? A good starting point in answering this questions is to look to what we have consistently defended over the sixty years since the end of World War II, when Canada first

began to make its voice heard in the international forum.

In 1947, Louis St. Laurent, then External Affairs Minister, gave his landmark “Gray Lecture” at the University of Toronto.³ St. Laurent outlined the values underlying Canada’s foreign policy. These values, as he described them, helped define us as Canadians: national unity, political liberty, the rule of law, the values of a Christian civilization (which includes the integral importance of the family), and the acceptance of international responsibility.

Lester Pearson referred to this set of principles as his “checklist” for foreign policy making.⁴ In 1967, Canada’s centennial year, then External Affairs Minister, Paul Martin Sr. restated St. Laurent’s principles and added to them social justice and economic development. A recent article in *Policy Options* suggests that, in the post-Cold War environment of the St. Laurent-Pearson era, the vision of Canadian values remains as relevant as ever.⁵ And a recent study found that most Canadians still believe that Canada has a moral obligation to the world and would like to see Canadian values adopted abroad.⁶ In the 1995 foreign policy review, *Canada in the World*, the Government of Canada proposed four themes: human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and sustainable development. As mentioned above, the 2003 Dialogue identified three overriding themes: protecting the security of our nation and contributing to global security; increasing prosperity in Canada and expanding global prosperity; and promoting the values and culture that Canadians cherish, to help make a better Canada and a better world. That list builds on the tradition of articulating our values in foreign policy begun with St. Laurent and developed by Pearson and Martin—a tradition that continues today.

Domestic policies and values determine foreign policy. The principles identified in 1947, 1967, and 1995 reflect a consistent perspective of Canada’s active foreign policy pronouncements on the international stage. The commitment to certain core values for our own conduct, combined with a sense of responsibility to help others has governed our affairs

for close to sixty years.

Canadians are proud of this fact, and show every indication of wanting to stay the course. And this brings us to the family. Part of staying the course has been a consistent articulation of a commitment to the family. Canada’s signature on the numerous international legal instruments and United Nations conference documents wherein the family is defended is a testament to this commitment (see above). With respect to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Canada was a vocal supporter of the document and instrumental in promoting its near universal ratification.

The powerful declarations in these documents have inspired many, and they reflect a strong national reality. Canadians have consistently expressed their desire for a healthy, stable family life and a promising future for their children.

Public opinion polls have repeatedly shown the high priority Canadians place on family. In the 1999 “National Election for the Rights of Youth” conducted by UNICEF and Elections Canada, with 24 per cent of the votes among 10 possible alternatives, young people chose the right to live within a family with their parents as the most important right.⁷ Family was considered even more important than health, food and shelter. In the same year, a CBC/Macleans poll found that 93%

Canadians have consistently expressed their desire for a healthy, stable family life and a promising future for their children.

of Canadians ranked the preservation of traditional family values as ‘very important.’⁸ A 2002 poll conducted by the Strategic Counsel found that over 80 per cent of Canadians agreed that encouraging strong families should be a top priority of governments of Canada.⁹

An obvious focus then, is to direct this domestic value, as articulated in various international declarations, into practical aspects of our foreign policy framework.

The opportunity to translate Canada’s commitment to the family into concrete, practical initiatives that will guide program implementation strategies is an approach to our development policy that has yet to be seized.

A timely initiative for the rest of the world

The 2003 Dialogue, with its focus on Canada’s foreign policy framework, followed on from the 2002 policy statement by The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), *Strengthening Aid Effectiveness*. CIDA placed a strong emphasis on effectiveness, similar to Dialogue’s caution that we cannot be everywhere and do everything in our foreign policy. It is appropriate that our international development policy have similar goals to that of our overall foreign policy, for it is a subset of that foreign policy. While perhaps seen in the past as the luxury of budget surpluses, development aid is increasingly being seen in the west as a security priority. Unprecedented demographic changes in nations, the AIDS epidemic, and concerns about environmental degradation are not merely secondary concerns, but first-order priorities in foreign policy. Addressing these issues goes to the heart of Canada’s fundamental objectives for peace, security, and the rule of law.

For example, a very specific recognition of this link was made in 2001, with the creation of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). In it, African leaders recognize that they have a pressing duty to reduce poverty and an obligation to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on the path to sustainable socio-economic growth, and in turn, political stability. Canada responded quickly and determinedly, with the creation of the Canada Fund for Africa in the December 2001 budget—a \$500-million fund to support the G8 Africa Action Plan and NEPAD. From these resources, Canada recently contributed \$100 million to an African Investment Fund.¹⁰

Demonstrating the link between foreign policy and development assistance more clearly, then Prime Minister Chrétien made NEPAD a central theme of the

G8 summit hosted in Canada in June 2002 and further committed Canada to NEPAD in the September 2002 throne speech:

Canada has a long history of contributing solutions to global problems. We will continue to speak out in every forum for the values of pluralism, freedom and democracy, and contribute to reducing the growing global divide between rich and poor. We will double our development assistance by the year 2010, and earmark at least half of that increase for Africa as part of Canada's support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development.¹¹

The February 2003 budget reflected this commitment by guaranteeing an eight percent annual increase in Canada's international assistance. The focus on Africa due to NEPAD presents an unprecedented opportunity to craft and implement policies which factor the needs of the family into the development process. The G8 endorsement of NEPAD rightfully commits to major investments in countries that govern justly, invest in their own people and promote economic freedom.

The NEPAD initiative is but one example of why a new focus on family in foreign policy would be timely. The reality around the world is that the vast majority of human beings are found living within families—whether structured as two-parent, single parent, blended or multigenerational. A family

focus as a theme of foreign policy is a sound course of action because it builds on this reality.

Around the world, the family performs many essential functions which governmental policies should support, because it is both cost effective and efficient, and also because it is a 'people-centered' approach to achieving results. Policy that can operate from the ground

Increasing empirical evidence shows that the best living environment for all human beings—anywhere in the world—is a stable family.

up as well as the top down—as is the case with policy that focuses on the family—has a much better chance of having impact.

Moving forward with our foreign policy

In the introduction to this piece, the point was made that the family is the starting point for human security and prosperity; that it is the first forum where children learn values and develop their cultural identity. This reality is often lost on decision-makers where such simple realities are obscured by a maze of complex policy design and implementation. The growing body of scholarship demonstrating the

correlation between family and the well-being of society is significant. Increasing empirical evidence shows that the best living environment for all human beings—anywhere in the world—is a stable family.¹²

Food, shelter, safety, opportunity—these are universal needs and desires of people everywhere, but are expressed in a variety of ways. People all over the world consistently place a strong emphasis on family and kinship ties, a factor that must be taken into account for any successful foreign policy strategy. Just as the existence of stable families domestically will assist in efforts to improve the overall well-being of Canadians, so too will support for stable families throughout the world promote the development of secure, prosperous societies, reflective of shared values and respectful of cultural diversity. Acknowledging this fact is consistent with the UDHR's vision and modern socio-political realities.

The trends of the last decade—globalization, growing concern about environmental degradation, increase in the rate of HIV/AIDS, ongoing civil strife in Africa—have posed new challenges to Canada in articulating effective foreign and development policy. With Canada's long tradition of commitment to extending assistance to others, the desire to promote our values abroad, and the NEPAD strategy, we are uniquely poised to become a leader in policy innovation. Despite the complexities of prioritizing goals, addressing the role and needs of the family is imperative in policy development.

As an integral part of what it means to be Canadian, the value of family must be clear in our foreign policy framework. Investing in families will reap a greater return as communities, societies and nations are empowered to grow. As Canada's 1995 Foreign Policy Review put it, "The basic infrastructure that underpins society must be in place, along with policies that promote sustainable economic growth with equity." Nothing is more important than the strength of families that form the foundation of societies around the world. 🍁

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New York: United Nations University Press. Also, see Rogusky, D. (2002). *Building a healthy nation: Policies to encourage strong marriages and stable families*. Retrieved from <http://www.fotf.ca/familyfacts/analysis/020101.html>

The Future of Family Law: Law and the Marriage Crisis in North America

Cere, Dan (Principle Investigator). (2005). New York, The Institute for American Values.

Reviewed by IMFC staff

Canadians who have been observing the public debate over the redefinition of marriage will notice that it has focused on individual rights and freedoms, with little attention to societal and familial implications, especially for children.

In response to the lack of “intellectual platform” needed to advance a “meaningful discussion” (p.8) about marriage and parenthood in North America, the combined Canadian-American Council of Family Law has published *The Future of Family Law: Law and the Marriage Crisis in North America*. This report exposes the “underlying, competing models of marriage that are contributing to deep public clashes over the law of marriage, cohabitation, and parenthood.” (p.10)

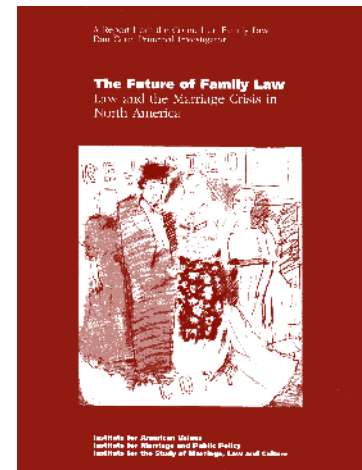
The Future of Family Law uses two influential reports, *Beyond Conjugal* from the Law Commission of Canada and *Principles of the Law of Family Dissolution* from the American Law Institute, to demonstrate the increased pressure to alter the meaning of marriage from a fundamentally child-centred conjugal view, to a close relationship. This relationship view understands marriage as a means to satisfy the needs of adults without giving much consideration to the children involved.

According to the evaluation in *The Future of Family Law*, both of these reports fall short because they displace, or completely remove, a number of issues that are, and always have been, recognized to be essential to marriage and parenting. These include

recognition that marriage “promotes a public form of life and culture that integrates the goods of sexual attraction, interpersonal love and commitment, childbirth, child care and socialization, and mutual economic and psychological assistance. It provides a social frame for procreativity. It fosters and maintains connections between children and their natural parents...” (p.20)

Instead of mourning the extermination of these long-standing foundations of family law, *The Future of Family Law* evaluates four scenarios that could result, if we understand marriage and parenting to be based on a close relationship model. The first removes the differences between marriage and cohabitation so that marriage becomes largely the same as cohabitation, minus a wedding ceremony. We can see that Canada has already taken a number of steps down this road. The second scenario sees marriage’s distinct legal status remain, but changes the meaning of marriage to include “any” two people. Clearly our courts have chosen to adopt this direction. A third possible response is that marriage and the state become completely separated so that government no longer establishes any definition of marriage. This view has attracted people from all spectrums of thought. A fourth possible scenario is that marriage will open up to include more than just two partners.

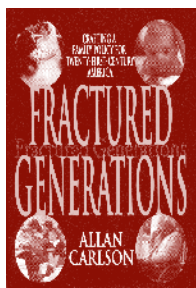
The report emphasizes that altering social institutions only for the sake of individual wants and needs has significant implications that must be examined. An institution such as



marriage is filled with “thick, multi-layered realities that speak to the needs for meaning and identity within human community... [t]o change the core features of marriage is to impact real people, adults and children, whose lives will be significantly shaped by the renewal or decline of this institution.” (p.40)

This warning is still meaningful in the Canadian debate, as many changes have to be made in provincial laws to reflect the altered definition of marriage. The importance of the institutions of marriage and parenting are deeply woven into policies and practices of everyday life, such as deciding what content to include in a provincial education curriculum. Will law makers give due consideration to the effects of its changes on Canadian children and families? Reports like *The Future of Family Law* will help decision-makers better understand the widespread social, political, philosophical, and legal implications of redefining marriage.

The Future of Family Law succeeds in presenting its ideas succinctly and coherently, making it easily accessible to a wide-range of readers. It is unfortunate that this report did not come out early enough to impact the Canadian debate before the passing of new marriage legislation. Regardless, it is still an asset to public policy-makers, courts, and the general public as they adjust to this social experiment and evaluate the choice our nation has made.



Fractured Generations: Crafting A Family Policy for Twenty-First-Century America

Carlson, Dr. Allan. (2005). New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers.

Reviewed by IMFC Staff

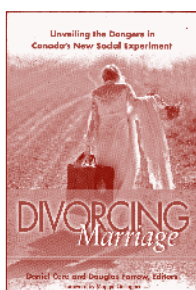
Fractured Generations presents an unapologetic case for creating family policy that will strengthen the traditional family structure within society. In this provocative work, Dr. Allan Carlson solicits a new deal for families in America and beyond. Failed attempts to address family concerns with education, taxation and shifts within multi-generational social structures have created a dearth of legislation that favours traditional families.

Carlson presents the way forward for America by casting a wide net over the family policy arena. He examines the current debate on marriage that is raging throughout western nations; then moves to present a recrafting of population policy, which currently serves more to de-populate than to populate. Carlson presents strong views in favour of home-education and increasing family resiliency by addressing taxation inequities.

In *Fractured Generations*, Carlson builds on the thesis of a previous publication, *The Family in America* (Transaction, 2003) which presented the family as the harbinger of social infrastructure in pre-industrial America. He then goes on to provide practical suggestions for policy-makers on how to take a great leap forward in creating policies that will support marriage, enhance elder and child care, improve educational options, make taxation equitable, and help address demographic trends within contemporary society.

The Canadian reader will no doubt stumble somewhat on Carlson's Ameri-centric approach in his analysis and recommendations. Yet, thorough research and documentation coupled with Carlson's comparative policy insights prove that *Fractured Generations* has appeal beyond US borders. As the author himself clearly communicates, no nation can progress or even survive without a durable family system.

Dr. Allan Carlson is president of the U.S.-based Howard Center for Family, Religion and Society. His previous publications include the aforementioned *The Family in America: Searching for Social Harmony in the Industrial Age*; *The Swedish Experiment in Family Politics*; and *Family Questions*.



Divorcing Marriage

Cere, Daniel and Farrow, Douglas (Eds.). (2004). Montreal, McGill-Queens University Press.

Reviewed by IMFC Staff

Published in 2004 and edited by renowned Canadian scholars Daniel Cere and Douglas Farrow, this book was a timely addition to the Canadian debate regarding the definition of marriage. It was commented on in the media and quoted at length in the House of Commons. As the final House of Commons vote on Bill C-38 drew closer, Members of Parliament were bombarded with copies of this book for their reading pleasure.

Divorcing Marriage was brought into the political discussion to provide an intellectual defence of marriage between a man and a woman. Cere and Farrow do an excellent job of including contributions from a wide variety of scholars and scholarly domains. The contributors include Margaret Somerville, Ted Morton, Paul Nathanson, and John McKay and others. They cover the debate from legal, philosophical, sociological, and religious perspectives. *Divorcing Marriage* is truly unparalleled, as it provides such a diversity of perspectives, all coming to the same conclusion: it is essential to recognize marriage as being between one man and one woman.

Although the civil marriage bill passed in Parliament, there is every indication that the controversy surrounding the subject of this book will not die any time soon. As such, *Divorcing Marriage* will continue to be an asset to Canada and will assist other countries that are currently considering redefining marriage.

TAKING SEX OFF THE MARKET

by Anna Marie White



Jennifer Jessie Allan started out life in the Yukon like many others of her generation: the eldest of three sisters in a family struggling to stay together. Eighteen years later, after doing time in foster care and several juvenile centres, she found herself entrenched in the sex trade of Vancouver's downtown east side as a full-time prostitute. After eight years, through the help of a local outreach mission, she was able to radically remake her life. Today she is an ardent advocate for the rights of prostitutes and runs her own outreach to help women struggling to get out of prostitution. If you ask her how to help women in prostitution through policy reform, she'll tell you point-blank, "Give them a way to get out."

She dismisses any talk of legalization and denounces any reforms that would give prostitution legitimacy as a 'profession' of choice for young women. The semantic revamping of 'prostitution' into 'the sex trade' may seem like mere political correctness gone overboard, but it is helping to fuel the belief, particularly in European countries, that prostitution is best addressed by legitimizing it as its own rightful industry.

Two years ago, Germany chose to deal with prostitution through legalization. Seemingly overnight, brothel owners joined the ranks of other respectable entrepreneurs and began paying taxes on earnings and offering health insurance plans to employees. They also gained access to databases of hopeful job seekers to whom they could send a request for

personnel. Employment centres could not legally refuse requests from brothels nor discriminate their staffing requests from those of other businesses.

In January 2005 an unemployed 25-year-old German waitress was told her unemployment benefits could be cut if she refused to take a job in the sex industry. Trained as an IT professional, she refused the job and attempted to sue the employment centre for trying to force her into prostitution—with no luck. Given Germany's completely legal sex trade, a brothel is as legitimate an employer as the neighbourhood gas station.

A *UK Telegraph* news story reporting on the case quoted Hamburg lawyer Merchthild Garweg, "[The employment centres] are already prepared to push women into jobs related to sexual services, but which don't count as prostitution.

"Now that prostitution is no longer considered by the law to be immoral, there is really nothing but the goodwill of the job centres to stop them from pushing women into jobs they don't want to do," said Garweg. Germany's laws not only fail to protect women who are at high risk for sexual exploitation, but they also threaten hapless job-hunters.

In contrast, permissive Sweden—long-time bastion of 'free love'—clamped down on prostitution in 1999 after three decades of a legalized sex trade. It toughened laws that punished the johns

and got rid of those that punished the prostitutes. Squelch the demand and you'll put the supply out of business—so goes the theory.

Yet what to do with the world's oldest profession? One Swedish commentator and ardent feminist points out that just because prostitution has always existed does not mean it always must. She notes that giving women real power—since 1998, Sweden has had the second highest number of female parliamentarians in the world—eliminates the need to perpetuate pseudo-power structures. Yet given that Rwanda occupies first place in female parliamentary representation, it is likely not the panacea for global exploitation of women that some feminists may wish.

Sweden's law-and-order approach to prosecuting the 'clients' and not the service provider has faced tough critics from groups like Vancouver-based Pivot who advocate legalizing prostitution here in Canada. Regardless of criticism, Sweden's reforms to prostitution laws seem to be working. In fact, the results are hard to ignore. Early reports say Sweden has cut street prostitution by 50 per cent and that more women are choosing to exit prostitution now than at any other point in their country's history.

Perhaps Jennifer is on to something that took Sweden thirty years to figure out. What exploited women really want is a way out of prostitution, not more laws to help keep them on the market. 🍀



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