Families in Transition: Of What Consequence are Global Changes in Fertility & Marriage?

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The World Family Map Project (WFMP)

International Federation for Family Development
Why is the WFMP Needed?

- Much of the globe is experiencing a "second demographic transition" marked by:
  - A retreat from parenthood:
    - Falling fertility
  - A retreat from marriage:
    - Divorce, cohabitation, nonmarital childbearing, & single parenthood on the rise

- The New York Times says we are moving towards a "post-familial" moment.

- How is this transition affecting children, families, and nations the world over?
The Emptying Cradle

Total Fertility Rate

Sources: www.sustainabledemographicdividend.org/p-appendix/sources
Shrinking Workforces

- Because of low fertility, the workforce will shrink in much of Europe & East Asia in this century.
- From 2010–2050 (Eberstadt 2011):
  - Chinese workforce will decline by 21%
  - Japanese workforce will decline by 35%
  - Eastern European workforce will decline by 33%
The new face of East Asia is increasingly an elderly one (Longman 2011).
- Japan’s slow rate of growth since 1990s partly attributable to stagnating work force
- Some economists now predicting slowing growth for South Korea & China as their populations age
- Demography isn’t destiny, but sustained low fertility could threaten long-term growth.
The bottom line:

- These demographic “trends portend ominous change in economic prospects [for many developed countries]: major increases in public debt patterns, and slower economic growth.” (Eberstadt and Groth 2010)
But family change is not just about the number of babies being born in nations around the globe, it’s also about the nature of the homes they are being born into & raised in.

Growing number of children being born and/or raised outside of a married home around much of the globe.
Childbearing Outside of Marriage

WORLD PERCENT OF BIRTHS OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE

Sources: www.sustaindemographic dividend.org/e-ppendix/sources

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More Nonmarital Childbearing

- Nonmarital childbearing is concentrated in
  - The Americas
  - Europe
  - More than 40% in many countries in the Americas and Western Europe
    - From Colombia to United States to Sweden
  - Nonmarital childbearing
    - To single mothers
    - To cohabiting couples (more likely to break up)
Cohabitation Less Stable, Often Ends in Single Parenthood
(Heuveline et al. 2003)

Odds that children see parents break up by age 15

- Parents married at birth
- Parents cohabited at birth

France
Spain
United States
Even in Sweden Cohabitation is Less Stable

In Sweden:

- Children born to cohabiting parents are 75% more likely to see their parents break up, compared to children born to married parents (Kennedy & Thomson 2010).

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2, 1, or 0 Parents?
Children’s Family Structure

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More Single Parents
(WFMP 2014)

- More than 20% of children in the Americas and much of Western Europe are currently living outside 2-parent family.

- In these regions, many more will spend some time in single-parent family.
Why Does This Matter?

Why does it matter that marriage is less likely to ground the bearing & rearing of children?

- More single parenthood & family instability
Single Parenthood & Child Well-Being
The Western Experience

In North America & Europe, the intact, 2 parent family is associated with better outcomes:

▪ Emotional and Physical Health:
  ▪ Less obesity, drug abuse, & depression
▪ Social Welfare:
  ▪ Less crime, teenage pregnancy, & educational failure
▪ Economic:
  ▪ Less poverty & economic immobility
Young Men in Prison

Odds of Incarceration by 30

Source: Harper and McLanahan 2004

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Teenage Girls Pregnant

% Teenage Girls Pregnant

Source: Ellis et al., 2003

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College Graduation in America

Percent of Young Adults Graduating from College (Add Health 2008)

- Intact: 38%
- Non-intact: 20%

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Community Family Structure & American Dream

Source: Data from The Equality of Opportunity Project.
Not Just America: The Swedish Story

Suicide & Drug Abuse, by Sex and Family Structure

- Two-parent family
- Single-parent family

Source: Weitoft et al 2003

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What About Outside the West?

- When it comes to education, family structure matters not just in Europe & North America but also in much of Asia, Latin America, & Middle East.

- When it comes to health, family stability matters in most of the developing world.
Literacy (WFMP 2013)
Odds of Being Held Back in School (WFMP 2013)
Explaining the 2-Parent Advantage

Compared to single parents, two parents often have more:

- Time
- Money
- Affection
- Kinship support
- Stability

... to give to their children.
Family Instability & Child Well-Being
Healthy Children (WFMP 2014)

- U.N. Millennium Development Goals seek to improve the health of children in the developing world.

- But little attention has been given to role of the family in shaping the contexts of care.

Which regions?

- Central/South American & the Caribbean
  - Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Peru
- Africa
  - Cameroon, Chad, Congo Democratic Republic, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda
- Middle East
  - Azerbaijan, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Turkey, Uzbekistan
- Asia
  - Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Vietnam
Relative Risk of Diarrhea

North American Expert Group Meeting - Mexico City 2014

Relative risk of recent diarrhea compared to children living with a mother continuously in first union.

- NEVER IN UNION: 14% Central/South America & the Caribbean, 20% Africa
- DIVORCED OR DISSOLVED A COHABITING UNION: 19% Central/South America & the Caribbean, 19% Africa
- WIDOWED: NS
- REPARTNERED/NEWLY PARTNERED: 7% Central/South America & the Caribbean, 16% Africa, 35% Asia

- Significantly different from never in union as well as stable first union
- NS = Not Significant

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Relative Risk of Stunted Growth

- Never in union: 15
- Divorced or dissolved a cohabiting union: 12, 18, NS
- Widowed: NS, 41
- Repartnered/newly partnered: NS

Relative risk of stunted growth compared to children living with a mother continuously in first union.

Central/South America & the Caribbean
Asia
Africa
Middle East
NS = Not Significant
Relative Risk of Child Mortality

- Relative risk of death compared to children living with a mother continuously in first union

- NEVER IN UNION: NS, NS
- DIVORCED OR DISSOLVED A COHABITING UNION: 35, 26, 30, NS
- WIDOWED: NS, 43, 20, NS
- REPARTNERED/NEWMENLY PARTNERED: NS, 27%, 20, 34

Legend:
- Central/South America & the Caribbean
- Africa
- Asia
- Middle East
- NS = Not Significant
- v = Significantly different from never in union as well as stable first union
### Stability, By Region

**TABLE 1** Union Instability Among Mothers Of Young Children By World Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>MOTHER CONTINUOUSLY IN FIRST UNION</th>
<th>MOTHER NEVER IN UNION</th>
<th>MOTHER REPARTNERED/NEWMELY PARTNERED</th>
<th>DIVORCED OR DISSOLVED A COHABITING UNION</th>
<th>MOTHER WIDOWED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFRICA</td>
<td>75.86%</td>
<td>2.93%</td>
<td>15.42%</td>
<td>4.30%</td>
<td>1.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASIA</td>
<td>93.99%</td>
<td>0.19%</td>
<td>3.88%</td>
<td>1.17%</td>
<td>0.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDDLE EAST</td>
<td>95.44%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2.75%</td>
<td>1.12%</td>
<td>0.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENTRAL/SOUTH AMERICA &amp; THE CARIBBEAN</td>
<td>60.32%</td>
<td>6.16%</td>
<td>20.75%</td>
<td>11.93%</td>
<td>0.83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why Might Family Instability Harm Children?

- Is this really about money?
  - unlikely because in the regions with significant results, the divorced are wealthier
  - unlikely because results do not differ much when controlling for wealth
- Less time devoted to caregiving
- Stress
  - affects caregiving (children suffer from second-hand stress)
  - direct stress from union transitions
- Disrupts social support networks

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The Limits of the Second Demographic Transition (WFMP 2014)

- Marriage remains quite strong in two major regions of the world: Asia & Middle East.

- Today, most children are still being raised in two-parent families—esp. high in Asia & Middle East.

- Majority of global adults think two-parent family is ideal.
Cultural Support for Two-Parent Ideal

An Unsustainable Trajectory?

- Are these trends in fertility & marriage unsustainable?
  - The Emptying Cradle
    - Negative implications for workforce, economic growth, & fiscal health of nations
  - The Retreat from Marriage
    - Negative implications for physical and emotional health, education, mobility, & probably economic growth

- Challenges associated with these transitions have often been obscured or mitigated by affluence.

- In this century, we will see if economic & social progress can be sustained in countries with low fertility & marriage.
Policy Suggestions

Policies and cultural initiatives should

▪ 1) Minimize marriage penalties
▪ 2) Tax credits for children/caregiving that do not favor one family–work strategy
▪ 3) Social marketing campaign on behalf of success sequence
▪ 4) Expand vocational education targeting boys and young men falling behind in educational arena
Conclusion

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

“The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.”

The path towards continued social & economic progress lies, in part, through building strong families for the 21st century.
Questions and Answers

For more information on the report:

www.worldfamilymap.org

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For more information on me:

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