

# AUSTRALIAN POPULATION ASSOCIATION 14<sup>TH</sup> BIENNIAL CONFERENCE 30 JUNE – 3 JULY 2008 ALICE SPRINGS

## PLENARY SESSION ABSTRACTS

### Plenary 1: Indigenous Demography

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> July, 9:00 – 10:30am

#### ***Indigenous demography and public policy: From 'Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage' to overcoming disadvantaged indicators***

**Dr John Taylor**, Deputy Director and Senior Fellow, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University

This paper reviews the application of demographic analysis to Indigenous Affairs public policy in Australia as an exemplar of what Gavin Jones has labelled, 'the demography of disadvantage'. The origins of contemporary applications are traced to the 1967 Referendum and examples are provided of the subsequent unfolding nexus between population studies and policy development. While demography has found a natural and successful role here using census, survey and administrative data, for the most part this is restricted to a series of gap analyses based on a deficit model of Indigenous well-being as measured by standard social indicators. While useful for macro-policy settings, translation of these research findings into coherent policy on the ground is thwarted by a lack ethnographically-informed data that derive from the inter-cultural world of Indigenous lived realities. This is because the categories and contexts deployed are uncritically those of the mainstream and generally not reflective of Indigenous institutions or life projects. This inadequacy is explored against the background of an emerging dialogue between demography and anthropology. Ironically, Australian demographers pioneered such a dialogue but so far it has failed to penetrate the demographic research that informs Indigenous public policy. The paper concludes with an exploration of Indigenous institutional arrangements that are capable of statistical capture and that can provide a more meaningful basis for the framing of empirical research projects and policy formulation.

#### ***Demography of the Canadian North: The 2006 Census of Population***

**Dr Margaret Michalowski**, Chief, Social Analysis and Research, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada

The Canadian North, comprised by three territories – Yukon Territory, Northwest Territory, and Nunavut – has a population, which has been growing at the rate higher than the national average. Over the 2001-2006 period, while the size of the Canadian population increased by 5.4%, the growth rate of 5.9%, 11.0% and 10.2% was characteristic of the population residing in Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, respectively. In fact, the territories' population growth was much faster than that of metropolitan areas and mid-size urban centres. The populations of the territories are also demographically different from the other Canadian regions. The importance of measuring changes undergoing in these populations cannot be overstated, with Census being the major source of information on demographic, social and economic conditions of the society. This presentation will focus on the changing environment of census taking and will discuss lessons learned from the population counts formal review process conducted after the 2006 Census of Canada.

## **Plenary 2: Policy Responses to Demographic Change**

**Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 8:45 – 10:15am**

### ***Between panic and denial: Government reactions to low fertility in Europe***

**Professor Wolfgang Lutz**, Director, Vienna Institute of Demography and Leader, World Population Program, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis

European populations show a rather heterogeneous pattern of fertility. Current total fertility rates (TFR) range from 1.2 in Slovakia and Moldova to 2.0 in France and 2.1 in Iceland. Governments across Europe show very different ways in reacting to these trends, but the degree of government concern is not strictly proportional to the level of fertility. Historical and ideological factors play an important role. While Belarus and Moldova have elevated “demographic security” to the very top of the political agenda, other very low fertility countries pay almost no attention to the issue. I will also discuss the recent efforts by the European Commission to address the issue in a way that is acceptable to all member governments.

The discussion of these different policy approaches to low fertility in Europe will be guided by two fundamental questions:

1. How “dangerous” is low fertility and what should be the ultimate goal of population policies. In this I will add considerations of human capital (including education and health) to the more narrow considerations of population size and age structure.
2. In analogy to climate policies, I will discuss the choice between mitigation strategies (influencing the demographic trends themselves) and adaptation strategies (taking demographic change as a given and trying to adjust institutions).

Finally, I will stress the point that the choice of policies crucially depends on our views about the future trends of fertility, whether it will “naturally” recover or whether it will continue to fall in a “low fertility trap”, i.e., a self-reinforcing process of declining fertility.

### ***Evaluating public policy responses to the economic burden of population ageing with application to Australia***

**Professor Ross Guest**, Professor of Economics, Griffith Business School, Griffith University

This paper reviews the issues in evaluating public policy interventions that are designed to address the economic burden of population ageing. It then briefly reviews the main public policy options with application to Australia. The economic burden of ageing is defined as the burden on national economic well-being over time and the extent to which this burden is shared between the public and private sectors. A key policy issue is the extent to which the economic burden of ageing should be spread out over present and future generations. This depends on how we value the economic well-being of future generations relative to our own, future projections of economic growth, and the rate at which our subjective sense of well-being improves with our living standards. The paper discusses policies to boost the labour force participation rates of older workers, measures to boost fertility and immigration policy. Also discussed are several policies to shift the burden of ageing from the public to private sectors: the establishment of government financial funds such as the Future Fund, superannuation policy, and health and aged care policy.

### **Plenary 3: The Demography of Australia's Northern Neighbours**

**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 9:00 – 10:00am**

#### ***Singapore's changing demography, the crisis of care and the transnationalisation of the reproductive sphere***

**Professor Brenda Yeoh**, Professor of Geography, Head, Department of Southeast Asian Studies Programme, National University of Singapore and Research Leader of Asian Migration Cluster, Asia Research Institute

Scholars have recently argued that globalisation processes have significantly altered not just the productive but reproductive sphere. 'Reproduction' is formulated to include both biological and social reproduction, and which at the individual level requires 'care' throughout the life-cycle – that is, from cradle to grave – in sustaining the body in its corporeal and affective aspects. At the household level, the concept of 'global householding' (Michael Douglass) emphasizes the view that the formation and sustenance of households is increasingly reliant on the international movement of people and transactions among household members residing in more than one national territory. Applying these notions to the context of the city-state of Singapore where a developing crisis of care (resulting essentially from the changing demographic profile, the shortages of Singapore women's reproductive labour and rigidities in the gender household division of labour) accompanies rapid globalization, this paper examines strategies of care substitution which draw on the labour (paid and unpaid) of different groups of transnational subjects (mainly women) – transnational domestic workers, transnational careworkers in institutionalized settings, and 'foreign brides'. The paper concludes with reflections on the interdependencies between transnational flows as well as the changing shape of the Singapore family under conditions of rapid globalization.

#### ***Convergence between the demography of Australia and its northern neighbours***

**Dr John Bryant**, Senior Research Statistician, Social and Population Statistics, Statistics New Zealand

Forty years ago, Chinese and Thai women had about twice the fertility rate of Australian women; their fertility rates are now about the same. However, examples of complete demographic convergence are rare. Australia's demography remains distinct from that of most of its northern neighbours, and is likely to remain so for decades. This is partly because the demographic differences that had appeared by the middle of the twentieth century were so large. It is also because many demographic characteristics are intrinsically historical.