

**Values and Beliefs
Concerning Children and
Related Things**

Arland Thornton

2 Kinds of Low Fertility Explanations

Structural/Material Explanations:

Costs of children too high and income and resources for children too low.

Ideational Explanations:

Desire/preferences for children and support structures for children too low relative to desire/preferences for things competing with children.

Focus of My Talk on the Ideational

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I believe that such ideational factors are important for our discussion in this conference.

Talk is in Spirit of this Conference

What would you do IF you believed fertility should be increased.

I make no advocacy statements for raising fertility.

Such advocacy is outside the scope of my presentation.

Talk Has Two Parts

1:

Ideational Factors in Causes of Low Fertility in Europe

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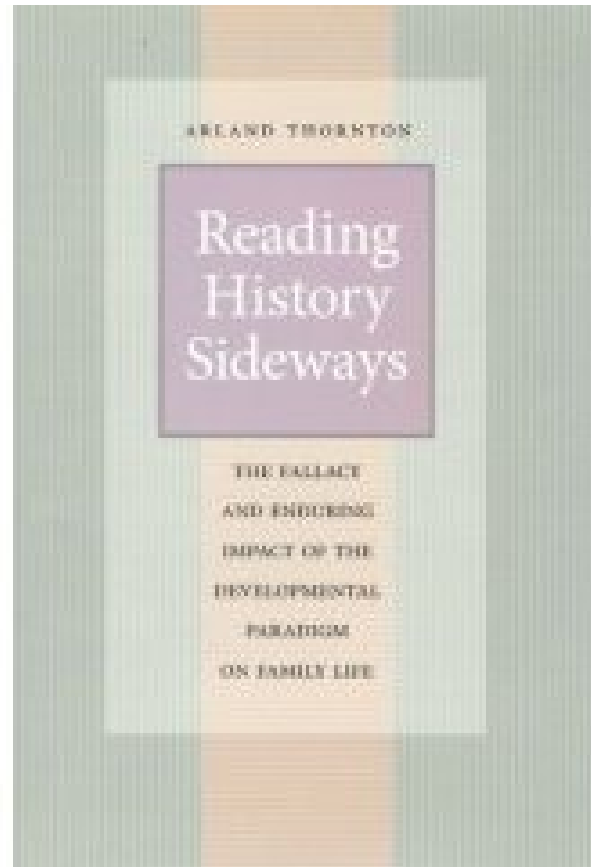
1: Ideational Factors in Causes of Low Fertility in Europe

2: Ideational Factors in Scholars and Policy Makers Approaching Remedies for Low Fertility in Europe

Part 1:

Ideational Factors in Causes of Low Fertility in Europe

Reading History Sideways: The Fallacy and Enduring Impact of the Developmental Paradigm on Family Life



The University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Messages that Can Cause Family Change

1. Modern society is good and includes:

- Industrialized
- Urbanized
- Highly Educated
- Highly Knowledgeable

Messages that Can Cause Family Change

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2. Modern family is good and includes:

- Individualism
- Nuclear Households
- Old Age at Marriage
- Youthful Autonomy
- Courtship in Marriage
- Gender Egalitarianism

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1. Modern society is good.

2. Modern family is good and includes:

- Individualism
- Nuclear Households
- Old Age at Marriage
- Youthful Autonomy
- Courtship in Marriage
- Gender Egalitarianism
- Family Planning
- Low Fertility

Low Fertility and Family Planning are Good

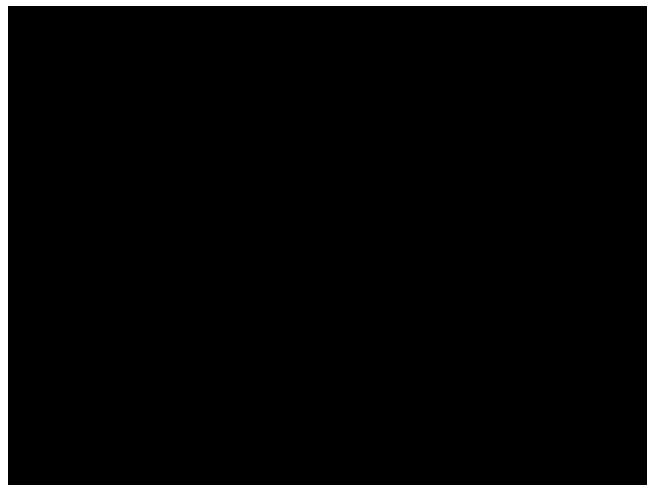
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Low Fertility and Family Planning are Good

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- 2. But now, maybe 1 is better than 2?**

Low Fertility and Family Planning are Good

- 1. At first, 2 was defined as good.**
- 2. But now maybe 1 is better than 2?**
- 3. And maybe 0 is better than 1?**



Basic Point of First Part of Talk

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Effective demand/desire/preference for children may have, indeed, fallen this low.

Summary Statement from Thornton and Young-DeMarco (2001 JMF)

The meaning of marriage and children has changed dramatically. Marriage and parenthood are no longer requirements for adult manhood and womanhood. Most Americans do not believe that all married couples ought to have children, that childless individuals lead empty lives, or that the main purpose of marriage is to have children.

Percent Agreeing that “All Married Couples who Can Ought to Have Children

Year	Mothers	Daughters
1962	84%	--
1980	42%	36%
1985	42%	33%
1993	41%	22%
American Sample		

Summary Statement from Thornton and Young-DeMarco (2001 JMF)

One important continuity is the strong commitment given to marriage, children, and family life in America today. The great majority of young women and men view both fatherhood and motherhood as fulfilling. Only a modest fraction believe that motherhood and fatherhood are not fulfilling, that kids are overly disruptive to parental freedom, and that they are likely to decide against having children.

Number of Children Mother and Child Wants 18-Year-Old Child to Have (1980)

	Mother	Child
Zero	1%	2%
One	4%	4%
Two	64%	41%
Three	20%	26%
Four or More	11%	27%

How Bothered Will Mother Be if 18-Year-Old Child Has No Children (1980)

Great Deal	12%
Some	31%
A Little	20%
Not at All	36%

How Bothered Will Child Be if Childless 23-Year-Old Child Has No Children (1985)

Great Deal	41%
Some	32%
A Little	14%
Not at All	12%

About 20 Years from now how likely will it be that 75 percent of women will give birth to 0 or 1 child (adults 2006)

Very Likely	
Somewhat Likely	
Somewhat Unlikely	
Very Unlikely	
American sample	

About 20 Years from now how likely will it be that 75 percent of women will give birth to 0 or 1 child (adults 2006)

Very Likely	21%
Somewhat Likely	45%
Somewhat Unlikely	25%
Very Unlikely	9%
American sample	

Would you approve or disapprove if in about 20 Years from now 75 percent of women give birth to 0 or 1 child (2006)

Strongly Approve	6%
Approve	57%
Neither	7%
Disapprove	25%
Strongly Disapprove	6%

In the future will the number of children a woman has increase, decrease, or stay about the same (adults 2007)

	United States	Northeast U.S.
Increase	18%	13%
Stay Same	6%	6%
Decrease	75%	81%

Will it be a good thing or a bad thing if in the future the number of children a woman has decreases (adults 2007)

	United States	Northeast U.S.
Good Thing	23%	22%
Won't Matter	45%	57%
Bad Thing	32%	22%

Things Supporting Childbearing/rearing

**Marriage has been de-institutionalized—
with it now being less central in people's
lives.**

Does 18-Year-Old Child Think He/She Will Get Married (1980)

Yes	83%
Probably	9%
Maybe	5%
No	3%

How Bothered Will Child and Mother Be if 18-Year-Old Child Does Not Marry (1980)

	Child	Mother
Great Deal	27%	10%
Some	34%	32%
A Little	18%	15%
Not at All	21%	43%

About 20 Years from now how likely that the average age of 1st marriage for women will be at least 35 (adults 2006)

Very Likely	
Somewhat Likely	
Somewhat Unlikely	
Very Unlikely	
American sample	

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Very Likely	12%
Somewhat Likely	33%
Somewhat Unlikely	34%
Very Unlikely	21%
American sample	

Would you approve/disapprove if in 20 years the average age at 1st marriage for women was at least 35 (2006)

Strongly Approve	8%
Approve	54%
Neither	7%
Disapprove	26%
Strongly Disapprove	5%

Things Competing with Children Increasing

- **Consumption Aspirations**
- **Career Advancement**
- **Housing Desires**
- **Vacation Aspirations**
- **Desire for Self Fulfillment**

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- 1. I am puzzled by apparent reluctance to consider policies that increase desire for children in Europe**
- 2. Many Europeans actively pursue policies to decrease desire for children outside Europe.**
- 3. The Effect of the programs in France may be more in their demonstration of valuing children than in reducing costs and increasing financial support for children.**

Part 2:

Ideational Factors in Scholars and Policy Makers Approaching Remedies for Low Fertility in Europe

The Developmental Paradigm

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- 2. Still widespread in public policy**
- 3. Still widespread in demography—in fact, one of our dominant paradigms**

The Developmental Paradigm

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- 2. Change is pictured as natural, uniform, necessary, directional, and irreversible.**

Emphasis on Transitions

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- 2. Great family transitions**

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- 1. Political and Economic Modernization**
- 2. Great family transitions**
- 3. First Demographic Transition—large mortality and fertility declines**
- 4. Second Demographic Transition—large family and fertility changes**

Attributes Are Given to Transitions

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- 1. Movement from one stable equilibrium to another**
- 2. Are natural, uniform, necessary, and directional**
- 3. And, are irreversible.**

Developmental Paradigm and Transition Language is Bad for Science

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- 2. Social change is not necessarily movement from one stable equilibrium to another.**
- 3. Social change is not necessarily irreversible.**

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- 1. Defines some potential public policies as impossible because they are going against history.**
- 2. Defines some countries as advanced and therefore models to follow—when those models may be inappropriate ones**
- 3. Limits options.**

So, IF you want to change fertility in Europe

- 1. Discard the Developmental Paradigm
and its concepts and assumptions**

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- 1. Discard the Developmental Paradigm and its concepts and assumptions**
- 2. Do not define low fertility as part of the first demographic transition, but as a big and important change.**
- 3. Do not define low fertility as part of the second demographic transition, but as a big and important change.**

So, IF you want to change fertility in Europe

- 1. Discard the Developmental Paradigm and its concepts and assumptions**
- 2. Do not define low fertility as part of the first demographic transition, but as a big and important change.**
- 3. Do not define low fertility as part of the second demographic transition, but as a big and important change.**
- 4. That makes a lot more things possible.**

