

The Population Conundrum Roundtable on Singapore's Demographic Challenges

Thursday, 3 May 2012
8.30 am – 5.30 pm
Ballroom 2, Level 3, Orchard Hotel



Delayed Marriage and Ultra-Low Fertility – the Confounding Challenges to Social Stability

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The Baby Puzzle 😊

- I. Contesting Ideals – The Singles Dilemma
- II. Eye on the Converts – The Married Couples Woes
- III. Identify Root Cause
- IV. Transformation of Work & Family

Eye on Singles

Age Group	Gender	2000	2010
25-29 yrs	Male	66	78
	Female	46	62
30-34 yrs	Male	33	43
	Female	22	31
35-39 yrs	Male	21	24
	Female	16	20

Contesting Ideals

- * Transformation of marriage – search for the Perfect Spouse
- * The Time Crunch – Demands from paid work
- * Effects of income disparities on Lifestyle Aspirations
- * Embracing meritocracy and the push towards overdrive
- * Work achievements as markers of excellence

Dominance of Paid Work

- * Performance Based Evaluation System & Performance Bonus
 - Replaces traditional output markers
 - Are new KPIs transparent, objective, quantifiable?
 - Are outputs clear and distinct?
- Long work hours – low productivity ☹️

Singlehood as Norm

- * “Old Maid” no more
- * Ease off pressure to get married before 30 years old
- * Perception that there is sufficient time to find one’s significant other
- * Singles set norms and parameters of engagement at workplace

Concerns of the Converts

- * Married with children
 - child care
 - Rising cost
 - Dual-income no-time
- * DINKs
 - Time & \$\$

Why is Child Care so \$\$\$?

- * Zelizer (1994)
Ideology of the modern Child - economically “useless”,
emotionally “priceless”
- * Commodification of childhood
- * Formal education achievements as means to upward
mobility – the importance of *Head Start*

Radical Interventions

- * Current population dilemma caused by
transformations in social & economic infrastructure
- * To arrest negative trends, intervention must
transform the way we do work and family



Proposal 1 – Rethink Remuneration System

- * Establish work-life balance
- Mainstream flexiwork arrangements
- Evolve clear, objective indicators of good performance
- Reduce reliance on face-time
- Raise base salary, reduce PB



How to lower the social cost to growing family?

Proposal 2 – Reconceptualise Good Parenting

- * Reform the formal education system
- * Institutionalize a 12-year school system with relevant exit points
- * Remove the PSLE
- * Rethink the merits of streaming
- * Re-establish learning as core of education philosophy
- * De-emphasize the importance of testing

We must **ACT NOW** while marriage
is still an important life goal for
young Singaporeans