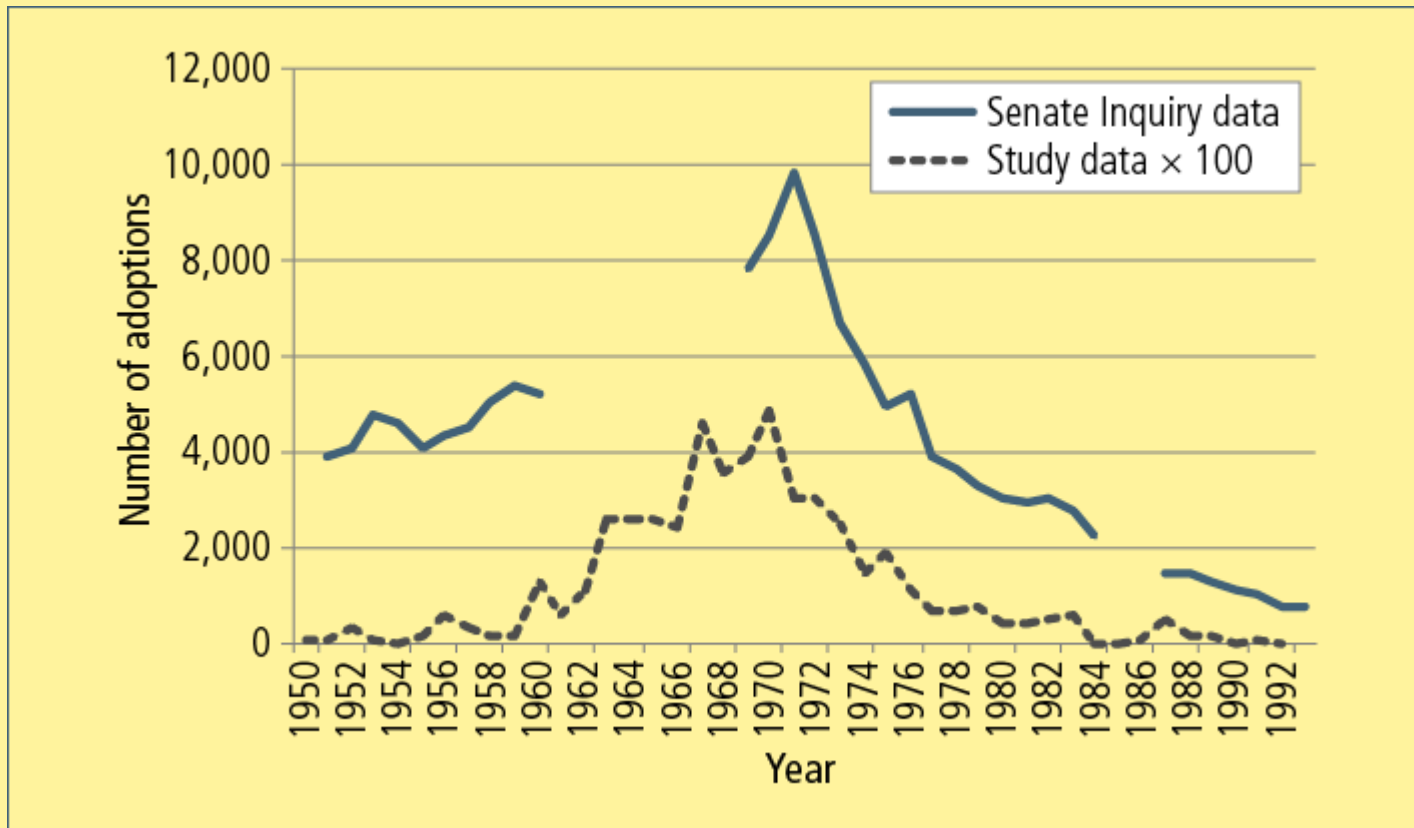


'We have not been blessed'

The interplay between infertility and adoption in policy and practice in Twentieth-Century Australia



Adoption statistics



Senate Inquiry into Former Forced Adoptions

- **‘a Government policy to remove children from so called "lower classes" and "unfit mothers" to provide children for childless or otherwise infertile married people’**
- **‘social workers ... were like vultures hovering over single girls to get their babies’**
- **‘a very lucrative market’**



Rise in concern about infertility

- NSW RC on the Decline of the Birth Rate, 1904
- Venereal disease, 1916-1918, 1930s
 - 'potent cause of sterility'
 - 'deadly ... from a racial point of view'
- Freudian theories arguing for psychogenic infertility



Helene Deutsch

Has her fear of the reproductive function proved stronger than her wish to be a mother? Is she still so much a child that she cannot emotionally and consciously decide to assume the responsible role of mother? Is she so much absorbed emotionally in other life tasks that she fears motherhood? ... Does a deeply unconscious curse of heredity burden all her motherly wish fantasies? And, above all, has the sterile woman overcome the narcissistic mortification of her inferiority as a woman to such an extent that she is willing to give the child, as object, full maternal love?

Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 6
April 1944

'The fertility of every married couple is today so vitally important to the nation that birth clinics ... set up for free investigation and the treatment of all wives and husbands desirous but unable to increase the birth-rate, would amply repay the expense involved'

"THE COUNSELLOR" URGES CLINICS TO CHECK BIRTHRATE FALL

THE establishment of birth clinics, where each case of childlessness could be investigated to ascertain the cause, and where appropriate treatment could be given, is a move that might help much to arrest the falling birthrate.

In many countries these special clinics are set up to deal with such cases. It was a clinic of this nature which was, I believe, advocated by a reader in *The Courier-Mail* recently—but was interpreted to mean only the usual pre-natal clinic for the already expectant mother. At such clinics there are specialists in charge, preferably a medical woman for women and a man for the male side.

In many cases only minor adjustments need be made; in others long courses of injections are necessary. In some an operation will set matters right, while in many more advice on general health, diet, and married relations is all that is required.

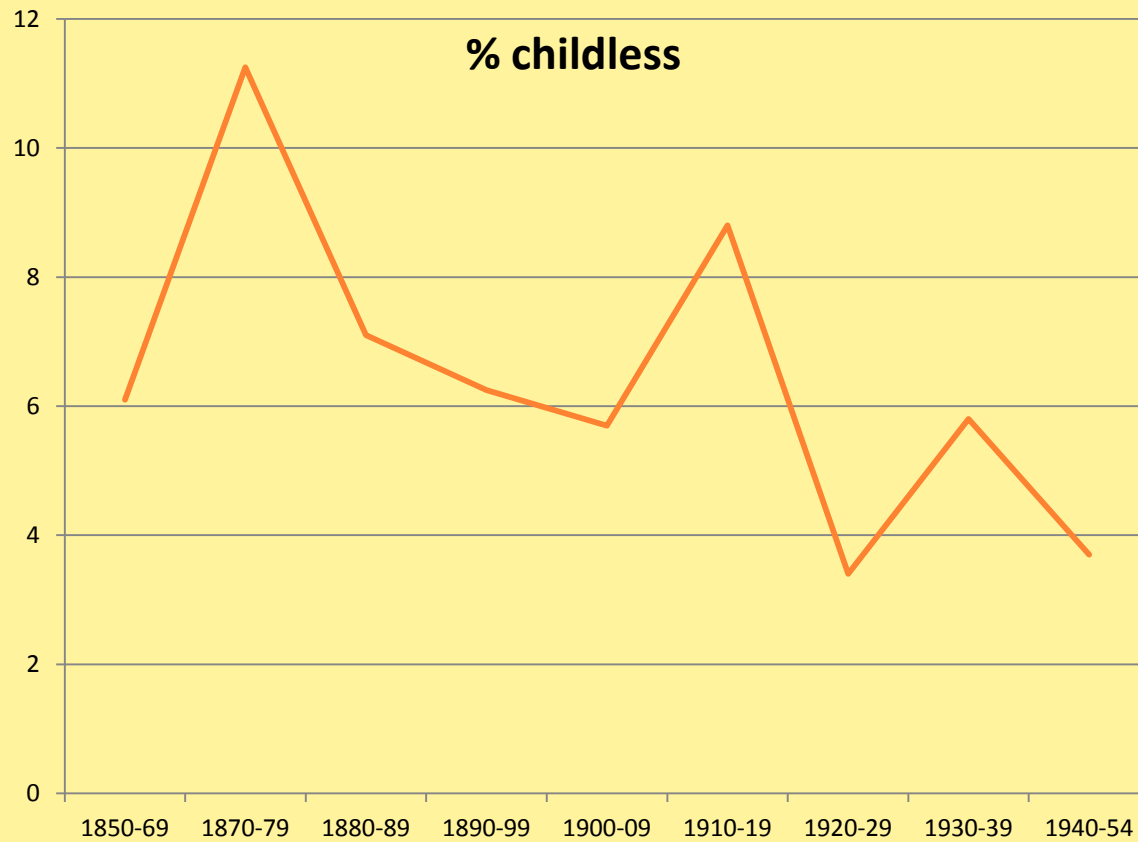
All these tests and treatment are naturally expensive and beyond the reach of many couples, while at the gynaecological out-patients' departments of the public hospitals there is neither time nor facilities for the doctor to deal adequately with these cases of sterility.

Valuable Records

The fertility of every married couple is to-day so vitally important to the nation, that birth clinics, with specialists in charge, set up for free investigation and the treatment of all wives and husbands desirous but unable to increase the birth-rate, would amply repay the expense involved.

Moreover, the records of a birth clinic would soon yield valuable information as to the major causes of the only too prevalent sterility among Australian women.

The investigations of any Royal Commission on the falling birth-



Infertility as a motivation to adopt

Newspaper advertisements 1850-1954

Adoption as Cure: Becoming Fruitful by Induction

- Jr. Cottrell, Leonard S. , "Research in Causes of Variations in Fertility: Social Psychological Aspects," *American Sociological Review* 2, no. 5 (1937)
- Frederick M. Hanson and John Rock, "The Effect of Adoption on Fertility and Other Reproductive Functions," *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 59, no. 2 (1950)

Adoption as Cure: Supplying the Market



Diane Gray

a huge mass of people,
wealthy people, that
couldn't have children ...
people with some power
and all this pool of women
with no power, that ... were
like a labour force of
people to donate their
children to all the wealthier
people

