

**THE SPATIAL DYNAMICS OF FERTILITY**

**IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

**1976 TO 1996**

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## **Abstract**

In the past the identification and explanation of spatial variations in fertility was seen as an important contribution to the field of population geography. By the 1980s with the substantial declines in fertility and the ‘end’ of the demographic transition came the belief low fertility equated with little variation between groups and across space. Recent evidence however suggests the interaction of various factors including place-specific factors has led to spatio-temporal changes in fertility that have not been expected based on theoretical and national patterns of fertility.

The objective of this thesis was to investigate if spatial differentials in fertility still exist, and have relevance in a low fertility setting. The study examines the geography of fertility in the State of South Australia from the mid 1970s to the mid 1990s using unpublished issue data from the 1976, 1981, 1986 and 1996 Australian Censuses for women aged 45–49 years and 15–44 years. In addition to identifying the patterns trends towards convergence or divergence in the patterns over time and the reasons for the patterns were also identified.

The findings of this study indicate strong spatial variations in fertility still exist, have persisted over time and there are localised conditions which temper overall expectations from theory. While it is assumed declines in fertility equate with a convergence in differentials, the statistical parameters used in this study showed trends towards convergence or divergence varied by geographical scale and age group. Despite the limited attention socio-economic factors have received in the examination of population issues in Australia, they remain central to explaining the fertility patterns and trends found in this study. In fact in metropolitan Adelaide fertility may be a significant contributor and influence on social polarisation.

## **Candidate Declaration**

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

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## Glossary

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ARIA	Accessibility/Remoteness Index for Australia
ASD	Adelaide Statistical Division
CD	Collection District
CBR	Crude Birth Rate
CWR	Child Woman Ratio
GFR	General Fertility Rate
ISBR	Indirect Standardised Birth Rate
LGA	Local Government Area
SAHT	South Australian Housing Trust
SLA	Statistical Local Area
SSD	Statistical Sub Division
TFR	Total Fertility Rate