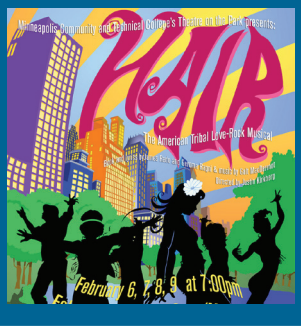
The sixties 'liberation': what happened?

based on *False Promises: Sixties Philosophy Against the Church, Windrush Press, 2012*
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VoxBrief
February 2014
FamilyVoice AUSTRALIA

Forty years after he brought the rock musical* Hair *to Australia in the late sixties, entrepreneur Harry M Miller was interviewed about the show – highly controversial at the time for its nude scene, profanity, illegal drug use and treatment of sexuality.

Mr Miller told Channel 7's* Today Tonight *in 2009 that fears expressed by "scaremongers" had been unfounded. "People thought there would be incest in the home and seduction in the streets," he said. "None of it ever happened."

Had he not noticed? That is exactly what* did *happen, and a lot more like it.

Marriage and birth rate

In the early 1950s, Australia had an annual marriage rate of 8 per 1,000 population. Our annual divorce rate was 3 per 1,000 existing marriages.

By the early 1990s, the annual marriage rate had fallen to 5.8 per 1,000 population, and the annual divorce rate had risen by a factor of 20 – to 61 per 1,000 existing marriages.

At mid-century, Australia's birth rate was 23 per 1,000 population; the illegitimacy (ex-nuptial birth) rate was just 4% of all births, and the fertility rate (number of children per woman in her lifetime) was 3.2.

Towards the century's end, the birth rate had fallen by one third to 14 per 1,000 population; the ex-nuptial birth rate had risen to 28%, and the fertility rate had fallen to 1.8 – below replacement level.

Welfare expenditure and childcare

In the early 1950s, annual expenditure on social security (old age, invalid, sickness, widows and unemployment pensions and benefits) was the equivalent, in 1987 dollar value, of $241 per head of population.

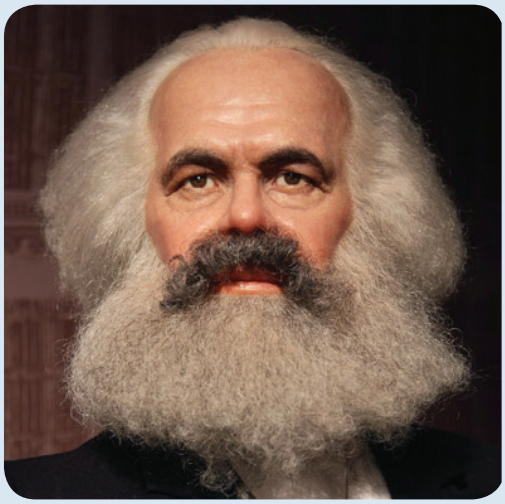
By the early 1990s, expenditure on welfare had risen to $1,900 per head of population (1987 dollar value).

In the early 1950s, the employment rate in the paid workforce for women aged 15 and over was 26%, and long-day childcare was so rare as not to warrant a statistical category in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) year book.

By the early 1990s, the employment rate for women aged 15 and over had almost doubled to 49%, and 93 per 1,000 children of pre-school age were in long daycare; 580 per 1,000 (more than half) spent some time in non-parental care.

Crime rate and drug use

In 1952, Australia had a property crime rate of 96 convictions per half million population, and a violent crime rate (murder, rape, assault etc) of 18. By 1993, the property crime rate had risen to 1,523 (estimated equivalent convictions) per half million population. The violent crime rate had soared to 124. The escalation in property crime began in the 1960s, while the fastest rise in violent crime was in the 1980s.



Karl Marx: his ideas promised utopia, but led to disaster

In the early 1950s, annual consumption of alcoholic beverages was the equivalent of 5 litres of pure alcohol per year per person aged more than 15. The use of psychoactive drugs was so rare as not to warrant notice by the ABS.

In the early 1990s, consumption of alcoholic beverages had risen to the equivalent of 7.8 litres of alcohol per person over 15, and over 30% of a surveyed sample of the population had used cannabis (marijuana) at least once. There were over 400 deaths by overdose of heroin and other opioids every year.

Suicide rate

At mid-century, the annual suicide rate was 16 per 100,000 males, and 6 per 100,000 females. By the 1990s, the rate for males had risen to 21. For females, after a short rise, the rate returned to its former level.[1]

Do these changes matter? Is there a causal relationship between some of them?

Several of these changes are even more striking because during the first half of the 20th century, trends were in the opposite direction.

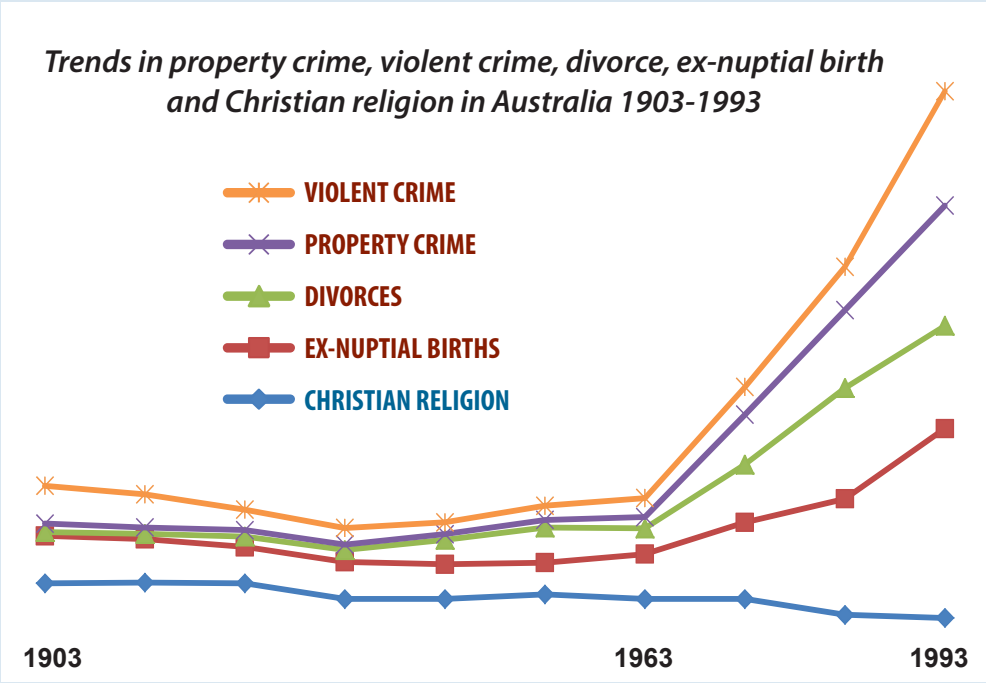
The dramatic decline

For over three decades, as the scope of these changes unfolded, academics aided by the media persuaded the public to accept high rates of divorce, illegitimacy, sole parenthood, working mothers and institutional childcare as unimportant changes – or indeed, the reverse: desirable signs of a liberal society.

Yet there remained a niggling suspicion in the public mind that high divorce rates separating children from their fathers and other changes *did* matter and were not life-enhancing – and that rates of crime and drug use were increasing, despite academic claims that they were simply being reported more often.

The extreme changes in the domestic structure and functioning of Australian society over the last three decades of the 20th century did not come about by some sort of happy natural evolution. They were the deliberate achievement of mid-century left-wing educated elites, who lacked commitment to intellectual traditions and the productive economic functioning of society.

Their theories had their roots in the 18th century Enlightenment, Rousseau, the French Revolution, Karl Marx, and Marx's "softly, softly" disciple Antonio Gramsci. Their ideas were promoted in both politics and the arts. They promised a happier and



A marked change for the worse began in the decade between 1963 and 1973, in which secularism overpowered the traditions of religion (trends only, actual incidence given in text)

more benign society.

They later became government policy, not by being put to the people before an election – but by imposition afterwards, once power had been achieved.

Changes made to the system of government funding of university research in the 1970s and 1980s allowed left-wing social scientists to dominate. Grants now favoured research in areas of progressive social theory and policy.

Early proponents became the "experts" in these fields. As later grant applications and papers were referred to them, they were able to block funding and research that challenged their views.

False Promises uses demographic ABS statistics to document the growing conformity to Christian social ethics in the first half of the 20th century – followed by a dramatic decline after the 1950s as social policies turned the other way.

What happened to marriage?

New grounds for divorce in the *Family Law Act* (1975) reduced the legal identity of marriage to the existence of sexual relations. This stripped marriage of its real social function of protecting procreation and the raising of children. The change in law gave a certain aura of validity to the campaign for same-sex "marriage" which began in the 1990s.

Now, young couples did not marry when they began sexual relations, but rather, when they planned to have children.

Divorce

Marriages can fall apart too easily for trivial reasons, such as "falling in love" with someone else and the excitement of a new sexual encounter. Before 1975, the difficulty in getting a divorce served a useful purpose in enabling couples to survive the rocky patches in their marriages.

The divorce rate rose starkly following the enactment of the Family Law Act 1975, where "no-fault" divorce was introduced. Divorce was now more often instigated by the unfaithful than by the faithful partner.

There was now no hand to stay the harm this did to the faithful partner and to children of the marriage, and indeed to the should-have-been-temporary wanderer.

By 1993, the divorce rate was 2.9 per 1,000 population, more than three times the rate in 1953. It would have been even

Why are there fewer babies now?

Sexual liberation

As the marriage rate fell, the percentage of individuals who never married increased.

Cohabiting couples are less likely to make the commitment to children.

Divorce

The rapid decline in fertility coincided with the skyrocketing of divorce in the 1970s, which probably meant potential families were terminated early. The decline flattened along with the divorce rate in the 1980s and 1990s.

Women at work

The fertility decline also coincided with the rise in women's participation in the workforce of the 1970s. Women now had equal pay, which may have contributed to the later age of marriage.

Reduced family income support

Although it predated the major increase in working mothers by more than a decade, the decline in fertility coincided with the period in which family income support (child endowment and tax rebates) was greatly reduced. Then in the 1980s, government welfare policy focused on improving the incomes of non-earners, rather than ensuring good earner incomes for families as single units.

Surveys showed that for many men and women, the loss of family income support forced them to have fewer children. It was the outcome of pressures and conditions which had their origins in 1960s feminist and left-wing welfare ideologies.

Abortion

The birth control pill and accessible abortion made it easier to have fewer children.

Immigration

Despite falling fertility, the population continued to rise across the period more rapidly than during the previous half century. This was achieved through increased immigration.

The birthrate fell to its lowest level during the period of highest immigration, in the late 1980s, and recovered when immigration rates were lowered in the early 1990s.

The effect of high immigration may have been similar to the effect of the extreme drought nearly a century earlier, as families responded to the scarcity of resources by limiting family size.

Squeezed family incomes and liberation of children from parental control meant that having children no longer promised happiness and contentment as it had in the past.

Now, children no longer seem to be the highly prized bright hope of the future that the baby-boomers had felt in their own childhoods.

For parents, raising and protecting their children had become a daunting task.



greater had not many couples chosen to cohabit instead of marrying.

Divorce and the loss of sexual partnership are a major source of unhappiness in society today, to say nothing of their role in depression, suicide and violence against women.

In the 1950s and 60s, libertarian progressives argued that divorce was better for children than to live with quarrelling parents.

That hypothesis is less convincing today. The murder of children by a despairing, alienated father, along with his own suicide, has become a regular phenomenon. So has the abuse of children living with a new "father".

What happened to children?

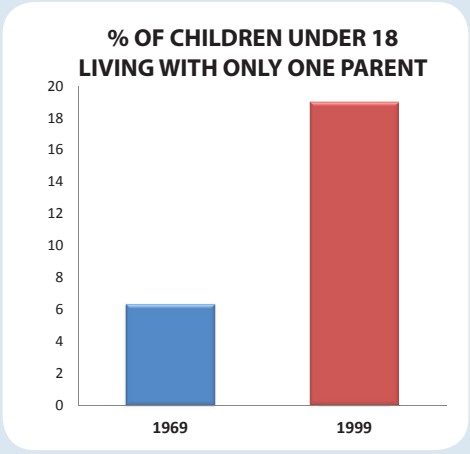
Children were the biggest victims of progressive policies, and child victims do not become responsible adults.

As more mothers worked and the use of childcare centres grew, large numbers of Australian infants were placed in the care of strangers for long periods of time.

Research shows that long childcare hours for under-threes causes severe distress and lasting psychological trauma.[2]

Broken homes

The number of children aged less than 18 whose parents divorced in 1967 was a little over 10,000, but had soared to 46,000 in 1979. It was 50,000 in 2000, although the population had only doubled since 1967.



Sole parenting

In 1969, only 6.3% of children aged less than 18 lived with only one parent (about 240,000 children), whether from illegitimacy, divorce, or bereavement.

In 1999, a fifth of Australian children were living in a family with diminished caretaking capacity. Half of them, mostly the boys, lacked an intimate role model of their own sex.

By the early 1980s, concern about the public cost of supporting the families of divorced, separated, and of out-of-wedlock fathers had grown. Rising welfare expenditure impacted tax levels.

Although the courts could award a contribution for child maintenance after divorce, judges tended to be sympathetic to the desire of men to retain their incomes to support a new family (they were the partner who had usually lost the first one). There was no effective system for enforcing alimony and child support payments.

Homeless children

Homelessness of children became significant in the late 1970s, once it became a paying way of life via welfare benefits. By the 1980s it was recognised as an endemic social problem and began to be studied and counted.

Between 24,000 and 36,000 young people aged 15-24 were homeless in 1986.[3]

The television documentary, *Nobody's Children*, exposed the fates of these "liberated" children.[4] Departments of Children's Services were quite ineffective in protecting them from physical abuse, even death.

A secondary effect was the growth of irresponsible parental behaviour. Welfare money was co-opted to make irresponsibility viable for both parents and children.

Self-restraint and delayed gratification were considered an essential part of moral education of the young in the first half of the 20th century. In its second half, policies of "rights" and "liberation" undermined traditional wisdom in both public and private life. The sad fate of children in this era demonstrates clearly that state assistance in enjoying one's immediate desires is not a panacea for happiness or well-being.

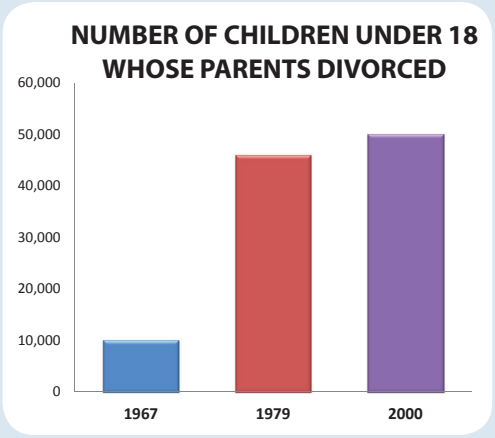
What happened to adoption?

In the course of the 1970s, welfare support and abortion took the place of adoption for dealing with the problems inherent in extra-marital births.

Although adoption had worked well for both adopting parents and adopted children, the grief experienced by relinquishing mothers began to be publicly recognised in the 1970s.

Early in the sexual revolution the number of annual adoptions rose steeply, along with the number of ex-nuptial births, from 7,000 in 1968/9 to nearly 10,000 in 1971/2.

But with the confidence gained in the new wave of feminism, and with sex before marriage no longer stigmatised, women took the step of keeping their illegitimate babies. With the assistance of the Supporting Mothers Benefit, adoption fell away sharply, back to 7,000 in 1973/4, and to 4,000 by 1977/8. The importance of the mother-child relationship was thus reasserted.



Government intervention was turned on its head. Instead of a policy to relieve the community of the support of fatherless babies, the Single Mothers Benefit facilitated the economic drain on the community that illegitimacy creates.

What happened to abortion?

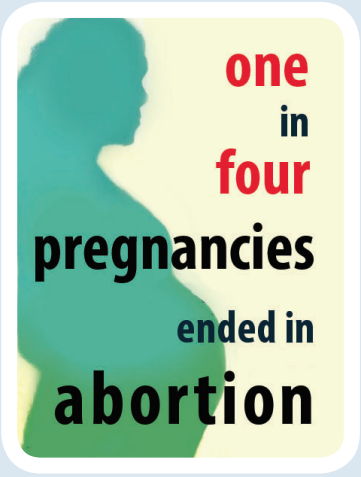
South Australia was the only state to respond to the feminist demand that abortion be formally legalised. As such, it was the only state in which statistics were recorded.

Between 1970 and 1980, abortion rates increased from 6 to 14 per 1,000 women of childbearing age (15-44 years) per year.

Abortion was now sought less to prevent ex-nuptial births than to limit family size. Already in 1975 about 75% of abortions were performed on married women.

The ground for abortion was overwhelmingly, and euphemistically, "mental disorder" – 96% in 1975.

The availability of abortion contributed substantially to the fall in birth rate over the period. It weakened government commitment to family income support and fuelled mothers' impetus into the workforce.



If the figures for South Australia are extrapolated to the whole of Australia, they indicate that about one in four pregnancies ended in abortion.

Given the high percentage performed on married women, it is possible that the abortion rate would have been significantly lower if families had not been made so reliant on the mother's earnings, which a new baby would disrupt for several years.

What happened to education?

Liberation theory in primary education declared that children did not need to consciously learn or memorise. All that was needed was understanding.

Old methods of committing to memory were seen not to encourage understanding. The obvious point was missed: without knowledge, there is nothing to understand or think about.

Memorisation of multiplication tables by rote and chanting was removed from the classroom. "Whole word recognition" replaced sounding out phonetically. This made some children appear to read more quickly, but left others clueless.



In the 1950s, Australia had a 95% literacy rate, the second highest in the world, after Japan. Today, half the adult population struggles to read.

Another change was the introduction of Austudy, a special welfare benefit targeted at low income families. Social justice in education demanded that all children should spend the same number of years in formal education.

It kept adolescents whose capabilities would have made them happier in the practical working world at school, beyond the point of personal profitability.

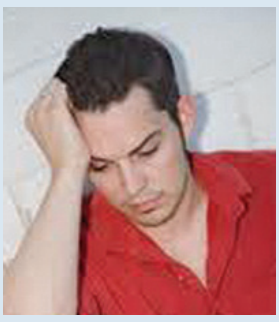
What happened to suicide?

Suicide rate is an index of mental health and well-being, and is a measure of alienation within a culture.

Suicide in young men should be considered a crisis of our time. Teenage liberation gave a false promise of benefit to both boys and young men. The suicide rate for 15 – 19 year-old boys rarely touched 15 per 100,000 population before 1960, but since then has risen steadily.

Young men suffering

Social changes in the last four decades did not favour teenage boys. Major growth in divorce and single motherhood left boys in households without their fathers and without a caring adult man.



At the same time as this lack of men in families, secondary education became predominantly coeducational. Schools became feminised and thus less effective as places of male reassurance and leadership. The fact that males were spending more time at school instead of moving out into the workforce in their mid-teens exacerbated the problem.

Rearing of boys in the absence of men was meant, in feminist theory, to make them gentler. Instead, it appears to have made them more violent towards others and themselves.

Psychologist Stephen Biddulph in his book *Manhood* quoted statistics from the 1991 Census showing that suicide is the leading cause of death for men aged less than 60, ahead of road deaths, heart attack and cancer, killing one in 34 Australian men.[5]

Poor delineation of masculine identity, role and image is likely to be the cause of the problem.

Frequent task forces on youth suicide produced nothing to control this epidemic. Despite the identified link between single parenting and youth suicide, no one has proposed campaigns to encourage parents to forgo their own liberated desires in order to protect their children's lives.

The link between marijuana use and youth suicide is rarely acknowledged.

The absence of working mothers from home in after-school hours during the vulnerable teenage years is another possible factor. It has been given no attention due to "political incorrectness".

What happened to crime?

Crime rate is an important indicator of the well-being and cohesiveness of a society.

The fall in crime rates across the first half of the century can be taken as a measure of the success of the social theory of church and state that influenced policy and behaviour in that period. The system of policing and criminal justice provided effective on-the-ground support.

By the early 1970s things had become much worse. Property crime was the first to escalate, as the me-generation began to express its rejection of traditional honesty.

Violent crime rates rose seriously only 10-15 years later, due to a complex of interrelated factors that expressed the liberated spirit of the times.

The rise in crime cannot be dissociated from the relaxation of censorship, and the escalating depiction of extreme violence and pornography in the entertainment media.

Clearly, sexual freedom, the removal of customs of deference and chivalry in the name of sexual equality, along with co-education did not result in improvements in men's behaviour towards women.

Crime rose most dramatically from the early 1980s to the early 1990s. This was the decade in which the first generation entirely reared under the influence of liberation social theory came to young adulthood.

Divorced parents, early childcare, under-supervised teenagers (with working mothers), exposure to violence and pornography in the post-censorship media – all could have played their part in producing a poorly socialised generation.

Conclusion

In their march through the institutions of marriage, education and the church, progressive left-wing ideologues introduced a new, immoral program that led to a dramatic increase in social ills.

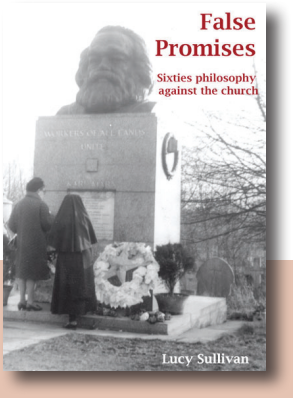
But instead of changing course, the left has introduced an endless succession of task forces, commissions, conferences, pilot studies, projects and reports that have avoided the real issues.

In fact, Christian institutions and morality have been blamed for these evils.

But we have not reached the end of this story. Will the left, in both politics and the media, manage to abandon its current trajectory and take up the challenge of moral persuasion through appeal to our endowed moral natures?

Can they bring themselves to help, not obstruct, the church's and conservative efforts in this direction?

Or will the left force the population into a revolt, undoubtedly different in direction but as destructive as that of the 1960s?



References

1. All original figures were obtained from Australian Bureau of Statistics Year Books
2. Eg, see James and Joyce Robertson, 1989, *Separation and the very young*, Free Association Books, Britain.
3. Estimates by Neil and Fopp (1992) based on ABS data
4. *Nobody's Children*, documentary, ABC, Australia, 1989.
5. Also see "Young men dogged by depression", *The Age*, 22 July 2013, www.theage.com.au/national/young-men-dogged-by-depression-20130721-2qcof.html

False Promises can be purchased from:

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