

Social Acceptance and Demographic Effects of Population Policy in the Netherlands

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Introduction

Given the continuation of current low fertility levels, the Netherlands, well-known as a country with a high population density, will be faced with a change in its population policy in the near future. Until recently, the policy could be labeled moderately antinatalist, aimed at the continuation of below replacement fertility. The central recommendation of the Royal Commission on Population, issued in 1977, was to opt for a termination of natural growth as soon as possible. In 1983, however, the government stated that if fertility should stay below replacement level during the coming years, an increase in fertility will become necessary. The Interdepartmental Commission on Population Policy (ICB) stated: »If the perspective of gradually approaching a stationary population of the same or a slightly smaller proportion than the present one is not to be lost, it would be desirable that an increasing trend would manifest itself after a period of ten to fifteen years. This would imply that a reversal of the fertility trend would become apparent in the course of the nineteen eighties» (ICB, 1982: 100). If this reversal should fail to materialize, and assuming there will be no major increase in immigration, low fertility levels combined with increasing mortality (due to aging), predict an absolute decline in the Dutch population beginning between 2000 and 2008.

The current low fertility situation and a future population decline is typical for most European countries, including the Nordic countries. When one compares total fertility rates (TFR) for Europe in 1981, only six out of 21 countries have a TFR equal to or higher than that necessary to reach replacement level. In Table 1 (p. 30) figures are given.

For the situation in Finland, lehto (1983) notes that »the current level of fertility is not sufficient to maintain existing numbers of Finns». He also states that »in the early 1970s Finland's birth rate went down to quite a low level» (Lehto, 1983). The official governmental attitude with respect to the acceptance of fertility, is that although current levels are satisfactory, policy intervention is necessary to maintain these levels and to prevent a further decrease in fertility (UN, 1980).

Viewed from this angle, Dutch and Finnish policies are somewhat similar. In this article we do not want to sketch similarities and dissimilarities in fertility and policy situations in both countries. Our goal is to present and discuss results from several Dutch research projects dealing with the acceptance and demographic effects of new policy measures aiming at increasing fertility. In the research projects (Leeuw and Kreft, 1983; Leeuw, 1984; Rozendal, Moors and Leeuw, 1985), it has been our goal to gain an insight in the acceptance level and demographic impact *before* the government takes any decisions to the introduction of (some of) these policy measures.

In the second paragraph we describe the history of Dutch population policy since

Table 1. TFR values for European countries (in 1981)

1	Federal Republic of Germany	1.44
2	Denmark	1.44
3	Netherlands	1.51
4	Italy	1.54
5	Switzerland	1.56
6	Luxemburg	1.58
7	Sweden	1.63
8	Belgium	1.67
9	Finland	1.65
10	Norway	1.70
11	Austria	1.71
12	England & Wales	1.82
13	France	1.97
14	Spain	1.99
15	Malta	1.99*
16	Greece	2.10
17	Portugal	2.17**
18	Iceland	2.33
19	Cyprus	2.49*
20	Ireland	3.00
21	Turkey	4.50***

* 1980

** 1979

*** the average estimate over 1975—1980.

1945. The third paragraph discusses our research on the acceptance of future pronatalist policy measures, and the fourth paragraph presents a preliminary test of Mancur Olson's collective action theory applied to the relationship between population concern and acceptance of population policy. The fifth paragraph reviews evidence from social demographic research on the demographic impact of one particular type of pronatalist policy. Finally, the relevance of our design, theory and findings for research on population policy is briefly discussed.

Dutch population policy since 1945

The Dutch population policy cannot be fully understood without some information about the demographics of the country. Van de Kaa and Van der Wind (1979) write about this as follows:

»The population has increased by more than 10 million people over the last 100 years. Some 45 % of this increase took place after 1945. The first post-war years were characterized by high birth rates. Natural population growth, mainly in the early fifties, was attenuated by the number of persons leaving the country. This lasted till approximately 1960. Since then there has been an immigration surplus. Nevertheless, the annual population growth in the seventies was smaller than in the early years. This was caused by a strong decrease in fertility».

In Table 2 relevant demographic figures are given.

The decrease in fertility is largely caused by the fact that the number of high parity births has strongly decreased. Since 1970, the number of first births has decreased as well. The most recent forecast of the Central Bureau for Statistics (December 1984) predicts an absolute population decline setting in between 2000 and 2008. The contin-

Table 2. Average annual population growth in the Netherlands between 1945—1982 due to births, deaths and migration (per thousand)

Population growth	Number of births	Number of deaths	Birth surplus	Number of immigrants	Number of emigrants	Migration surplus	Period
161.3	249.1	90.5	158.6	54.7	54.6	0.1	1945—49
130.7	229.2	78.2	151.6	45.4	65.6	-20.2	1950—54
147.4	234.8	84.0	150.8	51.8	58.5	-6.7	1955—59
159.0	246.7	91.9	154.8	57.7	51.2	6.5	1960—64
149.1	241.6	102.2	139.5	71.0	60.3	10.7	1965—69
128.3	212.2	110.7	101.6	89.1	61.1	28.0	1970—74
98.7	175.7	113.1	62.6	97.7	59.8	37.8	1975—79
86.6	177.2	114.9	62.3	87.9	63.5	24.3	1980—82

uation of low fertility levels combined with higher mortality (aging) and very limited migration accounts for this decline. In this paper we do not pay attention to (attitudes about) aging and migration (see a.o. Rozendal and Moors, 1983).

The *first stage* in Dutch population policy covers the period from 1945 to the late sixties. In the first 15 years after World War II, the annual stiff increase in population numbers worried the government and several segments of the general population. Hofstede (1964) described this situation using the concept of »population psychosis»¹. Nevertheless, an explicit interest from the part of the government in steering (natural) population growth did not exist. While several speeches by the Queen at the opening of the Political Year in the 50s stated that further population growth would lead to a higher population density in the country, an official statement by the government in 1963 said that »the rapid growth of the Dutch population has not induced the government to pursue a specific population policy» (Reply, 1963, 2). The dominant reasons behind this »policy abstinence» were religious and political. Although there was no fertility control policy in those years, there was an emigration policy. Hofstede (1964) showed that it was the intention of the government to attain an emigration-surplus of some 60,000 persons per annum. The policy was institutionalized in the late 40s and early 50s. However, when the public became aware that the Netherlands seemed to be on their way to a 'new golden age', the number of emigrants decreased rapidly. The total number of emigrants between 1945 and 1960 was approximately 950,000. The emigration-surplus, however, was not larger than 140,000. By the mid-60s, public interest in the population question was leveling off and by the late sixties it had more or less disappeared.

The *second stage* covers the period from 1970 to the early 1980s. Probably stimulated by the immense societal reactions to the Report of the 'Club of Rome', in which the disastrous consequences of further population growth in the world were shown and that indeed did upset large parts of the population, the Dutch government in 1972 established a Royal Commission on Population. The central duties of this Commission were:

- (1) to monitor national demographic developments and the factors that determine these developments and
- (2) to analyze the consequences of these developments for (mainly) the health aspects of society.

The Commission issued its interim report in 1974. In 1977 the Final Report was published (»Population and Wellbeing in the Netherlands», The Hague, 1977). The central recommendation stressed termination of natural growth as soon as possible. It said: »We recommend that the government should aim at ending natural population growth as soon as possible». Parallel to the activities of the Royal Commission, a number of policy measures that were antinatalist in orientation were implemented.

¹ Hofstede is rather sketchy about the data upon which this idea of »psychosis» is based. To our knowledge, surveys investigating attitudes of Dutch people in this respect have not been carried out.

For example, the government started subsidizing family planning services and bureaus in the early seventies, they de facto liberalized the anti-abortion law, they removed the ban on advertising and selling contraceptives, they strongly reduced the coverage of family allowances and they imposed quality control on rubber condoms (Van den Brekel, 1980). Two years after the publication of the Final Report of the Royal Commission (in 1979), the government made public their position concerning the population issue in the Netherlands. In short this position runs as follows: »we wish to reach a stationary population. Noting that the current fertility level is below replacement and judging this to be a positive state of affairs, no policy intervention is considered necessary during the next several years». This standpoint of the government is moderately antinatalist and is in agreement with the first recommendation of the Royal Commission (cf. Van den Brekel, 1980).

It should be understood that during the seventies, the total fertility rate declined from 2.6 (1970) to 1.6 (1980). It was this very decline, combined with the aging of the population that led the Interdepartmental Commission on Population Policy (ICB) in 1982 to become alert to the forecast that a stationary population of 12 to 14 million might not be reached in the (near) future. Therefore, in early 1983 the government formulated a new position concerning the present and future demographic situation in the Netherlands. Then the *third stage* in Dutch population policy regarding reproductive behavior started. As already indicated, the government is now of the opinion that in the next several years a change in the fertility trend will become imperative. If this change fails to come about naturally, implementing pronatalist policy measures will be considered.

As to the opinion of the Dutch population on the desired number of inhabitants in the country, recent surveys show the following figures.

T a b l e 3. Attitudes with respect to a future decline of the population in the Netherlands (in %)

	1981	1983
Positive	65 %	33 %
Positive nor negative	—	34 %
Negative	18 %	33 %
Don't know	17 %	—
	100 %	100 %

Sources: Leeuw and Kreft (1983)
Rozendal, Moors and Leeuw (1985)

T a b l e 4. Desired number of people living in the Netherlands in the near future (in %)

	1983	1984
A smaller population is desired	35 %	39 %
The same population is desired	57 %	51 %
A larger population is desired (D.K.)	8 %	5 %
	—	5 %

Sources: Rozendal, Moors and Leeuw (1985)
Leeuw and Gras (1985)

There appears to be an increasing number of persons having a negative opinion about a future decline of the Dutch population. Also worth mentioning is the attitude towards the desired number of people who will be living in the Netherlands in the near future. Three possible scenarios were presented: the same number, a larger number or a smaller number of inhabitants. Results are presented in Table 4.

We can see from Table 4 that — at least² — some 50 % of the respondents agree with the declaration issued by the Dutch government early in 1983.

The social acceptance of future pronatalist policy

In a liberal-democratic society, there are two ways of finding out to what extent pronatalist policies are socially acceptable. One is to wait until the policy measures are introduced and then ask the target groups about their attitudes towards these measures. An obstacle is that, if the policy acceptance is minimal the measures usually will not be able to reach the target groups, and fail to meet the policy goals. The second way to assess the social acceptance of policies is to investigate people's cognitions and attitudes prior to the introduction of the policies. Its method is the »hypothetical» (supposititious) question in which people are asked how they would evaluate certain (policy) items (under certain conditions). Although this type of study is sometimes considered a stopgap, in the absence of solid knowledge imperfect knowledge has a value (Simon and Simon, 1974, 585). Hypothetical — question research, making use of social science theories leads to more precise data because the right questions are asked in the right way (Thompson and Appelbaum, 1974).

In social demography, only a few of these hypothetical question projects were carried out. In the U.S., we mention Simon and Simon (1974) and Thompson and Appelbaum (1974). Both studies were concerned with antinatalist policies. In the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR we point to Hatzold (1979), Mehlan (1977) and Speil et al. (1984).

Studies that resemble a supposititious question approach are Pongràz and Molnár's (1980) analyses of the impact of Hungarian pronatalist policy and Hatunen's (1984) survey of the demographic effects of a change in Finland's mother allowances. In both studies respondents were asked to indicate if and to what extent changes in policy have influenced their fertility behavior. The Thompson and Appelbaum-study (1974) is by far the most advanced.

In the Netherlands, in 1981 a regional large scale pilot survey was carried out to assess the feasibility of using this approach with respect to future pronatalist policies (Leeuw and Kreft, 1983). We investigated the acceptance of a six month paid maternity leave, a baby bonus of \$ 400, favorable tax tariffs for families with more than three children and population education programs discussing possible disadvantages of a declining population. Data also were gathered concerning various background variables including: sex, age, number of children ever born, marital status, educational level and political party preference. Table 5 presents some data from this survey.

T a b l e 5. Frequencies regarding four hypothetical population policy measures

	Positive	Negative	DK
Item 1: opinion about the six month paid maternity leave with job reinstatement	2082 (41 %)	2669 (53 %)	234 (6 %)
Item 2: opinion about a baby bonus of \$ 400,— per birth	1594 (31 %)	3221 (64 %)	260 (5 %)
Item 3: opinion about more pronatalist oriented population information/education	3535 (70 %)	1113 (22 %)	427 (8 %)
Item 4: opinion about more favorable tax tariffs for families with more than 3 children	2530 (50 %)	2188 (43 %)	357 (7 %)

Source: Leeuw and Kreft (1983)

² As the current Dutch population will still increase somewhat till 2000—2008 logically people preferring a smaller population agree with this policy statement.

As for the relationships between background variables and the four population policy items, the following findings can be reported. The higher the educational level, the more negative one's attitude is concerning the baby bonus of approximately US \$ 400,— ($\chi^2=152$; $df=12$). Opinions concerning a 6-month maternity leave with job reinstatement vary positively with age ($\chi^2=221$; $df=14$) and with liberal political party preference ($\chi^2=336$; $df=12$). More 'pronatalist oriented public information' is not specific of any category of respondents. As to the fiscal incentive the higher the educational level, the more conservative the political party preference and the larger the number of children ever born, the more positively respondents evaluate this policy measure.

By multivariate analysis we have described simultaneously the relationship between three background variables (education, age and number of children ever born) on the one hand and the opinions about these four policy measures on the other hand. (Canals and Primals, cf. Burg & De Leeuw, 1983). We found that people who prefer both financial policy measures (baby bonus and tax facilities) are different from people preferring the hypothetical maternity leave. The lower the educational level, the more people desire financial measures. We also found that the very young (till age 20) and the very old (70 years and older) are more in favor of the two financial provisions. The higher the CEB, the more people favor financial measures. Finally, we analyzed the impact of educational level and political affiliation upon attitudes towards the four policy items. While affiliation to conservative and /or christian-democratic parties leads persons to a more positive opinion about financial measures and affiliation to left wing parties to a more positive point of view regarding maternity leaves, nevertheless higher educated men and women *within* the same political parties are *more* in favor of maternity leaves as opposed to financial measures. Women in general appear to be somewhat »extra» more in favor of this item within the same educational and political party »bracket».

Given these results and a number of positive reactions on this type of hypothetical questioning, the National Programme for Demographic Research financed a national survey that analyzed more in depth the acceptance and demographic impact of hypothetical policy measures. This study was carried out by Rozendal, Moors and this author under the responsibility of NIDI³. Attitudes of people regarding twelve possible pronatalist measures were researched. Table 6 on page 35 summarizes some of the results. This table shows that particularly important for a person's attitude is the family stage to which he or she belongs. In favor of the measures that expand maternity and parental leaves, flexitime and child care systems are in particular persons younger than 35 and persons who do not yet have children themselves. The least positive about these measures are persons with children over 18 years of age as well as persons older than 35. These findings do suggest that when people on their own have found a solution to problems with raising children, they are *less* in favor of public arrangements. Another characteristic of the data is that attitudes about financial policy measures are much less dependent upon one's family situation. With respect to the relationships between background variables and policy acceptance, data indicate the following:

- the younger persons are, the more positive their attitude is towards the policy measures
- the higher the educational level, the more favorable one is to measures on leaves of absence with young children and on new child care facilities
- people oriented towards progressive (left wing) political parties are more in favor of the new policy measures compared to people oriented towards conservative political parties (Rozendal, Moors and Leeuw, 1985).

The bivariate and multivariate analyses presented so far are essentially descriptive. They do not explain certain findings, nor do they pay attention to the relation-

³ The research was a joint project between NIDI and the University of Leyden. Project director was Hein G. Moors.

T a b l e 6. Overview of attitudes of respondents about hypothetical policy measures according to their family stage

	% of respondents in favor of the policy measure:	respondents younger than 35/no children (NP = without partner (P = with a partner)		the age of the youngest child is:			respondents that are 35 years old/no children
		NP	P	0—6	7—18	>18	
One year unpaid maternity leave	36	+	++	0	0	---	—
15 days paid leave while young children are ill	63	0	0	0	0	0	—
Paternity leave after child birth (10 days)	54	+	+	++	—	---	—
Right to work part-time upon birth of a child	54	+	++	0	0	—	—
Flexitime	52	++	+	+	—	—	—
Day care mothers*	36	0	+	0	—	—	+
Child care after school time	37	+	+	0	—	0	+
More kindergartens	48	++	++	0	—	0	---
Family founding loan**	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Educational allowance for father/mother***	29	0	—	0	0	0	0
Higher family allowances	35	0	0	++	0	—	---
Higher tax exemptions with more children	44	0	0	+	0	0	---

The signs ++ and --- indicate a deviation from the average of 10 % or more resp. in a more or less favorable position. Signs + and — indicate a deviation of in between 5 and 10 % and the sign 0 indicates a deviation smaller than 5 %.

* Day care mothers are women who in their own house rear young children of 2—4 parents. These parents are both active outside. Their income is partially paid by the government and there is control over the quality of their work by the government.

** A family founding loan is a loan of up to \$ 2000, redeemable upon child birth, i.e. \$ 400 upon the first birth, and \$ 800 upon second and third birth each.

*** This allowance (50 % of the official minimum-wage) is paid by the government to the mother or father who gives up labor force participation and instead raises his (her) own children till the fourth birthday.

Source: Rozendal, Moors and Leeuw (1985)

ship between (background) variables and fertility behavior (birth intentions and number of planned children). In the next paragraph we present a theory that links one particular background variable with the attitude towards population policy and with fertility intentions.

Attitudes towards the population issue, population policy acceptance, birth intentions and planned number of children: a preliminary test of Olson's theory of collective action

A classical hypothesis in social demography and sociology states that if people are concerned about the natural growth rate of the population in their country (in the present, Dutch situation: not reaching a stationary population), people then will

have a positive attitude towards a subsequent population policy and will also adapt their fertility behavior accordingly (Kruegel, 1975; Westoff and McCarthy, 1979). Empirical studies carried out by Rindfuss (1972) and Kruegel (1975) corroborate this hypothesis. Counter-evidence is presented by Darney (1970), McCutcheon and Vick (1976) and, in particular, Barnett (1974). Barnett's findings are based on surveys among members of the (US) Zero Population Growth Inc., a pressure group that aims at achieving zero population growth as soon as possible. Barnett's findings indicate that »recognition of the population problem is not closely related to engaging in or supporting action that will alleviate the problem». In the Federal Republic of Germany, Urdze (1978) also found results falsifying this hypothesis, in his study on the issue of a declining population. The conclusion to be drawn from these studies is that only sometimes are fertility intentions and behavior in agreement with people's attitudes towards the population issue. Why this is so, is not explained. An explanation can be given by applying Olson's theory of collective action (1971). This theory is discussed in demography by Miller and Sartorius (1979). The nucleus of this theory is as follows. When in a country public and governmental concern is uttered about the population issue, efforts to reduce this problem can be conceptualized as trying to realize or produce a public or collective good (in the welfare economic sense of the concept). A stationary population of a certain volume is an example of such a good, »that, if any person X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n consumes it, it cannot feasibly be withheld from the others in the group. Those who do not purchase or pay for any of the public good, cannot be excluded or kept from sharing in the consumption of the good» . . . (Olson, 1971, 14—15). If efforts are successful to realize the pro-

T a b l e 7. Correlations between the attitudes about the population issue, population policy acceptance and fertility intentions (N=952) (Pearson's r).

	Attitudes towards the population issue (antinatalist — pronatalist)
Attitudes towards accepting hypothetical pronatalist policies (in general)	— .06
— acceptance of policies reducing the direct costs of children (e.g. child allowances)	.06
— acceptance of policies reducing the indirect (opportunity) costs of children (paid leaves)	.00
— acceptance of more child care facilities	— .06
— acceptance of more adequate work-(time) facilities for people with young children	— .16**
Attitudes towards hypothetical cancellation of existing anti-natalist policies:	
— cancellation of free use of contraceptives and sterilization	.14**
— cancellation of subsidized maternal and child health provisions	.00
Intention to voluntarily participate in paying a part of the costs of introducing new pronatalist policies	— .08
Intention of birth of next child	.09*
Total number of planned children	.21**
Total number of children ever born	— .10*

(All variables: low score = positive answer and high score = negative answer)

* $p = .05$

** $p = .01$

Source: Rozendal, Moors and Leeuw (1985)

duction of this good (i.e. lead to a stationary population), persons not having participated in the production process cannot be excluded from the profits this good brings with it, neither can they decide autonomously to accept the societal profits. Given the public good nature of a stationary population, »free-rider-behavior» becomes a crucial element in the relation between individual fertility behavior on the one hand and macro-social interests with respect to population stabilization on the other hand. Another factor Olson (1971: 45) points to in explaining »free-rider-behavior» is that »the larger the group, the less the likelihood that the contribution to the production of the good of anyone be perceptible». When we add certain demographic regularities obscuring the relation between individual fertility behavior and macro-demographic developments, it is understandable that »unless the number in a group is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some special device to make individuals act in their common interest, rational self-interested persons will not act to achieve their common interests» (i.e. will not act voluntarily to realize a stationary population).

Olson's collective action theory explains the discrepancy between attitudes toward the population problem, fertility intentions and fertility behavior. We are able to present a preliminary test of one hypothesis, deductible from this theory. This hypothesis states the following:

»When people (younger than 35 years of age*) have an attitude towards the population issue in their country and towards desired future population numbers and when these people are of the opinion that smaller (resp. larger) population numbers are desirable, then these people will have a more negative (resp. a more positive) attitude towards the introduction of (hypothetical) pronatalist measures and a more negative (resp. a more positive) attitude towards the (hypothetical) cancellation of existing antinatalist policies**. However, these people will not differ with respect to their birth intention(s) and with respect to their planned number of children, nor will they differ as to the willingness to participate in paying a part of the collective costs, necessitated by the introduction of new pronatalist policy measures».

For the operationalization of the variables central in this hypothesis, we refer to Rozendal, Moors and Leeuw (1985). Low correlations between the variables or no correlations at all support the hypothesis deduced from Olson's theory. Strong correlations support the classical hypothesis that population concern is causally linked with a positive attitude about population policy, a willingness to pay a part of the costs of this policy and to subsequent fertility intentions and behavior. Table 7 (see page 36) presents the result of our analysis. It appears that the calculated correlations are all low to very low, indicating support for the hypothesis derived from the collective action theory. Apparently, people's attitudes towards the population problem are not a major determinant of their attitudes towards population policy, neither of their fertility intention nor their willingness to pay a part of the costs of new policy measures. This is an important finding, given the concern of governments about the (future) declining population numbers throughout Europe. However, Table 7 also shows some statistically significant correlations that cannot be considered very low. This indicates that the support for our hypothesis is limited.

A policy corollary from our findings is that by merely stressing the importance of reaching a stationary population or reaching replacement level fertility, European

* The reason for focusing on this age group is that these people are in general (still) in their childbearing ages. Still, we did the analyses also for people 35 years and older, and the results were comparable.

** In the survey carried out in early 1983, we investigated reactions toward a hypothetical cancellation of existing policies, i.e. (1) the current Dutch system of child allowance, (2) child & maternity health programs and clinics, now freely accessible, (3) governmental subsidies to family planning clinics and (4) scratching the »pill» and contraceptive sterilization off the national sickness insurance schemes. The constructed variable has as extreme positions an antinatalist one and a pronatalist one.

governments will not be able to accomplish a change in fertility behavior of individuals and couples leading to replacement level. Then the question arises what possible other policy measures governments in liberal-democratic societies have at their disposal to help reach this goal. As it is not possible to answer that question fully in this article, the next paragraph focuses on one type of population policy only, i.e. family benefits. These measures reduce the direct and indirect costs of children. Reasons for this focus are the following:

- compared to the other main types of population policy strategy (i.e. education and information strategies, coercive measures and institutional arrangements like child care systems), industrialized countries show a clear preference for monetary policy measures.
- secondly, there is dissension about the demographic impact of these measures. While some scholars believe it is of no use to try to stimulate fertility via these measures (Strümpel, 1978), others attribute quite strong demographic effects to this type of policy (Febway, 1959).
- the third reason is that monetary policy measures make relatively heavy demands on public finances. Although most of these measures also serve other than demographic goals and hence they should not only be evaluated in terms of their possible demographic impact, one should know to what extent these measures are able to steer fertility behavior in a pronatalist way.

The demographic effect of policy measures reducing the costs of children: the case of family benefits

The rearing of children leads to parental expenditures or costs. Broadly, there are four types of costs: financial and non-financial both direct and indirect. Direct financial costs include expenditures for food, clothing, schooling, living and recreation of children. Indirect financial costs are the opportunity costs of children. Direct non-financial costs occur when the parental relationship is stressed due to children and indirect non-financial costs appear when there is loss of social relationships due to the raising of their children. In this paragraph we pay attention only to policy measures reducing the financial costs of children.

It is generally agreed that these costs play a role in the fertility decision-making process (Thornton and Kim, 1980; Fawcett, 1983; Zundel et al., 1982). Governmental policy measures such as child and family allowances and paid maternity leaves reduce these costs. It is assumed that by reducing these costs, a barrier is taken away for people to have a(nother) child. Gauthier (1981) and Wulf (1982) argue for example that fertility levels would have been lower in pronatalist countries, if these countries had not implemented this type of population policy. Examples of family benefits are:

- child and family allowances;
- baby bonuses;
- child care allowances;
- family founding loans;
- favorable tax tariffs for large(r) families.
- paid maternity leaves;
- paid educational leaves (»family salary») and
- maternity allowances.

Demographers try to assess the impact on fertility of these and similar measures. Earlier we made an inventory of some 50 studies (Leeuw, 1984). There are four types of research designs. First, there are descriptive studies based on — mainly — statistical data and referring to particular policies in particular countries. Examples are Madison's (1964) study of the family allowance system in Canada, Presser and Sals-

berg's (1975) project on the impact of the US »Aid to Families with Dependent Children» (AFDC) and Vining's (1984) analysis of the paid educational leave (»family salary») implemented in the German Democratic Republic. Secondly, there are studies describing the impact of combined policy measures in specific countries. Frejka's (1980) analysis of the Czechoslovakian pronatalist policy is an example, as is Lehto's (1983) analyses of the Finnish social and population policy. Another example is Festy's (1981) study of the current Hungarian population policy and Chesnais' analysis of pronatalism in France and the German Democratic Republic (Chesnais, 1985). Thirdly, there are a number of hypothetical-question studies, in which people are asked to indicate to what extent they think certain new policy measures will influence their fertility decision-making process (Simon and Simon, 1974 and Hatzold, 1979). A slightly modified version of this design is used in studies in which people are asked to rate the impact that already existing policies have had on their fertility behavior (Pongráz and Molnár, 1980; De Wit and Somermeijer, 1977 and Hatunen, 1982). Finally, there are cross-national studies analyzing »isolated» policy measures like child allowances (Hohm, 1976 and Lloyd, 1974) and combined sets of policy measures (Presat, 1979, David and McIntyre, 1981 and Bodrova and Anker, 1985). Quasi-experimental studies, similar to the ones assessing the impact of housing allowances on nuptiality and labor force participation do not exist (Friedman and Weinberg, 1983). From our review of these studies we draw four conclusions. It should be taken into account however, that the lack of (quasi) experimental studies, and, more in general, the lack of methodological quality of a number of the studies narrows the scope of these conclusions, rendering them rather conjectural (see for similar comments: Salo, 1980; 1982).

- (1) From the first type of study it is concluded that monetary measures covering a limited part of the costs of children, appear not to have a pronatalist effect. Only when the benefit level as well as the coverage level of the measures is substantial, such an effect is probable.
- (2) Results from hypothetical-question surveys also indicate that a pronatalist impact can be expected only when monetary measures cover a large part of the costs of children. In one of our own studies (Rozendal, Moors and Leeuw, 1985), we have shown that when hypothetical policy measures are introduced in the Netherlands, 12 % of all persons perceiving themselves to be fecund, are willing to reconsider their fertility intentions.
- (3) A third conclusion is that even policy measures covering a substantial part of the costs of children, have only a temporary effect. After some time people seem to get used to the new measures, which leads to a decreasing demographic impact. Lehto (1983) argues that »exceptionally strong measures are needed at regular intervals. Income transfers (like child and family allowances), should . . . be raised clearly more rapidly than the general rise in the level of prosperity» (Lehto, 1983: 43).
- (4) The fourth conclusion is that adequate pronatalist policies have an important effect on the timing of births but hardly an effect on completed family size.

The general conclusion therefore is that governments should not expect too much from limited monetary pronatalist policies. As McIntosh (1983: 232) puts it: »(young) women today are far too sophisticated to undertake the responsibility and burden of additional children for the sake of marginal financial incentives».

Discussion: the relevance of demographic policy research in industrialized countries

Given the above conclusions about the limited demographic effects of monetary measures, the social acceptance of population policy measures in liberal-democratic

societies becomes a crucial variable in the policy making process. If people don't have a positive attitude towards these measures, it would be unwise to implement them. Lack of acceptance will only further limit the demographic impact. Research-based information about the acceptance of policy measures, available prior to the implementation of the measures, should play an important role in the policy making process. This research should not be confounded with public opinion research about demographic issues and policies. Public opinion polls, in an attempt to measure such complex issues as the desired type of governmental interventions on reproductive behavior, or the attitude on a stationary population, usually do so on the basis of »one-item questions», which yield unrealistic and unreliable data.

In our kind of research priority should be given to theory-driven hypothetical question studies, combined with advanced data-gathering and data-analysis techniques. The emphasis on theory is necessary because theories point to relevant explanatory variables linked with social acceptance. In the afore mentioned Thompson and Appelbaum (1974) study, it was shown that variables like the values and beliefs of people with regard to demographic questions and with regard to types of governmental interventions do explain more of the variance in the dependent variable (= population policy acceptance) than do the traditional socio-demographic background variables. In our own survey from 1983 (Rozendal, Moors and Leeuw, 1985), we worked along the lines of the Ajzen-Fishbein model of attitude-behavior relationships and studied the interplay of values of children, values of life, cognitions and attitudes about demographic trends and existing policies, and social norms regarding fertility. While it was found in a public opinion survey carried out in the Netherlands in early 1983, that 22 % of the respondents answered »yes» to the question whether or not they would like to have more children when a pronatalist policy is introduced, our data report only 12 % of the respondents indicating a *willingness to reconsider* their fertility intention upon implementation of this type of policy (N = 250). However, only one third of them indicates a willingness to *change* their fertility intention in a pronatalist way. A government that uses data obtained from public opinion surveys instead of information stemming from demographic policy research, might be deceived in the long run.

Our plea therefore is to pay more attention to demographic policy research. One of the aspects needing further attention deals with the attitudes about demographic trends and policies of societal groups like the women's movement, the environmental movement, the churches, political parties, the labor unions and the employers' unions. From a sociological perspective it would be rather unwise to ignore the momentum the attitudes of these groups and movements have with respect to the acceptance and impact of pronatalist policies in liberal-democratic societies. Hardly any attention is paid to this issue, nor is it attempted to bridge the gap between attitudes and behavioral intentions of *individuals* on the one hand and these *societal* attitudes on the other. Given the growing public interest in pronatalist policies and in a more efficient allocation of public funds in industrialized countries, it is to be hoped that the interest in demographic policy research will increase accordingly.

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