



# Choosing Childlessness



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Decision-making of women about  
childlessness; the role of values

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The pictures on the front page are made by the photographer Mike Mike. They are part of the project “the face of tomorrow”. Mike Mike travels over the world, in each city photographing the first 100 people that he can convince to take part in the project. From these pictures he tries to create the average face, the face of tomorrow. The pictures used on the front page are taken in London and Amsterdam. ([www.faceoftomorrow.com](http://www.faceoftomorrow.com))

## Preface

In the past two and a half years while working on the research master spatial science I became more and more interested in people and their behavior. As a human being myself I have lots of ideas and biases about other human beings, and I wanted to test if my biases were true and to know why people behave as they do. This master thesis started from my idea that when motherhood and family are very important in a society less people will choose to become mothers. High standards set in society will make it difficult for them to be good enough mothers. From this starting point almost everything changed, and here now finally finished is my thesis about the role of values in the decision making process about childlessness.

In the past year I learned more then in any other period in my life, not only about values and childlessness, or about doing research, but mostly, and most importantly about myself. I want to thank a lot of people for the fruitful combination of challenging me and believing in me. I want to express special gratitude to the respondents who participated in the research, and shared their stories with me.

# Contents

## Preface

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	1
1.1 Background; why values and childlessness?	1
1.2 Research Questions and Objectives	2
1.3 Outline	3
<b>Chapter 2: Fertility and childlessness</b>	4
2.1 Introduction	4
2.2 Childlessness	4
2.3 Fertility theories	5
2.3.1 Micro-economic theories	6
2.3.2 Sociological, cultural and structural theories	6
2.3.3 Psychological theories	7
2.3.4 The Second Demographic Transition	8
2.3.5 Demand, supply and regulation	9
2.4 Evaluation of fertility theories	10
2.4.1 Macro level changes and differences	10
2.4.2 Micro level decision	10
<b>Chapter 3: Values and Norms</b>	13
3.1 Introduction	13
3.2 Defining values and norms	13
3.3 Values and norms on macro and micro level	14
3.3.1 Internalizing of societal values	14
3.3.2 Individual differences	15
3.4 Value changes and value differences in society	15
3.5 Values, norms and fertility	16
3.5.1 Research on macro level	16
3.5.2 Research on micro level	17

<b>Chapter 4: Decision-Making processes</b>	20
4.1 Introduction	20
4.2 Choice and decision-making	20
4.2.1 Motivation	20
4.2.2 Setting the problem space; different concepts of rationality	21
4.2.3 Decision-making styles	22
4.3 Theoretical framework of the study	23
<b>Chapter 5: Values and childlessness rates on macro level</b>	27
5.1 Introduction	27
5.2 Hypotheses	27
5.3 Data	28
5.4 Methods	29
5.4.1 Aggregation	29
5.4.2 Factor analysis	30
5.4.3 Regression	30
5.5 Results	31
5.5.1 Relations between values	31
5.5.2 Relations between values and childlessness rates	34
5.6 Conclusions	35
5.6.1 Relations between values	35
5.6.2 Values and childlessness	36
5.6.3 Discussion	37
<b>Chapter 6: Values, characteristics and childlessness on micro level</b>	39
6.1 Introduction	39
6.2 Hypotheses	39
6.3 Data	41
6.4 Methods	41
6.4.1 Factor analysis	41
6.4.2 Correlation analysis	41
6.4.3 Logistic Regression	42
6.5 Results	42

6.5.1	The creation of the values	42
6.5.2	Relations between values	44
6.5.3	Values and childlessness	46
6.5.4	Personal characteristics and childlessness	47
6.5.5	Values, personal characteristics and childlessness	49
6.6	Conclusions	50
6.6.1	The theory of the Second Demographic Transition	50
6.6.2	The Value of Children theory	51
<b>Chapter 7: Values and childlessness decisions</b>		<b>54</b>
7.1	Introduction	54
7.2	Theory and research questions	54
7.3	Methods	55
7.3.1	Selection of respondents	55
7.3.2	Problem-Centered interviews	56
7.3.3	Analysis	56
7.3.4	Ethics	57
7.4	Results	57
7.4.1	Motivation	58
7.4.2	Creation of the problem space	61
7.4.3	Decision-making styles	67
7.5	Conclusions	70
<b>Chapter 8: Conclusions</b>		<b>73</b>
8.1	Introduction	73
8.2	The macro level	74
8.3	The micro level	74
8.4	The decision-making process about childlessness	75
8.5	The Theory of the Second Demographic Transition	77
8.6	Values and voluntary childlessness	77
8.7	Discussion	78
Appendix 1: Rotated component matrix of the macro level analysis		81

Appendix 2: Inglehart Materialism Index	83
Appendix 3: Childlessness by level of transition; differences between countries	84
Appendix 4a: Interview guideline (English translation)	85
Appendix 4b: Interview guideline	89
Samenvatting (summary in Dutch)	93
References	95



# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background; why values and childlessness?

After the First Demographic Transition in Europe, population was expected to stabilize and fertility to remain at replacement level. Instead in the 1960's fertility suddenly decreased below replacement level, women started to postpone childbearing to later ages and childlessness rates increased (Van de Kaa, 1988). These changes in fertility lead to aging, population decline and high demographic pressure.

Childlessness rates are expected to increase further in the future (Sobotka, 2004). The majority of people still chooses parenthood; but voluntary childlessness becomes more and more present and accepted. The number of women that state at the beginning of their reproductive career that they want to remain childless is growing. However at the end of their reproductive career an even larger number of women will actually be (voluntary) childless (McAllister and Clarke, 2000).

Some individuals have children while others choose to remain childless. In European countries the share of the latter group is increasing. Differences in childlessness rates between European countries are also increasing. In the modern world the question why people have children at all becomes relevant. Technically it is easy to not have children, but is the decision not to have children also easily made? Why then does the majority of people still chose parenthood, are there values present in society that oblige people to have children? Why then can some people decide against that, and why does the share of people that has no children vary between countries?

Values in European countries also have radically changed. People adhere less to religious normative, authoritarian and traditional values while personal autonomy and individual freedom become more important (Hagenaars, Halman and Moors, 2003). Van de Kaa, (1988) mentions a cultural revolution; post-materialistic, secular and individualistic values replace traditional and religious norms. Freedom of choice, equality and personal development become more important.

On macro level there has been a lot of research into the decline of fertility (Van de Kaa, 1988; Lesthaeghe and Meekers, 1986, Surkyn and Lesthaeghe, 2002). The theory of the Second Demographic Transition (Van de Kaa, 1988) gives an explanatory framework for the demographic changes. According to the theory, a revolution in values together with institutional and technological change explains the demographic transition. Low nuptiality, postponement of childbearing and low fertility and high childlessness are all explained by value changes. Values can explain high childlessness rates also via low nuptiality and postponement.

On micro level there has been quantitative research into the relation between personal characteristics and childlessness (Coleman, 1990, Veevers, 1983), but not into the influence of values on micro level. Qualitative research has been done on the decision-making process of women and couples about childlessness (McAllister and Clarke, 2000, Morell, 1994), but not on how values influence this process.

With still increasing rates of lifelong childlessness insight in the decision to not have a child becomes more and more important. Furthermore values in Europe are changing and differ between countries and between individuals. Therefore this research especially focuses on the relation between values and childlessness.

On macro level the relation between values and demographic characteristics is already described, this research adds a special focus on childlessness and tests the theory of the Second Demographic Transition.

On micro level research has been done that links personal characteristics with childlessness. Some relations are found, but no theory or explanation for these relations. In this research theories that explain why certain personal characteristics are related to childlessness will be described.

Not much research has been done into the influence of micro level values and personal characteristics. According to the theory of the Second Demographic Transition societal value have major influence on fertility. However the decision to have children or not is taken by individuals, therefore in this research also the relation between micro level values and childlessness will be tested.

Quantitative research gives insight in which values and personal characteristics are related to childlessness on macro and micro level. In the research voluntary childless women, involuntary childless women, and also women that are (still) childless due to postponement are included in the childlessness variable.

While the quantitative research focuses on childlessness for all different reasons, the qualitative research focuses on voluntary childlessness. It gives insight in why and how individuals make the decision to remain childless. A lot of research has been done already into how the decision to remain childless is made. This thesis combines three parts of research. Thereby it can link macro level values, micro level values and individual decisions.

In the qualitative research it not only gives insight in how the decision is made, but also in how and why the values that were found to be related to childlessness in the quantitative part play a role in this decision. This research adds to the existing research by combining and linking three parts of research on both macro and micro level, and by building, elaborating and using theory to explain the found relationships.

## **1.2 Research Questions and objectives**

The objective of the research is to give insight in why women remain voluntary childless, and how values influence this decision. There are different research questions for the different parts of the research.

Quantitative macro level research:

- How are different macro level values related to each other?
- How are macro level values related to childlessness rates?

Quantitative micro level research:

- How are values related to each other on micro level?
- How are they related to the probability that an individual is childless?
- How are personal characteristics related to individual childlessness?

Qualitative micro level research:

- How is the decision to remain childless made?
- Why and how do values influence this decision?

### 1.3 Outline

This first chapter sets out the background, the relevance and the objectives of the research. In the subsequent chapters two to four a literature review of existing theory is given. Chapter two describes theory about fertility and childlessness. The existing theories are evaluated based on their relevance of explaining individual fertility decisions and societal childlessness rates. Chapter three defines values and norms based on existing scientific views on these concepts. Furthermore it describes theory and earlier research about the influence of values and norms on fertility decision and childlessness rates. Chapter four describes the theory about decision-making processes and the role that values can play in the different part of a decision-making process. Based on the first four chapters, at the end of chapter four a theoretical framework for the research is constructed.

Chapters five and six describe the quantitative analysis on macro and micro level. In both chapters relation between values and childlessness are tested with statistical analysis. In chapter five values orientations of individuals are aggregated to macro level and related with childlessness rates in European countries. It is tested if values that based on theory would lead to higher childlessness indeed are found more in countries with higher childlessness rates. In chapter six individual level value orientations are related to individual fertility. It is tested which values are related to a higher probability to be childless. In this chapter also the relation between personal characteristics and the probability to be childless is investigated.

Chapter seven describes the qualitative part of the research. Based on interviews with childless women in the Netherlands it is described what reasons there are for voluntary childlessness, how the decision to remain childless is made, and why and how values play a role in this decision.

Chapter eight contains the conclusions of the research, what personal characteristics and values on both macro and micro are related to childlessness and how and why do these values influence the decision to remain childless.

## **Chapter 2: Fertility and childlessness**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Childlessness rates have been increasing in European countries since about 1980 and will increase further in the future. In some countries permanent childlessness rates of 25 up to 30% are projected for the near future (Sobotka, 2004). But not for all European countries childlessness rates will be that high; there are increasing differences in childlessness levels between countries. Sobotka (2004) hypothesizes that differences in institutions and social and cultural norms explain these country level differences.

Besides differences between countries, also between individuals there are large differences in childlessness (Veevers, 1983). Some individuals have children while others choose to remain childless. Many researchers already have tried to find differences in childlessness rates between groups of people. They tried to find a relation between personal characteristics and the probability to be childless.

In this chapter first the findings from research on childlessness will be described. In order to understand how and why personal characteristics and values and country level values institutions and norms can influence childlessness theory is needed. Therefore in the second part of the chapter an overview of fertility theories is given. Finally the fertility theories are evaluated based on their utility for explaining contemporary individual fertility decisions and childlessness.

### **2.2 Childlessness**

Childlessness rates differ between countries and between individuals. On country level not much research on childlessness is done yet. Some researchers have tried to relate value orientations and institutions with demographic trends. Simons (1986) found influence on fertility patterns from individualistic value orientations. Van de Kaa (1998) found influence on marital and fertility trends from post-materialistic country level value orientations. Sobotka (2004) states that countries with institutions like childcare facilities and family support have lower childlessness levels. He also hypothesizes that countries with traditional values and norms about motherhood and work have higher childlessness levels. When norms make it impossible to combine motherhood with other ambitions people will have to choose one or the other. This will mean more people will choose to remain childless.

On the individual level many researchers have tried to relate personal characteristics and opinions to the probability to remain childless. Bram (1977) found that in childless couples, much more than in couples with children the woman is higher educated than her husband. The women are also more often employed; more often fulltime employed, and have higher level jobs. Childless couples value their marriage and social life more highly; it is an important source of satisfaction to them.

Fawcett (1983) hypothesizes that socio-economic status, educational level and religion have important influence on childlessness. People with high socio-economic status and education will have fewer children; religious people will have more children.

Veevers (1983) gives an overview of research on differences in childlessness rates between groups. She finds lower levels of childlessness for religious women, low educated women, and women with (more) siblings. Childless women are more likely to be career-oriented and ambitious, to be married at higher ages, and to be employed. According to Veevers (1983)

androgynous women who value equality and non-traditional gender roles in their relation highly are also more likely to remain childless. She states that the transition to parenthood often leads to conventional gender roles and loss of equality in marriage. Knowing that their husbands will not take their share in household responsibilities women will decide against children.

Coleman (1998, p.25) states: "Childless couples are different but not that different; the women more than the men: better educated than usual, professionally or career-oriented and ambitious, less likely to be religious or to have been married in church, individually more hedonistic, more likely to be an only child and to be emotionally distant from parents." "But", he adds "no more neurotic, immature or selfish than others."

McAllister and Clarke (2000) mention a development from only high-educated childless women to also middle class women with normal jobs who decide to remain childless. Marital status is the best predictor of childlessness; most women do not want to have children alone. In their research childless women do not see themselves as ambitious or career-minded. Childless people see parenthood as a big responsibility; something you can only do a hundred percent, a commitment or sacrifice (McAllister and Clarke, 2000).

Based on these studies, on macro level values and norms are expected to have influence on the childlessness rate in a country. Traditional family norms, post-materialistic and individualistic values will be related to high childlessness rates.

On micro-level personal characteristics are found to explain childlessness. High educated, upper-class, employed, career-oriented, ambitious women, who are not religious, only children, not married or married at later ages, and live in urban settings are expected to have a higher probability to be childless.

The studies found a relation between personal characteristics or values and childlessness and concluded that certain values or personal characteristics lead to childlessness. To understand why and how these values and personal characteristics influence the decision to remain childless, theory is needed. In the remainder of this chapter fertility theories are described. Based on fertility theories it can be understood why some people have children and others not. In the next chapter theory about values on both macro and micro level and their influence on fertility decisions will be described.

### **2.3 Fertility theories**

Through the history of demography many fertility theories have been developed. In this part theories that can be useful to understand macro level fertility trends and micro level differences in fertility and childlessness will be described.

The Demographic Transition is one of the first theories in demography. It states that modernization, urbanization, economic development and the industrial revolution cause mortality decline. Because of lower mortality there will be rapid population growth and it will no longer be necessary to have very many children to keep population on a certain level. These developments will make that after mortality decline also fertility will decline. According to the theory, the development from high mortality and fertility through a transition stage of low mortality and still high fertility and therefore population increase to a new equilibrium of low fertility and mortality will eventually take place in all societies. When the transition is completed, fertility will be on replacement level again, meaning that every new generation will replace the former in number. Population will not increase or decrease (De Bruijn, 1999). This theory is a macro level theory explaining fertility on societal level rather than individual fertility decisions (De Bruijn, 1999). However for understanding

childlessness it is valuable because it shows the influence of society on individual decisions, and it describes what societal conditions make fertility decrease.

The Theory of the Demographic Transition is a starting point in demography. From this background, new fertility theories have been developed from different scientific disciplines.

### **2.3.1 Micro-economic theories**

From the 1960 onward micro-economic theories are developed to explain fertility decisions (Van de Kaa, 1996; De Bruijn, 1999). Micro-economic theories presume rational decision making in order to maximize utility. Children have costs and opportunity costs, but also benefits as they can produce extra household income, old age security or emotional rewards. The theory of child quality states that the higher the income of the household, the more is invested in a child and the higher therefore is the child quality. Therefore with rising income, costs of having an additional child will be higher, while quality per child is also higher, therefore people will have less children (Becker, 1960).

These theories of 'new home economics' only take into account the demand for children. Easterlin complemented this theory by combining demand and supply in the 'Easterlin Synthesis'. Natural fertility determines the supply, rational decisions the demand for children, and when supply exceeds demand there is motivation to limit fertility. But the actual limitation of fertility also depends on economic and non-economic costs of birth control (Easterlin and Crimmins, 1985).

Micro-economic theories predict individual fertility decisions from individual circumstances. In that way they are a major improvement from the former macro level theories. The weakness of micro-economic theories is that it is difficult to take non-economic factors into account. Not only the costs and the economic benefits of children influence the decision, but also non-economic rewards which are difficult to give a value to. Also personal preferences and taste cannot be taken into account (Van de Kaa, 1996).

The 'Easterlin Hypothesis' is a micro-economic theory that tries to take individual preferences and tastes into account. It assumes that individual tastes for children and consumer goods are formed during socialization at the parental home. There people get used to a certain level of affluence. If couples cannot achieve this standard of living themselves they will delay marriage and reduce family size. They want to be able to provide at least the standard of living they consider appropriate for their children. Because large cohorts have worse labor market chances, they will not be able to reach their parents' standard of living. They will therefore have less children, resulting in a cyclical pattern of large and small cohorts succeeding each other (Easterlin, 1980).

### **2.3.2 Sociological, cultural and structural theories**

Demographic transition theory stated that once mortality had declined, fertility would also decline. In practice fertility remained high for a long time in some countries. Reactions on classical transition theory from sociological, cultural and structural viewpoints gave new insights. These reactions give a more theoretical explanation for the transition, thereby they explain why people make certain fertility decisions.

Notestein (1945) states that because mortality had been very high, in order for societies to survive very high fertility was needed. Therefore, religious doctrines, moral codes, laws, customs, marriage habits and family organization were all directed to maintain high fertility. While during the demographic transition modernization, improved socio-economic and health conditions cause mortality decline, fertility is much less responsive to these changes. Culture, structure and societal organization directed to support high fertility had to change before a

new fertility regime was possible (Notestein, 1945). When fertility finally started to decline this was facilitated, not by the availability, but by the acceptance of contraceptives, by the changed social norms, codes and doctrines. After this, fertility had become subject to choice, and low fertility was the rational decision (Van de Kaa, 1996).

Caldwell's (1982) 'Wealth Flow Theory' is an explanation for the demographic transition (Van de Kaa, 1996). According to Caldwell (1982) the direction of the 'wealth flow' from the moment people become parents until they die between parents and children determines if it is economically rational to have children. A wealth flow from children to parents leads to high fertility while a reversed wealth flow makes zero fertility the rational decision. The direction of the 'wealth flow' is determined by institutions, culture and the organization of society. During the demographic transition forms of production, occupation and property, kinship relations and the educational system changed. Therefore the direction of the 'wealth flow' changed and fertility decreased. In societies with traditional forms of production, extended family relations and no mass education, the 'wealth flow' is still from children to parents, and therefore high fertility is still the rational and prevalent situation.

### **2.3.3 Psychological theories**

Psychological theories explain human behavior from considerations on the intra-individual level. They describe needs, goals and motivation of individuals to explain what people want to achieve (De Bruijn, 1999). The Value of Children Theory is the only psychological theory that is exclusively designated to explain fertility decisions. In chapter four about decision-making processes other psychological theories will be described.

The Value of Children Theory of Hoffman and Hoffman (1973) states that children can be used to satisfy material, social and intrinsic needs. 'The value of children is the functions they serve or the needs they fulfill for parents.' (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1973, p20). Children have a value to their parents when they are used to fulfill certain needs. They describe nine needs that can be fulfilled by having children, but all needs can also be fulfilled in alternative ways. When can achieve all needs in alternative ways, children have no value to them, therefore they do not need to have children.

- Adulthood is the first need Hoffman and Hoffman (1973) mention. Having children makes that you are treated like an adult.
- The second need is Immortality, the drive to pass on your genes and family name. According to the authors parents like it when their children behave like they did when they were young, when through their children their ideas, norms, and behavior survive in the world.
- Thirdly Morality is mentioned, childbearing as altruistic action to show that you are not selfish, motherhood as a Christian virtue and children as a gift of God for the people who deserve it. Also having children for the survival of your religion, nationality or country is placed in this category.
- Affiliation is the fourth need that can be fulfilled by having children. Children provide family ties and they can improve the relation between spouses. Also when other people are having children you can belong to them by also having children.
- The fifth need is Stimulation, novelty or fun. Children can provide pleasure and animation; they provide pleasant occupation.
- People also have a need for Esteem. Rearing children asks for competence, creativity, and achievement and therefore created an outlet for this need.
- People want to have some Power over others, and having children gives them at least power over their children but in some societies also over other people.

- There also exist a need for Social Comparison and competition. People want to show others how happy, healthy or successful they are. One way of showing this is having a large happy family.
- The final need is Economic Utility. Children can provide positive economic utility for their parents in some societies. However in modern society the wealth flow is from parents to children (Caldwell, 1982), therefore the need for economic utility should be fulfilled in other ways than by having children.

Hoffman and Hoffman (1973) created a model based on these nine needs to explain fertility behavior. Every need can be fulfilled either by having a child or by alternatives. When having a child has lower social or financial costs than the alternative way of fulfilling the need, people will have a child, when the alternative has lower costs people will not have a child. However there are also barriers and facilitators; ‘the factors that make it more difficult or easier to realize a particular value by having children’ (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1973, p63), like health or housing conditions, competing time demands or pro or anti-natalist views. With this model individual fertility decisions can be explained from individual circumstances and characteristics.

The Value of Children theory can be used to explain why personal values and characteristics influence fertility. According to Hoffman and Hoffman (1973) the importance of certain values of children will differ between groups. This is because some groups have alternatives to achieve a certain need. When a need can easily be achieved in an alternative way it is not a value of children anymore that children can also be used to achieve that need. This means these people do not need to have children. Lower class women will have a higher desire for children because they have less alternatives to achieve values such as esteem, adulthood or power. Employed and higher educated women will more often be childless, because they have more alternatives to achieve power, stimulation, esteem, and children have higher opportunity cost for them. In rural settings children have higher economic value, lower costs, and lower opportunity cost.

Fawcett (1983) states that background factors and personal characteristics influence fertility via the values of children. Personal characteristics determine which values of children are considered most important. People with high socio-economic status and education will value children less for their economic value or for stimulation, power and esteem and more for psychosocial rewards. The Bible states “Be Fruitful and Increase in Number”, and also in other religions it is important to populate the world. Therefore the morality value of children will be more important for religious people; they believe it is moral to have children. Fawcett (1983) found a relation between which values of children are most important and fertility. When children are valued for economic utility or lineage (Immortality) fertility is high, while when psychosocial rewards are valued most, fertility is lower. A transition in the value of children from economic values to psychosocial values will therefore go together with a transition in fertility. Changes in values and institutions in Europe changed the relative importance of the different values of children, therefore fertility changed; this is what happened in the Second Demographic Transition.

#### **2.3.4 The Second Demographic Transition**

After the First Demographic Transition in Europe, population was expected to stabilize and fertility to remain at replacement level. Instead, in the 1960’s fertility suddenly decreased below replacement level, women started to postpone childbearing to later ages and childlessness rates and extramarital birthrates increased (Van de Kaa, 1988). These demographic changes are called the Second Demographic Transition.



The Theory of The Second Demographic Transition explains these demographic changes from value changes, and institutional and technological developments. The technological developments made modern contraceptives widely available. Institutional changes consisted of rising female educational level and labor participation, increasing social security and loosening influence of religious groupings. This created more freedom of choice for individuals about if and when to have children and increased the opportunity costs of having children.

These technological and institutional changes come together with a cultural revolution of value changes. Post-materialistic, secular, individualistic values replace traditional and religious norms. Freedom of choice, equality and personal development become more important.

These three developments on the one hand make childlessness open to choice, modern contraceptives make childlessness possible, changing values and institutions make it accepted. Besides having children, people are now also able to choose for childlessness. The value changes on the other hand change what is important to people. They will choose the option that they perceive as the best way to achieve the values that are important to them. People are motivated by personal development and individualism will more often choose childlessness.

### **2.3.5 Demand, supply and regulation**

Bulatao and Lee (1983) explain fertility from supply, demand and regulation. Supply of children is dependent on the proximate determinants of fertility (The biological and sociological behavioral factors that can influence fertility (Bongaarts, 1978 cited in De Bruijn, 1999)) and on child survival. The perceived values and disvalues of children and their perceived importance determine family size desires or demand for children. Fertility regulation is dependent on the availability, acceptance and costs of contraceptives.

Supply, demand and regulation are dependent on both macro and micro level conditions: values, norms, and personal characteristics. When supply exceeds demand there is motivation for fertility control. When the (economic and non-economic) costs of contraceptive use are very high, fertility will not be controlled and supply will determine actual fertility. However, when contraceptives are accepted, available and affordable, costs of regulation will be low. In that case people will realize their demand; they will control their fertility when supply exceeds demand (Bulatao and Lee, 1983).

Coale (1973 as cited in Van de Kaa, 1996) argues that there are three preconditions for fertility decline. First, techniques to reduce fertility should be known and available. Second, low fertility should be perceived as advantageous. Third, people must perceive fertility as subject to choice; they should feel free to decide about their own fertility. The costs of fertility regulation as stated above by Bulatao and Lee (1983) are determined by both the first and the third precondition. Techniques for fertility regulation must be available and accepted. If not fertility is not subject to choice, supply will determine fertility. On the other hand when fertility is subject to choice and techniques are available, fertility will be determined by demand. Demand will be low if low fertility is perceived advantageous (Van de Kaa, 1996).

Lee and Bulatao (1983) state that demand for children is dependent on costs, opportunity cost, tastes and values, and wealth or income. Wealth or income determines the budget constraints of people. Within those constraints they choose to spend money on either children or consumer goods. Children and consumer goods have costs, children also have opportunity costs and both provide utility. The utility children provide is determined by the values that they fulfill (Lee and Bulatao, 1983). People want to maximize their utility. When people can gain more utility from children or children have relative lower cost they will have a taste for children; they are willing to spend a larger share of their budget on children.

## **2.4 Evaluation of fertility theories**

Some individuals have children while others remain childless and in European countries the share of the latter group is increasing. Also differences in childlessness rates between European countries are increasing. In order to understand the increase in childlessness levels and the difference between countries, a theory is needed that describes macro level characteristics and macro level changes that can influence individual decisions. To understand the difference in fertility behavior and decisions between individuals, micro-level theory is needed. In the last part of this chapter the theories that can explain these changes and differences in childlessness will be described.

### **2.4.1 Macro level changes and differences**

The changes in society that influence fertility and childlessness levels are best described in the theory of the Second Demographic Transition. According to Van De Kaa (1988) rising childlessness levels can be explained from cultural, institutional and technological changes. Technological changes make modern contraceptives available. Institutional changes and cultural, value changes make that fertility becomes subject to choice, people are free to decide about their own fertility. Therefore demand will determine actual fertility (Lee and Bulatao, 1983). Institutional changes also cause higher childlessness via low nuptiality and postponement of childbearing. Fertility demand is dependant on societal values and institutions. Values determine what is important to people. If childlessness is perceived instrumental to achieving these values they will choose childlessness. Societal values also influence which Values of Children (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1973) are most important to people and what alternatives people in countries have to achieve these needs.

Values in European countries are changing and differ between countries. These values influence fertility demand and regulation. The Theory of the Second Demographic Transition describes value changes that lead to post-transitional demographic characteristics like high childlessness rates. Therefore this theory can be used to explain rising childlessness levels and differences in childlessness between European countries.

### **2.4.2 Micro level decisions**

The Value of Children theory and the micro economic theories are micro level theories. These theories explain differences in individual fertility decisions from differences between individuals. The Values of Children are motivations to have children to individuals that have no alternative means to achieve these nine needs. Costs and opportunity costs, facilitators and barriers determine if people will choose children or an alternative way to achieve a certain need. People's values and personal characteristics will determine if they have alternative means to achieve the needs, what means they have and if they will choose to use these alternatives or children to achieve the nine needs. In this way personal characteristics and values will influence fertility via the Values of Children. They will determine the cost and opportunity costs of having children and the available alternatives to achieve the values in another way then by having children (Fawcett, 1983; Hoffman and Hoffman, 1973).

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## **Chapter 3: Values and norms**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Values and norms are often mentioned concepts in everyday language. According to the American Heritage Dictionary (2004) values are principles, standards or qualities considered worthwhile and desirable. Values define the meaning given to things and situations; what is important, what is desirable, what is good and what is beautiful. Values underlie beliefs, ideas and opinions, that is, based on values; beliefs, ideas and opinions about situations are formed. Values define how people act and react to situations (wikipedia, 2006). The aim of this chapter is to define values and norms and to describe how they can influence micro level decisions and macro level outcomes.

First values and norms in scientific literature are described, based on that the concepts are defined. Second, values and value changes in societies will be described. In the last part, earlier research on the relation between values and fertility will be described. Which values are expected to be related to fertility or childlessness rates?

### **3.2 Defining values and norms**

According to Rokeach (1973) people have a limited number of values, and all people will possess the same values to different degrees. Rokeach (1973, p.5) defines a value as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence.” A value system combines the different values a person has, and orders them by relative importance. “A value system is an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conducts or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance” (Rokeach, 1973, p.5).

Kluckhohn (1959, p.395) states: ‘a value is a conception (...) of an individual or of a group of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of action. He explains that values are not observable but that they are manifested in what is said and done by people. A ‘conception of the desirable’ means that it is a subjective view; not of what is desired, but of what should be desired morally or aesthetically.

Schwartz (1992) studied the meanings and dimensions of values and value differences. He defines values as ‘concepts or beliefs that, pertain to desirable end states or behaviors, transcend specific situations, guide selection or evaluation of behavior and events and are ordered by relative importance’ (Schwartz, 1992, p4). In 1999 (p24) Schwartz again defines values. According to him ‘values are trans-situational criteria or goals ordered by importance as guiding principles in life. (...) Conceptions of the desirable that guide the way social actors select actions and evaluate events.’

Values determine ends, what is important to individuals, or what they want to achieve, and their means, the preferable ways of achieving these ends. People possess a number of values to different extents, organized by relative importance to them. People will first be motivated by their strongest values, choose the ends and means according to that value, and thereafter by other values. Values transcend specific situations, they do not determine what is the right thing to do in one situation but what is always important and preferable. In this research values will be defined as enduring beliefs internal to people about what ends and means are preferable, stated differently what is important, and what is the best way to achieve it to them.

Values are the enduring beliefs about preferable means and ends; they are independent of the situation. Based on values, rules are created what is appropriate to do in specific situations; norms (Schwartz, 1999). While values transcend specific situations (Schwartz, 1992), norms apply to one specific situation (Oppenheim Mason, 1983). Values guide people opinions and actions via norms. According to Oppenheim Mason (1983) norms are rules and standards widely shared in the social group that state how people ought to behave, think and feel in a particular social situation. Values are the underlying vague beliefs about what is good. Based on values more specific norms are formed what people ought and ought not to do in specific situations.

Values and norms can not be observed but determine people's preferred means and ends, therefore it is possible to construct the underlying values and norms from the opinions and actions of individuals. Opinions and actions are guided by values and norms, therefore they give insight in them.

### **3.3 Values and norms on macro and micro level**

In the field of demography values and norms play an important role. However on how values and norms influence individual demographic behavior not many research has been conducted. Oppenheim Mason (1983) defines values and norms and explain their roles in a theoretical study into the desire for children. She states that values and norms are determined on societal level, it are ideas of what is good and what people ought to do that society imposes on people. Values and norms are macro level cultural or societal phenomena: they are imposed on the individual by the group.

Societal values are the values that are shared between many individual participants in a society. Individuals learn to adhere to the same norms as others and in that way recreate the societal values.

Values and norms are characteristics of a society; however they are often measured for countries, while the borders of a country and a society not have to coincide. However most countries have a single language, educational and political system, the same mass media and national symbols. Therefore most values will be shared through a whole country, while some values will differ between cultural subgroups or between individuals (Schwartz, 1999).

#### **3.3.1 Internalizing of societal values**

Although values and norms are macro level phenomena, they influence micro level decisions. In order to do that they have to be internalized by people. To have influence on individual decisions the norms and values should work on micro level (Coleman, 1990). Oppenheim Mason (1983) states that through the socialization process people 'learn' to adhere to the norms that persist in the group. People adhere personally to the norms that are persistent in society and therefore are influenced by these norms in their decisions. The societal level norms are a blueprint for the norms all individuals in that society adhere to. When there is a norm in society that having children is good, people will start thinking that way themselves and therefore they will have children.

People learn to personally adhere to the norms and values persistent in society, therefore these norms and values will influence their individual behavior. This means that the norms and values in society can be measured by asking individuals about what they and others ought to do (Oppenheim Mason, 1983).

### **3.3.2 Individual differences**

Although values and norms are imposed on individual by society there can still be differences between individuals. Schwartz (1999, p25) states: “Individual value priorities are a product both of shared culture and of unique personal experience.(...) As a result, the members of each cultural group share many value-relevant experiences and they are socialized to accept shared social values. Of course, within cultural groups there is individual variation in value priorities due to the unique experiences and personalities of different individuals.”

Oppenheim Mason (1983) states that for a social norm in order to be effective a large enough share of individuals in society should adhere to it. About some social rules there is no complete consensus, some people may distract themselves from that norms. This is possible when the sanctions for aberrant behavior are not important to these people, or when only a small share of people without much sanctioning power adheres to the norm. There can be differences in behavior between subgroups in society. This is either because they adhere to different norms, or because some sanctions are not important to them, so they can ignore a social norm. When only part of the individuals in society behaves according to a certain rule, this rule can either be an ineffective social norm, or a social norm only effective in a subgroup of society (Oppenheim Mason, 1983).

According to Surkyn and Lesthaeghe (2002) personal characteristics influence peoples micro level values and the macro level values and norms that apply to them. Personal characteristics determine the unique experiences of individuals and the subgroups to which individuals belong.

### **3.4 Value changes and value differences in society**

Different authors have tried to measure values and value change in western societies. Inglehart (1977) states that the values in western societies are changing. He describes the causes and effects of value changes.

According to Inglehart (1977) values are mostly formed during adolescence. People have psychological and safety needs and higher order needs (this is further explained in chapter 4 (Maslow, 1970)). When during adolescence the lowers order needs are fulfilled people will try to achieve higher order needs. They create values that state that higher order needs are good and important. This value orientation is often called post-materialism. People will no longer strive for material needs. Instead freedom of speech, equality, beauty or participation are mentioned as important goals.

Because of economic prosperity and the absence of war new generations grow up with the lower order needs fulfilled. These people will develop different values than former generations. Economic and technological development and distinctive cohort experiences (like war, famine or the absence of them) cause values changes in societies (Inglehart, 1977). These individual value changes create post-materialistic societal values. Based on these new post-materialistic values in society different norms will be established.

In the theory of the Second demographic transition, Van de Kaa (1988) described value changes in European countries. He mentions a development towards individualism, secularization, personal freedom, and higher order needs orientation, i.e. post-materialism.

### **3.5 Values, norms and fertility**

Values and norms have influence on individual fertility decisions. This can happen in different ways. The most direct form is a societal value or norm directly concerning fertility. Values that having children is good, and fertility regulation is not good directly influence fertility. In the same way also norms about when to have children and ideal family size have direct influence. Norms and values concerning marriage, sexual intercourse, contraceptives or abortion also influence fertility. Other norms and values can have indirect influence on fertility. Norms about work, motherhood, education or relations can strongly influence the value (utility) of children and the alternatives present to decision makers (Oppenheim Mason, 1983). According to Schwartz (1999) values and norms also influence the institutional system of a country. The educational system, childcare facilities, family support and the facilitating of part time work are all part of this institutional system. Therefore also via institutions values and norms can influence fertility in a country.

#### **3.5.1 Research on macro level**

The theory of the Second Demographic Transition (Van de Kaa, 1988) describes how values influence demographic changes. Secularization, individualization, post-materialism and a development towards more emphasis on personal freedom and democracy are mentioned as explanation for the demographic changes. Therefore these values are expected to be related to decreasing fertility and increasing childlessness.

In 1998 Van de Kaa again researches the effects of value orientations on demographic change. He used the distinction between post-materialist and materialist values to distinguish societies. Countries with more post-materialistic values have lower fertility and higher ages of childbearing. This indicates that these countries are further in the demographic transition. Because increasing childlessness rates are also part of the demographic transition, countries with post-materialistic values will also have higher childlessness rates.

Lesthaeghe and Meekers (1986) tried to find relations between different value orientations and between values and demographic trends. They found increasing post-materialistic and secular value orientations to be related to less nationalistic values and less traditional family norms. These values together are related to lower fertility, more childlessness and more cohabitation.

Simons (1986) compared values in European countries with each other. He found a relation between individualism and fertility rates. According to Simons, there is a religious relation between individual and society. This religious character of the relation between individual and society makes a moral obligation to reproduce. Individualist values make that people can act against this moral obligation. Collective values intensify this obligation; the future of the society is dependent on the willingness of its member to reproduce.

According to Simons (1986) religiosity has two dimensions. If people belief in God, and if religion is important to them determines personal religiosity. The other dimension, secular individualism, is determined by the influence of religious norms and doctrines; does a society accept cohabitation, childlessness, abortion or homosexuality. Secular individualist values in a society will make childlessness accepted, and therefore will be related to high childlessness rates.

According to Van Dalen (2004) the value nationalism influences norms about fertility. Fertility is needed in order for society to survive and to maintain its power and its identity. Nationalistic countries value the maintenance of the national identity and power higher; this will lead to stronger norms to have children or to institutions that promote childbearing. Persistent low fertility will cause immigrants and foreign descents to be a growing share of the population. This can lead to a loss of the countries culture, value system, language or



national identity. Tolerance toward others will determine how much this will be perceived as a problem, and therefore how much norms and institutions will be designed to keep fertility levels high.

### **3.5.2 Research on micro level**

Also on micro level research has been done on the relation between values and fertility. Surkyn and Lesthaeghe (2002) state that value orientations influence life course decisions and household positions influences values. They researched the values and household positions of individuals in a number of European countries. They found most materialistic, intolerant, conformist and religious values for married couples with children. Cohabiting couples without children are on the other end of the values spectrum, they have most post-materialistic, secular, non-conformist, anti-authorial, egalitarian and tolerant values.

Lesthaeghe and Moors related the personal characteristics and values of individuals in European countries to parenthood. They find significant negative effect on the probability to remain childless from religious upbringing, low socio-economic position and conservative values.

Personal values can influence the relative importance of the different Values of Children, and thereby the number of children people want to have (Fawcett, 1983). Norms and values can exclude alternative ways of achieving the nine needs. When there are no alternative ways open to choice to achieve a certain need it will be necessary to have children (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1973).

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## **Chapter 4: Decision-making processes**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In chapter two and three theories about fertility and values have been described. Fertility is influenced by societal and personal values and by societal and personal characteristics. To understand how these can influence individual fertility decisions, insight in decision-making processes is needed. This chapter discusses theory about decision-making processes. In the second part of the chapter a theoretical framework integrating the theories from the first four chapters will be made. This model will explain individual fertility decisions from macro and micro level values and characteristics via a decision-making process.

### **4.2 Choice and decision-making**

Theory about decision-making usually distinguishes three components; the set of alternatives open to choice, an evaluation of the consequences of the alternatives and a selection of a particular alternative according to some criterion or rule (De Bruijn, 1999).

Human behavior is based on motivation. What motivates people are the values they want to achieve. Based on their values they will choose the behavioral alternative that they think is instrumental to achieve a value. Before being able to compare alternatives on which one is the best instrument to achieve your values, first the decision-maker has to get insight in the alternatives open to choice and their consequences.

When the decision-maker would have perfect knowledge and information he or she would be able to oversee the objective choice situation. The objective choice situation is a complete overview of all the real alternatives with all their real consequences; this is called the task environment. In reality decision-makers have no complete insight in the task environment. They have a subjective perception of the task environment, with only the alternatives and consequences they can oversee, and that they consider open to choice. The subjective perception of a decision-maker of the choice situation is called the problem space. Different concepts of rationality give different views on the problem space of decision-makers (De Bruijn, 1999).

Once the problem space is set, decision-makers will evaluate the alternatives based on their motivation. How people evaluate the different alternatives and select the alternative of their choice depends on their decision-making style (De Bruijn, 1999).

#### **4.2.1 Motivation**

In micro-economic theory people want to maximize their economic utility. However in social sciences people are known to have more objectives. Different theories about what people want to achieve speak about goals, values, motives, ends states or needs. All these terms are used interchangeable. Many authors have tried to make empirical as well as theoretical models of human motivation by listing the goals or values people want to achieve.

Human behavior is motivated by the goals, needs or values people want to achieve. To explain and understand behavior therefore it is needed to know what behavior is instrumental to achieving a certain need, and which need people try to achieve. Theories that just list the different needs of people cannot explain why one person's behavior is directed to achieve one need, and another person's behavior is motivated by another need. These theories explain behavior by stating it is instrumental for achieving a certain need. Still why a person wanted to achieve especially that need, and not one of the other needs remains unanswered. The

behavior of the person therefore is not fully explained; when he would have been motivated by one of the other needs he would have behaved differently.

Maslow's theory of basic needs is a special theory of human motivation. This theory not only lists the basic needs of people, but orders them by relative importance. Thereby it can predict by which of the needs a person will be motivated. According to Maslow (1970) all people have (in this order) physiological needs (food), safety needs, needs for belongingness and love, needs for esteem, (competence, status, achievement, etc) and for self actualization. People in the end want to fulfill all those needs, but they only strive for the fulfillment of higher order needs when lower order needs are fulfilled to a certain degree. The behavior of people who have nothing will be motivated by lower order needs. Only after they fulfilled their needs for food and safety to a certain degree they will start to strive for love and belongingness. Only when all other needs are fulfilled a person will strive for self actualization. This means that the level of fulfillment of a person's needs will determine which need motivates his behavior.

Maslow's theory explains why a person's behavior is motivated by a certain need, and not by one of the other needs. Therefore it can also explain differences in behavior between individuals. It can explain why one individual tries to achieve physiological needs why another strives for esteem by the level in which these persons needs are already fulfilled. These individuals have different motivations, because they strive for different needs, this can explain why they make different decisions in the same choice situation.

The basic needs are the same in all societies, but the means to fulfill them are culturally dependent. Having children can be the best instrumental behavior to achieve the physiological need of old age security in one society, while in another society other instruments are available.

The lowest order need that is not fulfilled motivates people's behavior, also their fertility behavior. When physiological and safety needs are fulfilled people's fertility behavior will be motivated by the need for love and belongingness. They will decide to have children when it is instrumental to this need. When the need for belongingness and love is fulfilled people want to achieve esteem. Also fertility decision will be motivated by this need; people have children when it is the best instrument available to achieve esteem. When all other needs are fulfilled people strive for self-actualization. Also their fertility behavior will then be instrumental to this need.

#### **4.2.2 Setting the problem space; different concepts of rationality**

Rational behavior is behavior that is expected to lead to reaching an objective or fulfilling a need, performed with the intention to reach that need. People want to reach certain goals or end states, or maximize their utility. When they choose a behavioral alternative with the intention of thereby achieving this goal or utility, this is rational behavior.

There are different concepts of rationality. Micro economic theory developed the concept of substantive rationality. It presumes omnipotent humans; people who know all the alternatives, all the consequences and are able to process all the information to make a decision. According to substantive rationality the problem space of a decision-maker is similar with the task environment (De Bruijn, 1999).

In reality, people are not omnipotent; they are not able to oversee all the alternatives open to choice, or all the possible consequences of those alternatives and they have limited information processing capacity. When this is taken into account rationality is bounded. The problem space of an individual depends on the information about alternatives and consequences this individual has. People receive information from the social context, based on that they create their own image of reality and their position in it. Based on their

information they can oversee a number of alternatives and consequences, but not all. Their values determine which alternatives they perceive open to choice. Because people have subjective and incomplete information the problem space differs from the task environment. When within this subjective problem space people make a rational decision this is bounded rationality (De Bruijn, 1999).

A third concept of rationality is procedural rationality. Which alternatives and consequences people take into account in their decision is dependent on the procedural rationality. When people have to make a decision they will create a problem space with the alternatives they consider open to choice and the consequences they expect of these alternatives. People will choose to search a certain amount of information on alternatives and consequences, but maybe not search information on all alternatives. Procedural rationality states that people can create their own problem space and that this problem space is subject to change (De Bruijn, 1999).

The last concept of rationality is expressive rationality. The other concepts state that it is rational to choose the alternative of which you think it will have the highest utility, or of which you think it will help to reach your goals. Expressive rationality states that people also question their goals. They not only wonder what they should do to reach their goals, but also what their goals should be (De Bruijn, 1999).

According to procedural and expressive rationality people can decide about their problem space and their goals. Based on their values they decide what goals they want to achieve and what alternatives are open to choice to them.

#### **4.2.3 Decision-making styles**

When the goals or values that motivate people's behavior and the problem space with all the alternatives considered open to choice are set, the actual decision has to be made. Decision-makers in some way have to evaluate the different alternatives considered open to choice to find one that is most likely to lead to the fulfillment of a value. How a decision-maker will evaluate the alternatives and select the alternative of his preference depends on the decision-making style. There has to be a criterion or rule how the evaluation and the selection will be performed (De Bruijn, 1999). Decisions can be made based on the extensive evaluation of all the alternatives and all their consequences. The decision-maker then has to calculate which alternative has the highest expected utility or the highest probability of achieving certain goals or values. Because of the high demands on time and effort this strategy is not always the optimal strategy. Decisions can also be made based on simpler evaluation rules or criteria. The first step in making the actual decision therefore is to choose either for extensive evaluation, or for a simpler decision style.

When the decision-maker has chosen for extensive evaluation he in some way has to calculate the expected outcomes of the different alternatives. How this can be done is described in value expectancy models. Value expectancy models assume that people multiply for every alternative the probability of a certain consequence (expectancy) with the utility or value of that consequence. When for all the alternatives the value times expectancies are summed, the alternative with the highest outcome has the highest expected value and therefore will be chosen (De Bruijn, 1999).

The subjective utility model is one of the value expectancy models. It multiplies the perceived probability with the perceived utility of the consequences. By using subjective probabilities and utilities (probabilities and utilities as they are perceived by the decision-maker) the model is a good predictor of actual decisions (Hollerbach, 1983).

The Value Expectancy model of Fishbein (1972 cited in Hollerbach, 1983) states that decision are based on both attitudinal and normative variables. For every behavioral

alternative the expectancy times the value are summed. Next to this personal evaluation of the alternatives also the perceived opinion of others times the motivation to comply with these others are taken into account. The intention to choose one behavioral alternative is dependent therefore on both the perceived personal utility as well as on the perceived normative expectations. These two terms are empirically weighted; weights are assigned to the normative and the personal utility component in such a way that the outcome is the best predictor of actual behavior. When in a society normative expectations are more important than personal utility maximizing this will be expressed in a higher weight of the normative component (Fishbein, 1972 cited in Hollerbach, 1983).

It depends upon the importance of the decision if a decision-maker will evaluate all the alternatives or will use some simplification strategy. For important decisions people are willing to make the effort of extensive evaluation in order to make the most optimal decision. For less important decision it is not rational to waste time and effort on the extensive evaluation. It also depends on the perceived control and on the amount of information people have what decision strategy they will use. When they perceive low control on the outcomes of their behavior they will not use extensive evaluation strategies. When they think their decision has almost no influence on the outcome, they will not spend much time on making the best decision. When they have little information about the possible alternatives or consequences they will also not make extensive calculations. When there are other alternatives and consequences they cannot oversee their calculations are useless (De Bruijn, 1999).

People have different strategies for simplifying their decision. For instance they consider sequentially the alternatives and choose the first that is satisfying, although this might not be the optimal alternative. Another strategy is to consider only a few consequences of every alternative. People sometimes only compare the best or the worst possible outcome of every alternative and decide based on comparison of only those consequences. Or they attach equal probabilities to all the consequences in order to simplify the calculations (De Bruijn, 1999). When decisions are made everyday people will only evaluate the alternatives once and based on that they will make the same decision everyday. These routine or institutionalized behaviors make everyday life easier.

Social norms can strongly influence decision-making. When people perceive only one alternative open to choice because of normative constraints decision-making is passive. There will be no rational evaluation of different alternatives. People will behave according to the norms, values and habits of their society (Hollerbach, 1983). Their problem space consists of only one alternative because that decision is the norm or the habit in their group. Because they have never seen alternative choice options they do not perceive them open to choice.

When people do not want to make a clear decision this is called ambivalent decision-making. Instead of making one major decision about if they want a child or not, they make incremental decisions, for instance about the use of contraceptives, or unprotected sex. These are also fertility decisions, but they think they let nature decide for them (Hollerbach, 1983).

### **4.3 Theoretical framework of the study**

Values and norms in society are a macro level phenomenon that influences micro level decisions. In the process of socialization individuals internalize the norms and values in society. They start to adhere personally to the values and norms persistent in society. The societal values and norms are therefore working on micro level and therefore they influence the decisions of individuals.

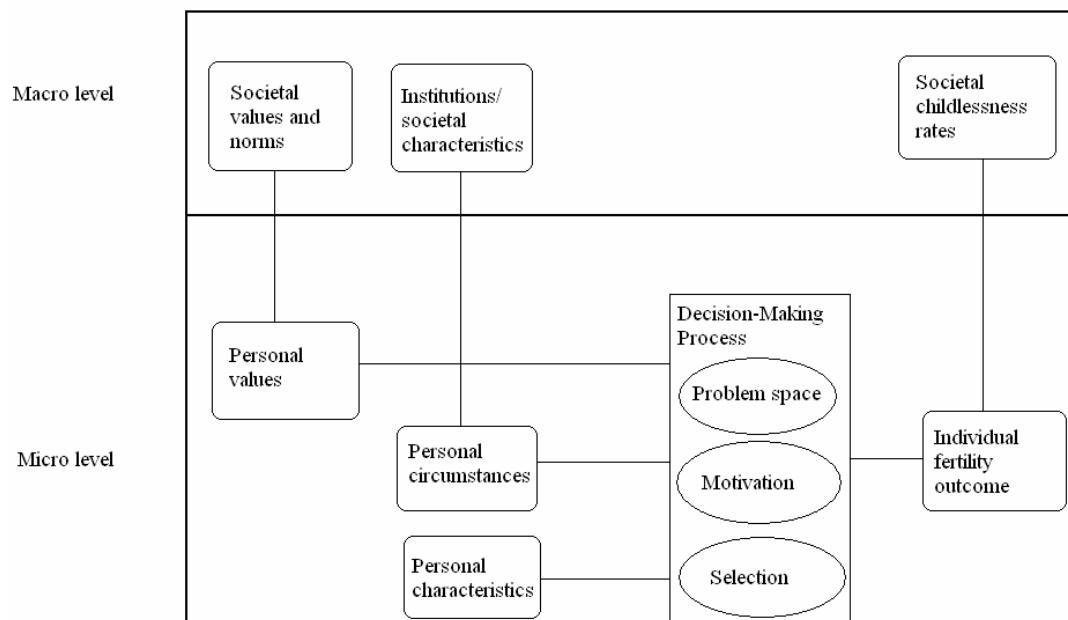
Other macro level phenomena that influence individual behavior are institutions (or societal characteristics). The educational system in a country, childcare facilities, family support or the facilitating of part-time work have influence on individual fertility decisions and childlessness. These institutions influence personal circumstances; the alternatives people have and their relative cost. In that way institutions work through on micro level and thereby have influence on micro level decisions.

Besides the internalized societal values people also have personal values. According to Schwartz (1992) values are formed by both societal experiences and unique personal experiences. Therefore everybody has unique personal values. Internalized societal values and personal values together determine what goals people want to achieve and what alternatives are open to choice to them.

Personal characteristics like educational level, marital status, jobs status and age will also influence fertility. These characteristics influence the alternatives people have to fulfill certain values (of children) and the relative costs of these alternatives (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1973).

Figure 4.1 is a theoretical framework in which the theories about fertility, values and decision-making are integrated. The structure of the model is based on Coleman's (1990) methodological individualism and on the integrated model of fertility of De Bruijn (1999). Macro level values and characteristics influence the personal values and circumstances of individuals. These micro level values and circumstances together with personal characteristics influence the different components of an individual decision-making process. The outcome of the decision-making process is individual fertility. People either have children or they are childless. All these individual outcomes can be summed; this will result in a macro level outcome, the childlessness rate in a country.

Figure 4.1: Theoretical Framework



(Based on Coleman (1990) and De Bruijn (1999))



In a decision-making process individuals create their problem space, set the goals they want to achieve and select the alternative of their preference. The different components of their decision-making process are influenced by personal values, including personally learned societal values, and by personal circumstances and personal characteristics.

The objective task environment is dependent on personal characteristics and circumstances. They determine what alternatives people have and what the costs and benefits are. The problem space is different from the task environment because people have incomplete information and because of values and norms. Values and norms can exclude alternatives from the problem space of an individual. Because they are not accepted in their values system, they will not be considered as alternatives open to choice. Values and norms also influence the (normative) cost and benefits of the other alternatives.

The motivation component is influenced by values. Values determine the goals people want to achieve. Therefore based on values, people will evaluate the different alternatives in their problem space. Alternatives that lead to the achievement of these values or goals will be evaluated positively. According to Maslow, people are willing to achieve the lowest need that is not yet fulfilled. They will evaluate the behavioral alternatives they have based on what alternative is most likely to lead to the fulfillment of that need. According to Hoffman and Hoffman people's fertility behavior is guided by the nine values they want to achieve. Children can fulfill these values but they can also be fulfilled in alternative ways. When an individual has no alternatives of achieving one of these values, this person will have children to fulfill the value.

Values and personal characteristics determine what alternatives are open to choice to an individual, what the consequences of these alternatives are, and what people are willing to achieve with their behavior. Based on this they will have to make a decision about what alternative to choose.

How the selection of an alternative of preference is performed depends on the perceived control, the (perceived) amount of information and the (perceived) importance of the decision. When these are all high people will intensively evaluate the behavioral alternatives and their consequences. Otherwise people will use some simplified decision-making strategy or behave from routine.

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## **Chapter 5: Values and childlessness rates on societal level**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In chapters two and three theories about values, norms and fertility are described. According to these theories macro level values and norms in countries influence individual fertility decision and therefore macro level fertility outcomes. In this chapter it will be tested what relations exists between macro level values and norms and childlessness rates. The analysis is done by quantitative comparison of values and childlessness rates in European countries. The European Value Survey measures opinions and actions of individuals in European countries. Based on these opinions and actions the underlying macro level value orientations can be constructed. These values then are compared with country level childlessness rates.

Based on the theory it is expected that certain values will be related to each other and to the childlessness rate in a country. First a number of hypotheses about this are formulated. Second the data and methods used will be described. The results of the analysis show the relations between values and between values and childlessness rates. Based on these results conclusions about how values are related to each other and how they are related to childlessness rates can be drawn.

### **5.2 Hypotheses**

In the theory, macro level values are said to have influence on fertility decisions of individuals. These individual fertility decisions add up to country level fertility and childlessness outcomes. Therefore a relation between macro level values and childlessness rates in a country can be expected.

According to Van de Kaa (1988) the Second Demographic Transition is a development in which values in countries change towards more post-materialistic, individualistic, secular, freedom, non-traditional and tolerant values. These value changes will diffuse as one development over European Countries. Therefore these values will be related to each other, and together will be related to changing demographic behavior. Increasing childlessness is one of the demographic phenomena of the Second Demographic Transition, therefore post-transitional values are expected to be related to high childlessness rates.

Besides Van de Kaa (1988) also other researchers expected influence of religiosity, materialism and individualism on childlessness (Simons, 1986; Lesthaeghe and Meekers, 1986). They found higher childlessness rates in countries with secular, post-materialistic or individualistic values.

Post-materialism, individualism, secularism, tolerance and freedom values and non-traditional values will all be related to each other and to high childlessness rates.

Based on the research of Van Dalen (2004) childlessness rates are expected to be lower in countries with a nationalistic value orientation and higher in countries with tolerant values. Personal values as well as institutional arrangements promoting childbearing will cause this difference.

According to Simons (1986) there are more dimensions to the value religiosity. The personal religious experience has become separated from religious norms and doctrines. Religious norms and doctrines loose their influence on a society, although the individuals might still believe in God. Secular Individualism is the absence of traditional religious norms and

doctrines in people's values. On macro level secular individualism is expected to be related to childlessness even more than religiosity itself. The absence of traditional norms about marriage, procreation or divorce leads to higher childlessness rates.

Based on the theory a number of hypotheses are formulated.

- On country level, post-materialism, individualism, secularism, tolerance, freedom, and less traditional family norms are related to each other.
- Countries that have post-transitional values (post-materialistic, individualistic, secular tolerant, freedom, and non-traditional values) have higher childlessness rates.
- Religiosity has two dimensions, these dimensions are independent of each other.
  - Secular individualism is related to other post-transitional values and to high childlessness rates
  - Personal religiosity is not related to post-transitional values and does not have influence on the childlessness rate.
- Childlessness rates are lower in countries with more nationalistic values.

### **5.3 Data**

To test these hypotheses data from the European Values Study (EVS) and the Family and Fertility Survey (FFS) are used. The European Value Study is a survey conducted in 32 countries in Europe. According to Halman (2001) values can be measured by analyzing documents, observing actual behavior or by asking questions. Because the EVS wants to compare values between countries and over time, the best way to measure them is a survey. The goal of the EVS was to examine if there is a common European identity and to get insight in the value differences, similarities and changes within Europe. Therefore a standard questionnaire was conducted in all European countries. Per country 1000 to 3000 people are included in the survey and questioned about religion, morality, gender roles, politics, democracy, economics, work, ecology and solidarity (Halman, 2001; Inglehart et. al, 2004). The survey was conducted in 1990-1991 and again in 1999-2001 in the European Union countries. In this research the data of the 1999-2001 wave is used.

The FFS is a survey conducted in the 1990's in 24 member states of the UNECE; the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. The goal was to get more comparable research on family and fertility in different European countries and to be able to do cross-country comparative research. The survey asks samples of men and women in the countries about their fertility and family situation. Household characteristics, partnerships, fertility regulation, children and personal characteristics and views are included in the survey. In this research only the childlessness rate in the country is derived from the FFS. The FFS contains information on the number of children of women in different age groups. Only for the age group 35-39 data is available for all countries on the number of children. The percentage of childless women in that age group therefore will be used as a variable in the research.

Of the 30 European countries in the 1999-2001 wave EVS only for 20 there is also data in the FFS. Only countries that are included in both surveys can be used in the research; only for those countries there is data on both value orientations and childlessness rates. Table 5.1 shows the countries that are included in the analysis and their childlessness rates.

Table 5.1: Countries in the analysis and their childlessness rates.

Country	Childlessness rate among women 35-39	Number of women in sample	Year FFS research conducted
Austria	13,9	4500	1996
Belgium	12,4	3200	1992
Bulgaria	8,3	2500	1998
Czech	3,5	1700	1997
Denmark	15,9	*	1994
Estonia	7,8	5000	1994
Finland	13,2	4200	1989
France	11,3	2900	1994
Germany	15,4	6000	1992
Greece	8,4	3000	1999
Hungary	7,5	3600	1993
Italy	16,6	4800	1995
Latvia	5,3	2700	1995
Lithuania	9,4	3000	1995
Netherlands	17,0	4500	1993
Poland	9,5	4200	1991
Portugal	11,5	6000	1997
Slovenia	3,5	2800	1995
Spain	9,2	4000	1995
Sweden	11,5	3300	1993

\* In Denmark the FFS results are not based on a survey but on the population register.

## 5.4 Methods

The EVS contains data about opinions and actions on individual level. First the separate questions are aggregated to country level. Second the country level opinions and actions are combined in a factor analysis to reveal the underlying values. Finally with regression analysis the relation between the components that come out of the factor analysis and the childlessness rate is tested.

### 5.4.1 Aggregation

The EVS contains questions divided over 7 subjects: perceptions of life, environment, work, family, politics and society, religion and morale and national identity. 211 of these questions contain data for all 20 countries included in the research. These 211 variables are aggregated to country level.

Most variables in the EVS are measured on ordinal level (e.g. How important is religion in your life?: very, rather, not very, not at all). In this research variables like this are aggregated in a way to measure the percentage of people in a country that give a certain answer. Based on the distribution of respondents over the answer categories the aggregate variable is constructed as either measuring the percentage of respondents in a country in the first, or in the first two answer categories. When there are few cases in the first category and many in the second, the percentage in both categories was included in the aggregation. The EVS also contains a lot of binary variables. (0=no, 1=yes) These variables are aggregated by taking the mean answer for a country. This can be interpret as the share of respondents that

answered yes. Some variables are measured on an ordinal scale from one to ten. People are asked to rate how important something is to them. In this research these variables are also aggregated by taking the mean mark respondents in a country give.

#### **5.4.2 Factor Analysis**

Factor analysis is a statistical technique to reduce a dataset. A large number of correlated variables can be represented by a smaller number of uncorrelated factors or components (Rogerson, 2001). When a number of variables is highly correlated it can be said that only one factor or component underlies these variables (Darlington, 2004).

The factor analysis will be performed on the aggregated EVS data. The cases therefore will be countries, and the variables will be the aggregated variables. When variables are highly correlated they will be represented by one component. This can indicate two things. Either individuals who score highly on one variable also score highly on the other variables, or a country that scores on average highly on one variable also scores highly on the others. In both cases there will be one factor or component representing all the correlated variables. Not all variables will correlate with each other. There are more dimensions to people's opinions and actions or to the value orientations of countries. Variables about religion do not have to correlate with variables about nationalism, tolerance or family situations.

Values underlie people's opinions and actions. They are not observable, but can be interpreted from people's opinions and actions (Kluckhohn, 1959). Therefore the factors or components that according to the factor analysis underlie the opinions of people in the EVS will be used as values in this research.

Principal Component Analysis is chosen as the method to do factor analysis. When doing factor analysis in SPSS, based on the correlation between the variables the components will be calculated. Component loadings show the correlation between the original variables and the components. These component loadings are used to interpret the components. A component that is highly correlated with questions about the importance of religion, service attendance, and comfort and strength from religion can be interpreted as representing personal religiosity.

The Eigenvalue is the total amount of variance that is explained by a component. When many original variables are correlated to each other it is possible to create a component that is correlated to all those variables. This component catches part of the variance of all those correlated variables. The share of overall variance that is explained by this component will therefore be high. When only a few questions are correlated a component explaining the variance in these questions will have a lower Eigenvalue.

Component scores are the scores of the cases on the components. They indicate the score of a country on the value or component. The components are new variables that can be related to the childlessness rate in a linear regression model

#### **5.4.3 Regression**

The components that come out of the factor analysis are the independent variables in the regression analysis. The components represent a value or a group of values. These components and also other values are related to the childlessness rates in countries from the FFS in a multiple logistic regression model. The logit of the childlessness rate in a country is predicted from the independent variables: the values in that country. The regression model shows the direction and the significance of the relation between value orientation and the probability to be childless in a country. To control for heteroscedasticity the cases are weighted by  $p(1-p)$ , in which  $p$  is the share of childless women in a country.

## 5.5 Results

The data from the EVS is aggregated, a factor analysis is performed on the aggregated data and finally the components are included as independent variables in a linear regression model. With this linear regression model it is tested what relation there exists between the components and childlessness rates. First the results of the factor analysis and the interpretation of the components will be described. Second the results of the regression model are described.

### 5.5.1 Relations between values

First a factor analysis is conducted with all the 211 variables in the EVS that contain data for all 20 countries included in the research. Based on the course of the Eigenvalues four components are extracted. Only variables that load highly on one of these components are included in a new factor analysis. The new factor analysis is done with 87 variables that in the earlier analysis correlated highly with one of the four components. When there are less variables included it is easier to interpret the components. By leaving out the variables with low component loading the components will not change much.

The factor analysis including 87 variables extracts 13 components with Eigenvalues higher than one. Table 5.2 shows the Eigenvalues and explained variance of the components. Because there are so many variables included many components have Eigenvalues above one. Not all 13 components will be included in the final analysis, the results will be better interpretable with less components. Based on the course of the Eigenvalues it is chosen to extract three components. With these three components Varimax rotation is performed to make them better interpretable. In appendix 1 the rotated component matrix is included with the component loadings of the variables on these three components.

Table 5.2: Eigenvalues and percentage of explained variance of the components

Component	Eigenvalue	% of Variance explained	Cumulative %
1	30,288	35,2196	35,2196
2	15,114	17,5748	52,7944
3	9,419	10,9530	63,7474
4	5,616	6,5306	70,2781
5	4,242	4,9325	75,2106
6	3,213	3,7364	78,9471
7	2,905	3,3788	82,3259
8	2,560	2,9771	85,3031
9	2,460	2,8611	88,1642
10	1,939	2,2553	90,4195
11	1,772	2,0614	92,4810
12	1,457	1,6952	94,1762
13	1,078	1,2543	95,4305
14	0,906	1,0535	96,4841
15	0,848	0,9862	97,4703
16	0,642	0,7468	98,2172
17	0,575	0,6686	98,8859
18	0,506	0,5887	99,4746
19	0,451	0,5253	100,0000

The three extracted components can be interpreted based on the variables that load highly on them. In tables 5.3 to 5.5 respectively the variables that load very highly on the component one, two and three are described. (Component loading of .7 and higher are qualified as very high component loadings (Brand-Koolen, 1972).)

Component one represents the values post-materialism, tolerance, secular individualism and freedom. This component is also correlated with positive attitude towards democracy, and a positive life attitude. Based on the theory of the Second Demographic transition it was expected that post-materialistic, tolerant and freedom values would be correlated. Component one representing all these post-transitional values confirms this. Diminishing religiosity was also expected to be part of the transition, but this value is not correlated with the other values but represented in a separate component. Only secular individualism, the absence of influence of religious doctrines in everyday life is correlated with the other values in the first component. The importance of religion in personal life is uncorrelated with the first component; this indicates that diminishing religiosity is not part of the general transition in values.

Table 5.3: Interpretation of component 1; post-transitional values

Value	Variables	Component loading
Post-Materialism	Inglehart (post) materialism index*	.763
	Imagination is child quality	.873
	Good pay important in job	-.773
Tolerance towards immigrants	Employers should give priority nation people over immigrants	-.771
	Prepared to help immigrants	.779
Secular Individualism	Divorce justifiable	.865
	Suicide justifiable	.786
Freedom	Experience freedom	.761
	Experience freedom in job	.951
Democracy	Democracy is better	.703
	Respect for human rights	.718
(Positive) life attitude	Satisfied with life	.894
	Most people can be trusted	.829
	Friends important	.911
	Leisure time important	.919
	Belong to organizations	**
	Active in politics	**

\* See appendix 2 for explanation of Inglehart Materialism Index

\*\* Based on a number of variables with component loading all higher then 0.7.

Component two is based on what people state as important in a job. Only variables about what is important in a job load highly on this component. The Maslowian (1970) need of self-actualization is represented by most of the variables. These variables can also be interpreted as representing the Values of Children (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1973) esteem and stimulation. When people state it is important for them to get esteem and stimulation from their job this can have two effects. On the one hand, people stating that the values of children esteem and



stimulation are important to them will be extra motivated to fulfill these values, and they can be fulfilled by having children. On the other hand people that state esteem and stimulation are important in a job will have an alternative to having children for fulfilling those needs. From the first interpretation it is expected that this component will have negative influence on childlessness rates while the second interpretation expects a positive relation. It is striking that the variables on which people stated that it is important for them to have generous holidays and not too much pressure on their job also highly load on this component. This makes the component less easy to interpret, it is not only the importance of esteem and stimulation in a job that loads on the component, but rather everything that people state as being important to them in a job.

Table 5.3: Interpretation of component 2; importance of esteem and stimulation in a job

Value	Variables	Component loading
Self-actualization /Esteem, Stimulation	Important in a job: respect	.869
	Important in a job: achievement	.833
	Important in a job: responsibility	.866
	Important in a job: opportunity to use initiative	.802
	Important in a job: meets one's abilities	.794
	Important in a job: chances for promotion	.852
	Important in a job: useful for society	.878
Other	Important in a job: not too much pressure	.790
	Important in a job: generous holidays	.756
	Important in a job: meeting people	.778

Table 5.4: Interpretation of component 3; personal religiosity

Value	Variables	Component loading
Religiosity	Religion important	.767
	Religious faith is child quality	.787
	Approve of abortion if not wanting more children	-.806
	Confidence in churches	.721
	Belong to religious denomination	.767
	Believe in God	.948
	Believe in Life after Death	.847
	Believe in Hell	.777
	Believe in Heaven	.907
	How important is God in your life	.923
	Comfort/strength from religion	.900
	Pray or meditate	.827

Component three represents the value of religiosity. Most of the variables that load on this component measure personal religiosity; the meaning of God and religion to individuals, rather than the norms and doctrines that religion imposes on them. The variable about the

approval of abortion however is more a measure of secular individualism. This indicates that religiosity and secular individualism are still related to each other; people to whom religion is important will also adhere more to religious norms and doctrines about abortion. Values about suicide and divorce are unrelated to the religiosity component, these variables are correlated with component one. Secular individualism is related both with the transition in values (component one) and with personal religiosity (component three), while personal religiosity itself is unrelated to the other values in component one.

The variables measuring traditional family norms are not included in all 20 countries, therefore they can not be included in the factor analysis. However when including the questions “a child needs a home with a father and a mother” and “women in real do not want to emancipate they just want a home and children” these variables load very highly on component one (component loadings of 0,715 and 0,841 respectively). This indicates that also non-traditional family norms are related to the other post-transitional values. When including these extra variables the components remain almost the same, there is a correlation higher than 0,995 between the components including and excluding traditional family norms. On country level post-materialist, tolerant, secular individualist, and freedom values are also related with non-traditional family norms.

### 5.5.2 Relations between values and childlessness rates

Besides the three components, other variables are included in the regression analysis. The value nationalism was only measured with one question in the EVS. When many questions measure about the same value these questions will be correlated and therefore a component with a high Eigenvalue will represent these questions. Because only one question measures nationalism a component representing this value will have a very low Eigenvalue and will therefore not be extracted. To measure the effect of nationalism on the childlessness rate therefore a separate variable for nationalism will be included in the regression model. The model will contain 4 independent variables; the three components and nationalism.

Table 5.5: Macro level regression model

Variable	B	t	Sig.
Constant	15,194	7.638	.000
Post-transitional values (component 1)	2,597	4.422	.001
Esteem and stimulation important in job (component 2)	,140	,215	.958
Personal religiosity (component 3)	2,499	3,472	.006
Nationalism	-,110	-2,451	.031

Dependent = macro level childlessness rate, N=20, R<sup>2</sup>=0,612

The model is a logistic regression model explaining the share of childless women in the age group 35-39 in European countries. Component one, representing post-transitional values is positively related with childlessness. Countries with more post-materialistic, secular individualistic, freedom and tolerant values have higher childlessness rates. Because non-traditional family norms also highly load on component one, and the component almost not changes when including them it can also be said to be related to high childlessness rates together with the other post-transitional values. Post-transitional values being positively related to high childlessness rates confirms the theory of the Second Demographic Transition

The influence of the importance of esteem and stimulation in a job (component two) is insignificant. The importance people in a country adhere to esteem and stimulation in a job has no influence on the childlessness rate. People to whom the needs stimulation and esteem are more important were expected to more often have children to in that way fulfill those needs. On the other hand people who state these needs are important to them in a job will have an alternative to achieve these needs and therefore do not have to have children. The research finds no influence of this variable, this can either mean that none of the hypotheses is correct, or they both work in different groups or societies and the different effects neutralize each other.

Personal religiosity (component three) has positive significant influence on the childlessness rate. When to the people in a country religion is more important the childlessness rate in the age group 35-39 is higher. This is opposite to what was expected based on theory and earlier research. The separate effects of the different dimensions of religiosity are never tested before. Researchers that found negative influence of religiosity on childlessness will have included normative aspects of religiosity in their variable. In this research only the personal dimension of religiosity is included, this can explain why it does not have the expected negative influence. It however can not explain the positive influence of religiosity that is found.

Nationalism has significant negative influence on the childlessness rate. In countries with a nationalistic value orientation childlessness rates are lower, as was expected based on the theory. Values, norms and institutions in those countries will be more directed towards the survival of the people and the country.

## **5.6 Conclusions**

The theory of the Second Demographic Transition states that a transition in values will diffuse over European countries and that these changed values will cause changes in demographic characteristics. Based on this theory post-transitional values are expected to be related to each other on macro level, and to be related to high childlessness rates. The research finds post-transitional values being represented by one component, and this component has significant influence on the childlessness rates in countries. Thereby the research confirms the theory of the Second Demographic Transition.

### **5.6.1 Relation between values**

Based on the theory of the Second Demographic Transition it was expected that on country level several values would be related to each other. Post-materialist, secular, individualistic, freedom and tolerant values and non-traditional family norms were expected to be correlated. The factor analysis shows which values are related to each other.

Three components are extracted from the factor analysis. The first component represents post-materialist, freedom and tolerant values, non-traditional family norms and secular individualism. This confirms the hypothesis that all these value are related to each other. The importance of religion in personal life however is not related to this component. It is represented by component three, a separate unrelated component. The hypothesis that secularization is part of the value changes in the Second Demographic Transition therefore is only valid for the normative part of religiosity. The diminishing influence of religious norms and doctrines is related to the other post-transitional values in component one. The personal meaning of religion however is unrelated to the post-transitional values.

Simons (1986) stated that there are two dimensions of religiosity; secular individualism, the influence of religious norms and doctrines, and personal religiosity, the

meaning of religion to the individual. This is confirmed by the factor analysis. The first component represents secular individualism and other post-transitional values. Personal religiosity is represented by another unrelated component.

The second component is more difficult to interpret. Variables about what people state as important in a job load highly on component two. People want respect, achievement, responsibilities, and to use their abilities in a job; this represents the Maslowian (1970) need of self-actualization, or the Values of Children (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1973) esteem and stimulation. This component can have two contradictory meanings. Either people to whom the Values of Children esteem and stimulation are important will have children to achieve these values. This will mean that component two will have negative influence on childlessness; when esteem and stimulation are more important needs people will more often have children to achieve them. On the other hand this component is based on what is important in a job for people. When the Values of Children (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1973) esteem and stimulation are important in a job, work can be an alternative way to achieve these values. When people have alternatives to achieve values this will mean they will more often be childless.

### **5.6.2 Values and childlessness**

The theory of the Second Demographic Transition states that value changes (together with institutional and technological transitions) will cause demographic change. Component one, representing post-materialist, secular individualistic, freedom and tolerant values and non-traditional family norms, therefore is expected to be related to higher childlessness rates. Component two can have either positive or negative influence on childlessness dependent on the two different interpretations. Earlier research showed higher childlessness rates in countries with more secular values. Therefore component three representing religiosity is expected to have negative influence on childlessness. Besides these three components also the influence of nationalistic values is tested. In nationalist countries it is expected that norms and institutions are more directed towards childbearing, therefore childlessness rates will be lower.

The research finds a positive relation between post-transitional value orientations on macro level and childlessness rates. Thereby it confirms the theory of the Second Demographic Transition. In appendix 3 a graph is included that shows the relation between the level of transition and childlessness rates in countries.

The relation between component two and the childlessness rate is insignificant. It can not be confirmed that when esteem and stimulation are important values people will more often have children to fulfill them, nor that when esteem and stimulation are important in a job people will be able to reach these values in a job and therefore will not need to have children. It is possible that these two effects are working at the same time in different groups and therefore counterbalancing each other.

Nationalism is significant negative related to childlessness. As was expected in nationalistic countries childlessness rates are lower. Norms and institutions will be directed to promote childbearing for the survival of the country or the nationality.

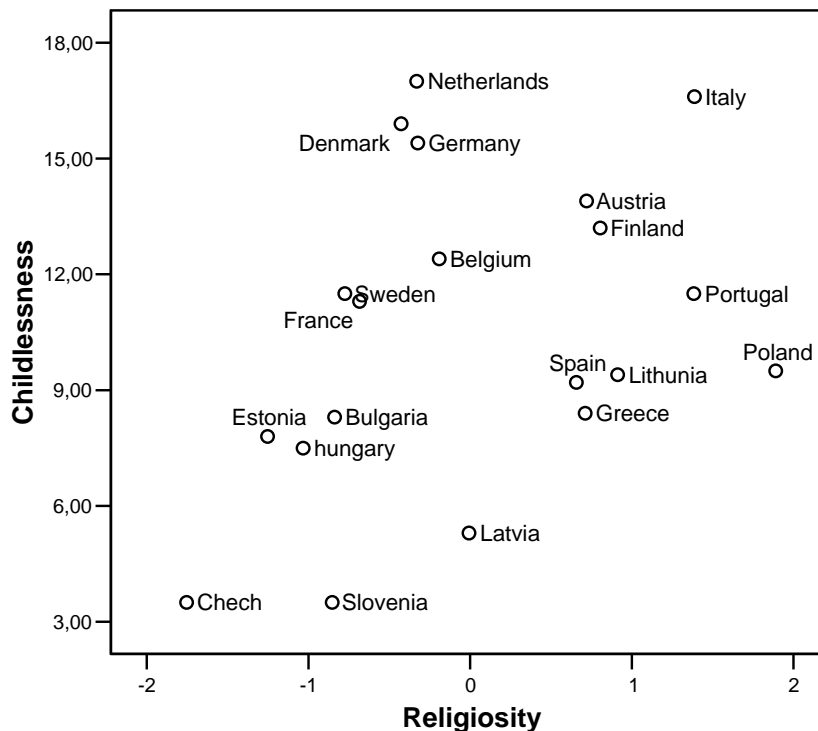
Simons expected that secular individualism more than diminishing personal religiosity would lead to higher childlessness rates. The regression analysis confirms this; the first component which represents among other values secular individualism has positive influence on childlessness. Diminishing personal religiosity however has negative influence on the childlessness rates in countries. In more religious countries the childlessness rates among women aged 35-39 is higher. This is contradictory to all expectations and theories about religion and childlessness.

### 5.6.3 Discussion

It was hypothesized based on theory and earlier research that religiosity would have negative influence on childlessness. On country level this is not the case; the regression analysis shows that component three has a positive significant relation with the childlessness rate. Component three represents the importance of God and religion in the lives of individuals. Religiosity measured in this way can have influence on peoples' individual (fertility) decisions. However personal religiosity does not create norms or values to be imposed on others. This can explain why this component does not have the expected negative influence on the childlessness rate on country level. Other researchers that find negative influence from religion on childlessness may have used measures of religiosity that include more also normative aspects. The influence of religious norms and doctrines in people's lives does have influence on childlessness on the aggregated level.

Still not explained is why religiosity has positive influence on childlessness. Childlessness is measured in this research as the percentage of childless women in the age group 35-39. It is possible that these women are only postponing and will have children later. In Italy, a country where religion is very important, childlessness is very high in the 35-39 age group, but in older age groups already much lower (UNECE, 2006). Permanent childlessness is around ten percent which is low compared to other European countries (Bernardi, 2003). Also in other countries where religion is important (Portugal, Poland) childlessness is relatively high in the 35-39 age group but decreases in the older age groups (UNECE, 2006). This may explain why in this research religion is positively related to childlessness, while theory and other research find the opposite relation. Religious countries have high childlessness in the 35-39 age group, but low life long childlessness. This means that in countries where personal religiosity is more important, individuals more often postpone childbearing. Graph 5.1 shows religiosity and childlessness in the countries in the analysis.

Graph 5.1: Childlessness in the age group 35-39 in European countries by religiosity



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## **Chapter 6: Values, characteristics and childlessness on micro level**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In chapter 5 the relation between macro level values and childlessness rates in European countries is tested. In this chapter the focus will be on the Netherlands and on the micro level. The relation between values and personal characteristics and childlessness of individual women in the Netherlands is tested. Chapter 5 tested the macro level Theory of the Second Demographic Transition (Van de Kaa, 1988). As expected post-transitional values on societal level were related to high childlessness rates. In this chapter it is tested if this theory is also valid on micro level. It will be tested if also on individual level post-transitional values are correlated with each other, and if individuals with post-transitional value orientations are more likely to be childless.

The Value of Children Theory of Hoffman and Hoffman (1973) is a micro level theory about fertility. All people have to reach nine needs or Values, either by having children or in an alternative way. Personal characteristics determine what alternatives individuals have to reach these goals. To test this theory therefore the relation between personal characteristics and childlessness is tested in this chapter.

The relations between values and childlessness and personal characteristics and childlessness are tested in a logistic regression model. The probability to be childless is explained from values and personal characteristics of individuals. The European Values Survey contains information about childlessness, personal characteristics and opinions and actions of women in the Netherlands. With factor analysis the value orientations of individuals are created from their opinions and actions. The relations between the values are researched with correlation analysis. With regression analysis the relations of the values and personal characteristics with childlessness is tested.

First based on the theories described earlier a number of hypotheses will be formulated. Second the data and methods used will be described. The results show what relations exist between values, personal characteristics and the probability to be childless. Finally conclusions can be drawn about the influence of micro level values and personal characteristics on childlessness. Thereby the validity of the Value of Children Theory and the Theory of the Second Demographic Transition on micro level is tested.

### **6.2 Hypotheses**

The Value of Children Theory of Hoffman and Hoffman (1973) as described in chapter two states there are nine needs that people have to achieve. They can achieve these needs either by having children or in alternative ways. Children have Value to their parent when by having children they can achieve a need they otherwise could not have achieved. When alternative ways of achieving these needs have low costs people do not need to have children; children have no value to them.

Personal characteristics determine what alternatives people have to achieve needs. According to Hoffman and Hoffman (1973), higher educated women, women with a job, high job status or a high income will have more alternatives to reach esteem, adulthood, stimulation, economic utility or power. Therefore they will more often be childless.

The costs and opportunity costs of having children will be higher in urban settings, therefore women who live in cities will be more likely to be childless.

Norms and values of an individual influence her fertility behavior via the nine values or goals of Hoffman and Hoffman (Fawcett, 1983). For religious and nationalistic women the Morality Value will be more important. They will feel obliged to have children for the survival of their country or religion, therefore they will less often be childless.

The theory of the Second Demographic Transition (Van de Kaa, 1988) is described in chapter two. Value changes and institutional changes on societal level caused a demographic transition. Van de Kaa (1988) states that values changed from religious, materialistic, nationalistic and traditional values towards secular, individualistic, post-materialistic, freedom, tolerant and supra-nationalistic values. Because of the increased freedom of choice and less traditional norms and religious values people could decide for themselves if they wanted children. Individualism and post-materialism made people value their own life, freedom, personal development and career higher than children.

Van de Kaa formulated his theory only on macro level. Post-transitional values on societal level will be correlated and cause societal level post-transitional demographic characteristics like high childlessness rates. In this chapter it will be tested if this theory also applies on micro level. Are post-transitional values also correlated on individual level, and do individuals with post-transitional value orientations have a higher probability to be childless?

Simons (1986) states that religiosity has two dimensions, and that on macro level secular individualism will be related to childlessness while personal religiosity is not. This is confirmed in chapter five; secular individualism was found to be correlated with other post-transitional values and high childlessness rates. Personal religiosity is not correlated to post-transitional values, and does not have the expected influence on childlessness. In this chapter it is tested if there are also two independent dimensions of religiosity on micro level.

Based on these theories a number of hypotheses to be tested about values and personal characteristics influencing the probability to be childlessness are formulated.

- Higher educated women are more often childless.
- Employed women are more often childless than unemployed. Fulltime employed women are most often childless.
- Women with higher job status are more often childless.
- Women with higher income are more often childless.
- Women who live in urban settings are more often childless.
- Nationalistic women are less often childless.
- Religious women are less often childless.
  
- Women with post-materialistic values are more often childless.
- Women with secular individualistic values are more often childless.
- Women with individualistic values are more often childless.
- Women with tolerant values will more often be childless.
- Women with traditional family norms will less often be childless.
- Women with career oriented values will more often be childless.
- Post-transitional (post-materialistic, secular individualistic, individualistic, tolerant, supra-nationalistic, non traditional) values are correlated on micro level.
  
- Secular Individualism is uncorrelated with personal religiosity.



### **6.3 Data**

In this chapter data from the 1999-2000 wave of the EVS survey is used. Only women in the Netherlands aged 40-64 are selected; 207 women are included. To select women aged 40 and older is because childlessness among these women will most likely be permanent. The age span should be small to make sure these women made their fertility decision under more or less the same societal circumstances, but large enough to have enough cases to perform statistical analysis. Therefore women up to age 64 are selected.

The EVS survey is described in chapter 5. Besides data about opinions and actions of individuals also personal characteristics including if a person has children or not are available in this survey.

### **6.4 Methods**

The EVS includes data about the number of children a woman has, her personal characteristics and her opinions and actions. With factor analysis values are created from different variables about opinions and actions. With correlation analysis the relations between the different values are tested. With logistic regression analysis the influence of both value orientations and personal characteristics on childlessness is tested. A logistic regression model predicts the probability that a woman is childless from her personal characteristics and values.

#### **6.4.1 Factor analysis**

Factor analysis has been explained in chapter 5. In this chapter a factor analysis is performed on the individual level data from the EVS. The variables are the opinions and actions of women aged 40-64 in the Netherlands. The components that come out of the analysis represent the values underlying these opinions and actions.

Instead of including all variables in one factor analysis in this chapter different factor analyses are done. For every value variables about opinions and actions that can serve as indicator for that value are combined in a factor analysis. Thereby all values are measured independently, and the analysis can test the correlation between the values and the influence of the separate values on childlessness.

The variables about opinions and actions that are chosen as indicators for a certain value are combined in a principal component analysis. When this value underlies these opinions and actions, the variables will be correlated and therefore can be represented by one component. If one variable is not correlated with the others and therefore does not fit into the component, it is not measuring the same value, and therefore is excluded as indicator. All values are represented by a component that is created from a number of highly correlated indicators for that value.

#### **6.4.2 Correlation analysis**

With correlation analysis it is tested how the different values are correlated with each other. With bivariate correlation analysis the correlation between variables is tested for all pairs of variables. The correlation analysis shows the direction, the strength and the significance of the relation for every pair of values. The theory of the Second Demographic Transition (Van de Kaa, 1988) expects post-transitional values to be highly correlated to each other. Based on Simons (1986) it is expected that the values secular individualism and personal religiosity are independent of each other. Besides testing these theories correlations between values can also explain why certain values are related to childlessness in an univariate regression model but not in a multivariate model.

### **6.4.3 Logistic regression**

In a regression model it is tested which values and personal characteristics are related to childlessness. The dependent variable, childlessness, is a binary variable; the women in the survey are either childless, or they have at least one child. Therefore a logistic regression model is used. The probability that a woman is childless is predicted from her values and personal characteristics.

All the values created in the factor analysis are included as independent variables. Also the personal characteristics that are expected to have influence on childlessness are included as independent variables. With these variables both univariate and multivariate logistic regression models are made to test their influence on childlessness. The univariate models test for every value and personal characteristic if it is correlated with individual childlessness. The multivariate models test which values and personal characteristics explain the probability to be childless.

## **6.5 Results**

With factor analysis components are created that represent values. With correlation analysis it is tested if these values are related to each other. Furthermore these values, and the personal characteristics of individuals are related to childlessness in logistic regression models. First the creation of the values with factor analysis is described. Second the relations between the values will be described based on the correlation analysis. Third the outcomes of the regression analyses will be described and interpret.

### **6.5.1 The creation of the values**

For every value a number of variables are chosen as indicators. These variables are combined in a factor analysis. When the variables are indicators for the same value, they are expected to be highly correlated. The same underlying value will determine these variables about opinions and actions. Because they are highly correlated the variables can be represented by one component. If a certain variable is not highly correlated with the first component but represented by a second unrelated component this variable is excluded from the analysis. Every value therefore is represented by one component; the components are constructed from a number of highly correlated variables.

The value nationalism is not created by factor analysis. There are not many questions that can serve as indicators for the value nationalism. As in chapter five therefore the question “how proud are you to be of your nationality” alone is used as indicator for this value.

Table 6.1 shows all the component matrices of the values. High component loading indicate that the original variable is highly correlated with the component representing the value.

Table 6.1 Component matrices of the values

Post-materialism	
Imagination is child quality	,580
People should not have to work if they do not want to	-,433
Good housing not important in marriage	,457
Adequate income not important in marriage	,611
Secular rather than traditional values	,586
Self-expression rather than survival values	,637
Inglehart materialism index*	,664
Important in a job, ability to use initiative	,349
People who do not work turn lazy	,504

\* for explanation of Inglehart materialism index see appendix 2

Secular Individualism	
Religious faith is child quality	-,548
Belong church organization	-,373
Homosexuality justifiable	,688
Abortion Justifiable	,823
Divorce Justifiable	,781
Euthanasia Justifiable	,837
Suicide Justifiable	,729
Better if more people with strong religious beliefs	,634

Individualism	
Family Important	-,447
Not belong any organization	,750
More emphasis on individual is good	,667

Religiosity	
Religion important	,838
Attend religious services	,751
Religious person	,742
Statement of belief	,734
Moments of prayer, meditation	-,607
Pray to God outside religious services	,852

Tolerance	
Neighbors: people of a different race	,633
Neighbors: Muslims	,770
Neighbors: Immigrants/ Foreign workers	,696
Neighbors: gypsies	,579
Employers should give priority Dutch people over immigrants	-,398
Concerned with immigrants	,617
Prepared to help immigrants	,650

Traditional Family norms	
Family important	,235
Child needs home with father and mother	-,463
Woman has to have children	-,414
Men need children	,251
Women single parent	,301
Important in marriage: having children	,449
Working mother good relation with child?	-,624
Being a housewife fulfilling	,398
Children suffer with working mother	,687
Women want home and children	,634

Career orientation	
Important in a job: achievement	-,367
Important in a job: chances for promotion	-,486
To develop talents you need to have a job	,582
It's humiliating to receive money without having to work for it	,634
People who do not work turn lazy	,636
Work should always come first	,678
Less importance on work	-,501

### 6.5.2 Relations between values

According to the theory of the Second Demographic Transition the post-transitional values post-materialism, secular individualism, individualism, tolerance and non-traditional norms will be related to each other on macro level. In chapter five these values were found to be related to each other as expected. In this chapter it will be tested if the relations between the values also exist on micro level.

All values are measured separately, with different indicators, as described above. With correlation analysis the correlations between the different values are tested. Table 6.2 shows the correlations between the different values.

Table 6.2 Correlations between values

	Post-Materialism	Secular Individualism	Individualism	Religiosity	Tolerance	Nationalism	Traditional family norms	Career orientation
PM	1	,515(**)	,189(**)	-,221(**)	,309(**)	-,445(**)	-,520(**)	,551(**)
SI	,515(**)	1	,080	-,484(**)	,151(*)	-,178(*)	-,439(**)	,242(**)
Ind	,189(**)	,080	1	,037	,269(**)	-,138	-,199(**)	,152(*)
Rel	-,221(**)	-,484(**)	,037	1	,100	,072	,143(*)	-,080
Tol	,309(**)	,151(*)	,269(**)	,100	1	-,251(**)	-,365(**)	,247(**)
Nat	-,445(**)	-,178(*)	-,138	,072	-,251(**)	1	,292(**)	-,335(**)
Tfn	-,520(**)	-,439(**)	-,199(**)	,143(*)	-,365(**)	,292(**)	1	-,242(**)
CO	,551(**)	,242(**)	,152(*)	-,080	,247(**)	-,335(**)	-,242(**)	1

\* significant on 0,05 level

\*\* significant on 0,01 level

Almost all values are significantly correlated with each other. Post-materialism and secular individualism, the main values in the Second Demographic Transition are significant and highly correlated to each other. Post-Materialism is correlated significantly with all other values, and secular individualism with all but one. Individuals with post-materialist values are more likely to have secular individualistic, individualistic, not religious, tolerant, not nationalistic, non-traditional and career oriented values. This confirms the validity of the theory of the Second Demographic Transition on micro level. Also on micro level post-transitional values are related to each other. Not only countries have either pre or post-transitional value orientations on all values, also for individuals this is the case.

According to Simons (1986) on macro level there are two independent dimensions of religiosity. The influence of religious norms and doctrines, secular individualism is independent of personal religiosity. The factor analysis in chapter five finds two independent components representing these two dimensions and thereby confirms Simons (1986) theory. The correlation analysis however shows that on micro level there is very significant correlation between secular individualism and personal religiosity. Individuals who believe in God are more likely to adhere to religious norms and doctrines. This can be a macro micro difference. Religious norms can lose their influence in a country without people having to lose their faith, however individuals that believe in God are still more likely to adhere to traditional religious norms.

People with secular individualistic values are more likely to have also post-materialistic, non-religious, not nationalistic, tolerant, non-traditional and career oriented values. They are not more likely to have individualistic values.

Individualistic people are more likely to be also tolerant, non-traditional and career oriented. Tolerant people are less often nationalistic, less often traditional and more often career oriented. Career oriented individuals have less traditional family norms.

### 6.5.3 Values and childlessness

According to the theory of the Second Demographic Transition macro level values influence fertility and childlessness. Post-transitional value orientations in countries are expected to be related to higher childlessness rates. This hypothesis was confirmed in chapter five. In this chapter it is tested if these values are also related to high childlessness on individual level.

The values as created by the factor analysis are related to childlessness rates in logistic regression models. Thereby it is tested if there is a relation between values and the probability to be childless. With univariate models the separate relation of a value with childlessness is tested. In the multivariate model all values are included together in the model. This model shows which values are the best predictors for childlessness.

Table 6.3 shows the results of the different univariate models. In an univariate model the post-transitional values post-materialism, secular individualism, individualism, nationalism, non-traditional family norms and career oriented values are significantly related to childlessness. Religiosity and tolerance are not related to childlessness.

Table 6.3 Univariate models values and childlessness

Variable	N	R <sup>2</sup>	B	Wald	Significance
Post-materialism	192	0,027	0,347	2,980	*0,084
Secular individualism	201	0,046	0,483	5,090	**0,024
Individualism	203	0,177	1,598	14,660	***0,000
Religiosity	207	0,001	-0,076	0,180	0,671
Tolerance	207	0,004	0,136	0,438	0,508
Nationalism	201	0,025	-0,411	3,081	*0,079
Traditional family norms	193	0,115	0,797	11,661	***0,001
Career orientation	206	0,024	0,434	4,622	**0,031

Dependent variable=childlessness

Table 6.4 Multivariate model values and childlessness

Variable	B	Wald	Significance
Post-materialism	-0,321	0,868	0,351
Secular individualism	0,297	0,831	0,362
Individualism	1,126	7,082	***0,008
Religiosity	0,072	0,063	0,801
Tolerance	-0,327	1,681	0,195
Nationalism	-0,112	0,114	0,735
Traditional family norms	0,672	4,280	**0,039
Career orientation	0,457	2,654	0,103
Constant	-2,267	9,595	0,002

Dependent = childlessness, N=176, R<sup>2</sup>=0,230

Table 6.4 shows the results of the multivariate model. Individualism and traditional family norms explain the probability of individual women in the Netherlands to be childless. Individualistic women are more often childless and women with traditional family norms are less often childless. Post-materialism, secular individualism, nationalism and career orientation, although significant in an univariate model, are not related to childlessness in the multivariate model. When other values are included in the model these values lose their influence.

The included values are highly correlated. This can explain why certain values have effect in an univariate model but not in a multivariate model. Post-materialistic individuals have more often individualistic values and non-traditional family norms. People with individualistic values and non-traditional family norms are more often childless, therefore in an univariate model post-materialism will also be related with childless, however the relation is via individualism and family norms and therefore disappears when these variables are included.

People with individualistic values are more often career oriented and more often childless. Career orientation is related to high childlessness via individualism, therefore in the univariate model it has effect, but not when individualism is included in the model.

People with secular individualistic values have less traditional family norms and people with traditional family norms more often have children. Secular individualism is related to childlessness via family norms in an univariate model, but loses its effect when family norms are included.

Nationalism is correlated with traditional family norms, career orientation, post-materialism and secular individualism. In the univariate model it has a relation with childlessness because all these related values have some effect on childlessness. It only has effect via these other values, when one of these other is included in a multivariate model nationalism loses its effect.

#### 6.5.4 Personal characteristics and childlessness

The value of children theory of Hoffman and Hoffman (1973) states that children have a value to their parent when they can be used to fulfill a certain need that can not be fulfilled in alternative way. Personal characteristics determine the alternatives people have to achieve needs. People with high educational level, a job, high job level, and high income are expected to have more alternatives to achieve the needs esteem, stimulation, adulthood, power, and economic utility. Having children will have higher costs and opportunity costs for women living in urban areas, therefore they will more often be childless.

It will be tested here what personal characteristics influence childlessness, first in univariate models, and thereafter in a multivariate model. Table 6.5 shows the results of the different univariate logistic regression models.

Table 6.5 Univariate models personal characteristics

Variable	B	Wald	Significance
Education (university=reference)		7,560	,023
Education (elementary)	-1,096	6,112	,013
Education (secondary)	-,896	4,010	,045
Constant	-,896	11,405	,001

Dependent = childlessness, N=207, R<sup>2</sup>=0,059

Variable	B	Wald	Significance
Work (fulltime =reference)		20,341	,000
Work (part-time)	-1,493	11,088	,001
Work (housewife)	-2,138	13,978	,000
Constant	-,571	5,407	,020

Dependent = childlessness, N=207, R<sup>2</sup>=0,173

Variable	B	Wald	Significance
Job level(professional=reference)		4,996	,172
Job level (office)	-,062	,013	,910
Job level (skilled)	-,610	,806	,369
Job level (unskilled)	-1,709	4,210	,040
Constant	-,894	5,103	,024

Dependent = childlessness, N=118, R<sup>2</sup>=0,084

Variable	B	Wald	Significance
Urban/ rural	-,439	1,459	,227
Constant	-1,266	27,489	,000

Dependent =Childlessness, N=204, R<sup>2</sup>=0,012

Variable	B	Wald	Significance
Income	,076	,786	,375
Constant	-1,909	10,199	,001

Dependent = childlessness, N=198, R<sup>2</sup>=0,007

Education is significantly related to childlessness. People with secondary education are less often childless than people with university level education. People with elementary education are least often childless. If people have a job is significantly related to childlessness. Women that work fulltime are most often childless, followed by women with part-time jobs. Housewives are least often childless. For the women that work, also the level of their job is related to childlessness. Women with professional jobs are significant more often childless than women with unskilled jobs. People living in urban regions are not significant more often childless than people living in rural areas. High income also has no significant relation with childlessness.

Table 6.6 Multivariate model personal characteristics

Variable	B	Wald	Significance
Education (upper =reference)		1,020	,601
Education (lower)	-,491	,789	,374
Education (middle)	-,391	,633	,426
Work (fulltime =reference)		15,343	,000
Work (part-time)	-1,443	9,443	,002
Work (housewife)	-1,901	9,776	,002
Urban/ rural	-,069	,029	,864
Income	,030	,087	,768
Constant	-,443	,315	,575

Dependent =childlessness, N=187, R<sup>2</sup>=0,188



Table 6.6 shows the results of the multivariate model of personal characteristics. The variable job level is excluded from the model because it has missing data for all women that do not have a job. In the multivariate model only the variable work has significant effect on childlessness. Education has no effect on childlessness anymore when included in a model together with working status. There is significant correlation between educational level and working status. Low educated people are most often housewives, middle educated people most often work fulltime and high educated women most often work fulltime. Because education is related to work, and work is related to childlessness in the univariate model a relation between education and childlessness is found. This relation however only exist via working status, and therefore disappears in the multivariate model.

### 6.5.5 Values, personal characteristics and childlessness

Finally a multivariate model is made in which all values and personal characteristics are included. Table 6.7 shows the results of this regression analysis.

Working status, individualism and tolerance have significant influence on the probability that a women is childless. In the multivariate model with only values traditional family norms had significant effect on childlessness, and the effect of tolerance was insignificant. The inclusion of personal characteristics changed the influence of the different values.

Table 6.7 Multivariate model values and personal characteristics

Variable	B	Wald	Significance
Post-materialism	-0,350	0,804	0,370
Secular individualism	-0,136	0,124	0,725
Individualism	-1,418	7,043	***0,008
Religiosity	-0,012	0,001	0,971
Tolerance	0,544	3,340	*0,068
Nationalism	0,071	0,035	0,852
Traditional family norms	0,528	1,696	0,193
Career orientation	0,501	2,447	0,118
Education (upper =reference)		0,013	0,993
Education (lower)	0,088	0,011	0,917
Education (middle)	0,059	0,009	0,926
Work (fulltime =reference)		9,703	***0,008
Work (part-time)	-1,256	4,412	**0,036
Work (housewife)	-2,601	7,930	***0,005
Urban/ rural	0,418	0,667	0,414
Income	0,114	0,794	0,373
Constant	-2,262	2,385	0,123

Dependent = childlessness, N=158, R<sup>2</sup>=0,369

When the variable income is included in the model the effect of traditional family norms on childlessness becomes insignificant, and the effect of tolerance becomes significant. The post-transitional values post-materialism, secular individualism and traditional family norms are significantly correlated with tolerance and with income while tolerance and income are uncorrelated. This indicates that income and tolerance are two dimensions of post-transitional values.

When income is included in the model the income dimension of the post-transitional values has no effect anymore on childlessness. Therefore the effect of post-materialism, secular individualism and traditional family norms is insignificant. Because these variables no longer have influence, also the tolerance dimension of these variables is excluded as explanatory variable for childlessness. Because the correlated variables lose their influence the variable tolerance itself appears as significant explanation for childlessness.

Individualist and tolerant values and work explain the probability that a woman is childless. Women with individualistic values and tolerant values are more often childless than women who do not adhere to these values. Women that work more are more often childless.

## **6.6 Conclusions**

In this chapter it is tested if the theory of the Second Demographic Transition also applies on micro level. This theory expects post-transitional values on macro level to be related to each other and to high childlessness rates. Also the Value of Children theory is tested. This theory states that values influence childlessness via the nine needs, and personal characteristics determine the alternatives people have to achieve the nine needs. Therefore values and personal characteristics are expected to influence the probability to be childless.

The research shows which values and personal characteristics are related to childlessness. Thereby it explains the probability of Dutch women to be childless from their values and personal characteristics. When the expected relations are found the theories are confirmed; these theories then explain why certain values and personal characteristics influence childlessness.

### **6.6.1 The theory of the Second Demographic Transition**

The theory of the Second Demographic Transition (Van de Kaa, 1988) states that on societal level there will be a transition in values, and that this will cause a transition in demographic characteristics. Post-transitional societies will have post-materialistic, secular individualistic, not nationalistic, tolerant, non-traditional and individualistic values. These societies will have post-transitional demographic characteristics like low fertility and nuptiality and high childlessness. The theory expects macro level post-transitional value orientations to be related to each other and to be related with macro level post-transitional demographic characteristics like high childlessness rates. In chapter five this relation on macro level was tested and confirmed. In this chapter it is tested if this theory also applies on micro level. It is tested if post-transitional values are correlated at individual level, and if individuals with post-transitional values are more likely to be childless.

In the correlation analyses significant correlations are found between post-materialism, secular individualism, individualism, nationalism, tolerance and traditional family norms. Post-materialism is significantly correlated with all other post-transitional values, and almost all pairs of variables are significantly and highly correlated. Individuals with post-materialist values are more likely to also adhere to secular individualistic, individualistic, not nationalistic, non-traditional, and tolerant values. Not only countries, but also individuals have either pre or post-transitional value orientations on all transitional values.

With the regression analysis it is tested if the post-transitional values, that are found to be related to each other, are also related to high childlessness rates. In the univariate regression analyses almost all post-transitional values have significant influence on childlessness. However because these values are highly correlated, in the multivariate model

most values lose their influence on childlessness. Only non-traditional family norms and individualism are significantly related to a high probability to be childless in the multivariate regression model. Individuals with traditional family norms more often have children, while people with individualistic values are more often childless.

The theory of the Second Demographic Transition describes a number of correlated value changes that together influence childlessness. All post-transitional values being highly correlated to each other confirms the first part of the theory. Some post-transitional values are also related to higher childlessness. The values individualism and non-traditional family norms are part of a value system of all post-transitional values. These values being related to high childlessness rates confirms the second part of the theory. Individuals with post-materialistic, secular individualistic, individualistic, non-traditional tolerant, not nationalistic, and career oriented values will feel free to choose childlessness if they want to. They will more often want to remain childless because they value their career, personal development and individual freedom higher than having children. The theory of the Second Demographic Transition although formulated on macro level also applies on micro level, post-transitional values are correlated in individuals as well as in societies and cause the freedom and the wish to choose childlessness.

Simons (1986) stated that religiosity has two dimensions. The influence of religious norms and doctrines and the personal religious experience. Although it was found in chapter five that different components represent these two dimensions, the correlation analysis in this chapter shows that they are highly correlated. On micro level secular individualism, the absence of influence of religious norms and doctrines is significantly correlated with personal religiosity. Religious people more often adhere to traditional religious norms and doctrines. The correlation analysis thereby shows that on micro level the two dimensions of religiosity are not independent of each other.

### **6.6.2 The Value of Children theory**

According to the Value of Children Theory (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1973) personal characteristics and values determine the alternative means, besides having children, individuals have to achieve nine needs.

Higher educated women, women that work more and women that have a higher job level have more alternatives to reach adulthood, esteem, stimulation or power. Because they can reach these values in their job they do not need to have children to fulfill these values, therefore they will be more likely to be childless.

A high income can be an alternative way to achieve the Value of Children economic utility. Therefore women with a high income are expected to be more often childless. In rural areas the costs and opportunity costs of having children are lower, therefore people in rural areas will have more children.

Fawcett (1983) states that values influence fertility via the needs of Hoffman and Hoffman. The morality value will be more important to religious and nationalistic women; they will feel obliged to have children for the survival of their country or religion, therefore they will have more children.

Income has no significant effect on childlessness in the analysis. In chapter two it was already stated that having children is no effective means of achieving economic utility if the wealth flow is from parents to children, and old age security is provided by the state. If this is the case, as it is in the Netherlands, economic utility is no longer a Value of Children because you

cannot achieve it by having children. Therefore income as way to achieve economic utility will not longer be an alternative to having children, and therefore not related to childlessness.

Also living in urban or rural areas and the values nationalism and religiosity have no significant relation with childlessness. Costs and opportunity costs of having children do not determine childlessness. The importance of the Morality value of children to an individual also does not determine childlessness. The costs of having children can influence how many children individuals have, but not if they have children at all. The same is the case for the morality value, the survival of a country or nationality can make individuals have more children, but does not influence if they have children at all.

Alternatives to achieve the Values of Children are expected to determine if people need to have children or if they can choose childlessness. Individuals with a job, high job level and high educational level will have more alternatives to achieve esteem, adulthood, stimulation and power and therefore will be more often childless.

In the univariate models work hours, educational level and job level have significant influence on the probability to remain childless. In the multivariate model the effect of education and job level disappears. Only work hours is significantly related to childlessness.

Work hours, job level and educational level are highly correlated. Higher educated people work more often and more often fulltime and people with a higher job level work more often fulltime. This explains why educational level and job level have influence in the univariate model but not in the multivariate model. They only have effect via work hours, people that work more are more often childless, and this happen to be individuals with higher educational level and job level.

Based on the Value of Children theory educational level and job level are expected to have an additional effect on childlessness besides the effect via work hours. People that work as many hours but in a higher and more interesting job have more alternatives to achieve adulthood, stimulation, esteem and power and are therefore expected to be more often childless. The research does not find this additional effect.

Women that have a job, either fulltime or part-time can achieve needs in their job, and therefore do not need to have children, therefore they are expected to be more often childless by the Value of Children theory. The research however finds no significant difference in childlessness between part-time working women and housewives, but only between fulltime working women and the other two groups.

If the relation between personal characteristics and childlessness is explained by the alternatives women have to achieve the Values of Children, it would be expected that educational level, job level and part-time work would have a significant relation with childlessness. Because all these relations are insignificant the Value of Children theory can also not be used as an explanation for the relation between fulltime work and childlessness. If fulltime working women are more often childless because they have more alternatives to achieve esteem, power, stimulation and adulthood, it would be expected that also educational level, job level and part-time work have this effect. Because this is not the case it is more likely that the relation between fulltime work and childlessness is explained by the fact that women with children choose to not work fulltime.

The research finds no strong evidence for the Value of Children theory. Therefore this theory can not be used to explain the relation between work hours and childlessness. It is more likely that there is a different explanation for this relation.

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## **Chapter 7: Values and Childlessness decisions**

### **7.1 Introduction**

In chapter 5 a relation was found between macro level values and childlessness rates. Chapter 6 shows that values and personal characteristics of individual women in the Netherlands are related to the probability to be childless. In this chapter it is tried to answer the question why and how values influence childlessness and how the decision to remain childless is made.

The conceptual model, as described in chapter four, states that micro level values and personal characteristics influence individual fertility outcomes via a decision-making process. Macro level values influence societal childlessness rates via the individual level. Coleman (1990) states that in order to comprehend any social outcome it is necessary to understand behavior at the individual level. This is called “methodological individualism”. Societal values and characteristics influence individual values and circumstances, influenced by this, individuals make a decision about fertility, and all those individual fertility decisions add up to a societal fertility outcome.

To understand childlessness it should be studied on individual level. To answer the questions why and how values influence fertility and how the decision to remain childless is made it is needed to do qualitative research.

In this chapter the outcomes of qualitative research into the reasons for voluntary childless and the role of values in the decision to remain childless are described. Based on interviews with childless women in the Netherlands it is tried to give insight in how the decision to remain childless is made. First theory about decision-making is described and the research questions are formulated. Second the methods used are described. The results describe the decision-making process of childless women in the Netherlands and the role of values in the process. Based on this it is tried to answer the research questions.

### **7.2 Theory and research questions**

In chapter four theory about decision-making processes is described. According to De Bruijn (1999) a decision-making process has three components: problem space, motivation and selection. The problem space is the perceived choice options with their perceived consequences. Behavior is guided by motivation. People will be motivated to achieve certain goals, they will choose an alternative that they think is instrumental to achieving these goals. How they evaluate the different alternatives to select the alternative of their preference depends on their decision-making style.

Motivation is influenced by both macro and micro level values. Micro level values determine what is important to individuals, what they want to achieve. However people adhere to these values because they internalized societal values. People will choose the alternative that they perceive instrumental to achieving the values that are important to them. In another way values also influence the problem space. Values can make that people perceive certain alternatives, like abortion or contraceptive use as not open to choice to them. It will mainly be macro level values and norms that exclude options, however individuals can also exclude options for themselves because of their micro level values. Macro and micro level values thus influence both the creation of the problem space as the motivation in the decision-making process.

In this chapter there are two main questions. First, what are the reasons for childlessness and how is the decision to remain childless made. Second which values play a

role in the decision to remain childless, and how these values influence this decision. To answer these questions the creation of the problem space, the motivation and selection of the preferred alternative of childless women is described in this chapter.

### **7.3 Methods**

To answer these research questions qualitative research has to be done. Six in-depth interviews with childless women in the Netherlands are done and analyzed. Grounded theory is a methodology for doing qualitative research. It described strict methodological rules for doing research in order to develop a theory that is grounded in the data. When collecting and analyzing qualitative data according to these rules a theory can evolve from the data. This theory is then grounded in the data; the theory is created by induction from the data, with deduction expectations about new data are formulated, the new data should then confirm these expectations and thereby confirm the theory. The theory comes directly from the data, not from earlier ideas of the researcher, and the data confirms the theory.

To make sure a theory is grounded in the data, rules and procedures of grounded theory methodology should be used. In this methodology sampling, data collection, analysis and theory building are not separate parts of the research but influence each other.

Theoretical sampling is “the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analysis his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges.” (Glaser and Strauss 1967, cited in Flick, 2006). Based on the analysis and the emerging theory new cases should be selected. Sampling is finished when theoretical saturation is reached. This means that no new codes, categories or information emerges from the data anymore; when a new case only confirms the theory already developed based on the earlier cases theoretical saturation is reached (Flick, 2006).

Analysis should be done with systematic coding procedures (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). Coding is the process of breaking down the data, attaching labels to the pieces of data, and arranging the pieces of data in new ways. Pieces of data are labeled as representing concepts or categories (open coding). All pieces that fit in the same category can be put together, thereby the differences within the category and the links of the category with other categories become clear (axial coding). The goal is to discover patterns in the data, links between concepts, and under which conditions they apply. In that way a theory is built that really emerges from the data (Flick, 2006).

#### **7.3.1 Selection of respondents**

Six interviews were done with childless women in the Netherlands. In this research it is chosen to only interview women, and to only interview women who are in stable relationships and state of themselves that they are voluntary childless. In further research the focus can be on men or on singles. The women had to be past reproductive ages to make sure they made the decision to remain childless in the past. The respondents are selected by snowballing. The researcher asked around if people knew anybody who was voluntary childless and in a stable relationship. The first interviews were done and analyzed, and based on that new respondents were sought, with different characteristics and stories. While every new interview had a new personal story, on the main subjects there were also agreements between the interviewees. Because new interviews provided new stories, and different reasons to remain childlessness theoretical saturation was not reached yet after six interviews. For the purpose of this research; illustration and explanation for the quantitative results, however six interviews were enough to answer the research questions. Therefore after six interviews sampling stopped.

### **7.3.2 Problem-Centered interviews**

In this research the interview method of problem-centered interviews is used. Problem-Centered interviews are part of the theory generating procedure of Grounded Theory (Witzel, 2000). Problem-Centered interviews are based on a guideline with open questions and probes. With the questions and probes the interviewee is guided to tell about the topics of interest. The questions are formulated in a way that stimulate story-telling. A problem-centered interview is taped and transcribed, immediately after the interview also a postscript is made in which the interviewer writes down impressions and non-verbal aspects of the interview (Witzel, 2000). Witzel (2000) also proposes to start the interview with a short questionnaire on relevant characteristics. In this research people were asked to tell about themselves, and were probed for relevant characteristics, in this way it was easier to generate story-telling.

Problem-Centered interviews about childlessness were done with six childless women in the Netherlands. In the interviews people were first asked to tell about themselves, and probed for relevant personal characteristics.

Second they were asked to tell the story about their childlessness, how come they are childless and how did they make the decision.

Third the respondent were asked about the role of others and norms in their decision. What are the opinions of important others and of the society about being childless according to them and how did this influence their decision.

Fourth the respondent were asked about what was important to them in their lives, what they wanted to achieve. The answers were used to ask further about how this influenced their decision to remain childless.

In the closing of the interview we talked about what they had expected, and what the purpose of the interview was. After telling them the purpose of linking values with childlessness, some respondents told interesting stories about their own values and the influence on childlessness.

The interview guideline is included in Appendix 4. The interviews were all recorded and transcribed. After the interview the impressions about the atmosphere, the person and the place were written down in a post-script. According to Witzel (2000) the complete transcriptions of the interviews should be analyzed with the grounded theory methods of coding and theory building.

### **7.3.3 Analysis**

The transcriptions of the interviews were coded. The codes emerged from the data, it was tried to label the pieces of data with codes that best represented the content of the piece of data. Mostly in-vivo codes were used, i.e. codes that are taken from the words of the interviewee (Flick, 2006). About 30 codes were selected, representing pieces of data that seemed to be important for further analysis. Of some codes the dimensions i.e. the variation between the respondents in what they state about a subject were analyzed. When the codes and the variation within the codes is clear the story of the respondents can be told. According to the theory a decision-making process consists of motivation, creation of a problem space and decision-making style. The story of the women as it appears from the data is told in the format of this theory. First the different stories about motivation are described, based on codes, variation within codes and linkages between codes the similarities and differences in the data about the motivation of Dutch childless women are described. Also the problem space and the decision-making style of childless women emerges from the data via codes, variations and linkages.



### 7.3.4 Ethics

Before the interviews the respondents were told that they did not have to answer the questions, that they could tell whatever they wanted to tell and did not have to talk about subject where they did not want to talk about. Anonymity was guaranteed in the report, only age, educational level and duration of relation of the respondents are mentioned in the report.

One respondent first had problems with the interview being recorded, because she did not know what questions there would come, she would not agree beforehand on the recording. When I said that she did not have to answer questions she agreed with the recording.

Not only childlessness is a sensitive topic, the women told also other personal stories, about their relationships, contraceptive use, abortion, and their values and ideas. Therefore it is very important that anonymity of the respondents is guaranteed. A problem hereby is that the people who helped me find the respondents will know that they participated in the research and therefore recognize them. They already knew the respondents were voluntary childless, because that is why they suggested them to me. The voluntary childlessness therefore is not the main problem, but the respondents also talked about other personal and sensitive topics. Therefore it is an ethical problem that there are people that can recognize the respondents.

## 7.4 Results

Women were selected who were in a stable relationship, past reproductive age and voluntary childless. It was tried to find women with different educational levels, working status and marital status. The women are aged 43 up to 55, two of them are married, four others are living together, three with a man, one with a woman. Table 7.1 shows some personal characteristics of the respondents.

The interviews give insight in the decision-making process of these women. In this paragraph the motivation, the creation of the problem space and the selection of an alternative in the decision-making process about having children are described. The codes are used to select pieces of data that give insight in components of the decision-making process. They show the similarities and differences between the women on one subject. Based on this the general and specific story of childless women is told, illustrated with quotes, that show how the conclusions are grounded in the data.

Table 7.1 Personal characteristics of the respondents

Resp.	Age	Education	Work hours	Duration relation	Duration of living together	Marital status
A	46	HBO	18	15	8	Not Married
B	45	HBO+	32	22	16	Not Married
C	43	VWO+	55	3	2	Has been Married
D	48	University+	55	22	20	Not Married
E	50	MBO	40	30	30	Married
F	55	HBO	32	30	30	Married

\*Explanation of the Dutch educational system: In the Netherlands there are different levels of secondary and tertiary education. VWO is the highest level of secondary education. MBO (middle level vocational training), HBO (higher level vocational training) and university are different levels of tertiary education.

#### 7.4.1 Motivation

What motivates women in the Netherlands to remain childless? Without asking for it all respondents mention the absence of “the desire for children”. They tell about the absence of a strong desire for children by themselves as main reason why they do not have children.

*I never had a strong desire for children, my partner never had a strong desire for children, and now we are just too old. (respondent D)*

*I always had the feeling; when I get children it will be because of a very positive feeling “yes I want children” You have to make a positive decision to want them. And not ‘do I want children or not’, because then you don’t want them really. (...) And that thus never came, that feeling. (respondent D)*

All women state they do not experience a strong desire for children. Because they do not feel this need, they can make a decision based on what is important to them.

#### Freedom and independence

Some respondents mention that the values freedom and independence are very important to them. When freedom is very important, and childlessness is perceived instrumental to freedom, this can be a motivation for childlessness.

*Sometimes I already find it hard to take (partner) into consideration. (...) Yes, freedom and independence are two very important things to me. (respondent E)*

*I know how splendid it is in the meantime to have that freedom, and it is different when you would have children. So I think it does play a role for (partner) and me. (respondent C)*

For respondent F freedom is also important, but it is not a reason for being childless.

*It (freedom) is a very high good of course, but it is not that I therefore cannot commit myself. (...) I feel free in the sense that I only have one person that I really have to take into consideration (...) But it is not that freedom is that important that it was a reason for not having children, to give in that feeling of freedom. I didn’t have that.*

#### Personal Development and Career

All respondents value personal development highly. Personal development they achieve in a working career or in other ways. For most women the career itself is not that important, as long as they can develop themselves in some way. Personal development is the highest need according to Maslow (1970), people will try to achieve it when all other needs are fulfilled. These women are motivated by personal development in their decision about childlessness, this indicates that all lower needs are fulfilled. They will choose childlessness when they perceive that instrumental to their personal development.

*Uhm, what I think is important... the possibility to develop myself. (...) Not in the sense of working on your career, but to be able to develop myself. To be able to do the things that are valuable to me, in the sphere of work and leisure time. (respondent A)*

*But trying to experience some sort of personal or developmental growth, that's pleasant to me. Nice it is, and important. (respondent F)*

Some of the respondents very much try to develop themselves in their jobs.

*The nice thing about this job is that I'm general manager now, (...) and that I'm learning lots of things again and I'm able to develop myself. And I'm very happy with that, because that was the reason why I left (former job) (Respondent B)*

*I don't experience it as a career, but more as you want to develop yourself. Yes and then it resembles a career because you keep making steps, but my goal was never, I have to be the top, but I'm ambitious in the job. I want to be good at the job. (respondent C)*

Also respondents D and E try to develop themselves in their job. For them their job and career are that important that this played a role in the decision to remain childless.

*If it would have been easier to combine work and children then there would have been a much larger chance that we would have had children (respondent D)*

*I started as a florist and I have in the meantime made quite a career, that wouldn't have happened if I would have been out for a while to have children and to raise children, because I think it is very complicated to stay working fulltime when having children. (respondent E)*

Personal development is an important value to all respondents. To some women their career is an important means to develop themselves. Because it is difficult to combine a career and children for them childlessness is instrumental to personal development.

#### Contact with other children

Most of the respondents state that they like children, and like to be around children sometimes. They have good contact with nephews, nieces or children of friends. Friends and family with children are very willing to 'lend' their children when the childless women want contact with children. Parents like to share the experiences of having children with the childless women, some were even invited to a delivery.

*I like children very much, I can very much enjoy it. I have also children in my surroundings. A niece and nephew with whom I have a close bond, that I tend, that stay here, two kids of a friend of (partner) that live very close by and come over here every week that she tends, I like that very much. (respondent A)*

*Lisette's children they say, when we took them for a day of, they say, "you may borrow us for a day" (respondent C)*

*And then she said, and I found it very honest indeed, 'do you want to be more involved with our children, do you want to be more present, would you like it*

*if we arrange something that you can get more a role in the upbringing?’  
(respondent C)*

The fact that they can be in touch with somebody else’s children, is an extra reason for not having to have them yourself.

*We had this feeling every time, why would we have them of ourselves if we also once in a while can take it to our home, or call on it ourselves, by being with friends and family who have children. And it was in fact every time like that, as we like children very much, but we don’t have to have them ourselves. (respondent B)*

From friends with children they also here the negative sides of having children, this is an extra motivation to not have children for them.

*A friend called and she said ‘ how are things in the real live’ because the kids really drove her crazy. (respondent C)*

*And then I hear from those girls that they have no time anymore for sex, for sleep, they have no time for nothing. (respondent C)*

*(They tell) more that it is not all pink cloud stories. (respondent F)*

#### World view

The world view of the women can also be a motivation to not have children. For some women the values of sustainability are very important. This was a motivation for them to not have children.

*We make so much use of all, means, of energy, that kind of things, water, it can’t work out like that on the long hand. That worries me. (...) That are the great values for the future. (...) The values of sustainability, with not having children, it also plays a role. Like there are enough people on the world in total. And that has contributed to it, to the reasoning, ‘I don’t really need to add to that’ (respondent B)*

One respondent does not have children for a completely different reason.

*To have children yourself, or children to be responsible for them, no that made us decide not to do it. And that also has to do with world view. If your stand positively or negatively in a society. So we, or no I only speak for myself, have not a too positive view on society. (...) No, I think it is quite heavy to grow up in a society like this (...) And I think it is a big responsibility to give yourself the right to put an individual on the world, I find that a very big responsibility. If I could have asked ‘would you like to be born’ well then I would have wanted to let that happen. But that responsibility, You have to take it, and that was heavy for me, yes that was heavy for me. (respondent F)*

## Conclusions

The respondents state that other women will have a strong desire to have children. They themselves do not experience this desire, they do not need to have children. Therefore they can make a decision based on other motivations.

The decision to not have children is motivated by the values freedom, independence and personal development. These values are important to the women. When a value is perceived as important, and childlessness is perceived instrumental to achieving the value the women will decide to remain childless.

Some women perceive childlessness as instrumental to freedom, they state they will lose their freedom when having children. When freedom is then very important to them they will base on that decide to remain childless.

For all women personal development is very important. Some of them achieve personal development in their career. Therefore their career is very important to them. When they think they can not combine a career and children, they will remain childless in order to achieve the important value of personal development.

All women state they like children, and almost all state they like to be around children, and try to keep in touch with children. Other people around them have children. Because they can be in touch with these children they do not need to have children themselves. These others also tell about the negative aspects of having children, this is an extra motivation for them to not have children themselves.

### **7.4.2 Creation of the problem space**

The problem space is the options that are perceived open to choice by the respondents. For all respondents voluntary childlessness was one of the available options. This is not an option for everybody, but for these women it was. Why could these women consider the remaining childless, while for others that is not possible?

The first most important reason for this is the absence of the strong desire for children. As described above, the respondents did not have a strong desire for children. The respondents state that other people do have a strong desire for children, so they do not have a real choice, they have to have children.

*“Because I think when it is there (the desire to have children) then there is no way out, you have to do something with it (respondent A).*

When a person has this strong desire for children, childlessness is no longer open to choice. Because the respondents do not feel the need or the desire to have children these women have more options to choose from. They make a deliberate choice between childlessness and having children.

*And the desire for children was not that strong that we wanted to give up much for it. (respondent E)*

Women that not have a strong desire for children have at least two choice options in their problem space. Both having children and remaining voluntary childless are open to choice to them. They can make a decision if they want to have children or not. Women with a strong desire for children have only one option, for them voluntary childless is not a choice option.

### Norms

Norms can exclude choice options from the problem space. When women perceive a strong norm to have children, childlessness is no longer a choice option for them.

The respondents state that nowadays there are no norms that you should have children. At least they do not feel influence by such a norm.

*Absolutely not! And also if it would have been the case I couldn't care less.  
(respondent E)*

*That there is some sort of norm.. well of course that is very much changing  
(...) you are allowed to be broad-minded in this society, there are many  
people that are broad-minded in this society, that is the valuable thing about  
it I think. (respondent F)*

The respondents state that in the past there were norms to have children. When they would have lived in a time with such norms they most probably would have had children, they state, because the norms make that childlessness is not a choice option.

As respondent D tells about her mother:

*I think in the case of my parents, it was much more self-evident that they  
married and had children, I think that if my mother had had a choice, really  
a free choice, well I don't know what she would have done then.*

When she herself would have lived in that time, she would most probably also have had children:

*Good chance I would of course, you didn't have that much choice then.*

Because the respondents live in a time when there are no strong norms to have children, and they do not perceive any pressure from any norm to have children, voluntary childlessness is a choice option for them.

### Religion

Although in society there are no strong norms to have children anymore in some religions these norms still exist. Some of the women are from a Catholic background. Some Catholics have traditional norms about having children, marriage and abortion. These religions norms have no influence on the respondents, they feel free to remain childless.

*Well then that Pope can think that, but I don't care, I have always thought it  
was a bit insane. (respondent A)*

*I'm so far away now from what the Pope expects of me, I can't feel and think  
of myself as a Catholic in this at all anymore. So I think I just abandoned it  
step by step, and it did not hinder me in any way. (respondent B)*

### Immortality

Respondent F states she likes to recognize things from herself in her family.

*Very important (is family to me) because it is something very familiar,  
certain characteristics that you recognize in each other, without saying  
things are understood and you recognize things, that is very dear to me.  
That, with your family, or my sister or brothers you see things of which I*

*think “oh, I do that in the same way”, and also the other way around, that they tell you, “I do that exactly in the same manner, how funny” It gives a bond. (...) But I don’t have the idea that we have to live on in the future or so, no.*

Hoffman and Hoffman (1973) mention immortality as one of the nine values of children. People like it when they recognize their opinions and habits in others, when they have no other means to achieve this they have to have children. Respondent F mentions this need, but immediately states that she does not need to live on in the future; the need is not that important to her that she therefore has to have children.

### Childlessness

The respondents feel no strong desire to have children. They are not influenced by norms of the society or of their religion. There are no Values of Children that they can not fulfill in another way than by having children. Because of all this childlessness is one of the options in the problem space of the respondents.

Besides childlessness also other possibilities are perceived open to choice. First the alternatives to childlessness are described, second the alternatives perceived open to choice to achieve childlessness.

### Having children with partner

The respondents considered the option to become pregnant and have a child with their partner to different extents. For most respondents it was a very serious option, but not for all of them. It depends on the partner and on age, but for some respondents having children was never a serious option at all.

The partner is important in the decision to have children together.

*I have been married when I was 24, we had been together for quite some years already then. (...) With him I didn’t have children, it also wasn’t an issue I knew I don’t want to have children with him. (...) And then I met somebody and we fell in love and I started living together with him. That was somebody with whom I thought, yes I want children but he didn’t want to, then I was 31 or 32 or so. He said I don’t want that, the relation is not stable enough, and yes afterwards I’m grateful for that. (respondent C)*

*We both have the idea that if we had had a relation with a man, we’re both bisexual so that would also have been an option, and there, in that relation, for example by that man there would have been a desire for children, well than maybe we both would have become mothers. (respondent A)*

Respondent C however only met her partner when she was already 40. This was a reason for them to not have children.

*Then I met Guido when I was 40, well a friend of mine experienced something like that, and she immediately started living together, jumped on each other and from that came a little child after a year. (...) It might sound a bit rude, but you almost order a child with Down Syndrome (Dutch: Mongool) (...) Only when she was 5 months pregnant she told it to me, she had had so much tests, I was one of the first she told that she was pregnant. That was a reason for me...*

*We also said this to each other, if we would have been younger, if we would have met when we were 30, and we would have had a peaceful and good relation for a couple of years, yes then most probably it would have happened. (respondent C)*

Also other respondents state that age is important in the decision about having children.

*We are just too old now, well at least I am for sure (respondent D)*

*I didn't really experience it as a moment, but age played a role for me, I thought when I was about 39, 40 I shouldn't become pregnant anymore. (respondent B)*

Respondent E states that she first started thinking seriously about having children when she was 35, and her husband 41. But then already she thought about it in the past tense, it was not an option for her to have children anymore.

*The first 10, 15 years of our marriage we have really been very busy (...) so then you don't think about it. An then at a certain moment my little sister got children, and then we had something like, well that is actually very nice indeed, but then we were already about 40 or so. No, well all right 35. (...) When my sister and brother-in-law got children, we thought yes maybe we would have made quite nice parents.*

Some respondents never seriously considered having children, but most did make a very deliberate decision between childlessness and having children. In the decision to have children the partner plays an important role. Not with every partner having children is considered as choice option. Also age plays a role in the decision, after a certain age having children is no longer perceived as a choice option.

#### Having children alone

Most of the women have been in long stable relationships and therefore never considered having a child alone for themselves. However some of the women perceive having a child alone also as a possible option. They feel that also singles can choose and have to choose between having children and being childless.

*Because I think when it is there (the wish to have children) then there is no way out, you have to do something with it. Then you have to find out, in a relationship or not in a relationship, what do I do with this. (respondent A)*

Respondent D tells about her sister:

*Well she never, she had a partner sometimes, but never a partner with whom she wanted to go for it. And I think she wanted that pretty much. (...) And having children alone was also not an option for her.*

Respondent C has been single for longer times, and therefore could consider having children alone. This was a serious option for her, but eventually she decide not to do it.



*At a certain moment I turned 38 or so, and then I have thought very deliberately... Then I thought now you have to stand in front of the mirror: do you really want this yourself, because then it passes by. Because nowadays there are possibilities, you can become a mother alone if you want that. And then I looked myself very seriously in the eyes (laughs). (...) Because you are a Women indeed, it is a possibility you have, it is not that that thought never occurred to me.*

#### Alternatives to having own children

Besides having own children people can also adopt children, foster children or in other ways take care of children. For some of the women it was more an option to foster or adopt children than to have children of themselves.

Both respondent B and F state there are already more than enough people on the world, that it is not sustainable to add to that. They both considered adoption but eventually decided not to do that. Respondent B also considered foster care as an option.

*Yes there are enough people on the world. And then I also think there are enough people in a less favorable position as we are here, and possibly we can devote to them. (respondent F)*

To respondent E adoption and foster care were also available options, but more options for other people who do want to have children. When she heard about children that needed a foster home during weekends she considered that. Adoption, or full time fostering were never options to her. They decided also to not take care of children during weekends because they would lose their freedom then.

*Well I sometimes read those stories about women that are totally messed up because they can't have children of themselves. Then I think if you are so eager to take care of children, because having children is one, but I think it is much more important that you want to take care of children, want to raise them. Why then don't you think about wanting to adopt children. Because there are so many children that don't have parents and do need them.*

*We have thought about that, I wanted maybe to adopt children, but (partner) thought it unworkable. (...) so we stopped thinking about it. Well I call it adoption maybe uh. Yes adoption is very definitive, more just being care family or foster home, but only in weekends because during the week I was not thinking of giving up my job for that.*

Some respondent mention that they are guardian, or in some other way involved with somebody else's children.

*We are also, how do you call that, godmother and goddad (laughs) no it is called different, uh, Guardian. Yes I think it's Guardian, it is also laid down at a notary that if something happens to my sister and brother-in-law that we take over the upbringing of their children. (respondent E)*

#### How to achieve childlessness

Above the different options in the problem space of the women have been discussed. Having children as well as choosing childlessness are possible choice options. Women that decide

they want to remain childless should also perceive a method to achieve childlessness open to choice. Using modern contraceptives is perceived as available option by all women, but ideas about abortion vary.

All women used modern contraceptives.

*But always very dedicated using oral pills and things like that, for I had the idea it's not going to be an accident, you hear things like that, from people that let it happen. I have had in that period quite a dose of morning after pills, really terrible. (Respondent C)*

Contraceptives and abortion are both included in the problem space of the women, they perceive that they can be free to choose them. However most women state that in their own case they would not choose abortion. They are not against abortion, but in their own situation it is not necessary, so for themselves they cannot justify the decision to have an abortion.

*I: Have you ever been afraid you were pregnant?*

*R: No, no but I've always been very careful and precise.*

*I: What would you have done?*

*R: Had the child.*

*I: Really?*

*R: Yes, but that's because I can't morally accept abortion for myself. That's not because I'm religious, for I'm not, but no I don't think I would be able to do so. (respondent D)*

*I've always used oral pill, and a few times I forgot, also when we had had sex, and then I really panicked. (...) But when I thought further about it I always had, when it happens it happens, then it has come in love, and surely can grow up with us. But fortunately it never happened. (respondent B)*

*At that time abortion was something like, we fought for it, it belonged to the attainments, to the rights of women. It was not an ethical question. But nowadays it would be a more burdensome deliberation for me. (respondent A)*

Not all women would have had the child if they accidentally got pregnant. For all of them it is hypothetical question what they would have done. But one states she would probably have had an abortion.

*What a difficult question, I can of course say that I most probably would have had an abortion, but you don't know that. (respondent E)*

### Conclusions

Childlessness is open to choice to the respondents. They do not need to have children because of a strong desire, or because of religious or societal norms that have influence on them.

Modern contraceptives and abortion are perceived as open to choice. The respondents can achieve childlessness because they can choose to use modern contraceptives. Abortion is also considered as an option, but most women state that for themselves they most probably would not have chosen for it.

Most women have to doubt between the option of voluntary childlessness and other choice options. Having own children, with a partner, or alone, are mentioned, as well as

adoption or fostering. Some women never seriously considered these other choice options. They just remained childless, without extensive deliberation about the other choice options. They did not make it explicit to themselves that they had more options to choose from, but only perceived childlessness, and ended up with that.

The other women did perceive that they had more options to choose from. They had to make a decision between childlessness, having own children, or adopting or fostering children. How they made this decision is described in the next paragraph.

### **7.4.3 Decision making styles**

How did these women make the decision to remain childless? Did they know all their lives that they did not want children, or did they only realize that at a certain moment? Did they make a fixed decision, or did they let the time pass until it was too late. Was it a very hard decision to make, and did they seriously consider all the options, or did they never really think about it. Some women will have discussed the subject extensively with their partner, friends and family, while others made the decision alone. There are a lot of different decision-making styles how these women came to the same decision to not have children.

#### Ideas about children when very young

None of the respondents knew already she wanted to remain childless when she was young. Most respondents state they pictured themselves with a family, but some already saw there were also other options.

*It appears to be that I have said at high school age that I wanted to have a large family, but I can't remember that myself. (respondent E)*

*Yes that (large family) seemed very cozy to me then, a bit the Von Trapp family idea, but I left that idea with becoming older. (respondent F)*

*I'm raised from the idea –well I was always good at school- and it was self-evident therefore –I'm from an academic social background- that I would go to university, and thus also do something with it. Thus I did not have the standard image of becoming a housewife and having children, but I also didn't have the idea I'm not going to have children. (respondent D)*

*But something like, you get a partner, and you start living together (...) but that's your only frame of reference at such a moment, something else was not in my system. (...) or you don't meet anybody, because that's also possible. (respondent A)*

#### Having children, subject of extensive deliberation?

For some respondents having children was never a subject of extensive deliberation. They did not see it as a strong decision of themselves, they just never had children. They let the time pass without having children, without really worrying about that.

*The first ten, fifteen years it has never been the subject of conversation. The first ten fifteen years of our marriage we have really been very busy, with working, car racing, and the maintenance of the house and the garden, and no strong desire for children, thus then you don't think about it, I think. (respondent E)*

When asking respondent E if she spoke with her partner about having children she answers:

*Well more with a drink, and what I just said when my sister and brother-in-law got children, maybe we would have been quite nice parents (laughs)*

Also respondent A did not deliberate much about having children, when asking her about when she thought about having children she states:

*Well it was never a real item for me. (respondent A)*

For other respondents it was a much harder decision. They doubted about having children or not, and although did not feel a desire to have children now, they were afraid that they would regret their decision later.

*At a certain moment I turned 38 or so, and then I have thought very deliberately... Then I thought now you have to stand in front of the mirror: do you really want this yourself, because then it passes by. (...) And then I looked myself very seriously in the eyes (laughs) and thought about my life. (...) Because I had thoughts like that, that I pitied it, sometimes, well maybe not really sorrowful, only a bit, not really often, and then that feeling was also quickly gone again. (...) Thus diagnosed in myself like right, you don't have an enormous desire like that. (respondent C)*

*I realized that I did not have the feeling like I really want to be pregnant once, and I realized that I wasn't lyrical about every baby I saw. Thus a feeling like it is good as it is now. (...) And in fact it was like that every time, we like children very much, but we don't have to have them ourselves. And we discussed that over and over very regularly, and so eventually the decision became very deliberately we don't. (respondent B)*

There are big differences between the respondents in how much they doubt and deliberate about their decision. Respondent E who stated that she wanted a large family when she was young never really thought seriously about having children when she was married. Because they had no desire for children, and did not want to give up their freedom and careers for children, they are childless. They never made an explicit decision, but just did not have them. Also respondent A did not have a strong desire for children, and therefore she remained childless. Because she is in a Lesbian relation not having children is very easy, and having children very complicated. Because having children “was never a subject” to her she simply remained childless.

The other women much more realized that they had a choice and that they had to make a decision. They see that besides childlessness also having children is a possible option for them, and that they have to choose between the two. These women think about how wonderful it must be to experience pregnancy, delivery, and the upbringing of a child. They thought about what they miss by remaining childless, and about what they gain, and made a deliberate decision.

### Postponement

The women who did make a conscious decision between childlessness and having children had different strategies. Some decided at a certain moment they did not want children, while others postponed having children, until at a certain age they thought of themselves as to old.

The women that used the postponement strategy waited for the desire for children to come. Because this feeling never came they never had children.

*No I think it just never came to it, I think that is the best description. No deliberate choice, well what is a deliberate choice, I had no strong desire for children, my partner has no strong desire for children, and now we are just too old. (...) I always had the feeling; when I get children it will be because of a very positive feeling "yes I want children" You have to make a positive decision to want them. And not 'do I want children or not', because then you don't want them really. (...) And that thus never came, that feeling. (respondent D)*

Other women made the decision to remain childless once and for all at an earlier time in life.

*None of us really felt the need to have own children, so then you reinforce each other in that, and then at a certain moment it became a decision. (...) Yes that was early thirties, I think I was in my early thirties. (respondent F)*

### Sharing the decision

Besides with their partner some of the women talked with other people about their decision to have children or not. But other people's opinions did not influence their decision.

*When we were much younger, and everybody was in that phase, we very regularly discussed it with friends and brothers and sisters. And there were a lot of them, then that said, yes we are also in doubt, having them, or not. (...) But eventually everybody made the decision to have children, but we didn't, we stayed with the other decision. (respondent B)*

The opinions of the partner did influence the decision. When the partner would have had a very strong desire for children, then most women would have had children. Only respondent E states that even if her partner had very much wanted to have children, she still would probably not have had them. But all women state that their partner also had no strong desire for children, that they agreed on the decision to not have children.

*I said, if my partner would have wanted children, I said if you really want children, I will give birth to them, but then you also should take care of them for the largest part. (respondent D)*

*We made that switch, in the beginning I had very clear the idea 'we are going to have children' at that moment (partner) had totally nothing with that idea. And when he came with 'maybe it is nice' I was more on the side of well I don't think I need to have them for myself. So actually we crossed each other, and then later (partner) went to my side, like no we don't have to have them ourselves. (respondent B)*

*Yes I don't know, I think I'm quite a liberated person, I don't know, if it would have made a difference and what I would have done in that case. (respondent E)*

### Conclusions

The women did not already decide that they did not want to have children when they were young. Most saw themselves in the future with a partner and children.

At a certain age having children became a serious option for most respondents, they started thinking about it and discussing it with their partner. However some respondents never seriously thought about having children. They just let the time pass without having children, and without burdensome deliberations about wanting to have children or not. To them childlessness is not a subject, they just never had a child.

The other women perceive more alternatives to choose from in their problem space. They feel they have to make a decision between having children and voluntary childlessness. There are two strategies to do this.

The first strategy is postponement. When the women are not sure children, or when they disagree with their partner they postpone the decision. This can be a very conscious decision, we only have children when we are very sure we both want them, and if not then we will never have them. When the strong desire to have children would come before they thought of themselves as too old they could have children then.

The other strategy is to decide earlier in life that you never want children. After extensive deliberation and discussion with the partner some of the women decided that they did not want to have children of themselves. They were already sure that they never would want them before they thought of themselves as too old.

## **7.5 Conclusions**

Based on the descriptions of the motivation, the problem space and the decision-making styles the research questions can be answered. What are the reasons for childlessness, how is the decision to remain childless made, and what is the role of values in this.

To be able to make the decision to remain childless, the first most important thing is to perceive childlessness as a choice option. Childlessness should be included in the problem space. For the respondents childlessness is an option because they do not feel the strong desire for children and because they do not feel pressure from any norm to have children. According to them when having this strong desire for children, you have no choice but to have children. For other women that have this strong desire childlessness is not really a choice option. The respondents also state that in another time, there was not really a choice, there were strong norms to have children, and therefore they most probably would have had children when they had lived then. The absence of pressure from norms and of a strong desire for children makes that for these women childlessness is a choice option.

Besides remaining childless there are also other options, having own children, or adopting or fostering children. Some women create a extensive problem space with all these choice options. To them it is explicit that they have to choose between childlessness and having children, and they start doubting and discussing and weighting pros and cons.

Not all women built this explicit problem space. Some perceive only childlessness as serious choice option, they never seriously considered having children. Because they only perceived one choice option they did not have to make a decision. They simply did not have children.

For the women who perceived childlessness as well as having children as open to choice there was a decision to be made. There are two different decision-making strategies to do this. Some women postponed childbearing until it was too late. They had no strong desire for children, and therefore did not want children now, but waited for this desire for children to come. Because the desire never came they remained childless.

The other women at a certain moment made the decision that they did not want children once and for all. Before they thought of themselves as too old they already had decided that they never wanted to have children.

When women have to choose between childlessness and having children they are motivated by their values. When a value is very important and childlessness is perceived instrumental to achieving that value this is a reason to choose for childlessness.

Freedom and independence are important values to the respondents. To some respondents they are that important that they do not want to give up their freedom for having children. Because they think they will lose their freedom when having children they decide to remain childless.

Personal development is a very important value for all respondents. For some of the women their career is an important means to achieve personal development. Because they think they cannot combine their career with having children they choose to remain childless in order to be able to develop themselves.

The Theory of the Second Demographic Transition (Van de Kaa, 1988) describes a transition in demographic characteristics, including rising levels of childlessness. The values of freedom, independence, and personal development will become more important. Norms will lose influence thereby increasing individual freedom of choice.

The childless women in this research perceive childlessness as a choice option because they are not influenced by norms. They choose childlessness over having children because the values personal development, freedom and independence are important to them, and they think they can better achieve these values when not having children. The Theory of the Second Demographic Transition predicts relations on macro level between norms and values and childlessness. This research investigates these relations on micro level and thereby explains why these relations exist.

The Value of Children Theory (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1973) describes nine needs that have to be fulfilled. Children have value when they can be used to fulfill these needs, but the needs can also be fulfilled in alternative ways. When there are no alternative ways to achieve needs like adulthood, stimulation or immortality you have to have children. People who cannot fulfill these values in other ways will feel a need, or desire to have children, while others not experience this need. When you do not need to have children to achieve any of the nine values of children, you can make a rational decision about wanting to have children or not.

The value of children theory can explain why some women experience a strong desire for children and others not. According to the theory this will be because these women have no alternative means to achieve one of the needs. They experience a desire for children because children have a value to them, children can be used to fulfill a need that they otherwise cannot fulfill.

This would mean that women that have unfulfilled needs will experience a strong desire for children, while women with alternatives to achieve needs will not experience this desire. The research cannot prove that the desire for children is explained by unfulfilled needs, maybe it is a feeling that comes from within the individual that has nothing to do with the achievement of needs.

Women that have no strong desire for children, maybe because they have alternative means to achieve the Values of Children, can make a free decision between childlessness and having children. They are guided in their decision by the values they want to achieve. Personal development is very important to the respondents, and also freedom and independence are valued highly. When they perceive not having children as instrumental to achieving the values that are important to them they decide to not have children.

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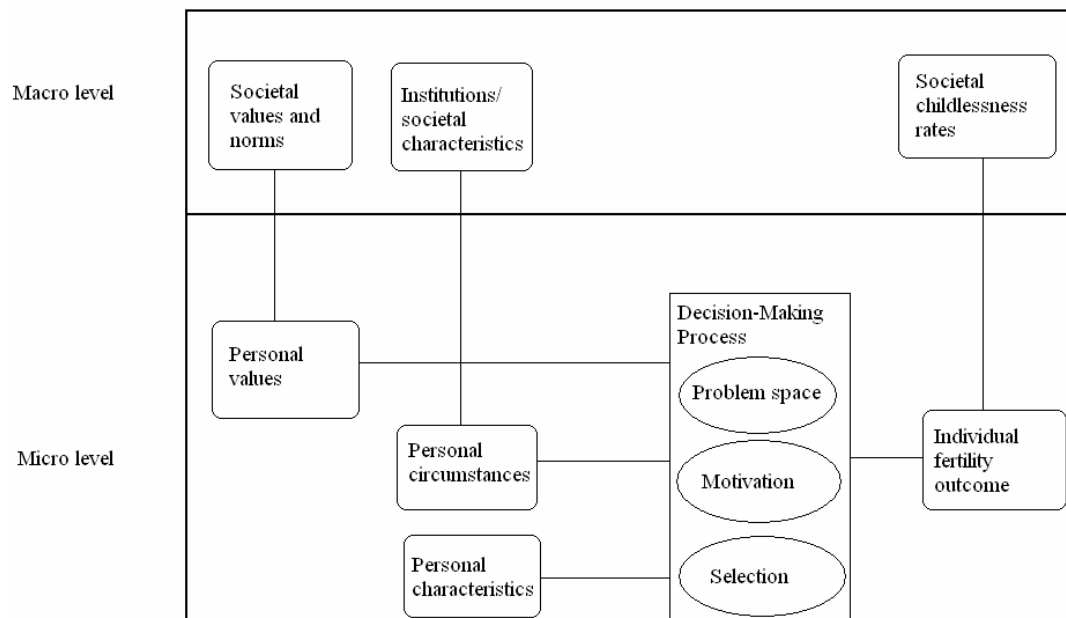
## Chapter 8: Conclusions

### 8.1 Introduction

This thesis consists of three separate research parts. It is tested which macro level values are related to childlessness rates in European countries. On micro level the influence of both values and personal characteristics on the individual probability to be childless is tested. In the qualitative research insight is gained in why and how these values that were found to have influence in the quantitative research influence the decision of individuals about childlessness. The qualitative research also gives insight in how the decision to remain childless is made.

The conceptual model shows research on two levels and the three different parts of the research. Macro level values influence macro level childlessness rates via the micro level. Micro level values and personal characteristics influence childlessness via the decisions of individual women. The decision-making process consists of the creation of the problem space, motivation and choosing the alternative of preference with a certain decision-making style. Values and personal characteristics influence the problem space, motivation and selection in the decision-making process about fertility and childlessness and thereby influence if women will choose childlessness.

Figure 8.1 Conceptual model



(Based on Coleman (1990) and De Bruijn (1999))

## 8.2 The macro level

The theory of the Second Demographic Transition (Van de Kaa, 1988) describes a number of value changes that will coincide in society and together will cause demographic changes. A change towards post-materialistic, secular, individualistic, tolerant and freedom values and less influence of traditional norms makes fertility subject to choice and childlessness a reasonable decision. Based on this on macro level post-transitional values are expected to be related to each other and to high childlessness rates.

Secularism is mentioned by Van de Kaa (1988) as a post-transitional value. However according to Simons (1986) religiosity has two dimensions; the influence of religious norms and doctrines and the personal religious experience. The absence of influence of religious norms on everyday life is called secular individualism and is expected to be independent of personal religiosity.

The macro level research indeed found the values post-materialism, secularism, tolerance and freedom to be related to each other and to childlessness rates; countries with these post-transitional values have higher childlessness rates. Thereby the research confirms the theory of the Second Demographic Transition.

Of the two dimensions of religiosity only secular individualism is related to the other post-transitional values. In countries with post-transitional values, including secular individualistic values childlessness rates are found to be higher. Personal religiosity is another independent factor, in countries with more religious values childlessness rates are found to be higher. This is contradictory to what was expected. The personal dimension of religiosity is related to high levels of childlessness, while the normative dimension of religiosity is related to low levels of childlessness. This confirms the hypotheses of Simons (1986) that religiosity has two independent dimensions. Childlessness rates in the 35-39 age group are higher in countries where personal religiosity is an important value. However this childlessness is very much due to postponement and life long childlessness is low.

## 8.3 The micro level

The most important theory on micro level is the Value of Children Theory (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1973). All people have to achieve nine needs: adulthood, immortality, morality, affiliation, stimulation, esteem, power, social comparison and economic utility. These needs can be achieved either by having children or in alternative ways. Children have value to their parents when they can be used to achieve a need. When an individual has no alternative to reach one of the needs she will have to have children and achieve the need by having children. What alternatives people have to achieve these values depends on their personal characteristics. According to Hoffman and Hoffman (1973) morality can be achieved by having children for your country or religion. Achieving this value will therefore be a motivation to have children for religious and nationalistic women.

Based on the Value of Children Theory it is expected that people who have a job, high job level, high educational level and high income will have more alternatives to achieve adulthood, esteem, stimulation, power and economic utility. Of these variables only fulltime work is found to be significantly related to childlessness. Educational level, job level, income and part-time work have no influence on the probability to be childless. Therefore it is not likely that the Value of Children theory explains this relation. If women working fulltime are more often childless because they can achieve Values of Children in their job it would be expected that also influence was found of part-time work, job level and educational level.

Women with children less often choose to work fulltime is a better explanation for these results. The values nationalism and religiosity are not significantly related to childlessness on micro level, also in this the research does not confirm the Value of Children Theory.

Besides the Value of Children Theory, in the micro research also the theory of the Second Demographic Transition is used. According to this theory countries experience a transition, therefore on country level post-transitional values will be correlated to each other and to post-transitional demographic characteristics like high childlessness rates. Values in countries change because individuals adhere to different values systems. The question is if also on individual level post-transitional values are related to each other, and to high childlessness rates. If the theory of the Second Demographic Transition applies on micro level this would mean that post-transitional values are correlated with each other in individuals. Like countries also individuals will have either pre or post-transitional value orientations on all transitional values. People with post-transitional values orientations will then also have a higher probability to remain childless.

The micro research finds significant and high correlations between the post-transitional values post-materialism, secular individualism, tolerance, individualism, non-nationalistic and not religious values and non-traditional family norms. Individualism and non-traditional family norms have significant effect on the probability to remain childless. This confirms the expectations that were made translating the theory of the Second Demographic Transition to micro level. A micro level theory can be formulated; post-transitional values are correlated with each other on individual level and cause the freedom and the desire to choose childlessness. Therefore individuals that adhere to post-transitional values will have a higher probability to be childless.

#### **8.4 The decision-making process about childlessness**

The research on the macro and the micro level show a relation between values and childlessness. According to the theory this relation exists because values of individuals influence their decision about fertility. Insight in the decision-making process can explain why and how values influence childlessness. A decision-making process consists of the creation of a problem space, motivation and the selection of the preferred alternative. Values and norms influence what alternatives are included in the problem space and people are motivated by the values they want to achieve.

According to the theory traditional norms and religious values can exclude childlessness as choice option from the problem space. Post-transitional value orientations; high value of freedom, personal development and independence, make people decide against children. When an individual wants to achieve one of these values, and perceives childlessness as instrumental to this achievement, people will remain childless.

According to the Value of Children Theory when having no alternatives means to achieve all nine values of children you have to have children. Values and personal characteristics determined the alternatives individuals have. Some people will have no choice but to have children while others can also choose alternative strategies.

The childless women in the research state that they do not feel a strong desire for children, therefore they do not need to have children but can make a deliberate decision. They can choose between childlessness and having children based on what is important to them. According to the respondents, other women who do have this strong desire for children will have no choice but to have children. The Value of Children Theory would explain this by

stating that the respondents had alternative means to achieve all values and therefore did not need to have children. The strong desire for children then not is a feeling that comes from within, but caused by unfulfilled needs. This research cannot test if this desire for children is caused by unfulfilled needs. To test that it is needed to interview women who have or at least want children, and ask them why they want children. The childless women in this research state they like their live as it is. When they sometimes regret being childless, they can think of other nice things to do instead and not feel sorrowful anymore. This can indicate that individuals with alternatives to achieve the Values of Children not feel the need or desire to have children.

Although some women have a religious background they all state they do not feel any pressure from religious norms. Also societal norms or pressure from others to have children did not influence their decision. The women state that nowadays they do not experience pressure to have children from any norm. However in another time these norms existed, and people did not have a real choice about having children. When they had lived under such norms they most probably would have had children because they did not see childlessness as a possibility.

The absence of pressure from norms, and the absence of the desire for children makes that childlessness is an option open to choice to these women. In their problem space besides having children also childlessness is included.

The women can freely make a decision between childlessness, having own children, and other possible options like adoption or fostering. In this decision they are motivated by their values. The value of freedom is important to the women, to some women this value is that important that they do not want to give up their freedom for having children. Personal development is also very important to all women. Some of the women perceive childlessness as instrumental to personal development, they achieve personal development in their work and their career, and state they cannot combine their career with having children. Because personal development is very important to them, they choose to remain childless on behalf of their career. Values of sustainability are important to some women, to them the idea that there are already more then enough people on the world is an extra motivation to not have children themselves.

The absence of a strong desire for children not only makes that childlessness is included in the problem space, it is also a motivation to choose that option. The women mention the absence of a desire for children as first reason why they do not have children. One respondents states she only wanted children when she really experienced a wish to have children, she did not want to have them without that strong feeling. Motivated by different combinations of values all women eventually choose childlessness over having children.

In the theory the desire for children was never mentioned. However according to the respondent it is a very important reason for childlessness. A theory can be formulated explaining childlessness from the desire for children. The absence of the “desire for children” makes that childlessness is part of the problem space of individuals and motivates them to not have children. Therefore only people who do not have a strong desire for children can choose childlessness.

There are big differences in how the women eventually decided to remain childless. Although for all women both childlessness and having children were options not all women perceived explicit that they had to make a choice. Some women never seriously considered the option of having children, they made no explicit decision they did not want children but just never had them. On the other side are the women who made a very deliberate decision. They talked

about it with friends, tested their own reaction on other children, tried to understand their own feelings or discussed the subject extensively with their partner. These women really perceived that both having children and childlessness were options to them, and they had to make the right decision.

In how these women eventually made their deliberate decision there are two strategies. One group at a certain moment decided that they did not want to have children, that they did not need to have them. Together with the partner they decided they would never have children, and kept to that decision later. Another group of women did not make a decision at a certain moment. They knew all the time that they certainly did not want children now, but did not decide they would never have them. These women state they waited for the desire for children to come, they expected it to come someday, but it never came. After postponing the decision, at a certain moment they thought of themselves as too old, and that made the decision about childlessness definitive.

## **8.5 The theory of the Second Demographic Transition**

The theory of the Second Demographic Transition is a macro level theory that expects values to be related to demographic characteristics. High childlessness rates is one of the demographic characteristics that is expected to be related to post-transitional value orientations on societal level. The macro level research confirms the theory, countries with post-transitional values are found to have higher childlessness rates.

Based on the micro level research the theory of the Second Demographic Transitions can be elaborated to micro level. A micro level theory can be formulated to explain individual childlessness probabilities from adherence to transitional values. On individual level post-transitional values are correlated to each other and together cause the freedom and the wish to choose childlessness.

According to the theory of The Second Demographic Transition secularism is a post-transitional value and religiosity is pre-transitional. Hereby the two independent dimensions of religiosity are not taken into account. This macro level research shows that the normative dimension of religiosity is part of the Second Demographic Transitions and with other post-transitional values related to high childlessness rates while the personal religiosity dimension does not have the expected relation with childlessness. Also on micro level secular individualism is related to childlessness while personal religiosity is not. The micro level research however finds significant correlation between the two dimensions of religiosity. Individuals to whom religion is important more often adhere to religious norms and doctrines.

## **8.6 Values and voluntary childlessness**

On country level values are related to childlessness rates as predicted by the Second Demographic Transition theory. This theory can be translated to the micro level to predict the relation between individual values and childlessness. Also on individual level post-transitional values are related to each other, and individuals with post-transitional values have a higher probability to be childless. Both societal values and individual values influence the decision of individual women about childlessness.

Values influence the creation of the problem space and the motivation and thereby influence the decision about childlessness. Societal and personal values can exclude choice options from the problem space, they can make that people do not perceive childlessness as open to choice. A strong desire for children also makes that voluntary childlessness is no

option. When people do not experience pressure from norms or a desire for children they can choose freely if they want children or not. Their decision will then be based on motivation. People are motivated by values, when a certain value is important to them and they perceive childlessness as instrumental to its achievement they will choose childlessness.

## 8.7 Discussion

In chapter five values were created from aggregated variables about opinions and actions. The share of people in a country with a certain opinion was used as indicator for country level values. In chapter six the opinions of individuals were used as indicators for their personal values. However two different techniques were used to create values from the indicators. In chapter five all variables were combined in one factor analysis, and the different extracted components represent different values and the component loadings indicate which variables are strong indicators for these values. With this technique the values appear directly from the data, and the researcher only has to interpret the meaning of the different components. In chapter six separate factor analyses are done, the values are created from indicators chosen based on theory or earlier ideas. The advantage of this technique is that all values can be measured independently, and therefore correlations between the values can be measured. In further research with data for more countries it would be interesting to also on macro level create separate values, and test if there are differences between correlations on macro and micro level. Individuals with post-materialistic values also adhere to secular individualist values, it would be interesting to test if countries with post-materialist values also have secular individualist values, and if this correlation is stronger then only the relation that exist because of individual correlations. Testing correlations between all values on both macro and micro level gives more insight in the theory of the Second Demographic Transition, and the individual Transitional values theory and how these two theories are related.

In this thesis qualitative research was used as illustration of the quantitative research and to answer the questions why and how the found values influence childlessness. To give a reliable view on how exactly all different women make the decision about childlessness not enough interviews are done. After six interviews theoretical saturation was not reached yet. The research describes different reasons for childlessness and different strategies and decision-making styles, however it does not state that these are all reasons and all strategies. Because theoretical saturation was not reached the research can not be sure that there are no other reasons and other decision-making styles, to discover that more interviews are needed.

In the research an explicit choice is made to choose the female perspective. Country level childlessness rates are only available for women, but individual childlessness would have been also available for men, and also in the qualitative research it would have been possible to interview men about their decision. Because only six interviews were done, the focus had to be either on men or on women, and I chose women. In further research it would be very interesting to choose a similar approach and a focus on men; are they influenced by the same values, and do they make the decision in the same way.

Besides a focus on women, in the interviews it is also chosen to only interview women in stable relationships. It would be very interesting to get insight in how values influence the fertility decisions of singles. Traditional, religious and family norms are related to lower childlessness, it are reasons to have children when in a relation. Will these values have the same effect for singles, or an adverse effect because a partner is required for having children?

Also the alternatives considered open to choice and the values that motivate the behavior of singles are an interesting topic for further research.

In chapter seven it is suggested that the Value of Children Theory might explain why some women have a desire for children while others do not have this feeling. According to Hoffman and Hoffman (1973) all people have to fulfill nine needs, children have value to their parents when they can be used to achieve needs. When an individual has no alternative means to achieve one of the needs she (he) has to have children. For individuals with a strong desire for children voluntary childlessness is not a choice option, they have to have children. Will this be because of unfulfilled needs? Is the feeling of a strong desire for children driven by needs that can not be fulfilled in alternative ways. It would be interesting to do further research to further develop the desire for children theory, and to test if it links to the Value of Children theory. This can be done by interviewing women who have, or want to have children and ask their motives for having children, or by asking women both childless and with a child or a desire for children if and how they achieve the different Values if Children.

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Appendix 1: Rotated component matrix of the macro level analysis

Variable	Label	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
a001	FAMILY IMPORTANT	0,452	0,633	0,127
a002	FRIENDS IMPORTANT	0,911	0,123	-0,189
a003	LEISURE TIME	0,919	0,207	-0,085
a004	POLITICS IMPORTANT	0,636	0,055	0,000
a006	RELIGION IMPORTANT	-0,088	0,488	0,767
a030	CHILD QUALITY: HARD WORK	-0,931	-0,098	-0,008
a034	CHILD QUALITY: IMAGINATION	0,873	-0,040	-0,029
a040	CHILD QUALITY: RELIGIOUS FAITH	-0,234	0,451	0,787
a049	ABORTION IF NOT WANTING MORE CHILDREN	-0,110	-0,044	-0,806
a058	SPEND TIME WITH FRIENDS	0,708	0,168	0,122
a062	HOW OFTEN DISCUSSES POLITICAL MATTERS	0,139	-0,343	-0,030
a064	BELONG SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICE FOR ELDERLY	0,828	-0,040	-0,171
a066	BELONG CULTURAL ACTIVITIES	0,800	-0,045	-0,160
a067	BELONG LABOR UNIONS	0,760	-0,124	-0,184
a068	BELONG POLITICAL PARTIES	0,815	-0,010	-0,059
a070	BELONG HUMAN RIGHTS	0,748	-0,075	-0,075
a072	BELONG PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS	0,814	0,164	-0,127
a073	BELONG YOUTH WORK	0,749	-0,039	-0,207
a074	BELONG SPORTS OR RECREATION	0,874	-0,155	-0,283
a077	BELONG CONCERNED WITH HEALTH	0,776	-0,060	0,049
a079	BELONG OTHER GROUPS	0,769	-0,122	-0,309
a080	BELONG NONE	-0,915	0,086	0,226
a165	MOST PEOPLE CAN BE TRUSTED	0,829	-0,198	-0,116
a170	HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR LIFE	0,894	0,064	0,042
a173	HOW MUCH FREEDOM YOU FEEL	0,761	0,039	0,004
b003	GOVERNMENT REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION	-0,815	0,056	0,208
c002	EMPLOYERS PRIORITY (NATION) PEOPLE/IMMIGRANTS	-0,771	0,260	0,221
c011	IMPORTANT IN A JOB: GOOD PAY	-0,773	0,370	0,207
c012	IMPORTANT IN A JOB: NOT TOO MUCH PRESSURE	-0,155	0,790	0,174
c014	IMPORTANT IN A JOB: A JOB RESPECTED	-0,240	0,869	0,145
c016	IMPORTANT IN A JOB: INITIATIVE	0,386	0,802	0,027
c017	IMPORTANT IN A JOB: GENEROUS HOLIDAYS	-0,267	0,756	0,127
c018	IMPORTANT IN A JOB: YOU CAN ACHIEVE SOMETHING	0,107	0,833	0,032
c019	IMPORTANT IN A JOB: A RESPONSIBLE JOB	0,300	0,866	-0,020
c021	IMPORTANT IN A JOB: ABILITIES	-0,201	0,794	-0,117
c022	IMPORTANT IN A JOB: PLEASANT PEOPLE WORK WITH	0,509	0,569	-0,141
c023	IMPORTANT IN A JOB: GOOD CHANCES PROMOTION	-0,246	0,852	0,102
c024	IMPORTANT IN A JOB: A USEFUL JOB FOR SOCIETY	-0,280	0,878	0,121
c025	IMPORTANT IN A JOB: MEETING PEOPLE	0,030	0,778	-0,100
c029	EMPLOYED	0,640	-0,091	-0,152
c034	FREEDOM DECISION TAKING IN JOB	0,951	-0,024	0,034
c059	ONE SECRETARY IS PAID MORE	-0,327	0,189	-0,292
c061	FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS AT WORK	0,185	0,146	-0,110
d026	LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP TO BE HAPPY	-0,618	0,480	-0,203
d030	RESPECT + APPRECIATION MARRIAGE	0,630	0,563	-0,194
d031	RELIGIOUS BELIEFS MARRIAGE	-0,159	0,547	0,620
d034	UNDERSTAND AND TOLERANCE MARRIAGE	0,600	0,582	-0,269
d040	SPENDING TIME TOGETHER MARRIAGE	0,066	0,805	0,213

d041	TALKING MARRIAGE	0,226	0,830	0,343
e016	MORE EMPHASIS ON TECHNOLOGY	-0,819	-0,101	0,019
e025	POLITICAL ACTION: SIGNING A PETITION	0,825	-0,105	-0,147
e026	POLITICAL ACTION: JOINING IN BOYCOTTS	0,871	-0,166	-0,208
e038	TAKE ANY JOB AVAILABLE	-0,317	-0,599	-0,161
e069	CONFIDENCE: CHURCHES	-0,449	0,139	0,721
e073	CONFIDENCE: LABOR UNIONS	0,297	0,043	0,266
e074	CONFIDENCE: THE POLICE	0,551	-0,046	0,343
e075	CONFIDENCE: PARLIAMENT	0,313	0,376	0,379
e076	CONFIDENCE: THE CIVIL SERVICES	-0,055	0,389	0,211
e077	CONFIDENCE: SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM	0,274	0,002	0,095
e088	CONFIDENCE: THE UNITED NATIONS	0,123	0,410	0,164
e110	DEMOCRACY IS DEVELOPING IN OUR COUNTRY	0,482	-0,149	0,222
e115	HAVING EXPERTS MAKE DECISIONS	-0,537	0,625	-0,190
e117	HAVING A DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL SYSTEM	0,748	0,232	0,003
e123	DEMOCRACY MAY HAVE PROBLEMS BUT IS BETTER	0,703	0,017	-0,018
e124	RESPECT FOR INDIVIDUAL HUMAN RIGHTS	0,718	-0,235	0,060
e148	RECOGNIZING MERITS	0,325	-0,566	0,103
e166	PREPARED TO HELP IMMIGRANTS	0,779	0,192	0,048
f024	BELONG TO RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION	0,238	0,195	0,767
f033	RELIGIOUS SERVICE DEATH	-0,340	0,070	0,708
f038	CHURCHES GIVE ANSWERS: THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS	-0,201	0,002	0,699
f050	BELIEVE IN GOD	-0,136	0,123	0,948
f051	BELIEVE IN LIFE AFTER DEATH	-0,025	-0,102	0,847
f053	BELIEVE IN HELL	-0,477	0,026	0,777
f054	BELIEVE IN HEAVEN	-0,166	0,005	0,907
f055	BELIEVE IN SIN	-0,569	-0,108	0,682
f057	BELIEVE IN RE-INCARNATION	-0,623	-0,560	0,050
f063	HOW IMPORTANT IS GOD IN YOUR LIFE	-0,240	0,208	0,923
f064	COMFORT AND STRENGTH FROM RELIGION	-0,293	0,125	0,900
f065	MOMENTS OF PRAYER, MEDITATION...	0,027	0,041	0,827
f098	DO YOU HAVE A LUCKY CHARM	-0,090	0,034	-0,303
f114	JUSTIFIABLE: CLAIMING GOVERNMENT BENEFITS	-0,187	0,049	0,080
f121	JUSTIFIABLE: DIVORCE	0,865	-0,057	-0,248
f123	JUSTIFIABLE: SUICIDE	0,786	0,032	-0,232
f126	JUSTIFIABLE: TAKING SOFT DRUGS	0,656	0,169	0,047
f132	JUSTIFIABLE: HAVING CASUAL SEX	0,691	0,180	-0,185
y002	POST-MATERIALIST INDEX 4-item	0,763	0,165	0,219

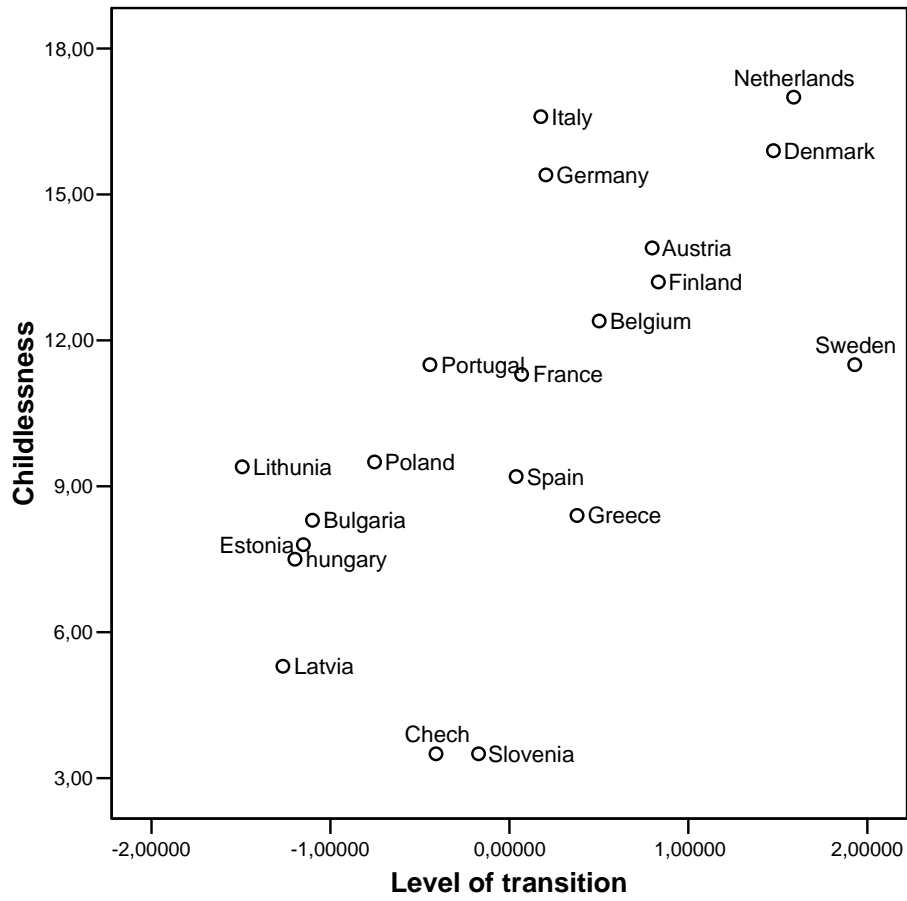
## Appendix 2: Inglehart Materialism Index

Inglehart designed specific questions to measure materialism and post-materialism. The Inglehart materialism Index is used in the EVS. People are asked what is most important; maintaining order in the nation, giving people more to say, fighting rising prices or protecting freedom of speech. They should state their first and second most important goal. Based on this question people are defined as post-materialist when they mention both freedom of speech and giving people more to say as important goals. When they mention one of them as first or second most important goal they have a mixed value orientation. When they mention both fighting rising prices and maintaining order they are defined as having a materialist value orientation.

This variable is aggregated to country level. The percentage of people in a country with a post-materialist value orientation is the new aggregated variable.

Inglehart, R. (1977) *The Silent Revolution; changing values and political styles among western publics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Appendix 3: Childlessness by level of Transition, differences between countries.



## Appendix 4a : Interview Guideline (English Translation)

I'm Sanne Boschman. I study Demography at Groningen University and I'm working on my master thesis on childlessness. I'm interested in why people not have children, and how this decision is made. Therefore I conduct interviews with childless women in the Netherlands.

I want to thank you for accepting to talk to me. All information you give here will be handled confidentially, you will remain anonymous. The interviews will only be used for my own research. You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to answer. Do you agree with the interview being registered on tape? The interview will take about 1 hour.

### **Starting: (Warming Up)**

First I would like to know something about yourself, can you tell me about your current life? (When asks 'what') About everything you want, about your living situation, parents, siblings, work, education, partner, friends, hobbies, everything you want to tell about yourself.

Probes:

- Work, do you like your work, how long have you been working in this job, contract, where did you work (town)?
- Education, what different things did you do?
- Partner, how long together, living together, married? Are these issues?
- Tell me something about your partner (how met, how relation developed, work/education of partner)
- Siblings, how is relation with siblings (children)
- Parents, (still alive?) relation with parents
- Where and how do you live?

## **Childlessness**

You don't have children; can you tell me how did that come around? / What has led to you being childless at this moment? / What has led to this decision?

Probes:

- Can you remember the first time when you have thought about if you wanted children or not? When was it? What did you think then, how did your opinion develop?
- Have there been moments in your life on which you maybe wanted a child? Why especially considered at that moment? What was the reason to nevertheless not have a child at that moment? What were the arguments pro and contra? (Was it ever an option to have a child alone or only considered in solid relationships?) Have you ever considered adoption?
- Is it definitive for you that you will never have a child? Why? When did you once and for all decide you would never have children, has there been a moment like that in your life, how did you experience it?
- How did you discuss having children with your partner, what is his position, did he want children? Who started the subject, who used what arguments, who was more pro children, who more against? Why?
- When would you have had children? What should have been different in your life to make you have children? (Probe: Partner (met earlier, different partner) job, education, childcare facilities, people around you) Why?
- What do you do to prevent pregnancy? What would you do if something went wrong with it, if it failed? Are you afraid to get pregnant accidentally? What would you do if you turned out to be pregnant now? (Abortion) Why??? Have you ever thought you might be pregnant, how did you experience it, how did you discuss this with partner, how did you handle it.
- Do you ever regret your decision to have no children? What would you have liked to have experienced? Is there anything that you miss, what do you miss most, why?

## **Others/ Norms**

Till now we have talked most about yourself and your partner, now I want to talk a bit more about other people around you, about the role of other people.

### Important others

- Is there anybody (beside your partner) with whom you discuss (not) having children? In what way, how?
- What is the opinion about having children from the people around you? Whose opinions are important to you, what are their opinions, does this make your decision to remain childless more difficult/ easier?
- How did you experience it when people close to you had children, how did you feel about it, how did this change your view on having children?
- Did somebody ever encourage or discourage you to have children? (Who, in what way?) (Parents, siblings, friends, strangers)
- Are there more people among your friends/acquaintances that are voluntary childless, do you discuss the subject with them, do you get support in you decision from each other. (If no other childless people: would it have made it easier for you if you knew more childless people?)

Now I want to change the subject a bit...

### Norms

What does a 'normal' or ideal family in the Netherlands look like?

What does the ideal family look like in your personal view? What do you think is the ideal family for somebody in your situation?

Why is your view different/ why is your family different from your view of an ideal family?

- How did this view (of others) on the ideal family influence your decision to deviate from it? Did it make your decision more difficult/ easier/ different?
- Do you feel you have to defend your decision?
- Do you feel you're expected to have children, that having children is the norm? Did this make the decision to remain childless more difficult?

Now we come back to your personal life...

### **Values**

What is to you important in your life, what do you want to achieve, what is the goal in your life?

(Probe: Freedom, independence, carrier/ambitions, family/relations, happiness, wealth, religion, what else?????)

Can you sketch what your ideal life would look like?

What ideas, ambitions, what kind of a world view would you like to send along? What ideas, ambitions, world view would you like to send along with your children if you would have had children?

You state that (.....) is important to you,

- (Family) Does this make your decision to remain childless more difficult? Why?
- (Religion) Does this make your decision to remain childless more difficult? Do you feel pressure from your religion to have a traditional family and to populate the world? Why?
- (Wealth/Lifestyle) Have you considered the costs of children when making the decision?
- (Freedom) Do you think you would loose your freedom if you had children, has this played a role in your decision? How, Why?
- (Independence) Do you think you would loose your independence if you had children, has that played a role in your decision? How, why?
- (Carrier/Ambitions) How would you combine work and childrearing, would it be possible to have a career like you have now when you would have children, has this played a role in your decision? How, Why?

There is this discussion in the Netherlands that there are more and more foreigners, while the native population diminishes. Some people think that this will mean that Dutch culture and language will be lost, what is your opinion about this?

### **Closing**

Is there anything else about the subject that you would like to tell me about?

Do you feel I forgot to ask about some specific important topic? What where your expectations of the interview, where there questions you expected but I didn't ask?

(We talked about the decision to remain childless and your own and others influence on this decision.

Can you give a short summary about how this decision was made in your case?)

Is there anything else that you would like to tell, or do you have any questions about the interview? If you think of any questions later you can always call me or mail me.

Thank you for the interview, it was very interesting, you helped me a lot.



## Appendix 4b : Interview Guideline

### **Interview Guideline**

Ik ben Sanne Boschman. Ik studeer Demografie aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen en ben bezig met mijn afstudeerscriptie over kinderloosheid. Ik ben geïnteresseerd in waarom mensen geen kinderen krijgen en hoe die beslissing genomen wordt. Daarom houd ik interviews met kinderloze vrouwen in Nederland.

Ik wil u bedanken dat u hierover met me wilt praten, alle informatie die u hier geeft zal vertrouwelijk worden behandeld, u blijft anoniem. Het interview zal alleen voor mijn eigen onderzoek worden gebruikt. U hoeft geen vragen te beantwoorden die u niet wilt beantwoorden. Vindt u het goed als het interview wordt opgenomen op tape? Het interview zal ongeveer 1 uur duren.

### **Begin: (Warming Up)**

Als eerste zou ik graag wat over jou willen weten, kan je me vertellen hoe je leven er op dit moment uitziet?

Als vraagt “wat dan”: Over alles wat je maar wilt, over je ouders, broers en zussen, werk, opleiding, partner, woonsituatie, vrienden, hobby’s alles wat je maar over jezelf vertellen wil.

Probes:

- werk, vind je jouw werk leuk, hoe lang werk je er al, vast contract, waar (welke plaats)?
- Opleiding, wat heb je allemaal gedaan
- Partner, hoe lang samen, samenwonen, trouwen, ter sprake?
- Vertel me eens wat meer over je partner, hoe heb je hem ontmoet, hoe is jullie relatie ontwikkeld, wat doet je partner (werk/opleiding)
- Broers en zussen? Relatie? Kinderen?
- Relatie met ouders (leven ze nog)
- Waar en hoe woon je/jullie?

## **Kinderloosheid**

Je hebt geen kinderen, kan je me vertellen hoe dat zo gekomen is? / Wat heeft er toe geleid dat je nu geen kinderen hebt? / Wat heeft er tot dit besluit geleid?

Probes:

- Herinner je je de eerste keer dat je nagedacht hebt over wel of geen kinderen krijgen? Wanneer was dat? Wat dacht je toen en hoe heeft je mening over kinderen krijgen zich ontwikkeld over de jaren?
- Waren er momenten in je leven waarop je misschien wel een kind wilde? Waarom juist toen overwogen? Wat was toen de reden om toch geen kind te krijgen? Wat waren de argumenten voor en tegen? (is het ooit een optie geweest om alleen een kind te krijgen, of alleen overwogen binnen relatie) Heb je ooit nagedacht over adoptie? Waarom?
- Ben je er zeker van dat je nooit een kind zal hebben? Waarom? Wanneer heb je voor jezelf definitief besloten dat je geen kinderen zou hebben, was er ooit zo'n moment, hoe heb je dat beleefd?
- Hoe besprak je het krijgen van kinderen met je huidige partner, wat is zijn positie, wilde hij kinderen, wie sneed het onderwerp aan, wie gebruikte welke argumenten, wie is meestal meer voor, wie meer tegen?
- Wanneer zou je wel kinderen hebben gehad, Wat zou er anders moeten zijn geweest in je leven? (partner (ander, eerder ontmoet), werk, opleiding, kinderopvang mogelijkheden, mensen om me heen) Waarom?
- Wat doe je om te voorkomen dat je zwanger wordt? Wat zou je doen als er per ongeluk iets mis ging daarmee? Ben je bang om per ongeluk zwanger te raken, wat zou je doen als je zwanger bleek te zijn? (Abortus?) Waarom???? Heb je ooit gedacht dat je zwanger was? Hoe heb je dat beleefd? Met wie heb je het besproken? Wat heb je gedaan, zou je gedaan hebben?
- Heb je ooit spijt van je beslissing gehad? Wat zou je graag meegemaakt hebben/meemaken, is er iets wat je mist, wat mis je het meest?

## **Anderen/Normen**

We hebben het nu vooral over jezelf gehad, en over je partner, nu wil ik het wat meer hebben over de mensen om je heen, over de rol van anderen,.

### Belangrijke anderen

- Zijn er anderen (behalve partner) met wie je het wel of niet krijgen van kinderen bespreekt? Op wat voor manier, hoe?
- Wat is de mening over kinderen krijgen van de mensen om je heen? Wiens mening is belangrijk voor je, wat is zijn/haar mening over kinderen krijgen? Maakt dit je beslissing moeilijker, makkelijker?
- Hoe heb je het beleefd toen iemand die dicht bij je staat kinderen kreeg, wat voor gevoel had je daarbij, wat voor gevolgen had dat voor je mening over kinderen krijgen?
- Heeft iemand je ooit aangemoedigd of juist afgeraden om kinderen te krijgen? Wie, op wat voor manier? (ouders, vrienden, broers, zussen, vreemden)
- Zijn er meer mensen in je vrienden/kennissenkring die bewust kinderloos zijn? Praat je met hen over het onderwerp, krijg je steun van elkaar in je beslissing. (Als niemand kinderloos: Zou het makkelijker voor je zijn geweest als je meer mensen om je heen had die ook kinderloos waren?)

Nu even een beetje een ander onderwerp...

### Normen

Hoe ziet een normaal of ideaal gezin eruit in Nederland?

Hoe zie jij zelf een ideaal gezin? Hoe zie jij een ideaal gezin voor iemand in jou positie?

Waarom is jou beeld anders/ waarom is jou gezin anders dan het standaard beeld?

- Hoe heeft dit ideaalbeeld van anderen invloed gehad op jou beslissing hier van af te wijken? Maakt dat de keuze moeilijker, makkelijker, anders?
- Heb je het gevoel dat je jouw beslissing moet verdedigen?
- Heb je het gevoel dat er van je verwacht wordt om kinderen te krijgen/ dat kinderen krijgen de norm is? Maakt dit je beslissing moeilijker?

Nu komen we weer bij je eigen leven...

### **Waarden**

Wat is voor jou belangrijk in je leven, wat wil je bereiken, wat is het doel in je leven?  
(Probe: vrijheid, onafhankelijkheid, carrière/ambities, gezin/familie/relaties, geluk, rijkdom, religie)

Kun je een ideaalbeeld schetsen van hoe voor jou het ideale leven eruit zou zien?

Wat voor idealen, ideeën, wat voor wereldbeeld zou je willen meegeven aan de wereld, als je kinderen had, wat zou je hen dan willen meegeven?

Je zegt dat je .... belangrijk vind, ...

- (familie/gezin) Maakt dit de beslissing om kinderloos te blijven moeilijker? Waarom?
- (Religie) Maakt dit de beslissing om kinderloos te blijven moeilijker? Voel je geen druk vanuit je geloof om een traditioneel gezin te vormen, en de aarde te bevolken? Waarom?
- (Rijkdom/lifestyle): Hebben de kosten van kinderen een rol gespeeld in je beslissing?
- (vrijheid) Denk je dat je je vrijheid zou verliezen als je kinderen zou hebben? Heeft dit een rol gespeeld in je beslissing? Hoe, waarom?
- (Onafhankelijkheid) Denk je dat je je onafhankelijkheid zou verliezen als je kinderen zou hebben, heeft dit een rol gespeeld in je beslissing? Hoe, waarom?
- (ambities/carrière) Hoe zou je je werk combineren met het opvoeden van kinderen, zou het mogelijk zijn net zo'n carrière te hebben als nu als je kinderen had gehad? Heeft dit een rol gespeeld in je beslissing? Hoe, waarom?

Er speelt een discussie in Nederland, dat er steeds meer allochtonen zijn, terwijl de autochtone bevolking alleen maar kleiner wordt. Sommige mensen denken dat hierdoor de Nederlandse taal en cultuur zullen verdwijnen. Wat is jouw mening hierover?

### **Afsluiting**

Is er nog iets anders dat je graag vertellen zou? Heb je het gevoel dat ik iets specifiek ben vergeten te vragen? Wat had je van het interview verwacht, zijn er vragen die je verwacht had en die ik niet gesteld heb?

(We hebben gesproken over de keuze voor kinderloosheid en de invloed van jezelf en anderen op die beslissing. Kan je kort samenvatten hoe jij die keuze gemaakt hebt?

Wil je nog iets anders kwijt, of heb je nog vragen over het interview? Als je later nog vragen hebt dan kan je mij altijd bellen of mailen.

Bedankt voor het interview, het was zeer interessant, u hebt mij erg geholpen.

## Samenvatting

In deze scriptie zijn drie verschillende onderzoeken uitgevoerd naar de rol van waarden in het besluitvormingsproces omtrent kinderloosheid. Een centrale rol is hierbij weggelegd voor de theorie van de Tweede Demografische Transitie. Deze theorie beschrijft hoe een verandering in waarden in de maatschappij leidt tot ander demografisch gedrag. De waardeveranderingen leiden tot toegenomen keuzevrijheid; mensen zijn vrij om voor kinderloosheid te kiezen, en tot meer aandacht voor het individu en persoonlijke ontwikkeling; mensen kiezen eerder voor hun eigen leven, geluk en carrière dan voor het traditionele gezin.

Door de relatie tussen waarden in Europese landen en de kinderloosheidpercentages van deze landen te onderzoeken wordt duidelijk welke waarden in de praktijk invloed hebben op de beslissing omtrent kinderloosheid. Kinderloosheidcijfers zijn hoger in landen waar de waarden postmaterialisme, seculier individualisme, tolerantie en vrijheid belangrijk zijn voor mensen. Traditionele normen omtrent familie en nationalisme hangen samen met lagere kinderloosheidpercentages. Het onderzoek op macro niveau bevestigt hiermee de theorie van de Tweede Demografische Transitie.

De theorie van de Tweede Demografische Transitie voorspelt op macro niveau een samenhang tussen waarden, en dat deze samenhangende waarden demografisch gedrag beïnvloeden. Een postmaterialistische samenleving zal ook seculier individualistisch en tolerant zijn en hogere kinderloosheidcijfers hebben. Het onderzoek op micro niveau laat zien dat dit ook geldt voor individuen. Ook op individueel niveau bestaat er een samenhang tussen de verschillende post-transitionele waarden, en individuen die deze post-transitionele waarden aanhangen zijn vaker kinderloos. Dit betekent dat de Tweede Demografische Transitie theorie vertaald kan worden naar het micro niveau.

Om inzicht te krijgen in hoe de beslissing om kinderloos te blijven wordt genomen en hoe en waarom waarden deze beslissing beïnvloeden is kwalitatief onderzoek gedaan. Op basis van interviews met kinderloze vrouwen in Nederland is geprobeerd een beeld te geven van de keuzeruimte (problem space), motivatiestructuur en de besluitvormingsstijl. De keuzeruimte is een overzicht van de keuzeopties die als beschikbaar worden gezien. Vrijwillige kinderloosheid is niet voor iedereen een optie; een grote kinderwens, of traditionele of religieuze normen kunnen er voor zorgen dat mensen kinderloosheid niet als keuzemogelijkheid waarnemen. Alle geïnterviewde vrouwen stellen dat zij zich niet beïnvloed voelen door een norm, en geen sterke kinderwens hebben, daardoor zijn ze vrij te kiezen voor kinderloosheid.

In de motivatiestructuur wordt de rol van waarden duidelijk. Vrijheid, onafhankelijkheid, en persoonlijke ontwikkeling zijn erg belangrijk voor de kinderloze vrouwen. Kinderloosheid wordt gezien als instrument om deze waarden te bereiken, de vrouwen zijn bang hun vrijheid, onafhankelijkheid en mogelijkheden voor persoonlijke ontwikkeling kwijt te raken als ze kinderen zouden hebben. Voor sommige van hen zijn deze waarden zo belangrijk dat ze daarom geen kinderen hebben. Het gebrek aan kinderwens maakt niet alleen dat kinderloosheid een mogelijkheid is, maar is ook een reden om voor deze optie te kiezen. Zoals één vrouw het stelt: “als ik kinderen krijg dan is dat omdat ik graag kinderen wil, want als je dat gevoel niet hebt dan wil je ze dus niet echt”. Een extra reden om geen kinderen te krijgen is dat sommige vrouwen grote waarden hechten aan duurzaamheid. Vanuit het idee dat er al meer dan genoeg mensen op de wereld zijn, en dat het nooit goed kan gaan als we op deze manier doorgaan, besluiten ze dat ze zelf niet “daaraan nog hoeven toe te voegen” door zelf kinderen te krijgen.

Er zijn grote verschillen in de besluitvormingsstijl tussen de vrouwen. Voor sommigen is het een zeer bewuste en zware afweging terwijl anderen er nooit bewust over nagedacht hebben. Voor deze tweede groep was kinderloosheid eigenlijk de enige keuzemogelijkheid, het hebben van kinderen was niet opgenomen in hun keuzeruimte. Zonder een bewuste keuze te hebben hoeven maken hebben zij eenvoudigweg hun leven geleefd zonder ooit kinderen te krijgen. Binnen de andere groep zijn er twee keuzestrategieën, de beslissers en de uitstellers. De uitstellers weten zeker dat ze nu geen kind willen, maar wachten op het moment waarop die kinderwens wel komt. Pas als ze zichzelf te oud vinden om kinderen te krijgen wordt de beslissing voor hen definitief. De beslissers nemen al op een eerder moment in hun leven de beslissing dat ze nooit kinderen zullen hebben.

Door de combinatie van kwalitatief en kwantitatief onderzoek op zowel macro als micro niveau geeft dit onderzoek breed inzicht in de keuze voor kinderloosheid. Waarden in de samenleving en persoonlijk waarden beïnvloeden de keuze voor kinderloosheid. Dat doen ze door mogelijkheden in of uit te sluiten van de keuzeruimte en door de motivatiestructuur van individuen te leiden.

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