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**Fertility, Feminism, and Family Policy:  
A Study of Québec Demographic Discourse and Government Documents, 1970-1997**

**Janet Dorozynski**

**A Thesis**

**in**

**the Ph.D. Humanities**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at  
Concordia University  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Fertility, Feminism, and Family Policy: A Study of Québec Demographic Discourse and Government Documents, 1970-1997**

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This dissertation examines the influence of Québec feminist demographic discourse on Québec Government policy documents, specifically a sample produced between 1970 and 1997. It begins with the premise that Québec demographic discourse and Government family policy measures have their basis in epistemologies and methodologies which fail to identify women's experiences as problematic and are incompatible with feminist principles of gender equality and autonomy. In addition, women's reproductive behaviour and declining fertility have been linked to issues of national survival, cultural identity, and linguistic concerns. As such, in order to question and unpack the ideological and patriarchal basis of knowledge, discourse and policy, the first part of the study proposes a framework which combines a feminist standpoint epistemology with a synthesis of the concepts of patriarchy and ideology. A subsequent review of the Québec demographic literature since 1970 reveals the divergence between mainstream and feminist demographic discourse in terms of the types of issues discussed and the way in which they have been theorized. On the basis of these findings, the second part of the dissertation conducts a textual content analysis of a sample of ninety-two Québec Government documents on family policy, fertility and related demographic issues, to determine if and how themes and issues from Québec feminist demographic discourse have influenced the corpus of documents. The investigation concludes that while Québec feminist demographic discourse has been moderately influential on the corpus of government documents, especially those produced by the Conseil du statut de la femme, the pronatalist and nationalist tendencies of Québec mainstream demographic discourse have been incorporated into the corpus to a larger degree. Furthermore, due to the relative absence of family policy measures responsive to the recommendations of the Conseil du statut de la femme, the influence of Québec feminist demographic discourse on Québec Government family policy during the period of study remains inconclusive.

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State involvement in family life is not always based on informed knowledge about how people actually live or why they live this way. Instead, programs and policies are sometimes based on preconceived notions about the importance of family in society, the role of women in families, the responsibilities of parents towards their children, and the reasons behind the need for government assistance (Baker, 1990). These ideologies and values permeate our culture, yet change over time with economic, political and social trends (Baker, 1996).

With demands for the right to abortion and control of their own fertility via contraception, women are breaking barriers between the social body and the human body, because their fertility is, in fact, the demography of societies. All social institutions, including the medical and religious establishments and the State, are obliged to meditate on the female body (Cohen, 1989).

## PREFACE

In the May 1988 budget, the then Liberal Government of Québec announced a series of financial incentives designed to increase the birth rate. The *allocation à la naissance*, which at that time consisted of five hundred dollars for the first and second child and three thousand dollars for third and subsequent children<sup>1</sup>, struck me as slightly unusual since it is rare that demographic issues and family policy matters are of such concern and interest to individual provinces. Unfamiliar with the history of demography in Québec, I was unaware of the preoccupation with the birth rate and its link to the language, collective identity, and survival of the *peuple québécois*. Intrigued, and equipped with a background and curiosity in the study of public policy, I decided to investigate further into the discourse and formulation of demographic policy in Québec, specifically family and pronatalist policy incentives, and the participation of women, the group most directly affected by such policy measures.

Subsequent to a cursory examination of the demographic literature, it was apparent there were numerous gaps and unanswered questions. Several questions immediately came to mind. First, why was the Québec demographic discourse on fertility so overwhelmingly pronatalist, with an essentially alarmist sense of demographic predictions? Was it merely a coincidence that the majority of these writings and commentaries happen to have been by men? Third, was it really true that fewer women in Québec (and most Western, industrialized countries) were having less children, and what was the significance of their actions? Fourth, what had been the influence of feminists, or feminist thought, on demographic discourse and Québec Government family policy? Specifically, had feminist goals of gender equality,

autonomy, and reproductive freedom been incorporated into Québec's family policy? Were pronatalist measures, such as the *allocation à la naissance*, compatible with the pursuit of women's emancipation?

Following some deliberation, I realized that due to the complexity of the issues and crossing of traditional disciplinary boundaries, the answers to these questions could not be obtained through a conventional approach to the study of public policy alone. This approach, until recently, has paid negligible attention to feminist thought or women's participation, or lack thereof, in the policy-making process. Moreover, it has paid even less attention to the study of demographic policy. As such, it became obvious that in order to identify the existing links with respect to demographic discourse, demographic policy, and the influence of feminist thought, an inter-disciplinary inquiry into the relationship between patriarchy, ideology, and Québec demographic politics was required. The study which follows is the result of this inquiry.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Specific Aims and Focus of the Study**

This dissertation examines the influence of feminist demographic discourse on the Québec Government demographic policy agenda, specifically a sample of Québec Government policy documents produced between 1970 and 1997. The premise of this study is that much of the mainstream demographic discourse and government policies with respect to women, fertility, and reproductive decision-making are neither grounded in the real-life experiences of women, nor compatible with feminist principles of gender equality and autonomy. A sizeable component of mainstream demographic literature is based upon notions of "motherhood" and gender appropriate roles that have been idealized and ideologized. Moreover, it tends to visualize and categorize women as "mothers" and/or "workers", and sees them as "objects" of policy rather than agents of their own lives<sup>2</sup>. Consequently, women's actions, concerns, and political agency have been of secondary importance to researchers and policy-makers<sup>3</sup>.

In the case of Québec, the focus on fertility and family in public and government discourse has also been linked to issues of cultural identity, national survival, and linguistic concerns. This has meant that women's social roles have been defined according to the needs and interests of the State, and scripted, first and foremost, as familial. Women, and to a greater extent feminist discourse, have been marginalized in the process of government policy



formulation. The end result has been that women become the recipients of government discourse and/or policy initiatives which continue to define them as mothers and constrain them into family roles<sup>4</sup>.

Although my interest relates specifically to the state of affairs as it has evolved in Québec, its relevance is much broader. This is because the issue of fertility has taken centre stage in many contemporary social debates, both in the North and South, related to population growth and decline, reproductive behaviour<sup>5</sup>, abortion, immigration, the so-called "crisis of the family", as well as with respect to development and environmental concerns. The subject is an important and timely matter for study, not least because it deals with the relatively unexplored relationships between gender, demographic discourse, and government policy measures, but also because it speaks to the importance of:

...paying attention to the precise way that "women" are spoken about (their discursive location) in population policy and demographic politics (Maroney, 1997:41).

Furthermore, the issues discussed in this dissertation are inextricably linked to matters of fundamental importance such as gender equality, reproductive freedom, and women's role and influence in the demographic policy process. They relate to the concerns of women, academics and policy-makers who are working towards creating more egalitarian public policies and more representative policy-making processes. An examination of the particular situation in Québec will further our understanding of the relationship between feminist theory and political practice and, expose "the way in which the demands of women's movements have (or have not) been integrated into the state" (Maroney, 1988:26).

In this dissertation, I have drawn on the theories and research of three disciplines -

demography, sociology, and political science/public policy analysis. Although there exists some literature in each of the disciplines (in varying degrees of relevance and usefulness), an interdisciplinary approach allows for a more comprehensive investigation into the disparate aspects and emphases of the study. To my knowledge there are no studies which incorporate the concepts of ideology and patriarchy into an analysis of Québec demographic discourse and policy, or which examine the influence of feminist demographic discourse on Québec Government demographic policy documents.

To address the lacunae of earlier discipline-bound studies, I begin by consulting existing works on ideology, patriarchy, fertility, and family policy. This serves as the point of departure for a discussion of key questions which will structure the following chapters. In particular, I will ask: What is the role of academic disciplines and the State - both the product of ideological processes - in shaping public policy discourse and direction on demographic matters? What is the influence of demographic discourse on demographic policy? To what extent have feminist concerns and discourse been integrated into the Québec family policy agenda? What has been the government response in terms of demographic policy initiatives and policies directed towards women and families? Is childrearing adequately supported, or is the focus disproportionately placed on encouraging women to have children?

## **That Which Came First: An Overview of Existing Theory and Research**

Prior to reviewing existing theory and research, it is necessary to mention a particularity which relates to the classification of the existing literature. Although it is simple

to distinguish the demography and sociology literature from that of political science/public policy analysis, the line between sociology and demography is somewhat more blurred. Whereas demography was at one time considered a sub-field of sociology, it has since acquired the status of a separate discipline in and of its own right in parts of Europe and North America. In Québec, the discipline of demography has been described as more institutionalized than in the rest of Canada, which can be partly attributed to the creation of the Département de démographie at the Université de Montréal in 1964.

The department was then, and still remains, the only fully independent academic department of demographic research and teaching anywhere in Canada (Maroney, 1992:16).

This fact is noteworthy and more than an inconsequential detail. It is an indication of the disciplinary significance of demography in Québec and, as discussed below, the ideological and political importance of the study of demographic issues in Québec. The Département de démographie has been responsible for producing a substantial proportion of research on Québec fertility and family policy, while several of its faculty members have been instrumental in shaping public awareness with regard to contemporary demographic issues in Québec<sup>6</sup>.

Accordingly, because sociology and demography share similar research interests, such as the study of fertility, the family, and women's reproductive behaviour, and sometimes corresponding methodological approaches, there are times when the literature can be said to fall within the scope of both disciplines. Rather than viewing this as an obstacle, I would argue that this reaffirms the need to utilize an interdisciplinary approach to the study of my problem.

## **Sociology and Demography: Previous Research**

A review of the existing sociology and demography literature illustrates that much of the research concerning my problematic has been conducted by feminist sociologists and demographers. Beginning with the field of feminist sociology, there is research on patriarchy and the role of the State in maintaining women's oppression<sup>7</sup>, and on the role of ideology and discourse on institutions and social relations, specifically as they relate to women (Smith, 1987b,1990; Petchesky, 1990). Furthermore, there are works examining the impact of patriarchal thought processes in shaping women's perceptions and aspirations with regard to mothering, housework<sup>8</sup>, and work outside the home<sup>9</sup>, as well as literature on pronatalism and reproductive decision-making<sup>10</sup>.

Throughout the past few decades, feminists like Friedan (1963) and Bernard (1974) have exposed the idealization of motherhood and the negative impact it has had on women's lives. While Blake (1972) and Gimenez (1983) have argued that pronatalism is prevalent in all societies (though their focus is on the USA) because there are few legitimate and socially recognized alternatives to being a parent. Gimenez believes the return in feminist theory and practice in the 1980s towards uncritically supporting motherhood as a given right is reflected by the:

...advocacy of the "do both" syndrome; i.e., motherhood and careers not as alternative and equally legitimate choices for women, but as a combination to which all women have a right. The women's liberation movement is implicitly supportive of pronatalism because it has aimed its struggles to the goal of eliminating the social, economic, legal, educational, and psychological barriers standing in the way of women's ability to "do both", thus stressing women's right not to have to make a choice (Gimenez, 1983:288).

More recently, Snitow has questioned why "pronatalism flourishes with so little

argument from feminists" and maintains that "feminist culture has not produced 'alluring images' or 'thinkable identities' for the childless"<sup>11</sup>. Whereas Morell (1994) concurs, stating that the resurgence of "maternalism" within the feminist literature "interferes with the reproductive autonomy of women"<sup>12</sup>, so that choice is limited to "when" and how many children women will have.

McDaniel (1996) also echoes similar sentiments and refers to how "crisis thinking about the family", which is both academic and political, "parallels social policy and ideological shifts that increasingly define women as familial". She points to the consequences of diminishing access to abortion providers and the "moral interpretations that could be put on the seeking of contraception", especially by teenage women, so that:

Women's lives and choices are thus increasingly constrained by societal definitions of women as mothers, as familial (McDaniel, 1996:91).

Works by hooks and Collins have challenged the division of women into separate reproductive categories, arguing that this tends to overlook the contribution of non-mothers in the lives of children as well as the not-mothering work of mothers<sup>13</sup>. Morell (1994) once again adds that the validation of women's choices to "not-mother" or have "alternative purposes in the world" is not wide-spread. This appears to be the case with a sizeable portion of the mainstream demographic literature in Québec, whereby women have not only been defined as familial, but chastised when they fail to comply with this role.

A cursory examination of the mainstream demographic literature in Québec over the past three decades illustrates how many demographers have been preoccupied with the fall in the birth rate (*dénatalité*) and its consequences. According to Dandurand and Kempeeners

(1990), this concern "'teinté d'une nuance catastrophique'" tends to be expressed more so "chez les hommes que chez les femmes". Within the mainstream literature, there is research on fertility determinants and the influence of economic and social variables on individual decision-making<sup>14</sup>; the relationship between fertility and work outside the home (Kyriazis and Henripin, 1982); and, *dénatalité* and the need for pronatalist policies<sup>15</sup>.

The preoccupation with *dénatalité*, fuelled in part by nationalist concerns and cultural and linguistic survival, has had the following effects on mainstream demographic discourse. First, it has meant that relatively few demographers have questioned the epistemological foundations of the discipline or the role of ideology in shaping demographic discourse and Québec Government policy or rhetoric<sup>16</sup>. Second, and as a result of the first, certain demographic scenarios have been perceived as more desirable than others: for example, increasing fertility as opposed to immigration as a solution to apprehend demographic decline<sup>17</sup>.

Third, fertility or having children is viewed as a separate activity and in direct competition with paid employment. It is in this regard that functionalist notions of the family and fertility with the emphasis on role differentiation and specialization, in conjunction with the usage of the conventional research methodologies, have propagated research which continues to focus on women's traditional reproductive role within the family and views fertility decision-making primarily as an economic-based choice. The changing aspirations, material circumstances, or "survival strategies"<sup>18</sup> employed by women to cope with the conflicting demands placed on them, are rarely acknowledged in the mainstream literature.

In the field of feminist demography, recent works have begun to incorporate feminist

perspectives into the study of fertility and related demographic questions (Greenhalgh, 1990,1996; Maroney, 1997; McDaniel, 1995, 1996; Presser, 1997; Watkins, 1993)<sup>19</sup>. There is also feminist research which questions whether family policy, or the discussion of family policy, is even beneficial for women. Does it serve to reproduce patriarchal structures which are already in existence? Is family policy or pronatalist measures compatible with feminist goals related to the equality and autonomy of women? Or, alternatively, should policy measures be focused on the individual and tailored according to the different stages of an individual's life?

Some like Heitlinger (1993), have argued that the discussion of family policy and pronatalism can work to the advantage of women. She believes that feminists can use the fear of population decline, which often accompanies the demand for family and pronatalist policies, to highlight and strengthen the necessity of feminist demands for pay and employment equity and child care supports. Although such policy measures may or may not influence fertility, they are designed with the intention of allowing parents, especially mothers, to better reconcile work and family responsibilities.

In contrast, others have expressed a more cautious viewpoint regarding the sentiments and motivations which often co-exist with family and pronatalist policy measures, and the problems associated with defining women as mothers or with putting forth an image of women that is connected to families (Berry, 1993; Maroney, 1997; Morell, 1994). Maroney (1997) suggests that we need a gendered analysis with respect to population and family policy planning, which addresses women not only as "mothers" or "workers", but takes into account the various facets and activities in women's lives and the ways in which they overlap and co-

exist. She also warns that we need to decipher and recognize the underlying messages and ideology which are so often part and parcel of these policy-making processes since:

Putting together the flexible, hidden and pervasive character of demographic policies and the powerful emotions associated with fears of population explosions or national or cultural disappearances with an ideologically contested category like "woman" is likely to produce a charged, unstable ideological mix whose hidden cultural effects and explicit policy outcomes may not be benign (Maroney, 1997:42).

With respect to Québec, there is feminist research on reproduction and the representation of women in Québec demography<sup>20</sup>, family policy and pronatalist policies<sup>21</sup>, family and work<sup>22</sup>, the linkages between feminism, pronatalism and nationalism<sup>23</sup> and, on the *androcentric* bias in the discipline and the implications for policy<sup>24</sup>. However, there are no works in the feminist literature which examine the significance of ideology and patriarchy on demographic discourse and family policy, nor the influence of feminist demographic discourse on Québec Government policy documents.

### **Political Science and Public Policy Analysis: Previous Research**

An overview of political science and public policy research illustrates the limited, and at times paradoxical, interest in matters pertaining to demographic policy and policy-making. Within the political science literature, we see the contradictory nature of the study of population issues. On the one hand, there is the interest in population issues as they relate to geopolitics, nationalism, and economic considerations. On the other hand, most of the research in the field has shown negligible concern for demographic policy-making or the role of women within the decision-making process.



With regard to the correlation between population growth and fertility increase, there is a smattering of literature on the relationship between a stable or increasing level of fertility with the power and wealth of a nation<sup>25</sup>. Discussions relating to the size and composition of a country's population date back as far as the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome. Likewise, public policy designed to influence fertility has had an equally long history.

In many instances, governments have viewed a large and healthy populace as synonymous with economic dynamism, military strength, and cultural and linguistic integrity, and have therefore encouraged marriage, family stability, and high fertility to varying degrees. The intensity of policy measures has varied according to the role and legitimacy of the State in a particular society, and has been influenced by the way in which a country's demographic situation has been defined by its leaders and opinion makers. The extent to which demographic knowledge or information is used by policy makers is said to be determined more by the nature of the political and bureaucratic apparatuses of the State rather than by the quality or quantity of demographic data itself. According to the United Nations Population Fund:

Policy decisions are essentially political in nature and tend to reflect ideological preferences and values of the political decision makers (United Nations Population Fund, 1989)<sup>26</sup>.

Generally speaking, many nations have been faced with a situation where population size, either increasing or decreasing, has been an issue at one time or another. However, whether or not decision makers choose to act and put forth explicit policy measures or initiatives depends upon the degree to which governments "possess the power, authority, and inclination to shape the structure of the society and the lives of its citizens" (McIntosh,

1983:27).

Distinct from and at times quite separate from the political science literature are the research studies and analyses of public policy. Traditionally the study of public policy examines a wide variety of substantive areas and actors in the policy process, as well as the type, organization, and processes of public policy-making and the mechanics and influences on the policy process (Kernaghan and Siegel, 1991). Until recently there have been few studies which include gender as a category of analysis or examine women's policy concerns and their involvement in the policy process<sup>27</sup>. Studies on women and the policy process, and the impact of public policy measures upon them, seem voluminous compared with existing research on feminist influences on the demographic policy-making process.

With regard to the legitimacy and mechanics of the decision making process, the public policy literature consists of several commonly accepted descriptions, ranging from: "the authoritative allocation of values for the society" (Easton in Adie and Thomas, 1987:192); "[p]ublic policy is whatever governments choose to do or not to do" (Dye in Kernaghan and Siegel, 1991:114) to public policy as the product of "a prolonged course of action, taking place over time and involving a large number of decision points rather than as individual acts of decision making" (Adie and Thomas, 1987:192). It is important to distinguish between the academic perspective of the study of public policy which "focuses on the attempt to *explain* the evolution of public policy or a particular policy field *over a significant period of time*", with the applied perspective, whereby public policy (analysis) consists of "deciding what to do or not to do or what to advise *at a particular point in time*" (Doern and Phidd, 1983:38).

In my view, the study of public policy and public policy-making must take all the above factors into consideration. Ideally, it must acknowledge the existence of competing interests, varying degrees of participation, power differentials among different actors at the many levels and stages of the process, and the complexity of structural and institutional arrangements which facilitate or impede decision-making and implementation of policy. Furthermore, it should recognize the motivation behind and the various social, political, ideological, economic and cultural factors which determine the activities or inactivity of decision-makers and actors, and the types and levels of policies which ultimately are adopted by governments.

In the case of Québec, few political scientists have been interested in the study of demographic politics or policies. In fact, many important works on Québec politics and public policy pay very little attention to population policy, fertility, or family policy (McRoberts, 1993; Lachapelle et al., 1993). However, what research there is focuses on what Marcel Rioux has called the *idéologie de la survivance* or ideology of survival, which was partially inspired by the thought of Lionel Groulx. According to Groulx, the ideology of survival is based upon two conditions: first, "the maintenance of the specificity of the Québécois nation"; and secondly, the existence of "a system to pass culture and tradition from one generation to the next so that this specificity could withstand the test of time" (in Lamoureux, 1987:55-56). The family was identified as the institution best able to carry out these roles.

The need for a large population and the focus on the primary role of the family has been referred to as *la revanche des berceaux* or revenge of the cradle. According to this idea women, within the context of the family, were responsible for the transmission of the three

cornerstones of nationalist ideology: language, culture, and tradition, though they had no input in determining what they passed along. Although never an official State or Catholic Church policy, some believe *la revanche des berceaux* contributed to a situation whereby women were defined very narrowly in terms of their reproductive capacity. According to Lamoureux, the ramifications of this have had a lasting impact on Québec discourse and politics.

The French Canadian elite, faced with the dilemma of being a minority in a country that it did not control, chose to adopt a pronatalist policy rather than to formulate a political strategy that would allow it to resolve the national question...Indeed, the revenge of the cradle proved to be so durable that in the 1960's demographers were still calculating the number of children each francophone family should have to maintain or increase their weight within Québec and Canada ([Henripin et al.]in Lamoureux, 1987:56-57).

Both Lamoureux (1987) and Maroney (1992) point to the influence of Groulx on Québec policy research on fertility and the family. Maroney argues that the historic connection between nationalism or the *idéologie clérico-nationaliste* and pronatalism has remained intact to the present, the only difference being the shift from a clerical to a secular discourse. She believes a new secular version of pronatalist discourse has been constructed as a professional project by demographers which forms the scientific basis for pronatalist policy initiatives taken up by both the Parti Québécois and Parti Libéral. In this respect, pronatalist demographers, by having incorporated fertility into the language and survival debate, have taken over where Groulx and others left.

The preoccupation with numbers in Québec continues to this day and is visible in the plethora of writings, government documents, and commissions of inquiry that have come into existence since the 1970s. Beginning with Annex 16, *Les Fondements d'une politique familiale* of the Commission d'enquête sur la santé et le bien-être social in 1970, to the 1985

commission of inquiry *Etude de l'impact culturel, social et économique des tendances démographiques actuelles sur l'avenir du Québec comme société distincte*, and the more recent *Document de travail pour le séminaire sur la politique de population* in 1993, there are many examples of the Québec Government's focus on the falling birth rate and the need for corrective measures, as well as the fear of minority status of francophones within Québec and Canada. Although some women and feminists are playing a more active role in politics and policy-making than ever before, the fact remains that the majority of decision-makers continue to be men who have been only marginally influenced by feminist discourse and the actual concerns of women (Bystydzienski, 1992; Maillé, 1990; Vickers, 1997; Wine & Ristock, 1991).

Therefore, this brief review of the relevant literature has shown that most of the research relating to my problematic have been discipline-bound which has lead it to focus exclusively on certain aspects while excluding others. To avoid this problem it is necessary to utilize an interdisciplinary approach which integrates and synthesizes methods, theoretical concepts, and data from each of the above disciplines. Although a complete discussion of the methods of research and sources of empirical data is left to the body of the dissertation, I will briefly describe the methodology and the feminist framework used to overcome the limitations of previous research and examine this conventional "demographic issue" from an original perspective.

### **Theoretical Framework, Methods of Research, and Empirical Data**

Prior to the "Second Wave"<sup>28</sup> of feminism and advent of feminist research, much

conventional methodology and theory in the social sciences was predicated on ontological and epistemological premises which centred on man or male as the norm (Harding, 1987; Smith, 1987a, 1990; Vickers, 1984, 1989). Many of these inquiries were conducted by men and had men as the focus and subjects of research. Moreover, because men were considered "knowers" or agents of knowledge who defined what topics were appropriate or suitable for social science research, that which constituted legitimate knowledge had been narrowly defined. This usually meant that the everyday experiences of women were trivialized or ignored, while research topics of concern to women were dismissed as being outside the scope of academic consideration (Harding, 1987; Smith 1987a, 1987b).

Although the demography and sociology literature on fertility and the family has traditionally focused on women, until recently the conceptual frameworks and theories of both disciplines have done little to problematize existing gender inequalities between women and men or the sexual division of paid and unpaid labour. In the case of Québec, the dominant discourse on fertility is, by and large, predicated upon the following assumptions. First, the primacy of women's role as mother, and historically, as mother of "*la famille nombreuse*". Second, that childcare is largely the responsibility of women and that work or career should come second to this responsibility. Third, that part-time employment is the rational choice made by women in order to reconcile their dual responsibilities as mother and worker.

Furthermore, as I discuss in Chapter Three, the uncritical adoption of theories of demographic transition and economic theories of fertility decision-making have meant that childbearing behaviour is largely viewed as the outcome of attitudes and choices. Maroney points to how this has resulted in women's roles in procreation being moralistically

problematized as a matter of good or bad will, and has left "the dominant tendency in Québec demography...no way of untangling naturalized elements of hegemonic ideology from its own 'science'" (Maroney, 1992:21).

With respect to these considerations, the objectives of the dissertation are two-fold. First, the development of a framework capable of analyzing gender, demographic discourse, and Québec demographic politics<sup>29</sup>. What is required is a theoretical framework which situates the concepts of patriarchy and ideology as central to the study of the influence of feminist ideas on demographic discourse and policy in the Province of Québec. At present, the linkages between ideological scientific discourse and public policy measures articulated by governments have been largely ignored. In the case of demography in Québec, much of the existing demographic and policy research fails to acknowledge how existing research methodologies serve to replicate language, ideology and the existing distribution of power in society. By and large, mainstream demography has ignored the fact that patriarchy and ideology act as hegemonic organizing principles which order and regulate discourse and societal structures, or what Smith (1987a, 1990) calls the "relations of ruling"<sup>30</sup>.

I use the term discourse in the Foucauldian sense to refer to language usage that is unified by common assumptions and is capable of closing off or limiting that which cannot be said or thought. This usage of the term draws attention to the production, organization, and control of knowledge by academic disciplines and the social practices which maintain it<sup>31</sup>. Discourse can be said to have an effect similar to that of ideology as it is:

...a ready-made way of thinking, [and] can rule out alternative ways of thinking and hence preserve a particular distribution of power (Abercrombie, et al., 1988:71).

My definition of ideology<sup>32</sup>, based on that of Marx and Gramsci, refers to the ideas, concepts and practices used by the ruling class to organize social relations and maintain its domination. Ideology serves to limit actions and ways of thinking and conceals or misrepresents the existence and characteristics of contradictions we are unable to solve in practice. It is influenced by a wide range of forces in a given society, be they economic, political, cultural, or social and can be generated at both an intellectual and popular level. As such, ideology is often translated into everyday practices and engaged in by people in an unconscious manner.

Lastly, although the term patriarchy literally means rule by the father or men, it is commonly used in feminist theory to describe a system of social relations which perpetuates the subordination of women to men. For the purpose of this dissertation, I use a definition taken from dual-systems analysts, particularly Eisenstein (1980, 1986), who contend that women's subordination has its origins in the interaction between the autonomous systems of patriarchy and capitalism.

The theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two draws on the various writings of Dorothy Smith (1987a; 1987b; 1990, 1991). It incorporates a feminist standpoint epistemology which emphasizes the need to treat women's worlds and experiences as "problematic" and, which poses research questions hitherto unasked by "male-stream" social science (Smith in Currie, 1988). According to Smith (1990), established sociology requires that women visualize their world in terms of the concepts and ordering of men. This in turn results in established social forms of consciousness that alienate women from their own experiences .



Notwithstanding the theoretical complexity of traditional research in the disciplines, a substantial amount has implicitly or explicitly disregarded the concerns, experiences, and the location of women in the world. In this sense, the "universe on paper that social scientists [and policy makers] encounter and rely on is already ideologically structured" (Smith, 1990:57). To move beyond this dilemma, Smith proposes beginning from the "standpoint of women", which she uses as a critique of social science methodologies and epistemologies, and not to refer to a common perspective or universal experience among women. She explains it as:

...a method that, at the outset of inquiry, creates the space for an absent subject, and an absent experience that is to be filled with the presence and spoken experience of actual women speaking of and in the actualities of their everyday worlds (Smith, 1987a:107).

The framework developed in this dissertation examines if and how the ideologically structured universe on paper, or demographic discourse which by and large excludes feminist perspectives, has been incorporated into Québec Government policy documents.

The second objective of the dissertation is to evaluate the influence of feminist demographic discourse on the Québec demographic policy agenda and family policy measures, through an examination of a sample of Québec Government policy documents for the time period 1970 to 1997. The dissertation first reviews the Québec demographic literature and discourse from 1970 onward and identifies several significant themes and issues. This is followed by a textual content analysis of a sample of ninety-two Québec Government documents to determine if and how themes and issues from the feminist demographic discourse have influenced the corpus of documents. Were feminist issues and

the concerns of women taken into account? What type of demographic solutions or scenarios have been put forward?

## **Limitations of the Study**

Given that the subject matter of the dissertation crosses traditional disciplinary boundaries and explores previously unexamined areas, it should come as no surprise that the study faces several limitations. First, due to the lack of theoretical and analytical frameworks concerning the relationship between ideology, patriarchy, demographic discourse and policy, the study can only be considered preliminary research or an exploratory analysis of this subject matter. In fact, a major task of the project is to contribute to the development of an appropriate theoretical and analytical framework.

Consequently, there is the risk that my framework and analyses have fallen prey to the limitations and shortcomings of the theoretical analyses and conceptual frameworks of the three disciplines which I utilize. The positive side is that the study, similar to most exploratory research, will shed new light on areas hitherto unconsidered. Because theorizing with regard to feminist influences on public policy and political praxis in general, and the demographic policy process in particular, has been sparse to this point in time, studies such as this are all the more necessary if we are to continue with the advancement of theoretical analyses which have practical and real implications for women.

The second limitation is methodological in nature and stems from the corpus of primary research. Since the corpus consists of Québec Government documents compiled primarily on the basis of the computerized data base of the Québec Bibliothèque nationale,

it is conceivable the sample may be incomplete. Although efforts were taken to ensure the sample was complete and representative, some documents dating from the period of study may have been overlooked.

A third limitation of the study relates to the problem of studying women and feminist inquiry in general. Whereas feminist research strives to be increasingly aware of the diversity of concerns among women and towards the formulation of theory which is inclusive and non-essentialist, this is still not the case. While I recognize the problems involved in using terminology and categories which loosely group together "feminist goals or demands for equality", the "realities of women's lives", or even the "concerns of women", I believe there is an action/empowerment/social amelioration axis<sup>33</sup> that runs through feminist research and discourse which is broad enough to be agreed upon by most feminists.

Although women and feminists do not always agree on the direction or conditions of this axis, the fact remains that the implications of the discursive location of women in academic discourse and government policy extends to **all** women. This is so because discourse and policy measures perpetuate certain conditions and expectations and set forth standards of behaviour, whether it be with regard to women's secondary status in the labour force or the assumption that women are/should be primarily responsible for caring for children.

## **Order of Presentation**

To summarize, this dissertation examines the influence of feminist demographic discourse on Québec Government policy documents over a period of almost three decades.

Chapter Two develops the theoretical framework used to analyze the influence of feminist discourse on Québec Government policy documents. It proposes the amalgamation of a feminist standpoint epistemology with a synthesis of the concepts of ideology and patriarchy, in order to question and unpack the ideological and patriarchal basis of knowledge, discourse and policy. With this framework in mind, Chapter Three presents an overview of recent Québec demographic literature and discourse on fertility.

Chapter Four provides a brief summary of recent political events and policies in Québec with respect to the family and demographic matters, as well as explains textual content analysis, the method used to examine the corpus of Québec Government documents. The findings of the textual content analysis are presented in Chapter Five. Finally, in Chapter Six I evaluate the influence of feminist demographic discourse on Québec Government policy documents. The study concludes by contemplating the compatibility of Québec family policy with feminist goals of equality and autonomy of women, suggesting some avenues for further research.

## Endnotes

1. The policy measure was discontinued in 1997. At that time the rates for the allocation à la naissance were: \$500 for the first child, \$1,000 for the second, and \$8,000 for the third or subsequent child.

2. Kabeer in Maroney, 1997.

3. For an elaboration of this point see McDaniel (1993).

4. McDaniel argues that public policy in Canada and the United States is increasingly orientated towards the privatization of care of the young, old, sick and elderly and has focused on "creating new ways in which women's reproduction and caring is harnessed to the interests of the so-called productive sector" (McDaniel, 1996:92).

5. In feminist theory, the concept of reproduction can have two meanings: the reproduction of human beings which consists of the propagation of the human species (Engels, 1985) and the related activities of socialization and maintenance (Ursel, 1992:5); and secondly, "the socially-mediated processes of biological reproduction and sexuality" (Humm, 1989:190). In this dissertation I use the term in the first sense, so that reproductive behaviour includes the actions or conduct related to having and rearing children. Other activities such as women's paid employment outside the home and women's involvement in politics and policy-making are then considered, de facto, non-reproductive behaviour.

6. Beaujot (1985) argues that demographers in Canada have been relatively absent in policy debates and in conducting policy relevant research. The exception being Quebec demographers who have been more willing to debate demographic policy issues, especially the issue of pronatalism. While Maroney (1992, 1997) and Bergeron and Jensen (1999) point to how the concerns of pronatalist and nationalist demographic research and demographers have influenced the reports of various government commissions of inquiry in Quebec.

7. See Barrett (1988), Fox (1988), the edited collection by Sargent (1981), and Walby (1986,1990,1992).

8. See for example: Fox (1997), Gittens (1985), T. Gordon (1990), Hays (1996), Jackson (1992), Luxton (1997a, 1990), Luxton et al. (1990), McMahan (1995), Rich (1986), Richardson (1993), Riley (1983), and Wearing (1984).

9. See Bernhardt (1993), Kempeneers (1985,1992), McDaniel (1984,1988,1993).

10. See Currie (1988), Folbre (1983), and Heitlinger (1993).

11. In Morell (1994:2).

12. Morell (1994:12).

13. Ibid., pages 149-150..
14. Examples include Keyfitz (1986), Kyriazis (1987), Lapierre-Adamcyk (1988), and Peron (1988).
15. See Gauthier (1981), Henripin (1981,1984/5), Martin (1991), Mathews (1989), and Ouellet (1989).
16. See Piché and Pierard (1976), Piché (1992).
17. See Gauvreau (1988) and Piché (1992) for further discussion of this point.
18. See Peters (1997) for the discussion on "survival strategies" as opposed to "rational choices" in coping with the conflicting demands faced by women in families.
19. See also Chesler (1995), Folbre (1994), and the collection by Federici et al. (1993).
20. For example, see Gauvreau (1988, 1991, 1994) and Stoddart (1984).
21. See Baker (1994), Dandurand (1987b), Dandurand and Kempeneers (1990), Dandurand, Kempeneers and Le Bourdais (1989), Frenette (1991), Le Bourdais (1989b), and Le Bourdais et al.(1994).
22. Kempeneers (1987) and Kempeneers and Saint-Pierre (1993, 1989).
23. See Baker (1990,1994), Bergeron and Jensen (1999), Hamilton (1992), Lamoureux (1987), Lavigne (1986), and Maroney (1990, 1992, 1997).
24. See Le Bourdais (1989a), Lavigne (1991), Lavoie (1991), and Lepage (1991).
25. See McIntosh (1983) and Teitelbaum and Winter (1985) as two examples.
26. Although the observation refers to population policy-making in developing countries, the situation can be said to hold true for developed countries and their respective decision makers. For further information see Endnote 71 and 72 in "Sectoral Paper: Policy Development", from the UNFPA International Forum on Population in the Twenty-first Century, November 1989.
27. Some examples include: Boneparth (1982), Burt (1988), Bystydzienski (1992), Gelb (1982), Maillé (1990), MacIvor (1996), Randall (1987), Sasson (1987), Ursel (1992), Vickers (1997), and Wine & Ristock (1991).
28. Some feminists mark the beginning of the "Second Wave" of feminism with the publication of "The Second Sex" by Simone de Beauvoir in France in 1949. Whereas others, especially North American feminists, see the time period of the 1960's and the publication

of Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" in 1963 as corresponding with the beginning of the "Second Wave" of feminism.

29. Maroney's (1997) uses the term "demographic politics" because of its conceptual advantage over the more commonly used notion of population policy. Her terminology "helps to break the self-referential hold of the 'population establishment',...highlights their role in shaping the permissible terms of discussions,...makes it possible to expand our notion of what is relevant...draws out attention to the politicization of the concepts, texts and discourses of academic 'demography'... highlights the politics of the race/ethnic mix in population policies...[and] finally, it reminds us of the way that demographic themes run through other political and policy issues".

30. This point is described in more detail in Chapter Two.

31. For further discussion of this point with regard to demography see Greenhalgh (1996).

32. For a more detailed explanation of ideology see Chapter Two.

33. This term comes from McDaniel (1996).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **TOWARDS A FEMINIST FRAMEWORK: IDEOLOGY, PATRIARCHY AND THE POLITICS OF RESEARCH**

#### **Introduction**

Conventional social science theories and methodologies have been increasingly challenged by feminists. Many believe that both methods of research and the data they produce are contrary to the aims of feminism and contribute to and perpetuate women's oppression. In this study, the term feminism incorporates both the theory and organized movement for the elimination of oppression on the basis of gender, as well as the advocacy of the goals of autonomy, freedom, and equality for all women<sup>1</sup>.

With the advent of the "Second Wave" of feminism, feminist social scientists began to insist that research be conducted by and for women and that feminist research be part and parcel of the emancipatory process of praxis for women (Mies, 1983, 1991). However, it was soon apparent that more than mere research by and for women would be required. To move beyond theories and concepts based on pre-existing assumptions concerning women and gender relations, it would be necessary to challenge the existing theories and foundations upon which the traditional disciplines rest (Gergen, 1988).

In the case of Québec, feminist sociologists and demographers conducting research on women, fertility, and the family, have also questioned the epistemological foundations of these disciplines. They point to the fact that issues considered important by women are absent from demographic discourse and policy, and that women themselves have been blamed for



the current demographic situation of low fertility - a state of affairs in which they have had a limited role (Lavigne, 1991; Lavoie, 1991).

This chapter focuses on the ways in which epistemologies and methodologies have failed to problematize the everyday world of women. This has resulted in the production of knowledge which is ideological and part and parcel of what Smith (1987a) terms the "relations of ruling". Specifically she uses this term to describe:

...that familiar complex of management, government administration, professions, and intelligentsia, as well as the textually mediated discourses that coordinate and interpenetrate it. Its special capacity is the organization of particular actual places, persons, and events into generalized and abstracted modes vested in categorial systems, rules, laws, and conceptual practices. The former thereby become subject to an abstracted and universalized system of ruling mediated by texts (Smith, 1987a:108).

In light of the above, the purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it examines the epistemological implications and problems associated with the methodological practices of the disciplines used in this study. This illustrates the extent to which traditional research methodologies provide a discursive basis for epistemologies which legitimize women's subordinate position in society and in turn, propagate an essentialist relationship to gender-specific spheres and tasks such as "motherwork, "wifework", "housework" and "daughterwork"<sup>2</sup>.

The second part of the chapter explores the concepts of ideology and patriarchy and the ways in which they act as organizing principles that order and regulate discourse and society. This discussion constitutes the theoretical backdrop for the development of the proposed framework, a feminist standpoint epistemology which incorporates and establishes the concepts of ideology and patriarchy as analytically significant. This framework in turn,

informs and guides the examination of the contemporary Québec demographic discourse which follows in Chapter Three.

## **Part I: A Feminist Standpoint Epistemology**

### **Some Basic Definitions**

I begin with an overview of the concepts of method, methodology, epistemology, and ontology and discuss how epistemologies motivated by "malestream" thought and "patriarchal symbol systems" (Vickers, 1989) have inspired methodological techniques which have "eclipsed" or excluded women. I have also included specific examples pertaining to my area of investigation.

### **Method**

Drawing on the work of Sandra Harding, method refers to the technique used to gather information or evidence. She explains that there are essentially three broad categories of evidence-gathering techniques: examining historical records, observing behaviour, and listening to informants. Harding explains that even though feminists may use traditional methods of social inquiry, the manner in which they implement methods of information gathering can be distinguished from conventional social science usage. For example, feminist researchers:

...listen carefully to how women informants think about their lives and men's lives, and critically to how traditional social scientists conceptualize women's and men's lives. They observe behaviours of women and men that traditional social scientists have not thought significant. They seek examples of newly recognized patterns in historical data (Harding, 1987:2).

Harding makes it clear that although feminist research may rely on traditional methods, the critique of traditional methodologies and epistemologies which deny or exclude the standpoint of women has ushered in a different and innovative usage of these methods.

## **Methodology**

The term methodology refers to the theory of how research is or should be conducted. It considers how "the general structure of theory finds its application in particular scientific disciplines" (Caws in Harding, 1987:3). This includes an examination of how methods of thinking and analytical procedures of functionalism, phenomenology, or Marxist political economy, to name a few, are or should be applied in research.

Feminists have been critical of functionalism in particular, which conceives society as a social system of interrelated, interdependent parts, each contributing to the overall stability of the whole. They argue that the use of functionalist methodologies tends to neglect or down-play individual interpretation and meanings that women have given to their actions<sup>3</sup>. In the case of sociology and demography, they point to how functionalist research has narrowly focused on women's relationship with respect to having and caring for children, so that women are expected to enter and withdraw from the labour market in accordance with the family life cycle, work part-time instead of full-time, and not allow their jobs or careers interfere with their primary responsibility for children and home<sup>4</sup>.

Feminists have also pointed to how functionalist research does little to challenge the notion that women's activities and their relationship to childbearing are intrinsically related. Likewise, much of this type of research fails to recognize gender as a political relation,

marginalizes issues that are important to women, and ultimately, serves as a tool for perpetuating the subordination of women (Eichler, 1988; Harding, 1986, 1987; Jayaratne, 1983; Maroney, 1992; Mies, 1983; Smith, 1987b).

## **Epistemology**

The concept of epistemology describes the theory of knowledge or more explicitly "the study of assumptions about how to know the social and apprehend its meaning" (Fonow and Cook, 1991:1). This includes what can be known, who can be a "knower", and the kinds of tests beliefs must pass in order to be considered legitimate knowledge. It also encompasses the relationship between knowing and being, or the relationship between epistemology and ontology (Harding, 1987; Stanley and Wise, 1990). Furthermore, epistemologies can be characterized as strategies for justifying beliefs, be it an appeal to reason, observation, custom and tradition, or the authority of God (Harding, 1987:3).

With regard to women and epistemology, several interesting dilemmas have arisen. First, common sense, everyday experience and subjective truths have been excluded from our conception of what constitutes knowledge. Dorothy Smith (1987a, 1990) explains how women's experiences and everyday lives must serve as the starting point for inquiry; in that way hitherto "latent" questions or puzzles in women's lives are problematized and become legitimate subjects for research. Second, the exclusion of everyday experience and subjective types of knowledge has resulted in a situation whereby women have not been considered "knowers" or agents of knowledge (Harding, 1987). Textually mediated ruling relations exclude women from the practices of power which signifies that "our experience, our

interests, our ways of knowing the world have not been represented in the organization of our ruling nor in the systematically developed knowledge that has entered into it" (Smith, 1987:18). Third, in order to "grasp our own authority to speak" and transcend institutional practices and structures which have excluded women from the "ideological work of society", conceptual frameworks must originate with epistemological presuppositions which examine and begin with what women have determined important.

Smith, as well as Harding and other feminists have argued, that although a feminist epistemology is necessary to empower women in a patriarchal world where socially legitimated knowledge and political power is associated with men, we must avoid the formulation and advocacy of one, rigid, all-encompassing epistemology which could end up being "just another set of rules for the policing of thought". According to Harding, we must "renounce the goal of unity around shared social experiences in favour of solidarity around those goals that can be shared" (Harding, 1986:660).

Elizabeth Spelman (1990) takes another approach to the question of a feminist epistemology or standpoint of women. She argues that the desire to focus on what all women have in common has subverted any attempt to talk about our differences. Spelman sees this as the central paradox at the heart of feminism and stresses that rather than assuming women have something in common as women, we need to examine how and why women of different classes, races, historical periods, religions, and so forth, are or have been different. Spelman believes that feminist research must recognize and place significant weight on the differences that exist among women and discontinue the search, often carried out by white middle-class feminists, for the "generic woman". By doing so, we will be able to identify whatever

similarities exist in the context of the differences between us, as well as the effects of these differences on the similarities.

I believe it is important to reiterate that my understanding and usage of the term feminist standpoint epistemology in this study does not imply a common viewpoint among all women, but rather stresses that "what we have in common is the organization of social relations that has accomplished our exclusion" (Smith, 1987a:78). Moreover, feminist epistemologies should make allowances for the differences amongst women or groups of women and not assume that general, universal concepts and political goals are possible or even preferable. Given that the primary focus of my investigation relates to the textually mediated, institutionally located social "relations of ruling", or the influence of feminist demographic discourse on Québec Government policy documents, an exploration into the degree and access to power by different women and different groups of women must be left to a separate study.

## **Ontology**

The last concept, ontology, refers to the "way of being in the world" and the underlying assumptions about reality, especially social reality, that come to exist in a given outlook (Stanley, 1990:14). An ontology may exist in and of itself, or as a mode or determination of something else. In this sense, it has direct implications for the logic of knowledge itself.

Feminists explain how in social and political theories which have an ontology that is male, women cannot simply be put back in or added on. This is because they often have been

narrowly defined in relation to the family and the private sphere which falls outside the scope of politics. It is impossible to challenge these relations or assumptions without "challenging age-old assumptions about the family, its traditional sex-roles, and its relations to the wider world of political society" (Moller-Okin, 1980:286). As I discuss below, in cases where women and their concerns have been "added on" to classical theories, they usually have been decontextualized or rendered invisible due to the orientation and methodological techniques used by some theorists. "Presence, being there, is no guarantee of visibility, of accurate treatment by the discipline" (Thiele, 1986:40).

As discussed earlier, although it is impossible to categorize all women as "being" similar or sharing common experiences by virtue of their gender, it is still possible to speak of a feminist ontology. Following a similar line of reasoning as Smith above, Stanley and Wise believe that the shared experiences of women originate not from "biological facts", but from the fact that women can share "experiences of oppression" and that "'woman' is a socially and politically constructed category, the ontological basis of which lies in a set of experiences rooted in the material world" (Stanley and Wise, 1990:21).

To avoid essentialist theorizing, Stanley distinguishes between what she considers a "specifically feminist ontology" from an ontology attached to the category '(all) women'" (Stanley, 1990:14). She explains:

I make no claims that 'women' will share this state of being; patently, most do not...an ontological state comes into existence, not in relation to something essentially female, but rather the facts of the present social construction of 'women' as this is seen, understood and acted upon (however imperfectly, and with whatever backsliding) by those who call themselves feminist; *and* who name this present social construction of women as *oppressive*. That is, it is the experience of and acting against perceived oppression that gives rise to a

distinctive feminist ontology; and it is the analytic exploration of the parameters of this in the research process that gives expression to a distinctive feminist epistemology (Stanley, 1990:14).

Whereas women do not and cannot share similar experiences and perceptions of reality by virtue of being women, the fact remains that in the majority of circumstances, social relations determining the everyday, as well as the social construction of "women" itself, have been largely determined for us, and not by us.

### **Counting Babies In, Counting Women Out: The Impact of Androcentric Theories on Research on Women**

With respect to *androcentric* or male-centred research on women in the social sciences, feminists point to how the hegemonic ontological premises of male stream thought have resulted in the creation of "patriarchal symbol systems" which limit, condition, and constrain women to understand the nature of their being by using "tools and categories devised by men to understand their reality, not ours" (Vickers, 1989:54). *Androcentrism* in this case refers to male centredness, whereby male or man is the norm and female or woman is deviant or the exception<sup>6</sup>.

To conduct research that begins from a feminist standpoint, it is first necessary to establish:

...how epistemology can be put into practice methodologically, as a perspective, and how this in turn relates to the practical use of different research techniques (Stanley and Wise, 1990:36).

Within the literature on feminist methodology, there are four inter-related issues that are pertinent to my investigation. Each issue is present to varying degrees within each of the



three disciplines used in this study - sociology, demography, and political science/public policy analysis. All of the issues relate to the absence of gender as a specific and significant category of analysis and include the following: the decontextualization of women's experiences; the exclusion of women as agents of knowledge; the canon of objectivity; and, scientific method and the debate between quantitative versus qualitative data.

### **Decontextualization of Women's Experience**

The first and perhaps most compelling issue is the tendency in social science research to ignore or downplay the significance of gender. Until recently, the experiences of women would often disappear or become invisible due to decontextualization or "context-stripping", in which:

...'concepts, environments, social interactions are all simplified by methods which lift them out of their contexts, stripping them of the very complexity which characterizes them in the real world'(Mishler in Vickers, 1989:46).

McCormack argues that gender should be recognized as a determining factor in understanding issues or activities such as political behaviour. She asserts:

...the assumption of a 'single society', in which generalizations can be made about all participants, hides the fact that men and women may inhabit different social worlds and that their behaviour can only be understood (and changed) by refusing to adopt techniques of analytic method (McCormack in Vickers, 1989:44).

The consequences of decontextualized research can take one of several forms.

First, most of what is studied or known in the social sciences equates the experiences of men (usually white, heterosexual, middle-class, able-bodied men) or masculine behaviour with the universal. *Androcentric* theories and methods have divided the world and knowledge

into two separate but unequal spheres: the public sphere of men with objective and rational knowledge, and the private sphere of women embodying everyday experience and subjective knowledge (Smith, 1987a, 1991). Some feminists assert that because men dominate universities and other sites where research is conducted, they have created a "male scientific culture characterized by male socialibility and grounded in an academic 'machismo'" (Cook and Fonow, 1986:6). Similarly, David Morgan suggests that "academic discourse is, in reality, a male discourse hiding behind the labels of science, rationality, and scholarship" (Morgan in Cook and Fonow, 1986:6).

Secondly, although the concerns and experiences of women are viewed as different from those of men, research devoted to their description, analysis, and explanation are seldom topics for research. In some cases, the experiences or condition of women were simply deemed inexplicable by virtue of human nature - that is women's nature (Eichler, 1988; Christiansen-Ruffman, 1989). In other cases, women's experiences in the world have been lumped into and depicted according to the attributes of a genderless human being.

Contemporary political science and public policy literature decontextualizes women's behaviour by assuming a universal "human condition" exists. Whereas classical political theory texts have either ignored the specificity of gender and women's condition, or offered explanations in terms of the categories used to describe men<sup>7</sup>. By downplaying the importance of gender and theorizing in a decontextualized manner, our notions of society, political participation, and power end up being more reflective of abstract generalizations, whereby being male or female is considered irrelevant to being human (Thiele, 1986). Likewise:

Theories continue to be constructed as if women, and their interests as a

group, were conceptually irrelevant to political discourse. More accurately, mainstream theorists today define the political terrain in genderless terms (Jones, 1988:11).

When women and issues of concern to them have been the subject of inquiry, as in the case of fertility or family policy initiatives, in many instances the research has been conducted on the basis of traditional models and using secondary sources for empirical testing. For example, notwithstanding recent feminist research on fertility, much literature in the fields of sociology and demography focuses on the relationship between women's activities, notably that of paid employment, and motherhood and children. A substantial proportion of this research relies on demographic models of fertility decision-making, which place a disproportionate emphasis on individual choice and economic variables (Currie, 1988). A full discussion of this point can be found in Chapter Three.

Decontextualization of women's experiences has also resulted from demographic research which relies on primary sources such as census data or fertility surveys. The work of Marie Lavigne (1986) is especially relevant in this respect. Using fertility data for the period 1831 to 1965, Lavigne debunks the myth of hyper-fertile *québécoises* and refutes the idea that women's demographic history can be reduced to such stereotypes. She also takes issue with the traditional depiction of Québec demographic history as one where women were content with their natural disposition or vocation as mothers and had many children to preserve the French-Canadian race, despite urbanization, industrialization, and modernization.

Lavigne explains that while overall fertility rates and averages may be useful for explaining some long-term tendencies, they are too abstract to accurately describe what happens in the lives of individual women - who has children, when, and under what

conditions. According to Lavigne:

If we examine demographic statistics in terms of the experience of women, a very different picture of their history emerges. Several possible life cycles and a plurality of experiences come to light...the history of the mother with a large family is that of only a minority of women born at the turn of the century. The prolific minority did, however, have an immense impact on the statistics. They forced up the fertility rate and the size of the average family, and it is the averages provided by this minority that provide the basis for theories as to the fertility of the Québécoise. The use of averages to reduce women's history to the history of 'the average' woman distorts our perception of history, and it is important to correct it by using studies based upon methodologies which allow us to get a better picture of how different groups of women experience historical change (Lavigne, 1986:320).

Similarly, Greenhalgh (1990) and Hammel<sup>8</sup> have argued that "women's voices and experiences must not be aggregated and abstracted such that they go unheard in fertility analyses".

In sum, epistemologies and methods that decontextualize and make generalizations about human behaviour overlook the reality that women and men, as a group and as individuals, live and experience things differently. Likewise, they reinforce existing *androcentric* biases, maintain the discursive hegemony of the male social universe, and perpetuate the notion that women can be analyzed as a homogenous group.

### **Women as Agents of Knowledge**

A second issue involves the situation whereby women's knowledge, as well as women themselves, have been marginalized within social science inquiry. Dorothy Smith (1987a) explains how the material conditions and ideological apparatuses of society have contributed to a situation where the knowledge of women, and that historically associated with women,

has been denigrated or excluded from the processes and discourse of the “relations of ruling”. Since women were only nominally present in the research process until recently, we have not had the power to name and analyze experiences that we consider meaningful. As such, what we do know and that traditionally based on experiential analysis, emotion, and the everyday world, has been virtually absent from academic discourse and the confines of legitimate knowledge. Moreover, within the parameters of patriarchal society, women's knowledge has been viewed as different and not equal to that of men. This has been propelled by language, theories, and academic concepts that abolish the agency of women in this reconstructed image of the world (Vickers, 1989). Similarly, it is reinforced by the concept of “universal” male behaviour reflected in our social knowledge of what constitutes human behaviour.

To restore the agency of women, it is necessary to make women and the things they deem significant the focus of inquiry. Spender argues that feminist research must expand the criteria of what constitutes knowledge and allow women to define what it is they want to *know*; that is, what is studied, how, and by whom (in Stanley and Wise, 1983). Epistemologies that defy or determine what is worth knowing have done so at the expense of women. Feminists need to analyze reality and the experiences of women on the basis of how women perceive them, rather than slotting them into theories or paradigms of existing sexist knowledge which frequently have proved irrelevant or constraining to women.

Although disciplines such as demography routinely study women and make their behaviour the focal point of numerous studies, the study of women has been confined traditionally to a narrow, *androcentric* interpretation of gender roles and the sexual division of labour, or limited to their reproductive function and role within the family (Le Bourdais,

1989a; McDaniel, 1995; Presser, 1997; Stoddart, 1984; Watkins, 1993). It is only recently that the knowledge of women and women as researchers have played an integral part in the research process. With the advent of feminist research and more female involvement, we have witnessed the broadening of areas and topics of research, as well as methods of social inquiry. The increased visibility of women and feminist research are both steps toward reestablishing of the agency of women.

Mainstream fertility research and related policy measures can be described as largely indifferent to the standpoint of women. For example, Québec's declining birth rate usually has been described in terms of its negative economic and political impact on society. However, recent feminist research points to the positive impact of smaller numbers of children on both women and society. Although women have less children, they are also participating in greater numbers and for longer periods of time in the paid workforce. Provided that mechanisms exist which make it easier to reconcile family life with paid labour, women's increased workforce participation can lead to greater financial independence for women and families, and an expanded tax base to cover pension and other social costs related to an aging society. Rather than problematize the reproductive behaviour of women or focus negatively on the perceived implications of lower fertility rates, feminists stress that research beginning from where women are located can provide alternative scenarios and a different basis upon which to formulate policy (Dandurand and Kempeneers, 1990; Gauvreau, 1988; LeBourdais, 1989b).

### **Dichotomous Variables or "The Either/or Syndrome"**

A third issue for feminist research is the use of research methodologies which analyze

persons and situations in terms of narrow, preconceived categories or on the basis of dichotomous variables. The use of dichotomous variables and rigid analytical categories, or the "either/or syndrome" (Christiansen-Ruffman, 1989), are methodological techniques which pose limitations for feminist research because they limit research questions and produce research where women and their experiences are misrepresented or overlooked.

Bivariate tables and dichotomous variables such as public/private, emotion/reason, and production/reproduction, limit and obscure our conceptions of social and personal organization, rather than clarify our analyses of a given situation. Research that relies on a limited number of variables or scenarios put forth by the researcher precludes the possibility of alternative descriptions of reality being taken into consideration. In an attempt to transform human understanding into "objective science", personal experiences are often relinquished or concealed (Christiansen-Ruffman, 1989:124).

The division of the private and public sphere is an interesting, albeit ironic, illustration of the syndrome. For example, although reproduction and child care traditionally have been considered women's issues and/or private matters, they manifest themselves as a double-edged sword in terms of theory, research and public policy. On the one hand, because having and caring for children is considered a private and woman's matter, governments have been able to absolve themselves from providing services to assist families, such as ample, affordable child care. On the other hand, when deemed necessary and/or backed by policy research and discourse, governments have become involved in trying to influence private decisions. In the case of Québec, the government has attempted to become directly involved in influencing the private affairs and decisions of its citizens through policy incentives

designed to influence fertility, such as the *allocation à la naissance*. It would appear therefore that responsibility for children and child care can be arbitrarily designated as both private and public, depending on what is at stake.

Another difficulty arising from the use of dichotomous variables is the tendency to stress differences and not similarities. Keeping dichotomous variables artificially constant, or naming one variable dependent and the other independent, perpetuates categorization and division, instead of integration or an attempt to convey a holistic picture of the problem under investigation (Klein, 1983). Rigid analytical categories are more often than not obstacles to understanding social practices.

Examining the mainstream literature on fertility and reproductive decision-making, one is struck by the predominance of the work/family dichotomy. In contrast, Currie (1988) explains how feminist research which begins with themes suggested by women themselves will enable us to see how women's decision to not have or have children takes into account a wider range of structural or social processes. These factors are often eclipsed by the dichotomy which positions having children as incongruous with working for pay. Currie illustrates the advantages of beginning from women's experiences rather than past theoretical models, stressing that the focal point of research and field work is:

...a process of discovering new themes from the experiences of women themselves, rather than one of asking research subjects to respond to categories deduced from established theory (Currie, 1988:236).

By using this approach, we can move beyond personal decisions or "'private troubles' within individual biographies", and focus on the importance of the organization of the workplace and the family as a social institution. Although conventional theories of



reproductive decision-making suggest a series of hypotheses based on the inter-relationship between fertility and socio-economic variables (the "choice" between motherhood and career - for reasons related to economic need or personal satisfaction), Currie's research shows us that women do not necessarily view reproductive decisions as a straight-forward either/or prospect.

The consequences of research methods and methodologies that attempt to "fit" the experiences of women into neat little boxes, or describe their choices in terms of an either/or prospect, can be characterized as unrepresentative of what women think and do, and are therefore useless for the integration of research with praxis. Feminist research methodologies and questions should be reflective of women's experience in their political struggles towards emancipation. This requires feminists to challenge epistemologies and the patriarchal status quo which frequently serve as the starting point for many an academic enterprise (Harding, 1986; Mies, 1983, 1991). According to Mies, the truth of a theory should not be:

...dependent on the application of certain methodologies, principles and rules, but on its potential to orient the processes of praxis towards progressive emancipation and humanization (Mies, 1983:124).

Finally, Harding (1986) points out that it often has been the destabilization of thought as opposed to restabilization that has advanced our understanding of phenomena.

### **Scientific Method, Objectivity, and Quantitative Data**

The final category involves the preoccupation with scientific method, the canon of objectivity, and the disproportionate emphasis placed on quantitative research. These issues have been particularly pronounced in the field of demography which I discuss in greater detail

in Chapter Three.

Qualitative research, especially qualitative feminist research, has been looked upon suspiciously by some members of the mainstream academic community. Qualitative research is often thought as biased and not objective due to the assumption that it is "unscientific" or politically motivated (Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991). The tendency to equate quantification with objectivity is just one reason why the insistence on measurement and scientific method persists. Another is the belief that quantification guards against the intrusion of ideology into the research process.

Traditional social science research has been influenced by research methodologies and methods from the natural sciences which rely predominantly on experimentation and quantification of data. Generally speaking, the elements of research incorporate the development, testing and validation of theory. Quantitative data and scientific objectivity have been viewed as preferable to qualitative data and its looser methods due to the tendency to equate quantification with value neutrality. There are several problems associated with this assumption.

First, quantitative data may be just as open-ended or "loose" as qualitative data if standards or methodological rigour are overlooked for purposes of expediency (Jayaratne, 1983; Reinharz, 1983). Second and especially relevant in the case of feminist research, quantification has the capacity to misconstrue or downplay the range of experiences and differences among women because:

...emphasis on statistical methods means that variables are often conceptualized according to what is most easily quantifiable rather than what is most theoretically important" (Cook and Fonow, 1986:10).

Furthermore, it is often the case in survey research that respondents are required to choose between answers that only partially describe the situation at hand. The implications of this problem can be far-reaching since survey and statistical information are often consulted and used by policy makers in the formulation of policy.

Objectivity, which implies the use of techniques that separate the scientist from the subject, assumes detachment will produce results or data that are unbiased, gender neutral, and non-discriminatory. However, as the work of Lavigne above illustrates, even objective data such as tables and historical surveys can produce research that fails to accurately describe the variable experiences in women's lives. This is because the epistemological foundations or assumptions - often sexist - upon which research is based are integral to the process of inquiry.

To avoid this dilemma, feminists advocate recognizing and accepting the implications of subjectivity, rather than pretending research is unmotivated by values, preferences, and world-views (Gergen, 1988). All research, and this includes feminist research, incorporates the human attributes which are brought into the research process by researchers. Furthermore, because it is impossible for research or knowledge to be value-free, we should not deny the existence of the researcher's subjectivity but rather recognize and situate "the experiences and consciousness of the researcher as an integral part of the research process" (Stanley and Wise, 1983:48).

The reliance on empiricism can create other problems for feminist inquiry. Given that methodological norms of empiricism apply only to the context of justification and not the context of discovery where problems are identified and defined, the selection of research

topics and goals of a study may be determined within a context that ignores or excludes issues that are relevant to women (Harding, 1986). Many theories have been formulated on the basis of *androcentric* epistemologies and ontologies. As such, the categories and questions deduced from established theory may be less than "scientific" and more a reflection of the status quo.

As well, the *androcentric* assumptions underlying research questions or statistical categories may simply be a reflection of the viewpoint of the researcher. Consequently, this type of uncritical acceptance can be potentially as biased as any other orientation (Cook and Fonow, 1986; Jayaratne, 1983). In this respect, qualitative methods such as unstructured personal interviews may yield a more realistic or holistic assessment, because they allow women themselves, rather than the researcher, to determine the parameters of the problem under investigation.

The recent work of Québec feminist demographers and sociologists illustrates some of the dilemmas associated with quantitative research. In the introduction to the special issue of *Cahiers québécois de démographie*, "Démographie et femmes", Céline Le Bourdais (1989a) points out how, from a methodological point of view, statistical categories used by official bodies such as Statistics Canada have not always kept pace with recent theoretical developments or the real life circumstances of women. Drawing on the work of Barrère-Maurisson, Le Bourdais explains that as more women continue to work outside the home permanently and for longer periods of times than before, it is less relevant to rely on functionalist conceptualizations of the family and sex roles which categorize women's activities in terms of childbearing versus paid employment. Statistics and analyses of women's

labour force participation can no longer be examined solely in relation to their family life, but must also be studied in terms of changes that have occurred within the global market (Barrère-Maurisson in Le Bourdais, 1989a:5). The way in which statistics are collected can be just as telling as the data they produce.

To avoid misrepresentation and ensure that social science inquiry is able to accurately reflect societal complexities and the intricate patterns of individual lives, feminist researchers must be wary of the problems inherent in all types of research methodologies and avoid exclusive use of only one method. Using a variety of research methodologies can provide a more comprehensive explanation of social interactions and relations.

For example, feminist demographers and sociologists have shown the limitations of the paid employment/fertility dichotomy. Their research has shown that despite the sizeable amount of literature centred on the inverse relationship between the two variables, the relationship is far from purely linear or causal. Research beginning from where women are and what they say depicts the relationship between family and professional life as dynamic and occurring simultaneously (Currie, 1988; Le Bourdais, 1989b). Instead of concentrating on if and why women choose between work and fertility, more attention should be focused on understanding why and how women reconcile both of these parts of their lives.

### **Some Remaining Challenges**

In this part of the chapter some of the epistemological and methodological dilemmas that are present when conducting research on women in the social sciences were highlighted. Due to the absence of epistemologies and methodologies that begin from the standpoint of

women, traditional research has resulted in knowledge and theories which reinforce stereotypical beliefs about women and run contrary to a feminist action/empowerment/social amelioration axis.

The work of Dorothy Smith is once again pertinent in this regard. She discusses at length how the discipline of sociology (though this applies equally to demography and public policy analysis) embodies and incorporates ontologies which generate epistemological foundations that contribute to the creation of the "relations of ruling" or ruling apparatus, consisting of texts, discourse and institutions that exclude the standpoint of women (Smith, 1987a, 1990, 1991). She describes why this is so, as well as the repercussions due to the absence of a feminist standpoint:

The first difficulty is that how sociology is thought - its methods, conceptual schemes, and theories - has been based on and built up within the male social universe, even when women have participated in its doing... There is thus a disjunction between how women experience the world and the concepts and theoretical schemes by which society's self-consciousness is inscribed... A second difficulty is that the worlds opened up by speaking from the standpoint of women have not been and are not on a basis of equality with the objectified bodies of knowledge that have constituted and expressed the standpoint of men...Furthermore, objectified knowledges are part of the world from which our kind of society is governed (Smith, 1990:13).

This quotation illustrates how the epistemological and methodological difficulties of sociology are inter-related, in the sense that women continue to view their world using concepts and terms created by and for men. Rather than determining and defining what is relevant and important for ourselves, we have often found ourselves in a situation where established social forms of consciousness serve to alienate us from our own experiences (Smith, 1990). Woman is other, deviant, different, or abnormal.

In light of the above, it is important that the starting point of feminist inquiry be the calling into question of male stream ontologies. The consequences of male stream ontologies are significant epistemologically, and have direct repercussions on all other aspects of theory and research processes (Stanley & Wise, 1983; Stanley, 1990; Vickers, 1989). Because women historically have not participated in defining their way of being in the world and what it means to be women, our positions in society have been largely, though not exclusively, defined for us and not by us.

Classical social and political theory texts conveyed the message that women, by virtue of the biological capacity to bear children and resulting absence from the public sphere, were naturally inferior and not capable of participating in civil society as equal members (Clark and Lange, 1979; Moller-Okin, 1980; O'Brien, 1981; Shanley and Pateman, 1991). Similarly, contemporary research and theorizing on women continues to naturalize (and romanticize) motherhood by linking together "woman" and "mother". The result is that having children is assumed to be a universal and transhistorical drive and an essential and defining condition or characteristic of/for most women<sup>9</sup>.

Male stream ontologies in turn have implications for epistemologies which exclude women (and others) from being considered agents of knowledge. Traditionally, women's knowledge has been associated with common sense and "subjective knowledge" which has eliminated the possibility of women being credible or legitimate "knowers". Moreover, because methodologies have their basis in epistemological concerns, and methods are subsequently derived from particular methodologies, theories of knowledge which assume the invisibility or inferiority of women are inevitably problematic. Without challenging

existing discourse or epistemologies, it is unlikely that the activities and concerns of women will be placed at the forefront of the research agenda (Cook and Fonow, 1986; Harding, 1986; Mies, 1983; Vickers, 1984).

Notwithstanding, arguing for a feminist standpoint epistemology is not the same as advocating female separatism. Nor does it imply the wholesale repudiation of all previous theory and research processes. Rather, it requires the removal of "existing methodological separatism" which apprehends and examines the world using an "assimilationist and textually mediated alienated knowledge which proceeds by measuring social life against pre-existent theoretically (that is, ideologically) derived categories" (Stanley and Wise, 1990:39).

To conduct research which reflects and integrates women's experiences in their struggle towards emancipation, feminist inquiry must do two things. First, it must reject methodologies which insist social reality is objectively constituted and that one "true reality" exists. Although the contextually grounded experiences of women are different from those of men, as well as different from one another, women's knowledge should not be regarded as secondary, "other" or less meaningful. Women's experience and their location in the world must serve as the starting point of a feminist standpoint epistemology.

Second, feminist methodology must incorporate women's experiences and use them as the basis for "consciousness raising". Research for and from the many standpoints of women will produce knowledge that uncovers the *androcentric* bias of traditional methodologies which can in turn be used to work towards social change (Klein, 1983). Many of our current research practices and knowledge are the outcome of assumptions and techniques which reproduce sexism and *androcentrism* in scholarship, policy, and our



everyday lives. The resulting ideologically structured discourse and knowledge has implications for the "relations of ruling" and material circumstances of the everyday world in which we live, conduct social inquiry, and formulate public policy.

## **Part II: Ideology and Patriarchy: Towards the Development of a Feminist Framework**

### **Ideology**

Although the term ideology has been assigned a variety of different meanings, I have chosen to draw on the work of Marx, and to a lesser extent Gramsci, as their definitions are most directly related to the objectives of this inquiry. Rather than include a comprehensive review of Marx and Gramsci as a whole, I have presented the essence of their works while focusing on the relevance of their writings to my analysis of Québec demographic discourse and government policy documents.

Marx's concept of ideology can be summarized in the following way. Because the contradictions of social reality appear impossible to resolve in real life and consequently in consciousness, ideology functions to conceal and negate existing contradictions and to act as a solution in the mind or at the conceptual level (Marx and Engels, 1976). In a capitalist economic system, ideology serves the interests of the dominant class and brings about the inversion of reality and sublimation in consciousness of the limitations of human practices which leads to the negation of social contradictions. Consequently, by concealing contradictions, ideology legitimizes and maintains the class structure as well as a distorted or false consciousness among the proletariat. For this reason, the concept of ideology is a

useful tool or category of analysis because it:

...directs us to look for and at the actual practical organization of the production of images, ideas, symbols, concepts, vocabularies, as means for us to think about our world. It directs us to examine who produces what for whom, where the social forms of consciousness come from (Smith, 1987a:54).

In addition to the relationship between consciousness and practice, Marx also examined non-ideological forms of consciousness. The concept of ideology in this sense is connected with the determination of all forms of consciousness by material reality (Larrain, 1979; 1983). Marx distinguishes between ideological and non-ideological forms of consciousness, explaining that although an idea is of the ruling class, it is not necessarily ideological unless it conceals contradictions or is in some sense distorted. He also referred to the legal and political superstructures of society and the forms of social consciousness that correspond to the base, without describing either the superstructure or resultant social consciousness as being ideological in nature. All forms of consciousness may be socially determined, but not all forms of consciousness are ideological.

Throughout Marx's writings the definition of ideology remains consistent with an emphasis on negative meaning or concealment. It is clear that the inversion which occurs in both consciousness and reality is sustained and developed, but that it is used exclusively to describe "those distortions which are connected with the concealment of a contradictory and inverted reality" (Bottomore, 1983:220). In this sense, ideology can be characterized as a solution in the mind to problems and contradictions which cannot be solved in practice. In order for change to occur or to solve problems, we must change the actual system or relations which are responsible for the contradictions.

The association of ideology with "definite procedures or methods of thinking and reasoning about social relations" (Smith, 1990:35) is what makes Marx's conceptualization of ideology most relevant for an analysis of discourse and policy documents in the realm of Québec demography. Turning once again to Smith, who draws on Marx, we are told of the implications of the separation or labelling of the rupture between consciousness and practice and reminded to distinguish between:

...on the one hand, ideas and images - the social forms of thought - directly expressive of a world known directly and shared...and, on the other hand, the social forms of thought made for us by others, which come to us from outside, and which do not arise out of experience... Thus, experiences, concerns, needs, aims, interests, arising among people in the everyday and working contexts of their living, are given expression in forms that articulate them to the existing practices and social relations constituting its rule (Smith, 1987a:55-56).

Smith's quotation illustrates the separation between what we know through experience or practice and that which becomes invisible through ideological practices, concealing or suppressing the presence and workings of underlying relations. It reminds us to think about the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of research and how research findings become translated into knowledge or theories. Finally, it focuses our attention on the ramifications of such research and knowledge on academic and public policy discourse and, by extension, people in the everyday world.

Though Marx's ideas on ideology contain many positive and worthwhile elements and offer much by way of explaining the determination of social consciousness and social relations, there are several criticisms worth mentioning. The first is the confusion that results when distinguishing between ideology as a specific phenomenon and its role in the general social determination of all forms of consciousness. Marx considers the concept of ideology

from two points of view: one being the relationship between consciousness and practice, and the other being the relationship between base and superstructure. Some, like Larrain (1979), have argued that each perspective is different, with the former linking consciousness to practice which produces predominantly though not exclusively economic relations, while the latter sees consciousness as stemming from a separate economic structure.

Second and more importantly, Marx's conception of ideology suffers from an over-emphasis on the notion of false consciousness or falsity, Giddens (1991) points out that this notion has been interpreted in a manner which is blaming. Moreover, the negative focus or connotation of ideology risks to overshadow the material basis and to obscure the agency of people to change their situation. In order to take into account the relation of ideology to systems of power and domination, we must recognize the most subtle and sophisticated manifestations of ideology are often buried in the modes of daily practice.

In this context the work of Gramsci is particularly useful. Gramsci builds upon Marx's conceptualization of ideology but develops it further in several crucial respects, providing a more extensive examination of ideology and social practice. Gramsci expands the concept of ideology to take account of the connection between political ideas and class interests, the role of the State and civil society. To do so, he develops the concept of hegemony, which describes the way in which dominant classes impose their conception of reality on subordinate classes, but which also includes possibilities for the transformation of the existing order.

Gramsci's main concern was to develop an understanding of consciousness: how it is constituted through ideological means and how it can be transformed. For Gramsci, as for

Marx, ideology is not the product of naked coercion on the part of the dominant class. Rather, according to O'Brien, he viewed it as the outcome of social practice in the realm of everyday life and thought:

...where consciousness acts in the experiential social context in which the subject is immersed, and where men (sic) can only deal with the realities which history presents to them (O'Brien, 1984:88).

However, in an important departure from Marx, Gramsci focused his attention on how the oppressed could create alternative political and cultural structures which would enable them to understand and overcome their oppression. Class consciousness was understood as being dialectically structured - the struggle between "common sense" or acceptable knowledge and "good sense", which has the capacity to overthrow "common sense" and the ideological baggage of the dominant class. While hegemony is the force behind "common sense", defining reality according to ruling class definitions, it also makes way for the possibility of counter-hegemony in the process. For example, education is one of the institutions that can be transformed by the working class to allow for the creation and development of critical "good sense" and the transformation of civil society (representing the needs of individuals and standing between the political level of state and economic structures). It challenges the dominant ideology and allows for the recognition on the part of the working class of their relations to the means of production and their exploitation within the class structure (Weiler, 1988). Thereby, the construction of counter-hegemony can prepare the terrain for the revolutionary struggle which Gramsci believed to be necessary for the ultimate creation of a universal class and the realization of true consciousness.

Gramsci, like Marx, paid scant attention to the specificity of women's subordination

in his analysis. While he did allude to the family as a site of ideological reproduction, arguing that under advanced capitalism the sphere of struggle for hegemony has crept further within the family, Gramsci did not separate women's reproductive labour power from general production. Therefore, his analysis is not able to come to terms with the exploitation of women by men at home and at work, nor can it address gender hegemony or the social construction of gender relations at all. O'Brien explains:

In collapsing the particular ideology of patriarchy into the general category of ruling-class (state) ideology, the systematic denigration of women and the legitimation of violence in procuring consent to patriarchal hegemony is ignored (O'Brien, 1989:232).

Although Gramsci's contribution to the conceptualization of ideology is *androcentric*, as is the case with much of Marxist tradition, his understanding of hegemony contributes to an understanding of gender subordination because it encompasses the structures and ways in which a dominant class (or gender) acquires and maintains authority over a subordinate one. Gramsci's contribution can best be characterized as a dynamic shift away from the more narrow Marxist interpretation of ideology as false consciousness. It is the move away from the negative conception of ideology, combined with Marx's understanding of social consciousness, which makes the concept of ideology so useful. The concept enables us to recognize the role of everyday experiences and structures in shaping our world and see the potential for change.

Nevertheless, the concept of ideology is rather insensitive to the existence of gender subordination and therefore incapable of providing a comprehensive understanding of the unequal position of women in contemporary societies. Because women's exclusion and the

distinctiveness of their oppression have not been adequately theorized in previous works on ideology, it is necessary to turn to the concept of patriarchy. I believe the concept of patriarchy is capable of enlarging our scope of inquiry not least because it recognizes "gender division which implies power and demands explanation", but also because it provides "a theoretical basis for arguing for the specificity of women's oppression" (Coward, 1983:271).

Although the relationship between ideology and patriarchy has been analyzed by feminist theorists (Mitchell, 1971; Barrett, 1988; Smith, 1990), few demographers - feminist or not - have contemplated this relationship, or argued the need for a framework that examines ideological and patriarchal influences on contemporary demographic policy and discourse. By situating the analytical concepts of patriarchy and ideology in the theoretical framework, we will be better able to understand the various influences to Québec demographic discourse and government policy documents.

### **Patriarchy**

Though patriarchy is a commonly used term in contemporary feminist theory, its meaning differs greatly among different groups of feminists. Patriarchy, which literally means rule by the father or by men<sup>10</sup>, has been used in the recent feminist literature to theoretically address the basis of the subordination of women and to analyze the particular forms which it assumes (Beechey, 1987)<sup>11</sup>. Initially, the term was employed by radical feminists, notably Kate Millet (1978), to refer to an autonomous system of domination whereby men as a group dominate women as a group and are the primary beneficiaries of the subordination of women. Subsequently, the concept has been used by feminists of all stripes to analyze the factors

underlying women's inequality, corresponding to the different political tendencies that exist within feminist politics (Beechy, 1987; Coward, 1983; Eisenstein, 1986; Rich, 1986; Walby, 1990).

While recognizing the variance in its usage, patriarchy's strength as a concept lies in its potential to explain more than a concept like sexism, which signifies sexual inequality but gives no indication as to how or why it develops. Patriarchy is meaningful because "it *problematizes* gender and gender relations", implying that gender inequality is a widespread attribute of contemporary societies, that women's oppression is different from other kinds of oppression, and that most importantly, gender inequality requires a specific explanation and analysis (Fox, 1988). It is clear therefore that the analytical and explanatory potential of the concept would be useful for feminism in general. Moreover, because patriarchy problematizes gender relations and is capable of identifying a gender subtext, it has analytical validity in determining the extent to which feminist discourse has influenced the demographic policy agenda in Québec.

While most feminists agree that women's position in society (both in the public and private realm) is not equal to that of men, there are several competing explanations for the past and present state of affairs. Borrowing loosely from the categories set forth by Sylvia Walby (1986; 1990), gender inequality can be said to occur as a result of one the following four causes<sup>12</sup>: (1) the Marxist feminist interpretation in which gender inequality is the outcome of the system of capitalist relations (Kuhn and Wolpe, 1978; Barrett, 1988); (2) the radical feminist interpretation in which gender inequality is the consequence of the autonomous system of patriarchy (Millet, 1978; Firestone, 1979; Rich, 1986; O'Brien, 1981);



(3) the socialist feminist explanation where gender inequality is the result of the simultaneous system of patriarchal and capitalist relations - capitalist patriarchy (McDonough and Harrison, 1978; Young, 1981; Vogel, 1981); or (4) dual-systems analysis whereby gender inequality occurs as a result of two autonomous systems of oppression - capitalism and patriarchy (Mitchell, 1971; Hartmann, 1981; Eisenstein, 1980, 1984, 1986). For my purposes, I have chosen to utilize a modified dual-systems analysis, as it comes closest to identifying the nature and causes of gender inequality, and builds upon the linkages of the marxist-inspired conceptualization of ideology described above.

### **Dual-Systems Theory**

Dual-systems theory emerged in response to the limitations and polarization of radical feminist and Marxist feminist theorizing of women's oppression. While radical feminists argue that patriarchy functions as an autonomous system and is the root and primary source of women's oppression, Marxist feminists believe that gender inequality stems first and foremost from capitalist relations. In contrast, dual-systems theory explains the subordination of women as having its origins in the interaction between the autonomous systems of patriarchy and capitalism, rather than pointing to gender or class as the primary form of domination. Moreover, as illustrated by the work of Eisenstein below, the State is the point where the interests and demands of both intersect. Although there are various interpretations regarding the influences of patriarchal and capitalist relations in the determination of gender inequality, I have limited my discussion to Juliet Mitchell, Heidi Hartmann, and Zillah Eisenstein, whose works cover a range of issues such as ideology, subjectivity, sexuality,

household production, and the role of the State.

In *Women's Estate* (1971), Juliet Mitchell rejects traditional Marxist-feminist analysis whereby women's position is determined in relation to her function in the capitalist system. Instead, she argues that women's role is determined by her role in production, as well as reproduction, which includes sexuality, the socialization of children and procreation. Later in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1975), she more clearly separates patriarchal from capitalist relations, and argues that each determines different spheres of society. Mitchell limits the influence of patriarchy to the areas of ideology, culture and sexuality, while capitalism is confined to operating at the level of production or the economic sphere. Drawing on the work of Freud, she argues that patriarchy has an ideological basis and that gender relations can be explained through an analysis of the workings of the unconscious. Patriarchal law, which according to Mitchell, is the rule of the father and not domination by men, operates through the kinship system and Oedipus complex .

According to Mitchell (1990), capitalism as a system, although intersecting with patriarchy at some points, does not need patriarchal law to keep its workings intact. Even under socialism women will continue to be oppressed by patriarchal relations unless they overcome the means and ways in which subordination is internalised. In addition to changing the structures of production, there is the need to change the non-material aspects of patriarchy, or the “psycho-sexual drama” which has and continues to produce men and women as we know them (in Tong, 1989:176).

Although Mitchell's pioneering analyses went beyond the crude economic reductionism of traditional Marxist analysis, and questioned the impact of radical feminist's

faith in reproductive technologies as the key to women's liberation, her work remains problematic. She under-emphasizes the material basis of patriarchal relations and the material benefits men derive from women's work. As well, she relies too heavily on the idea that consciousness, culture and ideology are the prime determinants of patriarchal relations.

Another variant of dual systems analysis, that of Heidi Hartmann (1981, 1990), views patriarchal and capitalist relations coexisting in and influencing all levels and spheres of society simultaneously. According to Hartmann, although there are tensions between patriarchal and capitalist interests:

...the accumulation of capital both accommodates itself to patriarchal structure and helps to perpetuate it (Hartmann, 1981:3).

Capitalism and patriarchy operate in conjunction with one another and interact in several ways. First, through the existence of job segregation by sex, women are ghettoized in low paying jobs and forced to be dependent on men. Consequently, men are able to demand a family wage which justifies the exclusion of women from the work force and which serves to perpetuate their "natural" role in the home. Both men and capital reap the benefits of this arrangement as women's unpaid labour in the home services the personal interests of men as well as the broader, "societal" interests of capitalism. Hartmann sees patriarchy having its material basis in men's control over women's labour power, and is maintained and reproduced through a variety of institutions such as the family, social structures and economic production.

While Hartmann develops a well thought- out position with regard to gender inequality and the interrelationship between patriarchy and capitalism, her arguments have been criticized for being analytically loose and lacking in theoretical depth (Beechey, 1987;

Fox, 1988; Walby, 1986). Hartmann states that on the one hand men's control over women's labour power is the basis of male dominance. On the other hand, she identifies aspects of the social structure as being responsible for men having this control. Fox criticizes Hartmann because:

...control of women's labour power is both the basis and object of patriarchy. As a system, patriarchy is under-specified in this argument, to say the least. For the source of men's need or desire to control women's labour is not specified (Fox, 1988:168).

An additional problem relates to Hartmann's definition of patriarchy. Because she defines patriarchy as a set of social relations primarily between men, and not between and amongst men and women, her theory is not capable of recognizing the role of women and the possibility of women's collusion in their own oppression. Women are viewed as passive victims within a system, or two systems in this case, which is responsible for their subordination but not subject to change. Finally, Hartmann's dual systems analysis of gender inequality relates primarily to women and work while ignoring other elements of patriarchal structures, such as violence, sexuality, and culture.

The work of Zillah Eisenstein is a more comprehensive attempt at understanding the existing conflicts and symbiosis of the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy. While her earlier work (1979) focuses on the dialectical nature and mutual dependency of capitalist class structure and male supremacy, her later work points to the conflicts between patriarchal and capitalist interests (1980, 1984, 1986).

Eisenstein develops the argument that although capitalism and patriarchy are relatively autonomous systems ("semi-autonomous, semi-dependent"), they intersect and contribute to

the overall oppression of women (1984). She highlights the pull in opposite directions between capitalism and patriarchy with regard to the control and demand for women's labour in terms of household or paid employment. She also rightly identifies the point at which they converge - the level of the State. Eisenstein believes that the irreconcilability of the conflicts within society, or between capitalism and patriarchy, necessitate or legitimate the activities of the State. According to Eisenstein, the liberal capitalist State ensures that patriarchal interests are represented via male capitalists through legislation and policy (1980, 1984).

Eisenstein's recognition of the role of the State is significant because it draws our attention to the position of the State in maintaining and mediating the reproduction of capitalist and patriarchal relations. Her emphasis on the contribution of both patriarchal and capitalist forces in creating gendered subjectivity is also important. She describes how patriarchy is a system that limits women's options, first and foremost, to generational reproduction or mothering. Capitalism, on the other hand, sustains the separation of social life into private and public spheres through the division of labour by sex. Eisenstein's position can be summarized by the following quotation:

Patriarchy is the process of politically differentiating the female from the male, as woman from man. Patriarchy in this sense is the politics of transforming biological sex into politicized gender, which prioritizes the man while making the woman different (unequal), less than, or the 'other'. This process of differentiating woman from man while establishing the privilege of men operates partially on the level of ideology that centres the phallus in the series of symbols, signs, and language while dividing the private world from the public world. And it simultaneously establishes the sexual division of labour, the distinctiveness of family and market, patriarchal controls within the market, and so on (Eisenstein [1984] in Fox, 1988:175-176).

Eisenstein has been criticized for her ambiguity over the separation or union between

capitalist and patriarchal systems (Barrett, 1988; Fox, 1988; Walby, 1986), and for the over-emphasis on the capital labour dynamic and under-emphasis on the political level or gender relations (Walby, 1990). Nonetheless, I believe her work is an interesting starting point for a discussion of the points at which patriarchal and capitalist relations converge. An expansion of her framework and acknowledgment of the complex reality of domination on various fronts can serve as the starting point for an analysis of the various factors at play in the Québec demographic arena: the epistemological foundations of demographic discourse, the role of language and cultural survival, nationalism and the role of the State, and public policy measures which exclude women and feminist demands.

With respect to the situation in Québec, Eisenstein's emphasis on the role of the State is especially important as it focuses our attention on the clash between patriarchal and capitalist interests over the control of women's reproductive capabilities and productive labour. The State is active in "protecting the hierarchical sexual structuring of society" which involves mediating the conflicts between woman as mother and wage earner, preserving the importance and role of the nuclear family, and with regard to questions of reproductive control (childbearing) and motherhood (childrearing). In fact, in Eisenstein's conception of patriarchy:

...the struggle to control women's reproductive activity and the limiting of her choices related to the institution of motherhood, reflects the centrality of patriarchy to Western society (Eisenstein, 1986:224).

The way in which the concerns of the State manifest themselves is in the realm of public policy. Applying Eisenstein's analyses to the case of demographic issues and family policy in Québec, we see how the actions (or inactivity) of successive Liberal and Parti

Québécois governments have attempted to reconcile competing interests. On the one hand, the State has tried to encourage women to have children through a series of monetary incentives, the most well-known being the *allocation à la naissance*. While on the other hand, it has inadvertently supported women's decision to work outside the home and have less children, due to the lack of availability of affordable child care and the absence of long-term, remunerated parental leave. This is just one example of State mediation of the competing demands of capitalism and patriarchy. In actuality, the conflicts in Québec go beyond the accommodation of capitalist and patriarchal interests to encompass that of nationalism, ethnic identity and language politics.

### **Towards a Feminist Framework**

This chapter pointed to the importance of beginning with a feminist standpoint epistemology as well as the analytical significance of the concepts of ideology and patriarchy. In the first part of the chapter, the epistemological implications and problems associated with the methodological practices of the disciplines used in this study were highlighted. Examples from sociology, demography and public policy analysis illustrate how each discipline embodies and incorporates ontologies generating epistemological foundations that contribute to the creation of the texts, discourse and institutions which establish social forms of consciousness that serve to alienate women from our experiences.

Traditional research methodologies provide a discursive basis for epistemologies which legitimize women's subordinate position in society and propagate an essentialist relationship to gender-specific spheres such as childrearing and related tasks. In turn,

traditional research has resulted in knowledge and theories which reinforce stereotypical beliefs about women and run contrary to feminist goals and principles. It is for this reason that methodologies and epistemologies must be scrutinized. They direct our attention to who is producing what, how, and why, as well as determine how and what can be seen.

In the second part of the chapter, I turned my attention to the theoretical significance of the concepts of ideology and patriarchy. Both concepts are important because they act as organizing principles that order and regulate discourse and society and because they direct our attention toward the organization of the production of ideas and vocabularies in academic disciplines, popular discourse, and public policy measures, be it with regard to gender, class, or other attributes.

The concept of ideology focuses on the organization of the production of images, ideas, symbols, concepts, vocabularies. It directs us to examine the origins of social forms of consciousness and at who produces what, how, why, and for whom. This does not dispute that knowledge is grounded in one's interests or perspective, but to reiterate the point that "objectivity" or knowledge that is detached from the subjectivities of those involved remains elusive.

Although ideology refers to the ideas, concepts and practices through which the ruling class organizes and authorizes the social relations which maintain its domination, ideology is not the product of naked coercion. Rather, it is the outcome of social practice in the realm of everyday life and cannot be attributed to the invention of anything that does not already exist. Furthermore, reproductive practice or the creation of the means of existence is determined by the given circumstances of the society. This creates social conditions which



can be separate from people's desires and, as a consequence, determines the constitution of social reality as a contradictory reality. Therefore, ideology conceals and negates existing contradictions and acts as a solution in the mind or at the conceptual level. By concealing contradictions, ideology legitimizes and maintains the structures and relations of domination which allows one class or grouping to maintain control over the rest of society.

The notion of hegemony contributes to an understanding of the ways in which dominant classes impose their conception of reality on subordinate classes. Counter-hegemony, or the possibilities for transformation, allows for the creation and development of critical "good sense" which has the capacity to overthrow "common sense" and the ideological dominance of the ruling class. For change to occur, the actual system or relations which is responsible for contradictions must be transformed. In other words, we need to begin with an examination of the structure of political and social organization, public policy measures, and the nature of academic research and disciplines, to name just a few, which support these relations and result in the domination of a particular class or group over others.

Whereas ideology refers to the images, ideas, and practices which allow a dominant class to rule over others by virtue of their control over the means of production and participation in the ruling apparatus of society, the concept of patriarchy focuses on the gender subtext, or the organization of gender relations which are sustained and influenced by the dominant mode of production. Patriarchy exposes the gender division and unequal distribution of power of men over women which manifests itself in different ways in various spheres of society. It points to the gender subtext of the textually mediated relations of ruling where women, by and large, have been excluded from the ruling apparatus - in the academy,

business, the media, and, in government and policy making.

Though far from being an ideal model, a modified version of dual-systems analysis, where patriarchy operates autonomously and in conjunction with the capitalist mode of production in different spheres of society, is most appropriate to my analysis of the situation in contemporary Québec society. Dual systems analysis recognizes the specificity of capitalist and patriarchal relations, and has the capability to theorize questions of race and ethnicity (in the form of nationalism), which also play a role in determining social actions and relations in Québec.

The end result of women's exclusion from the practices of power is that our lived experiences and actual social relations become secondary or invisible, due to discourse and theories of knowledge which have been created for and not by us. Gendered subjectivity attributes certain characteristics and duties to women on the basis of gender, which is reinforced by the division of public and private spheres. These roles and expectations serve the interests of patriarchy and capitalism, while resulting in the inversion of reality and sublimation in consciousness of the limitations of our practice.

Public policies that are formulated on discourses which are ideological and patriarchal mean our positions in society have been largely, though not exclusively, defined for us and not by us. To overcome this dilemma, feminist research and counter-hegemonic struggles must acknowledge the impact of ideology and patriarchy upon discourse, methodologies, and policy formation. Attention must be focused on the ways in which research is conducted, what constitutes knowledge, and on how and who participates in the formulation of public policy measures.

The above tenets form the basis of my theoretical framework which informs and guides both the review of the contemporary Québec demographic discourse as well as the textual content analysis of Québec Government policy documents. As a result of this review, it will be possible to determine the extent of influence of feminist demographic discourse on the sample of Québec Government family policy documents.

## Endnotes

1. Oppression or discrimination on the basis of gender exists in conjunction with other attributes such as race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, and age, among others, and differs from one woman to the next. However, like bell hooks (1984), I recognize that what makes feminism viable is not that women share a similar experience, but rather that women can come together in the struggle against all the different forms of patriarchal domination.

2. This terminology is borrowed from Luxton et al. (1990:13) who use these categories to analyze the unwaged care-giving work that women do in the household. While "motherwork", "wifework", and "housework" are self-explanatory, "daughterwork" is used to describe to the job of eldercare, the majority of which is undertaken by daughters and daughters-in-law.

3. For more detail see Goldstein Fuchs (1995:6).

4. See "Working Moms: Changing Family Life Since the 1950s" in Wilson (1991:23-27).

5. For further discussion of the implications of ontology on the logic of knowledge see: Brown (1988), Clark and Lange (1979), DiStefano (1991), and Overall (1988).

6. This term was first used by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in *The Man-Made World or Our Androcentric Culture* in 1911 to draw attention to male bias. For further information see Humm (1989).

7. For a discussion of this point see: Brown (1988), Bryson (1992), Clark and Lange(1978), Di Stefano (1991), and Vickers (1997).

8. In McDaniel (1996:89).

9. See Badinter (1981), Benn (1998), T. Gordon (1990), Hays (1996), McMahan (1995), Morell (1994), Richardson (1993), Veevers (1977), Wearing (1984), and the edited collection by Trebilcot (1983) for discussions of various aspects of this point in general; and Carmel (1990) and Maroney (1990,1992) with regard to the situation in Quebec.

10. Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1985) traces the oppression of women back to the supposed shift from matrilineal to patrilineal kinship. With the transition from hunting and gathering to agrarian-based societies and the advent of private property, the necessity of fathers to ensure the rightful transfer of property to their children resulted in the formation of the modern family form in which inheritance and descent was passed along through the male line. This, according to Engels, brought forth the 'world historic defeat of the female sex' which could only be eliminated through the dissolution of the nuclear family and the full scale integration of women in work outside the

home.

11. Gayle Rubin in "The Traffic in Women" (1990) prefers the term sex/gender system to patriarchy, as she believes patriarchy fails to distinguish between "the human capacity and necessity to create a sexual world, and the empirically oppressive ways in which sexual worlds have been organized". However, she also states that whichever term we use, and I prefer patriarchy, that we must "adequately describe the social organization of sexuality and the reproduction of the conventions of sex and gender".

12. Walby also discusses a fifth category, in which gender inequality is theoretically insignificant or non-existent, which I reject and will not elaborate upon.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **"WOMAN EXISTS FOR THE SAKE OF THE WOMB"<sup>1</sup>**

#### **QUEBEC DEMOGRAPHIC DISCOURSE AND LITERATURE ON FERTILITY AND FAMILY POLICY SINCE 1970**

##### **Introduction**

This chapter reviews the contemporary Québec demographic literature, concentrating in particular on the discourse on fertility and family policy, and drawing on the principal theoretical debates in the field. It begins with an introductory overview of the evolution of the study of demography in Québec, highlighting its origins and institutionalization during the 1960s and 1970s. The bulk of the chapter is dedicated to a discussion of four issues and debates, specifically : the question of epistemology and the role of ideology in demographic research; the various approaches to the study of fertility and the preoccupation with the study of fertility determinants and fertility decline; the role of the demographer and the potential application of demographic research in policy formulation; and finally, a discussion of pronatalist and family policy measures. While the work of feminist demographers and sociologists is contrasted with the mainstream demographic discourse and fertility research throughout the course of the chapter, an additional section provides further detail on the main issues of contemporary feminist demographic discourse. The chapter concludes that the approach and findings of both types of discourse have varied considerably.

##### **The History of Demography in Quebec: Origins of the Discipline**

The emergence of demographic research on French Canadians can be traced back to

1934, *L'histoire de la population canadienne-française* by Georges Langlois. Langlois was the first to trace the evolution of the population of French Canada from its beginnings. With this book, "la démographie des Canadiens français passait de la mythologie à la connaissance empirique" (Henripin, 1962:133). Within a decade, studies on French Canadian fertility, family life cycles, and migration had expanded to include George Sabagh's article on the fertility of French-Canadian women during the 17th century in 1942, French author Pierre Dumareau's article "*L'aspect et l'avenir démographique du Canada français*" in *L'Actualité économique* in 1952, and Jacques Henripin's early work, *La population canadienne au debut du XVIIIe siècle* in 1954. Although studies on various aspects of Québec population grew more numerous, this still did not justify the inclusion of "demography" or "population studies" as a separate and unique field of study within *Recherches sociographiques*, the journal of record of the day (Henripin, 1962).

The three general areas of inquiry within the discipline of demography are reflective of the ways in which populations renew themselves: fertility, migration, and mortality. In addition to the three main areas of inquiry, Québec demographic research has incorporated an additional area of study, "demolinguistics", which consists of the study of rates of language transfers, retention, and assimilation. This area of research has figured prominently within the discipline in Québec along with the study of fertility. The reason for this can be attributed to the concern related to cultural identity, the political survival of Québec, and linguistic issues with respect to preservation of the French language within Québec and Canada. Likewise, as I discuss below, there has been a noticeable tendency within certain demographic and political circles to strongly emphasize the inverse correlation between

linguistic matters, Québec's demographic and political weight within Canada and its declining rate of fertility (Comeau, 1991; *Disparaître*, 1988; Gendron, 1987; Henripin, 1989; Lachapelle, 1991; Ouellet, 1992).

It was during the 1960s, or what Lalonde (1980) identifies as the first of three phases in the development of demography in Québec, that many of the contemporary preoccupations of Québec demography were established. At this time, demographers began to stress the importance of specialized demographic knowledge for a society undergoing rapid social and economic changes. They asserted that demographic findings could increase understanding of the profound transformations taking place with regard to fertility, language, health, and migration. Moreover, demographic knowledge would prove beneficial in the formulation of policy (Henripin, 1962).

Henripin is perhaps the best known of the early pioneers in Québec demography. He, as well as other members of a small coterie of demographic researchers, studied under Alfred Sauvy at the Institut national d'études démographiques (INED) in Paris<sup>2</sup>. The influence of Sauvy and the French tradition meant that most early demographic research in Québec was empirically oriented and the study of fertility rates and patterns was very important. Writing in 1962, Henripin noted:

J'insisterai davantage sur la fécondité, parce qu'on trouve dans l'étude de ce phénomène une source abondante de questions conduisant à l'exploration de réalités culturelles importantes (Henripin, 1962:136).

Though seemingly banal, this remark emphasizes the prominence of fertility studies, especially the study of birth rates, in the field of demography over the next few decades.

While the first developmental phase of Québec demography was characterized by the



formulation of research areas and the development of systematic research on demographic phenomena, the second phase involved the expansion of the community of researchers and the entrenchment of the discipline within the university milieu. In 1964, the Section d'Etudes Démographiques was established at the Université de Montréal (later to become the Département de démographie). This was due in part to the then-Dean of Social Sciences, Philippe Garigue, who was a supporter and promoter of demography's disciplinary differentiation, and partly because the Quiet Revolution, a time of political change and economic development had brought about the overall expansion of social science research in Québec. Lalonde argues that the creation of the Département de démographie can be viewed as part of the overall growing concern with demographic phenomena which was concomitant with the profound changes occurring within Québec society at this time (Lalonde, 1980). Then, as now, the Department was the only one of its kind in Québec and Canada<sup>3</sup>.

The third developmental phase of demography in Québec is characterized by the expansion of faculty and researchers within the Département de démographie and the creation of the Association des démographes du Québec (ADQ) and their journal, the *Bulletin*, later known as *Cahiers québécois de démographie*. It was during this time that the clash between the two major approaches which characterize the discipline of demography first became apparent. On the one hand, there was the empirical, French tradition of the first and second generation of researchers. This tradition had historically chosen to downplay or overlook the human and social dimensions of the study of population, focusing instead on the collection and measurement of "hard facts" (Loriaux, 1995).

On the other hand, there was the new generation of researchers who had done post-graduate training in the United States and were influenced by the sociological, American tradition of demographic research (Lalonde, 1980). This approach placed a greater emphasis on the interpretation or explanation of social occurrences and aspired to investigate and correlate demographic phenomena with other social factors. As I discuss below, the emergence of this new generation of researchers sparked a debate on the role of ideology and epistemology in demography and an examination of the relationship between theory and facts.

The co-existence of the competing schools of thought was seen as the beginning of a new dynamism and openness in the analysis of demographic phenomena in the Département de démographie. Although the Département and the discipline continued to be dominated by empirically based research and analysis, research that embraced a more theoretical and sociological dimension was far from marginal (Lalonde, 1980). The divergence of viewpoints or traditions had also become more visible throughout the community of demographic researchers in Québec. One need only look at the scope of research conducted by members of the ADQ in *Cahiers québécois de démographie* as an example of the heterogeneity of the demographic literature on fertility. Nevertheless, there are four key areas which stand out in the Québec demographic literature, which I will discuss in the next section.

### **Contemporary Demographic Discourse in Quebec: Debates and Issues**

An examination of Québec demographic literature since 1970 reveals that while

demographers have studied most types of demographic phenomena, the study of fertility and birth rates has been a key theme<sup>4</sup>. The preoccupation with declining fertility (*dénatalité*), specifically the declining birth rate of francophones, has been linked to questions of language, immigration, and the future of the “Québec nation state”. Furthermore, for “habitants de vieille souche”, the threat to a “*société québécoise francophone originale*” is at the centre of the demographic crisis associated with low fertility<sup>5</sup>. In addition to the emphasis on *natalité* and *dénatalité*, the preoccupation with the study of fertility determinants is a related prominent theme within the literature. This can be partially attributed to the uncritical adoption of American functionalist models of demographic transition and modernization theory, whereby childbearing “behaviour” is viewed as a subsystem that adapts to changes in the economic and social environment and is the consequence of attitudes and choices that are readily quantified<sup>6</sup>.

Within the context of my study, there are three other important issues in the Québec demographic literature. These include discussions concerning pronatalist and family policy measures, the role of demographer and application of demographic research vis-a-vis public policy, and lastly, the question of epistemology, ideology and the methodological implications for demographic research. I begin with a discussion of this last issue as it directly relates to the methodological and ideological components of research discussed in the previous chapter.

### **Epistemology, Methodology, and Ideology**

Of the four issues identified earlier, the question of epistemology, along with the role

of ideology and methodology in Québec demographic research has received the least attention within the discipline. The reasons for the absence of a real debate on such matters can be linked to three inter-connected issues. First, epistemological considerations relating to the origins and institutionalization of demography, how research is organized, and who is in control, have seldom been questioned, save for a small minority of demographic researchers<sup>7</sup>. Second, with respect to methodology, most demographic research has been limited to the descriptive aspects of population (Loriaux, 1995). Until recently, there was only a small minority of demographic researchers on fertility who did not utilize a functionalist perspective which accepts the existing social order as a given<sup>8</sup>. Lastly, with regard to ideology, there has only been one brief exchange centred on the role of ideology in scientific theories or the study of demography (Henripin, 1980, 1985; Piché, 1981).

Among the first in the literature to write about epistemology, Piché and Pierard (1976) described how demographic research in Québec consciously had adopted theories without much discussion, and how Québec demographers employed limiting micro-theories (such as psycho-social theories of fertility) to explain complex macro-phenomena. This situation came about because the discipline had been absent, for the most part, from the grand theoretical and ideological debates of the times. The level of theoretical or political debate found in other social science disciplines in Québec such as sociology, political science and history, was not present in demography during this period (Lalonde, 1980).

The epistemological and methodological underpinnings of the two dominant frameworks within the discipline have served to reinforce demography's detachment with respect to political debate and social theory. The influence and dominance of the French

empiricist tradition, with its emphasis on quantification and measurement, reinforced a lack of self-reflection, the absence of theoretical frameworks, and served as a justification for the perceived detachment from the political struggles of the time. According to Lalonde:

En effet, c'est dans ce contexte de l'engagement des sciences sociales dans les principaux enjeux de la société québécoise que la démographie tente nettement de se détacher et de se différencier, en invoquant la nécessité du primat de l'objectivité, de la neutralité axiologique, sur la participation aux débats et enjeux nationaux.

Ce choix épistémologique est légitime et caractérisé par le recours à un corpus technique et méthodologique extrêmement raffiné, par la prédominance de l'empirisme (collecte des données) sur la théorisation, par un mode de pensée et une tradition de recherche qui s'inspirent grandement de l'approche des méthodologues français (Lalonde, 1980:18).

The American sociological tradition, in particular the application of functionalist models of demographic transition, has also had consequences for fertility research in Québec. It has resulted in a theoretical void in much of the literature whereby fertility decline is simplistically attributed to modernization - socio-economic factors (education, religion,) and technological innovations (contraception), without the establishment of any causal hierarchy (Piché, 1987). Furthermore, the predominance of empiricism and belief in a "value-free" orientation meant that a substantial proportion of demographic research paid little or no attention to the connection between theory and facts.

Briefly, the dominant discourse on fertility has embraced an essentially functionalist perspective whereby the role of the existing social order is seldom questioned. Research explaining how the dominant society can impose a certain life style, values, or behaviours remains in the minority. The economic and social context within which research is conducted is rarely considered. It has been suggested that Québec demographic research needs to adopt

a framework which questions forms of belief or knowledge, and challenges the underlying hypotheses or trends with regard to demographic phenomena and the social structures in which they occur (Piché and Pierard, 1976). However, this has not been realized to any great extent in the past few decades, save the recent research undertakings by some materialist and feminist demographers.

The absence of such a framework raises the issue of what demographers choose to study, and how the "relations of ruling" shape and determine what is important or relevant to study. In the case of Québec, demographers have been particularly interested in the declining birthrate and linguistic issues, whereas feminists have been critical of this preoccupation with *dénatalité* and point to the negative ramifications of a "nostalgic" model of fertility discourse. Feminist demographers maintain that political or "official discourse" which problematizes women's new social roles and lower fertility is particularly hard on women. On the one hand, women are blamed for the declining birth rate and aging society, and chastised for selfishly abandoning their responsibility for the work or childbirth and child care (Maroney, 1997). On the other hand, neither demographers nor politicians have paid much attention to the concerns and difficulties women face with regard to caring for children or growing old<sup>9</sup>.

Although some demographers pass off demographic findings as purely scientific and value-free, the way in which certain issues are framed or the manner in which some issues are emphasized at the expense of others, illustrates that demography is far from being the neutral discipline it claims to be. Feminist research, once again points to the problems associated with certain methodologies and functionalist conceptions of the family and sex

role stereotypes which emphasize role differentiation and specialization. As well, sources of data employed in traditional demographic studies have tended to focus on the incompatibility or negative correlation between fertility and women's labour force participation. Rather than problematizing this relationship, contemporary feminist demographic research in Québec has explored the transformations to women's employment outside the home, as well as the reasons for the difficulties experienced by women who are responsible for children and paid employment (Descarries-Bélanger and Corbeil, 1987; Duval, 1985, 1992; Kempeneers, 1987, 1992; Kempeneers and Saint-Pierre, 1989, 1993; Saint-Pierre, 1985). By and large, feminist demographic research supports a woman's right to have children and work, or not to have children at all.

Another epistemological concern relates to the matter of who participates in demographic research and the formulation of demographic discourse. Until recently, women and feminists have been absent from both. Although women were often subjects of demographic research, especially fertility research, most demographic research on women was conducted by male demographers, who formulated questions and hypotheses on the basis of concepts and a frame of reference which was more reflective of the male universe or experiences than the reality and concerns of women.

Lavigne (1991), former President of the Conseil du statut de la femme, believes the absence of a critical feminist epistemology within demography is due to the fact that the discipline is viewed as having always focused on women. She maintains that earlier female and feminist involvement would have resulted in a different approach or interpretation to the study of fertility and different concerns for Québec demographic discourse. Lavigne also

doubts the relationship between fertility and paid employment would have been problematized to the extent that it has within demography over past two decades.

The pervasiveness of functionalism and empiricism has produced several methodological dilemmas within the discipline. For example, in much of the Québec literature on fertility, demographers have gone to great lengths to establish a causal relationship between fertility and socio-economic factors. That is, how have socio-economic factors such as a woman's level of education, degree of religiosity, husband's profession [sic], economic costs associated with children, to name just a few, influenced fertility decision-making (Gauthier, 1987; Henripin, 1989; Henripin et al., 1981; Henripin and Lapierre-Adamcyk, 1974; Kyriazis and Henripin, 1982; Lapierre-Adamcyk, 1981; Lefebvre and Perrot, 1986). This type of research is problematic for several reasons.

First, it assumes that giving birth is instinctive, always desired or expected, and considers socio-economic factors as impediments to this state of being. Second, it cannot provide a comprehensive or macro explanation because it usually does not establish or prioritize the relationship between the economic, social and cultural structures within which fertility decision-making takes place. Third, the heavy emphasis on quantification and empiricism usually means that research of this sort is not capable of answering complex questions. And finally, causal research raises the issue of the accuracy and reliability of the variables used.

The choice of independent and dependent variables, by and large, has not been subject to rigorous scrutiny in the fertility literature. Most variables are chosen because they are easily quantified and may be more reflective of the researcher's bias rather than indicators



of what actually influences behaviours or attitudes. Piché and Pierard (1976) describe how questions in fertility survey research (Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Surveys - KAP) routinely end up reinforcing the position of the researcher, rather than being able to uncover why things happen the way they do.

An interesting methodological technique which has fostered the misrepresentation of the history of fertility and family life in Québec is the use of statistical averages. The measurement and description of reproductive behaviour in terms of fertility averages can be very misleading as a wide range of variations are reduced to a single value. The general fertility rate<sup>10</sup>, which is the annual number of births per thousand women between the ages of 15 and 49, is incapable of accounting for the diversity and changes among particular women or groups of women. Furthermore, it is unable to reveal what percentage of women have no children or which cohort has more than the average number. Lavigne (1986,1991) has shown how the use of fertility averages has served to distort the fact that almost half of all women born in Québec in 1887, 1903 and 1913 had only one, two or no children. Likewise, because the fertility rate refers to live births only, it does not take child mortality levels into account.

Lavigne (1986) also explains how using data based on the average number of live births per woman refutes the hyper-fertility of Québec women. Using this methodology for data from 1913, she explains that the average number of live births per married woman in Canada was 3.1, as compared to 3.8 for Québec and 4.3 for French Québec. Although the number of children per women was still higher among *québécoises* than other Quebecers and Canadians, it does not support the idea of the *revanche des berceaux*, which has painted a

picture of all *québécoises* having many children. In fact, the overall decline in Québec fertility is due to the drop in the number of women having six or more children, which has always been a minority position, not because less women are having children.

A fleeting debate on ideology in demography can be compared with the schism that characterizes the discipline in Québec. On one side of the debate are those who profess the non-ideological, value-neutral stance of demographic analysis. Demography is viewed as a discipline which is essentially descriptive and empirical, whose primary goals are to measure, describe and analyze (Lachapelle, 1977). Proponents of this viewpoint argue that ideology does not, nor should it have, any place in scientific theory or in demography.

According to Jacques Henripin (1980), the analysis of population data has been wrongly infiltrated by outside influences and theories which belong more to the domains of philosophy, theology or ethics. These outside "ideologies", (specifically marxist or materialist) which distort and deform reality, are of a completely different nature than scientific discourse and act primarily in response to the individual psychological need to devise a global picture of society. Citing Popper, Henripin argues that science or scientific analysis is characterized by the submission to reality and facts, and that demographic research will only be advanced through falsification - testing and falsifying of existing hypotheses, rather than formulating new ones.

Ce qui est héroïque (si l'on veut), ce n'est pas d'inventer une hypothèse; c'est d'en trouver une qui résiste à l'épreuve de l'expérience ou de l'observation convenablement faite... (Henripin, 1980:16).

Henripin concedes that although ideologies can act as a stimulus for researchers, it is in the best interests of demography to keep ideological and scientific discourse separate. Moreover,

though Henripin refers to "discursive formations", he fails to address the epistemological underpinnings of the issue of conscious production of forms of thought, or how facts become translated into knowledge or theories.

On the other side of the debate are those who dispute the existence of a value-free scientific approach, arguing that the determination of "facts", events, and variables is never purely arbitrary or value-neutral. Writing in response to Henripin's 1980 article, Piché (1981) argues that Henripin is wrong to assume that some theoretical frameworks or researchers have ideological baggage while others do not. Whereas Henripin singles out the deterministic and ideological character of historical materialism, Piché insists this not only simplifies and deforms its potential as a framework for understanding reality, but repudiates the a priori, often implicit, bias of **all** researchers. Furthermore, Piché has argued elsewhere that the demologuistic debate in Québec (as well as demographic research on fertility and immigration in general) serves to illustrate how all researchers have a certain "understanding" or perception of the situation (Piché, 1987; 1992; Piché and Pierard, 1976).

The historian Fernand Ouellet (1983) likewise refers to the various epistemological and ideological currents within Québec demographic research, focusing specifically on the underlying assumptions of Henripin's research on fertility rates of Québec Catholics for the years 1681 to 1850. Ouellet asserts that Henripin has analyzed his data through a pronatalist perspective, while Henripin contends that "facts are facts" and he is only the transmitter of figures or data which convey what was happening at that time. Henripin denies Ouellet's charges of being pronatalist and nationalist, saying that one can marvel or be amazed at the exceptionally high fertility rates of one's ancestors without coming from a "*tradition nataliste*

or *nationaliste*" (Henripin, 1985:277). However, much of Henripin's other research seems to indicate otherwise. He has been one of the most vocal advocates of pronatalist incentives, and an outspoken critic of women being overly concerned with their careers and unwilling to take time off to have children (Henripin, 1974, 1981, 1989).

Despite these few brief exchanges, ideology and epistemology were never at the centre of a full-fledged debate within Québec demography, because the dominant tradition, with its aversion to historical and theoretical approaches, made this a non-issue from the beginning. Many mainstream demographers did not feel the need to question the foundations of the discipline and were content to conduct demographic research as a seemingly value-free empirical exercise dedicated to description. The following sections elaborate upon the implications of this orientation and illustrate how the underlying presuppositions of the discipline have resulted in some demographic issues being considered more worthy or important than others.

### **The Study of Fertility: Birth Rates and Fertility Determinants**

As mentioned above, much of the Québec demographic literature on fertility has been devoted to the study of birth rates (*natalité*) and fertility determinants, often from a pronatalist perspective (Gauvreau, 1981; Piché, 1987, 1992). Initially, attention centred on the *revanche des berceaux* or the "revenge of the cradles", while later it shifted to the more recent phenomenon of declining birth rates (*dénatalité*). Each of these issues will be discussed below.

In his early work on French Canadian birth rates in 1954, Henripin was one of the

first to draw attention to the idea of the *revanche des berceaux*. This concept associated the exceptionally high birth rates of *québécoises* with a conscious strategy on the part of nationalist clergy and politicians, and with the backward and rural character of Québec society (Henripin and Péron, 1972). Since then, it has figured prominently in the Québec discourse on fertility and been subject to various interpretations.

Bouchard and Lalou (1993) trace the roots of the *revanche des berceaux* to the Jesuit priest Louis Lalonde. At a conference in Montréal in 1918, Lalonde referred to the conscious strategy by French Canadians to have many children to counter the effects of their defeat to the English. Lalonde urged the continuation of this strategy, on the grounds that it could also compensate for the deficiencies of Québec society, such as poverty, illiteracy, and lack of industrialization. Bouchard and Lalou also explain how around this same time, Edouard Montpetit urged better infant care and the reduction of infant mortality, so as to not wipe out the positive effects of high francophone fertility. Lionel Groulx did his part by praising noble *québécoises* who gave birth in great numbers and kept the enemy at bay. Georges Vattier went so far as to link high birth rates among *québécois(e)* as being motivated by nationalism and cultural survival.

The idea of the *revanche des berceaux* as a deliberate nationalist and clerical strategy of cultural survival has been challenged for several different reasons. Caldwell (1976) draws on sociological studies of the 1800s and 1900s which illustrate that occurrences of abortion and infanticide were not as low as previously thought. Likewise, Caldwell and Moreux (in Maroney, 1978) have both suggested that pronatalist values were never really internalized by women as commonly believed, which explains why birth rates declined so dramatically

with the loss of social hegemony and control of the Catholic Church. This, coupled with the growing importance of such values as liberty and consumerism, meant that fertility was in direct competition with other aspirations.

Fournier (1989) concurs that the reasons for the *revanche des berceaux* had more to do with close knit families, intermarriage, and the lack of outside influence from a modernizing, consumer society than with any deliberate plan or influence by the Church or State. He believes the theory arose, in part, due to the dissemination by the anglophone press of the caricature of *québécois(es)* as obedient and God-fearing, whose *raison d'être* for procreating in large numbers was to surpass the number of *anglais*.

Bouchard and Lalou (1993) also reject the notion that francophones were urged by clergy or nationalist politicians to have many children to outnumber the English. Although there are examples of priests and bishops urging couples to procreate, they believe this fell within the scope of official Catholic Church doctrine, in which procreation was associated with marriage. They assert it is simply wrong to assume that an intentional strategy had been carried out.

Au sens plein, la thèse n'a de sens qu'en référence à des motivations nationalistes des couples qui auraient très consciemment trouvé dans la fécondité élevée le moyen d'assurer la survivance de leur groupe ethnique en Amérique du Nord (Bouchard et Lalou, 1993:31-32).

To support their allegations, Bouchard and Lalou refer to data which shows that fertility rates did not alter significantly before and after the "*Conquête*". Furthermore, though *québécoises* had high rates of fertility, there were other groups at that time whose birth rates were even higher, for example Scots in the Eastern Townships and groups of women in

France and Switzerland. Bouchard and Lalou argue that high fertility amongst *québécoises* had more to do with "natural" factors such as diet, shorter periods of breast-feeding, and interestingly enough, higher rates of fertility among older women, than the generally accepted ideological, nationalist, or religious explanations. In their opinion, the *revanche des berceaux* is a theory run amok:

...(p)rogressivement, l'idée a fait son chemin, échappant au contrôle de la méthodologie, et elle a fini par s'accréditer même chez de bons auteurs (Bouchard et Lalou, 1993:11).

Lux (1979) also argues that Québec demography would be better off altogether forgetting the *revanche des berceaux*, since it:

...n'a jamais été une politique démographique, mais plutôt une rationalisation *ex post sortie* de quelque cerveau d'intellectuel ou de politicien (Lux, 1979:69).

Feminists have been especially critical of the *revanche des berceaux*, challenging the idea that women bought into the notion of having many children for reasons of cultural and political survival (Gauvreau, 1991; Lavigne, 1986). Lavigne (1986) credits the legacy of the *revanche des berceaux* as one reason why Québec demographic discourse has had such difficulties recognizing and accepting the contemporary role of women. She argues that although women's lives have changed dramatically during the past few decades, there is demographic discourse and research which remains fixated on the heritage of the past and ties women's reproductive behaviour to the survival of the race.

During the 1970s demographic research continued to focus on fertility and became even more preoccupied with the declining birth rates of francophones. Amyot et al. (1980), for example, described how low francophone birthrates served to focus attention on the

consequences of *dénatalité* and the anglicization of immigrants, both issues which were linked to the future of the French language and Québec. Houle and Hurtubise (1991) argued that although interest in the study of children had been widespread in popular and academic circles, it became even more so since the decline in the birth rate<sup>11</sup>. The underlying demographic shift was indeed quite dramatic. Between 1959 and 1972, Québec fertility had decreased by 56% (Mathews, 1984), while 1970 marked the first year in which the Québec fertility rate fell below 2.1, the level considered necessary by most demographers to maintain replacement level population growth (Mathews, 1985). Increasingly, certain Québec demographers were determined to ascertain the perceived consequences of *dénatalité* along with fertility determinants and appropriate policy measures.

Essentially the problem was approached from four different angles, reflecting four tendencies within the mainstream demographic literature on fertility. According to Piché (1987), this literature can be categorized according to the type of research: empirical, primarily survey-based research; research which relies on the concept of norms to explain variations or fertility differentials; research that focuses on the relationship dynamics of the couple as the determining factor in the success of family planning; and lastly, micro and macro-economic approaches to fertility research.

The first category of empirical, survey-based research, concentrates on numerous social variables whose significance is analyzed after the fact. This type of research is not specifically associated with any particular conceptual framework or model, but is similar to the American sociology research on fertility determinants or differentials conducted by Freedman during the 1970s. Research of this kind rests on several questionable assumptions.



First, behaviours and attitudes are variables which can be measured through survey research. Second, it is possible to establish a causal link between a series of intermediary variables and fertility. Third, despite the absence of a theoretical framework, there exists a series of hypotheses (usually functionalist) on the inter-relationship between fertility, family, and socio-economic variables. Instances of this type of research abound in the Québec literature; several noteworthy examples being that of Henripin and Lapierre-Adamcyk (1971), Henripin (1989), Henripin and Gratton (1977), Lapierre-Adamcyk (1981, 1991), Lapierre-Adamcyk et al. (1987), Marcil-Gratton (1991), and Péron et al. (1987).

A second and related approach to the study of fertility uses the concept of norms to explain fertility differentials. The underlying premise of this type of research is that individuals internalize the values or norms of a particular group which in turn serve as the basis for individual decisions and actions. Normative fertility research in Québec has been predominantly empirical in orientation and shares similar characteristics and flaws with the first category of research described above. A fair number of authors have utilized this sort of analysis to interpret the recent decline in Québec fertility. They point to factors such as women's increased level of education, work outside the home, habitat and changing religious values as primary reasons for increased contraceptive usage, decreased family size, and changing values with regard to family, marriage and divorce (Caldwell et al. 1993; Henripin et al. 1981; Lapierre-Adamcyk, 1975, 1979; Lapierre-Adamcyk et al. 1987; Péron, 1991). Likewise, various authors cite economic factors or refer to economic theories of fertility decision-making discussed below.

Carisse, by contrast was among the first in Québec to discuss the changing nature of

women's roles and indicate that women no longer wanted to be mothers only, but had aspirations to work outside the home and be part of the community. In an early article, Carisse (1966) referred to the "*révolution des aspirations*", which explained how urbanization in Québec had caused French Canadian culture to take on the typical characteristics and behaviours of an industrialized society with regard to fertility decision making. Rather than being nostalgic for large families of the past or alarmist, as is the tendency among some demographers, she called for the need to take into account the profound changes of society and its affect on people and to consider how the resources of the modern family can help its members to grow as individuals.

The third type of fertility research in Québec falls into the category of "interactional" research. This type of inquiry explores interaction and communication within the couple relationship and contends that good communication about contraception and fertility is the principle determinant of effective family planning (Gourgues and Cloutier-Cournoyer, 1981). Good communication is considered to exist in more egalitarian relationships, those in which women are financially and emotionally less dependent on their partners and therefore better able to "negotiate" a more equal partnership and articulate their needs and desires.

Feminist research, independently of "interactional" research, has likewise focused on the issue and impact of power dynamics within the couple/familial relationship (Vandelac et al. 1985; Dandurand, 1987c, 1991). Moreover, there is related research which examines the role of men in the family and couple relationships and their responsibility as fathers (Champagne-Gilbert, 1980, 1981; Antil et al. 1987).

The fourth and final category is research based upon economic theories of fertility

decision-making. This type of fertility research has its roots in the micro-economic "New Home Economics" of Becker (1960,1981) and the macrolevel theory of Easterlin (1969,1980). Both approaches define fertility in terms of choice models and view the couple or generational cohort whose choices are determined by micro- or macrolevel constraints. While this approach has had limited application in Québec (Kyriasis; 1987, 1990; Kyriasis and Henripin, 1982), its impact on fertility discourse has been considerable (Caldwell, 1976; Gauthier, 1987; Henripin et al. 1981; Lefebvre and Perrot, 1987). As such, it is relevant to explain the work of Becker and Easterlin in further detail.

In Becker's "New Home Economics" the focus is on the household as the reproductive decision-making unit which makes rational decisions based on essentially economic considerations. Becker (1960, 1981) asserts that couples make household decisions, including whether or not to have children, based on financial constraints. Households are similar to rational and efficient production units so that the decision to have children is based on the couple's time and goods available for childrearing. For Becker, the desire to have children is initially analyzed within the context of consumer demands or desires, and then in relation to the benefits, largely psychological, they provide for parents. According to this hypothesis, couples with increased incomes should rationally desire to have more children. However, this is not always the case since many high income couples tend to have small numbers of children.

The other economic model of fertility decision-making is that of Richard Easterlin (1969, 1980). His theory postulates that the determining factor in a couple's decisions with regard to fertility is relative revenue or income. Easterlin contends there is a direct

relationship between a couple's material aspirations and lifestyle preference with their ability to realize these aspirations. According to Easterlin, an individual's lifestyle preference is formed during the period of adolescence in light of the economic situation of her/his parents. This lifestyle preference, which may or may not be realized in adulthood due to the availability of revenue, forms the basis on which the generational cohort and couple later decides whether or not to have children, or how many. Easterlin sees a positive relationship between revenue and fertility; it is one in which women will work only to increase the income of the male head of the household. For groups with large numbers of cohorts, the prospect of the male breadwinner finding a well-paying job with financial security diminishes, which in turn means that fertility rates are expected to be low.

Kyriazis (1987) views the work of Easterlin and Becker as positive contributions to explaining fertility decision-making in Québec, most notably for their recognition of the cost of children and in terms of women's lost revenue. Notwithstanding, though Becker's and Easterlin's theories may be appropriate to explain fertility decision-making in certain developed market economies, they are by no means applicable to all situations since calculated choice-making is largely a middle-class phenomenon.

While not entirely dismissing the validity of economic factors, feminists point to several problematic aspects of economic models of fertility decision-making. These theories, which have their basis in certain functionalist assumptions, presume that women will always care for children and will only work to supplement a couple's or family's income. In reality though, a woman's income may be the sole or primary source of revenue, especially in the case of single-parent families. Another problem with economic modelling approaches is that

they fail to take into account the historical development of the unequal relationship between the sexes and the power differentials that exist among men and women (Folbre, 1983, 1994). In many instances, it is questionable whether each member of the couple has an equal say or weight in the decision-making process, or has similar desires with regard to having children and family size.

Likewise, economic explanations do not take into consideration the influence of patriarchal social forces and ideology on women's choices and options with regard to employment. In many circumstances women's options, perceived and real, are limited to part-time, low-paying employment outside the home, coupled with the primary responsibility for unpaid childrearing in the home. According to Currie, given that:

...the context of reproductive decision-making is dominated by pronatalist attitudes and expectations, traditional approaches of cost-benefit analyses obscure this by portraying 'alternatives' as carrying personal rather than cultural priority (Currie, 1988:249).

Aside from the problems associated with economic approaches to fertility decision-making, there are difficulties with the other categories of research described above. For example, normative and functionalist approaches perpetuate the fertility/paid employment dichotomy and repudiate the fact that many women want or need to do both. As a consequence, mainstream fertility research which accepts and relies on this false dichotomy, has failed to recognize and adequately address the realities and new social roles of women in Québec. Unfortunately, research of this sort minimizes the fact that women need and want, first and foremost, financial independence and autonomy as persons.

Gauvreau (1994) correctly explains that because theoretical explanations within

demography remain narrowly focused on external motivations or factors and are not comprehensively linked to the global economic, social and cultural structures, our knowledge of fertility determinants is still quite limited. She also reiterates the importance of recognizing the concerns of women, individually and as a group, since it is women who are most directly affected by childbearing/childrearing and the conditions under which they occur (Gauvreau, 1981, 1988).

Finally, and what is particularly troubling about the above approaches to fertility decision-making, is the disproportionate emphasis on women's reproductive potential and their relationship to childrearing, coupled with the notion of "free choice" between working outside the home or having children. Both assumptions fail to acknowledge the "public" nature of problems arising from social structures such as the organization of the workplace and the family, while ignoring or downplaying the unequal participation of men in parenting and the privilege they derive from such arrangements.

The review of the four main types of fertility research in Québec illustrates that there are difficulties associated with each of them. None of the approaches has been completely able to analyze the profound changes which have occurred in women's lives and Québec society during the recent past, and as a corollary, incapable of explaining the reasons or causes for fertility decline. Some studies, it appears, have done little more than reiterate the fact that statistically speaking fertility has declined. Nevertheless, Québec demographers have put forth an impressive body of literature on the consequences of fertility decline and the need for policy measures and incentives. Prior to an examination of both issues, I will discuss the position of the demographer and application of demographic research in Québec.

## **The Position of the Demographer and the Application of Demographic Research**

What is the position of the demographer in Québec? Is s/he an impartial social scientist who avoids involvement in political questions and refrains from making policy recommendations? Does s/he conduct research in which data and projections serve as the basis for policy decisions by decision-makers? In this section past and recent perspectives on the role of the demographer and the need for and application of demographic research in the Province of Québec will be discussed.

An early exchange at a round table discussion at the 1975 conference, *Démographie et problèmes actuels: Colloque international de Montréal*, reveals a range of viewpoints and concerns on the role of demographers and application of demographic research (Pierard, 1976). Michel Amyot, then president of the ADQ, remarked how the results of demographic studies often serve as the basis of information for policy decisions, and that there was an increasing range of areas appropriate to study by demographers, such as population policy, labour policy, urbanization, and migration. He also raised the issue of the increased need for multi-disciplinary studies and asked what role demographers should play: government advisor, disseminator of academic findings, or advocate within a professional association.

Bernard Bonin (in Pierard, 1976), then deputy minister of Immigration for the Province of Québec, remarked that up until that point, demography and other social sciences had not made a meaningful contribution in terms of population policy. He felt this partially explained why governments had been slow to act in this area. Bonin also stressed the need for demographic research in areas which were important for Québec, such as the consequences associated with an aging population, couples' motivation in terms of fertility,

the role of child care, and whether a demographic or family policy is needed. Jacques Henripin added that although the role of the demographer is to describe and interpret, there is also the obligation to warn about trends which may eventually cause political or moral problems, such as a potential gender imbalance resulting from technologies permitting sex selection.

The themes of this discussion resurfaced periodically over the course of a decade which may be interpreted as a sign of demography's relatively new status as an institutionalized discipline. It also indicates the growing importance and relevance of demographic research in public policy matters in Québec. Amyot (1976) subsequently raised the issue of how demographic research in Québec must be responsive to the needs of Québec society, so as to be used in decision making at the national (i.e. provincial), regional, and municipal level. Although a variety of agencies (Statistics Canada, the Ministère des affaires sociales, the Bureau de la statistique du Québec and Institut National de la Recherche Scientifique - Urbanisation) carried out demographic forecasting, only one (Statistics Canada) made its information public and only one other (INRS) had comprehensive data on Québec. Amyot reiterated the necessity of accurate, useable (applied) studies and forecasting by Québec demographers, as most government decisions took population projections into consideration.

According to Bussière (1977), demographic studies are useful to provide an overview or diagnostic of a situation, although less useful for explaining individual behaviour or proposing a plan of action (i.e. policy matters). Similarly, Lachapelle (1977) points out that although demographic forecasting and predictions may not be completely accurate with



regard to numbers, they are useful because they alert us to trends for which we can plan. As a result, Lachapelle believes demographers will always play a role of premier importance with respect to the establishment of hypotheses concerning variations in demographic variables.

There are some problems associated with this view which were pointed out by others. For example, due to the lapse of time between the commissioning of a study and its completion, its results may no longer be valid when they become available. Also, population predictions which are normally based on past and current trends cannot anticipate or factor in future changes in behaviour and technology. As such, they are not always the most reliable and accurate foundation upon which to base a decision. Mathews (1987b) believes that one reason why demographers and sociologists were late to recognize and even minimized Québec's spectacular decrease in fertility up until the 1980s, stems from their reliance on using current fertility rates to predict longitudinal rates. Festy (1986) also warns of the problems associated with examining rates of fertility or marriage annually as this may not be representative of the overall trend.

Bussière (1977), for his part, explains how most policy measures relating to population have a social character and are therefore long term and costly. This means that policy makers will not usually act on the basis of demographic goals alone, but link demographic policies to other social goals and programmes. At times, this can prove difficult since demographic policy implementation may require horizontal government action which may be at odds with departmental goals or functions of individual ministries. Notwithstanding, Bussière notes that demographic studies on language transfers in Québec

had an observable influence on the debate concerning language legislation, that "[e]lle serviront sans aucun doute à éclairer le législateur dans ce domaine" (Bussière, 1977:265).

With respect to the role of the demographer in policy-making, most demographers recognize this as the domain of elected officials. The demographer is there to provide research or advice which may in turn clarify the situation for decision-makers, enabling them to better understand and make informed judgements. However, the line between providing information and influencing political action is sometimes very fine. In this context, scholars of public policy have shown how policy making should be envisaged as an extended course of events and actions taking place over time and involving a large number of decision points rather than a singular, individual act of decision-making (Adie and Thomas, 1987). Therefore, when and what type of information is provided by demographers during the decision-making process unquestionably influences decision outcomes.

As we saw above, some demographers argue the discipline is different from others in the sense that it is primarily descriptive and empirical. According to Lachapelle, demographic research "n'offre pas aux preneurs de décisions des cadres théoriques susceptibles d'orienter leurs politiques et de guider leurs actions" (Lachapelle, 1977:268). Others, however, have pointed to the way in which the role and responsibilities of those advising and those making the decisions can sometimes overlap, using as an example the events leading up to the series of language legislation in Québec:

L'application, l'évaluation et certaines modifications dans l'application de loi se font avec la collaboration de démographes. C'est le cas de la controversée Loi 22 qui est présentement l'objet d'importantes études concernant son impact sur les transferts linguistiques et les transferts de langue maternelle (Amyot, 1976:315).

A decade later, Gary Caldwell and Daniel Fournier (1987) expressed similar sentiments on the role of demographers and the relevance of demographic research for Québec society. They insisted that members of the ADQ had been more effective in empirically assessing the changing social reality of Québec for over twenty-five years than all the other social sciences in Québec. Moreover:

...although individual historians and sociologists may have played a role in shaping a national consciousness in contemporary Québec, **only demography has directly inspired political action**. This happened in the late sixties and early seventies when concern over the consequences of language assimilation of both immigrants and francophones led to language legislation, particularly Bill 101...which indeed changed the course of events in as much as the linguistic composition of Québec society is concerned (Caldwell and Fournier, 1987:19).

Similarly, Fournier contends demographic issues have shaped public and political discourse on the future of Québec:

...les 'problèmes démographiques' (et linguistiques) sont au centre des débats sur l'avenir du Québec et ils retiennent l'attention des milieux politiques et de l'Etat: dénatalité, relations entre groupes linguistiques et communautés culturelles, etc. (Fournier, 1987:165).

Maroney (1992) adds that demographic research and demographers, speaking from positions of scientific authority during the 1980s, were responsible for the introduction of "the new demographic pronatalist discourse" via the province-wide consultations on family policy, cultural, and linguistic matters.

In an editorial introduction to the *Cahiers québécois de démographie* issue on papers from the conference "*Changements démographiques et impacts socio-politiques*", Daniel Latouche (1988) expresses a somewhat more cautious view. He believes that although provincial and federal governments have undertaken many costly studies and census, they

are no closer to knowing the effectiveness of demographic or any other policy. Even though there has been a willingness on the part of policy makers to discuss family policy issues, they have been more reluctant to act due to the controversial nature of the subject matter. Bonin echoed similar sentiments years earlier stating:

...l'action est particulièrement difficile et met en cause diverses sensibilités morales, politiques et ethniques et que l'inconnu règne en maître dans ce domaine (Bonin in Pierard, 1976:150).

With regard to pronatalist policies in particular, Gauthier (1981) explains how politicians have not been keen to implement such a policy due to high costs, uncertainty of results, and because the problem at hand is one which will not manifest itself until years from now. He believes there is little incentive to spend money on something that will only be a problem for future generations. Latouche questions whether it is even possible to formulate policies that influence behaviour in a realm so charged with emotion as having children.

In the end, however, Latouche acknowledges that whereas demographers were ignored by policy makers and political scientists for a longtime, they have received more attention as a result of the heightened awareness over the population problems facing Québec:

...la science politique n'a jamais guère porté attention à la démographie. On peut supposer que les choses vont changer. Du côté des démographes aussi, eux qui pensent encore que la promotion d'une question au rang de 'question politique de l'heure' est le premier pas vers la résolution d'un problème (Latouche, 1988:6).

So although demographers do not ultimately make actual policy decisions, their actions and capacity in shaping events and consciousness have undeniably inspired political action. I would conclude therefore that the overall influence of demographers is far from negligible.

What was it then that demographers were saying with regard to demographic policy? Does Québec need a family policy, immigration policy, or a population policy? What would each of these entail? The following section summarizes the discussion as it has evolved in both the mainstream and feminist demographic literature since 1970.

### **Declining Fertility and Policy Incentives**

The discussion on government intervention into demographic matters in Québec dates back to the 1960s, when demographers first began to seriously study the fall in fertility. It was during this period that Philip Garigue, former Dean of Social Sciences of the Université de Montréal and president of the Conseil supérieur de la famille, a Québec Government advisory body on family policy matters, was among the first to call for a family policy.

Garigue (1966) argued the rapid decline in fertility and current situation of Québec families was alarming. The principle reason for creating a family policy related to our recognition as a society that the family was best equipped in the modern world to accomplish the functions of raising children and nurturing its members. Garigue was clear to differentiate between social policy measures based on the individual, and family policy measures designed to protect and support the family while respecting its liberty. The role of the family should not be replaced by the State, but supported and assisted through a series of integrated policy measures. Writing at the time of the Quiet Revolution, the influence of clerical thought on academic discourse on the family was still very present in Garigue's work:

*...il s'agit non seulement de faire comprendre à tous l'importance de la famille pour l'avenir du Québec, mais aussi de leur montrer combien l'amour humain, ce commencement de spiritualité qui relie l'homme à Dieu, a sa source*

première dans la famille (Garigue, 1966:148).

Although the initial call for family policy originated within the context of declining fertility and the perceived crisis of the family, it was soon linked to other demographic considerations. To a lesser extent, there was the burgeoning debate between less government interference into private family matters and the expansion and administration of social services by a professionalized bureaucracy. To a greater extent, there were issues related to population decline, an aging population, and perhaps most importantly, the growing concern over the political importance and demographic weight of Québec within Canada and the preservation of the French language and culture. According to Le Bourdais:

Cette situation est souvent décrite par les intervenants et chercheurs militant en faveur d'une politique familiale (lire plutôt nataliste) de manière alarmiste 'censée convaincre de l'urgence d'agir' (Gauvreau, 1988, p. 23). Dépopulation, vieillissement de la population et épuisement des fonds de retraite, diminution du poids politique du Québec dans la confédération canadienne sont alors présentés comme autant de spectres menaçant la société québécoise. A terme, c'est évidemment la question de la survie collective du peuple québécois en tant que nation qui est évoquée derrière ce problème de dénatalité (Le Bourdais, 1989b:87).

The above concerns prompted an impressive amount of academic writings about the need and type of demographic policy to be adopted in Québec. Would it be a population policy designed "to influence population growth and structure with the strategic variables fertility, morbidity and mortality, migration, nuptiality and divorce"<sup>12</sup>? A more specific and targeted immigration policy designed to regulate migration and ensure the integration of immigrants toward the francophone majority? A family policy with measures designed to "strengthen family functions like emotional stabilization, recreation of and care for family members, procreation and socialization of children, production and consumption"<sup>13</sup>? Or

should it be a pronatalist policy, consisting of measures especially designed to encourage procreation and influence fertility?

It is useful to recall at this stage that these debates took place against a background of heightened urgency over the perceived problems associated with the decline of the birth rate, such as: the economic costs and repercussions of an aging society; population decline and the relative political and economic significance of Québec within Canada; concern over French language usage and preservation of Québécois culture; and the role of immigration in alleviating or preventing population decline.

For example, some authors maintain that demographic growth has been responsible for Québec's economic growth, with the most successful societal investments having been demographic rather than economic (Caldwell and Fournier, 1987), even though others have attributed the lag in Québec's past economic and social development vis-a-vis Ontario to the province's historically high rate of fertility (Henripin 1968a). Out-migration has been blamed for the relative deterioration of the province's growth rate, although it is also recognized as having strengthened the francophone character of Québec (Amyot et al., 1980). Likewise, it is generally accepted that the declining birth rate has been responsible for the most fundamental changes to Québec's demographic history, and that the problems associated with a declining birth rate and zero population growth are potentially very serious.

Mainstream demographic discourse has devoted considerable attention to the perceived costs and problems associated with an aging society. These include: the increased dependency ratio or increased public sector expenditures resulting from high medical costs and pension plans to be paid by a decreasing proportion of workers or tax payers (Lux,

1979,1991; Mathews, 1991; Gauthier, 1986,1991) and the decreased demographic importance of francophones in Québec and Canada (Gendron, 1987; Graveline, 1993; Ouellet, 1992).

In *Le choc démographique*, Mathews (1984) referred to the long-term problem of depopulation, which would effect economic infrastructure in terms of building and service needs and cause long term economic stagnation. While Mathews believes Québec potentially could be hard hit because it is "...petite et ouverte à tous les vents" (Mathews, 1984:149), he nonetheless takes issue with other demographers who envision the future of Québec only in terms of an aging society riddled with problems and difficulties. Mathews (1987b) also argued elsewhere that Québec has a margin to manoeuvre because of the baby boom and that with a certain amount of planning and adjustment, the costs and problems associated with fertility decline can be accommodated.

Gauthier (1981) believes that an overall drop in population volume will be more dramatically felt in Québec than in other countries such as the USA, because they have a smaller population to begin with. However, he also suggests the impact of fertility decline may not be so dramatic in the short and medium term while the long term effects are not really known. The costs associated with an aging society are not cut and dried, but dependent on a variety of factors such as retirement age, type of pensions, the level of unemployment, economic productivity, and the proportion of women in the workforce. As such, it is conceivable that in a favourable economic situation with low unemployment, high productivity, and a large proportion of women in the workforce, the economic burden on government and tax payers would not be so dramatic. Similarly, the increased labour force



participation of women will ensure better retirement conditions than was the case for preceding generations.

Albeit most demographers acknowledge all industrialized countries will eventually experience slow or negative population growth and aging populations, the discussion in Québec has gone far beyond the usual interest in escalating pension and health-care costs. In Québec, the issue of low or declining fertility has also been framed within the context of the loss of economic power and political weight of Québec within Canada. The discussion of the role of immigration in turn, has been closely tied in with French language usage within Québec. Throughout the years, the impact of migration on the Province's dominant linguistic and ethnic groups, as well as the threat to the linguistic and ethnic equilibrium of the Québec population (measured according to the linguistic indicators of language usage and mother tongue) have been at the centre of demographic concerns (Piché, 1992).

In order to slow down or reverse the rate of population decline and alleviate some of the problems associated with an aging society, Québec demographers have recommended solutions which fall into two broad policy areas. The first favours immigration and for many, the integration of immigrants into the francophone majority. The second option by contrast, encompasses the adoption of policy measures designed to increase fertility and/or support the family. Because the fertility-immigration dilemma figures prominently in the Québec demographic literature, it is appropriate to give a brief synopsis of the debate prior to the discussion of family and pronatalist policy measures.

## **The Fertility/Immigration Nexus**

The repercussions of migration and migratory patterns on the political and demographic aspects of Québec society has always been of interest to demographers. Research has concentrated on how francophones historically experienced a drop in numbers due to out-migration during the previous centuries (Charbonneau, 1991; Charbonneau et al., 1973, Termote, 1991), as well as the demo-linguistic aspect of migratory patterns and the tendency among certain immigrant groups to adopt English rather than French as the primary language spoken outside the home (Henripin, 1991; Henripin and Pelletier, 1986; Lachapelle, 1991; Termote, 1992a). For the most part, the issue of immigration has been integrally linked to the matter of national identity, which in turn is related to integration and (French) language usage.

La question de l'immigration au Québec est indissociable du triptyque nationalisme-intégration-démographie (Piché, 1992:143).

For this reason, demographic and political discourse is particular to Québec and distinct from the rest of Canada<sup>14</sup>.

In an article on the "discours démo-politique" on immigration, Piché (1992) argues the dominant discourse on immigration in Québec has been monolithic, ideological, and firmly situated in a pronatalist perspective. Four assumptions have been made in this discourse. The first is that present-day immigrants, coming largely from the developing world, pose greater problems in terms of integration than was the case with the predominantly European immigrants of the past. The work of Gendron (1987) provides an illustration of this:

De plus en plus, l'immigrant appartient à une culture, à une religion et à une ethnie sans rapport aux nôtres. Au mieux, évoquer notre civilisation occidentale ne fera rien vibrer en lui; au pire, une telle référence éveillera dans sa tête la haine des colonialistes, des impérialistes et de leurs héritiers (Gendron, 1987:7).

Piché sees this hypothesis as having its basis in ideology as opposed to fact, since little systematic research has been conducted on recent immigrants and integration. Moreover, the research which has been conducted measures the concept of integration almost exclusively according to linguistic indicators, that is, mother tongue and language usage outside the home. The meaning of integration has been based on little more than language choices of immigrants.

A second assumption of the discourse is that immigration is not a solution to prevent demographic decline. Though declining fertility has been a major preoccupation among Québec demographers, immigration is not viewed as a viable option by many. Rather, the influence of pronatalist thought has meant that measures to increase the birth rate are the preferred means to prevent decline. Piché argues that many demographers do not even feel the need to justify their rejection of immigration as an alternative solution, but when they do, it is on the basis of one of three reasons.

The first is a tautological argument which reasons that because the level of immigration in Québec has rarely exceeded 35,000 immigrants per year, it would be difficult to maintain higher levels in the future. Second, large numbers of immigrants would create serious, though often unidentified problems. And third, volumes of demolinguistic studies legitimize the concerns over the linguistic integration of immigrants. Large numbers of immigrants are viewed as a threat to the francophone majority because English is often the

language of choice by many immigrants. Even when immigrants do choose French, there are those who argue that speaking the language does little in terms of preserving the *vieille souche* population or a French Québec:

'C'était la langue du lien avec le passé, avec la lignée généalogique; la langue du lien avec la Normandie ou la Bretagne de l'ancêtre; la langue de la famille. Un Québec majoritairement composé d'allophones obligés de parler français n'est plus un Québec français' (Jean-Guy Dubuc in Gendron, 1987:9).

According to Mathews (1984), a low birth rate and French language usage can be compensated in the short term by increasing French language usage in the workplace and schools through such measures as Loi 101 and 178<sup>15</sup>. He also views immigration as only a partial solution, due to the problems associated with assimilation and existing economic stagnation. Mathews also envisions it will be difficult to ensure the rights and importance of Québec within Canada in the long run, and adds the declining population of francophones within North America is not something which is quantifiable in terms of scientific criteria. Graveline (1993) points out that while Québec immigration policy must affirm the French nature of the Province, this is difficult to do since the Canadian Government advertises Canada as a bilingual country abroad.

The third assumption concerning immigration relates to the notion of accommodation or capability of the province to receive a given level of immigration in a certain time period. Although it appears Québec could be in a position to accommodate and welcome large numbers of immigrants, especially given its concern over decreased fertility and population decline, demographic discourse and Québec immigration policy has shown otherwise. Even though both levels of government acknowledge the positive aspects of immigration on the

Québec and Canadian economies, Piché argues that immigration levels and policy have been exclusionary rather than expansionist.

The reason for this may be due to the fear of new immigration which differs ethnically, racially, and culturally from European immigration of the past. Alternatively, it is sometimes assumed that an unacknowledged or implicit threshold of tolerance, if surpassed, would lead to unmanageable racial and ethnic problems. Furthermore, as the capacity to absorb or accommodate immigrants is difficult to quantify or know with certainty, the notion itself becomes one which is arbitrary and an inappropriate basis on which to base policy.

The final assumption in the mainstream demographic discourse asserts the preeminence of the State in all matters concerning immigration. Piché explains how the discourse assumes the primacy of the State, specifically the "francophone state". This has meant the concerns and role of immigrants and ethnic communities have been viewed as secondary. Although it is usually immigrant groups and organizations which are responsible for the "social" costs of integration of immigrants, it is ministries of immigration which determine the level and type of immigration (e.g. family reunification) and select immigrants (with an emphasis on francophones or "*francophonisables*").

The above discussion of discourse on immigration and integration illustrates the extent to which certain ideas or assumptions have been privileged at the expense of others. Increased immigration is rarely considered a viable option to slow down or prevent population decline because it is perceived as a threat to the preservation of *la culture québécoise originale*. Immigration is frequently associated with difficulties involving the

linguistic integration of immigrants into the francophone majority and the cultural and religious differences of newer immigrant groups. Moreover, it is understood as a factor that may contribute to or even exacerbate the existing problems resulting from a declining francophone birthrate.

According to Ouellet (1992) and others, the gravity of the situation is epitomized by the fact that francophone Québec is shrinking not only in real terms, but relative to the rest of anglophone North America. A smaller population means that the political weight of Québec within the Canadian federation decreases. As well, it poses a potential political threat in terms of territorial sovereignty due to the failure to populate and adequately occupy sparsely populated areas, such as the North or *Estrée* (Caldwell and Fournier, 1987; Henripin and Lapierre-Adamcyk, 1974; Graveline, 1993).

However, not all demographers in Québec are opposed to immigration. Bélanger (1993) for example, is positive about the benefits of immigration and refers to studies which show an increased knowledge of French by the immigrant population, attributed in part to the linguistic component of Québec's immigration policy. She also raises the issue of how female immigrants of reproductive age can make a positive demographic contribution:

On sait que près de 60% des femmes immigrantes sont en âge de procréation à leur admission et, mieux encore, près de 40% sont aux âges où les taux de fécondité sont les plus élevés, soit entre 20 et 34 ans. Leur ajout à la population québécoise permet de ralentir de façon significative la chute du nombre des naissances. Même dans un contexte de baisse fécondité, les naissances imputables à ces femmes pourraient avoir, selon le niveau d'immigration, un effet positif (quoique limité) sur les taux de natalité (Bélanger, 1993:32).

As an alternative to immigration, many demographers have suggested the Québec

Government formulate a family policy designed to support the family and/or encourage childbearing. The debate on the necessity and types of measures to support the family or increase fertility is multi-faceted and can be traced back to the beginning of Québec demography itself. The next section reviews key issues of the debate as well as examines recent contributions by feminist demographers who have been especially critical and outspoken of the recent direction of Québec family policy.

### **Fertility, Family and Pronatalist Policies**

The preoccupation with declining fertility in Québec has inspired volumes of studies on what type of policy measures should be adopted to counter this trend. In general, these measures fall into two categories. On the one hand, advocates of family policy measures point to the economic and time constraints experienced by many families today and argue that government policy should support parents with children and financially compensate families who choose to have children. On the other hand, supporters of pronatalist measures believe greater emphasis must be placed on encouraging couples to have more children than they presently do. At times, only a fine line separates pronatalist from family policy measures, with a great deal of debate taking place at the level of semantics. However, the two approaches can be differentiated on the basis of the following loosely defined criteria.

Pronatalist measures, while sometimes a component of a family policy, are characterized by the pursuit of a quantitative rather than qualitative goal. Lefebvre and Perrot (1986, 1987) further distinguish between hyper-natalist policy measures, which over-compensate the cost of having a child, and “ordinary” pronatalist measures which partially

or fully compensates the costs associated with having children. Family policy measures, by contrast, are designed to ensure the well-being of families and support family functions, such as the socialization of children and caring for family members. Accordingly, pronatalist policy focuses primarily on encouraging women (and couples) to have more children and raising the overall number of births<sup>16</sup>.

Not writing specifically about Québec, Heitlinger (1993) distinguishes between “direct” and “indirect” pronatalist policies. She describes how the term “indirect”, which she equates with “family policy” applies to a “greater range of policies which happen to make childbearing/rearing easier without the increase in the birth rate being an explicit objective”. By contrast, the term “direct “or “pronatalist” policy is reserved for “cases where the intention to raise the birth rate is explicit” (Heitlinger, 1993:128). On the basis of a review of population policies in advanced industrial societies, she identifies “ten major pronatalist approaches” which can exist independently or in combination with each other:

1. Family founding loans (made to couples at the time of marriage at low or no interest, with the provision that part of the loan will be written off with the birth of a child or children within a certain time period after marriage).
2. Birth grants.
3. Child allowances.
4. Tax exemptions for children and/or dependent spouses.
5. Guaranteed income for mothers (parents) who care for their children instead of working for wages.
6. Work-related measures, addressed to women or couples through extended maternity (parental) leaves, flexible work schedules and leaves for family reasons (such as child's sickness).
7. Subsidised housing, child care and/or recreational facilities for children.
8. Pronatalist propaganda campaigns, educational programmes and psychological inducements.
9. Restrictions on abortions and in some cases also on contraceptives.
10. Emphasis on infrastructural changes in order to create an environment more 'friendly' to children (Heitlinger, 1993:129).



At least half of these approaches or measures have been adopted at one time or another in Québec over the past three decades. Most of them, such as maternity leave, family allowances, and day care subsidies have been essentially pronatalist, whether or not they achieve their desired goal. According to Gauthier:

Ces programmes, bien que non définis en fonction d'objectifs natalistes, ne sont pas foncièrement différents de mesures natalistes. Malgré les sommes importantes que ces programmes absorbent, on ne connaît pas du tout leur effet sur la fécondité (Gauthier, 1981:219).

In accordance with the distinction between family policy and pronatalist measures made above, the Québec demographic literature can be categorized into two broad groups that sometimes appear to overlap. The pronatalist camp, on the one hand, views the current situation of fertility decline as a "crisis of depopulation" and advocates many of the above measures to increase the birth rate. The family policy advocates, on the other hand, are less crisis-oriented, but nonetheless regard certain aspects of government intervention into the family as desirable. Feminists fall somewhere on the margins of the latter group and will be discussed separately. They have been especially concerned that the cultural prescription of motherhood (or parenthood) as universal combined with a limited focus on increasing the birth rate, may thwart many of the recent gains made by women outside and within the home.

### Pronatalist Policy Measures

The discussion of pronatalist measures in Québec centres predominately around the issue of raising the birth rate by increasing the number of third children. Consequently, family allowances and/or *primes à la naissance*, with an emphasis on the third child, have

long been recommended by some Québec demographers. Henripin (1991), for example, regards them as "plus natalistes" than increased family allowances, the provision/expansion of child care, or conditions which allow women to work part-time. In contrast, other demographers and politicians insist that such measures, including the *allocation à la naissance* introduced by the Québec Government in 1988, are not pronatalist but merely a means to support the family. However, they leave two important questions unaddressed. First, why is financial emphasis placed on the third child which overall is less costly than the first or even second child? And secondly, why assume that couples will have a first or second child?

Henripin (1981) explains there are certain conditions which must exist before adopting a pronatalist policy. These include: the agreement on a minimum fertility level; the improbability that this level of fertility could be obtained without measures; the existence of effective measures; and the reconciliation between the proposed measures with other interests, such as "feminist ideology" and the cost of such a policy. In the case of Québec, there has not been unanimous agreement among demographers on any of the above conditions.

Two works have figured prominently in the discourse on the pronatalist measures: *La fin de la revanche des berceaux: qu'en pensent les Québécoises?* (Henripin and Lapierre-Adamcyk, 1974) and, *Les Enfants qu'on n'a plus au Québec* (Henripin et al., 1981). Both were partially funded by the Ministère des affaires sociales of the Province of Québec and have had lasting impact on popular and government discourse in Québec.

The first study, *La fin de la revanche des berceaux: qu'en pensent les Québécoises?*,

is based on 1,745 interviews conducted in 1971 with married women aged 15-65 about attitudes towards having children. The results were analyzed according to age, habitat, language, highest level of education obtained, and profession of the woman's husband. Some of the more significant findings include: the majority of women surveyed had a favourable opinion towards having children; women in general have less children than they would like, which has contributed to the overall decline in fertility; and only 10% of women would have an additional child to "*surviver la race*".

The study also examined the measures favoured to alleviate the burden of mothers and parents. These were, in order of preference: increased family allowances, higher student bursaries and loans, housing assistance, aid to families (physical), child care services (outside the home) and, the greater possibility of part-time employment. However, when these same women were asked whether they would have another or more children if their preferred measure of assistance was implemented, only 10% responded positively.

Despite their findings, Henripin and Lapierre-Adamcyk recommend the adoption of a comprehensive system of financial and other policy incentives to increase the birth rate and maintain a one-percent population growth rate per year, which translates into slightly more than 3 children per family. They also explain that although there is no scientific means of determining an optimal population level or how many children are too little, it is nonetheless necessary to determine what is appropriate for Québec. In a follow-up article summarizing the findings of *La fin de la revanche des berceaux: qu'en pensent les Québécois?*, Lapierre-Adamcyk (1975) describes how as a result of the decreased and lower birthrate of francophones and the preference by many immigrants for English, francophones would need

to compensate with a fertility rate of 3.0, as opposed to 2.5 for other groups.

Both Henripin and Lapierre-Adamcyk are critical of zero population growth. Echoing the pronatalist French demographer Alfred Sauvy, they describe how increased fertility and population growth will ensure a more dynamic and competitive society, and how it will preserve the linguistic composition of Québec and the demographic importance of francophones within Canada and Québec. Several salient points mentioned include:

- a) Indépendamment de tout souci d'équilibre linguistique, il serait souhaitable que la fécondité des familles québécoises ne tombe pas au-dessous de trois enfants par famille. Cela assurerait, à long terme, une croissance de la population de l'ordre d'un pour cent par an.
- b) Si les mouvements migratoires qui affectent la population du Québec continuent à jouer en faveur des anglophones, la surfécondité des francophones qui serait nécessaire pour compenser l'effet des migrations pourrait être de l'ordre de 20 à 40 pour cent.
- c) Assez curieusement, le déficit à combler ne semble pas devoir être plus grand, si l'on veut maintenir la fraction des francophones dans l'ensemble du Canada (Henripin et Lapierre-Adamcyk, 1974:132).

Implicitly, the methodology and questionnaire used in Henripin and Lapierre-Adamcyk's research is based on the assumptions discussed earlier on in the chapter, namely that fertility can be influenced or increased if competing aspirations and factors, such as economic considerations, work outside the home, and housing needs are addressed or eliminated. The policy incentives recommended by the authors are understood as falling under the guise of a family policy rather than a pronatalist policy, as they argue comprehensive measures are required to lessen the overall burden of families and not only to increase the birth rate.

The subsequent study by Henripin et al. (1981), *Les Enfants qu'on n'a plus au Québec*, also focused on Québec's declining birth rate and further explored how women

could be motivated to have more children. This study compares the findings of Henripin and Lapierre-Adamcyk's 1971 survey data with a follow-up survey conducted in 1976. Similar to the first study by Henripin and Lapierre-Adamcyk, Henripin et al. (1981) assume it is both possible and necessary to establish fertility determinants so as to respond with the appropriate policy measures to increase fertility.

A noteworthy component of the second study includes the analysis of the discrepancy between the higher number of children women said they wanted in 1971 with the number they actually had in 1976. According to the authors, this divergence is an indication that the desire for additional children was not being realized. At several points throughout the study, Henripin et al. express their difficulty in understanding why couples stop at having two children, and why is it that women or couples who say they love and want children are having them in such small numbers.

This study paid considerable attention to the position of the third child - who has it, which measures would encourage couples to have an additional child, and the problems which accompany the third child. Although they make reference to the measures discussed in Henripin and Lapierre-Adamcyk's (1974) earlier book, in the final analysis, Henripin et al. (1981) recommend that incentives other than financial ones be instituted, so that society becomes more child-friendly and accommodating to the needs of parents.

An especially interesting aspect of both Henripin and Lapierre-Adamcyk (1974) and Henripin et al. (1981) is the emphasis they place on the fact that child care was not the preferred option (it rated 4th) to facilitate the reconciliation of family and work responsibilities as most women favoured having their children cared for at home. This point

is significant as it appears to have been used to underscore the point that child care is not viewed as a priority by most women, thereby justifying the Québec Government's reluctance to expand child care services. Also, both studies view fertility decline only negatively and fail to consider any of the positive effects - such as the impact on women and especially those in lower income families.

Another curious point discussed by Henripin et al., as well as several others in the literature (Henripin and Gratton, 1977; Richer, 1978; Henripin, 1980; Gendron, 1987; Mathews, 1987a), is the concern over the rise in the number of sterilizations performed in Québec. Henripin and Gratton (1977) refer to how this "radical measure" of preventing fertility, which is a more certain and permanent method than in the past, has resulted in less accidental or undesired children than previously. Several authors also appear to lament the fact that there is now a higher proportion of women "refusing" to have children and that more and more couples choose sterilization. They criticize Québec doctors for not respecting the previously adhered to arbitrary guideline, whereby sterilization would not be performed before a figure of 100 could be calculated: the age of the mother times the number of children plus 10 or, for example:  $30 \times 3 + 10 = 100$ .

In addition to the studies he co-authored, Henripin's own writings make him the most prolific and well known of Québec demographers advocating pronatalist policy measures<sup>17</sup>. Although Henripin (1989) prefers the label "politique de la famille" over "politique nataliste", the emphasis on the third child and increasing the birth rate essentially puts him in the pronatalist camp. In essence, Henripin (1982, 1993) believes Québec society has become so focused on other things, such as material comforts, leisure, and career aspirations

(particularly in the case of women) that we have "...perdu le goût de donner la vie dans la mesure où nous l'avons reçue..." (Henripin, 1982:148). He believes more attention must be paid to learning about the desire to have children, and that demographers should focus on "ce qui entoure la formation des jeunes couples, que de faire des études de fécondité traditionnelles" (Henripin, 1982:148).

Measures suggested by Henripin range from the moderate and liberal, such as school programmes to eliminate sexism and the gendered division of labour between men and women (1974), as well as the necessity to change the structure and organization of work to make it more amenable to parenting (1982); to the extreme and provocative, whereby abortions "would be turned into live births" (so that babies could be adopted) (1981), welfare recipients could "contribute" by looking after children and relieving the burden of parents (1984), to advocating Sauvy's idea of votes for children which would be exercised through their parents (Henripin, 1991). Throughout his writings and recommendations, Henripin maintains a strong emphasis on the role of the third child. Once again drawing on Sauvy, Henripin (1984) describes how we must be focused on the exact decimal and aim for a total fertility rate of 2.3 as opposed to 1.9 or 2.0. In order to reach this goal, half of all couples must have two children while the other half must have three.

With respect to maternity leave and the additional time off required for the third child, Henripin rationalizes that at two to three years per child, including additional time off for the third child, this constitutes a mere 7% of adult (sic) life (Henripin, 1981). According to Henripin, even if women were to take 12 years off a professional career of 40 or so years to have and stay home with three children, this should not be viewed as much of a sacrifice

(Henripin, 1984).

Albeit Henripin (1981, 1984, 1991) speaks of measures to encourage shared parental responsibility and the greater involvement of fathers in parenting, his opposition to universal, government-funded child care coupled with the endorsement of greater availability of part-time employment for women has two implications - that women's wages and careers are secondary to men's, and that women are primarily responsible for childrearing. Henripin (1981) is particularly disparaging of feminists, whom he labels "radical feminists", because of their desire to be like men<sup>18</sup>, and their lack of concern about Québec's declining birth rate:

Le Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille continuera sans doute à lancer son cri d'alarme; on écouterait plutôt quelques féministes qui, à toutes fins utiles, préfèrent l'infécondité heureuse qui conduit au néant plutôt que l'inconfort et les quelques injustices de l'existence (Henripin, 1986:27).

Taking a somewhat different perspective, the work of Georges Mathews (1984, 1985, 1987a, 1987b, 1989) has also informed the debate on pronatalist policy measures. His book *Le choc démographique* (1984), examined various currents of thought with regard to fertility decline in Québec and the Western world and focused public attention on the gravity of the situation in Québec. The title of the book refers to the drop in the fertility rate to below replacement level (2.1) that first occurred in 1970.

Elsewhere Mathews (1987a) argues that although low fertility coupled with voluntary sterilization may be a signal of a demographic crisis, we should not interpret this as a crisis of the family. Many couples still want children but in smaller numbers than in the past. Likewise, he observes how sociologists and some of the demographic literature in Québec tend to equate two child families as synonymous with low fertility. Throughout his writings,



Mathews (1984, 1987a) has been critical of the theories of Easterlin discussed earlier, arguing that relative income and cyclical or generational patterns of fertility are inconsistent with changes in attitudes among women, and that the baby boom has been an exceptional trend in this century's descent toward low fertility. He likewise questions whether the motivation to have less children is entirely financial, as some couples choose to have none, one or two children on the basis of professional and lifestyle reasons.

However, Mathews believes the decision whether or not to have a third child is more likely based on economic factors, since it is at this point that the associated costs - child care and the loss of the mother's salary (sic) are most significant. As such, he recommends the adoption of a comprehensive pronatalist family policy for Québec, citing France as a model and success story. He, like others, alludes to research indicating that women in Québec have less children than they desire<sup>19</sup>. As such, "...ce qu'il nous faut, c'est une politique nataliste résolument moderne" (Mathews, 1984:187), meaning one which does not threaten access to abortion or contraception or infringe upon individual liberties.

Mathews believes that although the majority of Québec demographers favour a concerted effort of policy measures, many of their recommendations have been general and unspecific in nature: higher family allowances, more child care spaces, and measures which would permit *women* to better reconcile maternity and paid employment. Mathews himself concludes by suggesting two (general and unspecific) measures which are indispensable for Québec's family policy: substantial incentives and tax deductions to defray the costs associated with the third child and longer and better compensated maternity leave.

One problem with regard to policy incentives relates to the overlapping areas of

jurisdiction between Québec and Ottawa concerning the family. Several demographers have argued that until Québec is able to gain greater access to federal spending powers or complete jurisdictional control, it will be difficult for Québec to implement a comprehensive family policy (Gauthier, 1981; Mathews, 1984, 1985, 1987b). Moreover, Mathews claims because the rest of Canada has little or no interest in seeing an increase in the Québec fertility rate, there has been little discussion, and even suspicion on the part of English Canada, of family policy matters outside Québec.

...le Canada anglais n'a pour l'heure aucun intérêt à favoriser une remontée de la natalité au Québec. De ce côté-la, c'est le blocage total et je vois là une situation qui est grosse de conflits pour l'avenir (Mathews, 1985:19).

Mathews (1984) contends that although the discussion of demographic policy in Québec has occurred primarily at the level of nuances as opposed to concrete ideas or measures, there nonetheless has been resistance to such a discussion. Other demographers, like Martin (1991) likewise have commented on the difficulties or reluctance associated with the creation and implementation of pronatalist policies. Martin argues that although many of Québec's policies and legislation cover most other aspects of peoples lives, that is to say language, health, or education, there has always been a certain hesitation with regard to the formulation of population policy due to the association with the totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany and former Eastern Bloc countries.

Notwithstanding, Martin believes Québec has had a demographic policy by virtue of omission - to not have a policy is in fact a policy, and regardless of whether it is intentional or not, the State almost always has an effect on demographic variables and the level and composition of population. He believes Québec has been too timid in not formulating an

explicit pronatalist policy over the past thirty years and takes issue with those who dispute the necessity or legitimacy to create conditions which would encourage an increase in fertility.

While arguing from a different and feminist perspective, Rochon (1981) also claims that Québec has not had a demographic policy per se, but has used a piecemeal approach. She sees measures such as increased family allowances according to birth order, as well as the **lack** of child care facilities as having influenced men's and women's choices with regard to having children. She also notes how in the Québec discourse on fertility:

On favorisera la fécondité des femmes de tel état matrimonial, niveau de revenu, groupe ethnique mais on fera l'inverse pour les femmes présentant d'autres conditions (Rochon, 1981:168).

In cases where demographers support political action or policy incentives to increase fertility, there remains the problem of how to determine and pay for the "costs" of such compensation. Anne Gauthier (1987) suggests that within the context of *dénatalité*, we need to know how to estimate the "cost" of having a child so that government policy or compensation can reflect this. She argues that because normative evaluations are not reflective of true costs, we must draw on actual family expenses obtained from survey data. Gauthier concludes that although compensatory policy covering the monetary cost of child related expenses would be a tremendous expense for Québec, she nonetheless views it as necessary given the current demographic situation. In the absence of such a policy, couples who do decide to have children and contribute to the regeneration of the population are penalized and see their standard of living deteriorate. As such, she believes many choose to remain childless or have less children.

Hervé Gauthier (1981) raises the issue of whether incentives or financial aid to families should be universal or specifically targeted at those who need it the most. Whereas Gauthier recognizes low income families are in greater need of financial support, he also believes the psycho-social impact of pronatalist or fertility policies may be lost if targeted at some families and not others. State recognition of the value and importance of the family's role in having and raising children must be universal. Lefebvre and Perrot (1986, 1987) add that if it is indeed possible to influence fertility decision making through financial compensation, such measures must be clearly defined and of long duration.

Henripin (1981, 1991), drawing on Easterlin, reasons that fertility may increase if economic conditions were similar to what they were during the Baby Boom period. He advocates the creation of a more favourable economic climate through a series of financial incentives such as family allowances and birth incentives funded by the State, as well as other non-monetary stimuli such as public recognition of pregnant women and mothers of three children, and a clear and firm message on the part of politicians, union leaders, intellectuals, etc. that the current situation of low fertility is unacceptable. Henripin rejects economic measures such as an increase in the minimum wage which may alleviate the burden of parents. Rather, he prefers the State compensate parents, universal subsidies for child care notwithstanding, as added expenses in the form of increase wages would be too costly and unfairly burden private enterprise.

Another economic aspect of pronatalist measures relates to the compensation of mothers for their time away from paid employment, which is usually longer or more permanent after the third child. While most demographers agree women should be financially

compensated, there is not always agreement on how or to what extent. There are those who argue that policy measures and incentives must remain unbiased with regard to women's employment and not influence a woman's decision to leave the workforce after having children (Mathews, 1989). Whereas others believe longer maternity leave and pension benefits for women who remain at home with children does not bias a woman's decision, but rather is due financial compensation for those who choose to leave their jobs and raise their children at home (Henripin, 1991; Ouellet, 1992).

Still others like Bédard (1985) see maternity leave as too costly for employers as well as working against women, since employers would be less inclined to hire women of childbearing age. Bédard also views extended and better compensated leave as hampering the competitiveness of Québec vis-a-vis Ontario and the United States, its two largest trading partners. Moreover, small and medium-sized enterprises would be hardest hit as they can least afford to pay maternity leave in addition to hiring replacement personnel.

Although some demographers frame the discussion of extended parental leave and benefits in terms of time and compensation to be used by either or both parents, the feminist literature below has shown that it is usually women who take time off from paid employment or work part-time after the birth of a child.

A final economic consideration relates to the issue of whether women or couples are actually having the number of children they desire. As mentioned earlier, economic theories of fertility decision-making assume there are impediments, mostly of a financial nature, which interfere with the realization of the desire for children. Ouellet (1992) and others, for example, refer to the *Secrétariat à la famille* survey which found that although couples still

want children (at least 2.4), they are not having that number due to socio-economic reasons. However, both Carisse (1966) and Bélanger (1993) refer to surveys and research which demonstrate the contrary, arguing that people often want less children once they have had one and realize how much work is involved. Carisse (1966) referred to surveys of the day which illustrated that although a sizeable majority of young adults wanted five or more children, they usually ended up having less once they realized how much work was involved in caring for several children. Similarly, Bélanger (1993) points to recent surveys indicating that couples tend to want less children after the birth of a first child or with the passing of time:

...les enquêtes sur les aspirations des femmes et des hommes en ce qui a trait à leur désir d'enfants révèlent que leurs aspirations sont plus élevées avant le premier enfant et que le nombre d'enfants désirés diminue avec le temps (Bélanger, 1993:26).

Lastly, Gauvreau (1994) has argued that although it is difficult to know if women and men are having the number of children they truly desire, we do have information from studies on contraception usage and rates of sterilization which illustrate a strong desire to control fertility. According to data from 1987, 38% of women in Québec ages 30-34 had been sterilized; while Canada as a whole had the highest level of sterilization in the world.

The emphasis on the third child, as well as other pronatalist incentives, have been subject to criticism by feminist and other demographers. Many believe that by placing such a heavy emphasis on encouraging the birth of the third child, insignificant attention is paid to existing children. It sends the message that Québec society is more concerned with having children than caring about their well-being once they are born. Proponents of pronatalist

policies have been accused of being overly concerned with numbers and increasing the birthrate rather than with the well-being of children and, the mostly, women who care for them. In contrast, family policy advocates argue that policy measures must cater to the needs of families and all its members in order to be successful. The following section summarizes the literature on family policy and is followed by a synopsis of works by feminist demographers, who have been particularly critical of much of the discourse on pronatalist and family policy measures.

### Family Policy

While the primary thrust of pronatalist policies is quantitative in nature and focuses on increasing the numbers of children born, the principle goals of family policy are to ensure the well being of families and support parental responsibilities through monetary and/or non-monetary measures (Dandurand and Kempeneers, 1990). Despite this distinction, the Québec literature on family policy reveals an equivocal, and at times, murky differentiation between the two policy types.

During the early seventies Michel Perreault (1973), then executive director of the Fédération du Québec pour le planning des naissances, called for the formulation of family policy measures focused on supporting those who want children, rather than a pronatalist population policy centred on numbers and increasing family size. While acknowledging Québec's declining fertility, Perreault argued that moderation is key in policy measures regarding population matters. Similar to other family policy advocates, he recommended policy measures consisting of financial incentives such as a guaranteed income, allocations

to decrease the financial burden of parents, and paid parental leave, as well as social measures, like the reorganization of work, recognition of women's unpaid labour, and access to family planning services. Perreault also viewed immigration as playing an important role, with the integration of immigrants into the francophone majority being a fundamental component of the overall policy.

Other family policy advocates likewise have recommended moderation and breadth with regard to family policy measures. For example, the late Maurice Champagne-Gilbert (1981) considers comprehensive support for the family, financial and otherwise, is necessary; arguing its absence would be a blow to human dignity and progress. In addition to government support for the family, Champagne-Gilbert called for shared parenting and the need for men to become more involved in childrearing. He recognized that women were no longer willing to undertake this responsibility on their own and saw men's increased involvement as not only beneficial for themselves, but essential for the future of families.

Champagne-Gilbert (1981) was critical of the Parti Québécois during their first term in office for not being interested in families. He also criticized the Parti Libéral, for acknowledging the importance of families but leaving the sole responsibility for them to individuals. Champagne-Gilbert suggested the creation of an advisory council on the family, similar to the Conseil du statut de la femme (CSF), the provincial advisory body on women, so that the rights and needs of families would receive similar attention as those of women.

Others, like Caldwell (1979), called for more radical, or at least transformative family policy measures, such as the creation of a "*milieu d'appui*"<sup>20</sup>, which would consist of a defined territory consisting of approximately 1,000 people, and include an elementary school



with no more than 100 students, a *caisse populaire* with no more than 1,000 members, and 1.5 doctors per 1,000 inhabitants. Caldwell believed the creation of smaller communities of orientation would act as a counter-weight to the impersonalization, rationalization, and bureaucratization that accompanies modern society, which in turn would encourage couples to have more children. Rampant consumerism, individualism, and an ethic of technological advancement (growth and centralization) all contributed to decreased fertility. Caldwell believed that parenting was no longer valorized as it was in the past, and Québec society was no longer able to provide the family and community structures which facilitate the sharing of responsibilities of caring for children.

More recently, Bélanger (1993) has argued that although family policy should assist in raising the birthrate, it must do so without infringing upon the gains of women and without underestimating the potential impact of international immigration. Although Bélanger considers the current low birth rate as the result of collective individual choices to have fewer children, she also points out that existing social systems do not support women's decision to have children and work. Bélanger calls for the establishment of policy measures and structures which would facilitate the reconciliation of childrearing with paid employment, since according to Statistics Canada (data from 1990), 75.6% of women ages 25 to 44 were in the work force, most working out of necessity. With regard to the nature and type of government incentives, she states:

Si la société québécoise veut réellement voir sa fécondité augmenter et se maintenir par la suite, elle devra faire en sorte que les structures sociales soient plus accueillantes d'une part pour les jeunes adultes (emplois stables, logements adéquats, etc.) afin de stimuler la venue d'un premier enfant, et d'autre part pour les jeunes familles (garderies publiques, horaire scolaire

modifié, mesures fiscales répartissant le coût d'élever des enfants, etc.) afin d'encourager la venue d'un deuxième et d'un troisième enfant. Il n'est pas question de retourner aux familles nombreuses d'antan, mais simplement de voir le nombre de familles de trois enfants augmenter (Bélanger, 1993:26-27).

Bélanger also referred to the long-term positive effects of smaller families in relation to aging and pensions, explaining how couples could put more money into pension and retirement savings resulting from decreased expenditures due to the smaller number of children per couple.

As shown, while some of the mainstream literature acknowledges the problematic aspects and concerns of family policy with regard to women, it is largely the work of feminist demographers which has scrutinized family and pronatalist policies and drawn our attention to the problems associated with both types of policies for women. The following section reviews these issues, as well as other themes in the recent feminist demographic literature in Québec.

### **Contemporary Feminist Demographic Discourse in Québec**

Feminist demographic literature on fertility and family and pronatalist policy measures in Québec can be traced back to the late seventies. It was during this period that feminist criticism of the alarmist prognoses and prescriptions by mainstream demographers, referring to the "crisis of depopulation", "crisis of the family", and the detrimental impact of "women's liberation" on women's attitudes with regard to having children, first appeared. Feminist demographers have been sceptical of family and pronatalist discourse and policy measures which infringe upon the freedom and equality of women and prevent or impede

women's access to personal and financial autonomy, primarily though not exclusively through waged labour (Baker, 1994; Dandurand and Kempeneers, 1990; Le Bourdais, 1989b). In particular, they are critical of mainstream discourse which problematizes rather than seeks ways to combine shared parental responsibilities for children with paid employment or, which disparages women's reproductive behaviour while ignoring the context in which these decisions and actions occur (Lavoie, 1991; Lepage, 1991). Furthermore, feminists caution against using family or pronatalist policies designed to increase the birth rate as a solution to problems or issues that are of a political or social nature (Gauvreau, 1988).

Writing over the past two decades, feminist demographers and social scientists in Québec have emphasized that any discussion of population policy must take into consideration all three demographic variables - fertility, mortality and migration, as well as acknowledge the social importance of maternity and concerns and desires of women (De Koninck, 1991; Gauvreau, 1981, 1988; Lavoie, 1991; Rochon, 1981). They believe that too much attention has been focused on discussing and bemoaning the declining birthrate and its consequences, rather than acknowledging its positive effects for women, or examining solutions such as the employment of more women and unemployed persons to reduce the dependency ratio. Fertility or the desire to have a child must be analyzed as part of a complex system of social conditions, not as an autonomous or isolated decision (De Koninck, 1991; Gauvreau, 1994). Factors which can act as a constraint on fertility, such as not having a job or the risks associated with single parenthood, must also be taken into consideration (Dandurand and Kempeneers, 1990; Le Bourdais, 1989b).

More specifically, feminists have criticized the mainstream discourse on the "crisis of depopulation" in Québec for several reasons. First, feminists are critical of the more conservative, nationalist participants in the debate, for focusing exclusively on women's reproductive role and ability, assuming women's secondary status in society, and for seeing women's concerns as peripheral to the debate (De Koninck, 1991). Second, and following from the first, feminists contend that women have been treated as objects rather than agents in and of their own right, simultaneously being blamed and directly associated with the problem of low fertility (Lavoie, 1991). Third, they stress that the discourse overlooks the fact that there still are women who have children in larger numbers, though they happen to be the "wrong kind" of women, that is lower income and immigrant women as opposed to so-called *vieille souche québécoises* (Gauvreau, 1994). Fourth, they point out that mainstream dominant discourse is largely silent on the less desirable aspects of high fertility, such as higher rates of poverty, lower levels of female education and participation in the paid workforce, higher rates of infant and maternal mortality, and increased levels of housework and child care for women.

Finally, though much is made of the relationship between fertility and women's work force participation, the important issue of how both responsibilities are juggled by women comes secondary to the focus on causality and the perceived negative correlation. Gauvreau (1994) for example, states that there has been too little public and public policy recognition of women's responsibility for paid and unpaid labour. Likewise, Le Bourdais et al. (1994) explain that due to the lack of policy measures which guarantee real economic equality for women in the workplace, women continue to occupy the most precarious, badly-paid, part-

time jobs. This, in conjunction with inadequately compensated parental leave benefits, reinforces a situation where it is economically more rational for women than men to leave work to care for children.

The effect is to reinforce the differences between men and women when it comes to caring for the children, and to force women back into the senseless quandary of having to choose between wanting to have a child or to work (Le Bourdais et al. 1994).

In light of these factors, it is hardly surprising that women are less inclined than men to view decreased fertility as a grave social problem<sup>21</sup>.

With regard to the differentiation between family and pronatalist policies, many feminists maintain that both policy types are different, with specific goals and priorities. As discussed previously, the principle characteristic of a pronatalist policy is to encourage women and couples to have more children, with little regard to supporting them, financially or otherwise, once the child is born. Whereas the goal of a family policy is to assure the well-being of families who choose to have children, regardless of numbers, throughout the entire period of parenting (Dandurand and Kempeneers, 1990). In the case of Québec, the separation has not always been clear, as reflected by the fact that Québec Government discourse and policy formulation has fluctuated between the objectives of a family and pronatalist policy. Dandurand and Kempeneers explain how as a result of the conflicting messages and actions, Québec women have been circumspect of the family policy process and hesitant to participate in the debate:

A l'instar des féministes occidentales face à la famille et à la maternité, les Québécoises affichent une position marquée par l'ambivalence en même temps que par la nécessité d'une implication. Leur position est d'autant plus inconfortable que l'ambiguïté est constamment maintenue, dans le débat

public, entre politique familiale et politique nataliste (Dandurand and Kempeneers, 1990:91).

Another explanation for this ambivalence stems from the fact that elements of both policy types have been identified as troublesome for women. Le Bourdais (1989b) explains how certain family policy measures present hidden difficulties for women in terms of posing a threat to their autonomy and financial independence. Specifically, she refers to part-time employment and the provision of longer maternity leave (paid or not) which many pro-family policy advocates insist facilitate the reconciliation of paid employment and family responsibilities. Le Bourdais and others believe that while such measures appear, or even prove temporarily beneficial to women, they can be detrimental in the long run for several reasons.

First, lengthy absences from the workforce may result in women losing more ground and being further penalized in a labour market where they are already restricted to certain types of lower paying and less secure occupations. Acoca (1981) points out that it is usually women in non-unionized positions with lower salaries and less education who want longer maternity leave and part-time employment; women who are already in a precarious position to begin with. Second, studies have shown that working part-time does not eliminate the double burden faced by most women. Many women end up doing more rather than less housework while working part-time and have as little or less time for themselves as before<sup>22</sup>. In addition, recent Canadian research points to the fact that women usually do less housework in situations where they earn more than half of the household income<sup>23</sup>.

Other problems associated with part-time employment stem from the fact that many

of these jobs are in the service sector of the economy where shift work or having to work evenings or weekends further complicates family scheduling problems. Desrosiers and Le Bourdais (1991) view the "choice" of part-time work by women as a reflection of the sexual inequality both within and outside the workplace. This "choice" tends to reinforce the notion that women are primarily responsible for the family, and that the reconciliation of work and family obligations is primarily the problem of women. Similarly, Le Bourdais (1989b) draws on the experiences of women in England and Sweden, illustrating how part-time employment has kept women in job ghettos or sectors of the labour market that have done little to promote better pay, benefits, and job security.

The case of Sweden is worth mentioning in some detail at this juncture, especially because it is frequently referred to as an exemplary model by family policy and pronatalist policy advocates alike. Sweden, and to a lesser extent Denmark and Norway, is often lauded as a family policy success story, in the sense that women have been able to successfully combine work and having children. This is generally attributed to the fact that in Sweden, family policy measures have been implemented in conjunction with equal employment opportunity policies. However, feminist research illustrates the continuing relative subordination of Swedish women, a highly sex-segregated labour market, the small number of women in upper level positions in private business, education, and trade unions, and the persistence of a sexual division of labour in the home and workforce, with women occupying a large proportion of the helping professions or "caring work" (Acker, 1994; Mahon, 1998). Similarly, because work in Sweden, as in Québec, is still organized around an eight-hour day, women's career paths are frequently blocked or altered as a result of the lengthy parental

leave provisions of Sweden's family policy. According to Widerberg:

The measures designed, in part, to make women economically independent also solidify their status as different workers and confirm their obligations as the primary organizers of family life and providers of care, thus limiting their economic independence (Widerberg [1991] in Acker, 1994:42).

Similarly, although the intention of Sweden's family and social policy measures was to increase gender equality of women through financial independence and facilitate the combination of work outside the home with family responsibilities, the result has been the opposite. According to Acker<sup>24</sup>, it has served to:

...lock women into sex-segregated and often low-level, dead-end positions in an economy still organized around the male worker who has few home responsibilities (Acker, 1994:43).

Furthermore, Mahon (1998) points to how the restructuring of the global economy and changes to the power relations between capital and labour in Sweden in the 1990's, have made the above-mentioned predicament of women even worse. A series of Welfare State cutbacks have effected the many women working in this sector of the economy, resulting in an increasing wage gap between women and men, higher unemployment, privatization of public "caring work" including child care access, and a decrease in the compensation level for parental leave from 90% to 75% of the previous salary<sup>25</sup>. In turn, while the example of Sweden may still be interesting to study, feminist research has shown the unintentional results of a well-meaning policy.

Generally, many Québec feminists believe that a realistic family policy must be one which permits equal employment opportunities for women and encourages the equal sharing of childrearing and paid employment between both partners (Le Bourdais, 1989b; Lepage,



1991). An important means of ensuring greater access to paid employment is the adoption of affirmative action and pay equity legislation which will facilitate the entry of more women into the work force and into more equitably paid jobs. Feminists argue that until women have equal access to more and better paying jobs, the sexual division of labour will persist, with many women rationally choosing to put childrearing responsibilities ahead of their careers or paid employment (Desrosiers and Le Bourdais, 1991; Le Bourdais, 1989b; Le Bourdais et al., 1994).

Therefore, family policy should not discourage women from working outside the home nor should it encourage women's return to the home or economic dependence on men. Furthermore, it must respect women's right to equality and personal choices. Le Bourdais concludes that family policy measures must be compatible with employment equity provisions, so that:

...both men and women will avail themselves of a more balanced life in a society which increasingly values both home and market work<sup>26</sup>.

As I discuss in Chapter Five, the Québec advisory body on women's issues, le Conseil du statut de la femme, has recommended such action since its formation in 1973. Similarly, the 1986 Report of the Québec Government Consultation Committee on Family Policy also strongly recommended this be a priority of the family policy adopted by the Québec Government (Dandurand, 1987b).

Rochon (1981, 1989) has suggested that any type of policy measures adopted by Québec must not be geared towards or evaluated on the basis of quantitative goals, and should be capable of encompassing competing societal interests and values. The policy must

recognize and facilitate the role of parents, especially women, and ensure that women's contribution through childbearing is recognized, not just symbolically valorized. She, as well as others, believe that all women who have children, in the work force or not, should be guaranteed a decent standard of living and shared responsibility (State and fathers) for child care and rearing. Ultimately, the only acceptable family policy is one which is clearly oriented towards improving the quality of life of all family members. This being said, "il n'est pas interdit de penser qu'elle aura des retombées natalistes" (Dandurand, Kempeneers, LeBourdais, 1989:29).

Following a similar line of reasoning, Dandurand and Kempeneers (1990) outline five main principles, based loosely on a document produced by the Conseil du statut de la femme (1984), to be incorporated into a Québec family policy responsive to the needs of women. These include: the responsibility of the State toward all children of all ages (not only babies or toddlers), as well as towards the people who care for them; and secondly, the principle of autonomy of all persons within the family coupled with the equitable division of household labour and equal access to jobs. Dandurand and Kempeneers, as well as Rose (1987), are critical of fiscal policies which perpetuate the dependence of women on men, such as income tax deductions for dependent spouses (usually women), and taxation or policy measures based on the family instead of individuals<sup>27</sup>. A third principle is the right to freely chosen maternity, while the fourth consists of protecting against the risks associated with single-parenthood, such as ensuring access to adequate social assistance and the enforcement of the collection of child support. Finally, the fifth principle to be incorporated into a family policy responsive to the concerns of women is the need for continuity and permanence of all

government family policy measures.

With regard to the fifth principle, Dandurand, Kempeneers and Le Bourdais (1989) have commented on the precarious nature of the financial incentives announced in the 1988 Québec "family policy" budget. These measures, which consisted of benefits, exemptions, and deductions, centred primarily on encouraging couples to have children rather than assisting them with the economic costs and energy required to care for and raise children to adulthood. The *allocation à la naissance*, eliminated in September 1997, is just one example of how easily such measures can be reduced, de-indexed, suspended, or eliminated.

The *allocation à la naissance*, or what was colloquially referred to as "*bébé-dollars*", has been largely criticized by Québec feminist demographers and sociologists. The non-taxable birth allowance, weighted heavily in favour of the third child, originally consisted of \$500 for the first and second child and \$3000 for third and subsequent children. This was subsequently increased to \$1000 for the second child and \$8000 for the third child, to be distributed over a five year period. Immediately after its inception in May 1988, the *allocation à la naissance* became known as the most distinguishing feature of Québec's family policy. Some have speculated the adoption of this measure can be viewed as an indication of the co-optation of the family policy process by conservative family organizations and the passing over of the concerns put forth by women's and more moderate family organizations (Dandurand, 1987b).

With respect to the emphasis on the third child, the work of Madeleine Rochon (1981, 1989, 1991) has shown how placing such an emphasis may be misdirected in the case of Québec. She explains that not only has there been a decline in the numbers of third and

fourth children born over the past several decades, but the number of first and second births has decreased as well. Similarly, Gauvreau (1994) adds that although first births comprise 75% to 80% of the total number of births, second births encompass only 56%, while third births constitute an even lower 19%. As such, pronatalist policy measures which concentrate predominantly on the third child do little to encourage or support the birth of first and second children, whose numbers have also declined. The *allocation à la naissance* which did just that, placed disproportionate emphasis on the third child, while assuming the first and second child would come automatically (Le Bourdais, 1989b; Dandurand, Kempeneers and Le Bourdais, 1989; Le Bourdais et al., 1994).

Notwithstanding, Le Bourdais et al. (1994) note that the fanfare surrounding the pronatalist baby bonuses has overshadowed some of the more positive aims and attributes of Québec's "pro-active approach" to family policy, such as the willingness of the Québec Government to take action in the area of family policy, the development of administrative structures for the implementation of a multi-sectorial policy, and the emphasis on joint action between government and family organizations.

A final issue widely discussed in the feminist literature is the question of availability and access to child care services. While mainstream demographers like Henripin (1991) downplay the need for universally subsidized or free child care services, arguing this would discriminate against parents who choose to remain at home and care for their children themselves, Québec feminists have long viewed child care to be a collective rather than an individual responsibility. Consequently, child care should not only be affordable and accessible to all, but should complement the schedules of working parents and enable all

women and couples to better reconcile work and family responsibilities. An important way of increasing accessibility to child care is the extension of opening hours so as to accommodate employees who work outside "normal" weekday working hours (Lepage, 1991).

A comprehensive family policy should also incorporate the guarantee of financing public child care services for all parents out of general tax revenue. Not doing so reinforces the idea that women are intermittent workers who want and can readily stop paid employment to care for children, and that women's caring for young children is "normal", "natural", or even desirable. Furthermore, child care user fees put working parents at a financial disadvantage compared to workers without children and may act as a disincentive for women to work, since it is usually their salaries which are used to pay for child care costs.

The 1997 changes to the provision of child care services in Québec is the most recent attempt to extend accessibility and reduce the costs assumed by parents. Partially funded through the abolition of the *allocation à la naissance*, revenues have been diverted to expand the number of provincially funded child care spaces, whereby all spaces cost \$5 per day per child. Although feminists acknowledged this as a step in the right direction, the measures were criticized as insufficient for several reasons. First, while the Government announced the creation of 73,000 new spaces by the year 2001, its own office responsible for child care, the Office de service de la garde, previously issued a report stating that 95,000 spaces would be required province-wide. As of February 1999, there were 92,000 places available within the network of non-profit, profit, and home day care agencies (Ministère de la famille et de l'enfance, 1999). Secondly, whereas the \$5 fee is advantageous to middle-class families, it

is less beneficial to poor families with several children who previously paid less (Lemieux, 1997).

## **Conclusion**

The review of the contemporary Québec demographic literature and discourse on fertility and family policy focused on four main issues: epistemology and ideology or the emphasis on data collection or "facts" as opposed to theory; the role of the demographer and application of demographic research; the preoccupation with the study of fertility decline and fertility determinants; and the discussion of pronatalist and family policy measures. On the basis of this overview two observations can be made. First, the recurrence of several predominant themes, and second, a divergence in the way many themes and issues were theorized and analyzed within the mainstream and feminist literature.

Beginning with the discussion of epistemology and ideology, this illustrates how the emphasis on facts versus theory in much of the mainstream literature has contributed to framing certain research questions and debates within the discipline, serving to eclipse some while emphasizing others. For example, much of the mainstream fertility research, though not monolithic, is empirically focused, quantitatively based, and somewhat functionalist in its underlying assumptions. Fertility is viewed as an "output" which is the result of choices based on economic concerns or rational self-interest. There is a strongly assumed causality between fertility and socio-economic factors, mostly of an economic nature, and a marked focus on how to encourage couples to have more children through financial incentives and/or measures designed to facilitate having children with paid employment.

With respect to the role of the demographer and the application of demographic research, there appears to be a consensus among mainstream demographers regarding the importance and necessity of demographic research with regard to government planning and policy making. While several refer to the influence of demolinguistic research on the evolution of language legislation, others lament the fact that policy makers seldom act upon the recommendations or concerns of demographers. Furthermore, whether or not demographic research has inspired the volumes of journalistic and popular writings on the "crisis of depopulation" and the potentially troublesome aspects of fertility decline which include an aging society, increased dependency ratio, and the diminished political weight of Québec within Canada remains a matter for further debate.

Fertility, or rather fertility decline, is a central preoccupation within the mainstream literature. Low fertility is viewed as undesirable by many demographers, due to the problems associated with an aging society, increased dependency ratio, and the perceived increase in social spending associated with an elderly population. The solution to the problem of declining fertility usually takes one of two forms.

On the one hand, the "depopulation crisis" camp views low fertility as a "crisis" and women's current reproductive behaviour as problematic. There is a strong tendency to highlight the incompatibility or negative correlation between fertility and paid employment, with several authors even going so far as to make nostalgic references and comparisons to the phenomenally high fertility rates of the past. Proponents of this view strongly support the creation of policy measures though the line between what constitutes pronatalist and family policy measures is not always clearly defined. Emphasis is weighted in favour of financial

incentives to assist parents and, to a lesser extent, to allow parents/women to choose to stay at home with their children. In a fair number of cases, stress is placed on encouraging and supporting the birth of the third child. This type of solution presupposes reproductive behaviour can be altered through policy measures and incentives, especially those of a financial nature.

Immigration, by and large, is viewed as a less palatable option to prevent population decline, due to the perceived problems with integration and French language acquisition of immigrants. In this sense, the discourse on immigration and demolinguistics is connected with the study of fertility in Québec, in that fertility decline is often analyzed in terms of the consequences associated with a decreased number of francophones in Québec, or with regard to national identity and the demographic weight of Québec within Canada.

In contrast, "family policy advocates" can be described as less crisis orientated, more concerned with the needs of existing children and, to a lesser extent, the women who care for them, and less opposed to immigration. They believe that parenting and childbearing must be publicly supported and socially recognized as important and that policy measures designed to support the needs of families should be instituted regardless of the level of fertility. Immigration is viewed as a positive and necessary option to counterbalance the potential problems associated with declining fertility. The requirement that immigrants learn French and integrate into the dominant francophone majority of Québec are also important considerations, though recognized as separate issues in need of specific policy action.

In spite of differing goals and orientation, there are similarities among the two groups with respect to the type of policy measures proposed. The difference appears to be one of



intent as opposed to impact of the proposed measures. For example, although the intent behind family policy is to strengthen or support the family and pronatalist measures to encourage fertility, both groups advocate measures such as better compensated and longer parental leave to facilitate the responsibilities of working parents. However, "family policy advocates" are generally more supportive than "pronatalists" of the expansion of State-funded, comprehensive child care services.

Though sharing similar concerns with "family policy advocates", Québec feminist demographic discourse can be described as distinct from, and in some ways, as a critique of the mainstream literature. In general, the feminist literature is more focused on the need for research and policy measures which are compatible with the needs and changing realities of women's lives. Research and policy measures which infringe upon women's autonomy, freedom, or the struggle for equality are viewed as restrictive and problematic for women.

Feminist demographers are critical of certain methodological techniques employed by mainstream demographers, such as the use of fertility averages, the reliance on economic theories of fertility decision-making, and the imperative to establish causality between fertility and socio-economic factors. These types of approaches are normative and incapable of prioritizing disparate variables. They also tend to be disproportionately focused on financial considerations. Furthermore, feminist research challenges the "dominant discourse" on fertility which they believe tends towards nostalgia for the past and makes women responsible for the current demographic situation of Québec.

With regard to family and pronatalist policy measures, feminist demographers and sociologists have criticized the fact that pronatalist measures are often put forward as a

solution to problems which are essentially linguistic or political in nature. They are also highly critical of the disproportionate emphasis placed on supporting the birth of the third child, not least because fewer couples are having a second or first child. Feminist discourse maintains policy measures should focus on existing children rather than on encouraging the birth of children, and that policy measures should be neutral and not influence or bias a woman's decision with respect to work or having children in any way.

The feminist literature supports the notion that family policy measures should be compatible with and formulated in conjunction with policies designed to support and promote women's equality. For example, policy solutions which appear to assist in the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, such as part-time employment or extended parental leave, have been shown to create as many problems for women as they appear to solve. Because women continue to earn less than men, it is economically more rational that women rather than men take parental leave or work part-time as a means to cut down on child-care expenses. However, in both instances women remain primarily responsible for the majority of duties related to children, which works against the possibility of equally shared parenting arrangements and perpetuates the gendered division of household labour.

Other problems associated with absences from the work force and working part-time include the lack of job security and promotional opportunities, financial insecurity and decreased pension benefits. As such, feminists argue that family policy measures designed to assist with the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities must be implemented in conjunction with employment equity policies and increased access to State-supported child care. Until then, and even then (as the case of Sweden demonstrates), the financial autonomy

of women and equally shared parenting will be impossible to achieve; while the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities will continue to remain the problem of women.

Lastly, the feminist demographic literature has been critical of recent policy initiatives in Québec over the past decade for being disjointed, temporary, and unresponsive to the needs of women. Moreover, due to the fact that policy direction has fluctuated between family policy and pronatalist policy incentives, the Québec Government has sent conflicting messages which have made women suspicious and hesitant to participate in the debate.

With these findings in mind, the next task of the dissertation is to explore the extent to which a "feminist standpoint epistemology", as reflected by the issues raised in the feminist demographic discourse, has influenced the corpus of Québec Government policy documents. In the next chapter, I describe the elements of the textual content analysis used to analyze the sample of government documents, as well as, provide a short overview of recent political and policy events in the Province of Québec. The findings of the textual content analysis are presented in Chapter Five.

## Endnotes

1. As "declared a popular [Canadian] health manual of the 1890s (Prentice et al., 1988:146)" in Wilson, 1991:19.
2. For further details see Lalonde (1980) and Maroney (1992).
3. Although demographic research is carried out by demographers and other social scientists outside the Département de démographie at the Université de Montréal, this department has undoubtedly produced the bulk of fertility research and birth rate studies in Québec.
4. See Dandurand (1987b) for an elaboration of this point.
5. Rogel in Piché (1992).
6. See Greenhalgh (1996) and Hodgson (1988) for further discussion.
7. See for example: Gregory (1979), Piché (1987), and Piché and Pierard (1976).
8. Several examples include: Kempeneers (1985, 1987, 1992), Lavigne (1986), Le Bourdais (1989a), Stoddart (1984).
9. For a critical feminist analysis on demographic issues ranging from fertility to aging to immigration, see the collection of essays in *Femmes et questions démographiques: Un nouveau regard* (1991), from the proceedings of the conference "Femmes et questions démographiques" organized by the Conseil du statut de la femme.
10. The general fertility rate is distinguished from the total fertility rate which is a calculation of the life-time average number of children for women in a given population. The total fertility rate necessary for a population to maintain or reproduce itself is 2.1. This rate for Québec in 1998 was 1.48.
11. Although their research examines popular Québec literature during the 1980's, it has been argued elsewhere (Le Bourdais, 1989b) that the study of children, and especially the family, has become an increasingly important subject area within contemporary academic discourse, the media and political discourse.
12. See Höhn (1989:386) for further details.
13. Ibid.
14. See Baker (1990) and Maroney (1997).
15. Both of these are described in Chapter Four.

16. See Höhn (1989), Pressat (1979), and Dandurand and Kempeneers (1990) for more details concerning the differences between family and pronatalist policies.

17. In a recent collection of English essays on the contemporary State and society in Québec, the only article on population trends and policies was by Henripin (1993). He begins by cautioning the reader to remain "cool-headed, so that the facts can be presented truthfully and objectively", but then proceeds to disparage the current "manifestations of freedom" in Québec society (lowest proportion of married young adults, highest proportion of non-legalized unions and out-of-wedlock births in Canada) as not being "appropriate soil for producing and raising children", and calls the phenomenon, in Québec and Canada, of attributing questionable merits to immigration as part of a "new Canadian puritanism, along with an obsession for ecology and some other myths".

18. Ironically, Henripin (1981) mentions in a footnote to this article that feminists view childrearing as a burden, the sole purview of women, and how they have not even considered the possibility of men becoming involved!

19. In addition, Ouellet (1992) refers to a series of three surveys conducted by the Secrétariat à la famille on the desire to have children. Each survey concluded that couples do not have the number of children they ideally would like (2.4). For further information see Secrétariat à la famille (1991), *La famille et le désir d'enfants, les résultats comparés de trois enquêtes 1985-1988-1991*, in Appendix II.

20. This concept was first suggested by Colette Carisse. See Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille (1974b) in Appendix II..

21. See Baker (1990), Dandurand and Kempeneers (1990), Frenette (1991), Le Bourdais (1989b), and Messier (1981) for further information regarding this point.

22. For further information on this point see: Desrosiers and Le Bourdais (1991), Duval (1985, 1992), Fox (1997), Le Bourdais et al. (1987), and Luxton (1997b).

23. See Nakhaie (1995) and McFarlane et al. (1998) for further discussion of this point.

24. See also Widerberg (1991).

25. Norway has also experienced similar problems with regard to parental leave benefits and the provision of child care. The Christian-Democratic-led government recently suggested offering financial incentives to new mothers in order to encourage them to remain at home with their babies. The opposition Labour party has argued against these measures, maintaining they run contrary to the principle of gender equality (The Economist, 1999:4-5).

26. From Kamerman (1979:650), as quoted in Le Bourdais (1989b:97).

27. See Ruth Rose (1987) for a discussion of the reforms to federal and Québec tax policy during the late 1980s, which she sees as having taken place "en plein coeur d'une renaissance du débat sur la natalité".

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **POLICY AND ANALYSIS: QUEBEC GOVERNMENT POLICY DOCUMENTS AND THE APPLICATION OF TEXTUAL CONTENT ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section highlights significant political and demographic policy developments over the past several decades, specifically with respect to family policy, language, and immigration. In doing so, it illustrates the degree to which these three policy areas have been inter-connected in Québec and stem from historical concerns related to culture, language, and identity. Moreover, the section provides background information which further serves to contextualize the review of Québec Government documents in Chapter Five. The second section of the chapter describes the objectives, relevance, and methodology of textual content analysis, the technique used to analyze the sample of Québec Government documents. Likewise, it describes the types of questions and documents included in the corpus.

#### **A Brief Chronology of Québec Politics, Family Policy, and Related Demographic Policy Areas**

Prior to 1970, relatively few measures targeted specifically towards the family existed in either Québec or Canada. One exception was the family or mothers' allowance introduced in 1944 by the Federal Government. This measure was formulated with several goals in mind: to assist families with the costs associated with children, increase the birth rate,

supplement declining wages, and placate demands for pay increases and unionization (Baker, 1996; Ursel, 1992). It has also been suggested that because Québec had the highest birth rate in the country during this time, the "Family Allowance Act would represent financial compensation and a profitable political move" (Lachapelle et al., 1993:380). However, the response of the isolationist Duplessis Government of the day towards family allowances was one of apprehension, viewing them as federal encroachment on provincial jurisdiction and a threat to male authority in the family (Clio Collective, 1987)<sup>1</sup>.

In Québec, a Ministry for Social Welfare and Youth with a Division for the family (Direction-générale de la famille) existed from the post-war period to the 1960s. In 1958, the word "youth" disappeared from the department's name and it became simply the Ministry for Social Welfare. In 1961, legislation was introduced yet again creating the Minister for the Family and Social Welfare. This was the first time the word "family" was included. In addition to line departments, there was the Conseil supérieur de la famille, a consultative body with no administrative functions.

Towards the end of the 1960s, the Québec Ministère de la famille was replaced by the Ministère des affaires sociales which, according to Champagne-Gilbert (1981), effectively closed the dossier on the family in Québec. Others, however, contend that successive governments in Québec have never paid any more than lip service to the family, and that the primary reason for the lack of coherent family policy measures stems from the absence of jurisdictional control by Québec over family policy matters (Mathews, 1985).

Although Québec's birth rate had been the lowest in Canada since 1961, the anxiety over the declining birth rate reached new heights in the wake of the Quiet Revolution.



Specifically, it was the awareness of a decreasing francophone birth rate, fears of cultural assimilation, and the tendency of immigrants to adopt English rather than French which prompted a series of occurrences. First, with regard to immigration, a Québec Ministry of Immigration was created in 1968, to ensure the immigrant selection process conformed to the needs and interests of the province, and to encourage the integration of immigrants into Québec society, particularly towards the francophone collectivity. Second, with respect to the "politicization of language", Québec's political leaders adopted policies to strengthen and safeguard French language usage (Gagnon and Montcalm, 1990).

Bill 85, the controversial bill on French language usage in the field of education was introduced in 1968. It centred around the issue of parental choice of the language of instruction and was the first in a series of language legislation by successive Québec governments. However, Bill 85 was withdrawn before second reading in the legislature, due to intense public protest by nationalists and French-language rights activists, as well as the division within the governing Union Nationale. Less than a year later, Bill 63, the *Loi pour promouvoir la langue française au Québec*, was passed in the National Assembly. This law guaranteed freedom of choice with regard to the language of instruction in schools, but established the principle of priority of French in the public and private sector and the fundamental right of francophones to work in French. Largely acceptable to anglophones and allophones, this law was criticized by the growing francophone nationalist movement which called for the primacy of the French language in education and other spheres of private and public life (Lachapelle et al., 1993).

In 1970, the Liberal Government of Robert Bourassa came to power just months

before the FLQ crisis, which is often viewed as an indication of the severity of linguistic tensions in Québec. The solution to the problem of growing dissatisfaction in segments of the francophone population towards linguistic duality came in the form of Bill 22 in 1974. This law, the *Loi sur la langue officielle de la province du Québec*, declared French the sole official language of Québec, regulated French language usage in the public sector, and made access to English language schools contingent upon an existing knowledge of English. During this same period, Québec also took over responsibility for the distribution of federal family allowances. From 1974 onward, the province administered as well as supplemented federal family allowances, providing additional amounts according to the rank and age of the child. Though not explicitly stated, this move could be characterised as pronatalist due to the progression of the amount per child according to birth order. When the Federal Government family allowance was abolished in 1992, Québec continued to maintain its own child benefit allowance.

Under the first Liberal Government of Robert Bourassa, the discussion of demographic policy issues was exemplified by two unpublished documents. The first was the "*Livre Brun*", entitled *Une problématique des ressources humaines au Québec* by the Ministère de l'immigration (1974). This document concluded that greater emphasis needed to be placed on immigration as opposed to stimulating the birth rate, recognizing that the likelihood of success of policy measures designed to persuade women to have more children was questionable. The second document, *Livre blanc sur les ressources humaines: Pour une politique de population*, suggested raising the fertility rate from 1.8 to 3.2. However, this report from September 1975 was never made public and rejected by the Government

(Mathews, 1984:175, 203).

The victory of the Parti Québécois in 1976 ushered in a new phase in Québec political history. Never before had a political party whose goal was the political independence of Québec been elected. Among the priorities of the first PQ Government was the reinforcement of the French character of Québec through the strengthening of the province's language laws. In 1977, Bill 101 was passed in the National Assembly. Bill 101, or The Charter of the French Language (in English) was designed to strengthen and extend the provisions of Bill 22 with respect to education, signage and advertising, as well as public and private language usage. In the area of child care and family policy measures, the PQ instituted child care tax deductions in 1977, a child tax credit in 1978, and created the body responsible child care services, the Office de service la de garde à l'enfance in 1980<sup>2</sup>. Also in 1980, the PQ held its first unsuccessful referendum on sovereignty-association.

During the second PQ mandate (1981-85) and throughout most of the 1980s, the discussion of the family and family policy came to the fore in political and academic circles as well as in the media (Le Bourdais, 1989b). In 1981, the Executive Committee of Cabinet created the Minister of State for Social Development, which was to be responsible for identifying and putting forth policy measures concerning the family. Also in 1981, Premier René Lévesque announced the creation of the Comité interministériel sur la famille which was to prepare a working paper on family policy. *Pour les familles québécoises: document de consultation sur la politique familiale*, or what is commonly referred to as *Le Livre vert*, was completed in August 1983. In 1984, the Government created the Secrétariat à la politique familiale, which later became the Secrétariat à la famille.

During the first half of the 1980s, province-wide hearings were conducted on the basis of the *Livre Vert*, to determine the type of family policy measures to be adopted by the Québec Government. The two-volume report, *Rapport du comité de la consultation sur la politique familiale*, was published in 1986. The Report concluded that although there was not a "crisis of the family", there was a "crise des rapports collectifs et individuels entre les hommes et les femmes". As such, a principal preoccupation of family policy should be the creation of "une nouvelle solidarité entre les hommes et les femmes" (in Dandurand, 1987b:360). Moreover, the report acknowledged raising children to be a collective or societal responsibility rather than individual, and emphasized the obligation of government to support Québec families<sup>3</sup>.

A simultaneous inquiry into the demographic and political situation in Québec was the Commission permanente de la culture de l'Assemblée nationale, chaired by Liberal MNA Richard French. The inquiry commission's report, *Etude de l'impact culturel, social et économique des tendances démographiques actuelles sur l'avenir du Québec comme société distincte*, was presented to the National Assembly in September 1985. It concluded that Québec needed to formulate a population policy so as to increase fertility and immigration, in order to prevent population decline and preserve the linguistic composition and cultural specificity of Québec within Canada and North America.

With respect to immigration, several important changes took place during the PQ's first mandate (1976-1981). A federal-provincial agreement on immigration the Couture-Cullen accord, was signed in 1978. This agreement gave Québec a much larger role in encouraging francophone immigration and in selecting immigrants that could be integrated

into the francophone community. In 1981, the Ministère de l'immigration was re-established as the Ministère des communautés culturelles et de l'immigration (MCCI), and the document, *Autant de façons d'être Québécois*, outlined the growing importance of immigrants and ethnic communities "while proposing a societal model of convergence toward a central francophone culture" (Black and Hagen, 1993:292).

With the return to power of the Liberals in 1985, we see a shift in policy direction with regard to the development of family policy. This shift was the result of several related factors. First, there was the drop in the Québec fertility rate to a never-before low of 1.34 in 1987<sup>4</sup> and the accompanying calls by demographers for pronatalist policy measures. Second, major segments of francophone society remained reluctant to come to terms with an increasingly multi-ethnic society (Black and Hagen, 1993). And third, the public debate on immigration continued, influenced in part by demographic discourse that viewed immigrants as posing a threat to the French language and character of Québec. A 1987 survey conducted by Createc+ and published in *Le Devoir* illustrates the convergence:

...[l'enquête] a montré que 72% des Québécois pensent qu'eux-mêmes devraient faire plus d'enfants, avant tout, pour éviter une diminution de population; seulement 13% favorisent un recours à l'immigration. Quant aux francophones, ils préfèrent la revanche des berceaux à 77% contre 9% pour l'immigration. Les jeunes de 18 à 24 ans renforcent le courant: 80% approuvent la natalité et 10% l'immigration. 62% des francophones estiment que leur province reçoit déjà trop d'immigrants (in Gendron, 1987:9).

In December 1987, the first formal declaration of family policy, *La politique familiale: Enoncé des orientations et de la dynamique administrative*, was approved by the Conseil des ministres. In the May 1988 budget, the Liberal Government introduced a series of measures which centred on increasing the birth rate, thereby essentially ignoring the

recommendations of the 1986 Report of the Family Policy Consultative Committee. The rationale for the emphasis on the birth rate was articulated in the 1988 Budget Speech by the Minister of Finance:

...l'examen des divers programmes actuels de soutien économique à la famille nous a fait conclure à l'existence d'une lacune quant au soutien à accorder aux parents au moment même de la naissance...Pour la naissance d'un troisième, il faut mieux. Comme on le sait, la majorité des familles au Québec sont actuellement composées de un ou de deux enfants. Les résistances que l'on observe à la venue d'un troisième enfant sont de plusieurs ordres, les contraintes financières n'étant pas les moindres. C'est pourquoi, il semble important d'encourager les familles du Québec à envisager la venue d'un plus grand nombre d'enfants avec moins d'incertitudes financières et une plus grande confiance dans l'avenir<sup>5</sup>.

Policy measures in the form of economic support for families included: a programme designed to help families with two or more children purchase a home; an increase in child-care deductions; the conversion of "availability" allowances into allowances for young children; a tax exemption for Québec family allowances; and the controversial tax-exempt birth incentives (*allocation à la naissance*), which became the focal point of Québec's family policy.

Several administrative structures and coordination bodies were also created in 1988. A Minister responsible for the family was appointed "with a mandate to develop Québec family policy and act as a spokesperson on the family for the government". The Secrétariat à la politique familiale became the Secrétariat à la famille, whose purpose was "to provide the Minister with the services required to implement the multisectoral family policy within the government" (Le Bourdais et al., 1994). In addition, the act governing the Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille was amended to create the Conseil de la famille, the new

advisory body dedicated exclusively to family matters.

In 1989, the Secrétariat à la famille produced the first family policy action plan, *Familles en tête: plan d'action en matière de politique familiale*, for the years 1989-91. Subsequent plans for the years 1992-94 and 1995-97 were also produced. The first Action Plan presented 58 recommendations or policy measures and consisted of 13 "chapters" or areas of action ranging from the prevention of family violence to support for research on the family. The implementation of the Action Plan was to involve approximately twenty government departments and agencies. However, despite its good intentions, the Plan was criticized by the Conseil de la famille for not having established specific timetables or evaluation mechanisms. The Conseil du statut de la femme also criticized the Plan on the grounds that Québec's family policy was "more concerned with increasing the birthrate than with families", a critique it also levelled against subsequent plans (Le Bourdais et al., 1994).

Some like Mathews (1989), lauded the creation of the *allocation à la naissance* as ushering in a new phase in Québec demographic and family policy. Mathews regarded the measure as an adequate response to heightened public concern stemming from the realization of the severity of the demographic situation facing Québec. However, Mathews also saw the *allocation à la naissance* as being largely symbolic since the financial emphasis was on the increasingly non-existent third child, while the levels of compensation for the first and second child were minimal. Feminist organizations like the Conseil du statut de la femme also acknowledged the symbolism of the birth incentive but were more critical of this pronatalist turn in policy direction, fearing the introduction of subsequent policies to encourage fertility and the return of women to traditional roles (Bergeron and Jenson, 1999;

Le Bourdais et al., 1994).

In 1989, the Québec Government introduced the provision of 27 additional weeks of parental leave to parents of three or more children, to be added to the 18 weeks of leave covered by the Federal Government Unemployment Insurance Plan. In addition, 34 weeks of unpaid leave would be available for either parent after the birth of a child, with five days for childbirth and five days for “child-related responsibilities”. In the announcement of these policy measures, then-premier Bourassa stated that the goal of increasing the birth rate “is the most important challenge of the decade for Québec...because our future is imperilled”. Similarly, Bourassa explained how other commitments designed to increase the francophone population “would ensure the future of French in North America and the place of Québec within Confederation”<sup>6</sup>. At this time, the three provincial allocations for children - *allocations familiales*, *allocations au jeune enfant*, and *allocation à la naissance*, amounted to \$260 million or around .8% of total public spending.

Other noteworthy developments during this Liberal mandate included Bill 178 on the language of commercial signs and recourse to the notwithstanding clause of the Canadian Constitution<sup>7</sup>, and the report of the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, *Commission sur l'avenir politique et constitutionnel du Québec* issued in 1991<sup>8</sup>. In addition, there was the failure of the Meech Lake Accord and Charlottetown Accord in 1990 and 1992 respectively, two attempts by the Parti Libéral to reform the Canadian Constitution so as to guarantee Québec’s linguistic and cultural “distinctiveness” (Maroney, 1997).

With regard to immigration, there was a significant budgetary increase for the MCCI during the years 1987-1989. In the 1990 document, *Let's Build Québec Together*, four



overlapping policy areas were outlined: the need for increased immigration levels, especially francophone immigration, the promotion of French language usage among immigrants, and programmes on adaptation and intergroup relations (Black and Hagen, 1993). However, from 1992 onward, immigration levels began to decrease and in 1994, the Government reduced its annual immigration level by 20,000.

Some attribute the 1994 reduction to pressure from nationalists following the release of the 1994 report *L'avenir démographique du Québec et de ses régions*, by Marc Termote of the INRS. The Report, whose findings were originally contained within an unpublished report commissioned by the Conseil Exécutif in 1992, warned of the minority status of francophones on the island of Montréal by 2001 as a result of low fertility and international immigration<sup>9</sup>. However, the Liberal Government explained the reduction in numbers had more to do with "the difficulty in integrating immigrants into Québec's language and culture, the shortage of jobs, and the reluctance of entrepreneurs to move to Québec before a possible referendum on separation" (Mackie, 1994).

In 1993, another document on population policy was produced. The *Document de travail pour le séminaire sur la politique de population* was prepared by the Groupe de travail sur la politique de population. Its purpose was to evaluate the consequences of short-term demographic changes and put forth a comprehensive population policy action plan. The document focused predominately on increasing fertility and immigration as a means to maintain or increase population size. This report was never made public nor were any of its recommendations implemented before the Liberals left office in 1994.

With the return of the PQ to office in 1994 came the renewed interest in the project

of sovereignty. Prior to the 1995 referendum, the Ministère des affaires internationales, de l'immigration et des communautés culturelles (formerly the MCCI), released a series of pamphlets dealing with the issue of who was considered Québécois and why sovereignty was necessary for Québec. With respect to the identity or definition of Québécois:

Les Québécois sont issus directement des 60,000 habitants, d'origine française, qui peuplaient le Canada en 1763....Les Québécois sont de langue française (Ministère des Affaires internationales...., La question du Québec: Identité, 1995:3-5).

Furthermore, with regard to the others who were not descendants of the original 60,000:

Environ 17% de la population québécoise sont d'origine britannique ou multiraciale. Ces Québécois se regroupent, sous l'égide du gouvernement canadien, en "communautés multiculturelles". Jusqu'à présent, ils sont restés étrangers aux quelques quatre siècles d'histoire du Québec et ont signifié massivement, par des votes significatifs, leur volonté de vivre à l'écart de cette histoire et de rester attachés au Canada, leur terre constitutionnelle d'accueil (Ministère des affaires internationales....La question du Québec: Le peuple québécois, 1995:4).

Curiously, the pamphlets were distributed primarily in France.

During the 1995 referendum campaign, the issue of identity surfaced once again, though not before a discussion on low fertility and family policy was thrust briefly onto centre stage. It was sparked by a comment by Lucien Bouchard, then-leader of the federal Bloc Québécois, who stated that Québec's low birth rate could be attributed to the continuous constitutional squabbling which had prevented Québec from developing a suitable family policy. Furthermore, he added:

Do you think it makes sense that we have so few children in Québec? We're one of the white races that has fewest children, that's really something. That suggests we haven't solved our family problems (Bouchard in Siblin, 1995).

The reaction among those opposed to sovereignty and the anglophone press was

predictably one of outrage and shock, with accusations of racism and sexism. Conversely, sovereignists, the francophone press, and the Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ), the province's largest women's organization, appeared little interested or unsettled by the comment. In various correspondence by then-president of the FFQ Françoise David<sup>10</sup>, she explained that while Bouchard's comments might have been tactless, false and confused, they were not meant as an insult to women. Moreover, although she expressed disagreement with Bouchard's usage of the terms "race" and "white race", she also commented that he had not been the first to mistakenly confuse pronatalist policies with family policies. The second PQ referendum on sovereignty in the fall of 1995 failed by the narrowest of margins.

In December 1995, Pauline Marois, the newly appointed Minister responsible for the Family and Children, instructed the Conseil de la famille to undertake consultations with Québec parents on the eventuality of new policy measures and services for young children. This resulted in the most recent changes to family policy announced in the fall of 1996. In 1997, the PQ Government introduced legislation to implement the proposed policy measures which were also outlined in the document *Nouvelles dispositions de la politique familiale: Les enfants au coeur de nos choix* (1997). The changes included: the elimination of the *allocation à la naissance*, creation of an integrated child allowance, the establishment of a parental insurance plan (*assurance parentale*), the introduction of \$5 a day child care for all children, and an increase in the number of child care spaces. Five dollar a day child care spaces were initially provided for children four years of age as of September 30, 1997. Gradually, this has been expanded to include children of all ages<sup>11</sup>. The implementation of the parental insurance plan was postponed in August 1997, after Québec and Ottawa failed

to reach an agreement on the transfer of Employment Insurance premiums and other child tax benefits and credits<sup>12</sup>.

The administrative changes with regard to family policy implementation included Law 145, which modified the *Loi des services de l'Office de garde des enfants*. This law (re)created the present-day Ministry of the Family and Childhood and included the merging of the Secrétariat à la famille and the Office des services de garde à l'enfance. In addition, the law extended the size and mandate of the Conseil de la famille which was renamed Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance.

Since 1997, another provincial election has taken place. During the 1998 election campaign, both the Liberals and the PQ made family policy and the Québec family a part, albeit a minor one, of their party platforms. Whereas the Parti Québécois highlighted its \$5 a day child care and focused on the ability of the policy measure to "change lives, improve the birth rate and close the gender gap"<sup>13</sup>, the Liberals proposed to alleviate the financial burden of Québec families through tax cuts of \$500 million for families with children. Although both parties promised to extend the availability of child care spaces to include 2 year olds and infants by fall 1999 and the year 2000 respectively, the Liberals also proposed tax cuts targeted at families in which one parent remained at home with the children. According to Liberal leader Jean Charest, the tax deductions were in response to "a cry of alarm from Québec families" and "reflect the choices families have made, not choices the government wants to make for them" (Bauch, 1998:A6)<sup>14</sup>. On November 30, 1998, the Parti Québécois was returned to office with a smaller percentage of the popular vote than the rival Liberals. The implementation of the proposed increases in the number of child care spaces,

as well as the creation of an alternative to the parental insurance plan, remains to be seen.

## **A Textual Content Analysis of Québec Government Documents**

This section explains the method used to analyze the corpus of government documents, and provides information on the documents and the questions used in the analysis. The corpus consists of a sample of Québec Government documents on family policy, fertility and demographic policy produced by a variety of departments, agencies, advisory councils, and commissions of inquiry between 1970 and 1997. The textual content analysis of these documents involves a series of seven questions (see Appendix I), which were formulated on the basis of the central themes and issues from the Québec demographic literature discussed in the previous chapter. My intention was to discover which themes and issues from the feminist demographic literature had been included within the corpus of government documents. More precisely, the goal of the textual discourse analysis was to discover the following: What is the type of discourse surrounding fertility decline, the family, and pronatalism? What, if any, is the intensity of pronatalist discourse? How were factors such as language, culture, immigration discussed? And, most importantly, to what extent have the issues raised in the feminist literature been incorporated into Québec Government demographic discourse and policy measures?

As discussed previously, discourse or policy measures which restrict the choices and actions of women or infringe upon the gains of contemporary feminist organizing, can be viewed as contrary to the goals of feminism. As such, a major emphasis of the textual content analysis was to determine the compatibility of discourse and policy measures put forth in the

Government documents with the goals of women's equality, autonomy, and freedom of choice.

Québec feminist demographers have characterized pronatalist discourse or policy measures that advocate the return of women to the home, part-time employment, or long absences from the workforce as inconsistent with feminist principles of gender equality, freedom of choice, and autonomy, since they deny women access to equality and financial self-sufficiency (Dandurand and Kempeneers, 1990; Le Bourdais, 1989b). Likewise, discourse and policy measures based on a limiting view of women which emphasizes their reproductive role in the family, or which problematizes and links women's reproductive behaviour to the collective survival and political interests of Québec, are also incompatible with the self-determination of women. Pronatalist discourse or policy measures disguised as family policy measures can also be considered detrimental towards women.

### **Textual Content Analysis: "Reading" the Documents**

For the purpose of this dissertation, textual content analysis is taken to mean:

...the analysis of the content of communication, which involves classifying contents in such a way as to bring out their basic structure. This term is normally applied to the analysis of documentary or visual material rather than interview data...Researchers create a set of categories which illuminate the issues under study and then classify content according to these predetermined categories"(Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 1988:50).

This method was chosen because of its suitability to organize and classify the large variety and volume of documents in the sample. It also comprises an historical component which allowed me to chronicle the evolution of Government discourse and policy measures put

forth by a variety of government sources over a relatively long period of time - twenty-seven years in this case.

Textual content analysis has further advantages as it does not require access to politicians, policy makers, or other members of the bureaucratic decision-making process since it deals with the analysis of written documentation alone. It provides an independent means of studying the evolution of the bureaucratic administrative process and the ways in which specific policy areas and issues have been defined over a given period of time. The use of this method allowed me to determine which issues were discussed by government departments and agencies, and perhaps more importantly, to recognize issues which have been absent from the discussion. Given that the analysis of Government discourse on Québec family policy is the chief concern of this study, textual content analysis is clearly a well-suited research method to analyze the corpus of documents.

### **Textual Content Analysis: The Documents**

My first task was to identify the relevant Québec Government documents dealing with family policy, fertility, and demographic policy. Beginning with a listing of thousands of government documents contained in the computerized data base of the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, Edifice Aegidius-Fauteux<sup>15</sup>, an initial search was conducted on the basis of the following search categories: family policy (*politique familiale*), fertility (*fécondité*), family allowances (*allocations familiales*), and demography (*démographie*). "Women" as a search category was not used because it is too general and would generate numerous documents not relevant to my problematic.

This led to a second search according to organization and publication name which appeared under the category headings of the initial search by subject matter. The third and final search screened the list of documents produced by the relevant organizations and eliminated those documents irrelevant to a study of family policy matters. Amongst the final sample of documents, some documents focus specifically on women and family policy, fertility, or demographic policy, while many of them make no specific reference to women at all. In addition to the documents obtained from the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, the chief repository of Québec Government documents, some documents were acquired directly from Québec Government departments and agencies, or in the case of several unpublished documents, from private archival sources. The total number of documents in the sample is ninety-two.

An initial consideration in the final selection of documents was the existence of policy recommendations and/or potential policy implications of each document. I believed that documents which included policy measures or recommendations would prove particularly useful as they would allow me to observe the orientation of government departments or advisory bodies, whose role is to advise to policy makers on specific policy matters. However, because a substantial proportion of the documents in the final selection contained either few or no policy recommendations, it was no longer feasible to make this a strict criterion for selection.

### **Textual Content Analysis: The Corpus**

The sample of documents or corpus stems from a relatively limited number of



Québec Government departments, policy secretariats, advisory councils, and commissions of inquiry. These include: the *Ministère* and Conseil des affaires sociales, the Ministère du travail, the Secrétariat à la famille, the Conseil de la famille, the Conseil du statut de la femme, Bureau de la statistique du Québec, and the Régie des rentes du Québec. Studies generated by commissions of inquiry include those by the Commission permanente de la culture, Ministère de l'immigration, Secrétariat au développement social, and the Groupe de travail sur la politique de population.

In addition to documents produced by line departments, I have chosen to include documents by Québec Government advisory bodies, such as advisory councils and commissions of inquiry, though neither are directly responsible for the implementation or administration of government policies. Nonetheless, their presence is indicative of a certain level of concern or commitment to act on the part of government in a given policy area. Advisory councils often have the dual function of representing and lobbying on behalf of specific constituencies of the population, in addition to acting as government policy advisors (Jackson and Jackson, 1994). As such, they can be viewed as:

...vehicles for channelling public opinion on particular issues. Conversely, they assist the government in this capacity by generating support for the latter's policies...[and] can serve as critics and consensus builders in the policy process (Doerr in Kernaghan and Siegel, 1991:264).

Québec advisory councils like the Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance and Conseil du statut de la femme have permanent staff positions and many of the trappings of the formal bureaucracy. They are responsible for organizing consultations, the preparation of studies and research, and the production of opinions on policy direction which are consulted by

government. An extract from an information pamphlet on the creation of the Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance illustrates the instrumental and influential role of advisory councils:

La principale tâche du nouveau Conseil demeure avant tout celle de conseiller le gouvernement au regard de la famille et de l'enfance et de l'accompagner dans le développement de la politique familiale québécoise (Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance, 1998).

Reports by task forces, commissions of inquiry and coloured papers were also included in the corpus as they constitute an important part of the policy process and are frequently used as a source of policy advice by the executive branch of government. For example, coloured papers are prepared by government departments to:

...communicate current government thinking on a particular issue to interested individuals or groups and to stimulate public discussion on the issue (Kernaghan and Siegel, 1991:128-9).

A green paper, such as *Pour les familles québécoises: document de consultation sur la politique familiale* (1984), though not a statement of government policy, signals the first step taken by governments when considering change or action in a policy area. By contrast, a white paper such as *La politique familiale: Enoncé des orientations et de la dynamique administrative* (1987) or *Nouvelles dispositions de la politique familiale: Les enfants au coeur de nos choix* (1997), is a statement of government policy in everyday language prior to the drafting of legislation.

Commissions of inquiry and task forces created through Orders-in-Council<sup>16</sup>, have as their mandate the investigation of a critical or sensitive public policy area and the preparation of a report containing recommendations on an appropriate course of action. Jackson and Jackson (1994) explain how proposals from commissions and task forces are

usually incorporated into government action in the form of incremental policy changes, the process having allowed decision makers to first sound out the limitations of their intended action. Reports like *L'Etude de l'impact cultural, social et économique des tendances démographiques actuelles sur l'avenir du Québec comme société distincte* (1985) and *Rapport du comité de la consultation sur la politique familiale* (1986), are examples of these types of documents included within the sample. Aspects of each of the above types of documents have had implications for both discourse and the family policy agenda in Québec.

The time frame of the corpus dates from 1970 to 1997 and corresponds with the creation of several key Québec Government departments and agencies, such as the Ministère de l'immigration (1968), the Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille (1970) - preceded by the Conseil supérieur de la famille, and later replaced by the Conseil de la famille (1987) and the Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance (1997), as well as the Secrétariat à la famille (1989). Likewise, it coincides with a time period characterized by an increasing awareness of issues such as declining francophone fertility, Québec nationalism and independence, and a growing anxiety over linguistic and cultural preservation and survival within a predominantly English Canada and North America.

Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Three, this era corresponds to the growing influence and profile of demography as a legitimate profession within Québec, and the increasing influence of demographers in shaping public policy discourse and policy measures concerning language, fertility and immigration (Maroney, 1992). Lastly, the period 1970 to 1997 encompasses the creation of the Québec advisory council on women, Le Conseil du statut de la femme in 1973, and reflects the growing societal awareness of feminism and

issues concerning women, as well as the heightened awareness and consciousness of women themselves.

### **Textual Content Analysis: The Questions**

A series of seven questions was formulated to guide the analysis of the ninety-two Québec Government documents (see Appendix I). Beginning with the hypothesis that patriarchy and ideology act as hegemonic organizing principles which order and regulate discourse and society, the questions were designed to discover if the principal themes and issues in feminist demographic discourse and research had influenced the content and discussion of issues within the sample of Québec Government documents. Specifically, the questions sought to examine the following: Was there a preoccupation with the declining birth rate? Were policy measures or any type of action recommended? Could the recommendations be considered pronatalist in orientation? Was there any reference made to immigration, political or linguistic matters, or the demographic weight of Québec within the Canada? Do the documents address issues raised by feminist demographers?

The design and structure of the questions reflects my desire to determine both the manifest and latent content of the documents. Manifest content refers to the "visible, surface content", whereas latent content is the "underlying meaning" (Babbie, 1986). I believe it is necessary to ascertain both types of meanings because although a document may not contain any visible, manifest content, it may nonetheless contain latent content or meaning due to the overall tone or way issues are discussed within the document. Although a document may not have specifically mentioned the need for "pronatalist measures", it can nevertheless suggest

these kinds of measures under the guise of a different name. As I discuss below, whereas few Québec Government publications explicitly advocate pronatalist measures, some documents convey similar sentiments and ideas as a result of the emphasis placed on the "role of the family", the number of children per family, or by focusing on certain types of incentives or measures to support the family. Some documents have even gone so far as to frame their discussion of women's rights within the context of encouraging women to have the number of children they really desire. Therefore, the questions were both broad and specific so as to identify and capture both manifest or overt displays of pronatalism or feminist content, for example, as well as the latent or underlying meaning within the text.

It should be noted that some of the questions were more pertinent or applicable than others. A question with minor explanatory value was number six which asked if mainstream and/or feminist literature had been cited, or if any person or group had been consulted in the preparation of the document. Whereas I initially believed that knowing who or what had been consulted would enable me to determine which demographers and what type of demographic literature had played an instrumental role in influencing government discourse and policy, the results of content analysis proved otherwise. First, because some documents list neither references nor persons consulted, it is impossible to know with certainty who or what sources have been influential in shaping government discourse. Second, although mainstream demographic literature may have been cited or used in the preparation of a document, it is inaccurate to assume that government discourse will reflect the ideological bias or position of the literature. Therefore, a discussion of the findings of this question has not been included.

Another question with limited significance was number seven, whose purpose was to ascertain if policy recommendations had been included in each of the government documents. I assumed that because demographers and the demographic literature had emphasized the need for various types of policy measures and actions on the part of the Québec Government, government discourse and policy measures would be reflective of these desires. However, it was not always the case that policy recommendations were included in the documents.

With regard to the remaining questions, number one sought to identify the purpose and mandate of the document. Question two asked if family policy was the focus of the document, whereas question three examined if fertility decline was viewed as problematic, the inclusion of pronatalist sentiments or measures, and if and how family policy was discussed in relation to pronatalism. Question four highlighted the issues of language, culture and immigration. Its purpose was to determine whether the link between nationalist concerns and pronatalist discourse, as illustrated within the mainstream demographic literature, was also present in the documents. Finally, the goal of question five was to determine the predisposition of government discourse with regard to women. Ultimately, the purpose was to establish if the issues raised in the feminist literature had been incorporated into the documents. Is Québec Government discourse with regard to women patriarchal, familialist or feminist?

### **Textual Content Analysis: Interpreting the Data**

The ninety-two documents which comprise the corpus of this study were sorted

according to organization and read in a sequential, chronological order. The nine broad organizational groupings include: the Ministère des affaires sociales (4 documents), Secrétariat à la famille (19 documents), Conseil des affaires sociales (2 documents), Ministère du travail et Ministère de la main-d'oeuvre et de la sécurité du revenu (3 documents), Régie des rentes (2 documents), Bureau de la statistique du Québec (2 documents), Conseil de la famille (31 documents), the Conseil du statut de la femme (21 documents), and a category of miscellaneous documents consisting of one commission of inquiry, two unpublished governmental documents, and documents from other government ministries (8 documents).

It is obvious that the majority of the documents in the corpus come from three key organizations: the Secrétariat à la famille, which is responsible for the overall coordination of family policy matters and reports directly to the Executive Council, and the Conseil de la famille and Conseil du statut de la femme, two government-appointed advisory bodies on family and women issues respectively. Surprisingly, the search produced only one document by the Secrétariat à la condition féminine, the body responsible for the coordination of issues relevant to women.

In the next chapter, the findings of the textual content analysis along with the key themes and issues discussed within the corpus of the government documents are summarized. An examination of the influence of feminist demographic discourse on Québec family policy documents is left to the concluding chapter.

## Endnotes

1. The Duplessis Government was opposed to mothers' allowances on the basis that it limited the rights of the father, who according to the Québec Civil Code, was the head of the family and sole administrator of the couple's common property. The Québec clergy also opposed the new measure as a threat to male authority in the family. See Clio Collective (1987:284-87) for further details.
2. See Dandurand (1987b) for an excellent overview of key family policy initiatives and events during the 1980s.
3. From the *Rapport du Comité de la consultation sur la politique familiale*, 1986:40 in Le Bourdais et al.(1994).
4. Based on a figure supplied by the Bureau de la statistique du Québec in Le Bourdais et al. (1994).
5. Ministère des Finances, Discours sur le budget, 1988-1989 in Secrétariat à la famille, *Carnet de Famille*, Hiver 1996:7.
6. From Picard in Baker (1990:7).
7. For an overview of the events surrounding Bill 178, see Lachapelle et al.(1993:342-344).
8. See Delisle (1991) on Henripin's presentation to the Bélanger-Campeau Commission concerning fertility increase as a solution to Québec's demographic problem.
9. For further information see Mackie (1994), Plante (1994a, 1994b).
10. Letters from Françoise David to Suzanne Marcil, 18 October 1995, and to the membership at large, 20 October 1995.
11. See the Ministère de la famille et de l'enfance press release: "Le ministère de la famille et de l'enfance poursuit l'implantation des places à 5\$", September 1, 1998 which describes the inclusion of services for three year olds in September 1998, two year olds in September 1999, one year olds by September 2000 and, for children less than a year by September 2001.
12. See Ministère de la famille et de l'enfance (1999) for details and the projected plan of the Québec Government.
13. From the *Gazette* editorial entitled "Take care on daycare", November 9, 1998.
14. See also Gagnon (1998).



15. The computerized data base catalogues documents according to subject matter, organizational name, or name of publication.

16. Orders-in-council are "decisions rendered by Cabinet on specific matters carrying legal force" (Jackson and Jackson, 1994:281).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE FINDINGS: A TEXTUAL CONTENT ANALYSIS OF QUEBEC GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS, 1970-1997

#### Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the textual content analysis for the corpus of Québec Government documents dating from 1970 to 1997. There are ninety-two documents which have been categorized according to nine organizational groupings<sup>1</sup>. While the findings of many of the documents have been presented separately, some were summarized by group or document type, depending on the nature of the subject matter or documents involved. A discussion of the influence of feminist demographic discourse on the sample of government documents follows in Chapter Six.

#### Ministère des Affaires Sociales

With regard to the first organizational grouping, the Ministère des affaires sociales, there are four documents which can be described as very significant to the family policy process in Québec during the 1980s.

The first document, *Les programmes de services sociaux offerts aux familles québécoises* (1982), consists essentially of a review prepared for the Comité interministériel sur la famille of the various programmes offered to families by the Ministère des affaires sociales. The document is mostly descriptive and outlines nineteen sectoral policy areas for families with children under 17 years of age<sup>2</sup>. While the focus of the document is definitely

family policy, there is also a discussion of pronatalist measures. There is no mention of language, culture or immigration, nor any of the issues raised in the feminist literature. There are no policy recommendations put forward in the document.

The second document is the working paper on family policy *Pour les familles québécoises: Document de consultation sur la politique familiale* (1984), also known as the *Livre Vert*. It was prepared by the Comité interministériel sur la famille for the Ministère des affaires sociales with the intention to:

...set forth, for the first time on the part of a government in Québec, what a family policy could entail and encompass (Ministère des affaires sociales, 1984:7).

In this document, Québec's low birth rate is cited as one of three demographic characteristics of the population and a cause for concern, while Québec society and its people are referred to several times as having a "unique role to play in America and the world" (Ministère des affaires sociales, 1984:5). Aside from this, there are no references to language, culture, or immigration.

Although pronatalist measures to increase the birth rate are not explicitly mentioned, it is suggested that family or population policy measures could influence the decision to have children. While acknowledging women's "specific rights and demands as women" and shared parenting rather than the separation of roles, the *Livre Vert* raises the issue of providing services which would facilitate women's dual responsibilities as parents and workers. The document also stresses the need for policy measures or structures which would allow women or couples the choice to remain at home with their children if they so chose to do so. Moreover, it urges the establishment of a comprehensive support system which could

potentially motivate couples to have the number of children they desire.

The *Livre Vert* issues a strong message warning against the dangers of the State acting as a substitute for the family and being too interventionist. There is a substantial discussion on how families should be supported but also on how they should be more autonomous or responsible for their own affairs. As discussed below, this emphasis on the State being detrimental to the family and the return to a more traditional conception of the self-sufficient family has been criticized by the Conseil du statut de la femme. The CSF feared that discourse advocating the retrenchment of State services and more reliance on the private sphere would return women to their traditional role of unpaid, unrecognized caregivers with no means of economic support or independence of their own.

Lastly, this document, like a number of other documents in the corpus, remarks that women or couples are not having the number of children they ideally would like due to structural, economic and other factors. However, the *Livre Vert* does not put forth any policy recommendations as the document was to serve as the basis of discussion for the formulation of family policy.

The third document, *Rapport du Comité de la consultation sur la politique familiale* (1986) is the outcome of the province-wide family policy consultative process initiated by the Parti Québécois in the early 80s. The report consists of two volumes and was prepared by the Comité de la consultation sur la politique familiale. The first volume provides an overview of the consultation process which centred around the key policy areas of support needed for Québec families. The second volume contains 136 recommendations in the key policy sectors: economic aid to families; work and parental responsibilities; housing;

preparing for family responsibilities and the relations between school and family; leisure and cultural activities for the family; child care services; social and other services required for the well-being of families; family law; family violence; and the administrative structures required for the implementation of a family policy.

Although the Report refers to Québec's low fertility as worrisome, it acknowledges that the demand for pronatalist policy measures was a minority position during the consultation process<sup>3</sup>. The document also includes a discussion of what constitutes family policy and how it differs from other policy areas. For example, the differences between family policy and social policy in general; the distinction between family, pronatalist, and population policy; and the specific types of policy measures and administrative structures required to put a family policy in place. Furthermore, the Committee Report clearly states that the decision to have a child is the choice of individuals and couples, and that support for families is required regardless of Québec's demographic situation.

La décision de mettre des enfants au monde, même si elle se prend le plus souvent dans un cadre familial, reste foncièrement une responsabilité et un choix d'individus et de couples.

Bien sûr, on peut penser que si les parents et les familles sont mieux soutenus, cela aura un impact sur la natalité. Mais ce n'est pas pour cela qu'il faut nous doter d'une politique familiale.

La politique familiale est essentiellement une politique de qualité de vie et de soutien minimal apporté aux parents, aux enfants et à l'unité familiale.

Cette politique doit exister dans une société comme la nôtre, indépendamment de la situation de la natalité (Comité de la consultation sur la politique familiale, Volume II, 1986:43).

In addition to the 136 recommendations, the *Rapport du Comité de la consultation sur la politique familiale* lists seven priority recommendations in the conclusion of Volume II. These include: urging the Government to create an administrative structure for the

implementation of a family policy which would focus on the sharing of parental responsibilities between women and men; the adaptation of the workplace to accommodate parental duties; increased child-care and other health and social services for children; programmes and action in the area of family violence; increased family allowances; and the creation of programmes to facilitate greater parental involvement in schools, as well as preparatory courses on family life and responsibilities (pages 145-6).

This document addresses many of the concerns identified as important in the feminist literature, such as the sharing of parental responsibilities and increased child care facilities. Likewise, it refers to the issue of how to ensure the complementarity of family policy with women's equality/women's policy issues. Aside from the documents published by the Conseil du statut de la femme, the *Rapport* can be seen as the document most influenced by feminist discourse of all the corpus. Unfortunately, not many of its recommendations or findings had an impact on Government policy direction. There was no mention of language, culture or immigration.

The final document in this organizational grouping is the often cited White Paper, *La Politique familiale: Énoncé des orientations et de la dynamique administrative* (Ministère de la santé et des services sociaux; Secrétariat à la politique familiale, 1987), which outlined the administrative structures and overall policy direction of the Liberal Government's family policy. With regard to administrative structures, the document describes the role of the Minister responsible for the family who, with the help of the Secrétariat à la famille, was to oversee the coordination of family policy measures amongst various ministries and organizations. It also outlines the creation of the Conseil de la famille, which was to provide

the Minister with studies and opinions concerning the family and maintain contact with the public and family organizations.

With respect to policy direction, the White Paper emphasizes few of the policy areas and recommendations of the *Rapport du Comité de la consultation sur la politique familiale*. It differs from the *Rapport* in the sense that it is more preoccupied with transformations to the Québec family, especially the declining birthrate, which is mentioned as the second lowest in the Western world after (then) West Germany. Whereas the *Rapport* urges the need for a redefinition of roles and responsibilities for childrearing amongst women and men, the Liberal Government's *Enoncé* conveys a more pronatalist sentiment and the need for family policy measures to address this concern. This pronatalist orientation became more explicit in the budget of May 1988, which established the *allocation à la naissance*, the birth incentive weighted in favour of the third child. The *Enoncé* mentions the role of immigration in diminishing the effects of demographic decline in the context of an overall population policy, citing findings from the Commission permanente de la culture de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec discussed below.

### **Secrétariat à la Famille**

The second organizational grouping includes nineteen documents produced by the Secrétariat à la famille. While all the documents focus on family policy, many emphasize the problem of fertility decline and refer to pronatalist measures designed to increase the birth rate. There is a noticeable preoccupation with numbers in many of the documents, be it with regard to the "precipitous drop in the birth rate" ("baisse radicale de la fécondité")<sup>4</sup> or the

satisfaction of survey respondents with the number of children they have (Secrétariat à la famille, 1991). In general, the documents in this organizational grouping can be sub-divided into three different kinds: research studies and surveys, Family Policy Action Plans (*Familles en tête*), and information publications, including the quarterly newsletter, *Carnet de famille*.

The first type of documents, research studies and surveys, were for the most part commissioned by the Secrétariat à la famille and prepared by an assortment of individuals, primarily demographers, sociologists and economists. These include a report on the economic determinants of fertility (Secrétariat à la famille, 1993c); an evaluation of the complementarity between Québec family policy and reforms to the Civil Code (Secrétariat à la famille, 1993a); a socio-demographic profile of single-parent and blended family types in Québec (Secrétariat à la famille, 1993f); a study of factors influencing Québec fertility between 1960 and 1990 (Secrétariat à la famille, 1992b); an analysis of Québec fertility decline between 1960 and 1990 (Secrétariat à la famille, 1992a); and the often cited study comparing the results of three surveys on the desire for children (Secrétariat à la famille, 1991).

In a majority of these documents, the issue of fertility decline has been problematized. Recent low levels of fertility in Québec are said to be the result of several factors, such as the increase in divorce and family instability, financial constraints, or recent changes in women's aspirations toward paid employment which have negatively affected fertility. Several of the documents focus specifically on what motivates couples to have children and how measures, such as financial incentives, could influence them to have more. Although there are no explicit references to language, culture, or immigration, one of the documents describes how



policy responses to the declining birth rate are the result of increasing concern over the political weight of Québec within Canada:

Cette politique a été engendrée, sinon par la peur de 'disparaître', du moins par la volonté de retarder le moment où la population du Québec commencera à décroître en nombre absolu et de freiner en même temps l'érosion quasi inéluctable de la place relative de la population québécoise au sein du Canada (Secrétariat à la famille, 1993c:3).

Another document, *La famille et le désir d'enfants: les résultats comparés de trois enquêtes 1985-1988-1991* (1991), is particularly noteworthy, not least because it is cited in several documents in the corpus as well as various academic writings. This document clearly illustrates the preoccupation with the **number** of children per family in Québec, as six out of thirteen survey questions concentrate on the actual and desired number of children per respondent.

The document begins by lamenting how Québec went from having one of the highest fertility rates in the Western world in 1961 to currently having one of the lowest (Secrétariat à la famille, 1991:3). It then explains that while the family is still an important priority and the desire to have children remains strong among the majority of Québécois, socio-economic constraints and problems such as reconciling paid employment with childrearing prevent many couples from realizing their desire for more children. Interestingly enough, the study also establishes that 30% and 18% of respondents in 1985 and 1991 respectively considered the increased proportion of working women posed "tremendous" or "a lot" of difficulties for families (Secrétariat à la famille, 1991:11)<sup>5</sup>. The study concludes that although the amount of children deemed socially and personally desirable has diminished between the 1988 and 1991 surveys, the number is still higher than 2 (Secrétariat à la famille, 1991:14). The issue

of how to assist couples in fulfilling this unrealized desire did not fall within the scope of this document.

The second document type in this organizational grouping consists of four documents pertaining to three family policy action plans. The first action plan, *Familles en tête: plan d'action en matière de politique familiale, 1989-1991* (1989), was prepared by the Secrétariat à la famille in response to the 1987 policy statement discussed above, *La Politique familiale: Enoncé des orientations et de la dynamique administrative* (Ministère de la santé et des services sociaux; Secrétariat à la politique familiale, 1987) and, as part of its mandate which included:

...(le) développement des politiques et des programmes en faveur des familles, de la coordination interministérielle ainsi que de la concertation avec les organismes sectoriels concernés (Secrétariat à la famille, 1989:17).

The first Family Policy Action Plan set forth 58 recommendations ranging from improving the financial situation of families, the extension of maternity and parental leave, increased availability of psycho-social services for families, to the adoption of a "family-centred" approach in everything from leisure and cultural activities to the media. With regard to the provision of child care services, no new initiatives were recommended. Curiously, the document states that the main objective of the action plan was increased financial support for large families (3 or more children) with young children, while at that time, 81% of Québec families had only one or two children<sup>6</sup>.

While the primary focus of the document is the family and measures to assist the family, there is a discernible pronatalist slant and emphasis on the number of children and family size. Children are described as the "richesse collective" of Québec society, which has

been criticized by some feminist demographers for the suggestion that Québec's collective survival or interests are linked to its number of children, or to the need to increase the number of children<sup>7</sup>. Declaring that a "major shift will be required to enable parents to have the children they desire" (Secrétariat à la famille, 1989:15), the document refers to potential problems caused by declining fertility and the need for government intervention in this matter. For example:

... bien que les comportements des personnes à l'égard de la fécondité soient de l'ordre de l'intimité, l'Etat ne peut demeurer neutre devant la baisse radicale de la fécondité qui risque d'avoir d'importantes répercussions sur les plans politique, économique et social et sur la survie même du Québec comme société distincte (Secrétariat à la famille, 1989:15).

Furthermore, in the preface to the document by then-premier Robert Bourassa, he expressed that through a concerted effort on the part of Government and its partners:

...nous parviendrons à atteindre un objectif d'avenir qui nous tient à coeur, celui d'assumer la survie du Québec francophone en cette terre d'Amérique et d'accroître la qualité de vie de nos familles (Message du premier ministre in Secrétariat à la famille, 1989:3).

In addition to the apprehension surrounding the political and socio-economic ramifications of fertility decline, the Plan also expresses ambivalence with respect to the role of immigration. For example:

Les conséquences prévisibles de la sous-fécondité québécoise sont le vieillissement accéléré de la population et le début inévitable de sa décroissance dans une quinzaine d'années.  
Inévitable puisque même un accroissement important de l'immigration et une diminution du nombre de personnes qui quittent le Québec ne pourraient que ralentir quelque peu le vieillissement et retarder le début de la décroissance de la population (Secrétariat à la famille, 1989:11).

With respect to women, the document acknowledges the increased number of women

working outside the home (within the section *Les transformations de la vie familiale: les aspects psychosociologiques* (!) - page 12) and the resulting changes for families, workplaces, and within relationships between women and men. The Family Policy Action Plan has the tendency, like other documents in the corpus, to speak in gender-neutral terms and refer to "parental responsibilities" and "parental leave." However, these terms belie the reality of many women's lives and downplay the fact that many of the issues concerning the reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities, such as the problem of income replacement for women on maternity leave, are specific to women<sup>8</sup>.

A number of recommendations from the Plan were translated into concrete policy measures or legislation. In the *Loi sur les normes du travail de 1990*, 34 weeks of unpaid parental leave were added to the existing 18 weeks of maternity leave; paternity or adoptive leave was increased from 2 to 5 days, with the first 2 days now paid; and the provision of five days of unpaid parental leave for activities related to children was instituted<sup>9</sup>.

The second Family Policy Action Plan, *Familles en tête: 2ième plan d'action en matière de politique familiale, 1992-1994* (Secrétariat à la famille, 1992c), contains 92 policy recommendations organized according to five principal areas: the prevention and promotion of harmonious family relations (with an emphasis on family violence); the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities; financial support; the improvement of family life (with regard to school, leisure, culture); and lastly, the pursuit of a family-oriented focus. Recommendation #87 announces the establishment of the first biannual conference on the family, designed to bring together representatives from family organizations, unions, business organizations, municipalities, and various levels of government to discuss the

objectives and measures proposed in this plan of action. Alongside each policy measure is the name of the government department or agency responsible for its implementation. The Plan also includes a summary of the aforementioned measures and initiatives which were executed as a result of the first Action Plan.

The second Family Policy Action Plan can be characterized as less pronatalist in orientation, due in part to the numerous criticisms of the first Plan<sup>10</sup>. The accent on supporting large families was eliminated in the second Plan, although the goal of assisting parents to have their optimal number of children remained constant. The survey results on the desired number of children (Secrétariat à la famille, 1991) are once again mentioned, as are references to the profound changes to Québec society as witnessed by smaller family size, a greater diversity of family types, and the increased labour force participation of women with children. There is no discussion of the role of immigration in this document, nor are there any references to language or culture as in the first Plan.

Lastly, with respect to the issues raised in the feminist literature, the second Family Policy Action Plan is similar to the first. On the one hand, it also refers to the functions, responsibilities, and difficulties of working parents in gender-neutral terms. While on the other hand, many of the references or statistics are on working mothers only. Under the sub-heading "Des parents plus actifs" (my emphasis), all the examples point to working or studying mothers and the consequences of this on the demand for child care (Secrétariat à la famille, 1991:12-13). Most of the proposed measures on reconciling work and family in the second plan centred on providing information or sensitizing employers to the nature of the problem. The absence of concrete measures, in combination with the obfuscation of the

fact that it is mostly women who are faced with balancing work and family responsibilities, serves to reinforce the already difficult situation experienced by many working mothers.

The third Action Plan, *Familles en tête, 1995-1997: Plan d'action des partenaires en matière familiale* (Secrétariat à la famille, 1995) is the last in the series within the corpus of Québec Government documents. In addition to the third Action Plan, there is the consultation document which preceded it, *Familles en tête, 1995-1997: Les défis à relever* (Secrétariat à la famille, 1994c).

The third Action Plan is unlike the first two plans and represents a noticeable shift in the approach towards family policy action plans. This Plan can be described as a collaborative effort between Government and non-governmental partners (family and community organizations, unions and business organizations, municipalities, etc.), who were collectively involved in the formulation and adoption of an extensive series of family policy measures or challenges (*défis*), which formed the basis of the third Plan. Both the consultative document (Secrétariat à la famille, 1994c) and the third Action Plan (Secrétariat à la famille, 1995) centred around four major policy areas: prevention of violence and family dissolution; reconciliation of family and work responsibilities; financial support of families; and the improvement of family life (housing, social services, regional and local intervention in the family).

Although the multisectoral plan contains an impressive number of recommendations (*engagements*), 371 in total, there are several difficulties worth mentioning. First, because many of the recommendations are so far-ranging and diverse, they can no longer be described as pertaining to family policy but rather social policy in general. For example, the

recommendation *Défi 1.1.7*, "Protéger les enfants et les jeunes contre le tabagisme et la fumée de tabac" (page 37) is too general for even the most inclusive definitions of family policy. Second, many of the recommendations or initiatives in the third Action Plan are lacking in terms of specific legislative or policy action because they were no longer the responsibility of the Government, but of the numerous non-governmental partners involved. Unlike the first and second Action Plans, the Government was no longer responsible for the implementation of many of the initiatives within the third Action Plan. This begs the question as to whether these family policy measures can be considered part of the Québec Government's policy or programme. Moreover, it creates the dilemma of how to monitor and evaluate a family policy which is the responsibility of so many participants. These issues are not dealt with in the document.

In terms of the specific content and orientation of the document, the third Action Plan is less focused on the problem of fertility decline than its predecessors and makes no references to language, culture or immigration. It does allude to the special needs of Aboriginal and immigrant families though many of these recommendations consist of the need for increased research, public sensitization or publicity. In fact, numerous recommendations in all four policy areas in the third Action Plan call for more research or a review of existing programmes or legislation rather than a commitment to new services or funding. With regard to key family policy areas like child care or parental and maternity leave, there are no recommendations for additional spending, nor for the improvement of existing programmes.

Another difference from the preceding Action Plans is the way in which the third Plan

refers to some of the issues raised in the feminist literature. Albeit the document lacks significant policy measures, and for the most part, continues to utilize the gender-neutral term parent, it is the first plan to recognize the specificity of women's experiences in parenting. For example, with regard to the increase in the number of working women within the chapter on the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities:

Cette situation n'est pas sans poser des problèmes importants pour les parents qui ont à concilier des exigences familiales et professionnelles souvent divergentes. Le fardeau repose trop souvent sur les seules épaules de la mère. C'est à elle qu'incombe, en grande partie, la charge des tâches domestiques et des soins à donner aux enfants. C'est elle qui doit s'absenter du travail pour des raisons familiales (maladie d'un enfant, problème de gardienne, etc.) (Secrétariat à la famille, 1995:65).

Although a step in the right direction, the recognition remained largely at the level of discourse, since the 73 recommendations or initiatives in this policy area are rudimentary in comparison to the complexity of the problem. As mentioned earlier, many of the initiatives encouraged sensitization and research into measures to better reconcile work and family responsibilities but offered little in terms of concrete solutions.

The third category of documents belonging to the Secrétariat à la famille organizational grouping are information publications. Of the nine documents, there are two guidebooks on the rights, services, and resources available to Québec families (Secrétariat à la famille, 1994a, 1993e<sup>11</sup>), an overview of the proceedings of the first biannual conference on the family (Secrétariat à la famille, 1993g), a booklet on encouraging men to become more involved in parenting (Secrétariat à la famille, 1994b), a questionnaire on the sharing of tasks and responsibilities within couples (Secrétariat à la famille, 1994d), two documents providing information on the International Year of the Family and the *Forum sur la famille*



(Secrétariat à la famille, 1993b,1993d), and another one on research funds available for projects on the family called *Fonds famille* (Secrétariat à la famille, 1992d). The last "document" in this category consists of fourteen issues of the quarterly newsletter *Carnet de famille*, published between 1992-1996.

Although these documents contain information on Québec Government programmes or initiatives relating to the family and family policy, most do not discuss fertility decline or the need for pronatalist measures. However, many contain information on the situation of Québec families, statistics, and programmes updates, emphasizing the need to support parents and create a society which is more welcoming towards children. There are no references to language, culture, or immigration and no recommendations put forth. Likewise, the documents do not address issues raised in the feminist literature, with the exception of *Etre père: La belle aventure!* (Secrétariat à la famille, 1994b) and *C'est à ton tour: Questionnaire sur le partage des tâches et des responsabilités dans un couple* (Secrétariat à la famille, 1994d).

The above two documents are noteworthy and can be viewed as a positive step on the part of Government to stimulate thought and dialogue on one of the issues raised in the feminist literature, equal sharing of childrearing responsibilities between men and women. Both documents were published in response to one of the aims of the second Family Policy Action Plan, which sought to identify and promote initiatives to encourage a greater sharing of parental responsibilities between men and women (Measures 77 and 78). Albeit the documents are only short booklets, *Etre père: La belle aventure!* is one of the few public documents on parenting targeted specifically at men, speaking of the benefits and need for

fathers to assume more responsibility in childrearing. *C'est à ton tour: Questionnaire sur le partage des tâches et des responsabilités dans un couple* uses humour to examine if childrearing and domestic responsibilities are shared equally among couples.

### **Ministère du Travail; Ministère de la Main-d'Oeuvre et de la Sécurité du Revenu**

The third organizational grouping consists of three documents published by the above two ministries. One document discusses the compatibility of provisions of collective agreements with family policy objectives (Ministère du Travail, 1989), while the remaining two are information pamphlets or brochures designed to familiarize the public with the wage supplement programme for working parents which is part of the family policy package (Ministère de la main d'oeuvre et de la sécurité du revenu, 1993;1994). The APPORT programme, or Parental Wage Assistance programme (PWA), was developed to financially assist and encourage low-income workers with dependent children to remain in the work force. The programme consisted of an income supplement and in some cases, a reimbursement of child care expenses and housing allowance. With the creation of the unified child benefit and the \$5 day care fee in 1997, parts of the APPORT programme were modified and consolidated into the new family policy provisions. Low income parents eligible for the PWA are now entitled to a maximum of \$3/day compensation to cover the cost of child care<sup>12</sup>.

The remaining document in this group is *La politique familiale et la présence de dispositions dans les conventions collectives* (Ministère du Travail, 1989). Essentially, it is an overview of how certain provisions of collective agreements relate to and are compatible

with family policy objectives, such as the reconciliation of family and work responsibilities. It examines how maternity leave may facilitate this reconciliation for women, at least initially. Moreover, it questions if and how the existence and length of maternity leave influences fertility decision-making. The document concludes that while declining fertility is a problem for Québec in terms of the political and economic consequences for francophone culture in Canada and North America, it is difficult to attribute fertility decline to collective agreement provisions, given the absence of an explicit link with Québec family or pronatalist policies.

## **Régie des Rentes**

There are two documents from the Régie des rentes in the fourth organizational grouping of the corpus. The first document (1986) is part of the Collection études et recherche and was prepared by the Service de l'analyse socio-économique, Direction de la recherche et de la statistique. It contains a disclaimer that the publication does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Régie des rentes. The second document (1993), which is an information brochure, was published by the Direction des communications et des renseignements.

*La compensation des charges familiales au Québec* (1986) considers the variety, efficiency, and efficacy of financial aid to families in Québec. The document does not set forth any concrete recommendations but does conclude that financial aid to families should be included under the general rubric of a family policy rather than within the parameters of a fiscal or income policy. Although the document mentions the decline of Québec fertility

over the past three decades and acknowledges that the desire for family policy stems largely from this concern, it neither advocates pronatalist policy measures nor makes a correlation between pronatalist and family policy measures. The document recognizes that family size and composition have changed, and while it is now socially acceptable for both parents to be involved in childrearing, it is still mostly women who perform the majority of these duties. No mention is made of language, culture or immigration.

The second document in this grouping, *Les allocations d'aide aux familles du Québec* (1993), is an information pamphlet whose purpose is to describe the types of aid available to families, who is eligible, and how to apply for a particular type of allocation. At the time of publication, there were four types of allowances available to residents of Québec: *l'allocation familiale*, *l'allocation pour jeune enfant*, *l'allocation à la naissance*, and *l'allocation pour enfant handicapé*. The document is informational rather than a policy or research document and does not make any references to fertility decline or pronatalism, issues raised in the feminist literature, or the matters of language, culture or immigration.

### **Bureau de la Statistique du Québec**

The fifth group of documents consists of two documents published by the Bureau de la statistique du Québec. The first, *Démographie québécoise: passé, présent, perspectives* (1983), is an overview of Québec demographic trends and scenarios. Two chapters in the document, chapter seven, "Facteurs explicatifs de la baisse de la fécondité québécoise: faits et commentaires" and chapter eight, "Les aspirations en matière de fécondité", focus on fertility determinants, the problem of low fertility, and draw heavily on the fertility surveys

conducted by Henripin et al. in 1971 and 1976<sup>13</sup>. Although neither chapter contains specific policy recommendations, pronatalist and other family policy measures are discussed. Chapter seven points to several of the key issues raised by feminist demographers and notes that lower fertility rates in Québec are not surprising since many women are no longer willing to be responsible for childrearing without greater involvement from their partners.

Jusqu'à tout récemment, les femmes acceptaient d'être le groupe social à qui l'on réserve la tâche d'élever les futurs membres de la société. Elles refusent de plus en plus d'y être les seules associées et veulent que leurs partenaires s'y intéressent de près. C'est à notre avis la seule condition qui fera qu'il demeurera agréable d'avoir des enfants...Nous croyons plutôt que l'inquiétude, plus souvent masculine, face à la dénatalité, escamote une remise en question qui devrait être faite sur la participation maintenant indispensable des hommes à une des tâches les plus importantes de la société: élever des enfants (Bureau de la statistique du Québec, 1983:283).

The second document entitled *Essai d'évaluation des coûts de l'enfant* (1986), was commissioned and published by the BSQ but written by Jacques Henripin and Evelyne Lapierre-Adamcyk. As stated in the introduction, the report is part of ongoing research by the BSQ to determine the costs associated with children. This document is a follow-up to a family expenses survey conducted in 1982 and looks specifically at how affect a family's standard of living is affected by different numbers of children<sup>14</sup>.

For example, data in the document illustrates how expenditures per child actually decrease according to the number of children per family, while the cost per child increases with age. Albeit there are no policy recommendations specified within the document, it is simple to see how research of this nature would be of interest to policy makers with regard to the determination of family allowances. The document does not address issues raised in the feminist literature, nor does it explicitly focus on fertility decline and pronatalist

measures. There are no references to the issues of language, culture or immigration in either of the documents by the BSQ.

## **Conseil des Affaires Sociales**

The two documents published by the Conseil des affaires sociales comprise the sixth organizational grouping and are amongst the most overtly pronatalist within the entire corpus. The first document, *Deux Québec dans un: rapport sur le développement social et démographique* (1989), is an examination of the social, economic, and cultural impact of demographic decline and an aging population on Québec. Although the report focuses primarily on the link between demographic variables and social development throughout the various regions of Québec, it strongly emphasizes the economic, political, and social implications of depopulation.

Fertility decline is problematized and presented as something which is worrisome to Québécois:

Les Québécois sont inquiets. Le XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle se présente sous les auspices plutôt gris du déclin démographique et, par voie de conséquences, d'une population en vieillissement, où l'espace occupé par les jeunes va, et continuera d'aller, en rétrécissant. Quelques optimistes obstinés cherchent, et trouvent, des vertus à cet état de chose. Mais pour la majorité, il est difficile d'échapper aux interrogations inquiètes que suscite un tel changement dans la population du Québec (Conseil des affaires sociales, 1989b:XXI).

Moreover, with regard to the discussion of family policy, the document suggests that pronatalist measures, similar to those utilized in France, are both desirable and necessary for Québec.

The document devotes considerable attention to the survival of the French language

and culture and describes how the relative size of the population of Québec vis-a-vis Ontario and the rest of Canada has decreased<sup>15</sup>. In addition, the report implies that the wisdom of demographers, long ignored, is finally being seriously considered:

La croissance de la population du Québec connaît un ralentissement alarmant, ralentissement par rapport à sa propre évolution mais également ralentissement par rapport à l'ensemble du Canada et surtout à l'Ontario. Cette question fait l'objet d'un large débat public. Les démographes, après avoir prêché dans le désert, sont devenus des gens importants, sorte de gourous des temps actuels (Conseil des affaires sociales, 1989b:102).

With regard to immigration, the document expresses concerns similar to that of the mainstream demographic literature on the adoption of English, not French, by allophone immigrants. Moreover, it appears sceptical of language legislation such as *Loi 101*, commenting that such legislation is not capable of fully integrating immigrants into Québec's French majority when surrounded by a sea of English. Curiously, the document points to international adoption as a form of immigration which would involve less difficulties than the integration of adults, since "les enfants accueillis par les familles francophones s'adaptent très vite au Québec français" (Conseil des affaires sociales, 1989b:16). Although a significant proportion of the document deals with fertility and fertility decline, women or issues raised in the feminist literature are never mentioned.

The second document published by the Conseil des affaires sociales consists of the proceedings from the *Colloque international sur les politiques familiales* entitled *Dénatalité: des Solutions* (1989). This document, complete with dramatic cover photos of an empty hospital nursery and playground, is atypical in that it is not a report from a line department or advisory body. Rather, it is a collection of articles written by demographers, business

people, bureaucrats from the Québec and Canadian public service, as well as the Québec Minister responsible for the family.

In the forward by the president of the Conseil des affaires sociales, Madeleine Blanchet states that the Conseil has been a faithful observer of demographic issues for more than eighteen years. The colloquium was organized so as to bring together the "principaux artisans des politiques familiales". in order to reflect on the problem of Québec's falling birth rate and discuss solutions in the form of family policy measures.

While fertility decline is the focus of all the articles and family policy incentives are discussed in many, not all authors agree on the need for pronatalist incentives or make the correlation between family policy and pronatalist measures. However, some of those advocating policies designed to ameliorate the economic and organizational constraints experienced by families (mainly women), appear to have been motivated by the desire to increase Québec's fertility rate. For example:

Encore là, il y a certainement un désir de fécondité qui est inassouvi et que des politiques familiales adéquates peuvent permettre de réaliser...il importe de souligner l'importance des "signaux" et de la création d'un climat favorable susceptible d'inciter les couples à avoir un premier enfant, mais qu'également une action favorisant la venue d'un troisième est aussi nécessaire...il ne faut jamais opposer l'un à l'autre, parce que sans la remontée de la fécondité, le redressement est impossible et tout particulièrement si nous laissons s'implanter comme mode de vie l'infécondité annoncée par les comportements récents (E. Lapierre-Adamcyk in Conseil des affaires sociales, 1989a:84).

In the introduction by then-premier Robert Bourassa, the phenomenon of low fertility is identified as one of the greatest collective challenges for Québec society and directly linked to the future of Québec<sup>16</sup>. The closing remarks by Aubert Ouellet, head of the



Secrétariat à la famille, also reiterate this concern:

Comme l'ont affirmé à plusieurs reprises le Premier Ministre et le ministre délégué à la Famille, la politique familiale est une priorité du Gouvernement, et la survie même du Québec comme société distincte est étroitement liée à cette politique (Ouellet in Conseil des affaires sociales, 1989a:160).

Both statements can be viewed as strong expressions of the Government's concern over the problem of declining fertility and the link to collective identity and survival.

Several other articles strongly emphasize the negative correlation between a low birth rate and collective survival ("survie collective") or survival of "notre peuple" (Dutil in Conseil des affaires sociales, 1989a:191). Others, by contrast present the solution to Québec's demographic problem in terms of three possible options: more immigration, more babies, or face extinction (Fortin in Conseil des affaires sociales, 1989a:163). The political, economic, social and cultural insecurity prompted by the absence of replacement level fertility is also a noteworthy theme<sup>17</sup>, as is the political weight of Québec vis-a-vis Ontario and within the Canadian confederation<sup>18</sup>. Lastly, with respect to immigration, given the choice between increased immigration or increasing the birth rate, the Createc+ survey mentioned in chapter three is cited as proof by at least one author that Québécois themselves prefer measures geared towards the later (Fortin in Conseil des affaires sociales, 1989a:163).

Although some of the articles mention several of the issues raised in the feminist literature, such as the difficulties experienced by women balancing career and childrearing responsibilities, the lack of adequate child care services and access to parental leave, or the fact that women continue to shoulder most of the responsibilities with regard to children<sup>19</sup>, there are more that appear less interested in addressing these issues or which imply these

issues affect the family or both parents equally<sup>20</sup>. There are no formal policy recommendations included in this document.

## **Conseil de la Famille et de l'Enfance**

The seventh organizational grouping is the Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance with the largest number of documents, thirty-one in total. The present-day Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance is the most recent incarnation of the Québec Government advisory body on the family. It was preceded by the Conseil de la famille (1987-1997), the Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille (1971-1987), and the Conseil supérieur de la famille (1964-1971). There are four different types of documents in this organizational grouping: reports or memoranda, usually to the Minister responsible; research studies and conference proceedings; public information documents as well as twenty issues of the newsletter, *Si familles m'étaient contées*; as well as *avis* or opinions, which comprise almost half of the documents.

The first category consists of six documents and includes memoranda and reports dating back to the formation of the Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille in 1971. The first document *Rapport à Monsieur Claude Castonguay, Ministre des affaires sociales, sur l'organisation d'un organisme gouvernemental de la famille au Québec* (Conseil supérieur de la famille, 1971), is a position paper presented to the Minister of Social Affairs concerning the suitability of the newly created Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille (CASF), as the organization responsible for the formulation of a comprehensive family policy. The paper was prepared by the Conseil supérieur de la famille in consultation (by letter) with

several family organizations and MNA's.

In this document, the Conseil supérieur de la famille argues that the CASF would not be able to put together a comprehensive family policy due to its limited mandate and jurisdiction. The CASF is depicted as an inappropriate vehicle because its mandate was limited to only certain aspects relevant to family policy such as health, social services and family allowances, but did not include others such as education, housing, family law, taxation policy, leisure activities, consumer information, and employment and working conditions. The Conseil supérieur de la famille also argues that even if the terms of reference of the CASF were expanded, there was still the problem of the organization being attached to a single minister. This meant the CASF could not act as the central coordinating body amongst various ministries in the creation of a global family policy which would incorporate "différentes politiques sur la natalité, le travail, le bien-être, le revenu, la justice, les loisirs, etc." (Conseil supérieur de la famille, 1971:9).

In light of this administrative dilemma, the Conseil supérieur de la famille believed the development of an effective family policy would be hampered. This in turn would have consequences for Québec families who were already experiencing a multitude of problems such as increased drug abuse and delinquency amongst youths, increased incidence of mental illness, a decline in the birth rate, and a lag in socio-economic development (Conseil supérieur de la famille, 1971:12). No mention of language, culture or immigration, or any of the issues raised in the feminist literature appears in the document. However, there are several policy recommendations to Government.

The first recommendation is for the Government to appoint a Minister of State for

the Family, who would be authorized to coordinate policy among different ministries and responsible for maintaining links with family associations and the preparation of necessary legislation. The second recommendation is the creation of a consultative body, comprised of representatives from organizations whose main interest is the family, to advise the Minister of State for the Family. Recommendation three further outlines the administrative structure of this unit; it was to be chaired by the Minister of State for the Family and supported by a permanent secretariat, which would include persons specialized in preparing legislation. The fourth recommendation is the establishment of a commission of inquiry on the family. The commission was to investigate family life in Québec and the long-term requirements of Québec family policy. Its findings were to be based on a series of public consultations, as well as research on family policies in other countries. Finally, the fifth recommendation is that the word "family" be eliminated from the name of the Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, and that an internal committee on family issues be created within the Conseil des affaires sociales. The new committee would investigate and make recommendations on questions regarding health care, social security and family allowances.

Despite the call for action, it would take more than a decade before any of the policy recommendations were implemented. As discussed in Chapter Four, a province-wide inquiry on family policy was not conducted until 1983, with its final report not issued until 1986. As well, it was not until 1988 that a Minister responsible for the Family was appointed or the Secrétariat à la famille created. It was also during this same year that the Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille was reconstituted as the Conseil de la famille.

The second document in this category is *Contribution à une politique des affaires*

*sociales et de la famille: Les propositions et recommandations du Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille* (1974a). It is a broad-ranging report with four areas of emphasis: the humanization of social services, research, increased participation of organizations within the domain of health care and social services, and the family and elements of a family policy. It is evident that the latter emphasis constitutes the core of the document since the majority of the discussion and 86 of the 126 recommendations focus on the creation of a family policy.

According to the document, a comprehensive family policy must incorporate the following five areas: revenue and income tax policy and the equitable distribution of wealth; the reorganization of paid employment with the inclusion of flexible or reduced working hours and the possibility to work at home; improved and more availability of family housing; social services to support harmonious family relationships and programmes for children and enfants; and finally, strengthening the responsiveness of community health care facilities (CLSC), more child care facilities, and the increased availability of social programmes, assistance and recreational services for families and individuals. Neither fertility decline nor pronatalist measures are explicitly discussed within the document, although some of the policy recommendations could be described as having pronatalist intentions as they could encourage women or couples to have children.

The 86 recommendations focus on a variety of issues which relate to the five aforementioned areas. Examples of some of the recommendations include: a taxation system which takes into account family responsibilities and the number of children per family; the need for research into the possibilities of part-time work for mothers (*mères de famille*); the expansion of affordable, family-sized dwellings and incentives for families to purchase or

renovate houses; social service programmes and support services focused on maintaining the integrity of family ties and the well-being of individual members; and the need for the systematic elimination of discriminatory stereotypes and behaviour towards women, increased equality of opportunity, and a pre- and post-natal leave with guaranteed salary and protection of employment.

With regard to the issues raised in the feminist literature, the document is more inclusive than many of the documents in the corpus. Although children are identified as the first priority of family policy, women, or *une politique de la femme*, are recognized as the second priority. There are several pages of discussion and recommendations (Recommendations 3.1 to 3.10) on the need to eliminate discrimination in the workplace, to encourage men to participate in childrearing and domestic responsibilities, and the necessity that democratic society ensure a diversity of opinions and lifestyles which would enable women to choose from a variety of options. The document contains no references to language, culture, or immigration.

The next document in this category is *Une Consultation du CASF auprès des organismes familiaux et d'autres agents d'intervention auprès des familles* (1975). As indicated by the title, the document contains a summary of consultations with 127 family organizations and 4 individuals held between January and August 1974 in seven regions throughout Québec. The objectives of the consultations were threefold: the identification of family organizations and the services they provide; identification of existing and eventual relationships among family organizations and the CASF and Minister of Social Affairs; and the identification of problems and solutions for families, as envisaged by family

organizations (CASF, 1975:14-15).

This report constitutes part of the overall mandate of the CASF, as designated by the Minister of Social Affairs, to put forth recommendations in the area of family policy. As such, a major thrust of the consultations was to put forward recommendations, in this case 222 in total. Thirty-one of the recommendations concern family organizations themselves and their relationships amongst one another and with the Minister of Social Affairs, while the remaining 191 recommendations focus on ways to improve the quality of life for families. These range from the revision of the Labour Code to prevent strikes which could create problems for families (page 197), to the adaptation of mothers' working hours to make them more compatible with the needs of families (page 212). While the document acknowledges the changing role of women with respect to work outside the home, a fair number of the recommendations tend to reinforce the position that women are primarily responsible for children and family. There are several recommendations that suggest ways to lighten the burden of working mothers whereas none challenge or attempt to alter the existing sexual division of labour.

Inasmuch as the document focuses on potential family policy measures, pronatalist measures or the correlation between family policy and pronatalism figures less prominently in the discussion. Although there are some references to creating measures to increase the birth rate (CASF, 1975:139,171), most of the discussion and recommendations centre around improving conditions for families raising children. There are no references to language, culture, or immigration, with the exception of passing reference to family organizations whose goal is the preservation of the religious, social and cultural values of the French

Canadian heritage (page 39).

The next document in this category is unusual in the sense that it provides an inventory of all Québec Government programmes and services sanctioned by law or policy with respect to the family. *Inventaire des principales mesures et actions du gouvernement du Québec à l'égard des familles* (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1982b) does not contain recommendations nor does it discuss fertility decline, language, culture, or immigration, or any of the issues raised in the feminist literature. However, it is significant as it contains several interesting definitions which describe and differentiate three types of measures concerning the family. According to the document, a measure is:

...un élément qui implique une action concrète donnant lieu à des programmes et services accessibles aux familles à qu'ils s'adressent; ces mesures rejoignent souvent les familles, par l'intermédiaire des enfants (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1982b:2).

Furthermore, measures with respect to the family can be divided into three different kinds:

...les mesures d'appui aux familles, soit celles qui s'adressent à la famille pour lui fournir un appui ou un soutien;  
les mesures qui font appel aux familles, c'est-à-dire qui s'adressent d'abord à une entité individuelle, mais mettent à contribution la famille sans nécessairement lui fournir une aide;  
les mesures qui tiennent compte des familles, ou mesures s'adressant d'abord à une entité individuelle, mais tenant compte de la situation de famille de l'individu et/ou de ses charges familiales (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1982b:2).

Following these definitions, the document outlines all existing policy measures or actions on the family, their objective or rationale, and the law or regulation governing their implementation, as well as the organization or department responsible for implementation.

The fifth document in this category is the memorandum presented to the province-



wide consultation on family policy by a working group of the Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille. *Investir dans les enfants* (1985) was prepared in response to the working paper on family policy, the *Livre Vert* (Ministère des affaires sociales, 1984), and outlines concerns of the CASF with respect to family policy to be addressed by the Québec Government.

As stated in the document, a major preoccupation of the CASF centres around the need for increased State and private sector support for children and families in order to prevent the potentially damaging effects resulting from the declining birth rate. The CASF points to the indifference of the State regarding the economic and fiscal situation of families.

Le Conseil s'étonne que la fiscalité considère si peu ou mal les charges reliées à la présence d'enfants. Le Conseil s'étonne, qu'au niveau actuel de la natalité, l'Etat ne soit pas disposé à investir davantage dans les enfants (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1985:11).

They also point to the organization of paid employment and its negative consequences on the fertility rate.

**Pour que les couples aient la possibilité de faire des enfants et de les élever à leur convenance sans pour autant être pénalisés, des conditions minimales devront être consenties aux travailleurs et travailleuses qui rendront compatibles travail et famille...De combien de points la natalité s'est-elle déjà abaissée parce que les couples n'ont pas pu concilier famille et travail? (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1985:15-16).**

Finally, the apparent resignation especially on the part of Government is also cause for concern.

... l'Etat n'est pas préoccupé par le phénomène de la dénatalité ou qu'il le considère comme irréversible ou incontrôlable (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1985:12).

While the document is undoubtedly focused on family policy, it conceals neither its

pronatalist sentiments nor its desire to avert the problem of fertility decline.

Pourtant, on en a besoin pour assurer le renouvellement de la population. En pratique, il faudrait que la moitié des couples ait deux enfants, l'autre moitié, trois. Bien sur, le Conseil réalise que l'Etat ne peut amener les gens à avoir des enfants contre leur gré, que d'autres raisons que financières motivent la décision d'avoir des enfants. **Mais le Conseil croit que l'Etat doit faire beaucoup plus d'efforts afin que ceux qui veulent davantage d'enfants ne soient pas arrêtés par des contraintes économiques** (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1985:13-14).

Furthermore, one of the seven recommendations suggests the problem of fertility decline is critical enough to merit a large-scale publicity campaign on the negative consequences of a declining birth rate.

Enfin, étant donné le cas particulier que représente le Québec en Amérique du Nord, étant donné par conséquent l'importance de sa santé démographique, le Conseil recommande que la population soit sensibilisée à toutes les conséquences sociales, économiques et politiques de la dénatalité à moyen et à long terme. En conséquence, **une information constante** [emphasis mine] devra circuler dans les médias pour renseigner la population à cet égard (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1985:22).

This quotation illustrates the perceived seriousness of the situation as well as alludes to the correlation made between demographic issues and the cultural and linguistic specificity of Québec. With regard to immigration, the document does not appear convinced of its merit as a plausible solution:

Le Québec se caractérise maintenant par une fécondité des plus basses au monde...La question est encore plus inquiétante pour le Québec, car peu de peuples doivent autant à leurs phénomènes démographiques. S'il ne peut compter sur sa natalité pour maintenir sa représentativité au sein d'une masse culturelle sans cesse envahissante, il ne peut non plus, du moins présentement, compter sur la migration, car il ne parvient pas à retenir sa population: le solde migratoire du Québec est depuis longtemps déficitaire (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1985:13).

With respect to the issues in the feminist literature, the document acknowledges the

permanence of women's participation in the paid workforce and urges that measures be implemented to assist couples in the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities. In order to "favoriser le développement d'une vie familiale harmonieuse", the following measures are proposed:

...d'accorder une attention toute spéciale à l'arrivée de l'enfant en élaborant un programme intégré d'assurance maternité...une attention spéciale au partage des rôles au sein de la famille en rendant compatible le travail des parents et l'éducation des enfants grâce à diverses mesures comme les congés parentaux, les horaires variables, le travail à temps partiel avec les mêmes avantages que le travail à temps plein, les horaires des cours aux adultes ajustés en fonction de la disponibilité des parents, etc. (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1985:2).

The last document in the category consisting of memoranda and reports is *Une réflexion: Une place pour les enfants* (Conseil de la famille 1991b), which is an off-print from the 1990-1991 Annual Report of the Conseil de la famille. The document is fairly short (16 pages of text, 9 pages of bibliography) but illustrates the position of the Conseil with regard to the place children occupy in the family and society. The first part presents a portrait of contemporary societal attitudes towards children, the place of children in families, and the reasons why couples choose to have children. The second part of the document draws attention to the key difficulties encountered by parents and those in the lives of children.

Albeit the document focuses on family policy issues, the support and services required by parents, and the needs of children, there are no recommendations put forth. Similarly, although fertility decline is not the focus of the discussion, the report concentrates on the impact of changing societal values and mores such as individualism, consumerism, and the importance of career and leisure. There is a heavy dosage of nostalgia and regret that

couples today have forgotten the joy which children can bring to their lives:

Les adultes oublient souvent la profondeur que les enfants donnent à une vie et la qualité qu'ils y ajoutent...les enfants permettent aux hommes et aux femmes d'actualiser leur fécondité qui donne du sens à leur vie et de l'ardeur au quotidien (Conseil de la famille, 1991b:29).

Lastly, with regard to issues raised in the feminist literature, the document frames the discussion of the organization of work and the reconciliation of family and work responsibilities as something which equally affects and is equally shared by both men and women. Furthermore, although there is a specific section on "Paternity", the specific needs and experiences of women or mothers are barely mentioned in the document. There are no references to language, culture or immigration.

The second category of documents within the organizational grouping Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance consists of eight documents published between 1974 and 1993. Some of the documents pertain to a conference held by the Conseil, while others are research studies from the *Etudes et recherches* series. Several of the research documents were prepared by social scientists commissioned by the Conseil and include a disclaimer that the opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Conseil. Although these documents cannot be considered in the same way as the other documents produced by the CASF, they have been included in the sample because they are an illustration of which issues have been considered important by the Conseil.

The first document is *La Famille: Mythe et réalité québécoise* (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1974b), a two-volume research report prepared by Colette Carisse. The first volume is divided into three sections and discusses a variety of topics such as the

role and definition of family, responsibilities of mothers and fathers, the impact of other institutions such as school, the Church, and the State, and contemporary social problems and occurrences that have changed the structure and organization of the family. Volume two consists of research annexes which supplement the first volume. Much of the document takes the form of a literature review and draws on sources from family organizations, the clergy, and academics concerned with the future of the family in Québec.

The second document in this category is *La natalité et le contexte démographique du Québec* (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1979a). It was prepared by George Savard for the CASF and served as the working document for participants at the conference *Naître au Québec*. The forward states that although the sources consulted are a reflection of the author and not the CASF, nonetheless the document:

...rassemble les principales conclusions de diverses études récentes sur les faits saillants qui caractérisent la démographie du Québec (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1979a).

According to the document, the principal characteristics of Québec demography are a declining birth rate, a negative immigration balance, and a diminishing proportion of francophones in Canada. Most of the discussion focuses on the reasons for the decreasing birth rate and whether it is possible to increase fertility. While immigration is mentioned as a possible solution, so are the accompanying problems related to language and culture:

La question des apports culturels de l'immigration est plus délicate car elle est compliquée par la question de la langue et celle de la "défense de la personnalité nationale". Ces sujets, comme aussi la dimension humanitaire de l'immigration, débordent le cadre de cette étude; ils sont, néanmoins, au coeur des décisions politiques les plus importantes relatives à l'immigration au Québec. Il faut surtout retenir ici la place quasi privilégiée que l'immigration occuperait dans l'ordre des facteurs susceptibles de modifier

positivement les perspectives démographiques du Québec si la natalité offrait trop peu de promesses de changement (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1979a:28-29).

The document focuses on fertility studies and literature which tends to question or problematize women's reproductive behaviour, rather than paying attention to the concerns and problems faced by women as identified in the feminist literature.

The next document, *Rapport des délibérations du colloque du CASF sur le thème: "Naître au Québec", février 1979* (CASF, 1979b), contains the presentations and discussions of a conference held in Montréal in February 1979. As stated in the introduction, the conference report:

...constitue un rapport de consultation. Il sera l'objet d'analyses par le Conseil et ses comités spéciaux. Il pourrait bien être à l'origine d'avis importants au ministre des Affaires sociales et au gouvernement du Québec (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1979b:7).

The focus of the conference was an examination of the reasons behind and future implications of Québec's declining birth rate. Several presenters suggested ways to overcome or alleviate the negative effects of decreased fertility, which included an aging society and diminished political weight within Canada and North America. Family policy measures designed to increase the birth rate<sup>21</sup> consisted of more day care facilities, increased family allowances, the creation of support networks for parents, increased assistance for single-parents, and measures designed to encourage the sharing of tasks between fathers and mothers. Several participants proposed forgetting "la revanche des berceaux" and looking towards immigration as a counter-balance to declining fertility (CASF, 1979b:92).

Fertility decline is problematic throughout much of the document though the overall

tone is constructive and geared toward finding concrete solutions. Some presenters like Henripin take a more derisive approach and in his discussion of aspirations in competition with having children, disparages women's desire for a career to "se réaliser" or as "un moyen d'obtenir plus de confort" (CASF, 1979b:32).

Of the dozen panellists invited to participate in five sessions, only Claire Bonenfant, then-president of the Conseil du statut de la femme, addresses issues of concern to women raised in the feminist literature. She cautions against the temptation to blame women for the declining birth rate and explains how 90% of women who work do so to support themselves and their families. Likewise, Bonenfant maintains that:

...si on veut que remonte la courbe de la natalité, il faut mettre en place de meilleurs équipements sociaux, des garderies, par exemple; il faut donner un véritable congé de maternité et favoriser la stabilité de la famille autrement qu'en comptant uniquement sur l'abnégation et la générosité des femmes (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1979b:73).

Although there are no formal recommendations in the document, the closing speech by then Minister of Social Affairs Denis Lazure, provides an overview of recent policy initiatives as well as future priorities of the PQ Government. Among those mentioned are the establishment of family planning clinics, an 18 week maternity leave, a maternity allowance of \$240, pre-natal courses, the creation of 5,000 day care spaces, and a three-fold increase in family child care subsidies. Lazure concluded his address stating that the desire for children can only be fostered in a society where parents are confident about their future. He remarked:

Lors de la "revanche des berceaux" c'est l'instinct de survie qui nous poussait a nous multiplier.  
L'incroyable croissance des 60 000 Québécois de Nouvelle-France au

moment de la défaite de 1760, à plus de 6 millions maintenant, constitue un exemple percutant de la volonté acharnée d'un peuple à se maintenir.... De plus, nous croyons qu'en atteignant l'objectif politique que nous proposons aux Québécois et Québécoises, il en résultera un regain de fierté de dignité que nous voudrions transmettre à une très nombreuse génération suivante!!! (Conseil des affaires sociale et de la famille, 1979b:130).

The next three documents in this category are: *Etat et famille: des politiques sociales en mutation* (Conseil de la famille, 1990a), *Le Pouvoir et la légitimité de l'intervention de l'Etat auprès des familles en lien avec l'autorité et la compétence parentales, dans le contexte des législations et des pratiques existantes: approche éthique* (Conseil de la famille, 1990b) and, *La fiscalité comme mécanisme d'intervention auprès de la famille: mythe et réalités* (Conseil de la famille, 1993a). All belong to the "Etudes et Recherches" series and are discussion papers prepared for the Conseil de la famille by outside researchers. Although the documents are more akin to academic research papers, they have been included for the following reasons.

First, because the documents were produced for the Government's advisory body on the family, we see first-hand the sort of information which may have been considered in the formulation of family policy. In fact, the Conseil explicitly stated that discussion papers were:

...susceptible d'être reprise par le Conseil de la famille pour lui permettre de fonder d'éventuelles recommandations en matière de politique familiale (Conseil de la famille, 1990a:1).

Second, the documents provide commentary and information on the family policy process itself, and at times, the unstated or less publicized objectives of the Government's policies regarding the family. Third, all three documents examine the role of the State with regard to



the family through family policy measures and legislation.

The document *Etat et famille: des politiques sociales en mutation* (Conseil de la famille, 1990a) is an examination of the relationship between the State and families, as well as a discussion of various policy approaches and interventions into the family. It explains that the relationship between the State and the family is complex for several reasons. First, because the motivations surrounding family policy are often hidden and second, because family policy measures are often formulated against an antagonistic background between what constitutes the public and private. In the case of Québec, the situation is complicated due to the concerns over nationalism and fertility decline:

Au Québec, parmi ces "angoisses sociétales" à la source de la politique familiale, on ne peut ignorer la question démographique, version en apparence plus "neutre" de la question nationale. Entre la question référendaire de 1980 et la question crue posée en janvier 1989 par Lise Payette dans une émission télévisée: "*Disparaître?*", la politique familiale de 1987 apparaît comme une réponse fournie par la classe politique à ces questions vitales pour la société québécoise...l'Etat est d'abord concerné par la population dont il a la responsabilité et que les familles ont un statut instrumental par rapport à elle. On observe d'ailleurs, dans le Plan d'action du gouvernement en regard des familles, plusieurs irruptions de la préoccupation nataliste, dont le discours officiel prétend qu'elle ne constitue pas l'objectif principal de la politique familiale (Conseil de la famille, 1990a:5).

With respect to the issue of public versus private, the document raises the matter of how policies which strive to emphasize the private or "milieu naturel" have often done so at the expense of women. For example, family and social policies that valorize the potential of the family and communities to provide for themselves, must also recognize the "surutilisation des femmes comme actrices principales du soutien familial et de la nécessité de développer des stratégies et des mesures visant un meilleur partage selon les sexes" (Conseil de la

famille, 1990a:16).

The document *Le Pouvoir et la légitimité de l'intervention de l'Etat auprès des familles en lien avec l'autorité et la compétence parentales, dans le contexte des législations et des pratiques existantes: approche éthique* (Conseil de la famille, 1990b) focuses on the role of the family in society and the power and legitimacy of State intervention into the family. It proposes an ethical approach to the study of the relationship between government and family and illustrates how different conceptions of the family and types of interventions have moral consequences in terms of liberty, creativity, and individual and collective responsibility. For example:

...la conception qu'on a de la famille n'est pas neutre; elle influence elle aussi la détermination des choix politiques et des types d'interventions (Conseil de la famille, 1990b:45).

From the overview of Québec Government activity concerning the family from 1946 to 1989, the report concludes the following:

...nous avons constaté que la famille est d'abord présentée comme une affaire privée mais, c'est là où réside une certaine ambiguïté, son rôle est principalement défini en fonction de la société. **La famille est souvent présentée comme la première des valeurs des Québécois et des Québécoises, mais il n'apparaît pas évident que c'est l'ensemble des types de familles qui est valorisé. Même si l'on s'en défend, la famille traditionnelle demeure subtilement idéalisée** [emphasis mine]. La famille est "idéologiquement" présentée comme une institution naturelle, comme la base de la société, alors que "la première de nos institutions" se révèle être manifestement, dans les définitions qu'on en donne, une construction culturelle et sociale (Conseil de la famille, 1990b:16).

Furthermore, with respect to State intervention into the family and the distinctive nature of Québec culture:

La spécificité de la société québécoise pose de façon particulière la

problématique de l'intervention de l'Etat auprès des familles, comme nous l'avons mentionné à quelques reprises au cours de notre étude. Comment insérer la famille, dans un projet de société qui vise à assurer la perpétuation du peuple québécois, sa culture et ses idéaux dans le respect et la promotion des solidarités en place et des valeurs familiales? (Conseil de la famille, 1990b:45).

The document concludes by encouraging the Conseil de la famille to make the family a political preoccupation, but cautioning it to be mindful of which definition of family and model of State invention is used when analyzing and recommending family policy measures and legislation.

The document *La fiscalité comme mécanisme d'intervention auprès de la famille: mythe et réalités* (Conseil de la famille, 1993a), is an analysis of the way financial aspects of various family policy measures affect fertility and the socio-economic status of families. The discussion includes: the taxability of child support payments, tax deductions for child-care, family allowances, and the financial ramifications of common law as opposed to legal marriage. In general, the aim of the report is to assess which economic factors and policies benefit or work against families.

Among the many issues raised, the report criticizes child-care deductions as favouring working parents over parents who stay at home and suggests the deductions be abolished. Child care deductions should be replaced by a non-taxable sum to be distributed to parents of pre-school age children. This way parents themselves could decide whether to use the amount to cover child-care costs or, something looked upon unfavourably in the feminist literature, as compensation for the parent who remains at home. The document adds that the savings resulting from the abolition of this tax deduction could then be invested in a

universal child care programme.

The document also raises the issue of whether the pronatalist slant of child benefits or family allowances is fair and equitable.

Fidèle à sa politique nataliste, le Québec a réduit la prestation de base à l'égard des deux premiers enfants et a augmenté celle à l'égard des enfants suivants...En termes concrets, le montant de prestation de base pour les familles québécoises ayant moins de 3 enfants sera inférieur à celui des autres familles canadiennes similaires...S'il est opportun d'encourager la naissance d'un troisième enfant, il nous semble toutefois inéquitable, pour ce faire, de pénaliser les familles ayant choisi de n'avoir qu'un ou deux enfants. Cette mesure nous apparaît d'autant plus préjudiciable envers les familles monoparentales comptant moins de trois enfants et dont la situation économique précaire ne permet pas d'augmenter ce nombre (Conseil de la famille, 1993a:40).

There is no mention of language, culture, or immigration in this document.

A two-part series on paternity and men's attitudes towards fathering constitutes the last two documents in the category of research studies. The first is the research study *La paternité: les transformations sociales récentes* (Conseil de la famille, 1993b), while the second is a summary of a series of consultations entitled: *Rapport de consultation: Nécessaire paternité...essentielle parentalité* (Conseil de la famille, 1993d). The focus by the Conseil de la famille on paternity came about in response to issues in previous documents by the Conseil (1991b) and the Ministère de la santé et des services sociaux (1987).

*La paternité: les transformations sociales récentes* examines sociological, historical, and psychological aspects of paternity. Much of the document is a literature review divided into five sections: recent transformations to fatherhood; men's experiences before the birth of the child; men's experiences after the birth; other experiences in fatherhood; and the adaptation of fathers to changing family situations. The document does not make any

recommendations, nor does it focus on many of the issues raised in my questions. One exception is the discussion of how society and the workplace continues to define women as the primary parent. "Parent" still equals "mother" for the most part, and is just one of the obstacles faced by men who want to assume equal parenting roles. Other obstacles include men's focus on their careers and women's reluctance to let fathers become more involved.

The second document on paternity is entitled *Rapport de consultation: Nécessaire paternité...essentielle parentalité* (Conseil de la famille, 1993d). It is a summary of a series of consultations organized by the Conseil de la famille on men's attitudes towards fathering and being a father. There were 20 consultations in all, centred around a series of questions prepared by the Conseil de la famille. The questions pertained to general, thematic and specific issues related to paternity, such as the meaning of fatherhood, sharing of childrearing responsibilities, work, and family break-ups<sup>22</sup>. The questions were designed to facilitate unstructured and unrestricted discussion.

As a result of the consultations, twenty-one priority action areas responding to the needs of fathers were identified. Most of these were aimed toward educating or sensitizing men themselves, as well as governments, employers, and social services agencies about the responsibilities and requirements of fathers. Priority areas ranged from designing courses in schools and social service agencies to educate and assist fathers (and future fathers) with their responsibilities, to providing greater access to measures such as parental leave. In the conclusion to the document, the Conseil urges:

...que ces recommandations ou suggestions ne restent pas lettre morte et soient reprises par des personnes, des organismes et des ministères qui ont une influence et un pouvoir de persuasion certains. Elles doivent vivre et se

transformer en changements d'attitude, en projets et en actions (Conseil de la famille, 1993d:84).

The third category of documents in the organizational grouping Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance consists of public information documents and newsletters. There are two information documents and twenty issues of the newsletter *Si familles m'étaient contées* (1989-1997/98).

The first document in this category is *Aide-mémoire tiré des travaux du Conseil de la famille à l'occasion de son 5e anniversaire, pour Penser et Agir Famille* (Conseil de la famille, 1994). It is essentially an overview of all the publications and recommendations by the Conseil de la famille between the years 1988 to 1993. Publications include *avis* or opinions, research reports and studies and thematic reflections from annual reports which are examined within the corpus of this study. In addition, the document includes copies of fourteen letters and memos sent to various ministers and commissions of inquiry. Most of the letters request action in a specific family policy area (e.g., child care services, Family Action Plans, or child support payments) or urge the inclusion of a "family perspective" in a document or service. One letter, which was sent to the environmental magazine *Franc-Vert* on 24 April 1991 has this to say:

Le Conseil a manifesté, dans cette lettre, son étonnement à la Direction du magazine qui tentait d'accréditer l'idée que la limitation du nombre d'enfants dans une famille constituait une bonne action écologique, au même titre que le recyclage, l'économie d'énergie et la plantation d'arbres (Conseil de la famille, 1994:56).

The next document is a public information brochure entitled *L'art de mieux vivre une recomposition familiale* (Conseil de la famille, 1995a). It was prepared and published by the

Conseil and fulfills a commitment made in the document *La famille...composée autrement* (Conseil de la famille, 1995b) referred to below. The document is an overview of the aforementioned document targeted at parents living in blended families (remarriage, step-children, etc). Due to the increasing number of such families, the Conseil believed it was important to provide information which could assist couples and children in blended families to live more harmoniously.

The document states that blended families comprise approximately one in ten Québec families and that 20% of Québec couples end their relationship after three years in this type of family. Moreover, these kinds of relationships are often more complex and without the same kind of support services as "ordinary" families. The document contains quotations from persons living in blended families and very briefly touches upon issues such as the relationship between children and a new spouse, services offered by CLSCs and Maisons de la famille, as well as the difficulties experienced by children in these types of family relationships. Due to the nature of the document, there are no recommendations and no discussion of such issues as fertility decline, language, or issues raised in the feminist literature.

The last in the category of public information documents and newsletters consists of twenty issues of the newsletter *Si familles m'étaient contées* (1989-1997/98). Between October 1989 and Fall 1995, the newsletter was published three times per year. Subsequently, it has been published bi-annually. Subscription to the newsletter is free; the Winter 1997-1998 edition had a circulation of 11,000. The purpose of the newsletter is:

...à faire connaître les travaux et les activités du Conseil et à fournir certaines

informations d'intérêt général sur les familles et les enfants (Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance, Vol. 9, No. 1, Hiver 1997-1998:16).

As such, many of the articles in the newsletter focus on family policy initiatives and services.

Although some of the articles are reprints from elsewhere, reviews of conferences or books, or summaries of legislation or government measures, a fair amount of content conveys the message that fertility decline is a problem and action is required so that families can have the amount of children they desire. Most of the measures discussed relate to economic support for families or towards making society, the workplace, services, etc., more welcoming to families with children.

Several of the issues contains cartoons, quizzes, and statistics pointing to the diminishing birth rate and the fact that Québec has the highest percentage of couples in Canada without children<sup>23</sup>. There are also book reviews explaining how the survival of the family is threatened<sup>24</sup>, and messages from Government Ministers emphasizing the importance of children to the future of Québec<sup>25</sup>.

With regard to language and cultural issues, one edition of the newsletter includes a copy of the letter sent by the Conseil to the Bélanger-Campeau Commission on the future of Québec, expressing concern "devant la situation des jeunes adultes qui trouvent difficilement les moyens de réaliser leur désir d'enfants"<sup>26</sup>. Another includes an article entitled "Les accents familiaux dans la consultation sur l'avenir du Québec" with the following remark:

...les propos des participants marquent l'importance de la famille par des souhaits particuliers: soutien du couple et de la famille, son épanouissement, l'importance des enfants, aussi importante que la langue et la culture, sa stabilité qui apporte beaucoup à la société...(Volume 7, number 1, Autumn 1995:11).



Finally, with regard to issues raised in the feminist literature, the newsletters are not especially focused on the particular concerns of women. There are many articles on the difficulties of reconciling work and family and on parental leave, many of which refer to the problems experienced by **parents**. There is no specific reference to the double-burden or unique circumstances faced by many women. Notwithstanding, there were a handful of reviews or references to some of the feminist literature discussed in Chapter Three<sup>27</sup>.

The final category of documents for the grouping Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance are opinions, some of which are from the *Avis et Etudes* series. There are fourteen documents which were published between 1978 and 1996. The first document is *La situation des familles québécoises* (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1978). It is an *avis* or opinion, and third in a series on the family in Québec<sup>28</sup>. This document, like all *avis* in this category, was submitted to the Minister responsible for the Family.

The document contains an examination of the various situations and problems facing Québec families. In this case, family was defined as follows:

Le Conseil ne s'est pas imposé d'analyser les caractéristiques particulières de la famille suivant ses origines ethniques diverses, il s'en est généralement tenu à cerner les traits de la famille québécoise francophone (CASF, 1978:24).

Though the report falls clearly within the scope of family policy issues, there is a strong concern over fertility decline and the need for measures to overcome this problem. For example:

Les dispositions naturelles qui portent hommes et femmes à avoir encore des enfants devraient être l'objet de support de la part du milieu social, non seulement à l'avantage des parents, mais aussi à celui de la société toute entière. C'est d'abord un certain climat de dissuasion face à la procréation

qu'il faut amender...C'est un climat d'accueil à l'enfant qu'il faut instaurer, constitué d'une série d'interventions gouvernementales concrètes (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1978:72).

The document is divided into four sections and covers four broad subject areas: l'institution familiale; le milieu familial; les fonctions de la famille; and les institutions et systèmes complémentaires à la famille. There are 52 policy recommendations which relate to the following issues: the rights and responsibilities of spouses and children; measures with regard to part-time employment, parental leave, child care; the need for substantially increased family allowances and the development of a guaranteed annual income; measures to strengthen the role of family organizations in the policy making process; measures to better coordinate efforts between various departments and agencies within Government on family policy matters, and finally, measures targeted specifically at women.

Of the seven recommendations concerning women, six relate to the provision of services for pregnant women and mothers. Two consist of the reservation of space for pregnant women in public places, and the guarantee of paid maternity leave to all female worker regardless of their status. Four other recommend the creation of services for first time mothers and mothers in maternity hospitals, while the seventh recommendation concerns the creation of job training programmes for first time job seekers and the recognition of the relevance of women's domestic and childrearing qualifications<sup>29</sup>. Lastly, the document states that women who chose to work or have a career are faced with the following:

La mère qui désire maintenir une vie professionnelle régulière est donc confrontée, et pour de longues années, à un problème sérieux de garde de l'enfant (CASF, 1978:48).

With regard to language, culture, or immigration, the document makes several

dramatic remarks. First, it warns of the consequences of low fertility in terms of cultural and linguistic survival:

...la somme des choix individuels associés au refus de mettre au monde un enfant risque de conduire, à plus ou moins long terme, à la réduction de la société francophone d'ici à une existence folklorique analogue à celle de nombreux autres groupes ethniques, tant au Canada qu'aux Etats-Unis (CASF, 1978:72).

Second, with respect to the role of immigration:

Les données démographiques indiquent aussi que des déséquilibres peuvent dans le temps se dessiner entre les groupes de population d'âge productif et les groupes de population qui en dépendent. Il devrait être possible de recourir à des moyens correctifs et d'atténuer dans une certaine mesure ces déséquilibres par des interventions touchant la natalité et l'immigration. La place que la société québécoise veut occuper sur le continent américain à l'avenir compte parmi les questions qui déterminent la sorte de considération qu'on fait de la fonction de procréation (CASF, 1978:72).

The second document in this category is entitled: *Avis et recommandations du CASF au ministre des affaires sociales: La Natalité au Québec* (CASF, 1981 a), and was prepared by the "Comité spécial sur les familles québécoises" of the CASF. It is an opinion on the problem and possible solutions to Québec's declining birth rate. The document was written in response to the working document and proceedings for the conference "Naître au Québec" (CASF, 1979a, 1979b) and because:

...les préoccupations qu'a déjà évoquées le ministre des Affaires sociales à l'égard de la dénatalité sont largement partagées par le Conseil (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1981a:I).

The focus of the document is Québec's declining birth rate and if and how family policy measures can alter or influence it. The CASF advises the Québec Government to implement family policy measures in order to make society more receptive to couples

wanting to have children. However, it cautions against instituting a pronatalist policy which would hamper the emancipation or autonomy of women. Three broad areas in which action is recommended include: a change in attitudes and values so that childrearing no longer remains the exclusive domain of women; fiscal policies to improve the financial situation of families; and changes to the workplace and the humanization of social services.

In terms of language, culture and immigration, the document stresses that fertility decline will have repercussions with respect to the demographic weight of Québec within Canada, the francophone majority in Québec, and the future of "la société québécoise"<sup>30</sup>. Nonetheless, it proposes using immigration as a means to compensate for lower rates of fertility. Lastly, with regard to issues raised in the feminist literature, the document acknowledges the double-burden faced by working women with children and advocates that childrearing tasks be equally shared by both parents. It urges that men be encouraged to become more involved in the care of their children and that the Government be aware of the types of messages it conveys regarding women (in policies, etc.).

The third and fourth documents in this category are *Concilier maternité et participation au monde du travail* (CASF, 1981b) and its annex *Natalité, travail des mères et aide de l'Etat* (CASF, 1981c). The former is an opinion by the CASF on issues relating to the reconciliation of women's work outside the home with family responsibilities. While the latter discusses the results of a survey which focused on women's perceptions and attitudes with regard to population growth and fertility decline in Québec, the number of children desired, and the role of the State in assisting working women with family responsibilities.

While the survey (CASF, 1981c) is based on interviews with women only<sup>31</sup> and the

opinion (CASF, 1981b) centres on women and the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, one is left with the impression that these issues were significant primarily due to their implications for Québec's declining birthrate and not women as such. Declining fertility is linked to an aging population and the eventual threat to demographic growth:

L'espérance de vie augmentant, la population vieillit et le faible taux de natalité ne vient plus contrebalancer ce phénomène du vieillissement. La croissance démographique elle-même est menacée par ce processus (CASF, 1981b:1).

An interesting detail of both the survey and opinion is the fact that they point out that 59.5% of the women interviewed said a relative (usually their mother) had assisted them after the birth of their child, as opposed to 37.8% who named the father of the child.

Although there are no formal recommendations for measures to increase fertility, the opinion undoubtedly expresses interest in couples having more children.

Dans l'immédiat, pour assurer le renouvellement de sa population jeune, les Québécois devraient donner naissance à 2,3 enfants par famille...Comment maintenir chez les couples un désir d'enfants suffisant pour que le nombre idéal d'enfants auxquels ils aspirent puisse se concrétiser. Voilà le défi que notre société aura à relever au cours des prochaines années (CASF, 1981b:1,4).

Moreover, it is clear from the topic sub-headings, "Au moins deux, de préférence trois", "La population devrait augmenter", and "Les obstacles à la venue de l'enfant" that the need to increase fertility is a priority area of the documents. Neither document contains specific references to the issues of language, culture, or immigration.

The fifth document in this category is the opinion entitled *La Famille demain* (CASF, 1982a). The objective of the document is to outline the elements to be included in a family policy, in response to a request by the Ministre des affaires sociales in Summer

1980. The information for this document came from the CASF working group on family policy, the above documents on reconciling work and family responsibilities (CASF, 1981b, 1981c), as well as the document on the various government measures and programmes aimed at the family (CASF, 1982b). This document is exclusively focused on family policy and specifies the following guiding principles to be included in the development of a family policy: the respect for pluralism and diversity of families; the recognition of the responsibilities and autonomy of families, as well as the solidarity that exists amongst families; assistance to alleviate the financial burden of families; and the assurance of the neutrality and coherence of government policies and State intervention into the family. The document contains twenty-three recommendations covering areas as diverse as increased financial assistance for families, housing, the inclusion of birthing rooms in hospitals, longer maternity leave, and more and better counselling and social services aimed at families (CASF, 1982b:39-55)<sup>32</sup>.

With regard to fertility decline and the need for pronatalist measures, the document explains how low fertility and outward migration since the 1970s had resulted in seriously reduced population growth. However, it also notes that opting for pronatalist measures presupposes that fertility or the desire for children is something which may be easily influenced or set in motion. Rather than implementing policy measures which may or may not respond to the complex and varied aspirations of individuals, the document finds it preferable to:

**...opter pour une politique familiale qui créerait des conditions favorables à la naissance d'enfant(s)... [et] chercher à diminuer les obstacles au relèvement de la fécondité tout en préservant l'autonomie et la possibilité de choix des**

familles (CASF, 1982b:17, 59).

One of the motivating factors behind the need for a family policy is linked to the evolution of Québec society and its demographic weight within Canada. For example:

A l'échelle du Québec, tenant compte que sa population représente environ 30% de la population canadienne, on peut soutenir qu'environ 5 millions de Québécois vivent dans la structure familiale. Cet ensemble de familles québécoises représente un vaste réservoir de ressources humaines à qui il faut fournir un environnement favorable. L'avenir de la nation québécoise en dépend (CASF, 1982b:20).

Furthermore:

Si chaque famille demeure responsable de son projet familial, l'Etat ne peut se désintéresser du développement des ressources humaines du Québec. A ce titre, la politique familiale est appelée à jouer un rôle-clé dans l'avenir de notre société...Néanmoins, on ne peut ignorer que, comme par le passé, la survie de notre collectivité ne peut être assurée que par une volonté de mieux accueillir l'enfant dans la famille et dans la société (CASF, 1982b:60).

Finally, in relation to the issues raised in the feminist literature, the document recognizes women's dual role of worker and mother, as well as the difficulty in reconciling both. To alleviate the burden of working mothers, the document urges a more equal sharing of domestic and parenting tasks among men and women. One means proposed is to teach boys and girls at a young age that housework and childrearing is the responsibility of both sexes<sup>33</sup>.

The next document in this category is *Des priorités pour la famille* (CASF, 1986). It was written in response to the *Rapport du comité de la consultation sur la politique familiale* (Comité de la consultation sur la politique familiale, 1986) by a working committee of the CASF. The opinion examines the findings of the *Rapport* in general and the sectoral policy recommendations specifically.

The CASF criticizes the *Rapport* for its lack of attention to declining fertility and the reduction in the number of young families in Québec. It disagrees with the Comité's definition of family policy and the differentiation made between family policy and pronatalist measures:

Le Conseil s'étonne donc du principe énoncé par les auteurs du rapport qui affirment que la politique familiale 'doit être considérée comme une politique de qualité de vie foncièrement distincte de toute forme de politique nataliste ou de population'. On semble vouloir ainsi écarter de la politique familiale toute stratégie ou mesure destinée à s'attaquer au problème le plus réel et le plus fondamental aux yeux des membres du Conseil, celui du non renouvellement des familles et de la population (CASF, 1986:8-9).

Moreover, the CASF finds that:

Considérant le problème de sous-fécondité chronique qui affecte le Québec, le Conseil est d'avis que l'adoption de mesures destinées à favoriser la natalité tout en améliorant la qualité de la vie des parents constitue la visée première de la politique familiale (CASF, 1986:9).

It is also interesting to note that *Des priorités pour la famille* criticizes the family policy consultation process as unrepresentative, since three quarters of the participants were women and many of those who presented briefs came from the public sector and feminist and family organizations<sup>34</sup>. Moreover, while agreeing with the recommendations in general, one in particular is considered irrelevant, relating to the "développement d'une nouvelle solidarité entre les hommes et les femmes" (CASF, 1986:9).

Although there are no specific policy recommendations put forward, the CASF document urges action in three areas designed to eliminate the obstacles to fertility. The priority areas include: economic support for parents, the adaptability of the workplace to parents, and child care services<sup>35</sup>. The document is very focused on fertility decline and the



need for a family policy centred on the birth rate. According to the Conseil:

...la question de la natalité doit se trouver au coeur d'une politique familiale (CASF, 1986:7).

With regard to language, culture, and immigration, the document draws attention to the widening gap between fertility levels in Québec and Ontario, and touches upon the problems associated with immigration:

...tous les démographes s'accordent à dire qu'un problème de sous-fécondité de l'ampleur de celui que nous vivons au Québec ne peut se résoudre par la seule voie d'une immigration accrue. De plus, le fragile équilibre social et politique du Québec pourrait-il survivre à une immigration massive qui viserait à compenser les effets d'une faible natalité? Si on se préoccupe de l'avenir de la famille et de la population au Québec, peut-on faire abstraction du problème de dénatalité aigüe qui affecte présentement notre société? (CASF, 1986:8).

The seventh document in this category is entitled *Penser et agir famille. Guide à l'intention des intervenants publics et privés, 2e édition*, or the English version, *Think and Act Family. A Guide for Public and Private Organizations (Conseil de la famille, 1989)*. This document is similar to the previous one in the sense that it reveals the shift in orientation of the Conseil from a liberal, family-oriented perspective in its earlier days towards a more pronatalist and fiscalist orientation<sup>36</sup>.

The purpose of this document is to set forth objectives and guidelines to assist policy makers and administrators to "think and act family". In addition, it proposes an evaluation grid that was to be used to identify the ways in which policies and programmes positively or negatively effect families. An important component of the evaluation is the determination of whether or not policies prohibit or penalize couples from "having the number of children that they desire". Sample evaluation criteria include the following questions:

Should the increase in the birthrate be an objective of a family policy or the result? Does the State have any say in a couple's decision whether or not to have children? (Conseil de la famille, 1989:34).

There are two recommendations made by the Conseil to the Minister Responsible for Family Policy in this document. The first is that the Québec Government adopt the evaluation criteria in the document as guidelines for all actions with regard to families "in order to translate its commitment to *think and act family* into concrete action" (Conseil de la famille, 1989:80). The second recommendation is that the Secrétariat à la famille also develops a practical evaluation tool to be used by public administrators, planners and departmental family policy coordinators to analyze the family content of policies or programmes which directly or indirectly affect families and parental responsibilities.

While the document is very much focused on family policy, it is also very interested in fertility decline and the ways in which policies or lack thereof work against couples with several children or those wanting more. The correlation between family policy and pronatalist measures is seen as follows:

Family policy hinges on demography. The Conseil de la famille is concerned about the situation in Québec, particularly by the dramatic drop in the birthrate...According to the Conseil, an increase in the birthrate should result from a sound family policy: with favourable conditions for new life and a lightening of the parental burden, families will multiply...Choosing measures geared towards the family rather than towards the birthrate means working on all fronts at once: allowances, credits, parental leave, family recreation, housing, matrimonial regimes, the fight against family violence, and so on...However, given the present concern for the size of the population, it would be worth verifying whether policies and programs reflect the reproductive function of the family. The desire for children is still strong among young parents. Policies and programs must therefore be evaluated in order to ensure that families that want more children are encouraged to have them (Conseil de la famille, 1989:17-18).

Although the document states that families and the birthrate constitute part of a collective and historical challenge which will determine Québec's future, there are no direct references to language, culture, or immigration. In addition, there is only passing reference to the possibility of developing a family policy which is capable of respecting the "personal autonomy women have won and their right to maternity" (Conseil de la famille, 1989:34).

The eighth opinion is *Les parents et les normes du travail* (Conseil de la famille, 1990c). Its objective is to evaluate the proposed changes to the *Loi modifiant la Loi sur les normes du travail et d'autres dispositions législatives* according to the "family criteria" put forth in the previous document, *Penser et Agir famille. Guide à l'intention des intervenants publics et privés* (Conseil de la famille, 1989).

In light of the family criteria, there are twelve recommendations concerning the proposed legislation. These include: the need for longer and better paid maternity leave, more annual holidays for workers, the creation of parental leave days, a decrease in the work week from 44 to 40 hours, the right of parents to refuse work on Sundays or overtime without advance notice, and the introduction of a publicity campaign to sensitize employers and employees to the advantages of flexible working hours.

Whereas the document focuses on the proposed changes to a specific piece of legislation, the primary motivation for doing so falls within the scope of family policy. Furthermore, Québec's low birthrate is explicitly linked with the need for family-friendly policies which could influence fertility:

L'importance de notre déficit démographique nous rappelle qu'il faut faire un effort spécifique pour encourager les parents à donner suite à leur désir d'enfant. Le marché du travail, comme beaucoup d'autres milieux, doit

apporter sa contribution pour réduire les obstacles que rencontrent les travailleuses et les travailleurs qui souhaitent augmenter leurs responsabilités familiales (Conseil de la famille, 1990c:3).

The discussion of women centred primarily on the benefits of longer maternity leave and work reforms. The document emphasizes that women should be able to take longer maternity leave or not work at all if financially possible. In addition, it mentions that parental leave could promote or facilitate the participation of fathers in childrearing:

La qualité des congés parentaux a une grande influence sur la réalisation du désir d'enfant, sur la qualité de la vie familiale et sur la participation plus grande des pères à l'entretien et à l'éducation des jeunes enfants (Conseil de la famille, 1990c:8).

There are no references to language, culture, or immigration in the document.

The ninth document is entitled *Réaction au Plan d'action gouvernemental en matière de politique familial 1989-91, Familles en tête* (Conseil de la famille, 1990d). It is an opinion concerning the first Family Policy Action Plan (Secrétariat à la famille, 1989) discussed earlier and contains both general and specific comments on the Government Plan. There are no recommendations in this document.

The Conseil views the Action Plan as a good beginning and reacts positively to the multisectoral approach of coordination and action by various government departments and agencies. Nonetheless, it is critical of the Plan due to its lack of fixed deadlines and absence of an evaluation mechanism.

With regard to fertility decline and the pronatalist birth incentives proposed by the first Action Plan, the Conseil de la famille reiterates the precarious nature of Québec's demographic situation and supports the Plan's emphasis on the third child. However, it also

cautions that public reaction to these kinds of measures would be perceived negatively. To ward off such criticism, the Conseil purposes financial assistance also be given for the birth of first and second children. In addition, they advise placing greater emphasis on two areas identified as priorities in the feminist literature: measures to assist parents in reconciling work and family responsibilities and child care. There are no references to language, culture, or immigration in the document.

The tenth document in this category is *Le financement des organismes familiaux: une approche partenariale* (Conseil de la famille, 1991c). It is an opinion of the Conseil de la famille with regard to the role and financing of family organizations, as well as their position in relation to the State and families. There are nine recommendations put forth in the document, all of which deal with the role and financing of family organizations.

As family organizations are viewed as part of Québec's multisectoral approach to family policy, this document can be described as focusing on a particular aspect of family policy formulation. The document also points to the fact that declining fertility is one of the "new social problems" which came about due to the crisis of the Welfare State (Conseil de la famille, 1991c:4). There are no references to language, culture, or immigration in the document, nor are the issues raised in the feminist literature part of the discussion.

The eleventh document is entitled *Agir avec les familles en habitation* (Conseil de la famille, 1991a). It is an opinion of the Conseil regarding "le milieu où la vie familiale se déroule, en l'occurrence le logement et son environnement" (Conseil de la famille, 1991a:1). The document states that housing issues are an important concern of the Minister Responsible for the Family and formed an integral part of family policy. There are thirty-four

recommendations in the document which centre around how to make housing and the surrounding environment more accessible and welcoming to families. Recommendation 17, though somewhat unique, is noteworthy for its pronatalist thrust or preoccupation with numbers:

Procurer une aide financière supplémentaire de 2 000\$ pour chacun des enfants de second rang et plus, et en cours de programme, effectuer une remise de capital du même ordre lors de la naissance d'enfants (Conseil de la famille, 1991a:33).

Furthermore, the Conseil also considers housing assistance should be appropriated according to the number of children per family, which in turn may have an impact on fertility itself.

Le Conseil considère que le soutien financier en matière d'habitation devrait être modulé en fonction du nombre d'enfants. De plus, l'aide fournie devrait contribuer à soutenir les familles dans la réalisation de leur désir d'avoir d'autres enfants (Conseil de la famille, 1991a:20).

The document does not discuss any of the issues raised in the feminist literature though it notes safety and access to housing are especially important for children and women. Lastly, though there are no references to language, culture, or immigration, the document points out that the amount of federal funding for social housing in Québec is less than Québec's share of the total Canadian population:

...le gouvernement fédéral n'allouait au Québec que 17,8% de son budget en matière de logement social et que cette situation était inacceptable, compte tenu, entre autres, de la proportion de la population du Québec qui s'établissait à 25,6% de l'ensemble canadien (Conseil de la famille, 1991a:27).

The twelfth document, *Les services de garde au Québec: un équilibre précaire* (Conseil de la famille, 1993c), is an overview and opinion on the situation of child care in Québec - services available, subsidies, resources, and the needs of clientele. The document

discusses the impact of child care on the development of children, in addition to how child care corresponds to the needs of parents. There are nineteen recommendations aimed at improving accessibility, resources, funding, and regulations.

The document recognizes child care as an important element of Québec family policy. Child care was important because it would assist parents who choose to work in reconciling work and family responsibilities. Likewise, due to the situation brought about by decreased fertility and an increase in the number of small families, child care may prove useful in other respects:

A l'époque dite de la révolution tranquille, le Québec était renommé pour ses familles nombreuses. Si l'indice de fécondité atteignait alors 3,8, il n'était plus que de 1,66 en 1991, après un redressement du creux historique de 1,35 enregistré en 1987. L'impact de la diminution de la taille des familles est considérable. Elle isole les jeunes parents en les privant d'un réseau d'entraide propre aux familles nombreuses en plus de restreindre la socialisation des enfants à fratrie réduite. La famille doit alors suppléer par d'autres moyens l'absence de proches en mesure de les soutenir en plus de compléter cette carence de contacts vécue par leurs jeunes (Conseil de la famille, 1993c:7).

With regard to issues relating to women, the document recognizes the necessity of child care for single mothers, so as to enable them to work outside the home and "for their mental well-being". It also advocates shared parenting and the prerogative of parents who choose to remain at home with their children as an alternative to child care. Once again, we see the usage of gender-neutral language and the framing of child care alternatives in terms of choice. This downplays the fact that it is still mostly women who remain at home to care for children and that some women have no other choice.

Finally, although there are no references to immigration in the document, it did mention how daycare could assist in the transmission of language and culture:

Des services de garde répondant aux besoins de ces nouveaux petits Québécois doivent ainsi être offerts afin qu'ils puissent s'intégrer à notre mode de vie et apprendre dans ce milieu de socialisation la langue et les rudiments de la vie québécoise en grandissant avec des enfants de leur âge (Conseil de la famille, 1993c:16).

The next document is *La famille...composée autrement* (Conseil de la famille, 1995b). It is an opinion with regard to the challenges faced by those living in blended families. The findings of this document were highlighted above in *L'art de mieux vivre une recomposition familiale* (Conseil de la famille, 1995a).

The last document in the category of *avis* is entitled *Choix et Soutien...telles sont les exigences des familles québécoises au regard d'une éventuelle politique de la petite enfance* (Conseil de la famille, 1996). This document is a résumé of the consultations held by the Conseil de la famille with a selection of 100 parents<sup>37</sup> and family organizations on the Government's proposed policy on early childhood (politique de la petite enfance). The consultations took place in various locations in Québec during April and May 1996, in response to a request by the Minister Responsible for the Family. Some of the findings of this document concerning "les plus jeunes citoyens du Québec" were incorporated into the White paper *Nouvelles dispositions de la politique familiale: Les enfants au coeur de nos choix* (Ministère du Conseil exécutif, 1997) discussed below.

The document constitutes part of the Québec Government family policy formulation process and discusses various policy measures, principles, and services to be integrated into a policy to support parents with young children. There are eight recommendations in the document as well as the suggestion by family organizations regarding the creation of an "Office à l'enfance" to be responsible for the administration of the new policy. The



recommendations (or principles) include: the integration and coordination of an early childhood policy with the Government's existing family policy; the assurance that parents be involved in the coordination and formulation of eventual services, since parents are the best qualified to decide what is best for their children; that policy measures and choices serve a variety of needs, for example, equal financial compensation for child care as well as for parents who stay at home with their children; the harmonization and complementarity of services; the assurance that all children are eligible to receive the same services, regardless of where they live; and the adequate support of family organizations which are considered the vital link between families and government service providers.

Fertility decline is not the focal point of this document though there are several references to how Québec families are smaller than before. The family continues to be viewed as the cornerstone of society, consequently putting it in danger would also put the foundations of Québec society at risk. Nevertheless, if this document is any indication, the tone and zeal of the Conseil with respect to pronatalist measures to increase the birthrate appears to have subsided. There is no discussion of immigration or culture though the need for language training for children who do not speak French is highlighted.

Lastly, with regard to issues raised in the feminist literature, the document acknowledges that it is often the careers of women which are jeopardized due to the inadequacy of child care services:

Plusieurs familles sont obligées de trouver des solutions de rechange, de faire garder leurs enfants dans une garderie non régie ou simplement de sacrifier la carrière d'un parent (la mère, dans la majorité des cas) pour contrer les limites de ces services (Conseil de la famille, 1996:8).

However, and without realizing a potential contradiction, the document also strongly advocates financial compensation for parents, the majority of which happen to be women, to enable them to leave the workforce and remain at home with their children.

### **Conseil du Statut de la Femme**

The eighth organizational grouping consists of twenty-one documents published by the Conseil du statut de la femme (CSF) between 1979 and 1997. The documents in this grouping are somewhat atypical in the sense that the major themes and ideas are more constant and similar throughout the documents than is the case with other organizations or groupings of documents. Due to the high degree of consistency, I have summarized the contents of all the documents together rather than treating each one separately.

There are basically two types of documents in this organizational grouping, namely research documents or opinions by the Conseil du statut de la femme. Of the twenty-one documents, the majority are explicitly concerned with family policy, while several examine related issues such as parental leave and pronatalist measures. A few are slightly broader in scope and focus on questions pertaining to demographic change, fertility decline, and immigration. There are many recommendations scattered throughout the various documents.

All the documents in this organizational grouping focus on the concerns of women, many of which correspond to the issues raised in the feminist literature. The purpose of the documents is to make the Government aware of the concerns of women and to introduce a feminist perspective into the study of demographic matters. In the document entitled *Au coeur des changements démographiques; des femmes font le point: rapport* (1991a), we are

told of the importance of doing so:

...il importe de souligner que ce rapport constitue une nouvelle lecture des phénomènes démographiques et l'amorce d'une réflexion féministe sur le sujet. Le groupe de travail souhaite que cette nouvelle approche influence le discours officiel sur la situation démographique au Québec et surtout incite le gouvernement à revoir ces politiques à l'égard de la famille en tenant compte davantage des besoins des femmes (CSF, 1991a:4).

Similarly, in her remarks to the conference entitled *Femmes et questions démographiques: un nouveau regard*, then-president of the CSF Marie Lavigne commented on the need for feminist input into demographic issues and the lack of critical reflection within mainstream demographic discourse:

...alors que sociologues, économistes, historiens et anthropologues voient régulièrement leurs analyses ou leurs méthodes critiquées, voire mises au rancart au gré des courants idéologiques dominants, la démographie échappe en partie à ces fréquentes remises en cause. Auréolées de la neutralité quantitative, les études des démographes sont utilisées comme des faits objectifs, tant par les chercheurs des autres disciplines que par les concepteurs de politiques sociales ou encore par certains démographes se transformant en penseurs sociaux...A cause des enjeux liés aux questions de population et de l'utilisation massive faite par les décideurs des résultats des études démographiques, il me semble urgent que les femmes s'approprient ces savoirs et qu'elles soient partie prenante de la définition de la connaissance et des méthodologies. Si elles ne veulent pas que d'autres définissent pour elles un rôle auquel elles n'aspirent plus, ou définissent un monde, des enjeux sociaux et des politiques dans lesquels elles ne se reconnaîtront pas... (CSF, 1991b:207-213).

The CSF warns against idealizing the family and failing to recognize that women assume most of the domestic and childrearing responsibilities (CSF, 1985a). They also insist that nostalgia should not be the starting point for family policy and to remember that families have not always been a haven for women (CSF, 1986). Young women will not be inspired to have children out of nostalgia for the past, nationalism, or even to preserve the material

acquisitions of the generation preceding them (CSF, 1991c).

Unlike many of the other documents in the corpus, the Conseil du statut de la femme documents do not use gender neutral language, but rather emphasize the fact that it is largely women, not parents, who are responsible for most of the work with regard to children. They also point out that it is women who often pay the highest price with respect to lost wages, career prospects, and the "double-burden" (CSF, 1979; 1984).

As mentioned above, many of the documents centre on family policy. In addition to examining specific policy measures, there is an overall preoccupation with the compatibility between family policies and women's equality. Specifically, the documents are interested in whether Québec family policy acts as a disincentive to women working for pay, or if it promotes women's economic independence and autonomy (CSF, 1984; 1984a; 1985b; 1986; 1997). The documents question the possibility of creating a family policy which takes gender relations into account:

La politique familiale viendra-t-elle renforcer cette volonté de changement en responsabilisant les deux parents, en offrant aux femmes les mesures économiques et sociales qui leur permettent d'assumer cette autonomie individuelle prônée par la réforme du droit de la famille ou bien, viendra-t-elle sanctionner le fait que ce sont encore les femmes qui constituent l'élément fondamental de la famille et sur lesquelles reposent toutes les tâches? (CSF, 1984:8).

The CSF also questions the intentions of the Government with respect to family policy measures, wondering if these were designed to support the needs of parents, most notably mothers, or to fulfil the demographic objectives or goals of the State (CSF, 1992). They conclude that a neutral family policy was the preferred option:

Une politique neutre est souhaitable de façon à ne pas compromettre l'entrée

des femmes sur le marché du travail. Actuellement, des services de garde coûteux et en nombre insuffisant y font obstacle. Celles-ci, surtout quand elles sont à faibles salaires, sont alors incitées à demeurer au foyer (CSF, 1985a:92).

According to the Conseil du statut de la femme, five principles must be respected in the formulation of family policy measures. These include: respect for the autonomy of individuals; the responsibility of the State to provide for the needs of children; the responsibility of the State to economically assist parents; the equal responsibility and sharing of duties related to children by both parents; and the freedom of choice to have any number or no children at all (CSF, 1985a; 1992).

The CSF documents also emphasize the importance of policy measures which focus on the individual within the family as opposed to the family unit. The reasons for this stem from the fact that family types vary, making it impossible to formulate appropriate policies for all circumstances. Moreover, measures based on the family unit, such as the income tax exemption for a dependent spouse, can act as a disincentive for women to work outside the home, thereby contributing to their dependence and lack of autonomy (CSF, 1985a).

The CSF is critical of the family policy consultation process which occurred during the mid-1980s. The consultation document, the *Livre Vert* (Ministère des affaires sociales, 1984) and the final report of the committee, *Rapport du Comité de la consultation sur la politique familiale* (1986) are identified as problematic for several reasons. First, the CSF is concerned over the stance of the *Livre Vert*'s warning of the dangers of State intervention into the family. The emphasis on a private versus public approach to supporting families and the need for families to have more autonomy and responsibility is rejected. The reason for

this is that reduced government services would create more work for women and risk returning them to their traditional role of unpaid, unrecognized care-givers with no means of economic support or independence. The CSF cautions that retrenchment and privatization of services usually results in women being responsible to provide services which the State is no longer willing to provide (CSF, 1985a).

Second, the CSF disagrees with the notion of preference or the choice to work or stay at home with children, arguing instead that women often have no real choice due to financial constraints and the limited and unrewarding possibilities concerning paid employment. The same is said to apply to being able to freely choose between a full or part-time job:

...ce sont toujours '(les) femmes (qui), contrairement à la plupart des hommes, ont effectivement à choisir' l'aménagement de leur temps de travail en cas de responsabilités familiales. Le fait que les femmes assument encore aujourd'hui la plus grande part du soin et de l'éducation des enfants, la pénurie et les coûts élevés des services de garde adéquats, tout comme les inégalités sexuelles sur le marché de l'emploi amoindrissent cependant la prétendue 'liberté' de choix des travailleuses entre temps plein et temps partiel (CSF, 1991b:48).

Moreover, the CSF warns of the problems associated with part-time work or job-sharing as an alternative. They argue that both options could further jeopardize women's careers and financial security and do little to ensure that both men and women are equally involved in childrearing responsibilities:

...l'ensemble des aménagements du travail gagne-pain qui nous apparaissent souhaitables, parler seulement de la flexibilité des régimes de travail nous semble très limité et deux des moyens identifiés, soit le temps partiel et le partage de l'emploi, risquent dans les conditions actuelles d'être pénalisant pour les femmes et de ne pas mener au partage des tâches souhaité entre conjoints (CSF, 1985a:100).

Similarly, several CSF documents mention that job sharing and part-time arrangements will

only be successful and egalitarian if fathers also opt for these arrangements. The fact that it is mostly women who choose these arrangements only serves to perpetuate women's lower salaries and the fact that women do most of the work related to children (CSF, 1989a; 1990a; 1992).

The third reason the CSF is critical of the family policy consultation process stems from the preface to the *Livre Vert* and its emphasis on the phenomenon of fertility decline in Québec. The CSF believes this served to reinforce the confusion among the media and public regarding the differences between family policy and population policy. Furthermore, they argue that most of the discourse on fertility decline has been especially difficult for women due to the tendency to blame women and be critical of women's need for autonomy and financial independence (1985a).

Lastly, the CSF is critical of the final report of the family policy consultation process *Rapport du Comité...*(1986) for its lack of emphasis on economic support for parents (as opposed to fertility incentives), particularly in the form of increased financial aid and deductions for child care expenses (CSF, 1986).

Although the issue of fertility decline is addressed in many of the documents prepared by the Conseil du statut de la femme, the tone and content differs from the rest of the corpus. In one of its earlier documents, the CSF (1980) explains that the reason why Québec fertility is viewed as problematic is due to the inappropriate comparisons with the exceptionally high levels of the past.

...l'effondrement de la natalité au Québec n'a absolument rien de particulier, hormis une ampleur un peu plus grande qu'ailleurs. En vingt ans, nous avons atteint le niveau moyen des pays industrialisés. Si le caractère vertigineux de

la chute du taux de natalité a été plus marqué au Québec, c'est parce que traditionnellement ce taux était très élevé (CSF, 1980:4).

Rather than bemoaning the current situation or being nostalgic for the past, the CSF suggests accepting and recognizing the positive aspects associated with low fertility and working towards restructuring government services and the workplace so as to accommodate new realities (CSF, 1991d; 1992). The CSF opposes what they see as the alarmist stance taken by the Québec Government on the negative correlation between fertility decline and an aging population, and disagree with its narrow focus on increasing the birth rate and levels of immigration for the sake of numbers alone (1991e; 1992).

The CSF documents also state that many of the projections for the costs associated with an aging population fail to recognize that much of work associated with a young population, that is caring for young children, is performed by women who are not remunerated (CSF, 1985b). Moreover, they are critical of the fact that many of the poorest and most disenfranchised members of the elderly population are women who have never worked outside the home and have limited access to adequate pensions (CSF, 1984).

The reading of the CSF documents reveals that mainstream and Government demographic discourse have problematized Québec's birth rate while ignoring the positive aspects or advantages to women (CSF, 1985b; 1991a; 1991b).

Le Québec est sans doute l'une des régions du monde occidental où le discours démographique est le plus largement axé sur la dénatalité...[mais] la dénatalité n'a pas que des retombées économiques. Elle résulte de changements sociaux profonds, mais elle en induit d'autres jugés souhaitables par beaucoup...le plus souvent, c'est de l'amélioration de la qualité de vie...notamment pour les femmes qui, dans un tel contexte, gagnent en possibilité d'épanouissement personnel...Il faut bien souligner que telles considérations sont absentes du discours des natalistes ou encore ces



aspirations sont jugées bêtement égoïstes. Ne lisait-on pas, sous la plume d'Henripin (1986:27) que 'les féministes (...), à toutes fins utiles, préfèrent l'infécondité heureuse qui conduit au néant plutôt que l'inconfort et les quelques injustices de l'existence' (CSF, 1989b).

Similarly, the documents criticize demographic and Government literature for examining the actions and aspirations of women only in the context of demographic evolution and ignoring the concerns of women themselves.

Dans l'ensemble, la condition féminine est étudiée indépendamment de l'évolution démographique, la faible fécondité étant admise et se situant en amont des progrès enregistrés par les femmes au plan socio-économique...Au centre tant de la mise en place du nouveau régime démographique que de l'avènement d'une société qui n'a plus d'autre choix que de leur faire une place et de les écouter, les femmes ont rarement le privilège, dans le discours démographique actuel, d'imposer leur approche. Il n'émerge pas, des textes passés en revue, de vision globale, de théorie qui permette de lier leurs aspirations et l'évolution démographique (CSF, 1989b:21,45).

The CSF documents do not problematize low fertility or attribute its cause to women. Rather, they strongly urge the need for a family policy which encourages the emancipation of women. The Conseil contends women have less children due to the risks associated with financial insecurity and as such, advocates measures which safeguard women's access to jobs and financial security. This in turn may result in women having (more) children. Family and social policies must accommodate women working for pay, rather than penalize those who do so and have children.

Donner naissance à un enfant, c'est investir dans l'avenir de la société...Il n'est pas acceptable que les femmes, parce qu'elles assument cette fonction, soient pénalisées sur le plan professionnel et économique...Le marché du travail et la politique sociale doivent s'adapter à cette réalité si l'on veut que les femmes et les hommes puissent, sans trop de pénalité, mettre au monde les enfants qu'ils souhaitent (CSF, 1989a:3-4,51).

Several of the CSF documents raise the issue of how the Québec Government has

paid heed to demographers who disparage the inverse relationship between women's pursuit of economic independence and equality and the low birth rate, and who consider working to be incompatible with having children (CSF, 1991a; 1991b). The position of the CSF is that work is not in competition with having children. On the contrary, having a job may financially enable women to have children and prevent some of the risks associated with single motherhood (CSF, 1985b).

As we have seen with other documents in the corpus, at times the concern over declining fertility in Québec has been linked to the need for pronatalist measures. The Conseil du statut de la femme is critical of alarmist demographers advocating vigorous strategies to increase the birthrate, and opposed to pronatalist measures because of their repercussions for women (CSF, 1988; 1991a; 1992).

...devant la chute de la natalité, on pourrait être tenté d'introduire des mesures natalistes (qui concernent la venue d'un troisième enfant et l'appui aux parents pour l'enfant en bas âge). Ces types de mesures tiendront-elles compte du fait que ce sont encore largement les femmes qui prennent en charge les enfants? Comment conciliera-t-on cette reprise en charge des enfants avec le désir d'autonomie que les femmes expriment de plus en plus? (CSF5, 1984:7).

Moreover, the CSF believes the Québec Government was unduly influenced by pronatalist demographers which serves to explain the pronatalist orientation adopted during the 1980s. Their objections and criticisms to the inclusion of numeric goals in family policy are explained by the following:

Le Conseil du statut de la femme ne peut que se montrer critique face à l'orientation qu'a donnée le gouvernement à la politique familiale. Il trouve, en effet, difficilement acceptable qu'un objectif démographique, soit celui de relever la natalité, prenne autant de place dans cette politique...Il apparaît donc que, pressé d'obtenir un résultat numérique à son objectif démographique, le gouvernement a négligé de considérer les véritables

besoins des personnes et des familles malgré les conséquences fâcheuses qu'une telle façon de faire peut avoir sur les personnes, sur les couples et, somme toute, sur l'atteinte même de son objectif (CSF, 1992:20).

The CSF is especially critical of policy measures which encourage or reinforce the traditional division of labour whereby women are seen as primarily responsible for children. Similarly, they oppose any sort of measures which could act as a disincentive for women to work for pay and economic support. Instead, the Conseil documents recommend that an integrated set of policy measures aimed at parents be neutral, encourage the sharing of parental tasks between father and mother, support parents for longer than the first few years of the child's life and, place additional financial emphasis on low income families rather than the third child (1981; 1982; 1988; 1991d; 1992).

Two important policy measures discussed in many of the CSF documents are the need for a more comprehensive maternity or parental leave programme and greater access to affordable child care. Both measures are necessary so as to enable parents, especially women, to better reconcile having children with paid employment. Their position regarding each issue will be discussed briefly, beginning with parental leave.

In general, the position of the CSF with regard to parental leave has remained constant over the years. They have always recommended the need for a more comprehensive and better compensated maternity, and more recently, parental leave programme. Notwithstanding, a 1982 document which includes a speech given by then-president of the CSF Claire Bonenfant, illustrates how the inadequacy of child care or collective solutions to child care can be masked and rationalized by proposing longer maternity leave and the connection between women and children:

...c'est toujours l'avenir de la femme qui est annexé à celui de l'enfant. Il n'y a pas assez de garderies? On propose alors à la femme un congé-maternité assez long pour masquer les besoins en équipements collectifs. On la fait disparaître encore quelques années de la scène (CSF, 1982:7).

However, this document appears to be exceptional since all other discussions of parental leave highlight the necessity and effectiveness of this measure in working towards women's economic equality and autonomy.

The CSF considers parental leave a fundamental part of family policy because it allows parents to take time off from paid employment for the initial responsibilities related to children. In the case of Québec, a 1989 document points out the problems of the existing programme:

...complexité et incohérence découlant de la multiplicité de lois et de programmes;  
lacunes au plan des congés accordés et de la protection de l'emploi et des avantages;  
insuffisance du remplacement du revenu durant les congés;  
difficultés soulevées par l'exercice du retrait préventif (CSF, 1989a:8-9).

The CSF recommends the following changes to parental leave throughout several of its documents. These include the need for longer maternity leave and the eligibility to collect benefits regardless of work status (CSF, 1979; 1997). In addition, in a document dating back to 1979, the CSF urges the Government of Québec to obtain complete jurisdictional control of its parental leave programme. The CSF also suggest the compensation level for maternity or parental be increased, since it covers just slightly more than half of one's salary whereas other kinds of leave, like workers compensation, covers 90% (CSF, 1990b; 1997).

Another issue with regard to parental leave involves the transfer of parental leave between parents. The CSF is opposed to this and recommends to Government this not be

allowed in a Québec plan. Drawing on the example of Sweden where men were entitled to 90 days of leave and parental leave transferable, it was shown that in the majority of cases (90 to 95%), fathers transferred their time to the mother (CSF, 1989a)<sup>38</sup>. Similarly, a CSF survey on parental leave taken by fathers in Québec provides equally discouraging findings. Only 4,2% of total users of parental leave were men, while only 2,5% of those took the maximum allowable of ten weeks. Furthermore, in 60% of the cases where men took parental leave, women were also on leave or present (CSF, 1995).

While transferability of leave may benefit women on an individual basis by allowing them to take longer maternity leave, it does little to alter the traditional division of labour with regard to childrearing or increase the proportion of fathers who take leave (CSF, 1985a; 1991a; 1992). For this reason the CSF recommends non-transferable parental leave in the hope that it may influence fathers to take parental leave, work towards eliminating the unequal distribution of household and childrearing done by women, and work towards creating a more egalitarian society (CSF, 1990b; 1995; 1997).

In 1997, the PQ Government proposed a series of changes to parental leave which were outlined in its White Paper *Nouvelles dispositions de la politique familiale: Les enfants au coeur de nos choix* (Ministère du Conseil exécutif, 1997) discussed below. Some CSF recommendations included in the proposed changes were: longer coverage, less stringent eligibility requirements, extension of coverage to those not presently covered, such as self-employed and part-time workers, 75% coverage of net salary, and the complete jurisdictional control by Québec. However, because agreement could not be reached between Québec and Canada with regard to the transfer of premiums for maternity and paternity leave stipulated

in the federal Employment Insurance Act and for other tax deductions and contributions, the talks were postponed in August 1997<sup>39</sup>. To this date a Québec-administered parental leave plan has yet to be implemented.

At present, the financial aspect of parental leave in Québec falls under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government Employment Insurance Programme, with the Québec Government providing an *allocation de maternité* to cover the initial two week waiting period required to collect federal benefits. The Federal Programme covers 57% of previous earnings and consists of 15 weeks for maternity leave, with an additional 10 weeks parental leave to be taken by either parent or shared between both. To qualify for leave, 700 hours of work during the past 52 weeks are required. Since eligibility for leave from employment is a matter for provincial jurisdiction, in Québec it is possible to take up to 34 weeks of unpaid leave for each parent.

The second policy measure discussed in several of the CSF documents is the need for more affordable child care, an increase in the number of available child care spaces, and a range of choices to respond to the needs of parents. This would enable parents and especially women to better reconcile childrearing and paid employment. As well, the CSF has recommended an increase in the salary of child care workers, the majority of which are women and poorly paid (CSF, 1997).

Changes to the provision of child care were also proposed in the 1997 White Paper mentioned above. The new plan included the introduction of \$5 a day child care and the expansion of the number of existing spaces. The programme initially covered four year-olds though has since been extended to three and two year-olds. By 2001, the Government has

promised services to children of all ages, as well as the creation of additional spaces.

Although the CSF acknowledged the new measures as a step in the right direction, they criticized the delay in availability of services for all children as well as the insufficient number of new spaces to be created. In addition, the CSF recommended the \$5 fee be eliminated for low income families, that priority be given to the creation of spaces in not for profit daycare centres run by parents, and that child care services be available throughout all regions of Québec (CSF, 1997).

Finally, with regard to the issues of language, culture, and immigration, a handful of documents produced by the Conseil du statut de la femme include discussions of these matters. According to the CSF, there are essentially two currents of thought in Québec demographic and policy discourse when discussing the correlation between population decline and the cultural, political, and economic future of Québec. On the one hand, there is a handful of outspoken and influential persons making alarmist and pessimistic predictions for the future. The situation in Québec has been perceived more negatively than elsewhere in the industrialized world due to the concern over the demographic weight of Québec within Canada and North America, as well as the association between language and the specificity and preservation of Québec culture (CSF, 1992). While on the other hand, there are those who are optimistic and advocate adapting to the changes currently taking place (CSF, 1992). The CSF sees itself as part of the latter group.

The CSF condemns the alarmist stance taken by some Québec demographers and explains how demographic discourse on immigration and integration has focused too narrowly on language usage (CSF, 1989b; 1991c; 1992). They recommend increasing the

number of immigrants as a solution to demographic decline and working towards the creation of a society that would be both welcoming to immigrants and capable of maintaining the cultural and linguistic integrity of Québec (CSF, 1985b; 1991e). This could be accomplished by avoiding an over-concentration of immigrants in the Montréal area and ensuring that female immigrants have access to French language training (CSF, 1989b; 1991e).

With regard to using immigration as a means to slow down or prevent an aging population, the CSF explains that in order to preserve a low ratio of elderly people, similar to the proportion in 1961, and not rely on immigration, women would have to have no less than 4 children each (CSF, 1989b). Although increased fertility may slow down population decline, it is unlikely that the trend of an aging population can be completely reversed or eliminated at this stage (CSF, 1991a).

Although the CSF documents view immigration as important and a viable option, they also explain that having an immigration policy or reaching a certain level of immigration does not diminish the need for a family policy:

Sans remettre en question le principe même de l'immigration, et conscient du fait que le Québec doit et a avantage à accueillir des personnes venant de cultures et d'horizons différents, le Conseil du statut de la femme craint cependant qu'une association aussi étroite que celle qui est faite entre le redressement démographique et l'immigration puisse conduire à un net désintéressement pour une véritable politique familiale (CSF, 1991e:2).

Likewise in the same document, they somewhat curiously point to the fact that the Québec Government has not done all it possibly could to increase fertility or the natural increase of the population:

Le Conseil du statut de la femme estime que seules les mesures qui permettent aux parents de concilier leurs responsabilités professionnelles et



familiales, tout en préservant les acquis des femmes dans ces deux domaines, pourront véritablement faire en sorte que les Québécoises et les Québécois, quelle que soit leur origine, aient tous les enfants souhaités. En somme, le Conseil du statut de la femme n'est pas encore convaincu que tous les efforts nécessaires ont été déployés pour offrir aux femmes et aux parents des conditions plus favorables à la natalité (CSF, 1991e:2).

Ultimately, the CSF considers the demographic weight or vitality of Québec to be not solely a matter of numbers, but rather a question of collective identity and conviction (CSF, 1991a; 1992):

Bien que le Conseil du statut de la femme soit conscient qu'un relèvement de la population serait favorable au Québec, notamment à cause de sa situation particulière au Canada et en Amérique du Nord, il ne peut s'empêcher d'exprimer des réserves face à cette orientation gouvernementale. D'abord, il considère exagéré de présenter le relèvement de la population québécoise comme un préalable au maintien de l'identité culturelle, du pouvoir politique et du pouvoir économique du Québec. Il lui semble, en effet, que la survie du Québec dépend autant, sinon plus, de la qualité et la force de ses ressources culturelles, politiques et économiques que du nombre total de ses habitants. Autrement, comment pourrait-on expliquer que, parallèlement à la perte séculaire du poids démographique du Québec dans l'ensemble canadien, on ait assisté au renforcement de son identité culturelle et de son pouvoir politique et économique (CSF, 1992:17-18).

To summarize, the position of the CSF with respect to family policy is best articulated in the opinion published in response to the most recent changes to family policy. Subsequent to listing six general principles of family policy measures - relevancy, coherence, simplicity and efficacy of measures, in addition to the goals of shared responsibility for children and social justice and equity, the CSF states the following:

Selon le Conseil du statut de la femme, l'Etat doit dans ses actions en matière de politique familiale poursuivre également des objectifs particuliers à l'endroit des femmes. Celles-ci continuent, en effet, de jouer un rôle important auprès des enfants et à l'égard des autres membres dépendants de la famille. Pour accéder au marché du travail, elles ont besoin de l'apport de l'organisation sociale. Sans un soutien collectif à la famille, sans partage des

tâches entre conjoints, il peut s'avérer très difficile pour plusieurs d'entre elles de concilier activités professionnelles et responsabilités familiales...la politique familiale s'appuie sur **l'équité entre les sexes**. Les moyens d'action choisis doivent favoriser **l'amélioration des conditions de vie des femmes**, concourir à leur **autonomie** et aller dans le sens de **l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes** (CSF, 1997:14-15).

## **Miscellaneous Agencies and Commissions of Inquiry**

The ninth and final section consists of eight miscellaneous documents. Several are reports from commissions of inquiry, while others are documents produced by Québec Government departments or agencies.

The first document is Annex 16 of the Report of the Commission d'enquête sur la santé et le bien-être social (1970). This Annex entitled *Les fondements d'une politique familiale*, contains the primary discussion on family policy within the inquiry commission document. Its purpose was to present the Commission with an overview of the various elements and disparate policy areas which fall under the guise of family policy. The specific areas discussed include: economic and financial measures, housing, the relationship between work and family responsibilities, family education, health, leisure, social services, family law, consumer services, government structures and organizations for the family, as well as areas of research on the family.

Although no formal recommendations are put forward in the document, it suggests Québec formulate a family policy which would be part of a broader policy of socio-economic development. Three reasons as to why Québec needed to act in the area of family policy are given. The first reason relates to "ce que l'on appelle communément la 'dénatalité'

québécoise"<sup>40</sup> and its impact with regard to cultural and linguistic matters. As fertility decline was particularly marked in the region of Montréal and especially among francophones, the document urges the implementation of family policy measures so as to maintain the overall proportion of francophones in Québec.

The second reason for a Québec family policy is to counter-act or ameliorate social problems stemming from recent changes within families. One example given relates to the "difficult problems" caused by the increased numbers of working women. The document suggests the need for special services in the form of day care or reduced working hours, as well as the creation of an allowance for mothers who stay at home with their children. The latter was proposed so that:

...la mère puisse faire un choix valable entre le travail et ses enfants. La situation présente est préjudiciable à la vie familiale en raison de la fatigue de la mère qu'impose le manque de services adéquats, impliquant aussi des conséquences graves sur les enfants (Commission d'enquête sur la santé et le bien-être social, 1970:67).

The third reason, which relates to the second, is that the establishment of a family policy in Québec would create far-reaching services and measures which would respond to the needs of all family members. Although each measure would have a specific goal, together they would be capable of assisting families "de compenser aux tensions et difficultés créées par les transformations de la société moderne" (Commission d'enquête sur la santé et le bien-être social, 1970:68).

The second document in this category is *Une problématique des ressources humaines au Québec*, prepared by the Ministère de l'immigration (1974). It is a report on the planning needs and management of human resources in Québec. Specifically, the objective of the

document is to examine and discuss the requirements and type of actions or policy needed with respect to three segments of the population -the total population, the active or working population, and with regard to immigration. There are no formal recommendations put forth in the document.

Although not stated as such, a primary concern of the document centres on how immigration can be used to minimize the negative effects of fertility decline and its role in preserving the francophone majority in Québec. Arguing that the preservation of the French language and culture is an important priority for Québec, the document contemplates the necessity and efficacy of language and population policy, particularly immigration or family policy measures, in maintaining the linguistic balance and cultural integrity of francophones in Québec. Specifically:

Sa situation particulière en matière d'évolution démographique, sa situation linguistique au sein du continent nord-américain et sa tradition culturelle l'incitent en effet à adopter une politique de la population qui lui soit propre. Le premier objectif de cette politique vise à accroître la sécurité de chaque famille québécoise...le troisième objectif tient aux conditions particulières du Québec en matière de répartition ethnique et linguistique: assurer le maintien et le développement du peuple francophone au Québec. C'est dans cette perspective que s'insère sa politique linguistique et que le Québec accorde une grande importance à une immigration vigoureuse et sélective (Ministère de l'immigration, 1974:80-81).

The correlation between family policy, population policy and pronatalist policy is also discussed in the document. It explains that although the goals of each policy type may differ from the other, there are similarities with respect to the type of measures for each policy. For example, whereas population policy is concerned with the volume and rate of growth of a population (fertility increase or decrease, geographic distribution, etc.) and pronatalist

policies with increasing the birth rate, family policy is focused on improving the conditions in which families raise children. Notwithstanding, measures such as flexible hours of work and tax breaks for those with family responsibilities can be said to fall within the realm of each of the above policies. Child care is also cited in the list of policy measures, though the document expresses a lack of consensus as to whether this measure is an incentive or disincentive to fertility:

...établir un réseau de garderies d'enfants encore que l'on ne sache pas de façon certaine s'il s'agit d'une mesure nataliste ou anti-nataliste certains soutenant que, comme les garderies permettent aux mères d'exercer un emploi hors du foyer, elles ont une influence anti-nataliste, d'autres que, comme elles encouragent les femmes qui en bénéficient à avoir d'autres enfants, elles ont au contraire une influence nataliste...(Ministère de l'immigration, 1974:121).

With regard to issues raised in the feminist literature, the document explains that because women's identity is no longer limited to motherhood, population policy or policies targeted at women must take this into account. Moreover, although a policy designed to improve the status of women may make it easier for women to have (more) children, population increase should not be the goal of such policies:

...l'objectif d'une telle législation consiste à aider la femme à réaliser ses propres objectifs et non pas la modification du taux de croissance de la population. Il reste que, dans la mesure où la participation de la femme à la vie politique, sociale et culturelle de la société lui permet d'exercer des rôles nouveaux, elle ne tire plus son identité ni sa valeur uniquement de son rôle de mère de famille plus ou moins nombreuse; comme sous-produit, une législation sur le statut de la femme, peut donc avoir un effet sur le taux d'accroissement naturel d'une population (Ministère de l'immigration, 1974:131).

The next document was prepared by the Secrétariat au développement social of the Ministère du Conseil exécutif (1984). It is entitled *L'évolution de la population du Québec*

*et ses conséquences* and is a synthesis of a larger research report which consisted of submissions by twelve ministries and government organizations. There are no recommendations put forward in the document.

As stated in the preface, the purpose of the document is to sensitize the Québec population to the relationship between demographic issues, particularly population size, and the survival of Québec as a distinct society. Although all three demographic variables are discussed in terms of the political, cultural, social, economic and regional consequences for Québec, the attention dedicated to the analysis of fertility figures most prominently. The issue of fertility decline is identified as one of the demographic problems facing Québec. Other problems relate to the migration deficit and the preference of immigrants to choose English over French as their second language. The document explains how below replacement level fertility and declining fertility will eventually pose problems in terms of an aging society. Likewise, in addition to migration and linguistic matters related to immigration, it will pose a threat to the continuity and long-term survival of Québec culture.

The situation in Québec is perceived as being more serious than elsewhere since it is the only "société à majorité francophone"<sup>41</sup> in North America, "entourée de voisins populeux anglophones"<sup>42</sup>. Although the document does not reject immigration outright or advocate Québec close itself off from other linguistic and ethnic groups, it does project a slightly contradictory message. On the one hand there is the somewhat more closed, inward-looking message:

Nous croyons qu'il incombe à la collectivité d'assurer à long terme au moins le remplacement des générations, de façon à ne pas mettre en danger son identité propre. Après deux siècles d'efforts collectifs pour sa survie, le

Québec ne peut se permettre de perdre son acquis démographique (Ministère du Conseil exécutif, 1984:84).

While on the other hand, there is openness and a more outward-looking vision:

Il faudra maintenir cette ouverture au monde extérieur, que ce soit à l'égard des citoyens du reste du Canada ou des citoyens d'autres pays. Le Québec doit pouvoir bénéficier de l'apport enrichissant d'autres groupes culturels. Tout en reconnaissant l'existence au Québec d'une culture principale qui est de tradition française, il faut que la société québécoise trouve chez les minorités une source de vitalité (Ministère du Conseil exécutif, 1984: 88).

In addition to the need for immigration, the document also suggests a family policy designed to remove the barriers to having children. This policy should aim toward improving the well-being of families and increasing the fertility rate to 2.1<sup>43</sup>. However, it should not be limited to pronatalist measures only:

...si on ne peut pas demeurer insensible à la situation démographique, on se doit d'intervenir par une politique nuancée qui ne se limite pas à des objectifs strictement natalistes...Il serait illogique de mettre de l'avant une politique visant à influencer la fécondité qui ne soit pas d'abord basée sur la qualité de vie des familles...De la même façon, elle devra tenir compte des grands objectifs sociaux même si souvent, à tort ou à raison, ils sont associés à un faible niveau de fécondité. comme c'est le cas pour l'amélioration de l'instruction, l'accès égalitaire au travail pour les hommes et les femmes, etc. (Ministère du Conseil exécutif, 1984:84).

Lastly, with respect to issues raised in the feminist literature, the document recognizes that women's decreased fertility may have positive aspects for both women and the whole of Québec society. The benefits to women include: a longer professional career, greater financial autonomy during their working lives, and greater financial security at retirement. In the long term, the benefits of women's increased workforce participation to Québec society include the reduced risk of labour shortages and a possible reduction of the dependency ratio<sup>44</sup>.

The fourth document in this category is the report of the Commission permanente de la culture (1985) entitled *Etude de l'impact culturel, social et économique des tendances démographiques actuelles sur l'avenir du Québec comme société distincte*. This Commission was appointed by the PQ Government in 1984 in the aftermath of the publication of the previous document *L'évolution de la population du Québec et ses conséquences* (1984). The mandate of the Commission was as follows:

Etudier l'impact culturel, social et économique des tendances démographiques actuelles sur l'avenir du Québec comme société distincte, notamment:

1. les réactions des spécialistes au document gouvernemental: *L'évolution de la population du Québec et ses conséquences*, février 1984;
2. la situation démographique de Montréal et des autres régions;
3. les politiques démographiques adoptées dans d'autres pays (Commission permanente de la culture, 1985:10).

It was also noted in the preface that the Commission was to facilitate debate and propose specific population policy recommendations.

Although the primary focus of the report is not family policy, family policy measures are discussed as being part of an overall population policy. Similar to the preceding document, family policy is identified as separate from a pronatalist policy. Other issues widely discussed in the document include the problems associated with fertility decline and depopulation, and the need to increase both fertility and immigration. The document stresses the emphasis on fertility and immigration should be complementary not opposing.

Il est facile en fait de montrer que l'amélioration du solde migratoire et le redressement de la fécondité ne s'opposent pas, mais doivent se compléter si l'on veut atteindre la stabilité démographique...sans amélioration notable de ses échanges migratoires et sans remontée significative de sa fécondité, le Québec est condamné à la dépopulation (Commission permanente de la culture, 1985:102).



With respect to language and culture, the document refers to the difficulties in accurately predicting the long term implications of depopulation on the French language in Canada or the resistance of Québécois culture to American culture. However, it also warns of the potential risks involved:

Le nouveau contexte démographique ne facilitera cependant pas la tâche à la collectivité québécoise. L'effondrement de la fécondité québécoise et la dépopulation qui pointe à l'horizon de ce coin de pays créent une situation radicalement nouvelle, dans laquelle tous les risques sont multipliés: risque culturel, risque économique, risque technologique (Commission permanente de la culture, 1985:90).

Furthermore:

Le déclin démographique et économique risque de saper la vitalité culturelle de cette société distincte qu'est le Québec, surtout à une époque où la présence de la culture populaire américaine n'aura jamais été si forte, ici et en Europe. La société québécoise de demain sera-t-elle une société de créateurs ou de traducteurs? (Commission permanente de la culture, 1985:108).

Many of the nine recommendations in the document highlight the importance of migration issues in a Québec population policy. While some recommendations suggest the need to raise the level of yearly immigration and prevent out-migration, others concentrate on the linguistic aspects of immigration and the need for improved French language training programmes for immigrants.

Finally, although the document does not address the issues raised in the feminist literature to any great extent, it does acknowledge women as primary caregivers of children and the double burden of work and family responsibilities faced by many women.

The fifth document in this category is the *Document de travail pour le séminaire sur la politique de population* (1993). This is an unpublished report prepared by the Groupe de

travail sur la politique de population (1993) and is divided into four parts. The first section "Impacts des tendances démographiques actuelles, evaluates the impact of short-term demographic change as well as the consequences for the long term. The observations of this document are based on demographic trends from the period 1981-1991 and 1990-1991. The second segment of the document, "L'Utilisation des leviers démographiques: Marges de manoeuvre et limites de l'action", examines the scope or latitude of the Québec Government to act in influencing fertility, mortality, international immigration and inter-provincial migration. The third part of the document, "Les objectifs d'une politique de population pour le Québec", explores possible targets and objectives of a population policy, concentrating primarily on the demographic indicators fertility and immigration. The fourth section, "Orientations et axes d'intervention", suggests a variety of policy directions in which the Government could proceed. There are no formal recommendations given, only an overview of possible and potential areas of intervention. The emphasis is clearly on a concerted rather than fragmented approach to population policy.

Albeit the scope of the document is very broad, fertility and family policy are two of the main areas of attention. Fertility is described as a demographic variable that is reversible and in which the scope of influence is theoretically very large. However, in the case of Québec, there are two difficulties identified. First, surveys (Secrétariat à la famille, 1991) have indicated that couples were not having the number of children they really desired. Second, existing federal and Québec Government family policy measures were often unclear and contradictory<sup>45</sup>. As such, the document stresses the importance of determining why couples have less children and the need to formulate policy measures which are

complementary to one another. Looking at examples from countries with family policies<sup>46</sup>, the document explains that the most successful include policies which are:

...les plus globales et les mieux articulées, et là où, à la mise en place de mesures financières importantes, se sont également ajoutées des politiques visant à tenir compte de la participation de plus en plus importante des femmes sur le marché du travail, la conciliation de la vie professionnelle et des charges familiales est ainsi devenue un élément clé de toute politique de population qui cherche à agir sur la fécondité des couples (Groupe de travail sur la politique de population - "Orientations et axes d'intervention", 1993:3).

There are several extensive sections within the document concentrating on the role of immigration and the impact of demographic change on French language and culture. Although immigration is viewed as a necessary means to prevent the negative aspects associated with population decline, there is nonetheless an awareness of past, and to a lesser extent current, problems concerning the retention and linguistic integration of immigrants. The document is clear on the need for the long-term preservation of the French language and character of Québec within Canada and North America. In order to succeed:

...l'affirmation du caractère français du Québec est essentielle. Plus le message sera clair auprès des immigrants et des communautés culturelles, que la société d'accueil est une société francophone et distincte en Amérique du Nord, plus il sera facile de réussir l'insertion linguistique des immigrants à la communauté francophone (Groupe de travail sur la politique de population - "Orientations et axes d'intervention", 1993:31).

Furthermore, the demographic weight of Québec within Canada is also regarded as an issue of concern. Accordingly, population policy should:

Retarder, et si possible éviter le déclin démographique, de même qu'infléchir l'évolution de sa structure par âge vers une position moins défavorable...[S]'ajoutent à ces objectifs ceux de maintenir une société francophone et un équilibre adéquat dans la répartition de la population sur l'ensemble de son territoire. Enfin, la diminution du poids démographique du Québec dans l'ensemble canadien est une préoccupation qu'il ne faut pas

négliger (Groupe de travail sur la politique de population - "Les objectifs d'une politique de population pour le Québec", 1993:30).

Lastly, with regard to issues raised in the feminist literature, the document accentuates the irreversibility and positive aspects resulting from the entrance of large numbers of women into the workforce, such as women's financial autonomy<sup>47</sup>. Likewise, it presents some of the ideas expressed in an opinion by the Conseil du statut de la femme (1990b) with regard to parental leave programmes and income replacement<sup>48</sup>. These recommendations are viewed positively in the document.

The sixth document in this category is *Mesures d'aide à la famille* (1994), which was prepared by the Direction de la sécurité du revenu and published by Publications du Québec. The objective of the document is to describe programmes of both the Québec and Federal Governments that are pertinent to families in Québec. Each programme is described in terms of its objectives, criteria for admissibility, and the measures and costs for the year 1993. The description of each programme is preceded by a brief history of various financial support mechanisms dating back to 1917.

The document focuses on what can be classified as the fiscal aspects of family policy measures. This includes programmes or allowances in which a certain sum of money is transferred by the State to individuals. Two such Québec Government measures included family allowances and birth allowances. In addition, there were fiscal measures, such as tax credits or tax exemptions, which are levers to redistribute income or reduce inequities amongst households.

With respect to the issues of fertility decline and pronatalist family policy measures,

there is no discussion of either except for the following description of the 1988 birth allowances:

L'allocation à la naissance vise à encourager la venue d'un plus grand nombre d'enfants (Publications du Québec, 1994:5).

Due to the descriptive character of the document, there are no references made to language, culture, or immigration. Similarly, issues raised in the feminist literature discussed are not discussed. There are no recommendations put forward in this document.

The seventh document in this category is the White Paper *Nouvelles dispositions de la politique familiale: Les enfants au coeur de nos choix* (Ministère du Conseil exécutif, 1997). This document provides an overview of the Québec Government's most recent changes with respect to family policy. According to the Minister, these changes were formulated in response to the changing needs of families, the evolution of the workplace and economy, new social realities, and current budgetary constraints (Ministère du Conseil exécutif, 1997:3).

The principal new measures to family policy consist of the following. First, the introduction of a unified family allowance, to be determined according to family income, number of children and type of family (single or two parent). This allowance replaces the previous family allowance, the newborn allowance (allocation à la naissance), and the allowance for young children. It is paid until the child reaches the age of 18 and is designed to cover the basic needs of children in low-income families. There is also an allowance for handicapped children, designed to cover the additional costs incurred by parents caring for a child with a disability.

The second element of the new family policy includes the introduction of \$5 per day child care and the expansion of the number of existing spaces. Spaces were initially designated for four year-olds, with three and two year-olds having since been incorporated into the scheme. By the year 2001, the Government has promised to extend the \$5 child care to children of all ages. Also, 73,000 additional child care spaces are to be created by 2001 (Ministère du Conseil exécutif, 1997:22).

The third element of the new family policy was the creation of a new parental leave programme. This appears to have been in response, in part, to the above recommendations by the Conseil du statut de la femme. The programme was to consist of: maternity leave for a period of 18 weeks for all women having earned \$2000 over the past 52 weeks; parental leave (in the case of a birth) of seven weeks which can be taken by either parent; paternity leave of five weeks; adoption leave of twelve weeks to be shared or taken by either parent; and an extended parental leave of 26 weeks in the case of a third child. The parental leave programme was to cover 75% of net salary and not taxable in Québec. However, as already noted, this component of the new policy has not been implemented.

Albeit the document focuses on family policy measures and makes several references to Québec's low fertility, there is a marked shift in focus from that of encouraging fertility to the emphasis on deficit reduction, employment, and the restructuring of social assistance. While the document notes that more generous parental leave measures (with extended leave for the third child) could "favoriser la venue d'un enfant"<sup>49</sup>, it also acknowledged the poor results and lack of compatibility of the *allocation à la naissance* with the needs of most families<sup>50</sup>:

...l'allocation à la naissance, qui visait à favoriser la fécondité, n'a pas produit de résultats vraiment probants et, de toute évidence, la formule qui consiste à soutenir plus généreusement la troisième naissance ne répond pas aux besoins de la majorité des familles d'aujourd'hui (Ministère du Conseil exécutif, 1997:7).

From this point on, new family policy measures were to centre on combatting child poverty, encouraging employment, and reducing dependency, most notably in the case of single parents (mostly women) on social assistance. According to the White Paper:

La pauvreté est moins présente chez les ménages qui participent à plein temps au marché du travail. C'est pourquoi il faut la combattre non seulement par des mesures de transfert d'aide financière vers les familles les plus pauvres, mais aussi sur le terrain de l'emploi, en offrant aux parents les conditions qui faciliteront la conciliation de leurs responsabilités familiales et professionnelles et qui rendront l'occupation d'un emploi plus avantageuse que l'aide sociale (Ministère du Conseil exécutif, 1997:6).

So whereas the document targets mothers on social assistance, it is less explicit in terms of measures aimed at helping other women (or parents!) reconcile work and family responsibilities. It does however call for the increased participation by men in domestic duties and childrearing, and the need for child care services "plus accessibles et plus aptes à épauler les parents dans leur mission d'éducation et de développement des enfants" (Ministère du Conseil exécutif, 1997:5). There are no references to language, culture, or immigration in the document.

The last document in this category of miscellaneous documents originates from the body responsible for the coordination of issues relevant to women, the Secrétariat à la condition féminine of the Ministère du Conseil exécutif. It is an article entitled "Un nouveau défi démographique: Réaliser le désir d'enfant" from the newsletter *A la Une* (1991), written by Violette Trépanier, then Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and the Family.

The primary focus is fertility and family policy measures which support women's desire to have children. Though the article describes fertility decline as "deplorable", it also points out that women should not be blamed for this situation:

On a beaucoup déploré la baisse du taux de fécondité au Québec...Comme il serait injuste et inadéquat de faire porter l'enjeu démographique sur les femmes uniquement, il m'apparaît de la plus haute importance de faire du redressement démographique un projet global de société où le travail, accessible à tous et à toutes, la sécurité du revenu, la santé de même que la famille, serait pleinement considérés (Trépanier in Ministère du conseil exécutif, 1991:1).

The quotation also illustrates the need for a comprehensive solution so that women can feel confident in their decision to have children. Once again, there are references to the survey conducted by the Secrétariat à la famille (1991) explaining how the fertility rate could rise to 2.4 if women were having the number of children they wanted.

The desire to have a child is described as a demographic challenge and one that must be assisted by the Government as well as business. In order to realize this desire, the Minister points to several issues raised in the feminist literature. The first is the need for greater participation and responsibility of fathers in parenting, while the second relates to measures which would enable both parents to better reconcile work and family responsibilities. There are no references to language, culture, or immigration and no policy recommendations put forward.

## **Conclusion**

On the basis of the results of the textual content analysis of the corpus of ninety-two Québec Government documents presented in this chapter, the following general observations



can be made. First, judging from the manifest and latent content of the documents, certain themes and issues with respect to the individual questions of the textual content analysis were more prevalent than others. These are discussed below according to the subject matter of each question. Second, the contents of the documents produced by the Conseil du statut de la femme differed from most of the other documents in the corpus, in terms of their inclusion and attention to issues raised in the Québec feminist demographic discourse. The findings of these documents are summarized primarily in the section entitled “Feminist Issues”.

### **Family Policy**

The textual content analysis revealed that most of the documents in the corpus focused on family policy. The exceptions were several inquiry commission reports and unpublished documents which nonetheless included discussions of family policy within the broader context of demographic policy issues (Ministère de l’immigration du Québec, 1974; Commission permanente de la culture, 1985; Groupe de travail sur la politique de population, 1993). In the documents on family policy, approximately half mentioned Québec’s declining birth rate and the various implications of this situation. In terms of family policy measures, there was the desire to support families and the goal of social equity (Comité de la consultation sur la politique familiale, 1986), contrasted with the need for more narrowly defined pronatalist measures (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1986;1989; Secrétariat à la famille, 1989). The latter were especially apparent in many of the documents prepared by the Conseil de la famille et de l’enfance and the Secrétariat à la famille.

Although many documents in the corpus recognized the participation of women in work outside the home in greater numbers than ever before, as well as the need for fathers to become more involved in childrearing (Ministère du Conseil exécutif, 1991; Conseil de la famille, 1993d; Secrétariat à la famille, 1994b), some documents gave the impression that this was primarily a problem for women (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1974a; 1975). The message was more latent than manifest, since it was often inferred or implied rather than explicitly stated. For example, while there are references to the “double-burden” experienced by women (Bureau de la statistique, 1983; Régie des rentes, 1986), there were also discussions on whether child care acts as an incentive or disincentive to fertility, the problems caused by women working, and the economic infeasibility of women’s “choosing” to remain at home with their children (Commission d’enquête sur la santé et le bien-être social, 1970; Conseil de la famille, 1990c;1996).

The provision of child care was viewed as an important measure to allow parents, and especially women, to better reconcile work and family responsibilities. State funded child care was considered favourably in the majority of documents, although several mentioned the need for a greater variety and choice of options, such as home-based care. Furthermore, a small number of documents proposed financial or economic incentives to allow parents to remain at home with their children and questioned whether child care deductions favoured working parents over those who stay at home with their children (Conseil de la famille, 1990c;1993a).

The term “parenting” along with the need for measures to assist “parents” were used frequently throughout many of the discussions of family policy measures. However, it is

important to reiterate how the use of gender-neutral language can be misleading. On the one hand, while the term "parenting" conveys the importance and greater need for the participation of fathers, it also minimizes the fact that it is still women who assume the majority of responsibilities related to children, and who in most cases, take "parental leave". On the other hand, the use of gender-neutral language points to the related dilemma of how to formulate family policy measures capable of responding to the needs of women as primary care-givers, while encouraging the equal participation of men as fathers. Should family policy measures and language be geared towards recognizing women as primary care-givers? If so, how do we challenge or change the existing sexual division of labour and ensure that men become more involved?

### **Fertility Decline**

As noted, approximately half the corpus referred to the problematic nature or significance of Québec fertility decline (Ministère des affaires sociales, 1984; Conseil des affaires sociales, 1989a, 1989b). Though fertility decline was not always viewed as a crisis, it was often regarded as a problem in need of a solution. Many of the documents concerned with fertility decline also called for the creation of policy measures to increase the birthrate, at times adopting a rather strident and alarmist tone (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1985; 1986; Conseil de la famille, 1990c). For the most part, the problems stemming from fertility decline relate to the future of the demographic health of Québec or linguistic or cultural specificity (Commission permanente de la culture, 1985; Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1982b, 1985, 1986; Conseil de la famille, 1990d, 1991a). Far fewer

documents mentioned the positive aspects of low fertility, in terms of women being able to have a longer professional career, greater financial autonomy, and more financial security in their old age (Ministère du Conseil exécutif, 1984; Groupe de travail sur la politique de population, 1993).

### **Pronatalist Measures**

Roughly one third of the documents included a discussion on the need for or types of pronatalist measures. In many instances, the discussion was not framed in terms of measures to increase the birth rate, but rather in terms of implementing measures which would allow couples to realize their desire for additional children (Secrétariat à la famille, 1991, 1992c; Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1978; Conseil de la famille, 1989; 1990c; Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance, 1989-1997/8). The strongest pronatalist sentiments were found in the documents published by the Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance, the Secrétariat à la famille, and the Conseil des affaires sociales. Numerous documents from the above three organizational groupings placed more emphasis on encouraging the birth of children (numbers) as opposed to assisting parents with children.

Many of these documents assumed that more couples would have more children if socio-economic obstacles were eliminated, and if society and the workplace were more accommodating to children (Conseil de la famille, 1989, 1990c; 1991a). One even referred to how changing societal values had made couples forget the joy that children could bring to their lives (Conseil de la famille, 1991b). A sound family policy, designed to economically compensate the costs related to children should act as a counterbalance as well as increase

the birthrate (Ministère de la santé et des services sociaux, 1987; Conseil de la famille, 1989).

### **Language, Culture, and Immigration**

The issues of language, culture or immigration were discussed in around one quarter of the documents, usually in relation to the problem of declining fertility. For example, about a dozen documents referred to the repercussions of declining fertility on the demographic weight or importance of Québec, vis-a-vis Ontario or in relation to English-speaking Canada and North America (Secrétariat à la famille, 1989; Commission permanente de la culture, 1985; Conseil des affaires sociales, 1989b). Another dozen referred to the importance of preserving the French language and Québec culture (Commission d'enquête sur la santé et bien-être social, 1970, Ministère du Conseil exécutif, 1984). A handful of documents questioned the reliance on immigration as a means to compensate for low fertility and cited problems ranging from assimilation to the language choice and acquisition by immigrants (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1979b; Conseil des affaires sociales, 1989b). The documents which favoured immigration supported a model of integration which emphasizes culture and language acquisition over citizenship (Ministère de l'immigration, 1974; Groupe de travail sur la politique de population, 1993).

### **Feminist Issues**

With regard to the inclusion of issues raises in the feminist literature, two points must be made. First, within the corpus as a whole, slightly less than half of all documents

addressed at least one of the issues raised in the feminist demographic literature. As noted above, the most commonly discussed issue was the need for measures to enable parents and/or women reconcile work and family responsibilities. Second, although the documents produced by the Conseil du statut de la femme constitute part of the corpus, they are somewhat separate and exceptional due to their unmatched attention to the issues raised in the feminist literature.

In general, the CSF documents were more forthright in their analysis of issues of concern to women and discussed most, if not all, of the issues from the Québec feminist demographic discourse. For example, all the CSF documents identified the various needs and particular location of women, examining how the family, family policy, and demographic change have had an impact on women's lives (CSF, 1991b; 1991a; 1992). Other organizations, such as the Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance or the Secrétariat à la famille, appeared more interested in numbers (of children or immigrants) or the needs of the State or the family as a unit. Many paid insufficient attention to how social and political changes and policies affect women, the primary care-givers of children.

The CSF documents strongly opposed Government and demographic discourse which problematizes fertility decline and holds women accountable (CSF, 1980; 1985a; 1985b; 1989b). They were critical of pronatalist measures or any measures which could bias women's decisions with respect to having children and/or working (CSF, 1986). The CSF documents also argued that the birth rate in Québec would continue to remain low or become even lower, unless society and the workplace stopped saddling women with the primary responsibility for children and penalizing them when they do so (poorly paid leave, lack of

job opportunities, double burden). At the same time, like other documents in the corpus, the CSF documents focused on measures designed to aid the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities (CSF, 1979; 1981;1989a, 1990a; 1997). Several CSF documents were devoted exclusively to the issues of child care and parental leave, while many others included discussions of types of measures as well as ways in which they assist or work against women (CSF, 1982; 1990a; 1990b; 1995)..

With regard to the handful of CSF documents which discussed immigration, language, or culture, they were overall in favour of immigration and critical of demographic discourse on immigration that focused narrowly on the language acquisition of immigrants (CSF, 1991e; 1992). As well, while several documents endorsed the need for immigration to act as a means to counterbalance fertility decline, it was generally agreed this did not diminish the need for a policy designed to support families. The CSF strongly advocates the necessity of instituting family policy measures regardless of Québec's demographic situation. According to this line of reasoning, families needed to be supported, with increased fertility being an added bonus of family policy and not the reason for its existence (CSF, 1980;1984; 1992).

### **Policy Recommendations**

The last of the textual content analysis questions inquired whether policy recommendations had been made in the documents. As discussed in Chapter Four, this question was included because I assumed that since demographers and the demographic literature had emphasized the need for various types of policy measures and action to be

taken on the part of the Québec Government, this would be reflected in the corpus. Inasmuch as the textual content analysis has shown that approximately half of the documents did include some sort of policy recommendations, this in fact, seems to be the case. Nevertheless, the significance remains unclear, since the number and range of policy recommendations in the documents considerably outnumber the amount of proposed or actual Government family policy measures introduced between 1970 and 1997. In other words, although issues such as declining fertility, the need for family and/or pronatalist policy measures, and the demographic future of Québec were important areas of investigation for various Government organizations and advisory bodies, and often resulted in policy recommendations being put forth, their actual relevance on the decision-making process, or in the end to policy makers, is less understood.

It is possible to speculate that the heightened concern over fertility decline and advocacy of pronatalist measures in some of the government documents produced during the 1980s, had some bearing on the pronatalist family policy measures introduced by the Liberals during the late eighties. However, recent reforms to Québec family policy do not appear linked to government document discourse focused on supporting families, and only marginally connected to demographic considerations. Rather, the changes appear to have come about in response to the changing fiscal and political priorities of the PQ Government, with the emphasis on deficit reduction and social spending cuts, and as a result of the failure of the *allocation à la naissance* to increase the birth rate. In both instances, the proposed policy measures neither addressed the issues raised in the feminist demographic discourse, nor responded to recommendations put forward in the Conseil du statut de la femme



documents. I will return to this point in the following chapter.

Following this in-depth analysis of the sample of Québec Government documents for the period 1970 to 1997, the next and final chapter of the dissertation contemplates the influence of Québec feminist demographic discourse on the corpus of documents. This matter, as well as broader questions relating to the compatibility of Québec Government family policy and discourse with feminist goals of equality and autonomy of women are also explored.

## Endnotes

1. See Appendix II for a bibliographical listing of all the documents.

2. The sectoral policy areas include:

- les programmes du planning des naissances;
- les programmes offerts par les centres locaux de services communautaires (programmes parents-enfants, aux adolescents, aux familles);
- le programme d'adoption;
- les programmes offerts par l'Office des services de garde à l'enfance;
- les programmes de services sociaux en milieu scolaire;
- les programmes de services d'aide psychosociale aux enfants et aux familles;
- les programmes de services sociaux en milieu hospitalier;
- les programmes de services d'expertise psychosociale à la Cour supérieure;
- les programmes de services de conciliation;
- le programme de consultation conjugale;
- le programme de la protection de la jeunesse;
- le programme de la probation des mineurs;
- le programme de placement d'enfants en familles d'accueil;
- le programme d'admission des enfants et les services sociaux en centres d'accueil;
- les programmes de réadaptation (enfants - mésadaptés sociaux, handicapés mentaux, handicapés physiques);
- le programme de services à domicile;
- les programmes de prévention et de réadaptation de l'alcoolisme et des autres toxicomanies;
- les organismes et les programmes subventionnés (budget réservé aux organismes bénévoles - aide à l'enfance, femmes en difficulté, maisons des jeunes, organismes familiaux);
- les programmes de services sociaux offerts aux autochtones.

(Ministère des Affaires sociales, 1982:1)

Each programme was also categorized according to their place within the six stages of family life, i.e. pre-parental (couples en phase d'établissement, familles en phase d'établissement), or parental (tout jeune 0-2, préscolaire 2-6, scolaire 6-13, adolescent 13-18).

3. See Comité de la consultation sur la politique familiale (1986), *Rapport... Volume II*, pages 43-44.

4. Secrétariat à la famille (1989) *Familles en tête: Plan d'action en matière de politique familiale 1989-1991*, page 15. There is also an English version of this document entitled: *Putting Families First: Plan of Action respecting Family Policy 1989-1991*.

5. The surveys specifically asked if the increased presence of working women was among the problems encountered by families. Question 6f asked: Selon vous, est-ce que la présence plus grande des femmes sur le marché du travail crée à la famille énormément,

beaucoup, assez, peu ou pas de tout de difficultés? (Secrétariat à la famille, 1991:18).

6. See pages 55 and 11 respectively in Secrétariat à la famille (1989).

7. See Dandurand and Kempeneers (1990) for discussion of this point.

8. An example of this is illustrated by the percentage of women who say they work part-time for family or personal obligations as compared to men. In 1976, the figures were 21.3% for women and 0% for men. While in 1988, they were 11.8% and 0% respectively (Conseil du statut de la femme, 1990a:77). See Kempeneers (1992) and Kempeneers and Saint-Pierre (1993) on the relationship *travail-famille*, or how the responsibility for children influences women's employment status. See also Peterson (1983) for a discussion of how the term "parenting" "does much more harm to women's condition than good".

9. See Le Bourdais et al. (1994) for further details of the types of policy measures and for a comparison between the types of measures proposed in the first (1989-1991) and second (1992-1994) Family Policy Action Plans.

10. Le Bourdais et al. (1994).

11. *Le guide québécois de la famille* (Secrétariat à la famille, 1993e) was published in response to recommendation 46 of the first Family Policy Action Plan (Secrétariat à la famille, 1989).

12. See Ministère de la famille et de l'enfance (1999).

13. This includes Henripin et al. (1981) and Henripin and Lapierre-Adamcyk (1974).

14. According to a recent article by Martine Turenne (1999) in *L'actualité* this is among the few, and most recent study, on the costs of children in Quebec.

15. The comparison with Ontario is made in several other documents throughout the corpus. This is because Ontario is the most populated (English) province in Canada and is perceived as representative of the English-speaking founding peoples. Due to the diminished demographic weight of Québec vis-a-vis Ontario, many fear a weakened political position for Québec, and "de plus en plus, l'Ontario pourra prétendre, avec davantage de légitimité, que 'What is good for Ontario is good for Canada'" (Conseil des affaires sociales, 1989b:103).

16. "Le déficit démographique inhérent à la diminution radicale des naissances au cours des trente dernières années constitue l'un des plus grands défis collectifs auxquels notre société est confrontée. L'avenir du Québec étant directement concerné...(Robert Bourassa in Conseil des affaires sociales, 1989a).

17. According to Ouellet, then head of the Conseil de la famille: "Depuis près de 20 ans maintenant, la fécondité québécoise se situe en-dessous du seuil de renouvellement des générations, ce qui provoque des inquiétudes profondes sur le plan politique, économique, social et culturel" (Ouellet in Conseil des affaires sociales, 1989a:154).

18. In "Le Québec: une postérité en péril", Petitpas remarks:

"En cinq ans à peine, entre 1981 et 1986, le poids démographique du Québec au sein de la population canadienne est passé de 26,4% à 25,9%. Entre-temps, en nombre absolu, la croissance de l'Ontario atteignait presque le triple de celle du Québec. Nous n'assurons plus notre descendance" (Petitpas in Conseil des affaires sociales, 1989a:97).

19. For a discussion of issues concerning women see Dutil, page 196, and the article by Laplante, pages 197-204.

20. See Ouellet (in CAS, 1989a:151-160) who appears to be saying that both men and women are equally participating in childrearing and equally affected by the rigidity of the workplace and the lack of access to services.

21. The distinction between family policies and pronatalist policies is not always clear. According to Henripin, "la plupart des mesures qui visent ou viseraient à accroître la natalité, sont en même temps des mesures qui améliorent la situation des familles et, en particulier - du moins pour plusieurs d'entre elles - qui réduisent les difficultés ou se trouvent les femmes qui désirent avoir des enfants et exercer une activité extérieure au foyer" (CASF, 1979b:36).

22. Twenty consultation sessions consisting of people from a variety of organizations and walks of life were held. Thirteen groups were composed exclusively of men, one group exclusively of women, and six were mixed, of which two consisted of adolescents. There were 240 participants in general, of which 178 were men and 62 women. The average age was between 30 and 50, with a higher than average education level and middle level income. The majority were married and lived in urban centres.

23. For example, see volume 9, number 1, Hiver 1997-1998, page 11 for several statistics; Volume 1, number 1, October 1989, page 7 for a cartoon, and Volume 1, number 2, February 1990 for question #3 of the quiz.

24. Volume 3, number 1, October 1991, page 7.

25. Volume 6, number 1, Autumn 1994, page 1 and Volume 8, number 1, Spring 1996, page 1.

26. Volume 2, number 2, February 1991, page 7.

27. For reviews see: Volume 9, number 1, Winter 1997-1998, page 8; and volume 4, number 1, October 1992, page 6.

28. The other two documents discussed above include *La famille: mythe et réalité québécoise* (1974b) and *Une consultation de CASF auprès des organismes familiaux et d'autres agents d'intervention auprès des familles* (1975).

29. For more information see numbers 11 and 27-32 found on pages 9 to 13 of the document.

30. See CASF (1981a:7).

31. The survey was based on the responses of 286 women from the Montréal and Québec area who were interviewed by telephone. The initial sample included 504 women of which 77 were eliminated because of language and 54 for other reasons (moved, no telephone listing). Of the remaining 373, 71 women refused to answer while 16 could not be reached. The total number of respondents was 286 or a response rate of 56.7%.

All the women in the sample were francophones (or able to speak French) as the survey was conducted only in French. Each woman had had a baby between July 16-20, 1980. Women with a high school education or less comprised the majority of the respondents (59.8%). 67.2% of the women worked in either an office or factory (CASF, 1981c).

32. Georges Mathews (1984) has criticized this document for being too vague and not including the cost of the measures proposed.

33. See the discussion on pages 25-29 and 39-41.

34. The opinion criticized the fact that men, youth, and representatives from the private sector were absent from the consultation process. However, the family policy consultation process, like other government consultation processes, was open to all and any who wished to present briefs and appear before the Committee. Perhaps the lack of representation of business and men can be viewed as a lack of interest in this issue.

35. See CASF (1986:30-31) for further details.

36. See Dandurand (1987b) for further details.

37. The parents were chosen by organizations such as the YMCA of Ville Saint Laurent, the Services diocésains of Chicoutimi and Joliette, various day care centres, the city of Longueuil, and by the Conseil de la famille in Montréal.

38. The ability to transfer parental leave in Sweden has been amended. Currently, paid parental leave is available for up to a year but must be split between two parent families (Maroney, 1997).

39. See "Parental Insurance Plan" in Ministère de la famille et de l'enfance (1999).

40. Commission d'enquête sur la santé et le bien-être social (1970:65).

41. *L'Evolution de la population du Québec et ses conséquences*, page 3.

42. *Ibid.*, page 82.

43. See the discussion on pages 86-87. See also Mathews (1984:178) who describes this document as different from reports of the 1970's, in that the Québec Government clearly states its desire to increase the fertility rate to 2,1 to prevent depopulation and the need for government intervention to do so.

44. *L'Evolution de la population du Québec et ses conséquences*, page 61-62.

45. See Groupe de travail sur la politique de population, "Orientations et axes d'intervention" (1993:6), for a list of Federal Government policies at odds with recent actions of the Québec Government.

46. *Ibid.*, pages 9-10, for examples of successful family policy measures in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.

47. *Ibid.*, page 5.

48. See Groupe de travail sur la politique de population - "Orientations et axes d'intervention" (1993:10-11).

49. From the forward by Pauline Marois, Minister of Education and the Family, page VI.

50. According to the document, 85% of families have either one or two children (Ministère du Conseil exécutif, 1997:4).

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **WOMEN, BABIES, AND THE STATE: THE INFLUENCE OF FEMINIST DEMOGRAPHIC DISCOURSE ON QUEBEC GOVERNMENT POLICY DOCUMENTS**

In the final chapter I return to the original consideration of the dissertation, the influence of Québec feminist demographic discourse on Québec Government policy documents produced between 1970 and 1997. In light of the findings of the textual content analysis presented in the previous chapter, I discuss how and which themes and issues from the feminist discourse have been incorporated into the corpus of government documents on family and demographic policy matters. The chapter concludes by pondering the compatibility of Québec family policy with the pursuit of feminist goals of equality and autonomy of women, suggesting some areas for further research.

#### **Feminist and Mainstream Demographic Discourse**

The examination of Québec demographic discourse in Chapter Three revealed the convergence of Québec feminist demographic discourse around several principal themes. It is helpful at this stage to recapitulate them and contrast them with some of the dominant themes in the mainstream demographic discourse. The first theme can be described as an epistemological and methodological critique of mainstream demographic discourse on fertility, for its emphasis on quantification and empiricism, the narrow focus on fertility determinants, the disproportionate preoccupation with the negative aspects of fertility decline, and for the tendency to hold women responsible for the current demographic

situation of Québec. Another major theme concerns the need for family policy measures which work towards rather than hinder the struggle for women's emancipation.

Within the mainstream literature on fertility, an important theme centres around the inverse relationship, and at times, incompatibility between women's increased workforce participation and declining fertility. Demographers have been overly preoccupied with determining the direction of this relationship, as well as focusing on the negative ramifications of low fertility, which include an aging society and the diminished demographic weight of Québec in Canada. For the most part, the mainstream discourse suggests a strong causality between fertility and socio-economic factors, therefore assumes that fertility can be influenced through predominantly, though not exclusively, economic measures. The mainstream discourse tends to script women's role as familial and make them primarily responsible for children; this reinforces the intrinsic link between women and childbearing/rearing.

In contrast, feminist research is critical of discourse which problematizes women's current reproductive behaviour and blames women for the precarious demographic situation in Québec. Feminist research stresses that too much emphasis is placed on predicting or forecasting the potential negative effects of low fertility, or what types of economic incentives should be implemented so as to encourage women to have more children. Although feminists recognize the importance of population renewal, they also recognize the positive aspects of fertility decline on the lives of many women. Moreover, they deplore the fact that conventional research has not focused more of its attention and energies on studying alternative, positive scenarios for an aging society with a lower rate of fertility. Baker



explains that in Québec the "positive aspects of fertility decline have been overlooked, while the potential negative implications for culture have been emphasized" (1990:17).

Within the mainstream literature, the interest in fertility decline has been linked to questions of national identity, language, and cultural preservation. Though immigration is viewed as a means to stave off population decline, it is also perceived as problematic due to the difficulties associated with integration and unfavourable language choices (English) of immigrants. In some instances, these fears and concerns appear in conjunction with the condemnation and suspicion towards women's new roles.

Another major issue in the feminist literature concerns the need for family policy measures that are compatible with the reality of women's lives, and which promote and support equality and autonomy of women. For example, part-time employment or extended maternity leave provisions whereby women earn inadequate revenues to support themselves and their children (to say nothing of pensions and other benefits), are viewed warily as measures to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities. Whereas they may temporarily alleviate some of the problems experienced by women, in the long run they work against the goal of ensuring financial and personal autonomy.

In the absence of bona fide employment and pay equity legislation covering all sectors of the labour force, the recourse to such measures reinforces the precarious position many women already find themselves in. In addition, feminists warn of the implications of such measures as they do little to alter the gendered division of labour and women's responsibility for children. Baker (1990) adds that if women were to have more children and take longer and more frequent leaves, the gains achieved by women in the workplace could

be jeopardized.

According to the Québec feminist demographic literature, fiscal policy measures such as baby-bonuses weighted in favour of the third child are problematic given that they have failed to bring about any real change to the situation of the majority of Québec families which currently consists of one or two children. Not only do they fail to support existing children, but their effectiveness in encouraging fertility remains inconclusive. Moreover, these kinds of family policy measures do not foster a true reconciliation of work and family responsibilities and may even bias a woman's decision with respect to work outside the home. Measures such as comprehensive childcare or the reorganization of the workplace to permit shared-parenting are seen as preferable options, because they support women's decision to work outside the home, as well as assist women to participate in activities which are not limited to the domestic sphere.

### **The Influence of Feminist Demographic Discourse on Québec Government Policy Documents**

On the basis of the textual content analysis of ninety-two Québec Government documents, several observations can be made. First, the fact that there were 92 documents published over a 27 year period reflects the importance attached to family policy and demographic policy matters in Québec. No other province has enacted policy measures to encourage fertility, or focused as much attention on the implications of a low birth rate as Québec, even though fertility has declined and populations have aged in all provinces (Baker, 1994,; Le Bourdais et al., 1994).

In Canada, the only other jurisdiction which has devoted any sort of attention to demographic issues is the Federal Government. However, if its large-scale demographic report, *Charting Canada's Future: A Report of the Demographic Review* (1989), is any indication, the Federal Government's perception towards changing family structures, an aging population, and the role of immigration, the three main areas of analysis, is generally more positive and less crisis-oriented than in Québec. Media and public reaction to the *Review* and other demographic predictions has also differed vastly between Québec and the rest of Canada (Baker 1990; Maroney 1997).

Although Québec's concern over declining fertility is not unique among industrialized nations, it is distinguished by the apprehension over population decline and the consequences for language, culture, national identity, and in terms of Québec's demographic and political importance in Canada. The textual content analysis has shown that although the issues relating to the preservation of language and culture were not at the forefront of most documents, they along with the concern over declining fertility, formed the backdrop to the discussion of family policy issues and measures.

A second observation is that whereas demographic questions have been of interest to the Québec Government throughout the twenty-seven period of the study, only ten of the 92 documents in the sample were published before 1980. Thirty-one documents were published during the 1980s, with the remaining 51 published between 1990 and 1997. Although various reports such as *Une problématique des ressources humaines* (1974) and others by the Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille were produced during the 1970s, the issues of fertility and the family received less attention, in terms of government

publications, prior to 1980.

A third observation based on the findings of the textual content analysis is that nearly half of the documents in the corpus referred to at least one issue raised in the feminist demographic discourse. This seems significant, even though of this proportion, only the twenty-one documents produced by the Conseil du statut de la femme addressed these issues in their entirety. Therefore, although it would appear upon first glance that Québec feminist demographic discourse has had considerable influence on the corpus of Québec Government policy documents, a closer examination reveals that this influence was less pronounced.

### **Québec Feminist Demographic Discourse and the Corpus**

Within the corpus as a whole, nearly half of all documents referred to at least one issue raised in the feminist demographic literature, such as the need for measures to assist in the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, or the fact that women work outside the home in greater numbers than ever before. However, it would be mistaken to interpret these references as an embracement of feminist issues as such. This is because even when documents referred to problems experienced by women or situations raised in the feminist discourse, they did so in a selective manner and few proposed solutions which would fundamentally alter the gendered division of labour. Very few documents problematized the unequally shared responsibility for childrearing or presented an image which challenges the belief that women are primarily responsible for children.

Several noteworthy exceptions include *Groupe de travail sur la politique de population* (1993) and the family policy consultation document *Rapport du Comité de la*

*consultation sur la politique familiale* (1986), which included priority areas similar to those identified in the feminist discourse. However, whereas the *Rapport* stressed the importance of both parents being equally involved in caring for their children, increased child care, the adaptation of the workplace to accommodate parental duties, and the need to focus on the "développement d'une nouvelle solidarité entre les hommes et les femmes", the White Paper which followed - *La politique familiale: Enoncé des orientations et de la dynamique administrative* (1987), placed greater emphasis on the importance of policy measures designed to increase the birth rate. The 1988 Budget also ignored the recommendations of the *Rapport* and chose instead to institute financial incentives weighted in favour of the third child.

My reading of the 92 Government documents examined parallels the observation by Dandurand (1987b), who views the family policy consultation process throughout the early to mid-1980s as an illustration of the various competing interests of the time. There were feminist interests as represented by the Conseil du statut de la femme<sup>1</sup>, fiscalists, pronatalists, "familialistes conservatrices", who advocated a return to the traditional family based on religious teachings, strict gender roles and anti-abortion<sup>2</sup>, and "familialistes libéraux", who drew on rationalist social science research and looked to the State as the supporter and arbiter of family functions. Dandurand describes how the orientation of the Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, the main government advisory body on the family, moved from being "familialistes libéraux" in its creation to more pronatalist and fiscalist during the recessionary times of the mid-1980's:

En 1985, le "familialisme du C.A.S.F. est réaligné par rapport à celui de

1982: l'accent est mis sur la réforme du régime fiscal et l'incitation à la natalité (1987b:358).

The emphasis on financially supporting families and to a lesser extent, increasing fertility, have remained priority areas of the Conseil to the present day.

In general, the documents published by the Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance, Secrétariat à la famille, and Conseil des affaires sociales were among the least influenced by Québec feminist demographic discourse. They constitute the majority of documents in the corpus, calling for pronatalist measures to increase the birth rate and remove the socio-economic obstacles which prevent couples from realizing their desire for children or to choice to remain at home with them. The notion of "choice" and narrow emphasis on the socio-economic determinants of fertility are both criticized in the feminist literature.

Moreover, even when these documents make reference to issues raised in the feminist demographic discourse, this was often overshadowed by their concern for the alarming or problematic nature of Québec fertility decline. As such, they were sending mixed messages, setting the discussion of family policy and the needs of women as mothers against a backdrop of virulent warnings concerning the ramifications of women's current reproductive behaviour on the survival of Québec in terms of language, culture, and the future of the "nation". Particularly interesting examples include the Secrétariat à la famille's first Family Policy Action Plan (1989), *La famille demain* (Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, 1982a), and *Dénatalité: des solutions* (Conseil des affaires sociales, 1989a).

Few of these documents, especially those published since the 1980s, advocated an outright return of women to the home or their absolute responsibility for children,<sup>3</sup> but some

conveyed a similar message in more subtle or latent ways. For example, several documents emphasized the difficulties experienced by families where women work outside the home, calling for greater access to part-time work arrangements and longer maternity leave, so that women would be better able to reconcile work and family responsibilities. As pointed out by feminist authors, this can give rise to several dilemmas. On the one hand, while they can indeed help women juggle the twin responsibilities of caring for their families and pursuing a professional career, they can also have detrimental effects, in terms of diminished job security, salary loss, and the reinforcement of women's dependency on men or the State. In particular, neither the recourse to part-time employment nor the entitlement to longer maternity leave does much to alter the structure of the workplace or encourage men to become more involved in childrearing, since it is mostly mothers, not fathers, who take advantage of these measures.

Another dilemma relates to the use of gender neutral language in many of the documents, an issue first mentioned in Chapter Five. Although the word mother or women has been replaced by parent in more recent documents, giving the impression of a gender-neutral approach, statistics, examples, and references still pertain largely to women<sup>4</sup>. Similarly, policy measures should be designed to assist and involve both parents in childrearing, but this is not yet the case. While a handful of documents explicitly recognize this fact and the specific needs and difficulties faced by mothers, many make no mention of it at all. Therefore, gender-neutral language perpetuates a false reality which ignores that women remain primarily responsible for children and that most men still do not participate equally in parenting. Regardless of income or type of employment, studies continue to show

that women consistently spend more time than fathers in activities solely devoted to children<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, resolving the dilemma of devising policies that reflect the needs of women, who primarily care for children, and at the same time encourage men to become more involved in caring for their children becomes all the more necessary. In other words, policy measures need to be designed and implemented that eliminate rather than reinforce existing power arrangements among couples and within society.

With regard to the need for universal and affordable child care, an issue unequivocally supported in the Québec feminist discourse, some demographers writing within the mainstream literature, appeared more interested in examining how the provision of child care acts as an incentive or disincentive to women's employment, rather than recognizing that child care enables women to have children and work at the same time. The issue of whether the availability of child care acts as a pro or anti-natalist incentive has been addressed in only one document in the corpus, though several others questioned whether the existence of tax deductions for child care expenses discriminated against parents who wished to remain at home to care for their children. The issue itself remains a matter of debate, even among feminists. Mason and Kuhlthau conclude that "difficulties in finding child care has more influence on employment of mothers than on childbearing"<sup>6</sup>, while Presser and Heitlinger have shown that the lack of availability of child care has acted as a constraint on whether and when to have a first or second child<sup>7</sup>.

Finally, the majority of Québec Government documents in this category are silent on another important point raised by the feminist discourse: the need for employment equity provisions to accompany or be part of family policy. The feminist literature has argued that



until women are at the same starting point as men in terms of salary, job security, benefits and promotional opportunities, few men in dual-income couples will consider taking parental leave or working part-time. So although Government discourse and policy measures are aimed at making it easier for parents to reconcile their work and family responsibilities, in reality, it is mostly mothers who face these problems.

In sum, though many of the non-CSF documents have been somewhat influenced by feminist demographic discourse, the concern for the problem of fertility decline, the need for pronatalist measures, and the resulting problems facing Québec is clearly apparent. This tends to convey a message (inadvertently or not) which upholds or idealizes a traditional family model whereby balancing work and child care is viewed primarily as the concern of mothers. Although many of these documents call for increased child care and other parental supports, there are many references or inferences giving the impression this is more the responsibility of mothers than fathers. In fact, a fair number of the recommendations put forward in these documents have been criticized for their lack of attention to the concerns of women and children and their preoccupation with encouraging fertility (Bergeron and Jenson, 1999; Dandurand et al., 1989; Lemieux, 1997). Moreover, though not a hard and fast rule, it can be said that the more a document was concerned with fertility decline or proposed pronatalist measures, the more it appeared to pay lip-service to issues raised in the feminist discourse; thereby being inclined to uphold a traditional notion of the family and sexual division of labour, where it is assumed that caring for children will precedence over all else women may do.

## **Québec Feminist Demographic Discourse and the Conseil du Statut de la Femme**

In marked contrast to the above documents, the Québec feminist demographic discourse appears to have been very influential on the documents produced by the Conseil du statut de la femme. All of the key themes and issues raised in the feminist discourse have been included in the twenty-one documents produced by this government advisory body on women. This includes criticism of both mainstream demographic literature and certain government discourse for the inclination to problematize Québec's birth rate and the - at times - alarmist tone of the discussion linking fertility with the survival of the francophone collectivity in Québec and Canada. With respect to immigration, the CSF documents oppose any discussion which is narrowly focused on numbers and linguistic questions. Likewise, policy measures directed at trying to increase the birth rate at the expense of improving the socio-economic conditions of children and women are also contested.

As discussed in both the feminist literature and CSF documents, policy recommendations or government policy discourse should not bias or influence the decision of women not to work or have children and must support and promote women's autonomy or equality. Similarly, many of the policy recommendations proposed in the CSF documents mirror those of the feminist discourse, such as the need for family policy measures formulated in conjunction with employment and pay equity legislation, alongside non-coercive policy measures designed to encourage the participation of men in childrearing.

Among the many other issues discussed in both the feminist demographic discourse and the CSF documents were: the benefits of smaller families for women, the importance of universal access to government-funded child care responsive to the needs of parents, and the

necessity of measures such as flexible working hours, job-sharing, and longer and better compensated parental leave, designed to improve the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities and facilitate a real and equitable sharing of responsibilities among parents.

Since its creation, the Conseil du statut de la femme has maintained that universally accessible and affordable child care is absolutely necessary to allow the equal participation and reconciliation of childrearing and paid employment for mothers and fathers. Another major policy recommendation is the need for a fully compensated parental leave programme to be administered by Québec alone. Though several CSF recommendations were included in the most recent changes to family policy, most notably that the plan be administered solely by Québec, to date parental leave is still under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government Employment Insurance Programme and is only compensated for up to 60% of previous employment revenues. Not surprisingly, parental leave is still almost always taken by women.

Although other organizations such as the Secrétariat à la famille or the Conseil de la famille also support longer and better compensated parental leave, the position of the CSF goes further for the following reasons. The CSF sees fully compensated parental leave as enabling both women and men to be involved in the caring for children without fear of salary or job loss, rather than a measure primarily aimed at women, returning them to their traditional role of caring for children with no means of economic support or independence of their own. It is not a measure designed to increase fertility, nor meant to influence women to leave the workforce. Parental leave should be formulated so as to allow both men and women to work and have children, and should not be "des congés de maternité déguisés" (Le

Bourdais, 1989b:97).

However, as the CSF itself has pointed out, even though men have had the opportunity to take parental leave since 1990, they have not done so to any great extent. This is so partially because the level of compensation for leave is still inadequate and women on average continue to earn less than men. Consequently, women remain the primary users of this leave, foregoing promotional opportunities and salary increases as they are disproportionately absent from the workforce. Until economic equality between women and men is ensured (a major shift in attitudes!), there is little hope of changing the situation whereby a woman's career comes second to a man's. In the absence of employment and pay equity legislation, we will continue to see the perverse effects of the partial or fragmented implementation of family policy in Québec.

In sum, while it is undeniable that Québec feminist demographic discourse had a major influence on the documents produced by the Conseil du statut de la femme, its influence on the remainder of the corpus has been less pronounced or at times absent. In part, this is because organizations like the Secrétariat à la famille and the Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance have often sent conflicting messages with regard to women. For example, they have advocated the right to freely chosen maternity and women's right to work, while also supporting measures that can prove problematic for women, such as financial incentives to remain at home and birth allowances. Not to mention that many of these documents have fertility decline and the problems related to language, culture, and the demographic weight of Québec as a backdrop to the discussion.

In addition, I would argue that feminist discourse has been more influential in terms

of policy discourse than with regard to policy measures even though feminist discourse or CSF recommendations have been included in some of the documents produced by other government organizations. Overall, many Québec family policy measures have fallen short of feminist demands, while components of Québec family policy during the late eighties appear to have been more influenced by pronatalist and nationalist elements of mainstream demographic discourse.

### **The Influence of Feminist Demographic Discourse on Québec Family Policy**

The influence of Québec feminist demographic discourse on Québec family *policy*, as opposed to Québec Government *documents*, was never a main concern of this dissertation. Nonetheless, it is interesting to refer to significant family policy developments which occurred during the period under examination, if only to highlight the complexity of this relationship, which can also involve other factors. Two contrasting cases can serve to illustrate this. First, the pronatalist policy initiatives introduced in the Liberal Policy Statement *La politique familiale: Énoncé des orientations et de la dynamique administrative* in 1987 and the 1988 Budget measures appear to be an expression of the pronatalist hiatus of policy discourse and measures, and the victory, albeit temporary, of pronatalist discourse around that time. The Liberal Government during the late 1980s was clearly not influenced by feminist demographic discourse or policy recommendations by the Conseil du statut de la femme; rather, it seems to have taken its cue from the documents published by the Conseil des affaires sociales et de la famille, with their focus on fertility decline, the need for

pronatalist policies, and linguistic concerns and the demographic weight of Québec.

By contrast, the most recent changes to family policy introduced by the PQ in 1997, while partially influenced by the recommendations put forward in the documents of the feminist-influenced Conseil du statut de la femme, can mainly be attributed to factors that were not priority areas in the government documents. The inclusion of \$5 a day child care and the parental leave programme, the *assurance parentale*, were both inspired by long-time CSF recommendations. However, the *assurance parentale*, which at any rate was to cover only 75% of previous salary and not 90% as recommended, was never implemented. As for the \$5 a day child care, when available, it is subsidized by parents themselves who are no longer entitled to claim the \$5000 Federal Government income tax credit for child care or any tax credit at all from the Québec Government (Turenne, 1999).

The core components of the most recent changes to family policy on the other hand, such as the greater emphasis on deficit reduction and budgetary restraints, and the elimination of the *allocation à la naissance* were not priority areas in any of the government documents. While the pronatalist emphasis has all but disappeared in *Nouvelles dispositions de la politique familiale: Les Enfants au coeur de nos choix* (1997), the policy measures are still lacking in terms of the recommendations put forth in the feminist demographic literature and by the feminist-influenced advisory body, the Conseil du statut de la femme. Bergeron and Jenson believe that this shift in policy direction may prove just as problematic for women:

Toutefois, à la fin des années 90, les réseaux féministes québécois affrontent moins les réseaux natalistes mais plus les réseaux axés sur l'emploi, ce qui pourrait avoir des incidences tout aussi néfastes sur les orientations futures

de la politique familiale (Bergeron and Jenson, 1999:98).

Moreover, although the recent policy changes acknowledge the need for measures to make the workplace more adaptable to those with children, ultimately the focus is on economic considerations; that is, the need to reintegrate single mothers back into the labour market and reduce their dependency on social assistance. According to Bergeron and Jenson:

La conciliation de l'activité professionnelle et de la vie familiale devient un enjeu majeur pour le gouvernement. Toutefois, la formulation de cet enjeu ne rejoint pas totalement les discours et les positions féministes. La conciliation est abordée sous l'angle de la participation au travail rémunéré des mères chefs de famille monoparentale en faisant en sorte que les parents s'adaptent aux structures de l'emploi plutôt que l'inverse et en veillant à ce que ce parent devienne 'apte' au travail dès le jeune âge de son ou ses enfants (Bergeron and Jenson, 1999:95).

Therefore, whereas current family policy measures fall short of measures in the feminist demographic discourse and the documents published by the CSF, Government policy measures during the whole period studied have been less pronatalist than might have been expected. Despite the pronatalist hiatus of the mid to late 1980s, and the strong pronatalist bias expressed in many of the documents from the beginning of the decade, the direction of policy as a whole remained much more moderate. Possibly, this may be due to a moderating influence of the feminist discourse as reflected in the CSF documents, which may have acted as a counter-balance to the more nationalist and pronatalist sentiments in the corpus. At the same time, due to the shifting mixture and competing interests apparent in the policy documents, it is perhaps not surprising that:

...les décisions politiques en matière familiale demeurent toujours, au Québec, en deçà des recommandations des démographes et des demandes des femmes, notamment en ce qui touche le montant des prestations familiales et les interventions pour concilier travail et maternité (Dandurand,

1987b:351).

In the end, it will have to be left to future researchers to sort out the complex relationship between demographic discourse and actual demographic policy. Some questions they may wish to ask include the following: Given the almost perfect setting for a pronatalist policy in the 1980s, with both nationalists and demographers pushing for one, why was it so short-lived? If the birth rate had not fallen so dramatically, would the Government have been as intent on having a family policy in the first place? Conversely, if the Government was really so interested in increasing fertility, why were their attempts and approaches so piecemeal and half-hearted? Did it all come down to cost calculations? And did feminist concerns really act as a counter-balance to the more pronatalist and nationalist elements of the policy process?

### **Some Final Conclusions**

This dissertation has shown that the influence of Québec feminist demographic discourse on the sample of Québec Government documents dating between 1970 and 1997 has been moderate. At the level of theory, it was shown through the use of the framework developed in Chapter Two, which sought to unpack the ideological and patriarchal basis of knowledge of knowledge and discourse, that differing methodological techniques and epistemological bases in Québec demographic research on fertility have resulted in the existence of two types of discourse.

On the one hand, there is what I have labelled the Québec mainstream demographic discourse. This discourse is largely based on empirically and quantitatively based research,



which explains fertility behaviour and differentials in terms of economic choices, rational constraints, or according to norms and/or functionalist conceptions of the role of women and the family. This discourse is dominated by the study of fertility determinants, the problem of declining fertility and its impact on the future of Québec in terms of language, culture, and political considerations, the role of immigration and the economic ramifications associated with aging populations and/or population decline.

On the other hand, there is the Québec feminist demographic discourse which is epistemologically separate from the mainstream discourse, utilizing qualitative and other feminist methodologies discussed in Chapter Two. The feminist demographic research starts from the current location of women and treats their world and experiences as problematic and worthy of study. Québec feminist demographic discourse is critical of the mainstream discourse which problematizes women's reproductive behaviour and which advocates policies narrowly focused on increasing the birth rate. Such policies can work to the detriment of women, in terms of limiting their potential for equality and autonomy. Furthermore, employment and pay equity policies must accompany family policy measures, which must work towards changing the unequal burden for children currently faced by women.

Having established the differences between mainstream and feminist demographic discourse, the dissertation then turned its attention to determining the influence of feminist demographic discourse on the corpus of Québec Government documents on family policy and fertility. Making use of textual content analysis, that is, categorizing and reading the documents on the basis of a series of pre-established questions reflecting the dominant trends

and issues of the Québec demographic discourse on fertility, my analysis concluded that feminist discourse had been moderately influential on the government documents.

I have described this influence as moderate because attention to the central issues identified in the feminist demographic discourse, such as family policy which is compatible with and promote women's equality and autonomy, or the need for policy measures which challenge and breakdown the gendered division of labour with respect to childrearing, were mostly restricted to the documents produced by the government advisory body on women, the Conseil du statut de la femme. Though these issues were also mentioned in documents produced by other Québec Government organizations, they were generally overshadowed by other themes centring on the alarming situation of Québec fertility decline, the need for pronatalist measures (sometime reflecting the neo-liberal trend towards the privatization of care by women in the home), and the future complications associated with fertility decline, in terms of linguistic, political and cultural considerations. This served to undermine or downplay the relevance of the issues identified in the Québec feminist demographic discourse.

In the end, it can be said that although feminist discourse has had a certain role in shaping the contents of Québec Government documents on family policy and fertility, other concerns, reflecting the pronatalist and nationalist elements of Québec mainstream discourse, generally remained dominant. Issues from the feminist demographic discourse were frequently confined to a niche provided by only one government body, the Conseil du Statut de la Femme, and when they did figure in documents in the rest of the corpus, their potential impact was often cancelled out by the virulence of pronatalist or nationalist positions.

Consequently, a lot of work remains to be done by feminist demographers, government advisers and policy makers, in order to give feminist concerns greater prominence in the demographic discourse, so as to prepare the ground for policy measures designed to enhance women's equality and autonomy. Of course, as mentioned above, shifts in policy do not come about by changes in discourse alone, but they are subject to other influences, particularly financial constraints or considerations over the efficiency of previous policies. Nonetheless, the struggle for hegemony in the demographic discourse may prove to be crucial for the determination of future demographic policies.

## ENDNOTES

1. As well as by other feminist organizations such as the Fédération des femmes du Québec, l'Association des femmes pour l'éducation et l'action sociale and various others throughout Québec (Dandurand, 1987b:356).

2. This position was not represented by a government organization but rather by the Office de la famille of the Archdiocese of Montréal and other groups affiliated with the Catholic Church such as the Chevaliers de Colomb and Cercles de fermières (Dandurand, 1987b:355).

3. Interestingly, two documents commissioned by the Conseil de la famille (1990a, 1990b) point to how Quebec Government policy related to the family between 1946 and 1989 put forth and “idealized” a traditional family model (1990b), which valorizes the private potential of families to provide for themselves, based upon the “surutilisation des femmes comme actrices principales du soutien familial” (1990a:16).

4. See the example given in Chapter Five for the second Family Policy Action Plan (Secrétariat à la Famille 1992c).

5. See Berry (1993) and McQuillan and Belle (1997) for more details on how women still assume primary responsibility for caring for children.

6. In Beaujot (1995:15).

7. In Heitlinger (1993:140-141).

## **APPENDIX I**

### **TEXTUAL CONTENT ANALYSIS DOCUMENT QUESTIONS**

- 1      What are the objectives of the document?
- 2      Is family policy the focus of the document?
- 3a     Is fertility decline a concern of the document?
- 3b     Are pronatalist measures discussed?
- 3c     Is there a correlation between family policy and pronatalist measures?
- 4      Are there any references to the preservation of language or culture, or the role of immigration?
- 5      Does the document address issues raised in the feminist literature?
- 6a     Are mainstream or feminist literature references cited?
- 6b     Was any group or person consulted?
- 7      Were there any policy recommendations?

## APPENDIX II

### QUEBEC GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS BY ORGANIZATIONAL CATEGORY

#### 1. MINISTERE DES AFFAIRES SOCIALES

Ministère de la santé et des services sociaux; Secrétariat à la politique familiale. (1987) *La politique familiale: Enoncé des orientations et de la dynamique administrative*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Comité de la consultation sur la politique familiale. (1986) *Rapport du comité de la consultation sur la politique familiale, Volume I - Le Soutien collectif réclamé pour les familles québécoises; Volume II - Le Soutien collectif recommandé pour les parents québécois*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Ministère des affaires sociales. (1984) *Pour les familles québécoises: document de consultation sur la politique familiale*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Ministère des affaires sociales. (1982) *Les programmes de services sociaux offerts aux familles québécoises*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

#### 2. SECRETARIAT A LA FAMILLE

Secrétariat à la famille. (1995) *Familles en tête 1995-1997: Plan d'action des partenaires en matière familiale*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille. (1994a) *50 questions et réponses sur les familles québécoises, leurs droits et les ressources à leur disposition*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille. (1994b) *Etre Père: La belle aventure!* Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille. (1994c) *Familles en tête, 1995-1997: Les défis à relever*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille. (1994d) *C'est à ton tour... Questionnaire sur le partage des tâches et des responsabilités dans un couple*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille. (1993a) *Analyse de certaines dispositions du nouveau Code civil du Québec en regard de la politique familiale québécoise: Rapport*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille. (1993b) *L'année internationale de la famille au Québec*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille, rapport remis par Claude Felteau et Pierre Lefebvre. (1993c) *Les effets des variables économiques sur le coût et la demande d'enfants au Québec: théorie et résultats*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille. (1993d) *Forum sur la famille: plan d'organisation*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille. (1993e) *Guide québécois de la famille*. Boucherville: Gaétan Morin.

Secrétariat à la famille. (1993f) *Monoparentalité et recomposition familiale chez les québécoises*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille. (1993g) *Première biennale sur la famille*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille. (1992-1996) *Carnet de famille* (quarterly newsletter). Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille, rapport remis par M. Gauthier et J. Bujold, Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture. (1992a) *Les antécédents et les conséquents de la baisse de la fécondité au Québec, 1960-1990: une analyse des interdépendances*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille. (1992b) *Les déterminants de l'évolution récente de la fécondité au Québec*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille. (1992c) *Familles en tête: Deuxième plan d'action en matière de politique familiale, 1992-1994*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille. (1992d) *Le Fonds famille: un programme conjoint du Secrétariat à la famille et du Conseil québécois de la recherche sociale pour expérimenter et évaluer des projets novateurs*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille. (1991) *La famille et le désir d'enfants, les résultats comparés de trois enquêtes 1985-1988-1991*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Secrétariat à la famille. (1989) *Familles en tête: Plan d'action en matière de politique familiale 1989-1991*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

### **3. MINISTÈRE DE TRAVAIL ET MINISTÈRE DE LA MAIN-D'OEUVRE ET DE LA SÉCURITÉ REVENU**

Ministère de la main d'oeuvre et de la sécurité du revenu. (1994) *Le Programme APPORT: Une aide financière aux efforts de travail des familles*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Ministère de la main d'oeuvre et de la sécurité du revenu. (1993) *Le Programme APPORT...Comment arrondir les fins de mois des familles*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Ministère du travail. (1989) "La politique familiale et la présence de dispositions dans les conventions collectives" in *Le Marché du travail*. Québec: Les Publications du Québec.

### **4. REGIE DES RENTES**

Régie des rentes du Québec. (1993) *Les allocations d'aide aux familles du Québec*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Régie des rentes du Québec. (1986) *La compensation des charges familiales au Québec* (Collection étude et recherche, N<sup>o</sup>. 3). Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

### **5. BUREAU DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUEBEC**

Bureau de la statistique du Québec. (1986) *Essai d'évaluation des coûts de l'enfant*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Bureau de la statistique du Québec. (1983) *Démographie québécoise: passé, présent, perspectives*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

### **6. CONSEIL DES AFFAIRES SOCIALES**

Conseil des affaires sociales, Secrétariat à la famille, Bureau de la statistique du Québec.



(1989a) *Dénatalité: des solutions (Colloque international sur les politiques familiales, 1988)*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Conseil des affaires sociales. (1989b) *Deux Québec dans un: rapport sur le développement social et démographique*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

## **7. CONSEIL DE LA FAMILLE**

Conseil de la famille. (1996) *Avis: Choix et soutien...telles sont les exigences des familles québécoises au regard d'une éventuelle politique de la petite enfance*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Conseil de la famille. (1995a) *L'art de mieux vivre une recomposition familiale*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Conseil de la famille. (1995b) *Avis: La famille...composée autrement*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Conseil de la famille. (1994) *Aide-mémoire tiré des travaux du Conseil de la famille à l'occasion de son 5e anniversaire, pour Penser et agir famille*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Conseil de la famille. (1993a) *La fiscalité comme mécanisme d'intervention auprès de la famille: mythes et réalités*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Conseil de la famille. (1993b) *La paternité: les transformations sociales récentes*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Conseil de la famille. (1993c) *Les services de garde au Québec: un équilibre précaire*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Conseil de la famille. (1993d) *Rapport de consultation. Nécessaire paternité...essentielle parentalité*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Conseil de la famille. (1991a) *Agir avec les familles en habitation*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

Conseil de la famille. (1991b) "Une réflexion: une place pour les enfants" in *Conseil de la famille Rapport annuel 1990-1991*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec.

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