Timing children at a later age: motivational, behavioural, and socio-structural differentials in the individual decision making process of older mothers

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Preface

If, like me, you are working on a thesis for several years, many different people will cross your path in the course of time. Some of them remain involved until the end; others will disappear from sight all too soon. In most cases that is a great pity. In this preface I cannot mention all these people. Yet all of them have been invaluable to me in many different fields.

At the start of this research project the supervisors were Prof. A.C. Kuijsten and Prof. D.J. van de Kaa. Daily supervision was in the hands of Anton Kuijsten; Prof. van de Kaa was involved less frequently, but still very much engaged and inspiring. For this I thank him. In the course of the project, problems of a methodological nature arose. To counter these problems we asked Prof. J. Gierveld to join the supervision. My special thanks go out to her because of her willingness to come aboard a project that was already far advanced. Prof. van de Kaa withdrew from the project by mutual agreement. Three supervisors for one thesis would have been too much of a good thing. Shortly after this change of supervisors we were deeply shocked by the untimely death of Anton. It is too late now to thank him in person for his enormous dedication and commitment to 'his young demographers' of the PDOD, of whom I was one. I have missed him these past years. For Jenny Gierveld this meant she suddenly found herself the only supervisor of a project she had neither initiated nor developed. Yet, with her expertise and her cheerful style of supervising, she, more than anyone, knew how to motivate me to continue. I always looked forward to my conversations with her.

My erstwhile colleagues in the demography research group at the Department of Planning and Demography at the University of Amsterdam have also disappeared from sight for the most part. Over the course of time they moved on to work elsewhere. I wish to thank them also. With its fine collegial atmosphere, the group of demographers at our University, as they existed in the nineties, motivated me enormously and taught me a great deal. Two of them I want to mention by name: Willy Bosveld and Claartje Mulder. Right up to the final stage of the project they have been very important to me as a sounding board.

I want to thank Anne Hawkins for her work on the English text1. Her suggestions have considerably improved the clarity of the text.

In recent years I have found that it is impossible to separate work from private life. That is why I extend my gratitude here to Berend, Niels and Jim for being here for me and for surrendering family time and gezelligheid occasionally.

Finally, I should also like to mention my father, who sadly is not here to share with me the completion of what is to me a very important project. I regret this enormously. That is why I dedicate this thesis to him.

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1 Preface translation: Alison Stevenson