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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3 The decision making perspective

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the macro level changes with respect to age specific fertility were described and some macro level explanations for these changes were put forward. That chapter was included to provide background information. The research questions formulated in the introductory chapter make it clear that the focus of attention here is actually on the micro level of individual decision making.

The choice for micro level research to investigate decision making seems evident. It would have been possible to investigate timing decisions on the macro level. In such a study, the decision making would be assumed and would usually be inferred from the data. Should a correlation between level of education and timing of fertility later in life be found, the conclusion would be drawn that women with a high level of education had decided to postpone childbirth. Although the conclusion seems plausible, it would only be one of many possible explanations of the correlation observed. Study of the actual individual level decision making process is necessary to validate such a conclusion made on the basis of macro level data. The correlations between variables found on the macro level of analysis can best be explained by descending to the micro level of analysis (Willekens 1990).

It is important to be aware of the differences between the various social sciences regarding the level of analysis they usually employ. Lindenberg (1992) distinguishes between the theoretical and the analytical primacy of the social science disciplines. Sociology, economics, and demography traditionally have an analytic primacy at the aggregate level. Scientists in these disciplines analyse social systems, and the system is the unit of analysis. They study and explain the purposive actions of human beings. Therefore, their theoretical primacy lies on the individual level, which is necessary to provide explanations for phenomena at the aggregate level. Psychology, on the other hand, has both theoretical and analytical primacy at the individual level. Bagozzi and Van Loo (1978) describe a scale from situational determinism to psychological determinism. The latter perspective starts with needs, motives and other mental events as primary antecedents of fertility. In our study, intended to yield insights into individual decision making processes on a demographic life event, we have restricted ourselves to the study of fertility decision making at the individual level. Formulated in Lindenberg's terms, our theoretical as well as our analytical primacy lies at the individual level. We certainly have no wish to exclude situational influences, so we take an intermediate position on the scale from situational to psychological determinism.

The choice of an individual level study does not imply an assumption that women make fertility timing decisions completely on their own, as if isolated from their social environment. Influences from other people in the decision making process are
conceptualized as influences that affect the decision maker. It is not the couple's interactions while coming to a decision which are being studied, but rather the woman's contribution to this process which has our attention. There has been considerable debate on the issue of taking the couple or the individual as the unit of analysis. Opting for a couple's decision making implies the inclusion of a quite different set of determinants from those involved when the individual is the unit of analysis. Couple interactions in fertility decision making involve factors related to communication, social power differences between partners, and partner agreement (Beekman 1978; 1982). Although these factors are important, they are not the primary interest of this project. The aim here was to investigate the determinants of female fertility decision making. The male contribution is therefore conceptualized as having an indirect effect on timing outcomes via female decision making.

With the level and unit of analysis now established, the next issue to consider is the specification of decision making. Simon (1992) draw a distinction between decision making and problem solving that allows us to define the construct of decision making clearly. Decision making is seen to be composed of evaluating and choosing, as opposed to problem solving, which has more to do with setting goals and designing actions. From this line of thinking it follows that decision making involves tastes, and therefore has a strong motivational component. Problem solving is more rational in nature and has a strong cognitive component. Planning the fertility life course is not seen as just motivational or rational, but with components of both inherent in the process. Motivational as well as rational determinants have therefore been incorporated in our conceptual framework.

With the introduction of the study of individual level decision making into demography, concepts that do not belong in the traditional demographic conceptual framework become important. Such concepts as attitudes, motivations, and reasons currently take a more central place than was previously the case in demographic decision making research. In her paper on life strategies, Ní Bhrolcháin (1993) introduced some relatively new concepts that raise questions about which conceptual framework should be used. She introduced the concept of strategy as an instrument for studying decision making in developed countries. This notion certainly contributes to the understanding of decision making on the timing of fertility in the Netherlands (Wijse 1993). Ní Bhrolcháin's description of the various components that are bound up in the concept, such as goal directedness, choice, complexity, time-reference, control, rationality, and instrumentality, makes it apparent that the study of decision making can be approached from different perspectives, but all of them must use an active and bounded rational model of man.

In the next section, an overview of fertility decision making research is given. The conceptual frameworks used in fertility studies from the microeconomic, behavioural, and motivational approaches are reviewed. The emphasis in the following section on the life course perspective is on life cycle elements in fertility timing. The chapter concludes with a section presenting the conceptual framework used in this study.
3.2 An overview of fertility decision making research

It is possible to distinguish fertility timing decisions and behaviour from other fertility decisions or behaviour, but a full understanding of the timing aspects requires an understanding of how these are incorporated in fertility decision making as a whole. We have therefore not confined ourselves to the literature about timing research, but have reviewed the whole range of fertility decision making research to identify the determinants of timing.

3.2.1 The microeconomic approach

Economic theories of fertility seek to predict the number of children an individual (or couple) has by assuming that the processes of decision making on having children are comparable with the processes of decision making on buying market goods. People seek to maximize their utility, which is a function of the desired family size, the costs of each child, and the quantity and costs of other commodities that the individual wants (Becker 1981). At first sight this may seem a rather simple way of considering having children and it would not seem to contribute much to the idea of individual decision making on having a (next) child. However, by assuming that the decision to have a child is of the same nature as the decision to purchase any other commodity, the microeconomics specialists implicitly stressed the importance of the decision making aspects of fertility. That is why the numerous contributions to the microeconomic line of research have been very influential on other scientific disciplines involved in the study of fertility decision making.

The discipline of economics has made three important contributions to research on fertility (Bagozzi & Van Loo 1978). These are: the application to fertility of the economic theory of consumer behaviour; the new home economics approach; the extension of economic research with non economic variables. We briefly describe here each of these contributions and highlight the notions that are important for individual decision making.

Individuals make rational choices between children and market goods dependent on their income and their individual 'taste' for children. Fertility behaviour is viewed as consumer behaviour. With this assumption, economists introduced the notion of intentional decision making into fertility research. First of all, income and the prices of goods and children were entered into the classical utility function. The decision making rule is the maximization of utility. People will choose that combination of number of children and number of goods that gives them the highest possible satisfaction (=utility). This is a classic example of rational choice behaviour.

The new home economics recognized that households not only consume goods and children, but also produce final goods. The time spent on producing final goods becomes
important and so costs of time enter the utility function. Children are final goods and the number of children is determined by the relative price of children compared with the price of other goods, given the budget constraints. The quality of children plays an important part in this process. The number of children wanted, their quality, and their relative costs are variables in a function that maximizes the utility for the individual (Becker 1981). The interaction of quantity and quality explains why the relationship between income and number of children is not always positive. With the introduction of time costs, the concept of the opportunity costs of children becomes important in explaining fertility.

The microeconomic approach concentrates its efforts on the demand for children, ignoring the 'production side' (Easterlin 1978, p. 67) of having children. Easterlin adds factors related to fertility regulation to the basic economic fertility model. The motivation of the couple and their attitudes toward fertility regulation are important in explaining its fertility behaviour. Preferences, or tastes for children, expressing the degree of satisfaction attached to various possible combinations of children and other economic goods, enter the utility function. According to Easterlin, these preferences show important person-to-person differences that depend mainly on socio-structural and socio-cultural characteristics (religion, colour, nativity, place of residence, education, family economic background, and number of siblings, for example).

Becker, as Easterlin, deals with the factors that determine the number of children a woman will have at the end of her fertile period. Neither of them indicates, however, at what age of the mother these children will be born. Easterlin (1978, p. 68) even assumes that "...prospective parents are not concerned about the spacing of births...". This assumption is not valid in modern western society, but it remains one of the inbuilt restrictions of the microeconomic model, since the model was designed primarily to predict number of children rather than to study the timing aspects of fertility.

Siegers (1987) gives some examples of how the timing and spacing of children can be related to the number of children in a microeconomic fertility framework. This influence takes effect via the level of income a woman has and expects to have in the future and the opportunity costs she will have when she has children. A woman with a high level of education expects her income to rise steeply. She will therefore have her child very soon after completing her education, because her time will soon become more expensive. Having a high educational level is thus not considered capable of explaining the postponement of childbirth. Razin's (Razin 1980) model predicts precisely the opposite effect from the level of education. The life course of a woman has three parts: before children are born; when children are present; without children again. A woman's income will be lowest in the middle part of the life course, because she is then likely to be working part-time and the care of children costs money. Highly educated women will have higher incomes and will therefore postpone having their first child, because they have more money to lose when having children. It is clear that the level of education and the related level of income are variables that could influence the decision when to have children.
However, the exact nature of the relationship at the individual level can be interpreted in different ways.

The microeconomic approach to fertility decision making has received criticism both from within the field of economics and from other disciplines (Bagozzi & Van Loo 1978; Adler 1979; Zey 1992). The disadvantages amount to three points:
- The method relies on the assumption that decision making can be operationalized by using a utility function. The psychological decision making process as such is no object of study, but rather an assumption of rational decision making is made;
- The scope for choosing determinants in the utility function is limited. The validity of the method is thereby decreased, because the distance from 'real life' fertility decision making appears to be substantial;
- Traditionally, the dependent variable chosen was child number. The link with timing could be inferred indirectly, but was not an explicit object of study. In more recent research discussed by Gustafsson (2001) the timing of maternity becomes the explicit topic of study, but she concludes that 'Economic theorizing on the optimal age at giving birth in general weighs the pleasure of early births against the lower cost of later births' (p. 244). Thus it is assumed that women want to have a child early on in their life but postpone having a child, merely for economic reasons.

It cannot however be denied that the microeconomic approach has made important contributions to fertility decision making research. The advantages of the economic perspective are twofold;
- By viewing fertility as consumption, economics has introduced a new and useful perspective on fertility decision making. As demonstrated in the remainder of this chapter, the approach forms the basis of the models proposed by other disciplines.
- The microeconomic approach has not only introduced the importance of the financial costs of children, but also that of the costs of time. The issues of female labour force participation, socio structural variables such as level of education, and the relative level of a partner's income have all evolved from the economic perspective. These factors have proved to be important determinants of several fertility indicators.

3.2.2. Fertility decision making from a behavioural perspective

Instead of thinking of fertility as a form of purchase, as economists do, behavioural theories of fertility conceptualize fertility as strictly individual behaviour. Fertility does not mean the number of children that a group of women have; it has to do with an individual or a couple having or not having a child in a particular situation. Fertility is viewed as a form of purposive behaviour, as the result of (more or less) intentional decision making.

In the early 1970s, the 'Value of Children' research project started. It was a cross-cultural study that adopted a decision making approach to fertility (Fawcett 1970, 1972, 1973; Hoffman & Hoffman 1973). The conceptual framework resembled the microeconomic
framework in its emphasis on the costs and benefits of children. The underlying line of thought is straightforward: people decide about having a (next) child after weighing up the costs and benefits of an additional child. But the value-of-children approach has a broader orientation. Non monetary costs and non economic satisfactions are introduced as important determinants. Furthermore, attention is paid to the fact that the perceived costs and benefits may be more important than the actual costs and benefits. This approach can be viewed as the beginning of the introduction of the importance of individual processes in fertility decision making research.

In a sense, the conceptual framework of the value-of-children study has not been very refined. All kinds of values and dis-values are treated as being equivalent to each other. People are asked to rate a number of positive and negative possible consequences of having children, or to choose the most important consequence (Bulatao & Arnold 1977; Bulatao 1981). Although the paramount importance in fertility decision making research of the value-of-children approach is beyond question, its conceptual scope is rather limited. Attention is only paid to the consequences a child has for its parents' life. Of course, there are other important factors that contribute to fertility decision making.

In 1978, Bagozzi and Van Loo presented their interactionism model for fertility. It builds on the economic view and then departs from it: family income and opportunity costs influence fertility, but only indirectly, through intervening endogenous social psychological processes. The empirical test of the model confirms this idea, but the authors themselves admit that they are far from explicit in their description of the individual processes:

"...the actual causal mechanisms linking independent and dependent variables are not explicitly modelled but rather are presumed operative." (p.224)

With their theory of reasoned action, Ajzen and Fishbein (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975; Ajzen & Fishbein 1980) constructed a theoretical model with the aim of predicting behaviour. The model asserts that performing behaviour is determined by the intention to do so. The intention to behaviour has two determinants: the attitude towards the behaviour, and a normative component. An attitude is composed of two elements: beliefs about the consequences of the behaviour; the subjective probability of the occurrence of the consequence. People are assumed to have a few salient expectations about the consequences of intended behaviour (beliefs) and they have some evaluative idea about the goodness or badness of the expected consequences. It is a highly cognitive model, because people are assumed to undertake cognitive work with their beliefs and evaluations in order to produce an attitude toward the behaviour. The same mechanisms are at work in constructing the normative component. Perceived beliefs of important others are combined cognitively with the motivation to comply with these others. This process yields the social norm for the intended behaviour.

The decision rule on which the model is based is the optimization of subjective expected values (Campbell et al. 1982). The approach resembles the microeconomic and value-of-
children approaches in the sense that it is based on the weighing up of costs and benefits. The choice of determinants, however, differs somewhat. Values can be viewed as a form of utility; values are subjective utilities. The attitude is constructed through weighing up costs and benefits (evaluation of beliefs). The social norm is a new addition with respect to the classical microeconomic models and the value-of-children approach. The implicit decision rule is not utility maximization, but rather optimization of the expected value components (attitudes and subjective norm), given – among other things – the social norms surrounding the decision maker.

The Ajzen and Fishbein model was successfully employed in several studies designed to predict the likelihood of having additional children (Vinokur-Kaplan 1978; Moors et al. 1989; Niphuis-Nell 1981). Intentions, attitudes, and social norms were related to actual behaviour. The results indicate that the model gives satisfactory results, although it has two shortcomings.

First, certain additional concepts are needed to improve the explanatory power of the model. The incorporation of family stage (Moors 1974), preceding behaviour (Bentlar & Speckart 1979), or self-efficacy (Bagozzi & Van Loo 1989) into the Fishbein and Ajzen model improves its explanatory power of fertility intentions and behaviour. Some of these variables can have direct effects on behaviour instead of, as the theory of reasoned action states, always being mediated by social norms and attitudes. De Jong-Gierveld and Liefbroer (1988) constructed a model which included socio-structural and socio-cultural variables of perceived behavioural control; objective conditions were also incorporated. Following the criticisms made, Ajzen (1991) improved the original model by adding perceived behavioural control and relinquishing the strict assumption about the mathematical operationalization of the subjective expectancy values. Ajzen considered this operationalization only partially successful.

Second, only one type of behaviour can be analysed at a time. The model offers no opportunity to include a choice between alternative behaviours, simply because no such concept is included. There is, for instance, the very important issue in fertility decision making of the combination strategy of work and children. The use of only one attitude towards behaviour is an unjustifiable simplification, especially in the highly complex case of fertility behaviour. Behaviour is almost always based on several attitudes (Van der Pligt & De Vries 1991). Bagozzi and Van Loo (1989) put forward a new model as a solution: the purposeful behaviour theory of work and family-size decisions. It is an expectancy-value model designed specifically to explain goal achievement on parallel careers. Work and family size decisions are assumed to be made either sequentially or simultaneously. The decisions are dependent on each other; attitudes towards the one aspect are therefore also important in decision making on the other.

The behavioural models just described have usually been designed to explain some kind of purposive behaviour. The models are then used in several studies to explain fertility behaviour in specific terms. The results are promising and have enhanced our
understanding of an individual’s decision making about a (next) child, contraception, and other related issues. Until recently, however, no empirical studies existed with the timing of a (next) child as the dependent variable. Timing was frequently mentioned as a by-product of the wish for an additional child (Beckman 1978). The growing importance of the timing aspects of fertility has led to some attention for it at the conceptual level. Miller and Pasta (1994) have made an important contribution. They distinguish three aspects of the wish to have children (or fertility desires). Fertility desires are either childbearing desires (the desire for another child), or they are family-size desires (the desire for a specific number of children), or they are child-timing desires (the desire for a child at a certain time in the future). People are thus supposed to have intrinsic wishes regarding the timing of their children. The timing of the children is therefore not (solely) the by-product of the decision making on the number of children wanted (as the microeconomics specialists have suggested), but the wish to have a child at a particular time in one’s life can be a goal in itself.

Thus, following Miller and Pasta, one of the antecedents of child-timing intentions is child-timing desires. Desires are the product of individual mental states such as attitudes, beliefs, and motivations. While the most important concepts of the theory of planned behaviour can be found in this framework, it has the advantage that the role of multiple attitudes as determinants of decisions on fertility timing is recognized.

3.2.3 Motherhood motivations in fertility decision making

The literature with a microeconomic or a behavioural perspective tends to ignore one aspect of fertility decision making: motherhood itself. Motherhood is often seen as a psychological concept that has no place in fertility research. Beckman incorporates the hypothetical concept of motivation-to-parenthood into a rational-type model of fertility:

‘Motivation to parenthood is .... the general strength of the tendency to have a first or an additional child. It represents a predisposition to act and serves to arouse, maintain, and direct behaviors toward or away from the goal of having a first or an additional child. The strength of motivation for or against another child depends on the perceived satisfactions and costs ...as compared to various alternatives to children. Rewards and costs can be defined as perceived positive outcomes (satisfactions and benefits) and negative outcomes (costs) associated with having and interacting with an nth child.’ (Beckman 1978, p.60).

Although an attempt has been made, the author does not really present a new motivational perspective on the concept of motivation; in the definition of parenthood motivation, he returns to the traditional mechanism of weighing up costs and benefits. We have to turn to other disciplines if we are to find a better way of incorporating motivational considerations into the conceptual model for fertility research.
The rational choice approach needs to be complemented by the view that decision making about the timing of having children can be a highly emotional process. And since men and women have clearly different behavioural patterns to deal with emotions, women experience and express more prosocial emotions and female roles are more often based on emotions (Fischer 1993, 2000), we have to distinguish motherhood motivation and fatherhood motivation as possibly two different aspects of the same concept of parenthood motivation. In this study we will only deal with motherhood motivation.

Motherhood motivation may play an important part as a driving force in the process of timing decision making. Miller and Pasta (1988) provide support for this assumption. They find that women with a negative maternal motivation have their children at a later age then women with a positive maternal motivation. These effects were found irrespective of the age of the mother or expected number of children.

The reason why the aspect of motherhood has so often been ignored in fertility research might be that the concept of motherhood, or motherhood motivation, is very complex. The concept is very difficult to grasp. The exact nature of a motivation in general and motherhood motivations in particular still has to be fully conceptualized.

Since the mid 1970s, considerable research has been undertaken to identify the dimensions underlying the salient beliefs on children and/or parenthood. The results indicate that such dimensions evolve from a general value system (for example, the materialism - post materialism dimension of Inglehart, 1977). Since values and norms are shifting most of the time (Halman et al. 1987; Alwin 1992), so are intrinsic motivations for having children. Knijn and Verheijen (1988) carried out the most recent research in the Netherlands on this topic. They found a shift of motherhood opinions from sacrificing motherhood in the 1960s (women are meant to be mothers, and therefore must take on the responsibility) to educating motherhood in the 1970s. Motherhood is an explicit task and is no longer seen as a natural part of a woman’s tasks. In the 1980s, women find self-actualization the most important aspect of motherhood. Having a child is a means to a fulfilled life. Morahan-Martín (1991) also found support for changes in motherhood opinions in the United States. She found that parenthood motivations among young adults became more positive between 1976 and 1986. The American results correspond with those of Knijn and Verheijen for the Netherlands. Knijn and Verheijen (1988) did not, however, investigate the combination of motherhood opinions and the timing of motherhood; this combination could be an important factor. Women who have their children late may do so because they do not think they would have a fulfilled life in just having children. For this reason, the intrinsic motivation of older mothers will probably be different from that of younger mothers. Keuzenkamp (1995) shows that the age at first (and second) childbirth is indeed higher for work-oriented women than for motherhood oriented women in a study on Dutch women.
3.3 The life course perspective

Studying the decision making on timing a child almost compels us to adopt a life course perspective. The focus of attention is thereby directed to intertwining life courses. Usually, the timing of fertility is measured as the age of the mother at the moment of birth; the timing is operationalized in terms of individual time. Hence, the individual biography up to the moment of childbirth is an important source of information for understanding why a child was born at a particular time. It is important to realize that every individual has several parallel and intertwined biographies that influence behaviour (Willekens, 1991). In the case of fertility behaviour, four such biographies are of interest (Birg, 1986): the fertility life course itself, the occupational life course, the social life course, and the developmental (or psychological) biography. An individual decides through the decision making process which alternative life course is to be pursued and will be the dominant life course for which the other domains of life may have to be adjusted.

Bulatao and Fawcett (1981) point out that there are several successive decisions in the context of life cycle events. We can therefore conceptualize the successive fertility events as a fertility career. An important aspect of this biography for the study of fertility decision making is the timing of the decisions whether or not to have children (irrespective of quantity) and decisions concerning the postponement of a pregnancy. Postponement might have been the outcome after a period of serious doubts (Van Luijn & Parent 1990; Van Luijn 1996), which has its influence on timing. Whether these decisions are taken intentionally or not, in each case the timing of the decision itself is important in providing insight into the process of fertility decision making.

The occupational career is related to the fertility career (as mentioned in the section on microeconomic fertility research). Their mutual interdependence has resulted in a huge amount of research that has yet to lead to definitive conclusions about the relationship between the timing of having children and indicators of women’s labour force participation. (Ni Bhrolchain 1986 1993; Siegers et al. 1991; Ermisch 1991). Elements of the educational career are also present in the occupational career. The educational career has an indirect effect on timing decisions via the occupational career. With a high level of education tend to invest more heavily in their occupational careers. But there is also a direct effect from the length of the educational career on the timing of the life course. Today, women tend to spend more years of their lives in school, or at university. The influence on their fertility timing is direct, because it is extremely rare for Dutch women to have children while still at school.

The social and developmental life courses are indirectly related to the fertility career. Aspects related to the family cycle (birth of a child of lower birth order, death of a parent, having a partner, for example) are of interest, but so are aspects of the personal development of the (future) parents. People develop through different stages in which different aspects of life become salient (Erikson 1980), so that feelings of maturity or immaturity may play a part in postponing fertility. Women might not feel ready to have a
child although the biological age at which this stage would be propitious has already been reached. Previously (chapter one), we referred to this personality characteristic as the *subjective age*.

### 3.4 The conceptual framework for the fertility decision making process

This review of the literature on fertility decision making has made it clear that there are various kinds of determinants of the timing aspects of the fertility career. In this section, these determinants are integrated into a conceptual model for the study of decision making on fertility. It is important to note at this stage that the model explicitly excludes any decisions pertaining to whether or not one wants to have children at all. Such decisions are of a totally different nature and would need a different model.

In general terms, the model in Figure 3.1 is based on traditional behavioural models (see section 3.2.2); it has a structure with behaviour as the dependent variable. Behaviour is viewed as the outcome of the preceding decision making process. Not only is fertility behaviour of interest; behaviour concerning the alternative life courses, which is decided upon simultaneously, has also been placed in this field of the conceptual model.

As we have seen, in all behavioural models, although behaviour is the variable of ultimate interest, the behavioural intention that precedes this behaviour is important. The first outcome variable of decision making could be said to be the intention towards certain behaviour. Since behavioural intention is difficult to measure (especially from a retrospective perspective), it is used as an explanatory construct: a latent variable that mediates the influence of the decision making determinants.

Whether or not a positive intention can be transformed into the intended behaviour depends, among other things, on the circumstances constituting the opportunities and constraints. In the case of fertility, two important life domains are important elements of these circumstances. First, there is physical fecundity. For instance, when a woman has difficulties in conceiving, the intention-behaviour link is inhibited. Second, there is the availability of a male partner. When no suitable partner is present in a woman’s life, having a child becomes difficult. In addition to the direct effect on the intention-behaviour link, the circumstances as they present themselves to a woman may also influence the intention to behaviour. For instance, if no suitable partner is available, the intention to have another child is probably not very strong.

Now the outcome and the circumstances of the fertility decision making process have been established, we consider how the process itself has been conceptualized. The model is initiated with two input concepts. Motherhood motivation is viewed as the driving force of the fertility life course that triggers the process of fertility decision making. A similar driving force is found for the parallel life course that forms an alternative to having children: the orientation towards alternative life courses. Both motivations are entered into
the actual decision making, which is an individual cognitive process. In this study, we have not concerned ourselves with the precise way in which these cognitive processes come about. The concept of the combination of the two life courses suffices to support an understanding that the process is intentional and rational.

The process of input, decision making, and output is repeated for every child a woman has. Of course, the process always starts with the decision making process for a first child and it always ends with the process for having a last child. In this way, the ongoing fertility and alternative life courses are integrated. However, in order to make a series of processes, an evaluation must be incorporated into the model. A woman who has already been through the entire process once will enter it on the next occasion with more experience and knowledge about the combination. Consequently, ideas and motivations regarding children and the alternative life courses may be altered.

The last concept in the model is that of the socio-structural and socio-cultural variables. These variables pertaining to socioeconomic status and religion are traditionally included. There is no particular place in the model where these variables exert their influence, but they are assumed to influence the entire process. They are therefore given in the form of a broad bar along the model.
Figure 3.1 Conceptual framework for child-timing behaviour and decision making

**Stage 1**
- Input: motherhood motivation
- Orientation towards alternative life courses
- Combination
- Behavioural intentions
- Behaviour - timing first child, work
- Evaluation
- Circumstances - infertility, partner availability

**Stage 2**
- Input: motherhood motivation
- Orientation towards alternative life courses
- Combination
- Behavioural intentions
- Behaviour - timing second child, work
- Evaluation
- Circumstances - infertility, partner availability

Socio-structural and socio-cultural variables