

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



LIMITED

ST/ECLA/Conf.48/L.4
21 March 1974

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA

LATIN AMERICAN PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE
WORLD POPULATION CONFERENCE

Jointly sponsored by the Economic Commission
for Latin America, the Secretary-General of
the World Population Conference, the United
Nations Population Division and the Latin
American Demographic Centre

San José, Costa Rica, 15-19 April 1974

POPULATION POLICY AND THE FAMILY:
THE LATIN AMERICAN CASE

submitted by

Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE)

74-3-0499



1974

World Population Year

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I. POPULATION POLICIES AND THE FAMILY:
SOME BASIC CONCEPTS

A. TOWARD A DEFINITION

There has been a great deal of discussion in Latin America about a definition of Population Policies, which can be explained by the complexity and ambiguity of the field more than by a byzantine eagerness for conceptual perfectionism. The following considerations attempt to clarify this problem and to establish the minimal conceptual basis necessary to the development of our subject.

The majority of the proposed definitions have an evident normative character, which is to express what, in their author's opinion, a population policy should be. Even though these propositions do not coincide in all their aspects, they contain certain basic common elements that can be conveniently outlined as follows:

- For a population policy to exist, it must pass, from a passive attitude, in which population phenomena are considered as parameters, to an active attitude, in which the possibility of exerting influence or control over population variables is established.
- The variables which we intend to influence ultimately are the volume, growth, structure, mobility, and the geographic distribution of the population.
- A population policy is based on decisions adopted by the public sector.

From a normative point of view, there is general agreement that the objectives of a population policy and the means chosen to achieve them should be coherent with the goals and objectives of economic and social development, and subject to them. This is the reason why - it is said - a population policy should be formulated in the context of global planning.

/In practice,

In practice, the identifiable population policies usually do not fulfill this last requirement because there is no global development policy, because the planning organisms do not exist, or because when both exist the decisions destined to influence demographic behaviour are taken from a purely sectoral perspective (for example, as a component of health policy).

The previously cited three basic elements on which there seems to be consensus allow us to construct an operational definition in the following terms: Population policy in a country exists when the public sector adopts decisions deliberately designed to influence demographic variables, whether as their principal effect or as a foreseen side effect.

An even wider definition could be as follows: Population policy exists when the public sector (or government) considers population variables from the point of view of their eventual control. And a stricter one than the preceding would be: "that it adopts decisions ... and implements and carries them out".

In this series of definitions, more or less exacting, the deliberate character of the decisions is emphasized - which is of course, inherent to the very concept of policy - thus excluding the so-called "implicit population policies" that seem more appropriately called simply "demographic effects (unforeseen) of economic and social policies". It is evident that policies which directly or indirectly produce demographic effects have existed and will always exist, but it is only correct to speak of population policies when the demographic effects are foreseen and desired or, at least, accepted by the political actors.

B. STAGES IN THE FORMULATION OF A POPULATION POLICY

A population policy thus defined involves at least four stages:

- Analysis of the problem.
- Formulation of a policy: taking decisions in order to influence (or not to influence) demographic variables in the desired manner, which implies fixing more or less precise goals and electing means.
- Implementation (assigning human, financial and institutional resources) and enforcement.
- Evaluation.

We shall concentrate on the first two stages.

1. Analysis of the problem

It is usual to speak abstractly of "the population problem", which from a political viewpoint is practically useless. The simple intensity of a phenomenon (for example, high birth rate) does not constitute a problem in itself but to the extent that its effect upon economical and social variables makes it an obstacle to the accomplishment of determined objectives.

The analysis of the problem thus necessarily involves a certain conception - scientific or not - of the way the structure and dynamics of population influence economic, social, and political structures and processes, thereby obstructing or facilitating the accomplishment of the proposed objectives for development.

Therefore, it can be affirmed that the manner of defining the problem around specific demographic phenomena and the political significance attributed to them will vary between one country and another, depending not only on the objective situation but also on the style or strategy of development adopted by each government and the conception that the political actors may have of the role of demographic variables in the social, economic and political processes.

2. Policy formulation

In this respect it is necessary to mention at least two basic considerations:

First, because of the very nature of the variables one desires to modify, the specific goals of a population policy cannot be considered as valuable in themselves; their value, eminently instrumental, arises from their connexion with the objectives of development. Thus, it is possible to maintain that the objectives intended to direct and justify a given population policy are economic, social or political but by no means demographic. That is why for example, the desired decrease of fertility in certain cases is sought not for itself, but because it is expected to reduce the rate of increase in the demand for services or to raise the level of family life, or to diminish pressures upon the political system, etc. This apparently obvious affirmation has, however, an extraordinary importance, as it establishes a clear difference between the population policy and other policies such as health, education, employment, social security, or housing, which can be instrumental in reaching broader objectives but are oriented toward goals considered valuable in themselves. This fact justifies the relative autonomy of these policies in relation to a general development policy and, as its counterpart, justifies the subordination of an eventual population policy to that general policy.

Second, it is pertinent to point out that though the goals of a population policy may be precise and specific (for example, to reduce the birth rate from b_1 to b_2 in t years), thus clearly distinguishing it from other policies, the means that can be used are so varied that the population policy will be intertwined with other sectoral policies because of the necessity of acting through them. This dependence is particularly intense when one attempts to modify reproductive behaviour, which is obvious if we review the multiple factors on which it apparently depends such as marriage laws (which influence the age of marriage eligibility); social security systems (which reward or punish large families); programmes for maternal health (which facilitate contraceptive

/practice); educational

practice); educational and employment systems (which establish the economic significance of the child and affect women's participation in the labour force, etc.).

Thus, it can be maintained that, because of the very nature of variables involved, a population policy necessarily interacts and is expressed concretely through other sectoral policies (health, education, industrialization, agrarian policies, etc.).

C. FAMILY POLICY AND POPULATION POLICY

The preceding can be fully applied to the relations that should exist between a family policy and a population policy. The central objective of the former can be formulated as the creation of the most favourable conditions for the establishment and adequate functioning of families in accordance with the function and specific role assigned to them by each society. It is evident that universally one of these essential functions is procreation, whose regulation by the couple through family planning is universally accepted as a value, a duty and a right.

The exercise of a responsible parenthood is not limited to birth control but is expressed as well and principally in the care, feeding, education and socialization of the children. Consequently, family planning programmes should be considered one among "many" instruments useful to a family policy intended to enable and motivate the couple to exercise a responsible parenthood. The existence of education and services devoted to family planning is thus fully justified as a tool of family policy, whether or not a population policy already exists and whatever its goals may be.

Between both policies there can exist complementarity or conflict. The latter arises, for example, when the demographic effect resulting from the eventual application of a family planning programme is considered in opposition to what the government desires. This is the case in Argentina, where for a long time there has existed strong resistance toward official development of those programmes, based on

/a pro-natalist

a pro-natalist attitude. In other cases, the conflict may present itself at an ethical level when, for example in order to raise the demographic efficiency of the family planning programmes, proceedings that are contrary to the principles and values that shape the family policy are adopted.

These types of conflict can be also present in other specific policies to the extent that the demographic changes that may be foreseen as a lateral effect of their application do not have the meaning or intensity appropriate to the adopted population goals.

D. POPULATION POLICY AND GENERAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

As was pointed out previously, there is agreement that population policies should be consistent with the goals and objectives of economic and social development and subordinate to them. This proposition could be applied equally to any other particular policy, but is specially important in the case of population policies because at the same time that it gives them meaning, it is essential for their rationality and effectiveness. We shall devote the rest of this paper to this latter aspect, especially referring to those population policies that affect and are affected by family dynamics and structure, that is, those attempting to influence reproductive behaviour.

The relation of population policy and the general development policy can be specified for the previously mentioned levels: analysis of the problem, policy formulation, implementation and evaluation.

Until now the prevailing tendency has been to discuss population problems considering mainly or exclusively the effects of demographic factors on political, economic and social structures and processes. This perspective, though necessary, seems incomplete since dynamic analysis of population problems within concrete societies should also include the study of the demographic changes resulting from changes in the economic and social factors produced by the application of specific policies (among other causes). Only this approach permits

one to predict the probable course of the behaviour of demographic variables throughout time, thus establishing an important basis as much for the definition of the problem as for deciding on the desired direction of change and the goals that should orient an eventual population policy.

Therefore, the definition of the problem as well as the formulation of a rational population policy requires an answer to the following series of questions:

1. The analysis: Which are the probable demographic effects of a determined economic and social policy "X" within a given historical context? To what extent is it going to affect differently the behaviour of different social sectors?
2. The problem: Is the demographic behaviour expected from the application of that policy "X" favourable, indifferent or unfavourable to the achievement of the proposed objectives of development?
3. Objectives and goals: Depending on the answers to the previous questions, what should be the objectives and goals in a population policy that attempts to be an instrument of the adopted general development policy? Is it suitable to reinforce or rather to counteract the demographic effects expected to result from the application of "X", and in which social sectors?
4. Means: Which are the changes to be effected in the proposed concrete programmes in "X", in order that its demographic effects could be more closely linked to the adopted population goals? Which complementary means could be applied? Which are the necessary conditions (economic, social, cultural) for a chosen specific means to produce the desired effect? What is the political and administrative feasibility of the means (or programmes) adopted? What is the cultural and ethicojuridical acceptance of these means?

The scientific answer to these questions requires a theory of the interrelation of economic, social and political variables, on the one hand, and demographic variables, on the other hand, as well as a great deal of empirical research in this field. There are no answers of universal validity, and the answers vary not only as a function of the objective situations in each country but also according to the development policies adopted and the strategy chosen to put them into practice.

II. THE FACTORS OF REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR: POSSIBLE MEANS OF ACTION

Reproductive behaviour, as all human behaviour, is the result of the interaction of many social factors of different kinds. If it is to be modified in a given direction, one is faced with the problem of electing the most appropriate means to induce that change. This problem cannot be solved rationally without formulating a theoretical framework for the factors that determine or condition that behaviour and its interrelations. As the majority of the Latin American countries still maintain high rates of demographic growth, attention will be centered upon those means which can be useful to produce a decrease in fertility.

Two main types of changes in fertility can be distinguished: the "major" changes, which have appeared in processes of demographic transition in various forms according to the different historical contexts in which they have occurred; and the "minor" changes, which are produced in different social sectors once the transition is over or within each of its stages. The following discussion will be drawn to the factors that account for those "major" changes, and to the means that can be used to induce or accelerate them. In this section, we shall first examine briefly the process of demographic transition observed in developed nations in order to take advantage of that historical experience to then outline an analytical framework that distinguishes and organizes the factors that appear to determine or influence changes in fertility.

A. DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION IN DEVELOPED NATIONS

It is well known that the processes of demographic transition experienced by developed nations began from a stage of high fertility with a predominant orientation toward relatively large families, sexual behaviour without habitual contraceptive practice, and with the expectation and acceptance of pregnancy if it resulted. Ultimately the process reached a stage of low fertility resulting principally

/from orientation

from orientation toward a small family, an objective achieved through sexual behaviour characterized by habitual contraceptive practice or by resort to abortion as an anticipated solution.

It should be pointed out that there were no important technological advances in the field of contraception during that process and that control of reproductive behaviour was achieved despite the primitiveness and insecurity of the methods used. One could thus assume that the emergence of this new pattern basically followed a change in motivation from an orientation toward large families to an orientation toward small families.

This change in motivation appears to have responded to changes in family structure resulting in turn from important transformations, in the economic-social context. These transformations beginning with an initial economic-social structure in which high fertility is functional for the family, ended with a structure in which low fertility is functional.

In the initial structure the cost of an additional child is small compared to his contribution through early incorporation in work and his participation in the domestic economy; the wide net of family relations is an important factor of security and of social and economic power, the children caring for and protecting their parents in old age, etc. On the other hand, the family fulfills a series of economic and social functions mainly through the woman, whose domestic work is considered consistent with the requirements of her role as a mother.

In contrast, in the final structure, economic and social factors are such that a reduced number of children becomes more functional than a large number to satisfy family needs and the couple's expectations. This type of structure is characterized by (among other features) a high degree of industrialization, urbanization, and urban concentration; the growing influence of urban culture on rural areas; universal primary education; the transfer of a great part of the traditional family's socio-economic function to extrafamilial institutions; the tendency to lessen the difference in sex roles, with an increasing participation of women in extra-domestic work, in professional training, in political, union, artistic, athletic, and other types of organizations. Under

/these circumstances

these circumstances, the cost of an additional child is high, the quality rather than quantity of the children (education, professional training, etc.) is important, and the social utility of the net of family relations is diminished.

Undoubtedly, the decline of mortality played an important role in the transition, especially as it permitted the same final family size to be achieved with a lower rate of fertility. Nevertheless, the decisive factor for the start of a generalized reduction in fertility seems to have been the change in the socio-economic structures which led to a reformulation of reproductive behaviour patterns, with a period of transition and adjustment.

It would be simplistic to believe that the underdeveloped nations must undergo the same process of socio-economic change experienced by the developed nations in order to produce an orientation toward a small family and a practice of controlled reproductive behaviour, for at least theoretically it is possible to imagine other societal models that would lead to this kind of reproductive behaviour. What it does seem legitimate to conclude is that demographic transition to a great extent seems to be the result of important changes in the socio-economic structure and that this aspect cannot be left out of the discussion of the means to achieve or accelerate the transition in specific societies.

B. FACTORS OF REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Based on the preceding general considerations, we propose the following analytical framework, within which the discussion of instruments will then be placed.

The change in fertility implies two complementary elements: fertility goals (orientation toward a small family) and means to achieve them (contraceptive practice 1/ and abortion).

1/ In "contraceptive practice" we also include sterilization.

1. Factors influencing fertility goals

(a) Macro-structural factors at a macro level: These are elements or characteristics of socio-economic structure that condition the family structure according to the manner in which the latter is inserted within the former and thereby determine the most convenient number of children for the family. We refer to factors such as:

- In the economic structure:
 - forms of ownership of the means of production and land tenure
 - types of enterprises
 - structure of labour force demand (in particular, job opportunities for women)
 - forms and levels of remuneration
 - labour stability, etc.
- Permeability of social stratification, with the corresponding mechanisms and expectations for social mobility.
- Educational system: extent, access, length of obligatory education, possibilities of technical training for women, etc.
- Social security system: access to health services, family lending services, protection in old age, etc.

(b) General cultural factors: Principally the traditional or modern character of the system of values and norms.

(c) Specific cultural factors: Beliefs, values and norms referring to family size and the functions of its members, particularly the children.

(d) Family structure: The functions fulfilled by the family and the system of roles organizing the activity and interaction of its members.

(See diagram, 1e) Within the proposed framework, the orientation of reproductive behaviour toward a small or large family will depend principally on the type of family structure (1d) and secondarily on specific cultural factors (1c). In other words, it is assumed that

/orientation of

orientation of reproductive behaviour depends on the significance of the children (quality versus quantity, differential significance according to sex, etc.) to the development of family life and the satisfaction of the couple's needs, which in turn depends on family structure. It is also maintained that family structure depends principally on structural factors at the macro-social level (1c) and only secondarily on cultural factors (1b).

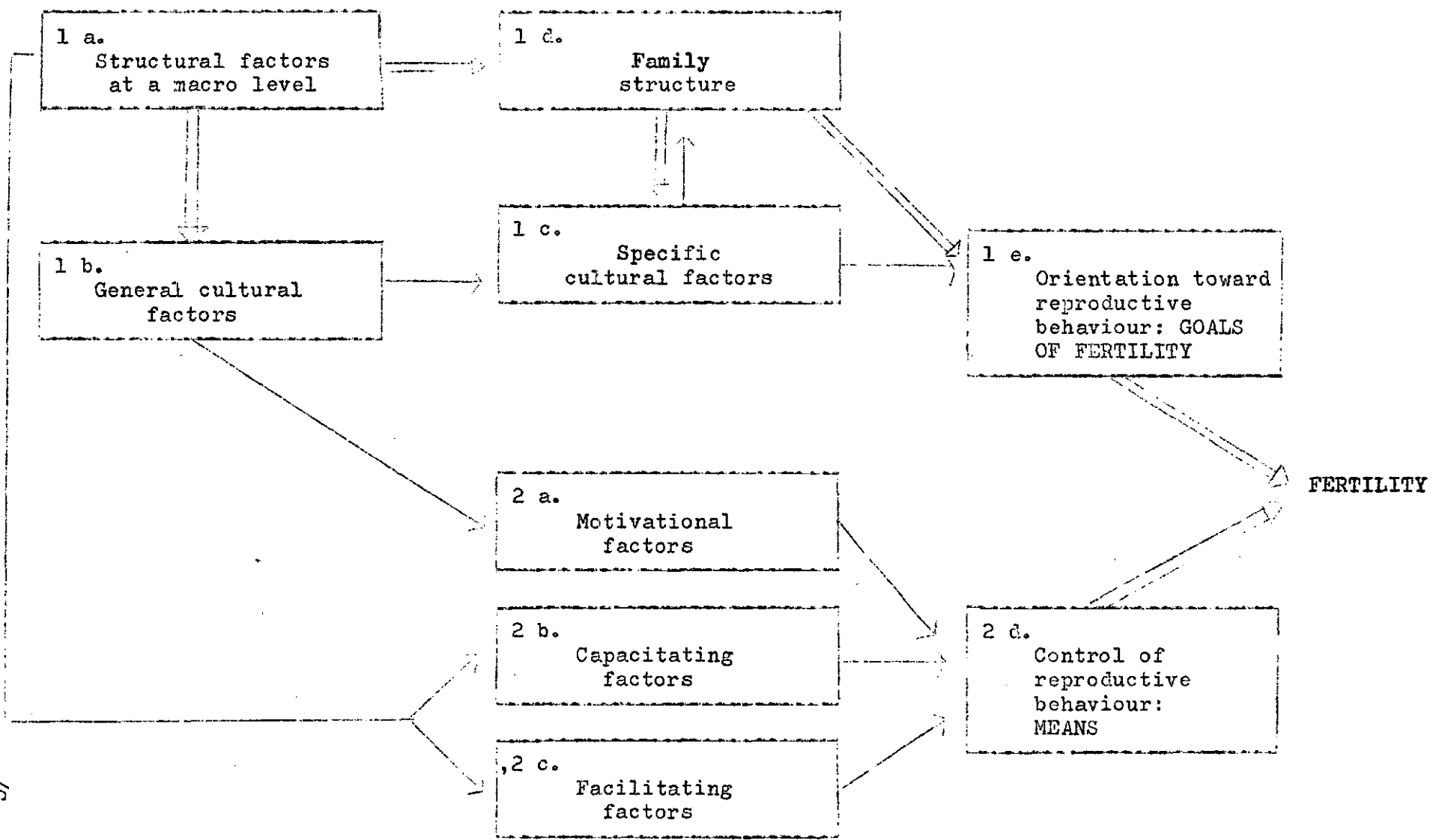
The level and form of insertion of a family unit, or of a group of family units corresponding to a social sector, in the socio-economic structure results in a particular configuration of these economic and social factors which condition the family micro-structure. The greater the internal heterogeneity of the macro-structure, the more differentiated the configurations of socio-economic factors that results from different levels and forms of insertion of the units in the structure. This in turn generates different types of family structure, especially with regard to forms of participation by the man, the woman, and the children in extra- and intra-family economic activity.

2. Factors influencing means toward a controlled reproductive behaviour

(a) Motivational factors: Condition the acceptance of techniques and can be cultural (opposition to the use of contraceptives for moral reasons, resistance to methods involving handling of the genitals by a physician) or of widespread practical judgement (low efficiency, fear that a method may produce illness, etc.).

(b) Capacitating factors: Related to information on the existence of methods and techniques, and to the aptitude and training of people for their use.

(c) Facilitating factors: They have to do with the development of technology (contraceptive methods, abortion techniques, etc.) and with the availability and access to that technology.



C. MEANS OF ACTION

We shall now examine the means to be used within the framework of the types of factors just mentioned. Until now, the most frequently used means to bring about a decline in fertility have been family planning programmes. Together with these, some measures have been taken to liberalize legislation on abortion and to facilitate its practice. These programmes act basically at the level of facilitation (2c) and capacitation (2b) for controlled reproductive behaviour. In many cases there are attempts to reinforce them through propaganda and education aimed at introducing the norm of a small family. Thus the intention is to promote a cultural change by acting directly on the contents of culture.

At a motivational level (2a), means to increase the acceptance of the method have been proposed by various authors 2/ and adopted in some programmes as in India, for example, where men have been given economic incentives to accept vasectomy. The imagination of some authors has been working feverishly at this level, inventing innumerable possible means, in many cases of a coercive nature. An example of this is a proposed law forbidding each couple to have more than two children; obedience would be ensured by an obligatory temporary sterilization for everyone, which would be suspended only between marriage and the birth of the second child 3/. Others have proposed obligatory sterilization after the third child, or compulsory abortion. The efficiency of these different measures may vary greatly according to the characteristics inherent in the groups or social sectors to be influenced.

If we exclude the use of coercive measures - whose ethico-legal acceptability and political feasibility seem to be very low, at least in Latin America - we can maintain that the efficiency of family planning programmes will greatly depend on their response to a demand to a need to limit family size.

2/ See Bernard Berelson, Beyond Family Planning, in Studies in Family Planning, No 38, February 1969.

3/ Chasteen, Edgar R., The Case for Compulsory Birth Control, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971.

If the propositions mentioned above are accepted, this felt need to limit the size of the family will depend to a large extent on the characteristics of the configuration of economic and social factors resulting from their particular form of insertion in the macro-structure. Thus, if there endures a configuration in which a relatively large number of children is functional for the satisfaction of the needs of the couple or of the family in general, the acceptance of the programme can be expected to be low. And even though family planning were to be accepted, contraceptive practice would only be casual or sporadic, without producing a significant decline of fertility.

The same can be expected of those measures destined to directly induce the change in cultural norms and values through propaganda. As long as having many children continues to be suitable for the couple, the cultural norms favourable to a high fertility will continue to be functional, and for that very reason will show a high resistance to change. When, on the contrary, changes have already been produced at a structural level making a small family more functional than a large one, but norms favourable to a large family continue to be culturally valid, we can expect the predisposition toward cultural change to be greater (given the nonfunctional character of the norms) and therefore the efficiency of propaganda and education intended to modify them could be greater as well.

The use of direct incentives raises another type of problem. The appearance and generalization of a controlled reproductive behaviour pattern, oriented toward a small family, seems to necessarily require an appropriate configuration of socio-economic factors. If this structural condition is not met, the changes in behaviour resulting from direct motivation of the individual through incentives will probably be only changes in aggregations of individuals without cultural repercussions, and therefore without the possibility of being spread and transmitted from one generation to another. Thus, they would be exogenous actions incapable of producing a self-sustaining effect. On the contrary, if structural conditions favourable to a

/change in

change in the reproductive behaviour are produced, direct incentives can effectively contribute to start and accelerate the process of change, counteracting at the motivational level subsisting cultural resistance.

Concerning coercive measures (for example, prohibition of having more than "x" children, together with compulsory sterilization and/or abortion), their efficiency will depend on the coercive capability of the authorities. However, they present serious problems from the viewpoint of their ethico-legal and cultural acceptability, and political and administrative feasibility.

This short discussion of the means that can be used to apply a policy oriented toward reducing fertility can be summarized in the following propositions:

1. Inducement of reduction in fertility supposes as a necessary condition the creation of structural conditions that make a small number of children more appropriate than a large number for the satisfaction of family needs.
2. Given that the change in cultural factors is often a delayed effect of change at a structural level, situations are produced in which the effectiveness of facilitating and capacitating means toward controlled reproductive behaviour are hindered mainly by cultural resistance. In these cases, the process of generalized adoption of the new type of behaviour can be accelerated through means acting at the cultural level like propaganda and education.
3. Under specific circumstances, direct incentives can favour and accelerate the adoption of controlled reproductive behaviour, but they do not seem capable of producing by themselves a stable generalized change that registers at the level of cultural norms and values.

4. The creation of structural conditions favourable to a change in reproductive behaviour depends on the course followed by its conditioning factors at a macro-structure level; and this course depends in turn on the action on these factors through economic and social policies. This is why consideration of the probable demographic effects of economic and social policies should become an element in the formulation of population policy and the basis for its insertion within general development policy.

From this angle, the discussion in the remainder of this document, besides dealing with the particular situation in Latin America, will treat the effect of certain policies - (in particular those related to the forms of insertion in the productive system) - on family structure and functioning, and in this way on the reproductive behaviour of certain key social sectors for demographic change.

III. THE SOCIAL FRAMEWORK: MAJOR LINES OF SOCIAL CHANGE IN LATIN AMERICA

This is not the place to give a detailed version of the changes that have been taking place in Latin America and which influence the family and its reproductive behaviour. However, it is necessary to point out at least their major lines, since the society they contribute to form constitutes the context in which the family is inserted, a context without which it is difficult to make an analysis of the role of public policies in demographic change.

Specifically, it is interesting to point out how the social structure of the countries of the continent has been acquiring a growing heterogeneity, regional as well as sectoral and in social stratification. This heterogeneity definitely leads to the presence within the same country of groups with characteristics similar to their equivalents in countries of much greater relative development and of others marginal to the system and even maintaining characteristics that in other settings would be considered archaic. In other words, we want to emphasize that the problems that various authors have attempted to explain through the concepts of "marginality", "internal colonialism", "dependency", "structural heterogeneity", cannot be left aside when one tries to analyze the family and its reproductive behaviour in Latin America.

The existence of an internal polarization is not a new phenomenon in our continent, but its character has changed through time due to the double influence of the changing internal structure and the way in which national economies are inserted in the world economic market. Thus, while these countries based their economy on agriculture and on exportation of some raw materials, the developed poles were constituted by the places and regions where those activities were carried out, and by the cities that served as centres of administration. As is well known, this situation changed when, due to the Great Depression, the political elites of some of the countries of greater relative development in the continent began

/to evolve

to evolve a new style of development based on import-substituting industrialization. It is then that the heterogeneity that is interesting here begins to acquire its more defining characteristics.

In effect, at first that industrialization is centred upon the production of consumption goods, which naturally leads the factories to settle in or around the more populated cities. The new job opportunities opened by the installation of these factories extracts manpower from the countryside and smaller cities of these centres. To this must be added the deterioration that the agricultural sector begins to suffer due as much to an archaic land-tenure system as to the subordinate role it begins to play in the various governments' plans, and the consequent drop of public and private investment in the sector. This, added to the rapid vegetative growth of the rural population, increases the surplus of agricultural manpower. As a consequence of both processes, urbanization trends become ever more accelerated, as it is shown by the fact that the continent's urbanization rate increased from 1.26 between 1920-1930, to 2.5 between 1950-1960 4/.

This process of accelerated urbanization has in its turn the result of concentrating the population in a few, comparatively big cities, if not in only one. This tendency, according to some sources, has increased instead of diminishing in the great majority of the Latin American countries 5/.

The tendencies outlined lead to two different types of heterogeneities or polarizations: the urban-rural and the inter-urban. As a consequence, the economic, administrative, social, political and cultural infrastructure of the countries of the continent are concentrated in a few cities.

4/ Villa, Miguel, América Latina: Algunas consideraciones demográficas del proceso de metropolización 1900-1960 CELADE, Series C, Nº 122.

5/ See, Elizaga, Juan C., "Migración interna, migración y movilidad, el proceso de urbanización", in Actas de la Conferencia Regional Latinoamericana de Población, México, 1970, Vol. 1, p. 497.

Infra-urban imbalances must be added to these polarizations. The emergence of manufacturing as an internally important sector increases the complexity of the urban social stratification. The changes expected by the experience of the more advanced countries (emergence of urban managers as an economically important group, enlargement of the "middle sectors", emergence of an industrial proletariat) are joined by others which give the Latin American urban social structure its specific characteristics. In general they are related to what Raúl Prebisch has called "the spurious absorption of manpower" or dynamic insufficiency of the Latin American economy 6/, that is to say, the incapacity experienced by the economies of the countries of the region to supply steady employment to the available labour force.

More specifically, there are two main tendencies that the specialists mention in this respect. On the one hand, it is pointed out that the economic structure presents deep internal heterogeneities, both in sectoral productivity and in the degree of concentration found within each sector. Firms and sectors using advanced technology based on an intensive use of capital co-exist with other comparatively primitive firms and sectors, and with others of an intermediate development. On the other hand, and directly derived from the latter, there are deep intra- and intersectoral differences in capacity to absorb the labour force, the most modern enterprises showing the greatest incapacity in this respect 7/.

6/ Prebisch, Raúl, "Transformación y desarrollo. La gran tarea de América Latina", Santiago, Chile, April 12, 1970 (mimeo).

7/ In a study on the subject, it is pointed out that the modern economic sector of Latin America absorbs one eighth of the labour force while generating half the product. The contrary occurs in the traditional sector, which accounts for one third of the employed population, though not generating more than 10 per cent of the product. See ECLA, Estudio económico de América Latina, 1968. Algunos aspectos de la economía latinoamericana a fines de la década de 1960. Interesting antecedents on the structure of the labour force appear in Kirsch, Henry, Employment and the Utilization of Human Resources in Latin America, ECLA, Social Development Division, Population Unit, November 1972 (draft for comments).

Structural heterogeneity has helped to produce the subcultural or institutional differences which to a greater or lesser degree are found in Latin American countries. The countryside and the city, urban as well as rural classes and strata, the degree of technological development of the sector or firm where people work, and different historical heritages, all contribute to produce distinct values, beliefs, and norms. In the following pages, there will be an attempt to indicate how all of these factors have influenced the family and its reproductive behaviour.

Attention will be particularly centred upon certain social sectors that still present high fertility rates; these are the popular urban sectors and the sector of the peasantry linked to the minifundio-latifundio system. The reproductive behaviour of both sectors, which sharply contrasts to that shown by the urban middle classes, generally oriented towards a small family and where the practices of birth control have become habitual, converts them into key sectors for an eventual demographic change.

IV. STRUCTURAL HETEROGENEITY, KEY SECTORS FOR
DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE, AND POPULATION
POLICIES IN LATIN AMERICA

The increasing structural heterogeneity that has characterized the social and economic development processes in Latin American countries during the last fifty years has been manifest also in changes in reproductive behaviour. Whereas middle urban sectors, principal beneficiaries of the economic development and the expansion of services (education, health, social security) have experienced a gradual and sustained decrease in fertility, to the point of reaching levels quite similar to those of the developed countries, the great bulk of the rural population, left out of the principal benefits of development, still shows high levels of fertility and, in some cases, also of mortality. Within the urban context it has been also possible to detect a remarkable contrast between the reproductive behaviour of the previously mentioned middle sectors and that of the so-called "popular" sectors, which display levels of fertility very much similar to those prevailing in the rural areas.

If a population policy oriented toward decreasing the birth rate is proposed, it seems evident that the key social sectors on which the action should concentrate are precisely those that maintain high levels of fertility. In other words, if the idea is to obtain an important reduction in the growth pattern of the Latin American population, it is necessary to induce a change in the reproductive behaviour of the popular sectors, both in urban and rural areas.

In this chapter, the reproductive behaviour of these strata will be analyzed from the viewpoint of the factors proposed in Chapter II, discussing on this basis the probable efficiency of certain means of action. Given the character of this paper, there is no intention to give here precise diagnosis of a concrete situation, which would lead to a detailed and complex analysis of the situation in a determined country, but rather to discuss the standard situation with some empiric support by way of example.

A. THE URBAN CONTEXT

1. The family structure of the urban popular strata

The thorough examination of these urban popular sectors (that was possible thanks to several studies carried out during the recent years 8/) shows that structural heterogeneity is also present within them, as determined by different manners of insertion within the economic sector. This seems to be the key factor for the differentiation of two family types: the working-class or proletarian family and the marginal or sub-proletarian family.

In general, these studies tend to agree that there are important differences relating to the type of occupation of the household head. In those families where the household head suffers permanent instability in his working performance, is underemployed and receives the lowest income on the scale, the studies have encountered the greatest number of unstable and consensual unions.

On the other hand, the insufficient income from the household head leads the mother and children to also incorporate themselves into

8/ Among these studies, it is necessary to mention: Joaquín Duque and Ernesto Pastrana, Las estrategias de supervivencia económica de las unidades familiares del sector popular urbano: Una investigación exploratoria, Programa de Intercambio ELAS-CELADE, Santiago, January, 1973; Aldo Currieri, et. al., Estudios sobre la juventud marginal latinoamericana, Editorial Universitaria, Santiago de Chile, and Siglo XX, México City, 1971, as well as H. Godoy and F.L. Lira, "Aspectos sociológicos de la familia en Chile", Revista de Estudios Jurídicos, 1973; A. Mattelart, and M. Mattelart, Juventud chilena: Rebeldía y conformismo, Editorial Universitaria, Santiago, 1970; Paz Covarrubias and Mónica Muñoz, "Algunos factores que inciden en la participación laboral de las mujeres de estratos bajos", Instituto de Sociología, Departamento de Trabajo y Organizaciones, Universidad Católica, Santiago, Working Paper Nº2, 1972; and A. Mattelart and M. Mattelart, La mujer chilena en una nueva sociedad, Editorial del Pacífico, Santiago, 1968.

productive activities ^{9/}. When the entire active female population is taken into account, as did PECFAL-Urban, one finds that women preferably work outside the home, and that married women or consensual partners participate less in economic activities than do spinsters, widows, or separated women. However, regarding the type of marginal or subproletarian family to which we are referring now, the preceding studies appear to demonstrate that this generalization is not applicable. Apparently, legal dispositions are operating to produce effects distinct from those hoped for. In this case, the regulations on pre- and post-natal leave would work as a break on hiring married women.

However, in the case of marginal families, studies have encountered a greater incidence of consensual unions, a situation generally not covered by the law, which makes it difficult for employers to calculate a priori the risk of pregnancy for the woman.

On the other hand, mothers within the urban marginal strata typically carry out activities not covered by social security or in contexts where it is easy to evade control by the authorities. Consequently, the legal arrangement that is apparently an obstacle would not affect the mother of an economically marginal household.

Participation by mothers in economic activities involves as a consequence a redefinition of authority roles in the marginal family in general, but especially in those organized as a consensual union. The actual exercise of authority with respect to the children and the representation of the family to the outside world fall primarily on the mother. According to some, this leads to a

^{9/} The comparative investigation on Urban Fertility in Latin American cities directed by CELADE found that in all of them active women carried out mainly manual activities and except in the cases of Buenos Aires and San José, especially nonspecialized manual occupations. At the same time, it was found that either they had no formal education or had only completed several years of primary education.

/greater insecurity

greater insecurity and frustration of the male, channeled as aggression toward the women and children, and as slight participation in household activities 10/.

Frequent absences of the mother from the home brings about norms of socialization different from those of other families. Older children and neighbours are those who principally fill the role of socializing agents. The former are charged with caring for the younger children, preparing meals, cleaning house. When they are not at home, because they in turn are working the neighbours assume the tasks vital to the survival of the smallest children. Mothers and older children are the principal internal socializing agents for the family, while neighbours are the principal external agents.

The preceding patterns differ from those in families where the household head carries out stable manual activities, preferably of an industrial nature. A first difference arises with respect to the type of union. Duque and Pastrana and Torres-Rivas agree on pointing out that in these families as well consensual union has enjoyed ample legitimacy but that its incidence should tend to diminish. Several factors combine to produce this situation. On the one hand, the husband's activity allows the family an easier access to benefits provided by social security legislation and, in general, by all legislation designed to protect the family. As many of the benefits of these laws require legal matrimony, couples who for years had lived together without legalizing their union found themselves impelled to do so in order to gain access to these benefits. On the other hand, it has already been pointed out that there exists a close relationship between the power of trade unions and the insurance and social security benefits they have obtained for their members. Labourers with stable work, comparatively high wages, and membership in a generous system of social benefits in fact

10/ On this topic, there is an especially interesting study by Edelberto Torres-Rivas, "Familia y Juventud en El Salvador", in Gurrieri, op. cit., pp. 195-281.

find themselves much closer to the middle class than to the other sectors of manual labourers, the marginal and underemployed. In the Chilean case, many of them have even obtained a legal definition as "employees" (white-collar) rather than "workers" (blue-collar), independent of their type of work. All this leads to an attempt to adopt the standards of behaviour and life style of "employees", that is, of the middle class standards and style which do not permit simple consensual unions.

The internal division of roles is clearer in families of this type. The husband is the economic support of the family, and the mother assumes the functions of socialization. When the wife works, she does it sporadically, part-time and generally in activities that entail a greater degree of specialization than activities carried out by marginal mothers. The standards of authority are shared by both partners, with the mother maintaining them within the house and the father making decisions that go beyond the family context. The children are freer from the tasks of socializing their younger siblings and from the necessity of interrupting their studies in order to work and contribute to the family income.

The studies mentioned previously also note certain differences with respect to the way which the children's role is defined. In both types of families, the mothers see the acquisition of a higher level of education than they themselves have had as a means of assuring upward social mobility for their children. However, in those cases where the household head carries out unstable economic activities, the aspiration to give them a better education conflicts with the necessity to work from an early age or help with domestic chores. The consequence of this is that many young people are forced to abandon school in the early years of primary education. In contrast, the children of fathers with more stable and better paid occupations have a greater possibility of finishing their primary education. In the case of the family that we have called here "urban-marginal", the children are considered as providers of

/income for

income for the immediate support of the family, whereas in industrial workers' families there is a tendency to see them as an eventual aid in bettering the future social position of the family.

The role assigned to the children makes clear a more subtle aspect, but one of great consequence: the temporal orientation of family activity. In marginal families, the necessity of daily survival, instability toward the future, difficulties of access to the benefits of social legislation, and in general all the factors that we have mentioned previously, contribute to a short temporal dimension of their activities and aspirations. Realistically, given their situation, these families do not plan long-range activities, lacking a vision of goal in the future toward which they can orient their actions. In contrast, greater economic stability, more active participation in unions and community organizations, the real rise in standard of living that some have experienced, greater participation in the durable goods market, installment buying, all contributes to broader time dimension for the families of industrial workers. The existence of long-range goals and the possibility of achieving them gradually makes the actions of these family groups much more open to planning than those of marginal families.

All the differences that have been exposed among families in the urban manual strata according to type of occupation of the household head allow us to draw the conclusion that they constitute different types. Seen in the wider context of effects produced by employment, income distribution, insurance, and social security policies, these types appear to be a consequence of the increasing closeness they have produced between the middle class of non-manual workers and industrial workers and, vice versa, the unemployment and underemployment they have produced in the cities.

2. The change of reproductive behaviour in the urban popular sectors

Up to this point, the analysis leads one to think that, should the theoretical assumptions on which we are working be valid, the tendency to change reproductive behaviour would be different for the two family types that have been characterized.

Bearing in mind the structure of the working-class family and the characteristics of the social context in which it is inserted a reduced number of children seems to be more functional than a large one, in order to satisfy their needs and to achieve their aspirations. This leads one to think that the continuance in some cases of permanent high levels of fertility in this type of family is due, on the one hand, to the persistence of cultural values and norms oriented toward a numerous family and, on the other hand, to the lack or insufficient development of factors that enable a controlled behaviour or facilitate its practice.

Situations like these make it understandable that the decrease of birth rate in such sectors is often initiated with a growing resort to abortion that, given prevailing legal conditions and the restrictions of medical institutions, is carried out clandestinely and in unsanitary conditions, meaning a high risk for the mother's life. Such situations demonstrate the existing tendency towards a reduced family or at least towards the desire not to increase the family group with a new child, but the appropriate means of reaching such an objective are lacking.

Therefore, a high degree of receptivity for family planning programmes can be expected from this type of family because ultimately they satisfy a felt need. Should cultural resistance subsist, it can be removed through education and propaganda, thus making conscious a need which arises from the very structure of the family and its context.

The situation of the family we have identified as marginal is not so clear. The orientation towards a high fertility is supported not only by traditional cultural patterns frequently internalized in their original rural environment, but also by certain advantages

/derived from

derived from a large number of children. These advantages may neutralize to some extent the disadvantages that a large family in the urban environment must put up with (high costs of food, cramped and wretched housing, etc.).

So it appears that, though minor changes in fertility in the marginal strata can be achieved through the diffusion of family planning programmes or the liberalization of abortion, it should be difficult to obtain a permanent and generalized orientation towards a small family unless their marginal insertion in the economical and social structure can be fundamentally modified. From this point of view, the population policy that attempts to reduce fertility cannot be formulated unless it is supported by other policies oriented to modify the structural conditions that will finally determine the demographic dynamics.

B. THE RURAL CONTEXT

It is possible to identify different kinds of socio-economic contexts in the rural areas of Latin America, as well as various kinds of agricultural exploitation and a great variety of types of family structure. The conditions that follow refer to peasant families linked to forms of land tenure and exploitation that are usually denominated the minifundio-latifundio complex. However, these considerations can also be valid for other types of situations.

The social structure in this context is characterized as bi-clasist, with a very low interstrata permeability and consequently limited expectation of social mobility, except by migration towards urban centres. The peasant either possesses his own small plot of land (minifundio) or profits from a piece of land of the large state (latifundio) in exchange of part of the family's labour. The minifundio owner, due to the normally very reduced size of his farm, sells part of the family's labour to the latifundio owner. The working salary usually is given mainly in kind or in benefits (use

/of a

of a house, food for the animals, etc.) with a little monetized and self-consumption economy predominating. Access to health and education services, in particular, is generally very limited, as is access to social security.

1. The family structure

Predominating in this context is the extended family, reinforced in the fulfilment of their multiple economic functions, of socialization and protection by an active set of kinship relations. The women, besides performing an active socializing role, usually also participates in agricultural and economic activities together with the rest of the family. In this respect it must be noted that the work performed by a woman out of the house is not incompatible with her role as a mother. This is due, on the one hand, to the fact that the working conditions are generally flexible, are near home, and include the possibility of being accompanied by the children, and on the other hand, that the responsibility of fulfilling the maternal role is diluted within the extended family.

In this kind of family structure, the children play an active economic role from early childhood. Their maintenance cost is low, due to the predominating forms of self-consumption. A large number of children in this case contributes positively to the economic efficiency and importance of the family group; it gives stability to the social position of the family in expanding the set of kinship relations; and in this way it also gives stability and security to the couple in their old age.

The decline in mortality experienced during the last decades, through advances in medical technology and the extension of health programmes, has produced an increase in the number of surviving children. It would seem, however, that this phenomenon has been more than neutralized by the migratory flow towards the cities 11/ that

11/ A survey of the marginal population taken in Santiago, Chile shows that the greatest relative frequency of migration to the capital occurs among women between 15 and 19 years old and among men between 20 and 24 years old. See Fecundidad y anticoncepción en poblaciones marginales, DESAL-CELAP, Santiago, 1970.

frequently separates the eldest children from their homes, thus reducing the size of the family nucleus living around the parents. It can be concluded that this phenomenon helps to stimulate fertility.

2. The change of reproductive behaviour in the peasant family

In the type of peasant family just described here, the absence of reproductive control and its direct consequence, a large number of children, seem to be rational behaviour or at least cannot be labeled as irrational. As shown in the preceding pages, this is due to the characteristics inherent to the socio-economic structure in which this family develops and to their particular form of insertion in it.

In this context, the absence of a behaviour designed to control births respond primarily to a lack of need for it. As a consequence, the demographic acceptance and efficiency of the programmes designed to capacitate and facilitate controlled behaviour can be expected to be very low if they are not accompanied or preceded by changes at the macro-level which determine the type of prevailing family structure and the corresponding orientation towards a large number of children. The same can be said of those programmes designed to directly produce changes at the level of norms and values of reproductive behaviour (factors at the cultural level).

G. POPULATION POLICIES AND OTHER PUBLIC POLICIES

The analysis of the preceding sections leads to the affirmation, first, that in order to achieve an important slowdown in the current growth rate of the region, it is necessary to induce a profound change of reproductive behaviour in the marginal urban sectors and among the peasants. Second, it seems improbable that this change can be achieved solely through resort to actions destined to capacitate and facilitate controlled reproductive behaviour (such as family planning /programmes), without

programmes), without a modification of the prevailing structural conditions that allow a high fertility to be convenient for the functioning of the family and satisfaction of the couple's needs in these social sectors and especially among the peasantry.

Assuming this, one is faced with the problem of which macro-social factors should be modified and through which policies.

This is not the place for a detailed discussion of each of the economic and social policies that could create the structural conditions for a change in reproductive behaviour. Here there is only room to point out that policies such as those of employment, agrarian reform, education, social security and health would seem crucial to the creation of macro-structural conditions favourable to a decline in fertility. Whether this objective is achieved will depend in great part on the form, content, and breadth of these policies. This in turn will depend on whether the population policy is formulated and implemented in strict interrelationship with social and economic policies.

