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From Pronatalism to Social Welfare? Extending Family Allowances to Minority Populations in France and Israel

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Abstract. An inherent tension exists between the goals of pronatalism and the actual policies through which law makers have often attempted to raise birth rates. Proponents of pronatalism often prefer to raise births only to specific racial/ethnic or national groups; yet in modern democracies, it is unacceptable for social policies to explicitly discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, or national origin. Social benefits, such as family allowances, must be accessible to all citizens. The recent extension of certain previously denied family benefits to minority populations in France and Israel illustrates this tension and points to a future direction in which any pronatalist intent behind family policy will likely be downplayed in favour of a social welfare imperative.

Key words: nationalism, population policy, pronatalism, social policy

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Résumé. Une dissension existe entre les objectifs natalistes et les politiques effectivement suivies, aux travers desquelles les législateurs ont souvent tenté de relever la natalité. Ceux qui proposent des politiques natalistes préfèrent souvent relever seulement la natalité de groupes raciaux, ethniques ou nationaux spécifiques; cependant, dans les démocraties modernes, il est inacceptable que les politiques sociales effectuent une discrimination en faveur de tels critères. Les bénéfices sociaux, tels que les allocations familiales, doivent être accessibles à tous les citoyens. L'extension récente de certains avantages familiaux, auparavant refusés à certaines populations minoritaires de France et d'Israël, illustre cette dissension et pointe vers les directions futures dans lesquelles toute intention nataliste, sous-jacente à une politique familiale, devra vraisemblablement s'effacer devant un impératif de politique sociale.

Mots clés: nationalisme, politique de population, prenatalisme, politique sociale

1. Introduction

With the exception of the United States, most wealthy nations provide family benefits to citizens, and often to non-citizen residents, with children. These benefits usually include family allowances, housing subsidies, tax breaks for dependent children, and paid family leave, to name some of the most important. Those excluded from eligibility are most often non-citizen immigrants; thus, research on exclusion from social programs often tends to focus on immigrant groups (e.g. Castles and Miller, 1998). In some instances, however, citizens have been excluded from family-related social programs. Focusing on the cases of France and Israel, this paper explores how certain groups of citizens came to be excluded from family benefits and only recently, in the 1990s, gained access to these benefits. I argue that the citizens of France's Overseas Departments and the Arab citizens of Israel were originally denied access to certain family benefits because of the pronatalist agenda behind these programs. I then examine how and why these groups eventually gained access to pronatalist-inspired family benefits. Exploring the development of family benefits in these two countries illuminates questions of nation and citizenship, specifically the often hazy distinction between citizenship in the state (based on participation in a political community) and membership in "the nation" (which often entails belonging to a specific ethno-national group). It also draws attention to the uneasy relationship between pronatalism as an ideology and the actual policies that have been enacted to address pronatalist goals.

2. Family policies and pronatalism

Numerous forms of assistance to families were instituted in some European countries before the 20th century (see various articles in Bock and Thane, 1991) but comprehensive and universal benefits were introduced only in the first half of the 20th century. Family policies were originally instituted in response to a number of political and societal concerns. These concerns included ideas about appropriate roles for women in society, concern over child poverty and, possibly most importantly, concern about low fertility. The earliest comprehensive family policies owe their existence in large part to the desire of some national leaders to increase national fertility rates (Pedersen, 1993; Ohlander, 1992). As fertility declined in Western Europe, many leaders worried that their nation's economy and military strength would eventually suffer because of slow growth rates. Others felt that low birth rates reflected declining morals. Thus, many Western European countries – including Germany, France, Sweden, Italy, and Spain – had some type of pronatalist-inspired family policy in place by the end of the 1930s. Family benefits, especially family allowances, which were designed to ease the financial burden of raising children, were the cornerstone of these pronatalist policies.

Without support from pronatalists, other groups seeking benefits for families had met with little success. Early in the 20th century, non-pronatalist groups, such as feminists and/or socialists, had sought unsuccessfully to convince lawmakers

to provide benefits to families with children. In Sweden, some Social Democrats had supported the idea of family programs to mitigate social inequality, but they had never gained enough support to make significant legislative changes. However, when family policy became associated with the population question, specifically with the notion of encouraging births, it gained widespread support (Ohlander, 1992). In the 1930s, Swedish lawmakers developed a family policy designed to increase the national birth rate, which had fallen from about four children per woman at the turn of the century to two children per woman at the time the policy was instituted (Ginsburg, 1992; Ohlander, 1992).

In other countries, ideology was likewise important. Comparing family programs in Britain and France in the early 20th century, Susan Pedersen (1993), illustrates the importance of ideology in the institution of family policies. In Britain, where family benefits became associated with feminism and socialism, lawmakers had little interest in programs to help families. In France, by contrast, family benefits were seen as pronatalist tools; they were associated with nationalism and conservatism and they eventually found support among business leaders and policymakers.

In France, pronatalism remained strong after World War II; but in most European countries, pronatalist ideology lost much of its appeal in the post-war years. The term "population policy" had become associated with Nazi atrocities (Ohlander, 1992, p. 215). By this time, however, family benefits had become an integral part of the social welfare systems of countries like Sweden and France, with as much a social as a demographic imperative (Jonsson, 1974; Ohlander, 1992). Pronatalism did not disappear after the war but it ceased to be the dominant ideology driving family policy; politicians eventually tended to downplay any pronatalist intent. In Western Europe and elsewhere, pronatalist ideology experienced a resurgence in the 1970s and 1980s, as politicians and other national leaders became concerned once more with falling birth rates.

Pronatalist ideology has historically been closely linked to nationalist ideology. In seeking to encourage demographic growth, pronatalist policies imply competition among nations for power. Thus, national leaders, when discussing pronatalist programs often make comments about "the greatness of our nation" and speak about low birth rates in terms of a national crisis (see Yuval-Davis, 1989; Heng and Devan, 1992; Kligman, 1992). To illustrate the idea that pronatalist efforts are, ultimately, expressions of nationalism it is instructive to look at immigration policies. If they wanted to ensure population growth, lawmakers might opt to encourage immigration. However, according to the United Nations *Global Population Policy Database* (1996), of the forty-seven countries that have policies designed to maintain or increase fertility only three claim to be intervening to raise immigration as well. Twenty-three have policies to lower immigration. And Israel, one of the few pronatalist countries seeking to raise immigration, encourages the immigration only of one specific racial/ethnic group (Goldscheider, 1996). Immigration is clearly a sensitive issue for governments because social services for immi-

grants, such as housing or special school programs to help immigrant children gain language skills, are expensive and because native residents may resent immigrants, especially in times of economic recession. Pronatalist policies, however, are controversial and expensive as well. Teitelbaum and Winter (1985, p. 150) suggest that the most important reason governments may be loath to increase immigration is because “it unavoidably leads to rapid changes in the cultural, racial, linguistic, or ethnic composition of the national population.”

In fact, pronatalist policies have historically been most concerned, implicitly or explicitly, with raising the fertility of a specific ethnic, racial, or national group¹ (Glass, 1940; Gauthier, 1996; Myrdal, 1940; Yuval-Davis, 1989). While the bifurcated fertility policies of Nazi Germany may be the first to come to mind (Aryans were encouraged to have more children, Jews and Gypsies were discouraged and/or forced not to have them – see Bock, 1984), this undercurrent can be witnessed in contemporary policies. The most telling examples are those that are explicitly bifurcated. For example, in Singapore during the 1980s, the government sought to increase births to educated people, overwhelmingly ethnic Chinese, through pronatalist incentives and to decrease births to less educated and less affluent people, mostly Malays and Indians, with anti-natalist programs (Heng and Devan, 1992; Lee et al., 1991). South African population policy during the apartheid era was similarly bifurcated along racial lines as the government tried to reduce births to the black population through family planning programs and increase the fertility of the white population through pronatalist incentives (Chimere-Dan, 1993).

Because family benefits comprise a large part of most modern welfare states (the United States, of course, is a notable exception) they must be understood not only as “population policy” but also as “social policy.” The fact that family benefits are simultaneously part of a nationalist agenda and also part of a social welfare agenda may cause conflict. This conflict derives in part from a fundamental contradiction between “citizen” and “nation” (see Castles and Miller, 1998). Citizens, according to liberal political theory, must all be free and equal within the political sphere, regardless of their membership in specific groups – race, ethnicity, religion, etc. In addition, ideally all citizens should all have equal access not only to the political sphere, but also to state-funded social programs (Marshall, 1950). According to Castles and Miller (1998, p. 41) however, the idea of the citizen “conflicts with the reality of nation-state formation . . . in which being a citizen depends on membership in a certain national community, usually based on the dominant ethnic group of the territory concerned.” Changes in access to family benefits in France and Israel illustrate the tensions between the nationalist agenda that would seek to raise fertility of specific groups only and that of a social agenda which has as its goal the distribution of benefits to increase the welfare of the nation’s citizens and residents.

3. Family policies in France and Israel

Governments of France and Israel have sought to raise birth rates through family-related incentives – France since the 1930s, Israel since the 1960s. The social welfare systems of France and Israel are based on ideals of national solidarity and equality for all citizens; but in each country, lawmakers instituted pronatalist policies that excluded certain citizens: in Israel, the Veteran's Child Allowance Scheme, instituted in 1970, excluded Palestinian citizens of Israel by distributing allowances only to veterans of the Israeli Defense Force; in France, citizens residing in the Overseas Departments² of Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guyane, and Réunion received, from the time they joined the French nation shortly after World War II, only a fraction of the family benefits enjoyed by those living in metropolitan France. After decades of exclusion, in the mid-1990s these groups in Israel and France gained access to the full range of family benefits offered in each country.

In the following sections, I examine how and why these minority populations in France and Israel were first excluded from, and later became eligible for, pronatalist-oriented family benefits. In both countries, pronatalist and social welfare imperatives co-existed from the start. Pronatalist-inspired family benefits were originally instituted through the efforts of conservative, nationalist-pronatalists³ who were joined by more left-leaning lawmakers seeking to broaden social welfare regimes (King, 1998). Members of the latter group may have opposed the idea of trying to encourage births through government policies; however, they were willing to support the initial programs because they provided increased social support for the much of the citizenry.

4. Family policy in the French overseas departments

France has used family policy as a vehicle for encouraging births since the 1930s, especially since 1939, when the comprehensive Family Code was instituted.⁴ The Family Code consolidated already-existing family programs and increased family-oriented benefits, including birth premiums, loans to young married couples and housing subsidies. The code sought to create an environment in which parents would want to raise children. This legislation was the culmination of decades of concern about slow population growth on the part of national leaders. Joseph Spengler (1979, p. 134), wrote, in the late-1930s, "it may be said that the current alarm at depopulation, while not the first in the historical experience of France, is the most intensive and protracted in the history of France . . ." There is little doubt that the main goal of the Family Code was clearly to increase the birth rate (also see Lenoir 1991, p. 149).

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, government leaders emphasized that family policy had not only a demographic objective but also a social one – national solidarity. Thus, Family Secretary Laurent Cathala stated in a 1991 interview that the basic principles of family policy should include: 1) individual freedoms; 2) aid

Table 1. Total fertility rates^a in the French Overseas Departments and the Metropole, 1967–1994

	1967	1974	1982	1989	1991	1994
Guadeloupe	5.33	4.37	2.62	2.25	2.18	2.05
Martinique	5.12	3.85	2.11	2.09	1.96	1.17
Guyane	NA	4.10	3.90	3.35	3.73	3.69
Réunion	6.07	3.88	2.86	2.60	2.60	2.39
Metropole	2.67	2.10	1.91	1.79	1.77	1.65

^aThe Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is a measure of fertility calculated from period-specific data. It is an estimate of the average number of children that would be born to each woman if the age-specific birth rates at a given time were to remain constant.

Adapted from Rallu, 1997a and 1997b.

to those in greatest need and; 3) encouragement of solidarity between generations (Cathala, 1991). Yet by the late 1980s, residents of France's Overseas Departments (Départements d'Outre-Mer or DOM), though officially incorporated into the French nation-state since 1946, still did not benefit equally from the generous set of family benefits enjoyed by residents of the metropole ("mainland" France). The exclusion of DOM residents from family benefits was long-standing.

According to Helen Hintjens (1992, p. 70), "During the first two decades of departmentalisation, there were long delays in the application of social and labour legislation to the new French departments." Thus, it has not only been in the area of family policy that social benefits are unequal in the metropole and the DOM. However, certain family benefits have lagged even further behind than other social provisions over the past several decades, probably in part because French policy makers did not want to encourage more births in the DOM, where fertility rates have been higher than in the metropole (see Table 1). For example, in his book about Réunion, even staunch pronatalist politician Michel Debré (1974), suggested that this overseas department needed a different population plan than the metropole. He argued that while mainland France needed more children, Réunion needed fewer and he called upon doctors, social workers and educators to help make people in Réunion aware of birth control.

Extending family benefits to the DOM has been a gradual process. French family policy was strengthened in 1945 and 1946; family allowances were raised, tax breaks for families were increased and pre-natal allowances were instituted, but none of these family benefits were extended to residents of the Overseas Departments. Some DOM leaders and activists complained and slowly the French state began the partial extension of specific family benefits to the Overseas Departments. Civil servants in the DOM gained access to family benefits in 1953, after a lengthy strike (Gautier, 1986). Over the next decade, certain other categories of workers in the DOM began receiving benefits, although at lower rates of payment than in the metropole. Disparities between mainland France and the Overseas Departments

remained great. In 1960, an employed father of three in Guadeloupe or Martinique received about 4000 francs in contrast to 20,000 francs in the metropole (Gautier, 1986).

Gautier (1986) lists three main reasons typically offered for why DOM residents were denied access to the full range of family benefits. First, the socio-economic situations in the DOM have been very different from those of the metropole. On average, DOM residents are much poorer than residents of metropolitan France and they thus pay fewer taxes. Second, demographic trends in the DOM are different from those of the metropole. Specifically, fertility has been higher in the DOM. Third, family structure in the DOM tends to be different from the metropole. There is a higher percentage of cohabiting couples, nonmarital births, and lone parent households. Gautier (1986) argues that one of the main reasons for the DOM's exclusion from France's family benefits is that the system is geared towards a male breadwinner, male head-of-household model. According to Gautier, since DOM families fit this model much more rarely than do metropole residents, lawmakers have been hesitant to extend family benefits to the DOM.

Despite resistance to distributing family benefits to residents of the DOM, however, there have also existed strong ideological and economic incentives in favor of extending benefits to the DOM. One of these has been the practical need to discourage residents of the DOM from seeking independence from France. Why do French leaders want to retain control of these departments? First, some French leaders want to maintain a French cultural presence around the world. Perhaps even more importantly, the DOM provide strategic outposts (for example, French Guyane on the east coast of South America is the site for French space launches) and provide France with the world's third largest exclusive maritime area (Aldrich, 1996). During the anti-colonial movements of the early 1960s, the French government began providing more family-oriented benefits to the DOM residents in hopes of weakening any separatist movement (Hintjens, 1991). Prior to Mitterrand's election as president of France in 1981 an uprising had occurred in Guadeloupe and a separatist movement in Martinique was gaining popularity (Murray, 1997). Mitterrand came to the presidency committed to equalizing social benefits between the DOM and the metropole. At least in part because of Mitterrand's inclusive agenda, the separatist parties in the DOM lost some of their momentum (Hintjens, 1991).

Although some family benefits continued to have a pronatalist orientation during his presidency, Mitterrand was concerned with national solidarity (King, 1998).⁵ In fact, when some French leaders (e.g. Jacques Chirac and Jean Marie Le Pen) argued for cutting off pronatalist benefits to non-citizens, Mitterrand's government continued to provide pronatalist benefits to all citizens and legal residents of France, including legal immigrants as well as residents of the DOM (this will be discussed in more detail below). One interpretation of this is that Mitterrand's vision of the French national community was inclusive, consisting of all citizens and potentially even all residents of France, whereas some other French leaders

viewed “France” in a more limited way, mainly as “white” and “European” (e.g. Le Pen, 1984).

Within a few years after he took office, Mitterrand’s government announced a new family allowance system, spearheaded by Minister of Social Affairs and National Solidarity Georgina Dufoix. The new program was basically pronatalist; but Dufoix’s family program extended more family benefits to the DOM. However, DOM residents continued to receive most benefits at lower rates than in the metropole and continued to be denied some benefits altogether.

During Parliamentary debates over Dufoix’s plan, some Socialist deputies representing the DOM called for a greater equalization of benefits than was proposed in the new plan. Addressing the National Assembly, Representative Wilfrid Bertile clarified the status of DOM residents vis-à-vis family policy (*Journal Officiel*, 1984, p. 6641). First, a few benefits were extended at the same rates to DOM and metropole residents. Second, DOM residents received other benefits, such as a parenting allowance, a single parent’s allowance and a housing allowance at lower rates of payment than residents of metropolitan France. Third, some benefits paid both lower amounts and also had different types of eligibility requirements for DOM residents; these included the regular family allowance, certain maternity benefits and a family-oriented housing allowance. Finally, some benefits – including pre- and post-natal allowances and loans to young families – were denied to DOM residents altogether. “Without a doubt,” stated Bertile (*Journal Officiel*, 1984, p. 6642), “we will be told that the demographics are not the same in metropolitan France and in the Overseas Departments. That has been the pretext used by right-wing governments for not distributing pre- and post-natal benefits in the overseas departments . . .” Bertile reminded other representatives, however, that the new family policy was not only guided by pronatalism, but also by the ideal of “national solidarity.” Thus, he argued, all family benefits should be extended to the Overseas Departments as part of this second goal. Following these debates, the French government renewed its verbal commitment to equalize family benefits between the DOM and the metropole; but disparities continued.

Beginning in 1986, a period of governmental “cohabitation” commenced, whereby France had a socialist president (Mitterrand) and a more conservative prime minister (Jacques Chirac of the Rally for the Republic party). Chirac’s policies focused more on attracting capital investment to the DOM; he abandoned the policy of aligning social legislation (Hintjens, 1991). But in April 1988, President Mitterrand restated his pledge to equalize social benefits, writing in his *Letter to All the French*: “How could I fail to think of the populations of our distant departments who are still waiting for social equality?” (quoted in Rollat, 1993). Thereafter, the government began a new wave of efforts aimed both at equalizing social policy and also at fostering economic development in the DOM, where unemployment was high and the economies weak and dependent on financial transfers from France.

In 1991, the government presented legislation dealing with “diverse social measures” that included changes in health insurance coverage for both the metropole and DOM as well as a plan for aligning family allowances in the DOM with those in the metropole (Saux, 1991b). According to this plan, family allowances would be equalized by 1995. However, by the early 1990s, attitudes of DOM politicians had shifted somewhat from the 1980s. To the surprise of many socialist legislators, some DOM lawmakers opposed the new plan. In their view, economic development should be a higher priority than social benefits. In the National Assembly, Representative Lucette Michaux-Chevry argued “Dignity for the Overseas Departments comes from work, not from public aid or charity.” She also criticized the “assimilationist” approach of the bill: “There is a conflict between the generous wishes of the government and our wish to retain the specificities of France, Réunion or the Caribbean Islands” (Saux, 1991a). Similar sentiments were voiced in the Senate debate (Saux, 1991b). Some legislators took particular issue with a part of the new plan that would terminate the family allowance for first children in the DOM. The distinctly pronatalist style of the French family policy provided more assistance for families with two, and especially three or more, children. Representatives from Guadeloupe and Réunion (see *Journal Officiel*, June 5, 1991) argued that fertility in the DOM was declining, which was good; the changes in family policy might cause DOM residents to have more children, which they felt was not desirable. In addition, perhaps resistance to the new program on the part of some DOM politicians sprang from a long-standing conflict between the need to be ideologically “separatist” on the one hand, and the political need to gain welfare benefits for DOM residents – which they needed to get votes back in their districts (Hintjens, 1991, p. 58). Whatever the case, the representatives from the DOM banded together to change two parts of the legislation they felt went counter to the interests of DOM residents (the elimination of a family allowance for first children and the reduction of state funding for school cafeterias) and the legislation passed. Currently, residents of the DOM may receive allowances for a first child that residents of the metropole receive only for the second or third child.

An important backdrop to the above events should be noted. In mainland France, no distinction has been made between citizens and non-citizens regarding family benefits. The question thus arises as to why the French government would provide legal (non-citizen) immigrants in France with full family benefits while denying some benefits to French citizens of the DOM. Some politicians do favour limiting certain family benefits to citizens, but efforts to do so have thus far been unsuccessful. My speculative explanation for this looks to both France’s history as an immigrant receiving country and recent demographic trends pertaining to the immigrant population. Historically, compared to other European countries, France’s naturalization laws have been generous in that it has been relatively easy for children of immigrants to become citizens (see Body-Gendrot, 1995). Currently, about one in five French citizens has at least one immigrant grand-

parent (Bernard, 1997b). But according to Body-Gendrot (1995, p. 246), “As soon as they become part of the nation, individuals cannot claim for themselves or for their ethnic group any specific treatment that would loosen the links of the implicit contract they have, as individuals, with the French national sovereignty. This ideology is based upon an indissoluble bond between citizenship and nationality, a French specificity.” Historically, the major institutions of French society – including the army, the educational system, the church, and the welfare system – have been integral to this model of assimilation and integration. Providing all types of welfare benefits to immigrants, including family benefits, has facilitated this process. A family policy that distinguished between citizens and non-citizens would seemingly run counter to the ideology of assimilation and integration.

This said, however, in the era of economic growth of the post war years until 1974 (when worker immigration was halted), most immigration to France consisted not of families but of men who were either single or who left their families behind in the country of origin. Immigration of families was first allowed in 1976; but governments subsequently began restricting family immigration (Bernard, 1997a). In 1996, only 14,000 people immigrated to France under the rubric of family reunification. This is important in that the slowing of family immigration has weakened calls – by the some centrists as well as by the far right – to restrict some family benefits to French nationals. Seventy-five percent of all family allowances going to legal immigrants go to support a child who is a French national or will soon be one (Bernard, 1997b). Providing family benefits to non-citizens does continue to be a somewhat controversial issue, if less so than in the past. A 1998 poll showed that 67% of respondents favoured providing family allowances to immigrants, up from 48% in 1991 (*Le Monde*, 1998).

5. Israeli veterans’ allowances

Since the founding of Israel, in 1948, the question of how to keep the state *Jewish* in the face of a rapidly growing Arab citizenry has been of central importance for Zionist policy makers. While Israel’s Law of Return has brought millions of immigrants, Jewish fertility, with the exception of the ultra-orthodox Jews, has always been lower than Arab fertility and has been steadily declining for decades. In his 1971 autobiography, Israel’s first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion (1971, p. 837), wrote, “One of the most vital elements in the equation of survival is the fact that the Jewish birth rate is much lower than that of our neighbours and is decreasing annually.” In addition, differential fertility within the state of Israel was worrisome to Jewish leaders. Jewish fertility in Israel has always been much lower than that of Muslim Israeli citizens (see Table 2). Nonetheless, Ben-Gurion argued that the government should *not* institute a pronatalist policy: “since the problem of the birth rate does not affect all the inhabitants but only the Jewish community, it cannot be solved by the government. Israel provides equal rights for all its citizens, without distinction of race and nationality” (p. 838). Instead of a

Table 2. Total fertility rate of Jews and Moslems in Israel, 1955–1995

	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Jews	3.64	3.49	3.47	3.41	3.21	2.76	2.85	2.69	2.53
Moslems	7.96	9.31	9.87	8.95	7.75	5.98	4.86	4.70	4.69

Adapted from Goldscheider 1996 and from Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1999.

state policy, Ben-Gurion preferred private initiatives within the Jewish community to increase fertility.

Although many Israeli lawmakers expressed reservations similar to those of Ben-Gurion, in 1968 “The Fund for Encouraging Fertility” was created in the Ministry of Housing to provide housing loans to large families with relatives who served in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) (Tzur and Davids, 1984; Yuval-Davis, 1989). This scheme excluded almost all Arabs, who were not required to serve in the IDF, as Jews were, and who rarely volunteered to do so (Doron and Kramer, 1991). The same targeting mechanism was incorporated to extend family allowances almost exclusively to Jews. This exclusion of Arabs was no oversight; policy makers obviously intended these programs for Jews only (Rosenhek, 1999).

Child allowances were instituted in Israel in 1959 and provided cash allowances to families with four or more children. Later the program was extended to cover any number of children. Both Jewish and Arab families received these allowances. The stated goals of the original legislation were: “1) to lighten social conditions of weak parts of population; 2) to check the negative trends in demographic developments; [and] 3) to remove some anomalies in the field of employment and the distribution of wages within enterprises in relation to the family situation of workers” (Doron and Kramer, 1991, p. 122).

An additional benefit, the Veterans’ Family Allowance Scheme, enacted in 1970, provided for child allowances to large families in which at least one member had served in the Israeli Defense Forces or another national security service. Families could receive this allowance on top of other child allowances they might already have been receiving. Rules for eligibility were liberal – anyone with a parent, grandparent, brother or sister who served in the IDF could benefit (Schiff, 1978). The allowance was distributed by the National Insurance Institute and funded by the state treasury. The Veterans’ Family Allowance Program was expanded in 1971 to include all recent immigrants regardless of military service; this program was financed mainly by the Jewish Agency, a semi-private organization. In 1974 the Veterans’ Family Allowances were extended to third children.

While Arab citizens of Israel benefited from the regular family allowances, they were almost always excluded from the Veterans’ Allowances (with the exceptions of Christian and Bedouin Arabs, who sometimes served in the Israeli army); Arab residents of the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza were eligible for

no family benefits. While the Veterans' Allowance Scheme was popular among most Jewish Israelis, Arab leaders and some Jewish leftists vehemently opposed the Veteran's Allowances, which they saw as racist. At the other end of the political spectrum, some right-wing, Jewish nationalists opposed state-funding of allowances; they wanted the Jewish Agency to oversee all family allowances and provide them only to Jews (Yuval-Davis, 1989). Despite opposition, however (as is discussed below), the Veterans' Allowance Scheme remained in effect and in 1994 it was extended to all citizens, Arab and Jewish, regardless of prior military service.

Arab leaders in Israel had always viewed the Veterans' Allowance as racist and discriminatory. During the 1980s, regular child allowances were reduced somewhat; at the same time, however, Veterans' Allowances increased slightly (Doron and Kramer, 1991). Arab leaders complained that Jews could receive up to twice as much as Arabs for the third child and more than twice as much for subsequent children (Izenberg, 1992). The discriminatory nature of the Veterans' Allowance seemed heightened by the fact that, when the huge wave of Soviet Jewish immigrants arrived in the early 1990s, these allowances were provided to immigrants as well. National Insurance Institute policy was to "... recognize immigrants as residents with rights equal to those of veterans as soon as possible after their arrival" (Israel, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Demographic Center, 1994, p. 54).

Jewish opposition to extending the Veterans' Allowance to Arabs was great and those who supported the status quo rationalized the unequal system. For example, in response to allegations that the National Insurance Institute discriminated against Arabs, director of the National Insurance Institute, Mordechai Zipori argued that the system was reasonable because Arabs didn't pay their fair share for insurance anyway. Zipori stated, "What they (Israeli Arabs) get is out of all proportion to what they pay" (quoted in Black, 1989). Doron and Kramer (1991, p. 139) predicted that "The debate on this issue will continue, but within the context of the historical Arab-Israel conflict there seems to be insufficient popular support in Israel to expect a change in this policy."

Doron and Kramer's prediction proved wrong, however. In order to seal an alliance with Arab political parties, which he needed to support his coalition Labour government, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin promised to close the gap in child allowance payments between Jews and Arabs. In July 1992, to "test Rabin's intentions," Arab Democratic Party representative Abdul Wahab Darawshe drafted a bill in the Knesset calling for equal child allowance payments regardless of whether or not family members had served in the army (Izenberg, 1992). In late 1992, at the same time that child allowance rules were changed to remove the means test for first and second children, the Cabinet voted to abolish the Veterans' Allowance and equalize the amount paid to families regardless of former military service. Explaining the decision, Israel's finance minister stated, "Citizens who have served in the army should receive some financial benefit, but it should not be through child allowances" (quoted in Odenheimer, 1992).

The Rabin government encountered intense resistance to the proposed equalization. Because the child allowance change was attached to the government's 1993 Economic Arrangements Bill, which had to be approved by the Knesset, those opposing the decision tried hard to block the budget bill altogether when it came up for a vote. Likud leaders protested that the child allowance changes had not been discussed in committee and they tried to have that part of the bill removed on procedural grounds. Tempers in the Knesset were so hot over the child allowance equalization that a fist fight almost broke out. While Likud representative Dan Tichon argued that the procedure through which the child allowance changes had been added to the budget bill had been inappropriate, representative Rehavam Ze'evi called out: "The (proposal) is an incentive for making more Arab children. They will live off us forever. They will give birth to 70 children; they do anyway . . . they will give birth to 50, 60, 70 children and we will pay them discharged soldiers' grants" (quoted in Izenberg, 1993). Another representative responded, calling Ze'evi a racist; the situation then degenerated until the Deputy Speaker called a recess.⁶

The budget bill passed, however, aided in part by the fact that some ultra-Orthodox representatives threw in their support. The ultra-Orthodox Jews, whose political power has been rising because they are growing in number (mainly due to their relatively high fertility), wanted the Veterans' Allowance extended to all citizens. Because the ultra-Orthodox do not serve in the army and were therefore excluded from the Veterans' Allowance along with the Arabs, they stood to benefit from the new arrangement.

In Israel, then, practical politics played an important role in the extension of the Veterans' Family Allowances to Arab citizens. It should also be noted that the arrival in Israel, between 1989 and 1992, of over 400,000 Soviet Jews was important as well (Goldscheider, 1996). This immigration wave altered the demographic composition of Israel, substantially slowing the decline in the Jewish population as a percentage of the total population. (Table 3 shows the percentage of Jews and Moslems in the total population.) Concern over low Jewish fertility faded as absorbing these immigrants became a central task of social welfare services.

6. Discussion/conclusions

The recent extension of family benefits in France and Israel to formerly excluded groups could be explained in any one of several ways. One is that fewer law makers in these nations subscribe to a pronatalist agenda and more favour a social equity model. It would be understandable if fewer policy makers supported family benefits for pronatalist reasons. Researchers have been hard pressed to show that pronatalist initiatives are successful in raising fertility. Demeny (1987, p. 350) claims that the evaluation literature has been "less than unanimous in its conclusions" but that the "modal finding is that the effects [of fertility policies] are negligible."⁷ It may also be relevant that fertility has dropped significantly among these minority

Table 3. Religious composition of the population of Israel, 1980, 1990, 1998

	1980	1990	1998
Population – total (in thousands)	3,921.7	4,821.7	6,041.4
Percent of total			
Jews	83.7	81.9	79.2
Moslems	12.7	14.1	14.9
Christians	2.3	2.4	2.1
Druze	1.3	1.7	1.6
Religion unclassified	–	–	2.1

Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1999.

populations in France and Israel. Perhaps it is easier to rationalize extending the family benefits given that their efficacy in raising birth rates is questionable and the minority populations' birth rates have been falling anyway. And while some leaders may have preferred to retract family benefits across the board, once the public comes to expect certain benefits, it becomes difficult for politicians to take them away.

A second possibility is that many supporters of family policies retain a nationalist, pronatalist orientation but that more lawmakers are seeing the national community as including the minority citizens as "one of us." In both France and Israel there have always been those who take an inclusive view of the national community, seeing the nation less as an ethnic community and more as a political community. During the 1980s and 1990s, several leaders, such as Mitterrand, expressed this view. But, as discussed above, there is vocal opposition to this position by some members of the dominant populations in each country.

Finally, a third possible interpretation of the extension of family benefits to formerly excluded groups is that, in general, lawmakers and citizens still want to see more births to the majority or dominant population and have extended the allowances for practical political reasons only. If this is the case, one might expect to see other types of attempts to raise birth rates, perhaps not via family policy but through either private initiatives or new types of public programs.

Whichever the case, however, the extension of family benefits to previously excluded groups may indicate a trend toward more inclusiveness in family policy. What can we learn from the cases of France and Israel? Does the extension of benefits mean French and Israeli family policies are losing their pronatalist orientations and moving toward more of a social welfare model? In both cases, the answer is complex and the political and demographic ground is continually shifting. Certainly some lawmakers in both countries remain concerned about low fertility. Yet, in one important way, the answer to the above question is "yes." Though leaders may be extending benefits to minority populations for practical domestic-political or geo-political reasons one consequence is that, if they are

going to do this, politicians must downplay the importance of pronatalism in favour of social welfare. It would be impossible for Israeli Jewish politicians, for example, to justify encouraging more births to Arabs. In France, lawmakers may not find it easy to justify encouraging births to residents of the French DOM, a high percentage of whom are poor and already dependent on welfare. The ideology behind the policy has to be reinvented; the discourse shifts from stressing demography to emphasizing social welfare. This does not mean that pronatalist ideology has faded altogether. On the contrary, among certain factions it may remain quite strong. What it *does* mean is that the link between pronatalism and family policy diminishes. Family allowances that were once considered part of a “population policy” become more strictly associated with social welfare policy.

A relational understanding of “family policy” and “pronatalist policy” helps illuminate connections and contradictions between demographic policies and modern welfare state programs that benefit families with children. An inherent tension exists between the goals of pronatalism and the provision of social benefits to raise fertility in that proponents of pronatalism often prefer to raise births only to specific racial/ethnic groups; yet in modern democracies, it is difficult to rationalize and maintain social policies that explicitly discriminate on the basis of race or ethnicity. Although welfare states have been shown to reproduce race, class, and gender inequalities (Quadagno, 1994; Rosenhek, 1999), the mechanisms through which this has occurred are rarely overtly discriminatory. While immigrants are sometimes denied benefits on the grounds that they are not full members of the nation-state, citizens are generally *technically* eligible for social benefits regardless of their gender, or their racial, ethnic, or regional status. Thus, using social policy to affect demographic trends may eventually compel or foster a movement away from any demographic goals and towards a social welfare imperative.

Notes

¹ As is always true with a generalization such as this, there are exceptions. Certainly, not all advocates of pronatalist policies are motivated by racism, ethnocentrism or extreme nationalism. However, many (and perhaps most) pronatalist initiatives throughout the 20th century can be said to implicitly or explicitly target certain groups.

² Departments resemble American states. I do not address the French overseas *territories*, which have a somewhat different status from the overseas *departments*. Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyane and Réunion were formerly French colonies that became French departments shortly after World War II.

³ A national community may be imagined in various ways (see Anderson, 1995). For example, “France” can be imagined as “white and Christian” or as “multi-cultural and multi-racial.” In this case, I am referring to less inclusive nationalists.

⁴ It is important to note that prior to the 1939 Family Code, employers had set up family allowances through a system of *caisses de compensation* or compensation funds. Businesses, though sometimes justifying these funds with Catholic or pronatalist rhetoric, had their own, economic reasons for providing family allowances (see Pedersen, 1993).

⁵ In France, family policy generally divides along party lines. Socialists tend to emphasize social solidarity; more right-leaning parties often emphasize population increase through pronatalist

programs. This is a general tendency; some on the left, while favoring social solidarity, are also pronatalist and no doubt some on the right oppose pronatalism.

⁶ Hadash MK Tawfik Zayyad and MKs Gonen Segev (Tsomet) and Rehavam Ze'evi (Moledet) argued over the child allowances.

Ze'evi said: "The (proposal) is an incentive for making more Arab children. They will live off us forever. They will give birth to 70 children; they do anyway . . . they will give birth to 50, 60, 70 children and we will pay them discharged soldiers' grants."

Zayyad responded: "You're a racist. You should be in jail."

Ze'evi: "You're a red fascist."

Segev: "The entire Arab people are fascists and killers."

Zayyad: "You and Ze'evi ought to be in jail."

Segev: "You are a nation of killing."

The exchange continued in that vein, ending this way:

Ze'evi: "You are a toilet."

Zayyad: "You are shit in a toilet. You son-of-a-bitch"

(cited in Izenberg, *Jerusalem Post*, 1993, p. 14).

⁷ There apparently remains among some national leaders, however, a belief in the effectiveness of pronatalist policies. Pronatalist Jacques Chirac (1999), proclaimed in a recent speech at the yearly ceremony awarding the "Medal of the French Family" to mothers of many children that "If demographers are not in agreement when it comes to measuring the exact effect of family policy on fertility, they generally admit the importance of its role."

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