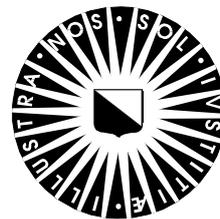
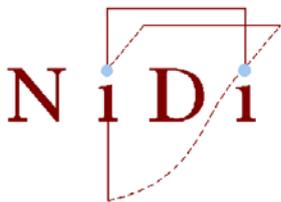


# NETHERLANDS KINSHIP PANEL STUDY

**A Multi-Actor, Multi-Method Panel Survey on Solidarity in Family Relationships**

**1999**

**A Proposal Submitted for Funding by the NWO-programme 'Investerings Groot'  
by the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute and Utrecht University**



Address correspondence to:

Prof. Dr. P.A. Dykstra  
Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI)  
PO Box 11650  
2502 AR The Hague  
The Netherlands  
tel.: +31 (0)70-356252  
e-mail: [dykstra@nidi.nl](mailto:dykstra@nidi.nl)

**1 Applicants (listed in alphabetical order):**

Prof. Dr. P.A. Dykstra  
NIDI  
PO Box 11650  
2502 AR The Hague  
The Netherlands  
tel.: +31 (0)70-3565252  
e-mail: [dykstra@nidi.nl](mailto:dykstra@nidi.nl)

Prof. Dr. M. Kalmijn  
Tilburg University / FSS  
P.O. Box 90153  
5000 LE Tilburg  
The Netherlands  
tel.: +31 (0)13- 4662246  
e-mail: [M.Kalmijn@uvt.nl](mailto:M.Kalmijn@uvt.nl)

Prof. Dr. G.C.M. Knijn  
Utrecht University / FSS  
PO Box 80140  
3508 TC Utrecht  
The Netherlands  
tel.: +31 (0)30-2531861  
e-mail: [t.knijn@fss.uu.nl](mailto:t.knijn@fss.uu.nl)

Prof. Dr. A.E. Komter  
University College  
PO Box 80145  
3508 TC Utrecht  
The Netherlands  
tel.: +31 (0)30-2539900  
e-mail: [a.komter@fss.uu.nl](mailto:a.komter@fss.uu.nl)

Dr. A.C. Liefbroer  
NIDI  
PO Box 11650  
2502 AR The Hague  
The Netherlands  
tel.: +31 (0)70-3565230  
e-mail: [liefbroer@nidi.nl](mailto:liefbroer@nidi.nl)

Prof. Dr. C.H. Mulder  
University of Amsterdam / AME  
Nieuwe Prinsengracht 130  
1018 VZ Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
tel.: +31 (0)20-5254014  
e-mail: [c.h.mulder@uva.nl](mailto:c.h.mulder@uva.nl)

## 2 Executive summary

**Content:** The development of a large-scale database is proposed, one that allows the examination of family and kinship from a dynamic multi-actor perspective. Three types of relationships will be investigated: those between (un)married cohabiting partners, between parents and their (co-residing) children, and between family members who do not share a residence. The underlying research questions revolve around the theme of solidarity. Solidarity is defined as ‘feelings of connectedness in family relationships and how these are expressed in behavioural terms’. Three dimensions are distinguished: instrumental, social, and emotional solidarity. The research goals are (a) to describe the nature and strength of solidarity in family and kin relationships, (b) to explain variations in solidarity across individuals and social categories, and (c) to examine the consequences of solidarity for individual well-being. The programme proposes to develop a database, which can be used to answer the three research questions.

**Method:** The goal is to organise an extensive face-to-face interview survey among a large random sample of the Dutch population: the *Netherlands Kinship Panel Study* (NKPS). The NKPS has four special features: (a) it is large (N = 10,000), (b) it is a panel (respondents and family members will be interviewed at more than one point in time, yielding a prospective longitudinal design), (c) it is multi-method (both structured interviews and in-depth open interviews will be conducted), and (d) it is multi-actor (data from individual respondents will be collected as well as from family members). The combination of these features makes the NKPS highly innovative. In the Netherlands, existing surveys (with the exception of those carried out for statistical purposes by Statistics Netherlands) are smaller, they seldom have a prospective design, they only occasionally gather data from residential kin (and hardly ever from non-residential kin) and rarely combine qualitative and quantitative methods.

**Motivation:** The programme is motivated by both scientific and societal considerations. Research in family sociology has been losing ground during a time in which family relationships have been changing rapidly. The increasingly complex nature of contemporary family relationships has posed society and policymakers with a series of new and challenging questions. Family sociology has the potential to help find answers, but the lack of institutional and scientific growth in this discipline leaves this potential unrealised. The scarcity of high-quality databases affects the competitiveness of Dutch family sociology in the international academic community. Leading countries have been developing better quality data, which has resulted in rising methodological standards in the top academic journals. The development of a large-scale, multi-actor, multi-method panel survey which is highly accessible to the wider research community will be a collective investment that will help Dutch family sociology meet the top international academic standards. This kind of an investment clearly surpasses the financial means of individual institutions. Not surprisingly, all major foreign databases are funded by national research agencies.

**Context and organization:** The data collection will be organised by a group of six family sociologists who have complementary skills (expertise in qualitative and quantitative research methods) and complementary disciplinary backgrounds (sociology, social psychology, and demography). The research team will be supplemented by a small research staff for data management, questionnaire development, and fieldwork supervision. Employment of the data will be secured in three different ways. First, Utrecht University and the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute have committed themselves to invest research capacity to carry out this line of research. Second, a separate programme (*Family Relationships: The Ties That Bind*) has been submitted to NWO. It outlines the substantive issues in greater detail and requests funds for 20 junior researchers who would employ the data (see Appendix). Third, the data will be made available to the broader research community. To encourage interested academic researchers to use the survey, the data will be made available free of cost, accessible codebooks and user guides will be developed, and workshops will be organised. The purpose of the latter is to instruct (potential) users and to discuss methodological problems. Given the panel-nature of the data, members of the wider research community will have the opportunity to propose changes and addition to the survey when new interests arise.

### 3 Top 5 Scientific Publications of Applicants

Main recent publications of P.A. Dykstra:

- Dykstra P.A. & V.R.A. Call (Eds.) (forthcoming). *Aging without children: A cross-national handbook on parental status in late life*. Newport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Wissen, L.J.G. van & P.A. Dykstra (Eds.) (1999). *Population issues: An interdisciplinary focus*. New York: Plenum.
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- Dykstra, P.A., & J. de Jong Gierveld (1994). The theory of mental incongruity, with a specific application to loneliness among widowed men and women. In R. Erber & Gilmour (Eds.), *Theoretical frameworks in personal relationships* (pp. 235-259). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Main recent publications of M. Kalmijn:

- Kalmijn, M. (1999). Father involvement in childrearing and the perceived stability of marriage. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61, 409-421.
- Kalmijn, M. (1998). Inter marriage and homogamy: Causes, patterns, trends. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, 395-421.
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Main recent publications of G.C.M. Knijn:

- Drenth, A. van, T. Knijn & J. Lewis (in press). Sources of income for lone mother families: policy changes in Britain and the Netherlands and the experiences of divorced mothers. *Journal of Social Policy*.
- Knijn, T. (in press). Marketization and the struggling logics of (home) care in the Netherlands. In M. Harrington Meyer (Ed.) *Care Work*. New York: Routledge Press.
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Main recent publications of A.E. Komter:

- Komter, A. (in press). Gift giving: expression of feeling and relationship. In: D. Levinson, J. Ponzetti & P. Jorgensen (eds), *Encyclopedia of Human Emotions*. New York: Macmillan.
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Main recent publications of A.C. Liefbroer:

- Liefbroer, A.C. (1999). From youth to adulthood: Understanding changing patterns of family formation from a life course perspective. In L. van Wissen & P.A. Dykstra (Eds.), *Population issues: An interdisciplinary focus* (pp. 53-85). New York: Plenum Press.
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Main recent publications of C.H. Mulder:

- Mulder, C.H. & J. Smits (1999). Home-ownership of couples: the effect of intergenerational transmission. *European Sociological Review*, 15, 323-337.
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## **4 Research Topic and Research Design**

### *4.1 Background and Central Questions of the Research Proposal*

Family relationships have traditionally been regarded as one of the key determinants of social cohesion. Strong family relations are assumed to promote social cohesion and prevent social exclusion. The family is the most important institution in which future generations are raised, in which norms and values are transferred, where the foundations of the future generations' position within society are laid and where informal support and care are exchanged. Family relationships are also bound up with social inequality. Resources are initially divided up amongst households but they are also subsequently divided up amongst individuals within households and nuclear families.

The importance of nuclear and extended family relationships is often underlined in public debate on social cohesion and inequality. But the family is not what it used to be. Dramatic changes have occurred in the way people's private relationships are *formed and dissolved* and how they are *structured*. These changes have been brought about by two major cultural developments – individualisation and secularisation – and a number of structural developments, such as the creation and subsequent modernisation of the welfare state, the expansion of education, and changes in the labour market. *Partner relationships* have changed as a consequence of female labour participation. Moreover, people have become more hesitant about entering into relationships. Partner relationships are formed later and dissolved sooner by divorce. All of these changes point to a shift in the significance of partner relationships to those involved in them. *Parent-child relationships within the household* are now characterised by a greater degree of equality and respect for each other's autonomy than they were in the past. Most of the old hierarchical relationships have dissolved, and there has been a shift from households based on 'authority' to ones based on 'negotiation'. *Relationships with family members who live outside the household* are also changing. Children no longer automatically

regard it as their responsibility to support their parents when they need help. Nor do parents themselves always want their children to care for them, because doing so is at odds with the new freedom of choice and emphasis on emotional reciprocity.

These changes are often assumed to weaken family bonds. Whether or not they are in fact indicative of a decline in solidarity within family relationships has yet to be ascertained. Even if family bonds *have* eroded, there is still no certainty about the implications for social cohesion and inequality. Social science has come up with little in the way of explanations as to how nuclear and extended family relationships have changed, what factors have brought this change about and what the potential implications of this might be. During the past decades the scientific climate in the Netherlands was not very conducive to research into family relationships. At the end of 1996, however, the Social Science Council (SWR) published a report about sociological research in this field entitled *New Perspectives for Family Sociology*, that underscored the social and scientific importance of research into family relationships and put forward a wide range of areas that such research could focus on. The Social Science Council's recommendations have given an important impulse to the development of the research programme *Family Relationships: The Ties That Bind*. This programme aims to promote the systematic, scientific study of changing family relationships and to provide answers to key social issues. Two of the central components of this programme are, first, the emphasis on the nature and degree of solidarity within family relationships; and second, the focus on relationships within the family in a broad sense, instead of just relationships within the nuclear family. Solidarity is defined as 'feelings of mutual affinity within family relationships and how these are expressed in behavioural terms'. Solidarity is conceived as a multidimensional concept. The following aspects are distinguished:

- Solidarity implies that *individual* interests are (partly) subordinated to *collective* interests or the interests of others in a relationship, but motives for expressing solidarity may vary from a sense of mutual affection, moral convictions, accepted authority, to considerations of long-term self-interest;
- Three main types of solidarity are distinguished: *instrumental* or economic solidarity (the way people involved in a relationship express their economic and instrumental bonds), *social* solidarity (the way social bonds are expressed) and *emotional* solidarity (revolving around emotional reciprocity);
- Solidarity has a *quantitative* and a *qualitative* aspect: the degree of solidarity can vary, and the nature of solidarity might differ (the way solidarity is expressed);
- Solidarity has a *behavioural* and an *attitudinal* component: it is expressed in people's actions as well as in their feelings and cognitions;
- Solidarity can be used to identify *asymmetry* within family relationships by determining the degree of stability and reciprocity in terms of the contributions and expectations of those involved;
- Solidarity can be identified at the *individual* level (people's inclinations to show solidarity), at the *relationship* level, and at the level of *networks* of relationships.

The second central component of the research programme is that it does not focus solely on partner relationships or the nuclear family; its scope is broader, examining changes within *families*, nuclear and extended. As this programme adopts a dynamic approach, one cannot focus solely on nuclear family relationships. Parents and children form a spatial unit that can be termed a nuclear family for only part of their lives. The period after which family members have ceased to be a nuclear family is also important if one is interested in determining the strength of family bonds. While the character of parent-child relationships may change after they cease to live in the same household, these relationships continue to be important.

The panel survey proposed here is meant to provide the data that allow answering the central research questions of the research programme *Family Relationships: The Ties that Bind*. The three general research questions are:

- What patterns can be distinguished in the nature and degree of solidarity within family relationships, and how does this solidarity change over time and during the course of people's lives?
- To what extent are differences in the nature and degree of solidarity within family relationships influenced by socio-structural and cultural factors, and what mechanisms play a role in this?
- What are the implications of differences in the nature and degree of solidarity within family relationships, for how family members function within society and for the relationship between families and other social institutions?

Each of these questions will be answered for three types of family relationships, viz. (i) partner relationships, (ii) kin relationships within the household, and (iii) kin relationships outside the household. In addition, these questions will be answered at the level of the family network as a whole.

## 4.2 Survey Design

### 4.2.1 Main Features of the Survey Design

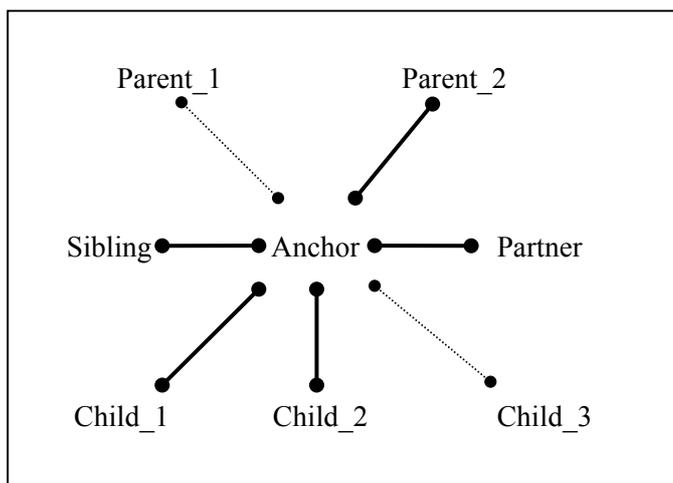
To answer the research questions formulated in section 4.1, a multi-actor, multi-method panel survey is required. The *Netherlands Kinship Panel Study* (NKPS) is designed to meet this data requirement. Data need to be collected from multiple actors, by multiple methods, and at multiple points in time. We will briefly elaborate each of these three requirements.

- *Multi-actor.* The data-collection focuses on how solidarity is created and maintained within family relationships and within the kin network as a whole. This implies that the focus is on *relationships* and *networks* of relationships rather than on individuals. Although it is possible to collect information on relationships and networks from one person, it is crucial to enrich this with information from the other person. The persons involved in a relationship may have widely varying opinions of and perceptions on the content and significance of their relationship. Moreover, these differences in opinions and perceptions are highly relevant to the research programme while they highlight potential conflicts within family relationships. Therefore, information on family relationships has to be gathered among all those involved.
- *Multi-method.* The research programme conceives of solidarity as a multidimensional concept. A *large-scale survey with pre-structured questions* on behaviour, opinions and perceptions is a useful instrument to gain general knowledge on the multidimensional nature of solidarity. However, a pre-structured interview schedule does not offer the opportunity for an in-depth inquiry into aspects of solidarity that are difficult to tap in pre-structured questions or to probe deeply into what specific relationships signify for the family members involved. *In-depth studies (mini-panels), using flexible interview schedules* are needed to examine these aspects of solidarity. A combination of both approaches holds the greatest promise for understanding solidarity within family relationships. Although the benefits of combining a large-scale survey and in-depth interviews are considerable, data-collection programmes that combine both methods are rare. This partly results from the fact that both approaches ask for different types of expertise. The NKPS is designed to overcome this problem, by including researchers who have acquired expertise in both types of data-collection methods into the research team.
- *Panel.* Relationships are in constant flux. Their content and their level of solidarity changes as those involved in these relationships experience significant life events. In addition, family relationships have an internal dynamic of their own that has an impact on the level and type of solidarity characterising these relationships. In order to understand this dynamic nature of solidarity, a panel approach – collecting information on the same persons at several points in time – is necessary. A second important reason for the use of a panel design is that it facilitates the study of causes and effects of solidarity within family relationships. However, a careful spacing of panel waves is required. If waves are spaced too closely, only little change in the relevant attitudes and behaviour will be observed. If waves are spaced far apart, too much change in relevant phenomena may have occurred. In the NKPS waves will be spaced three years apart.

### 4.2.2 Surveying Kin Networks

The survey focuses on kin networks. However, sampling kin networks is not an option, as no sampling frame for kin networks is available. To arrive at kin networks, the sample for the survey will be person-oriented. Each selected person (Anchor) will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview. During the interview, the kin network of Anchor will be delineated and sets of questions will be posed on the *network as a whole* and on the four most important *types* of family relationships. If Anchor is involved in a partner relationship – either inside or outside the household – questions on this relationship will be posed. If the parent(s) – or primary caregiver(s) – of Anchor are alive, questions on the relationship with these parents will be asked as well. If Anchor has children, questions on each of these children will be posed. Finally, information on the relationship between Anchor and his/her siblings will be gathered. In addition, Anchor will be asked for permission to send a self-administered questionnaire to the partner, one of the parents, one sibling and a maximum of two children of secondary school age or older. Figure 1 shows an example of the family members within a hypothetical kin network. This hypothetical Anchor has two living parents, three living children, one sibling and a partner. Within the study, data will be collected among all these categories of family members, however, with a maximum per category: the partner, one of the parents, one sibling and two children. Which parent, sibling and children will be asked to participate in the study will be randomly decided. The thick lines in Figure 1 designate relationships for which direct information from both participants in the relationship will be available. Dotted lines designate relationships for which information from just one of the participants is available. In addition to questions on the relationship with Anchor, all surveyed members of the kin network will be asked general questions on solidarity within the kin network as a whole. As a result, this procedure will generate a wealth of information on the role of solidarity within family relationships.

Figure 1 An Example of Family Members Surveyed Within a Kin Network



The ties with the partner, children, parents and siblings are the primary ties within and through which solidarity is maintained within kin networks. All more extended relationships, such as those with grandchildren, cousins, aunts and uncles, are derived from these primary ties. We, therefore, concentrate on these primary ties. In addition, concise information will be collected on the relationships with extended family members. No attempts will be made to gather information from these people themselves.

The types of family relationships that will be studied, and the types of family members asked to provide information, depend on the availability of relationships within the kin network of Anchor. The relationships within kin networks vary strongly with age. If Anchor is a middle-aged person living with a partner, a fair chance exists that all of the relationships depicted in Figure 1 actually exist and will be surveyed. If Anchor is in his or her twenties, however, relationships with children may well be absent, as may be a relationship with a partner. If Anchor has entered old age, relationships with the

older generation (parents) and with others from the same generation (siblings, partner) may be lacking as a result of the death of these family members. Of course, the possibility also exists that Anchor is single or childless. As a result, the number of family members from whom information will be gathered within a kin network will vary substantially. In some networks, information will be gathered from six family members (including Anchor). In others, information will be gathered from Anchor only. In section 4.3.6, a global estimate will be presented about the number of family members (partners, children, parents and siblings) that will be surveyed.

#### 4.2.3 Panel Design

Family relationships are not static. The level and structure of solidarity within such relationships change as family members experience life-events that reorient their life, like losing a job, union dissolution, or the death of a parent. More subtle processes of relationship development also affect solidarity. Sometimes, family members grow apart as a result of small frictions accumulating in the course of their relationship. Solidarity also changes as the socio-structural and cultural environment within which family members live changes. A related reason for using a longitudinal design is that it provides better opportunities for disentangling causal mechanisms. A static design offers much less promise in this regard. For example, in a static design, people who have experienced a divorce may be observed to attach less importance to commitment and altruism within partner-relationships than do people who are living with a spouse. A longitudinal design can illuminate the causal link between divorce and solidarity attitudes. A comparison of changes in attitudes among those who experienced a divorce between two survey waves and those who remained married may show that experiencing a divorce influences opinions on and feelings about solidarity, that differences in solidarity opinions affect the likelihood of divorce, or that both processes operate.

To study such individual level and network changes, two designs are available: a cross-sectional survey with retrospective questions, and a panel design in which the same respondents and the same family members are interviewed at successive points in time (prospective). A prospective design is more expensive and more difficult to realise than a retrospective design, but offers data of much higher quality. In a retrospective design, many relevant aspects of people's lives cannot be measured, either because people cannot remember them, or because current events or emotions unconsciously bias people's memories. Given these limitations of retrospective surveys, a prospective survey (a panel) is best suited to collect information on the development of family relationships.

When conducting a prospective survey, a thoughtful spacing of successive panel waves is essential. If change in the concepts of interest occurs at a rapid pace, waves have to be spaced at short intervals. If change in the concepts of interest occurs slowly, a much longer interval between subsequent waves is needed. We propose to space the waves of NKPS at three year intervals. An important source of changes in solidarity concerns significant events occurring in the lives of the family members under consideration or within the broader kin network. Such events can take place at any time, but if the inter-wave interval is less than three years, the number of such occurrences within the kin network will be relatively small. If waves are planned with a longer time interval, their number may be too large. In addition, too much time may have passed since the life-event of interest to establish a clear relationship between this event and changes in the level or structure of solidarity.

While prospective data have many advantages, they also have disadvantages, the most important one being attrition. In section 4.4.3 some measures are proposed aimed at limiting sample loss. However, some attrition is unavoidable. Given the aim to continue the survey after the first two waves, it is necessary to add new respondents to the survey at each successive wave. To counteract the ageing of the survey sample, these new respondents will also be sampled from cohorts that were too young to be included in earlier sample frames.

A special feature of our panel is that not only individuals are followed through time, but networks as well. This raises the question of which network members are selected to receive a mail questionnaire at successive waves. This question is easily answered when networks are stable, but networks are not. Partners become ex-partners, new children are born, parents die and may be replaced by new (non-

biological) parents, and people remarry. A set of rules and procedures will be developed to assist in deciding which network members should be included in successive waves. A guiding principle will be that priority is given to *existing* family relationships rather than to terminated ones. If no contact with a former partner exists anymore, there is little sense in sending a mail questionnaire with structured items to this former partner. A mail questionnaire will be sent to the new partner instead. However, this does not imply that no attention at all is paid to terminated relationships. They will be considered in the interview with Anchor. In addition, terminated relationships can be the focus of attention in one of the mini-panels.

#### 4.2.4 Data-Collection Methods

Within NKPS several complementary data-collection strategies will be used. Face-to-face interviews will be conducted with the Anchors in the kin network study, mail questionnaires will be sent to the other family members involved in the network study and in-depth interviews will be conducted with the participants in the mini-panels

Anchors will be asked to participate in a *structured face-to-face interview*. Face-to-face interviews are a very costly survey research method compared to mail and telephone questionnaires. However, a number of compelling reasons make it the only feasible alternative. First of all, the questionnaire will be highly complex. The kin network of Anchor has to be delineated, and dependent on the type and number of family relationships available, specific sets of questions have to be posed or skipped. The complex nature of these routing and selection principles makes the use of a mail questionnaire impossible. Another characteristic of the interview will be its length. Collecting data from Anchor will on average take about 1½ hours of interviewing. A data-collection of this length cannot be done by telephone. A respondent is unlikely to stay on the telephone and remain motivated for so long. In a face-to-face situation the interviewer can more easily motivate the respondent to continue with the data-collection. A third important reason for collecting data from Anchor using a face-to-face interview is that this setting allows for the most intense interaction between interviewer and respondent. If a respondent does not understand a question, it is hardly impossible to ask for clarifications in a mail survey. In a telephone survey clarifications can be given, but only after the respondent has asked for this type of clarification. In a face-to-face interview an interviewer can observe whether or not a respondent understands a question and can meaningfully judge the usefulness of providing additional information or feedback. A final reason to opt for face-to-face interviews is that it enhances participation of Anchors in the kin network study and in future waves. If the interviewer succeeds in creating an open and friendly atmosphere ('rapport'), this will increase the likelihood that Anchor will disclose addresses of family members for the network study. The assumption here is that Anchor will be more inclined to grant a favour to a friendly person in a face-to-face situation than to an unknown person during a telephone interview. In addition, it is assumed that his or her willingness to participate in follow-up activities (mini-panels and new waves) will also be enhanced through the experience of an interview in a friendly atmosphere, by observing the professional conduct of the interviewer and by the suggestion of importance attached to the respondent, that is mediated by the fact that a representative of the research team is willing to visit the respondent at home to obtain his or her point of view.

During the face-to-face interview not all information will be collected through oral questioning. At selected time points, the respondent will be asked to fill in self-administered questionnaires. This procedure saves time, because standardised item sets can be administered much faster in a written questionnaire than verbally. It also enhances comparability between the answers given by Anchor and by other kin network members who will be approached by mail questionnaires, because they answer identical questions in the same data-collection mode.

Information on other kin network members will be gathered by the use of *mail questionnaires*. It is feasible to use mail questionnaires because the amount of information to be gathered from these respondents is more limited than the amount of information to be collected from Anchor. Most of the mail questionnaire will consist of the same kind of measurement instruments on family solidarity as in

the Anchor questionnaire. In addition, some information on the kin network members' social position will be collected.

Selected Anchors and other family members will be asked to participate in *in-depth interviews* (called mini-panels, given the longitudinal nature of the survey). There are at least three compelling reasons for supplementing the face-to-face and mail questionnaires with in-depth interviews. First, in-depth interviews offer the opportunity to acquire *much more differentiated information* on specific target-groups within the total sample. It also offers the additional opportunity of focussing on specific family configurations of interest given the main aims of the research programme. Secondly, in-depth interviews allow for the *refinement of theoretical insights* that can be gained from the main survey. The mechanisms that are assumed to be at the root of (changes in) patterns of family solidarity can be studied with the use of data stemming from in-depth studies, leading to a better understanding of the dynamics of family relationships. A third advantage of in-depth studies is that the insights gained from them can be used to *generate additional measurement instruments*. These can be implemented in the second wave of the panel survey.

#### 4.2.5 Sample

The sample size for the NKPS has to be substantial, given the aims of monitoring new developments within kin networks, examining diversity in how solidarity is structured within specific sub-categories, and analysing determinants and consequences of how solidarity is structured within family relationships and kin networks. To achieve this aim, we propose to collect data from a random sample of 9,000 persons, aged 18 and older. This sample size offers a sufficient number of respondents within broad age  $\times$  sex categories to allow a thorough description and analysis of solidarity within kin networks within each of these sub-categories. A realized sample size of 9,000 is also much larger than what has commonly been used in sociological surveys, which makes it attractive for the wider research community to use the data.

Another goal of the NKPS is to monitor developments within non-standard living arrangements and family configurations. Examples are one-parent families, stepfamilies, and middle-aged people living alone, but many other non-standard categories can be considered as well. To ensure that a sufficiently large number of respondents living in non-standard living arrangements are sampled, we propose to undersample respondents who are in their first marriage – the most common living arrangement in the Netherlands – by a factor of approximately 0.75. This effectively results in the oversampling of respondents not in a first marriage, including those living in the kind of living arrangements mentioned above. There are several reasons to opt for undersampling people living in their first marriage rather than for oversampling *specific* non-standard groups, as is usually done. First, the screening procedure is much easier: just one question is needed in order to decide whether or not an individual is eligible for undersampling. Second, information on the empirical distribution of the various non-standard groups in the population is obtained more easily from the sample. Third, the construction of sample weights to construct a nationally representative sample is easier. This is particularly important for analyses that do not focus on specific groups.

A side-aim of the research programme is to compare processes of solidarity creation and maintenance across ethnic categories. The three major ethnic communities of interest are Turks, Moroccans and former inhabitants from Surinam and the Dutch Antilles. If respondents from these ethnic communities have the same response-rate as those of the population as a whole, their approximate numbers in the base sample will be 370, which is fine for comparisons with the majority population, but probably too low for comparisons across ethnic groups themselves. To study such differences in greater depth, we will supplement our base sample of 9,000 respondents with 1,000 respondents from ethnic minorities. Together with the base sample, this results in 1,370 respondents from ethnic minorities. The minority sample will be drawn and interviewed separately because it requires special screening procedures.

#### 4.2.6 Overview of the Substantive Content of the Data-Collection

As discussed in section 4.3.4, three main data-collection methods will be used. We briefly sketch the kind of information gathered with each of these three methods. The measurement instruments used within each data-collection method will be specified in greater detail at a later stage, after consultations with national and international experts.

- *Face-to-face interviews with Anchor*

In the face-to-face interviews with Anchors, information on five broad research issues will be gathered.

1. Information on Anchor's life course and current circumstances. Concise life-history information on parental background, partnership and parenthood, migration and housing, and education and employment will be collected. In addition, information on the current living conditions of Anchor will be gathered, for instance on household composition, daily activities of Anchor and of other household members, including employment information, income and wealth, relationships with non-kin and social participation.
2. Information about behavioural aspects of the relationships of Anchor with relevant family members. The topics depend upon the type of relationship and include frequency of various types of contact (personal, phone, fax, mail, e-mail); occasions for contact (birthdays, Christmas, holidays, weekends); location and travel distance; presence of others during contact; division of (household and other) tasks; use of outside support, such as childcare and domestic help; joint activities and their content; demarcation between joint and solo activities (or those undertaken with others); legal arrangements (cohabitation and marriage contracts, child custody); financial arrangements and support; non-financial help and support; 'house rules' (agreements on dinner time, bed time, going out, spending money, informing each other about coming home late).
3. Information about attitudinal and emotional aspects of the relationships of Anchor with relevant family members. Topics include relationship quality, equity and reciprocity, trust, feelings of affection versus obligation, relationship orientation (exchange versus communal orientation), feelings of missing certain relationships when they are absent; feelings of regret or satisfaction about the former course of relationships, feelings of loneliness and incompleteness within relationships, and relationship-efficacy.
4. Concise information about general attitudes towards family relationships, such as norms about the formation and dissolution of partnerships, social value orientation, the quality and content of partner relationships and parent-child relationships, mutual support.
5. Concise information about well being and life-satisfaction, including satisfaction about relationships outside the family.

- *Mail questionnaires for kin network members*

The type of information gathered from family members will not differ strongly from that collected from Anchor. However, the questions will be fewer in number and considerably less detailed than in the interview with Anchor. In addition, the bulk of the information gathered will be on the relationship between the network member on the one hand and Anchor and other close family members of Anchor on the other hand. For example, in a questionnaire to be filled in by Anchor's mother, most questions will be on her relationship with Anchor, supplemented by questions on her relationship with her own partner and with Anchor's children. We expect that not all Anchors will grant permission to send a mail questionnaire to selected family members. More particularly, our estimate is that approximately 60% of Anchors will grant permission and that an average number of 2.5 mail questionnaires will be returned by family members of these Anchors.

- *In-depth interviews*

In-depth interviews are conducted within the context of a mini-panel. A mini-panel is organised around a topic about which it is deemed necessary to collect additional, in-depth information. The content of the in-depth interviews, therefore, will depend on the topic of the particular mini-panel. These topics are subsumed under five broad subject areas, that have been identified as being most likely to benefit from an integration of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. The first three subject areas concern the understanding of longitudinal changes in level of solidarity, whereas

the last two subject areas concern the understanding of differences in solidarity between social categories. The five subject areas are:

1. *Understanding exceptionally high and low levels of solidarity.* Some family relationships are characterised by extremely high or extremely low levels of solidarity. The aim is to understand the genesis of these types of relationships and their course. Information from the large-scale survey will be used to identify both types of relationships. Those involved in such relationships will be asked to participate in in-depth interviews at two time-points. The focus will be on the durability of existing levels of solidarity. The aim is to monitor changes in the level and type of solidarity and to unravel the underlying mechanisms.
2. *Conflicts within family relationships and solidarity.* Some kin networks and family relationships are characterised by relatively high levels of conflict. These conflicts may have consequences for the level and organisation of solidarity within the kin network. At two points in time, family members who are or were involved in relationships that have been subjected to severe internal or external pressures will be interviewed in order to obtain detailed knowledge about the impact of stress and conflicts on the temporal course of solidarity.
3. *Changes in solidarity.* In the course of time, many family relationships experience changes in the level and organisation of solidarity. These changes can be related to significant life events like marriage, divorce, illness or death of family members. However, changes may also occur more or less unnoticed and not be related to previous significant life events. It might even be that the change in solidarity is a result of events occurring to other family members. Several mini-panels will be organised to improve our knowledge about the background of and causal mechanisms behind these changes in solidarity. This will be done by identifying kin networks that are characterised either by the occurrence of significant life-events between the first and the second survey wave or by relatively strong shifts in the level of solidarity between waves. Selected members of these networks will be asked to participate in the in-depth interviews. Some of these mini-panels will be organised around the occurrence of specific life events, like divorce, leaving home, etc., whereas other panels will be organised around the occurrence of exceptionally large increases or decreases in levels of solidarity.
4. *Non-standard living arrangements and solidarity.* Within this subject area the focus is on living arrangements that are relatively uncommon and for which no clear 'cultural scripts' exist. This implies that (as yet) no generally shared norms or expectations exist about the structuring of these living arrangements, nor about level and type of solidarity. Examples are two-location households, co-parenting, stepfamilies and homosexual living arrangements. The main aim of the proposed mini-panels is to increase our understanding of how solidarity within such 'scriptless' living arrangements is negotiated and experienced.
5. *Gender, age, ethnicity and solidarity.* Empirical research on solidarity has shown that there are large gender, age- and ethnic differences in level and type of solidarity. Mini-panels that focus on gender, age- and ethnic differences, respectively, are planned to enhance our knowledge of the reasons for these differences and to further the development of theories on socio-cultural differences in family solidarity.

To adequately cover the subject areas delineated above, a total of 15 mini-panels is planned. Nine of these will be organised after the completion of the first large-scale survey wave, and six more after the second survey wave has been completed. In conjunction with wave 1, one mini-panel will focus on exceptionally high and exceptionally low levels of solidarity. Participants in this mini-panel will be approached again after wave 2 in order to study the stability of these relationships. A second mini-panel will focus on conflicts in family relationships. Again, participants in this mini-panel will be approached after wave 2 to study the development of conflict-ridden family relationships. Four mini-panels that will be organised after wave 1 will focus on non-standard living arrangement and will allow for an in-depth analysis of how solidarity is construed and maintained within such relationships. Finally, three mini-panels will focus on gender, age- and ethnic differences in family solidarity, respectively.

Another six mini-panels will be organised after the second wave of the large-scale survey. Two of these, on exceptionally high and low levels of solidarity and on conflicts, are continuations of mini-

panels started at wave 1. In addition, four more mini-panels will be organised focussing on changes in level and type of solidarity.

The number of respondents in each mini-panel will vary according to the research question and family relationship under study. Sometimes interviews will be conducted with Anchor only. In other instances, interviews with two family members or with even larger segments of the kin network will be more appropriate. In general, we expect about 80 respondents per mini-panel. In all, some 1200 in-depth interviews in 15 mini-panels will be held.

### 4.3 *Fieldwork and Organisational Issues*

This section deals with the preparation and execution of the panel study. To ensure that high-quality data are collected, each stage of the survey process has to be planned and executed with utmost care. The most important aspects of the procedures needed to generate a high-quality data-set are described below. Details will be decided on at a later stage.

#### 4.3.1 Sampling Frame

In the Netherlands, several strategies exist to arrive at a satisfactory sampling frame. In the event of cooperation with Statistics Netherlands (CBS; see under 6.3) the sample could be drawn from the national population register, GBA (Gemeentelijke BasisAdministratie). Statistics Netherlands has the complete population register of all municipalities at its disposal. It offers ample opportunities for creating stratified samples and for using both oversampling and undersampling techniques. If no cooperation with Statistics Netherlands is realised, there are two possible alternative sampling frames. First, municipal population registers could be used. Municipalities can be sampled by stratifying according to region and population density. Second, the PTT Post database of addresses in the Netherlands could be used. Compared with GBA or municipal samples, the PTT database has the disadvantage that it is not a person sample but an address sample. However, its cost is moderate and it is easily accessible.

#### 4.3.2 Questionnaire Development

Much attention will be paid to the development of the questionnaire. This development will be guided by a number of criteria:

- Decisions about the information to be collected will be guided by the research questions that are central to the research programme on *Family Relationships: The Ties That Bind*. The more central a questionnaire item is deemed to be with regard to the key research questions, the higher its priority;
- As far as possible, measurement instruments will be selected that have been used and validated in earlier research, both nationally and internationally;
- New measurement instruments will be thoroughly tested in a pilot study in order to ascertain their reliability and validity.

To meet these criteria, the questionnaire will be developed in close contact with researchers participating in the research programme on *Family Relationships: The Ties That Bind*. Sufficient time for testing and fine-tuning the measurement instruments will be reserved.

#### 4.3.3 Fieldwork Arrangements

The quality of the data depends not only on the quality of the questionnaire, but as much on the efficiency of the fieldwork organisation in persuading respondents to participate in the survey and on the ability of interviewers to collect information in accordance with the rules spelled out by the researchers. All possible care will be taken to ensure both a high response and a proper execution of the fieldwork. The arrangements to be made include the following:

- A workshop will be organised with national and international researchers involved in multi-actor, multi-method or panel studies to discuss the main arrangements needed to ensure high response, high-quality data and low attrition rates;

- A pilot study will be organised to test the questionnaires and the fieldwork procedures. This pilot will consist of 200 interviews, to allow proper testing of the reliability of item batteries developed to tap core concepts;
- Interviewers will receive an extensive training programme. This programme will include information on the aims of the survey and a discussion of the rationale behind the questionnaire itself. Most attention, however, will be paid to training basic interviewer skills, like contacting respondents, avoiding suggestive questions, probing, and dealing with problem situations;
- Interviewers will be intensively supervised during the survey period. This will include monitoring their performance with the use of audiotape-recordings of their interviews;
- Interview-schedules will have a complex nature. Kin networks have to be delineated and numerous special routings will be necessary. Interviewers will use CAPI (Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing)-techniques to facilitate the correct completion of the questionnaire. This will reduce item non-response and faulty routing decisions;
- Response rates for surveys have decreased strongly during the last two decades. Securing a high and non-selective response rate is evidently highly important. A combination of strategies will be used to produce a high response. A personalised letter and an informative brochure will be mailed to the respondents before contacting them. Interviewers will be thoroughly trained in contacting respondents. If feasible, initial contacts will be made by visiting respondents rather than by phone. Respondents will be offered a monetary reward for their co-operation;
- Interviewing members of ethnic communities poses additional challenges. If feasible, interviewers from these ethnic communities will be recruited and trained. This will enhance participation from members of these communities. It is as yet undecided whether or not questionnaires in the mother tongues will be used. The advantage is that respondents who have only a small mastery of the Dutch language can also be interviewed. Disadvantages are the additional costs involved and the fact that it is very difficult to construct a questionnaire in different languages that preserves equivalence in the meaning of the constructs used;
- The representativeness of the sample is threatened not just by initial non-response, but by attrition between panel waves as well. Apart from mortality, the two main causes of attrition are refusal to co-operate in subsequent waves and migration. Loss-to-follow-up is often selective, because steady participants usually differ from dropouts on important characteristics. An additional problem of attrition is that the sample becomes smaller in the course of time, reducing the opportunities to study less general topics and specific subgroups of interest. A number of measures will be taken to minimise the loss-to-follow-up caused by refusal. Proper and pleasant interviewer conduct is of central importance in ensuring initial and continued participation from respondents. In addition, respondents will be kept informed on the progress of the project by sending them a series of newsletters that will provide them with significant results from the study and with information on future plans. Additional measures to enhance continued participation, like sending birthday cards and season's greetings, will be decided on at a later stage. The Netherlands has a well-functioning municipal registration system, which makes it possible to trace people — something which is not possible in the United States, for example —, and to reduce the impact of loss-to-follow-up caused by moving house. In addition, kin network members might be able to provide information on the whereabouts of untraceable respondents.
- Procedures for the mail questionnaire part of the study will be pre-tested in a pilot study. We acknowledge that non-response among family members can be substantial. To counteract this, Dillman's Total Design Method will be used to secure maximum participation from kin network members. They will also be offered a reward for their participation. Information from the interview with Anchor can be used to assess the extent to which non-response on the part of family members is selective;
- The planning of the interview schedules for the mini-panels asks for specialised expertise on the part of the researchers. To guarantee the quality of the interview schedule, researchers who have acquired substantive and methodological expertise with regard to the topic of particular mini-panels will be invited to develop a research proposal and an appropriate interview schedule. These researchers will also closely cooperate with the fieldwork manager and the project members in organising and carrying out the mini-panels;

- The in-depth interviews, conducted as part of the mini-panels, will be based on a semi-structured interview schedules. To conduct these interviews, different skills are required than for structured interviews. Interviewers recruited for this phase of the data-collection will be thoroughly trained in the probing and feedback skills needed to conduct these types of interviews. Their performance will be monitored by audiotaping the interviews;
- A full-time fieldwork coordinator will be appointed through the entire duration of the NKPS. This person's task will be to prepare and supervise the complete process of data-collection. This includes all three types of data-collection modes (structured face-to-face, mail questionnaires, and mini-panels). In addition, this coordinator is responsible for panel maintenance (keeping track of respondents);
- No decision has been made as yet with regard to whether (part of the) fieldwork will be contracted out or organised in-house by the applicants. Cost considerations are highly relevant, but substantive considerations are at least as important. The main advantage of outsourcing fieldwork activities is that one can profit from the experience of market research organisations in conducting surveys. In addition, they usually have a vast pool of interviewers around the Netherlands that can be called in to conduct the fieldwork. A potential disadvantage of using the services of market research organisations is that it is much more difficult to monitor and influence the quality of the interviews than if one organises the fieldwork in-house. Given the complexity of the study and the need to minimise non-response and attrition, close monitoring of the fieldwork procedures and quality is essential. Of course, the decisions made in this regard will also depend on how discussions with Statistics Netherlands on potential co-operation will evolve.

#### 4.3.4 Data Management

The *Netherlands Kinship Panel Study* will produce a wealth of data on solidarity within family relationships. The project data-manager will be made responsible for checking the data, coding non-numerical information and cleaning the database. In addition, this data-manager will construct and maintain the database, so that new information can be easily linked to existing information. Finally, the data-manager will see to it that the data are made readily available to all interested parties.

#### 4.3.5 Organisational Structure

A project team consisting of the six applicants will supervise the *Netherlands Kinship Panel Study*. This team will meet regularly to discuss the planning and progress of the study. A fieldwork coordinator and a full-time data manager will assist the project team. One of the project team members will act as the project coordinator and be responsible for the daily course of events. Given that the NKPS is designed to provide the data to answer the research questions formulated in the Research Programme on '*Family Relationships: The Ties That Bind*', a close contact will be established between the project team and the Committee in charge of that NWO Research Programme.

#### 4.3.6 Planning Schedule

- Questionnaire Development (incl. Consultations with Experts), July-December 2000
- Preparation Sample Selection, January-June 2001
- Pilot Study, February 2001
- Evaluation Pilot Study and Changes to Procedures and Interview Schedules, March-June 2001
- Fieldwork Wave 1 among Anchors and Family Members, September 2001-April 2002
- Data Cleaning Wave 1, January-June 2002
- Data Wave 1 available for Analysis, September 2002
- In-Depth Interviews Wave 1, September 2002-June 2004
- Analysis Data Wave 1, September 2002-December 2003
- Preparation Fieldwork Wave 2, January-June 2004
- Fieldwork Wave 2 among Anchors and Family Members, September 2004-April 2005
- Data Cleaning Wave 2, January-June 2005
- Data Wave 2 available for Analysis, September 2005
- In-Depth Interviews Wave 2, September 2005-December 2006

## 5 Motivation for the investment

Like in all sciences, advancement in the social sciences depends on the fulfilment of two conditions: a) the availability of good theories about social behaviour and social systems and b) the availability of high-quality data to test existing theories and explore promising new ones. In order to generate high-quality data substantial financial investments are needed. The types of investments to be made, however, typically differ strongly from those made in the natural sciences. Investments in the natural and life sciences are often made in the form of the acquisition of equipment that allow the collection of data in highly controlled laboratory conditions. In the social sciences, investments often take the form of facilitating the collection of data from and on human beings and their social interaction in natural settings. The creation and dissemination of databases with social science data is essential to the progress of these sciences.

This investment proposal is aimed to create a database with information on family relationships that is highly innovative on a number of features. Data on the same respondents will be collected at multiple time-points, data will be collected from several family members and a combination of structured and semi-structured data-collection methods will be used. If funded, the investment will allow the creation of a database that has no precedent in the Netherlands and will rank among the most important existing databases on family and kinship internationally. This, in combination with the planned increase in research capacity generated by the research programme on *Family Relationships: The Ties That Bind*, will greatly increase Dutch scholars' contributions to the international literature on family and kinship. The database will enhance our knowledge about the conditions that govern the creation, maintenance and possible demise of solidarity within kin networks and on the consequences of variations in solidarity for well being and social integration.

A number of recent developments, both within Dutch social sciences and internationally, have prompted the urgency of investing in a panel study on family relationships. In 1996 the Social Science Council (SWR) of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences published a report *Nieuwe Perspectieven voor de Gezinssociologie* (New Perspectives for the Sociology of the Family), prepared by an Ad-Hoc Committee on Family Sociology. In this report the Social Science Council stressed the need for investments in personnel and infrastructure so that the Netherlands would regain the prominent position it once held in the field of sociological research on the family. In addition, the SWR identified three relevant themes for future research: a) developments in the formation and dissolution of families, b) changes in power balances within horizontal and vertical family relationships, and c) the interplay between families and other social institutions. On instigation of the SWR and in consultation with the former members of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Family Sociology, a number of scientists developed a research programme, titled *Family Relationships: The Ties That Bind*. Starting from the SWR's analysis, this programme theoretically integrates the three themes by focusing on the nature and maintenance of solidarity within kin networks and on the interplay between kin networks and other societal institutions. The research programme *Family Relationships: The Ties That Bind* has been submitted for funding to the Dutch National Science Foundation (NWO). A copy of this research programme is found in the Appendix. If funded, it will give a major impetus to Dutch research on family and family relationships. However, the success of the research programme is dependent on the availability of high-quality data. *The Netherlands Kinship Panel Study* provides these data.

The need for a *Netherlands Kinship Panel Study* is prompted by recent methodological and theoretical developments within family sociology and in the social sciences more generally. First, increased attention is being paid to the dynamic nature of people's behaviour and their relationships. To understand current behaviour, attention has to be paid to its (temporal) antecedents. This has led to the increased application of both retrospective (life-history studies) and prospective (panel) research designs. Second, it is increasingly being acknowledged that many sociological phenomena are relational in nature. Most studies, however, focus on individuals and collect individual data only. Multi-actor studies, in which data are collected from several or from all of the actors involved in a

relationship or a network, offer better prospects for enhancing our understanding of relationships and networks. However, relatively few multi-actor studies have been conducted so far. Third, most studies either use a structured interview design combined with quantitative, statistical methods of analysis or a semi-structured or open interview design combined with qualitative, interpretative methods of analysis. Only few studies combine both types of research methodologies. This is unfortunate, because such a combination can be very profitable. The structured interviews can be used to identify phenomena that seem particularly promising for in-depth study. The results of in-depth studies can be used to generate promising research questions for the large-scale survey and to facilitate the interpretation of research findings from the survey.

The investments needed to create a database like the NKPS clearly surpass the resources of individual research institutions. It asks for a sustained investment over a long time-span. All major existing panel studies, like the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, the National Survey of Families and Households and the series of National Longitudinal Studies in the United States, and the British Household Panel Study have been funded by national or federal agencies. These types of databases can be viewed as a kind of collective good. They are too costly to be funded by individual institutions, but once they are created, the whole research community profits from them.

## **6 National Relevance, Accessibility of the Data, Co-operation**

### *6.1 National Relevance*

Investment in the NKPS is of national relevance for both scientific and societal reasons. The *scientific relevance* of the NKPS lies in its potential to further our knowledge about the nature, creation and maintenance of solidarity within different types of family relationships. Methodologically as well as theoretically the proposed research is innovative because of its multi-method and multi-actor approach, and its main theoretical focus on solidarity. It will provide an extremely rich source of data to build upon. The availability of this database will enable the execution of the research programme on *Family Relationships: The Ties That Bind* and will allow Dutch scholars on family and kinship to make significant contributions to the international literature in the field. The NKPS will be a valuable addition to existing Dutch databases that contain information on family relationships. Although many of these surveys contain valuable information on family relationships, their focus is different and they do not contain the information needed to answer the research questions of this study. Naturally, care will be taken to avoid redundancies with existing surveys.

The *societal relevance* of the investment is linked to a better understanding of: a) the potential and the limitations of family relationships in contemporary society, b) the ways in which institutional arrangements and policies influence family relationships, and c) the consequences of the embedment in family relationships for social cohesion. In the past decades, important societal developments are assumed to have influenced the character of family and kinship in the Netherlands. Developments like individualization, increased mobility, increased educational attainment and labor participation of women, fewer children within the family and the increased divorce rate, are assumed to have lowered the significance of the family, and to have caused a decrease in solidarity among family members. The Netherlands Kinship Panel Study will provide empirical data allowing scientific conclusions with respect to these assumptions.

### *6.2 Accessibility of the Data*

One of the central aims of the panel study is to create a pool of quantitative as well as qualitative research data, and to make these data both nationally and internationally available to researchers in the field of the sociology of the family. As soon as the data from the large-scale survey are cleaned, they will be deposited in electronic format (SPSS-files) at the Steinmetz Archive (NIWI), for free of charge use by all interested parties. To encourage cooperation with and use by non-Dutch researchers, all relevant information will be made available in the English language. Workshops to acquaint potential users to the database will be organised. The possibility of disseminating the data (or parts thereof) by

means of the Internet will be investigated. The data from the mini-panels (verbatim protocols of the in-depth interviews) will also be deposited in electronic format at the Steinmetz Archive (NIWI).

### 6.3 Cooperation

National cooperation will be central to the success of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study. First, researchers of Utrecht University (UU) and the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) will cooperate in formulating and implementing the NKPS. These researchers represent various research traditions in the Netherlands and combine expertise of quantitative as well as qualitative research techniques. Second, the NKPS will be executed in close cooperation with the Research Programme *Family Relationships: The Ties That Bind*. The data that will be collected in the NKPS will be used to answer the central research questions of that research programme. This research programme was developed in close consultation with Dutch family sociologists who participated in the ad-hoc Dutch Social Science Council-Committee on Family Sociology. All Dutch researchers in the field of family sociology and demography will be granted the possibility to cooperate within the framework of the NWO Research Programme *Family Relationships: The Ties That Bind*. Opportunities for a close co-operation with Statistics Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek) are under investigation. Statistics Netherlands has expressed the intention (in writing) to co-operate if this is feasible. The co-operation could include the sampling from the national population register (see 4.4.1), questionnaire construction, survey interviewing, and part of the data handling.

## 7 International Context

The proposed research design of the NKPS has a number of exemplary and innovative features that if carried out, will put Dutch family research among the international vanguard. The first is that it is designed as a *panel* survey, with repeated measures over time. Among social scientists, there is consensus that the most promising way to gain insight into processes and mechanisms of structural and cultural change is by means of a prospective, longitudinal design. Such a design is also needed to ascertain whether observed differences between age groups stem from developmental (age-related) changes or from cohort differences reflecting the shared past of those with whom an individual grew up and matured. Though retrospective, longitudinal designs (e.g. the retrospective collection of life history data) are not without merits, they do have serious limitations: recall biases and the reinterpretation from a current perspective of past experiences. Not surprisingly, therefore, panel studies have become increasingly popular in the past decade. Most panel studies are based in the United States. Examples are the *University of California Longitudinal Study of Generations* (funded by the National Institute on Aging, N=2044 at wave 1 in 1971-72), the *Panel Study of Income Dynamics* (PSID, funded by a number of US government agencies and foundations, N=5,500 households in 1968, increasing to N=8,500 households in 1995), the *National Survey of Families and Households* (NSFH, funded by the Center for Population Research of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the National Institute on Aging, N=13,007 at wave 1 in 1987-88), and the series of National Longitudinal Studies (on Young Men, Young Women, etc.). In European countries, the establishment of panel surveys is of more recent origin. Examples include the *British Household Panel Survey* (BHPS, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council), the *Panel Study on Belgian Households* (PSBH, funded by the Federal Department for Scientific, Technical and Cultural Affairs, N=11,000 at wave 1 in 1992), and the *East German Life History Study* (EGLHS, funded by the German Research Society, N=2,331 at wave 1 in 1979). The growing availability of high-quality panel data have had a clear impact on the acceptance policies of core sociology journals like *American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociology* and *Social Forces*. Nowadays, almost all studies on family sociology published in these journals utilise panel data. If Dutch scholars want to compete at a par with their international colleagues, the collection of high-quality panel data is a prerequisite. With its prospective, longitudinal design, the NKPS is keeping abreast of international developments.

The second special feature of the NKPS is that data from *multiple family members* will be collected. The idea is to not only obtain information from the 'Anchor' (the primary respondent) but also from

the partner, a parent, a sibling, and two children —of course only if those relationships exist. Congruity as well as differences in perceptions and evaluations between the parties involved in a family relationship is crucial to understanding the construction, maintenance and possible demise of family solidarity. Though family researchers generally acknowledge the necessity of obtaining data on family relationships from *both* parties involved, this is by no means common practice. The practical obstacles to collecting information from several network members often leads researchers to refrain from conducting a multi-actor survey. However, positive exceptions, like the Panel Study on Belgian Households and the British Household Panel Survey, where data from all household members aged 16 and over are collected, exist. The same holds for the design of the second wave of the US National Survey of Families, where data were collected from the original respondent, the original partner of the respondent, the current partner of the respondent, a randomly selected child and a parent of the respondent. The University of Southern California Study of Generations has participants from three family generations: grandparents, parents and grandchildren. In fact, the study has been broadened to include a fourth generation, the great-grandchildren, and is now called the *Four Generation Family Study*. The NKPS research design has parallels with existing and ongoing panel studies outside the Netherlands as regards surveying both members of a family dyad (partner-partner, parent-child). Unique to the NKPS, however, is its focus on siblings. The NKPS does so in two ways (regardless of household membership): by surveying a sibling of the Anchor and by surveying two of the Anchor's children (who are of course each other's sibling). With this research design, the NKPS can address questions which have remain underdeveloped, such as peership among siblings, siblings' respective views of intergenerational relations, and the division of tasks within families with parents requiring care. With its expanded focus on family members, the NKPS is truly innovative both nationally and internationally.

The third special feature of the NKPS is its *multi-method* approach, namely its combination of a large-scale survey using prestructured question formats and in-depth studies using flexible interview schedules. The two research methods are mutually enriching: results from the quantitative analyses can suggest issues requiring conceptual and theoretical clarification through in-depth study, while feedback from the in-depth studies can be used in the construction of standardised questionnaire items. The combination of 'reflexive' and 'quantitative nomothetic' methods is unique to the NKPS. There is no other program of research with this combined focus. The 'intensive protocol' of the Berlin Aging Study (BASE), which is based on 14 sessions of about 90 minutes each, is the only study which bears some resemblance to what is being proposed in the NKPS. BASE covered a wide range of disciplines (internal medicine and geriatrics, psychiatry, psychology, sociology and social policy) and all its biographical information was collected through tasks and questionnaire items designed to capture subjective experiences in a standardised way (Schütze et al., 1999). With its multi-method design, the NKPS will definitely command international attention, and establish itself as an exemplary program of research.

A final special feature of the NKPS is that it explicitly considers *diversity* within the population in the ways solidarity in families is structured. This is done in two ways. People in first marriages (still the most common type of living arrangements) will be undersampled. As a result, the number of respondents living in 'non-standard' living arrangements, like members of one-parent and stepfamilies and members of single person households will be substantial. This is a prerequisite if one aims at monitoring new developments in kinship and at gaining insight into the diversity and complexity of modern family ties. In addition, there will be an overrepresentation of members of Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Dutch-Antillian ethnic communities. Viewed from an international perspective, the sampling frame is quite unique. The American NSFH is the only study with a similar design. Their sample includes a main cross-section of households plus an oversampling of blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, single-parent families, families with step-children, cohabiting couples and recently married persons. This focus on subcategories of the population that are interesting from a theoretical point of view, will help the NKPS gain international recognition.