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WHY HAVE CHILDREN?
A STUDY OF METHOD AND MEANING IN VALUE-OF-
CHILDREN RESEARCH.

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of the Degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy
in Sociology

at the
University of Waikato

by
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University of Waikato
Hamilton, New Zealand

1984

VOLUME ONE

ABSTRACT

The 'Value of Children' has been proposed, inter alia, as an important intervening variable in fertility behaviour, and as an explanatory factor in demographic transition. It has been investigated as such by sociologists, psychologists and microeconomists. This thesis is concerned with the notion of 'value' which is implied by these investigators. The research addresses three questions:

1. What is 'Value'?
2. Is the understanding of 'value' which a researcher has of the same order as the understanding which a subject has?
3. If not, how might meanings which the subject imputes to 'value' of children be understood?

Answers to these questions have been sought in several different ways. Firstly, research is seen as a social construction which has its own set of meanings and understandings. This includes prior ideas and modes of analysis: the conceptualisation of 'value' is thus understood within the context of sociological, psychological and economic ideas about fertility determination and the nature of social action. The nature of meaning is also explored within a distinctly sociological context whereby imputation of subjects' meanings is seen to reflect assumptions about objective and subjective meanings, and positivist versus interpretive modes of analysis. Thirdly, the notion of a paradigm is employed to elucidate how subjects, as well as researchers, make sense of their fertility behaviour. These three approaches emphasize that 'value' as understood by everyday people does not have the same meaning as that imputed by researchers who have investigated this as an attribute of children.

The empirical component of the thesis represents an attempt to

apply two different modes of analysis to an elaboration of child 'value'. Survey data (n=154 pakeha New Zealanders) are compared with material derived from indepth, informal discussions with 15 of the survey participants. Whereas survey data provided some indication of generalities, the conversational analysis was employed to try and gain access to subjects' understandings of children and having children. These meanings have been deduced by analysis which sought not only the form and content of people's talk, but which also looked for particular expressions of order, ambivalence and tension, marginality and deviance. Everyday talk was not taken literally, but was taken seriously.

The meanings people attributed to children were categorized (by the researcher) as understandings to do with family, immortality and continuity, parenthood, childlessness, economics and biology. Of these, the most pervasive and coherent paradigm whereby subjects understood and gave meaning to children and having children was one labelled a 'biological paradigm'. This paradigm is not of the same order as that which might be employed by a ('scientific') biologist. Rather, it reflects a kind of sense-making which implies an underlying assumption of 'natural' order to the course of human events.

This exploratory investigation led to a review of the approaches useful to an interpretive analysis of the value of children. A proposal is offered which assumes that meaning is socially constructed in everyday action and interaction with and about children; that talk is a form of action and though metaphorical, reflects the formation, nature and communication of meanings; and that the nature of everyday understanding might be elucidated by examining what is taken for granted and what is questioned, by notions of order and contradictions to that order. By treating meaning as subjective and expressed in parents' speech of the everyday world, in their common sense, an opportunity is provided to understand more clearly the social meaning which they impute to the idea which previous researchers have labelled the 'value of children'.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During the four years spent on the research described in this thesis many individuals and several institutions have provided support and encouragement. I thank the University Grants Committee which provided me with a postgraduate scholarship for three years, and the New Zealand-United States Educational Foundation which funded my attendance at the Twelfth Summer Seminar in Population at the East-West Centre in Honolulu and the University of the Philippines Population Institute in Manila in 1981. A material contribution was also made by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs which through its bilateral aid programme funded the Hamilton Family Formation Study carried out for the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Secondly, I offer my gratitude to those 154 men and women who participated as subjects in the ESCAP Pakeha Survey. In particular I thank the people who in this thesis I have called the Brownings, Learys, Oldes, Coxes, Milnes, Sumners, Janet, Ann and Mat for their friendliness, their honesty and the time they gave me. They provided the substance for this thesis. During the ESCAP Survey I also appreciated the dedication and collegiality of the fourteen interviewers, the coders, and the clerical assistants. In particular I thank Ted Douglas, Principal Investigator of the Maori component, for his understanding, his friendship and for the challenges he offered.

Appreciation is expressed to all those who at various stages have commented upon and criticized my arguments. Professor Ian Pool (Head of Sociology, University of Waikato) not only was instrumental in organizing the ESCAP Survey, but also made a

most valuable contribution to the full final draft of the thesis. The comments of Peggy Koopman-Boyden (University of Canterbury) on several chapters are also acknowledged. I thank them both for their particular contributions, but I also wish to acknowledge the general support and encouragement I have received from colleagues at both Waikato and Canterbury Universities. Dr David Thorns (Head of Sociology, University of Canterbury) is thanked for providing the supportive environment which facilitated the completion of this research.

This thesis was produced in its final form by the staff of WORDCOM - The Word Processing Centre, Christchurch. Their care and attention is appreciated.

There are always numerous personal debts which should not go unmentioned. Mine are for various "causes": I owe a particular debt to George Knox, Professor of Zoology at Canterbury University, who fifteen years ago first sparked my enthusiasm for doing research; I would like to thank fellow students Beryl Duff, Louise Harvey and Roberta Hill for putting our shared frustrations and delights in perspective; Alaka Basu and Kiyosi Hiroshima, for the confidence they instilled in me; Yvonne Ooman, Anderley Middleton and Julianna Ooster who were my childminders during 1980-1982; John and Dianne Cameron for allowing me to share in the formation of their family, and for supporting my family in times of crisis; and Mr Chesterman for providing security and company during some long and otherwise lonely hours.

It is, however difficult to express one's greatest debts. Throughout this research Professor David Bettison has remained steadfastly behind me, cajoling, questioning, criticizing, but always encouraging. I put faith in his "Of course you can do it!" and I doubt that he is aware of just how much I feel I owe him. I appreciate the example and inspiration of his scholarship and the generous use of his time which he gave me. Thank you, David.

The other David in my life is thanked not only for all those personal things which spouses are usually praised for, but also for his own involvement in the research as a survey interviewer and coder, thesis proof-reader and critic. In addition I owe to him our children's tolerance of, and pride in, my endeavours, and to Jason and Lisa I must also give credit for accepting some major domestic changes when Dave for a year set aside his own career so that I could pursue mine. Thank you, Dave, for your loyalty, for your care and most of all for giving me space to think, to write and be myself. I know it was not always easy, but you did it.

This thesis is about families and about children. In writing these acknowledgments I remember my own family. I think of my grandmother, Lizzie Pierce, in her 94th year. I also remember my mother-in-law, Isabella Cameron who, having appreciated the pursuit of knowledge, would be glad that her legacy contributed materially to the final production of this thesis. Finally I think of my own children, Jason and Lisa, who taught me about children and made me the kind of parent that I am. To these, who to me symbolize family, this thesis is dedicated.

WHY HAVE CHILDREN ?
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(Photographs on page 210 provided by Waikato Times (top) and M.Grayburn (bottom); photographs on pages 272, 292 and 320 provided by D.Cameron.)

PREFACE

When this study was begun, early in 1980, it was conceived of as a quantitative survey investigation of the economic and social-psychological costs and benefits of children perceived by a sample of Pakeha (European) New Zealanders. Child 'value' was perceived as an 'intervening variable' between social factors on the one hand and reproductive achievement (number of children) on the other. Such a perspective was consistent with a well-established tradition of demographic research and was in keeping with my own previous experience in studying population phenomena.

In mid 1980 an opportunity was provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to implement this survey as a component of the Hamilton Family Formation Survey. Financial support was provided to employ interviewers, coders and clerical assistants, as well as for the material needs of a questionnaire survey. It was considered that a 'value-of-children' module would provide an additional dimension to the understanding of family formation sought by the ESCAP researchers and similarly, questions pertaining to a new perception of 'family' which were being tested in the survey would, it was anticipated, provide a familial context for the study of 'value' of children.

The questionnaire thus contained various questions pertaining to 'value of children', many of them derived from or modelled on the questions asked by the East-West Crossnational Project researchers. They referred primarily to social-psychological and economic parameters. It was anticipated that answers to these questions, suitably coded, would be analysed by testing for correlations both between them and with fertility variables, and by constructing various indices as 'measures' of 'value'.

As the practical component of the research progressed I became increasingly dissatisfied with what I was trying to do. I lived in the same cultural world as my respondents and I knew from my experience as a subject, rather than as a researcher, that 'value' of children was not perceived as categorically as I, like my predecessors, had defined it in the questionnaire. I began to realise that this 'value' which was my construct had no necessary relevance to the reality of the subjects to whom I was attributing it.

Confirmation of my doubts was reached when a colleague asked me why I had children. If I had been able to answer him at all, it would not have been in the idiom of the kind of cost-benefit analysis I was attempting to apply. I did not even think about my children in such a manner; like the subjects of one or two other surveys, I found the idea offensive. The meaning of children for me, and I suspected for my respondents, lay in rather different understandings.

I then began a search of the literature in an attempt to find suggestions of a different mode of explanation. I was already convinced that I had to allow respondents to tell me in their words, not mine, what children meant to them. To this end a small number of people who had been involved in the original survey were interviewed informally. The aim was to listen to their talk and to attempt to analyse this in some way which would reveal the meanings that they gave to, and derived from, children, their activities with children, and their interactions with other people with respect to children.

Interpretive sociology provided the theoretical basis for such an investigation. The research task now became a search for a method of discovering social meaning, and communicating that meaning in a manner which would also be meaningful to an audience of demographic researchers. By so-doing, I believed I would contribute to 'value of children' knowledge, not with

substantive findings but with a proposal for a new way of looking at 'value' and a closer understanding of what the ideas which researchers called 'value' meant in everyday life.

This 'evolution' of the research is reflected in the structure of the thesis. It begins with a review of traditional demographic investigations which referred to issues more recently labelled 'value' of children. This review is followed by a critique of the perspectives implied by these researchers, and a proposal for an alternative mode of investigation which is adopted for the empirical component of the study. The thesis task is no longer to deduce what 'value' children are to parents, but is an inductive one, to find what their meaning is, and how this might be known.

CHILDREN

And a woman who held a babe against her
bosom said, Speak to us of Children.
And he said:
Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's
longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you yet they belong
not to you.

You may give them your love but not your
thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek not
to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor carries with
yesterday.
You are the bows from which your children as
living arrows are sent forth.
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the
infinite, and He bends you with His might that
His arrows may go swift and far.
Let your bending in the Archer's hand be for
gladness;
For even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He
loves also the bow that is stable.

(SOURCE: Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In New Zealand almost all adults, sooner or later, 'have' children.¹ Usually people not only want to and expect to have a child, but they also have more than one. They also expect other adults to have, and want to have, children. People do not appear to see any need to explain these expectations: they are taken for granted. To many, the question "why have children?" is unanswerable.

In population studies, however, various researchers have attempted to answer this question. Answers have been sought in order to explain both individual fertility (in demographic terms expressed as, for instance, 'completed family size') and group fertility (expressed as, for example, population 'birth rate'). In particular, people who have the technical facility, as abortion or contraception, to limit their fertility are assumed to persist in having children because they consciously and deliberately choose to do so, or at least do not choose not to. To such people children are assumed to be more than simply an unintended by-product of sexual intercourse.

Explanations of fertility now commonly focus on what is termed the 'value' of children. The question asked is, in effect, "what value do children have, that people apparently choose to have them?". The question is stated explicitly by

1. Footnotes to Chapter 1 are placed at the end of the chapter, p 13.

demographers, psychologists and economists, but has also been implied in the work of historians and sociologists who were not necessarily concerned with population explanations. As a consequence of the varied intellectual traditions of these disciplines, the researchers have adopted somewhat different perspectives and offered different understandings to explain why people have children.

For example, when historians describe the 'family life' of early man they tend to invoke what demographers² would term a 'utility' argument of fertility to explain, not why parents chose to have children, but rather why they did not choose to kill or abandon those that were born to them. Why did prehistoric, nomadic peoples nurture helpless children? With almost naive simplicity, Greenleaf (1978: 1), for instance, answered that as a gatherer man could be helped by small children, and only when he became a hunter did a division of labour arise whereby children were given over to the care of women. Similarly, referring to the period of early agriculture, Kay (1972: 44) wrote, "More food meant more children. More children meant more hands to cultivate the land. Children, and the female who produced them, were priceless assets."

Other meanings might be derived from folk history, mythology and the sayings attributed to people who lived many years ago. The philosopher Gibran, for instance, wrote that children "are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself" (see page xix). By contrast there are biblical grounds to a political rationale to childbearing, as in Psalm 127:

Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit
of the womb is his reward.
As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are
children of the youth

or in the injunction of Genesis 1:

Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,
and subdue it (emph. added).

Similarly, in Sparta the "sole object" of marriage is said to have been to produce healthy male children, to be bred as warriors; daughters and sickly sons were often left to die or were killed by their mothers (Kay: 58,59). In early Rome parents were paid to keep children alive in order to replenish a dwindling population (de Mause 1974: 28). Even in 18th century France the birth of a boy was heralded as "another new defender for the country", while peasants did not include daughters in the 'count' of their children (Robertson 1974: 409-410). We are led to believe then that from early times there was an explicit 'population policy': children, especially sons, were economic assets to the individual parent and political assets to the state.

Another 'use' of children which might be considered is their religious significance. Children represented fertility and, as Cupid, sexual love. They thus embodied the supernatural. In Greece and Rome people believed in gods to protect their children. But children were also sacrificed to the gods in various cultures - as in the biblical reference to a ram being substituted for Isaac. The ultimate sacrifice was to offer one's eldest son, indicating more precisely the importance of that child to his father, rather than any assumed importance to the god.

Historians have also noted contradictory meanings ascribed to children³. For instance, it has been suggested that high infant mortality in 18th century Europe meant that since children were so often ephemeral they received little emotional 'investment' from their parents. Stone (1977: 81) considered that indifference or neglect by many parents was induced by poverty or ignorance; while neglect led to high mortality, it was also caused by it. The expendibility of children was evidenced by the practice of giving the same name to more than one child in a family (op.cit: 70, 409).

On the other hand, this wastage and misery is said to have caused thinking people (influenced by Rousseau's Emile of 1762) to care more for their young. To some extent the 'scientific' attitude of the late 18th century, combined with an environmentalist tabula rasa notion of a child, led men to nurture and train their children as they would their domestic animals. Intellectuals, concerned with 'progress', considered the education and care of children to be a means of achieving this (Robertson 1974: 407).

Historians have also noted the incidence of child labour and it might be tempting to cite this as a 'use' of children. Folk sayings indicate that idleness was one of the seven deadly sins and, worse, there was the belief that the devil found work for idle hands to do. Thus it was that everyone, small children included, had work to do, the work being appropriate to the particular family's livelihood. Work was a way of life. It would be erroneous to cite this as some discrete economic 'value' of children⁴.

Cast in the scientific, pragmatic idiom of our time, it is perhaps not so surprising that the historical accounts appear to place so much emphasis on economic, or 'utility' values of children. But this is an historical legacy, not of fact but of interpretation.

A different perspective on the economic utility of children might be found in Marxist writings. Marxist thought epitomizes children as property and labour power. In The German Ideology, for instance, Marx referred to the first form of property "which lies in the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband. This latent slavery in the family, though still very crude, is the first property, but even at this early stage it corresponds perfectly to the definition of modern economists who call it the power of disposing of the labour-power of others." (1845, transl. 1964: 159-160) In the Communist Manifesto Marx and Engels specified the

development of this division of labour under capitalism:

The bourgeois clap-trap about the family and education, about the hallowed co-relation of parent and child, becomes all the more disgusting, the more, by the action of Modern Industry, all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labour. (1888 edition, ed. Tucker 1978: 487-488).

Less dogmatic Marxist philosophy retains an economic perspective, as indicated by Minge-Kalman (1978: 457):

The difference in the treatment of children between preindustrial and industrial societies is more than a change in child socialization mores or in family sentiment. It is a consequence of fundamental differences in the family's economic relation to preindustrial society on the one hand and industrial society on the other.

Contemporary feminists also imply an economic 'value' of children when they refer to women as "reproducers of labour" - not just as rejuvenators of existing labour (husbands) but as producers of future labour (children).

These two examples of perspectives on children illustrate the mode of economic conceptualisation employed in explanations of the 'value', or 'use' of children. However, other attributes have also been implied: religious and political significance, connotations of adulthood and immortality. Such attributes are subsumed in contemporary demographic research under the title of 'value' of children, but often receive less attention than do economic characteristics. It is argued in this thesis that such an orientation reflects not so much the understandings of the parents of these children, but rather the perspectives of the researchers investigating and describing them.

The historical descriptions and the Marxist interpretations

illustrate the various meaning constructions employed by researchers in understanding children. They have also introduced to this discussion the kinds of qualities imputed to children which might be categorized under the label of 'value' of children. Thirdly, they have raised the question of whose construction of reality we are referring to when we talk about child 'value'.

These issues form the basis of the present research exercise. The study focusses on the following questions, each of which is implicit in the title of the thesis:

(a) What 'is' the notion called 'value' of children? That is, on the one hand, what meaning is imputed to the notion of 'value' by researchers, and on the other hand, what are the understandings which everyday people have about children and activities to do with children?

(b) Are these constructs of 'value' or meaning of the same order; do subjects and researchers understand the same meaning by these constructs?

(c) How might a phenomenon such as 'child value', which has hitherto been objectified as an 'intervening variable' in mechanically-defined demographic processes, be studied? Is it appropriate to apply an attitude of mind which "treats social facts as things"⁵? If not, then what alternative perspective might be adopted? How might the ideas implied in the researcher's notion of 'child value' be studied within a framework derived from interpretive sociology?

To answer these questions one must first recognise that the research process is itself a social construction, with its own assumptions and 'background expectancies'. To elaborate on this, Kuhn's notion of a "paradigm" is adopted, the paradigm being an "accepted model or pattern" (Kuhn 1962: 23). The

foci which Kuhn nominated as "normal" for factual scientific investigation are shared by most demographic researchers, including value of children researchers:

1. significant facts, with an emphasis on accuracy of observation (eg number of children; expenditure per child),
2. other facts which might be relevant, though not of intrinsic interest to the problem (eg prevalence of formal education; religious beliefs),
3. empirical data to support the facts.

The "other facts" are required to relate the "significant facts" to existing theory (eg transition theory - see Chapter 4), while empirical work provides a basis for articulating the theory, permitting specification of universal laws or regularities, in the manner of physical science.

As Feyerabend has exemplified in his book Against Method (1975) this is not the only way of creating knowledge. Furthermore, the scientific paradigm is itself tautological since, as Feyerabend pointed out (p31), factual statements contain theoretical assumptions which might be quite abstract or even unrecognised - for example, the idea that number of children is an appropriate manner of documenting the changes implied by transition theory, or that it is expenditure per child which is a "significant fact" in computing child 'value'. Other assumptions relate to, for instance, the mode of 'counting' children (rates per 1000 females; male/female sex ratios, etc.) or cost (dollar values; deferred gratification; opportunity cost, etc.). The theoretical premises themselves determine the nature of the 'facts' which are sought to provide evidence for the theory.

When the paradigm is taken for granted, however, researchers

'know' they share a commitment to the same rules and standards of research practice, that there is consensus on the prerequisites for "the genesis and continuation of a particular research tradition" (Kuhn: 11). The rules are not just rules of technique or method, as suggested above, but involve also points of view or perspectives, the very grounds for knowledge itself. It is only when these 'rules' are challenged that the paradigm changes - the "revolution" to which Kuhn referred. The very possibility of such a revolution indicates that the 'rules' refer not to facts, but interpretations, that the research process and the concomitant paradigm for understanding the world are social constructions.

Rather than adopting one single paradigm, as proponents of the physical or natural science methodology tend to do, Feyerabend argued that a pluralistic methodology must be adopted in order to introduce other views, thereby "maximizing" the empirical content of the views already held. The scientist "must compare ideas with other ideas rather than with 'experience'" and in so doing will retain "old" theories, such as those from (for example) religion or myth, seeking to improve rather than reject them (p30)⁶. Knowledge, he wrote, is not a progressive journey towards some ultimate truth, but is an ever increasing set of alternative ideas about reality (ibid). Scientific theories are only one type of a whole variety of kinds of ideas. If one is to understand social meaning, then common sense ideas also must be heeded.

This thesis implies a questioning of the paradigm whereby contemporary researchers investigate and understand what they term the 'value' of a child. It is argued that many of the assumptions of the paradigm are a consequence of a research heritage of quantitative, economically-deterministic and policy-oriented investigations of demographic phenomena. Other assumptions derive from an orientation towards economic and psychological understandings, rather than sociological understandings. The ideas conveyed by recent 'value of

children' researchers have been implicit in earlier sociological discussions of fertility variation, but these have not always been made explicit to the reader. It is proposed that such ideas must be made explicit and, more importantly, an attempt must be made to uncover the social meaning to everyday people, as distinct from the meaning imputed to them by researchers from various disciplines.

A review of sociological research into fertility behaviour, in Chapter 2, provides a background to contemporary 'value-of-children' research. In this review three themes are specified, each of which is elaborated upon in following chapters. Firstly, social psychologists have extended early demographic variable analysis to include economic dimensions which, it is argued in Chapter 3, have been an important influence on both the conceptualisation of 'value' and the means whereby it has been investigated by recent researchers. Secondly, some sociologists have adopted a structural-functionalist perspective on fertility behaviour. This is exemplified by demographic transition theory, discussed in Chapter 4, as a quasi-theoretical justification for a pragmatic approach to value of children studies, where 'value' is conceived of as an 'intervening variable' in fertility. Thirdly, a few sociologists have attempted to use interpretive procedures to discover the social meaning of children. Two attempts to do this are also discussed in Chapter 4. It is concluded that although these latter studies have added considerable understanding to a hitherto artificial interpretation of 'value', they are not entirely successful in revealing understanding from the everyday, commonsense, perspective. This is partly a consequence of the policy-orientation of some research, whereby attributes which can be manipulated to achieve desired fertility outcomes have been sought. Consistent with this orientation is the employment of methods of measurement, aggregation and correlation which, while being purported to 'explain' fertility variations, in practice have obscured how these come about. It is pertinent to observe that

most quantitative studies have been concerned with the numbers of children people have, rather than with why they have any at all, thereby implying the assumption which is questioned in this thesis, that is, why do people have any children?

The failure of researchers to convey everyday understanding is also considered to be a consequence of their construction of 'social context', which might bear little resemblance to the social situation in which people find themselves when reflecting on their own fertility behaviour. These problems, which are among those outlined in Chapter 5, are considered to be consistent with the application of a research paradigm which resembles that of the physical or natural sciences (measurement and correlation, or structural-functionalism). The conclusions reached from the methodological evaluations documented in Chapter 5 add support to the hypothesis offered in the first half of this chapter, viz that the research 'findings' often represent the perspective of the researcher, rather than the researched.

From these conclusions the next thesis task is produced: what methods are appropriate for studying what 'value' children have to everyday people? How do we find out what 'value' means to them? It is argued that the term 'value' is inappropriate. Adopting a different kind of perspective, it is proposed that 'value' be reconceptualised as the 'meaning' of children to everyday people. Axiomatically, 'meaning' is subjective. It is not an empirically observable fact, in the physical-science sense, and the positivist paradigm is inappropriate. Given that there can be no objective knowledge of 'meaning', the challenge is to explore how the researcher might gain access to meaning and come to understand it. It is proposed that the meaning of children is socially formed and is located in a context of interaction with and about children by people in the world. It is their means of making sense of their fertility, their own paradigm of understanding. Chapter 6 presents a consideration of possible strategies for discovering what

children mean to people in the everyday world, as distinct from what they might mean to researchers viewing the world 'objectively' or 'scientifically'.

The theoretical discussion of Part One provides a background for the empirical investigation discussed in Part Two. In the investigation of New Zealand pakeha (European) subjects the perspectives applied were derived from both positivist and interpretive traditions. These perspectives are presented initially as alternative points of view, but as the research activity itself proceeded the understandings gained tended increasingly to support earlier conclusions that 'value' of children could not be objectified as some discrete, extrinsic quality of children. Indeed, where discrepancies are documented between the 'results' of an 'objective' questionnaire survey, on the one hand, and of interpretive analysis of informal discussions on the other, they tend to confirm that these two modes of making sense of social phenomena are of quite different orders of understanding. In Feyerabend's terms, they represent different "kinds" of ideas.

The practical investigation was carried out in the cultural context of 'knowledge' about New Zealand families which was shared by the researcher with the subjects. This 'cultural context' complements the research context. Both are described in Chapter 7. The following chapters of Part Two are discussions of analyses which focussed on selected issues pertaining to children. These topics are not exhaustive, but have been selected to illustrate how people might be understood to make sense of having children. The topics are specified in chapters which refer to family, continuity and immortality, biology, economics, parenthood and childlessness.

A summary of, and conclusion from, this New Zealand research form Part Three of the thesis. It is suggested that the 'meaning' of children might be accessed through an understanding of people's ideas of social and biological order;

it is reflected in tensions and ambivalences pertaining to children. 'Meaning' of children is defined subjectively and given expression within the social constructions of family, parenting and biology. This concluding chapter specifies an interpretive methodology for studying value of children. It is considered appropriate that the 'last word' in this thesis is not what 'value' of children 'is', or why people have children, but rather how this might be known. The final argument is a proposal for a phenomenological approach to studying what the 'value' of children means, to researchers and to everyday people, who share a common world.

Notes to Chapter 1.

1. See Chapter 7.
2. Throughout this thesis the term "demographer" or "demography" is used to refer to the student, or study, of population, whether the researcher is considered an economist, sociologist, psychologist or, in some cases, statistician.
3. The activities of children themselves are seldom stated explicitly in historical accounts of ancient societies. Written history records public, not private, events. Children would have been in the background, not the foreground, of such events. In The World We Have Lost (1965) Laslett described this situation:

These crowds and crowds of little children are strangely absent from the written record, even if they are conspicuous enough in the pictures painted at the time, particularly the outside scenes. There is something mysterious about the silence of all these multitudes of babies in arms, toddlers and adolescents in the statements men made at the time about their own experience. Children appear, of course, but so seldom and in such an indefinite way that we know very little about child nurture in preindustrial times We do not even know for certain how babies were carried about. It is in fact an effort of the mind to remember all the time that children were always present in such numbers in the traditional world, nearly half the whole community living in a condition of semi-oblivation. (p109-111).

Stone (1973: 63) however remarked,

It is commonly supposed that pre-modern homes were swarming with children. This is an illusion derived from a number of striking but in fact exceptional examples. the normal reality was very different.

4. This "work" includes the education of wealthier children for 'suitable' marriage partners. Tucker (1974: 246-7) noted that by the 18th century most aristocratic children went to school or, more often in the case of girls, received education at home. Poor children, however, worked in the workshop, home or the fields. Stone claimed to have found sufficient evidence to indicate that rather than wanting to have many children in order to provide labour, the poor resented large numbers of children, regarding children as not much more

than "either impediments to the earning capacity of the wife, or hungry mouths to be got rid of as soon as possible. ... For those without property, security or prospects children were often an unmitigated nuisance" (op.cit: 470-471).

5. Durkheim, 1982 edition, p32. See Chapter 2.
6. To illustrate, Feyerabend cited Chinese herbal medicine and acupuncture, once rejected by 'scientific' medicine as imposed by western (medical and political) practitioners, but more recently re-accepted with a view to understanding these as alternative ideas which do 'work'. How this traditional medicine is being reincorporated into 'scientific' medicine reflects the persistence of western 'scientific' medicine as the 'correct' paradigm. (see p50-52)

PART ONE

... Where do you look and how do you start a process of rethinking? New ideas are usually presented as if they emerge fully grown from the mind of the inventor; but while logical coherence is a condition of communication it is rarely a circumstance of invention.

(Piepe 1971: 1).

Chapter 2

SOCIOLOGY AND FERTILITY: A BACKGROUND TO CONTEMPORARY VALUE-OF-CHILDREN STUDIES.

2.1 Introduction

"Considered as a branch of sociology", wrote Davis, "the study of population is peculiar" (1959: 309). The peculiarity Davis referred to reflects the variety of assumptions, or 'background expectancies', of researchers whose professional allegiances span a number of disciplines and whose modes of thought therefore reflect a variety of intellectual traditions. As a "branch" of sociology, however, it is argued in this thesis that the study of population is grounded firmly in the tradition of positivism, whereby population phenomena are believed to be observed objectively and treated quantitatively¹. Whether the orientation of the researchers is towards sociological, economic, psychological or biological interests, their tendency is to treat "demography" as a science², characterised by both the mathematical techniques and the quest for law-like generalisations which are 'appropriate' to the physical sciences.

Fertility researchers are concerned, primarily, with explaining differences in fertility levels or patterns. This thesis is not concerned with the establishment of such regularities or differences per se, nor with correlations of fertility with patterns of contraceptive use (etc.) or 'social'

1. Footnotes to Chapter 2 are placed at the end of the chapter, p 38.

characteristics such as education or income levels. It is argued that such correlations do not 'explain' except in a simple or general way. Rather, a different order of explanation is sought, which reflects the social meaning of fertility behaviour. In conventional demography this approach is most closely approximated by studies of the 'value' of children.

This chapter is intended to provide one kind of sociological context for current value-of-children research. Assuming that 'value' of children is a social phenomenon, one might view this research context in two ways. First, one might ask how 'value' has been given a distinctly social meaning or whether other meanings have been imputed to it, and one might ask what the research traditions are which have provided the background to these investigations. Secondly, one might emphasize the social context, rather than the research context. This would be to ask what researchers mean by 'social context': is this a totality of social relationships which constitute the subject's world, or is it the sum of some social 'correlates' which the researcher has defined? To answer these questions it is appropriate to explore the methodological traditions in sociology which might be applied to the study of such phenomena as the 'value' of children.

The research to be discussed in this chapter has been selected as an illustration of the types of investigation and modes of thinking which might have contributed to the 'background expectancies' of contemporary value-of-children researchers. In keeping with the intellectual orientations of the present thesis, the studies discussed here are limited to those commonly labelled as sociological. The influence of other intellectual traditions (psychology and economics) is discussed in Chapter 3.

2.2 Social Variables, Social Context and Fertility Analysis: A Background to Value-of-Children Research.

Although the fertility investigations to be discussed in this thesis have been carried out in various cultural situations, by researchers of a range of different nationalities, most reflect the tradition of population study usually identified with American demography. This tradition involves, in particular, large-scale survey research and somewhat ambitious long-term projects. The beginning of this tradition most commonly cited is the Indianapolis Study of Social and Psychological Factors Affecting Fertility, begun in 1938³.

It is instructive to consider why such a survey should have been instigated. In the early 1930s academic and political concern had centred on the declining birth rates experienced in western countries. This decline had been 'explained' by associated trends in, for example, urbanisation, class mobility, and the "loss of family functions" (Davis: 317). The focus had been at the aggregate, or "macro", level of analysis. But with the upswing in fertility in the late 1930s it was realised that the same people who had deferred births in the earlier years, thereby contributing to an overall fertility decline, might now be contributing to the apparent increase. As a consequence of this new research perception, the attention of later researchers shifted from current to cumulative fertility measures, from cross-sectional to parity and cohort analysis, and from aggregate or "macro" level trends to individual or "micro" level experiences. At the outset, however, analysis was to incorporate the study of 'attitudes' and 'motives' and attempts to determine reproductive intentions. Factors labelled 'social-psychological' became an intrinsic component of fertility analysis, in recognition that

...each birth occurs in and is influenced by a different set of circumstances, and each child alters the family's situation and so affects the probability and timing of future births.

(Davis: 318-9).

The Indianapolis study was intended to go beyond official statistics "to probe the social and psychological structure of fertility" (Bumpass and Westoff, 1970: 50).

Westoff et al (1961) characterised the Indianapolis study as the first "to open the door to knowledge of the cultural and motivational variables underlying contraceptive practice and family size" (p6). The survey was followed some twenty years later by two projects which eventually provided direction for a wide range of fertility research, the 1955-1970 Growth of American Families and National Fertility Studies,⁴ and the 1957-67 Family Growth in Metropolitan America Study (Princeton Study)⁵. While the Growth of American Families (GAF) study was concerned primarily with establishing regularities or parameters of, eg, incidence of sterility, contraceptive use, etc, in order to predict aggregate fertility levels on a national scale, the Princeton study was focussed on hypotheses regarding variations in fertility and the correlates of these for some highly specialized samples. That is, the GAF study was descriptive but the Princeton researchers sought explanation.

The importance of these three projects to the present research is that they all incorporated what were termed 'social and psychological' or 'social-psychological' variables in their analyses, representing "a radical departure from the traditional concerns of demography" in that a shift from a macro to a micro orientation was implied (Westoff et al 1963: 237)⁶. In order to elucidate what these 'variables' referred to, reference is made to the analysis of religious differentials in fertility documented in The Third Child, the second report of the Princeton Study.⁷

In the first phase of the Princeton Study religious preference (affiliation) was determined to be the best single predictor of desired family size (Westoff et al 1963: 79). The second

study included an attempt to explain the connections between religion, construed as a 'social' variable, and fertility, a demographic variable, by the analysis of correlations of fertility with religious affiliation and "religiousness" (religiosity). So defined, religious affiliation is what demographers call a 'social correlate', an objectified characteristic or attribute which is a proxy for a particular set of beliefs and ideas: people are or are not Catholics, Presbyterians, Jews etc. By contrast, religiousness was a constructed index, which incorporated both formal religious behaviour (such as church attendance, or whether the couple were married by a minister) and informal religious behaviour (such as the extent to which religion was included in home activities, and the respondent's self-rating on a scale of "religious mindedness" (p92)). Religiousness might therefore be termed a sociological variable, a proxy for an action component of the social context in which fertility decisions were assumed to take place. One further aspect of religion was investigated, an aspect which, one might suspect, researchers thought would provide the 'link' between the previous two variables. They asked respondents for their perceptions of their church's stand on family size and on birth control. These questions, phrased as,

As far as you know, does your religion take any stand on size of family/birth control or family planning? What? (p83).

were intended to reflect the "subcultural normative systems" operating on fertility (p237). The results, however, served to confuse, rather than elucidate, the original correlation between fertility and religion⁸. To explain the discrepancies, other 'social variables', such as socio-economic status, ethnic origin and the incidence of Catholic school education, were incorporated into the analysis.

The Princeton investigators also included in their analysis a category called "personality variables". These were individual

psychological characteristics: generalized manifest anxiety, nurturance needs, ability to delay gratification of impulses, self-awareness, compulsiveness, ambiguity tolerance, cooperativeness and need achievement (p242). Later researchers might have heeded the authors' discussion of the lack of any "significant correlations" of these with fertility or fertility planning:

It is not clear whether this negative result is due to the difficulties of measuring the personality dimensions or to the lack of validity of our initial hypotheses. (ibid).

Although discussion of personality variables occupied little space in the report, their inclusion in the survey became a forerunner to more elaborate psychological research into "mentally-oriented events", which included 'needs', 'motives' etc, in the late 1960s and 1970s (ESCAP Secretariat 1981: 4).

In the context of the present research a third issue investigated during the Princeton Study must also be mentioned: "social relationships within the family". Including aspects of "relationships and attitudes" to do with marital and parental roles, liking for and problems with children, social participation, wife's employment, etc. (Westoff et al 1963: 242), this topic bears some resemblance to the variables subsumed under the more recent term 'value of children'. Indeed, the Princeton authors referred specifically to "fertility as a value" and "attitudes towards children" (p187). But because only "weak" associations of family relationships with fertility were found (p177), discussion of these is limited. As with their personality variables, the authors acknowledged that the failure to explicate any impact of the familial context on fertility was at least in part methodological:

The hoped-for evidence did not materialize in sufficient strength for any one or more of reasons such as poor measurement, invalid hypotheses, or complexity of the

phenomenon. ... Until nagging questions pertaining to the validity of measures are answered or until some radical departure is introduced, there seems to be little point to further investigations in these areas of family relationships and fertility. (pp 184, 197).

The Princeton example has been cited in some detail in order to illustrate the complexity and equivocal nature of social-psychological variable analysis. It is pertinent to note that while the researchers, for practical reasons (questionnaire survey research) disaggregated 'social context' into particular variables or correlates such as socio-economic status, residence, religion, family relationships etc, these factors were reintegrated in attempts to explain the observed differentials of fertility behaviour. Multivariate analysis indicates which factors account for, in a probabilistic sense, fertility variance by revealing relative differences in 'loading factors'. Such techniques are important in indicating the relative importance of possible explanatory factors, but they do not of themselves provide explanation⁹. Although the Princeton study represents a serious attempt to incorporate a social context into the analyses, the context referred to is a synthetic one. It comprizes an aggregate of empirically observable factors or characteristics¹⁰ which are treated independently of the individuals who are reputed to 'have' them. Analyses indicate correlations between social and demographic factors, but they do not indicate how these correlations come about, or how they are perceived (if they are perceived at all) by respondents. As the Princeton authors were aware, such explanations would require a different form of analysis.

A study of the familial context would, presumably, help fill this analytic void. Drawing attention to the inadequacies of some of the large surveys conducted outside America prior to the mid 1950s, Davis suggested one must go to the people being studied, to learn what is relevant to study. Qualitative analysis, though time-consuming, might provide the answer

(Davis: 324).

It is perhaps surprising that population researchers have not used qualitative analysis as a mode of investigation more whole-heartedly than the literature suggests. The term "qualitative" is commonly employed to refer to phenomena which can be identified by the researcher as present but which are not numerate or measurable. Davis, however, was referring to a perspective derived from a particular tradition of sociological thought, a perspective which focusses on interpretations and meanings, rather than regularities and correlations. The perspective was not new to sociologists (see section 2.3 below), but it apparently was new to demographers. The potential of such a perspective is found in the work of Rainwater, reported in And The Poor Get Children 1960.¹¹

Rainwater's intention was to study "the background of social and psychological factors which influence the ways in which working class people think about family planning and contraception" (1960: 6). The study was to be an extension of an earlier investigation of various aspects of working class life. Thus far his aims appear little different from those of the major survey researchers. But Rainwater's method, and his rationale for this method, indicate a rather different perspective. What people do, he wrote, is not enough to understand their behaviour. That is, one needs to understand the meaning people impute to their behaviour. Rainwater attempted to understand his subjects' fertility behaviour by employing "intensive conversational depth interviews". Several fertility-related topics were introduced systematically by the interviewer but then "the respondents were encouraged to talk freely and to discuss whatever seemed relevant after a general topic had been raised" (p187).

Although the small sample size (100 respondents) might be considered to diminish the utility of Rainwater's data for comparative or quantitative analysis of the type possible for

the large questionnaire surveys previously discussed, the study had other, different, strengths. The understandings he drew from the conversations, as communicated in his book, enable the reader to begin to understand why "the poor get children", not simply in terms of contraceptive practice or religious or education (etc.) differentials, but in terms of the cultural 'knowledge' and social understandings those individuals employed in living their lives. Examples of this 'knowledge' and understandings abound in Rainwater's book. He wrote, for instance, of "the naturalness of having many children and the artificiality of having few", illustrated by comments that women who want only one child are "very selfish or very sick" (p55). He discussed the difficulty some people experienced in coping with the very idea of family planning: family planning was "simply another facet of a world seen as chaotic, difficult to understand, and very difficult to master in a personally effective way" (p59). Concepts of "good husband" and "good wife" revealed understandings about marital, and especially sexual, relationships (p67) and ideas of "good father" and "good mother" indicate the nature of parents' relationships with their children, and with each other with respect to their children, (p87-91). Rainwater's reference to 'meaning' has particular significance for this thesis. He wrote,

Two aspects of being a parent are important in connection with family planning: the meaning of the biological fact of becoming a parent, and the meaning and function of children in the lives of their parents. (p81-82).

The first meaning, he wrote, was to do with one's perception of being a man or woman, the second with one's identity as a father or mother as "defined in action" (ibid). Furthermore, referring specifically to "The Value and Function of Children", Rainwater wrote,

Once children have arrived they take on different meanings; they come to be individuals to whom one must relate and whose independent existence must be taken into account in the way the husband and wife live. The

relatively simple meanings which having children represent become much more complex as the children become psychosocial realities as well as biological events. (p86, orig. emph).

Rainwater's work has indicated an alternative perspective which might be applied in studying fertility variation, or 'value' of children. It is argued in this thesis that the notion of 'value' is inappropriate for understanding the meaning people give to children and to their actions to do with children. As Rainwater recognized, meaning is associated with action and is sustained by everyday talk. This dimension to value-of-children research has been incorporated into recent research (see Chapter 4) and is made explicit in the present study.

Some of the concepts used in the Indianapolis study were taken up anew in the World Fertility Study¹² of the 1970s. The World Fertility Survey was explicitly concerned with the 'value' of children as an aspect of fertility analysis.

The World Fertility Survey (WFS) was aimed in the first instance at eliciting data on pregnancy history, family planning practice and a range of 'socio-cultural' variables (such as urban/rural residence status, ethnicity, household 'type', literacy rates). The survey also provided for the inclusion of specific modules pertaining to other aspects of fertility behaviour. One of these was an economic module, developed by Deborah Freedman and Eva Mueller (1974a, 1974b). The module had three components: family income, asset holdings and the economic costs and benefits of children. The latter component was to "obtain information about the effect of children on the family's economic situation", controlled for economic status (1974a: 5).

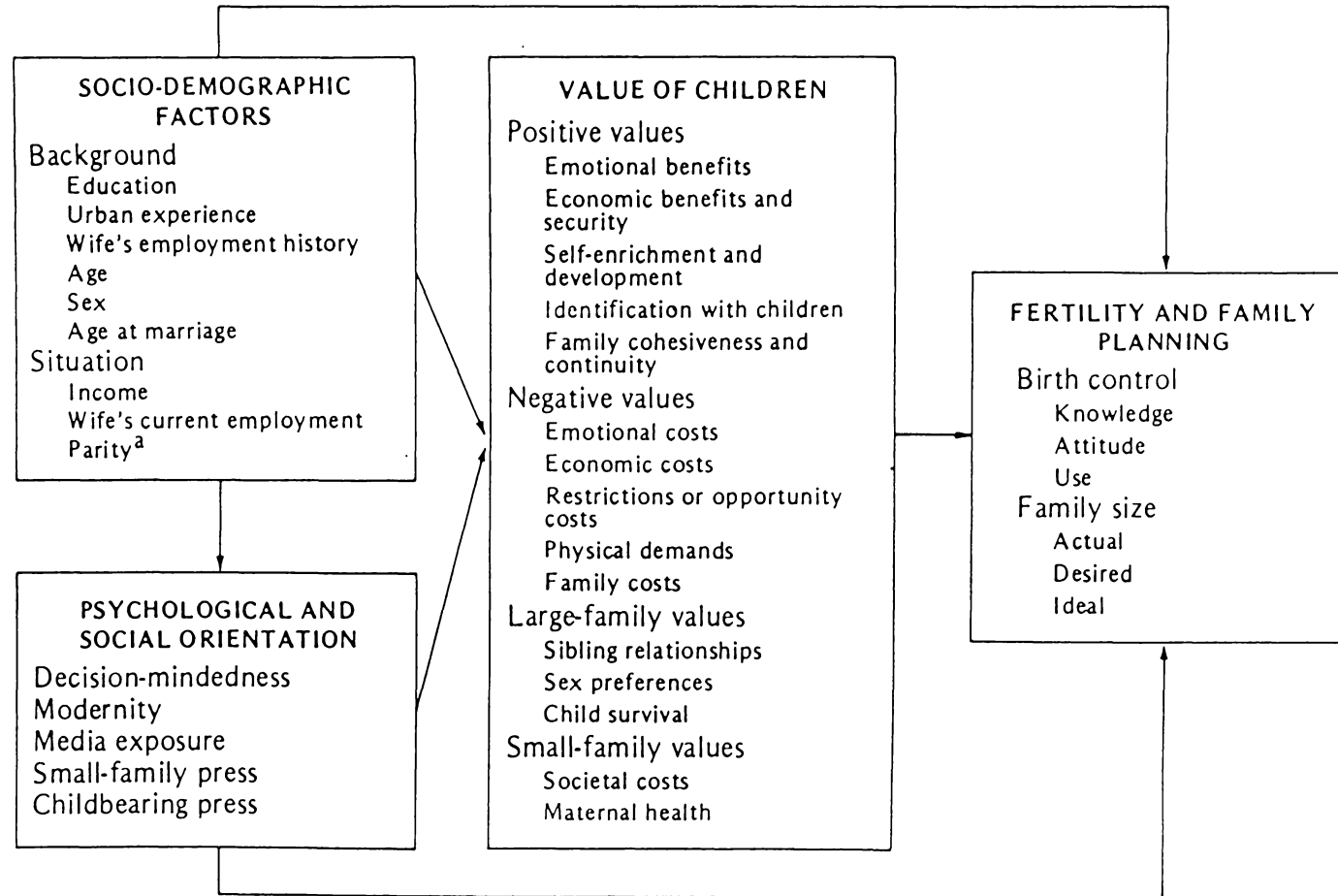
The rationale behind this module was to consider the family as an economic entity. While economic data were to be used as controls for other fertility differentials (education, occupation, etc.) the questions on costs and benefits of

children were also intended to elucidate how economic parameters influence fertility. There were distinct policy implications to this approach.¹³ The rationale given at the time of their proposal was cast in an idiom which became familiar in Value-of-Children studies:

Couples want children because they derive pleasure from them as well as economic benefits. Raising children also involves costs for parents. In developed countries, children rarely are a net economic asset since their cost exceeds any contribution they might make to their parents. In LDC (Less Developed Countries) children can be an important asset to parents, as a source of labour, financial assistance and care in old age. (1974b: 16, parenth. added).

Questions in the module referred to child's education costs, cost of forgone ability to work due to child care, incidence of child labour, financial assistance, support in old age, and also questions about the advantages of large and small families. Maintenance costs of children were not sought. Although the questions emphasized monetary (or proxy-monetary) dimensions of cost and benefit, the authors also implied different dimensions: that mothers care for children, that goods and services might be sacrificed in order to support children (implying a perception of preference), and that prevention of births also involves costs. They attempted to distinguish "realized" and "expected" costs and benefits and introduced a notion of "marginal utility" of additional children (1974a: 43-44; 37). An economic idiom of thought was thus imputed into the fertility behaviour of people. The WFS had a clearly defined 'value-of-children' module.

The most explicit development of the value-of-children idea in recent research has been made by psychologists - in particular by Hoffman and Hoffman (1973) and by those who formulated the East-West Crossnational Study which began in 1972 and continues now in many countries¹⁴. Extending the focus from purely economic connotations of 'cost' and 'benefit' to include psychological and socio-cultural dimensions, the value of



a Parity may be considered a situational variable or a family-size variable, but not both at the same time.

Fig. 2.1 Conceptual Model For The Value-Of-Children.

(Source : Arnold et al 1975 : 8).

children aim, "to link social and economic change to fertility decision-making" (Simmons 1977: 158), remains similar to that of the large surveys of the 1950s. Given that these psychologists acknowledged the multifaceted nature of 'satisfactions' and 'costs' of children (Arnold et al 1975), including the range of dimensions shown in Fig 2.1, it seems curious that their concepts and methodologies appear much more closely aligned to those of economists than sociologists. Reference was made to the functions of children documented in anthropological literature, and to the use of "satisfactions and costs of children ... as a partial explanation for the demographic transition" by sociologists and demographers (op.cit; 3, 4) but at the time of the project's inception "it was the work of economists that was primarily associated with the value of children" (p4). The implications of this alignment with the concepts and modes of analysis of economists are discussed in Chapter 3.

Sociologist-demographers¹⁵ have continued to investigate income as a perceived (by researchers) fertility variable, even if sometimes claiming it to be a proxy for non-numerate variables such as 'status' or 'class'. However these are aggregate level correlations between income level and fertility behaviour. The literature suggests that at the micro level the idea of 'value' of a child as represented by some monetary or financial (services, labour etc.) cost or benefit might even be repugnant to some sociologists. Blake, for instance, in criticising the economists' approach to fertility decision-making (see Chapter 3) asked "Are babies consumer durables?" (1968). Blake was a researcher of a rather different tradition that was developing in fertility research, a tradition which was shared by Davis and is reflected in his criticism of the failure of many surveys to offer data for useful analyses of decision-making or for predictions of fertility behaviour:

Thinking of themselves as dealing with attitudes and motives and thus as being in a realm called 'social-psychology', the investigators have sometimes paid lip

service to 'the role of culture' and 'community values' but have actually been technically unaware of social structure. (p322).

"The connection between social organization and reproduction", he wrote, "is too close to be ignored" (p323).

This third tradition attempted to explain fertility within an institutional framework, thus acknowledging the total 'social context' referred to earlier. This perspective is explicitly structural-functional:

The sociological frameworks ... do seem to be 'functionalist' in tone and suggest at least a Weberian 'rationality'; that is, a reasoning from cause to effect by couples and societies and some purpose or direction to human activity. (Robinson and Harbison 1978: 12).

Structural-functional fertility analysis is perhaps best exemplified by the Davis-Blake model of fertility, whereby total group fertility is perceived as a consequence of individual actions which intervene in a biological process, reproduction. In analysing how institutional patterns affect the 'intervening variables' (intercourse, conception and gestation), the authors provided cross-cultural evidence of the effect of marriage and kinship systems, technology and 'the economy', and of institutionalized 'norms' on fertility. The functionalist argument was couched in such terms as,

Early marriage therefore represents the maximum possible hedge against the threat of failure in population replacement. ...The marital relation thus becomes a general norm in terms of which the hopes and expectations of virtually all individuals are channelized. (Davis and Blake 1956: 199, 203).

Only later, in his theory of change and response (see pages 82-83), did Davis suggest that these institutionalized mechanisms might be a consequence (rather than, or as well as, a cause) of individual perception and interpretation. The

perspective is focussed on the aggregate. Any interaction between the aggregate and the individual is loosely defined in terms of 'norms' or 'socialization' (Ryder 1978a), and even when specified in such frameworks as Ronald Freedman's "Sociological Model of Fertility" (1975) they remain a vague cultural catch-all of indeterminate social forces¹⁶.

The perspective is succinctly summed up by Ryder who, while acknowledging individual idiosyncracies of action and group membership, wrote,

Population replacement is a problem that requires an institutionalized solution. (1978a: 12-13).

The implications of structural analysis for value-of-children research are discussed in Chapter 4. However, an understanding of the relationships among individuals and the processes whereby the postulated consensus is reached, remains a significant omission in these sociological approaches to fertility. Even Caldwell (discussed in Chapter 4), who has done some of the most insightful research from a structural perspective in recent years, does not make explicit the formation and communication of these social understandings of fertility.

2.3 The Issue of Social Meaning in Value-of-Children Research: Sociological Interpretations.

The sociological perspective of fertility appears to involve that most commonly associated with Durkheim. Durkheim's objective was to use the methods of natural and physical science to study the phenomena of social life:

... our rule implies no metaphysical conception, no speculation about the innermost depth of being. What it demands is that the sociologist should assume the state of mind of physicists, chemists and physiologists when

they venture into an as yet unexplored area of their scientific field. ... He must feel himself in the presence of facts governed by laws as unsuspected as those of life before the science of biology was evolved. (Durkheim, Preface, 1982 edition, p37).

However, he recognized that phenomena such as beliefs and institutions (eg kinship 'systems') could not be observed as tangible material 'things' in the same way that natural phenomena could. To overcome this problem Durkheim attributed to such social phenomena the status of things: his "social facts"¹⁷.

Durkheim's "social facts" include ideas, language, rules 'norms', beliefs, customs, etc, the means by which people express meaning in their actions. They represent a synthesis, a "plurality of consciousness" (op.cit: 45); they are held to be external to people and, therefore, examinable. Social facts, Durkheim wrote,

reside in the society itself that produces them and not in its parts - namely its members. In this sense they lie outside the consciousness of individuals as such, in the same way as the distinctive features of life lie outside the chemical substances that make up a living organism. (op.cit: 39-40).

To Durkheim "society is thus a reality 'in itself' and 'social facts' exist 'in their own right' apart from manifestations of them by individuals" (Hughes 1980: 26). From his perspective, social facts are causally determined, rather than used or acted purposively; they are objective and any subjective recognition might be misleading.

Hence for Durkheim suicide, as a social fact, must be defined by objective, external characteristics. Social facts are to be explained by (caused by) other social facts (eg Protestant 'norms' - see Talcott Parsons 1968: 316). Cause could be established by comparative method (since in social life experiment, even if possible, would be unethical). Of

particular relevance to the present research is the use Durkheim made of statistics, as explanatory social facts par excellence.

Durkheim believed, on the basis of his theory of social reality, that "society" could be studied by using the methods of the natural sciences. To do this, and avoid the illusory nature of the common-sense world, the investigator must adopt an objective position, independent of and neutral to the world being studied. That this is a matter of perspective is made clear in his writing:

To treat facts of a certain order as things is therefore not to place them in this or that category of reality: it is to observe towards them a certain attitude of mind. (p32).

This "attitude of mind" would seem to be the perspective taken by most fertility researchers, whether of sociological, psychological or economic orientation. Some of the researchers discussed in the previous section, such as Rainwater, Blake and Caldwell, have certainly attempted to impute different "categories of reality" to their findings, but in the final analysis their interpretations are limited by their own research perspectives, or "attitude of mind".

The challenge of the present study is to offer an alternative perspective for value-of-children investigations. An interpretive perspective might provide the grounds for a different understanding. Hughes (p66-67) described early formulations of this perspective as follows:

Knowledge of persons could only be gained through an interpretive procedure grounded in the imaginative recreation of the experiences of others. History, society, indeed all human products, were seen as the objectifications of the human mind and not at all like material things. (Hughes: 66-67, parenthesis added).

In contrast to Durkheim, these researchers do not "treat social

facts as things". The world is not objective: it is subjective and symbolic. It follows that this world cannot be studied by the methods of natural or physical science. Notions of measurement and causation are inappropriate for the study of the emotions, feelings, ideas, beliefs and attitudes which imbue social acts with their meanings.

Considering the subjective nature of the world, Max Weber proposed the possibility of "interpretive understanding", the method of verstehen, as a means of studying human action¹⁸: "subjective understanding is the specific characteristic of sociological knowledge" (Weber 1971: 137). Weber dealt with 'objectivity' by relating it to subjective meaning. There is no "absolutely 'objective' scientific analysis of culture", he wrote, but rather subjective understandings which reflect a "value-orientation" towards events; our value-orientations determine for us which events are significant. Scientific laws, for instance, do not determine which events are significant - they are not reality, but only aids by which we can know reality. Rather, "all knowledge of cultural reality ... is always knowledge from particular points of view" (Weber 1949: 81, orig.emph.). In the words of later interpretive sociologists then, the significance of events is a matter of perspective, by implication subjective.

Weber explained how an event might be recognized as (subjectively) significant by reference to his "ideal-type". The ideal-type is a mental construct "arrived at by the analytic accentuation of certain elements of reality" (1949: 90) against which "the real situation or action is compared and surveyed for the explication of certain of its significant components" (1949: 93). The ideal-type is logically perfect but there is no moral injunction to aspire to it in reality.

The "ideal-type" was proposed as part of the method of sociology. Weber emphasized that it is the method, or evaluative ideas (the guiding point of view) of research which

is subjective; the results are not necessarily subjective. It would appear that knowledge may be considered 'objective' provided the subjective stance of the knower is stated (which it would be if an "ideal-type" is postulated). Weber argued that "objectivity depends on the relationship of empirical data to evaluative ideas" (1949: 111), or as Berger and Kellner more recently stated:

... objectivity means that the sociologist's conceptual schema is in a dialectical relationship with the empirical data. (1981: 49).

Where the Durkheimian tradition has emphasized observation of social acts, the Weberian tradition has emphasized understanding of social action and interaction. Weber's "social action" is meaningfully oriented to the past, present or expected future behaviour of others: it is purposive, whereas for Durkheim acts exist in and of themselves. Meaningful action implies subjective understanding. Acts and action in the Weberian sense might, therefore, be regarded as objective and subjective elements of the same behaviour¹⁹. When actors take account of the actions of others then a social relationship can be said to exist (1971: 141).²⁰

The development of Weberian sociology which is particularly relevant to Part Two of this thesis concerns the subjectivity of the social understandings of actors themselves. Unlike atoms or electric currents, the subjects of the social researcher (and the subjects' actions) have a meaning to themselves, as well as the researcher. Similarly, the researcher is subject to himself and to his subjects; no researcher, so far as we know, can be a subject to the atoms he studies. A single act of an individual might as physical action (like Durkheim's suicide) be described, counted or measured, but as a form of social action it also has subjective meaning to the subject and the researcher. Unlike the physical or natural scientist, the social researcher is one step removed from the field of his study: he must understand the subject's

understanding. Paradoxically, at the same time the research is part of this action: meanings do not exist in isolation, but in common communication. Meanings, like action, have a time dimension. "The main problem of social life", wrote Douglas and Isherwood, "is to pin down meanings so that they stay still for a little time. Without some conventional ways of selecting and fixing agreed meanings, the minimum consensual basis of society is missing" (1979: 63).

Application of an interpretive perspective to demographic phenomena would mean that they are not treated just as objective occurrences or behavioural episodes. Demographic phenomena, such as fertility, have subjective meanings to both observer and observed. Fertility might be understood, for instance, as 'having a family' or as providing 'old age security' at some anticipated date. To discover the meanings attributed to such phenomena by the people themselves, researchers might adopt a perspective which derives from a Weberian tradition in sociology. An attempt to do this is documented in Part Two of the present thesis.

2.4 Summary.

The research discussed in this chapter was intended to illustrate the sociological background to studies in the 'value' of children. Using the Indianapolis Survey as a starting point, three themes have been developed. The first of these grew out of the Growth of American Families study, which provided guidelines for large scale questionnaire type surveys. The World Fertility Survey is seen as an extension of this mode of research and has been referred to in order to illustrate the survey approach to investigating value of children. The "economic module" of the WFS showed not only how 'value' could be investigated, but also by implication what 'value' meant to researchers. The East-West Crossnational

survey, incorporating psychological and socio-cultural 'values' as well as economic ones, might be seen as the culmination of the survey approach (see Chapter 3).

The second theme discussed reflects the interests of the Princeton researchers. Emphasizing social context as some form of totality of social influences, sociologists of the structural-functional tradition have explained fertility by reference to institutions, systems, and processes such as socialization. The Davis-Blake model of fertility epitomizes this approach, as does the demographic transition model. The structuralist approach is also implicit in the work of Caldwell, and that of Nag et al. These perspectives are described in Chapter 4.

The third theme discussed in this chapter is seen as a reaction to the perceived inadequacies of data obtained from questionnaire techniques. Rainwater sought to uncover the social meanings which, he believed, underlay the fertility behaviour other researchers were interested in explaining. He attempted to do this by letting respondents speak for themselves, telling his interviewers what they, the respondents, thought was relevant to the research topics. Similar techniques were employed by Busfield and Paddon, and by the UPPI researchers referred to in Chapter 4 (4.4). While Rainwater's approach might be regarded as simplistic, given the methodological developments which have since taken place with respect to interpretive procedures (see Chapter 6), it is germane to the present research as a deviation from traditional methods and perspectives. Conversation analysis is a component of the procedure outlined in Chapter 7 of the thesis.

These three themes represent a heritage for contemporary research both in methods of data gathering and analysis, and in concepts. 'Value-of-children' research is characterised by methods, concepts and analytic frameworks which reflect a positivistic perspective, most clearly identified in sociology

with the theories of Durkheim. The research also has a multidisciplinary nature, incorporating the ideas of psychologists and economists, as well as those of sociologists. However, the researchers share a common perception of value as having connotations of 'cost' and 'benefit', as employed in the idiom of economics. Implications of this common perception are discussed in Chapter 3.

Sociological research on fertility has tended to emphasize the aggregate, being concerned with correlations of various variables which together are considered to constitute the 'social context' of fertility behaviour. Such a context, however, is an abstraction, and may bear little resemblance to the social situation in which subjects see themselves, the situation which helps form their ideas and guides their actions. Even those sociologists who have recognized the influence of relationships between individuals on their conception of the world, have tended to analyse these within frameworks which identify artificially-constructed 'institutions', 'norms', etc. The social meaning of these in fertility behaviour remains unexplored. It is suggested that, in order to discover the meaning that such actions as having children have for subjects of the research, a different research perspective should be adopted. This is an interpretive perspective, which derives from the theories of Max Weber. The practical component of the present research, documented in Part Two of the thesis, included an application of interpretive procedures to the topic of 'value' of children.

Notes to Chapter 2.

1. By convention, the beginnings of demography "as a science" (Mitchell 1968: 52) are attributed to John Graunt (1620-1674) who employed the medical and vital statistics available to him to deduce rates and ratios which supported a numerical regularity of vital events, thus laying the basis for the use of statistics as the modus operandi to provide 'factual' evidence for later demographers' interpretations of population change (see Graunt 1662). Graunt, and after him Gregory King (1684-1712), were referred to by Laslett (1977: 11) as not just demographers, "but also as economists and even as econometricians". King's computations provided the first link in research between population and economics with his calculation of the value of people in terms of consumption and production by age and sex (King 1804: 244, 245, 248). Other investigations carried out by King were probably used for estimating taxation yields, thus facilitating policy formulation (Laslett 1973).

In the context of the present thesis, the 'scientific' heritage of population studies had three particular characteristics: it was quantitative and concerned with establishing 'facts' which were regarded as independent of and external to the observer; it sought to connect population with economics, ie, with production and consumption; it was concerned with the policy of the state. As practical endeavours these investigations were indeed "political arithmetic". These intentions are exemplified in the work of Graunt and King, and also in the writings of Malthus (1798; 1803; 1817) a century later. David Landes noted,

By the late 18th century demography had assumed the shape that has prevailed to this day - that of a discipline combining increasingly sophisticated techniques of quantification with a core of theory that aims to relate the diverse statistical data. (1972: 23).

Further elaboration of the argument with respect to Graunt and King might be found in Glass 1953; 1965a; 1965b. For an overview of the present scope of "demography", see Davis 1959: 309-333; Hauser and Duncan 1959: 1-123 and a summary statement in Cox 1976: 1. The major developments of population theory this century are well summarized by Robinson (1964).

2. See Note 1. This categorization is exemplified by Davis:

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the major advances in the science of population have

come from improvements in the sources of information and in the techniques of analysis, rather than from broad interpretations. ... Despite the outpouring of books, pamphlets and articles on population theory ... it is hard to cite a single scientific advance since Malthus' day that this literature has contributed to the subject. (1959: 313).

3. Results of the Indianapolis study have been published as Social and Psychological Factors Affecting Fertility, Pascal Whelpton and Clyde Kiser (eds), by the Milbank Memorial Fund, New York, in 5 volumes: 1946, 1950, 1952, 1954 and 1958.

4. The Growth of American Families studies, 1955 and 1960 have been published as

Ronald Freedman, Pascal Whelpton and Arthur Campbell, Family Planning, Sterility and Population Growth, New York: McGraw Hill, 1959.

Whelpton, Campbell and John Patterson, Fertility and Family Planning in the United States, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966.

The study was continued as the National Fertility Study, 1965 and 1970, published as

Norman Ryder and Charles Westoff, Reproduction in the United States: 1965, Princeton: P.U.P., 1971.

Westoff and Ryder, The Contraceptive Revolution, Princeton: P.U.P., 1977.

5. Results of the Princeton Studies of 1957, 1960 and 1963-67 have been published as

Westoff, Robert Potter, Philip Sagi and Elliot Mishler, Family Growth in Metropolitan America, Princeton: P.U.P., 1961.

Westoff, Potter and Sagi, The Third Child - A Study in The Prediction of Fertility, Princeton: P.U.P., 1963

Larry Bumpass and Westoff, The Latter Years of Childbearing, Princeton: P.U.P., 1970.

6. This orientation is reflected in the introductory comments made by authors of both the GAF and Princeton studies:

This is a study of human fertility. Essentially it is a study of why American couples differ in the number of children they have. More specifically, this book reports the results of the first stage of research into social and psychological factors which are thought to relate to differences in fertility among American couples living in the largest metropolitan centres in the nation. (Westoff et al 1961: 1, Princeton Study, first report).

This book is about the attitudes and behaviour that determine the number of children born to married couples in the United States. (Whelpton et al 1966: 1, G.A.F. Study, second report.)

7. The Princeton researchers sought to overcome a major problem inherent in the Indianapolis study, viz that by collecting data in a cross-sectional survey the Indianapolis researchers had risked distortions due to faulty recall and post facto rationalizations, resulting perhaps in a confusion of the temporal sequence of events. The Princeton Study was, therefore, a longitudinal one, based on a 1956 2-child parity cohort in the largest metropolitan areas in the country (Bumpass and Westoff 1970: 5-7).
8. The results gave no evidence that the perceived higher fertility among Catholics than among people of other religions could be attributed to any conformity with perceived (by respondents) encouragement of higher fertility by the church (Bumpass and Westoff 1970: 86). The analysis did not contribute any clarification of fertility differentials by active religious affiliation. However, correlation of birth planning success with informal measures of religiousness supported a positive association for Protestants and Jews and a negative association for Catholics. The authors argued that these associations were consistent with "the moral theme of responsible parenthood" as well as a positive association of religiosity and socio-economic status for Protestants and Jews, and with the desire for larger families and doctrine against contraception for Catholics (p93).
9. Whelpton et al (1963) acknowledged this by placing quotation marks round the word "explain" (p209). The main objectives of multivariate analysis were listed by them as,
 - (1) to achieve a reduction in the number of dimensions (factors) necessary to "explain" fertility variation,
 - (2) to show how much of the variation of fertility is "explained" by the factors extracted,

- (3) to examine the factor structure underlying different aspects of fertility - eg, to what extent does a common factor underlie desired number of children, length of birth intervals, family-planning success, etc?
- (4) to compare the structure of factors affecting fertility for different dimensions of the explanatory factor (eg different religious groups). (ibid).

10. The distinction between a social factor, a social variable and a social correlate is primarily analytical. A social factor can be regarded as some social, as distinct from biological (etc.), characteristic; when this factor is a characteristic which varies, either for the individual (eg religiousness) or within the aggregate (eg religious affiliation), it is termed a variable; when the variable is expected, or discovered, to be associated with some other variable, whether positively or negatively, it is termed a correlate. These labels are thus analytic devices which convey to the investigator or reader an indication of the research context in which they are being discussed, ie, for what purpose they are introduced to the research process.
11. In his Preface to Rainwater's book, Stycos noted that the Indianapolis study, despite a questionnaire of over 1000 items and hundreds of pages of "often ingenious analysis", gave one the impression "that contraceptive practices have nothing to do with sexual relations" (pviii). While acknowledging some concern the Indianapolis researchers might have had about the sensitivity of respondents to questions about sexual matters (a problem not significant in later studies), Stycos's point was the matter of taking behaviour, namely contraceptive behaviour, out of context, and treating it in isolation from the behaviour and relationships to which it is relevant. It should be noted that Stycos's Family and Fertility in Puerto Rico was then the only published study comparable to Rainwater's investigation (px).
12. WFS manuals were used as source material for interviewer training for the ESCAP Survey (see Appendix V). Other manuals have been consulted with respect to conceptual problems of, eg, definitions of 'marriage' and to technical problems such as nonsampling errors and distorted age data. (See Caldwell 1973).
13. Policy might include, for instance, differential taxation by family size, child labour laws, provision of education facilities, provision of childcare, etc.

14. A list of current titles in the East-West Centre's "Current Studies on the Value of Children" is included in Appendix I. The Crossnational study has been implemented so far in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, Hawaii (Phase I); Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Turkey and mainland U.S.A. (Phase II); West Germany and Australia.
15. The rather clumsy^{ms} term is used to distinguish demographers of a sociological background from those previously discussed who were psychologists or economists.
16. See Robinson and Harbison 1978: 10. They quoted Freedman (1968: 5):
- The number of children a couple should have is a problem so universal and so important in every society that it would be a sociological anomaly if normative cultural solutions were not developed to meet this problem in most cases. (Robinson and Harbison: 11).
17. In The Rules of Sociological Method Durkheim stated this repeatedly. For instance, "The first and most basic rule is to consider social facts as things" (1982: 60, orig. emph.); "... social phenomena are things and should be treated as such" (p69); "The thing stands in opposition to the idea" (p35-36); "A social fact cannot be explained except by another social fact" (p162). See Chapter 5 for further elaboration.
18. See Chapter 6.
19. This differs from Schutz's definitions (to be discussed in Part Three), whereby an "act" was a completed "action", the two being in a dialectic relationship, since the meaning of an "action" was the projected completed "act". That is, act is an action becoming; action has a time dimension which act does not. (Natanson 1970: 104-5).
20. That is, a 'relationship' is now objectified as existing, as if independently. In Richard Brown's terms (1976), 'relationship' is metaphorical; that is, accounting for each other's actions is 'as if' the two are related.

Chapter 3

ECONOMIC THEORIES OF FERTILITY AND THE CONCEPT OF 'VALUE' IN SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL FERTILITY ANALYSIS.

3.1 Introduction

The apparent neglect of sociological perspectives in recent value-of-children literature is a consequence of the primacy given to psychological and microeconomic investigations by the respective writers. To a large extent any failure of "sociologist-demographers" to provide alternative explanations of fertility differentials to those used at the "macro" (aggregate) level (Turchi 1975: 107) is an illusion created in part by the language and concepts employed by earlier sociologists (see Chapter 2) and in part by the specifically economic connotations implicit in both microeconomic and psychological research reports. The latter will be discussed in this chapter.

To a large extent microeconomic arguments regarding the 'value' of children have been based on abstractions of 'cost' and 'benefit', rather than on empirical observations. Such arguments occupied a prominent place in fertility decision-making literature during the 1960s, so much so that Arnold et al (1975: 4) remarked that until 1970 "it was the work of economists that was primarily associated with the value of children". Certainly the microeconomists had articulated the ideas of 'value', 'cost', 'benefit', etc in a manner which appeared attractive to psychologists: the research was 'refined', 'systematic', facilitated measurement, and referred to both "macro" and "micro" level analysis (op.cit: 3-4). Introduction of a psychological perspective, to study noneconomic 'values', was both timely and appropriate and in

the next decade the idea of 'value of children' came to be associated primarily with psychologists.

This chapter reviews these two perspectives on the 'value' of children. Although these might be seen as deviations from the intent of this thesis, which is to explore sociological perspectives of 'value', they are included here as an essential part of the thesis argument. That is, that the concept 'value' now employed by many fertility researchers, sociologists included, is derived from the economic mode of thought, the idiom of cost-benefit analysis, of these earlier researchers. Sociological arguments referred to in this chapter are introduced as a critique of the economic notions. 'Value' has been objectified. The implications of such objectification for sociological investigation of fertility will be discussed in Chapter 4.

3.2 Microeconomics and Fertility

Although a concern to calculate the 'cost' of a child, in a monetary sense, dates as far back as King's estimates for 1696 and persists in the writings of contemporary economists¹, microeconomic theories of fertility in a more general form are relatively recent. The groundwork for the theories which are relevant to value of children studies was laid in 1957 by Leibenstein, with his use of the concept of 'utility'.

According to Leibenstein, people estimate their family size desires on the basis of calculations which "depend on balancing the satisfactions or utilities to be derived from an additional birth as against the 'cost', both monetary and psychological,

1. Footnotes to Chapter 3 are placed at the end of the chapter, p 69.

of having an additional child" (1957: 161). Three types of utility were distinguished: that derived as a consumption good (pleasure to the parents), that derived from a productive agent (contributing to family income), and that derived from a potential source of security. Costs could be direct, related to maintenance expenses, or indirect, related to lost opportunities (ibid).

In the 1960s theorists incorporated 'taste', 'demand' and 'child quality', along with assumptions of choice, into early equations. The pioneering explication of Leibenstein's theory is attributed to Becker (1960). He argued that demand for children is determined by the relationship between their status as a consumption durable and as a production durable. Becker conceptualised the demand determinants as 'tastes' (relative preference for children), income, quality (amount spent on each child) and 'cost', which he calculated as "the present value of expected outlays plus the imputed value of the parents' services, minus the present value of the expected money return plus the imputed value of the child's services" (p213). Becker used the concept of "child quality" to explain why fertility did not rise with increasing income in the way that demand for most 'normal' consumer goods would. The family size actually chosen would be that which would maximize the couple's utility subject to the constraints it places on total income available, that is, the family size which would provide the optimal reward (Turchi: 109).

Reviewing the various methods of analysis of fertility adopted by microeconomists after Becker, Schultz (1973) specified four 'developments' (54-57):

- (1) treatment of children as human capital investment,
- (2) treatment of human time in allocative decisions with respect to both market and nonmarket activities (eg childcare),
- (3) treatment of the economics of household production

- (which is related to 1 and 2 above), and
- (4) treatment of the family as a decision-making unit in determining time and money allocation, and in household production.

Assuming that those decisions by parents, referred to in (4), were a response to economic considerations (1 to 3), Schultz suggested that parents considered both sacrifices for and satisfactions of children "in arriving at the value of children to them":

Thus in thinking about the economics of fertility, social costs and benefit aside, the analytical key in determining the value of children to their parents is in the interactions between the supply and demand factors that influence these family decisions. (p53).

The argument of this thesis is concerned with the notions implicit in the microeconomic theories which predate the social-psychological study of the value of children. Two issues are involved: the kind of argument proposed by microeconomic demographers and the concepts employed in those arguments.

A wide variety of terms are employed by microeconomists to represent the parameters of cost, benefit and preference. Such terms as 'cost', 'utility', 'tastes' etc might be argued to be no more than mere labels for ideas that researchers have about empirical phenomena. This is exemplified by Ben-Porath's plea for a substitute for the word 'quality' as it refers to children - he himself used the term "child characteristics" (1973: 230). But there are two levels of meaning given to the concepts, and they appear to be confused in the research arguments. Firstly, there are everyday common-sense meanings of quality, taste, utility, etc. Secondly, there are researchers' meanings. Researchers, unlike everyday people, have been compelled to specify the attributes of the concepts, in order to be able to measure them and present them in

deterministic equations. This confusion can be illustrated by various examples.

For instance, Robinson and Harbison (1978: 3) argued that Becker's "child quality" (total expenditure - which is determined by 'taste') was actually a 'surrogate' for the rising purchase price of children. To Becker, however, 'price' was fixed and what people chose to pay (cost) varied by quality. Higher 'quality' children were simply more expensive children, in the same way as cadillacs were better 'quality' motor cars. To have a motor car one does not have to have a cadillac.

Others, such as Okun (1960: 235-240) have queried the 'usefulness' of Becker's cost/quality/expenditure argument, stating that the "relevant economic variable is simply expenditure per child" (op.cit: 237). That is, the variable was determined by the utility of the argument.

If the notion of quality has proved empirically difficult, that of choice has been even more problematic for microeconomic demographers. Rationality, as used in the economic argument, implies choice and decision-making. Duesenberry commented that people actually had very limited choices in determining quality expenditure ("economics is all about how people make choices; sociology is all about why they don't have any choices to make") (1960: 233). If 'quality' meant the way children were reared, then a couple of given educational, occupational, regional (etc) type would actually have a very small range of choice. Duesenberry's argument invokes "macro" level variables, as they have been identified by sociologist-demographers (see Chapter 2), in an overtly deterministic manner. Not only are consumption patterns and living standards seen to differ by social group, but so also do what has been termed 'expected child utility' and time or opportunity 'investment'. As such, the 'quality' as well as the cost of children is determined largely by the everyday living situation

of the parents. Duesenberry's argument thereby explains why, in any given situation, it might be necessary to reduce desired 'quantity' of children in order to achieve minimal (socially prescribed) 'quality' - rather than reduce 'quantity' to facilitate increased 'quality'. The 'desired quantity', however, is also likely to be subject to social influence (p231-4).

As an alternative to 'quality', Easterlin (1969) considered that the constraints of choice might be incorporated into the topic of 'tastes', and that 'taste' should become more central in any economic theory of fertility. In Easterlin's theory "consumers with given tastes are viewed as maximizing utility subject to the constraints of prices" (op.cit: 128). In this theory both tastes and prices are objectified as given.

Easterlin hypothesized demand for children as being joint demand (Namboodiri 1972: 185), involving children, intercourse, competing goods and services, and labour force participation by household members. To these Ben-Porath added the uncertainties related to "risk preferences" of parents: risks associated with health, virility and fecundity, with contraception (and presumably abortion), and with infant mortality (1973: 203)². Easterlin's emphasis, however, was on tastes and fertility control, which, he argued, were the means of making Becker's theory "relevant".

The concept of taste introduces a specifically social dimension to the argument, a dimension which has so far defied empirical measurement and has, therefore, complicated the economic equation. 'Tastes', like 'preferences' and 'quality', represent social-psychological dimensions of child 'value' which have now been developed by value-of-children researchers.

The assumed 'problem' of tastes has been dealt with in various ways by microeconomic researchers. Robinson and Harbison (p5) described 'tastes' as "a kind of micro-economic error term"

used to explain any variation which could not be explained by income, prices or utilities. Alternatively, Becker (1976) suggested,

Economists generally take 'tastes' as 'given' and work out the consequences of changes in prices, income and other variables under the assumption that tastes do not change. (p517).

As a last resort, tastes might be relegated to social scientists, who, according to Becker (ibid), do not appear any more able to deal with them systematically!

The concepts of utility, taste, quality and choice are mental constructs, socially defined, not objective things. Not surprisingly, therefore, the social nature of childbearing is evident even in this terminology. This is because many of the parameters in the economic equations are relative - how relative, and to what they are relative, are socially determined. Even if costs or income are stipulated in monetary terms, money itself could be considered a proxy variable, for, eg, hours of work, degree of responsibility, quality of education etc. 'Measuring' the parameters in the form of money does not solve any conceptual problem. Rather, the equation remains tautological: the possibility of quantifying expenditure or cost only appears to facilitate measurement.

The kind of argument advanced by microeconomists assumes a process of household decision-making which involves the following principles:

- (1) any activity which uses goods, services or the consumer's time involves an allocation of scarce resources among competing alternatives,
- (2) childrearing involves the expenditure of parental resources which might have been used to satisfy other wants,
- (3) therefore if parents choose to have children they

must weigh up the psychic rewards from children against the rewards from other activities which they might have undertaken.

- (4) That is, the fertility decision is formally equivalent to other resource allocation decisions made under constraint. (Turchi: 108)

The decision-making perceived by researchers is undertaken by couples. It is assumed that couples do recognise and evaluate relative costs, utilities (etc) and make their choices on the basis of these recognitions and evaluations. But the process of decision-making itself is glossed over in these economic models. For example, the decision-making unit might involve at least two, and possibly more, people, and decisions are made continually. A decision to postpone a birth needs to be reinforced continually, if it is to be effected, and the factors entering into the sequences of decisions made as pertaining to that one birth will vary. Economic utility theory does not explain how preferences are ranked, but it assumes that they are ranked. The theory presents an image of isolated acts of consumer choice, in the manner that one chooses to buy, or not buy, a motor car. Making no choice, or doing nothing, means no motor car; the same cannot be said for births.

Ben-Porath acknowledged that the stumbling block in economic theory with regard to predicting real fertility behaviour lies in 'values' or 'norms' related to family size (1974: 304). The most difficult question was "to do with the basic motives for having children, the substance of parent-child relationships in terms of mutual responsibilities, and the associated costs and benefits" (1973: s203, s231-3). Such a deficiency in the theoretical schema would not necessarily eliminate their heuristic value but they would, he cautioned, have serious implications for empirical work on fertility (1974: 304). Turchi has gone so far as to excuse what he saw as a neglect of social, demographic and psychological factors

on the grounds that "a professional division of labour is possible with respect to fertility analysis" (p111). The review in Chapter 2 of this thesis should indicate that Turchi's generalization of neglect, though it might apply to economists, is too sweeping if referring to all fertility researchers.

It is as well that the social issues have been taken up by other professionals. Ryder, for instance, warned economists that

norms are not just another discipline's jargon for tastes and preferences; the distinction is crucial between them, because the terms point in entirely different research directions (referring to 'taste' as an individual, versus 'norm' as a group, property). (1973: S66, parenth.added).

Indeed, the social processes to which Ryder referred probably include the very behaviours referred to in Lindert's economic hypothesis, when he wrote that the 'preferences' for commodities and inputs which couples have need not be consciously-determined, but are common-sense awareness, "qualitative 'needs' and rules of thumb for running a happy family" which couples "retain from past experiences". Lindert further complicated the economic argument by acknowledging that although these impressions "carry real resource costs in time and money", the couple themselves might not be aware of these costs (1978: 18).

This difficulty further highlights the kind of argument assumed by economic researchers. Microeconomic theorizing has been criticized on the grounds that fertility behaviour is irrational. Defending the rationality implicit in the argument, Ben-Porath has pointed out that the theory of household choice makes no claim "that each individual goes through an explicit calculus of pleasure and pain as a guide to behaviour" with regard to fertility. Rather, the propositions of economic theory are derived as if people "were acting according to a specific rule - maximizing a utility function

subject to a resource constraint" (1974: 303-4). In other words, the 'rationality' argument is not derived from empirical generalizations, but from theoretical abstractions. The "real resource costs" referred to by Lindert might be perceived only by the researcher. Any intrinsic 'rationality' of the economists' argument might well apply only to the argument, rather than the behaviour it allegedly describes. Such a distinction is not explicit in the assumptions and conclusions represented in the value-of-children literature. After all, Lindert himself supported his own claim that couples have only a "vague sense" or "dim awareness" of what they can afford in terms of number of children or alternatives to them on the grounds that if couples knew what children actually cost (as in the calculations mentioned on page 69, n1) then no one would ever have any children (p17).

The nature of the argument has also been taken up by social researchers. Blake has pointed out (1967, 1968) that having children is something that many people consider is a human right; they do not necessarily see having children as an economic matter and therefore might not take into account their commitments of money, time or energy (whether short-term or long-term). Secondly, parents are not free to dispose of or use their children as they wish, which explains why couples frequently report that their decision to have no more children was made after they already (in their opinion) had too many - or, in economist's jargon, after they had experienced the miscalculation in expected utility of the number or spacing of those already born. On the other hand children already born might be resources themselves for subsequent siblings or parents (1981a: 425) so that the "dilution effect" of parental resources may not be in a simple one way direction (1981a: 422). Thirdly, Blake has personified 'society' to point out that children have social meaning and, perhaps more importantly, parenting has social meaning:

... societies channel motivation in the direction of goals that imply the advent and existence of children.

One can become a 'parent', 'have a family', be a 'mother' or 'father', only by acquiring children. (1968: 22-23).

Blake argued that the desire for these statuses is subject to social control. The issue of 'social meaning' of children will be returned to in later chapters. In the present context the points made by Blake serve to emphasize the lack of choice there is in childbearing behaviour. It is equally possible that the concept of 'choice' is itself inappropriate, since it implies a perception of alternatives and a deliberate intellectual decision which might not apply to fertility behaviour at all. As Ben-Porath implied, choice and decision-making, like 'value', are part of the economic researcher's view of the world. They are not necessarily a part of the respondent's view of the world. Yet the notion of value itself and the method of computing it in psychological and sociological research derive from this economic paradigm. The accounting procedure is exemplified in the Crossnational Value of Children Study.

3.3 Social-Psychological Perspectives: The Crossnational Study.

Although psychological factors have been included in demographic analyses since the surveys of the late 1930s (see Chapter 2), only recently have population studies been considered of particular interest to psychologists themselves³. Writing in 1970, Fawcett outlined the "field" as he saw it, for a new approach to fertility studies:

... the values attached to children and functions served by children should be a prime target for psychological research. It is a clearly defined subject that lends itself to methods of psychological assessment and it is an area where good empirical data, especially in comparative form, are lacking. ... Knowledge about the perceived value of children can be interpreted within

the framework of a functional approach to motivation and can also provide an additional dimension for tests of the economic decision approach to fertility. (p110-111).

The seminal paper in value-of-children literature was Lois and Martin Hoffman's "The Value of Children to Parents" (1973), a paper in which the authors claimed that the paucity of "known facts" about the value of children was because the question "what is the value of a child?" had not been answered "scientifically" (p19). In seeking to define the concept of 'value', the Hoffmans set out a typology of nine basic 'values' which, they argued, recognised the "multi-faceted" nature of the 'value' of a child. They recognized that this 'value' was not static, but changed with parity, age, even the time of day; they recognised the ambivalence there was in all intense personal relationships. Their typology, therefore, aimed to describe the dimensions of 'child value', many of which actually related to the parent, rather than the child:

- (1) Adult status and social identity (women's major role).
- (2) Expansion of the self, tie to a larger entity, "immortality".
- (3) Morality: religion, altruism, the good of the group; norms regarding sexuality, impulsivity, virtue.
- (4) Primary group ties, affection.
- (5) Stimulation, novelty, fun.
- (6) Achievement, competence, creativity.
- (7) Power, influence, effectance.
- (8) Social comparison, competition.
- (9) Economic utility.

(Hoffman & Hoffman, 1973: 46-61).

Value so defined referred to the functions children served for parents, or the 'needs' they fulfilled (L. Hoffman 1972: 26), the satisfactions they provided or why people wanted them

(op.cit 1975: 430). The Hoffmans elaborated their model to classify the variables influencing childbearing decisions as

- (1) the value of children
 - (2) alternative sources of value
 - (3) costs
 - (4) barriers
 - (5) facilitators
- (Hoffman & Hoffman: 62-63).

Barriers and facilitators were those factors, such as poverty, ill health, pronatalism or housing adequacy which made it more or less difficult to achieve the values attributed to children. This amalgamation of individual "micro" level variables (eg health) with community contextual variables (eg pronatalist policies) would be problematic for demographic analysis. However, the authors provided this as a general schema, noting that

... just as there are costs, barriers and facilitators that will affect motivations for children, there are costs, barriers, and facilitators that will affect motivations for the various alternative sources of values. (op.cit: 63, n25).

The values proposed in the schema would be interactive and would be affected by the broader social context. Robinson and Harbison (p14) commended the Hoffman's schema for its empirical orientation, an orientation which has now been taken up by researchers of the Crossnational Value of Children Project who have attempted to answer the question "what is the value of a child?" 'scientifically'.

The Crossnational Value of Children Project, applied initially to six countries (Phase I - see n14, page 42), emphasized a 'value' of children which was "directly linked to the needs, attitudes and values of parents"; the satisfactions and costs were to include economic, social and psychological dimensions (Arnold et al: 2).

Fawcett revealed what he saw as a 'scientific' approach when he wrote,

The objective of the VOC project is to develop new knowledge about childbearing motivations and the relationship of these motivations to family size preference and fertility. An assumption of the study is that perceptions of the satisfactions and costs of children have an important influence on decisions about family size. The survey measurements in the study are designed to assess attitudes and values related to the variety of satisfactions derived from children and the costs involved in rearing them. Also measured are perceptions of alternative sources of satisfaction, as well as diverse background factors and mediating variables. With this rich set of data, analyses are directed toward understanding the determinants and consequences of fertility behaviour among different social and cultural groups at various stages of the life cycle.

The project reflects a conceptual approach that is basically utilitarian - ie, it is concerned with the value of children to parents. Social, cultural and biological values of children are not ignored, but the survey method necessitates that these dimensions be measured through the filter of parental perceptions.

(in Bulatao 1979: x, emph. added).

While individual researchers on the project have refined or emphasized a ²variation of 'values', the major dimensions underlying all components of the study are those outlined in the introductory report (Arnold et al: 40ff). 'Values' were categorized as economic values⁴, general satisfactions and costs of children that were not related to number of children or sex of child⁵ and general values which were accounted for under dimensions labelled "son and daughter preferences" (p64-74) and "family size values" (p74-97). As a result of factor analyses of 2591 individual cases, attitude scales were developed from the perceived 45 "salient value" dimensions, producing "VOC attitude scales":

Continuity, tradition, security
parenthood satisfactions

role motivations
 happiness and affection
 goals and incentives
 social status
 external controls
 costs of children
 decision-mindedness

(p60-64).

Such scales and dimensions were comprehensive on psychological components and represent an exhaustive development of the original Hoffman scheme⁶. The psychological dimensions were related to such broad cultural dimensions as nationality, middle/low class and urban/rural membership. The 'social context' with which VOC indices were correlated referred to sociodemographic variables (age, income, education, urban experience, media exposure, marriage duration and parity), to five economic dimensions, to large/small family values and reasons for wanting/not wanting another child, and to eight fertility and family planning indices (p100-102). Relationships between the variables were conceptualized as in the model shown in Chapter 2 (p 27) and despite several limitations with the analyses with regard to cultural weighting and to 'feedback' effects of fertility and family planning, the approach can be recognized as an important exploratory contribution to the social-psychological analysis of fertility⁷.

By way of illustration of the perspective adopted by the East-West researchers, the methodological framework of Bulatao's study in the Philippines (Bulatao 1975) will be discussed⁸. In addition to satisfying the exploratory objectives outlined by Fawcett (op.cit), Bulatao was concerned to bring "some order to the understanding of the diverse values attached to children" (1975: 1). From a review of the conceptualisation of 'value' in the psychological literature, a review which revealed, inter alia, a divergence of opinion as to whether 'value' is an

attribute of the object perceived, or of the person perceiving it, Bulatao concluded a "common element", ie,

that values constitute criteria or standards for evaluation of human behaviour and its outcomes.
(p3).

Alternatively, values might be conceived of as simply evaluative verbalizations, a distinction which parallels the object-person dichotomy. Bulatao suggested it is as well not to stress these discrepancies, but to conceive of values as relating to a situation (with respect to evaluation). That is, to this extent he recognized the social nature of 'value': value of a child is given to it by a parent (p3-4). 'Value', however, was defined tautologically: "child values would be the things for which children are considered valuable or reinforcing" (p4).

But despite this imputation of the 'social', Bulatao's categorization of "values" and "disvalues" would seem to be a continuation of an economic mode of thinking, these terms being for all analytical purposes synonymous with 'costs' and 'benefits' (terms which Bulatao himself used when referring to economic values - p122) or to 'prices' and 'satisfactions' or 'rewards'. His contribution beyond the economic idiom was to emphasize that 'value' is not discretely apart from some object (ie, the child) but exists in a person-object dialectic (p4).

If there is a confusion in the social-psychological approach it is between 'value' and 'values'. Bulatao objectified a "value universe" which was seen to have both content and structure. His description of this universe (p81) suggests (though it did not specify) that it is an heuristic device to achieve the ordering he referred to (p1). The basic unit of the universe is

a value, a cognitively distinguished component or consequent (sic) of having children that has some affective or moral significance attached to it by some of the participants in a particular culture. (p82).

For each individual these various 'values' might have different meanings and different effects. But the labels given by Bulatao denote his construction of value correlations rather than the social meaning give by his respondents. For example, Bulatao treated "values" and "disvalues" separately, categorizing them as "differential" , "central" or "salient" values according to particular research criteria⁹.

The content of the value universe postulated in this study was the VOC scales and motivational items provided by the core questionnaire along with coded items constructed from responses to open-ended questions. Conclusions from Bulatao's research, organized according to this schema, are shown in Table 3.1.

The focus of Bulatao's study was on the verbalizations of the subjects (parents) with regard to the objects (children). In theory, any structure or categorization of values was to arise from the subjects rather than the researchers (pp 5,9). Yet responses were to be analyzed according to the elaboration of the Hoffman model. As with other studies in the Crossnational Project, the intention was to consider any criterion of evaluation, not just those employed by economic researchers. The core questionnaire, therefore, was that developed for the Crossnational Project. Any apparent intention to employ a qualitative form of analysis was not realised in the report. The emphasis of the present summary is on Bulatao's presentation of the survey data in the Crossnational report, bearing in mind his concern over the most appropriate definition to give to the term 'value'.

Bulatao's report suggests that "the ways people speak" about children, really, in the interview context which was his technique, means what people say rather than what they mean . Although the VOC questionnaire included open-ended questions on the advantages and disadvantages of having children, the results were presented in the format of tabulations and

Table 3.1a. values Attached to Children That are Most and Least Prominent in Centrality, Saliency, and Differential Effect.

Prominence (Continuum)	Centrality		Saliency (advantages)	Differential effect		Values attached to having another child	
	VOC indices	Motivational items		Values attached to sons	Values attached to daughters	Open-ended responses	Motivational items
Most prominent	Incentive value	Love between parent and child	Happiness	Economic help	Help in housework	Companion- ship for siblings	Companion- ship for siblings
	Role expression	Sharing with children	Old-age assistance	Family name		Good number to have	Desire for a boy/girl
	Family continuity	Children to survive self	Help in housework			Guarantee against loss	Learning about life
		Learning about life				Desire for a boy/girl	
		Religious duty					Family name
		Satisfying spouse	Self- fulfillment				Economic help
Least prominent	External pressures	Satisfying relatives	Social benefits				Satisfying relatives

(Source : Bulatao 1975 : 85).

Table 3.1b Disvalues Attached to Children That Are Most and Least Prominent in Centrality, Saliency, and Differential Effect.

Prominence (continuum)	Centrality (motivational items)	Saliency (disadvantages)	Differential effect regarding additional children	
			Open-ended responses	Motivational items
Most prominent	Financial burden	Financial burden	Financial burden	Financial burden
	Overpopulation	Disciplinary problems	General rearing problems	Emotional strain
		Anxiety over child health and rearing		Work and bother
Least prominent	Restriction of freedom	Physical work		Overpopulation
	Less time with spouse	Pregnancy problems	Pregnancy problems	Restriction of freedom
				Less time with spouse

(Source: Bulatao 1975: 86).

statistics. While the author commented that "it would seem presumptuous to seek the value of children in structured interviews and reduce it to dry statistics" (p1) this was one means at his disposal of establishing some order to the (researchers') understanding of 'value'. At the same time Bulatao himself was aware of the inadequacy of this method, and of the potential for a qualitative approach within his research topic:

Without attempting to penetrate beyond the conversational level of respondents' answers to survey questions, the investigation still discovered intricate patternings among the various aspects of values, in their interrelationships, and in the way they support particular intentions. Simply listing child values now appears to be clearly inadequate, since these values exist in an articulated structure and emerge only partially and incompletely as specific perspectives are adopted. (p196, emph. added).

By objectifying 'values' and then (subjectively) ascribing to them various attributes - values or disvalues, salient or central values - Bulatao attempted to indicate the relevance of his objectified 'values'. For instance, he described the happiness that children bring, assistance with housework, and support in old age as the most salient values (readily verbalized), but the loving relationship between parent and child, the desire to share in a child's life, the incentive to work hard, and the manifestation of parental roles were the most important values in terms of centrality (personal importance) (p197). For some respondents family continuity was personally important. The difference between the two hierarchies (salient versus central) suggested to Bulatao that "social pressure" (*ibid*) was not an important reason for wanting children among these Filipinos. On the other hand, financial cost was a prominent "disvalue" in both "salience" and "centrality". He also categorized anxiety over child health, disciplinary problems and childrearing generally as highly salient. One is led to question how these 'values' evolve and interact, what they mean to the subjects and how

they are (apparently) manifested by the subjects. How are these 'values' assumed to interact with fertility, in real life?

Bulatao acknowledged a variety of limitations to his research. Many of these in fact were a consequence of structured survey research as a method and of the unreliability of attitudes (or 'values' as proxies for attitudes) as predictors of actual fertility behaviour.

While the finding that economic "disvalues" place restrictions on family size is a direct reflection of the microeconomic mode of analysis discussed in section 3.2 of this thesis, any idea that references to 'interaction' values (p203) represents their social nature is an illusion. Such values are social only in that the researcher perceives them as being at the "micro" level, that is to do with interaction between parent and child (which economic disvalues are also, in effect). The social nature of the interaction itself, as having meaning within the total ("macro") context, remains unexplored.

Similarly, even though reference is made to, for example, value systems (p204), media exposure and population education (p205), no recognition of the social construction of such interactions as, eg, achievement or stimulation, as being held-in-common by subjects as 'valuable' is made explicit in the report.

Although it is not couched in the crude terms of monetary equations, 'value' of children in Bulatao's work is conceived of as 'evaluation'. Despite his prescription of a "value universe", comprising values (plural), the conceptualization of those values is in the context of value (singular) that children have to the respondents. Analytically, 'value' of children remains an objectification in the same idiom as the costs, satisfactions, benefits and prices of the microeconomists. This is the microeconomic heritage inherent in social-psychological value-of-children research.

3.4 Summary: The Concept of Value

Implicit in value-of-children arguments is a theoretical assumption that the biological component of fertility is now 'under control'. People can or can not have children as they wish, thanks to the technical development of mechanical or chemical methods of contraception or abortion. Furthermore, those who are involuntarily childless may adopt children or, in some cases, be recipients of externally fertilized ova or artificial insemination. The argument assumes that people want children because they are economically advantageous, providing practical help, family income or security in old age. However, measuring economic costs and benefits is problematic. Not only do costs, aspirations and expected benefits change with the age and birth of the child, but people do not actually know how much, in monetary terms, it costs to raise a child. Even more important is the fact that people are reluctant to discuss children in such economic terms, as if they are consumer durables (Arnold, et al 1975: 43, 105).

Value-of-children research has not brought about the elaboration of a social perspective which might have been anticipated.

One significant reason rests in the theoretical definition of child-value itself:-

Value of children is the "hypothetical net worth of children, with positive values (satisfactions) balanced against negative values (costs)" (Arnold et al 1975: 2, 10).

Like their predecessors, value-of-children researchers have continued to employ a formula befitting the physical sciences. In using this methodology they imply that the appropriate way to understand attributes of the social world is through the

objectification of psychic (mental) experiences and through mathematical presentation and interpretation of these objects. This approach obscures the issues which constitute the meaning which people themselves impute to children.

In outline, the typology developed by the Hoffmans referred to abstract qualities inherent in children or in the experience of being a parent. Operationalisation of their schema, however, has resulted in increasingly structured, mechanical interpretations of 'value'. In Arnold et al's schema the following variables were assumed to intervene between background (situational) variables and fertility behaviour:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Positive values | - emotional benefits
economic benefits
self enrichment and development
identification with children
family cohesiveness and continuity |
| Negative values | - emotional costs
economic costs
opportunity costs
physical demands
family costs |
| Large family values | - sibling relationships
sex preferences
child survival |
| Small family values | - maternal health
societal costs. |

(Arnold et al: 9-10)

Bulatao, on the other hand, provided an alternative classification of values and disvalues, and "salient" and "central" values, while Wu, referring to his Taiwan data, classified values as positive or negative, and as intrinsic

(ends in themselves) or extrinsic (instrumental) (1979: 6-7).

There are some major weaknesses in these frameworks. The nature of value is not defined explicitly, but is researched as a set of variables, or parameters, from a perspective reminiscent of the economic arguments discussed earlier in this chapter. Many of the parameters of 'value' actually defied measurement. As already indicated with respect to economic arguments, there can be no absolute measurement of noneconomic costs, or alternatives to childbearing. Within this framework, actual, perceived and relative value are confused. By incorporating a notion of relative value (indeed, the notion of value itself is relative), one ignores the fact that for some, perhaps many people, children are ends in themselves and stand separate from other preference sets¹⁰.

In most value-of-children studies the term 'value' is defined by a list of various and differing characteristics. For instance, Nag (see Chapter 4) attributed to value a necessarily positive dimension, as opposed to the negative definition of costs (1978: 1; Nag et al 1978: 293)¹¹, a definition which differs from Arnold et al's "hypothetical net worth" which is one value, derived from a balance of positive 'values' and negative 'values'. The scheme proposed by the Hoffmans defined value as "function served" or "need fulfilled". It incorporated various psychological variables, along with such biological or physiological variables as maternalism, or political variables such as imposed antinatalist or pronatalist policies or ideologies (Berelson 1973: 19-21).

By comparison the microeconomic theorists have applied the term 'value' to direct costs and benefits (or satisfactions) which, in economic terms, can be measured: for example, work-economic values, old-age security value or indirect costs such as foregone labour force participation or investment opportunities (Mueller 1972: 384)¹². Measurement, however, remains a proxy for 'value'. In criticising a definition of economic value

which is delimited by direct monetary contribution or cost, a problem acknowledged by Mueller (p403), Nag et al (1978) have successfully extended the economic variable into the wider cultural sphere by considering 'noneconomic' labour and support activities of children, in particular in as much as such activities of children (eg childcare) facilitate 'economic' activity of a parent. The variety of satisfactions and costs variously accorded the term 'value', however, lead to rather an imprecise definition when the concept is applied to children.

Some of the value-of-children literature actually begs the question of what is value. For instance, Berelson (pp 19-27) in his essay entitled "The Value Of Children" discussed, instead of value, "reasons for wanting children". The notion of rationality implied by Berelson's definition is much more precisely stated in Fawcett's paper (1974a) "On Learning To Value Children". In asking people why they do or do not have children, one is asking them to evaluate children, or, in Fawcett's terms, how do they value (verb) children; they are not being asked what value(s) (noun) children have. In the context of evaluation, Fawcett can justifiably define value as satisfactions and costs related to having children; this is not to say that these are reasons for having or not having children, in the manner in which Berelson discussed value. Indeed, a major problem with most value-of-children research is that mentioned by Masnick (1978: 303), viz, "the imputation of motives and the assumption that the economic value of children decrees rational decisions to have babies."

An alternative definition of value which does not assume this kind of economic rationality was contained in Bulatao's reference to "those things for which children are considered valuable or reinforcing" (1975: 4), or even less objectively in Arnold and Fawcett's reference to "the feelings people have about children" (1975: 13-14). Such sentiments were referred to by the Hoffmans when they wrote in their introduction (1973: 19) that children "are not wanted for utilitarian reasons

alone", but that the question, "what is the value of a child?", "has been answered endlessly in cave drawings, myths, religion, folk sayings, poetry and popular songs". Such a concept of value is qualitatively different from that which is referred to in any methodology derived from an economic model in which 'value' is conceptualized as "what it is worth", conjuring up notions of cost, prices, income and utility.

Other objections to economic equations of fertility relate to the assumption of a necessarily rational mode of decision-making, but yet a failure to account for the nature of choice, or, indeed, whether there is necessarily any choice in such behaviour.

However, the major problem for the present research, identified in this chapter, arises from the incongruence there is between the idea of 'value' at the theoretical level (social/economic) and the idea of 'value' at the operational level. 'Value', as a theoretical construct, is defined by abstract qualities (providing companionship, effectance etc) or, in economic parlance, as "what it is worth". Ascription of 'value' to children may be no more than fashionable intellectual labelling. Yet the economic paradigm operationalizes value as something factual and measurable, so that equations of positive and negative qualities can be used to deduce a "net value". Quantifying and measuring are also employed as indicators of **respectability** of contemporary 'scientific' enterprise. At both the theoretical and the practical level use of 'value' is a reflection of the research exercise itself.

These separate notions of value are not comparable with each other. Neither do they necessarily reflect the notion of 'value' held by everyday people in the world. It is this incongruence which is the source of the methodological difficulties and conceptual confusion which is evident in much value - of - children research. As long as this confusion persists, the social meaning of 'value' will not be clarified.

Notes to Chapter 3.

1. 'Modern' pioneers of this approach are usually cited as being Engels, with his 1884 family budget studies, and Dublin and Lotka's 1930 work entitled The Money Value of a Man (Espenshade 1972: 210). In 1983, press releases indicated a continuing interest in monetary costs of children. While Australians were attempting to develop a method of measuring the (monetary) costs of a child (Edgar 1983), Stevenson reported that "the average British working couple will spend 70,000 pounds on their first child up to the age of 16". In New Zealand, Household Survey statistics have been used to produce a figure of \$49,000 for the first 16 years of a child's life, with a press report concluding that "bringing up children is an expensive business, so expensive that it is cheaper to buy an average existing home than to rear a child for 16 years" (Christchurch Press 17 October 1983). The New Zealand figure, unlike the British figure, did not include loss of a mother's potential earnings.

2. Despite these references to contraception one should note Turchi's observation that most microeconomic fertility theorists either assume perfect and costless control over fertility or ignore the problem altogether (p. 117).

3. See for example, Fawcett (ed) 1973, Psychological Perspectives on Population, and Fawcett 1974b, 'Psychological Research and Population Policy: A Preview'.

4. Economic values were computed from an index which combined expectations of practical help from sons and from daughters, degree of reliance on children for old-age support, and the importance of economic "motives" for wanting another child (eg, whether an extra child would/would not constitute a heavy financial burden).

5. These were termed 'salient' values and included economic dimensions within a scheme of 40 specific satisfactions and 25 specific costs; other dimensions related to the general categories of
 - happiness, love, companionship
 - personal development of parent
 - childrearing satisfactions
 - benefits to family unit
 - kin group benefits
 - social, religious influences
 - general intrinsic values

emotional costs
 physical demands on parents
 restrictions on alternative activities
 marital problems
 kin group costs; problems of inheritance
 societal costs; overpopulation.

(p46-48).

6. See Appendix II.
7. The analyses and results of this study will be referred to specifically, where appropriate, in later chapters.
8. Volume 2 of the Crossnational Study. Bulatao's analysis was more extensive than that discussed in this section. Reference will be made to his later analyses, regarding demographic transition, in Chapter 4.
9. "Differential" values are those which vary according to whether they are relevant to, for instance, boys or girls or to children of a particular parity, or whether they vary in being held by people of, for example, different class, sex or residence locality. "Central" values are those which are considered close to a person's basic concerns in life. Centrality thus has a personal orientation. "Salience", however, has some social connotations, being a value which "readily springs to mind", whether because it is "rooted in common experiences, (is) a traditional answer, or (is) a recently popularized cliché" (p83). Bulatao concluded that salience and centrality were not strongly correlated. The orderings Bulatao sought would be according to these three dimensions, with values and disvalues treated separately.
10. The idea of relative value clearly reflects the economic theory of marginal utility which seeks to explain supply and demand on the basis of relative use-value of commodities. Within economics itself, however, it has been pointed out that "some commodity-combinations do not enter into preference or indifference relations with other commodity-combinations" (Sensat & Constantine 1975: 162). The relevance of such a notion in a study of human beings is surely even more open to question.
11. See Chapter 4, for further reference to the work of Nag et al and Mueller.
12. ibid.

Chapter 4

SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE 'VALUE' OF CHILDREN AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION.

4.1 Introduction

It might be argued that the conceptual problems to do with 'value' discussed in Chapter 3 are a consequence of the microlevel focus of the economic and social-psychological research. Value of children has been investigated as value to individual parents, and although value-of-children 'indices' have been correlated with variables referred to as 'social' or 'cultural' (nationality, urban/rural residence, income, education,etc.), these correlations do no more than construct an aggregate which is an abstraction from individuals. Correlations with social or demographic variables do not constitute a social context as defined by sociologists. It is possible that a distinctly sociological perspective of 'value of children' would employ a somewhat different conception of 'value', as a notion arising out of interactions between individuals (rather than being the sum of objectified attributes imputed to the sum total of individuals.)

In keeping with the paradigmatic nature of social-psychological research which focusses, inter alia, on 'value' as an intervening variable in fertility behaviour, this chapter considers research which explores the predictive or explanatory nature of those characteristics of children conventionally

defined as 'value' within a "macro" framework, at the societal level. This approach emphasizes the structure of, and interactions within, social institutions, and is exemplified on the one hand by proposals that demographic transition be explained as a transition in the value of children, and on the other hand by explanations of peasant household economics and fertility in terms of the productive role of children. In contrast to these studies some alternative approaches to understanding noneconomic values of children are described in section 4.4. These suggest some rather different perspectives of 'value'. The various sociological approaches described in this chapter indicate understandings of the 'social meaning' of children which differ from the kinds of analyses discussed in Chapter 3.

4.2 Children and Household Economics: A Case in Structural Anthropology.

It is commonly believed that where children are 'useful' in terms of providing for the family household (whether by labour, monetary income, or old age security) they will be 'valued' for this contribution. In the context of demographic transition arguments to be discussed in section 4.3, it is pertinent to consider the methodological implications of applying this perspective to studies of the value of children in peasant societies. In such households economic production (ie, subsistence production) is not differentiated by time, space or individual role in the manner that it might be in most urban households¹. If children are perceived by parents as being economically valuable, the meaning of this 'value' might be expected to be made most explicit in peasant societies.

1. Footnotes for Chapter 4 are placed at the end of the chapter, p125.

The anthropological perspective is structural in that those variables which are investigated as fertility determinants, for example age of entry into unions, or periodic abstinence, are related to the institutions and complexity of the society being studied. Such a structural relationship is well illustrated in Freedman's model (1975: 15), where his "social and economic structure" (including stratification, family structure, nonfamilial institutions and economic structure - p20) operated on intermediate fertility variables via "norms" about the variable themselves, and about family size. Conceptualizing Freedman's model in a slightly different way, and avoiding the problem of just what "norms" actually are ², one could argue that the institutions which are part of the "social structure" also include an abstract system of cultural values, which includes how people regard children and childbearing (Bulatao's "value universe", op.cit). In this context then, value of children can be conceived of as an independent variable³ which influences fertility by 'operating' through variables specified in the Davis-Blake model⁴. Satisfactions and costs of children thus provide a link between demographic variables (sex, ethnicity, education, etc) and 'fertility attitudes' or desire for children (Hoffman and Manis 1979: 583).

The anthropological perspective might start with the individual, family or household as its focus, but the theoretical framework applied to such observations is a device to explain population processes (in this case differential fertility) at a societal level. That is, the theoretical 'macroperspective' is both structural and functional⁵.

Whereas the social-psychologists of the Crossnational study portrayed value as part of an analytic structure, anthropologists and sociologists attempt to place value within a social structure. The methods of the researchers differ accordingly. The Crossnational research was conducted by means of a questionnaire survey, whereas the research to be discussed

in this section relied primarily on observation methods. Yet the epistemological problem is one in common: what is the 'value' of children to parents, seen in the structure of social (including economic) interactions?

It is perhaps no exaggeration to suggest that a number of recent papers on the value of children in household economics were written, at least in tone, as a reaction to work by Mueller in Taiwan (Mueller 1972). Drawing on a wide range of survey data, much of it subsequently criticized as inadequate (Caldwell 1976: 194-195), Mueller rated perceived costs of children as being more influential on preferred family size than was perceived utility. This finding differed from those of numerous subsequent studies, including the Crossnational study.

While respondents in all of the Crossnational studies had cited economic costs as a primary reason for restricting family size, Arnold et al (p149) also noted that "many parents, particularly in rural areas, expected to obtain long-range economic benefits from having children". Arnold et al suggested a "threshold effect" involving economic costs of children, ie that costs do not become important until some minimum family size has been achieved. In Taiwan in particular Wu (1979: 115) deduced a positive relationship between expectations of economic help from children and a belief in the economic benefits of large families. However, "for some measures of economic costs of children the expected opposite relationships were observed, but for other measures results were inconclusive" (loc.cit).

The economic activity has been observed or measured directly in other localities by, for example, Prasithrathsint and Day (1977) in Thailand, Vlassof (1982) in India, Caldwell in Nigeria (1977c) and Cain (1977) in Bangladesh. Classifying such behaviour as fetching water, tending goats or weeding paddies as "serious purposeful activity" (1977: 209), Cain concluded,

The welfare implications of fertility outcomes to parents are to a large extent dependent on the productivity of children in the context of household economic organization. (op.cit: 202).

Similarly, on the basis of studies in Asia and Africa spread over thirty years, Caldwell (1977b) concluded that conventional survey data tended to understate the contribution of children in peasant societies. The inadequacy of the data base was also implied by Ware when she wrote that such information as children's consumption and production by age and sex, and parents' ability to control the surplus "are not available for any African community" (1977a: 496). In her opinion, western estimates grossly over estimated the consumption parameter, while

labour force statistics for children's participation in Africa are almost invariably vitiated by the imposition of a minimum age, drawn from modern European experience and totally unsuited to African conditions.
(op.cit: 500).

None of these studies supported Mueller's claim. Most of the contradictions came from research which relied at least to some extent on survey analysis, augmented by the invaluable experience of living in some of the societies referred to. The remainder of this section summarizes one specific study which adopted systematic observation techniques to explore the economic contributions of children in peasant households. Much of this discussion refers to the methodology adopted, since methodology both reflects and is reflected in the notions of 'value' which are deduced.

Recognizing the unreliability of labour force participation rates, even for adults (see Mueller 1982: 55-56), Nag argued for the collection of time-allocation data. These were to overcome the problem inherent in Mueller's work whereby she defined 'economic' activities as only those which contributed

to G.N.P., thus overlooking the fact that households themselves are economic units of production and therefore require a certain amount of maintenance work quite apart from directly productive work (Nag 1978: 8). To overcome these deficiencies, Nag, White and Peet obtained six-daily income/expenditure schedules, 24-hourly time allocation and food consumption accounts, and observations of work input and residence locations. The total research period spanned 10-12 months⁶.

The difficulties highlighted were both methodological and conceptual in applying economic definitions to value of children. One cannot assume that observations pertaining to any individual or household exhaust all possible actions or relationships of the individual or household let alone those of all collectivities of individuals or households. In practice it is difficult to observe a number of subjects at the same time throughout a given period and it is also likely that the presence of a nonparticipant observer does affect work activity in some way. On the other hand, it is not easy to obtain accurate interview data on time allocation when the respondents' sense of time is not as precise as the researcher requires. Both problems reach their extreme when young children are the subjects of the study.

Other methodological problems are specific to the nature of time allocation. Firstly, there are differences in the economic returns ('income') of various activities, and secondly, a large number of activities in a household have no tangible return in terms of income. Yet these are essential to the individual, biological survival of the household members as well as to the maintenance of the household as a social unit. V. Hull (1977: 242-243) made the point that these distinctions are often quite arbitrary. It may be difficult to distinguish work (eg child-minding) from nonwork or leisure (eg playing with a child), and it is difficult to evaluate effort (children may work as long as adults, but not as hard, or a child may

take the same time to do an activity as an adult but with more effort). These problems arise because of the emphasis on quantitative measurement of the contribution of child labour⁷. Nag, White and Peet 'solved' some of these problems by treating all units of working time as equal, regardless of what the activity was⁸. It is important to note that their data were derived from researchers' observations and interpretations, rather than the parents' perceptions of their children's usefulness as workers or for old age support.

Analysis of residence patterns supported the commonly-held view that children or grandchildren are the major avenue of support for the elderly; children may be adopted specifically for this purpose. The authors raise the question of need - the 'needs' of the elderly in these villages were small, with the greatest expense, in monetary terms, being that which came after death, ie, the cost of funeral rites.

In addition to proposing a new (observational) method in value of children research, Nag, White and Peet gained insights which questioned notions of peasant 'economy' which were widely-accepted by economists and students of population. For instance, in both Java and Nepal, more time was spent in childcare by 6-8 year old girls than by any other age-sex group except 30-39 year old women, indicating that childcare is not particularly intensive on a mother's time⁹. A second 'discovery' was that children in large families appeared to be more productive, individually, than did children in small families. Rather than there being a set amount of work to do shared by all, it appeared that older siblings were freed to do "directly-productive" work by younger siblings taking over "household maintenance" work. At the same time, the need for childcare by siblings might have increased the observed 'work input' in larger families.

Despite their use of observation techniques however, these researchers persisted in casting their analysis in a

quantitative idiom. On the basis of their time allocation data, the researchers attempted to compute "economic efficiency" - using their own criteria of income minus food expenditure (food being the major item of expenditure, and hence being a proxy for total expenditure). Previously, such computations had been complicated, or misleading, by the use of a western stereotype of 'occupation', the idea that each person had a limited range of occupations or means of earning a livelihood. 'Efficiency', in their terms, was unrelated to access to land for cultivation, due to the large number of 'occupations' available which were not restricted by capital or labour supply. By adopting a wider perception of 'economic utility' than that used by, for example, Mueller (1972, 1976), Nag, White and Peet showed how even young children might be 'useful' to their households. The question raised by the authors is not "why is fertility so high?", but "why is it not higher than it actually is?".

This research also raised the issue of 'value to whom?';

It seems possible, then, however limited the available opportunities for productive labour in the Javanese village, each individual household, by increasing its size, obtains not less, but more of a share of these opportunities, even though the aggregate result of such behaviour may be an overall decline in job availability. This kind of reasoning ... simply helps to remove the misconception that in 'overpopulated' Java, children have no opportunity to do productive work to make themselves economically valuable to their parent. (Nag, White & Peet 1978: 298, orig. emph.).

In these peasant communities the 'value' of children to households appeared to be considerably higher than to the community as a whole (as 'measured' by the economic criteria). It thus seems possible that high fertility might persist where it is decidedly disadvantageous to the community. This research gave no indication of any process present among the people which might reveal or resolve the potential conflict between household and community interests which a western

observer might expect.

Nag, White and Peet's study has provided a different perspective on 'value' in the economic sense in which the word is used in 'value-of-children' studies. As Amita Bardhan concluded, "the real contribution of the study consists in its methodological innovation rather than in its substantive findings for or against economic theory" (in Nag et al 1978: 301). These authors illustrated how, even within an economic framework of fertility analysis, observation techniques can offer a much wider perspective of 'value' than had hitherto been recognised. In this instance, time allocation has been shown to be as relevant - perhaps more relevant - to cost/benefit analysis than was income/expenditure ratio. This research therefore obliges one to extend the economic focus given to the concept of economic 'value' of children when referring to peasant households, and calls into question any assumption that children in western urban households might not also be economically 'useful' in assisting to maintain the unit which reproduces (or recreates) labour for the labour market, and hence for economic production.

The economic 'value' of children has been cited as a factor involved in demographic transition (p 84). The research discussed in this section has drawn attention to the limits placed on the 'economic' definition when the activity is not studied in context, a context which is that of parents and households¹⁰. Only from that point can the 'value' of children be linked to those wider social structures which are referred to in sociological explanations of demographic transition.

4.3 'Value' of Children and the Demographic Transition.

In its simplest form Notestein's theory of demographic transition (1945)¹¹ described a biological phenomenon: as

mortality falls, consequent on increased survivorship due to control over disease, famine and other 'miseries', population increases as long as fertility remains the same. 'Transition' is completed when fertility also declines; in the new regime of low death and low birth rates population size remains relatively stable. The key causal factors in this transition were cited as being 'modernization' and 'rational control' (Notestein: 39, 40); contraception was the means, not the cause, of the fertility transition.

The essence of the theory, then, is that the 'transition' in fertility is from control by environment to control by calculated individual choice. Changes in mortality continue to be the result of social decisions and habits, but the 'transition' implies an increasingly effective control. (Robinson 1964: 386).

Despite various academic debates over the ideas incorporated in transition theory¹², it is considered here for three reasons. Firstly, the theory introduces a social parameter to what would otherwise be little more than biological patterns of fertility and mortality. Secondly, the theory is used as a predictive model, a context in which the 'value' of children is seen as an important variable. Thirdly, elaborations of transition theory specify an economic dimension to this social context¹³, a dimension directly relevant to value-of-children research as it is conceptualized in the mode of economic demography.

Recognizing the array of factors which might be involved in a transition to low fertility, Beaver drew up a model which he considered might be of predictive use. There is more than a superficial resemblance between Beaver's model and that of Arnold et al (shown on page 27) which was developed to illustrate the relationship of 'value' of children to fertility. Incorporated into Beaver's model are specifically economic factors, labelled as costs, tastes, preferences and 'value' of children (Fig 4.1). An alternative set of propositions to explain transition have been proposed by Coale (1973).

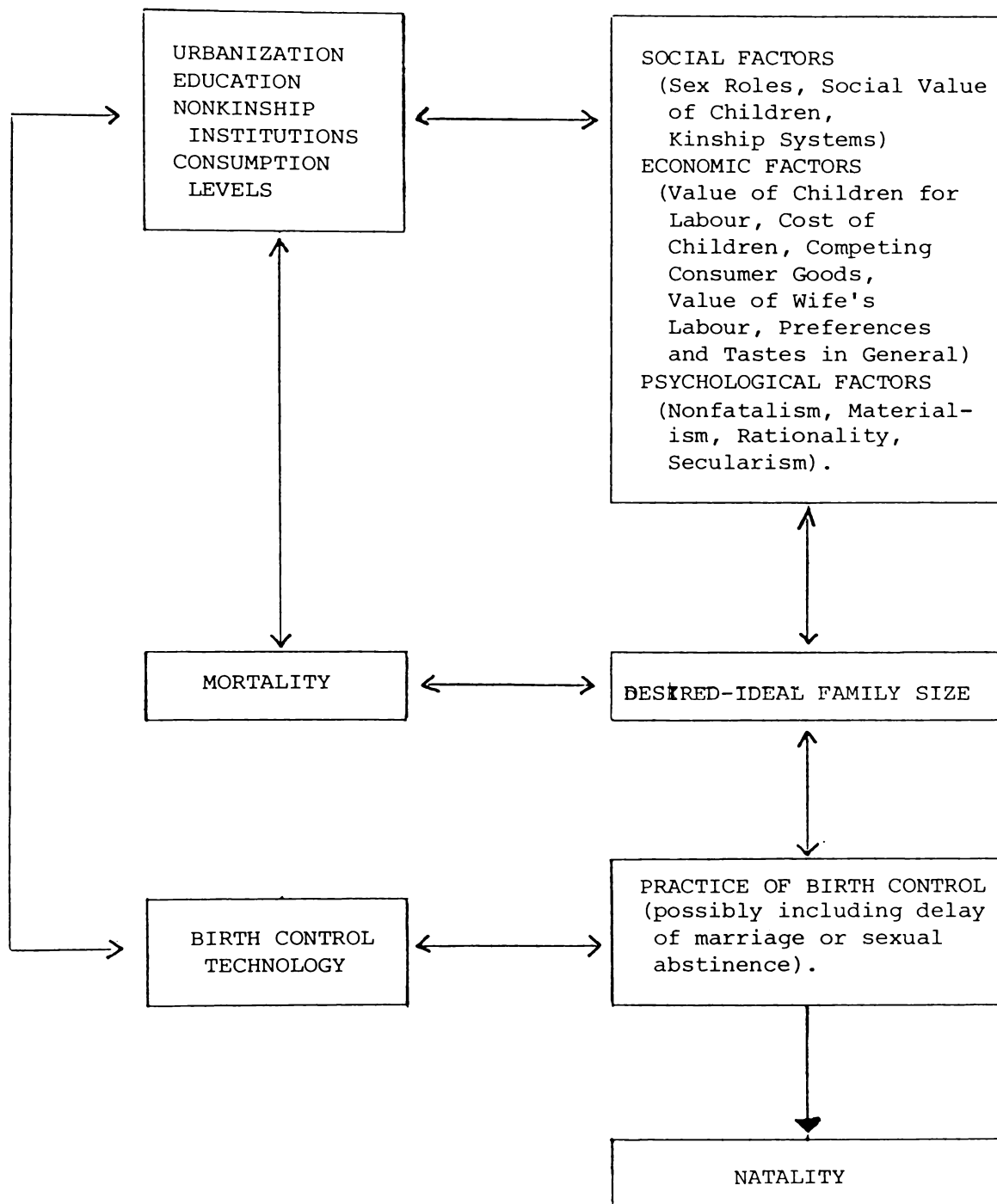


Fig. 4.1 Causal Model of Demographic Transition Theory.

(Source : Beaver 1975 : 10).

In attempting to define the preconditions for decline in marital fertility he cited three "general prerequisites" (p65-66):

1. fertility control must be within the calculus of conscious choice (ie, an acceptable mode of behaviour),
2. reduced fertility must be advantageous, and
3. effective techniques of fertility reduction must be available.

While the third precondition is technological and in theory operates only subsequent to the first two preconditions¹⁴, it might in practice be incorporated into the prior conditions as a cost or matter of conscience. Coale's first precondition was primarily psychological and while he acknowledged the possibility of fertility control being considered "immoral" he did not refer explicitly to the fatalistic idea that childbearing is not perceived as being an activity for which there are options. Such a perception refers to Greenleaf's query (Chapter 1, p 2), viz, that the issue with some couples is not why they choose to have children, but rather why they do not choose not to have them. While this question appears a matter of semantics, it in fact raises the issue of rationality in fertility behaviour as a problem. This issue will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The prerequisite which is central to a discussion of transition theory is the second. Coale stated,

Perceived social and economic conditions must make reduced fertility seem an advantage to individual couples. (loc.cit).

This prerequisite invokes a distinction between individual and aggregate action. Davis (1963) had earlier introduced the individual as actor to population theory when he observed that

demographic 'response' was both reflexive and behavioural. In addition, he argued, individuals respond in almost every demographic way possible, including delayed marriage, abortion and migration as well as contraception (p 349, 362). That is, the response to a population's mortality decline depends on individual perception of the decline, and the nature of the response will be an individual one, determined by the means available. Davis considered the 'motivation' for fertility reduction was more likely to be the prospect of rising prosperity, the desire to maintain relative status, rather than the Malthusian dread of poverty.

The difficulty in separating individual from population reaction should pose a problem for transition theorists. While contraception decision-making, for instance, is accredited to the individual couple¹⁵, little explanation is given of how this is legitimated within the social context. It is by individuals communicating symbolically with each other that groups (populations) institutionalize means of controlling population size, whether by ancient taboos and sacrificial offerings, or by commonly held 'modern' beliefs about what constitutes an acceptable family size or means of individual fertility control. This is the 'sociological' context referred to in the introduction to this chapter, and a separate issue to the social-structural context in which fertility decisions are assumed to take place, a context which includes the institutions (family, religious system, economic system, for example) recognized by Caldwell and others. The issue of shared meanings forms the methodological basis of Part Two of this thesis.

The search for intermediary factors between the social context and achieved individual fertility (and hence, in aggregate, population fertility) is justified by the separation which is technically possible between mating and reproduction. In this context 'value-of-children' research represents an attempt to explain why individuals choose to limit (or choose not to

limit) their individual childbearing. Individuals restrict their fertility (it is argued) according to how they 'value' children.

As a paradigm the transition model might be used to 'explain' the connection between social and demographic changes, and perhaps also the connection between individual action and population changes¹⁶. Although the perceived transition is much more complex than most textbook authors would have their students believe, the frameworks outlined by Notestein, Coale and others continue to be used as heuristic devices for the analysis of fertility change. With respect to value-of-children research in particular Fawcett has argued,

In sociology and demography, the satisfaction and costs of children have been discussed as a partial explanation for the demographic transition. The shift from a rural, agricultural society to an urban, industrialized one implies a reduction in the economic benefits from children and an increase in costs. Other changes, such as high levels of education, tend to increase awareness and desires related to alternatives to children. Changing family structures, along with alterations in economic activities of the family, tend to make large numbers of children dysfunctional. (1972: 5).

Fawcett's notion of "dysfunctional" children also is consistent with Davis's theory of multiphasic response (see page 83): if external changes which challenge family or societal stability (eg excessive numbers of children due to declining infant mortality) are not responded to by some demographic means (eg migration or contraception) then the social 'system' remains under stress. Of course a demographic response is only one response possible - people might respond by growing more food, for instance, which would be a social response. But the point is that in the transition model it is a specifically demographic response which is observed. If the model is given predictive status¹⁷ then it will be a demographic [§]response which is expected. As McNicoll aptly stated, demographic transition is concerned with the disruption of the steady state condition

(1978: 86). The analogy is deliberately mechanical: his proposal was for a structuralist (institutional) approach to studying population and 'development'.

Two explanations of demographic change will be discussed in this section. While both are economic in their focus, they differ in perspective. Continuing his analysis from the Crossnational study, Bulatao set out to identify those 'factors' in the value-of-children 'value' schema which appeared to be most influential in demographic transition. His findings led him to label demographic transition as a "transition in the value of children". Caldwell, on the other hand, is referred to here with respect to his intergenerational wealth flow hypothesis, whereby he has elaborated on the idea of economic value already discussed in section 4.2. Whereas Bulatao's focus was on a structural analysis of values of children, Caldwell discussed the economic value of children within the perceived structural institutions of 'society'. Both authors have used their data to reinterpret conventional transition theory.

4.3 (i) The Value-of-Children Transition.

In attempting to cover all 'major' explanations of fertility transition Bulatao (1979a: 3-7) proposed seven explanatory factors which could be subsumed under the processes labelled by Easterlin (1975) as

demand for surviving children,
potential supply of children, and
costs of family limitation.

These factors are specified in Table 4.1. The factors which directly affect the costs and benefits which parents consider children to have (ie his "demand" factor) are those which produce changes which "may be considered the value-of-children transition" (1979a: 5). This transition, while referring to

Table 4.1 Explanatory Factors for the Fertility Transition.

Factor (characterization)	Locus of effect
Increased contraceptive availability and efficiency	Family-limitation costs
Delayed marriage	Supply of children
Mortality reduction (Demographic)	Supply of children
Insurance	Demand for children
Price effect	
Emotional investment	
Rising aspirations for self and children (Psychological)	Demand for children
Vanishing economic roles for children (Economic)	Demand for children
Emergence of the conjugal family (Social)	Demand for children
Locus of costs and demands	
Companionate marriage	
Child-centredness	
Weakening cultural props for high fertility (Cultural)	Demand for children
Lineage and kin group	
Religious and social norms	
Social status	
Improved fecundity	Supply of children
Higher incomes	Demand for children

(Source: Bulatao 1979a: 5)

'motivations' at an individual level, "is not a theory of individual fertility", but is an explanation of long-term change via factors which may or may not be identical with factors which explain individual variance in fertility (1979b: 2).

The importance of Bulatao's hypothesis lies in his suggestion that the value of children provides an integrating link between demographic change and the whole range of variables which have been proposed from time to time as 'explanations' or correlates of transition (eg, women's education, family income, nonagricultural labour force participation, newspaper circulation, gross domestic product, and so on). The relative importance of demand, supply (due to improved fecundity and increased fecundability), and family limitation costs are, however, difficult to assess (1979a: 4). This would seem to be a crucial limitation, since different combinations of these factors could, presumably, lead to similar fertility levels. On the other hand, changes in the relative importance of each factor with respect to the other two may be the significant triggering mechanism for transition which researchers apparently are seeking. Bulatao himself proposed:

A reasonable, if oversimplified, assumption would seem to be that changes in supply and family limitation costs are dominant in the early stages of transition, and changes in demand become important after the early declines (1979a: 4).

In order to establish some common ground with the notion of 'economic' value of children referred to elsewhere in this chapter, this discussion of Bulatao's "demand factor" is limited to what he termed "economic roles" of children. His analysis was derived from data obtained from fourteen countries in Asia, Latin America, Europe, and Oceania (1979b: 1); the "values" and "disvalues" elicited in survey research were compared both by area and by fertility intentions of the parents.

Table 4.2 Range (%) of Respondents Citing Economic 'Values' and 'Disvalues' of Children For Fourteen Countries.

Value : Economic and Practical Help.

Fertility Level	n (groups)	Range of Response (rate)				Median	Mean
		Low		High			
Extremely High	10	15%	Kenya Akamba male	64%	Rural Ghana	37.5%	39.4%
Very High	6	35%	Iran workers	83%	Peru	70.5%	64.6%
High	13	31%	Turkey male	75%	Thailand female	53.0%	56.4%
Moderate	8	0%	Chile middle income	28%	Chile low income	15.0%	15.0%
Low	10	2%	Australia	7%	Japan female	4.5%	4.6%

Correlation of value response rate, with crude birth rate = 0.72, with ideal family size = 0.49.

Disvalue : Financial Costs.

Extremely High	10	0%	Bangladesh	96%	Rural Ghana	63.0%	52.8%
Very High	6	57%	Mexico	81%	Peru	70.0%	69.3%
High	13	24%	Indonesia female	66%	Costa Rica	30.0%	30.8%
Moderate	8	18%	Taiwan female	69%	Chile low income	33.5%	39.0%
Low	10	4%	Netherlands female	35%	USA male	14.0%	15.8%

Correlation of disvalue response rate, with crude birth rate = 0.62, with ideal family size = 0.57.

 (Source : Summarized from Bulatao 1979b : 22, 24, 68-71).

Details of sampling, data sources and the questions from which these responses were derived are appended in Bulatao 1979b : 54-59. In most cases questions were open-ended, referring to advantages and disadvantages of large and small families.

Table 4.3 Observed Changes in Values Attached to Children Across Nine Countries in the Value of Children Project.

Explanatory factor	Transition from high to moderate fertility levels	Transition from moderate to low fertility levels
Vanishing economic roles for children	Financial, practical help declines Help in housework declines	Financial, practical help declines Help in old age declines
Rising aspirations		Being tied down rises Fulfillment rises Achievement, power rises
	Cost of education declines (contrary to prediction)	
	Emotional strain rises	Discipline declines
Emergence of the conjugal family	Cost of education declines (contrary to prediction)	
	Emotional strain rises	Discipline declines
	Companionship, love rises (less sharply)	Companionship, love rises (more sharply)
	Fun rises (less sharply)	Fun rises (more sharply)
	Marital bond rises (less sharply)	Marital bond rises (more sharply)
Weakening cultural props for high fertility		Adult status, social norms rises (slightly, contrary to prediction)
Mortality reduction	Insurance against mortality declines	

Note: The nine countries in the Value of Children project were: the Philippines, Turkey, Indonesia, Thailand, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, the United States, and West Germany.

(Source: Bulatao 1979b: 6)

On the basis of these comparisons Bulatao found that the economic help children provide declined in salience and centrality from high to low fertility countries (see page 89). This was consistent with his 'vanishing economic roles' explanation of fertility decline. The disconfirmatory finding from the survey data was that perceptions of financial costs of children and of childbearing demands showed no rise (1979b: 5). Combined with the importance of decreased 'economic roles', this discovery tends to refute Mueller's conclusion that fertility decline is a consequence of increased cost, rather than decreased benefit (Table 4.2).

The vanishing economic roles' explanation of fertility decline conventionally has been interpreted as a demand for labour. The observations already discussed provide evidence that children do engage in productive activity in peasant (pretransition) societies. Bulatao sustained his argument on the basis of three categories of stated 'values' of children. The most marked decline between high, moderate and low fertility countries was in the salience (readiness with which values were verbalized) of financial or practical help. Help in old age, though mentioned by more respondents, declined less markedly, and help with housework, volunteered by fewer respondents than was general help, declined even less dramatically (1979b: 20-26, 60, 63).

Concluding his first analysis, based on only seven nations, Bulatao proposed "not one, but two value-of-children transitions, the first between high and moderate fertility levels, and the second between moderate and low fertility levels". Bulatao's summary of these transitions is shown in Table 4.3. Additional data in the second study largely reinforced the findings of the first study.

The lack of importance of economic utility as an 'advantage' of having children in low fertility societies has received support

from Lois Hoffman's research in the U.S.A.: only 7.9% of women (n=1258) and 10.1% of men (n=358) volunteered this advantage (1975: 433-434). However 39.9% of mothers and 44.7% of fathers cited financial costs as a disadvantage of having children, and 44.6% of mothers gave this as a reason for not wanting more than their preferred number of children (p435-436). Hoffman concluded, "the overwhelming reason for not wanting more children is financial" (p436).

In a later study Hoffman and Manis revealed a variation in the 'economic utility' value by urban/rural residence and by ethnic group: 20% of rural fathers and 10.8% of rural mothers gave this response, as did 18.5% of black fathers and 19.6% of black mothers (1979: 590-591). In particular, black mothers (10.9%) were more likely than any other group to cite "help with household chores" as an advantage of having children, and black parents were more likely to expect their children to provide economic help of various kinds than were white parents (p586, 591-2). Economic utility and useful activity accounted for a greater proportion of the variance in desired family size for all women (n= 1560) than did any other stated advantage (p539).

While the proportions citing economic advantages were not high when compared with those in peasant societies, the correlations with high and low fertility differences by ethnic group within the U.S.A. do support an hypothesis of a transition in the value of children.

Bulatao himself found further evidence for his hypothesis from an analysis of values and disvalues by parity in the Philippines, Korea and the USA, where different values and disvalues were related to different birth orders. In particular, the "late stage" (sixth and later children) "involved strengthening the family economically and all the economic benefits from children were prominent" for all three countries; the financial burdens were prominent at both middle and late stages (fourth and later children) although in the USA

the variation by parity was only slight (Bulatao: 1981). Since the transition in fertility occurs initially by eliminating higher birth orders, it is reasonable to conclude from these data that declining economic benefits are related to declining fertility, and that the negative relationship between economic costs and fertility is of less importance.

The transition Bulatao illustrated as in Table 4.3 does not appear as a smooth process. It is thus likely that some changes are more important than others at different stages of transition. There may also be reciprocal effects as between declining cost of education (free and compulsory) and the rise of the conjugal family - a point elaborated upon by Caldwell. Some changes may have both positive and negative effects on child 'value'. For instance, monetary cost of education may decline (decreasing financial 'cost' of children) but if school attendance therefore increases the 'utility' of children will decline, *ie*, the utility 'cost' of education increases. In particular, however, there is no indication in Bulatao's data of Caldwell's point of reversal of wealth flows (to be discussed below) and there appear to be some differences in the relative importance of various other determinants (*eg* emergence of the conjugal family) from those suggested by Caldwell (Bulatao 1979a: 94, n14). In Bulatao's opinion his analysis of values "essentially supports the economic explanation, and provides partial support for other (*eg* demographic, social, biological and psychological) explanations" (1979a: 1, parenthesis added).

4.3 (ii) Transition: A Reversal in Intergenerational Wealth Flows.

An alternative interpretation of demographic transition has been offered by Caldwell. The African research which provided much of the support for Caldwell's reinterpretation of

transition theory had as one of its aims "to learn more about how village society worked" (1977a: 6). That is, the Changing African Family Project¹⁸ emphasized process, rather than structure.

Acutely aware of the misleading conclusions which can result from functional determinism and tendencies to view social 'structure' as static, rather than dynamic (see Caldwell 1981: 20-21), Caldwell in his analysis has emphasized the interaction, indeed interdependence, of different processes or institutions in society. His overall perspective may be summarized as by Ware (1978: 10):

The point (is) that analysis of the material costs and benefits of childbearing depends as much on the social system that determines the nature and distribution of these costs and benefits as on the actual costs of food, clothing and other essentials.

The rationale behind much of the Changing African Family Project research, simply stated, is that if one is to understand the process of demographic transition then one must first of all understand what societies are like before transition.

Finding out "how society worked" is a logical basis for an exploration of why and how stable high fertility is sustained. Any assumption that high fertility in pretransition societies is a consequence of naivety, indifference or lack of contraceptive skills would, on the basis of the African studies, seem to be a dangerous illusion¹⁹. High fertility among the rural and urban poor populations studied in Asia and Africa was "not because they were helpless victims of uncontrollable fertility but because they preferred it that way and did not believe they would gain by having smaller families" (Caldwell 1977a: 1).

The premises of Caldwell's argument (see 1977a; 1978a) were

that there are only two types of fertility regime, both of which are economically rational:

1. Where there is no economic gain from restricting fertility (in which, theoretically, everyone would have the maximum possible number of children).
2. Where there is an economic gain from restricting fertility (where theoretically one would have no children).

In practice, he argued, the maximum and minimum levels of fertility in any society are determined by personal, social and psychological reasons, not economic ones. The movement from one regime to the other (demographic transition) is thus essentially a consequence of social, rather than economic, changes. This social revolution is one of familial relationships and has as a consequence a reversal of intergenerational wealth flows. That is, children change from being a net economic benefit to being a net economic cost. This is not so much to do with any intrinsic change in the value of children, but is to do with the directions of obligations and responsibilities from children to parents and vice versa. Such an explanation, Caldwell argued, does not need to refute "psychic" rewards²⁰ from children. The explanation simply holds without needing to consider such rewards (or costs).

Caldwell's writings indicate that any erroneous conclusions about pretransition fertility arise out of an artificial separation of economic and social structures, and from inappropriate definitions of familial relationships - such as where 'family' is defined simply as a residence group, or where the nuclear family is seen as the primary economic unit. In Africa in particular, the prevalence of polygyny implies different economic interests (including those related to children) of husband and wife, and ensures that these economic

interests are seldom, if ever, in any way restricted to any abstracted nuclear family unit or household. Rather than focus on either of these, Ware has suggested that a definition of the family "as the unit of mutual obligations"²¹ would be more relevant (1978: 9).

Adopting such a definition, Caldwell has analysed data from a number of African and Asian societies to determine how and why high fertility is preferred. If there is to be a transition in fertility, the cause of the shift in the cost-benefit equation then becomes problematic. The answers proposed by Caldwell lie in an intricate interaction of family obligations, economic maintenance and the return from education investment. In discussing children in this context Caldwell begins to show how their 'value' is defined by members of their society.

High fertility, he argued, is a rational response to the economic and social ends of a traditional agrarian society (1977b: 44; 1977c: 15). The economy of a society such as the Nigerian Yoruba, which has been studied in great detail, is a simple one based on communal land and co-operation between people, most of whom are relatives, who have lived in close proximity all their lives. In such a situation it is inconceivable that any nuclear family should crystallize out and take economic advantage over other such groups: 'family' and 'economy' are inextricably linked. In those societies which are polygynous children usually live with their mothers, forming semi-autonomous economic and social units within a wider extended family network which is oriented to families of origin rather than marriage. The costs of raising children are borne by the community or lineage. In a system where any person who is not fully committed in raising his/her own children is expected to help provide for the children of others less fortunate it would be irrational not to have as many children oneself as one wanted, almost regardless of one's own economic state. Caldwell wrote:

It is a salutary lesson to the outsider to find that Africa's peasantry rarely regard themselves or their children as being wretchedly poor. Certainly few regard themselves as being so poor that they would sell their right to higher fertility. (1977c: 240).

Caldwell has distinguished several economic advantages of children in peasant societies. In addition to 'subsistence services' of household and farm work as young children adult children continue to assist with labour inputs on their parents' farms as the parents age. They support and care for aged parents and for young siblings. Adult children contribute to family celebrations and bring honour to their parents which, via political influence, can have economic effect. Perhaps of most importance is the advantage which accrues to the patriarch with several wives and many children: at the top of his family pyramid he controls more and more resources and services, giving him both political and economic advantage. A Yoruba proverb indicates individual awareness of this advantage, stating that each new pair of hands helps to feed the extra mouth (1977b: 74). In societies where shortages are of labour, not land, it would be economically irrational to pay for labour when that of wives and children is free. This applies particularly to seasonal labour.

In a nonmonetized economy, such as the Yoruba, wealth flows are difficult to quantify. Services are difficult to measure and details of wealth are often withheld from relatives, as well as from officials (for fear of taxation). Although it may appear that the value-of-children notion of value 'to parents' is inappropriate in peasant societies, parents themselves clearly do see economic advantages. In a more recent paper Caldwell observed,

From Chad to Bangladesh the large family has been shown to benefit from the ability to diversify its labor force, and even to use this ability to exploit the possibility of windfall gains from unusual circumstances in the neighbourhood or beyond it. (1981: 7).

In addition, large families are powerful in economic affairs, having a disproportionate say in the allocation of communal resources (1981: 6).

To summarize then, notwithstanding the services and labour of young children, it is older children who contribute most significantly to the wealth flow to the older generation. The net gain from children is primarily from adult children; the net cost of young children is a small investment to make for this. Ware has argued that children are a "hedge against inflation" and while noting that some economists have calculated "that investment in children is a costly way to secure old-age support" she wrote that this shows little understanding of the real situation in developing countries where only charity would otherwise separate the old or disabled from starvation (1978: 21, 22). As investments, children draw on support when it is relatively plentiful, and provide it when it is scarce: "no investment is as attractive as a child" (Ware p22). The net value of children can be understood only in context of the total economic organisation, and is summed up in the Yoruba saying "children are wealth".

How then does transition occur? Caldwell has argued that free and compulsory mass education is a major factor²². Initially educational opportunities probably bring little disturbance to fertility preferences. Often the cost is met communally or by older, educated siblings and the rewards from the educated child are substantial, both in prestige and honour, and materially. At least initially, education might actually support high fertility.

But eventually education changes family and social relationships. Some change results from the removal of children from the labour force and as childcarers, due to lack of time, to their own distaste and to the reluctance of parents to impose this on their 'educated' children. But Caldwell gives much greater prominence to the westernizing effect of

education²³. Educated children learn that family 'is' two parents and their children; obligations and relationships between husbands and wives, and between parents and children, are perceived as in European relationships. Such ideas derive in the first instance from school itself²⁴ but later, since children are now literate and perhaps even have disposable income, from newspapers, magazines, radio, cinema and television. Children begin to see their entitlement to services and material goods, extending perhaps even to food, by reference to their parents' standards, rather than their age peers. They may 'need' more, and literally become more expensive. (1980: 227-8).

The educated sons (and, eventually, daughters) become "windows to the world" (1976: 221). Their perceptions of the western model ultimately result in family nucleation, marked first by relationships rather than residence, "and ultimately an emphasis on what parents owe children rather than what children owe parents" (1977c: 15). Schooling creates dependency: the child is seen as a future producer, not a present one and, as an 'investment', must be protected (1980: 228).

Mass schooling on its own might not bring family changes straight away. There are strong sanctions against an educated child not helping his community of origin (for instance, a person who can meet obligations, and does not do so, no longer has access to communal property). As long as the traditional obligations system persists, high fertility will persist. But strengthening of conjugal bonds threatens the system, a situation which is most likely when both husbands and wives have been educated to western ideas. It is understandable, wrote Ware, that educated parents "who psychologically do not have the option of rearing illiterate children, should be among the pioneers in family size limitation around the world" (Ware 1978: 8).

Caldwell recorded that "demographic innovators" (with 6 or

fewer children) in Nigeria were more likely to have been to secondary school, and to have husbands and fathers, and be themselves in nonmanual occupations; background seemed more important than contemporary experience. They came from emotionally nucleated families, were likely to have received more emotion and wealth from their own parents than was expected back, and they intended to treat their own children in this way. These women were distinguished "not (by) their lack of superstition or their rationalism" but by their attitudes towards their family and their children. They were less concerned with their ancestors and extended family relatives than with their children and their descendants. Children, to these mothers, had their own futures. (Caldwell 1977b: 96-98).

Family nucleation facilitates (rather than is caused by) a change in economic organisation. Although the transition is a social phenomenon, the wealth flow reversal can occur only when the economy of the nuclear family is independent of the extended family, when parents are in charge of their own family economy, unfettered by communal obligations. The interactions between family and economic organisation determine the value of children, and hence fertility change. Caldwell believed that

... the driving force of change in the worthwhileness of high fertility is the change from one mode of production to another - from familial to capitalist production - but that the point at which high fertility (or all fertility) becomes uneconomic can vary ... according to such social factors as whether children are taught to work hard and live austerely or not and according to whether mass education upsets the ability to maintain their hard working and relatively austere consumption situation. (Caldwell 1982: 299).²⁵

It is apparent that both familial and capitalist modes of production can, for a time, coexist. So long as the subsistence work continues to be done by women and children and wealth flows upwards, fertility will remain high (1980: 226).

In the terms used in previous sections, the wealth flow argument is based on a premise of rationality. Economically rational high fertility occurs where children's minimal costs and maximal gains (utilities) are shared communally. The individual couple or polygynous patriarch has nothing to lose by having a large number of children. Childrearing is shared and if belts have to be tightened then they are the belts of all children rather than the parents or even just the siblings. On the other hand, the extended family has everything to gain by extending its size, and in addition fathers gain political clout, accruing to them from the support of their adult sons.

Economically rational low fertility occurs when maximal costs are borne by individual parents, and minimal benefits accrue - benefits are returned to the child or the capitalist system. The transition from high to low fertility aspirations occurs as a result of westernization of family relationships; provided the family is an independent economic unit, intergenerational wealth flows can reverse, making children a net cost in economic terms.

Caldwell's argument has not gone unchallenged. Cain (1982) has suggested that in Kuwait, for example, wealth flows are already from parent to child, and yet fertility remains high. This criticism based on the situation in a country which is unusual in other aspects of its social organization, would seem to ignore the range of factors which Caldwell, at the outset, stated would determine actual fertility. Other similar empirical criticisms by Cain would also seem to be of minor importance: Caldwell, by incorporating personal, social and psychological variables, has much of the variance Cain documented well covered²⁶. Cain did however raise one point in particular which deserves consideration here. He took issue with the primacy Caldwell placed on family changes and claimed that Caldwell underestimated the variability in "economic extensiveness" of families. Cain suggested, on the basis of

his Asian studies, that extensive networks might actually facilitate fertility decline, rather than sustain high fertility, if it means that lateral kin provide support, hence reducing the need for lineal kin to provide it. He argued in contradiction to Caldwell:

Close-knit and strong kin networks can be viewed as a source of insurance alternative to children and may facilitate fertility decline by preventing children from becoming the focal point of parental concerns for security ... The value of children as a source of insurance and the value of having many children is thus increased by the weakness of lateral kinship bonds.
(Cain: 160, 173).

If one accepts Cain's critique, the role of a change in family type, from extended to conjugal, in provoking fertility decline can certainly not be held as a generalization, though it might well apply in some specific circumstances. It is possible, for instance, that an important factor is whether land or labour is the critical determinant of production: if it is land, high fertility will be disadvantageous to family production whereas if it is labour high fertility will be an advantage.²⁷

Others, such as Thandani (1978) have criticised other aspects of the argument and Caldwell has responded (see Caldwell 1981). The lack of consensus on a process regarded as fundamental to understanding population change serves only to highlight the complexity and variability of interaction between the structure (and functions) researchers perceive societies to have, and the 'value' parents place on children.

The contribution of Caldwell's analysis to this argument was not just to emphasize the nature of child 'utility', a net benefit often understated because of the hidden nature of many of the transactions between children and their elders. A more important contribution was that he located child 'cost' and 'benefit' within the social system, emphasized that the

'economic' is not independent of other transactions but is socially defined, and pointed a way to understanding how children come to have these notions of child 'value' attributed to them, ie, how values, costs and benefits are formed.

Caldwell's argument for transition was not simply a matter of increased cost of children, as it was with Mueller (1972, 1976) or of decreased utility, as it was with Nag et al (op.cit). Caldwell's argument was for a change in the directions of obligations and responsibility. This involves changed familial and economic structures. That is, transitions in value of children are only a symptom of, and an abstraction from, these more pervasive and underlying changes. Caldwell's theory lends support to the argument which is adopted in this thesis: the value of children can be understood only in the total social context. That is, 'value' is a sociological concept, as well as an economic or psychological one.

4.3 (iii) Implications For Policy.

However it is defined theoretically, the idea of child 'value' focussed on by researchers also has a practical orientation. As a stated 'intervening variable' in fertility behaviour, child value is at least implicitly open to manipulation by policy-makers (see Arnold et al: 11-12). Some writers have explicitly stated this potential as a justification for value of children research:

... so long as it is present to some degree, the economic benefits and costs of children are worth investigating, for they are far more capable of being influenced by policy than are most noneconomic benefits and costs associated with children. (Ridker 1976: 7).

The potential of applying a value of children perspective to population policy has been discussed in some detail by Simmons

(1977). He distinguished two 'intervention points' in the value of children determination of fertility:

1. The socioeconomic 'structures' can be modified to influence specific costs, incentives and alternatives with respect to children.
2. The 'value' of children itself can be modified by appealing to cultural values and beliefs underlying motivations for children.

Both of these interventions would thereby affect family size preferences and fertility. Unlike many family planning policies to date, Simmons' suggestion was for intervention in beliefs and values regarding, for instance, the goals sought and alternative ways of meeting these (the role of women, emotional support, companionship, community solidarity, etc). Interventions might be direct, in terms of persuasion or sensitization, or indirect via provision of social security systems or increasing maternity costs, etc (p 165-167). Many of Simmons' proposals, however, imply a certain level of economic development already attained (for example, his reference to withdrawing family allowances (p 167) and using television and radio to disseminate information (p 168)). They do not address the problem of fertility transition for the very poor, the subsistence agriculturalists discussed in this chapter.

A policy to achieve fertility decline in poor societies, focussed on economic value of children as previously discussed, would aim to increase child costs, decrease child benefits, or both. The research referred to in this section has indicated that a decrease in child utility might not be achieved very readily. The interaction of economic and social conditions means, for instance, that labour 'utility' of children is greatest in the poorest households and in particular in subsistence work beyond direct governmental control. Legislating against child labour would be difficult to achieve

and if successful would penalize the very households it would be intended to help. Such policy ignores the structure of peasant agriculture and familial production, and underestimates the larger scale economic benefits which adult children might bring.

Alternatively, any policy to diminish old age security value of children, a proposal advocated by Mueller (1976: 149), would require national resources which, generally speaking, are in excess of those available in poor societies where this 'value' of children is important. Furthermore, Ware has pointed out that "schemes to 'replace' children by old-age pensions ignore the fact the parents would not trust the stability, viability or honesty of any administration offering to guarantee them security in old age." (1978: 22).

Ware's observation highlights the problems inherent in any policy which focusses primarily on economic incentives or disincentives: life is not that simple. Certainly economic manipulations are attractive to those value-of-children researchers, such as Mueller, who conceptualize 'value' in economic terms which are abstracted out of, and separated from, the social context. McNicoll, for instance, being concerned that individual families might be advantaged by having a large number of children even when it is to the detriment of 'society', observed that "intendedly objective incentives" might acquire quite different personal connotations at the local setting (p 88). Even for very poor peasants, children have other significant psychological and emotional values, values which tend to be emphasized mostly with reference to 'developed' societies. Because of this, some writers (such as Darroch et al 1981, referring to Indonesia) have suggested that planning aimed primarily at improved economic conditions as a means of slowing population growth may be frustrated:

Population policies must take account of the high social value placed on children as children, regardless of their economic utility.

(Darroch et al : 75).

Heeding such words, the effectiveness of any policy increasing 'opportunity' costs, or awareness of actual child costs, would appear also to meet with limited success unless such policy also addresses the fundamental, and total, social situation. The complexity of such changes is apparent from the policy suggestions put forward by Wu for Taiwan. His suggestions included reforms in inheritance laws and religious ritual, as well as education and welfare policies (1977: 118-122). Bulatao, writing of the Philippines, was even more direct. Discussing the use of education and propoganda to alter religious values he emphasized,

the most important of these value changes ... depend on societal transformations. ... Public policy can only operate to guide, and to a limited extent accelerate, the process. (1975: 206).

The practical problem inhibiting policy formulation would appear to be whether transition is perceived as a general social process or primarily an economic process. While Bulatao's transition-in-the-value-of-children theory has outlined which "values" or "disvalues" he believed increase or decrease in importance as fertility declines (a correlation, not a causation), even he did not elaborate on how such changes come about. He has argued for the economic basis to this change on the grounds that if it was cultural then any observed differences between societies would be relatively permanent (1979b: 51). Notwithstanding his specification of particular cultural values (such as having 'family names') which might affect certain child 'values', Bulatao has employed a fixed definition of 'culture'²⁸ which is exclusive and a perspective of society which is static, not dynamic.

Caldwell, however, has specified the mode of change. To him fertility decline did not depend on industrialization or economic development (as Bulatao claimed) but on cultural

change through 'westernization', which is mediated through mass education. To Caldwell, fertility decline was more likely to precede industrialization, "and to help bring it about" (1977b: 112).

The culture/development disagreement has been regarded by Bulatao (1979b: 51) as "competing explanations for particular variations in values". Apparently seeking a compromise, he suggested an interaction of the two or, alternatively, the possibility that some value changes might be 'explained' by cultural changes, some by development, and some by both.

Phrased thus, the debate becomes a non-issue, for which the main argument is a question of causal sequence of economic/cultural development. Accepting Caldwell's theory, mass education might bring the cultural (including economic) changes which he perceived as a necessary precondition to fertility decline, but education also, in turn, requires a sufficient level of societal economic 'development' to sustain it en masse. Hence, economic development might be necessary for fertility decline, but it is not sufficient. The essential factor in Caldwell's transition is emotional and economic nucleation of the family, which involves at some point a change from familial to nonfamilial²⁹ production. The political challenge, according to Caldwell's theory, is presented as achieving westernization. Mass education, industrialization and capitalist production are the frontline attack. Any strong family planning programmes will be effective only where economic changes have already taken place, or are already under way (see also Simmons: 159).

Arguments such as Caldwell's are a step ahead of conventional structural determinist arguments. Cultural 'props' theories fall down as soon as one acknowledges that 'societies' and 'institutions' are only the sum of the parts. Even if one accepts that demographic change occurs when 'societies' are under stress (as McNicoll suggested, p86), it is individual

fertility which has to change. Coale and Davis both recognized that individuals must perceive a threat to their own economic position and perceive an advantage in reducing fertility. Caldwell, by emphasizing system rather than structure, has indicated how perspectives might be changed to these very ends. Erosion of cultural 'props', like acknowledgment of 'psychic' rewards of children, appears to need little consideration when economic influences are so pervasive. To achieve the transition from high to low fertility, one can conclude, policy must be most concerned with economic utilities and costs of children as components of a total communal system of wealth, goods and services which are transferred from generation to generation.

4.4 Alternative Approaches to Understanding The 'Value' of Children.

While the emphasis of the research so far discussed has been primarily on economic 'values', this is not to suggest that other kinds of values have been ignored. Implicit in reinterpretations of transition theory is a 'shift' in value of children from economic to noneconomic values. Caldwell considered that what he called "psychic" value, had no impact on the reversal in wealth flows but noneconomic values are implicit in his low fertility regime as the 'reason' why couples who economically-rationally would have no children actually do have some. Bulatao, however, made the value shift explicit in his value-of-children transition.

In this section two particular studies, one of a high fertility society and one of a low fertility society, are referred to. These provide a useful contrast to the research already discussed, not just in interpretation of 'value' but also as illustrations of alternative methods of investigating that 'value'.

4.5 (i) "Children of the Lakeshore": Value of Children In the Philippines.

Children of the Lakeshore (Concepcion, (ed) 1976) represents initial findings from the University of the Philippines Population Institute (hereafter referred to as UPPI) study of 'value' of children to people in selected Laguna lake towns, a study which, at the same time, sought to reveal the "inner view of peasant life" (pv). In the introduction to the report the fieldwork strategy is described:

It was agreed that the fieldworkers reside in the community and immerse themselves, so to speak, in the local culture and record what they see, hear, and, together with the informants, do. There were no hypotheses to set the tone of the research, except the general idea that the data to be gathered were to be about the family: its organisation, structures, behavioural features, problems, aspirations and so on.
(p vi).

An account of detailed method is missing from the report. Indeed, a somewhat laissez-faire approach is implied with no specification of the kinds of activities, conversations, relationships or perceived structures which were to be considered significant. The purpose of the approach is stated, but the means by which fieldworkers were to identify or define critical concepts (family, norms, values, etc) are not stated:

The purpose of this approach was to discover, in pristine form, how the people organize their relationships, relate to one another and to the community. How do they perceive these relationships in terms of norms and values governing local behaviour?
(ibid).

Whereas Bulatao, in his study of the Philippines, relied on verbalizations to reflect individual conduct and values, the

UPPI strategy was to examine how people conducted their everyday relationships. These relationships and interactions included those with and about children. That is, relationships significant to the research would have children as their object. In focussing on the object of these relationships the fieldworkers apparently were to recognize the 'value' of children as some discrete characteristic extrinsic both to the children concerned and to the parties to the relationships. However the accounts of family life given in the report also imply some intrinsic qualities of children, which are not discrete, apart or even identifiable as such by respondents. These qualities might also be subsumed under the label of child 'value'. The identification of 'children' with 'marriage' is an example of what might be termed an 'intrinsic' value, as compared to provision of household help as an 'extrinsic' value. Such qualities are not distinguished in kind in the report.

The general conclusions of the UPPI study differed little in outline from those of Bulatao. However, the field observations and conversations which have been recorded in the UPPI report could provide some insight to how the subjects themselves understood what the researchers termed 'value'.

For example, subjects frequently talked about "good" children, who were held in high regard not just by parents, but by the community. In discussing this 'value', however, the authors revealed their own recourse to measurement, and their imposition of this perspective on the subjects they were studying:

High regard for him or her is indicated by the number of times his/her name is mentioned or by the number of times the conversation is shifted so that the topic will focus on him/her. The child's goodness is measured to a large extent by the material support ... that he can extend to the other members of his family. (p36).

Not only parents, but also siblings, close kin and neighbours,

took any opportunity to 'brag' about such a "good" child. Respondents saw the advantages of a large family as being better chances that at least one child would be a "good" child, willing and able to take care of his/her parents in their old age. The idea of good was conceptualized by researchers in the idiom of economics. It may well have been articulated as such by respondents but other possible definitions, such as a common world view for instance (see p 215) were not considered. Material support, in addition to (or perhaps despite) providing economically, also symbolizes nonmaterial relationships and feelings, etc - the "psychic" values of Caldwell. It may be that the symbolic 'value' of a "good" child was more important than the gifts or money he/she provided. But one could not necessarily expect the subjects to recognize this. Exposing such symbolism is a researcher's task.

Laguna parents strived to produce "good" children. Misdemeanours were punished and achievements rewarded. A "good" child was co-operative and obedient. One mother responded that as her child went about housework patiently and obediently "the more I love him" (p62). The "good" child would support his family, even after he was married with his own children. He thereby helped to maintain stability in the community. The "bad" child was one who showed no care for his family or who went away and did not send back any contribution. These observations parallel Caldwell's interpretations of African 'wealth flows' (p 96). The Laguna studies show how children might be considered to be economic and social assets by researchers approaching their study from an economic perspective. In terms of maintaining family stability and in facilitating mobility the UPPI researchers wrote,

... everyone knows that the families that are moving up the socioeconomic ladder are those with ... children who have faithfully provided economic assistance to their families. (p92).

Children were considered to be assets not just to their

parents, but to their siblings and close kin. However, it is not just one's own children who are such 'assets', but anyone, young or old, who contributes to the material well-being of the lineage or community. In saying that it was therefore a matter of some importance to everyone in the community that parents raise good children who will assist their families towards a more comfortable life, the researchers may be referring to a commonly held community 'value', rather than any discrete 'value' of children per se.

Laguna respondents repeatedly cited the importance of striving to provide a good education for their children. While on the one hand, having children to be educated gave an incentive to parents to work hard, on the other hand this was perceived as an investment to ensure better opportunities for the children and thus a higher 'return' to the family. Not until old age was considered did the focus of child assistance return to the parents; older siblings, as indicated above, assisted the entire family. In focussing almost exclusively on the investment-return idiom of accounting, the other consequences of schooling, which were central to Caldwell's argument, have been overlooked. Education was presented as a financial or labour outlay; risks to personal and family relationships or indeed, to a whole way of life, received little attention from these authors.

To the Filipinos children strengthened marriages by giving parents mutual goals to work for ("both work harder to give the child a secure and bright future" - p11). Children were also a tangible reminder of the sacredness of their marriage vows:

Our children are the best guarantee of our marriage vows: they are a stronger source of security than the marriage license (p91).

There is no strong claim binding the couple's love if they have no children (p38).

Once there were children, the nature (or meaning) of the

marriage changed. In the Philippines:

many husbands expressed that with the coming of children their love for their wives was transformed from mere romantic love to love with responsibility. It was only with the coming of children that they were able to fully comprehend the true meaning of marriage and its responsibilities. (p91, emph, added).

Children not only made a marriage meaningful, but they also sustained the marriage. Where there were differences between Filipino spouses, attention was directed to the children:

When my wife makes me unhappy, I just comfort myself with the thoughts that we have these two active and happy children. Their noise and laughter make our home happy and help us forget our disappointments and differences (p91).

The pleasure of playing with children was said to encourage such fathers to stay at home, "thus avoiding the temptation to drink with friends or go nightclubbing" (p89). These husbands and wives did not only stay together for the children, but the children enabled them to do so. The children were thus to them, a real part of the marriage.

By contrast, the happiness brought by children was cherished for its own sake, a sentiment expressed by one mother as "a house with no children is like a rice cake without coconut".³⁰ Bulatao gave this 'value' prominence and it also recurs throughout the UPPI report. This 'value' is well documented by observations as well as - even more than - by interview data. Indeed, the UPPI researchers noted,

The Filipino family is often described as being child-centered. ... Children are highly desired. In fact the manner by which they are cared for and attended to often impresses one that Cardona (Laguna village) children are over-pampered and spoiled. (p88, parenth. added).

Not only parents, but brothers, sisters, friends and neighbours

enjoyed the play of children, the innocence and warmth of babies, the teasing of adolescents. It was widely believed that children made a home happy, and the more children there were the happier the home would be. The happiness would be even greater if the children turned out to be "good" children, helping their parents, being obedient and loving.

The majority of Filipinos were Catholics. The beliefs of Laguna subjects lay closely in accordance with biblical injunctions, combined with a "blind trust in Fate" (p91). Whether or not a couple will have children is considered beyond individual control, for it is God-ordained (p90). Filipino religious beliefs were expressed in various rituals which accompanied pregnancy, birth and death ³¹. Ignoring these rituals would, they believed, incur bad effects on the unborn child, the mother or the baby, or on the kin of the dead person. Similarly, to intervene in childbearing, by contraception or abortion, "would be to court divine retribution in the form of constant misfortunes like illness and economic difficulties" (p90). It is no coincidence then, that children, all children, but especially good, loving children, were considered to be gifts from God. Here the UPPI authors provided the link between children as part of marriage (a sacred institution), children as a blessing on that marriage, and the happiness that children (blessings) bring to a family and the community. Thus the reader is told that "everyone loves babies" (p89), that childless couples are to be pitied, and that adoption is very common. Because children were thought to be so important, mothers said there was no limit on how many a family must have. "Children are wealth" they said, and "if you have been given life, you will have the means to sustain it." (p40, 91).

The UPPI study adds considerable meaning to the conclusions reported by Bulatao. The Laguna studies extended into all aspects of family life, highlighting the fact that children, or the 'value' of children, cannot be studied out of the context

of family life. Bulatao wrote of the complexity of the interaction between various child 'values', and of how values are only partially revealed by imposing a structured perspective on what children mean. In applying an accounting perspective to their experience the UPPI researchers also imposed a particular structure on child 'value'. Furthermore, the UPPI report is structured in that child values are listed under various headings which might well have been uplifted from Bulatao's list of values. 'Values' have been seen as discrete and identifiable. But the difference between the reports is in the descriptive detail and case studies reported for the Laguna towns, detail which enables the reader to make his/her own interpretation of the qualities and interactions the authors have called 'values', and to achieve some understandings of the meaning of children to these people which might come closer to their reality, rather than that of the researchers:

They are everything to us - joy, happiness, inspiration and most of all - gifts from God. (p12, emph added).

The UPPI researchers viewed the child in the context of his family and community; they recorded not just what people said the 'value' of a child was, in the sense of "value" as defined by researchers such as Bulatao, but also in terms of how people spoke about children and how they behaved towards children. As a consequence, the reader might well conclude that the meaning is much greater than any 'sum' of the 'values' and 'disvalues' which might be identified. This is one kind of contribution which a field study such as the UPPI one might make to our understanding of the 'value' of children.

4.5 (ii) Western Interpretations: Marriage and Family

Western researchers may find it relatively easy to argue that cultural 'values', such as religion or patriarchy, encourage

high fertility in poor societies, particularly if there is an absence of modern contraceptive knowledge and practice. However, it is significant that even in western societies where, in Caldwell's terms, economically rational behaviour facilitated by effective birth control techniques could limit fertility to zero, couples usually have some children.

In the scheme proposed by Hoffman and Hoffman (1973, see Chapter 3), based on information derived from a range of sources, only one of the nine values listed is an economic factor. Data gathered in the USA (L. Hoffman 1975) indicated a relatively low rating of economic utility as an advantage of children, with much higher proportions of men and women volunteering personal and familial values (Table 4.4). Although Hoffman and Manis (1979: 583, 593-4) later found a negative correlation between responses indicating that children are "functional for the marriage" and desired fertility, there was a threshold to this effect:

... valuing children for their enhancement of the marriage provided a motivation at zero and first parity, but not beyond. (Hoffman & Manis: 594).

Hoffman and Manis suggested that the personal or social value of children is a complex notion which involves, in particular, concepts of adult status, and personal identity, expansion of self, morality and primary group ties. These aspects of the Hoffman and Hoffman schema represent the subject-object dialectic referred to by Bulatao (1975: 4, see page 58). The values are not intrinsic to either subject (parent) or object (child) but they arise out of, and may be perceived as separate from, the interaction between the two parties.

The idea that having children ascribes adult status to the parent is found in many cultures, entrenched in ideas of morality and maturity: an adult without children is difficult to comprehend, motherhood is "almost synonymous with virtue" and fatherhood with "self-respect" (Hoffman: 431). Even more

Table 4.4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Having Children
Volunteered (U.S.A.)

Hoffman and Hoffman
'Values'

Women
(Wife under 40 with at least 1 child)
n=1258

Men
(Wife under 40 with at least 1 child)
n=358

<u>Advantages</u>	%	%
Primary group ties and affection	66.2	60.1
Stimulation and fun	60.1	55.3
Expansion of self	35.2	32.4
Adult status and social identity	21.9	19.8
Achievement and competence	11.0	9.5
Economic utility	7.9	10.1
Morality	6.8	6.4
Power	2.2	2.2
Social comparison	0.1	0.3
<u>Disadvantages</u>		
Loss of freedom	52.9	48.6
Financial costs	39.9	44.7
Traditional worries (health, safety, etc)	19.8	19.3
Specific unpleasant aspects of job	9.9	9.2
Interfere with mother's work	6.6	1.1
Worry because of "troubled world"	6.1	7.5
Interfere with marital relationship	5.4	4.7
Worry about ability to parent	4.8	3.4
Children are lazy	2.6	1.7
Overpopulation	0.3	0.3

(Source: Lois Hoffman, 1975: 433-434)

pervasive than the idea that adults 'have' children is the assumption that marriages 'have', indeed 'need', children. In Hoffman's study two-thirds of parents indicated that an advantage of children was in establishing and reinforcing primary group ties, the "desire for love and the feeling of being in a family" (Hoffman: 433).

Hoffman's research was based on the East-West Crossnational study. The responses summarized in Table 4.4 are those derived from the first, open-ended, question in the interview schedule, which asked for advantages of having children compared with not having any at all. The responses included comments which were coded into 65 different types; these were, therefore, categorized according to the researcher's preconceptions. This "value universe" resembles a relief map of the world, an overview from a particular place but without any facility to know what it is like on the ground.

On-the-ground perspectives come from respondents themselves. Research in western societies which is based on informal interviewing similar to that conducted by the UPPI, provides some insight into what the 'value' of children means in everyday life, to western subjects. Such subjects may not know what children actually 'cost' in monetary terms, and they may not consider them to be particularly useful, but they do know why they are important in their personal lives. They know for instance, that marriage and children together constitute the meaning of 'family'.

For subjects this particular synthesis is legitimated in religion; for researchers it is legitimated in academic literature. For example, the marriage service of some churches specifically states that childbearing is one of the functions of marriage, while infecundity in some situations may be grounds for divorce. On the other hand anthropologists have defined marriage as being a union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are "legitimate" offspring

to both partners (Busfield 1974: 14-21). Clearly the idea that children and marriage go hand-in-hand is not an idea which springs independently from the minds of individual respondents. Parenthood is almost universal among married people and there are strong negative attitudes towards childless married couples.

Busfield and Paddon's study of English post-War fertility (Busfield and Paddon 1977) drew on informal interview material as a means of providing an understanding of children which was not apparent from a formal survey.³² Conversation analysis provided empirical support which is presented here not so much in order to substantiate their conclusions as to illustrate the potential of this type of method for providing detail of the kinds of survey data produced by, for example, Hoffman and Manis. Referring to the marriage/children synthesis, for instance, English respondents were reported as saying:

To (marry and not have children) would not only be unthinkable, it would also be illogical.
(Busfield & Paddon: 134)

It is useless to be married if you don't have children.
(op.cit: 38).

Like the Filipino respondents, the English also saw children as important for the survival of a formal marriage:

If you don't 'have any children, if you have any difference of opinion you're inclined just to sort of pack up your gear and get going. (op.cit: 135).

Whether they are babies or adults, 'children' are implied in the concept of 'family'. The desire for family life was, to the English respondents, an apparent reason for having children:

Without children a married couple are not a proper family (Busfield and Paddon: 136, *emph. added*).

Well I don't think that family life could be complete

without children. I don't think that life is complete unless you have a child really. (op.cit: 140).

... that's what you get married for, isn't it. I mean, I mean those that, those that - if they want a good time, well they shouldn't get married, should they? ... Marriage is a home and family and a husband and family. Marriage isn't to keep going out and keep - is it? (op.cit: 135).

Such comments not only tell us about the place of children in marriage, but also about the nature of normative marriage. For instance, in the previous quote, one doesn't have a "good time" or "keep going out" when married - does one? Perhaps unintentionally, such comments lend indirect support to an emerging ideology which seeks to establish that marriage doesn't have to mean children, that children might be bad for a marriage.

Busfield and Paddon's conversation analysis revealed an image of family life which is a reflection of overlapping concepts of, in particular, 'marriage', 'home', 'family', 'children', 'husband' and 'wife'. While in some cultures the roles of 'wife' and childbearer may be seen as separate³³, the two were regarded as one and the same by these western respondents. Women who had never married ("old maids") were assumed never to have had children - and were often regarded with pity or scorn because of this. Similarly, the concept of 'home' incorporated that of 'husband' ("Marriage is a home and family and a husband and family"). But it is children who, to most people, were the essential ingredient:

Well, I think when you're married, everybody wants children. I don't think it would be a home if you didn't have a family. (Busfield & Paddon: 197-8).

In the mental construct of these everyday people home and family are intimately linked, while family and children were used as interchangeable concepts. Such meaning constructions are not revealed by formal interview analysis, but by the

sensitive researcher observing how people themselves experience their families in everyday life. The meaning is expressed in practical family life, not in any researcher's theoretical construct.

Busfield and Paddon suggested that significant changes in how people thought about children with respect to marriage had taken place in the post-War period (p254-7). Early in the period pervasive limitations on family size had been socially prescribed.

... the calculations involved were normally encapsulated ... by an underlying acceptance of the necessity and value of family life, so that most people when they married started off with the assumption that having children was an essential and important part of family life. (p254).

As a consequence, it was considered essential to have some children, but on the other hand the number and spacing of these were determined by the interests of all family members (rather than personal satisfactions). One of the changes detected over the post-War period was that this assumption, that if one married one would automatically have children, seemed to be diminishing. The greater willingness to question the earlier assumption made the eventual decision more open to change. Against that, however, more people seemed to be arguing that there was no reason to marry unless it was to have children: marriage and children remained closely tied together.

Secondly, the researchers suggested that fertility decisions were based more on personal interest than family interest; personal ideologies (rather than communal beliefs) and alternative satisfaction had become increasingly important. Busfield and Paddon argued that this reflected a dichotomy of individual versus collective values in society (p256). The apparent shift in fertility decision-making thus represented a fundamental change in beliefs about the family, separating it even further from communal influence. The changes documented

by Busfield and Paddon indicate some continuation of Caldwell's family changes from production (economic) to ideological (cultural) values of children, at later stages of transition. More importantly, however, they reinforce Caldwell's belief that children, or the 'value of children, cannot be separated out from the total social fabric, except as an artificial abstraction.

4.5 Summary.

The studies referred to in this chapter serve to emphasize two important aspects of value-of-children research.

The first emphasis is on the need to see children, or child 'value', from the parents' point of view. The studies referred to in this chapter suggest various methods which sociologists might apply in order to try and do this. These studies have different strengths, but there is a common analytic problem, to do with interpretation. Ware highlighted this problem thus:

Parental behaviour is obviously influenced by parental perceptions of the costs and benefits of childrearing, rather than by the economists' calculations, but the question remains whether there is any real evidence that parents are wrong in their perceptions and are acting against their own best interests. (1978: 17).

Caldwell (1977b: 78-80) referred to the problem of 'disaggregating' these costs and benefits of children. In societies he called "unintrospective", people do not, and perhaps cannot, see separate aspects of child value. If they do, he suggested, the old society is already crumbling: "children's roles are not as certain as before" (p79). Abstracting out discrete values and disvalues is an exercise of hindsight or external observation.

Ware's question is unanswerable. The problem is, however, of

particular concern to policy-makers. Darroch et al challenged policy makers themselves, asking how they perceived people and their children, and how they related their perceptions to policy (p79). There are, they suggested, some discrepancies between the views of policy-makers and the societies they seek to change. Discussion in this chapter highlights these disparities. The net cost/net benefit dichotomy may well reflect perceptions of the world by the researcher, and might even imply some degree of ethnocentrism.

Ware (1978: 18-19) was of the opinion that those who argued for a net child-burden (such as Mueller) relied on "complex statistical manipulations of aggregate data drawn from a range of sources and even cultures". She argued that most economists of the child-burden school were also often restricted in their assumptions of western experience. On the other hand, she argued, those who proposed a net investment return (such as Caldwell) started from parental perceptions themselves in their data-gathering.

Whether children are more or less costly, or more or less productive, than parents perceive them to be may be of theoretical concern, but the practical interest in understanding the actual, real fertility behaviour of people themselves is what they believe the 'value' of children to be.

The second emphasis derived from the research discussed in this chapter is on the complexity of interaction between child 'value' and the social situation in which parents and potential parents find themselves. In contrast to research where child value was referred to primarily in terms of monetary cost, labour force participation, ^eforgone occupational or educational opportunities, old age support, etc (ie, in economic terms), this chapter has also referred to child 'value' in terms which have a human, rather than material, reference. Children have been discussed in the context of marriage, family, parenthood and womanhood.

Because many of the ideas presented in this chapter are ideas and feelings, rather than objectifications which the researcher (believes he) can observe or measure, they do not emerge very clearly - if at all - in conventional, quantitative value of children research. The discovery of the value (meaning) of a child in this context requires an intimate appraisal of the living situation of the subjects of the study. The researcher needs to become familiar with what they say, and what they do. The findings must reflect the subjective meanings of the subjects.

The examples cited in this chapter illustrate various ways in which such meanings might be gained and, in the context of value-of-children research, how they might be understood. The examples also illustrate the complexity of any apparently-rational and objective decision-making in childbearing behaviour. The quotations which have been reproduced indicate that human utterances say much more than does the sum of the words which make up the utterances. If we can deduce what the verbal statements about children mean we might be in a position to deduce what children mean to the people (including researchers) who made those statements. There is a major challenge implied in this work: to untwine the concepts of children, family, home, father, mother and woman, and to see where children are. The everyday meanings of these concepts are subjective; they cannot be understood objectively by any researcher. To make sense of these concepts in a manner which is similarly meaningful to the subject, the researcher, and the recipient of his report, the researcher must reveal his own subjectivity. That is, the social construction of the research process, as a separate understanding must also be acknowledged. It is thus unlikely that everyday people understand 'values' or 'disvalues', as they have been defined by Bulatao for example. It is unlikely that these 'values' are fixed and unchanging either in time or space. Yet 'values' do have common meanings. The formation of these meanings, arising out of social

interaction, is implicit in Caldwell's analysis. To be made explicit a different kind of analysis seems necessary. An attempt at formulating this method is the practical task of the present thesis.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. Caldwell (1977: 21) suggested that the failure of economic analysis to show why large families "feel no worse off" than small families was due to "a failure to understand societies where the distinctions are much less clear than in advanced industrial societies between producers and consumers and between the hours of the week devoted to production and those devoted to consumption".
2. For a discussion of 'norms' in fertility behaviour see Hawthorn 1970, Chapter VI.
3. Value of children might also, in turn, be 'determined' by other cultural variables, eg, religious beliefs.
4. For example, in Factors Affecting Human Fertility in Nonindustrial Societies Nag (1968) reported on crosscultural data under the headings "Factors relating to probability of coitus", "Factors relating to probability of conception" and "Factors relating to growth of fetus and survival of offspring" - ie, Davis and Blake's "intercourse, conception and gestation" variables.
5. The salient features of the 'structural' approach of anthropologists have been outlined by van Velsen (1967: 131) as being investigation which focusses on relations between social statuses or positions rather than between individuals, and which assumes a unity made up of parts or processes (relationships) which are linked to each other in orderly fashion, as family type or size might be linked to economic structure. As such, the unity is an abstraction. The theoretical basis of the structural approach reaches its extreme in sociobiology, the proponents of which assume a group rationality in which the group allegedly maximizes its own conditions for survival (Wilson 1975: Ch 2, 4). The perspective is reminiscent of that of the economists, implying competition, allocation of scarce resources, and adaption to the environment (Becker 1976: 818).
6. See Nag, White and Peet 1977; 1978, and White 1975.
7. See Hull and Johnson, in Nag et al 1978: 302). Measurement of (indeed, conceptualisation of) 'productivity' is an important problem in this research. The authors distinguished what they termed "directly

productive" from "household maintenance" work, a distinction queried by Johnson (op.cit) who argued that some "household maintenance" work (eg collecting firewood) is required to make other work (eg cooking) "directly productive". "Directly productive" work was, however, liberally defined, to include animal care, handcrafts, gardening, trading, cooking food for sale, and labour, while "household maintenance" included "housework" for the household, childcare and firewood collection. Such classifications reveal the bases of the researcher's statements and the grounds of research analysis.

8. On the basis of time allocation, child 'work' input has been expressed as a proportion of adult male input. By this criterion girls in almost all age-groups did more work than boys, partly because they did more household maintenance work and partly because boys were more likely to attend school than girls. For "directly productive" work, input ranged from 98% of adult male input for 15-19 year old Nepalese girls to 15% for 6-8 year old Javanese girls.
9. These women spent more time in "directly productive" work, averaging 5.2 hours/day in Java and 7.2 in Nepal. Most of the time spent on childcare was spent by other household members, especially older siblings. The authors cited the case of a 4 year old girl who was observed looking after a 2 year old brother for up to 6 hours while her mother worked in the field.
10. This is the context which the ESCAP project was an attempt at defining - see Chapters 6 and 7.
11. Notestein's theory is acknowledged as an elaboration of an idea first developed by Warren Thompson in 1929, and referred to also by Carr-Saunders in 1936 and the biologist Pearl in 1939 (Robinson: 103).
12. For example, debates over the actual mechanisms of mortality and fertility decline, over the timing of these, over the comparability of European with third world experience, and over the relative timing of urban and rural transitions. See, for example, Davis 1963; Robinson 1964; Concepcion and Murphy 1967; Coale 1972; Beaver 1975; Teitelbaum 1975.
13. Notestein himself cited the "cost of child-rearing", "economic contributions of children" and new "economic roles" of women as factors inducing the transition to

low fertility. (See Coale 1973: 54).

14. This is not to ignore the possibility that particular individuals might be prevented from using effective techniques in situations where the group has not satisfied the first two conditions, such that (for example) family-planning clinics are not available.
15. Davis and Blake in 1956 had acknowledged that although there were physiological limits to reproduction they were "concerned only with the steps in reproduction as they may be socially recognized and utilized" (1956: n1, emph. added).
16. Although the question of whether or not transition 'theory' is a theory shall not be taken up in detail, it is relevant to note its ambiguous state, given the criticisms levelled at demographers generally for the lack of theoretical development of their discipline (see, eg Davis 1959: 313). Hauser and Duncan, for instance, defined a 'theory' of population as

... a body of interrelated principles which has at least some degree of empirical support, which affords an explanation or prediction of observable relationships and which has heuristic implications in suggesting hypotheses for investigation. (1959: 13).

Similar requirements, emphasizing relationships and 'key variables' in historical transitions, have been proposed by Concepcion and Murphy in their call for a "real theory" of the demographic transition (1967: 6-7). That the theoretical rules are challenged is evidenced by the criticisms directed at the generalizations implicit in the model. Beaver (1975: 12) explained,

Most difficulties arise from the disagreement among investigators as to the content of the theory. This is understandable, since the theory has certain aspects of an empirical generalization, a true sociodemographic theory, and a paradigm. A given datum may support, or be irrelevant to, or inconsistent with the theory, depending upon how it is interpreted.

17. See note 16.
18. The Changing African Family Project has been conducted from the Australian National University from 1973 onward. Directors are F.O. Okedjii and J.C. Caldwell;

Field Director Helen Ware. (Caldwell 1977c: 27).

19. The illusion is described as "dangerous" because of the policy implications which might be perceived.
20. The term "psychic" is misleading. Caldwell implied by this emotional or psychological values. He did not appear to acknowledge that what he categorized as economic values are also psychic (ie, in the mind).
21. This definition is adopted in the present thesis research. See Chapters 6 and 7.
22. See Caldwell 1980 : 225-250 for a fuller explanation of the effect of mass education on fertility decline. Caldwell noted that the timing of mass education is not necessarily economically linked: mass education could well arise sometime after it was economically viable (as in England) (p226). He also emphasized that it is mass schooling, rather than literacy, which is the significant factor (p228).
23. In this context 'western' is distinct from 'modern'.
24. From an examination of school readers used in Nigeria, Caldwell found no support for traditional values. "The message is contemporary Western", he wrote, and would be particularly effective for young children. (1980: 240-241).
25. Evidence to support this belief from Europe and the colonies (including Australia) is discussed in Caldwell 1978a: 568-571, Caldwell and Ruzicka 1978: 81-103, Caldwell 1980: 232-237 and 1981: 16-20, and from some developing countries in 1980: 242ff. In Australia, for instance, a century ago "the important element in the economic value of children was the cheapness of their keep" (Caldwell & Ruzicka 1978: 85) but as the impact of schooling was felt with increased monetary costs the wealth flow towards children increased and "large families were described by all as unbearably expensive" (Caldwell 1981: 20).
26. For example, Cain claimed that Caldwell overstated patriarchal gain and understated the dependency of wives who may have an interest in gaining a large family (especially sons) as an insurance against loss of the husband's support. Much of Cain's argument was related to children as an insurance against risk, another aspect

which he claimed Caldwell underrated. This insurance 'value' would be highest in harsh environments and here, he argued, fertility change might result from economic changes. In more affluent societies these benefits would not be so essential to families, which might perhaps explain the different value shifts which Caldwell (and Bulatao) referred to. Despite his criticisms, however, Cain generally supported the net child benefit/high fertility correlation. (Cain 1982).

27. Ware (1978: 25) cited both Cain's Bangladesh study and White's research in Indonesia to support her conclusion that landowners with enough land to support their families (as in Nigeria), landowners with not enough to support their families, and those who have no land "all face different parameters in calculating the value of their children". Such are the constraints which operate when researchers attempt to calculate the value of children, but it remains to be shown that these people themselves actually do undertake such calculations.
28. "In contrasting the effects of culture and development, however, I am using 'culture' more narrowly to embrace elements for which change is not equivalent to development." (Bulatao 1979b: 51, n8).
29. Although Caldwell wrote of a familial/capitalist dichotomy, for the sake of the present argument 'nonfamilial' is used to include socialist production which, although communal, is not family-based.
30. Rice cakes are a Filipino delicacy (Concepcion (ed): 37).
31. Taboos observed during pregnancy mean a woman should not do heavy work, lift heavy objects (etc) for risk of miscarriage. Numerous folk beliefs include: if the woman's kin do any diggings it will be as if a grave is being prepared for her; if she stops while walking up stairs she will have a difficult delivery; she must use garlic to keep bad spirits away; if her belly is rounded she will have a girl; after birth the placenta might be buried under a rain gutter to make the child resistant to cold, etc, (Concepcion, (ed): 8-11).
32. The original prescription of the research described in Busfield and Paddon's Thinking About Children was to elucidate the factors affecting fertility patterns in

England since the War. The method was to conduct a sample survey and interview couples together, using a standardized questionnaire containing structured precoded items. As the research progressed the ideas of the individual researchers evolved, producing different knowledge bases for each stage of the research and also divergences between the researchers which required some reconciliation. When the questionnaire finally was drafted its content was finalised but not, the authors wrote, its interpretation. Discrepancies were highlighted by the different methodological stances of those researchers in the team who subscribed to a modified utilitarian (and positivist) approach, as against those who desired an interpretive approach. The final outcome was a decision to write two separate accounts, Thinking About Children (1977) and Hawthorn and Paddon's Having Children (which at the time of writing has not yet been published).

33. For example, in parts of Africa, where a woman does not necessarily bear children by the man who is her husband. (Piché: 130).

Chapter 5

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN VALUE OF CHILDREN RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction.

Research is ordered, not because that is how the respondents/subjects see the world, but because that is how the researchers must view the world if they are to get their particular work done. This ordering was referred to by Kuhn (1962) as a paradigm. 'Paradigms' are variously defined by Kuhn and others as, for example an "accepted model or pattern" (Kuhn: 23), a set of "scientific habits", a puzzle-solving device, or a way-of-seeing (Masterman 1970: 66, 68, 70). In the context of the present thesis the essential attribute of a paradigm, however defined, is the acceptance among members of specific categories of researchers of both 'appropriate' problems and 'appropriate' solutions, to the exclusion of other 'types' of problems and solutions. Thus demographers, for instance, 'know' what sorts of problems are appropriate for their investigation and they also 'know' what sorts of solutions are appropriate. But a multidisciplinary focus, such as that on value of children, can prove problematic to the extent that the 'problem' is commonly acknowledged but there is less agreement on what constitutes 'appropriate' solutions to that problem.

The paradigm determines both the nature of the problem and the solutions. That is, the conclusions are determined not by the nature of the method alone, or by the observations alone, but also by the researcher's prior experience and knowledge of what conclusions are "acceptable", and the assumption that the

research community, on the basis of this knowledge thereby "knows what the world is like" (Kuhn: 5-6).

In their book Thinking About Children (1977) Busfield and Paddon warned,

Social research is itself a social construction that demands the sociologist's attention (p59).

The purpose of this chapter is to raise issues which derive from the research process, in order to better understand the synthesis which emerges, a synthesis of researcher and researched.

The previous discussion of various value-of-children studies illustrates several methodological issues which characterise these particular types of research. The conceptualization of 'value', an epistemological issue, has been discussed in Chapter 3. In this chapter some issues which arise more specifically from methods of data gathering and analysis are discussed. Unlike the conceptual issues, which arise out of the theoretical basis of value-of-children research, the issues to do with interviewing as a method of data gathering, and rationality in data analysis arise out of the 'scientific' paradigm employed by these researchers, their way of viewing the world. The ultimate question in this debate concerns the portrayal of reality: whereas the section referring to conceptualization of 'value' might be summarized as asking "what value?", this section asks "whose value?" does 'value of children' refer to?

5.2 Seeing and Believing

5.2 (i) Interviewing As A Method.

With the exception of the microeconomic analysis referred to in Chapter 3, all of the research so far discussed has used interviewing of some kind as a method of data gathering.

The interview, whether to administer a questionnaire or of a less formal and structured format, at least theoretically reveals the researcher (or interviewer) as a social being. Research protocols require the interviewer to establish rapport, but to be unbiased, to "operate somewhat like a computer with all the appearances of a fellow human-being" (Cicourel 1964: 89). Standardised interviews are considered to be a necessary basis for the replication of pieces of research. They are considered by researchers to improve reliability of results. As such they are part of the ritual of quantification, seen as a necessary prerequisite for comparative as well as aggregate studies.

The fundamental difficulty with questionnaire or survey interview research is that of meaning. In the interview context meaning derives from the words used; people in different contexts might give different meanings to the same words, because meaning also derives from the context in which the words are used. A researcher therefore is not justified in assuming that the words used in the interview context are synonymous with those used in everyday life, nor are their meanings the same.

The question of context refers to both the interview situation itself and to the wider context within which the interview takes place. Interviews, as social situations, are unique. Despite reports that different interviewers using different interview techniques apparently do obtain comparable responses, the effect of the uniqueness of the situation on the resultant data set cannot be naively disregarded. The interview is a dialogue, but it is not an even dialogue. The respondent acts out his role as he perceives it, a perception which to a greater or lesser extent depends on how the interviewer

presents the concept of 'interview'. The onus, however, is on the interviewer to ensure that meanings are shared in order for the interview to be successful as a dialogue; the 'co-operation' (successful role-playing) of the respondent ensures success. There may be a 'successful' dialogue (conversation) but an 'unsuccessful' interview - the researcher might be played at his own game.

The questions posed in any interview or survey must be constructed against the background of meaning understood by the respondents. In setting the questions the researcher is interacting with himself, his own perceptions of the world; in asking the question he is interacting with the respondent and the respondent's perception of the world. The interviewer is not required to accept the constructs of the respondents for his own, but if there is to be meaningful interaction between them, he must understand the constructs (know what they mean). Such understanding is unlikely to come from detached observation, but will come from interaction with the respondents and from the researcher's familiarity, knowledge and experience of their world. Yet what the researcher believes he sees as the respondent's world remains his own construct. The respondent's construct, which is referred to as the "common sense" construct, differs from the scientific construct of the researcher which is used for ordering and analysing the information obtained about the respondent's world, and at this level of analysis the two must not be confused.

Among the difficulties with interview analysis is the situation where the response given to a question is meaningful, but the question did not mean to the respondent what it meant to the interviewer. Such 'false data' might be difficult to detect at the individual face-to-face stage, and it is likely to be lost in aggregation. How are such instances of inappropriate answers recorded? Does the interviewer ask himself, "what did she think I asked?", in which case the answer might be

meaningful to the interviewer, or does he ask himself "What did she mean to say?", in order to establish the question as meaningful to the respondent? Similarly, is an answer which is a question actually an answer - or is it a question? What statement is made in the question given as answer? Questions, by their nature, presume answers. The interviewer or analyst using an open format is continually interpreting yet most research protocols or reports give little in the way of theoretical guidelines for making these interpretations¹. 'False data' or untrustworthy replies are usually regarded as aberrations, or are relegated to the status of 'degree of error', and thereby set aside so that the job of interviewing or analysis might proceed unimpeded. No heed is taken of the possibility that such 'false data' might indicate a disjunction of meaning and lack of understanding of questions which are basic to the research topic.

While some researchers use case studies to augment or elaborate on the results of survey research (eg the Bangladesh and Thailand ESCAP Studies - see Chapters 6 and 7), Cicourel (1974) used his Argentinian case studies to elaborate on some of the particular difficulties of interview research. In one of his cases a woman was questioned about contraceptive use. She said her husband "would like to be careful, that he has the desire, but cannot do it" (p145). She also said "He can (could) use something but I can't make a fuss about it because he can't tolerate it" (p146). What could he not tolerate - contraceptives, or her "fuss"? Why can he "not do it" - a physical reason, loss of sensitivity, religious belief, or because (he said) he wanted 12 children and had only 1? This particular issue of contraception was further complicated by

1. Footnotes to Chapter 5 are placed at the end of the chapter, p 158.

other responses from the woman and her husband: their infrequent intercourse and different sexual "needs", his extramarital relationship and exnuptial child, and so on (p157). The "messages" received by Cicourel were complicated by nuances and gestures. Yet in translation, he noted, a convincing interpretation could easily be constructed:

The substantive content can be manipulated in each analysis by adding or dropping particulars or by stressing some and not others. (p147).

Having acknowledged the importance of shared meaning, the researcher is challenged by the task of detecting meaning. Meanings do not exist in isolation but are sensibly connected to each other; they vary in the extent to which they are visible - meanings may be expressed in actions rather than words, or by the tone or manner in which a statement is made. The meaning is also conveyed in the context of the respective roles of the participants and the purpose of the statement being made (Busfield & Paddon: 51-52, 100).

People make sense of their world by interacting, thereby transmitting ideas which denote different sets of meanings.² Sets of meanings may even be contradictory at times (for instance, the 'meaning' of marriage - devoting time and attention to one's spouse - may be in conflict with the 'meaning' of family - devoting time and attention to one's children, and yet marriage and family may be said to exist together). People, in their real worlds, negotiate around ideas, reconciling conflicting meanings, and so construct their social world.

Recognition of the context in which meaning is assumed has wide implications. These have been elaborated on by Cicourel who described the interviewer's challenge thus:

... trying to understand the social context of the family at the time of first contact is like walking into a theatre in the middle of an unknown motion picture and trying to describe what is going on. (1974 :75).

Cicourel's emphasis on social context, however, is extreme and has led some writers³ to accuse him of implying that any statement has no meaning outside of the particular social context in which it was made. But social interaction itself can hardly be sustained on such an assumption. Statements and gestures made in one context do have implications in another context. Meanings are not only formed socially, but are also communicated socially.

To return to the purpose of the research exercise however, is to remind oneself that the aim of any research interview is "to get truthful information from people on a subject about which they are under no obligation to tell, if they do not wish to do so" (Stacey 1969: 72). In this context the researcher overtly produces cues - of acceptability, authority, interest etc - by means of his/her dress, manner, tone of voice and so on. These cues are supposed to lead the respondent to understand the researcher's social world in the way that the researcher wants him to. If the researcher recognises his own 'role-playing', he should also recognise the role-play of the respondent. The entire validity of such research would be called into question unless the researcher can assume that meanings can be shared, understood, and translocated from one situation to another (as from questionnaire to interview to research report), and that meanings are 'truthful' - ie, that people give one to understand what they themselves understand by any given word, question, statement or situation.

Questionnaire or survey research is structured around 'the problem' imputed by the researcher. Because individual perception is selective, selectivity being rooted in the prior ideas, interests and knowledge of the individual, it is possible that the perception of the problem is different for

the researcher than it is for the subject. For instance, Piché (1974: 229) noted that while the "research problem" perceived by many demographers in Africa was excessive fertility, the problem perceived by the Africans themselves was that of sterility and subfecundity. If children are perceived as wealth, as Caldwell and Ware have emphasized, then lack of them, not excess of them, is what is likely to be considered problematic by the people being studied. The onus then, is on the researcher to know how the subject perceives the issue being investigated. That is, is it some problem which the researcher has or perceives, or is it some problem which the respondent has, or is it some independent problem, "out there", or in fact, is there any problem at all? The answers which the researcher receives must be interpreted in the context of how the respondents themselves perceive the researcher and his activities.

5.2 (ii) Lessons From Anthropology

In practice, observation is usually no less structured than informal interviews might be. The researcher is selective about what is observed or reported; the 'findings' might also be structured in a way which reflects the task of the researcher rather than the world of the subject. While there is perhaps less danger of taking interactions "out of context", there might be other, different, problems. For instance, as the researcher comes to 'feel at home', attributes which hitherto were considered important might be considered unimportant, only because they are now accepted as intrinsic parts of social interaction, and are no longer obvious and apart. Furthermore, without access to taperecordings or film, there is no way for a later investigator to check or replicate the total observation made; even taperecordings and films are likely to be selective.

Notwithstanding these limitations, anthropological techniques have been used to good effect and have shown some potential in studies of population processes. Research methods used to discern meaning and social constructs incorporate a necessary component of researcher participation in the day-to-day living of those being studied. Studies referred to in section 4.4, and to a lesser extent Caldwell's work (section 4.3 (ii)), indicate that informal modes of enquiry might reveal social meaning more explicitly than do formal modes of enquiry. This was described succinctly by Zweig, during his study of Labour, Life and Poverty in England over thirty years ago:

I dropped the idea of a questionnaire or formal verbal questions ... (and) instead I had casual talks with working-class men on an absolutely equal footing and in friendly intercourse ... I learned more about life in the course of a few months than I had in many years before, sitting in libraries and lecturing at Universities. (Zweig 1948: 1-2).

Gluckman (1967) has presented a useful typology of the anthropological method derived from Malinowski's classic work documented in Argonauts of the Western Pacific (1922):

- (1) delineate the organisation of the group being studied and the "anatomy of its culture" by statistical documentation,
- (2) describe the "imponderabilia of actual life" and
- (3) collect "documents of native mentality"

(Gluckman: xiii).

One might return to Malinowski to discover what this means and how one practises this method:

Preconceived ideas are pernicious in any scientific work, but foreshadowed problems are the main endowment of a scientific thinker, and these problems are first

revealed to the observer by his theoretical studies. The field worker relies entirely upon inspiration from theory ... (The) first and basic ideal of ethnographic field-work is to give a clear and firm outline of the social constitution, and disentangle the laws and regularities of all cultural phenomena from the irrelevances ... This ideal imposes in the first place the fundamental obligation of giving a complete survey of the phenomena, and not of picking out the sensational, the singular, still less the funny and quaint. (Malinowski: 9-11).

The research is to be methodical, systematic and relevant (op.cit: 12). This stage, of obtaining the skeleton of organisation, Malinowski called "the method of statistical documentation by concrete evidence" (op.cit: 17). Statistical methods alone however, are not sufficient to portray cultural phenomena. This inadequacy appears to have been overlooked by researchers of the positivist tradition⁴, viz that "quantitative methods are essentially aids to description" (Mitchell 1967: 20), helping to summarize regularities in the features of, or relationships in, the data. The richness of social life is in its 'flesh and blood', not its skeletal 'anatomy'.

To document the "imponderabilia" is more difficult. These comprise the "realities of human life", "a series of phenomena of great importance which cannot possibly be recorded by questioning or computing documents, but have to be observed in their full actuality" (Malinowski: 17, 18). The "imponderabilia" include such things as the routine of life, the emotions expressed between people, the tone of conversation, acts which express mutual interest or intimacy etc. How the researcher collects such data - by note-taking, tape-recording, film etc - may depend on personal preference or situation, but "the main endeavour must be to let the facts speak for themselves." (op.cit: 20). One can sometimes "let" this happen by joining the subjects' activities.

The "documents of native mentality" refer to the subject's own

"views, opinions and utterances", subjective states which Malinowski, for practical purposes⁵ categorised as the "typical ways of thinking and feeling" in certain situations, which might be conveyed to the reader by verbatim statements (op.cit: 22-23).

These three components of the typology should enable the researcher, finally, to "grasp the native's point of view, his reaction to life, to realise his vision of his world", a goal which the researcher should never lose sight of (op.cit: 25, *emph. added*).

"Grasping the native's point of view" has been attempted to a lesser or greater extent, by the researchers discussed in Chapter 4. It is an ideal which should be pursued by any researcher purporting to study value of children "to parents".

5.3 Rationality in Value-of-Children Research.

The assumptions of microeconomic theory implicit in value-of-children research have left their marks on subsequent studies, even those of an anthropological nature, as an aspect of the value of children paradigm. In particular, researchers employing this paradigm impute rationality, both to the behaviour of the subjects and as an intrinsic part of the researchers' methods. This assumption is explicit in the work of Caldwell who proposed a dichotomy of "economically rational" high and low fertility regimes, but it is implicit in all research which employs or assumes a cost/benefit analysis as the appropriate mode of thinking about 'value' of children.

The word 'rationality', however, is used to give various different meanings. Giddens (1974: 21) noted that the Greek

concept of 'reason' implied a notion of intellect as self-determining, controlling human destiny - an implication of logical thought. It is this meaning of 'rationality', which is implied in microeconomic theory. Use of the concept is ideological, derived from western (capitalist) economic thinking (op.cit: 395; Caldwell 1977b: 38) and a particular idiom of scientific (as distinct from metaphysical, fatalistic, etc) logic.

In contrast to this theoretical definition, rationality may be defined in practical terms, as being the "empirically adequate means" for accomplishing a task (Garfinkel 1974: 53). This latter meaning is implied in anthropological research. Neither definition, however, completely satisfies the notions which underlie social-psychological approaches to the value of children.

Means-end rationality is, however, only one 'type' of rationality in the Weberian sense of the word.⁶ This is that kind of social action in which the end is identified (eg economic utility) and a choice made from various appropriate and identifiable means (eg, hire labour, marry more wives, or have more children). By contrast to this "purposively-rational" behaviour, Weber's "value rational" behaviour is directed by ideals (eg to have many sons to bring honour to the father), whereas his category of "affective rational" is directed towards an emotive state rather than some clearly defined value (eg "we love babies").

Unlike purposively-rational behaviour, where the means can be identified by the end (utility requires labour-power which means people are needed), the other behaviours do not (one does not necessarily need sons to gain honour; people other than one's own babies can be the object of love). The latter rationality 'types' characterise social psychological perspectives.

A fourth type of behaviour identified by Weber might be appropriate for anthropological or sociological analysis of value of children. "Traditionality-rational" action overlaps value and affective orientations. To have sons to carry on a family name is traditionally-rational (ie, a custom), but it is also implicitly value rational, that is, implying that continuity of family name is itself a value. But more generally traditional action is undefined: people have children because that is what people do. In some situations fatalism also may be 'rational' as defined in this classification.

Thus far Weber's typology of rationality is a useful heuristic device for studying other people's rational (or nonrational) action. At a different level of abstraction, however, rationality may be categorized (as Garfinkel did with his 14 types, p54-59) as either "scientific rationality" or "the rationality of everyday life". Notions of motive and causality imply rationality in the "everyday" sense, and such conscious means-end behaviour is assumed to be readily identifiable by researchers. The 'connection' between these two 'forms' of rationality has been indicated by Talcott Parsons (1937: 58):

Action is rational in so far as it pursues ends possible within the conditions of the situation, and by the means which, among those available to the actor, are intrinsically best adapted to the end for reasons understandable and verifiable by positive empirical science ... this is essentially a matter of the accurate prediction of the probable effects of various possible ways of altering the situation (employment of alternative means) and the resultant choice among them. (emph. added).

Parson's definition sums up how the researcher decides if action is rational. But that is not to say that this is how people behave "rationally" in everyday life. What might, to the actor, appear to be "empirically adequate means" of reaching a planned "end" might not be seen as such by the researcher. Thus, to the researcher, high fertility might not

be a rational means of ensuring economic gain in a poor society, whereas to the couple to whom "children are wealth" this is rational action (see Caldwell's comment, p 96). The researcher, in imputing rationality or irrationality to subjects' actions, ascribes to himself a superior level of knowledge concerning the available and appropriate means and the possible end. In Schutz's words, it would seem, therefore, that we also have to

... distinguish between the rationality of knowledge which is a prerequisite of the rational choice and the rationality of the choice itself. Rationality of knowledge is given only if all the elements from which the actor has to choose are clearly and distinctly conceived by him. The choice itself is rational if the actor selects from among all means within his reach the one most appropriate for realising the intended end. (1970: 104).

Definitions of rationality, in both scientific research and everyday life, therefore stipulate the making of choices which are relevant to the situation and in relation to the means available or end to be met. "Scientific" rationality, by Garfinkel's definition, includes an additional characteristic (among others) of compatibility of the causal means-end relationship with the principles of formal logic. Such a definition is intrinsic to the microeconomic approach to value of children discussed in Chapter 3. The methodological problem is that researchers tend to impose this scientific criterion onto their assessment of everyday rationality⁷ as that is presented to them by their (selected) subjects.

People in everyday life take much of their "world" for granted; behaviour is not continually assessed consciously, in terms of means-end, or in a logical sequence. As already noted, many people do not think of having children as anything to do with income, expenditure or child quality in the way that economists, for instance, connect the two sets of preferences and use the connection as a basis for determining fertility decision-making. By scientific definition much behaviour is

not rational - but that does not mean it is irrational. Conscious choice involves knowledge, reflection, deliberation, preference, volition and action. Habitual, mechanical or non-conscious action is neither reasoned nor logical - it is a-rational, rather than irrational, unreasonable or illogical (these latter terms imply wrong choices, rather than no choices).

Yet value-of-children research accounts appear to imply rational action as if all fertility decisions are reasoned in the manner described by Parsons. The logic of demographic transition theory is predicated upon such 'rational actions' by individual members of given populations. If such actions are not rational, then it is reasoned, they either could be or should be⁸.

Caldwell (1977b: 38-41) paid particular attention to the problem of 'rationality' in transition theory. As noted previously, transition theory assumes rational behaviour. Caldwell specified this as "economic rationality" in order to avoid having to judge what he termed "social rationality" (Weber's value-rational or traditional-rational). If one accepts Caldwell's postulates it could be argued that in reality fertility behaviour is never purely economically rational:

Obviously the fundamental choices are social ones and economic behaviour is rational only so far as it is rational within the framework established by social ends. What demographic transition theory has always regarded as rational are primarily Western social ends with economically logical steps to maximize satisfaction given them. (Caldwell 1977b: 39).

A more important problem in value-of-children research, however, lies at the second level of argument, whereby the researcher assumes everyday action is rational in the same way as his own research procedure is rational. As noted above, this assumption is without foundation:

... the ideal of rationality is not and cannot be a peculiar feature of everyday thought, nor can it, therefore, be a methodological principle of the interpretation of human acts in daily life. (Schutz 1970: 104, emph added).

Garfinkel went further, in proposing that:

reconstructing the problem of rationality ... consists in the proposal that sociologists cease treating the scientific rationalities as a methodological rule for interpreting human actions. (Garfinkel: 67).

For example, despite his concern to study children from the perspective of parents themselves, Caldwell used an analytic framework whereby people's actions were defined accordingly to his own perspective of "economically rational" fertility behaviour. In other words, the respondents were described within a logical framework as if this is how their action took place. Caldwell maintained that people know what they are doing economically ("they prefer it that way" - 1977b: 1), but Ware questioned whether people do know what is best for them (1978: 17). That is, their behaviour in Weber's terms, might be value rational, but it is not purposively-rational. One is somehow left with a question: although the researcher's method and perspective are 'rational', does this mean that the behaviour of the subjects is also necessarily 'rational' in corresponding terms? The confusion between the two is a consequence of the particular paradigm employed. It derives from the differing perspectives on the world, the perceptions of reality.

5.4 Determining What is Real

5.4 (i) Objective and Subjective Reality.

Just as the "types" of rationality⁹ in the everyday world differ from the ^{oge}~~that~~ of the scientific world, so do the realities

of the people in these worlds. Schutz has noted the "leap into the province of theoretical thought" which accompanies the change from what he termed the "natural" (or everyday) attitude, to the 'scientific' attitude. While Schutz was perhaps overly extreme in claiming that scientists abandon their natural attitude entirely (Kelly et al 1982: 12), it is obvious that scientists - including microeconomists and psychologists who aspire to being 'scientific' - claim detachment and objectivity as regards the everyday world which they study, and of which they are a part.

Such researchers do not always distinguish the levels of understandings they claim to have achieved. On the one hand, understanding might be what Weber termed "direct understanding" (Giddens 1974: 9-10), which is objective and understood "in its own right" (for instance, crude birth rates = 38.2 per thousand), while on the other hand understanding might be explanatory, which places it "in context" (eg, why do peasants have large families?; what will be the consequences?).

Direct understanding, therefore, is regarded as objective - something is because it is; the act is completed, not "becoming" (Giddens: 10). Explanatory understanding, however, implies subjectivity, because it is means-end understanding. To understand, the observer must know something about the actor. If the observer sees couples with many children (however he defines "many") send one of these children to live with a grandparent, and when living with that grandparent the child labours in the house and gardens, doing activities of which the grandparent is no longer physically capable, the research conclusion might be that couples send their children to support elderly kin, or even that the reason they have "many" children is to be able to support elderly kin. In a different context, however, individual parents might send their child to a grandparent because they have more children than

they can feed, or so that the child can learn the traditions of his family, etc - his observable physical activities while living with the grandparent might be irrelevant to the parents' intentions in sending him there. But the observer is limited in his conclusion by his empirically objective stance to the research; until he places the objective observation in the everyday world context he assumes that this so-called objective understanding is the intended meaning (rationalisation) of the behaviour for the actors concerned.

The difficulty that arises out of such assumptions of objectivity can be illustrated by the effect of imposing scales of measurement on particular concepts, such as child utility. Imposition of such concepts or measurements may not only imply a meaning different to that understood in common language, but it may not even "make sense" to people in the world - as discovered by several value-of-children researchers:

... most people did not locate questions about whether to have children, how many to have, and when to have them in the context of alternative sources of utility ... they did not regard the consumption of resources on children as an alternative to their consumption elsewhere and to have suggested that buying a television might have been an alternative to having another child would have been regarded by them as not only materialistic and selfish, but probably somewhat bizarre (Busfield & Paddon, p 42, emph. added. - England).

Most parents appeared to have little notion of what it actually costs to raise a child, and many were reluctant to discuss children as if they were consumer goods. (Arnold et al 1975: 43 - Crossnational study)

Children are not a homogeneous mass that brings pleasure in added doses up to some satiation point. (Bulatao 1975: 2 - Philippines)

.. Indonesians (or Javanese, at any rate) do not view children simply as economic assets and ... narrowly economic incentives or disincentives will fail to reduce fertility significantly. (Darroch et al 1981: 81)

If the measurement, or research strategy, does not make sense in the everyday 'sense', its usefulness must be called into

question. As an example, Ware has criticised Ruprecht and Jewett's¹⁰ use of "normative consumption scales" in order to analyse economic well-being of families, with the comment,

If the model shows that parents cannot cope, when demonstrably they do cope ... then it is pointless to follow the model further in the study of reality. (Ware 1978: 11, *emph. added*).

Ware appears to have been alluding to the idea that these different perceptions of common action might be coincident. Her phrase, "demonstrably they do cope", reminds one of Durkheim's "social facts". But as an empirical generalization the phrase is subjective, just as deductions from the model are subjective. Both observations are interpreted in the light of the prior knowledge and experience of the observer. With respect to Ware's example, this mode of interpretation applies as much to the parents themselves as to the researcher, which perhaps explains why 'realities' which researchers claim to be objective (empirical observations) might not coincide with the subjective realities experienced by parents. The difference in these 'realities' is not a matter of correct or incorrect interpretation, but is a matter of the different individual perspectives of the respective actors.

Researchers of the positivist tradition represent their subjects' reality from their (researchers') point of view, whereas those who ascribe to an interpretive perspective attempt to represent reality as their subjects themselves see it. Some researchers might go so far as to claim that these are one and the same. Any debate over such a claim refers to what reality "actually" is, a problem which might be intrinsically insoluble. Yet it is a problem which must at least be acknowledged by any researcher claiming to describe reality, whether labelled as such or referred to in terms of "the truth", "a fact", etc.

Reality has been defined by Berger and Luckmann (1966: 13) as

"a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition". The definition as it stands approximates the "empirically observable facts" which scientists claim to study. Berger and Luckmann's reality, "that (which) we recognize", is perceived reality. That is, it is experienced and made meaningful subjectively even if its existence is thought to be independent, or "out there":

Everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world... The world of everyday life ... is a world that originates in their thoughts and actions, and is maintained as real by these. (Berger and Luckmann: 33).

So described, reality is a psychic phenomenon which cannot be objective in its meaning. While reference might be made to objective "facts", such as numbers of births, the meaning of these "facts" is subjective; they have no meaning outside of individual cognition even though other people's births as actions might be independent of one's own volition.

However, the idea of an objective reality which is shared (ie is intersubjective) is taken for granted by groups of actors. Researchers are one such group. Their grounds of knowledge concerning objective reality might differ from those of the people whom they study, but they comprise sets of shared assumptions just as do those of their subjects. By the means of common understandings the world is made coherent, and social life is sustained. The 'objective' or 'factual' reality which researchers pursue is their subjects' common experience and understanding of everyday life. It is subjective.

The researchers cited in Part One of this thesis variously presented the 'real' situation regarding the value of children to parents. However it would be erroneous to cite themes of common understanding in these reports as 'proof' of any universal objective discoveries. It is perhaps more likely

that the common understandings derive from general application of a particular research paradigm, or set of assumptions. The notion of 'cost/benefit' which permeates this research reflects such a common paradigm.

On the other hand one also must ask whether differences in interpretation reflect differing realities "out there", or different perspectives (in researchers' minds). Any comparative evaluation of the research discussed fails to answer this question. In criticizing the perceptions of any observer, however, it is as well to remind oneself that in everyday life people consider that variations in reality reflect the viewer, rather than the world itself¹¹. The same might be said for research practice.

This argument is not to suggest that the pursuit of generalities in research is futile. Rather the discussion is to alert one to what researchers might be doing when they make theoretical deductions from empirical observations.

In describing subjective reality researchers objectify it, making it "independent of (one's) own volition", out there in the world. By ignoring the ontological relationship between what they perceive (subjective) and what they claim to perceive ('objective'), on the one hand, while equating what they believe they perceive ('objective') with what actors themselves perceive (subjective) on the other, researchers produce the kinds of confusion referred to in this thesis. In particular, the various notions of 'rationality' obscure the very thought processes they are purported to describe. Similarly, the idea of 'value' of children is itself unclear conceptually and often lacking in accurate reference (ie, value to whom and defined by whom?).

Researchers' attempts to refine the empirical generalizations do not, indeed cannot, result in objectivity, since reality is phenomenal, not material. Development of the sophisticated

techniques of analysis of, for example, social-psychologists and microeconomists, devised to reveal the "truth" of reality, might well be serving to "drive us further away from the homely comfort of knowing-that-we-know-what-we-know" (Ford 1975: 1).

The fallacious assumption of objectivity, apparent when non-numerate attributes such as 'values' and 'attitudes' are measured or enumerated (scaled, ranked, etc), and when ratios or indices (eg "value universes") are presented as things of themselves, is also evident when stated attitudes ('words') are assumed to be the objective truth underlying the behaviour or anticipated behaviour of the subject. Much of the "data" discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 are hence attributed with the unreal characteristic of "independence of volition" - volition of the subject or the researcher. Ford (p7) described data as "matrices of sensations organised into meaningful patterns from some point of view ... (they are) seeings and believings" (emph. added). The data are the "seeings and believings" of the researcher - not necessarily coincident with the reality of the subjects at all.

5.4 (ii) Facts and Things.

Part of the problem of reality which inheres in value-of-children research pertains to the equation of 'truth' with objective 'facts', and the nature of these 'facts'.

By applying the 'rules' a researcher employing a positivist paradigm¹² can believe he observes "objective facts", facts which "exist in and of themselves, and it is their existence which defines reality" (Ford: 146). Precision of method is one of the 'rules'. Taken to a logical extreme, the positivist can argue that if some thing is measured, it must exist. But not to (be able to) measure something is not to say that it does not exist. And neither need what is measured exist in

objective reality - what is measured might well be, indeed often is, the subjective construct of the researcher. That is, it is part of the reality of the researcher, rather than the reality of the people he is studying.

To objectify ideas or phenomena as things is not necessarily to concretize them in a material sense. Certainly the idea of 'value', for instance, has been objectified in a material sense¹³ (as what it is worth, or income/expenditure, which as money is materially identifiable, even if the money itself is only a symbol of exchange), but such ideas as 'utility' or 'self-enrichment' are only treated as if they were material things¹⁴, rather than identified or symbolized as such. That is, the researcher describes, analyses, and manipulates these constructs as if they are objective facts, out there, rather than subjective meanings in either his own mind or in the minds of his subjects. To treat such ideas as things harks back to Durkheim:

... social phenomena are things and ought to be treated as things ... it is unnecessary to philosophize on their nature and to discuss the analogies they present with the phenomena of lower realms of existence. It is sufficient to note that they are the unique data of the sociologist. All that is given, all that is subject to observation, has thereby the character of a thing. To treat phenomena as things is to treat them as data, and these constitute the point of departure of science.
(1938: 27).

The end is utilitarian - ideas, meanings and interactions cannot be treated 'scientifically' unless they are treated as external 'things'. But in internalizing his observations (or inferences) of action in the everyday world, the 'scientist' moves from the objective reality of the everyday world to the subjective reality of his own internal world. The danger lies in the assumption that the two worlds (realities) coincide. This danger cannot be recognized as long as all phenomena in the social world are treated as 'things'.

If truth is defined as belief, some judgement is implied. Such a definition of truth might be more appropriate to value of children than is any notion of factual reality. Nagel commented (1961: 448),

... in the social sciences there is nothing quite like the almost complete unanimity commonly found among competent workers in the natural sciences as to what are matters of established fact, what are the reasonably satisfactory explanations (if any) for the assumed facts, and what are some of the valid procedures of inquiry. (emph. added).

One difficulty, it would seem, is how to distinguish fact from judgement (belief, truth). Unless such distinctions can be made, the appropriateness of techniques derived from the physical or natural sciences, used in the social sciences, must be questioned.

A different, but related, issue is the distinction between 'facts' which exist in themselves, as named phenomena external to the observer (ie, objectifications), and 'facts' which are purely the mental constructs of the researcher. Researchers often appear to make no such distinction between the 'factual status' of such "social facts" as birth rates or death rates, which are constructed from objective things or actions (numbers of births or deaths and numbers of people) on the one hand, and of, for instance, 'development' or 'urbanization' which are reifications of human processes or activities, on the other. Indeed, the two are often correlated as if they are objective occurrences of the same order of meaning. By reifying such products of human activity, these actions (modernization, contraceptive use efficacy, value of children, etc.) take on the appearance of nonhuman 'things' and may be treated as such by researchers. But they are human constructions, external but not objective in their own right, since they cannot be divorced from the people who constructed them (either objectively in the world, or subjectively in the minds of the subjects or the researcher). Difficulties arise in the research process

because of the nature of the reifications. These difficulties tend to be attended to by adopting increasingly sophisticated "techniques" of observation or analysis, overlooking the basic epistemological problem, that is the subjective - and hence, potentially varying - nature of the assumed "social fact". The problem is compounded when these varying "facts" and realities are linked in causal sequence as grounds for "rational" action.

5.5 Summary.

Any method or perspective adopted by a researcher has limitations, both in mode of application (technique) and interpretation. In this chapter some specific issues have been selected for discussion, issues which if not acknowledged or accounted for might seriously distort any 'reality' which the researcher portrays.

In most of the studies discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 researchers have reified 'value' and treated it as 'a fact'. Rationality discussed by these researchers is 'economic' rationality, the purposive rationality of Weber. The means/ends of the rational action are, frequently, reifications in the researcher's mind, and therefore rationality itself is an abstraction.

This is most obvious in Bulatao's treatment of "values" and "disvalues". Even though Caldwell and Ware have drawn attention to the implications of these tendencies, Caldwell still retained the practice in attributing economic rationality to fertility behaviour. Despite it being implicit in Caldwell's writing, he has not specified any distinction between his own framework, whereby 'values' are disaggregated, as an heuristic device, and the framework of his subjects, where values are enmeshed in a "total fabric".

The central problem, to which this summary returns, is the representation of reality. Researchers tend to present tabulations, statistics, correlations, etc as "how it is in the world" - the "social facts" of Durkheim. While individual subjects might, in their internal (subjective) realities equate, for instance, babies with old-age security, or contraception with God's will or fate, and they might even rationalise their conduct along these lines, the correlations or causal explanations of such social facts on an aggregated level is no statement of events in the world but is part of the subjective reality of the researcher.

Real people, in the real world, act upon meanings, which are social constructs. To investigate their realities requires access to their perceptions, and the medium for this is language, not statistics. Even then, words themselves are not the reality¹⁵, but they are the observable objectifications of reality, and as such they are accessible to the researcher.

The social scientist often takes it for granted that the meanings he assigns to people's actions are the same as the meanings the people themselves assign to them. As one moves from simply counting and tabulating numerical "social facts" - like birth rates, sex ratios, net migration rates, etc, which certainly exist independent of our own individual volition - to explaining actions in the world (like having babies, using contraception, migrating) the frame of reference (perspective) of the researcher must become wider, and more elaborate, to attempt to uncover and understand the meaning that such actions have in reality, to the subjects.

Anthropological perspectives move closer to the subjects' world. Yet despite the work of the UPPI team in the Philippines, and Busfield and Paddon in England, the role of an anthropologist working in his/her own culture remains problematic.

The classical anthropological paradigm assumed the researcher was studying an alien group. In the context of "appropriate problems and solutions" (p 131), Good's comment pertaining to New Zealand is relevant: "... it doesn't yet seem respectable for anthropologists to work within their own social and ethnic groups" (Good 1981: 2, emph. added). Yet participant observation is one anthropological tool which can well be used in one's own society:

Sociologists usually use this method when they are especially interested in understanding a particular organisation or substantive problem rather than demonstrating relations between abstractly defined variables. They attempt to make their research theoretically meaningful. (H. Becker 1958: 189-190).

The problem of understanding reality, and making it "theoretically meaningful", is a matter of acknowledging different perspectives. Berger and Luckmann's thesis of perceived reality, independent of volition, appears as a synthesis of objective social facts (the "things" of Durkheim¹⁶) and subjective meanings. Their notion of multiple realities allows one to acknowledge that different people have different views (perspectives) of reality, or that one person might experience differing realities at different times¹⁷, but the existence of a reality is taken for granted. To enable us to share this assumption, language is essential (Berger & Luckmann: 51-52), language being our means of objectifying reality (op.cit: 53-54). By the use of language the particular realities may be shared.

As pointed out in Chapter 3, it is not enough for the researcher to know how much children cost, because if the parents knew how much they cost, they would not have as many children as they do. Such a dilemma illustrates the dilemma of rationality and the 'problems' of subjective and objective realities in value of children research. To overcome these problems a different research perspective may be called for. The challenge is to find an alternative paradigm.

Notes to Chapter 5.

1. Researchers who have addressed such problems in detail include Back and Stycos (1959) for their Jamaican survey, and Pool and Pool (1971) for a survey in Niger. For the World Fertility Survey, O'Muircheartaigh (1982) addressed the problem of estimating the incidence of discrepancies in responses due to nonsampling errors, but he did not address the problem of meaning as a separate issue. Ware's WFS Paper (1977b) on problems of translation is perhaps more relevant to the present study. Although her paper was concerned with the problems of translating into several dialects, similar problems to do with ensuring equivalent understandings might occur within one 'language'.
2. The term "set" of meanings is used to refer to different meanings which are attributed to any particular symbol or word. For instance "health" might mean absence of disease, physical fitness, freedom from pollutants etc, and in this context these qualities comprise a "set" of meanings. To use the word "health" might imply any or all of these meanings.
3. See eg, Busfield and Paddon: 100; Hindess 1973, Chapter 2.
4. The term "positivism" is used here to represent an "ideal type". This is defined according to the "positivistic attitude" characterised by Giddens (1974: 3-4) as being
 - (a) that the methodological procedures of natural science may be directly adapted to sociology; the researcher is an observer of (external to) social reality,
 - (b) that the goal of sociologists is to provide law-like generalizations, as in natural science,
 - (c) that sociology is technical and value-free - as in natural science the researcher is "neutral" in stance.
5. The theoretical problem of subjectivity he termed "the real Gordian knot in the study of the facts of social psychology" (1922: 22).
6. Weber's typology of rationality is summarized from Giddens 1971: 150-154.

7. In fact Durkheim had specifically stated that human behaviour is "scientifically rational" in that "behaviour of the past can be reduced to relationships of cause and effect. The relationships can then be transformed, by an equally logical operation, into rules of action for the future." (1938 edition: xxxix - xl).
8. Kahan (1974: 200-205), for instance, noted the dilemma surrounding "rationality" in fertility decisions, equating it to Hardin's well-known "tragedy of the commons". While the problem of over-population arises because all people have as many children as they choose and are able, (individual rationality, or a-rational action), any rational group decision to limit the number of children born will return, for its implementation, to a question of who shall have children, "an allocation procedure most likely to be based on individual rationality". An assumption of group rationality would thereby be invalidated. "The Darwinian process of natural selection is basically one of individual rationality, and as such can never be a solution to the modern population problem". Rationality may be valid on an individual basis, but not on a group basis. Assumptions otherwise form a reductionist fallacy which is frequently stated, albeit implicitly, in demographic explanations.
9. Variouslly labelled "logic", "reason", "deliberation", etc.
10. T. R. Ruprecht & F. I. Jewett 1975 The Microeconomics of Demographic Change: Family Planning and Economic Well-being. New York.
11. "If someone appears not to see it (the world) as everyone else does, members do not immediately doubt their own sense of the social world. Rather they scrutinise him for what is 'wrong' with him." (Cuff and Payne 1979: 131, parenth. added).
12. Which, as rationalizations, are made meaningful.
13. Marx explained this tendency as follows: "The apparent stupidity of merging all the manifold relationships of people in the one relation of usefulness, this apparently metaphysical abstraction, arises from the fact that, in modern bourgeois society, all relations are subordinated in practice to the one abstract monetary-commercial relation ... The material expression of this use is money, the representative of the value of all things, people and

social relations ... the category of 'utilisation' is first of all abstracted from the actual relations of intercourse which I have with other people." - Marx & Engels, The German Ideology (1845-46: 460-461).

14. Durkheim: "We do not say that social facts are material things, but that they are things by the same right as material things, although they are different from them in type ..." (1938: xliii).
15. Words are "conventions"; they are not attributes of the object. "Words acquire meaning by belonging to the total situation .. (yet they) at the same time represent it". "Statements about the meanings of words constitute an analysis of reality". (Segerstedt 1966: 17-22, 36).
16. As in Durkheim's statement: "Social facts are to be treated as 'things'". Such social facts were to Durkheim by definition external, existing before, after and apart from the observer. Things were not purely the product of the individual intellect, but were defined by the group's conception of them. (Durkheim 1938: xvff; Madge 1963: 19-46; Giddens 1972: 30-74).
17. As in the illustration of the reality of a dream versus the reality of the wakeful world.

Chapter 6

TOWARDS A NEW PERSPECTIVE OF THE 'VALUE' OF CHILDREN

6.1 Introduction

The motives (reasons for acting, causes, needs or conscious desires) which are variously itemized, described and measured as explanations of fertility behaviour, reflect in the first instance the perspective of researchers who work from the premise that where something happens (or is expected to happen, and does not happen), then there must be a direct cause. Theorizing about the nature of the hypothesized cause produces problems which I argue are epistemological, since to the actors themselves the cause (motive) may not be readily identifiable and even if it is, this may not correspond with that referred to by the researcher's hypothesis". Many of the so-called 'motivations' reported by researchers are likely to be either inferences of the researcher or post hoc rationalizations of respondents required (in turn by the researcher) to give account of their fertility behaviour.

The 'value' of children is just one particular type of motive which has been hypothesized as a 'cause' of fertility behaviour. In the language of conventional research 'motive' is defined as "reason for acting". Value, or values, are the motive. The conceptual inadequacy of 'value' was indicated in Chapter 3. 'Value' as a concept is also methodologically inadequate. 'Values' are intangible, unobservable, so the

1. Footnotes to Chapter 6 are placed at the end of the chapter, p 177.

researcher must rely on indicators of value. 'Value' may thus be seen as a very similar concept to attitude.

Blumer (1969, Ch 4) has criticised attitudes as scientific concepts on the grounds of their lack of fixed empirical reference, a consequence of our inability to observe an attitude (attitudes must be inferred), on the grounds of inability to distinguish an attitude from an opinion, idea, judgement, etc., and on the lack of empirical evidence that attitudes do, in fact, indicate "tendencies to act" (op.cit: 93). The human act is not, argued Blumer, the release of a tendency (described by an attitude), but is "a construction built up by the actor" (op.cit: 94). This construction is not a mere response to a stimulus; it is moulded according to the actor's interpretation of the situation. Interpretation involves interaction by the actor with objects or relationships and interactions, and the consequent construction of action (ie, socially constructed). In this thesis, perspectives are differentiated from attitudes, though they might incorporate the ideas conveyed by the term 'attitude', in the everyday sense. As objectifications attitudes are perceived as external, whereas perspectives are internal frameworks, through which a person "views" his world. Perspectives define his reality and as Thomas and Znaniecki have told us, if men define their situations as real, they are real in their consequences (Madge 1963: 71-72). Because they arise during, or as a result of, creative social interaction, perspectives are intrinsically social.

6.2 Defining the Situation

Human group life can be perceived as operating through a process of "definition of the situation" which is understood by the researcher through attempting to see the world as his subjects see it. Blumer's proposal for a method of doing this

focussed on action and interaction, meaning and interpretation. The premises on which his method was based were:

1. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.
2. The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.
3. These meanings are handled in, and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the thing he encounters. (Blumer: 2).

The procedure advocated by Blumer was "to approach the study of group activity through the eyes and experience of the people who have developed the activity" (p 139). To not do so "leads to the setting up of a fictitious world" (p 51).

The implications of such a theory challenge those researchers who tend to define the situation according to their own experiences, to apply their own objectification of 'values' and 'disvalues', or 'costs' and 'benefits', or whatever labels (symbols) might seem convenient, yet who, at the same time, acknowledge that many people do not think about children in this way.

If the focus of value-of-children research is shifted from 'values', to children, a more meaningful (to the subject) perspective might be achieved. Using Blumer's phraseology, a person acts towards children on the basis of the meaning that children have to him/her. This meaning derives from individual ideology; it arises out of the interaction the person has with children and with other people with regard to children. Meanings are continually modified and reinterpreted on the basis of the person's interactions.

The world, in the sense of symbolic interactionists, is a totality of perspectives. These perspectives are symbolized in, or described by, language². People convey most of their understandings in verbal form, through speech, but communication also depends to some extent on unspoken knowledge. This knowledge is partly background (personally historic) knowledge and partly contextual. Cicourel, in Argentina for instance, incorporated into the "context" of his conversations distinctions of polite and familiar forms of address, particular forms of syntax and punctuation, and the Argentinians' sense of humour, exaggeration, irony and understatement (1974: 51-52, 176-177). He adopted the view that in order to understand his respondents, he had to understand their lives, their world: the social context of what they said to him.

Language is part of the relationship between actors, and reflects patterns in their interactions. Thus the speech patterns between interviewer and respondent are specific to the interview context, and these will also vary by (for instance) gender, class, and community, as well as by ethnic or cultural identity.

Language, therefore, is not an independent variable. Mary Douglas wrote,

A common speech form transmits more than words: it transmits a hidden baggage of shared assumptions (1975: 177).

The actors' "shared assumptions" (perspectives) enable them to understand meaning and so communicate. The shared assumptions reflect a collective consciousness. The way language is used can be expected to reflect the way the speaker sees the world³. Giddens (1976: 127) emphasized this form of social action as a practical activity "so central to social life that in some basic respects it can be treated as exemplifying social processes in general. Speech (action) presupposes a subject

(actor), and speech acts are situated contextually - as is dialogue between the speakers (interaction)." To be an effective member of the social group, to communicate, some form of everyday language must be mastered. Ethnomethodologists, such as Cicourel, argue that it is through language that one makes one's experiences meaningful and that common understanding of situations is achieved through language interaction. The 'paramount reality' is, therefore, the common-sense reality of everyday life, a reality which the researcher, by classifying and measuring, recasts in terms of sociological concepts (Cuff & Payne: 138).

But meaningful action entails more than perceived purpose or intention. In common-sense understanding one not only understands what a person does (eg, uses a contraceptive), but what he means by it (eg, taking control of bodily functions; planning a family), why he does it (eg, to avoid a pregnancy), and what definition he gives to the situation (eg religious, moral and medical consequences).

One does not have to know what it is to do such things, to literally take the role of the other, but rather to understand the situation in which it occurs - ie, to "make sense of" the action.

Circumstances do not exist in themselves - how we see them, how we react to them (ie, what they mean to us) depends on what we have in mind. To discover what circumstances or actions mean, Blumer (in Cuff & Payne: 96) has advocated what he termed a "naturalistic" approach, in which action is studied in the situation in which it usually occurs. Actions to do with sexual relationships and childbearing, however, are often intimate and private, characteristics used by some researchers to justify the remote stance they take when seeking information about these acts. As such, the data of survey reports represent 'reported action'. What tends to be overlooked is that the statements about such action are themselves social

acts; these statements made in daily talk, which are actions in daily life, are "in the situation in which they usually occur". This constitutes the difference between everyday talk and survey responses. Although many surveys have now produced information about such private acts as, eg, sexual intercourse or abortion, this information is given in a clinical, or quasiclinical, context. Responding to a questionnaire or interview is not, for most people, the situation in which personal talk about private actions usually occurs.

Cuff & Payne quoted Garfinkel's recommendation when they wrote,

Look around you and everywhere you will find ordinary persons going about their everyday business performing familiar unremarkable activities. This mundane fact is the very crux of the social world. (p 137)

Although Garfinkel was referring to actors' methods of creating their own world, his statement applies equally as an injunction to researchers as to how, or where, they too will see the actor "in his world", giving meaning to his actions. Personal talk and emotions are expressed by "ordinary persons" in the "everyday" world.

Action implies consciousness. This is not the mechanically reacting animal studied by the functionalist, but is a thinking actor. These actors reflect on themselves in the world, and act accordingly; the perspective acknowledges the existence of G.H. Mead's "self".

Silvermann (1971: 562-579) presented seven propositions to comprise what he called an "ideal-typical action theory". The propositions refer to several ideas already discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis, but it is practical to summarise them here. Silvermann's propositions were categorized as follows:

1. Social and natural phenomena are not of the same kind in that matter, unlike man, has no meaning until meaning is given to it by an observer; matter, unlike man, does not understand itself or its place in the world; matter behaves, it does not act. Therefore social phenomena cannot be treated from the same perspective as are natural phenomena.
2. Sociologists study action, rather than behaviour. While behaviourists might regard behaviour as concretely observable, the behaviour in itself has no meaning until placed in an action context. Weber defined "action" as "all human behaviour when and in so far as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to it" (Silvermann: 565). Action arises from meanings and is not simply the response to a stimulus (reaction) which is what a behaviourist might observe.
3. Meanings are socially derived. Silvermann classified these "shared orientations", which become institutionalised, as the "social facts" of Durkeim. Individuals derive meanings for their interaction by interacting. Their understanding of themselves is based on the responses of others to them.
4. By reflecting the common sense view of the members that society is an external reality, that certain actions and meanings are common sense, individuals "socially sustain" these meanings. "Social order depends upon the co-operative acts of men in sustaining a particular version of the truth" (op.cit: 569).
5. Social meanings are also changed by human interaction, when, for instance, the prevailing view of 'reality' is called into question. This implies

Berger & Luckmann's concept of multiple realities, or, alternatively, "he who has the bigger stick has the better chance of imposing his definitions" of reality (Berger & Luckmann 1966: 101).

6. Explanations of human actions must take account of the meanings which those concerned assign to their acts. That is, the theoretical interpretations of the subjective 'states of mind' of the actor must be accounted for (Weber's method of verstehen). An action has been explained when the meaning which the typical actor attributes to it has been demonstrated (Silvermann: 574-5).

7. Positivism as previously defined (see p 158, n4), is rejected in as much as behaviour is thereby explained in terms of external forces, or universal psychological forces, or reified social facts, denying the dynamic creative activity of the actor himself.

A frequent criticism of the action approach is that an observer cannot "get into the mind" of the actor. Outhwaite has pointed out, however, that this form of "taking the role of the other" must be differentiated from "the naive and mystical notion of empathy which postulates some form of direct access to the contents of people's minds (which is) logically impossible" (1975: 27). The verstehen approach makes sense of actions by situating them in context. Comprehension is thus dialectical, since the act is understood or explained "by its terminal significance (but also) in terms of its starting conditions" (Sartre, quoted in Outhwaite: 65). Action, therefore, is considered as intentional.

Ultimately, however, the researcher (as distinct from the man-in-the-street) seeks objective meaning. Herein lies the problem referred to by Schutz, viz how is it possible to form

objective constructs and an objectively-verifiable theory of subjective meaning-structures?

Schutz's question is partly answered by acknowledging that our concepts are only interpretations of other's (actor's) interpretations of the world - they are constructs of constructs. As such, our interpretation is limited by our 'common sense'. More importantly, the acknowledgment should enable us to distinguish our own perspectives from those of the actors we are trying to understand.

An argument against trying to understand meaning from the subject's point of view is based on the scientific requirements of 'rigour'. Putting ourselves in the place of the other might be regarded as speculation, which, unverified, is certainly unscientific. However, the argument overlooks our own membership in the world - we are not just researchers, we are also members. We know how people, ourselves included, act according to how they define the situation, and that such action involves language use: we know when lachrymal excretions are expressions of joy or sorrow. As Cuff & Payne wrote,

There is no reason why sociologists - unlike ordinary people - should pretend to be incapable of ascertaining the states of mind which activities express. (p 107, emph. added).

In such a way we can use our own common membership to find out what the couple mean when they say they "can't afford" another child.

To discover any underlying logic to the social meaning of 'value' of children, the researchers' focus on individuals must extend to the "allusions to the unstated" (C. Parsons: 50) as well as to overt interactions or statements. Denying, or ignoring, our own membership reduces the research to a social (albeit scientific) monologue. It forms a narrow perspective.

6.3 Some Methodological Principles for Value-of-Children Research.

The research carried out for this thesis study included questionnaire items derived from the East-West Crossnational study. The challenge however, was to develop as well an alternative method for investigating the 'value' of children. As indicated in this chapter, and in Chapter 4, the alternative approach was to be qualitative, deriving from the tradition of interpretive sociology.

In accordance with this intention, the present section outlines some of the methodological principles and procedures which must be considered in the development of any alternative orientation to the 'value' of children. For practical reasons, these principles are itemized under three headings.

I Theoretical Premises

- (a) There is no definitive statement of reality; all statements, whether made by actors or observers, are interpretations.
- (b) Perspectives are social constructions; reality is a social construction.
- (c) Reality is perceived; there are many perspectives of reality. In particular the researcher should be aware of
 - (i) the researcher's perspective of the topic, and of the respondent and what she says/does/means,

- (ii) the respondent's perspective of the research situation,
 - (iii) the respondent's perspective of the topics or phenomena being studied.
- (d) Perspectives derive from social interaction in the world, which gives meaning to reality. In 'value-of-children' research the researcher should be aware, in particular, of these interactions:
- (i) researcher <-----> subject,
 - (ii) subject <-----> children (which will vary according to the role the subject plays with respect to children),
 - (iii) subject <-----> other people in the world, with regard to children.
- (e) There is no need to impute rationality; neither is behaviour necessarily causal. Action is intentional in that it is formed, but the actor does not necessarily distinguish cause and effect.
- (f) 'Value' of children is defined as 'meaning' of children, ie, a perspective. This meaning is seen as a process, as something one does and expresses. It is not an objective fact, to be measured or counted.
- (g) The aim of the research exercise is to provide an understanding of the meaning children have to parents, and hence to provide some insights to the issues pertaining to transition theory and other value-of-children arguments.

- (h) The final research statement is the researcher's construct of this meaning. The statement derives its meaning from the context of the research exercise. It is not an objective representation of "how it is in the world", but is, itself, subjective.

II Method Perspectives

- (a) Actors objectify the world and influences are perceived as external. The actor's perspective is, therefore, structural and might also be functional.
- (b) If causation is postulated by the researcher the connections between cause and effect must be those perceived by the actor if they are also going to be seen as meaningful components of the actor's perspective.
- (c) Behaviour itself has no meaning; meaning is given to it by the observer (imputed) and by the actor (intentional). These meanings must be distinguished.
- (d) Actions are explained by reference to the meanings the actors give them.
- (e) One "makes sense" of action by situating it in context. This implies more than simply taking the role of the other - it includes an understanding of beliefs, ideas and feelings and a definition of the relationships among the actors.
- (f) Language is a set of symbols used to make reality meaningful, communicable and objective (objectified).
- (g) In their talk actors describe their world by the

categories they select, their language use, their gestures, expressions, emotions and manner. Talk may be used to understand the 'meaning' of children.

III Techniques

Bearing in mind the principles and procedures outlined above, and that in the context of this research most "action" will be talk action rather than physical action⁴, it is proposed that in this research formal interview survey analysis will be augmented by

- (a) informal interview, conversation analysis (participant observation), and
- (b) nonparticipant observation, and secondary analysis of, for example, media documents.

As indicated previously (p131), 'appropriate' (conventional) methods produce 'appropriate' (anticipated) results. As if anticipating Feyerabend's argument in Against Method (see Chapter 1), Nisbet (1971: 477-481) focussed on creative imagination as the source of "great ideas". To discover the unexpected, flexibility of method is considered essential, recognizing that no one method can reveal all there is to know about a phenomenon. Different methods provide different kinds of information, different perspectives on 'reality'. It is futile to advance any one perspective as the perspective. Reality is not definitive⁵.

6.4 Summary

The application of the procedures suggested in this chapter is

subjective. Objectivity is contemplated only in as much as that the words used are objectifications of subjective experiences - and are recognised as such - and that the researcher recognises his own subjectivity in interaction. As members, even supposedly neutral 'scientific researcher members', we adopt the perspective appropriate to our particular role, or as-of-the-moment-membership type. Our reality is how we define the situation, through our perspectives. All reality, as perceived reality, is therefore also subjective reality.

Just as "no social object is intrinsically meaningful" (McHugh 1968: 131), so also no social action is intrinsically meaningful. That is actions, like objects, have meaning given to them by people, through their interaction. The meaning of objects (children) or actions (talking about children) reflects the context in which the actions and objects occur, and in which interactions relating to them occur. That people are born and die is undeniable. But as demographic phenomena, recorded as social 'facts', these 'facts' are asocial. If one classifies wanting children, and having children, as "objective action", one should also heed Blumer (p18):

Behind the facade of the objectively joint action, the set of meanings that sustains that joint action has a life that the social scientist can ill afford to ignore.

Births and deaths take on social meaning by virtue of the social context in which they occur. This meaning is symbolised according to one's perspective. The perspective reflects not only the situation in which these births and deaths occur and affect the actor's life, but also the situation in which they are discussed.

Membership of the social world requires mastery of language as the medium of communicating sense-making in the world. Sachs' "conversational analysis" recognised this: in their talk members continually describe their world, selecting categories

(eg, wife, mother, woman, researcher) and constituting the nature of the social occasion (Cuff & Payne: 141-144). So-called objective reality is reality objectified by language. Language is a set of symbols, a typification to make social action coherent and meaningful. The value-of-children researcher need not be concerned with how actors construct reality (as the ethnomethodologist is), but should be concerned that reality is constructed, and that meaning is contextual (both indexical and reflexive)⁶.

Explanations of so-called 'facts' such as 'value' of children, therefore require an assessment of the social context in which they occur, a context which is created by the people themselves, by their actions and interactions, and is reflected in what they do and say. Fertility research is concerned with a specific type of social production, the reproduction of group members, by the birth of children. If this reproduction is to guarantee the survival of the social group, above and beyond the biological survival of the species, it surely must acquire a social as well as a biological meaning. To this extent reproduction can be viewed from a functionalist perspective. The social meaning of reproduction forms social order; biological reproduction does not do this. The meaning of reproduction as well as the meaning of children born must be sought in the social context.

'Values' in value-of-children research have sometimes been translated as 'attitudes'. To facilitate the particular type of research exercise both have been objectified. It is suggested that "attitude to" might be more appropriately investigated as a component of "perspective on" children, ie, as a process rather than a thing with independent existence.

Perspectives are not just what words say. They reflect the social world of the respondent, how she says what she says, how she acts towards, acts about, and interacts with the object being investigated. This action involves feelings as well as

physical actions and spoken language. All, together, symbolize a perspective, and define how the respondent "sees" the object in her (perceived) world.

Rather than being preoccupied with the epistemological nature of 'value' it is suggested that researchers shift the focus of their perspective to the children themselves, using the language and context of what people say and how they act to facilitate an understanding of what children mean to the respondents. Central to this perspective is a recognition that speech and action are symbolic. They are socially created and take their meaning from the social context. That context cannot be ignored.

Notes to Chapter 6.

1. For example, lack of contraceptive use due to what researchers term 'cognitive' failure' is unlikely to be identified as such by respondents.
2. Interpretation of the social world is 'done' by actors in their communication, by use of language. Reality, objectified, exists only as it is conceptualized; language thus symbolizes reality. In this context it is important to distinguish the theoretical perspective of phenomenologists (such as Schutz) from that of ethnomethodologists (such as Cicourel). Phenomenologists are concerned with how the world is interpreted, how it is seen to be. Ethnomethodologists emphasize how the world is constructed, how it comes to be. In practice, however there would appear to be considerable overlap in the two perspectives.
3. Expressed by the layperson in the saying "he sees the world in black and white".
4. The research is not concerned in the first instance with what people do for or with children (eg, sending them to music lessons, playing with babies, or going to parent education classes) but rather with what they say about children in these and other contexts.
68. The terms "indexical" and "reflexive" are those used by Garfinkel to describe how speech defines the situation. Actions or speech are indexical in that they are features of the social situation in which they are used, that is the context makes the action or speech "sensible". However, the context itself is not "given" but is a consequence of how the actor (member) makes sense of the situation - ie, speech is reflexive. For example, a response to the interviewer's question, "What is the value of children to you?" reflects the information which the question was designed to elicit (eg ideas of utility or old age security) and is indexed to the respondent's perception of the social situation (an interview where the respondent is required or expected to think of children in terms of value). Questions, responses and context (ie indexicality and reflexivity) together define the situation.
58. This futility has been recognized by some authors and is illustrated in Zito's comment:

Most individuals have either quantitative or verbal

skills, but seldom both. ... Hence some sociologists can just about add, while others can just about spell. The former deride quantitative methods, which they are incapable of understanding, and the latter deride qualitative methods as metaphysical nonsense and therefore unscientific. The great debate on sociological research methods is no more complex than that. (1975: 14).