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The Impact of Industrialization on
Fertility in Hong Kong:
Some Socio-psychological Aspects

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by
C.Y. Choi

August, 1975

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Preface

This is Part II of a two part report on "The Impact of Industrialization on Fertility in Hong Kong." Part I, on demographic, social and economic aspects, was prepared by Dr. C.Y. Choi of the Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong and Mr. K.C. Chan of the Hong Kong Family Planning Association, and was issued in September 1973. This part concerns socio-psychological aspects and includes analyses of costs and benefits of children.

The original research proposal was written jointly by Drs. C.Y. Choi and Betty Chung. Mr. K.C. Chan of the Family Planning Association joined in later and helped revised it. The Asia Foundation provided funds for the survey and we are grateful for this. The Social Research Centre provided facilities, both technical and clerical, and the Family Planning Association contributed from its own funds to the partial payment of interviewing.

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August, 1975.

CHAPTER I

THE CHANGING HONG KONG FAMILY

Marriages

Within traditional Chinese culture, marriage received great emphasis. It was a rite of passage through which everyone should pass sometime in their lives. It was also the beginning of the fulfilment of responsibility which was to give birth to the second generation. The need to have a son to provide continuity in the family lineage was not to be questioned. Therefore, in traditional Chinese society, apart from having special difficulties and problems, marriage was considered a necessity, and in cases of economic prosperity, early marriage was often practiced.

Between 1920 and 1930, in a nation-wide survey of land-use in China by John L. Buck and Nanking University, it was reported that age at first marriage was 20.5 years for males and 18.2 for females. According to another survey of the Swatao area in the 1920's by Daniel Kulp, age at first marriage was even lower, 17 years for males and 16 years for females. Twenty years later, another research by Chen Ta of the mountainous province of Yunnan in the 1940's, reported that the most popular ages at marriage were 18, 19 and 20 for males and 16 to 19 for females. The prevalence of early marriages can be observed from these and other surveys in early periods after the 1911 revolution.

Marriage in traditional China has three main demographic characteristics:

- 1) The universality of marriage - this was particularly true for females. Apart from special reasons of economic difficulties and customs (for example, many Shunteh women who in some periods preferred to remain single), almost everyone married in their life-time.
- 2) Relatively low age at marriage - age at marriage is determined by a whole complex of social and economic factors, and cannot be easily generalized. However, in

traditional Chinese society, marriage was not only a matter concerning two consenting individuals, it also meant the pulling-together of 2 families. The function of marriage was, therefore, the creation of a new family, and in addition the provision of a strong link between the families of origin of the bride and the groom. In traditional China where the family was of paramount importance, the wish of the parents for their children to marry early was perhaps one of the reasons for early marriage.

- 3) Ages at marriage for both bride and groom were very close. The surveys reported earlier showed that a difference of 2 years was usual. Cases of the groom being younger than the bride had also been reported in Chinese history.

The universality of marriage is also found in Hong Kong. According to census reports, in 1961, 96.6 per cent of men and 94.0 per cent of women of age 50 and over were once married. In 1971, these proportions were 96.3 per cent for men and 94.0 per cent for women. These figures are considerably higher than those in many Western countries. In the U.K., Canada or Australia, the proportion of population remaining single all through their lives is higher than that in Hong Kong.

Census and research reports in Hong Kong have shown that there was a marked postponement of marriage in the 1960's. In 1967, a survey by R. Mitchell of the Social Survey Research Centre of the Chinese University noted a rapid rise in age at marriage.

In the 1971 census, it was shown that the average age at first marriage had risen to 28 years for men and 23 years for women during the early 1960's. Average age at first marriage for those who married during 1961-1965 was 28.3 years for men and 23.3 years for women. But ages at marriage after 1965 have shown an apparent drop.

For those who married between 1965 and 1970, the average age at first marriage was 28.0 years for men and 22.7 years for women. This apparent drop was indicated also from figures issued by the Marriage Registry. According to this source, average age at marriage dropped from 29.0 years for men in the late 1960's to 28.1 years during 1972-73. For females, average age at marriage also dropped from 23.6 years to 23.3 years. Figures issued by the Marriage Registry include re-marriages and therefore are higher than those recorded by the census and other surveys which include only first marriages. But both sources pointed to a slight drop in average age at marriage.

However, this apparent drop in average age at marriage is caused by changes in the special age-structure of Hong Kong's population and not indicative of the desire or preference of Hong Kong's population to marry earlier. In the early 1960's, the proportion of those aged 20-24 among the total population was low, and consequently marriages within this young age-group were few. The census of 1961 counted 96 thousand unmarried males aged 20 to 24 and only 44 thousand unmarried females of the same age. But in 1971, unmarried males of this age group jumped to 157 thousand and females to 110 thousand. The number of marriages within this age group in the late 1960's and early 1970 increased, forcing the average age at marriage to drop. This drop in age at marriage under the special change in age structure is not indicative of any changes towards earlier marriage in Hong Kong.

If we attempt an analysis which is not effected by changes in age structure, it will be obvious that the trend in late marriage has not weakened. A comparison of the proportion never-married between 1961, 1966 and 1971 shows that this proportion has increased. The proportion never-married among women aged 15-19 was 93.6 per cent in 1961; in 1966, it was 95.2 per cent, and in 1971 it rose to 97.1 per cent. The proportion never-married among males had also increased from 98.7 per cent in 1961 to 99.4 per cent in 1966 and to 99.6 per cent in 1971. It is very rare for men to marry under the age of 20 in Hong Kong.

In the age group 20-24, the proportion never-married among females was 48.7 per cent in 1961, 57.0 per cent in 1966 and increased rapidly to 67.7 per cent in 1971. Among men of the same age group, the increase of the proportion never-married was similar - from 86.2 per cent in 1961 to 92.1 per cent in 1971. It is also uncommon for Hong Kong men to marry under 25.

Similarly, in the age group 25 to 29, the percentage never-married among women increased from 15.5 per cent in 1961 to 20.1 per cent in 1971, and among men from 56.2 per cent to 62.5 per cent. The rise in proportion never-married indicates the great extent of late marriage, especially among men.

Together with the trend of late marriage, the difference of ages at marriage between bride and groom has become greater. In the 1950's, men, on the average, married women 4 years younger than themselves. But in the 1960's, this difference increased to over 5 years, somewhat larger than that experienced in other countries, and an obvious deviation from the traditional Chinese norm.

In part I of this report (A Demographic, Social and Economic Analysis), postponed marriage was found to be related directly and strongly with work experience before marriage and with levels of education. (C.Y. Choi and K.C. Chan 1973) It is clear that the socio-economic system in Hong Kong in the 1970s was not conducive to early marriage. Employment opportunities for women increase during industrialization, and the economic position of the female in the Hong Kong family is no longer that of reliance. Labour force participation rate for women aged 15-19 was 56.4 per cent and for women aged 20-24, 69.5 per cent in 1971. (Census, 1971, p.74) This was a substantial increase from 1961 when the corresponding rates were 47.9 per cent and 51.1 per cent. Women, particularly young unmarried daughters, are very much in demand in the manufacturing industries. In many families, the income of the mother and more often of the daughter is an important and indispensable portion of the total

family income. One research has indicated that daughters usually had relatively more influence in family affairs as a result of their financial contribution. While working, their mother would care for their material comfort and they themselves would make friends outside of the family and would seek entertainment together with friends. All this provided attraction to compete with marriage and child-bearing. (Shalaff, 1972).

In our survey, it can be demonstrated that husband's income is usually not the total income of the household, and in many cases the difference is substantial.

Table 1.1 Husband's Income and Household Income, Survey 1972 (in Percentages)

<u>Monthly Household Income</u>	<u>Husband's Income less than Household Income</u>	<u>Same as Household Income</u>	<u>N</u>
Less than 600	12.9	87.1	263
600 - 999	49.2	50.8	821
1,000 - 1,399	68.1	31.9	527
1,400 - 1,799	71.1	28.9	173
1,800 and over	94.7	5.3	113
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
All groups	54.1	45.9	1897

In general, the higher the income range of the household, the greater is the proportion of husbands whose income is less than the total household income and the bigger is the difference between husband's income and household income.

Almost half of all respondents (45 per cent) interviewed were employed and a majority (70 per cent) did so because of the necessity to contribute to the family income. Most wives expected their children to contribute part of their earnings to the family and among those

children who were already working, a very high percentage (72 per cent) was already contributing, some by handing a portion of their salary to their mothers to pay for daily expenses or to pay for the education of their younger siblings; others purchased consumer goods such as T.V., refrigerators etc. for the family. It is customary in traditional Chinese culture for the eldest son to contribute to the family income when he earns, partly because he will assume the position of head of household after the father dies. However, in Hong Kong, especially in low-income families where every dollar is important, the eldest daughter appears to be expected to do the same. In some cases, chances of further education for the eldest son or daughters may be curtailed so that they can work to contribute to the family income. Unfortunately, data are not available to show the level of education attainment of the eldest child and subsequent children, but if such data were available, one could expect that the eldest child would have attained lower level of education relative to his younger brothers and sisters.

There are 2 important changes resulting from the increasing entry of women into the labour market. One is the disruption of the male authority in the family and the second is the economic pressure against early marriage, particularly for the eldest son but also for the eldest daughter. In the 1972 survey, about 14.4 per cent of the women interviewed married at the ages of 25 and over. An analysis of age at marriage by education indicated that they are directly and strongly related. Those marrying late (i.e., 25 years or over) were asked why they married at such ages and the answers showed that the need to support the family of origin (24 per cent) and the desire to remain single for a longer period (27 per cent) were important reasons. Another 29 per cent said that there were no suitable men to marry.

It is most probable that the rise in women's status in Hong Kong and the financial need for them to be employed contributed to sustain the present high age at marriage.

Households and Family Structure

By far, the most work done on the Hong Kong Family is on household and family structure. The immediate post-war family structure was reported to be an extended type qualified by two significant features - temporariness and brokenness (Wong, 1974a, 7). This was because the overwhelming majority of the early residents in Hong Kong were migrants who came to Hong Kong for short periods of time. Some might bring with them wives and/or children, but most came alone. Even for those who brought their immediate families, the larger extended family-lineage remained their main point of reference. Much commuting between Hong Kong and their native place of origin occurred, particularly during festival seasons such as the Chinese New Year and Ching Ming. Some of these movements continue until the present day, witness the large movement across the border on these occasions; but it must have involved a majority of the population in early periods. Many, after having worked in Hong Kong for a certain period of time and having accumulated sufficient savings, might return to stay in their native village. Others sent their children to their native villages or nearby town for education in Chinese schools.

As a result, their family structure was incomplete; it was only part of an extended family, the root of which remained in China. This is shown clearly in population statistics of these periods which have exceedingly high sex-ratios and when the number of married men far exceeded that of the married women.

This situation continued until the end of the 2nd World War. Sex-ratio remained high; in 1931, it was 1,348 men to 1,000 women. But events since the War encouraged the gradual settling of the Hong Kong population. The temporary separation of the migrant and his immediate family from his family-lineage in China became more permanent; and as the migrant family stayed on permanently, a defacto nuclear type of family was established in Hong Kong. If they sent for their dependent

parents who would stay with them, stem families consisting of three generations - one or both of the parents, the married son and daughter-in-law, the children - were established.

It is now almost certain that the acceptance of nuclear family ideals existed even prior to the rise of industrialization in Hong Kong (Wong, 1972c, 146-7), but the rise of industrialization and the spread of modern education accelerated the trend towards the nuclear family type. In 1961, when the first post-War census was taken, almost 63 per cent of all families consisted of family head, spouse and their children only. Another 12 per cent consisted of the family head, spouse, children and one widowed parent, while yet another 13 per cent consisted of one couple other than the head and spouse; many of these were parents of the head. Considering them in broad terms, about 70 per cent of all Hong Kong families in 1961 was "nuclear" and about 25 per cent was "stem".

The 1966 and the 1971 census did not include questions about family structure, but the 1972 survey showed that the percentage of nuclear family had increased to 74 per cent and the percentage of stem family decreased slightly to 24 per cent. The comparison between 1961 census results and the 1972 survey has to be interpreted with much caution. The definitions were not standardized and the coverage of population was different - the survey covered families whose wives were between the ages 15 to 49 while the census covered every family.

As an indication to whether the stem family system would continue in the future, a question was asked in the 1972 survey about the expectation of the interviewed women to live with their children when they were married. The results show that a majority did not expect themselves to live with either the son or the daughter when they were married.

Table 1.2 Whether expect to live with married sons,
by age of respondent, 1972 survey

<u>Age</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Not Decided</u>	<u>Total*</u>
15 - 19	4 -	9 -	3 -	16 -
20 - 24	54 (25)	106 (49)	56 (26)	216 (100)
25 - 29	90 (28)	149 (46)	85 (26)	324 (100)
30 - 34	86 (33)	114 (44)	60 (23)	260 (100)
35 - 39	118 (33)	136 (38)	99 (28)	353 (100)
40 - 44	104 (39)	91 (34)	70 (26)	265 (100)
45 - 49	99 (41)	87 (36)	55 (23)	241 (100)
15 - 49	555 (33)	692 (41)	428 (26)	1675 (100)

* 595 not applicable cases excluded.

Figures in brackets are percentages.

Table 1.3 Whether expect to live with married daughters,
by age of respondent, 1972 survey

<u>Age</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Not Decided</u>	<u>Total*</u>
15 - 19	2 -	10 -	4 -	16 -
20 - 24	24 (11)	149 (69)	43 (20)	216 (100)
25 - 29	41 (13)	201 (62)	84 (26)	326 (100)
30 - 34	43 (16)	155 (59)	64 (24)	262 (100)
35 - 39	42 (12)	223 (64)	83 (24)	348 (100)
40 - 44	50 (18)	169 (62)	55 (20)	274 (100)
45 - 49	45 (19)	152 (63)	43 (18)	240 (100)
15 - 49	247 (15)	1059 (63)	376 (22)	1682 (100)

* 588 not applicable cases excluded.

Figures in brackets are percentages.

As expected, sons are more favoured than daughters as future co-inhabitants, and this shows a certain degree of son preference and the continued expected reliance on the son for old age security. But the extent of this expectation is low: only 33 per cent of all women expected to live with their sons after their sons were married. This proportion was higher among women of higher ages (41 per cent for those aged 45-49), but declined to only 25 per cent for those 20-24. Even so, the presence of an expectation or desire to live with their married sons among those of young ages must be taken as an indication that traditional ideals of depending on sons at old ages continued.

Among those in the "not decided" category, there was a large proportion of those who indicated that they would stay with their sons or daughters depending on whether their sons (52 per cent) and daughters (46 per cent) would welcome them. Some raised doubts on whether they could get along with the sons' family (19 per cent) or with the daughters' family (18 per cent), and other feared that their future sons- and daughters-in-law might not welcome them.

Analysis of the incidents of living with parents or parents-in-law by age of respondents also showed that the custom of staying in the households of the husbands' family of origin forming stem or joint families was declining. Many of the older women interviewed said that they stayed with their parents-in-law because of custom, while among the younger ones, more specific reasons such as 'to take care of parents-in law', 'husbands' wish' etc. were given. This may indicate a drift from the habit of naturally staying in the husband's household to staying for specific reasons.

From this, it can be seen that the tradition of extended family has declined, partly because of the migrant nature of Hong Kong's population and partly because of the impact of industrialization and modernization. The physical crowdedness of Hong Kong also made it difficult to house several couples in one residential unit.

Family and Household Size

We have seen in Part I of this report that Hong Kong women of 30-34 years of age had an average of 3.1 children born to them. Those women who had nearly completed their child-bearing span had about 4.8 children. On the average, for all age-groups, the number of children born was 3.5 in 1972 which is lower than the figures of 3.8 reported by a 1967 survey.

But even if the fertility of married women aged 45-49 were taken to be completed fertility for all women, this number still could not be taken as household size. There are two major factors influencing the relations between household and family size. The first is mortality of the children, and the second is the prevalence in Hong Kong of having non-family members (nuclear family) living with a family or of family members living away, sometimes alone, from the family.

The effect from the death of children can be demonstrated in the difference between the number of children born and the number of living children.

Table 1.4 Average No. of Children ever-born and Children living by Age of Mothers, 1967* and 1972.

Age	<u>1967</u>			<u>1972</u>		
	Children Ever-born	Living Children	Difference	Children Ever-born	Living Children	Difference
15 - 24	1.3	1.2	0.1	1.1	1.0	0.1
25 - 29	2.1	2.1	-	2.1	2.0	0.1
30 - 34	3.4	3.3	0.1	3.1	3.0	0.1
35 - 39	4.7	4.3	0.4	4.1	3.8	0.3
40 - 44	5.3	4.8	0.5	4.7	4.4	0.3
45 - 49	**	**	**	4.8	4.2	0.6
15 - 49	3.8	3.5	0.3	3.5	3.3	0.2

* 1967 figures are from the Mitchell Survey (N = 1546)

** Numbers too small to calculate averages.

The major difference between the 1967 and the 1972 survey was the slight decrease in the average number of both children ever-born and children living. The difference between the number of children ever-born and children living remained about the same for both years. At ages above 30-4 group, the difference between the two was approximately 10 per cent of the children ever-born in 1967 and slightly lower for 1972.

The second factor is the difference between family size (No. of living children plus parents) and the size of the household. As we have seen above, approximately 26 per cent of the households in our survey can be classified as non-nuclear, consisting 24 per cent of stem families, 1.7 per cent joint-families. These households includes members from outside the immediate families.

Therefore, it can be expected that household size will be different from family size - larger if the pattern of stem or joint family is prevalent, and smaller if there is a tendency for many young children to set up own household before marriage. From results of the survey it can be shown that the average size of household is slightly larger than the number of living children, and that the variation in household size is great. Although the mode are those households consisting of 5 to 6 persons, these two categories accounted only for slightly over 33 per cent of the total. Many households (6.6 per cent) contained 10 or more persons.

Both the 1961 and 1971 census collected data on household size, which showed that there was an exceptionally large number of single-person households (104 thousand in 1961 and 126 thousand in 1971). These constituted approximately 15 per cent of all households in both 1961 and 1971. The 1971 census reported that, "A study of their geographical distribution indicates that most of these people, living away from their families, tended to concentrate in the urban areas, especially in manufacturing and commercial districts where they lived in order to be close to their place of work." (1971 Population and Housing Census, Main Report, 166). Many of these

single households may be temporary, i.e. residing there merely to be close to work and returning to their families during holidays and vacations. It is believed that many are grown up sons in congested families who moved to occupy bed-spaces or rooms near their place of work. In 1971, about 67 per cent of these single-person households are found in bed-spaces (10 per cent) and rooms (59 per cent), a proportion significantly higher than the total Hong Kong average of 44 per cent (1.7 per cent bed spaces, 42.3 per cent rooms).

Comparison between the 1961 and 1971 census results in household size showed very little change. The average size of 4.5 in 1971 was slightly larger than 4.4 in 1961, and this appears to be the result of the increase in the population of those having 6 - 9 members. However, the patterns of distribution for both years were similar and the majority of the households consisted of two to six persons. The slight decrease in the proportion of those with 2 to 4 persons is most probably related to the postponement of the first or the second child; and the reduction in mortality, which resulted in the lengthening of life expectancy, is partially responsible for the increase in the proportion of 6 - 9 member households. These are conjectures which require empirical evidence; but the slight change in the distribution of household size is the result influences such as these.

More detailed analysis of the socio-economic differentials in family size can be found in Part I of the report. Interested readers are referred to Chapter VI of that report.

Table 1.5 Percentage Distribution of Households by Size, 1961, 1971 (Census) and 1972 (Survey)

Size	1961 (Census)	1971 (Census)	1972 (Survey)
1	15.1	14.7	-*
2	14.6	12.9	7.1
3	14.2	12.1	10.6
4	13.5	12.8	13.8
5	12.0	12.6	16.2
6	10.4	11.6	17.0
7	7.8	9.2	12.2
8	5.1	6.4	9.9
9	3.1	3.8	6.5
10+	4.2	3.9	6.6
All sizes	100.0	100.0	100.0
Average Household Size	4.4	4.5	5.8
No. of Households ('000s)	687.2	857.0	2.27

* The survey by design did not include single person households. It was limited to those families (households) whose wives were between 15-49 years of age).

CHAPTER II

SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL CORRELATES OF FERTILITY

Several of the major intervening variables under study are psychological variables such as attitudes towards the family, children, family planning and future planning (fatalism). They provide the vital link between socio-economic conditions of the individuals and their actual fertility behavior. In Part I of our report, it was hypothesized that changes in attitudes towards child birth are related to industrialization which result in the equalitarianism of sexes, of family relations and in the changes of values towards children. The following sections examine these hypotheses in more detail.

Interaction and Patterns of Communication in the Family

Traditional Chinese families have usually been described as paternalistic, patrilineal and patrilocal, putting the husband-father as the centre of the family. The father, or the father's father, is the head of the family, assuming major decision-making power on household matters. Close kinsmen of the paternal side also influence decisions. The lineage is traced through the male line and the females reside in their husband's place of residence.

Much of these is now changed. The emergence of the nuclear family effectively separates the parents and their children from the husbands' lineage, forming a neolocal structure. The influence from the husband's family is minimized.

The 1972 survey contained several questions concerning the nature of decision-making process in the family. Eleven items of family affairs were mentioned and respondents were asked to say whether decisions concerning them were made by the husband, wife or husband and wife jointly etc. The results are shown below.

Table 2.1 Decision-making in the Family,
Survey 1972 (in percentages)

Items	Decisions mainly made by:				N
	Wife	Husband	Jointly Husband & Wife	Others (incl. parents)	
1. Number of children	17.0	6.7	73.4	2.9	1980
2. Contact with friends	32.1	6.6	60.2	1.1	1997
3. Purchase of goods	18.9	17.4	59.7	4.0	2198
4. Place of residence	12.0	25.4	59.5	3.1	2151
5. Children's education	26.2	17.3	53.3	3.2	2152
6. Children's discipline	38.9	7.3	51.8	2.0	2171
7. Monthly savings	36.7	13.5	48.7	1.1	1555
8. Recreation	44.3	7.4	47.2	1.1	1982
9. Daily expenses	60.9	9.3	25.9	3.6	2170
10. Whether wife works	66.5	12.6	19.2	1.7	2184
11. Place of work of husband	3.5	88.2	7.8	.5	2210

The first point to note in Table 2.1 is that most decisions were jointly made by the husbands and wives, presumably after consultation. The item on the number of children heads the list, with 73.4 per cent of women claiming that this decision was jointly made. In total, 6 out of the 11 items were considered by the majority of wives to be the joint decisions of both husbands and wives. They are: number of children, contact with friends, place of residence, purchase of durable goods, children's education, and children's discipline. The other five items, decisions of which were said to be made mainly by the wives or husbands independently are: monthly savings, recreation, daily expenses, whether wife should work, and place of work of husband. It appears therefore, daily affairs concerning children were mostly discussed and consulted between husbands and wives, and therefore decisions about them are

jointly made. "Purchase of durable good" concerns the outlay of a relatively large amount of money, and in many cases funds will have to come from several sources which make joint decisions necessary.

It may be expected that decisions concerning "recreation" would be jointly made, but the survey showed that only 47 per cent of the women claimed this to be so. The nature of "recreation" has to be understood in the local context. It is rare for a family to be out together except to see friends on rare occasions, and it is also rare for the husband and wife to be out together. In our survey, 65.3 per cent of the respondents said they rarely or never (17.5 per cent) go out with their husbands, and a further 15.9 per cent reported that they only sometimes do. Men socialize with men most of the time, and women with women. This separation is not abnormal, and is not indicative of any rift in the family. This explains partly why decisions concerning recreation are mainly independently made by the husband and wife. Forty-four per cent of the respondents in our survey said that recreation decisions were determined by the wives. Daily expenses, as expected, are mainly the responsibility of the housewife, and 60.9 per cent of them reported so. The decision of whether the wife should work is again not a joint one - 66.5 per cent of the respondents said that they decided on this issue alone while only 19 per cent claimed that this was a joint decision.

The large proportion of respondents who claimed that they were the decision-makers brings us to the second point in Table 2.1, that is, decisions concerning family affairs is fundamentally under the direction of the wife, either by deciding alone or in consultation with her husbands. Thirty-two per cent of the women claimed that they decided about contacts with friends as against only 6.6 per cent who claimed their husband did. Similarly, several other items appeared to be clearly within the wife's domain: 1) whether wife should work (66.5 per cent), 2) daily expenses (60.9 per cent), 3) recreation (44.3 per cent). Even children's discipline and monthly savings were considered to be the responsibility of the wife

or jointly the wife and husband, but rarely of the husband alone. In fact, only on two items (husband's place of work and places of residence) were shown the influence of the husband. Eighty-eight per cent of the respondents replied that their husbands decided on the place of work as against 3.5 per cent who claimed the wives did, and 25.4 per cent husbands as against 12 per cent wives on the question of place of residence.

If the claims made by the respondents reflect any truth of the real situation, the above pattern implies a fundamental change in the decision-making process in the Hong Kong family. Paternal authority is rapidly replaced by more equal or at times maternal authority. Husband-wife joint decisions are overwhelmingly important on many issues, and are significant even on issues pertaining only to one party of the couple. This pattern is also clearly shown in the decision to practice or not to practice birth control.

Table 2.2 Decision-making concerning the practice of birth control (Percentages)

Among Those	Decision mainly made by:				N
	Husband	Wife	Jointly Husband- wife	Others	
Practicing	2.3	22.9	73.6	1.2	1055
Not practicing	6.3	21.4	63.8	8.5	556
All	3.7	22.4	70.2	3.7	1611

Seventy per cent of wives claimed that the decision about whether or not to practise birth control had been a joint one. The difference between those practicing and those not practicing is very slight and insignificant. Again, here, the husband's role is minimal, indicating the importance of the wife's choice in this area.

Further questions on the frequency of communication on various issues was asked in the survey. Results from these questions show that contraception is still one of the least discussed topic in the family, although over half of the sample said that they discussed it at least sometimes.

Table 2.3 Husband-wife communication about family-affairs

Items	Very Frequently	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Almost Never	N
Wife's recreation	6.6	15.8	27.5	24.5	25.5	2188
Wife's personal affairs	7.9	21.9	30.3	21.4	18.4	2229
Husband's recreation	6.2	15.8	31.7	22.3	24.0	2215
Children's affairs	23.5	33.8	26.1	10.9	5.7	2231
Go out to friends	15.1	31.0	25.1	15.9	12.9	2199
Contraception	9.1	16.8	27.9	14.6	31.7	2217

In general, the level of husband-wife discussion as shown in the above table is low. Even on children's affairs, 5.7 per cent of respondents claimed they almost never discussed it with their husbands. This percentage rose to 24 per cent concerning husband's recreation and 31.7 per cent concerning contraception. If a "low communication" category is created to include the "sometimes," "rarely" and "almost never" categories, then Hong Kong husbands and wives must be among the lowest communicators in the world. Even if the "rarely" and "almost never" categories only were considered together, they accounted for substantial, if not over half, of the cases, indicating that communication between husbands and wives was indeed infrequent.

The low level of communication appears to be in contradiction to the claim that decisions on most daily problem were mostly jointly made by both the husband and wife. However, this contradiction does not necessarily exist, because although communication might be rare,

they might be effective, resulting in decisions. The nature and content of communication within the family in addition to the frequencies need to be considered. This research however, does not go into this aspect of the family and further research need to be done to throw more light onto the pattern of decision-making in the Hong Kong family.

Attitudes Towards Having Children and Contraception

Attitudes are general dispositions towards action and behavior. Attitudes towards child bearing and contraception are important determinants of actual fertility behavior, although they are two different entities between which inconsistencies often occur.

The 1972 survey was designed partly to gather information on attitudes towards having children and towards contraception. The survey questionnaire contained questions about the views of respondents towards a series of 20 statements. These statements can be roughly grouped into 5 major types: 1) the function of children, 2) difficulties and problems of child-bearing, 3) traditional values of filial piety, 4) number of children, 5) male and female preference. The following paragraphs examine the pattern of response to three questions.

I) The function of children. One of the hypotheses in this study is that industrialization diminishes the value of children and modernization of values create an atmosphere that would tend to be unfavourable to large families. Furthermore, the provision of old age security schemes from government and large organization makes it less necessary to have children for old age. To test this hypothesis, respondents were asked if they agreed to the following statements:

Table 2.4 Views on the Functions of Children,
Survey 1972, (percentages)

<u>Statements</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>N</u>
1. Children provide old age security	57.4	42.6	2165
2. Children could achieve, for the parents, goals the parents themselves did not achieve	53.8	46.2	1844
3. The aim of childbearing is <u>no longer</u> for old age security	63.2	36.8	2107

It is unexpected that over half of the respondents agreed (6 per cent agreed strongly) that children could provide old age security, and that children could achieve, for the parents, goals which the parents themselves did not achieve. The fact that children are important economically in the family is obvious in previous discussion of the relative role of the father in the family, but the expectation of over half of the respondents for their children to provide in their old age shows the extent to which children are valued in the material sense. When the reverse of the question on old age security is asked, 37 per cent disagreed that the aim of child-bearing is not for old age security. It is clear that in the Hong Kong society where there is no government pension scheme for the public and where very few are employed in large organizations which provide superannuation and pension schemes, children are important in this aspect.

Children who achieve in society are often considered pride of the family, and this shows in almost 54 per cent of the respondents.

II) Difficulties and Problems of child-bearing. There is little doubt that most Hong Kong women do not welcome the physical consequences of pregnancies and the discomforts of child-birth. Nine out of ten respondents agreed that child-birth was very painful

and that pregnancies caused great inconveniences as well as making the women look clumsy. But on the other hand, almost 65 per cent of the women agreed that it was a great loss for a women if she did not have a child.

Table 2.5 Views on the Problems of Pregnancy and Child-birth, Survey 1972 (Percentage)

<u>Statements</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>N</u>
1. Child-birth is very painful	89.6	10.4	2175
2. Pregnancy causes inconvenience	89.2	10.8	2197
3. A pregnant woman looks clumsy	90.0	10.0	2215
4. Great loss if woman has no child	64.8	35.2	2098

These responses are not contradictory. They show the feelings among women on the questions of having children can be very complex. The discomfort and inconveniences of pregnancies are felt possibly because social arrangements and expectations in Hong Kong are not suited to the state of being pregnant. The expectation or necessity to work, the prevalence of small nuclear family where help from relatives is unobtainable, etc. are inconsistent to the requirements of pregnancy. Hence there exists the feeling of inconvenience and clumsiness.

But these problems are not strong enough reasons to reject having children. Nearly 65 per cent of the respondents consider it a great loss (permanent scar in direct translation from the Chinese statement) to have no children at all, similar to the traditional feeling that every one must marry and must bear children. Almost 90 per cent of those who felt that pregnancy was inconvenient and clumsy also considered it a loss not to have children. More will be said in a later section on the cost and value of children.

III) Traditional value of children. The concept of filial piety is deeply imbedded in Confucian teachings and has influenced the thinking of the Chinese people for thousands of years. There was during the 1920's a movement in China against the teachings of Confucius and there has also been since the 1960's a cultural revolution aiming at exposing the bad effects of Confucianism. However, for Hong Kong, the impact of the cultural revolution has not been great and it can be safely assumed that changes from the ideal Confucian teaching came mainly from the impact of industrialization and westernization.

One of the Confucian teachings is that a woman should bear children, especially sons, to continue the family line; she should bear as many children as possible and as early as possible so that her parents-in-law can be certain that the family line is indeed continued. This type of pro-natalistic thinking is still strong in Hong Kong.

Table 2.6 Views on Traditional Values of Children, Survey 1972 (Percentages)

<u>Statements</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>N</u>
1. To be filial, a woman should bear many children	19.4	80.6	2142
2. The greatest offence against filial piety is not to have children to continue family line	37.5	62.6	2063
3. It is good fortune to have many children in the family	37.8	62.2	2103
4. To have 5 generations under one roof is not recommendable	70.1	29.9	2084
5. It is not good fortune to have many children and grand-children	76.9	23.1	2123

Although only less than 20 per cent of the respondents still thought that a woman should bear many children in order to be filial, a much larger proportion (38 per cent) thought that not to have any

children was an offence against being filial, and about the same proportion that it was a fortune to have many children. The psychological fear that one might be considered not acting filially is perhaps a very strong reason for considering a great loss if one did not have a child. In fact among those who responded in this way 80 per cent also responded that to have no children is against filial piety.

If similar statements were put to the respondents in a negative way, a similarly significant proportion (23-30 per cent) shows a tendency to consider having many children as indication of good fortune.

IV and V) Number of Children and Sex-Preferences. When respondents were specifically asked whether they thought the more children the better, 26 per cent agreed. But if the statement is put a little differently by using a promotional phrase - quality is more important than quantity - only 6 per cent disagreed with the statement.

Table 2.7 Views on numbers of children,
Survey 1972 (Percentages)

Statements	Agree	Disagree	N
<u>Number of Children</u>			
1. Quality of children more important than quantity	94.0	6.0	2172
2. The more children a family has the better	26.3	73.6	2142
<u>Sex-Preference</u>			
3. Sons and daughters are the same	95.7	4.3	2229
4. To continue the family line, a woman should bear more sons	21.0	79.1	2174
5. Girls tend to marry out, so sons are more desirable	13.5	86.6	2180
6. When a woman gets married, she relies on her husband; when she gets old, she relies on her son; it is comforting to have sons	41.3	58.7	2114

The apparent discrepancy between responses to the two statements concerning numbers of children may be caused by the following factors: 1) It is possible to agree to both statements; in this case the implication is that the desire for many children is accompanied by the desire to have them brought up properly. If these children can be brought up properly, then the more the better. 2) The statement "quality of children is more important than quantity" is a promotional phrase used by the Hong Kong Family Planning Association in recent years. It may be possible that this promotional campaign has had great impact on the population and convinced them of the face-value, at least, of the statement. As a result, an overwhelming proportion agreed to the statement but still wished to have as many children as possible.

On the issue of sex-preference, a discrepancy also arose. On the one hand, almost 96 per cent of the respondents claimed that sons and daughters were equally desirable, but on the other hand, 21 per cent felt that a woman should have sons so that the family line was continued, 41 per cent thought that since a woman ultimately relied on her sons for old age security, to have sons was comforting.

These discrepancies point to the complex nature of attitudes. It is clear from the above analysis of responses to different statements that responses differ depending on how the statements are expressed, on the interpretation of the statements and on the aspect of children the statements refer to. There is perhaps no single answer to the question of whether one desires children or not without the question qualified. The answers to questions of the desirability or undesirability of children would inevitably be "desired for some specific purpose," - to satisfy the urge to fulfil the wishes of parents-in-laws, for old age security, to continue the family line etc. But without qualifiers, simple statements such as "sons and daughters are the same" and "quality of children more important than quantity" etc. elicit responses which may not represent the true attitudes of the respondents under real situations.

In the Hong Kong study, it is clear that traditional emphasis on the value of children is still an important pressure on an important portion of wives to have children, but more important is the continued reliance (albeit expected) on children for old age security. This is true both for the older and the younger generations.

Relations between Family Decisions, Attitudes and Social Economic Characteristics

I) Family-Decisions

It is commonly expected that in traditional Chinese families with older parents, much of the decision-power lay in the hand of the husband-father. This expectation, however, is not supported by our data from the survey. It is true that the older the wife and husband, the less they make decisions together, but when single person decisions are made, the wife usually becomes more important as the family matures, and is most important at the age of 35-39.

Table 2.8: Percentage of one-person decisions among total decisions, and percentage of wife decisions among one-person decisions.
Survey 1972.

Age of Wife	<u>Childrens Education</u>		<u>Number of Children</u>		<u>Purchase of Consumer Goods</u>	
	% one- person	% wife	% one- person	% wife	% one- person	% wife
15 - 19	27	*	6	*	54	*
20 - 24	39	40	21	57	32	72
25 - 29	36	60	21	67	31	39
30 - 34	44	68	23	69	38	42
35 - 39	50	67	28	79	36	58
40 - 44	48	61	26	70	42	57
45 - 49	53	55	26	79	47	61
<u>Wife's Education</u>						
No school	50	53	27	70	41	56
Private tutoring	47	57	28	72	40	50
Primary	43	67	24	72	39	49
Secondary	40	74	21	76	30	55
Post-secondary	30	*	10	*	27	*

* Cell-size too small (less than 15) for percentage calculation

Perhaps, the pattern of decision-making in the family, should be viewed from the angle of family cycle. Our data do not allow us to trace the Hong Kong family cycle, but it can be expected that as the family matures, the role of the mother and her children becomes important in deciding family affairs. The father can be expected to become

increasingly occupied by his occupational (career) activities, leaving much of the family affairs to the wife.

Thus, on the item of children's education, only about 40 per cent of single person decisions were claimed to have been made by the wife, but this percentage increases to 67 per cent in the age groups 30-34 and 35-39, thereafter declining to 55 per cent for those aged 45-49. In a similar manner, the pattern for decisions about children's number (family size) shows that wife's decisions become more frequent after age 30. The main difference in decision-pattern between the above two items is of course the relatively lower percentage of one-person decision about the number of children. This shows rather clearly that the question of family size is much discussed and decisions concerning this appears to be results of these discussions. The decision pattern for the purchase of consumer goods is similar except for those aged 15-19 and 20-24. Indeed, in almost all decision items, the above pattern can be observed.

Education level of the wife also correlates strongly with the tendency of decisions made by the wife. The higher the educational level of the wife, the higher is the percentage of wife-decisions among one-person decisions. This is consistently so on the two items on children's education and number of children, but is mixed on the item concerning the purchase of consumer goods. It appears that the more highly educated the wife, the more important is her role in the family.

If educational level and age are considered together, the relationship between decision-making and these two variables becomes even clearer. The effect of education on decision-making pattern is stronger to those who are 35 years old and above than those under 35 years of age. The percentage of one person decisions on item A (Table 2.9) fell from 45 per cent to 34 per cent for those of younger ages, but fell more rapidly from 52 per cent to 18 per cent for those 35 years and above. Similarly, the proportion of wife-decisions rose more rapidly according to educational level for those over 35 than for those under 35. Perhaps, the explanation of the above lies in the possibility that formal education is a very important. Being the main channel

for receiving equalitarian ideas in past decades, it may have much influence on those aged 35 and above; while among the younger women, formal education is only one of the many influences and the effect of formal education is not shown as clearly as for those of older ages.

When education is held constant and the effect of age on decision-making for item (A) is observed, it appears as if similar effects are discernable for both who have less than primary education and those who have primary education. That is, age tends to raise the percentage of one-person decisions. Stating the above more properly, among those who have primary education or less, the older the respondents, the higher is the proportion of one-person decisions in their families. This is not so for those with secondary education or more. For them, the percentage of one-person decisions increased with age until 39 and then declined.

Table 2.9 Percentage of one-person decisions among total decisions and percentage of wife-decisions among one-person decisions, by education and age of wife, Survey 1972.

A) Item on "Children's Education"

Education of wife	% One-person Decisions		% Wife Decisions	
	Age: 15 - 34	35 - 49	15 - 34	35 - 49
No school	45	52	50	54
Private tutor	41	49	67	55
Primary	33	47	52	75
Secondary	37	46	70	83
Post-secondary	34	18	60	*

Age of wife	% One-person Decisions			% Wife Decisions		
	Education of wife:					
	Less than primary	Primary	Secondary or above	Less than primary	Primary	Secondary or above
20 - 24	46	43	31	33	33	59
25 - 29	42	33	38	48	58	70
30 - 34	43	45	43	66	64	74
35 - 39	45	45	54	59	71	86
40 - 44	51	46	37	55	73	78
45 - 49	56	52	33	50	68	73

B) Item on "Number of Children"

Education of wife	% One-person Decisions		% Wife Decisions	
	Age of wife:		Age of wife:	
	15 - 34	35 - 49	15 - 34	35 - 49
No school	31	26	64	71
Private tutor	26	29	71	73
Primary	21	27	60	83
Secondary	20	24	72	84
Post-secondary	*	22	*	*

Age of wife	Education of wife:					
	Less than primary	Primary	Secondary and above	Less than primary	Primary	Secondary and above
20 - 24	26	20	20	71	46	69
25 - 29	33	23	17	64	62	76
30 - 34	33	21	17	65	69	73
35 - 39	28	27	29	80	89	71
40 - 44	27	27	18	62	82	*
45 - 49	24	30	22	74	89	86

* Cell-size too small for calculation

Similar pattern of percentage increase until age 39 and decrease thereafter can be found in wife-decisions. This is true regardless of educational level of the wife. It is consistent with the earlier discussion that in the ages 30-39, the family is matured and the husband, being occupied outside the family, leaves much of the family decision to his wife.

Responses to item (B) on the number of children show a pattern essentially the same as for item (A), except that, the overall percentage of one-person decisions is far lower but the overall percentage of wife-decisions is much higher for item (B) than (A). The relatively high percentage of wife-decisions on the important item of number of children reflects the improving status of women in the present Hong Kong families, and the relief of wives from binding forces of the traditional Chinese families.

II) Attitudes

The relation between socio-economic characteristics (such as age and education) and attitudes is equally strong. In general the more educated the wife, the less would she agree to pro-natalistic attitudes; and the less educated, the more she would be inclined towards high fertility attitudes. The differences shown between the various categories are large. Only 18.6 per cent of those with post-secondary education agreed that "sons provide old age security", while 77 per cent of those without formal education thought so. Again, only 12 per cent of those with post-secondary education thought that it was a great offence against filial piety to have no children, while almost 50 per cent of those without formal education thought so. "Reliance on children" as well as the hope that "children could achieve goals for parents" were more strongly felt among the lesser educated.

Table 2.10 Percentage agree with statements, by education and by age, Survey 1972.

	<u>Statements</u>				
	Sons provide old age security	Great offence against filial piety without children	Great personal loss without children	Children achieve parents' goals	Reliance on children
<u>Education of wife:</u>					
No school	77	51	69	60	57
Private tutor	63	43	61	52	46
Primary	55	31	64	53	38
Secondary	32	29	64	48	21
Post-secondary	19	12	58	45	23
<u>Age of wife:</u>					
15 - 19	41	22	47	59	29
20 - 24	36	31	59	50	28
25 - 29	41	31	61	47	31
30 - 34	49	27	62	52	38
35 - 39	63	35	65	54	40
40 - 44	69	50	70	58	50
45 - 49	74	47	69	60	56

Among the five items listed above, post-secondary educated wives agreed most strongly with the statement that "it is a great loss for a woman to be without children", but least strongly concerning filial piety. It appears that among highly educated women, the order of importance of these various items is firstly personal ("great loss to self without children", "children achieve parents' goals") and secondly, economic ("children provide old-age security") and thirdly and finally traditional values ("against filial piety to have no children"). The order of these items remained essentially the same for those with secondary education. To those with less than primary

education, the item "sons provide old-age security" becomes the most important one, followed by the item on personal considerations. This shows that for all educational groups, the item on filial piety does not assume much importance in considering whether or not to have children, but economic and personal factors are important. To the less educated ones particularly, economic and material considerations are seen to be essential; but to the more educated ones, personal considerations are important.

Analysis of responses to these items by age categories of respondents shows that there is a general correlation between the proportion of those agreeing to pro-natalistic statements and age. The higher the age, the higher is the proportion who agree. Again here, in no age group is the item on filial piety important. It appears that traditional values such as these no longer provide enough motivation for having children, a factor which must have contributed to the changes in family structure in Hong Kong.

If age and education are considered together in reference to responses to pro-natalistic statements, the relationships between age and statement responses and between education and statement responses become stronger and clearer. Women aged 35 and above agreed generally more often to these statements than younger ones for all educational categories. The difference in responses between the two age groups is greatest to the statement "sons provide old-age security", and least to the statement "great loss without children". The maximum difference occurs with the post-secondary educated group in response to the statement about old-age security. Only 6 per cent of those aged under 35 in this educational group agreed to the statement. This is also a large reduction in percentage from 65 per cent agreement in the same age group but with no formal education.

Table 2.11 Percentage agree with statements by education and age, Survey 1972.

Education of wife	Sons provide old-age security		Great offence against filial piety without children		Great loss without children		Children achieve parent's goals	
	15-34	35-49	15-34	35-49	15-34	35-49	15-34	35-49
No school	65	78	50	52	68	69	67	61
Private tutor	57	65	35	44	60	64	51	54
Primary	47	65	28	36	61	68	37	56
Secondary	27	57	27	31	62	67	47	50
Post-secondary	6	50	13	17	61	50	33	50

It appears that education has a much larger effect among the younger ones than among the older ones in reducing the percentage agreement to pro-natalistic statements. The reduction in reference to the statement on old-age security is substantial (from 65 per cent to 6 per cent) among those aged 15-34, but not as much (from 78 per cent to 50 per cent) among those aged 35-49. The same pattern can be observed for the statements on "filial piety" and on "children achieving parents' goals". Apart from the secondary school educated group aged 35-49, responses to the statement on "great loss without children" fall into the same pattern.

CHAPTER III

THE VALUE OF CHILDREN

The above section shows that Hong Kong parents in general see children as beneficial to the family and to themselves, and that one of the good things about children is that parents can rely on them when they grow up.

This section attempts to analyse the desire for or value of children in a more systematic way. In a paper attempting to classify the categories of value of children, L.W. and M.L. Hoffman listed 9 types (in J.J. Fawcett, 1973, 46.) They are:

- 1) Adult status and social identity
- 2) Expansion of the self, tie to a larger entity
- 3) Morality, religion, altruism, good for the group, norms regarding sexuality, impulsivity and virtue
- 4) Primary group ties, affiliation
- 5) Stimulation, novelty, fun
- 6) Creativity, accomplishment, competence
- 7) Power, influence, effectance
- 8) Social comparison, competition
- 9) Economic utility

We have already seen in the above section that a large proportion of the respondents felt that it was a great personal loss without children. This shows to a certain extent that Hong Kong women would treat the bearing of children (or a child) as a type of achievement showing competence. But this is only a conjecture and further research is needed to clarify this point. Our survey does not include questions pertaining to all of the above nine items, but relevant questions were asked about A) the economic utility of children, B) the contribution of children to the functioning of the family (this would cover item 2, 4, and 5 of Hoffman's typology.)

How real is the expectation among Hong Kong women that their children will be beneficial to themselves as old-age security or to their current family as contributors of income?

The survey contains a direct question on the value of children. This question supplements the analysis of attitudes in the preceding section. While the attitude questions include items on the material value of children, the traditional value of filial piety, they do not contain items on the role children play in the family, i.e., whether children provide emotional satisfaction for the mother, whether children strengthen husband-wife bonds, or whether children add fun to the family and make it interesting.

Table 3.1 Percentage distribution of respondents identifying the most important value of children, by age, Survey 1972.

Values	Age						All ages
	15-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	
1. Perpetuate family line	10	11	13	16	17	17	14
2. Old age security	3	5	9	17	17	22	13
3. Emotional satisfaction	26	24	20	18	17	15	20
4. Add fun to family	53	52	48	38	32	31	41
5. Strengthen husband-wife relations	1	-	-	1	1	-	0.5
6. Help in the home	1	1	1	2	4	3	2
7. Fulfilment of duty	6	7	9	8	12	12	9.5
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total respondents	242	342	300	439	389	357	2066

Answers to a direct question on value of children reveal that "emotional satisfaction" and "adding fun to family" were considered by the majority as the most important value of children. When respondents failed to mention them as most important, they often mentioned them as second in importance. Only 13 per cent of all respondents did not consider them either as most important or second in importance, making these two items the most highly treasured value of children. Only 14 per cent of mothers considered children as valuable in the perpetuation of the family line, and only 13 per cent thought that old age security was the most important value of children. Surprisingly, 9.5 per cent

expressed the feeling that having children was valuable because it was the fulfilment of ones duty or responsibility; it is also the satisfaction in conforming to the general expectation that all women should have children. Almost none felt that children's value lay in the strengthening of husband-wife relations and very few thought that the help children gave in the home was important.

Analysis by age shows that the older the respondent, the less likely she would claim that providing emotional satisfaction and adding fun to the family were most important values. In fact, women of aged 40 and above often claimed "old age security" and the "perpetuation of family line" as more important than emotional satisfaction. This could indicate that, for older women, satisfaction derived from child-mother relationship may be less important because the structure of the traditional Chinese family placed less emphasis of the relations between the child and the parents. As the Hong Kong family structure changes from the traditional Chinese one to the nuclear form, the mother-child relationship becomes more important. In other words, the interdependence between the mother and the child is more intense among younger women than among older ones.

Some of the values are of similar nature and this is indicated somewhat by the clustering of answers to another question about the second most important value of children. Many did not give an answer to the second question (56.5 per cent), particularly those who mentioned "fulfilment of duties" (73 per cent) and "adding fun to family" (68 per cent). But when an answer is given, it is clear that those who thought emotional satisfaction the most important value also thought "adding fun to family" important; and those who considered "fulfilment of duty" important also considered "the perpetuation of family live" important. But because of the large number of respondents who did not give an answer to the second question, the groupings of values should be at most considered tentative. It would suffice to say that the perception of the value of children varies a great deal, and a simple question on the perceived value of children is insufficient.

Children's Value in the Family

Do children contribute to the smooth relations in the family? An affirmative answer can be expected in view of the fact that most respondents thought that adding fun to the family was a major value of children. But when more realistic questions were asked of them, the pattern is less clear. Four questions on children's value in the family were asked: 1) whether children improved husband-wife relations, 2) whether husband stayed home more often after having children, 3) whether children brought more joy and laughter to the family, and 4) whether husband paid more attention to wife after having children.

Table 3.2 Children's value in the family - percentage who answered 'Yes', 'No change' or 'No', by education and by age, Survey 1972.

Items	Education						Total
	No	Private	Primary	Secondary	Post- secondary		
A) Whether improved husband-wife relations	Yes	15	15	26	39	44	24
	No change	78	76	65	55	51	68
	No	7	9	9	6	5	8
B) Whether husband stayed home more often	Yes	14	14	27	36	48	24
	No change	81	82	68	59	50	72
	No	5	4	5	5	2	5
C) Whether brought joy to family	Yes	70	76	82	86	83	78
	No change	24	21	14	12	14	18
	No	6	3	4	2	2	4
D) Whether husband paid more attention to wife	Yes	27	28	36	41	93	34
	No change	70	69	60	54	7	62
	No	3	3	4	5	-	4

Table 3.2 (Cont'd)

Items		Age						Total
		15-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	
A) Whether improved husband-wife relations	Yes	40	34	26	20	17	15	24
	No change	51	56	65	72	78	78	68
	No	9	10	9	8	5	7	8
B) Whether husband stayed home more often	Yes	39	34	24	18	16	17	24
	No change	54	60	71	78	80	78	72
	No	7	5	6	3	4	5	5
C) Whether brought job to family	Yes	88	87	77	74	74	75	78
	No change	11	11	18	22	21	20	18
	No	1	2	5	4	5	5	4
D) Whether husband paid more attention to wife	Yes	44	43	28	29	27	34	34
	No change	52	51	66	68	71	64	62
	No	4	6	5	3	2	2	4

Answers to these four questions are in broad agreement with the view on the value of children. That is, there is strong indication that the presence of children in the family indeed adds much joy and fun. In total, over three-quarters of our respondents thought that children brought joy to their families while only a little less than one-fifth thought there was no change and 4 per cent claimed that children took away joy and fun from their families. This is particularly true among the more educated and the younger ones (Table 3.2). Over 85 per cent of high school educated and 87-88 per cent of those aged under 30 agreed that children added fun and joy to the family.

Positive answers to the other questions are much less strong. Only 24 per cent of all women claimed that children improved husband-wife relation and that children probably made the husband stay home more often. The majority (68 and 72 per cent) said that the presence of children made no difference to these aspects of family life. However, there is only a small percentage who claimed that the presence of

children had made family life deteriorate. Similarly, many (34 per cent) thought that their husbands paid more attention to themselves after their children were born, but the majority felt no changes. Again, here, the younger and the most educated ones felt more strongly about the value of children in these aspects.

In general terms then, it appears that there is a concensus that children contribute to the smooth functioning of the family and add joy and happiness to the parents. But this feeling, though general, is not totally shared by all and some even felt the reverse. There is also considerable variation between those better and those less educated and between the old and the young.

Children's Value in Rendering Help to the Family

It was reported earlier that one of the pro-natalistic attitude agreed by many respondents was that children provides for old age security. This of course relates to the future, and in this sense, is a hope which may or may not materialize. The survey, however, includes several questions which pertain to the more immediate expectation from their children: a) At what age are the children expected to work, b) would the working children contribute part of their income to support the family, c) would children help to take care of younger brothers and sisters and d) would children help in housework, and e) at what age would they help?

In primarily rural countries, an important value of children was thought to be the possibility of gaining help from children in the farms early in their lives. This is certainly not the case in urban Hong Kong. Only 5 per cent of all respondents hoped that their children work before the age of 18, and almost none hope that they work before the age of 18 which is the minimum legal age of employment in Hong Kong. The overwhelming majority however expect their children to work after their education is completed. It was already reported in Part I of this report (p.89) that a large proportion of the respondents expected their children to have a university education, both for sons and daughters, and a sizable proportion expected them to proceed to advanced training abroad. Thirty-nine per cent of all interviewed expected their

sons and 36 per cent expected their daughters to be university educated, although most of them realized that this would be a heavy burden. Some (26 per cent) were quite determined to see that their children be given the chance even if their economic situations might not be able to afford this.

Table 3.3 Number of respondents by age at which they expect their children to work, Survey 1972.

	Under 14	14-17	18-21	22-25	26+	After completion of education	Total
No.	5	58	144	64	7	836	1114
%	0.5	5.2	12.9	5.8	0.6	75.0	100

The emphasis placed on education for the children may be explained partly by the traditional importance Chinese culture placed on education which may or may not be related to entry into desirable occupations. To many Chinese, education is itself desirable because an educated person differs from a less educated one in his style of life, in his relations with other, and fits more properly into society. In almost all Chinese-related cultures, children's education often comes first in the priority list of the household. In Hong Kong, in addition to the traditional emphasis on education, the level of education is very much related to entry into employments, as is the case in most industrial-urban societies. A university degree is necessary for relatively higher occupations, and training in the professions particularly is highly desirable. The discrepancies in income are great between occupations of lower educational requirements and of higher educational requirements, and is certainly one of the important reasons why Hong Kong youths are staying more and more in school well passed the minimum legal age of employment. In the decade 1961-1971, there had been a great improvement in the educational attainment of the population of Hong Kong; this is particularly so with females.

Table 3.4 Educational attainment of population age 5 and over, 1961 and 1971 censuses.

	Males		Females	
	1961	1971	1961	1971
No schooling/Kindergarten	12.6%	11.7%	41.8%	30.5%
Private tutor	5.2	4.8	3.0	2.7
Primary	56.6	52.1	42.3	46.3
Secondary	21.9	27.1	11.5	18.5
Post-secondary & higher	3.7	4.3	1.4	2.0
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The expectation of their children in regard to education is not in contradiction with the simultaneous expectation that their children contribute part of their earnings to the family. Seventy-two per cent of those children already working contributed regularly to the family budget. In regard to children who were not already working, 48 per cent of the mothers expected them to contribute and only 7 per cent did not think their children would contribute when they worked. A large proportion (44 per cent), however, claimed that they did not know for certain.

It is apparent from the above that children are expected to contribute to the family, and that until the present, they are in fact doing so. But the Hong Kong situation differs significantly from situation in rural-agricultural economies that this contribution may come very late, often after the children have completed high school or university.

What is the value of children in helping in the household? Some clues to the answers can be obtained in the responses to the two questions on help in the home.

Table 3.4 Percentage of respondents answering whether children help in the family, by age of respondent, Survey 1972.

A) Taking care of young

	Under 25	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	All ages
Very often	1.3	2.7	7.0	10.2	11.1	11.9	8.0
Often	27.1	20.2	22.9	30.6	36.3	36.7	29.6
Ordinary	21.3	14.8	9.3	12.1	9.0	9.4	12.1
Rare	10.3	9.5	9.0	6.9	6.1	6.7	7.8
Very rare	3.6	4.1	8.6	6.9	7.5	5.1	6.2
Never	36.4	48.7	43.2	33.2	30.0	30.2	36.3
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	225	337	301	461	413	371	2108

B) Help in housework

	Under 25	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	All ages
Very often	1.3	1.8	4.4	7.8	10.4	11.3	6.8
Often	26.1	19.0	23.9	30.7	36.1	36.6	29.8
Ordinary	25.7	17.2	13.0	14.6	16.7	16.0	16.9
Rare	15.9	14.4	14.3	13.3	9.9	9.9	12.7
Very rare	2.7	5.4	8.5	8.9	7.5	6.8	6.0
Never	28.3	42.2	35.8	24.7	19.3	19.4	27.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	226	332	293	473	424	382	2151

On the question of helping to take care of the younger siblings, 36.3 per cent thought that their children never or would never take care of the young, but 37.6 per cent thought that they often did. Help in general housework is more frequent and only 27.7 per cent of all interviewed claimed their children never helped or

would never help. Older women reported more frequent help from their children and this may be because their children are more grown up and can help. Among those mothers aged 45-49, almost 50 per cent reported frequent help from their children in both taking care of the young and in housework. This represents substantial help in housework received from the children by the mother.

A further indication of the importance of children's help in the household can be observed in the early ages at which this help began. A very small number (1.7%) claimed that their children helped at the age of 4 or under. Twelve per cent said help began at age 4 to 6, and 36.5 per cent said it began between the ages 7 to 9. Over half of the respondents said that their children gave help before the age of 10, and 82 per cent said the children helped before the age of 13. These figures indicate the value of children in the household even before they have attained economic independence.

CHAPTER IV

THE COST OF CHILDREN

The cost of children can be conveniently classified into two main types - the material cost and emotional cost. The material cost is simply the amount of resources, monetary or otherwise, which are needed to bring up a child; or conversely, it is the amount of material reward which could have been gained if the child had not been born. The emotional cost is the psychological burden which the parents bear in the upbringing of the child.

These two types of cost should not be considered as mutually exclusive. One may lead to the other, as in the case when some parents worry about the disadvantages of frequent movement of place of residence to their child and decide not to move, and therefore are not able to fully capitalize on their chances for career advancement etc., or in another case when the cost of raising the child becomes a constant worry for the not-well-to-do parents.

In Hong Kong, as in many urban-industrial societies, the material cost of raising children has increased. The child, in order to survive and compete successfully in Hong Kong, needs much more than clothing and food. Salary scales are largely dependent on academic qualifications. Moreover, the difference in income between persons of various levels of educational attainment is great, e.g., primary school v.s. high school v.s. university graduates etc. In Hong Kong, where almost 90 per cent of all persons employed full-time are employees working on wages and salaries, academic qualifications become significantly important.

As we have seen earlier, there is a rising educational expectation of the child and the competition to study in good and prestige schools is severe. We have also seen earlier that there has been an improvement of educational attainment in recent years, but the pressure on educational facilities is great. The large number of children born to post-War families began to grow to school ages in the late fifties, and the increase in school places has not been kept in

pace. If the enrolment per 100 school age population is compared, we can observe a marked improvement, but the pressure has been shifted from the primary schools to the secondary schools.

Table 4.1 School enrolment per 100 school age population, 1971 Census.

Year	Primary school (age 6 - 11)*	Secondary school (age 12 - 18)
1961	89.5	26.9
1966	103.9	33.8
1971	120.6	40.8

* The percentage is above 100 in 1966 and 1971 because a number of students over 11 are enrolled in primary schools.

It appears from ratios presented in the above table that all of those in primary school ages were enrolled. It should be noted however, that there were substantial number of primary school children who were over-aged (20 per cent in 1961 and 15 per cent in 1966). Nevertheless, many more primary schools were built since 1966 and many more teachers were trained. Since 1970, primary school places are available to all of suitable ages and the number of vacancies in government schools increased.

Education at the secondary level is far from universal. In 1961, only one out of four among those aged 12-18 was enrolled in a secondary school. In 1971, about one in 2.5 was enrolled. In the 1971 census, at ages 12, 13 and 14, the proportion not-in-school was 6.6 per cent, 13.5 per cent and 25.6 per cent respectively. The jump in percentage not-in-school represents graduation from primary school normally at age 12 and the large numbers who enter the work force after this age (although the minimum age of work legally is 14).

Table 4.2 Percentage of persons not-in-school and percentage working, by age and sex, 1971 Census.

Age	<u>Percentage not-in-school</u>		<u>Percentage working among those not-in-school</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
5	15.6	18.6	-	-
6	8.0	9.6	-	-
7	5.0	6.0	-	-
8	4.1	4.7	-	-
9	3.5	4.4	-	-
10	3.5	4.2	16.1	15.4
11	3.5	5.0	27.8	29.1
12	4.8	8.5	40.0	47.2
13	8.8	18.4	57.9	64.6
14	17.8	33.7	75.0	77.6
15	30.5	44.5	85.2	83.6
16	42.1	53.6	88.3	86.4

Table 4.2 shows that the proportion not-in-school rises rapidly with age, and this is more so for female children than for male children. For all ages, the proportion not-in-school is higher for the girls than boys and the difference becomes larger beginning at age 12. This indicates a certain pattern of preference for sending boys rather than girls to school, particular to secondary schools. A large proportion of those not-in-school are employed and the rate is higher at the younger ages for girls.

The above analysis indicates that while it is known that parents expect a great deal of their children in their educational performance, the facilities are far from sufficient to meet these expectations. The lack of sufficient educational facilities has at least two important effect on the parents: 1) material cost: school places, particularly in secondary schools are scarce, and competition to gain admission into better schools is great. In Hong Kong, over 70 per cent of all secondary school place are provided by totally private schools (1971 figure), and another 20 per cent by schools

subsidized by government grants. Only about 10 per cent of all secondary school places are in government schools. Since competition is severe and most schools are operated by private organizations, fees are charged. School fees range from \$20-30 per month to over \$100 a month; and on top of this are costs of books, school uniforms etc. This results in a heavy burden on parents who have 3 or more children in secondary school. (Median household earning in 1971 was reported to be around \$590 per month). Almost invariably, with the exception of government schools, the better schools have higher charges and the parents are subject to severe financial burden if they wish to send their children to better schools. 2) emotional cost: the severe competition to gain admission into good secondary schools gives rise to the "Secondary School Entrance Examination" conducted by the Hong Kong Government in order to place students into government schools and to grant scholarships and aid to those admitted to both government and private schools. Each year, some 30 per cent of all candidates gain admission or scholarships and the rest have to be satisfied with second rate private school, or in many cases to discontinue their education. The pressure to pass this crucial examination is believed to be detrimental to the whole educational system and the emotional and physical health of graduating primary school children. (Teachers and other educator had taken protest action on several occasions against this examination). This is certainly a source of great anxiety and strain for parents who take pride in their children's academic achievement. Parents are worried when their children fail or do not do well in any one of the school examinations, nor would their mind be eased if the children study too hard at the expense of their health. To those whose children are forced to discontinue secondary school either because of expense or because of academic standards, there is an added anxiety that their children may be exposed to undesirable influences prematurely at place of work or elsewhere, and the fear of their children becoming juvenile delinquents is heightened by the frequent reports in Hong Kong of juvenile crime.

The four main worries about children in Hong Kong are: their future (career), their health, their education, and their becoming delinquent, and these are related to the inadequacy of Hong Kong's educational system.

Table 4.3 Response to main concerns about children by education of respondents, percentage distribution, Survey 1972.

Education	<u>Child's future</u>			<u>Child's health</u>		
	Very concerned	Concerned	Others	Very concerned	Concerned	Others
No education	59.2	37.2	3.5	67.6	31.7	0.7
Private tutor	59.3	34.9	5.8	70.9	27.5	1.6
Primary	68.3	29.3	2.4	72.9	25.7	1.4
Secondary	79.2	18.7	2.1	83.2	14.7	2.1
Post-secondary	81.8	15.1	3.1	84.9	9.1	6.0
All levels	66.1	30.6	3.3	72.5	25.9	1.6

Education	<u>Child's education</u>			<u>Child's becoming delinquent</u>		
	Very concerned	Concerned	Others	Very concerned	Concerned	Others
No education	61.2	33.4	5.4	71.9	26.7	1.4
Private tutor	62.4	33.3	4.3	71.2	28.0	0.8
Primary	68.0	29.4	2.6	76.3	22.3	1.4
Secondary	80.1	17.7	2.2	85.3	13.5	1.2
Post-secondary	81.8	9.1	9.1	87.8	9.1	3.1
All levels	67.2	29.0	3.8	75.8	22.8	1.3

It appears from Table 4.3 that although respondents showed great concern for their children in all the four aspects, they were most concerned with whether their children would become delinquents, followed by the health, the education and the future of their children. It also appears that the more educated the respondents, the more likely would they expressed "very concerned" in all four items. This is, of course, directly related to the higher expectation of their children in the more highly educated families.

In response to a question in our survey about the main disadvantage of having children, 33 per cent said that there were no particular disadvantage and 49 per cent mentioned emotional burden while 9.5 per cent mentioned material and financial difficulties. It appears therefore that emotional burdens are appreciated much more than financial burdens. Very few in higher educational groups claimed that financial burdens were significant, but these groups showed high responses about "inconveniences" children brought to the normal activities of the couple.

Table 4.4 Percentage distribution of responses to main disadvantages of having children, by education of respondents, Survey 1972.

Education	No disadvantage	Emotional burden	Financial burden	Great inconveniences	Others	N
No education	33.4	48.5	12.4	4.8	0.8	661
Private tutor	33.5	50.4	10.2	4.3	1.6	255
Primary	34.8	48.1	8.7	7.5	1.0	831
Secondary	32.4	49.1	6.5	11.7	0.3	383
Post-secondary	27.9	39.5	4.7	25.9	2.3	43

Similarly, a larger proportion of those with less than secondary school education saw no disadvantages in having children than those with secondary education or more. This is most probably because the demands of children, in terms of child-care etc. are more readily accepted by the lower educated families as a responsibility and a duty than by the more highly educated ones who see the presence of too many children as obstacles to their pattern of life.

Summarizing the discussion on the value and cost of children in Hong Kong, it appears to show the following important points. 1) Parents hope and expect children to contribute materially and financially to help the running of the family. This is so before the parents reach retirement age and is particularly important when parents are in old ages. There is evidence that the present generation of children are supporting their parents financially and also rendering

help in the family housework; as such they are probably serving as a reference for those mothers who are deciding to have addition children.

2) While the financial and material value of children is present, many mothers, particularly the younger and the more educated, see the value of children mainly as providing joy and happiness to the family, making the parents less lonely, and satisfying the mother that she like others has a child of her own. Satisfaction derived from mother-child relation, to these families, is more important than material considerations.

3) But, inspite of the above mentioned value of children, there is considerable cost in the raising of children. The material and emotional costs in sending children through primary and secondary schools are great. Parents show much concern over the future, the education and the health of their children, and are worried about their children learning to become delinquents. The emotional burden, particularly, is of major concern to the mothers.

4) It is difficult to find a balance between the cost and value of children and to decide that one or the other is more important in present day Hong Kong. But the analysis shows that there is a trend towards the lessening of the material value of the children. Many mother, although hoping that their children will provide for their old age and knowing that many children are doing so at present, are nevertheless doubtful whether their own will do the same many years from now. The help in housework etc. is a value when there are many children at home, and would decline as a value when there are only one or two children in the family. On the other hand, social and economic pressure from the very competitive society further lengthens the expected education period of each child. The cost of successfully "launching" a child into the world is great and will become even greater in the future.

In summary, therefore, there is enough pressure for the Hong Kong mother to limit their family size, although the desire for one or two children at least (and preferably one son) is well established in everyone's mind.

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