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Politics, Tradition and Structural Change: Fijian Fertility in the Twentieth Century

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Except where otherwise acknowledged in the text, this thesis represents the author’s original research.

Margaret Chung
Abstract

The model of demographic transition maintains the currency of ideas of social evolution in demographic theory, with tradition and modernity considered to be inversely related. Together with local values regarding tradition, this construction of explanation portrays Fijian women as traditional people clinging for socio-economic and political reasons to a culturally-patterned pronatalism. Yet, in Fiji, there is little knowledge of how social changes encountered by people of any ethnic community are related to fertility behaviour. This thesis engages a range of scales and a time depth of three generations to examine links between social, economic and political changes in Fiji over the twentieth century and fertility changes in the indigenous Fijian population. It traces the development of wider opportunities for women and their access to resources over the twentieth century, examines the nature of gender relations and kinship, and considers the impact of these changes upon the lives of women and their fertility behaviour.

A central theme concerns the role of the state in demographic change. The argument is that the demographic behaviour of people is powerfully influenced by institutional incentives or constraints which encourage or inhibit certain actions, often without intention. Just as there may be explicit policies to influence demographic behaviour, so there are 'hidden' policies set in motion by existing state activities and, more broadly, the general style of local development. Structures of opportunity often originate in state policies and operate indirectly on fertility behaviour through their impact on individual life-courses. As the opportunity structure becomes more diverse, so too does the fertility behaviour of a community. The variance in life experiences that increases through this century demonstrates the selective effects of social institutions upon individual lives.

Here, history is recounted on two levels: that of the Fiji state, with particular reference to the pattern of governance and the formation of neotraditional society; and that of the lives of ordinary people. Behind these histories lies a consideration of the mental constructs of social science which pattern our interpretation of events. Internationally, understanding of the politico-economic nature of community reproduction and the politicized nature of demographic processes has been promoted by more detailed histories of local communities. Integral to such research has been the identification of new information sources and the formulation of methods to exploit these. To reconstruct the history of this community and of individuals in it, I drew upon and amalgamated two rich but unreliable sources of information: the memories of community members and a genealogical register of communal land-owners, the Vola ni Kawa Bula.
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### Glossary of Fijian Words and Terms

**baka**  
Banyan tree

**boka**  
Customary gift

**bui ni gone**  
Old woman, midwife

**Buli**  
Government official

**bulubulu**  
Ceremonial apology; lit. to bury an injury

**bure ni sa**  
House for village men

**cauravou**  
Unmarried man

**coko**  
Yaws

**cuqa**  
Fever

**dabe**  
A child prone to illness and early death

**gade**  
Trip, holiday

**gone yalewa**  
Young unmarried woman

**kai loma**  
Part-Fijian

**kawa**  
Descendants, or patriline

**lali**  
Wooden drum

**masi**  
Bark cloth

**mataqali**  
An agnatically related unit, usually a lineage of a *yavusa*. This is the main recognised land-owning unit.

**matanivanua**  
Spokesman for a chief

**momo**  
Maternal uncle

**oga**  
Preparation for custom-prescribed ceremonial

**Roko**  
A Fijian officer in charge of a district

**sala**  
Lit. a road; connections between kin

**save**  
A weakling or slow developing child

**tabu**  
Embargo

**tabua**  
Whale’s tooth, of great significance in customary exchange

**talatala**  
Ordained minister of the church

**takia**  
Outrigger canoe

**tamata vuku**  
A learned person, usually in the sense of traditional knowledge

**tikina**  
Provincial subdivision

**tokatoka**  
Sub-lineage of a *mataqali*, or an extended family

**turaga-ni-koro**  
Administrative head of the village

**turaga-ni-mataqali**  
Chief of a *mataqali*

**turaga-ni-yavusa**  
Chief of a *yavusa*

**vakacadravi**  
Ceremonial giving of gifts from a woman’s in-laws to her natal family

**vakatawa**  
Lay-preacher/missionary

**vakavanua**  
In the custom of the land

**vasu**  
One’s relationship to one’s mother’s family

**veidakuni**  
Relationship between brothers and sisters-in-law

**veidavolani**  
equivalent to *veitavaleni*

**veidroaki**  
Elopement

**veiganeni**  
Classificatory brother-sister relationship

**veitacini**  
Statutory siblings

**veitavaleni**  
Cross cousins, the child of one’s mother’s brother or father’s sister

**veiwelani**  
Related by kin, more loosely than *veitacini* or *veitavaleni*

**Vola ni Kawa Bula vu**  
The register of land owners of the Native Lands Commission

**wai ni tagane**  
Semen

**yalewa vuku**  
Learned woman, mid-wife

**yau (ni vanua)**  
Goods, possessions

**yaqona**  
Kava (*piper methysticum*)

**yavusa**  
Agnatically related clan, comprised of several *mataqali*
Chapter One

Cultural History and Fertility Change

1.1 Introduction

While the current Fiji population growth rate of 2 per cent is not exceptional on a regional or international scale, it presents a strong challenge to development for an island state with limited options of economic expansion. Present and future population growth have dramatic potential to affect the scale of problems confronting Fiji’s policy makers in the near future; therefore it is important that population growth rates continue to decline (Bienefeld, 1984:vii). The growth of Fiji’s population is powered by natural increase despite a steady rate of emigration. It represents the least likely scenario in demographic projections made twenty years ago, when it was predicted that fertility rates would continue to fall and then stabilise at a low level (Fiji Medical Department, 1968:25; Fiji Government, 1971:257). The drop in fertility levels in Fiji during the 1960s and early 1970s was widely attributed to a government-supported family planning campaign (Fairbairn, 1970:147; Hull and Hull, 1973:215; Fiji Government, 1981:1:3). In conjunction with a sizeable level of emigration starting in the early 1970s the population growth rate declined from an average of 3.3 per cent during the decade 1956-66 to 2.1 per cent 1966-76 (Bienefeld, 1984:1). However, by the mid-1970s this decline had slowed markedly, to stagnate in the early 1980s before continuing a downward trend (Figure 1.1). Over the past fifteen years and three Development Plan periods, population growth rates have consistently overshot the government’s planned mark, despite upwards-shifting official targets.

The Fiji family planning programme is the most recent in a century-long series of attempts by the state to influence demographic processes. In multi-ethnic Fiji, the interpretation of population statistics has been considerably politicised and rhetoric has supported the subjective base of population policies (Hull and Hull, 1973). While in the 1970s the government generally endorsed the notion that fertility reduction was necessary, other political considerations have arisen since. The emphasis of the Eighth (1981-85) and Ninth (1986-90) National Development Plans demonstrated that the Fiji Government

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1 To the north-west of Fiji, the populations of the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu grew at 3.3 per cent and 4.1 per cent respectively over the decade 1966-76 (Levin and Retherford, 1986:4), growth rates which equal or surpass those internationally notorious examples, Kenya and Bangladesh. Having neighbours with more immediate problems is, however, cold comfort; if current growth rates persist, the Fiji population will double in approximately 34 years.

2 In the Seventh Development Plan the target was a crude birth rate of 22/1000 by 1980 (Fiji Government, 1980:1:266); in the Eighth Development Plan the target was 25/1000 by 1985 (Fiji Government, 1980:1:270); in the Ninth Development Plan it was to be 25/1000 by 1990, with an overall growth rate below 1.9 per cent (Fiji Government, 1985:145). At the 1986 census, the crude birth rate was estimated to be 27/1000, with a higher rate for ethnic Fijians, at 30/1000 (Gubhaju, 1989:13).
considered population redistribution to be of more immediate concern than population growth. Some Fijian leaders have long argued that higher fertility was a necessary condition for indigenous ethnic Fijians to become numerically dominant again in their land. Currently, nationalistic feelings stirred by the 1987 coups have further tempered the political will to pursue fertility reduction for the indigenous Fijian population.

**Figure 1.1 Total fertility rates for Fiji, 1966-1986**

![Graph showing total fertility rates for Fiji, 1966-1986](image)

Source: Gubhaju, 1989: figures 5.4, 5.5, 5.6.

Commenting on Fiji's social history in general, Kelly (1989:373) has noted the way in which historians have selectively defined the field of study, focusing on relations between indigenous Fijians and colonizing Europeans, and, in the process, often treating the Indian population as an adjunct to be dealt with in a sentence or two (e.g., Scarr, 1980). But if there is something odd about Fiji's social history in this regard, the sub-field which deals with demographic history, as it is presently written, is quite peculiar - for with few exceptions this is determinedly that of Fijian-Indian comparisons. That Fiji's

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3 Throughout this thesis, the term 'Fijian' applies to ethnic Fijians, and the term 'Indian' applies to people of Indian ethnicity in the Fiji population. Other writers often refer to these people as 'Indo-Fijians' which correctly suggests their citizenship and identity as people of Fiji. In this study, however, I have chosen to use the term 'Indian', for that is the term commonly used in the general community and in the literature on fertility change. The term 'Fiji' refers to the national population, of people of all ethnicities.

4 These exceptions include a number of village and local area studies, such as those by Sahlins (1962), Frazer (1973), Tubuna (1985), Ponter (1986), Ward (1986), Chung (1987), and Ravuvu (1988), and those under the auspices of UNESCO/UNFPA by Brookfield et al. (1977) of the eastern islands, where there are virtually no Indians. These studies, therefore, focus on Fijian populations. The only demographic study of a solely Indian population was Chandra's (1979) work on the contraceptive preferences of Indian men.
demographic history essentially is one that demands this ethnic comparison is drummed through census design and official systems of data collection, and reinforced by research that is strongly influenced by categories of available 'hard' data. Cross-cultural comparison is a specific methodology of sociologists (Lesthaege and Surkyn, 1988:1) which explains why some of the interpretation has been set in these terms. Another reason is the presumption of universal convergence implicit in the conventional model of the demographic transition (Greenhalgh, 1989:441). Beyond this, however, this construction has strong roots in colonial politics.

That is not to say that culture is an insignificant determinant of fertility behaviour, for to do so would deny a large body of well-documented evidence to the contrary. Nor do I contend that there are no significant differences between ethnic groups in Fiji. The argument, rather, is that in the explanation of fertility change in Fiji, constant ethnic comparison works to over-simplify the concept of culture. Commonly, the discussion is either reduced to simplistic stereotypes of ethnic difference which verge upon ecological fallacy, or culture is considered to embrace such an idiosyncratic approach to life that closer analysis of people’s lives is either prohibitively difficult or just unnecessary. Such descriptions of ethnic variance pretend to carry within them their own explanations, presenting the tautology that as people are different this difference is the significant issue (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 1976; Bavadra and Kierski, 1980; Laquian and Naroba, 1990). Yet Fijians and Indians in Fiji have had parallel rather than directly comparable histories, and these experiences have been structured by much more than their indigenous cultures. Ethnic differences have dominated demographic studies to the neglect of intra-ethnic studies of social change in Fiji, yet as Hackenberg (1967:478) warned:

Through ignorance of the finite limits and of the variability in the composition of the membership of a sociocultural unit, we may represent it with concepts that sharply diverge from behavioural reality.

Some literature on fertility change in Fiji presents contradictory or anachronistic accounts of social change and fertility-related behaviour, which is not surprising given the paucity


6 For example, Laquian and Naroba (1990:113) state that the use of contraceptives is highly correlated with such factors as higher income, higher education, greater exposure of the media, gainful employment of women, urban residence, and greater access to modern medical services. At a general level, this is not disputed. But they go on to claim: 'In Fiji, Indians generally reveal these socio-economic characteristics. The reverse situation exists for Fijians.' They then propose that this socio-economic difference between Fijians and Indians has major implications for Fiji's family planning programme. Yet if is a generalisation of dubious quality, and one which ignores substantial and important variations within these ethnic communities. Bavadra and Kierski (1980:18) also set up a picture of Fijians as predominantly rural dwellers subsisting on their communal lands, and a Indian community which was not only urban but predominantly
of empirical research. But if we withdraw from the assumption implicit in the theoretical model of demographic transition, that of eventual demographic convergence, then the focus on ethnic differences is seen to be of limited value for fertility policy design. Policies which are predicated upon uncertain explanations are not likely to be effective.

Briefly, the conventional understanding of demographic transition is that as a society undergoes modernization, traditionally high but fluctuating death rates decline to level off at low and stable rates. A parallel drop in birth rates is delayed by culturally patterned determinants of fertility behaviour which sustain traditional pronatalism. These fertility rates change gradually with the evolution of new tastes and attitudes and the transformation of local economies. Eventually, cultural paths will converge at a state of low, stable fertility.

Within this paradigm of demographic transition, the foci of debate have been the point at which fertility rates change from high to low levels, and the extent to which high fertility in changing social conditions could be viewed as irrational and uninformed behaviour. A central controversy has been over the relative weights of cultural values or ideologies as against demographic and economic vectors in determining fertility decline. As Schneider and Schneider (1984:247) explain, the two positions imply quite different assumptions about human behaviour:

Those who attribute fertility decline to the diffusion of modern western attitudes and values portray the world’s rural populations as people who are unreflective and fatalistic until guided to reasonable reproductive practices by enlightened urban-orientated minorities... Conversely, arguments for economic development (read urbanisation and industrialisation) as a prerequisite for demographic transition imagine people consistently strategising to adapt their fertility to economic and demographic circumstances.

The view dominant in the 1960s and 1970s, when many national family planning programmes were launched, was that high fertility was maintained by traditional pronatalist attitudes, inadequate contraceptive knowledge, and social practices which limited women’s determination of their own fertility. This paradigm directed the architecture of the Fiji family planning programme, it remains embedded in its structure, and there it still largely directs the activities and mentality of programme administrators and practitioners. The debate over development effects versus family planning has long been a focus of international study but it has become evident that it poses a conundrum. A central problem in the debate has been the suggestion of an either/or situation. But the pattern of socio-economic change is not something that just presents itself: it has as much to do with local politics as with declared policies for population change (Organski et al., 1984; Rouyer, 1989; Casterline, 1989).

Classical demographic transition theory suggested that demographic change is cumulative, unambiguous and unidirectional (Greenhalgh, 1990:3; Freedman, 1982:258).
Now, the nature of explanation of fertility change is under review, for ‘the edifice of demographic theory has been cracking for well over a decade’ (Greenhalgh, 1990:4). It has been recognised for some time that patterns of change were various. For example, Pirie (1976:5) noted that Pacific Island populations did not conform well to the conventional model of demographic transition. At more fundamental issue than patterns of change are the explanations they are considered to support. The deepest stress fractures in demographic theory have been provoked by historical studies of local-level change which reveal different paths to fertility decline running simultaneously within single communities (eg. Schneider and Schneider, 1984; Kertzer and Hogan, 1989), and studies of powerful government agency in demographic change (eg. Jewsiewicki, 1987, Hunt, 1988; O'Brien, 1987; Organski et al. 1984). Detailed explorations of the recent demographic history of discrete communities have weakened at least three central supports of demographic transition theory. First, there is debate over the extent to which uncontrolled fertility was a universal characteristic of ‘traditional’ societies. It now appears that in some Third World societies high fertility was promoted by economic and political changes connected with the global expansion of Western capitalism in the nineteenth century. To the extent that this is true for any society, the disjunction of historical experience may be demonstrated by the high fertility of older generations, rather than the contemporary decline in the fertility of younger women. Secondly, far from being natural consequences of social and economic change, demographic changes often were self-consciously directed by colonial governments. In Fiji, such intervention in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was an important ingredient in the reconstitution of Fijian ‘tradition’ (Thomas, 1990, Kelly, 1989; Kaplan, 1989). Given such a setting, the terms ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ are certainly ambiguous. A third challenge to convention has been towards demographic change as an evolutionary process. If ‘culture’

7 There has been some debate over whether the populations of island nations possess unique demographic characteristics and therefore are unsuitable for testing general hypotheses concerning fertility transition (Mauldin and Berelson, 1978; Cleland and Singh, 1980). These characteristics include the small size of population and thereby the greater significance of processes of population mobility - particularly where this modifies age-sex ratios and the likelihood of marriage and child-bearing within the resident population, and their greater vulnerability to significant damage from natural disasters. Cleland and Singh (1980) also propose that small size may influence perceptions of population pressure, create greater national cohesion and make centrally-devised policies more appropriate over all regions - all of which may influence fertility behaviour. Handwerker (1989:223) dismisses such claims for the special status of island populations, as lacking empirical support. He describes the relationships Cleland and Singh found between indicators of island status and fertility to be those expected by random sampling fluctuation and, in the absence of other valid evidence to the contrary, concluded there is no special relationship between island status and the nature of fertility transition. The central problems in this debate are those of scale and of relating micro and macro processes. These are problems of demographic analysis in continents as they are on islands. Communities the world over may experience the effects of smallness and isolation, and boundaries of water may be less substantial than they seem.

8 For example, there is evidence that birth limitation was traditionally practiced throughout Melanesia by employing chemical means and the practices of withdrawal, abortion, and infanticide (Pirie, 1976:8).

is understood as a pattern of values, beliefs and traditions, the suggestion is that these attitudes and values are prime determinants of behaviour and, therefore, to the extent that cultural characteristics are enduring, behaviour will change only slowly. Recent evidence suggests otherwise (eg. Stern, 1987; Kertzer and Hogan, 1989, McLaughlin et al. 1988).

Indeed, Stern (1987:4) proposes:

The evolutionary model of fertility change suggested by the model of demographic transition is in part an optical illusion, the result of bad data. The process through which fertility declined was discontinuous - in the jargon of social science, a step function...The illusion of gradual change is the result of using aggregate data that hide the complexity of individuals' behaviour.

The view implicit within the convention of the demographic transition, of a universal demographic history and unilinear progression from traditional to 'modern' conditions, is thereby challenged by an alternative view, that of distinct demographic regimes which are on their own historically patterned trajectories to particular levels of fertility and mortality. A demographic regime is time and place specific, and constructed from the ways the processes of birth, death and mobility are organised by groups of people for their own purposes (Kreager, 1986:133). By focusing on the particular ways demographic constraints and opportunities are important in different societies we can acquire a closer view of the politics within demographic change. This involves both government policies and the powerful and pervasive role of the state, and community values which modify behaviour according to both historical and culturally defined pathways.

This thesis examines the links between the social, economic and political changes in Fiji over the twentieth century, and fertility trends in the indigenous Fijian population. Over a range of scales - national, provincial, community and individual - and a time depth of three generations, it investigates how social, economic and political structures have operated within a small community to impinge on its reproduction. In doing so the intention is not to continue the neglect of Indians in the construction of Fiji history. Rather, the subfield of demographic history has been dominated by Fijian-Indian comparison and, clearly, the opposite is required. Instead of insisting upon the compelling significance of synchronic ethnic comparison in demographic change, this thesis studies the circumstances of the demographic regime of one ethnic group. In that the Fijian and Indian communities were subject to different sets of institutional arrangements in some respects yet experienced similar sequences of social change in others, their demographic histories are not unrelated, but neither are they directly comparable. The decision to study Fijian change was governed by two circumstances: my ability to communicate in Fijian but not in Hindi, and the existence of a unique genealogical register of ethnic Fijians.

A central argument in this thesis is that the demographic behaviour of people is powerfully influenced by institutional incentives or constraints which encourage or inhibit
certain actions, often without intention. Just as there may be explicit policies to influence
demographic behaviour, so there are 'hidden' policies set in motion by existing
government activities and, more broadly, the general style of local development. An array
of subtle forces influences behaviour in directions which may be only partially
predictable, and sometimes contrary to what seems sensible to outsiders. Nor, necessarily,
have 'insiders' articulated optimal routes through the exigencies of social change. The
design of social policy is more likely to be effective and practical where it is based on an
understanding of a specific system of institutions, its inherent contradictions, and
processes of institutional change. It is hoped that this thesis will contribute to the
necessary foundation for more pragmatic fertility-related policy in Fiji.

1.2 Politics, tradition and structural change
Population policies are predicated on the assumption that the state has power to modify
demographic behaviour, but how much power over population processes does the state
really have? In part, the assumption of agency derives from the associated paradigms of
modernization theory and the demographic transition, which suggest that 'traditional'
people, unsure of their real needs, can be directed towards more appropriate behaviour and
thereby their 'development', or that individual conduct can be modified for the good of
the group. The convention of the demographic transition derives from European
experience and assumes an historically distant starting point of 'natural' fertility and
mortality. This is proposed as the realm of tradition. From that point, mortality and
fertility rates evolve as a society moves towards modernity, and, implicitly, demographic
change involves social change. Yet, in the quite recent past of much of the Third World,
colonial governments have effected substantial reordering of local communities and
economies. Even in societies which remain outwardly quite 'traditional', the colonial state
has modified indigenous structures of power through the new institutions of governance
and welfare and the transformation of economic structures. Furthermore, power structures
not only have the potential to configure 'tradition' but they may confer value upon the
ideal of tradition. So it was in Fiji, where colonialism generated a neotraditional Fijian
society, with advantage to both the European and Fijian elites. The significance of this in
fertility change is that the convergence of an explanatory paradigm and political
advantage can direct the design of policy and provide a happy explanation for policy
short-comings. In this way, the construction of 'tradition' can be considered to have both
substantive and ideological qualities.

An understanding of the politico-economic nature of community reproduction and
the politicized nature of demographic processes has been promoted by more detailed
histories of local populations. An integral part of such research has been the identification
of new archives of population-related information and the formulation of methods to
exploit these. Beyond suggesting further avenues of study, they have promoted awareness
of official sources as historical records - forms of information which are so intimately part of systems of governance that their objectivity demands scrutiny.

Through the concept of demographic regimes, we can better understand that tradition - as synonymous with backwardness and resistance to change - and cultural resilience are two separate metaphors for locally specific demographic behaviour. There is now no direct way of knowing what traditional Fijian fertility was like, for demographic patterns were traumatically altered by the crisis-level mortality of the nineteenth century, which both preceded any known population records and is beyond the reliable recall of people still alive. Yet the features of cultural systems thought to be most related to fertility decisions - land-ownership, religion, marriage and family patterns, economic activities and occupations, education - are exactly those which local, regional and worldwide events during this century have disrupted, transformed and replaced. So, cultural resilience does not define Fijian society as traditional, at least not in a demographic sense.

Arguments relating to culture generally emphasise conservatism, an unchanging past and a homogeneous present, while arguments relating to social institutions place emphasis on dynamism and acknowledge past change in explaining a socially differentiated present. However, any sharp conceptual divide between 'culture' or structural and institutional explanations as to the determinants of fertility, proposes a caricature of social reality. Sahlins (1985:viii) describes an opposition of culture and history as a pernicious distinction:

I have seen among theoreticians of "the world-system", for example, the proposition that since the hinterland societies anthropologists habitually study are open to radical change, externally imposed by Western capitalist expansion, the assumption that these societies work on some autonomous cultural-logic cannot be entertained. There is a confusion between an open system and a lack of system. And it leaves us unable to account for the diversity of local responses to the world system - persisting, moreover, in its wake.

As fertility behaviour is related to culture, it can be understood by a description of the cultural patterns and social processes - or institutions - of particular times and places. A focus on institutions provides a subdivision of the cultural and social organisation of a society into components meaningful to its participants and, therefore, also to its observers. This assists the analysis of social change for, as institutions within a society are functionally related, changing the rules in one area often sets in train adaptation within other institutions.

The term 'institution' is generally used to suggest that people's actions are shaped by and reflect culturally inherited and evolving social rules or relationships (Neale, 1987:1202). Giddens (1979:96) describes institutions as 'standardised modes of behaviour which play a basic part in the time-space constitution of social systems'. While it is a concept difficult to define precisely, an important characteristic is that institutions
both constrain and enable human action (Giddens, 1983:78). Neale (1987:1178) states that ‘institutions fix the confines of and impose form upon the activities of human beings’. From this perspective, society is not the mass of separable events and sequences that positivists may suggest, but rather is comprised of a tangled, yet unbroken, web of institutions. Theorists argue over the extent to which the structure of society determines individual action and the power or agency of individuals to create society, but it is generally accepted that structure can never be separated from agency: ‘the unstructured properties of social systems are simultaneously the medium and the outcome of social acts’ (Giddens, 1981:19). Neale (1987:1181) proposes that:

*most of what people do is governed by the institutions of their society; with the term governed used in a non-deterministic sense, allowing that individuals accommodate and manipulate the rules and values of institutions to accomplish their aims.*

The focus of an institutionalist perspective is, therefore, on the rules and opportunities for action and the limits to action. With regard to fertility decisions, the idea of ‘calculus of conscious choice’ therefore can be reinterpreted, to better reflect the actual order and contents of people’s choices (Kreager, 1986:132).

Although the modern state is widely acknowledged as a central influence in the direction and progress of social change, and although declared population policies of governments commonly rest upon assumptions of their influence over some demographic processes, state power has been included in explanations of fertility change mostly by implication. Yet today, state activities and responsibilities pervade almost every aspect of life (Casterline, 1989:306). This capacity is most advanced in western industrialised nations, but even within the South Pacific, state bureaucracies are powerful mediators of public life.10

With the extension of state power, it is generally hypothesised, the centrality of kinship groups as political entities recedes, their welfare role is adopted by the state, and as the rewards of high fertility diminish, so do levels of fertility (McNicoll, 1988:11; Casterline, 1989:305). As well, by weakening traditional associations and communal powers and by centralising authority, the state indirectly encourages the emergence of the individual and the decline of the power of the kin-group - thereby resulting in more individualistic life plans (Mayer and Muller, 1986:223).

Such a scenario of change largely derives from the still influential model elaborated by Parsons in the 1950s. While state development and processes of family change are probably linked, other writers have challenged this conventional interpretation of the process of kinship change, arguing that the style of development, rather than

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10 A powerful state bureaucracy is one characteristic of MIRAB economies of South Pacific states (Watters, 1987). MIRAB is Watters’ neologism for the characteristics of South Pacific societies: migration (M), remittances (R), overseas aid (A), and bureaucracy (B).
'development' per se, is highly pertinent. Cancian et al. (1978:320) argue that this stereotype of family change under capitalism is both eurocentric and class-derived. Rather, in subtle and variable manners predicated by local cultures, kinship relations adapt to a changing social environment, of which the economy is a most influential part. However, because economic conditions are themselves largely the product of political actions or inactions - at either national or international levels - ‘politics not economics becomes the engine of demographic change’ (Rouyer, 1989:202).

More generally, the institution of the state exerts power on demographic processes by operating as a gatekeeper and sorter, thereby differently modifying the life courses of individuals and groups within the population. Mayer and Muller (1986:242) explain:

As persons pass through their lives, the state defines most of the ports of entry and exit: into and out of employment, into and out of marital states, into and out of sickness and disability, and into and out of education and training. In doing so, the state turns these transitions into public life events. In this sense, the state, as a gatekeeper and sorter, integrates and interlocks organizationally and functionally differentiated institutional domains of society as people flow through them.

The life course is a key institution of socialisation, as it regulates the movements of individuals through their lives in terms of career pathways and age strata, and it regulates their actions by structuring their perspectives for movement through life. The state integrates a society by offering organised tracks of education and occupational training, stable employment, and bureaucratic careers. It acts through laws, programmes and services, and brings growing numbers of people into its own sphere through public employment. In doing so, it differentiates the population by accentuating transition events and life segments, and thereby creating life stages of its own definition with their own internal stages, entries and exits.

The fertility transition is also closely related to the extension of social services, especially schools, public health activities to reduce mortality, and old-age security programmes. State policies, therefore, very likely contribute to the magnitude of socio-economic differences in fertility, through their impact on environments for fertility decisions, and by mediating or modelling the distribution of opportunities and incentives (Mayer and Muller, 1986:219).

1.3 Research on fertility change in Fiji
Other than the current lapse in political will, an impediment to the design of effective fertility-related policies in Fiji is the very narrow research base from which to work (Table 1.1). Although government reports commonly credit the initial reduction in fertility to the family planning programme, no routine evaluation has taken place and the few related studies have been mostly internal to the Ministry of Health (Cleland, 1975; Ram, 1977;
Table 1.1 Recent Studies Related to Fertility in Fiji

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Region/district</th>
<th>Data sources</th>
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<td><strong>Studies directly related to fertility</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Naroba 1990</td>
<td>Fertility trends</td>
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<td>Census, MOH</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other studies</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Various authors and dates</td>
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<td>National</td>
<td>Census</td>
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<td>Atkins <em>et al</em> 1983</td>
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<td>McLennan <em>et al</em> 1984</td>
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<td>Connell 1987</td>
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<td>Various ministries</td>
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Mendoza, 1988; Fiji Ministry of Health, 1988). The only nation-wide study to examine fertility trends was the Fiji Fertility Survey in 1974. Despite its acknowledged shortcomings, somewhat surprisingly the results of this are little known among local planners and policy makers (Mendoza, 1988:16). Programme planners rely almost exclusively on statistics produced at different levels within the Ministry of Health, yet these data are known to be inaccurate (Fiji Ministry of Health, 1988:7; Mendoza, 1988:15). These figures also provide the substance of technical publications about the Fiji family planning programme (Fairbairn, 1970; Bavadra and Kierski, 1980; Mataitoga, 1983; Laquian and Naroba, 1990).

Overall, most of the fertility research in Fiji has continued along the lines of enquiry established by the categories in which the census, registration data and medical records are set: comparisons between the principal ethnic groups (Fijian, Indian, ‘Other’), between urban and rural populations, and among the four administrative divisions or fifteen provinces. The Fiji Fertility Survey in 1974 was conducted as a pretest for the core questionnaire of the World Fertility Survey. It generated a large body of data on fertility behaviour, attitudes and practice, but unfortunately this was done in a manner which divorced the information from its social, economic and geographic contexts. That survey, and much of the limited discussion since, has suggested the issues are predominantly technical in nature and the socio-political dimensions of fertility change have not yet been much explored. Yet the Fiji Fertility Survey (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 1976:97) made no claim to being the definitive study:

> It will be obvious from...the whole tenor of discussion that there is ample scope for further investigation of the data. Examination of the fundamental topic of fertility change has barely started.

In the sixteen years since little has been done, in part because there remains a general satisfaction with the conventional model of demographic transition and of ethnic comparison as a basis for analysis. In this regard, all might appear to be ‘done’. This quietude discourages research efforts for explanations beyond these terms of reference.

Within this literature there is some confusion about the nature of social change as it relates to fertility change in Fiji. A frequent suggestion is that high rates of out-migration from the smaller eastern islands promotes the fertility of those remaining, but there has been little systematic study of the relationship between mobility, fertility and other dimensions of people’s lives (Sahlins, 1962:19; Cook, 1975:19). While there is substantial documentation of the local dynamics of mobility, that of the processes of fertility change is less thorough, and explanation must often rest upon bits and pieces of

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11 For example, the categories into which the reported data were aggregated demonstrate it was designed around administrative concerns; beyond the four government divisions into which Fiji is divided, there is no geographical dimension to the data.
models from elsewhere, fragments of politicized arguments and cultural stereotypes. A view commonly expressed by Ministry of Health officials and others, but rarely examined critically, is that people have responded at a political level; ethnic Fijians maintain higher fertility because of their fear of numeric and thereby political domination by Indo-Fijians (Laquian and Naroba, 1990:118; cf. Bienefeld, 1984:5). A related but also unsubstantiated argument is that Fijians have higher fertility because of their cultural pronatalist values and more traditional lifestyle (Ravuvu, 1978). Meanwhile, this focus on differential social change sits somewhat at odds with the widely held belief in the agency of the Fiji family planning programme on fertility decline.

To date, the only hint of other circumstances which might underlie ethnic differences is provided by Cleland's (1975) study of infant care and family planning in Suva, a report which is both technically thorough in its execution and intriguing in its suggestions. The study was framed in the usual terms, comparing the progress of Indian women and Fijian women along a common demographic path towards low fertility. However, in some contrast to other reports, Cleland drew practical conclusions from this comparison, conclusions pertinent to targeting family planning and infant health services to specific categories of women. But while Cleland's study emphasised cultural differences, his findings were quite ambiguous. For example, he found an enormous ethnic difference in the number of high-parity women sterilised: 27 per cent of Indian women who had borne four children, compared to 3 per cent of Fijian women of equal parity (Cleland, 1975:78). The suggestion that such a difference related to the vagaries of 'culture' (Cleland, 1975:127) was, however, diluted by other evidence he presented, of the quite different experiences Indian and Fijian women had of family planning services. There is no intention here to descend into a theory of conspiracy. Rather, what Cleland demonstrates is that within differences broadly ascribed to culture may be a range of more

12 A variant to this argument is presented by Clegg (1988) who argues that a principal factor in declining Indian fertility has been their response to the interests of racial harmony. But this writer does not explain how this political argument translates into individual decisions, and beyond relying upon our readiness to believe this should be the case in a multi-ethnic society, provides no supporting details.

13 There is evidence that women are most receptive to advice on modern contraception soon after the birth of a child (Potter et al., 1987:154) and the Fiji family planning programme centres on the integration of maternal and child health. Of Cleland's study population, 69 per cent of Indian women and 46 per cent of Fijian women attended post-natal clinic. At that clinic (held six weeks after the birth of their child) 87 per cent of Indian women and 80 per cent of Fijian women recalled that family planning had been discussed by doctors or nursing staff (Cleland, 1975:45). Cleland explained this differential as reflecting the probable later post-natal resumption of sexual relations by Fijians, so 'therefore family planning has not the same immediate relevance' (Cleland, 1975:45). Recalling the occasions they took their infants to health clinics, 83 per cent of Indian women and 74 per cent of Fijian women said family planning was discussed with them (Cleland, 1975:53). In explanation of this difference, Cleland (1975:53) suggested 'there is still a little reticence in broaching the discussion of family planning with non-Indians'. This is post-hoc rationalisation.

14 Indeed it would be difficult to do so, for the enthusiasm with which family planning has been promoted has been uneven over time and space, as well as race. Within the Eastern Division, Bedford and Brookfield (1979:213) noted a more vigorous family planning effort by the Medical Department in Lakeba than in Kabara or Taveuni.
tangible incentives or disincentives to change. The ‘black boxes’ of culture clearly also have political contents.

In sum, therefore, the literature on fertility change in Fiji is not comprehensive. The overall patterns of demographic change - of quite rapidly declining mortality rates, quite slowly declining fertility rates, and quite sharply increasing mobility rates - appear to confirm the universality of the demographic transition. The problem is not so much the description, although that is quite blurred, but the explanation it suggests. The political realities of a multi-ethnic state have captured the focus of research, yet there is little empirical understanding of how members of any ethnic community have encountered social change over the twentieth century, and how this is related to fertility behaviour. Yet this is what needs to be done, both to advance fertility-change theory and to establish a strong conceptual base for fertility-related policy in Fiji.

1.4 An institutional perspective

An emerging consensus among demographers is that the fertility decline can best be understood by examining the structures that lie between ‘society’ and the ‘individual’ (e.g. McNicoll, 1978, 1980, 1989; Ben-Porath, 1980; Cain, 1978, Potter, 1983; Hull, 1987; Greenhalgh, 1990). The characteristics of social environments provide a different focus from the characteristics of individuals, households and families which most commonly have been at the centre of demographic study (Potter, 1983:627). In examining the local configuration of social institutions, the appropriate level of analysis is the community rather than individual households or persons. Cain (1989:185) proposes that:

...a common error in analyses of contemporary demographic change [is] where preoccupation with variations in individual and household demographic behaviour has sometimes encouraged analysis at theoretically inappropriate levels of aggregation; where, for example, the economic dependence of women on men is treated as a variable individual attribute. While one can readily think of individual-level measures that in one way or another describe women’s economic status, it is important to emphasise that the factors which condition an individual’s experience - rules of marriage, family formation, and inheritance, religious laws or norms of behaviour, the division of labour by sex and patterns of labour market segmentation, for example - are located in a society’s institutional structure.

Potter (1983:627) suggests three main ways in which social institutions might influence fertility behaviour: by changing the economic costs and benefits of children; by changing internalised values concerning the family, marriage and fertility; and by changing social and administrative pressures bearing on the reproductive behaviour of individuals and couples. Hull (1987:90) suggests a series of levels of inquiry, that range from the characteristics of individuals to the evolution of the social institutions which relate to fertility decisions. The first level of institutional influences on individual
behaviour includes institutions which manufacture or supply birth control technologies; economic systems and particularly the labour market; and family structure variables, which include marriage. Another level comprises broader social institutions, including governing, planning and administrative institutions (such as the government bureaucracy, the military and the intellectual, religious and business elites), and the pattern of socialisation (including educational infrastructure and mass media). At the highest level are the ideological principles to which the society mostly subscribes.

By focussing on people’s actions it is generally possible to by-pass the difficult, complex issue of individual motives. While individual motives differ, what people do and how they do it is related to the institutional setting - the particular ‘rules of the game’ that each person tries to manipulate to attain his or her own ends. Indeed, a recent study of American women (McLaughlin et al. 1988) suggests that behavioural change often precedes attitudinal change, particularly where the ‘rules of the game’ are rapidly transforming. Because the concern is with people’s behaviour, institutions imply a mostly observable arrangement of peoples' affairs, as well as distinctions of time and place. Neale breaks down the concept of institutions into three characteristics. The first distinction is what people do; actions which can be identified through observation. A second is the rules which derive from the repetition of activities and give them stability and predictable order; again, in their aggregate, observed actions provide an understanding of these rules. The third characteristic is the folkviews which justify the activities or explain why they are going on, how they are related, what is thought important and what unimportant in the patterns of regularity. Folkviews can be uncovered by observation, but more directly through informed questioning.

1.5 The ‘limited domain’ of experience

The Swedish geographer, Hagerstrand, has proposed a conceptual link between the environments and behaviour of individuals. He (1978) describes human lives as interlinked trajectories within a block of time and space, and flowing through a system of ‘stations’. By this is meant both physical places and social institutions which are distributed through ‘functional space’. An individual’s life-path is a path that begins at the place of birth and wends its idiosyncratic way between these stations, finally ending at the place of death. A daily-path traces a similar trajectory between stations, but on a shorter time scale. The lifelines of a population consist of all these individual strands in a particular block of time-space, with the strands twisted together in a very complicated way (Hagerstrand, 1957:61). As society changes, so do the stations. Not only are there ‘replacement movements’ as new generations pass through existing stations but, with

15 This is a necessary simplification at this stage: as Namboodiri (1983:454) points out, where institutions change, peoples' behaviour may continue for some time to be influenced by past conditions.
16 Functional space is a redefinition of place, as constituted by the formal and informal relationships that exist between people and their contextual environments.
economic and social change, 'prime movements' occur as population flows begin to a new configuration of stations. The 'limited domain' is, therefore, a tangible and situation-specific context for human behaviour and is, to some degree, limited by the complex interlocking constraints of the very broadly defined environment.

Hagerstrand suggests that such a study of 'individual life biographies taking shape over time within the fields of prevailing distributional forces' would explain how states and events are distributed among members of subgroups of the population over time. When life biographies are reconstructed, they indicate the quantity and quality of options which confront individuals and small groups and the kinds of constraints within which actions and behaviour occur.

When we broaden the view over a wider field of trajectories we begin to see that all of the specific events of local interaction must take place under the influence of certain fundamental limiting conditions. The access to elements at the formation of sets comes out as an intricate budgeting process. At every next step in the process options are limited because of the constraints which operate both simultaneously (if over space) and sequentially (if over time). Events and states become place- and time-specific in ways which are beyond the grasp of those sciences which assume away the importance of geography and history (Hagerstrand, 1978:125).17

Hagerstrand’s concepts of daily-paths and life-paths within a ‘limited domain’ draw together several issues and approaches pertinent to the study of the institutional contexts of demographic behaviour. A central question in theories of fertility change is the rationality of societies. The Malthusian argument rested on the irrationality of pre-transition societies. Simon (1945:240) explains that the limits to human rationality are not static but rather depend on the organisational environment in which the individual’s decisions take place. He extends this argument to propose ‘bounded or segmented rationality’ and ‘domains of consistency’ which characterise individual behaviour and mask perceptual boundaries to inconsistencies in behaviour.18 Transactional theory attempts to explain how social transactions link people with one another and with social institutions (Ben-Porath,1980). The conceptualisation of society as a bundle of daily paths and life paths further suggests that participation in one place simultaneously constrains participation elsewhere. Together with experiences, interactions with other people, and the reinforcement of competencies and ideas, this may bring the intentional or unintentional discovery of additional or alternative institutional role possibilities. In this way a person defines and redefines themself through their life.

17 Giddens' (1979:205) objection to Hagerstrand’s description of life-paths is over Hagerstrand’s use of the term 'constraints', which may imply external restrictions. Giddens’ idea is rather of constraints and opportunities.
18 That is, it is possible that people do not perceive all the options available to them, for such factors as social class, peer pressure and their limited knowledge restricts their range of choice.
1.6 The focus and outline of this study

By examining social behaviour as revealed by life-paths, this thesis will explore the institutional context of the changing fertility behaviour of a group of Fijian people as their community has evolved over the twentieth century. The setting for this study is, therefore, the social, economic and political order of colonial and post-colonial Fiji as it affected the lives of a community of Fijian people. This includes government policies directed at public health and economic development; changes in marriage patterns, the family and kinship ties; colonial taxation, economic change and population mobility; education, particularly of women, and their absorption into the work force; the growth of a multi-ethnic community; and the family planning programme.

1.6.1 An analysis of case

The manner in which this study is defined predicates a case study approach which is community specific. It requires a holistic stance, gathering data over a wide but initially unspecified range in an attempt to construct as complete a picture as possible of a dynamic social situation. This is based on the assumption that an understanding of context is essential for the understanding of the events and processes of social change. In part, such a case study approach allows these processes to be considered from the perspective of local people rather than from a predetermined theoretical framework. However, the researcher's definition of topics to be studied both reflects her folkviews and, by association with a broader literature, suggests that there is an objective nature to the dynamics of a particular situation.

Mitchell (1987) decomposes an analysis of case into an understanding of situation and setting.19 Most simply, a situation is defined by the attitudes and behaviour of the actors to a particular set of events, or within a particular institutional context. It has a logic of its own which is formed in the wider political and socio-economic order, and yet it is not completely reducible to these processes nor their underlying principles. This wider social framework is defined by the theoretical concerns of the researcher, and constitutes the setting. As each situation and setting also stand in a reflexive relationship to one another, there is therefore no universal set of contextual parameters for all analyses of events. However, in regard to fertility behaviour, these parameters are likely to include most of the familiar socio-economic determinants of fertility (Potter, 1983:628), such as education, status, urban or rural residence, occupation, level of family income. Mitchell, (1987:9) explains:

19 The methods of situational analysis and extended case analysis are demonstrated in the works of Gluckman (1958) and Mitchell (1983; 1987). Although these terms are at times used synonymously, situational analysis focuses on a single event, clearly demarcated in time and space, while an extended case study involves a series of events, stretching over time and possibly space, but which are linked together in some manner apparent to the researcher. It is this second definition which is pertinent for this study, although the term situational analysis is preferred as more descriptive of the method.
The general perspective is...that the behaviour of social actors may be interpreted as the resultant of the actor’s shared understandings of the situation in which they find themselves and of the constraints imposed upon these actors by the wider social order in which they are enmeshed. Both components of the situation - the shared understandings and the notion of a wider social order - are in fact constructs erected by the analyst as a means of interpreting the social situation as a whole.

The question commonly asked of such case studies is how representative they might be of the broader area or population of which they form part. In a seminal paper, Mitchell (1983) distinguished between statistical inference and logical inference, explaining that case study validity does not lie in representation in the narrowly-defined statistical sense. Rather it depends upon logical inference, which is demonstrated by the internal cohesiveness of the theoretically necessary features of the study.

The data to support this study come from several sources, including government reports and archival records, other secondary sources, and census data. But as Rutz (1987:534) reminds us, ‘the authoritative history written from commission reports and based on administrative policy often conceals another history, that formed by the experience of everyday life.’ Focused biographies are a means of tapping into this local perspective (Hagerstrand, 1984; Kohli, 1986; Bertaux, 1981). The collective histories of approximately two thousand members of the study population provide a necessary balance to the administrative records in explaining Fijian fertility behaviour in the twentieth century.

1.6.2 The organisation of this thesis
The first part of this thesis focuses on the national population, and draws upon archival records, census and registration data and secondary sources to consider how changes in society and polity have structured the demographic characteristics of the Fijian population. At this level attention is directed to the political context of change: the establishment of a colonial power, the reification of a colonial ideology, and the interrelationships between politics and population. Together, Chapters Two and Three trace the evolution of new social institutions over this century and their relationship to the style of governance and political ideology, to explain the role of national-level politics in Fijian population change. They establish that Fijian society is not traditional, at least not in a demographic sense, and that through the official history of demographic change in Fiji runs an insistent political theme. The second part examines experiences of change within a community from the island of Kadavu. Chapter Four explains the methodology on which this community study was based. To reconstruct individual histories, I drew upon and amalgamated two rich but unreliable sources of information: the memories of community members and a genealogical register of communal landowners, the Vola ni
Kawa Bula. These sources, together with information I collected through other surveys and interviews, provided an insight into the lives of approximately 2000 people. Against this background, the life-histories of three generations of women provides the substance of my account. Chapters Five through Seven use this historical record to detail the changing social and economic contexts of fertility behaviour in the study population, and aspects of social differentiation and differential fertility. Chapter Eight concludes the thesis by returning to the theme of cultural continuity and discontinuity. This chapter links the two parts of the thesis by considering the official construction of Fijian fertility change, the fit between this and community patterns of change, and the following implications for fertility-related policies in Fiji.

This thesis, therefore, is concerned with not one, but with dual histories. These are those of the Fiji State, with particular reference to the pattern of governance and the formation of neotraditional society; and those of the lives of ordinary people. Behind these histories lie the mental constructs of social science which, even more than chronological sequences, pattern our interpretation of events. Indeed, an exposition of the institutional context of behaviour is incomplete without reference to the institutional context of that explanation. As Giddens (1979:259) explains:

...in the current phase of social theory, we are involved in rotating two axes simultaneously: that of our understanding of the character of human social activity, and that of the logical form of natural science.

The concern with 'natural' science, in this case, is in the form of theories of social evolution as encapsulated by the paradigm of demographic transition. These ideas have widely been used to describe social process of social evolution, and were applied to designing appropriate governance for Fijians. Indeed, there is a powerful convergence between political interests and theoretical perspectives. This is not to argue that this interpretation of change was peculiarly drafted to suit the Fiji situation. The pattern of state intervention reflected the class interests of the European and, in a secondary fashion, the Fijian elites, but also the extranational interests and values of colonial power. It is in this more general respect that we can consider the convergence of visions of natural order in politics and in society, rather than suggesting that the situation of Fiji was unique and insular. Both Fiji and interpretations of change were set in a wider political and intellectual sphere.

In recounting these dual histories, my aim as a geographer is to integrate current perspectives on social change from several disciplines. In the South Pacific, as elsewhere, a new wave of anthropologically-informed studies of the colonial encounter challenges older interpretations and, indirectly, suggests new empirical and theoretical perspectives on demographic change (eg. Beckett, 1987; Clammer, 1973: Jolly and Macintyre, 1988; Kaplan, 1989, 1990; Kelly, 1989; Thomas, 1989a, b, 1990). A focus of this work in the
South Pacific has been upon the 'invention of tradition' for which Fiji provides a classic example (France, 1969, Keesing and Tonkinson, 1982). More generally, feminist scholars have revised concepts of gender relationships, and of their structuring roles in human societies (eg. Leacock, 1981; MacCormack and Strathern, 1980; Moore, 1988; Scott, 1988; Teckle, 1984). Other scholars have provided fresh insights into the transformation of medical systems (eg. Manderson, 1989; Singer, 1989).

Demographic theory needs to respond to these perspectives for, as Caldwell (1982:300) explains, 'a separate theory of demographic change is a meaningless and dangerous concept.' Demography and anthropology have a long history of mutual, if somewhat unquestioned, reinforcement (Caldwell et al. 1987:25). The recent rapprochement between anthropology and history provides a particularly fertile association because of the strong traditions of theoretical criticism they have in common. Other than its penchant for conceptual integration, geography can contribute techniques of studying social process and, thereby, of conceptually linking the environments and behaviours of individuals.20 Despite the potential of these linkages, disciplinary boundaries have limited the traffic in ideas. Even the vaunted connection between demography and anthropology has been mostly limited to the cross-trading of methodologies (Caldwell et al. 1988; Greenhalgh, 1990:8). In a recent review, Caldwell et al (1987) identified the areas where anthropology could contribute most to demographic theory to be within the convention of demographic transition, in the realm of religious and cultural supports for high fertility and the conditions under which fertility declined. But the real challenge posed by anthropology to demographic theory is at another level. While much demographic research is located in colonial or ex-colonial societies, only recently have demographers taken cognisance of the fascination of anthropologists with colonial society: with the ways in which European colonial powers imposed their power and conceptions of order on other peoples, distorted the realities they wrote about and, thereby, helped to substantiate a particular interpretation of society (Asad, 1973:118).

20 These techniques are identified closely with the pioneering work of Hagerstrand.
Chapter Two

Changes in the National Fijian Population Over the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

2.1 Introduction

This first section of the thesis examines Fijian population dynamics in the twentieth century and their roots, which lie in changes which took place in Fijian society in the nineteenth century. It is not possible here to give a substantive summary of recent Fiji history,\(^1\) nevertheless it is clear that population change is never an independent nor a dependent variable, but needs to be conceptualised as a thread interwoven with other processes of social change (Cordell et al. 1987:16; Hull, 1987; McNicoll, 1978, 1980, 1988). The phenomena of birth, mobility or death cannot be separated from their social, cultural, political and economic contexts. In tracing the evolution of institutions that for successive generations have created the setting for Fijian reproductive choices, Chapters Two and Three emphasise the emergence of new power relationships wrought by the colonial order, the reification of the political ideology which promoted these relationships, and their impact upon local population dynamics. The connection between ideology and demographic processes is through social institutions and the dominant social groups which control and use them to promote the ideological base for their power. At the apex of a social system this process operates through structures of governance and patterns of socialisation which, in turn, are promoted through the agencies which cultivate consensus and conformity (for example, the legal system, the police, and the army) and such institutions as schools, churches and mass media (Hull, 1987:91; Potter, 1983:627). This process is demonstrated clearly in the allocation of power and the division of labour at all levels, including the household or family.

This historical perspective is necessary for reasons which go beyond informing the reader of the general background to this study. Ahistorical interpretations of demographic change abound, aided by the sometimes naive assumptions that demographers (and others) make about what constitutes a ‘traditional’ society, and similar presuppositions concerning the process of modernization which generalise about quite different regional, cultural and class conditions. The process of capitalist expansion and the experience of

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\(^1\) Such summaries are provided by Derrick, 1950; Lal, (in press); Macnaught, 1982; Narayan, 1984; Scarr, 1984; Sutherland, (in press); Ward, 1965.
colonial control modified many such ‘traditional’ societies in ways fundamental to their present demographic regimes. In particular, the histories of many ex-colonial states reveal the pervasive readiness of both colonial and local institutions to manipulate population processes. Furthermore, the modernization of these societies was commonly a self-conscious process, one in which official interpretations of demographic trends were fed back into the system - thus creating historicity rather than history. Where history is the unfolding of events through time, Giddens (1979:200) explains historicity to be:

the consciousness of 'progressive movement' as a feature of the social life of certain societies...in which that consciousness is organised actively to promote social change.

This chapter provides a general commentary on social, economic and political changes in Fijian society during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, changes which were germane in the demographic transformation of the Fijian population. The first section describes the nature of social and economic change during the nineteenth century, when Fijian society was opened to European influence. The next considers the nature of colonial governance in Fiji, and the society it helped create. The final section outlines social and economic change in post-war Fiji.

2.2 The demographic impact of European contact in the nineteenth century

Older histories of the region often imply that before European contact, Pacific peoples lived in glorious isolation on their far-flung home islands - a perception which more recently has been modified by archaeological and historical evidence of substantial periodic contacts between many island groups. Two thousand years ago a trading network, that spread the pottery now referred to as Lapita, spanned the western Pacific islands from Papua New Guinea to Samoa. In more recent times the Tongan empire linked island groups in the central South Pacific, and the expansion of European power in Fiji coincided with the apogee and decline of Tongan control over eastern Fiji. No doubt the microbes responsible for the epidemics and pandemics of those times hitched a ride with travellers. However, European contact with Pacific island communities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries dramatically speeded the process of disease diffusion by providing transport for a variety of organisms against which islanders had little if any immunity, and which spread new diseases for which local systems of health care had no traditions of coping. The ravaging of Pacific island communities by European-introduced diseases - particularly dysentery, measles, influenza and venereal diseases - was central to the ‘fatal impact’ of Europeans in the Pacific.2

2 Moorhouse (1965) used this term as the title of his general study of culture contact between Pacific islanders and Europeans. The view of a fatal impact in terms of culture contact exaggerates the power of
2.2.1 Accelerated mortality

Precontact Fijian mortality was probably low, although beyond the normal exigencies of disease and injury, lives were cut short by practices of widow-strangling, infanticide, euthanasia, cannibalism, and murder. Early European visitors to Fiji suggested people generally were robust and free from most of the diseases common to continental populations (Manning, 1985:56). Fijian oral traditions connect epidemic-related mortality with their first encounters with European ships in the late eighteenth century. The earliest of these recorded epidemics was known as lila - a slow, wasting disease that did not kill many of its victims but left them so emaciated and helpless that their relatives strangled them to death in pity for their condition. With the exaggeration characteristic of folk-memories, whole villages were said to have emptied, and survivors of the disease suffered starvation as the social fabric of their communities disintegrated. Around 1800, another epidemic swept Fiji, this time probably of dysentery. Again, oral traditions recount how the disease decimated communities as the death-toll mounted and survivors abandoned the sick in fear for their lives. According to Fijian accounts, this epidemic caused even more deaths than those which swept Fiji later in the century (Corney et al., 1896:35). No other details exist of the deaths, such as the age or sex of victims, therefore it is not possible to assess the demographic effects of these early epidemics beyond a general decrease in population in following years.

Increased contact between Fijians and foreigners throughout the nineteenth century brought a variety of new sicknesses, most well-known to Europeans but others apparently quite exotic - such as vudicoro, a disease which left peoples’ skin looking like that of a scalded banana but caused few deaths. Background mortality probably increased, aided by disruptions to the social order - one of which was more extensive and deadly local wars. An outbreak of influenza in 1839 brought another episode of crisis mortality (Derrick, 1950:62). Then, in 1875, a few months after Fiji became a British colony, an
epidemic of measles killed perhaps more than 25 per cent of the native Fijian population. In the weakened population, with health conditions exacerbated by bad weather and inadequate disposal of the dead, measles was closely followed by dysentery. The physical effects of the diseases were compounded by food shortages caused by lack of labour to tend and harvest crops, the starvation of neglected children and the elderly, and the psychological impact of rumours connecting the diseases to an imagined European plot to empty Fijian lands. It was a crisis from which the Fijian population could not recover for years. Derrick (1955:15) quotes an unnamed Fijian source: 'During the first year there were no births; during the second, all who were born, died.' A generation of leaders was largely lost, adding to social disorder and apathy, and some localities were virtually depopulated as survivors fled (Derrick, 1955:14).

Between 1884 and 1891 six more epidemics occurred: three of whooping cough, and one each of dengue, cerebo-spinal meningitis, and influenza (McDonald, 1959:67). By the 1890s dysentery was endemic in Fijian villages, contributing to occasional and localised bouts of crisis mortality, particularly where food shortages followed hurricanes, floods or social disturbances (McDonald, 1959:71), and, in sum, accounting for more than half of all Fijian deaths in the 1890s (Ward, 1965:81). By the late nineteenth century, some European observers believed that the Fijian population had been in decline for around one hundred years, largely through epidemic-related deaths and high infant mortality, although this perception was coloured by the then widely-held belief that indigenous peoples would fade before European advancement (Corney et al., 1896; Derrick, 1945).

The epidemics continued into the early twentieth century. By the turn of the century, tuberculosis was well established in the Fijian population and, in 1903, measles returned, killing possibly 2000 people. In 1918 the most recent of these epidemic crises occurred, as influenza affected about 80 per cent of the Fijian population and caused about

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5 It is impossible to specify the extent of deaths more closely. Contemporary estimates, on one hand, probably overestimated deaths by subtracting the 1881 census figure (114,748) from a pre-Cession population estimate of 150,000, and McArthur (1967:11) argues this latter figure was probably exaggerated for political purposes. Using life table estimates, McArthur argues a more likely death rate in the Fiji measles epidemic would be around 20 per cent, giving 20,000 - 30,000 deaths. It is also possible that the inverse is true, and these figures under-estimate deaths, for the 1881 census was problematic and can only be compared with complete guess-work - at a time when populations in the interior of the main islands were not well known to Europeans or amenable to being counted, alive or dead.

6 The anthropologist W.H.R Rivers (1922) later suggested a 'scientific' base for this belief by theorising that the psychological effects on native people of the reduction of their cultures before European cultures, were reflected in an actual decrease in the natives' physical power to reproduce, together with a wholesale increase in infanticide and abortion.

7 Cliff and Haggett (1985:37) count fourteen distinct waves of epidemic measles in Fiji since 1875. Mortality decreased rapidly from the peak of possibly 40000 in 1875, 2000 in 1903, 344 in 1910-14, to one or two deaths in each wave since - apart from 35 deaths in 1957. The number of deaths (2000) is McArthur's (1967:11) estimate, lower than that estimated in the 1911 Census report.
five thousand deaths - a mortality rate of around 5 per cent (CP 31, 1919:4-5). Because influenza-related deaths predominantly affected adults, Fijian births in the years immediately following were reduced by around one-fifth (McArthur, 1967:34). There were outbreaks of dysentery in 1921, whooping cough in 1925, and epidemic dysentery in 1929-30, but these episodes did not have the demographic impact of earlier disasters.

The series of epidemics in the late nineteenth century sent echo effects down through the generations, affecting Fijian population dynamics well into the twentieth century. Although there are no detailed records of deaths in the earlier epidemics, the first strike of each disease probably affected all ages,8 with immediate reductions in the number of births over the next few years.9 From the measles epidemic of 1875 until 1905, deaths exceeded births in each year (Lambert, 1938:5).10 Later epidemics of the same diseases probably set up age-selective patterns of mortality, which mirrored patterns of previous exposure and resistance within the population. The whooping-cough epidemic of 1891 probably caused most deaths to children less than seven years of age, those who did not experience whooping-cough in 1884. Deaths from the measles epidemic of 1903 were probably clustered in age-groups less than 27 years, for the older section of the population was exposed to measles in 1875 and probably had more resistance to infection (McArthur, 1967:32). The brunt of the epidemics, therefore, fell most heavily on people born between 1875 and 1903 - those people who in 1903 were most susceptible to measles, and, in 1918, the more likely victims of influenza (McArthur, 1967:32).11 Patterns of mortality would then be reflected in patterns of Fijian fertility, as the increased age-selectivity of deaths reduced the size of some cohorts and thereby periodically affected crude birth rates.

By the late nineteenth century the Fijian population was widely perceived to be at crisis point. The short- and long-term effects of the series of epidemics appeared to validate the belief that the Fijians were a dying race - and this perception was to have profound political consequences in both the colonial and Fijian domains. As a mark of the

8 Quite possibly, cultural practices influencing the differential care of the sick would contribute to the age-selectivity of deaths. Contemporary European observers were particularly critical of the care given to small children, and suggested that infant mortality was particularly high (Corney et al., 1896:23).
9 McArthur (1967:351) suggests that if the measles epidemic of 1875 caused higher adult mortality, of around one-third of the population, less than half of all marriages would survive the epidemic. As well, unweaned female children born before the epidemic struck would probably have higher than average mortality. Therefore the cohort of women entering the child-bearing age-group around 1890 would be very much smaller - the results of which were borne out by a marked reduction in registered Fijian births through the 1890s. Even if there were no further disruptions, the number of births in the population would be reduced until this cohort moved out of the reproductive age-group around thirty years later.
10 Manning (1985:241) suggests this is not quite correct, citing a small excess of births over deaths in the years 1879-83 (20,545 births and 19,971 deaths) and 1887-88 (8,872 births and 7,892 deaths) as evidence that both mortality and fertility rates increased in Fiji after contact.
11 McArthur estimated total deaths from epidemics in the 28 years between 1875 and 1903 at 47,500 (1967, 263).
government's concern, in December 1891 the Colonial Secretary posted a circular to European residents and other informed persons, to request their submissions to a commission of inquiry into the causes of the decrease of the native population. The Commission to enquire into the decrease of the native population was held in 1893 and its report published in 1896. The commission, directed by B.G. Corney, J. Stewart and B.H. Thomson, was offered a broad range of evidence, including village surveys conducted by the Medical Department, the informed observations of long-term Fiji residents and, in other cases, European ethnocentric polemic. Few submissions doubted that the Fijian population was in permanent decline. Not surprisingly, the Corney report did not suggest an appreciation of the cohort dynamics set up by age-selective mortality. The report therefore does not give the most simple answer to the question it examined but, rather, provides detailed documentation for the answer apparent to most contemporary observers - namely, fundamental changes to Fijian social institutions and cultural practices with European cultural and economic contacts, the widespread conversion of Fijians to Christianity, and the establishment of pax Brittanica.

2.2.2 European culture, Christianity, and capitalism

Through the nineteenth century Fijians increasingly came into contact with outsiders: European missionaries, traders and settlers and, now more frequently, people from neighbouring island groups of Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu, Solomons and Tuvalu. This was a period of extensive social change when a new religion and foreign cultural values helped modify the ethos of Fijian society, and the emergent world capitalism reached Fiji and provoked fundamental change in Fijian social organisation and economy. Later in the century, the establishment of a national colonial government helped realign structures of power throughout the society. Yet Fijian society also changed on its own terms. Fijian culture was reconstructed through the colonial experience rather than diminished. This reconstruction of Fijian culture is described in more detail by Thomas (1989a, 1989b, 1990) and elsewhere in the South Pacific by Beckett (1987) and Keessing and Tonkinson (1982). These writers emphasise the reconstruction of culture through the colonial experience, as opposed to the view of western
dialectic between local and introduced ways comes clearly through in the records of administrators. The church was in many ways a ‘proto’ government (Jolly and Macintyre, 1989:3); it held meetings each quarter, levied church taxes, and held court over people who had breached the faith by working on Sundays, drinking yaqona to excess, stealing, infidelity, parenting illegitimate children, or fighting with their spouses. The church equivalent of a jail sentence was expulsion from church until repentance was demonstrated. The 1896 Kadavu Circuit report (Methodist Missionary Society, 1896) noted the uphill battle to increase church membership:

During the year 254 persons have entered class but on the other hand we have had the very large number of 240 expulsions. Thus there is a small gain of fourteen of those who had joined the church from those who had been expelled. But death has claimed no less than 95 members so totals for the year show the very unsatisfactory decrease of 81 members.

While changes may sometimes have appeared slow to missionaries, the church nevertheless was a significant agent in the profound transformation of domestic relations in Fijian society.17

(a) Culture contact and Christianity

Christian missionaries were active from the 1830s and through the following decades. Confronted by the traditions of polygamy and child marriage, they denied church membership in the church to these ‘sinners’, a surprisingly effective measure by today’s standards. A number of submissions to the Corney Commission related declines in the health of women and infants to the disappearance of polygamy, arguing that in multiple-women households, an individual woman did not have to work as hard, received help and better care during pregnancy and her children’s infancy, and was more likely to space her children with less exposure to the sexual demands of her husband.18 In a polygamous household wives would ‘from a spirit of emulation try to rear their children’, thereby improving the children’s chances of survival (Corney et al. 1896:9).19 The decline of polygamy, these observers argued, meant that men of ‘lesser quality’ would have greater

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16 Records of the Methodist Church, Fiji Circuit, hereafter MMS.
17 Jolly and Macintyre (1989:4) state that Christian missionaries deserve particular scrutiny in any study of domestic transformations in the Pacific, a claim well supported by other papers in their volume.
18 Other submissions to the Commission explained lower fertility with polygamy in more negative terms, claiming that in polygamous unions wives commonly used methods of abortion to remain sexually available to their husband in competition with their co-wives. Child survival was also reduced because polygamy promoted in-breeding and thereby weak progeny.
19 Some submissions claimed that the lives of women in polygamous unions were made wretched by the mutual jealousies of co-wives and callous treatment from their husbands (Corney et al., 1896:10).
access to wives, applying the contemporary logic of stock-breeding to argue that as the quality of the stock declined so would the vigour of progeny. As one woman had to do all the work in a monogamous household, ‘when she enters the married state her duties as a worker prevent her from performing those of a mother’ (Corney et al., 1896:8).

Under traditional practice, a husband and wife did not cohabit during a woman’s pregnancy and period of breast-feeding her child (Blyth, 1887:180). If he had no other wives, a man went to live with the single men of the village in the bure ni sa (men’s house). Blyth (1887:181) reported other customs of sexual abstinence during marriage, but noted these practices had been forgotten as polygamy had disappeared. Still current in the 1880s was a Fijian belief that the children of a marriage would be more healthy and vigourous where their parents rarely cohabited (Blyth, 1887:181). By the 1890s, the Corney Commission was told, customs requiring spouses to live apart during suckling of an infant had been abandoned, because of the missionaries’ promotion of ‘Christian family life’, whereby a monogamous couple lived continuously together in their own house. (Corney et al., 1896:426). The general trend towards higher fertility in monogamous unions may well have been coupled with higher risks of infant death. As a monogamous husband would probably demand the sexual services of his wife during the traditionally prohibited period before a child was weaned, a woman might cooperate, while blaming the man for ‘killing’ the child and then neglecting it herself. In Fijian custom a child who had a younger sibling before he or she was weaned would be dabe (prone to illness and early death) or save (a weakling and late developer). Seemann, who observed Fijian life in the 1860s, reported that the father of a save child risked being beaten by his wife’s relatives for his imputed responsibility for the child’s condition (Seemann, 1862:342).

Nevertheless, the Commission concluded that the abolition of polygamy could not have had a major effect on population trends - and, in any case, wanted no proposal for a return to polygamy. The Commission’s argument rested on its claim that polygamy had

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20 Blyth (1887:179) reports that after marriage a couple remained in seclusion for three days, after which the woman was ritually bathed and her husband was supposed to abstain for a long period from sexual activity.
21 However in 1988 elderly people still spoke of traditions of post-natal abstinence and separation as quite recent - commonly something the ‘previous’ generation had done.
22 Recent research in African societies confirms that an increase is probable in the fertility of women with the change from polygamy to monogamy (eg Kitching, 1983).
23 The expectation of a mother that her child will die can readily become a self-fulfilled prophecy, as Scheper-Hughes (1989:8) argues from research in northeastern Brazil.
24 Pirie (1976:6) notes traditions of postpartum taboos were common in Melanesian societies.
25 Capell (1984:41,187) notes the following related terms, all of which carry a sense of disapproval: dau vakadabadabe - to have children at frequent intervals; tina ni vakadabadabe - the mother of a dabe child; tama ni vakadabadabe - the father of such a child; dau save na gone - always having children in too quick succession.
not been sufficiently widespread in the old social order as to reduce the exposure of many women to the risk of child-bearing. It suggested that the incidence of polygamy could have been exaggerated by Europeans who more often observed the living habits of chiefs than of commoners; if polygamy had been a widespread practice, the report argued, this together with the reported tradition of female infanticide, would have resulted in a disadvantageous and unlikely situation where large numbers of men were excluded from marriage (Corney et al. 1896:11). It is not possible to know what numbers of women were displaced by the abolition of polygamy or how much this directly affected fertility rates, but certainly this fundamental change to the institution of marriage would at least indirectly affect fertility by changing the status of women, the social context of their childbearing, and power relations within the household.26

A general change in the status of women was widely acknowledged in the submissions to the Commission too, particularly after the Cession of Fiji to the British Government in 1874. Most submissions record bleak views of Fijian society. Fijian informants claimed that their population was in decline because of changes in customs circumscribing the behaviour and liberty of women.27 The old strict surveillance of unmarried girls had reportedly lapsed, and girls used their new liberty as license for sexual experimentation.28 The strict sexual segregation of past times had broken down, which 'now leads to anything, everything - but marriage' (Corney et al. 1896:38). Reputedly, a woman was now less likely than in traditional times to be a virgin at marriage, and also she had gained the freedom to reject a husband chosen by her relatives. The traditional death penalty for promiscuity and disobedience was disallowed under British law, and replaced with the considerably less compelling threat of excommunication from the church, and court-imposed requirements to plait mats or make masi (bark cloth) in atonement. The Commission concluded that by disrupting the traditional social system, the efforts of the missionaries to promote 'family life' within Fijian society had ironically assisted the deterioration of public morality (Corney et al. 1896:176,179; also Blyth, 1887:179). Unmarried girls prevented their pregnancies with contraceptive concoctions and abortion, thereby jeopardising their future fecundity (Corney et al. 1896:186). Among married couples, extra-marital affairs reportedly often disrupted marriages, bringing decreased survival chances to children of those marriages.29 The practice of

26 From his research into African societies, Jewsiewicki (1987:275) suggests that such a shift would promote a more individualistic and male-dominated system.
27 Ratu Sukuna (Scarr, 1983:119) in 1932 related these changes to both Tongan and European cultural contact.
28 This must be taken with a grain of salt. The ambiguity of adolescent female sexuality is described for one contemporary Fijian community by Abramson (1987) who suggests that tales of female promiscuity could be evoked as easily as those promoting the orthodoxy of the imperative for virgin brides.
29 Based on a survey of households which included children of previous unions, the Commission found that where both parents were alive and living together half their children had died, of children left in their
abortion by both unmarried and married women was considered so widespread as to be a principal factor in the decline of the population (Corney et al. 1895:175). While it was argued that both sexes now resisted the responsibilities of marriage, it was also considered that cultural practices acted as obstacles to marriage - such as the difficulty of accumulating the necessary quantity and types of marriage gifts, and objections which could be raised by relatives. There was no evidence provided of recent changes in these demands on prospective spouses, but rather the assumption that such demands now more often prevented marriages occurring (Corney et al. 1896:40, 341).

European observers generally considered the life of a married Fijian woman to be one of drudgery, as women were responsible for a disproportionate share of community and household work (Heath, 1975:28). With the advent of colonial rule came the end to tribal fighting and the redundancy of the warrior role of men, but the establishment of peace appeared to have done little for women - for now the men spent their time discussing methods of taxation payment or were absent from home trading or working for taxation purposes, or arranging and attending church or government-related meetings, or in increased leisure. The Corney Commission noted that little could be done to legislate against women’s excessive work, and that in parts of Fiji where they did less manual work there was no variation in the survival rates of women or their children. Moral persuasion and education were seen as the best remedy for women’s conditions and nature.

At least part of a change in the status of women in the latter half of the nineteenth century was related to the widespread conversion to Christianity. But beyond the extension of some personal liberties, the expansion of monogamous marriages and new ideals of family life, and possibly their partners’ changed behaviour in the light of promised eternal salvation, the circumstances of women’s lives remained largely unchanged. While both males and females were taught basic reading, writing and numeracy skills in the small mission schools which were established in most villages, the missionaries acknowledged that these skills had little application in the lives of women. Mission education may even have reduced their rights to assistance from their children, if we are to believe allegations that with the promotion of education by the missions, even older adolescent boys spent all their time either at school or playing (Corney et al. 1896:40, 105). Christian-defined social rules apparently came down hard on women who conceived out of wedlock: the meeting of the Methodist Church’s central Fiji committee in 1883 heard of allegations made at the Macuata Council of Chiefs of the community neglect of mothers of illegitimate children (MMS, 1883).

mothers’ care two-thirds had died, and of children left in the care of their fathers, three-quarters had died (Corney et al. 1896:25). The extremely high child mortality found in this survey must reflect the epidemic deaths of the 1880s and early 1890s, as must a proportion of the disrupted marriages.
(b) The tentacles of world capitalism

Another source of early but fundamental social change was the introduction of Fijians to the international capitalist system. This was manifested concretely by the alienation of some native lands to European private property, the establishment of an economy based on the production and export of introduced agricultural commodities, and later - as the colony of Fiji was to be self-financing - the colonial government’s system for extracting taxes from the native population.30 The earliest Europeans who visited Fiji came to harvest sandalwood and *beche-de-mer*, and, by the 1860s, a growing European settler community had established copra, cotton and other plantations. The links between Christianity and cash cropping were apparent early - as in Navua where in the 1860s ‘that part of the town inhabited by Christians is full of cotton, whilst that inhabited by heathens [is] destitute of it’.31 During the 1860s, European settlers established plantations on a number of small islands and along the coastal lowlands and river plains of the main islands - on land purchased from Fijians, who at first had to struggle with this new concept of land tenure. The settlers provided the capital for the plantations, and expected Fijians would supply their labour.

By the mid-1860s, however, the demand for plantation labour had grown to conflict with Fijian village labour demands and, inevitably, misunderstandings arose between European settlers who considered labour a resource to exploit and Fijian workers whose perceptions of their relationship were quite different. The European planters and settlers then supplemented their labour supply with workers imported from the neighbouring islands of the Solomons, New Hebrides, and Gilbert Islands. In the 1870s, the plantation system continued to expand, both geographically into new areas and economically into new crops. By the late 1870s, sugar and copra had become the main export crops (Ward, 1965:25). Labour shortages remained and, in 1871, the Cakobau government (the precursor of British colonial government) began selling prisoners taken in local wars of ‘pacification’, as plantation labour. As well, the Cakobau government levied a poll-tax on all adult Fijian males, which was to be paid in plantation labour where it could not be paid in cash. This poll-tax was abolished at Cession in 1874, and many Fijians withdrew from plantation work. In part to protect Fijian society from the destructive influences of the plantation economy, and in part to solve the economically crippling labour shortage, the colonial government began the importation of labourers from India in 1879 - a development which would have momentous demographic and political ramifications. Nevertheless, over the second half of the nineteenth century many Fijians had experienced plantation work and thereby had come into contact with new ideas.

and attitudes, each often going back home as 'a different man, with his head full of new ideas rather subversive of feudal authority'.

Later, under the colonial government, a new system of native taxation was imposed. This time it was designed around the proposition that Fijians were to remain in their villages and plant economic crops in ‘tax gardens’. Each province was to produce goods to a determined value, and local government officials were to be responsible for allocating production quotas of specified crops to villages within the province and forwarding the produce to the government. Where the produce realised profits above the amount required for tax payment, the surplus cash would be returned to the villages. The purported advantage of this system of taxation was that it encouraged the Fijian peasantry to remain on the soil. The value of taxation in 1893, for example, varied between 5s/1d and £1/3/8 per head of males aged between sixteen and sixty (Corney et al. 1896:294), and were the tax to be paid in cash, Fijians would be forced to leave their villages for the plantations and other places of work. Even under this system, however, some married men out of necessity or of their own volition left their homes, particularly to work in the cane-producing districts or towns (Corney et al. 1896: 292, 294; Knapman, 1987:7). As well, the extension of the government’s legal system and its local magistrates into every locality substantially increased opportunities for people to experience prison sentences, often for quite petty matters, and these prisoners were put to work on government projects. The absence of men, whether at work or in prison, was considered to be related to lower survival chances of their wives and young children (Corney et al. 1896: 294, 390). The tabu (traditional embargo) placed on some food-crops to reserve them for tax-payment purposes, such as coconuts in copra-producing areas, allegedly disadvantaged the nutrition of small children and pregnant women (Corney et al. 1896: 294). However, men with large families were rewarded by being granted immunity from paying tax (Corney et al. 1896: 295, 547).

2.2.3 Changes in fertility

If we were to believe the quite remarkable story within the Corney Report, we would find alongside increased infant mortality, a fundamental change in the social context of fertility-related behaviour. This view of Fijian society is distorted through the often ethnocentric judgement of contemporary European residents, and must also be modified with current knowledge of the extent and long-term effects of epidemic-related mortality during the nineteenth century. It is clear, however, that neither the ethnographic arguments within the Report nor the statistically-derived arguments of later
demographers\(^{33}\) can alone be accepted. The current understanding of fertility change gives more credence to social controls than did demographic theory twenty years ago. Furthermore, Lambert’s (1934:37) seemingly scoffing statement that the line of argument apparent in the Commission’s report and generally then current - that of lessened fertility with frequent miscarriage, deliberate abortion and infanticide - should have been supported by statistics, avoids the point that such information is much less accessible or amenable to statistical analysis than simple trends in births and deaths.

Evidence presented by the Corney Commission suggests that changing social practices over the later decades of the nineteenth century encouraged the birth rate to rise. Observers of Fijian society in the early nineteenth-century had suggested Fijian women were seldom prolific (Heath, 1975:60). Quite likely these observations were of the numbers of surviving children rather than of all children born. Nevertheless there is indirect evidence for low fertility in the probably quite small size of the precontact Fijian population in relation to natural resources (Pirie, 1976:5), and, more directly, in records of social practices which limited exposure to pregnancy such as polygamous marriages, the custom of men and women living separately, and the long duration of breast-feeding and post-partum sexual abstinence. Seemann (1862:191) reported that Fijians expressed surprise when told of a European family with ten children:

> When told that these children were born at annual intervals, and that such occurrences were common in Europe, they were very much shocked, and thought it explained sufficiently why so many white people were ‘mere shrimps’.

There were also more physical causes for low fertility, such as the chance that women would not survive through their reproductive years and, possibly, a high level of infertility. Blyth (1887:178) noted a few women did bear ten or eleven children, but the total number of children was limited by a high incidence of sterile marriages.

The desire to limit pregnancies, the Corney Commission heard, was fostered by the degradation, toil and slavery of women which turned their natural feelings against having more than two or three children.\(^{34}\) One official went beyond the usual condemnation of the time for contraceptive ‘concoctions’ and sympathetically remarked that

\(^{33}\) In particular, Lambert (1934) and McArthur (1958, 1967).

\(^{34}\) It was, however, suggested in ‘happier’ social conditions that Fijian women might have five or six children. Several European submissions claimed that where Fijian women had married men of other ethnicity, particularly European, they were more liable to have larger families (Corney et al. 1896:39) - but these observations were based on few cases and probably skewed by eurocentrism.
I believe that most women consider children a burden - an additional burden to the many that most already bear. They do all the hard work, carry all loads, dig the yams, carry water and firewood, etc. (KPC, 1904).

Blyth (1887:181) nevertheless attributed this limitation more to a cultural value:

Fijian women have a decided aversion to large families, and have a feeling of shame if they become pregnant too often, believing that those women who bear a large number of children are laughing-stocks to the community. Hence it would appear that Fijian women often induce abortion with the object of curtailing the number of their offspring; or if a woman believes that her present pregnancy has too quickly succeeded her previous one she deems it necessary to bring about abortion.

Europeans were, by the mores of their own society, culturally indisposed to believe that long periods of post-partum abstinence occurred, and therefore tended to focus upon the likelihood of abortion and contraception. Missionaries considered these practices to act against the sanctity of life, and preached against them. With their encouragement, contraceptives, abortion and infanticide were outlawed by the first regional governments in the early 1870s. Because of their particular interest, missionary reports of fertility control may exaggerate. More disinterested accounts are those of the botanist Berthold Seemann, David Blyth who served as a Government Medical Officer, and Basil Thomson, who spent many years in Fiji as a Magistrate and amateur anthropologist. Commenting on the high incidence of sterility, Blyth (1887:179) noted that Fijians considered sterility to be a self-induced condition of women, from drinking ‘the waters of barrenness’ (also Williams, 1858:180). Seemann (1862:342) reported five types of plants used to procure abortions, and Thomson (1908) described three mechanical methods of inducing abortion. Blyth (1887:180) also noted with amusement Fijian herbal contraceptives

35 Hunt (1988:406) supports this conclusion with evidence from the Belgian Congo.
36 The governments of King Cakobau (1871-1873) and the Chiefdom of Lau (1871-1873) preceded the establishment of British colonial government. The practices of contraception, abortion and infanticide were banned under Act 35 of the Government of Cakobau, July, 1872. Article 6 of this act stated: ‘It is forbidden to procure abortion and the punishment shall be not less than one year or more than five years and the parties who assist or instigate shall be considered equally guilty. Drinking the Medecier of Barrenness is alike punishable under this Clause.’ Similarly, Article 50 of the Constitution of the Chiefdom of Lau banned abortion: ‘Any pregnant woman procuring abortion by any means shall be sent to hard labour for two years. This law applies to all who may aid and abet.’
37 The plants reported by Seemann were Kalakalawaivisoni (Hibiscus diversifolius); Wakiwaki (Hibiscus abelmoschus); Wavuti (Pharbitus insularis); Siti (Grewia prunifolia); and Ti kula or Sili damadama (Dracaena ferrea). Thomson (1908) reported abortions deliberately induced through sau (a splinter or reed) being inserted into the cervix; and deliberately or accidentally induced by vakasilima - a digital examination of the vagina under water by a Fijian midwife; and bobo - a vigorous body massage.
which were taken ‘without any reference to the point in time which the coitus may bear to the menstrual period.’

It is clear from later reports that legal bans worked more against infanticide than against abortion or contraception. There is evidence in provincial council documents to support the case that abortion and means of contraception continued to be used, although these documents also point to draconian witch-hunts by colonial officials. For example, in December 1897 the Buli of Tavuki was called upon by the Kadavu District Council to explain the ‘shocking’ excess of deaths over births in his tikina (district). His first explanation of excess deaths from dysentery in the previous year was not accepted as sufficient. He then claimed it was apparent that many young women who ought to be bearing children were not, and the District Council appointed the matanivanua (spokesman) of the Roko and three turaga-ni-koro (village headmen) to call the young women together and enquire into the matter. They reported back to the Council that the women had said they did not wish to have children. The Roko’s matanivanua had then rebuked them and warned them that if they used any methods to prevent their pregnancies, they would be prosecuted before the Provincial Court, as such actions amounted to murder and God intended them to have children. Three of the women cautioned were three months later reported as pregnant, and the Roko, heartened by this success, stated that he intended to use the same method in future.

The Kadavu Provincial Council report of 1898 records how the Buli of Sanima prosecuted several couples for abortion, on the flimsy evidence that they were not producing children but presumably were fertile. The ‘very significant result’ was reported to be that they had all since produced children who were then alive. The Council heard of interrogations of other married couples, who admitted to drinking Fijian medicines as contraceptives, and the comment was recorded that ‘there was a tremendous amount of herb drinking in Fiji to this end’. In 1901 the Kadavu Provincial Council heard of an exceptionally high number of still-births and miscarriages in the tikina of Nakasaleka - ten out of the 38 pregnancies recorded in the previous year - and these were attributed to women avoiding maternity. Similarly in 1904, the Roko reported that 202 women on the island who had been married five years or more, had only one child, and allegations were

38 One such oral contraceptive was a combination of leaves and roots of the Roga and Samalo trees (Blyth, 1887:180). The roots were denuded of bark and then scraped. These scrapings and the bruised leaves were infused with cold water, strained, and drunk several hours after coitus. Blyth does not explain from which locality this recipe came. Parham (1972) lists no Samalo tree, but Samaloa (Melochia mollipila) found around Nadarivatu, and Semelo (Melochia degeneriana) found in Viti Levu, Ovalau, Naigani and Waya. There are several varieties of Pipturus known as Roga. More generally in Melanesia, Pirie (1976:8) notes the widespread traditions of chemicals used with intent to avoid pregnancy.

39 Macnaught (1982:15) provides examples from elsewhere in Fiji.
heard that women either prevented conception or caused abortion by drinking an infusion of the scraped barks of the moli (lemon) and baka (banyan) trees.40

However, by the 1890s the Corney Commission noted, evidence was that fertility levels were not low, but rather infant mortality levels were very high. During this last decade of the nineteenth century, the Fijian crude birth rate was around 35/1000, but infant mortality was recorded at almost a third of all births.41 The Commission concluded that the survival chances of infants were reduced by primitive birth practices, but more generally by women engaging in heavy work during or immediately after pregnancy, and by them neglecting their children for their chores (Corney et al. 1896: 371-5; 379, 387-9). In the eyes of European missionaries and administrators, the problems of Fijian women were compounded by their hereditary, low moral standards, their callous disregard for the needs of their infants, and their generally frivolous nature.42

2.2.4 The transformation of Fijian society

In their review of the European historical experience of declining fertility, Knodel and van der Walle (1979:219) propose that not only was family limitation very rarely practised in pre-transition populations, but the ‘very concept of family limitation was alien to the mentalities of much of the population in the pre-transition era.’ This chapter has presented evidence from as far back as the historical record can take us, that Fijian women limited their fertility through abstinence, more direct means of contraception, and abortion. The emergent change in mentality in the late nineteenth century was not related to child limitation, but to child counting. Where traditionally the emphasis was on child spacing, the Europeans emphasized that somehow it was the total number of children a woman had over her reproductive years that was significant. Some suggestion of this

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40 The population of Kadavu at this time was around 6750 (Sutherland, 1902). Against the evidence quoted here could be weighed illegitimacy rates calculated by the Methodist church, averaging 7.54 per cent of all births in Kadavu between 1898 and 1901. This rate might suggest that some women were sufficiently unaffected by public Christian morality, the threat of legal penalties, the availability of methods of abortion, or the alleged general distaste for motherhood. However, the Methodist Mission did not recognize marriages which had not been sanctified in the church, and this broader definition of illegitimacy may apply to these figures.

41 CSO 3273/1898. In 1893 deaths of infants less than one month old were calculated to constitute 27.2 per cent of all births, and deaths to infants aged over one month and less than one year to be 44.7 per cent of births. In 1897 these mortality rates were calculated at 9.3 per cent and 20.5 per cent respectively. Other evidence of high child mortality is provided by the Corney Commission (1894:23) which reported a survey undertaken of 448 families in twelve villages. Each couple produced 2.94 children on average, but only 1.51 children per couple survived to adulthood.

42 Recent research by Scheper-Hughes (1989) provides an insight into maternal attitudes in a situation of high infant mortality. What may appear to an outside observer as callous and irrational behaviour which works directly against child survival, may also be behaviour which protects the psychological state of survivors. Thus while children die, the community is able to survive.
quite separate view comes through in the following interview the Corney Commission (1896:43) recorded with an Adi Alisi (whose identity is not otherwise specified):

**Question:** Do the common people recognize the fact that they are decreasing in numbers?
**Adi Alisi:** I do not know. We eat and we sleep. We do not cast these things over in our minds as you do. If you ask me I cannot say that the commoners do. The most striking thing to us is that you strangers should interest yourselves in the matter, when you might be looking after your own affairs.

By the end of the nineteenth century, at least two generations within the Fijian population had experienced dramatic and often traumatic changes in their lifestyles and life chances. Traditions surrounding every-day life had been so transformed in fundamental ways that few then living could recall the roots of the changes. These changes included the adaptation of reproductive behaviour to a new social context, and a new consciousness about population trends. But what today might be interpreted as rapid social change, observers at the turn of this century viewed as the death throes of a people who were deemed to be members of a squalid and decaying society. Fijian cultural resilience and population trends in the twentieth century demonstrate just how wrong were the predictions of imminent extinction - but wrong or not, this interpretation constituted a powerful ingredient of the political ideology of the colonial period, providing the paradigm within which later demographic developments were interpreted.

### 2.3 Colonialism and capitalist expansion in the twentieth century

Historical studies of third world populations for some time have demonstrated that the conventions of the demographic transition are not readily applicable over universal experience. Rather, population changes are historical processes which vary from one period, one area, and one society to another (Cordell *et al.* 1987:15). However, describing the setting for a study of population change is itself dependent upon a wider explanation of societal change. These are mostly in some disarray, caused by the tensions between general theory, on one hand, and the confusing diversity of field situations on the other. Modernization theory - that developing countries would imitate the West - has become particularly tattered. The social and political realities of the 1980s discredited the argument dominant in the 1960s, that in order to succeed on the path to industrial modernity, developing countries would need to abandon all vestiges of 'backwardness', including their old social and cultural institutions and values. Structuralist theories have similarly required modification: some Marxist historians now argue that the central

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43 Basil Thomson, an English magistrate who had observed and recorded Fijian custom over many years entitled his major work 'The Fijians: A Study in the Decay of Customs' (1908). He was a member of the Corney Commission.
concepts of exploitation and articulation of modes of production cannot be applied
dogmatically or universally because in each place the processes of change have sprung
from specific preconditions (van Binsbergen and Geschiere, 1985:6). The expansion of
capitalism into traditional communities was never an automatic process, but involved
improvisation, experimentation, and sometimes coercive measures. Further, the
intertwining of old and new practices and contradictions contributed to a complex of
place-specific variations (Jolly and Macintyre, 1989:3; van Binsbergen and Geschiere,
1985:7).

One universal experience with capitalism was that its expansion was uneven,
setting in motion new dynamics of social and economic organisation. Over time and
space, this uneven development was manifested in a region's position at the core or on the
periphery of a global economy. These patterns of regional and local imbalances between
core and periphery are reflected in all aspects of social life, including regional diversity in
demographic processes. At a regional or national level, local zones of core and periphery
develop and transform. In nineteenth century Fiji, the eastern islands were the core of
trade and plantation activity. Around the turn of the century, the focus of the capitalist
economy moved to the main islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, initially attracted by
larger areas of land for expanding commercial agriculture. In the twentieth century the
eastern islands of Fiji are on the periphery of the national economy and at the far margins
of the international economy.

The relationships between social structures and capitalist development are indirect
and interactive - and complicated by other than economic changes. These relationships
are also strongly patterned by politics, ideology and culture, and by the opposition of
ideological hang-overs from earlier cultural traditions. The British colonial
government heavily influenced the manner by which Fijian society was incorporated into
the national and international political economy, by redefining Fijian ‘tradition’. Through the Fijian Administration, the colonial government reified a state-defined
orthodoxy regarding ‘the Fijian way of life’, articulating a neo-tradition which in
important ways conformed to introduced social values. This codification, standardisation
and enforcement of Fijian cultural categories by British colonialists inevitably invoked
social changes. Later sections of this chapter discuss the details of this official structure.
However, while this reconstructed tradition was, and to some degree remains, a powerful

44 The establishment of a colonial space economy in Fiji is described in detail by Bedford, 1988; and
Britton, 1980.
45 This view is supported by a number of writers, including Cancian et al., 1978; Cordell and Gregory,
46 The creation of the neotraditional order in Fiji is explained in detail by Clammer, 1973; France, 1969;
Macnaught, 1982; Sutherland, in press; Thomas, 1989a, 1989b, 1990. The late colonial view of British
administrators is best illustrated by Roth (1953), whose book was entitled ‘The Fijian Way of Life.’
paradigm by which to ‘explain’ Fijian society, ‘ordinary folk’ did not always behave in
the manner the European and Fijian elite considered they should. As Macnaught (1982:3)
explains in the introduction to his account of the Fijian colonial experience:

The colonial order devised and imposed new, very much simplified principles
of authority and territorial organisation which may or may not have meshed
with pre-existing sociopolitical realities. The resultant ambiguities, the
continuing interplay of local and colonial priorities, will often emerge in the
chapters that follow. But with the poverty of local and regional studies in
Fijian history and anthropology, there are severe limits...to the illumination of
local processes. The only solid framework of reference for the analysis of
Fijian affairs is that which Gordon and Thurston created, and which Fijians
rapidly made their own and defended tenaciously for a century as the bulwark
of their neotraditional identity, of everything that was still distinctively Fijian.

The importance of such social restructuration for this thesis is two-fold. First, in a number
of ways, the colonial order impinged upon the demographic processes of fertility,
mobility, and mortality. Beyond such direct effects as new rules governing marriages,
programmes directed at mortality, and incentives to promote fertility, the colonial system
acted upon processes of social change more indirectly. The precapitalist mode of
production - village subsistence agriculture - was deliberately maintained by the
government, and immigrant labourers provided much of the cheap labour that capitalist
enterprises demanded. Fijian workers were involved on a restricted scale and, while
workers circulated between the centres of capitalist activity and their villages, the village
remained the centre of social security, reproduction of the labour supply and production of
subsistence.47 The colonial order reinforced and substantiated a division between a Fijian
chiefly elite and commoners. More than any universal process of modernization, or any
intrinsic process of cultural change, the colonial order thereby helped define the Fijian
demographic regime. Secondly, as Clammer (1973:219) explains, the ideal of Fijian
‘tradition’ took a peculiar value of its own, a value of importance to the colonial elite of
Europeans and Fijians. We shall return to this second idea later in this thesis, to
understand the political context in which fertility-related policy was designed. The theme
running behind this chapter is, therefore, that of the progress of historicity, rather than
history: of the present defining the future and redefining the past. Clammer (1973:219)
states:

Fijian tradition has been transformed by the Colonial regime, and since the
late nineteenth century Fijian society has been in the process of being
transformed itself to fit this new image of ‘traditionalism’, and this process is
not yet complete, and one hopes it never will be.

47 This process is described in more detail by Bedford, 1984, 1988.
2.3.1 The Fijian Administration

The conclusion of the Corney Commission, which might be paraphrased to declare that Fijian society was rotten from within, fitted well with the colonial government's agenda. From its beginning, the colonial government had determined to address the decline in the Fijian population with the expansion of the modern apparatus of the State, with its system of public order and its enlightened sanitary answers to the ills of Fijian society. After the measles epidemic of 1875, and determined to counter the demands of the settler community for plantation labour, the colonial government had decided that if there were to be any chance of Fijian survival, they should remain in their villages, living in their traditional manner, under the control of their own chiefs, and cultivating their own lands. The keystone of these policies was the retention of Fijian land-ownership, which prevented the massive dislocation of people and their cultural identity, and constrained the dissolution of the precapitalist form of production. This system of governance over Fijian communities was extended in the 1880s and 1890s by successive governors, and substantially directed the lives of Fijians through the twentieth century. The Fijian Administration was formally dismantled in the late 1960s, prior to national Independence, but by then these regulations had so defined village life that many live on as 'tradition'.

By this system, Fiji was divided into provinces, some of which were congruent with the old native states, and each province subdivided into *tikina*, consisting of a number of villages. Each village had its *turaga-ni-koro*, with a *Buli* in charge of each *tikina* and a *Roko Tui* in charge of each province. The sentiments behind this system of governance were described by Governor Garvey in 1953 - in a manner that did more than justice to the colonial system - as an:

> endeavour to administer the Fijian people, whom we hold in such regard and affection, in an enlightened and understanding way. The intrinsic gift they have given our Colonial Government in return is an unbounding trust in our ability to steer them through their period of transition until they reach their haven of maturity after which all virile races strive (in Roth, 1953:viii).

The colonial myth which Governor Garvey here perpetuates is that the Fijian Administration provided a quiet backwater in which Fijians could shelter from capitalist forces until ready to emerge into the economic realities of twentieth century (Sutherland, in press:23). Sutherland criticises this view of a benevolent and separate administration,

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48 Frank and McNicoll (1987:229) suggest that the description of a specific demographic regime needs to face the challenge of 'alternative histories', questioning whether a specific outcome was an inevitable consequence of local cultural evolution, colonial histories and political exigencies. To a limited degree this is possible in the case of Fiji. Even within the South Pacific, Fijian history differs from that of some of its neighbours in the degree to which the colonial government promoted land-rights, cultural identity, and political status. To this extent, sad alternative histories might be found to the immediate north, for native Hawaiians, west for Australian Aborigines, and south for New Zealand Maoris.
arguing that this system of governance was neither truly capable of nor intended to shelter Fijian society, but rather determined the nature of Fijian integration into the national economy.

Through the Fijian Regulations, Fijian society was legally defined as a patriarchial, patrimonial system, with at its apex the patriarch of them all, the stern but kindly colonial Governor - thereby confirming a sexual as well as a racial order. It also promoted a class-defined order, differentiating between the opportunities extended to those of chiefly and commoner status.49 Those of chiefly birth were to be the undisputed aristocracy, the thinkers, the overseers and potential administrators of their race’s development, thereby enhancing traditional authority with administrative status. The commoners were seen generally as fit only for manual work, to be largely confined to their own districts, and educated to these ends.50

In an ostensibly magnanimous manner, therefore, colonial control of the Fijian population was consolidated and promoted. The Fijian Administration was directed by regulations specific to Fijian people51 and officially justified as an attempt to control their lives in a manner which maintained traditional social institutions yet gradually reoriented the society into line with the ‘modern’ world, and its ideals of individualism and democracy. As the 1906 Kadavu Provincial Council Report (KPC, 1906) explained, ‘they require legislation to protect themselves against themselves’.

The regulations reached into almost every aspect of daily life. They defined the legal powers of the nominated Fijian political order and its hierarchy of Fijian officials, and detailed the relationship these officials would have with the colonial government and their duties and privileges in Fijian society. The regulations provided the economic order of Fijian society, most directly defining the amounts of taxation Fijian men were to pay and the means by which these taxes were to be raised, in an attempt to promote the communal nature of Fijian village society and its subsistence economy. They also placed restrictions on Fijian customs considered detrimental to their economic advancement, such as limitations upon the quantities of goods which could be ceremonially exchanged, and the amount of traditional goods each household must maintain for their practical use.52

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49 This is not to claim that this sexual and class order was new, but rather that these power bases were strengthened in the colonial order.
50 Eg. Governor Im Thurn, CP 30, 1908.
51 Similar legal systems bounded the lives of other ethnic groups indigenous to the South Pacific and resident in Fiji. The Rotuma Act (1927) governed Rotumans living on Rotuma, and the Rabi Island Regulations (1957) governed the lives of Banabans living on Rabi Island. These last regulations were formulated at the request of Banahan leaders. Rotumans and Banabans living elsewhere in Fiji were subject to general Fiji law (Pulca, 1986:8).
52 For example, kerekere (traditional requests for goods or aid which could not be refused) was considered almost diabolical by colonial officials, and contrary to any efforts to promote the economic advancement of Fijians. Similarly, solevu (customary exchanges of goods) which are of considerable community importance to Fijians, were considered by the colonial government to waste manpower and food and also to promote
Other regulations concerned public health and community order, such as requirements for the registration of births and deaths, the obligations of *turaga-ni-koro* and *turaga-ni-mataqali* to reprimand the parents of neglected children, the work pregnant women should do; the construction of village latrines; the design of Fijian dwelling houses and the layout of villages; regulations against Fijian medicine and witchcraft; and restrictions against people sleeping at night in their kitchens. The social position and rights of women were also circumscribed by the regulations, with controls being placed particularly on their mobility.

It is important here to note the extent to which the colonial government concerned itself with sexual practices and family formation, attempting to regulate when and with whom people should reproduce. In this manner the official institution of British law influenced Fijian family structure and domestic relations, creating a complex mosaic of local requirements and imported practices. A number of regulations and their amendments concerned legal punishments for adultery and abortion, licence fees and conditions for marriage and divorce, and new requirements for adoption. They introduced new criteria for acceptable marriage partners based on age and European categories of permissible consanguinity, and established new definitions of illegitimacy.

Government regulations are not necessarily immediately, nor necessarily ever, effective in changing the way people live, and degrees of covert and overt non-compliance is evident in the frustrations recorded by colonial officers in departmental minutes and Provincial Council reports. Through the early decades of the twentieth century Fijian society was perceived to be passing through a dangerous transition, but colonial officials continually complained that they could never make these people really care. Nevertheless, over the generations this new order was substantiated with assistance from government media, the church, the education system, and the local elite. While ambiguities and interplay continued between new and older forms of ‘tradition’, the colonial overlay eventually sank into the body of Fijian society, and assisted its reconstitution.

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53 This was not peculiar to the Fiji colonial government, but a popular preoccupation of colonial governments in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (eg. Hunt (1988) describing Belgian Congo). Pulea (1986) discusses this with regard to South Pacific countries.

54 For example, regulations forbade marriage brokers from accepting payments (*duguci-ni-yalewa*) or couples cohabiting before marriage (*vakatevoro*), and required fathers of illegitimate children to pay maintenance.
2.3.2. The Fijian village and communal life

The majority of Fijian people, the Fijian Regulations stipulated, were to spend their lives as villagers on their communal lands. This indeed was largely what happened, up until the Fijian Administration was disbanded in the late 1960s and the pace of social change through Fiji later accelerated. Throughout its rule, the colonial government stressed the communal nature of village life and exploited community systems of labour sharing and pooling. The intrinsic communality of Fijian 'traditional' life was a central tenet of colonial mythology. Clammer (1973:211) describes the 'colonial "communal" thesis' as resting on two flimsy premises: that all land was owned in common by a mataqali and that labour was organised communally to work this land. Rather, Clammer suggests, communal labour was never traditionally the normal organisation of manpower but was employed for specific and limited purposes, and always on a reciprocal basis. Clammer (1973:212) goes on to note:

The Native Regulations nevertheless succeeded in enshrining the dogma of communalism as a traditional form of organisation. Subsequent debates on the evils of communalism, either relating to its crippling effects on attempts to foster economic progress by way of individualism or in deploring its effects on the declining native population were thus at a further remove from reality.

Yet this debate over the opposed values of communalism and individualism dominated official discussion of Fijian social change throughout the colonial period. Government administrators generally promoted the colonial order as an ideal social state for Fijians.55 Other commentators assumed that traditional society was an obstacle to change and that secular capitalism was preferable (Overton, 1989:6).56 Over time the general view prevailed within the government that Fijians should become more individualistic and less communal, and the official shackles on individual enterprise should be lifted. This view, growing Fijian dissatisfaction with administrative constraints, and the imminence of national independence, were instrumental in the disbandment of the Fijian Administration in 1967. Although there was no immediate social upheaval and outwardly Fijian village life retained many of its characteristics, the pace of social and economic change accelerated after this event.

This manner of Fijian incorporation into the national and international political economy directly influenced both social dynamics and population processes. The village system promoted high fertility through the economic dependence of women, local

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55 Somewhat idealised pictures of Fijian village society are provided by Nayacakalou, 1978; Roth, 1953; and Sukuna, in Scarr, 1983.
56 Apart from many such statements in the Fiji Times and Pacific Islands Monthly of that time, this conclusion was supported by the works of Belshaw, 1964; Roth, 1953; Spate, 1959; Ward, 1965; and Watters, 1969.
demands for labour (such as the village work programmes, provincial taxes and other monetary demands) and the movement of people out of the village largely in response to national demands for labour. This situation was not peculiar to Fiji; the pronatalist effects induced by policies of colonial administrations or other capitalist pressures have been widely documented, as, for example, by Geertz, 1963, for Indonesia; generally by Polgar, 1972; Mamdani, 1971, for India; de Janvry, 1981, for South America; O’Brien, 1987, for the Sudan; and Cordell et al., 1987, generally for Africa. Like colonial regimes elsewhere, the government of Fiji promoted reproduction in the villages, and as social identity and social consciousness continued to be focused on the village, high fertility remained a central value. For example, disappointed at the numbers of births they could report for their districts in some years, provincial officials in Kadavu pointed to the absence from the island of many of the young men. Their concern took in only part of the picture, however; from around the 1930s until recently, the impact of relatively high fertility has been partially deflected from rural communities by the movement of people to work and residence elsewhere in Fiji.

2.3.3 Public health and public order
From its earliest days the colonial government had defined as its moral imperative the need to arrest the decline in population and, in particular, the very high infant and child mortality. To this end, government officers insisted on village sanitation and the promotion of public education regarding family and community hygiene. This common cause throughout the colonial empires of that time had particular political significance in Fiji, because special interest groups of European settlers used the decline of indigenous population to fuel their opposition to colonial policy.57 The Corney Commission had concluded that this decline was largely due to preventable disease, and many of the public health programmes initiated in the 1890s were developed through the twentieth century. Colonial officers worried over how to contain outbreaks of typhoid, measles, whooping cough and influenza, how to maintain the continuous struggle against tuberculosis, filariasis and tropical ulcers, and how to counter local traditions which promoted the infection of children with coko (yaws). The neglect of children which resulted in their illness or death, carried legal penalties. The chief, indirect causes of Fijian deaths had been identified as bad houses, insufficient food, uncleanliness of towns, and foul water, and the neglect of women, children and the sick which were relatively straightforward matters to clean up if only the ‘dismayed Fijian’ would not give up the fight and ‘sink

57 This is explained in more detail by Macnaught, 1982:13. Some European settlers suggested the Fijians should be cleared out of their way as indigenous peoples had been in Australia and New Zealand.
under the invasion of a thousand different diseases for which he [was] not prepared’ (Rougier, 1923, cited in McDonald, 1959:72).

The public health campaign centred early on inoculation programmes and changing living conditions, by legislating against overcrowding (and in the process redefining the household), insisting on improved house construction and ventilation, and sending inspectors against dirty living conditions. Before a couple married a house should be built for them, preferably with a bedroom complete with beds curtained off from the living area and a separate kitchen outside, so they could live together with their future children in a ‘correct’ family manner. Where government officials considered villages to be in unhealthy or inconvenient sites they were required to move to nominated locations. Small hamlets were amalgamated to prevent inbreeding and give the possibility of ‘proper’ communal life. Community water supplies were to be upgraded, and village hygiene ideally improved through the construction of village latrines, cutting grass and banning animals from village compounds. Other public health programmes were directed at improving infant welfare and clearing the endemic yaws, skin diseases and hookworm, which were considered to generally debilitate the population.

The forces of legislative action and colonial scorn were brought to bear on the preference shown by Fijians for native remedies over European ones, but this was for long an uphill struggle. Medicine was to be the proper domain of Europeans, and true vuniwai (doctors) were those trained in European medicine and licensed by the state. Beyond requiring government-appointed officers, such as Bulis or turaga-ni-koro to act as virtual public-health inspectors, an early innovation in Fiji was the training of local medicos (Native Medical Practitioners) and native nurses. From 1886 Native Medical Practitioners were trained to assist with general health work and from 1906 Native Obstetric Nurses were trained to advance maternal and infant care, particularly to work against the bui-ni-gone (traditional midwives) and the strong resistance to European birth methods, and to encourage women to give birth in hospital.

While traditional practitioners were disqualified in the new order, their medical tradition certainly did continue, somewhat clandestinely. The Kadavu District Medical

58 For example, in 1911 the ten people of Nalake joined the village of Namara, the Kadavu Provincial Council’s report noting that ‘obviously communal life in so small a community was impossible except under conditions indisputably undesirable’ - referring in part to the likelihood of marriage between close kin. In 1915 the village of Kama was moved to Muonisolo.
59 Janzen (1978) and Manderson (1989), respectively, describe similar suppression of African medicine by Belgian colonialists, and Malay systems of health care by British colonialists.
60 The intake of nurses was initially small: by 1920 only 100 girls had been trained, and by 1931 there were only 53 nurses working throughout Fiji (Anderson, 1931). At first, few lasted long at their jobs - caught as they no doubt were in the social politics surrounding the two medical paradigms.
61 The Native Regulation Act prohibiting the practice of ‘unauthorized’ medical treatment (traditional medicine) was abolished in 1966 along with other Fijian Regulations (Waqavonovono, 1980:22). Today, under the new fashion of primary health care, traditional medical practitioners are considered with some
Officer in 1912 bemoaned ‘local ignorance and addiction to native remedies and native quackery’ claiming that ‘the deliberate and wilful neglect to seek European medical aid caused the deaths of no less than eleven children from whooping cough alone’ (CP 28, 1912:24). Although colonial officers and other observers continued to express despair at effecting change, the Fijian crude death rate fell decidedly in the early twentieth century, from around 50/1000 in the 1890s to around 18-20/1000 in 1938 (Lambert, 1938:5) (Figure 2.1).

The efficacy of European medicine improved markedly after the introduction of salvarsan in 1909, sulfonamides in 1935, and the widespread use of penicillin after 1945 (Manning, 1985:100). Fijian acceptance of European cures rose as the medicines improved, with the successes of campaigns to eradicate yaws and hookworm, and as this new lore was "nativized" by the Fijian medics (Manning, 1985:100). Generally, however, traditional health care practices persist where they meet specific needs (Browner, 1989:466) - and in Fijian communities this has included reproductive health - and where access to official medical services is limited.

Villagers in the district mainly discussed in the following chapters, recounted that they also benefited from the diffusion of Fijian cures - these incorrectly termed ‘traditional’ for they were not always previously known in these communities. Along with tolerance, although where their practices are allegedly related to sorcery (drau-ni-kau) they are prosecuted severely and their clients publicly embarrassed.

Figure 2.1 Fijian mortality change, 1894-1986

with medical knowledge brought by the European-trained doctors on their tours of the
district, dispensed by district-based nurses, or absorbed by people during their visits to the
provincial hospital, has come knowledge of cures known to other communities, and
brought by visitors or people returning from other districts. The following interview
transcript illustrates these changes:

Children were very healthy then [in the 1940s when her children were young].
None of our children were sickly, they never got serious diseases. Only one
got very sick, Salote, and had to go to hospital in Vunisea.

Did more children die in the past or this time?
Oh, plenty died in those old times.

Why?
Because it was so difficult. There was no transport to the hospital and no
motor. They were looked after Fijian style and they died. The cuqa (fever)
killed many children. It still happens today but today they live. Now they
know the medicine. Salote had the cuqa and we walked carrying her to
Vunisea [a distance of six miles]. She was about two years old or one and a
half years.

Did you try Fijian medicine at that time?
Today they have traditional medicine for cuqa. We didn’t know any medicine
for cuqa in the past. We didn’t know any cure. Like today some people come
from Viti Levu and know the cure for cuqa. Now when children get sick we
don’t send them to hospital but give them the Fijian cure (Marica, Namara).

Efforts to improve child welfare were especially important in Fijian demographic
change because they helped modify infant mortality, and because they contributed to the
political interpretation of population dynamics and pronatalist pressures. In the fight
against disease and infant deaths, colonial officials believed that the most intractable
problem was the Fijian women who, left to their own instincts, made bad wives and worse
mothers.62 The Corney Commission (1896:44) had summarised a popular European
view:

The ancient custom of heathen time seemed to have recognized this lacuna in
the female character...But on the decay of heathen authority the Fijian mother
found herself thrown upon her own responsibility. She had been a mere wheel
in a machine compelled to move in its own orbit: she was now an independent
intelligence free to move as she would. She who had been allowed neither
choice nor responsibility, had now to choose between good and evil, between
industry and indolence, and between levity and seriousness. Born without the
tie of deep affections, she was suddenly called upon to develop a sense of duty
and a spirit of self-sacrifice to take the place of customs that had cramped her
moral development for ages. The process was an inevitable result of the
introduction of Christianity. It would be strange if a work fraught with so
much good should have been accomplished without bringing some qualifying
evil in its train, seeing how sudden and subversive a change it wrought in the
habits of the people.

62 In other parts of the world, government officials reached a similar conclusion - as for example in Japan
(Smith, 1983), Malaya (Manderson, 1987), and the Belgian Congo (Hunt, 1988).
By the 1930s the rhetoric had been moderated, but still the conventional view related infant mortality to the lack of responsibility women showed to the care of small children. Scores of Fijian infants could be saved, it was commonly believed, if there were a stronger appreciation by Fijian mothers of the responsibilities of married life (Roth, 1953:81). But if the colonial conception of Fijian society had not so under-rated the social role of Fijian women, there might have been a better understanding of why they were a little slow to adapt to the European model of the ideal housewife and child minder.

Beyond maternal neglect and ignorance, other alleged causes of infant deaths included traditional birthing practices, infant feeding and poor diet, and the continuing reluctance of Fijians to use hospitals and European medicine. From early this century the government made efforts to change these practices and, in 1928, the Native Department began a Native Child Welfare programme to work towards reducing mortality amongst children under five years. Initially, the programme was conducted in villages accessible by road from the towns and directed by European women volunteers who paid periodic visits. Women’s Committees were formed in each village, usually comprising the wives of chiefs and government officials, who inspected village children each day for cleanliness and health. By the mid-1930s this largely voluntary effort had apparently failed to substantially lower child mortality. Epidemics of mumps, influenza, measles, dysentery and whooping cough throughout Fiji in 1936 focused public attention upon infant and child mortality, the apparent failure of government efforts to reduce this and, particularly, a large differential between Fijian and Indian infant mortality (Figure 2.2). Control later passed to the Department of Health which expanded the programme into other districts with trained Fijian nurses and, while a series of public articles claimed the Medical Department exaggerated its success in reducing Fijian infant mortality, the programme was an important agent in the reduction of infant and child mortality in the late 1930s and 1940s (Manning, 1985:178).

A central problem in evaluating the changes and their possible causes was collecting reliable infant mortality data, but contemporary difficulties of assessing what

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63 Referring to a comparable situation in Malaya, Manderson (1987:263) noted how government reports routinely deflected the blame for high infant mortality away from the government or formal programmes towards local women, especially midwives and mothers.

64 Eg Fiji Times editorial October 20, 1937; Pacific Islands Monthly, August 1940.

65 Regulations requiring turaga-ni-koro and buli to report all Fijian infant deaths were generally observed but carried small penalties for defaulters, and the figures collated by the Register-General were undercounted. The apparent increase in Fijian infant deaths in the mid-1930s could in part be attributed to improved surveillance, and the much commented upon excess of Fijian infant deaths compared with Indian rates was exaggerated by less reliable Indian death registrations. The Child Welfare Scheme itself failed to provide information which justified its activities, and it is not possible from its reports to compare infant mortality in districts where the scheme was in force and districts where it was not. When the Colonial
was truly going on did little to spoil the heated public debate over Fijian child welfare nor temper its political themes - prominent among which was concern over the political future of a weakened, if not dying, race now facing competition from Asian immigrants. The political nature of this public concern is clear if one considers that Fijian infant mortality since the turn of the century had declined from 400-500/1000 to around 100/1000, and although the number of deaths of Fijian children aged under five still exceeded the total number of deaths of Indians of all ages, the Fijian infant mortality rate was amongst the lowest for any of the British colonies at that time (CSO F50/34/2, 1934).

Figure 2.2 Infant mortality rates by main ethnic groups in Fiji, 1925-1980

Fijian infant mortality also focused attention on social changes related to Fijian fertility behaviour. A proportion of infant deaths was attributed to the increased number

Secretary in 1938 requested Fijian and Indian infant mortality figures by province over the past ten years, he was told this information would involve reference to around 190 provincial council reports. 66 Quoted in the Fiji Times, October 26, 1937.
of Fijian illegitimate births associated with looser social controls over women. The Methodist Mission's evidence supported the view generally held by government officers, that these children were at risk of neglect. This neglect was particularly expected where the child's father was known to be of a rival mataqali, but was generally because of the moral stigma and legal penalties attached to illegitimate births. Furthermore, without a husband's help, a single mother had to work considerably harder to support herself and her child, increasing the likelihood of its neglect. One contemporary estimate was that the Fijian crude death rate could be reduced from 23.08/1000 to about 16/1000 if the excessive mortality of illegitimate children was reduced to the mortality levels of legitimate births. Consideration was given to lowering the legal minimum age for marriage from eighteen years for Fijian girls; in the five decades to the 1930s the recession of the average female age at marriage from around seventeen years to 25 years had in itself probably increased illegitimacy rates. After some discussion among government departments it was decided that lowering the female age of legal marriage without parental consent would have little effect, as few marriages were contracted without such consent.

2.3.4 The monetization of Fijian society

As money spreads into traditional communities it provides a new means of mediating and organising power relations within the community, and a new way whereby which the state can exercise control over the community. Commonly, the adoption of money produces a restructuring within the community - according to gender, to status or class, and to age-group (Jewsiewicki, 1987:276). Regulations on the mobility and activity of women largely exclude them from the means of gaining money, and their traditional power base is thereby contracted. As young men are usually sent out as labour, a generational gap may grow between the young with money and the old with traditional power, although in later generations this gap may diminish as the veterans of colonial service are pensioned off to

67 The problem of relating illegitimacy rates directly to infant mortality rates was noted by some government officials. Some births recorded as illegitimate were to women in de facto relationships, the number of which reflected in part legal requirements for marriage and difficulties for Fijian divorce. The Secretary of Native Affairs noted in 1938 that no Fijian divorces had been granted for the previous two years (CSO 50/34/2). Children born of de facto marriages were at much less risk of dying than those born to women outside established relationships.

68 Compared to my field data this appears a strong exaggeration, but the Church probably took a legalistic definition of marriage, recording children of unregistered marriages as illegitimate.

69 Dr. Hoodless, Principal of the Central Medical School 1936 (CSO F50/34/2).

70 Hoodless, 1936 (CSO F50/34/2). This alleged rise in average age at marriage was considerably exaggerated (see Figure 6.1).
retire as village leaders. State control over the community is exercised through demands for labour or produce in the form of taxes.

While the monetization of Fijian society dates back to the introduction of world capitalism in the nineteenth century, the tensions between protecting a communal system and promoting individual economic initiative grew as the twentieth century progressed. A decline in the number of tax-payers, due to the number of men absent (most often temporarily) from their villages, increased financial burdens on those who stayed. By the 1920 and 1930s, Bulis in Kadavu regularly complained of the difficulties of carrying out communal works and paying provincial taxes because many young village men were away at school, at work in other districts, or ‘misguidedly go[ne] to Suva under the impression that it is a veritable El Dorado’ (KPC, December 1930). The colonial government’s encouragement of the ‘evolution’ of communalism to produce individual economic initiative was intended to be slow, and government officials attempted to intervene where the people demonstrated by their mobility an inclination towards more rapid social and economic change. Noting an increased number of applications for exemption from communal work, the Kadavu Provincial Council report of 1929 observed:

The process of evolving from the communal state must be very gradual and can only come through practical education and the realisation by the people that they must take an active part in the development of their lands and follow the March of Progress.

Where exemptions from village life were approved, these men and their families gained a degree of independence from communal economic demands. They were, however, required to pay a fee each year as compensation to their villages for the loss of their services. The contradictions between policies which, on one hand, attempted to contain Fijian society in a ‘traditional’ state, and those which, on the other hand, promoted economic changes were demonstrated as community and individual needs for money increased rapidly - as people needed to pay taxes and other government fees, pay for the construction of village churches and schools, satisfy church demands for money, build houses from imported materials, and satisfy new tastes for imported goods and foods.

71 There are local variations of such changes. For example, in the highlands of Papua New Guinea it was the older men who went first to work. Where cash crops begin to provide cash, it may be the young who are excluded and lose their expected roles (G. Ward, pers. comm.). The point remains that fundamental social differentiation is likely.

72 In 1904, for example, there were 1849 tax-payers in Kadavu, required to raise £1404/10/0 as provincial taxation; in 1930 the 1290 tax-payers were to raise £1161/10/0.

73 Kadavu Provincial Council Report.

74 At least this was the conventional understanding. However, village and kin ties commonly overlap, and the independent residence of galala did not necessarily imply financial ties of obligation were severed. The European view of village life wavered between an unduly idyllic vision of a care-free life, or an unduly negative one of frustrating and overwhelming communal demands.
Provincial rates alone were relatively steep; the Kadavu Provincial Council in 1935 noted that, as in most districts, people were also maintaining village or district schools, paying *turaga-ni-koro*, and had other calls on their pockets, in proportion to their wealth Fijians were quite heavily taxed. In that year at the Provincial Council meeting (KPC, 1935):

In each instance the *Buli* exculpated himself from all blame for the backwardness displayed in the collection of taxes and rates, and also used as an excuse for the lack of adequate housebuilding, in many instances, the fact that the male population of this district was absent trying to get money for taxes and rates.

Colonial officials blamed the numbers of absentees but, ironically, the tax demands were a prime motivation for people to look for money wherever they could in Fiji, and the poor quality of local public services funded by provincial taxes - particularly education - further stimulated movement from provinces at the periphery to the national economic centre of Suva and its environs.

Despite the many colonial regulations intended to restrict female mobility, women also moved about, although not as independently nor to the same extent as men. Some of the earliest Fijian regulations prohibited women absenting themselves from their homes, but some non-compliance with such controls is reflected in the frustrations expressed over the years by Fijian leaders in local councils and the escalation of penalties. The intention behind these regulations was clearly to limit female access to the monetary economy, insisting on their domestic role in rural society. This coincided with, and was reinforced by, their virtual exclusion from advanced education and political authority. However, while women remain less mobile than men, their numbers in the work force and participation in education have grown substantially in recent decades and particularly in the post-colonial period (Figures 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5).

Urbanisation generally features in accounts of social change: towns and cities are seen as the main locus for the introduction of new ideas and ways of doing things, and urban life as a sufficient force to break traditional values. In recent years this view has been modified by the clearer understanding of the process of urbanisation in much of the Third World, where the city is a temporary home to many otherwise rural people. The urban population of Fijians has grown steadily throughout the twentieth century (Figure 2.6).

### 2.3.5 Education

Fijian people received basic education in literacy and numeracy early through mission-run village schools. In 1857, Methodist missionaries established a teacher-training institute whose graduates established village schools to teach people to read the Bible in Fijian.
Figure 2.3  Economically active Fijian women, by Industry, 1966-1986

(I) 1966

Source: Fiji Census, 1966, Table 18b.

(II) 1976

Source: Fiji Census, 1976, Table 38.

(III) 1986

Source: Fiji Census, 1986, Table 5. Volume 2

Note: The marked increase in numbers of women employed in agriculture is in part an artifact of improved measurement of women's economic activity.
Figure 2.4 Rates of participation in the labour force outside of agriculture, for Fijian women, by birth cohort

Source: Fiji Census, 1966, Table 18b,
Fiji Census, 1976, Table 38;
Figure 2.5  Educational attainment of Fijians, 1946-1986

Although the teachers themselves had only rudimentary education, literacy quite quickly became widespread. In 1887, Governor Gordon reported:

I have visited a great number of schools in Fiji and must say I have been greatly struck by their efficiency. A very large proportion of the natives read and write. Nor is this a mere knowledge or skill. They are extremely fond of writing to each other and the amount of native correspondence would greatly surprise those who are inclined to sneer at native progress (Quoted in Lewis-Jones, 1959:115).

Infant schools were run for children under nine years, juvenile schools for children up to twelve years of age, and further education at the larger mission schools given to promising boys and later to girls. By 1888, 1824 day schools had been established in villages throughout Fiji, with 2517 teachers and 41077 enrolled students (Fiji Government, Blue Book, 1887:15). Native Regulation 1 of 1891 made education compulsory for Fijian children aged between six and fourteen, and parents who neglected to send their children to school faced fines or imprisonment, although no real enforcement was made. The first Government post-primary school for Fijian boys was opened in 1881. The Queen Victoria School opened in 1906, paid for by Fijian provincial contributions and the Council of Chiefs. By the 1930s, provincial schools had been established to provide upper-primary education for boys of rank and ability.

The education system in the early decades of the twentieth century focused on improving this upper layer of schools while neglecting primary education, to the disadvantage of rural children and girls in general. Up to the 1930s, the Methodist Church slowly withdrew from its village schools and concentrated on developing larger regional schools. In 1931 primary education at the village level became the responsibility of local communities aided by the government, but it suffered through poor funding, heavy demands upon often poorly qualified teachers, and isolation. This promoted spatial variations in the quality of educational facilities, with the best in Suva and Lautoka, followed by other urban centres on Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, and often rudimentary facilities and poor standards in the rural schools. The social demand for education rose steadily, but access was limited.

The school system did a great deal to reinforce the class distinction between chiefs and commoners. Commoner children received basic education in their own districts, with often ill-trained teachers and few opportunities to practice their reading skills beyond local church meetings. Children of chiefly status and a few able commoners - most often boys - were taken out of their childhood environments for advanced education and groomed to be clerks or administrators in the colonial government, or officials in the church. As the educated Fijian elite was channelled into careers where they were less likely to compete with Europeans, the education system promoted an aristocracy with limited functions
rather than a cadre of skilled professionals. The system also discriminated between the opportunities afforded boys and girls. Although there were around three-quarters as many Fijian girls as boys at school in the early 1940s (CP 11, 1942), proportionately fewer girls advanced beyond primary school.75

2.4 **Social and economic change in post-war Fiji**

The Second World War marked a watershed in the recent history of Fiji, for it stimulated the pace of economic and social change. Fijian soldiers fought against the Japanese in the Solomons, others were stationed in Suva, and many of their wives and children spent the duration of the war in towns. Village men from each *tikina* were sent on rosters to build facilities for the increased air and sea traffic and the large numbers of American and other Allied troops stationed in Fiji. The said European town of Suva woke to the carousing of soldiers and young Fijians (*Pacific Island Monthly*, November 1944). After the war, Fijian soldiers were demobilised and encouraged to return to their villages, but some elected to remain in town, or went to work elsewhere. Even before the end of the war, Roth (1944) had noted the increased participation of Fijian villagers in economic activities, changes in diet, decline in the standard of village housing with the increased use of imported materials such as corrugated iron76, less care generally being given to ceremonial detail, and more anti-social behaviour connected with increased contact with urban lifestyles. Rising individual aspirations, the increased monetarization of the economy, exposure to new lifestyles and the increased availability and demand for Western goods, were reflected in a burgeoning Fijian urban population and increased tensions between the ways of money and custom.

While there had long been a small number of Fijians living in town, the numbers of urban Fijians increased markedly after the Second World War (Figure 2.6).77 As cheap, tenement housing was cleared from central Suva a number of Fijian settlements

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75 Of the 28 Fijians at secondary schools in 1944, only four were girls. It is interesting to note that the total number of girls at secondary school in that year was 29, of which the rest were all European, with no Chinese or Indian girls attending (Whitehead, 1981:38).

76 The number of iron-roofed houses was very high in some provinces much earlier, such as in Lau by the 1920s. This was seen by 'traditionalists' such as Roth as a decline in village conditions but by others (eg Spate) and certainly the people who laboured long to pay for it, as a great improvement in housing conditions.

77 In a social survey of Suva in 1959, more than half of the household heads interviewed had lived there for ten years, and around sixteen per cent had lived in Suva for 25 years or more (Vunivalu and Verrier, 1959:13). This pattern was partially confirmed by Nayacakalou in 1963, in his report of third generation Fijian families living in Suva. However, census and survey figures of urban residents are difficult to interpret for, until recently, there was little appreciation of the transience of sections of this urban population.
Figure 2.6 Urbanization, 1956-1986

(a) Of the Fijian population

(b) Of the total Fiji population

grew around the urban periphery, and these commonly were occupied by people from the same villages or provinces. Still today, people go to Suva on ‘holiday’, find a job and stay as long as it lasts, or stay on extended visits with urban relatives. Networks of kin connect people with jobs, spread news of village celebrations and requirements, and participate in oga (traditional ceremonies). Such kin networks function as social insurance for those unemployed or in financial difficulty, situations that underskilled urban dwellers are likely to face.

By the 1950s there was a growing awareness of the opportunities education offered for social and economic mobility and this was actively promoted by the media - as in the many optimistic reports that the Fiji Times carried of the successes of Fijian students, particularly the elite who went overseas for tertiary education. However, by 1953 most children still left after four years of primary school. Greater attention was paid to primary education following a government study in 1955, but village schools remained of a variable, though often poor, standard until well after Independence in 1971. Few rural parents were able to raise the boarding fees necessary for their children to attend secondary school elsewhere. The four or five years most rural children spent at school provided little more than a rudimentary literacy and numeracy, and limited chances beyond the village. By the 1960s, the implications of this had become apparent to at least some. In criticising the Fijian Regulations, a Fijian writer to the Fiji Times in 1961 observed:

The Fijian people are confused, as if with a mattress on their heads, and all they can think of is - perhaps if we can elect our own members something can be done to remove this load...Where, however, can we find the leaders that we want? Here we see how the Fijian people have been, as a result of mistaken Government policy, allowed to fall behind for the last thirty or forty years. How recently are efforts being made to train our people for engineers, lawyers, accountants, electricians and above all as highly trained teachers? These people are the real essentials for Fijian progress today, and their numbers are nothing compared with other races (K.L. Matatolu, Fiji Times, October, 1961).

Access to better education for their children was a main stimulus for many Fijian families to move to towns and to Suva in particular, but the low-paid jobs available there to transplanted Fijian villagers with limited vocational qualifications, and their subsequent financial problems, often restricted their children’s access to education.

Although post-primary enrolments doubled in the 1950s, still by 1960 Fijian boys outnumbered Fijian girls almost two to one (Whitehead, 1981:87). Even at the academically and socially elite girls’ schools in the 1950s and later, there was an emphasis

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78 A detailed description of the development of the Fiji education system is provided by Whitehead, (1981).
on domestic training which promoted the role of educated women to be good wives and housekeepers. By the late 1960s, the gender balance in enrolled numbers and career choices had begun to be redressed: between 1966 and 1973 the numbers of girls enrolled at secondary school increased 227 per cent (Whitehead, 1981:91) and in the 1980s there is a small but growing number of Fijian women professionals. The increased proportion of girls advancing beyond primary school during the last three decades is shown in Figure 2.5.

After the 1970s, the quality of education available to rural children improved with the upgrading of primary schools and the establishment of junior secondary schools in rural districts. Today, primary education is fee-free and compulsory, but the expenses involved in secondary education still act as a barrier to the full participation of all children. Policies of positive discrimination now allocate a majority of opportunities to tertiary education and vocational training for ethnic Fijians, and there is a rapidly expanding class of Fijian professionals, business people, and middle-class urbanites.

Over recent decades, the materialization of economic divisions and divergent lifestyles within Fijian society has been only partially diminished through cultural mechanisms which spread wealth between kin. Even before the war, dissatisfaction among Fijian commoners with the restrictions of the Fijian administration was clearly growing (Nayacakalou, in Cole, 1985:5), and more general concerns were promoted by increasing economic disparities within the country. Because of the structure of the economy and the promotion of racial stereotypes, these differences were commonly conceived of as between rich Indians who dominated commerce and poor, but happy, Fijians in their villages. To some extent this was so: the majority of Fijians were stuck in the economically stagnant backwater of village agriculture, even today seen as an obstacle to change.79 Meanwhile prominent minorities from other ethnic communities in Fiji were establishing themselves in more buoyant sectors of the economy, particularly business, the professions and the trades. The seemingly growing disparities in wealth and opportunity profoundly affected Fijian aspirations and perceptions about their own conditions. However, as Sutherland (in press:95) explains, this stereotype was biased:

It is clear...that the real yardstick against which Fijians measured their disadvantage was not 'Indian' success but bourgeois Indian success. They looked with envy not at Indian canefarmers, labourers and junior clerks but at Indian wholesalers and retailers, manufacturers and industrialists, builders and constructors, financiers, transport operators, accountants, lawyers, engineers, scientists, senior civil servants and so on.

79 The colonial government did little to develop agriculture: in the fifteen years from 1938 to 1953 only four per cent of state expenditure was in agriculture (Sutherland, in press:24).
While it is true that as an ethnic group Fijians still tend to be less financially secure and successful in education and business, the perception of general ethnic disadvantage disguises substantial differences in lifestyle and wealth among Fijians. The colonial system promoted the political and social interests of a Fijian elite who were integrated into the colonial administration. In the 1980s, racial rhetoric and economic realities are clearly divergent, with the growth of an urban Fijian middle-class which is tied to, yet lives apart from, rural village relatives.

Yet while economic and social differences within Fijian society have grown, other factors have acted to inhibit this. Traditional status is still important, and although general income groups can be identified, there is no clearly defined class differentiation. Overton (1989:120) suggests this might be because until now Fijian peasants have gained relatively little from capitalism, and because of the enduring and inhibiting structure of colonial conservation. Communal ownership of Fijian land is vested in the mataqali and while people have access to land outside of this system through leasehold, in general, the separation of land from the monetary economy makes it less of an issue in social differentiation than it is in other parts of the world. While destitution has increased generally in Fiji, and in both rural Fijian villages and among Fijians living in town (Barr, 1990:1; Bienefeld, 1984:322; Ward, 1987:40), there is no general emergence of a destitute, landless class of either rural or urban Fijians. Some suggest that class differences in Pacific societies are diminished by the strong kinship ties and patronage connections between the elite and poorer members of the communities (MacDonald, 1986; Rutz, 1982). However, while changes may be subtle and not in close accordance with developments in other societies, differences in power, wealth and lifestyle increasingly demarcate classes in the Fijian society.

2.5 A summary of change

Through this chapter the argument has been that, as in other ex-colonial states, the manifestations of social and cultural change in Fiji cannot be understood in isolation from intentional and unintentional manipulation by the colonial government, the reorganisation of power relations within society and the imposition of an ideology formulated by and promoting the new elite (Jewsiewicki, 1987:275-6). This ideology was advanced through

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80 A recent study of poverty in Fiji (Barr, 1990) found high degrees of inequality within Fijian villages. The top 20 per cent of households in Fijian villages reported average incomes (including the value of subsistence consumption) that were nine times as high as those reported by the poorest 20 per cent of households. The incidence of poverty was markedly higher in Fijian villages than in other areas but the most acute forms of poverty were experienced in the peri-urban squatter settlements.

81 Hau'ofa, (1985:15) and, more generally, Sutherland, (in press). Over 25 years ago the Fijian anthropologist Nayacakalou was suggesting that economic differentiation was becoming important within Fijian society, particularly between urban settlers and village dwellers (Fiji Times, January 30, 1961).
the social institutions of the colonial power, such as the system of governance and public administration, schools, the church, and the organisation of ‘public’ health.

The expansion of capitalism and the system of colonial governance influenced Fijian population dynamics both directly and indirectly: directly through regulations governing public life and health, and indirectly through the manner in which Fijian society was integrated into the world economic order. For the colonial government’s part, their idea of stewardship of the Fijian population clearly extended to the mechanisms and processes of population growth. Colonial regulations assisted the creation of a neo-traditional society and a new setting for fertility decisions, promoted a new consciousness about population trends, and determined the allocation of opportunities in a new system of power relationships with ramifications throughout Fijian society.

The implications for fertility change go deeper, however. As Clammer (1973:218-9) explains:

The aristocracy of the native society have thus come to perceive the colonial system as immutable and immemorial tradition - so the commoner has little option but to do likewise. Colonialism has thus profoundly influenced the Fijians’ perceptions of their own traditional polity and its sustaining beliefs. But from the initial imposition of a system based upon, but alien to, the original traditional system, the dogma of ‘traditionalism’ has itself become tradition and as such is exploited by the present political leaders of the Fijian community.

This chapter has demonstrated that Fijian society is not traditional in the sense suggested by the demographic transition. But in Fiji, this claim of tradition has itself a political value, although it may not consciously be so regarded. Chapter Three now turns to the relationship between ideological values and the interpretation of demographic change, an important determinant of fertility policy.
Chapter Three

Politics and Population

3.1 Introduction
This chapter deals with the politicisation of population trends and population statistics, and the manner in which this has directed social policy in Fiji over the twentieth century. Patterns of population change are complicated by local, class and sexual politics, conflicts which may be exacerbated or ameliorated by the processes of social and economic change. For ex-colonial states in particular, the manifestations of social and cultural change cannot be understood in isolation from intentional and unintentional manipulation by governments, the reorganisation of power relations within society and the imposition of an ideology formulated by and promoting the new elite (Jewsiewicki, 1987:275-6). This ideology is promoted through the social institutions of the colonial power, such as the system of governance and public administration, schools, the church, and the organisation of public health, and so exerts an indirect effect upon demographic change. Ideology is connected with demographic change even more directly, for it moulds both the collection of demographic statistics and their interpretation.

The changing ethnic composition of the Fiji population in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had powerful political and demographic repercussions (Figure 3.1). Largely because colonial policies of separate development promoted the philosophy of the paramountcy of Fijian interests over those of other non-Fijian groups, the growth of immigrant groups was interpreted as being inherently threatening to Fijian society. Specifically, this influenced colonial attitudes towards Fijian population trends and dominated the interpretation of demographic statistics.

3.2 Ethnic diversity in the Fiji population

The first non-Fijian and non-European group to emerge was the product of them both - part-Europeans who were seen as not belonging to either group, although this depended to some degree on the social status and ethnicity of the father. In the 1860s labourers were imported from neighbouring Melanesian islands. Many of these stayed, some marrying into the Fijian community and producing another group of mixed ethnicity and identity. Chinese settlers began arriving around the turn of the century, the earliest with the *beche-de-mer* trade or via the Australian goldfields, but most straight from Quangdong Province in south China. Some settled in the towns but many established themselves as village traders, again often marrying Fijian women. These ethnic groups, which never constituted more than ten per cent of the total Fiji
population (Fiji Ministry of Health, 1982:4) were more or less accepted by both the Fijian and colonial communities.

![Figure 3.1 The growth of ethnic components of the Fiji population, 1880 - 1987](image)

Source: Fiji Register-Generals Reports and Censuses

In 1879 the importation of Indian labourers began and their numbers grew rapidly through immigration until the indentured emigration was stopped in 1916. During these 37 years, almost 63,000 Indians came to Fiji, and over half settled permanently after their period of indenture was complete. From the beginning the colonial policy of separate development particularly set the Fijian and Indian communities apart. In part this was because of their segregation in a sectorally differentiated economy: the Fijians destined to live and produce in their villages, and the Indians working the sugar plantations; but the government also intervened more directly to limit their interaction. As Macnaught (1982:112) explains:

One can only speculate what might have emerged had Fijians and Indians been allowed to devise their own solutions to the land problem and more Indians been allowed to scatter throughout the group and attach themselves to the edges of village society...It is inconceivable that racial lines would

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1 However, the colonial government tried to limit both European-Chinese and Fijian-Chinese relations. Early anti-Chinese economic action by European traders is described in Mamak, 1978:14. The promotion of the village cooperative scheme forced the closure of Chinese trading stores in the eastern islands in the 1950s. This government scheme was intended to promote Fijian business participation, but it was also intended to redress the officially perceived problem of the exploitation of Fijian villagers by Asians.

2 For example, Macnaught (1982:112) reports how after around 1910 the Government stopped Indian settlers from making their own arrangements with Fijian villagers, and enforced Indian segregation in the sugar provinces of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu.
have been so sharply drawn had not the government been dedicated to keeping the communities institutionally and physically separate.

Little consideration was given to the development of multiracial social institutions or governance. Education remained ethnically segregated - with few exceptions - until after Independence in 1970, intermarriage was understandably rare, religious affiliation was divided on mostly ethnic lines between Fijian Christians and Indian Hindus and Moslems, and even such petty issues of daily life as sports were seen as ethnically separate realms.

The archival record of anti-Indian sentiments shared between the Fijian and colonial elites, proposes that Fijians early showed an innate dislike for Indians. If that was the case, how fortunate it was for the colonial government that Fijian racial distaste only extended to Indians and other Asians - precisely those people about whom the government had its sensitive reservations - and not as forthrightly to those other usurpers of Fijian territory, the British. Throughout the twentieth century the political interests of the British and Fijian elites converged, and racism, far from being an inevitable product of ethnic diversification, had for both a clear political value. Thomas (in press:2) notes that the history of colonialism has been crucial in the elaboration of cultural difference in the South Pacific. Kelly (1989:388) explains how the very different consideration given Fijian and Indian custom by the Fiji colonial government promoted an image of Fijian society enmeshed in tradition, and Indian society moving out from it.

In the early years of the twentieth century the natural increase of the Indian population was held by some as an example for Fijians to emulate: ‘Look to the Indians... how they increase and multiply’ the 1912 Council of Chiefs was urged (CP 2, 1912: 8). In 1921, the Legislative Council heard a suggestion for the maintenance of a ‘population balance’, to prevent Indians gaining too much power in the colony (Hull and Hull, 1973:174). Overall, however, before the 1930’s Fijians were not particularly threatened by the Indian presence, which was confined to the sugar sector and under the tight control of the government (Macnaught, 1982:112). But the political ramifications of the different growth of the Indian and Fijian communities had

3 This is generally accepted to be the case, although no statistical data are available for the incidence of Fijian-Indian marriage. Even here, however, administrative obstacles lay in the path of the brave who would dare social approbation. For example, if a Fijian Christian woman wished to marry an Indian Hindu man, she could not be married by a Hindu priest, because of the requirements of the 1918 Marriage Ordinance (CSO MP 6158/29), and no Christian minister could officiate at such a marriage. The population register of Vana Levu kept by Dr Verrier provides some clues to the ways people overcame such problems, as in the case of Gangamma Venkatswamy who, around 1960, having adopted the name ‘Mere Kalala’, married a Fijian man from Yasawa.

4 Sutherland (in press:46) dates the beginning of the rhetoric that European dominance was necessary to protect Fijians against the Indians to strikes in the sugar industry in the 1920s. Indian sugar workers struck against very poor conditions and low wages, but the government brought in Fijian labour and Fijian police and manipulated the conflict to make it appear racial in nature rather than an effect of capitalist exploitation.
not escaped the attention of the Colonial Office, and concerns with cost which delayed the proposed 1931 census until 1936 were bolstered by another consideration:

There are some persons who consider it should be done in the old happy-go-lucky way, as there is a fear that the new census may show that Indians outnumber Fijians. In fact there is in some quarters the reverse of a desire for an accurate census of Indians (CSO MP 468:30, 1930).

As the Indian and Fijian populations began to grow in the 1920s and 1930s, so did the political perception of a population 'race'. As both communities were by then virtually closed to migration, Fijian fertility came inevitably to be compared with Indian fertility, using measures which, unintentionally perhaps, were provocative. Before 1947 only crude birth rates were calculated. After 1947 details of age structure reported regularly by the Registrar-General's Office allowed the calculation of general fertility rates and other measures. The crude birth rates and general fertility rates shown in Figures 3.2 and 3.3 and often quoted, accentuated fertility differentials by disregarding variance in population structure. Figure 3.4 provides a retrospective view of the fertility of successive birth cohorts of Fijian and Indian women. This figure shows that proportionately more Fijian women in all cohorts were reportedly childless and, in the cohorts born before 1932, proportionately fewer bore eight or more children. Overall, however, both populations show a similar pattern of change.

The 1936 census revealed that Fijians comprised just under half of the Fiji population, and by 1946 Indians clearly outnumbered Fijians and seemed set on a demographic trajectory which would ensure their numeric dominance in the Fiji population as far into the future as one might project. This different growth of the two ethnic groups was a product of both fertility and mortality. Dr. Lambert (1938:10) calculated that it was the differential in infant and child mortality, rather than a large number of Indian births, that had resulted in a 60 per cent gain in the Indian population over the Fijian population. In 1939, the infant mortality rate of the Fijian population was 107/1000, and of the Indian population, 70/1000. The difference in the mortality of children under five years (CMR) was even greater: in 1939, the Fijian CMR was 90/1000 and the Indian CMR 21/1000 (Manning, 1985:165).

5 Lambert (1938:9) calculated births per 1000 females for the period 1908-1935, but used as the denominator all females in the population, not just those of child-bearing ages.
6 Another commonly used measure, the total fertility rate, removes the bias of age structure but its interpretation rests on the assumed behaviour of a synthetic cohort - that the cross-sectional pattern of current fertility also describes the life-path of an age-group. In a rapidly changing society this is a rather unsatisfactory assumption on which to work.
7 This was related to the sex ratio in the Indian population which was heavily male-dominated during the first decades of this century. The incidence of marriage among Indian women then was high, and the age of marriage low.
8 The Legislative Council in 1952 was informed that by the year 2000 there would be 835,000 Indians who would outnumber 425,000 Fijians by almost two to one (Fiji Times, 12-12-52).
Figure 3.2 Crude birth rates by main ethnic groups in Fiji, 1894-1986

Source: Ministry of Health  
Note: Total includes Fijians, Indians and all other ethnic groups.

Figure 3.3 General fertility rates, 1947-1982

Source: Fiji Register General reports,
Figure 3.4 Distribution of family sizes

(I) Of Fijian women born 1907 - 1937

(II) Of Indian women born 1907-1937

By the late 1940s, however, this perspective had been virtually lost in the public agenda, and the excess of Indian fertility rates over Fijian fertility rates fuelled a political furore which dominated public thought through the 1950s and 1960s, and still is a potent though anachronistic political force (Hull and Hull, 1973). Statistics showing an excess of Indian fertility over Fijian fertility were a powerful tool in a political campaign where the colonial government and Fijian leaders combined to defeat Indian demands for more political influence, and to preserve the paramountcy of Fijian interests in the colonial order. The emotive centre of this storm was land ownership, confirmed in Fijian hands at Cession by the British colonial government. Public comment focused upon a possible future battle between the races over land, of which around 80 per cent of the national total was held in customary Fijian ownership. The growing Indian community was placing pressure on the government to open up more Fijian-owned land to development and settlement, and Government assurances to the public that Fijian people would never be dispossessed of their land acted rather to strengthen political arguments that the pressure of Indian numbers would eventually swamp Fijian interests. The media campaigns which promoted European interests systematically portrayed Indian immigrant farmers as land-grabbers and their fertility as a potent threat to Fijian land-rights and cultural survival. The interpretations of contemporary population statistics were linked with racial stereotypes to project images of a local and regional threat. One popular periodical (Pacific Islands Monthly, August, 1949:1) suggested:

The situation in Fiji is a complete microcosm of the situation in the South Pacific generally. The Europeans and Pacific Islanders of these lands south of the equator are menaced as sharply by Asiatic over-population, and the truly horrible fecundity of the Asiatic, as are the 120,000 natives of Fiji.

The same periodical praised the Governor as ‘the first man game enough to grab this monster [i.e. the alleged unrestrained fertility of Asians] by the throat and drag it out into the public gaze’ (Pacific Islands Monthly, August, 1949:9): It quoted the Governor as summarising ‘the European view of the solution’:

Either they [the Indians] will continue to multiply beyond the available means of subsistence, with consequent poverty and distress; or they will maintain and improve their present standard of living by a voluntary reduction in their natural rate of increase.

By the early 1950s, and although the strong racial emphasis remained, concern over the changing ethnic balance was generalised into concern over possible over-population (Hull and Hull, 1973:180). The media supplied such supporting evidence as

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9 The possibility of Indian domination was brought back to the surface dramatically in the 1987 coups, which saw the revival of such rhetoric as the threat of extinction for the Fijian race.
the estimate of an unspecified United Nations' research council that Fiji would be 'over-populated' by the time the population reached 400,000, based on an average land requirement of 4.5 acres per person (Fiji Times, 12 December, 1952). The problem of limited land resources in a small island state with a predominantly agricultural economy was, the Pacific Islands Monthly (August, 1949:9) suggested:

...already there, and it is only too obvious that the problem will increase with every year that passes, so long as the non-native population of this Colony continues to multiply at its present rate.

By the 1950s, the climate of public and official opinion began to favour the introduction of a family planning programme to reduce this threat. This was sanctioned by the report of a Royal Commission of Inquiry into relationships between population and national resources (Burns et al., 1960). Hull and Hull (1973:183) note surprisingly little opposition to the introduction of birth control. They suggest that Fijian conservatives avoided public opposition in the hope that the Indian population would warm to the idea of fertility restriction. Declining birth rates in the 1960s and 1970s were attributed to the promotion and greater availability of modern contraceptives. The Medical Department was careful to emphasise the advantages of contraceptive use to the health of mothers and their children, to publicly distance the programme from the notion of racial competition (Hull and Hull, 1973:189). To this end it was probably fortunate that the decline in crude birth rates was greatest in the Indian population, and that it coincided with a significant level of Indian emigration in the 1970s and 1980s (Figure 3.2). Indeed, since the initiation of family planning in Fiji, the focus of official and public attention has been on the fact of ethnic differences. While the post-colonial government espoused multi-racialism, and population trends after the 1960s could have been expected to defuse old political rhetoric, the politics surrounding race relations remained close to the surface during the 1970s and 1980s. National elections in 1987 were followed by two military coups, which were intended to promote the political supremacy of Fijians, and in the wake of these coups occurred the demographic event of the 1980s - a substantial exodus of non-Fijians, particularly Indians. At the 1996 census, the population of Fiji is likely to show a majority of Fijians once again.

Statistics describing the changing ethnic composition of the Fiji population have been hung about with ideologically-defined interpretations. The colonial ideology promoted a complex of values, dominant among which was the divisive

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10 The Commission was held in 1959, and its report issued in 1960. It is commonly referred to as the Burn's Commission after the principal commissioner. The Burns Report set the basic development policies of Fiji for the next 25 years.
11 For example, Bavadra and Kierski, 1980; Fairbairn, 1970; Laquian and Naroba, 1990, Mataitoga, 1983; and successive reports of the Fiji Family Planning Association and the Fiji Ministry of Health. Hull and Hull (1973:195) state the exaggerated ethnic differences suggested by crude birth rates prompted the Medical Department to publish general fertility and age-specific fertility rates.
character of ethnic difference. This particular value promoted the interests of the
colonial order and the political and social interests of the Fijian elite, and has retained
its political significance in the post-colonial order of Fiji. The power balance defined
by the colonial government both changed the ethnic composition of the Fiji population
and public perceptions of its significance. Measured trends in the numbers of Fijian
births and deaths came to be viewed as problematic not so much in themselves, but in
comparison with Indian births and deaths. Ideologically-loaded interpretations of
population change were fed back into the society through public media and
institutions, which thereby both shaped population policies and influenced their
outcomes.

3.3 Politics and population statistics
Ethnic competition was translated into the collection of demographic data and their use
in a number of national political debates. This is, of course, not to allege that census
data are of necessity biased or otherwise invalid - rather it is to assert that statistical
data are not by some means exempt from the rigours of historical source criticism. As
Scott (1988:115) explains:

Statistical reports are neither totally neutral collections of fact, nor simply
ideological impositions. Rather they are ways of establishing the authority
of certain visions of social order, of organising perceptions of
"experience".

Demographic statistics are collected for purposes which are primarily political and, in
the absence of clearly-directed theory, they often are interpreted in an political manner.
Most directly this relates to the categories of collection, which in Fiji emphasise ethnic
differences. The ethnic blocks largely subsume processes of social differentiation
within ethnic categories. A common feature of colonial ideologies (and now of post-
colonial states) was the promotion of stratification by race, which kept both rulers and
subject people separate and reinforced divisions within the subject population
(Jewsiewicki, 1987:276). This relationship between national identity and population
statistics is illustrated by the opposite case of Indonesia. This post-colonial state was
forged from remnants of the Dutch empire after the Second World War. There, the
challenge to government is to maintain cohesion within the new state; ethnic
categories are purposely excluded from census schedules because of their potential for
divisiveness in a multi-ethnic society (Hugo et al., 1987:18).12

However, racial categories do not dominate the types of questions which are
asked about the dynamics of population change in Fiji, but rather add another bias.
Generally, examinations of fertility change have considered most often those socio-

12 Since the formation of the Indonesian state an exception has always been made for Indonesian
citizens of Chinese descent, a section of the national population which the Indonesian Government
considers requires special scrutiny.
economic variables which lend themselves best to being counted in censuses - education, urbanisation, occupation, labour force status and income. By contrast there has generally been little consideration of familial relations (Freedman, 1986:31) or the relationships between fertility variations and social institutions, such as kinship patterns (Namboodiri, 1986) quite simply because this information requires separate and probably idiosyncratic data collection systems. The effects of data sources on research directions is apparent: the desire for readily available and reliable statistical data results in much research being source rather than problem related, and focuses attention on the consequences of population change rather than its determinants. In this manner, official ideology lives on in the nature of much demographic research and the pervasiveness of racial categories underlies the formulation of social policy.

The perception of experience referred to by Scott in the previous quotation, is therefore not purely informed by politics, for the paradigm of interpretation rests on general understandings of social process. But the boundaries between politics and social science are not as clearly defined as they commonly are portrayed to be. Perlman (1976:247) writes of the power of ‘mythology’ in social theory. She defines a myth as:

A strongly organised and widespread ideology which spreads from the "collective unconscious" of a group or class and is rooted in a class-based interest in maintaining the status quo. It involves a belief system, and systematic distortion of reality reflected in this system, and a specific function for those ideas in serving the interests of a specific group.

Perlman (1976:247-8) explains that ideology operates on two levels: as an interpretative framework for change; and as a mechanism to maintain interests within that framework. The question of social theory is returned to later in this chapter.

### 3.3.1 Keeping the figures right

From the beginning of the colonial period the collection of population statistics was a central part of government officers’ work, both to measure the rate of population growth or decline, and ascertain the numbers of men eligible to pay taxes. In each province births and deaths were diligently counted and subtracted from each other, and for this reason the early registration data for Fijians are of unusually high quality. While Fijian officers dealt directly with their people, the European colonial officials were in no doubt as to what was expected of them. In tikinas where deaths exceeded births in any year, for example, it was assumed the Bulis had neglected their work, and some were threatened with dismissal. Provincial health inspectors appointed in 1899 were warned:

14 The Kadavu Provincial Council report of 1898 noted the population decrease of 29 in the second half of the year with the comment 'Unless there is a marked improvement during 1899 new Bulis will be appointed - present office holders to be warned.'
The success of your appointments will be judged entirely by its practical results in the way of checking depopulation, ameliorating the condition of the natives and increasing the out-turn of native produce\textsuperscript{15}.

While the responsibilities of local officials became less onerous through the twentieth century, the health statistics that local officials so anxiously collected did much to generate political concern and reinforce the political stance of the colonial power and its local elite. As the Legislative Council heard in 1942 (CP. 15, 1942):

The principal concern of the colonial Government has always been the preservation of the Fijian race from extinction, a tragedy with which it was undoubtedly threatened, and over anxiety in the matter of the discharge of its responsibility has given rise to a great deal of loose thinking and misunderstanding regarding the real progress of the Fijian race.

These official interpretations, loose, exaggerated or otherwise, over the years filtered down through such media as \textit{Na Mata},\textsuperscript{16} the \textit{Fiji Times}, and District Officers to people in the villages.

From the outset, the colonial government demonstrated a readiness to act upon its measurements of population trends. Achieving intended results was what was important, and if local officers went about this in an ostensibly 'Fijian manner', then well and good. So it was in 1898, when the Buli of Tavuki in Kadavu and the Native Stipendiary Magistrate held a meeting of all married couples in the district not currently bearing children to explain to them the deplorable state of their tikina's vital statistics. What these officials did not then understand was that such concern over numbers of births and deaths collected with no regard to the age structure or size of the population was absurd, and even more so where so-called vital rates were compared between small population units.

The collection of birth and death figures became so entrenched a procedure of provincial officials that even in the 1940s government reports included lists of deaths by province, and proceeded to compare them without reference to their denominator populations. Today the principles of statistics are introduced to primary school students and it is easy to forget that, even fifty years ago, the interpretation of statistics was an arcane skill to many public officials. It is common to find in the reports of the Native Administration and Medical Department, for example, statements such as 'Kadavu had an excess of fourteen deaths over births' (CP. 28, 1912) without reference to population size or its age structure. Dr. Lindsay Verrier attempted to set them straight in a letter to the \textit{Fiji Times} (9 December, 1943) in which he explained

\textsuperscript{15} Governor Im Thurn to Colonial Office, 12 June 1907 (CO83/85) Quoted in Macnaught, 1982:17).

\textsuperscript{16} A Government-published monthly newspaper, printed in Fijian and distributed free to all turaga-ni-koro and Native administrative officials in Fiji. It contained extracts from the Government Gazette, and advice and information of general interest to Fijians.
that provincial populations could not be compared without reference to the considerable difference in population size.

3.3.2 Pronatalist policies

Where people continued to die, the direct means of achieving positive balance in the population figures at the turn of the century was to promote births, and one can only applaud the imagination some local officials demonstrated to this end. The 1898 Kadavu Provincial Council Report describes another meeting in Tavuki, this time of all unmarried but marriageable people in the district. The Buli Tavuki assisted by three elderly men conducted the meeting, with the men seated down one side of the Court House and the women down the other. Working his way through the crowd, the Buli would select a young man and young woman from the same or neighbouring villages, call them to the front of the meeting and propose to them: ‘You two have known each other for a long time, you know each other’s habits and ways, how would it do for you to get married? You are not to be coerced, you are to follow your own minds.’ Where a person blankly refused, another partner was called up and the proposition repeated. Where a couple agreed, they were told to go away and think about it. The following morning another meeting was held, at which 24 couples were declared engaged to be married. The Report concluded: ‘getting married is too much bother for many Fijian youths. Gilbertian and ludicrous as this mode of doing things may seem it is nevertheless very practical.’

In later decades the Government’s pronatalist policies for Fijians were not acted upon as directly, but promoted through continued repression of abortion and traditional medicine (which included contraceptive methods), and the luvea levu - reduced tax rates for married men with more than five children.17 The decline in the Fijian population had been turned about by the second decade of this century18 but despite its increasing anachronism, the message of racial survival continued to be driven home: in May, 1915, Na Mata carried a report on the recent national census which recommended Fijians increase their birth rate so their lands and fishing areas would not be left idle in future years. In 1920 the Council of Chiefs was told by the Governor, ‘the production of families and the rearing of healthy children are duties which Fijians owe the Empire and to the traditions of their race’ (CP 1, 1920: 2). In the late 1930s the Chief Medical Officer, noting the slow numerical increase of the Fijian population due to high infant mortality, wrote of the ‘moral duty of every [Fijian] man and women to assist in the preservation of their own race’. An ostensibly scientific case for the necessity of ‘prolonging as much as possible the period of Fijian

17 The luvea levu (lit. many children) varied by province and by year, but was always substantially lower than normal provincial rates. For Kadavu in 1939, for example, the provincial rate was £2 and the luvea levu £1/2/0 (Kadavu Provincial Council Report, 1938).
18 The turning point was around 1905-1911 and by 1936 the total Fijian population exceeded that in 1901 (Bedford, 1988:65).
numerical domination’ was put by the influential Dr. Lambert (1938:12) who quoted River’s arguments as to the probable adverse effect on Fijian morale caused by Indian numerical dominance: 19

At present, when the Fijian is just beginning to feel national and racial aspirations, when he is in a plastic state, [Indian predominance] might be fatal to the welfare of the race.

While Lambert wrote most directly of reducing infant deaths, clearly Fijian numerical domination would need to be boosted by more births. But by late 1940s the Fijian birthrate was, in the public mind, only ‘slow and steady - what might be called normal’ in comparison to the Indian ‘truly horrible fecundity’ (Pacific Islands Monthly, August, 1949). 20 While in themselves quite high, these Fijian rates were considered necessary for a race recovering from threatened extinction and facing numerical domination. Although clearly an anachronism in the 1980s, this pronatalist ideology is still promoted in some quarters, with one family planning expert, for example, claiming the reason a majority of Fijians do not practice family planning is because of the fear of political domination by other races 21.

3.3.3 Antinatalist policy: family planning in Fiji
The local impetus for fertility restriction has been described above. While many of the private submissions to the Burns Commission were couched in heavily racist terms, the Commission’s report attempted to put forward in a even-handed manner, the threat to the national community of continued high levels of population growth.

The recognition within Fiji of the need to restrict national population growth coincided with an international move to reduce population growth rates. The establishment in 1963 of the Fiji Family Planning Association (FFPA), a non-government organisation, was the initiative of the Pathfinder Organisation. That same year, the Fiji association joined the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).

19 Dr. S.M. Lambert headed the Rockefeller Foundation’s programme to aid public health in Fiji from 1920 to 1939. Beneath the technical detail and supporting statistics in his papers which suggest sober scientific objectivity, the contemporary racist ideology is apparent. His views on the changing numerical relationship between Fijians and Indians in Fiji were stated more forthrightly in his autobiography: ‘In 1922 the East Indians were spreading. Today they are spreading even faster, until Fiji is threatened with becoming an annex to India. The Asiatic population is running about neck-and-neck with the native. Something should be done about it, but what?...The Indian has found a new freedom in the tropic isles and the immigrants were mostly very low-caste. Their ideals were very vague, their women scarce, the recruiting system lead to degeneracy, the marriage tie weakened: little girls were offered up to barter. Cult priests from India would froth up fanaticism and loud-mouthed little Gandhis kept the pot boiling...I am taking no sides (sic). I only report that the Indians are becoming conquerors by infiltration of an archipelago where the native deserves his own land and custom’ (Lambert, 1941:132).

20 The General Fertility Rates in 1949 were 160/1000 Fijian women aged 15-44, and 227/1000 Indian women aged 15-44 (Naroba, 1990:95).

21 Dr T. Bavadra, Fiji Sun 4-1-85, in reference to Dr S. Tabua.
In the years immediately following the institution of the family planning programme in Fiji, the crude birth rate and rate of natural increase dropped sharply. In the first decade modern contraceptives were freely available in Fiji, from 1962 to 1973, the Fijian crude birth rate fell from 37.8 births/1000 people to 28.9/1000 (Figure 3.2). The annual rate of natural increase similarly declined from 3.1 per cent to 1.5 per cent (Brookfield et al. 1977:120). In the mid-1960s the Fiji family planning programme was already hailed as 'a model of its kind' by the head of the IPPF (Hull and Hull, 1973:168). By 1969, the FFPA noted its branches were inactive because 'family planning is generally accepted in Fiji' and claimed Fiji was rapidly reaching the 'ultimate goal of its national family planning programme': a crude birth rate of 25/1000 by 1972 (FFPA, 1969:5). The numbers of women attending family planning clinics continued to rise sharply, to a peak of about 80,000 in 1972, representing around 25 per cent of all women then aged 15-44 (Bavadra and Kierski, 1980:122). The upsurge in women accepting modern contraception appeared to validate the emphasis of both the Medical Department and the FFPA on public awareness and family planning education.

![Figure 3.5 Contraceptive acceptance rates by ethnic group, Fiji, 1973-1987](image)

In the 1970s, however, the success of the family planning programme slowed and, by 1980, the fertility decline had apparently stagnated (Figure 1.1). Ministry of Health records showed the number of Fijian women using modern contraceptives had increased only marginally (Figure 3.5). There was a marked difference in the numbers of Indian and Fijian clients of the Ministry's family planning services and, after the early 1960s, a notable difference in ethnic fertility rates. The apparently sudden change
in the fortunes of the family planning programme in Fiji provoked some discussion. If the earlier fertility decline had been stimulated by the family planning programme, how could this stagnation be explained? If fertility behaviour responds most to social and economic change, why had fertility not continued to decline regardless of government actions or inactions?

Bienefeld (1984:13) noted the synchronism between the stagnation in fertility decline and waning official support for the family planning programme, suggesting continued official promotion was a necessary condition for fertility decline. Bedford and Brookfield (1979:215) proposed that they had run out of customers:

There would seem to be a lesson to be learned from this experience [that is, the apparent short-term success of the family planning programme]. Family planning programmes can draw readily on a minority ‘market’ of women - and less often men - to avoid further pregnancy. To advance beyond the level of protection this group required, in a society without either wealth or any welfare beyond that assured by large families, a very determined effort on the part of the medical or other authorities. This happened in Lakeba, but the effort reached a ceiling, the basic conditions of society and its economy did not improve - or may have even deteriorated - and the success was short-lived.

However, where these writers assume a ceiling in demand for child limitation was met, in fact the Ministry of Health figures record only that a ceiling in demand for their contraceptive methods was met. Bavadra and Kierski (1980:22) suggested Fijians were reluctant to limit their fertility because of a misguided belief that their land was still plentiful, a fear of political domination by numerically-dominant Indians, the opposition of the Catholic Church, and Fijian men’s fears for the fidelity of their wives using contraceptives. They also noted that Fijians were disinclined towards group discussions about sex, perhaps suggesting people of other ethnicity had little difficulty here. Figure 3.6 shows changes in age specific fertility rates for Fijian women, measured at ten-yearly intervals from 1946 to 1986. This figure suggests a rise in fertility rates to 1966, before declining. However, the 1946 and 1956 rates were calculated by McArthur (1959) from registration data, and she warned that they were not entirely reliable.

The results of the 1986 national census allow recent changes in fertility to be examined in more detail (Figure 3.7). As Gubhaju (1989:66) explains, there are ethnic differences in both total fertility, of over one child more for Fijian than Indian women, and differences in the age pattern of fertility. Declines in fertility occurred for all women in each age group over the decade 1966-1976. In the last decade, however, while the fertility of Indian women declined for all except the youngest and oldest age-
groups, Fijian fertility declined only for women aged 20-29 years, remained almost stable for women aged 30-34, and increased for women aged 35-49 years.

Indians seemingly had changed their fertility behaviour; Fijians apparently had changed theirs less. How was this to be interpreted? Here we return to a consideration of the social value of social theories. In Fiji, as in many multi-ethnic nations, the differential growth of ethnic groups has been of appreciable political significance. Yet the demographic transition paradigm appears apolitical in its ostensibly impartial explanations for differential change: demographic characteristics of societies transform as they pass from traditional to modern conditions. Demographic measures of variance between groups within a population suggest these differences are generated within these groups. In their relative slowness to change, Fijians might appear snared in tradition. They are less educated, have less access to formal employment, are more rural and more politically insecure, we are told somewhat inaccurately, and therefore they continue to be more fertile. Yet, as Bienefeld (1984:14) notes, the socio-economic factors associated with changing fertility in Fiji have not yet been clearly mapped out.

In the same manner, this paradigm provides a comfortable explanation for the differential success of the government’s family planning programme: they were supplied with modern contraceptives but they remain trapped in their traditions and would not accept. This avoids questions of service quality and appropriateness. With regard to Fijian society, as we have already considered, this also conforms well with
Figure 3.7 Changes in the age specific fertility rates of Fijian and Indian women, 1946-1986

Sources:
McArthur, 1959, for 1946 and 1956 data
Gubhaju, 1989, Table 4, for 1966, 1976 and 1986

Note: McArthur (1959) warns that the registration data from which she calculated age specific fertility rates were incomplete. However, these are the best estimates for this period.
the political value of 'tradition'. In all aspects, this paradigm of explanation suggests the homogeneity of cultural groups. Yet is this the case? Upon what conditions have experiences been ordered within any one ethnic category?

3.4 Ideology in action

This chapter has discussed the ideological context in which demographic change in Fiji has been measured and interpreted. A critical question is, to what extent does this ideology of ethnic division directly influence people's fertility behaviour? Such an issue cannot be approached directly, for answers to questions phrased in these terms might either reflect real attitudes or received platitudes. I approached this question obliquely and with older women in particular, for it was in their child-bearing days that the message of ethnic competition was more directly promoted. I asked about advice on child-bearing or rearing given them by their mothers or other relatives, and by their husband's relatives, and I also asked if they recalled what types of advice, if any, had been passed on to them by visitors to the village, particularly government officers. I also asked their opinions regarding optimum family sizes in their own circumstances and in those now of their daughters or other young mothers, and discussed the bases of their preferences. To uncover a political argument through such questioning was no doubt ambitious, but I consider it significant that not one woman raised the issue I expected and was probing for, that of racial competition. An explanation for this lies in the difference between public and private levels of discourse. The conversations I had with women were focused on their own lives, a level of experience where it would seem the political issue of racial competition was irrelevant. But had I spoken openly in the community and particularly to the body of village men, the level of discourse probably would have rested on a more generalised 'experience', one informed by political ideology.

This denotes the extent to which I now can argue that official ideology does not touch people's lives directly, and clearly my evidence here is not strong. But the real issue lies elsewhere. Ideology operates more indirectly - by pervading demographic analysis at a number of levels, by linking into a number of political issues, and by constituting a distorting mirror in which the society generally views itself. At an official level this view may be incorporated into the design and implementation of social policy, as it certainly was in Fiji's national programme to reduce fertility. Thus

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23 This conclusion is indirectly confirmed by observations by Scarr (1984:161), that it was town-based educated Fijians who were very conscious of the implications of the increase of the Indian population and seldom conspicuously multi-racial in outlook, and Cleland (1975:94), that among town-dwelling Fijians it was the better educated men in non-manual jobs who were less in favour of family planning than others. Formal education does not necessarily make a person independently more aware of social issues, but often informs them of the official interpretation. Also, this conclusion explains in considerable part the finding of Hull and Hull (1972) that political beliefs were significant in the fertility decisions of Fijians.
there is a public perception that is imbued with ideological principles, and a private reality which is dealt with along separate lines.

3.5 Conclusion
Unlike some other South Pacific peoples, Fijians have retained their cultural identity, their language, and considerable social cohesion. Demographers sometimes refer to traditional societies as if these can be unambiguously located on a diagram of the demographic transition or on a scale of modernization. But does their cultural resilience define Fijians as a traditional society? The argument in this first part of the thesis has been that it does not, for Fijian society has been modified in ways fundamental to its present demographic regime. Fijian population dynamics were modified by the colonial process and particularly by the manner in which Fijian society was integrated into the international economy. We also see the deliberate nature of demographic manipulation by the colonial government with its pronatalist policy, self-consciousness over population trends, the promotion of ethnic competition, and the politicisation of demographic statistics. As elsewhere, in Fiji the colonial ideology of racial stratification not only influenced population trends but also helped select the 'facts' of population change and confer on them political meaning. The colonial ideology of ethnic stratification remains pervasive and continues to dominate the interpretation of demographic change. Throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods, Fijian fertility has been officially viewed as problematic and therefore a target for government intervention, being either too 'low' or 'high' - mostly in comparison with Indian fertility. The patterns of population change in Fiji must be viewed in the context of their historicity, with ideologically-charged interpretations of population change fed back to the people as the official account of their changing society, together with specific instructions as to how they should proceed to achieve 'development'.

The story recounted here is reconstructed mostly through official documentary sources which, although contemporary, can rarely be considered objective. This chapter has balanced this account of population change with an understanding of the construction of an ideology, and the counter-connections between this ideology and population processes. But it would be wrong to present this story as a complete one. In A Bend in the River, by V.S. Naipaul, the central character, Salim, reads the well-acclaimed history written by a foreign academic of the African country he lives in:

The article turned out to be a compilation of government decrees and quotations from newspapers. There was a lot from newspapers; Raymond seemed to have taken them very seriously. I couldn't get over that,

While South Pacific societies each have their own histories, there are some commonalities of experience. Writing generally about Pacific Island populations, Pirie (1976:22) concluded that 'For the Pacific populations, the control of family size is a return to an ancient tradition which the spasm of fertility induced by social and political disruption has obscured in recent years.'
because from my experience on the coast I knew that newspapers in small colonial places told a special kind of truth. They didn’t lie, but they were formal. They handled big people - businessmen, high officials, members of our legislative and executive councils - with respect. They left out a lot of important things - often essential things - that local people would know and gossip about (V.S. Naipaul, 1979:186).

This thesis now turns to another level of inquiry, to examine processes of social and economic change as they have affected the lives of Fijian people of one genealogical community. This second part of the thesis focuses on the following questions: What has been the community experience of social change over the twentieth century, and what have been the consequences of these changes on people’s lives? How have opportunities been distributed through successive cohorts in the population, and how have patterns of mobility, urbanisation, education and work experience interacted with fertility behaviour?
PART TWO: THE LOCAL SITUATION

Chapter Four

Data Sources and Methodology

4.1 Introduction
This chapter describes the methodological strategy adopted for the study, as it was both predicated on the conceptual framework explained in Chapter One, and developed during the course of field-work. In particular, it describes how the two main sources of information, one documentary and the other ethnographic, were woven together, and the problems that each part entailed. A major issue for a project which examines social institutions and change at the local level is locating a reliable data source appropriate to the scale of investigation. While local informants' recall of past events and people is an essential element in such research, it is often incomplete and biased (Lauro, 1979:26; Morrill and Dyke, 1980:4). Good documentary evidence of population processes at the local level is also difficult to obtain in most Third World situations.

4.2 Sources of historical demographic information
Throughout the world most early studies tracing the interrelationships of demographic, social and economic change were based on census statistics, which can provide macro understanding of the broad outlines of population change but little understanding of the processes of this change. The refinement of techniques for more complex studies of the social and economic contexts for population change owes much to the work of northern European demographers and geographers, who have developed techniques for extracting demographic information from administrative and organisational records which, for some locations, are richly detailed and reasonably accurate over a long period. Because administrative and organisational records were not collected with such purposes in mind, their recent use has often required some methodological inventiveness. Specifically, this has involved the search for new historical sources or new combinations of traditional ones, the complementary use of macro- and micro-scales of analysis, a combination of both quantitative and qualitative types of information, a focus on the dialectic between demographic patterns and social formations, and consideration of regional variations in the timetables of change (Lofgren, 1978; Akerman, 1978). Still, information is most often absent about the economic and cultural contexts in which people live, to provide a proper

1 In the South Pacific region, one of the earliest studies to use census data to examine local-area demographic change was that of Pirie (1964) in Western Samoa.
base for the assumptions embedded in demographic measurements. Furthermore, as Louise Tilly (1982:201) explains:

In their commitment to seeking out the history of the inarticulate popular classes, social historians have necessarily turned to sources which tell about people rather than sources created by the people. The typical records used by social historians...and the typical methods of analysis of these records produce collective, not individual, biographies. The historical product is description and analysis of behaviour patterns by categories of individuals.

Generally, in the less developed parts of the world, population data sources with a comparable degree of detail, accuracy or time depth are not available; where such do exist, they have been collected spasmodically or for discrete groups. However, the more researchers have searched and been prepared to experiment, the more data sources they have been able to find and utilize. There have been significant recent advances in the historical demography of ex-colonial states, particularly in Africa, South America and South-east Asia. Within the decade of the 1980s, there has been a prodigious growth in publications about historical demographic research, especially concerning ex-colonial states - as is evidenced by the Journal of Latin American Studies, the Journal of African History, and comprehensive bibliographies in Cordell and Gregory (1987), Robinson (1981), Owen (1986) and Wightman (1990). There also has been some change of focus, from earlier research directed at reconstructing historical and regional rates of demographic change (eg. Smith’s (1975) documentation of regional variation in fertility, nuptiality and mortality in nineteenth and early twentieth century Philippines). Recent studies include more interpretative work, such as Wightman’s (1990) use of sixteenth and seventeenth century Peruvian parish records to examine the significance of population mobility in the transformation of traditional society under Spanish colonialism. Throughout the Third World the use of administrative records has increasingly facilitated better understandings of colonial and post-colonial societies. The focus of history can move away from elite groups and events played out in national capitals to include rural localities and communities, and allow other voices to be heard above that of the dominant colonial power. For social scientists this suggests exciting possibilities, for it has become apparent that many of the basic developmental models and paradigms originating in the West are much more time and place specific than was previously understood².

However, while documentary sources to reconstruct the demographic events of the colonial and post-colonial periods do exist in parts of the South Pacific, deposits of non-

² This is now argued to be so for the ‘theory’ of the demographic transition (eg. Caldwell, 1976), the ‘theory’ of the mobility transition (eg. Zelinsky, 1980; Chapman and Prothero, 1985), dependency ‘theory’ and structural materialism or Marxist ‘theory’ (van Binsbergen and Geschiere, 1985), to name some relevant here.
census materials there remain little explored or exploited. For example, despite the
variety of uses church records have been put to elsewhere, they have been rarely used as a
source of demographic data in the South Pacific - other than Scragg's (1977) work in
Papua New Guinea, and for deriving historical population sizes from missionary censuses
and surveys. There is, nevertheless, a substantial body of literature dealing with the
histories of small Pacific island communities. These studies commonly have dealt with
the paucity of historical documents by combining a number of sources, such as censuses
and archival records, with field censuses and interviews (eg. Hooper et al., 1973; Carroll,
1975; Davenport, 1975; Lambert, 1975; and Bayliss-Smith, 1978). Quite innovative
approaches have been taken particularly in Papua New Guinea, for example, by Scragg
(1977) with church records, Bowers (1971) with archeological evidence, and Ohtsuka
(1986) with oral accounts of fertility histories. Oral genealogies have also been widely
used (eg Powdermaker, 1931; Brown and Winefield, 1965; Bowers, 1971; Carroll, 1975;
Davenport, 1975; Lambert, 1975; Marshall, 1975; Ohtsuka, 1986), but documented
genealogies considerably less so (eg. Huntsman et al., 1986).

Alternative sources to census data, such as administrative and organisational
records, are often unattractive to demographers because they are incomplete or inaccurate
and contain peculiar biases. But in fact, when dealing with any form of data the question
is not whether they contain error - for it is always necessary to assume so - but rather the
types and extent of error and the biases which may be produced. A real advantage for
those who do investigate such sources in the South Pacific is that the period of intense
social, economic, political and demographic change has been relatively recent, ranging
from about two hundred years in places such as Fiji, Tonga and Samoa to a few decades in
highland Papua New Guinea, and occurring within the life spans of the present and recent
past generations of people. As oral traditions often remain strong, the survivors and
descendants of these generations may be prevailed upon to ‘talk story’ to elaborate and
validate the documentary records and fill in the gaps3.

My use of the Fijian land-owning register, the Vola ni Kawa Bula (VKB) to
recreate the recent demography of a Fijian community was experimental. Although I
knew there would be substantial problems in using this information, I was intrigued by its
potential. The challenge was to devise appropriate methods to mine this archive for its
demographic content - and that remains a challenge for research with regard to other
archives of administrative data in the South Pacific region, and for non-conventional
sources of demographic data there in general.

3 As did, for example, Huntsman et al (1986) in the Tokelaus, and Powdermaker (1931) in New Ireland,
Papua New Guinea.
4.3 A genealogical population

The impact of change on communities and individuals within them is likely to be variable according to age, occupation, social class, marriage, mobility and chance. These differences increase over time and space as the descendants of the original community members disperse. Social and cultural variance affects many values and behaviours, possibly including fertility. As Kreager (1982) and Oppong (1974) suggest, this process of differentiation is itself an interesting and relatively neglected topic, and one which is clearly germane to the examination of the broader social and economic implications of and contexts for demographic experience.

However, this variation and rate of change within the society poses problems of defining a population for study. Problems of definition are fewer in a closed population,4 but small isolated populations are now rarities. More commonly, populations are surrounded by other people with whom they intermix to some extent, particularly under Western influence. These more open populations are, therefore, more suitable for the study of social change, but it is still necessary nominally to close them or the study would have no boundaries. For the study of rapid social change, where lifestyle, location and culture may no longer be congruent, Hackenberg (1967) suggests a genealogical definition, a biological network of genetic descent.

Beyond the fortuitous situation that the best local records available to me were genealogical in nature, there are several advantages of defining a population in this way. It provides an alternative to a study population which is arbitrarily demarcated according to demographic or spatial characteristics. It is a population which is linked to a place, but not tied to it, thereby enabling one to consider rural or urban life without defining the population as necessarily being one or the other. As Willigan and Lynch (1982:117) explain, a genealogical population is ideally suited to a study of broader social and economic implications of, and contexts for, demographic experience, for over time the characteristics that originally defined a population become diluted. Over several generations lineage members will probably be variously affected by experiences that may modify their demographic behaviour. The time-depth which is characteristic of such a population allows a diachronic examination of the local process of social, economic and demographic change, either by describing patterns of social differentiation among individuals or through cohort analysis. A cohort is a group of individuals who experience the same event within the same time interval, which could be a generation in genealogical

4 A closed population is one in which all matings and marriages occur entirely among group members and, therefore, all members would have only natives for parents, would marry only natives, and would produce only native children. No one could enter the population except by birth, and no one could leave the population except by death (Carroll, 1975:6). Because of the methodological advantages of studying such populations, they were hunted assiduously by an earlier generation of anthropologists (eg. Firth (1957) on Tikopia).
terms. Where change occurs, it may differentiate the life experiences of cohorts from one another, and this variation between cohorts provides a measure of social change. However, as McGee (1979:113) explains, a problem with presenting data in terms of statistics categorizing a group, is that it inevitably leads a researcher to argue that the group as a whole will behave in the same manner. It is at this point that the distinction between situational and structural change must be emphasised.

A population which is linked by kinship provides a quite different view of society from that of an atomistic population consisting of just a number of individuals. Hareven (1982) has demonstrated that the life trajectories of individuals cannot be understood separately from their family contexts, for it is often the dictates of the household and/or kin group which is more instrumental than the individual’s preferences in directing his or her life course. This also operates over time, for there is often a clear connection between the experiences of one generation and the behaviour of the next. In part, this is because the actions of an individual or group at one time have repercussions which alter the context for the decisions of other individuals or groups at subsequent times. Kinship links create a type of social network, which may be broad or narrow depending upon the selected criteria for membership. For the type of small, relatively-closed communities with which this study begins, patrilineal kinship is mostly congruent with networks of co­villagers and neighbours as well. Because links within the network stretch between generations and places of residence, such a population clearly demonstrates the maxim that every community is a process in time (Hackenberg, 1973:310).

At the micro scale, genealogical lists provide a set of connected and interlocking individual histories. At an aggregate level these records describe a closely knit web of trajectories, which provides a means of understanding of the sequential relations of events across the whole population. At both levels it is understood that individual decisions and experiences exist within an immediate environment of family, friends and community, all of which influence behaviour.

4.4 The documentary base: the Native Land Commission’s records
For this study, the members of the population were initially defined by the Fijian communal land-owning records of the Native Lands Commission (NLC) for five yavusa5

5 Translations into English differ, but a yavusa approximates a clan, a mataqali a sub-group of that clan, and an tokatoka an extended family within that clan. The general system of Fijian kinship is described by Nayacakalou (1955, 1978), Capell and Lester (1945, 1946 a, b), Hocart (1929), and Walter (1975, 1978 a), who mostly repeat the orthodoxy of this official system. Thompson (1940) and Sahlins (1962) drew attention to the poor fit between the official orthodoxy and locally indigenous land arrangements, and this point has been taken further by France (1969), Walter (1975, 1978 a) and Turner (1984). I have no argument with this evidence that the official interpretation of Fijian social structure is something of a colonial invention. My point is that as it is now a legal reality, it is a social institution in itself.
(34 tokatoka) on the island of Kadavu. These records are contained in the volumes of the Vola ni Kawa Bula - literally ‘the Book of Descent’ - which lists the members of all tokatoka in Fiji and thereby virtually all claimants to Fijian ethnicity. The VKB is, in the description of Ratu Sukuna, a ‘Fijian Doomsday Book’ and unique within the islands of the South Pacific. Because these records are related to land and, less directly, to villages and their inhabitants, a study population based on them constitutes both a community and a ‘family’. Because this population is socially integrated, it constitutes a universe rather than a sample. There are very few people resident in the villages, apart from women who have married in, who are not members of the tokatoka of the district. The residents of the village define the contemporary population (de facto and de jure in my village censuses) and the names on the tokatoka lists define the broader de jure population over time and space.

Figure 4.1 Fijian social structure

The records provide legal title for members of Fijian clans to their traditional land holdings and name people belonging to each clan. They are kept according to the

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6 Ratu Sukuna in an undated memorandum to the Chairman, NLC, probably in 1932 (Scarr, 1983:84). This description conveys a sense of scale and local significance but is technically incorrect, in that the Doomsday Book records a population and property census of early England, where the Vola ni Kawa Bula is a continuously updated record of Fijian lineages.
tokatoka which usually number between 50 and 150 closely related kin. The tokatoka nest into mataqali which in turn combine into yavusa (Figure 4.1). Each mataqali is related to a parcel of land. It is this connection with land ownership and kinship which makes the VKB so important to Fijians, and provides the central reason why it now has a high level of registration. My estimation of VKB coverage of the tokatoka selected for this study was 93.5 per cent of the population. Falvey (1987:34) compared the national Fijian population as recorded in the VKB (1985) with that enumerated in the 1986 census, and concluded that overall 21,129 people were missing from the VKB registration system. This national figure of 6.39 per cent omissions is of a similar order to the 6.5 per cent of the study population I identified as missing from the records.7

4.4.1 The origin of the Vola ni Kawa Bula
The VKB records originate in a political philosophy adopted by the first substantive Governor of Fiji, Sir Arthur Gordon, and his advisers. The importance of the idea of the ‘fatal impact’ that Europeans had on Pacific island societies, and the construction of an ‘official tradition’ were referred to in Chapter Two. By the time Gordon became Governor in 1875, there was some understanding - at least at an elite European level - of the damage caused to island societies by the alienation of native lands by European settlers, notably in New Zealand and Hawaii. Gordon was also strongly influenced both by contemporary anthropological theory which suggested that the maintenance of a traditional land tenure system was essential to the evolution of Fijian society towards ‘civilisation’ (France, 1969:xii), and by his personal belief that he was uniquely capable of a close identification with, and an intimate understanding of, Fijian society (France 1969:104).

On the somewhat unfounded assumption that every piece of land in Fiji had traditional owners and clear boundaries defined by an ancient and immutable custom, Gordon set in motion a search for this traditional land tenure system. After considerable investigation, this resulted in the codification of the land tenure system of Fiji in a manner which although ostensibly was traditionally Fijian, was almost as much a European fiction. To achieve this codification, Gordon established a Native Lands Commission but its enquiries quickly became stalemated as complex local variations of land traditions were recorded, the mythical nature of an unchanging past became apparent to the investigators, and through Fijian opposition to Commission goals (France, 1969:148). By

7 However it should be noted that Falvey’s (1987) measurement assumed that people’s declared ethnicity in the national census matched their eligibility for VKB registration, and for a small minority, mostly people of mixed parentage, that might not be so. As well, Falvey was comparing a population of people currently living (from the Census) with a count of people who may or may not be still alive. While the Vola ni Kawa Bula often records where a person has died, it does not always do this. My count included both people currently living and those now dead.
early this century, however, the British colonial government had regained its
determination that the Commission should proceed. After the appointment of Native
Lands Commissioner G.V. Maxwell in 1912, matters moved ahead quickly, although
with little regard for the complexities and variety of Fijian social customs. The exact and
universal nature of Fijian society was thereby determined by Maxwell to be that of
yavusa, mataqali, and tokatoka, although this was at best a simplified taxonomy. In
1914 the continued reluctance of some Fijians to cooperate with the Commission was met
with a direct threat from Governor Sweet-Escott that non-cooperation would effectively
result in their loss of control over lands they considered theirs. As the Commission
conducted its surveys throughout Fiji, therefore, Fijian people worked to redefine local
social arrangements into the framework required for their land claims to succeed. As
France (1969:171) states:

Maxwell sent his clerks to each area well in advance to assist the bemused
Fijians, reporting that 'the people are absolutely incapable of classifying
themselves without assistance'. The alarm which their arrival caused was
recalled by a participant in the following words: 'For weeks before its arrival,
the Commission was the topic of conversation in every village. We [i.e. the
members of mataqali and yavusa] would consult into the stillness of the night
to have the name of our vu (ancestor) - that was the difficult part. I tell you it
was sheer murder'.

The NLC records thus arrived at consist of two complementary parts, the register
of native lands and the register of native landowners. The first part is permanent and
unchanging but the second part, which is of interest here, changes over time as new
members of a family group, or tokatoka, are born and old ones die. As the records
identify the descendants of the male members of each tokatoka, they constitute a register
of a genealogical-type population. They describe official kinship rather than practical
kinship. Although these two overlap considerably, it is true that tokatoka membership as
defined by the NLC lists is a jurally defined model of Fijian social structure which may be
of less relevance to daily life than locally defined models (Sahlins, 1962; Turner, 1984:3).
This in part explains why, for example, in the 1956 census 34 per cent of Fijians did not
name their tokatoka and mataqali membership (McArthur, 1958:212). It is also true,

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8 Maxwell had earlier defined the land code in the Federated States of Malaya.
10 Contained in the Governor’s address to the Council of Chiefs, CP 1, 1914.
11 France here quotes CSO Minute 197/19, and then Nayacakalou 1963:71-2.
12 Similarly, in Taveuni, Brookfield (1976:6) found a number of people could not accurately name their
tokatoka - perhaps because a number of people now resident in Taveuni are descendants of plantation
workers from elsewhere in Fiji and have little contact with their places of registration. Others (eg. Ward,
pers.comm), found people sometimes gave a tokatoka name for a mataqali, and vice versa. Walter
(1978:353 b) explains that the frustrations of European researchers with this apparent inability of Fijians is
however, that the NLC structure has grown to be a ‘new tradition’. Through what Nayacakalou (1965:132) described as ‘a powerful sanction for conformity with the classifications of the NLC - viz., land rights’ - it now provides a familiar framework which Fijian people understand and relate to. Indeed, many younger Fijians today would probably be surprised by the story of its colonial conception. ¹³ Neither does its hybrid parentage detract from the present use of the VKB lists to define a genealogical population, for their systematic compilation throughout Fiji has been based on acknowledged blood ties between fathers and children.

4.4.2 The development of the registration system

The initial NLC surveys were conducted through Fiji between 1899 and 1939, beginning in the central Viti Levu provinces of Nadroga and Namosi and concluding in the eastern island province of Lau. Kadavu was surveyed in 1929-31. In each province the survey teams collected oral testimony on land holdings, clan genealogies and their histories (tukutuku raraba), and later surveyed all agreed land boundaries. Committing such complexities to an official record was difficult for both landowners and NLC surveyors and some disagreements have rankled landowners ever since.¹⁴

At first the registers of land-owners were kept by District Commissioners, but this proved unsatisfactory for there was no reliable system for updating them and little care was given to the physical preservation of the volumes. In 1932, the NLC decided that the volumes should be sent one by one from provincial government offices for updating in the Department of Fijian Affairs headquarters in Suva. This remedy was not effective because of time delays and administrative confusions but, more seriously, because the records could not be systematically maintained in the absence of a method of indexing tokatoka or a means of cross-referencing between provinces. Because of this, children who were born outside the province where their tokatoka was registered, were likely to be missed from their tokatoka list. The dramatic increase in population mobility after the 1920s was just one factor which put at risk the integrity of the whole NLC registration

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¹³ The antiquity of the NLC system is still the conventional view, although evidence to the contrary is presented by a number of writers, including France, 1969; Chapelle, 1978; Walter, 1978 a, b; and less directly by Nayacakalou, 1975.

¹⁴ The Kadavu Provincial Council report of 1933 reports how a minor "crimewave" followed the NLC survey there, during which time a new Buli narrowly avoided being murdered by a relative of a previous Buli, old feuds resurfaced, and one old man committed suicide after the hearings. I did not want to delve into such matters for they remain sensitive and in any case, did not directly concern my research, but in some discussions I was aware of the undercurrent of unresolved disputes and, more generally, that the genealogies touched both politics and biology.
system, providing 'the fuel for endless future (land) disputes and terminal chaos in the records of Fijian land ownership.' 15

In the late 1940s, the problem of Fijian registration gained the interest of a medical officer in the colonial government, Dr. Lindsay Verrier. His professional interest lay in establishing and perfecting a system of population records for public health administration, an endeavour which would centrally involve both the national birth and death registration system and the Fijian native land registration system. In the process of his work he became sympathetic towards the goals of the NLC registration system and actively critical of its inefficiencies. At the time Dr. Verrier began his register the original VKB records were still kept in provincial offices, and some were badly dilapidated, with torn pages and some entries indecipherable. He wrote:

When the people see their precious "originals" of their Vola ni Kawa Bula, a hundred-weight or so of paper, dumped in copra sacks, torn to bits, leaves floating away, blotted and illegible, hawked about the islands, they just smile at any notion of an effective Fijian administration. 16

The methods of indexing which Dr. Verrier devised for his own project provided a model by which the national and Fijian land registration systems were greatly improved. From 1944 to 1966 Dr Verrier worked on his register of the Fijian population of Vanua Levu, in his capacity as Medical Officer but largely with his own initiative and resources, amassing meticulous vital event records for around 57,000 people. From 1966 to 1971 he worked on secondment as 'Demographic Adviser' to the NLC, when he attempted to extend his method of registration to cover the whole Fijian population. In the event he was unsuccessful in this expansion, largely for political reasons and because his system had the more demographic intent of organising information around mothers, where the NLC administration was focused on the genealogical connections between children and their fathers. Had his enthusiasm and talent been better appreciated at that time and his own register continued, Fiji would today possess an archival treasure of demographic information. Twenty years of his commitment did not go entirely wasted, however, for Dr. Verrier lobbied through the low and high ranks of government for improvements to both systems of registration, and his hand is still evident in procedures used by the NLC today.

The accuracy of the VKB lists has recently been further improved, as a result of the second of a series of NLC surveys, intended to be conducted every fifty years. This second survey was conducted throughout Fiji in 1984-5. New claims from people wishing to be written into tokatoka were heard and decided upon, and efforts were made to

15 Dr Verrier, in memorandum to Commissioner Northern, November 16, 1946.
16 Personal papers of Dr. Verrier, May 6 1962, in unaddressed memorandum.
identify people left off the lists by oversight and administrative error. The NLC ran page-long advertisements in the national newspapers, listing the names in their ‘dead-letter files’ - people whose births had been registered but whose correct tokatoka membership could not be determined by Commission staff. Today there is close liaison between the offices of the Registrar-General and the NLC. The VKB is kept in the NLC’s central office in Suva, and bound volumes of recent Fijian birth registrations are routinely passed there from the Birth Registration section for inclusion in the NLC records. In 1988 the VKB was transcribed onto computer files and by early 1990 the computerisation of birth registrations was about to begin.

One important issue for the VKB registration system was that of illegitimate births. Initially, children born without an acknowledged father were recorded in a supplementary roll, but as the District Commissioners’ Conference in 1930 noted, the result would be ‘a growing landless class of illegitimates and their descendants by the operation of a law entirely at variance with old Fijian custom’17. Following amendment by the Council of Chiefs in 1930, the supplementary roll was merged into the VKB and illegitimate births included in the records thereafter, within the tokatoka of the acknowledged father or within the mother’s tokatoka where her relatives prefer or the father’s identity is unproven.

Another early ruling was that children of ethnically mixed parentage were not to be recorded. This was also amended by the Council of Chiefs in 1930 to allow registration of half-caste illegitimate children where the father was a native of another South Pacific island country. The ‘pure race’ sentiment underlying such restriction was viewed sympathetically by the colonial government, and probably encouraged in some quarters, as demonstrated in 1930 by a petition from a group of Methodist-trained men calling themselves the Viti Cauravou (Young Fijian Society).18 The petition requested that the Governor prohibit mixed marriages and unlawful unions between Fijian women and non-Fijians, in the wish that the ‘Fijian race be preserved, to remain pure for all time’. The specific concern was that the offspring of these mixed unions would take over Fijian lands, and jeopardise Fijian rights and possessions. The Secretary for Native Affairs replied that, while the government sympathised with desires to maintain the purity of the Fijian race, the exclusion of ethnically mixed children from the VKB prevented Fijian lands from passing into the hands of non-Natives. However, the stern views of the Fijian

17 Interestingly, Ratu Sukuna in 1932 asserted that ‘under the tribal system it was impossible for children to be born out of wedlock, for illicit intercourse was a capital crime.’ It was ‘with the abolition of the customary safeguards against this form of immorality, brought about by the missionary crusade against all practices and symbols of heathenism, and with the spread of the freedom of association between the sexes introduced through contact with the Tongans and European civilisation, these children have become a large and increasing section of the Fijian population ’ (Scarr, 1983:119).
18 CSO 2704/30.
elite and colonial officials were not always closely followed by village people. Within the study area the older people of acknowledged mixed descent were all part-Chinese. These people came from mostly long-term de facto relationships between local women and Chinese settlers and the local view, being tolerant of administrative neglect and consistent with Fijian mores, was that these were not bastards but the children of their fathers’ tribes, wherever they might be. Attitudes and NLC procedures have changed in recent years, and several of these people are now included in the VKB\textsuperscript{20}, in most cases retrospectively from the 1985 NLC survey. Other children, conceived more casually, have long been routinely written into the records, with a clue to the ethnicity of their fathers sometimes given by their names.

4.4.3 The content of the Vola ni Kawa Bula
The tokatoka lists in the VKB contain names, individual identity numbers, father’s and sometimes mother’s identity numbers, birth certificate numbers (after 1930), birth dates, and sometimes dates of death. Figure 4.2 shows a fictionalised tokatoka list. The identification number of each person in the record is unique: first the tokatoka number and, separated by an oblique stroke, the number marking an individual’s position in the list. Index books kept by the NLC for all tokatoka and yavusa throughout Fiji allow the easy location of any person in the records once given his or her identity number. Information about the initial members goes back to people born in the latter part of the nineteenth century, although birth dates before about 1910 are guesses. Some early entries record the identification numbers of spouses, and most provide the identification numbers of mothers. In the late 1960s, the system of identifying mothers was changed; for several years after, most often nothing about a child’s mother was recorded but in recent years sometimes the first name of a child’s mother is written.

4.4.4 Availability of the NLC records
The VKB is a public document, with relevant sections open to Fijian landowners on request at NLC headquarters in Suva. Some turaga-ni-koro in Kadavu showed me mimeographed copies of lists they had for local tokatoka. In the early 1970s the VKB was microfilmed by the Church of the Latter Day Saints for use in their genealogical programme, and the records are available at any of the church’s genealogical libraries -

\textsuperscript{19} Practices varied, and the purported ethnicity of the fathers of illegitimate children may have influenced decisions to include or exclude the child from their mother’s tokatoka list. For example, children of European fathers are most often recorded but I know of children of Indian fathers who have grown up as Fijians in their mother’s villages but not been included in the Vola ni Kawa Bula.

\textsuperscript{20} This is possible where their mothers were not legally married to their fathers. Not all wish to be included, however, for although there is a tangible reward to VKB registration (land rights) it is also a declaration of ethnic identity. Some part-Chinese would not wish to declare themselves or their children Fijian.
Figure 4.2. A fictionalised tokatoka list from the Vola ni Kawa Bula

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Birth date</th>
<th>Deathdate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Aisea Raione</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1906</td>
<td>25.3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josefa Waqa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>16.9.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marica Kerea</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>f</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilia Seru</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1907</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mareia Kitoga</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>30/190</td>
<td>1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atama Raione</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>30/190</td>
<td>1928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taito Wami</td>
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<td>m</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>30/190</td>
<td>14.10.31</td>
</tr>
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<td>Eva Diva</td>
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<td>m</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>30/190</td>
<td>29.4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maciu Tuira</td>
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<td>m</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>30/190</td>
<td>19.2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>m</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>30/190</td>
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<tr>
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<td>f</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>6/24</td>
<td>2.2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>6/24</td>
<td>2.3.44</td>
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<td>m</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>6/24</td>
<td>26.2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daiana Seru</td>
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<td>f</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<td>20.3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>11.7.51</td>
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<td>f</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>f</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1.9.48</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6/24</td>
<td>24.12.58</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taito W(SVB)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16/203</td>
<td>2.7.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mataca</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>77/188</td>
<td>2.7.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The full identity number for the first person on the list would be 1/202
although excluded from circulation in Fiji. Unfortunately these copies are now dated and do not benefit from recent improvements in coverage. More general access to records held in the NLC office is at the discretion of the Chairman and, while many researchers have consulted sections of the records, their inherently political nature requires that outsiders proceed with respect. As Bell (1979) found in southern Italy, suspicion and bureaucracy can reinforce each other to thwart access to such materials. However, as explained below, the VKB records of themselves are of little use to social scientists; it is when they are checked against, expanded upon and combined with the oral testimony of the people named in the lists that their full potential is realised.

4.4.5 Using the NLC records as a demographic database
There were several difficulties with using these records to define the population, for they presented problems of both coverage and content. While they provided an invaluable starting-point, they were not necessarily correct in any one regard, and all information had to be verified and elaborated upon by individuals or members of each family group. The most serious problem of coverage was that they provided information about the children of males on the lists but not the females. This problem was partially overcome by selecting villages within a traditional marriage district, in this case a part of the old realm of Tabanivonolevu on the island of Kadavu (Figure 4.3). Because women often married within the area it was possible to identify their husbands and thereby their children in other tokatoka lists. Some other women on the lists were traced and interviewed, but not all could be. Unfortunately, but hardly surprisingly, the few cases where nothing was known by tokatoka informants about an individual were more often female than male.

It also became necessary to add wives into the original population. Although there was a lot of intermarriage within the group, there was also marriage with other Kadavuans, people in other parts of Fiji, and of other ethnic groups. The degree of marriage beyond Tabanivonolevu has increased with each generation. Therefore, the mothers of many of the children recorded in the tokatoka lists are from outside the initial genealogical population, although they may now be resident in the study villages. Some of these wives were interviewed and so I was able to collect the same details about them that were available for the tokatoka members. However, virtually nothing could be learnt about other spouses (female or male), except whom they had married and usually where they were from and where they currently lived. There is then a subset of the study population which must exist for definitional purposes, but about which little is known. For this reason I shall refer to the originally recorded population as the base study population, and the population including spouses as the expanded study population.
Figure 4.3 The study villages
Some descendants were missing from the lists, despite a recent effort by the NLC to identify and record missing tokatoka members. The most difficult to locate were children who died in early infancy. Some are recorded in the lists but through the elaboration of the lists and collection of fertility histories I was able to identify others. Even then I could not account for the number of infant deaths which I would have expected, particularly before the 1940s, for probably only the parents of these infants would recall all of them and few of this older generation survive. Dating their births required informed guess-work as no other records exist of these children. An approximate birth year could be fixed by knowing the birth order and the birth dates of siblings. For first-born children it was sometimes possible to know the age of the mother at their birth or place the birth in relation to the mother’s marriage, either before or after. Some women who could not remember the birth years or months of their children could remember which other village children were born about the same time.

Using these records to provide information on family size and women’s fertility was a tedious and time-consuming task, for it effectively meant turning them around, and therefore the population for this study is not large. The significant problem this poses is in measuring the validity of these records by conventional demographic means. For example, the sex ratio of the base study population (108.4/100) might suggest that those missing from the lists are more often female than male, but the interpretation of this figure is complicated by the small size of the study population. In a ‘natural’ population the sex ratio (number of males per 100 females in a population) at birth is expected to be in the vicinity of 106, and ratios significantly higher or lower than this either indicate special conditions within the population, such as sex-biased mortality or migration, or data error. In small populations, however, such logic does not hold, for the smaller the population the greater the possible variation (Feeney, 1975:59). Table 4.1 demonstrates how sensitive a demographic measure is to population size, and how it is, therefore, impossible to judge its validity against standards derived from very much larger populations.
Table 4.1 Sex ratios in the study population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex Ratio</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>95.47</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>10.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>141.72</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>11.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>83.90</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>11.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>102.36</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>13.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>95.41</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>19.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>154.23</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>17.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>112.50</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>18.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>132.55</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>21.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>24.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-99</td>
<td>150.00</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;100</td>
<td>112.12</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>25.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>108.40</td>
<td>2110</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Field survey and Vola ni Kawa Bula.

Large standard deviations imply low levels of confidence in the representativeness of the estimates. For example, the standard deviation for a population of 2110 is 4.6, and therefore the sex ratio might be anywhere between 101 and 111 without indicating any influence beyond biological chance. This is why, with small populations, data validity needs be measured in different ways and, most commonly, by cross-validation with other sources. In this study this was done by comparing the official lists with the family knowledge of people named in the lists. It was also done by cross-checking some lists of siblings with information included in the Register-General’s records of births.

There were also errors of content. Occasionally, where children had been adopted soon after birth, they were ascribed to their non-biological parents. Infrequently, the names of people completely unknown to other tokatoka members are mistakenly included in the lists. A few people are recorded more than once (by my estimate 31 or 1.5 per cent) sometimes because of variations in their name or birth date. The major problem, however, concerned birth dates. It is unlikely that birth-dates of the first people named in the lists

21 Hull (1988:1). Assuming the normal sex ratio of births would be 106 males per 100 females, the formula used to calculate standard deviations is: \[ \text{sd.} = \sqrt{\frac{0.485 \times 0.515}{N}} \times (1/0.485^2) \times 100 \], where \( n \) is the sample size. More simply, the formula is \[ 2.1212 / \sqrt{N} \times 100 \].

22 Usually deliberately, because this would get around the complications of Fiji adoption laws. This practice is more widespread than NLC officers would like to believe.
are accurate, for they were already old at the time of the NLC survey.23 There are clear inaccuracies in birth dates before about 1910. For example, one woman, Kelerayani, was recorded as born in 1861, making her at the time of the NLC survey around 68 years, but that birth date is probably incorrect because she bore two daughters, in 1902 and 1910. The birth dates of her children are probably reliable because they correlate with the birth dates of people known to be their age-mates, as do their ages at marriage, the birth dates of their children, and their present physical condition. But if Kelerayani’s birth date were correct this would put her at their births as 41 years and 49 years respectively, which must be considered unlikely. Although VKB birth dates after 1930 are products of the birth-registration system and most are cross-referenced with birth certificate numbers, there are occasional errors and fictions and, therefore, dates required rechecking. Occasionally birth registration dates are incorrect, particularly so with earlier generations and with people who are registered later than at birth.24

It was only in conjunction with discussions with lineage members that the VKB records could be transformed into a quite accurate record of the births of family members and extended to provide other information about the study population. Unfortunately, the general lack of familiarity with the lives of grandparents and, in some cases, with those of parents, made it difficult for me to pursue my goal of collecting information over three generations.

4.5 The ethnographic base: four yavusa of Kadavu
I chose to do fieldwork on the island of Kadavu for several reasons. Kadavu was a place of early colonial contact, and yet it remains relatively undeveloped. As much as a traditional Fijian lifestyle exists anywhere, it still does in most villages on Kadavu. Kadavu people have long been known for their mobility. This was a desirable characteristic for the study area because I was trying to locate a population which had become differentiated over time and over space. Although Kadavu people can be found almost anywhere, a large number have settled in Suva where it was relatively easy for me

23 If care had been taken at this time many of these birth dates could have been extracted from the registers of births which were maintained for Kadavu from 1877. It is now not possible to do such a cross-check because of the state of the registers and problems of identification. My familiarity with birth and death registers and Dr. Verrier’s diaries suggests to me that the cross-referencing of records by the NLC was most probably neglected, as it was until recently even between birth, marriage and death records within the same registry system.
24 Where late registrations are noted, they are marked in the records as volai sucu bera (lit. birth written late). The problem is that once a date becomes written down it becomes the ‘truth’, and there is rarely evidence otherwise. Some people record family details on the inner covers of their Bibles, but these may not last either. In my family, records were inscribed on the inner lid of a large wooden box but even this disappeared. The NLC records were helpful in this regard for they are mostly accurate, and without some form of written record many people would be unable to recall their own or their children’s birth years, let alone months or days.
to locate them through their families. The time I began my fieldwork, June 1988, was a
time of political tension in Fiji25, so Kadavu was a good choice of site because people
there knew of me and I could more surely work undisturbed.

4.5.1 My entry into the study communities
Where positivists often imply that not they but some objective automaton collected their
data - 'any researcher' would do - anthropologists write of their entree into their study
community and how they negotiated their own identity within it. The identity of the
fieldworker is important for 'what [people] can and will tell us depends on circumstances
of politics, on contexts we create together but differently construe, and on historical
processes in which we ourselves are actors' (Keesing, 1985:38).

I began fieldwork in my mother-in-law's village, Mataso, and then moved to the
neighbouring villages of Muanisolo, Namara and Dravuwalu (Figure 4.3). The
precolonial grouping of Tabanivonolevu, to which the four study villages belonged, holds
little political significance now and exists mainly within the memories of the older people.
However, the close kinship ties between the villages are still reinforced through
marriages, which enabled me to trace some mothers, sisters and daughters among the
villages. Mataso is a small village of 13 households and 67 residents, and Muanisolo has
21 households and 126 residents. Namara and Dravuwalu are two of the largest villages
on Kadavu, each with about 50 households. In late 1988, Namara had 267 residents and
Dravuwalu 258 residents. Villages and yavusa are associated but not necessarily
correspondent; the yavusa selected for this study are those represented by most residents
of the villages and amongst whose land the villages are located.

There are problems posed by working in an area where one has kin-connections as,
for example, whether people would trust me with the very personal information I was
trying to collect. I can give no firm answer to this, but I found the people most closely
connected to my family to be the most open with me, and supportive. I also never
answered questions about what other women had told me, but 'forgot' the details until
such questions dried up. Overall, however, I believe the advantage of being, in my case,
an 'insider outsider' outweighed any disadvantages. Fijian people are almost unfailingly
hospitable and friendly to visitors. While not denying the sincerity behind this kind
welcome, it is tempting for an outsider to project the hospitality extended as somehow
representing the nature and life of the community. Life in small communities is not
without tensions and all the problems that people everywhere impose on one another, and

25 At that time the search was on for illegal weapons in all parts of Viti Levu and it was uncertain what
might happen next. The army was conducting a campaign of threats against staff at the University of the
South Pacific, and political disturbance was being blamed (by the military and government at least) on
foreign mercenaries, journalists and troublesome academics.
knowing something of the history of the people from the inside through my husband’s family helped me appreciate this. It was also personally a rewarding experience for, through my work, I came to better understand people whom I had thought I already knew well and to help strengthen some connections within my family which had become quite tenuous. Further, people freely asked questions of me that hit as close to home as any I could pose to them: why was it that, despite my being apparently healthy and wealthy, clearly liking small children, and having a kind, helpful husband, I had decided to have no more children after my now nine-year-old son? It was pointed out to me that I was logically a member of my own study population26: who would interview me? As I understood how difficult it was to explain my life, I better realised the conceit and challenge within my efforts to understand theirs.

My entry into the study community was facilitated by my mother-in-law’s family but the extent to which I determined my identity within it, and the extent to which people there decided who I was to be, is difficult for me to say. A white woman is the archetype of a difficult visitor for many Fijian villagers. In my attempt to modify this perception of me I found my kin connections helpful, for I was a known character in a far-flung network. But my main assets were my five children (only their photographs accompanied me) and my status as a middle-aged married woman. These characteristics greatly helped my interviews, for not only did they make me an appropriate person to be discussing families and intimate details of conception and contraception27 but, I believe, they improved my identification with the women. I most certainly did not want the ‘token male’ identity that women researchers are sometimes ascribed. As a visitor I could also be invited to informal gatherings of mostly men, and it was on these occasions that we often discussed the people on the NLC lists. But although I tried to conform to local expectations as the wife of a distant kinsman, of course ambiguities remained: what was a mother and a wife doing away from her family, and still studying?

4.5.2 Field work methods

Kadavu people speak a dialect of Fijian with which I found some difficulty. On my first visits to the villages I went alone, and found my command of Bauan Fijian28 adequate to

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26 Not quite, for the children of women who had married out of the community fell outside of the study population as I defined it. I was also excluded by my ethnicity.
27 One day an elderly woman turned to Maraia, an unmarried girl who was helping me, and demanded why she was interested in contraception. Fortunately, Maraia had the presence to retort that it was I who was principally interested, and anyway she had been taught all about it when trained as a village health worker. The incident was partly in jest but demonstrated how age and marital status prescribe what can readily be talked about. The ‘world of women’ is not necessarily open to all women.
28 Bau dialect is the dialect of Fijian used by the church and the radio, taught in schools, and used by government and, therefore, is almost universally understood by Fijian speakers. The difference between
do the initial censuses and work on the VKB lists. Later, during the interviews of women I had someone with me to help me understand where I could not follow the conversation, although many women readily spoke in Bauan when they knew that was what I preferred. As a further check, I tape-recorded a number of the interviews and, in Suva, asked friends and relatives who speak Kadavu dialect fluently to help translate them. In Suva I conducted many of the interviews alone, for there women less often used dialect and as well I had by then become practised in the vocabulary that generally arose in the interviews. My first assistant with the village interviews was a school-teacher, which unfortunately limited the time she could spend with me, and the second had trained as a village health worker. As well as helping with the interviews they helped locate the people I needed to talk with and tuned me into some aspects of village life and etiquette.

I organised my fieldwork in four phases, which I carried out in the following general sequence, although discussion of the NLC lists continued over most of the fieldwork period:

(a) Village censuses
I took censuses of the *de facto* and *de jure* populations in each village (with *de jure* defined as people who usually lived in each household). Information was collected for each household member as to name, sex, relationship to head of household, marriage status, education place and level, and present whereabouts. For each person aged over fifteen years employment was recorded, and for each woman aged over fifteen years the number of her children living in the village, the number staying elsewhere, the number who had died, the year in which her last child was born, and whether that child was still alive. Birth dates were established from birth certificates, baptism certificates, or the NLC records or memory where none of the others were available.

(b) The VKB lists
For each tokatoka I sat with family members and asked about each person on the list. The questions covered confirmation of parent's identities and birth dates, place of birth, place of death or present location, number of times married and the identity of spouse(s), the number of children alive or dead (and identifying them on the lists), educational achievement, religion, and brief notes about mobility. The purpose in collecting this information was to get some data about the whole *de jure* population, to locate all women in the lineages, and to provide a separate check on both the field census and the interviews.

Bau and Kadavu dialects is of some words and expressions and is not so great that speakers of differing dialects can not readily communicate.
Initially this could be quite a tedious procedure, but became more interesting and
the information more detailed as people became familiar with my questions. The best
environment for this turned out to be with small groups of people, most often around a
bowl of *yaqona* in the late afternoon and evenings.29 Some of the lists were very long
(about two hundred names) and these discussions had to be broken into segments or they
became impossibly complicated and wearisome.

(c) Interviews with women

These interviews were structured around a broad range of questions which were
deliberately designed to be open-ended. From these interviews, individual histories,
which included fertility, marriage, mobility and occupational histories, were collected
from as many women in the expanded study population as it was possible to locate. In
effect this was almost all of those resident or visiting in the study area and many of those
resident in Suva; although some information was indirectly collected about almost all
other women in the base study population. Looking for people named in a list is a more
time-consuming task than interviewing people selected by their residence, but it had its
rewards. Most people were easy to find, but in other cases conducting the interviews was
like operating a bureau for missing people. Relatives were coopted to help in my search,
and I became aware that even the well-used kin-networks of Fijians have holes in them.
In the process I made visits to parts of the city that were previously unknown to me,
although I had lived in and around Suva for fourteen years. Where it was unlikely I
would be able to meet them, indirect information about women was collected from their mothers,
sisters or daughters. More generally, some information was collected about almost
everyone through discussions centred on the VKB lists.

In this way it became apparent that the truth could easily be ‘the intersection of
independent lies’.30 Some women certainly told lies about their reproductive histories, as
was sometimes revealed by asking women about their mothers and sisters. In one case I
asked a woman about her mother who was staying in Suva but whom I was not certain to
meet, for she moved about a lot. The woman, who was cooperative and had no reason

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29 Initially, I was concerned with applying the principles of triangulation, and collecting the information
separately from several informants. This was no way to improve validity, however, for in such a situation
people can feel compelled to make up what they do not really know. Because I was equipped with a lot of
information in the written records, it was possible to detect where people were unsure of the information
they were giving. The group situation, where people felt relaxed and could share information and mildly
gossip, was more comfortable for everyone and much more profitable for me.

30 Levens (1966) quoted in Fielding and Fielding (1987:23). The extent of lying is an important
consideration in assessing survey results. For example, the organisers of the Fiji Fertility Survey (1976:34)
estimated that 10-20 per cent of women had falsely denied contraceptive use at interviews. Quite
incidentally, the woman in the following anecdote later told me she had been a respondent in the Fiji
Fertility Survey, but of course I could not ask her if she had answered that survey truthfully.
(that was apparent to me) to lie, told me her mother had a tubal ligation after her last child. I did get to interview the mother, but did not tell her I had prior information about her. Despite my persistent probing (which stopped short of revealing my source), she refused to tell me anything about the tubal ligation and swore she had never used any form of contraception. However, that women may lie about important personal and sensitive matters should surprise no-one, and I agree with Bleek (1987:314) that it is more interesting to consider who was most likely to be lying and why, because this provides an insight into personal and cultural aspects of their lives. From the interviews and from discussing the problem with other Fijian women, the impression I gained was that the women most likely to falsely deny having used modern contraception were those now in their late forties or early fifties - the cohort which was the first target of the Ministry of Health when modern birth control methods were introduced. It may be that these women remain less able to shake off their feelings of shame when talking in the modern terminology of contraception. The women who spoke openly to me about the most sensitive matter of their own abortions and how abortions were procured, were those who knew me best31 and, unless my relatives happen to be more prone to abortions than other women in the study, I am now unconvinced by some other's denials of any knowledge of abortion.

A few other women gave untrue information apparently unconsciously; perhaps over the years some people form the mental habit of compartmentalising their families and therefore cannot accurately recall the number of children they have had. In one case an elderly woman told me during the field census that she had six children, of which one was dead. The NLC lists named the five living children and not the one who had died in infancy, but also named an illegitimate daughter who was now married and living in the same village. When I asked the woman again during the interview how many children she had given birth to, she again said six, and named the five living and one dead. When I asked her about her illegitimate daughter she replied 'oh, yes!', and then recounted the names of her 'six' children, naming the six living and forgetting the one dead. We went backwards and forwards like this a couple more times as she alternately counted the six children from her marriage or the six living children. In both senses she did have six children and it required a mental effort for her to remember that in yet another context - which was of little practical importance to her - she had borne seven children. The separate sources of information - the field censuses, the NLC lists and their annotation by community members, and the interviews - together formed a validation mesh which alerted me to such errors.

31 Again, this fits with Bleek's (1987) experience.
The personal histories were collected mostly through interviews, although towards the end of the fieldwork period when my two assistants were thoroughly familiar with the interviews, they collected some by questionnaire. The loosely structured interviews allowed a fairly informal, story-telling setting for data collection. This encouraged the women to speak more openly and made it possible for me to present a more genuine interest in each person's story. However, a check-list of questions was essential, and even with the aid of this the interviews demanded a lot of concentration.

(d) **Group discussions**
At the end of 1989 I returned to Suva and revisited some of my earlier informants. By that stage I had completed most of the preliminary analysis of my field data and wanted to explore some of my insights in more detail. As Bourdieu (1977:18) explains, the more that an informant is confident that questions are posed by someone familiar with their world of reference, the more willing that informant becomes to answer in her or his natural language of discourse. This iterative method therefore also provided me a different level of understanding. Because people travel between Kadavu and Suva a great deal around Christmas and New Year, it was not necessary for me to travel to Kadavu to meet residents of both places. In Suva, people generally sit around talking in the evenings with family or friends, or drinking *yaqona* together, and I mostly used this informal setting as the venue for my discussions. While outwardly very casual, these meetings were valuable because people commonly discuss matters in this way and they freely expressed their opinions or contributed new information. Most often too, family members of several generations were present and provided quite different perspectives.

(e) **The characteristics of the data collected**
The genealogical population consists of all members of land-owning *mataqali* of the study district. Some details were available about the lives of almost everyone on these lists, but fertility details are available for only 84 per cent of the women. For 52.4 per cent of the women in the genealogical population I was able to construct detailed accounts of their lives and accurately dated fertility histories. This subgroup A is displayed in Figure 4.4 as the genealogical population with full fertility details. For another 31.5 per cent of the genealogical population I had confirmed reports of the number of children they had borne, but had no reliable means of dating these births. This subgroup C is displayed in Figure 4.4 as the genealogical population without full fertility details. The remaining 16 per cent of the women, for whom I could not confirm the number of children they had borne (subgroup D), were most often missed by reason of their residence rather than another characteristic. A few families early moved away from the study district to settle in other
parts of Kadavu and, because of the difficulty of travelling about in Kadavu, I could not meet these people. Some had lived so long away from their village of NLC registration that people had no firm knowledge of their activities. The families of women who had married to other villages on Kadavu sometimes had lost close touch and were unsure of how many children these women had - again, a reflection of restricted travel around the island. Others within this unknown category were born in elsewhere in Fiji, where their families had migrated one or two generations previously. While I had information about a number of these people, they are excluded from analysis because I had no reliable means of confirming these reports. A further possible cause for exclusion was an undated death in an early generation, where I could not be sure that person had survived childhood.

There is another group of women (sub-group B) who, together with the genealogical population, comprise the extended population - these are women who married into the genealogical population and who are now, or in their lifetimes were, resident in the study district or in Suva. This group is displayed in Figure 4.4 as the outsider population with full fertility details. Again, these women were selected by their residence, either in the study district or in Suva, rather than by any other characteristic.

As Figure 4.4 demonstrates, it is not possible to argue that those lacking full fertility details are exactly replaced by those outsiders with full fertility details, but the fit is close and the chances of systematic bias greatly reduced by having other details about almost every person within this study population. While the definition of this population
is complicated, it describes a community in practice. Because it was conducted within
discrete space, the survey included details of all women (less three refusals) currently
living in the four study villages, and most women of the community (by marriage or
descent) currently resident in Suva.

For the most part the people I interviewed at length were women, although I talked
more casually with many men. Village men in particular sometimes considered it odd that
I preferred to talk to women, and some volunteered their life stories or participated in
parts of the interviews.

4.6 Genealogical demography

4.6.1 Quality of the data

The conventional belief about genealogies is that they are usually incomplete, inaccurate
or biased, and therefore are not a satisfactory basis for rigorous demographic analysis. It
is important to consider why this is so, the extent to which these problems have been
empirically determined, and the conditions in any particular data set which might
exacerbate or reduce these problems. At issue are the types and extent of errors and the
biases they may produce in the data set. Different types of genealogies have different
characteristics, as, for example, the distinction between ‘stock’ and ‘descent’ genealogies
(La Fontaine, 1973; Huntsman et al., 1986). Descent genealogies often incorporate
segments of origin myths and may be clearly symbolic and cultural. Stock genealogies
are those used for domestic purposes such as ordering and defining the groups through
which property rights are established or the desirability of marriages assessed. These
emphasize a complete record of actual links. They are seldom preserved orally for more
than five generations, beyond which they have little function. When proper attention is
paid to cultural idioms and cases of adoption, Huntsman et al. (1986:13) suggest stock
genealogies may well approximate biological validity.

Another important distinction is between oral and written genealogies which, in
turn, have different characteristics depending in part on whether the records are in private
or public ownership. Oral genealogies are more fluid, for the small group of people who
‘own’ the genealogy can secretly make adjustments or they can be amended more
informally over a long period (Wilson, 1977:27). This particularly happens where they
are polemic in nature and are used to support certain social, political or religious claims.
There may therefore come to be a change in the relations of names within the genealogy,
the addition of names or segments, or the disappearance of names. Over time, segments
may be forgotten or suppressed and the genealogy telescoped. This is less probable where
the genealogies are written down progressively and close to the time of each event, and
kept in an institutionalised form beyond local community politics. This is the case with
the VKB which forms a subsection of the vital events registration and can only be modified following legally specified procedures.

The degree to which errors in genealogical data limit their quality depends on the uses to which the data are put. As Hackenberg (1973:296) explains, there are both demographic and semantic components of genealogical analysis:

The qualitative element is semantic: the meanings of kin terms and behaviours appropriate among relatives...the quantitative element is in part demographic, with reference to the biosocial events of birth, death, residence and migration and also to the proportions of occupants of various status positions and their combinations into groupings of greater or lesser exclusiveness.

Errors of omission are of particular significance to the quantitative element of the data, producing error in the calculation of size, sex ratios, age and vital rates for a population (Morrill and Dyke, 1980:4). This capacity for error is particularly pertinent for this study of a small population, as it is compounded by the problems of interpretation of demographic rates that were discussed earlier in this chapter. In that omissions from the records were random or their patterns understood, the impact on the semantic or qualitative uses of the data would be less serious, as here the data is used more to understand the cultural milieu in which demographic events occur.

Many of the problems in earlier work in genealogical demography stemmed from a focus on the quantitative character of the data. The intellectual heritage of much of this work (particularly the papers in Morrill and Dyke (1980) was the family reconstitution technique pioneered by Louis Henry, and the technological impetus behind these studies was the then new and exciting potential of computer analysis and simulations. Lauro (1979) evaluated similar quantitative methods of genealogical reconstruction in his field-study of a Thai village community, and concluded that the amount of omission from retrospective recall seriously compromised the usefulness of the data (Lauro,1979:151).

By contrast, Das Gupta (1989) provides a model to exploit the more reliable, semantic quality of the genealogies. Rather than attempting to count events across family histories, she used the unfolding of these histories to elaborate the relationships between demographic events, social history, and cultural setting. Huntsman, Hooper and Ward (1986) exploited both demographic and semantic qualities in their study of Tokelauan communities, which used oral genealogies to detail epidemiological history and investigate the degree to which the social facts within the genealogical terms conformed to real biological relationships between people. Their conclusion was that while genealogies undeniably present certain problems of interpretation, the oral genealogies they collected gave accurate accounts of biological relationships and provided a sound basis for studies which crossed the boundary between biology and society.
4.6.2 Management and analysis of data

Their time-depth and myriad, interrelated people and events make genealogies rich but difficult material to work with. In the decade since Lauro needed to produce specially written programs for analysis on a main-frame computer, a number of computer programs have become available as aids to managing such data, and micro-computers have greatly increased capacity and convenience. However, many of the commercially available genealogical programs are restricted in the types of information that could be recorded for any individual, or in their ability to interface with statistical packages. Most are variations on the genealogical program developed by the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Personal Ancestral File) and use its GEDCOM\textsuperscript{32} standard (LDS, 1986). These packages have been developed to aid family historians who wish usually to organise information from a number of sources about a small population and generate family tree diagrams. While they are convenient in this regard, they can be inflexible in other respects, particularly with regard to the embedded European, or American, cultural values that must be conformed to, such as definitions of illegitimacy and marriage. Instead, I used DBASE4 and developed a system of files cross-linked on individual identity numbers to manage and analyse my genealogical data. I used the identity numbers upon which the VKB is already indexed. The memo field facility in DBASE4 allowed life history accounts and other qualitative information to be linked into the system and accessed and categorised by keywords embedded in the texts. From DBASE4 it is possible to transfer numerical data to LOTUS 1-2-3 or SPSS for the generation of cross-tabulations and other statistical manipulation.

4.7 Conclusion

In order to gather information about population processes in a Fijian community it was necessary to rely upon two rich but unreliable sources of information: the memories of community members and the records of the NLC. The methodological problem was to upgrade the quality of data by merging these two sources, which was done by using the records as a framework around which further investigations could be made and as one check on informant recall. The records also allowed integration on another level, for the genealogical connections embedded in them constituted a flexible sample frame and provided the definition of a natural community located in time and place, but not defined by either.

\textsuperscript{32}GEDCOM is the genealogical data communications program initially developed for the Personal Ancestral File.
Chapter Five

Choices, Chances and Constraints: 
The Changing Lives of Kadavu People

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please (Karl Marx, [1852] 1926:23).

5.1 Life-histories and the life course

The description in this chapter of the directions and characteristics of social change over the past four generations is based on the life-histories collected of people born into the genealogical population in the twentieth century. These provide a view over eighty years of the social, economic and political conditions in which these changes occurred. The recreation of the history of the district through the accounts of local people also balances that contained in colonial reports and other government documents which, de facto, overemphasize the power of the state in shaping personal and community experiences. For example, Chapter Two noted regulations intended to limit personal mobility, but the importance of these rules in the lives of people is claimed more in the records of administrators than it is revealed in the life-histories of the people. It is possible to exaggerate the degree to which these colonial rules represented colonial impositions, for the minutes of meetings ranging from the Council of Chiefs to provincial councils show that the Fijian elite was also enthusiastic about restrictions on the movements of villagers, and particularly of women. But in my discussions with elderly people I rarely found compliance with colonial regulations uppermost in people's recollections. Rather they stressed the need to conform with the wishes and demands of family members and village elders. This perspective may represent selective recall, or may indicate the degree to which colonial controls paralleled contemporary social controls, at least in the early part of the century.

In part, my emphasis on the strategic behaviour of individuals and families works upon the strength in the data I collected, but it also acknowledges that numerical rates provide a narrow perspective of the processes of change. As a number of writers have argued (eg. Anderson, 1977, Kreager, 1982), computed rates of behaviour can throw a quite hazy light upon the relationship of this behaviour to other aspects of the social structure. Jewsiewicki (1987:278) suggests that where they reveal 'strategies of social units confronted with the vagaries of individual actions and the norms of larger groups', life-histories can describe locally-defined principles underlying demographic rates. The range of choices and chances available to individuals and their families, and the concerns
and constraints that impinge on the decisions which mould their biographies, compose the conceptual link between individual lives and collective behaviour (Tilly, 1982:202).

The changing collective experience of cohorts shows the interplay between historical events and the life-courses of people. But while the behaviour and experiences of age cohorts describe general change in a society, individuals within these cohorts may lead quite different lives. Where changes occur fast, people of dissimilar ages experience an event at different stages of their lives (Young, 1979:45). Overall, however, the diversity of people’s life trajectories reflects the diversity of social and historical structures and processes individuals encounter in their life-courses (Sorensen, 1986:xi). To the extent that alternate paths to altered fertility behaviour can be identified, this diversity clarifies mechanisms of change in fertility regimes that are otherwise obscure (Schneider et al., 1984:247). More generally, the examination of different experiences provides an antidote to broad generalisations about the role of culture in demographic change, for it allows an understanding of the variation of life choices and life chances within a cultural group, and even within a small group of kinsfolk. Fijian society is not structured along clear class lines, yet the history of families explains much of the present pattern of social differentiation.

5.2 The study population

5.2.1 The four generations

To abbreviate the detail collected in the life-histories, the study population is divided into four generations. They conform as closely as possible to the generations in the genealogies, but of course the fit cannot be exact. The people referred to as the first generation are those people born before 1913 and now aged over 75 years.1 The second generation comprises people now aged 74 to 45 years and born between 1913 and 1943; the third generation are those people aged between 44 and 15 and born between 1944 and 1973, and the fourth generation are those people now aged less than fifteen years (Table 5.1). The genealogical population to which these generations belong includes people both currently living and those now dead, and both people resident in the study district and those living elsewhere (Figure 5.1).

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1 The present refers to December 1988, when most of the fieldwork was complete.
Figure 5.1 The Genealogical Population

Sources: Vola ni Kawa Bula and field survey.
Table 5.1 People of the four generations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birth Year</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alive</td>
<td>Dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880-1889</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890-1899</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-1912</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913-1923</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-1933</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-1943</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-1953</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954-1963</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-1973</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-1988</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Genealogies and life-histories.

Figure 5.2 shows the passage of life-stages of the generations over historical time. This diagram acts as a reference point for the description of community change which follows in this chapter, for it describes the intersection of historical time and life-times.

The population pyramid in Figure 5.1 is contoured by the genealogical definition of this population, but its broad shape mirrors the rapid increase of the residential population of Kadavu over the twentieth century (Figure 5.3).2 The eldest people in the

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2 Figure 5.3 shows some disparities between the population counts taken in the first part of the century by the Methodist Church and the national census, and in later years by the Ministry of Health and the national census. The figures of the Methodist Church and the Ministry of Health are aggregated from village or
Figure 5.2 The intersection of birth cohorts and historical time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life-stage in</th>
<th>GENERATION 1</th>
<th>GENERATION 2</th>
<th>GENERATION 3</th>
<th>GENERATION 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>OLD</td>
<td>OLD/ADULT/OLD</td>
<td>ADULT/ADULT</td>
<td>YOUTH/ADULT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>ADULT/OLD</td>
<td>ADULT/ADULT</td>
<td>YOUTH/ADULT</td>
<td>CHILD/CHILD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>ADULT</td>
<td>ADULT</td>
<td>CHILD/ADULT</td>
<td>CHILD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>YOUTH/ADULT</td>
<td>CHILD</td>
<td>CHILD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>CHILD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Birth year: 1890-1899, 1900-1909, 1910-1919,
1920-1929, 1930-1939, 1940-1949, 1950-1959,


Figure 5.3 The growth of the population of Kadavu, 1891-1987

Sources: Fiji Censuses, 1891-1986.
Ministry of Health, Kadavu.

district records and, other than inaccuracies which might result from this aggregation, these figures represent de jure populations. The census figures represent a single count approximately every ten years and, other than the likelihood of an inaccurate count, this is a de facto measurement.
study population are two people - but not a couple - born over 130 years ago. Figures 5.4 and 5.5 summarise the geographic distribution of this population over time, a distribution which is related to different life experiences among the people. The early cohorts were probably all born in the study area, and overall 63.5 per cent of the base population was born there. Among later cohorts we can see a dispersion to other parts of Fiji and most clearly to the national capital and nearest mainland port, Suva. Overall, around 17 per cent of the population was born in Suva, from the first in this community at the turn of the century to 28 per cent of the children now aged under ten years. Some of the people born away from the study area have returned to visit or to stay, others have never been back. Figure 5.5 shows this dispersion by the current residence of the expanded population. Today, around a third of the population (34 per cent) resides in Suva, with slightly more females than males (52.1 per cent and 47.9 per cent respectively). Less than half of the population is resident on Kadavu: 41 per cent in the study area and another 3.3 per cent living elsewhere on the island. A small group (2 per cent) of the people, now in their fifties or younger, lives away from Fiji.

5.3 Kadavu in the nineteenth century

5.3.1 Early trade
Kadavu was among the first parts of the Fiji group to become well known to Europeans, and long before that was an important trading centre with the neighbouring island group of Tonga, and particularly renowned for sail-mats. By the early nineteenth century, European traders had established collection and processing stations for *beche-de-mer* around the coast of Kadavu and, in the 1830s, a whaling station was established at Tavuki Bay, frequented mostly by ships from Port Jackson and New England ports (Figure 5.6). Although commercial intercourse was sometimes interrupted by violence, such as the massacre of European sailors by Fijians in 1834 and the kidnapping of the crew of a whaling ship in 1838 (Derrick, 1950: 69, 71), in some years this trade was substantial. In the 1860s Kadavu was a centre of cotton production and, in the early 1870s, the harbour at Galoa (near Vunisea) was perhaps Fiji's most important international port. Trans-Pacific mail steamers called regularly there, and passengers and mail were trans-shipped for Levuka or to steamers running to New Zealand (Derrick, 1950: 220). However, by the mid-1870s the hey-days were over and international trade by-passed Galoa for Levuka and other Fiji ports. By the beginning of the twentieth century the flurry of European activity in Kadavu had subsided; by 1907 there were very few Europeans there, none of whom warranted his photo in the Cyclopaedia of Fiji first published that year. In the early twentieth century a small number of Chinese and Indians came to live in Kadavu. Almost
Figure 5.4 Birthplaces of the genealogical population, by generation

Source: Vola ni Kawa Bula and field survey.
Note: This figure includes all people born into the population, including those now dead.

Figure 5.5 Current residence of the genealogical population

Source: Vola ni Kawa Bula and field survey.
Note: This figure includes only those people alive in December 1988.
all male, they established small shops which traded manufactured goods for local produce, operated small plantations, and some married into the island community.

Through the later nineteenth century, some Kadavu men found employment on visiting ships. They had the collective reputation of being good deck hands, and several men travelled widely; a District Officer in 1914 noted that he had met men who had travelled to England and Germany, and several who had spent years in India and America (KPC, 1914). This association of Kadavu people with ships and travel remains significant today: many of the men from the study area have worked for at least some period of their lives as dock-workers in Suva or as crew on inter-island or foreign-going ships. The enduring reputation of Kadavu people was expressed by the Australian poet R.D. Fitzgerald:

Kadavu men, it is said, have backs that will only stretch on a foreign mat for a bed,
And legs with a nagging twitch;
And you'll find Kadavu-born in trading-craft that ride from Cancer to Capricorn,
On every turn of the tide.
(Fitzgerald: 'The Invocation of Josefa Aseuela').

5.3.2 The establishment of the Church
Kadavu was also an early centre for the Methodist church in Fiji. As early as 1855 almost one-quarter of villages there had joined the Church (Derrick, 1950:116). In 1861, the Methodist Church opened a school on the island at Richmond, and this school was for a while the national training institute for the church and, later, became a boarding secondary school. One of the first European-style churches in Fiji was built at Tavuki in 1871, paid for by Fijian crops of cotton. The Catholics set up their mission at Nadiri at the northern end of Kadavu. Particularly around the turn of the century there was great activity in building churches; throughout this century church-building has been a focus of village projects and thereby a significant impetus for groups of village men to work away from Kadavu for however many months it took to fulfil their cash obligations.

Through the activities of the Christian churches, the early trade and the establishment of a local outpost of the new Fiji state, began what McNicoll (1988:16) refers to as the opening of village communities - the gradual loss of the localised 'little

3 Published in the Fiji Times April 10, 1970.
4 The price for the church was to be 180 bales of locally grown cotton 'but the chiefs after seeing the church standing completed but unopened for more than two years and not being able to muster the requisite number of bales...discharged the remainder of the debt by giving land' (Fiji Times, April 1, 1871). This church also established an unfortunate precedent for modern buildings on Kadavu - days after its opening, a hurricane blew most of its tin roof away.
tradition' and its replacement by a more uniform set of values of an urban-based popular culture.

5.3.3 The first people on the lists

For the tokatoka of the study area, the Vola ni Kawa Bula begins with forty-two people (twenty-five males and seventeen females) recorded as born between 1857 and 1879. Even the eldest of the people now living could only remember these from their childhood, as elderly people living in the village and knew little of their early lives. Because of the impossibility of gathering details about these earliest recorded people, this cohort predates the first generation which begins with the people born in 1880. Clearly, these people do not represent a complete birth cohort, for they were the eldest survivors at the time of the NLC survey or people of significance in the recorded genealogies, an importance which would rest upon their procreation of heirs. We can also date accurately few of the events of their lives because of their advanced age at the time of the NLC survey, when their birth-years could only be guessed at. However, the facts of their survival and parenthood are insufficient reason to believe that these people's lives were somehow unusual or unrepresentative of their contemporaries, so the little that is known of them is useful. Although the exact place of birth was unknown in several cases, all of these people were believed to have been born within the study district or nearby. This is not to subscribe to the view (eg. Zelinsky, 1971) that traditional people were necessarily immobile. The tukutuku raraba (stories of clan origin) of Fijians are catalogues of places stayed and battles over new territory; they are tales of community moves but, by the late nineteenth century and the cessation of tribal wars, community life had become stable and opportunities for individual mobility were very limited.

The early influence of the Christian church is apparent in the almost universal adoption by this cohort of personal names of Christian or European origin; 94 per cent were so named. Of the few names that were not of European derivation, most are of Tongan origin such as Mafitalai, Lute and Malele - artifacts of the old trade links between Kadavu and Tonga. Far from being tradition-clad or isolated, mid-nineteenth-century Kadavu society was open to foreign influence.

Of the twenty-one men born into the study population before 1880, seven were completely unknown to their descendants in 1988 beyond recognition of their names. The men who could be recalled were probably those who had done something unusual with

5 The Methodist missionaries encouraged the use of Christian names, but not always in the sense of names of saints or of Biblical origin. Along with such commonly-used names as Kameli (Carmel), Emosi (Amos), Akaripa (Sennacherib), Kitione (Gideon), Keperieli (Gabriel), Semisi (Simon), and Aseri (Ezra), are transformations of Victorian fashion. Still common today are such names used by this cohort as Etonia (Eton), Sereana (Sarah Anne), Merewalesi (Maryweather, one of Cinderella's ugly sisters), Miliakere (Millicent), Talica (Dahlia), Torika (Victoria), Napolione (Napoleon) and Matelita (Myrtle).
their lives. One such was Apisai from Dravuwalu, born around 1874, who captained the Caucaunitoba, an inter-island vessel belonging to a Chinese trading family. Also well-remembered was Varinava of Mataso, born in 1866, who built takia (traditional canoes) and lali (wooden drums) and went to find his wife from Nadroga, the vu (source) of the Mataso people. At least four men from this cohort went on ‘sign’ - to work for a year as contract labourers in Taveuni, Wainibuka and Ba. Another man is remembered as a volunteer soldier during the First World War and stationed for a period in Suva. Two men served the Methodist Church as vakatawa.

For the most part, however, these men did not travel far from home nor stay away long - as is evidenced by their almost exclusive choice of wives among women of the district, the birth of most of their children within the district, and their deaths commonly in their home villages. Largely, this reflected the range of available choices, as was suggested by my eldest informant, Naomi, in reply to my questions about these fathers and grandfathers:

At that time there was no work, they just went for ‘sign’ and came back.

The meaning I took from this apparent contradiction was the contrast between recruiters coming to sign up contract labourers, and the very limited opportunities for people to find work themselves.

The women in this cohort were even less mobile: of the sixteen born into the study population before 1880 all were born in the district and, with the exception of one Merelita, blind from birth, all married within the district and died there. Apart from Merelita and one other, they all had children - perhaps surprisingly few given scholarly views of pretransitional populations. Of the fifteen women, two are believed to have had four children each, three had two children each, two are remembered as having had only one each, and two had no children, but no-one could now confidently recall how many children the other six women had borne.6 Neither was it possible to know the ages at which these women married, nor their exact kin relationships with the men they married. However in every known case, their lives were played out within the confines of their natal villages and the immediate district.

6 Unfortunately the birth records of the Register-General for this period give no indication of the number of children previously born to mothers. The earliest birth registrations, from 1877 until 1912, include no count of previous issue. After 1912 birth registers recorded the number of children born to parents and the number of children then dead - with some unfortunate ambiguity as to whether the number born included the new birth and/or those dead. From this time the marriage date of the parents was recorded but not their ages, a procedure which was maintained until 1943.
The lives of these first people named in the tokatoka lists therefore set the baseline for the patterns of change that developed through the twentieth century, although they themselves were living during changing times. From this first cohort we see the spreading out of the genealogical population. Of course, the population of the district was never totally homogeneous, for there were important distinctions chiefly and commoner families and, probably, social inequalities of other types. However, it is the variance that appeared from around the turn of this century which is pertinent to this thesis, and which demonstrates the selective experience of new social institutions moulding individual life trajectories.

5.4 Improved life chances in the twentieth century

Mortality decline has a central significance in the study of both life trajectories and fertility behaviour. The pattern of life changes from the almost random experiences of individuals to an almost predictable life-span when death occurs at a later age (Kohli, 1986:275), and this has profound consequences for a whole range of social relationships (McNicoll, 1986:13). The longer people live, the more likely they are to complete their fertility careers and to see their children grow to maturity. The significance of each pregnancy in a woman’s life changes as more babies survive infancy and childhood to grow to adulthood - and this is marked by improved maternal care for children and greater investment in their more certain futures.

Generally Kadavu has a healthy environment; there is no malaria, nor dangerous animals apart from sometimes poisonous aquatic species, and usually the climate is mild and food abundant. Nevertheless, in the late nineteenth century, the first European medical officers heavily criticised living conditions on the island, claiming in their reports that people did not know better than to live in unhealthy swamps or in places without clean water, and that their houses were filthy. In their view, such ignorance, sloth, and parental neglect or callousness underlay high local rates of mortality, particularly of infants, which peaked during times of hardship such as those following storms or droughts. The provincial hospital was moved from Tavuki to its present site in Vunisea in 1911. Its administrators considered it was under-utilised, as local people stubbornly preferred their own remedies. Yet in the sixty years between 1890 and 1949 the crude death rate in Kadavu declined by almost two-thirds (Table 5.2). This decline was greatest for infant deaths (Table 5.3).
Table 5.2 Crude death rates for Kadavu Province, 1890-1949

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average CDR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890-4</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895-9</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-4</td>
<td>41.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>1905-9</td>
<td>33.6</td>
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<td>1910-14</td>
<td>36.1</td>
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<td>1915-19</td>
<td>37.4</td>
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<td>1920-24</td>
<td>24.2</td>
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<td>26.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940-44</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-49</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Manning, 1985: Tables 17, 18, 26. 
(Calculated from Provincial Council Reports).

Table 5.3 Infant mortality in Kadavu, 1904-1956

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>IMR</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>243.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>130.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>169.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>148.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>90.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>79.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>100.9</td>
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<td>1935</td>
<td>80.4</td>
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<td>1938</td>
<td>83.6</td>
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<td>1940</td>
<td>83.7</td>
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<td>1942</td>
<td>106.9</td>
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<td>78.8</td>
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<td>1946</td>
<td>67.3</td>
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<td>1949</td>
<td>62.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>92.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kadavu Provincial Council Reports.

Note: IMR = number of deaths of infants under age 1 during a year, per 1000 live births in the same year (Pollard et al. 1981:67). This information is not complete in most annual reports of the Kadavu Provincial Council.
Local reservations towards new medicine were not merely driven by ignorance or superstition as some reports then suggested. Beyond their experiments with trusted remedies against new sicknesses, Kadavu people recalled the problem of transport to hospital, the same problem which prevented medical staff from travelling much around the island. The long coastline of Kadavu, its exposure to strong southerly winds and its mountainous interior, make travel about the island difficult even today. Until the 1950s, when villagers began to acquire outboard engines, transport around Kadavu was by takia, poled punts, or along footpaths. Even placing all one’s confidence in Western medicine - a test of faith in times before antibiotics - with a seriously sick child or a less-easily transported adult, Vunisea hospital could be a long way off. As well, in their campaign against the bui ni gone and for public health in general, the colonial government made few resources genuinely accessible to rural people. By as late as 1931, for example, there were only two maternity nurses working throughout all of Kadavu, and it must have been as difficult for them to effect change as for local people to accept new ways as practical options.

Through recent decades this situation has changed, and today there are district nurses resident at two health and five nursing stations around Kadavu, and other medical staff at the Vunisea hospital (Figure 5.6). In many villages the Soqosoqo vaka Marama (Women’s Club) oversees village hygiene and, since the early 1980s, through a national programme to improve primary health care, women from each village on the island have been trained as voluntary village health workers.

5.5 The first generation, born 1880-1912
Of the 144 people of the first generation, only thirteen are alive today (Table 5.1). Some of these people are long dead, having died as children or young adults, and others are barely known to their descendants today. Most, however, were the parents of people now middle-aged, and information regarding their lives was collected from and checked among their adult children. This generation was economically active, and the women fertile, from the first decade of this century to the early 1950s.

Apart from the short absences of men working away from the island, the boundaries of this small district delineated the geographic domain in which most first generation people spent most of their lives (Figure 5.7). The genealogies describe a closely-knit community, tightly interwoven by kinship and including few outsiders. As Figure 3.3 illustrated, a residential change from one village to another within the district represented at most a day’s walk or an even faster trip by canoe or takia. It also represented for the most part a relocation among close kin, rather than an dislocation from home.
Figure 5.6 Fiji and Kadavu: places mentioned in the text
There were limited opportunities for the local employment of men by the church, the provincial administration, and as labourers on local plantations. There were some opportunities of work elsewhere for men, but almost none for women. Yet colonial policies to conserve Fijian village society were in some contradiction with increasing financial demands by the state and church and the attractions of new goods. As well as taxes, people had to pay levies to maintain district schools, the church, and local officials such as turaga-ni-koro. At the turn of the century taxes were collected in copra and yams, although some villages elected to pay in cash. Later, provincial and other government taxes were levied in cash, and the sums demanded increased steadily. Provincial tax doubled in the decade 1914-1924. After experimenting with a number of commercial crops such as cotton, locust bean seed (for cattle feed), coffee and tobacco, by the 1920s the provincial government was confident that it had established two sure sources of revenue: bananas and copra. The banana industry brought some prosperity to Kadavu through the 1930s and 1940s, although marketing and transport problems restricted production and contributed to its virtual collapse by the 1950s. In the 1940s yaqona became a significant commercial crop, and copra and yaqona remain today as the economic mainstays of the Kadavu economy.

The taxes raised were to cover the expenses of administering Kadavu, and the total required was divided by the number of tax-payers on the island. Thus after the influenza epidemic of 1918 the Provincial Commissioner noted that, what with the numbers of deaths and men absent from the island, the burden of tax would fall heavily on the
remainder (KPC, 1918). The ethos of communalism was in this way expanded upon by
the administration to promote the view that those leaving the 'traditional' system by
wilfulness or death, increased the financial burdens on those who stayed.

Villagers were required to pay a substantial share of the costs of local development
projects and groups of village men went away together to work and raise the money - as in
1928 when men from Namara went to work in Taveuni to pay for the village piped water
system. Otherwise, the Medical Officer noted in 1922 (CP 21, 1923):

The Kandavan natives chief aim in life seems to be the commendable one of
obtaining sufficient money to provide himself with a wooden house with an
iron roof. With this in view, they sign on for plantations or other work, and
so, eventually build their house.

5.5.1 Restricted mobility and employment
Many men travelled from the district to other parts of Fiji as indentured labourers,
dockworkers and seamen, and as church workers. Most worked for short periods as
contract workers, often as cauravou (unmarried men) or to acquire the cash for family or
village needs. By the 1920s and 1930s when most of the first generation were
 economically active, provincial administrators were bemoaning the absence of so many
men who were working elsewhere in Fiji. In 1930, officially there were 400 Kadavu men
working elsewhere in Fiji under indenture, usually of one year, and many others working
the banana ships between Kadavu and Suva and on the Suva wharfs (KPC, 1930:7). Other
men found casual wage employment closer to home, on the Chinese-owned plantations in
the district. As a 73 year-old man recalled:

At that time we planted yagona and coconuts, but there's not much of that
here. Sometimes we sold fish. In those days we were always looking for jobs.
We worked for the Chinese [in Kadavu]. It was very hard (37605).7

In their recollections of the 1920s and 1930s, a time when provincial administrators
fretted over such heavy issues as the imminent collapse of Fijian society, people spoke of
travel as a gade (adventure or holiday) to visit relatives in distant places, and of occasional
cash-earning as a necessity to sustain their rural life. For example:

Anare was born in 1900, grew up in Dravuwalu, and was educated in the
village school. As a cauravou he travelled away often, to work with other
Kadavu men in Taveuni and Wainibuka. He returned to Dravuwalu and
married in his late 20s, and eventually had nine children. He often returned to

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7 This reference number is coded to maintain the anonymity of persons quoted. Names used in the text have
also been changed for this reason.
Suva for several months at a time, to work on the wharf to earn money for the household necessities of his family which remained in Dravuwalu. (51801)

The range of employment for women was severely restricted as was their mobility. Those wishing to leave the island required the express permission of the Roko in theory at least; one clue to the difficulties of island administrators in making their regulations stick is their repetitiveness. Other regulations restricted women from even the limited opportunities for wage labour on Kadavu, as for example in 1935, when the Provincial Council resolved to prohibit women from working for the Chinese on Kadavu, noting:

It has been customary in the past for the women and girls living in the villages adjacent to the various Chinese banana plantations to engage themselves for labour for weeding and other tasks during packing time. The result has been detrimental to the interests of the natives (KPC, 1935).

Later reports more specifically note the hazard of such association to the moral well-being of young women. In broader terms such regulations were part of the attempt of the government to isolate the 'traditional' life of Fijians from pollution by other races, particularly Asian.

5.5.2 The educational transition
The people of the first generation were among the first Fijians to be trained in the skills of writing, reading and numeracy. There were limited applications for this education. A few men became church functionaries or government officials, but for most these new skills allowed little besides greater attentiveness at church and a better understanding of their financial obligations to the church and state. One influential hypothesis linking mass education and fertility decline is that literacy transforms traditional attitudes by bringing a new awareness of the outside world (Caldwell, 1980). But this assumes there are things to read, and in a language that is understood. The Bible was translated into Fijian, and a government gazette written in Fijian, Na Mata, was distributed every month, but beyond these essentially conservative sources, very little was available written in Fijian. Even today books and magazines are rare in village homes, apart from the Bible. The education transition in Fijian society therefore took an unusual path, for in the virtual absence of related avenues of social change at this time, literacy acted rather to sustain and reaffirm the legitimacy of Fijian neotradition. For only a very small minority did formal education equip them for a career beyond the village (Table 5.4).

8 Indeed, some legends now widely considered 'traditions', such as the legend of Kaunitoni and the African origins of the Fijian people, have been traced to the propagation of these stories in the press in the early twentieth century, and to be more correctly attributable to anthropological theories expounded in Fiji by Lorimer Fison.
Table 5.4 Education of the first generation, born 1880-1912

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No formal education</td>
<td>67 (76%)</td>
<td>78 (89%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years primary</td>
<td>5 (6%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8 years primary</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years secondary</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional vocational</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other vocational</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>8 (9%)</td>
<td>6 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88 (100%)</td>
<td>88 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Life-histories.
Note: Totals subject to rounding.

There was a clear distinction between the mobility and employment of the elite group of government and church officials, and the majority of villagers. The church provided a number of opportunities for social and geographic mobility. In the district, the church involved many people in low or unpaid work, as catechists, religious teachers, local preachers, and class teachers. Of these, only talatala and vakatawa were paid offices, which required these men to spend years training at the Richmond Institute, and their careers moving about Kadavu and Viti Levu. It is among the families of church and government officers that we see an early divergence in life trajectories within the study population. Their descendants are most often the people with professional or white-collar careers now living in town. People who grew up away from the village often continued to be mobile throughout their lives. For example:

Semesa was born in 1901 at Richmond, where his father was either training or working as a talatala. In his early life he travelled around Kadavu and Viti Levu with his family, as his father shifted between postings. In 1931, aged 30, he married a part-European woman in Suva and returned with her to Dravuwalu, where they had two children before divorcing. About 1936 Semesa remarried, to a woman from the nearby village of Nacomoto, and had

9 In 1895, for example, the Methodist church in Kadavu had five talatala (native ministers), six catechists, 89 vakatawa (teachers), 206 local preachers, 564 class teachers, and 234 Sunday school teachers - 1104 office-holders in a population of around 7200 church attendants, or around 15 per cent of the church-going population of all ages (MMS, 1895).
four more children. In the early 1950s he, his wife and his six children went to live in Suva. He worked as a soldier, on leaving the army as a cleaner in the market, and later as the market master. He retired in Suva and died there aged 62 (52800)

5.5.3 The lives of women

Figure 5.8 includes the life-cycles of 62 per cent of the women in this first generation who survived to age twenty.10 This figure contains a lot of detail, but the main point is the overall pattern of experience of this generation of women. In that this figure only distinguishes between rural and urban residence, and does not continue past the age of fifty, it under-represents the mobility experience of a very few of these women. Most (87 per cent) spent their entire lives in rural villages, although some had short stays of less than six months in town. As one woman explained of her step-mother's life, 'it was not like this time when people move around'.

The majority stayed in the villages of their natal district, married in their early 20s, and continued producing children until late in their fertile years. High fertility follows less from uncontrolled child-bearing than where the reproductive period is not truncated: that is, where women's reproductive careers are broken by the increasing degrees of sterility and mortality which come with age, rather than by design (Henry, 1961:81; Handwerker, 1986:4). The fertility regimes of these first generation women generally show this untruncated pattern, with child-bearing tapering off as women reached their late 30s. The fertility careers of several women were cut short by their deaths. All except four women married, and one of these had a child. While a few marriages were childless, these first generation women bore on average 5.4 children.

Of those who did live for more than a year away from the district, commonly it was to accompany fathers or husbands to work elsewhere or, late in life, when they went to live with their children:

Vasita, who was born in 1904 in Dravuwalu, went as a child with her father who was a talatala near Nadi on Viti Levu. She stayed with her father until his death in 1935, although she had two illegitimate children by then. At his death, and aged 31, she returned with her children to Dravuwalu, where she married and had three more children. In the early 1950s the family went to live in Suva, where her husband worked on the wharf. Sometimes in the early 1960s her husband died, and she returned to her mother's village in Kadavu, where she now lives (52204).

10 The construction of the study population was explained in Chapter Four. The information I had for the remainder of the women of this generation was insufficient to date the events of their lives; I have no details of a few. The chance that these missing people would substantially modify this overview of change is not great for people whose lives were different, such as teachers or nurses in the early generations, tend to be well-remembered.
Figure 5.8  Life-cycles of 53 first generation women, who were born into the genealogical population between 1880 and 1912, and survived past the age of twenty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Birth</th>
<th>At Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>m</td>
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<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>m</td>
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<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>m</td>
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<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>m</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>m</td>
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<td>1904</td>
<td>m</td>
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<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>m</td>
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<td>1906</td>
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<td>1907</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- m: employed outside the household
- b: birth
- m: married
- w: widowed
- d: divorced
- x: death
- **: From this stage on, dates unknown

(1) number of children born, birth-dates unknown
Only three (5 per cent) had any experience of formal employment, apart from occasional casual agricultural labouring for Chinese farmers in Kadavu. One was Atelini:

Abandoned by her first husband and with two small children, around 1928 [aged twenty-five] Atelini left her children with her parents and went to Suva. She worked there for about one year as a housegirl for a European nurse, using her wages to help support her children and parents. She then married a man from Rewa, who was working in Suva as a policeman, and they had four children. When he died [when she was in her late 40s], she returned to Dravuwalu where she now lives with her son and his family (52205).

Only Eseta, represented by the last line in Figure 5.8, had a working career. The daughter of a talatala, Eseta trained as a nurse, then married and went to live and work in her husband’s island, Beqa. On his death she returned to Dravuwalu, then married a man from a neighbouring village.

5.6 The second generation, born 1913-1943
While the people of the first generation largely spent their lives in the district, the second generation was more mobile. Of those still alive, almost half (47.5 per cent) now live in the district, another seven per cent elsewhere in Kadavu and 27 per cent in Suva (Figure 5.9). These people are now aged between 45 and 75 years of age, and are the seniors of the community. The women are past child-bearing and most are now grandmothers. While none of the women are still expanding their own families, many actively support their children or grandchildren.

Figure 5.9 The distribution of people of the second generation
5.6.1 The stagnant Kadavu economy

The eldest of this generation became economically active in the 1930s. By this time the banana industry was still going well, but otherwise the economy of Kadavu was doing badly. The economies of the eastern islands of Fiji were badly hit by declining copra prices after World War One; between 1920 and 1935 the market price of copra fell from £25 to £8 per ton (Thompson, 1940:93). This downturn in value was exacerbated by a decrease in production with the spread to the islands of an insect pest of the coconut tree, *Levuana iridescens*. In the early 1930s, this was followed by a sharp decline in demand, an effect of the Great Depression.

The Provincial Administration of Kadavu was so short of funds in 1936 that despite its long insistence that men commuting to work elsewhere undermined the development of the province, each district was ordered to pay its arrears by any means possible, including sending men to work on the roads or mines on Viti Levu (KPC, 1936). Beyond paying their taxes, people found their desires for imported goods and new measures of status (such as tin roofs and village churches) very much harder to fulfill. By 1936 an estimated 50 per cent of tax-payers were absent from the province, most temporarily.

Over the following decades, the local economy did not fully recover. Provincial government reports reiterated a litany about the drag of Fijian tradition - a laziness borne of communal life and an inherent resistance to change. But institutional barriers to agricultural production also lay in poor marketing organization, and high wastage rates for produce because of unreliable, costly transport and requirements for high quality standards. By the 1950s, the banana industry was struggling and other local sources of income were *yaqona*, yams, *dalo*, and copra. The people who then were young adults remember these as times of little money, when it was a struggle to find the bought necessities of life such as clothing and kerosene, but also times of subsistence plenty when children were well-behaved and healthy. By the mid-1950s, provincial officials were still complaining that the province was ‘almost broke’, and attempting to enforce regulations to keep people working their land for the whole year to ‘prevent them going places’ (KPC, 1955). But despite the intentions of the provincial administration, there was no stopping the flow of people between Kadavu and other parts of Fiji, if only because of their need for money. Like those of the previous generation, men periodically travelled to wage-employment beyond the island. Longer-term absentees from the district were most often connected with privilege - they were an elite forged of Fijian chiefly connections and church or government employment. An important element in this privilege was educational qualifications.
Figure 5.10 shows that Suva in the 1930s was a quite different place from the city it is in 1990. The map shows some of the important destinations of Kadavu people then: the Kings Wharf, the PWD depot at Walu Bay, the hospital, the villages at Tamavua, Wairua, and Lami, the residential area where some found domestic work and, perhaps for an unlucky few, the gaol or asylum. Some places of significance to Kadavans, such as the Fijian settlement at Naqaqi (on the town side of Albert Park), are left off this official picture of the town. But many places of importance to Kadavu people today just did not exist then. Suva was a small colonial town where the main activities were in administration and business. While the few Kadavans then qualified might find work with the Government, opportunities for other villagers to work or places for them to live were limited.

5.6.2 Educated to be villagers

Although still few people of the second generation were well educated, collectively they benefitted from substantially expanded opportunities for primary education (Table 5.5).

### Table 5.5 Education of the second generation, born 1913-1943

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No formal education</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>(24%)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>(17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years primary</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>(30%)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>(23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8 years primary</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>(26%)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>(31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years secondary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(0.6%)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional vocational</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(7%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other vocational</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(0.6)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>(8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>(12%)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>(13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Life-histories.

Note: Percentages subject to rounding.

These figures exclude people who did not survive childhood or adolescence.

In the early 1920s 'real' primary schools were established at Namara and Vunisei. They were run by the local community with government assistance. From that time almost
Figure 5.10  Suva in 1936

Source: Burrows, 1936, Map 4.
every village child attended school for two or three years. Government officials then described such schools generally as of a poor standard, but they were intended to fit village children for village life. There were still very limited opportunities beyond the village schools. A small number children from the district were educated at the Methodist Church’s school at Richmond, either through their being selected or because their fathers were working there for the church. Sunia, born in 1915, was the first of this generation to graduate from Richmond and then Davuilevu, as a vakatawa. Another boy also trained in the church, and three boys born in the district in 1916, 1917 and 1922, graduated in the late 1930s from the Methodist Church’s agricultural school at Navuso (Viti Levu). Other boys studied at the Kadavu Provincial School (KPS) in Vunisea. In the early days there were no entry examinations for KPS as boys were selected by their chiefs, and most often were of chiefly status themselves.

The slow trend towards wider educational opportunities is seen among boys born in the later decades: of those born between 1934 and 1943 eleven boys trained beyond the immediate district to become church workers, teachers or minor government functionaries. The survivors of this small, initial group of educated men are now the leaders of the community both in the district and resident in Suva, their education and professions reinforcing their traditional status. The other 80 per cent of the males of this generation had much more circumscribed opportunities; for those who travelled to work beyond the district, their rudimentary education limited their choice of employment to unskilled or semi-skilled work.

While girls were almost as likely as boys to attend the local primary schools, and government officials wrote to one another of the necessity for female education, their opportunities beyond the district were even fewer than for their brothers. Of the 51 women born between 1913 and 1922 of whom I have information, only one was educated beyond a rudimentary primary level. Alameta was born in Dravuwalu in 1919, but spent her childhood in Viti Levu at the various postings of her father, a talatala. She trained as a nurse, worked at the hospital in Suva and, after marrying a man from Rewa, worked

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11 At Davuilevu, on the outskirts of Nausori (Viti Levu), is the Methodist Church’s training centre for church workers.

12 In his study of Deuba village, Viti Levu, Geddes (1945:33) described how this selection proceeded for students (all boys) to attend the Government District School. ‘Although the three are selected by examination, the Roko apparently has the power of veto. Generally the nominees are approved, but not long ago the highest boy was replaced on the technical ground that he had been born in another province...The new boy selected was not the next on the examination list.’ Procedures were looser in Kadavu at this time but had the effect Geddes alluded to, of encouraging those of chiefly status.

13 As Geddes (1945:33) noted, ‘Of the small number that get to secondary school and become medical practitioners, teachers, or clerks, practically all lack sufficient advancement to receive more than minor positions.’
there as a District Nurse. Beyond a short period in her infancy and one return visit to her village to introduce her only child, Alameta had little contact with the district.

Few of the girls born between 1924 and 1933 trained for careers. Nanise, born in 1924, was again the daughter of a talatala and grew up at Richmond where her father taught. After graduating from Richmond she studied at Ballantine Girls’ School (BMS) in Suva and then trained as a nurse. She worked for some time at the hospital in Suva, and then went to live in Lau with her Lauan husband. She still works there, and occasionally visited her parents in Namara before their deaths. One woman born in 1933, the daughter of a turaga ni yavusa, trained as a nurse; another who grew up in Suva, became a teacher. They spent their careers at their various postings.

The younger of this generation did relatively better: although still few of the girls born between 1934 and 1943 had more than a basic primary education, ten were educated or trained beyond the village primary school. Of these, two trained as teachers and six attended nursing school. Another girl, Reapi (born 1942) grew up in Suva but when she was selected for nursing training her father refused to allow her to go, saying she was naturally skinny and therefore would easily fall victim to the sicknesses around her.

To this point it is clear that most opportunities for the social mobility of girls through education were distributed by family conditions of privilege or difference: those of chiefly blood, the children of talatala, those who grew up in Suva where their fathers were working, and a very few who made their way through village schools to Richmond or KPS, and on to secondary school in Viti Levu, selected on their aptitudes and also their families’ ability and willingness to pay for a daughter’s opportunity.

It is also clear from the subsequent life-courses of these second generation women why generalisations about the impact of higher education on women’s behaviour are so problematic. Of those who trained as nurses only two graduated: the others left in their final years for family-related reasons, to marry or to return to the village to mind elderly parents, and since then have lived with no special status in their husbands’ villages. Even of the two who graduated, their subsequent lives were directed more by the careers of the men they married than their own qualifications. One married a doctor and travelled around Fiji with him until he was promoted to a high position in the civil service and stationed in Suva; the other married a policeman and they worked together around Kadavu and in Suva until 1974 when they went to New Zealand on holiday, overstayed their visas, and remained there. One teacher and one typist stopped work upon their marriage. Men’s education most often directs their careers, but for women a possible career path is only one factor directing their future lives.

14 Her father was Semesa (see section 5.5.2).
5.6.3 Increased personal and family mobility

While many people of the second generation spent most of their lives in the study district, in general, this generation was considerably more mobile than the first. Many spent some time in Suva during the Second World War. Some men recruited into the army took their families with them to Suva. A number of these children began school in Suva, and a few of the women briefly experimented with wage employment. Most army families returned to Kadavu after the war, but mobility increased markedly after this.

One attraction back to the district was the timber mill which opened at Naikorokoro in 1949. District people had first options on some of the jobs at Naikorokoro and many went to work at the mill: the men as mill-workers and labourers, and women as housemaids for the management and relatives working there, and to help produce food for sale to mill-workers. For a time, Naikorokoro was the economic and social centre of the district. From Mataso, Muanisolo and Namara, a number of men travelled to Naikorokoro every day along the road which the mill later 'gifted' to the people of Mataso in return for their timber and as compensation for spoiling their water catchment (Fiji Times, January 1, 1964) and a few villagers boarded outsiders in their homes. When the mill closed in 1973 it precipitated the dispersal of many local workers to similar employment elsewhere in Fiji. This dispersal was aided by the disbandment in the late 1960s of the Fijian Regulations and their legal restrictions on personal mobility, although clearly these restrictions had been ineffective for some time.

The everyday need for money was exacerbated at times of special need, such as after the cyclones and hurricanes which periodically struck the island. Kadavu has been in the path of most cyclones which affected the Fiji group in recent decades. As more people desired houses built of wood with tin roofs, the cash costs of house building and repairs escalated. Four families (comprising twelve people) left Namara between 1954 and 1957 for the copra estate on the island of Mago (Lau), to earn money to build their houses. Three of these families stayed there a year and a half, and another stayed eight years, and in doing so set up the connections for other Namara families to follow to Mago later. One couple and their five children left for Mago in 1960, and twenty-two years later moved to Suva; none of them have returned to Namara. One family of three left for Mago in 1968 and never returned to the village. Another couple with their nine children and one nephew went in 1974; the parents, two sons and the youngest daughter returned to Namara fourteen years later in 1988.

A larger number of district people went to Lautoka, a protracted movement which mostly occurred in the late 1960s and 1970s. The first movers were joined by other family members, as Figure 5.11 illustrates for one family. The initial people to go were men who had served in the army during the war. One was posted there in the 1960s while
Figure 5.11 The movement of one family from Namara to Lautoka

Source: Vola ni Kawa Bula and field survey.

Note: A detailed explanation follows on Page 139.
Explanation for Figure 5.12

Emosi (1) was born in 1923 and grew up in Namara. He married a woman from Viti Levu (Rewa) and after he became a vakatawa he and his family moved from one village to another within Kadavu. His ten children were all born in Kadavu over 21 years, from 1940 to 1961. When his youngest daughter was still a child his wife (2) died. He stayed in Kadavu until 1974 when he became ill and one of his sons took him to his eldest son, working in Lautoka. Emosi died there soon after.

Two of his daughters live in Namara today. The eldest daughter (3) went to her mother’s village in Rewa where her marriage was arranged with a cousin. She found living in her husband’s village difficult because she had no-one to help her with her young children. After her second baby was born her mother came to stay and they decided she should return to Namara. Her husband stayed in Rewa three years before joining her in Namara, where the family has lived since.

The second daughter (4) married first a man from Nadi, then divorced and married in Namara. She has no children of her own, but adopted four of her second husband’s relatives.

Another daughter (9) married a man from a different district of Kadavu and lives there. She has spent her whole life in Kadavu.

Most of the family now live in Lautoka. The first person to go was the third daughter (5). She married a sailor from Lau, whom she had met at Naikorokoro, and went to live in Lautoka with him. Her husband later died, and in 1987 she remarried. She has no children. She was joined in Lautoka by the second son (7) who got a job as a carpenter there. He still works as a carpenter. He married a woman from Lautoka but divorced her before they had any children, and married a woman from central Viti Levu. They now have four children, all born in Lautoka and none of whom have visited Kadavu. He has not returned to Kadavu in the almost twenty years since he left, but most of his family has joined him there.

The eldest son (6) married a Namara woman and went with his wife to live in Lautoka sometime before 1973. their five children were born in Lautoka and have not yet visited their parents’ village.

Another daughter (8) joined the family in Lautoka.

In 1973, the third son (10) took his sick father to stay in Lautoka. After Emosi died he stayed on and worked with his brother as a carpenter. He married a woman from there, had two children, and divorced. He remarried, and around 1984 returned to Namara with his second wife and their three children. Another child was born in Namara, and the family returned to Lautoka in 1986, where they now live.

The younger three of the family spent much of their youth in Lautoka. One daughter (11) graduated from Richmond Secondary School and then went to commercial school in Lautoka. She now has a number of business qualifications and works as a clerical officer in Lautoka. She married a Cakaudrove man she met there and they have two children. The youngest son (12) went to school in Lautoka, and then Methodist Church training centre at Davuilevu. He now is a talatala and teaches at Davuilevu. The youngest daughter (13) spent her earliest years in Namara, but then went to join the family in Lautoka where she attended secondary school. She now works on the clerical staff of a Nadi hotel. She is not married and has no children.
still in the army, another was posted there as a civil servant. A Namara man taught in Lautoka briefly in 1950-2 after leaving the army, and several village people joined him there, but after he became ill they returned with him to the village. A larger group of men went to work at the Pacific Lumber Company in Lautoka after the closure of the Naikorokoro timber-mill, and many are still there. Often their sisters joined them as unpaid housekeepers, and several married Lautoka men and stayed on. A few district women now work in the tourism industry around Lautoka and Nadi; these are commonly the youngest sisters who attended secondary or vocational schools in Lautoka.

By far the majority, however, went to Suva. By the mid 1950s there were about 12,000 ‘absentee’ Fijians living in the Suva urban area and of these about 16 per cent were Kadavu people (Vunivalu and Verrier, 1959:4). Almost 60 per cent of Fijian families in Suva then lived in one-roomed accommodation and only 18 per cent in a separate house, with two-thirds of all people living more than four persons to a room. A real burden to Fijian households were the ‘hangers-on’, and quite likely they did ‘convert family budgets from the very tight to the frankly desperate’ (Vunivalu and Verrier, 1959:13). However, they also demonstrated the degree to which urban residence did not erode village connections. Apart from other kin-related activities, networks of kin were central in finding work for village people. Kin-networks also influenced residential patterns, as high rents in Suva encouraged the formation of peri-urban Fijian settlements created through vakavanua arrangements with Fijian landowners around Suva. For example, many men from Dravuwalu worked on the Suva wharf and a large proportion of Dravuwalu people have lived for short or longer periods of their lives at Wakanisila, one of these peri-urban settlements (Figure 5.12). Today Wakanisila is a large settlement of Kadavu and Lau people, where the majority of resident men work on the wharf or for the Ports Authority.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, when the movement of families to Suva was increasing, urban life was not easy. For those not living in vakavanua settlements rents were high, yet wages were low. The educated minority took public jobs with accommodation provided, such as police, prison wardens; the others got by often on a more temporary basis. Vunivalu and Verrier (1959:12) estimated a modal income of 13/- per person per week, to pay for all food, clothing, household costs, amusement, contingencies such as illness, and tax - and concluded that ‘many more than half the Fijian households in Suva have not enough money to buy sufficient food after they have met the inescapable charges in their income’.

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15 These settlements are therefore not legally squatter settlements, but like such settlements in other countries in all other ways.
So why did they move there? Ponter (1986:36) comments that 'observers often assert that rising expectations are a factor in sending people to town to look for work. But even modest expectations require cash'. There was no doubt a variety of reasons for any move, but the life-histories revealed that most often moves by families to Suva in the 1950s and 1960s coincided with a child's acceptance into secondary school there or several children in a family reaching school age. If the child did not go to live with relatives, his or her father or brother generally went to find work, and other family members then joined this Suva branch of the village. Sometimes, educating the family and launching their careers took a long time. Around 1966 Siteri and her family moved to Suva:

We went to Suva when our children were schooling there. Leone [her husband] went first. I stayed and got all our possessions ready, and then the rest of us moved to stay in Suva. One son was boarding at Queen Victoria School [QVS] and another son at Ratu Sukuna Memorial School [RSMS]. Then we got the son from QVS to go to RSMS so they were both day students.
Leone worked at the wharf. We stayed in Suva sixteen years. At that time when we were working for the children's education Leone was always sickly, but we prayed. We went to mind our boys at RSMS and pay for their school fees until they managed to find jobs. One joined the Post Office and the other joined the army. When the old man retired [1982] we decided to come back, our job was finished and our responsibility was over. Four of our sons are in the army, our daughter is married in Laqere [Suva]. One son came back first [1976] and we came back six years ago with our eldest son Sitiveni and his wife. Leone decided his eldest son should live a traditional life in the village [Sitiveni had then lost his job as a surveyor]. We have stayed here ever since, but sometimes we go back to Suva to visit our relatives... I never worked in Suva, I just looked after my children. I decided how to use our money. I shared out the money every day - bus-fare, school fees, there is always the day in the week when you share out the money for school fees and then for bus and food. We always kept aside money for school fees every time, and when it came time to pay we paid immediately (39801).

5.6.4 Gender differences in mobility and employment

Both the fact and the type of employment beyond the village were potent forces charting different life paths among the study population. We have already seen that few people of this generation were qualified by their formal education for work beyond semi-skilled occupations. Most men worked off the island for short periods throughout their adult lives. Ratu Alipate gained a job with good conditions due to his education and traditional status, unlike most men who found short-term work:

Alipate [born in 1916] was one of the few of his age-group to attend school at KPS. After leaving school in 1929 he stayed in the village until men were enlisted to fight in the Solomons during the Second World War. Although he had then four children, Alipate joined up. He spent three years in the Solomons and another three with the army in Suva, during which time two more children were born. Around 1947 Alipate and his family returned to Mataso where he had traditional responsibilities as turaga-ni-yavusa. In 1957 his eldest son was selected for secondary school on Viti Levu. While the subsistence lifestyle of the village was comfortable, it was difficult to obtain cash in the district. To support his son's education, Alipate also went to Viti Levu and found work in Suva as a prison guard. As the job included accommodation, the rest of the family soon joined him. While working there, Alipate managed to get three of his children educated to Fiji Junior Certificate level and his first son into the army. Another son was sent back with his own family to the village to mind the family land. On retiring, Alipate and his wife returned to Mataso, but since his wife's death in 1978 he spends much of his time with his children who work in Suva (39820).

Moves by women were less often self-initiated than those of men. With Alipate went his wife and daughters, willingly no doubt, but the decision to move was not particularly their own. Other women also went to support family members, sometimes as unpaid domestic help. Yet few of the women of this second generation were trained as professionals. There was, however, another group of women who left the village for more menial
employment in town. Most often their taking paid employment followed a personal crisis, such as widowhood, divorce, or the birth of an illegitimate child. For example:

Naomi was born in 1916. When she was in her early thirties her husband died, leaving her with four young children. Soon after, Naomi left her children in her village and went to Suva to work as a housegirl for the doctor who had previously treated her husband. After a couple of years in Suva she returned to Kadavu to be closer to her children, and worked towards their support as a housegirl for doctors at the Vunisea hospital. When her eldest son was in the army in Suva, she and her other children went to live with him there (38006).

The stereotype of Fijian village life is that of communality, mutual support and caring. When talking about mothers without husbands, village men usually stress the Fijian orthodoxy of the patriline’s possession of the children and its generous support for their mother, if she does not return, as she might, to her own people. The pattern of events suggests this was not even usually the case. The life-histories of these women demonstrate that someone has to pay for the support of dependent children and commonly it was them, with some family help.

Sisilia [born in 1930] married when she was about 23 years, but when her second child was still an infant she and her husband separated. He left the village and went to work as a crew on an inter-island boat. She left her children with her family and went to Suva where she worked as a housegirl. After about 3 months at the job she missed her children so badly that she left the job and returned to the village, where her parents helped support the children. Six years later her husband returned to live with her (39800).

Suliana [born in 1931] first worked as a housegirl at the timber camp in Naikorokoro in the late 1940s. There she married a man from a neighbouring village and had three children. Her husband died in 1955 and she and her two surviving children lived in her village with relatives for three years. As her children came of school age, Suliana went to Suva where she found work as a housegirl. Her children came to stay with her in the small room provided by her employer. Later the same year she married a soldier, but continued working until her children had finished schooling nine years later, as this second marriage was unstable [she believed because they had no children of their own] and she found it impossible to rely upon him for money for her children’s needs (40801).

Other women worked in happier conditions. Vilisi (born 1920) went as an unmarried girl to Suva with relatives. One of the very few Catholics in the district, she was employed there by a priest to be his housegirl. She married in Suva, was widowed there, and stayed on until her own death. Another woman went into business with her father and ran a grog shop in Vatukoula. Later, over the years her children were growing up, she worked at a canteen in Suva. Some tried out work as housegirls or factory hands for a few months,
often to supplement their husband's income at particular periods of family need. Most worked a few months or a couple of years at most. Other than the grog shop owner and another woman who used her experience as a kitchen hand to begin her own business in the early 1970s, all were employees.

5.6.5 The increased diversity of women's lives
Around one third of these second-generation women spent their entire lives in the district apart from occasional visits to relatives elsewhere. Others spent a period of their lives away from the district, either moving to accompany parents or husbands to work or, later in life, to live with their adult children. Women were more likely to survive their reproductive years, although their marriages might not. While the likelihood of widowhood diminished, the occurrence of divorce increased. A period at work, or a change in residence, often followed divorce or widowhood. Those women with long, continuous careers were teachers and nurses, and these represent the few who had the opportunities to train for careers and did so. Compared to their contemporaries, they had fewer children.

Over time, increasing numbers spent at least part of their lives in town. Around one quarter of second-generation women - most of whom were born after 1933 - had at least a brief experience of paid employment, most often as housegirls. Among the youngest of this generation, those born between 1933 and 1943, an increased number of single women went to work in town, and became mothers.

Figure 5.13 illustrates this increased diversity of life choices and chances, both compared with the women of the previous generation and between successive cohorts in this generation. Two qualifications must be made for this figure, and for Figure 5.15 which refers to Generation 3. First, they do not necessarily present a statistically representative sample because of the way in which the survey was designed and because, in each case, almost a fifth of the genealogical population is missing. While I had some information about most of these people, it was insufficient to date the events of some lives; of others I have no details. Second, they are summaries of residence and employment. They do not show the extent to which women moved between rural areas, nor do they show the common employment of women as virtual domestics in the households of their families. However, they do portray well the patterns of increased complexity in the lives of women.
Figure 5.13 Life-cycles of 142 second generation women who were born into the genealogical population between 1913 and 1943, and survived past the age of twenty.
## Year of Birth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.7 **The third generation, born 1944-1973**

Of the 890 people born during this time, 90 per cent are still alive and about one third resident in the district (Table 5.1; Figure 5.14). These people are now aged between 15 and 44 years of age. Economically, this is the most active segment of the population and these are the women now fertile -although very few under the age of twenty have yet had children. These people demonstrate a greater diversity of biographically significant choices and chances than the previous generations. People of the same age may be primary-educated villagers, town-based professionals, second-generation urban dwellers who have never returned to their parents' village, university graduates, or street-girls. Still, it is clear that family connections have a powerful influence in dealing out opportunities for social mobility; descendants of those who gained status early in the colonial order are themselves more likely to be privileged in terms of education and employment.

Figure 5.14 The distribution of people of the third generation

![Maps showing distribution of people of the third generation](image)

(a) Birthplaces  
(b) Current residence

5.7.1 **The expansion of secondary education**

The life-histories of this generation demonstrate both the tangible benefits gained by broader opportunities for education, and the changing value of higher education. As the
second generation experienced wider opportunities for primary education, so the third generation has had more chances of secondary and tertiary education (Table 5.7).

Table 5.6 Education of the third generation, born 1944-1973

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No formal education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years primary</td>
<td>21 (5%)</td>
<td>31 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8 years primary</td>
<td>166 (39%)</td>
<td>151 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years secondary</td>
<td>72 (17%)</td>
<td>83 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 years secondary</td>
<td>60 (14%)</td>
<td>67 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>7 (2%)</td>
<td>3 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional vocational</td>
<td>7 (2%)</td>
<td>12 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other vocational</td>
<td>23 (5%)</td>
<td>17 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>67 (16%)</td>
<td>67 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>424 (100%)</td>
<td>431 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Life-histories.
Note: Percentages subject to rounding

Virtually everyone received some primary education. District children attended the government-run schools at Vunisei, Namara and, after 1972, at Dravuwalu. These first few years of school were relatively inexpensive but Class 6 was the cut-off point for many rural children, after which it was necessary to board at Vunisea or Richmond or - even more expensively - to school in Suva, staying in the hostel or with relatives. It was also the cut-off point for a large proportion of urban children, whose parents could not afford the higher fees of secondary schools or were unconvinced of the necessity for further education. Yet of third generation males, 44 per cent had primary education, 33 per cent secondary education, and 9 per cent some tertiary or post-secondary vocational education. The educational gap between the sexes also narrowed. Of the 364 women of whom I have details, 50 per cent had primary education, 41 per cent secondary education, and 9 per cent tertiary or vocational education. Some of the youngest of this generation are still at secondary school.
A small number of district people made their way through the island’s primary and secondary schools to tertiary institutions on Viti Levu. A popular path for district girls has been through Richmond Secondary School to Ballantine Memorial School in Suva, and then to typing and secretarial classes. Six district-raised men and five women have become qualified school teachers. Six others, who were less successful in their secondary studies, were employed as licensed (unqualified) teachers. Altogether five of these teachers now work in the district’s primary schools. One man trained as an aircraft maintenance engineer in Australia, where he now lives with his Australian wife. Two other men have studied in Australia, one woman from the district holds a university degree, and a small number of others now work as civil servants or in the army. These people are, in terms of occupational qualifications and income, the elite of the district. A few of their cousins who grew up in town have also gained professional qualifications, but the difference in opportunities gained is not as marked as one might expect: two men became teachers, one woman trained as a kindergarten teacher, another woman has a university degree.

As in earlier generations, the education or training of women often did not preset their later life-paths, although this has happened more often in the careers of younger women. For example, two girls attended typing school but their careers went in separate directions:

Vasiti (born 1955) grew up on Vatulele. After she finished primary school in 1969, she went to Suva where she stayed with a cousin who was a policeman, and did a one year typing course. Then in 1974 she worked in a cafe for one year. While working there she applied to join the police. In the meantime she met a man from Muanisolo and by the time she knew she had been accepted into the police she had already married. They returned to Kadavu the same year and have stayed ever since in Muanisolo. She said she regretted marrying so young, but particularly never putting to use her typing certificate (59028).

Sera (born 1957) was educated at Richmond. About 1973, when she was sixteen, she went to Lautoka where her mother’s brother was teaching at the forestry school. She studied typing for one year and then went to work in a Nadi hotel. From 1975 until 1988 she supported her parents through her regular remittances to them. Although she is still working and has no children yet, since her marriage in 1988 she has stopped remitting money (55640).

A surer path to social mobility still lies in marriage. Few women have significant job qualifications themselves; more have married teachers, talatala and doctors. A few have married Europeans and live in relative affluence in Suva, Pacific Harbour, Lautoka, Australia and the Bahamas.
5.7.2 Varying access to modern opportunities

This third generation is much more mobile than the previous ones. Few women and fewer men have spent their entire lives in the district. A significant number went to town, either as small children with their parents or as adults to work or stay with relatives. Many who left the district as small children or were born away from it have never returned to their parent’s village, or have done so rarely and briefly. Yet most live in town within the network of kin, in close proximity to other family/village members. There are quite large communities in Lami village, Wakanisila and Laqere, and smaller groups at Nadonumai, Delainavesi, Namadi Delainabua, Tacirua Plains and Nepani (Figure 5.12). Some residences are geographically scattered but in other ways connected, although, as in any community, a few people are peripheral to the urban kin/village group.

Often, those living in town have not experienced the opportunities urban life might have been expected to bring. Although their parents frequently moved to town in expectation of their children’s benefit, these children may remain little better off economically than the parents who brought them there. In many cases, continuing school was found to be an unaffordable expense, and although their educational qualifications are relatively better, these children have now almost as limited occupational opportunities as their parents had. For example, before Venina’s birth, her parents left Kadavu to live in Lami (Suva).

Venina was born in Lami, and was educated at Lami Primary and Secondary schools. When she was in the fourth form and sixteen years old [1975] her father died and she had to leave school without her Fiji Junior Certificate. She stayed home for a while with her mother and then worked as a housegirl. When she was eighteen she married a Kadavu man who was also living in Lami. Her husband works as a driver. Since they were married Venina has stayed home, now with their six children (56188).

Lesita [born 1968] grew up in Nadonumai, and was educated at Lami Primary and Ballantine Secondary, where she gained her Fiji Junior Certificate. She took a one year’s sewing course and then worked for a year at the school canteen. In 1987, her second year at work, she became pregnant and left her job. She stayed home until her son was one year old, and late in 1988 had just begun work as a machinist at a sewing factory, leaving her son in her mother’s care (36017).

Over the generations there has been a clear drift of people from Kadavu to Viti Levu. One quarter of males born in the district between 1960 and 1970 are now away from the island - but often people come and go throughout their lives:

Lepani [born 1960] grew up in Dravuwalu, and finished primary school there. In 1981 [aged 21] he went to Suva and worked there for a year as a casual labourer, cleaning fuel tanks in the government shipyards. At the end of 1981 he returned to Dravuwalu for Christmas, but stayed on there for almost two
years. In 1983 he went back to Suva and then to Nadi, where he worked as a cleaner in a hotel until the end of 1984. He again returned to the village for Christmas and stayed, and in 1985 married there. He has stayed in Dravuwalu since, apart for three months in 1987 when he and his wife went to Suva for the birth of their daughter (52642).

Like Lepani, some of this generation are returning, either with retired parents or in the realisation that urban life has few rewards for those lowest on the job ladder. A number of village residents have educational qualifications which would have comfortably established their father or uncle in a well-paid job. But today the job-market value of two, three or four years secondary education is considerably less. Now there is a cohort of educated young people staying in the district. Indeed, three quarters of the young men born in the district between 1960 and 1970 and aged between 18 and 28, are living in the village. Were it not for the recruitment of young Fijian men into the expanded army since the 1987 coups, the proportion of locally-born males now resident would be higher.

To an extent this trend to stay in or return to the village reflects structural changes in the national economy. The Fiji Employment and Development Mission (Bienefeld, 1984:201-2) describes the general contraction of the national labour market since the mid-1970s. In the early 1970s the labour market was absorbent, but after 1975 there was a marked decline in the rate of growth in formal wage/salary jobs. This decline in the growth of the job market coincided with a bulge in the national population structure and a sudden increase in the number of potential entrants into the job market. The Mission noted that the rise in unemployment levels was substantially less than would have been expected from the number of jobs available in the formal wage/salary sector and, therefore, concluded that many people must have been absorbed into self-employment, unpaid family work and village employment. By Employment Mission calculations, this type of employment must have increased by about 3.3 per cent per year between 1975 and 1980, and over 6 per cent per year between 1980 and 1982. This conclusion was strengthened by the 1982 National Employment survey, which suggested that between 1976 and 1982 this type of employment increased by about 35 per cent, enough to make the large increase after 1980 plausible (Bienefeld, 1985:202) The Employment Mission further concluded that the increase in the number of villagers probably represented more the ability of the semi-subsistence sector to absorb excess labour than to employ this excess labour.

Seniors of the villages in the district also have actively encouraged the young to stay, for the quality of community life depends a great deal on both their production and reproduction. As cauravou and gone yalewa they work in the gardens and houses and serve their elders. As young, married people they provide spouses for the other young of
the district or bring in others to help produce the new generation. As well, the stereotype of the social evil of unsupervised urban life for young villagers is an image one encounters again and again when talking to people about population mobility. Over the years the turaga-ni-yavusa of Mataso, Ratu Seruvatu, has lobbied among young couples living in Suva to return to the village. The extent to which he has been successful attests to his personal commitment to his community but also the degree to which village authority structures have not broken down nor urban life necessarily brought personal autonomy (cf. McNicoll 1988). He was, for example, able to insist his son return to Mataso in 1965, although this son had been working away from the village as a member of the crew of a Suva-based ship for eight years, was then 31 years old, and was married with children. A number of young district people have returned from town after marriage. Older people have also returned, often bringing with them some of their adult children, as the story of Siteri illustrated. The family of a carpenter from Dravuwalu returned in 1988 after spending twelve years in the Solomon Islands and eighteen in Suva.

Now, the village communities are more vibrant than in the previous two decades. Young people are staying and having children of their own, and a few families which left long ago have returned, bringing some of their adult children with them. Although returnees are a minority, they have quite an impact on small communities. In 1988, Mataso was a much livelier community with twelve resident families than it had been in the early 1970s, when the residents comprised only four small households.

5.7.3 Surviving in the village economy

While economic conditions in the district have improved marginally, people there still have little ready cash. The average monetary income for Dravuwalu residents in 1983 was $Fl700 per annum (Sofer, 1985:430) including, for some village residents, remittances from family members working elsewhere. The main economic activity on the island remains agriculture, still characterised by semi-traditional technology, little capital investment, and a large degree of subsistence production (Sofer, 1985:430). The main income comes from crops of dalo, yams, and yaqona. Yaqona has increased in importance as its value has steeply risen. As it has a high value to weight ratio, it is easily transported. Improved local storage facilities and inter-island transport now also encourage the marketing of fresh fish, and many villagers earn money from sales of shellfish and from dried beche-de-mer. In 1987 and 1988, the sandalwood trade suddenly awoke after an almost one hundred-year hiatus; this time villages have undertaken replanting schemes so that the next harvest will not wait as long.

The range and scale of local business activity has recently expanded, encouraged by improved communications with Viti Levu. In 1988, a small mechanical
workshop opened in Namara, a family of house builders, recently returned from life in Suva, were doing brisk business around Dravuwalu, and a village forestry project was under-way in Muanisolo. In other parts of the island, small tourist enterprises are newly opened, exploiting the market for adventurous tourists and scuba divers. But while significant small-scale, economic change is occurring, Kadavu remains one of the least developed areas of Fiji. Outside the government station at Vunisea there are no telephones nor electricity, apart from the occasional shop generator, and transportation within the island is expensive and often difficult to arrange.

**5.7.4 A wider range of opportunities for women**

Still only a small group of women (about 15 per cent of their generation) have had employment which required some educational qualification, such as typist, clerk, secretary, sewing machinist, teacher, nurse, or hotel worker. Many more have had some experience of formal employment, but for the majority this connection with paid employment has been loose and periodic, working occasionally as housegirls, factory or cafeteria hands, or commercial cleaners. Others have careers as unpaid family help, as Venina did:

Venina was born in 1945 and grew up in Muanisolo, except for a few years in her childhood when her family moved to Suva to look after a brother who was hospitalised. After finishing school she stayed in the village until she was aged nineteen, when she went to mind the baby of her elder sister, who was a nurse in Suva. She stayed almost one year and then returned to Muanisolo to look after her father who was then widowed and sickly. She stayed with her father from 1965 until his death in 1974, when she was aged 29. The next year another sister who was married and working in Suva called Venina to help her with her household. Venina went to stay with her, but then met again a man she had known in Suva ten years previously. She went to live with him in Wailoku; she told me she had considered marriage would provide her security now her parents were dead. They have one child, her husband works occasionally as a garden-boy and she sometimes as a housegirl, and they mostly live on her husband’s land-rent payments (55609).

Figure 5.15 illustrates the pattern of change in the life experiences of third generation women. The early stage of the life course, the transition to adulthood, has become particularly variable: while some women in their late teens are still attending school, others have married or become mothers, or remain at home as domestic help, or have joined the work force. There is also greater marital instability, with increased divorce and multiple marriages, particularly in the early years of adulthood. Around 20 per cent of the older women of this generation - those born between 1944 and 1963 - have extra-nuptial births, as already do 13 per cent of those born between 1964 and 1969, and
Figure 5.15  Life-cycles of 266 third generation women, who were born into the genealogical population between 1944 and 1969, and survived past the age of twenty.

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**Note:** The table above represents the year of birth for individuals aged 20 to 35. Each age group is indicated by a series of dashes (---) to signify the absence of specific data. The table is structured to highlight the distribution of births across different age groups, providing a visual representation of the data. The year of birth is calculated by subtracting the age from 1940 to 1960, inclusive, for each individual.
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<th>Year of Birth</th>
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... village residence
... urban residence
... employed outside the household
b birth
d married
w widowed
d divorced
f ** from this stage on, dates unknown
s (i) number of children under, birth-dates unknown

From: [Source](#)
now aged between 19 and 24 years. Another clear change is greater labour force participation, which is related to higher levels of education for women, wider employment opportunities, and an increased proportion of urban residents. Figure 5.16 also demonstrates the increasing ambiguity in defining people as either rural or urban, for over their lifetimes many people have been both.

5.8 The fourth generation, born 1974-1988
Generation Four includes the 561 people born between 1974 and 1988. Almost half (48 per cent) are now living in the district and around one quarter (26 per cent) in Suva (Figure 5.16). The lives of these people are for the most part peripheral to this study, for they are still too young to have begun families or moving on their own accord. However, it is the choices that these people make that will most shape the future of their communities.

Figure 5.16 The distribution of people of the fourth generation

(a) Birthplaces

(b) Current residence

16 Despite the stereotype of young girls experiencing freedom and unexpected pregnancy in town, 40 per cent of these births occurred to girls resident in the village. Only a fifth (22 per cent) occurred to girls who were employed when they became pregnant.

17 By stopping at the age of fifty, this figure under-represents the extent of lifetime mobility, for many old women either return from urban life to the village, or leave the village to live with their children in town.
5.9 Changing life-course stages over fifty years
The women of the first generation often spent their whole lives in the same district. The life-stage transition of girls into adulthood was orderly and, for most, quite predictable. Marriage was almost universal, and commonly preceded childbirth. The majority of women continued to bear children into late in their reproductive years, although death intervened for some. While the lives of most second generation women were bounded by the rural household, a few spent a large part of their fertile years working. Increased numbers of women spent some period of their lives in town. Residence in town did not necessarily relate to reduced fertility in the older cohorts, and while a differential is apparent in Table 5.7 for the younger cohorts, this relationship between fertility change and urban residence is somewhat ambiguous.

Table 5.7 Median number of children of women in Generations 2 and 3, by current urban or rural residence

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Birth</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1913-1923</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>6.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914-1933</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5.31</td>
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<td>1934-1943</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>4.26</td>
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<tr>
<td>1944-1953</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>3.27</td>
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<td>1954-1963</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>2.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964-1969</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.902</td>
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</table>

Source: Life-histories.

The third generation of women had a more diverse experience. Again, a minority have spent their lives to date at professional careers. Compared to earlier generations, many more have spent some period of their lives in paid employment. Yet while more have had secondary education, the relative value of this education for moving out of menial employment has also declined. Marriage often bounded such experience of paid employment, with women either leaving work at marriage or taking work after marriage breakup. While few women have experienced widowhood, divorce is more common than in earlier generations. Overall, the range of life-courses is more varied: some women marry late or not at all; others precede marriage with children; some women lead lives at work; others are 'typical' villagers.

Together, Figures 5.8, 5.13 and 5.15 show the historical process of increased diversity in the life experiences of women. Paralleling this change between cohorts is an
increased heterogeneity in life-courses within successive cohorts. Some women’s lives have changed very little from those of their mothers or grandmothers, while others have a substantially different set of lifetime experiences. This inter- and intracohort variation in lifecourses is related to changing social institutions, particularly general economic conditions, the pattern of governance and historical constraints on the spatial and social mobility of Fijian women, and increased educational and occupational opportunities. This pattern of social change and its association with declining fertility has been noted elsewhere (Florez and Hogan, 1990:2)\(^{19}\). As women experience wider choices, opportunities and demands, so does their fertility behaviour change and overall levels of fertility in the population decline. These changes have been pronounced in the younger cohorts, particularly third generation women, and have particularly affected the life trajectories of women as they have entered adulthood. While the average age at marriage has increased only slightly, over the past 20 years the most persistent decline in the fertility of Fijian women has been among women aged 20 to 29 years (Figure 3.3).

Figure 5.17 summarises the general pattern of change by a series of ‘snapshots’ taken across these women’s reproductive years, and the life-stage experiences of women in the expanded study population\(^{20}\). Women born before 1913 are excluded from this summary as their numbers are too small, but their life experiences conformed to the pattern of the group born 1913-1924. The category ‘employed’ refers to unmarried women working outside the household; the categories of ‘wives’ and ‘employed wives’ are those women married with no children; and ‘mothers’ and ‘employed mothers’ refer to mothers (irrespective of marital status) who either stay home or work outside the household. One marked change is in the extent of mortality over the life course; this less often has affected women of recent cohorts during their reproductive years. The earliest cohort of women, born between 1913 and 1924, spent the most part of their reproductive years within a range of three states: as an unpaid family worker, as a mother, as a childless wife - or they died early. In the next cohort of women, those born within 1925-34, we see the early effects of opportunities and necessities for female employment. In the third cohort of women, born 1935-44, the number of employed mothers has declined, and the number of childless women employed increased, but the overall numbers of employed women are small.

It was the cohort of women born between 1945 and 1954 whose lives changed quite abruptly. This generation of women more often began their reproductive years with

\(^{19}\) Evidence that fertility declines often begin among members of higher socio-economic groups sometimes is taken as confirmation of a diffusion of modern ideas down a social hierarchy (Cleland and Wilson, 1987:13; Skeldon, 1990:221). This study agrees with this pattern of change but proposes a different process.

\(^{20}\) As explained in Chapter Four, the expanded population includes both women of the genealogical population and women who have married into this population.
Figure 5.17 Changes in life-courses over fifty years

N = 412 women of the extended study population

Source: Field survey and interviews
some experience of employment, although most often this was of short duration. Also
more wives and mothers were in paid employment during later stages of their reproductive
years than in previous cohorts. The reproductive career of this cohort coincides with the
onset of declining fertility in Fiji, and this suggests both a source of demand for effective
contraceptive technology at that time, and, to the present time, one effect of its availability
(Table 5.8).

Table 5.8 Median number of births of women in each generation,
at ages 25, 30 and 35

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<th>Generation</th>
<th>25</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generation 1</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generation 2</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>4.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generation 3</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>3.11</td>
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Source: life-histories.
Note: Not all women in Generation 3 have yet reached the ages of 30 or 35.

However, changes in fertility behaviour have not simply been a matter of changing
numbers of children, and neither have these changes been in one direction. Table 5.8
indicates that women of the second generation produced, on average, more children than
the previous or successive generations. Figures 5.18 and 5.19 provide further details of
changing fertility over the three generations. Figure 5.18 shows that parity progression
ratios over the first four births were highest for women of the later cohorts of Generation
2: that is, women born between 1924 and 1943. As these women, on average, had their
first children around the age of 21, the eldest of this cohort would have begun
reproducing between 1945 and 1964. Figure 5.19 shows that women born between 1924
and 1933, on average, had their first births younger than women of other cohorts. The
average intervals between first and second, and second and third births declined quite
sharply to their lowest points for women born between 1934 and 1943. These births
mostly occurred between 1956 and 1965. Together, these figures suggest that women of
Generation 2 exhibited higher fertility than either the previous or later generation, and that
fertility rates were at a high peak by the late 1950s. It is only possible to compare the
oldest cohort of Generation 3 with these older women, for the younger cohorts are still
bearing children. The figures for the youngest two cohorts are biased in two respects.
First, they account for the behaviour of the ‘front-runners’ who have highest early fertility
and, second, these women have not yet borne the number of higher parity children they
are likely to produce. Again, however, the cohort of women born between 1945 and 1954
Figure 5.18 Parity progression ratios, by generation of women

Source: Fertility histories.

Figure 5.19 Average length of successive birth intervals, by cohort of women

Source: Fertility histories.

Note: Generation 1 women are not included in this figure because, often, the birth-dates of their children were not sufficiently reliable.
provide the break with the immediate past. The average age at first birth has risen slightly, the first and second birth intervals are lengthened, and progression to fourth parity is almost back at par with the first cohort of Generation 2. These changes may appear somewhat at odds with the effects of the structural changes described in this chapter but, clearly, changes in fertility behaviour are not simply responses to one set of circumstances. I will return to this matter in Chapter Seven, which discusses changes in the medical system and in contraceptive technologies and practices.

5.10 Conclusion

This chapter has traced the evolution of wider choices and opportunities over the twentieth century, and considered the impact of these changes upon the lives of women and their fertility behaviour. From this discussion it is clear why statistical relationships between such indices of change as increased education and urban residence are more ambiguous than they may suggest. Greater opportunities for education have been of significance in differentiating the lives of a minority from their village sisters and cousins. Yet advanced education counted for little, in terms of variable fertility behaviour, where those opportunities were not taken up. The different behaviour of these women suggests that it is not the intellectual benefits of education, the modernizing of ones attitudes or the improvement of scientific knowledge that modifies fertility behaviour, but rather where education provides the entry into a new ‘game’, where the rules of every-day life are somewhat different. It is alternative opportunities for women which encourage their fertility limitation - and we see this happening in the small group of women trained for careers, well before family planning was considered desirable ‘modern’ behaviour.

Through the twentieth century a majority of women have continued to live village lives much as their mothers and grandmothers did, and have continued to bear children until late in their fertile years. Opportunities for the advanced education and social mobility of women, a modern phenomenon throughout the world, were predicated upon privilege. The distributions of choices and chances are not random but structured; and these historically-defined patterns of opportunity strongly influence demographic and other social changes. These structures of opportunity often originate in state policies, and operate indirectly on fertility behaviour through their impact upon individual life-courses. As earlier chapters of this thesis explained, the colonial government made enormous efforts to mould Fijian society according to its ideology of separate development for Fijians, and its definition of Fijian tradition. The state acted deliberately to sort out those of status to be given privileged opportunities from the majority of Fijian people who were to remain villagers. Yet in this the government was not entirely successful, for people
responded to a wider range of choices than reports of government administrators suggest were available to them.

The final issue, therefore, is the extent to which we should attribute behaviour to culture or tradition. While keeping in mind Sahlin's warning about the 'pernicious distinction' between culture and history, we can also consider what might have been if colonial policy had been quite different, and if structures of opportunity had been wider or more equally distributed. In any history it is tempting to recount events as if their patterning was inevitable. But in so far as there are possibilities for alternative histories, we should be wary of attributing responses to limited opportunities to cultural conservatism.
Chapter Six

Continuity, Change, and Competition
Within the Roles of Women

"Oh! my children, you have known what marriage is
In marriage progeny is needed, you who are sister's children's children
I am praying to my house
I am tapping [the door] this day, and [it] is being opened
I have conversed with sister's children and they, sister's children's children
You are here sitting right in front of me, siblings, parents and your children, wards and your defenders
I am beseeching [those] within my true house
That my [people's] progeny shall increase
Be of good nature, you siblings, parents and your children
[It is] an inspiration for our existence, as humans
The people is the chiefdom
The chiefdom comes into existence when people are present
If I look around here and there are people beside me, I can speak with pride and confidence
Death is of no consequence if I looked around, my side is occupied."

6.1 Introduction

Is this call for more heirs and kinsfolk one rooted in the essential and immutable values of Fijian culture, or is it comparable to wedding speeches made in societies now not considered pronatalist - such customary cliches as 'may your only troubles be little ones' or references to 'the patter of tiny feet'? The world over, wedding speeches customarily evoke the bond between reproductive values and the survival of community. Although these values may once have been central to local identity, now they are cultural relics for many descendants of small rural communities, having proved quite dispensable as their communities became more closely linked to national and international polities and were changed by circumstances and forces emanating from beyond much wider horizons. This chapter focuses on how local power relations have transformed as the systems of patriarchy and capitalism have interacted. The historical processes patterned by this interaction influence fertility behaviour by changing the nature of kin ties, the status of women, and family relationships in general. However, these changes do not necessarily act to reduce fertility nor improve the social conditions of women in the short term.

The first section of this chapter discusses the nature of gender relations and kinship in Fijian society. The second examines the effects of socioeconomic change on these gender relations and women's access to resources. This discussion therefore

2 Hartmann (1976) suggested capitalism and patriarchy are separate yet interacting systems of power, and the historical pattern of their convergence transforms local relationships of power.
skirts a minefield of contentious debates within several social sciences, particularly anthropology. However, neither geographers nor demographers can proceed as if the ground underfoot were secure, nor simply wait for these debates to be resolved in other arenas, for they are central to understanding population processes within the context of wider changes. Much of the discussion of changing family patterns and the role of women derives from nineteenth century theories of social evolution (Moore, 1988:13).\textsuperscript{3} These concepts and assumptions, which have been central to anthropological debates, passed over to the newer discipline of demography. This intellectual pedigree provides one explanation for a fundamental contradiction in the view of social change as it affects women. A central assumption within theories of fertility change is of the rising status of women with modernity - the evolution of a modern family which escapes the ties of tradition, particularly those which restrain the autonomy of women, and concomitantly, the emergence of modern women who, independently of their larger kin-group, can both wish for and achieve a smaller number of children. Yet this view that social change improves the status of women is contradicted by studies which claim that the development process exacerbates the oppression of women through their economic marginalisation. Yet both arguments, that women’s status necessarily rises or falls with ‘development’, provide a simple gloss over a complex reality. The matter of women’s status is too ambiguous to sustain either one.

6.2 \textbf{Measuring the status of women}

While there is wide agreement that fertility change is related to the shifting social conditions and status of women, there is less agreement as to the conceptual and methodological bases upon which to analyse the nature of status and its connections with fertility behaviour (Oppong and Abu, 1984:3). At aggregate levels, indices of social status may correlate with decreased fertility, but explaining causality within these relationships is problematic (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 1976:63; Cochrane,

\textsuperscript{3} Moore (1988:13,200) explains this link in more detail. She traces the theory of the primacy of the patriarchal family to Maine’s \textit{Ancient Law} (1861) and the subsequent debate as to whether the patriarchal family had evolved from an earlier order of ‘mother-right’. ‘The questions these nineteenth-century theorists raised - the relationship of the family to the political organization of society, changes in sexual relations and forms of marriage, the basis for types of kinship structure and discussion concerning the related concepts of ‘incest’, ‘power’, ‘private property’, ‘sexual antagonism’, and ‘descent’ - established the parameters of a debate which has persisted, albeit somewhat transformed, into contemporary anthropology’ (Moore, 1988:200). Assumptions about the evolutionary nature of social change, and an absolute division between the sexes, led social theorists of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries to focus on women’s status in society, by emphasising changing sexual relations and family structures in the evolution of society (Moore, 1989:200). The discipline of demography has less of a tradition of critical review than has anthropology, and the theoretical bases for studying transitions in sexual and marriage practices are less questioned.
1983:587; Oppong and Abu, 1984:3). Fertility research projects often assess women’s status upon such tangibles of modernization as levels of formal education, urban or rural residence, the power of women to decide on the allocation of family resources, and general sex-role equality within a society. For example, a recent study of Thai fertility (Hogan et al. 1987:11), developed indices of modernity based on a number of expressed female attitudes, such as the extent to which men should help around the house, the extent to which men should go out as much as they wished, who should get to choose the people the couple associated with most, the extent to which the husband should make major household decisions, who should decide on important household expenditure, and how much money was to be spent on housekeeping. While these indices may have produced valid measures of women’s status in Thailand, in Fiji they would more often signal values associated with kai valagi. By such implication, women’s status improves with acculturation to European mores; culture and change are antithetical. But more fundamentally, these household arrangements may tell less about evolving power relationships in Fijian households than they do of patterns of determined acculturation by the Church and State: household arrangements taught to village women as part of the self-conscious process of their development and now reified as ‘tradition’. It is difficult to suggest that the household roles of husband and wife demonstrate either tradition or modernity where we know that these are the result of self-conscious and deliberate change - in this case the modelling of Fijian domestic arrangements along the lines of middle-class English society (Slatter, 1984:15; Knapman, 1986:63). In stating this I intend no denigration of Fijian culture, nor contend that this change was peculiar to Fiji. The point, rather, is that gender relations and the meaning of ‘household’ or family need to be considered in their specific historical context.

The ‘seven roles’ framework developed by Oppong and Abu (1984, 1988) provides a culturally more neutral basis for this discussion, one which also addresses the problem of imposing a collective identity upon all women (Scott, 1988:25; Moore, 1988:189). Oppong outlines seven roles which women play during their lives:

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4 Westoff et al (1980) provide an example of how unsatisfactory these macro statistical relationships can be. Comparing the demographic significance of contraceptive sterilization in Fiji, the Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka, they concluded that sterilization was positively correlated with women’s levels of education in Korea and Sri Lanka, but negatively so in Fiji. In fact, the link with the educational level of acceptors in Fiji is an artifact of the case that a much larger number of Indian women than Fijian women have been sterilized, and that, overall, Indian women have a lower level of formal education. The causal relationship between education per se and sterilization in Fiji is, therefore, tenuous and the finding of no practical value.

5 Such scales of ‘modern’ attitudes derive from Inkeles’ (1969) attempt to identify the personality qualities of modern man, and the core attitude scale (OM-1) he (Inkeles and Smith, 1974) later designed.

6 It happened similarly elsewhere, for example in Japan (Smith, 1983) and in colonial Malaya (Manderson, 1987).
maternal, occupational, conjugal, domestic, kin, community and individual. Associated with each role are particular activities; resources of time, knowledge and material goods; attached power and decision-making; and significant people vis-a-vis whom she plays the role, and the content of their relationship with her (Oppong and Abu, 1987:7). Material, social and political status accrue in different ways and different amounts from particular roles, as do the rewards women perceive. At various stages of her life, a woman may find certain roles to be in conflict with others and, as well, the priority she gives to certain roles may change abruptly.

This conceptual framework allows one to see a more complex reality behind some common images of women, the most powerful of which are formed through distinctions between nature and culture, and between domestic and public spheres of activity (Moore, 1988:14). These images extend from an assumption that the biological or psychological effects of motherhood effectively exclude women from full participation in the public spheres of society. As a corollary, a change in gender relations is considered to require a restructuring of power relations within the biological family, and the emergence of women out of the domestic into the more prestigious public realm. The Eurocentric bias within this grouping of women/nature/inferior in opposition to male/culture/superior has been exposed by a number of writers, notably MacCormack and Strathern (1980), Leacock (1981), and Teckle (1984), but the images endure.

Oppong's work stands in some contrast to a lot of what has been written about the status of women as it relates to their fertility behaviour. Much has been more simplistic, with the stereotype of Third World women expressed in the maxim 'poor, powerless, and pregnant' (eg. Population Crisis Committee, 1988). To this we might add the European stereotype of Melanesian women as mute workhorses - a view which is plainly the construction of mostly male social scientists and government administrators (Keesing, 1985). In neither case do these stereotypes acknowledge that the absolute and relative strengths of patriarchal (and other) institutions vary across social settings. Because of its complex and shifting nature, therefore, women's status is not a characteristic which can easily be measured, although it is counter-intuitive to argue against a generally lower social position of women.

6.3 Fijian society as patriarchal society

6.3.1 Fijian social organization

We return, therefore, to the question which opened this chapter: is Fijian society inherently patriarchal and thereby pronatalist? The answer one could commonly expect would be a firm yes. To a considerable extent, daily life in a Fijian community is structured by kin-relationships, and while both maternal and paternal kin links are important, those forged through males dominate in daily life (Nayacakalou, 1955:44).
This is made visible in the clustering of the houses of close patrilineal relatives (broadly tokatoka) within the village, and in a more dispersed fashion, often in town. It is also apparent in the amount of time family members spend together and helping one another out. The women who have married into the family also are expected to cooperate with each other, particularly in preparing the yau ni vanua (items of traditional value) which are an important part of contributions from the family to community ceremonies. Towards the larger community, the family group mostly is expected to present a unified presence in community celebrations or projects.

Villages are not, however, usually made up of discrete family groups: intermarriage between lineages constructs a complex network of relationships that extends through the village and connects it with neighbouring ones.

Within the family group, personal interactions also are patterned by categories of kinship. There are those who must always be addressed with respect, yet from whom one may expect some indulgence, such as grandparents and maternal relatives in general. Some relations of respect require degrees of physical avoidance, for example between a son and his father, between veiganeni (cross-siblings) particularly where these are of opposite sex, and to some extent between veidakuni (sisters and brothers-in-law). There are those whom one must in every instance obey such as one’s momo (maternal uncle), and those to whom one should be generous such as one’s vasu (sister’s children). There are yet others with whom relations are less constrained, such as tavaleni (cross-cousins of opposite sex), who are free to joke intimately, between sisters, and between brothers - although deference is shown to the elder (Nayacakalou, 1955:47). Within the kin-group as a whole, these categories of personal obligation, association, avoidance, and obedience pattern the transactions of everyday life.

Ties of kinship are reproduced through marriage and they transform over the life course. By structuring interpersonal and intra-community transactions, these relationships define the kin-group in contrast to non-kin. More broadly, within the local community, seniority and gender provide the criteria of social ranking and, to this extent, Fijian society is the archetype of a patriarchal system, where social relations are patterned by the domination of the old over the young, and by men over women (Dixon-Mueller, 1989:294).

Certainly this is the portrait of Fijian society that is generally presented. The emphasis on male descent is a central tenet of the Vola ni Kawa Bula, and the patriarchal arrangement of power is an important link between national and local government. Nayacakalou is usually taken as an incontrovertible source of support for this definition of Fijian society - as a trained anthropologist, and as a Fijian with an insider’s understanding of his own society. Yet he too was a man of his time: his views were strongly shaped by the anthropological theories then current, and these
theories now are known to overstate the importance of descent in kinship organization. As understanding of women in society has become more sophisticated, so the two-dimensional view of male dominance and female suppression is seen as unsatisfactory (Leacock, 1981).

Other than as wives and mothers, roles which might involve subordination to men, women have their own role in kin-relations. As kinswomen they act as the sala - the pathway between paternal and maternal relatives. Teckle (1984:21) explains that while Melanesian women may appear to some observers to be rather inarticulate about general matters, this does not mean they are generally uninformed:

...in some societies, such as Vatulele [Fiji] they appear to have a deeper appreciation of the complex texture of their society and culture gained from wider involvement in both their natal and marriage groups and in the manipulation of social relations.

In her study of Fijian women, Teckle (1984:20) concluded that the power of women in the local political system worked from the network of kinship they sustained outside the patrilineal system, a truth which is embedded in other descriptions of Fijian kinship systems but rarely expressed as such. Indeed, Teckle (1984:190) noted that disregard for women's kinship role is implicit in the structural models drawn of patrilineal kinship. She proposed an alternative model derived from Hocart's (1929, 1970) analysis of the 'dual structure' of Fijian society (Figure 6.1).

**Figure 6.1 Two views of Fijian kinship**

(a) The conventional view:

(1) father=mother
tama=tina

(2) mother’s relative
(in-laws)

(3) vuqo

(4) sibling
tuaka

(5) self =
EGO

(6) =
spouse
wati

(7) cousin
tavale

(8) statutory child
luve

(9) nephew/niece
vuqo
Hocart’s model emphasises the generational rather than the gender hierarchy, thereby incorporating women rather than promoting the quite erroneous view that they are of no social consequence in Fijian society.

6.3.2 Patterns of inheritance

The availability of land and the rules of land inheritance often are posited as primary determinants of family structure and the demography of peasant societies (Goody, 1973; Berkner and Mendels, 1978, Cain, 1981, 1982). Inheritance patterns indirectly link with fertility behaviour through their effect upon women’s status, the sexual division of labour, and their agency in marriage strategies. In Fiji, a reason often proposed for the slower decline in Fijian fertility relative to other ethnic groups, is that in the Fijian land tenure system, sons are necessary to maintain the family lineage, or kawa:

The continuation of the family group in its larger sections, the tokatoka, mataqali and the yavusa is fundamental to the concept of a Fijian family group. The more children a couple have, especially male children, the more honoured and proud they are. As it is through the male members

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7 For European societies a large body of literature debates the variable effects of partible or impartible inheritance on fertility and mobility patterns, and the effects other characteristics of inheritance have on local demographic structures (eg. Knodel, 1974; Yasuba, 1962). In the Third World, consideration of inheritance patterns commonly focuses on the effect of population pressure on rural landholding. A general consensus is that the relationships between specific land inheritance systems and local demographic patterns are diverse: land-inheritance may be pronatalist where it stimulates a demand for sons, less so where the supply of sons is controlled to limit the number of heirs, (Mosk, 1983:97) and possibly anti-natalist where land-ownership provides old age security.

8 Such statements have been made to me by officials of the Ministry of Health, but, more generally, this is an assumption about Fijian society that is often publicly aired.
that the group will continue, men are considered important. Girls will marry out of their mataqali, and serve those of their husbands. Traditional Fijian parents are overjoyed if they have sons. To have daughters only is a stigma sometimes taken so seriously by married couples that they seek ways by which a male child could be begotten. A woman who produces more male children for her husband’s group can boast openly of giving life, strength, and prosperity to his mataqali... The more members of the mataqali, the stronger the group, economically and politically (Ravuvu, 1978:32).

This statement needs qualification, for Ravuvu here expresses ‘tradition’ in terms which are equally Fijian and male. While Fijian society is male oriented in many respects, this view exaggerates the cultural demand for sons by ignoring the kinship roles of Fijian women and down-playing their status. It also is necessary to consider this statement in historical context: before the codification of land by the NLC the strength of the lineage did depend on the reproduction of ‘sons’, but - as some earliest entries in the Vola ni Kawa Bula testify - these ‘sons’ could be borrowed from other kin. By creating new legal definitions of inheritance, the VKB effected a new rigidity in both land tenure and in the kinship requirements of land inheritance. While there are ways around the requirements of the VKB, a ‘son’ to the lineage now really does mean a biological son through patrilineal descent.9 Thus, if land inheritance as defined by the VKB does exert a pronatalist influence this probably is more modern than traditional.

The codification of land was an amalgam of European and Fijian assumptions about the laws of inheritance, coloured heavily by the European legalistic tradition and the convergence of European and Fijian male ideologies. A number of writers have detailed the variance between the administrative definition of inheritance as codified by the VKB and pre-existing local systems of land tenure (Sahlins, 1962:355; Walter, 1978a:351, Thompson, 1940:76). Such evidence points to a variety of land tenure principles and past degrees of matrilineal power, but these local traditions now are submerged.10 As Kessinger (1974:83) noted elsewhere, the act of defining rights

9 One way around this is to include a daughter’s ‘illegitimate’ child to bolster one’s lineage. Another is by adoption. To get past the legal hassles this may entail, some people simply record the child as born into their own tokatoka. In early generations, lineages were strengthened by heirs imported from related mataqali, as, for example, the father of the present turaga-ni-vanua of Mataso who was brought in to inherit leadership from a man with only one daughter.

10 While disagreements may continue over specific pieces of land, with time the uniformly patrilineal principle of the VKB has predominated in peoples’ memories. Nobody living in the study area could explain to me how land ownership was organised before the institution of the VKB and possibly, unlike some localities, there was no difference. Sometimes meeting the best informed people rests upon luck, or the lack of it. The man credited with the best knowledge of local history died (aged 92) before I could meet him. Sadly, my first visit to Namara coincided with his funeral. Sahlins (1962:219) reports from Moala an old custom of land being given to a woman at her marriage by her natal group so her children would remember her family. Roth (1953:73) noted that in Bau, women of rank received land as their dowry.
and writing them down can fundamentally alter the context of the village and its institutions. The inherent legalism of land codification probably replaced more subtle arrangements of power and tipped the balance towards men.

As Table 6.1 and Figure 6.2 demonstrate, there are considerable differences in the land resources of the mataqali of the study district. Overall, the people of the district could be described as land rich, particularly if we consider the limited area a person or family cultivates in the absence of any farm machinery (beyond the occasional chain-saw) on the island, and the semi-subsistent local economy.

Table 6.1. Mataqali land holdings in the study district

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of holding (ha)</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Ha. per living mataqali member</th>
<th>Ha. per living male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>431.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>n.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>288.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>72.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>288.5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>314.4</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115.2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>194.6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>258.2</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>368.7</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161.0</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>385.6</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169.4</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91.8</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140.9</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211.6</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120.1</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169.5</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vola ni Kawa Bula and field survey

The different quality of the land owned is not considered here, but much of the land is steep, forest-covered, difficult to reach on foot, and interior areas are rarely used for cultivation. People prefer to cultivate along the coast and in the vicinity of the villages. However, consideration of land quality misses the point behind land ownership. Access to land and inheritance is not the same thing - residents needing land can and commonly do 'borrow' land from other mataqali, by asking vakavanua
Land suitable for arable or tree crops, or grazing. (Fiji Land Use Capability Classes I-V)

Mataqali boundary
Road (motorable 1988)
Road (unmotorable)
Contour interval 100 feet

Figure 6.2 Mataqali land-holdings in the study district

Sources: Ministry of Primary Industries, Land-Use Division; Ministry of Lands.
By contrast, land inheritance is a matter of legal definition and emotional attachment. If the male line becomes extinct, the land reverts to the State. This has happened for one mataqali and two tokatoka of the study district. Neither the amount nor the quality of the land is the central issue in discussions of lineage strength, but the chance of its loss to the family.

The genealogies in Figure 6.3 exhibit the fates of various lineages over the past three to four generations, and demonstrate that despite a high rate of natural increase for the community, maintaining a lineage can be problematical given child mortality (more so in earlier generations) and the chance of fathering daughters. While sons are the main heirs, some lineages have benefited from the ‘own’ (illegitimate) child of a daughter. Yet while Fijian men more than women can claim land ownership, women retain rights of access, and these female rights are an important factor in marriage strategies.

If lineage survival is an important source of Fijian men’s demand for children, then we might expect that where the lineage was at risk its heirs would have more children on average. In the generation currently reproducing, we might expect that ‘only’ heirs would begin reproducing early and more prolifically than other men. However the figures did not show any clear lineal relationship between lineage risk and the numbers of children born to lineage heirs. The search for a statistical relationship was limited by the small number of cases in this study, but may well have been pointless, as wanting sons and getting sons are different matters. Evidence from the interviews did however indicate that men often do respond to the state of their patriline. The wives of men in seemingly quite different lineage situations spoke of their husband’s desire for many children to bolster his tokatoka. Wives of the same mataqali or village often particularly identified with this need (Figure 6.3.1):

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11 Vakavanua (that is, in the manner of the land) it is possible to borrow land for a specific purpose, such as a garden or a house-site, from another mataqali through a sevusevu to the turaga ni vanua - a formally-presented gift of yaqona, and possibly, tobacco and/or cash, or some other appropriate goods. Such requests are rarely refused, especially where there are kin-ties with the applicant.
12 While the official land-owning unit is the mataqali, people commonly refer to the state of their ‘own’ land and lineage - ie that of their tokatoka, and amongst village people there are disputes over the rights of different tokatoka. This indicates the degree to which the new ‘tradition’ of the VKB fits loosely with local land-ownership patterns, and the extent to which it has become substantiated - people are very aware of whose names are on which lists.
13 While I rarely turned conversations deliberately to the matter of land ownership, this topic came up many times, possibly because people knew I was familiar with their VKB, but also because this is an issue which is often discussed - especially where land had been or was in imminent danger of being lost. After years of negotiations, the turaga-ni-yavusa managed to get my uncles written to their mother’s officially extinct tokatoka, because she had never legally married their father. This was preferable to allowing the land to revert to the State. Negotiations continue between Namara people and the government to regain possession of the land once owned by an extinct mataqali.
Figure 6.3 The growth of patrilines

6.3.1

(d62) 6 (d41) 74 70 3 55 Pita

24 age
(d62) age at death
X died as child

Total number of children
Each line represents one son

38 Sairusi

(d72) 10 71 3 X 27 24 37 35 32 6 12 9 4

(d64) 60 31 29 26 28 20 3 1

(d66) 57 5 52 7 16 13

6.3.2

(d70) 2
(d49)

6.3.3

(d66) 5 (d66) 65

37 Joape

(d77) 5 37 26 23 10 6

(d86) 52 7 16
A mother of 8 children (5 sons): For us, we like to have many children because our mataqali is very small. There's not many of us. One house or two. That's why we want more people (38012).

More often such statements were interlaced with other concerns such as a wife's perceived lack of choice in contraceptive method (Figure 6.3.2):

Sairusi and his wife have six children, of which the fourth and sixth are sons. His wife told me four children was her ideal family size, and that she preferred daughters who think of their mother later in life. However, her husband was an only son, and he wanted sons to help him farm and to maintain his claim on the land. She hoped she would have no more children, but stopping was not easy, as all available contraceptives carried the risk of illness or general weakness (00204).

Neither living in town nor being from another area removed this pressure on wives, although some men were more dictatorial than others (Figure 6.3.3):

Joape and his wife (a woman from the province of Lau) live at Wakanisila in Suva. In 1988, his 35-year old wife was pregnant with their seventh child. Joape refused any form of contraception, a view he supported by reference to his Christian beliefs. For three years after her third child, his wife surreptitiously took the pill until she again became pregnant - an accident to which she attributed that child's sickly physique. Because Joape wanted children he would not cooperate to space their children by using withdrawal. Indeed, she told me he was so antagonistic to her using contraception that once when they went to the hospital, he saw a family planning sign and promptly left. After her current pregnancy she planned to secretly use a new contraceptive concoction - buadromo (a local plant) mixed with salt-water (12402).

6.4 Sons, daughters, and their mothers

This discussion has centred on a demand for sons by men. But while women are the vehicles for the success or otherwise of lineage-maintaining strategies, they have general priorities of their own. Indeed, a majority of the women interviewed said they wished for at least as many daughters as they did sons, for girls help with the tasks of women and are more reliable sources of assistance when adults. Adult sons often are responsive to their aged parents' needs, and eldest sons are particularly expected to be so. Nevertheless, women frequently were dismissive of their adult sons: 'Girls remember their parents, but after they are married boys forget their parents'.14 As

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14 Around the yaqona bowl, village men often introduced me by reference to my prowess in producing many sons, but older women were more likely to shake their heads over my predicament. I privately received well-intentioned counselling from my 'aunts' and 'grandmothers' to try for some daughters before it was too late, or I would have serious regrets in my old age when dependent on my children for emotional, if not physical, support. However, other people with only daughters have been advised exactly oppositely.
much as gender and kinship relations shape women’s roles, so too do they shape the
behaviour women can expect of their children.

6.4.1 The value of adult children
In Fijian tradition there are institutional barriers to close emotional relationships
between mothers and their adult sons. After a son is married with children, both his
parents should defer to him, and this change of status is marked by changes in kinship
terms of address (Ravuvu, 1971:482). The dismissive attitudes expressed might
reflect the absence of control that women have over their adult sons. The son truly
belongs to his father’s patriline, where the mother is only affiliated during the span of
her marriage. While a son may care for his parents, after the death of his father the
mother (conventionally) returns to her patriline which may be in another village,
where she may expect to be cared for by her brother’s sons (Ravuvu, 1971:482). In
the study population, however, this convention no longer held, and some adult sons
affectionately took responsibility for their aged mothers. The prestige and material
benefits of a son now often do include emotional support.

Mothers and their adult daughters often had particularly close relationships. Elderly women with several daughters proudly reported high levels of care and the
gifts their absent daughters sent. I often found elderly women living with their adult
daughters and, particularly in Suva, moving residence between them at her will. The
image remains with me of Ema, 83 years old, blind and mostly deaf, sitting in her
daughter’s house where her future coffin was tucked into the rafters, and where her
four daughters living nearby often visited her. The women would sit chatting with
one another; a grand-child might help Ema with her food. Unlike some other elderly,I
never saw Ema alone.

With the increased opportunities for women to have careers, the emotional
value of a daughter now may include material support. There was a small group of
unmarried women in their late twenties or thirties who were supporting their parents
through their work:

Joana (aged 36) spent her teenage years in Suva, and became pregnant
when studying to be a teacher. Her mother, who was an invalid, expressly
asked her not to marry for she feared that as a married woman Joana
would be less able to support her financially, nor be able to return to visit
her often. Joana’s son was adopted by her parents, and Joana used her
teacher’s salary to support her parents and son for the next fourteen years.
In 1988 her mother died, and within six months Joana had married
(38020).

15 This was also noted by Teckle (1984:158) in Vatulele.
There was a consensus of opinion among older women that simply having more children did not necessarily guarantee them a comfortable old age, for one could not expect they would all turn out to be 'good' and consider the needs of their aged parents above the more immediate needs of their own young families. Nevertheless, as 64 year-old Ateca reasoned:

> When you're old you realise that it was a good thing you had many children [she had eight] - because there is always one of them coming back to see us, to wash our clothes, to get water for us, and other things (40202).

### 6.4.2 The demands of young children

Overall, given an expected return on one's investment in children, it might seem best for a woman to have as many as possible. Yet, at this point, the concurrent roles of mother, of wife, of domestic worker, and of kinswoman, may conflict. Wives are expected to provide sexual services, mothers to adequately care for their children, domestic workers to keep the household running smoothly, and kinswomen to keep an eye on their family's and own futures.

As Chapter Seven will further explain, there is a strong value put upon spacing children so that a child can 'care for itself' before a younger sibling is born, although many women admitted they could not manage this. Adequately caring for small children was considered very difficult, for while they are breast-feeding their mother cannot take them when she goes fishing on the reef or collecting firewood in the bush, yet these are jobs she must do. This is a pressure which has increased greatly through the generations: older women recalled how they breast-fed their children for up to three years, and often commented on the great change with young women these days who were inclined to leave their children with others and go about as they pleased. Not surprisingly, younger women did not explain their behaviour in this light, but rather spoke of the necessity to wean their babies at around one year so they would be free to do their work. The pace of life has quickened in the village as it has elsewhere. In this regard, having paid employment should simplify life, in that a woman can then pay someone else to mind the children and house, yet clearly it does not work this way. Most employed women find themselves constrained from having many children in other ways, for the demand of organising household matters usually remains their responsibility.

There also is a keener awareness among younger women of the financial costs of rearing and educating children. In our discussions as to ideal family sizes these days, women of all ages commonly referred to three contemporary conditions: children now were very expensive to raise, particularly if they were to be educated for a good job; adult daughters could be very dependable sources of support, especially if
they had good jobs; but the way things were now, often adult children were struggling for their own families. Yet while both rural and urban women spoke of the present cost of rearing children and the need to have ‘just a few’, there was a remarkably consistent view that this ‘few’ numbered around four children. The balance between the costs of rearing children and their future value, therefore, can be quite fine and can change over the life-span of the family. As a mother of six adult children explained:

When they were small we said there were too many children, but now they are big and useful, now we say we don’t have enough children. It’s good now to have many children. Overall, is it best to have more or less? I don’t really know (12205).

6.5 Marriage strategies and characteristics

The power women derive from their role as pathways (sala) linking paternal and maternal relatives becomes more apparent when we consider strategies of marriage in the study population. Marriages are strategies which justify and manipulate alliances within the community and link a population between generations (Bourdieu, 1977:117; de Jonge, 1985:39; Brennan et al. 1982:289).

6.5.1 Measures of changing nuptiality

Over this century, changes in the demographic qualities of marriage patterns in the study population have included a decrease in age differences between spouses, an increase in the average age of marriage, and a wider choice of spouse (Figures 6.4, 6.5, Table 6.2), but the degrees of change have not been great. While most adult Fijians marry, a few men and fewer women do not, either through choice or some disability.16 The incidence of marriage among women in the study population has declined. Whereas almost all women in the first generation married in their early twenties, 6 per cent of the women born 1945-54 and now aged between 34 and 43 years, have never married, and 23 per cent of women born 1955-1964 and now aged between 24 and 33 have not married - although many have borne children and no doubt some will marry in later years (Figures 5.8, 5.13 and 5.15). The average age of first marriage for Fijian females has risen slowly over the past sixty years, most notably in the national population since the 1960s. This is a reflection of the greater opportunities for education and female employment in that period. From a life course perspective, the age at which a woman marries is significant, for this strongly influences her range of choices with regard to mobility and alternatives to domestic employment and economic dependency.

16 In traditional priestly families there was a marked male celibacy (N. Thomas, personal communication).
Figure 6.4 Age differences between spouses

(a) Mean age differences in the national Fijian population

![Chart showing age differences in national Fijian population over years of marriage from 1900 to 2000.](chart1)

Source: Marriage registers, Register General's Office, Suva.

(b) Average age differences within the study population

![Chart showing average age differences within study population over years of marriage from 1925-29 to 1985-88.](chart2)

Source: Field data.
Figure 6.5 Female average age at first marriage

(a) In the national Fijian population

(b) In the study population

Source: Marriage Certificates, Register General's Office, Suva

Source: Field data.
Marriage theoretically, but not necessarily, signals the start of a woman’s exposure to pregnancy and it may also influence the extent of community control over marriage choices. Measures of nuptiality are complicated by the variety of events which may mark marriage, and I defined marriage as cohabitation, for that may precede any ceremonies. While premarital sexual activity of women is officially frowned upon in Fijian society (Abramson, 1987), clearly many unmarried women are exposed to the risk of pregnancy.18

Such changes in marriage patterns are considered characteristic of modernization and declining patriarchal power and an index of increased female autonomy (Shorter, 1975, Smith, 1980). Shorter’s explanation of the ‘rise of the modern family’ derives generally from the paradigm of social evolution previously discussed and, more particularly, from his interpretation of European history. Essentially, this argument is that economic changes associated with modernization reduce the functions and size of the family, affecting institutions of courtship, forging stronger parent-child ties, and separating the nuclear family unit from the wider kin-group. This probably brings less inhibited selection of marriage partners, greater individual choice in the timing of marriage, a decreased age difference between spouses, and increased exogamy with regard to class and culture (Smith, 1980:59). Shorter’s explanation fits into the more general hypothesis of the rise of the primary individual, an explanation of family and social change elaborated by Parsons (1954) and extended to Third World societies by Goode (1963). This paradigm of the emergent primary individual rests heavily on assumptions regarding the weakening of kin-relationships due to social change, a matter to which I will return towards the end of this chapter. While the universality of this explanation of change has been seriously challenged (Cancian et al. 1978), it remains pervasive and powerful - in part because these assumptions are embedded within demographic measures of changing nuptiality.

More important than measuring change is considering its local significance. For example, an age difference between spouses is a possible source of male domination, for younger women may have less power in a relationship than their older husbands.19 Both nationally and in the study population these age differences

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17 There is no Fijian term which inambiguously refers to the formality of a union nor to the type of marriage ceremony. Veiwatini or vakawati can mean a formal or de facto union and vakamau (marriage) may be qualified as vakamau vakalotu (in church) vakamau vakavanua (traditional) or vakamau vakamatanitu (government registry). Of course, national registration data on marriages refers to the completion of civil requirements.

18 Other than the women who bore children outside of any union, many unions in the study population were initiated by pregnancies. This was also noted in Kadavu by Cook, 1974:22. Because few women could recall the start of cohabitation closer than the year, it is impossible to calculate rates of bridal pregnancy or suggest ways in which this has changed.

19 The Fiji Fertility Survey (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 1976) used a five-year difference in the ages of spouses as one measure of the degree to which a society was patriarchal.
have declined over the past fifty years, but not necessarily equally to the promotion of women's status or decline in fertility. Women often spoke of older husbands as more considerate of their needs. Older husbands were reportedly less likely to expect sexual services from wives caring for infants, and more likely to cooperate in at least partial abstinence as a means to space or limit their children. As a 55 year-old woman explained:

My husband was very good to me. When I was breast-feeding I took the traditional advice and did not sleep with him. He took good care of me and had pity on the children, because if something went wrong with me they would be the ones to suffer. His understanding was very good because he was much older than me (38403).

Women commonly assumed that relative age influenced the power balance in a marriage, but the increased authority of women might bring mixed rewards. A 25 year-old woman explained:

My thinking is that they should be far apart in age. When they marry young and close together all we get is fight, fight, fight (19804).

6.5.2 The choice of spouse

The customary choice of spouse lies among one's veitavaleni (cross-cousins) or veiwekani (relatives). Both yavusa and mataqali are exogamous, so membership in them does not affect marriageability. Rather, this is defined in terms of individual kinship, the distinction between cross and parallel kin. Generally, within the same generation cross-cousins can marry but parallel cousins may not (Nayacakalou, 1955:48, Turner, 1984:294). In Kadavu, marriage within very close degrees of kin is not approved of and, as a consequence, people often could not explain to me the precise kin-relationship with their spouse, a connection that may span several generations. As in any society, some ignore the 'rules'; a few women whispered that their husbands were in fact their veiwekani dina (first cousins) or veitacini (statutory siblings). Figure 6.6 illustrates a genealogy of ideal marriage partners.

20 Throughout Fiji there is local variation in the preferred degree of closeness between marriageable kin, as discussed by Sahlins (1962) for Moala, Hocart (1929) for Lau, Turner (1984) for Wainimala, and Walter (1975) for Mailevu, Lau. The literature is complicated by the variable use of Bauan and local kinship terminology.
The folk ideal of Fijian marriage is one arranged by elders in a manner which maintains and strengthens the patrilineal blood-line, the *kawa*, and the matrilineal kin network, the *sala*, as is illustrated by the marriage of Manoa and Torika.21

Manoa’s story:
In 1957 I was working as a clerk in Nausori, living by myself in the government bachelors’ quarters. One day my father came to visit and he found me at home, sick. He felt terribly sorry for me. I could see signs of agony in his eyes. As soon as he got back to Kadavu he began to tell my mother he wanted me to be married because no-one was looking after me. So the village discussed it, and then they all came. I knew nothing about this, the first warning I had was a telegram sent from the boat halfway from Kadavu to Suva: ‘Manoa, we are coming to attend your marriage.’ The next morning on my way to work I saw a large truck laden with yams and mats. I knew it was them. They were all there with my father. I argued with him for days. I was only twenty-three, I wasn’t at all ready

21 This couple referred to themselves as *veiwekani*, although neither knew their exact genealogical connection.
for marriage, I didn’t want to be like other people who get married with no money, no clothes, no yau. After days of argument my parents came in tears to me, ‘Please don’t embarrass us, our coming has the blessing of everyone, we have spoken with the girl’s parents. Oh please, please, we’ve brought pigs, we’re all here, we have food, please just agree.’ I gave in and told them it was their choice who my wife was as I didn’t have a girlfriend, I didn’t even care if she was blind or had leprosy. And if she refused them it wasn’t my problem. My mother told me they had already fixed a girl from her village. I told her I didn’t care from where, it was her problem to fix it (40401).

Torika’s story:
I was only sixteen then. I had no idea what was going on. Late in the night I was called to my uncle’s (the turaga-ni-mataqali) house where a lot of people were gathered. At that time my father was already dead and as the uncle I stayed with had been fishing all day, he had not known to forewarn me. And they told me, ‘you came here to be asked, only two things you say, either yes or no. We have agreed to these people who have come to ask for a wife for Manoa. We have agreed and now its up to you.’ I was afraid to say no. All I said was ‘it’s up to you’. That was a Wednesday and on that Saturday we were married. Only three days (04012).

Manoa’s father’s immediate concern had been for the welfare of his son, living away from the family with no domestic support. While his mother may have shared this concern, she had another ambition - to link her son to her natal village so to reaffirm her own ties (sala) there. Both Manoa and Torika found themselves constrained to agree to plans for their marriage. If Manoa had refused his parents would have lost face, as they would have if Torika or her relatives had refused. Torika’s relatives had felt equally compelled by the bonds of kinship when Manoa’s mother had returned to ask for a wife for her son. If they had refused her, both sides would have been embarrassed at a later occasion when they needed to cooperate at some family oga. The mother’s shame would have constrained her from visiting her natal village and, as well, provoked some snide remarks in her husband’s village. Yet she felt such consequences was something she was prepared to risk to achieve her ambition. The elders chose Torika, a mataqali member they had authority over, and let her know her refusal would cause embarrassment all around. While Torika had the least choice in the matter, the wishes of neither marriage partner were considered superior to the pressure of maintaining the wider kin group.

I often was told that ‘in the past’, marriages normally were arranged, but the low incidence of such arrangements appears not to have changed much over the three generations. Most women in all generations told me they had chosen their own husband - yet most had managed to ‘do the right thing’ in choosing amongst their veiwekani or veitavaleni. This bears out Bourdieu’s (1977:118) observation that even where approval is not tacit, generally, people subconsciously imitate already proven
strategies as the accepted, most respectable, or even the simplest course to follow.\textsuperscript{22} It also demonstrates that these Fijian women were not mere chattels of exchange in marriage, but could exercise choice. Quite often, the ambitions of parents and the choices of their children coincide in a serendipitous manner:

In 1985, when Ana’s daughter Nanise was sixteen, she was sent on holiday from Suva to her mother’s village. To Ana’s delight, while she was there Nanise eloped with a cousin. The young couple now live in Muanisolo, although they have not yet formally married after three years together. Ana described the arrangement as ‘nicely easy’ for her, because she can speak with authority both in the young couple’s house and, through her kin-connections, in the boy’s family house and in the village at large. Ana has lived in Suva since marriage, but her daughter’s marriage reaffirms her association with her natal village (55610).

Either through choice or arrangement, the ‘tying up’ of blood through marriage rejuvenates and strengthens the blood-line - \textit{vakabulabula na dra}.\textsuperscript{23} It keeps the land within the \textit{mataqali} by guaranteeing that the continuity of the land is not lost through intermarriage. Within the marriage, the relationship of \textit{veiwekani} ideally promotes a good relationship (\textit{veimalawai} - of one mind), whereby people can be at ease with each other. Marrying a relative was said to accord one considerable freedom, where marrying outside exposed women to the risk of enslavement beyond the assistance of their family. It also lessened the burden on the household when there is an \textit{oga}, for there is a common set of relatives to serve and one has the satisfaction of knowing that everything given remains within the family. To the particular advantage of women, as the stories of Manoa, Torika and Ana demonstrate, the marriage of \textit{veiwekani} protects rights of return to natal villages and maintains the kin networks of women. Such a choice of spouse also safeguards a woman’s access to resources. If a woman marries to a distant village not only is she restricted in this access but her parents are also restricted in the support they can extend to her, as Wati’s mother explained of her marriage in 1988:

This marriage strengthens the relationships properly. One good thing about this is that we don’t have sons ourselves and by this marriage we are perpetuating our \textit{kawa}, keeping it within the family - Kelevi is one of us too [Figure 6.6]. And Wati is with our folks in Mataso. If she had married to, say, Lau she would have gone there and we don’t have any strength in Lau, we would have no say at all in the husband’s place. That’s one good thing about marriage in the family, Wati stays in the \textit{mataqali}. Wati can

\textsuperscript{22} Bourdieu (1977:118) criticises the legalistic thinking that often underlies descriptions of kin relationships and particularly marriage strategies, a manner of thinking which interprets every act to be the execution of an order or plan. He argues for an alternative understanding of habitus - a generating and unifying principle of practices constituted by a whole system of predispositions, inculcated by the material circumstances of life and family upbringing.

\textsuperscript{23} Sometimes, although very rarely, \textit{veigageni} may have children, although not marry, in order to keep the bloodline close.
go to our land there and do anything she likes, eat off it and she can go to Kelevi’s land and do the same thing, she can use both lands just as she wishes. The same thing with their children, they have access to both lands now, the father’s and the mother’s (04012).

6.5.3 Changing degrees of endogamy
One result of this cross-cousin marriage at the village level is a network of closely intertwined marriages between neighbouring clans. Even today the majority of young villagers have married people they grew up with. However, this degree of endogamy is breaking down as people become more mobile, and more become urbanites, where they are as likely to meet an attractive stranger (Table 6.2). Inter-ethnic marriage is increasing but remains rare, especially for men.24

It is interesting to note the parallels between current concerns with the social context of fertility behaviour and those demonstrated in the Corney Report of one hundred years ago. To examine the the extent of custom of marrying first cousins (veidavolani)25 and effects of consanguineous marriages on the mortality of children, Corney et al. (1896:22) commissioned a survey of 448 families in twelve villages from the provinces of Rewa, Colo East, Serua and Ba (Table 6.2). They concluded that fecundity was relatively higher among veidavolani than other classes, and child mortality was lowest. Their questions were predicated upon assumptions about physical vitality and in-breeding, and the authors found it ‘remarkable that the two extremes of vitality should occur in the two classes in which inbreeding prevails’.26

A majority of both women and men in the study population suggested that endogamous marriage advantaged women through the assistance available to them and their access to land and other resources. When women spoke of their childbearing they most often also referred to the competing demands of their work-loads.

24 There is an interesting pattern of change. In the first generation the few inter-ethnic marriages were all between local women and Chinese settlers in the district, or the kai loma descendants of European settlers. In the second generation some women married Europeans they met in Suva, and one man married an Indian woman. In the third generation several women have married Europeans and Chinese, and of the group of local women now resident in Nadi and Lautoka, several have Indian husbands.
25 A Bauan term, equivalent to veitavaleni.
26 Such inbreeding purportedly affects fertility both through lowered birth rates and increased child mortality. This debate over the fertility implications of consanguineous marriage has continued to recent times, driven by the theory of population genetics that in a closed or nearly closed population inbreeding will lower Darwinian fitness (Reid, 1976:139). However, a number of studies have found that consanguineous marriages result in slightly higher birth rates, and this possibly may be because of the social and psychological quality of marital relations (Reid, 1976:140). An alternative hypothesis is that married residence within an extended family network promotes fertility through the encouragement of early and almost universal marriage, through the reduction of the costs of children to their parents, and through the increased status of larger families and their potentially enhanced economic and political positions within the community (Ryder, 1976:93).
### Table 6.2 Degrees of endogamy

**(a) The degree of endogamy in 1894**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>No. of families</th>
<th>Percent of families</th>
<th>Average no. of children</th>
<th>Average child deaths per family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veidavolani (orthagamous cousins)</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives other than veidavolani</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korovata (of the same village)</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-related people of other villages</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Corney et al., 1896:23.

**(b) The degree of endogamy in 1988**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>No. of families</th>
<th>Percent of families</th>
<th>Average no. of children</th>
<th>Average child deaths per family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A: Rural residence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veitavaleni (Orthagamous cousins)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations other than veitavaleni</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korovata (Of the same village)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-related people of other villages</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B: Urban residence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veitavaleni</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations other veitavaleni</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korovata</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-related people</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: field survey
and adequately caring for children. From the perspective of probable family assistance, rather than genetic vigour, the Corney data makes more sense - for we might expect that where women faced less conflict between the demands of motherhood and of work they may have less reason to curtail their births and more opportunity to nurture their children. In this manner, the change from endogamous marriage does not, in the short term, necessarily promote the autonomy of women, although it may encourage them to limit their fertility. Table 6.2 shows women now resident in town less likely to have married kinsmen than rural women, yet the figures are somewhat misleading for often their husbands were chosen from amongst their neighbours in the settlements and related in a less direct way.

Decreased endogamy is usually cited as evidence for the increased autonomy of women (Smith, 1980:61), but people here suggested some ambiguity over the advantage of this change for women. Where women might be exercising a wider choice of spouse, they still were marrying into the same domain of gender relationships and attitudes. Greater autonomy brought with it the reduced ability of a woman’s own family to support and protect her, and possibly increased financial pressures of two sets of family obligations.

### 6.5.4 Women as daughters-in-law

In the local folk model, the family of a man will go to the house of a girl to request her in marriage. The girl’s father’s brother or her grandfather will ask her publicly whether she accepts, and if so, the suitor’s family present traditional wealth, their *duguci* or *vosaki*. Presentations of food and clothing continue to be made to the girl’s family throughout the betrothal period. Because of the difficulty in assembling the appropriate *yau* (wealth), marriages may be delayed months if not years (Thomas, 1989a:6). Superimposed on the traditional order are Christian ceremonies and civil requirements, but the sequence in which they are met varies.

While a traditional engagement followed by a church wedding remains the ideal order, it was common for second and third generation women to have eloped (*veidrotaki*) with their chosen husband. Most often the young couple go to live with a relative in the boy’s village or elsewhere, while the boy’s family ritually apologise to the girl’s for his ‘theft’. Such a *bulubulu* (apology) is a high cost to the boy’s family, yet many couples elope to circumvent the demanding and drawn-out traditional obligations and higher costs of formal arrangements. Unless there was serious disagreement over their child’s choice, many parents tacitly agree that short-circuiting the traditional, legal and religious requirements for marriage is expedient. If the liaison lasts, the families can formalise the union at their convenience.
I was married in 1965. As far as I know, most marriages are similar to how I got married. We eloped and were living together, and then our parents started to talk about us getting married (55610).

In most cases this occurs before the birth of the first child, although a few couples live together for several years before formalising their marriage.

Most couples live with the husband’s relatives until after their first children are born. In town, however, the often crowded conditions prompt them to find their own accommodation sooner. After marriage, even when living in the same village, the woman is restricted from returning to her own family until after a final presentation of gifts by her husband’s family, vakacadravi. This ceremony often occurs after the birth of a first child, and emphasises the woman’s primary obligation to her husband’s lineage.

Women who fail to become pregnant after a year or so may suffer hard words from their husband’s family, such as ‘she is only eating from us, wasting our food’. There are several interpretations of infertility, the most easily expressed being that it is all up to God, and no-one may fault His judgement. Infertility may also be interpreted as a curse upon a whole family, or the specific curse of a father upon a disobedient son. For example, two sisters had married into one village; both were infertile. Their brother in another village was also childless, which demonstrated, in one sister’s view, the strength of the curse their grandfather had placed on their father, that his line would never prosper. Childlessness is considered to be truly unfortunate, despite the opportunities for adoption. There are traditional cures for infertility, and local specialists in their application. People rarely approached medical authorities about this.

The relationship of a woman to her husband’s family is made clear through the ownership of the children. Should the marriage dissolve through death or divorce, the children belong to the husband’s side, and the mother has an inferior claim. The current logic for this is that they are ‘written’ there, and can claim no other land, but certainly this predates the VKB registration. Where a woman is suspected of an extramarital affair, she may lose her husband, home and children.

When the Naikorokoro timber-mill was operating [twenty years ago], a man from another place boarded with us in the village. Once, when my husband was away in Suva, that man raped me. When my husband returned I told him what had happened. Somehow the story got out in the village, and then my mother-in-law turned up from Suva and accused me of being unfaithful to her son. [Because of his mother’s involvement] my

27 The provision of a separate house for married couples was stipulated in the Fijian Regulations, but was rarely complied with.
28 If she lives within the same village as her family, a young wife may visit informally, but cannot be involved in official family occasions or celebrations before the vakacadravi.
husband couldn't say anything, and as everyone then was blaming me, I packed up and left. My children stayed behind with my husband, and I came to Suva to work (52210).

Where the mother has been granted legal custody of the children, the husband or his family may intervene to take the children beyond the expected reach of the police or the Social Welfare Department. In 1943, after a violent separation from her husband, Salata stayed in Vatukoula with her infant son:

My husband was keeping an eye on me from this village in Lautoka, and then he came and stole the child. The child was taken by two of his uncles to this island just out of Tavua. I reported this theft to the police, and they looked around in Ba and Lautoka for him, but they couldn't find my son. Finally I was so fed-up I said, 'I don't want either of them [father or son] again' and I came straight back to Kadavu. They took that boy, they took him forever. I have never seen him since, but I now know where they had him (53002).

One woman I interviewed in Suva during 1988 was quite distracted with worry. Her daughter had been abandoned by her husband and had returned with her children to live with her mother. A week previously the daughter had gone to another island on holiday, and days later the husband had arrived at the house to claim the eldest child, the only son. The grandmother had felt forced to let the boy go, for she recognized the father's superior claim. Now she was waiting anxiously for her daughter to return, to take the matter to Social Welfare. 'But I know it won't be easy to find him,' she told me. 'Those people will have taken him some place really far, like Namosi or something. Nobody can find him there'.

6.5.5 Women as wives

'Power, prestige, wealth and marriage [go] together' (Belshaw, 1964:44). An important role of wives is to promote the influence of her husband's family and cement alliances through marriage. Related to this is her responsibility in providing traditional valuables (yau) for her family. Such manufactured wealth contributes to village ceremonies, nurtures kin-ties and promotes family prestige within the community. Thus, Teckle (1984:117) explains:

Although it is men who generally hold chiefly office which is allocated to them through a principle of patrilineal descent, it is women's power which to a large extent maintains them in their offices.

A woman acquires and builds status through her spouse, unless she herself has gained status through employment as a teacher, nurse, civil servant or at some other well-paying job. This creation and maintenance of family status extends to the manner in
which women care for their households and their children. The values of hygiene and
godliness expounded by the missionaries and early public health workers have long
been absorbed into that status system.

As noted in the previous chapter, few women in the study population worked
for long outside their home. Village women particularly have limited access to cash.
While women in the study villages fished this was for food rather than cash, and they
rarely farmed to earn their own money. A major industry of village women is
weaving mats, and some hire themselves as weavers for others who can pay cash,
such as the wife of a school-teacher. Even in town where living costs are high, there
are limited opportunities for paid employment. Women most often saw their main
responsibility to be caring for their households. Unmarried women were often co­
opted into the households of urban relatives to help with domestic work.

In large part, this is because few women had real options otherwise. Even
urban girls with secondary qualifications often left school to stay home.

Some people are just weak and don't want to go and work, but really
there's not enough jobs in town. To find work it's who you know, so for
some it's easy and for others its not. And for some it's because the work
offered is beneath their dignity, it's too low. Some they just come and
stay home or they do vocational training again (39802).

Shortages of job opportunities is not a full explanation. As part of their promotional
role within their husbands' families, and connective role within their own, women are
central players in the continuing round of oga that is as much a feature of urban life as
it is of village life (Bakker, 1986). In a balancing equation between the demands of
the interlocked roles of mother, wife, housekeeper and kinship maintainer on one side,
and the time-cost of a daily, often menial job on the other, the small cash returns to
formal employment are commonly insufficient. Financial support of the household
lies properly in the realm of men; women who take paid employment generally do so
briefly at a time of crisis, such as marriage separation, or when a fortuitous
opportunity arises. This is not to argue that Fijian women have little regard for
money. The range of one-woman informal businesses operating out of urban
households attests to considerable entrepreneurial enterprise, although the financial
return of, say, selling individual cigarettes or home-made sweets, is very small.
Women described the advantage of such enterprise to be providing them small but
valued amounts of cash without their routine commitment beyond the household.

To this extent, most women are financially dependent on their husbands,
though within the household the financial organization commonly rests with them.
Women often pride themselves on their financial acumen. As a Suva woman
explained:
For us, for household things, we both look after the money and decide on things. When he brings the money I am in charge of what concerns the house, he is in charge of what concerns the menfolk. I stay home, I know what to spend for the house (55609).

Because the woman was commonly the budget-keeper for the household, it was often she who organised when and how much money would go to their respective parents. For that reason, women often suggested, it was better to have a daughter to depend on in old age than to rely on a son and his budget-keeping wife. However, both urban and village women acknowledged that they only occasionally sent money to their parents, because most often they had none to spare.

The financial dependency of most married women upon their husbands, their role in organising household expenditure, and their responsibility for the care of their children, was demonstrated through one incident which occurred while I was interviewing women in Suva. An unmarried girl who accompanied me to interviews was beaten up. I had begun an interview, when a woman who had seen us enter the neighbourhood came to the door of the house and began to question my companion’s relationship with her husband. Although the insults were quite unsparing, the wife’s emphasis was not upon the sexual impropriety so much as the injustice she and her children suffered, from the husband diverting his money from their maintenance to the girl’s luxuries, such as taxi-rides. The girl was to apologise for her inconsideration to the man’s dependents. The people in the small apartment discreetly tucked themselves into corners and the neighbours gathered for the spectacle, but no-one intervened until the argument turned violent. Concerned at the consequences of a fight in the tiny room, the woman of the house began to quietly agree that the girl apologise to the wronged wife. I left with my angered but unrepentant friend. When I returned alone days later to complete the interview, the woman I was visiting shook her head tolerantly over girls’ behaviour these days. ‘Don’t they know how hard it is for women to raise children nowadays? These girls just want to eat up the money’.

6.5.6 Women outside marriage
The number of women who spend significant portions of their reproductive years outside marriage has increased over the generations. In successive generations, as opportunities for paid employment have increased, so have the number of women who reject or postpone marriage (Figures 5.8, 5.13, 5.15). Joana (Section 6.3.1) typified a group of women who deferred marriage, and sometimes motherhood as

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29 This is another good reason for marrying a son to a girl within the family, who may be more inclined to look after her husband’s family.
well, to support their parents. These women often worked in town and regularly sent money home, sometimes delaying marriage until their thirties, if marrying at all. Why daughters do this more often than sons could relate to the acknowledged authority of a husband over a wife and over both sets of parents. Once a woman married, her primary focus was expected to be her husband and his family. The lack of control women felt they could have over their husbands and sons was expressed in many ways, such as the concern of a single mother that she could not protect her child from an unsympathetic husband:

I did not want to get married. I did not want a man who would not like my child and might ill-treat him, seeing he was illegitimate. So I stayed like this and brought him up alone, and my family helped me (51805).

Often where a woman has a child, it is left with her parents and the woman works to support her parents and child - forming a husband-less family. Another group of women already discussed is those who become single again through death or divorce, and the incidence of divorce has also increased in recent years. Often these women too find paid employment to help support their children. Other than the small number of educated women with professional jobs, single mothers and women supporting their parents represent the majority of women who have worked for extended periods - frequently at menial jobs, such as housegirls, kitchen-hands, and cleaners.

6.6 The village in the city
A pervasive source of change in the local community has been greatly increased personal mobility over recent decades and, with this, a greater number of people are now resident in town. There is a difference in the fertility rates of urban and rural women, but it is not substantial (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 1976:98). In this study population the crude birth rate of women currently resident in urban areas was 2.07 per cent, and in rural areas 2.18 per cent, but variance in age structure accounted for 50.4 per cent of the difference in fertility rates. The problem lies in interpreting this difference. The Fiji Fertility Survey (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 1976:98) assumed the statistical variance in fertility rates demonstrated a significant division between rural and urban lifestyles:

To anyone familiar with the vivid contrast in the fabric of life between the rural and urban Fijian community, this finding comes as no surprise.

Such a comment might seem unexceptional but it only masquerades as explanation, for it is not grounded in the familiarity it claims. Rather, it conforms with the image
of the city proposed by modernization theory: a centre of social and economic change from where modernity washes out to the rural backwaters of tradition.

Many of the assumptions that link mobility and residence to other demographic behaviour derive from the model of change elaborated by Parsons (1954). This chapter has argued that the roles of Fijian women are strongly moulded by Fijian gender and kinship ideologies. According to the conventions of social change, kinship connections dissolve as they are stretched through time and space (cf. Fischer, 1982:353). This convention sees modern urban man or woman as a primary individual, who makes rational decisions relatively independently of their wider family group. Modernization is considered to entail changes in both human organization and human personality - bringing an increased openness to new experience, increased independence from parental authority, belief in the efficacy of science, and greater ambition for oneself and one’s children (Inkeles, 1969, cited in Easterlin, 1983:563). Modernity, and these traits, are associated with the town; tradition is the condition of the village. In this paradigm, the lower fertility rates which commonly pertain in towns are often attributed to these personal characteristics of modern women. Yet, as this chapter has argued, this model of social evolution does not fit well the experiences of this population.

6.6.1 Living in urban conditions

Many writers on Fijian society have considered that rural-urban migration disrupted patterns of residence and systems of kinship support, and that the so-called principles of communalism were transmuted by the new economy (eg. Ward, 1961). In this 'things fall apart' construction of history, kinship is seen as a fragile bond. Despite his insight into his society, Nayacakalou's writing too was dominated by the negative image of rural-urban drift and, as a government administrator, he probably shared the contemporary concern with the disruption of 'traditional' Fijian society. In his analysis of Fijian kinship and marriage, for example, Nayacakalou (1957:56) concluded that as money entered into the village system so too did alien ideas of financial equivalence which directly contradicted principles of communalism: 'kinship ties get attenuated and the intensity of kinship unity is rendered less'. Where kinship patterns traditionally had determined residential patterns in villages, Nayacakalou suggested that the movement of men to towns disturbed the normal patrilocal pattern and possibly traditional patterns of social control.30 This view was widely supported: government officers often believed that Fijians left their villages in

30 The report of the Urbanisation Advisory Meeting Committee for the South Pacific Commission is evidence of this view. It expressed concern over a 'definite lack of social cohesion and interaction among urban residents', and recommended closer study of conditions in Pacific island towns, particularly 'with regard to the social integration of the town dweller, measuring the degree of isolation and of lack of interpersonal communication he suffers' (South Pacific Commission, 1962:4).
order to evade the obligations of village life, most of which were kin-based. Nayacakalou (1957:57) warned that few could win in either place:

When they successfully evade these obligations, they are weakening their own kinship ties. When they do not, they maintain many connections with the village: in which case they have an assured place where they can return in their old age, while at the same time they are jeopardising their chances of making good in the commercial world.

Women were not supposed to move, which perhaps explains why there is almost no reference to them, other than as accompanying their husbands. Yet despite the lack of evidence, assumptions about the disruptive effect of mobility on kinship and marriage patterns, and their concomitant detrimental effects on the status of women have been repeated in many forms (Connell, 1985:1). Indeed, the evidence for any of this social disruption is weak, and perhaps demonstrates that cross-sectional studies defined by place cannot reveal the pathways of people between them.

Rather than dissolve, kinship systems adapt to changing economies, and culture is a critical part of the adaptive process (Cancian et al., 1978:319; Moore, 1988:124). In one of the few papers on this issue, Bakker (1986) described the ways in which Fijian kin groups have adapted themselves to urban conditions and to the challenge of operating at a distance from their village members. The considerable relevance of kinship ties in town is evidenced in the clustering of family residences in Suva, especially in the periurban Fijian settlements and lower-cost housing areas (Figure 5.12). Opportunities for employment also often run through the kin network, although in this community there were few key people well-located in access channels. In other respects, particularly in the constant round of oga and other family events, ties of kinship are sustained and nurtured in town. This does not mean that the 'communal system' works to even out differences in wealth and well-being, as it does not in the village either. Nevertheless, people in this study population rarely spoke as if town and village comprised two worlds. Suva and the village were connected by people, messages, money and materials moving back and forth. Figures 5.8, 5.13 and 5.15 show that the degree to which women spent their lives between

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31 Later, however, Nayacakalou (1963) somewhat contradicted this, in describing the strong kin-group associations forged by migrant men in Fijian settlements around Suva.

32 In the 1960s, for example, Sahlins (1962:19) expressed concern that the extent of male migration from the small islands of eastern Fiji reduced the number of available marriage partners for women, and thereby affected marriage practices and family structure. Where Sahlins found a surplus of marriageable females, Cook (1974:19) noted a surplus of marriageable males resident in her study villages. In both cases, extrapolation of cause and effect was based on sex ratios derived from very small populations.

33 In discussing employment experiences, I noted the common view that finding work depended upon the informal network of kin-assistance. Women in particular rarely made direct approaches of their own, but commonly described finding their jobs through interventions or introductions made by another person already employed.
village and town has increased markedly with successive cohorts, although as these figures only record residential changes of at least four months duration, they do not display the full extent of movement.

Overton (1989:9) notes that the urban-rural distinction became less marked from the 1960s, when administrative controls on the movement of people were removed. Now:

There is free movement from villages to cities (and vice versa), wage opportunities are numerous, there is considerable flow of goods and services between town and country, and many of the trappings of urban life (electricity, radios, videos, government services) have so percolated to the villages that their inhabitants have everyday experience of city living.

This movement in and out of the urban setting makes the rural-urban dichotomy conventionally proposed quite inappropriate to these Kadavu people - a point that is central to studies of population mobility but less acknowledged in fertility research.

For anyone who has travelled from Kadavu to Suva there is no denying the dramatic visual difference between the two places. As the boat nears Suva even seasoned travellers are drawn to the rail by the day-time activity or the city lights, and those visiting town for the first time often draw attention to themselves by their transparent excitement. As the boat swings through the reef into Suva Harbour, one sees a parade of vessels along the wharf, the cement factory at Lami pumping an unconscionable load of dust-smoke into the sky, large houses along the Lami shore and Tamavua Ridge, the huge hulk of Government House at Nasese, and the high-rises of central Suva. The movement of cars and buses along the waterfront underscores the dynamism of the city. But while the sight of the city may be common to all travellers, the experience of it is not. The differences in a woman's lifestyle and opportunities between the settlements of Wakanisila or Nadonumai, and the residential suburbs of Namadi or Domain are perhaps greater than they are between the urban settlements and rural villages. Abrams (1978:10) argues:

In an important sense, the city is not a social entity... We have been victims of the fallacy of misplaced concreteness in treating it as such.

Mitchell (1987:2) suggests that it is incorrect to cast urbanisation in terms of acculturation or historical change. He argues that many changes are merely situational adaptations to constraints imposed by urban conditions. The problem is to disengage the situations of individuals from stereotypes of urban lifestyle. The urban population is made up of many different experiences. Among the women of the study population there are essentially three groups of experience. The educated elite who work at professional careers; unmarried women supporting their families, who usually
work at fairly menial jobs, and domestic wives, most of whom live in periurban settlements in conditions not unlike those in the island villages.

6.6.2 Fertility and mobility
Macro-level spatial variations in fertility often are taken as evidence of the diffusion of modern attitudes and ideas from urban to rural areas. The problem often is, however, that process is simply extrapolated from pattern34.

Findlay (1982:251) combines both psychological and behavioural factors in her list of conditions in which migrant women would probably desire or have smaller families after moving. If they:

1. are young at time of migration;
2. delay marriage or first union;
3. experience lower infant and child mortality in conjunction with continued lactation and abstinence or use of birth control methods;
4. have or obtain literacy skills;
5. have aspirations for themselves or children;
6. interact with reference groups supportive of small families;
7. are committed to work outside the home and in a nonhousewife career;
8. are less reliant on children for help and plan more investment in children’s education and support;
9. are part of a culture with an openness to modernization and change;
10. are aware of and can obtain contraceptives.

Of these, Findlay suggests education is the most critical, although complex in its operation. As Chapter Five documented, movement to, or residence in, town during the early adult years of a woman often is related to continuing formal education or employment, and delayed marriage (conditions 1 and 2). As Table 6.3 shows, there is a small difference in the probability that children of urban families will die (condition 3). Education is an important sorting characteristic between women who pursue careers, and women who work out of periodic necessity (condition 4). Condition 10 is generally the case in Fiji, but conditions 5 to 9 are more ambiguous and dependent on the stage of a woman’s life in which she moves. Older women who move to town often do so when they lose their husbands and need work to support their families. They are, therefore, commonly highly committed to providing opportunities for their children (conditions 5 and 8) and, of necessity, work (condition 7). The older the

34 For example, Skeldon (1990:221) proposes that fertility decline occurs down a spatial hierarchy from the core to the periphery of cities, and then to rural areas. He argues, on the basis of this regularity together with the assumptions of modernization theory, that this general pattern supports the thesis that the diffusion of new ideas and attitudes towards birth control play a crucial role in fertility decline (eg. Cleland and Wilson, 1987). On the much smaller scale of this study, the same spatial pattern roughly holds - but I argue that has more to do with the uneven spatial distribution of employment and living conditions. In Suva, more single women live in the centre of town, residing in small apartments with one or two other relatives or working as housegirls; married women who work as housewives are more typical residents of the periurban settlements.
woman is, the less likely she will be to have more children, if only because of her biological limitations. Conditions 6 and 9 relate more to attitudes which I found to be expressed by people quite independently of their residence.

The distance between town and village is not a psychological gap, of slowly mutating values and experiences - the town is a place where many personal circumstances can co-exist, and only in their aggregate produce a statistical difference in fertility behaviour. It is the circumstances in which women live at different stages of their lives, rather than their changed psychological states, which are germane to their fertility. In a recent study of the changing roles of American women, Elder (1988:xiv) concluded that the important issue is the amount of time women devote to family and work domains. In the West Indies, Handwerker (1989:9) concluded that women's access to resources independently of their husbands and children, was central to their status and fertility: 'women have a lot of children when childbearing optimises resource access; and women have few or no children when childbearing impedes resource access.' The pattern of the lives of women in this community confirms this. The significance of residence is not, therefore, that it changes ideas and attitudes to create a modern person, but rather that it indicates that women's access to resources is unevenly distributed.

6.7 Conclusion
Fertility is closely linked with the roles and status of women, but this status is complex and shifting and therefore defies simple measurement. The statistical links between such indices of development as increased education, urban residence, and fertility decline are often interpreted as support for the modernization paradigm, of change being foremost a psychological transformation of attitudes and values, of the casting off of tradition for modernity, and of the emergence in society of individuals who independently make the rational and enlightened choice to have fewer children.

An alternate view has been presented here, although in its necessary subtlety and prevarication it lacks the clarity of the modernization paradigm. The changes noted in the lives of these three generations of women have not all been indicative of their improved status or increased autonomy, but rather of more complicated lives. Women play a number of life roles, more or less concurrently. Decisions about the number of children to have and when to have them are therefore not simple choices. These roles are strongly patterned by gender and kinship relations within a society. Opportunities and the necessity for women to work outside the household have brought with them increased role conflict (Oppong and Abu, 1987:114). In Fiji, as elsewhere, change itself has become a certain feature of life. As people lead more complicated lives, the quite idiosyncratic decision-making environment around them can change quite abruptly throughout their fertile years. To this extent, people cannot
really preplan their lives, and motives and attitudes prove to be most mutable. Handwerker (1989:219) sees increased opportunities for women beyond the household as a 'pull' towards lower fertility. But as much as these opportunities are related to structural changes in the larger economic and social order, so too are they constructed and mediated by family and gender relations (Moore, 1988:113, Oppong and Abu, 1987:114). It is subtle and profound changes in family relationships that constitute the essential linkage between macro changes in educational and employment institutions on one hand, and micro changes in child-bearing and rearing on the other and, ultimately, family size and fertility.
Chapter Seven

Intentional Fertility Policy

7.1 Introduction
Fertility behaviour does not simply reflect the availability or otherwise of modern contraceptives. Rather, it is powerfully influenced by institutional incentives or constraints which encourage or inhibit certain behaviours, sometimes purposely, but often without intention. There may be explicit policies to influence demographic behaviour, but so too are there 'hidden' policies set in motion by the social and economic systems. The previous two chapters discussed patterns of variation in the lives of three generations of women. To the extent that structural changes acted to modify the life-courses of women and their fertility, this effect was an unintentional consequence of state-related activities. This chapter returns to earlier themes: the agency of the state and the power of official ideology - both in intentionally directing fertility change and in interpreting the efficacy of these policies.

The family planning programme is the most recent direct intervention of the Fiji government in fertility trends. Over almost three decades of operation, this national programme has worked to lower fertility rates by making contraceptives available and their advantages known. A brief history of the programme was presented in Chapter Three. But, as later chapters explained, the programme has not been responsible for all the decline in fertility nor for initiating the behavioural changes which are expressed in lower fertility rates. Indeed, the family planning programme has done much more poorly than it initially promised, or than its organisers still publicly claim. In part, this poor performance was pre-programmed in the intellectual and political climate in which the programme was introduced and within which it has continued. In ignoring Fijian traditions of reproductive health care, the family planning programme failed to co-opt an important tradition to its advantage, and in its neglect of Fijian concepts of women’s health, the programme sabotaged its own public relations. In continuing to focus upon the means of its early apparent success, the programme has become entrenched in a situation which limits the possible gains.

While local ideas and beliefs can collide with public health programmes, and cultural traditions may set up problems of communications, an explanation which rests at this psychological level is incomplete. It diverts attention from more fundamental reasons why most women have been slow to reduce the size of their families. These include the structural causes of social changes, particularly the limited opportunities to access to resources. This is not to argue that fertility levels
would have fallen even if there had been no effort to increase contraceptive availability. Means of fertility control themselves provide a range of opportunities to women. Rather, the argument which links the sections of this chapter is that assigning agency to the attitudes and values of individuals may mislead policy, misdirect attention from more structural causes of continuity or change and, ultimately, misserve the very people who were supposed to benefit from the facilities.

7.2 The Fiji family planning programme

7.2.1 The task of modernizing traditional women

Chapter Three described the national and international impetus to introduce a family planning programme in Fiji. The public perception that Fiji was in danger of over-crowding occurred - and not necessarily independently so - at a time of increased international concern. The Pathfinder Fund, the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the United Nations' Fund for Population Activities were actively proselytizing the message of global risk from over-population, a concern which came to wide public attention in the later 1960s through, for example, Paul Erlich's influential book 'The Population Bomb' (1968). While population growth was a matter which demanded global attention, the focus of these international bodies was upon the 'traditional' women of the Third World who were generating the highest rates of population growth (Ehrlich, 1968:22). In the metaphors of the demographic transition and modernization, the women of these societies were ignorant of means to help themselves or of the risk they posed to the world and, enmeshed as they were in the inherent pronatalism of their traditional societies, they were resistant to change. Fijian women were cast in the same light - as traditional women, reproducing without restraint. As the Annual Report of the Fiji Family Planning Association (1971:1-2) explained:

The tragedy, in terms of human welfare, is that while family planning is a normal part of life in advanced societies and is commended by all major religions, there are still some in our own society who fail to qualify as family planners through ineptitude or unwillingness to employ any contraceptive. Those in the latter category will, in due course, catch up with the world and overcome their present disadvantage in mental and physical welfare.

Planners laid the onus of change upon women. But, from the manner in which the national programme was experienced in this Fijian community, it might appear that it was this characterisation of Fijian women which really hampered the progress of the family planning programme. For rather than working with Fijian traditions of contraception and women's health to foster the success of the programme, programme administrators saw a need to replace old ideas with modern knowledge and
technology. Just as the matter of infant care had been far too important for the well-being of the State to leave to women, the 'problem' of reproductive health was also seen as best handled by medical professionals. In Gish's terminology, reproductive health was taken over by the 'sick care system', and the family planning programme designed along the conventional input planning methods of such medical systems - with more doctors and more health centres - and with less attention given to output planning, that is actual utilization of the services provided (Gish, 1990:401).

If a woman does not use modern contraceptives, the argument commonly goes, it is because she is ignorant of the need or means to restrict her fertility, or she has no desire to restrict her fertility, or she is restrained from doing so by her beliefs or those of her near kin. Yet as Hull (1983:389) notes, women themselves often present an alternative view, that 'I had no other choice', which is not a denial of decision-making but a confirmation that no 'choice' was acceptable. Following the first line of argument, Fairbairn (1970:149) could explain that ethnic differentials in contraceptive prevalence rates in Fiji demonstrated that family planning was not a meaningful objective for other than a small minority of Fijians (Figure 3.5). This was, Fairbairn stated, because of a particular mix of cultural and socioeconomic factors: because Fijian's ready access to land, and traditions of family sharing and mutual help, reduced the compulsion of economic pressures; religious influences were against contraception; many Fijians favoured a continuation of the population race; and Fijians had a lower educational level compared with other racial groups. Family planning was practiced by a 'small coterie' of urban Fijian women, and this was likely to have an emulative effect on more traditional and less informed women.

Within this construction of explanation all of these appear quite reasonable statements - so much so that Fairbairn does not feel compelled to refer to his evidence. Certainly the twin paradigms of demographic transition and modernization appear to validate such explanation - for this view of reality sees Fijian women as moving more slowly than Indian women along the continuum from traditionalism to modernity. From a policy perspective there might appear to be little to do while waiting out the necessary transformation of attitudes and values, beyond educating women as to the availability of scientific contraceptive technologies and their social responsibility to use them.

This chapter argues that culture should not so be misassigned as a negative force in social change. In explanations of Fijian fertility behaviour, culture most often is cited as a brake on behavioural change. To policy-makers, the required transformation in cultural values appears as a formidable barrier to success. To this

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1 It is perhaps unfair to attribute all of this argument to Fairbairn, for this was very much the popular wisdom then, and remains so in some quarters today. It is difficult, however, to quote popular wisdom, and the written record is limited.
extent, the paradigm of modernization has paralysed the imagination of policy-makers in this, as in many other fields. Furthermore, in that the political and cultural value of the image of Fijian tradition endures, policy-makers in Fiji may be fundamentally opposed to the changes they consider necessary. Despite their conscious good intentions, one may come to doubt how much success they really intend to achieve:

Sometimes it looks as if those who work along the road of slow evolution intend to achieve only minimal changes, so that the situation continues to be substantially the same; this is, in other words, to change what is necessary so that things remain the same. Those who act according to such a point of view may honestly believe that their work is useful and transforming; however, they have in fact aligned themselves with the conservative elements who oppose...structural transformations (Batalla, 1966:92).

7.2.2 The eclipse of the Fijian system of medicine
The interpretation of fertility behaviour as being essentially culturally patterned provides an apparently consistent and convenient explanation for the failure of the family planning programme to sustain public interest and fertility decline. The fallacy within the explanation lies in the image of a traditional people reacting to modern medical science and the novelty of fertility control. Even by the late nineteenth century, Fijian fertility behaviour did not reflect long-established traditions, and what those various traditions actually comprised was, by then, already difficult to discern. In historical perspective, Fijian women had the direct means to limit their fertility disparaged and to some degree removed from them, and their fertility politicized. Under a fundamentally different medical system and changed social conditions, later generations were again admonished to control their fertility - this time with what many came to regard as powerful, dangerous and artificial medicines. While government policy reversed in direction from encouraging to overtly discouraging high fertility, the political climate in which this behavioural switch was to occur remained steady.

Of the few studies of Fijian traditional medicine, the most systematic has been that of Spencer (1941) which was based primarily on her fieldwork in interior Viti Levu. Even as she wrote, fifty years ago, Spencer (1941:14) noted the virtual impossibility of knowing whether any particular practice represented ‘another instance of the amazing diversity of custom and belief characteristic of Fijian culture

2 Other recent studies include Waqavonovono, 1980; and Weiner, 1984. Spencer also refers to earlier accounts of Calvert, 1858; Williams, 1858, Seemann, 1862, Rougier, 1907, De Marzan, 1909, Thomson 1908, and Brewster, 1919. She noted, 'it is not an easy matter to handle some of the accounts. Many of the older writers do not give exact locations for the customs they describe, but are content to treat Fiji as a cultural whole' (Spencer, 1941:vii).
throughout, or merely...change due to acculturation'. Overall, however, ideas of disease causation and methods of healing were closely aligned with other social and religious aspects of Fijian culture. In the general Fijian aetiology, illnesses commonly or ultimately resulted from transgressions between individuals and their social or natural worlds. Therapeutic measures included remedies for the immediate relief of the patient, and those to counter the ultimate cause of the illness, be that human or spiritual agency (Spencer, 1941:46).

Such a belief system was challenged by Christianity, but not easily deposed. Then, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the expansion of state power over Fijian society was intimately connected with new standards of sanitation (Thomas, 1990), and the reconstruction of Fijian tradition to serve the purposes of their separate development. In this, the Corney Commission of 1893, into the condition of the Fiji population, had great political significance, as Thomas (1990:157) explains:

The failure [of the Corney Commission] to recognize the specific causes of [population] decline was in fact enormously enabling. Almost anything to do with the organization of custom or village life could potentially be modified in the name of sanitation, since this did not emerge from any interested attempt to impose British or Christian values, but from the state's rational interest in preserving the native race. A constant slippage is evident between interests in reducing mortality and other agendas: political, moral and cultural impositions were justified by their association or conflation with the programme of sanitation.

That the definition of Fijian customs to be preserved as 'tradition' was selective is certainly evident in this matter of Fijian medicine. In the European view, indigenous medicine was a tradition to be dispensed with. As Chapter Two

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3 This is even more true today. The plant names referred to in this chapter are those mentioned to me by these Kadavu women. From elsewhere in Fiji a number of other plants have been recorded as abortifacients or contraceptives. Spencer (1941) noted as an abortifacient rewa (Cerbera manglias) The inner bark of the root was soaked in water, and this water drunk until results were obtained. This preparation supposedly turns the foetus to liquid which is passed out as blood. Seemann (1862:342) recorded as abortifacients kalani soni, wakiwaki. Weiner (1984:113,116,123) records as contraceptives: wi (Spondias dulcis), nawanawa (Cordia subcordata) as well as a number of plants used to relieve 'menstrual disorders' or associated with childbirth and postpartum recovery; and as abortifacients: wi, maoli (weleti) (Carica papaya) rogomi or sawaci (Rorippa sarmentosa) sacasaca damu (Codiaeum variegatum) sinu gaga (Exoecaria agallocha) kasiqa (Litsea Pickeringii) jaina leka (Musa) leba (Syzygium neurocalyx) totofero (Centella asiatica) tavoatolo yarol yarol dina, yarolalo yararo yarovula. Waqavonovono (1980:40) noted a contraceptive mixture prepared from the roots of tarawau (Dysoxylum richii or Dracontomelon vitiense), some part of the moli (lemon) tree, and soni (Solunum torum or Caesalpinia crista). The concentrated filtrate of yaqona (Piper methysticum) was cited as causing infertility when drunk by a woman within one to two weeks of giving birth. Waqavonovono noted a number of 'cleaning' herbs or remedies for 'menstrual disorders' were possibly abortifacients. H.B. Parham (no date:18) identifies bovu (massaenda fondona) as used in Vanua Levu for suppression of menses. She also noted that as bovu frequently also was used to produce abortion, it had been eradicated, where possible, by the white missionaries.
explained, the legacy of colonialism in health policy in Fiji included the displacement of Fijian medicine by a scientific, professional and bureaucratically organised medicine, the centralised determination of health policies and distribution of resources, and the disempowerment of local communities over their own health needs. In the matter of reproductive health, the new medical system stigmatised fertility control and outlawed contraceptives, abortions and practitioners of these skills; for practices which would retard the 'recovery' of the Fijian population were considered to be particularly detrimental to the physical and moral health of individual Fijian women and to Fijian society generally. Medical systems and programmes always are embedded in a political-economic environment (Singer, 1989; Manderson, 1989). Yet where they neglect to make this connection explicit, studies of the responses of communities to specific medical programmes may suggest that people are:

independent actors responsible for unilaterally building, owning and operating the self-contained theatres of their own social dramas (Singer, 1989:1194).

How easy it then becomes to assign measured differences in response to medical programmes to vaguely defined categories of culture, and to attribute poor programme performance to the characteristics of traditionalism: conservatism, ignorance, and irrationality. We now turn to consider the use of contraceptive technologies from the point of view of Fijian women.

7.2.3 Perceptions of contraceptive utility and risk
In the community of this study, I found contraception to be unevenly practised or considered possible to discuss, according mostly to the generation to which a woman belonged. Older women would either explain Fijian contraceptive methods and their own experiences in detail or, quite the opposite, they would claim they neither knew nor wanted to know anything about either old or new methods. However, I could not take such denials at face value, for some women apparently felt their knowledge of contraception could be construed as complicity in using it.4 As explained in Chapter Four, the readiness or reluctance of women to speak openly with me was often connected to the manner in which I was related to them. Some did not take well to being asked about these matters: 'these are things that only people who have lived here a long time should ask about,' one elderly woman told me in exasperation. The very oldest women, those in their mid-seventies or older, were difficult to communicate with and usually it was impossible to turn our discussions to intimate

4 Browner (1986:721) similarly noted that some women adamantly denied any knowledge of contraception, especially, it seemed, where they felt merely possessing knowledge would be interpreted as evidence of their intent to use it.
details of contraception. Most were hard of hearing and self-appointed ‘shouters’ would place themselves between us. Or, enthusiastic to have someone to speak with about old times and people, they would go off on conversational tangents of their own. Other elderly women, in their sixties or early seventies, were very informative and open with their knowledge, and it is to their experiences that I mostly refer when speaking of older women.

One difficulty in speaking with people of different generations is in decoding real variations in experience from selective recall. Older women did not remember limiting their fertility to have been much of a problem - but then they too may have selectively forgotten what life was like with a sexually more active husband. This older generation was inclined to speak of the will of God in determining the number of their children. Most said they had never discussed the desired total number of their children with their husbands. This was not particularly surprising, for this standard question of fertility researchers places a peculiar emphasis upon quantity. As a fifty-two year-old woman explained: ‘We never thought about it in that way.’

The ideal behaviour was that of sexual constraint within marriage. According to Iva (aged 64), in her day women commonly breast-fed their children until they were three years or older, and abstained from sleeping with their husbands, because:

Well, it’s up to us to care for our health, so we don’t sleep with our husbands (40202).

Other older women also spoke confidently of their ability to space their children, as 66 year-old Diyama explained:

We ourselves control our pregnancies and if we want them to be far apart then we can make it so. When the child is walking about then it is a good time to have another one. It is up to each one of us when to have our babies (38202).

To this end, these older women often suggested they would have had no need for modern contraceptives, although the extent to which they relied solely on abstinence was probably exaggerated. Although she had used Fijian medicine (*vorovoro kuro*) to delay her third pregnancy, Alisi (now aged 61) and her husband had more usually practised withdrawal:

With all my children [she had five] I did not take any modern contraception. When the medical workers came visiting and asked why, I told them that sometimes I did not become pregnant for five or six years. This was an agreement between me and my husband and we really worked at it. We both agreed not to have too many children (11200).

In talking with these older women, the same euphemisms recurred often: he took
good care of me (or, occasionally, he was very bad to me); we had a good agreement;
he took pity on the children. All of these refer to the husband's restraint (or lack of it)
with his wife, and his cooperation in avoiding pregnancy until it posed no real danger
to the health of his wife or children. Ideally, consecutive pregnancies should be
spaced through sexual abstinence during lactation, both because of the risk to the
welfare of the child by a younger sibling and because sperm in the woman's body was
thought to spoil her milk.6 A woman who was strained by work, sexual activity, or
pregnancy too soon after giving birth was also in danger of ca vuka qa, a weakness,
depression, or form of madness that could permanently affect her body and mind.7
Thus a woman bearing children in too close succession was a public declaration of an
inconsiderate husband and father.8 Still today some young women described sexual
restraint as demonstrating a mature marital relationship, but long periods of sexual
abstinence between spouses are rarely observed. Practicing withdrawal or just less
frequent sexual activity were described by younger women as good alternatives.

Sexual restraint was the ideal to which older women usually said they had
aspired. Some older women did claim long periods of post-partum abstinence, but
other second generation women reported that as soon as they had weaned one child
they became pregnant with the next. Others explained that sexual abstinence and
amenorrhea induced by long periods of breast-feeding were assisted by withdrawal,
herbal contraceptives, and, more rarely, abortion. These traditions of herbal
contraceptives, abortion and, possibly, withdrawal are also old, certainly predating the
experience of the oldest women.9 Some of the oldest women recalled hearing of
Fijian contraceptives when they were bearing children, and even being offered them.
Kenesi (aged 59) told of how, when she was a young married woman, her
grandmother tried to give her a medicine to delay her next pregnancy:

Then I told my grandmother, 'That's against the right behaviour of
marriage. I'm forbidden to now sleep with my husband (Au tabu ko soso
rata kei watiqu)' [referring to the post-partum period]. I never drank that
medicine, I never drank it once. They gave the medicine made of six
types of stick. Now they don't do it, nobody knows that medicine. But

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6 Blyth (1887:181) recorded a belief that restrained sexual activity between spouses improved the
general health and vigour of all their children, but he does not say from which part of Fiji he gathered
this opinion.
7 Capell does not list this term, but includes vaka-soso-vuso: a disease of the mother, if she allows
sexual intercourse before the child is six months old (Capell, 1984:203). This probably is the Bauan
equivalent.
8 Almost all women spoke of their husband's sexual needs, and rarely made reference to their own.
9 It is difficult to know whether withdrawal is an old or introduced practice, for while some elderly
women said they had practised this, others said they had never heard of such a thing. Thompson
(1940:30) recorded that withdrawal was used as a contraceptive practice in Lau in the 1930s.
my grandmother knew it, she scraped each of the six sticks. If you take that medicine you don’t get pregnant for one whole year (39801).

This story probably reflects the missionary and colonial assault upon Fijian herbal medicines in general and contraceptives in particular. The generation of women now old (the older cohorts of Generation Two) may have turned more to the ‘ideal’ behaviour of post-partum abstinence, but found such standards difficult to sustain. This may account for the declining birth intervals noted in Figure 5.18. Women born between 1924 and 1933 on average had their first births younger than women of other cohorts. The average intervals between first and second, and second and third births declined quite sharply to their lowest points for women born between 1934 and 1943, who mostly had their first births between 1955 and 1964.

Yet these traditions of herbal contraception and abortion endure, although within the study district they now are unevenly followed. Their practice depends on the survival or local residence of an expert, invariably an elderly person. One old man, himself the son of a famous midwife, was identified as an expert in curing infertility and inducing sterility. The information some elderly women gave me was independently confirmed by others. The real experts said least, but there was little doubting their status. Where there was such an acknowledged tamata vuku or bui ni gone, younger women often knew of some of their methods, but where there was none, women either depended on modern contraceptives or latched onto the new recipes for ‘traditional’ contraceptives that periodically spread about. So it was that several young women drank an infusion of tatadro and botebotekoro,10 where older women said they never had heard of such a mixture, one woman in Suva confidently expected a new recipe of buadromo11 and saltwater would be a healthy and efficacious alternative to the pill, and a young married woman told me how she induced her own abortion by brewing a single cup of tea from one pound packet of Bushells Blue Label.12

A number of the older women in the villages knew of nearby supplies of herbal contraceptives. Yet women often told me they could not collect these barks and plants themselves, but relied upon their husbands to do so.13 Indeed, that

10 Tatadro: Centella asiatica; botebotekoro: Ageratum conyzoides or Ageratum houstonianum (Parham, 1972:320-1). The plants named here are simply the plants that were named to me as used as contraceptives. I have no knowledge as to whether their reputed qualities exist or not, but their efficacy is held in little doubt by many Fijian women considered knowledgeable. Other plants named were sagai (sic), evu evu (Hernandia peltata) vuka navadra (sic).
11 Buadromo: local plant, not listed in Parham, 1972.
12 The brand of tea seemed important. Similarly a ‘school-girl’s’ abortifacient reportedly was five Sea-Legs (a brand of seasickness tablet) but no-one I spoke to said they had tried this.
13 In her description of a Mexican village community, Browner (1986:18-19) tells of a ‘birth control tree’, a plant whose bark was used by women as a contraceptive. The men of the village had cut down the tree, supposedly the only one of its kind in the locality, because they were angry so many women
arrangement was the reason why, in the end, these traditional contraceptives always failed: after some time husbands became lazy or refused to collect the ingredients. After a few attempts to ask why women did not go themselves, I came to realise this question was tactless. The answers I was commonly given - that the plants were far in the bush and unknown to women - were clearly not factually correct. One important plant was said to be growing on a small island close to the shore where the women usually fished, and some women did seem to know these plants well. Although their sources lay nearby, these medicines apparently had their own distribution system, and a woman’s husband was, ideally, a station on the way.

The politics within these pregnancy-spacing arrangements became apparent from other conversations. Women often referred to explicit or tacit agreements they achieved with their husbands, suggesting that men usually wanted many children while women felt constrained by their ability to care for the children adequately:

It’s us women, we want just a few. The men want plenty. But here it’s up to me, I decide five is enough (51809, aged 40).

As well as having a good number of children, it was considered important that a woman did not become pregnant before weaning her previous child. Many couples of all ages practised withdrawal, a contraceptive method which requires the cooperation of the husband and on which he can renege at any time. Perhaps the point at which husbands ‘forgot’ to collect the contraceptive herbs was, similarly, when it did not seem to them to matter any more.

Relations between spouses are not always so perfect. If a woman wishes, there are ways she can avoid pregnancy without her husband’s involvement. Some plants believed to have contraceptive qualities are to be found almost everywhere - like botebotekoro, tatadro and dabi14 - and women who know can use them without reference to anyone. Another type of medicine reputedly causes permanent sterility. This is either taken deliberately, or slipped to a woman by those who wish her ill. A few village woman douched themselves regularly, to little apparent effect. Some induced their own or other’s abortions by massage or by perforating their cervixes with stiff grasses. Other women declared avoidance was best. One woman with three young children explained that she encouraged her husband to go drink yaqona in the evenings, and would promptly go to bed with her infant daughter, knowing that would discourage her husband from waking her on his return home. As one thirty-six year-old woman explained:

were refusing to bear children. Like Browner, I initilly was puzzled by the involvement of men. Even a local supply, it would seem, is not proof against its political control being removed from women.
14 Dabi: Xylocarpus granatum (Parham, 1972:244)
When my husband wants me I tell him I have a stomach ache or I’m sick, or I just go fishing. I trick him in this way. I give him excuses. When we are younger we like to sleep with him, but when we are older, no (11620).

Most women now in their twenties or thirties or said they had discussed the size of their families with their husbands and few were reluctant to discuss contraception, or described contraception as immoral or otherwise wrong. They expressed their real problems as either their husband’s authority over their reproduction or deciding how to achieve contraception.

There was a widespread belief among even these younger women that the yalani (modern family planning methods)15 made women sick. Women referred to others as evidence that the pill made a woman’s stomach swell and her head spin, that the loop could damage one’s womb, that tubal ligation could permanently weaken a woman. Some women explained their husbands’ main objection to yalani was that it made women sickly and unable to cope with their responsibilities. Nanise (aged 37) explained a common view of a choice between the risk of unwanted pregnancy and the risk of general debilitation:

I don’t want to have any more children [she had six, of whom one had died], but I’m frightened to use these yalani - the pill, the loop, the injection, the sele [tubal ligation]. I’ve heard from many women they make you sick, then you can’t look after the family properly. Life in the village is hard, women here need to be strong to do everything. See Elenoa, she had the sele, she’s sickly now. I just have to hope I don’t have another child (02048).

In the prescriptive ideology of Fijian medicine, yalani was unnatural, something artificial. While withdrawal did not always work, it was ‘natural’ and would not make a woman ill. Fijian herbs were also considered natural because they came from plants, but the pill and injection were chemicals, as was the loop unnatural, and therefore they were hazardous to women’s health. Today young women rarely breastfeed their babies more than one year so periods of amenorrhea are now usually shorter, and other means of contraception more urgent. To this end, many younger women were prepared to experiment - although the range of this experimentation was strongly conditioned by the widespread belief that the choices offered by the Health Centre compromised women’s health. While younger women were more inclined to use modern contraceptives than older women, these negative attitudes spanned village and town.16

15 Yalani or tatarovi may refer to any form, modern or traditional, of contraception. In common usage today these terms refer to the methods promoted by the Ministry of Health.
16 Cleland (1975:107) noted the common belief that women in paid employment are particularly conscientious over family planning, because they have more to lose. Yet his survey of Suva women found little support for this. Of the 58 Fijian mothers who had a job at the time of the survey, 24 per
Thus there was from a long time back an ideal within the community for sexual restraint in marriage, because this protected the physical and mental health of the mother and directly influenced the well-being of children. A parallel tradition, which perhaps recognized that people do not always act as they should, was of artificial means of limiting or spacing pregnancies through contraception and abortion. This second tradition is not as easily spoken of, perhaps because its existence contradicts the virtue in the first, perhaps because both church and state have condemned it for more than four generations, and perhaps because its practice has its own significance in community and sexual politics. As the next section of this chapter will further explain, it is not, therefore, Fijian cultural values *per se* that were in opposition to the family planning programme, but rather that they were brought into opposition by the manner in which the programme proceeded.

### 7.2.4 Women’s experiences of family planning services

In the early days, the family planning programme focused on encouraging people to use the new contraceptives. Other than the falling crude birth rate, the most-quoted measure of the programme’s success was the contraceptive prevalence rate. New methods were promoted vigorously. One senior nurse told me of her experience as a newly-qualified district nurse in the early 1960s, when informal competitions were held between medical districts for success in signing up new acceptors. Each public health nurse and medical officer was allocated a monthly target of new acceptors (Ram, 1977: 14). In the enthusiasm for change, some medical staff warned women off older contraceptive practices, suggesting they might have detrimental side effects. A 50 year-old woman recalled:

> We used to do withdrawal. But the nurse came and told us not to do that because the husband might have a heart attack. I didn’t really believe that it would make my husband sick because we had been doing that and he hadn’t got sick. But after the nurse told us that we didn’t do it any more. Vuniwai Vilive also told us that and I got frightened. That was just after the time Esta [her fourth child] was born [1964], at the time they first started coming around with this family planning. That’s when I decided to try the pill for a while (38802).17

By their preferred measures of success - the falling crude birth rate and the soaring contraceptive prevalence rate - the Fiji Family Planning Programme soon exceeded expectations. This acclaimed early success was based upon two strategies: educating the public about the value of family planning and the availability of contraceptives; cent used no modern method and a further 19 per cent had discontinued use of a modern method. The proportion currently protected by modern methods differed little according to occupational status.

17 This discouragement no longer occurs. Some women told of now being advised to use withdrawal if they did not find other methods suitable.
and aggressively recruiting contraceptive users. The public awareness campaign had swept many people along, and many women were attracted by the claims of effective contraception. Many, who would have been counted as acceptors, were given an introductory supply of pills. Some continued with these for a while, others took a few and then left them, but as they had already been counted as acceptors, on the assumption they would use the supplies given them, the reported contraceptive prevalence rate soared. By the early 1970s, however, the pace of change had lessened considerably; contraceptive prevalence rates declined and fertility rates began to rise again.

Accounts of women’s experiences suggest that the manner in which these contraceptive methods were introduced went against local attitudes regarding women’s health. Rather than working with the duality of traditions related to contraception - the ideal of restraint and the back-up of contraception - the official family planning programme set about directly educating women in contraception, thereby denying ideal behaviour. Making private behaviour public may well have made life more difficult for women who were in fact contracepting, for they would fall under more direct accusation of doing so. Practicing withdrawal can be a secret between husband and wife, and using herbal contraceptives likewise a secret between spouses or close relatives, but attending a Health Centre puts one’s behaviour into a public arena. Still, in 1988, women particularly remarked upon the propensity of other women to talk about those who were known to use contraception. Where their husbands disapproved, some women managed to keep it quiet for a while, but usually their husbands found out eventually, if only through the regular visits of their wives to the Health Centre.

Given the strong value in Fijian medical ideology related to women’s reproductive health, the general belief that ill-health was connected to more cosmic imbalance, and the common experience of undesired side-effects from contraceptives, the failure of the Ministry of Health to deal sensitively with experiences of side-effects was an avoidable public relations disaster. Although they were dispensing new technologies, the medical establishment down-played the probability that some women would experience side-effects from modern contraceptives.18 Until recently women’s reports of physical effects were dismissed as the result of rumours, and the persistence of these reports taken as another symptom of the uninformed and essentially irrational behaviour expected of ‘traditional’ women.

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18 An international review of studies found that within a one-year period, 4 to 34 per cent of IUD acceptors had the devices removed for medical reasons or intolerable side-effects, and 8 to 50 per cent of pill acceptors discontinued use for the same reasons (Kreager, 1977, cited in Bruce, 1989:14).
Cleland’s study of contraceptive use among Suva women, for example, ignored the experience of side-effects and examined instead the currency of ‘rumours’ regarding adverse effects. As Cleland (1975:90) somewhat ambiguously explained:

Gossip about contraceptive methods and the spread of exaggerated or untrue stories about side-effects are common in all countries, but little serious investigation has ever been carried out.

Curiously, perhaps, Cleland related the level of experience with a given method to the extent that ‘rumours’ about it existed. The pill, he explained, was the most commonly used method and therefore ‘not surprisingly’ attracted most rumours. Somewhat fewer women had heard rumours relating to the loop, but a greater proportion of those who had believed these stories to be true.

The reputation of tubal-ligation, by contrast, emerges as unblemished; only nine per cent of Indians and 19 per cent of Fijians reported rumours. The relative absence of adverse stories about this method is undoubtedly associated with its ever-increasing popularity in Fiji (Cleland, 1975:90, my italics).

This interpretation of women’s understanding about the consequences of new technologies for their health is extraordinarily negative. To the extent that it then represented the view of the medical establishment, such an interpretation demonstrates the gulf between perceptions of health over which the family planning programme was attempting to operate. This denial of side-effects was disastrous for the long-term success of the programme. For many women, one bad experience was enough:

When the yalani was introduced I decide to try it. I took the little pills for about three months but they made my eyes spin. When I found this dizziness I decided I wouldn’t take the pills any more, it was no good for me (52205, aged 60).

The promotion of the IUD in the later 1960s proceeded in the same manner. Four women from the village of Namara alone had experiences with the IUD that went far beyond their accepting ‘rumour’. With one, the IUD ‘fell inside’ her body, and she

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19 Undoubtedly it did. J. Cleland conducted this research when he was the Family Planning Evaluator for the Fiji Ministry of Health, and later joined the World Fertility Survey as a Senior Research Associate. Even in 1988, village health workers in Kadavu talked knowledgeably about ‘bad rumours’ regarding modern contraceptives.

20 In a more general review of family planning experiences, Jain (1989:4) notes that the actual experience of early acceptors of a method is most likely to influence its acceptance, because reports of this early experience spread by word of mouth.
had to be admitted to hospital in pain to have it removed. Another woman had a similar experience:

[In 1967] I used the loop for about seven months, but it was making me sickly. My stomach ached and was getting big and my head also ached a lot. One time on the road in Suva I fainted, and went to the CWM hospital. The doctor there said the loop probably was causing my sickness, so I asked if it could be removed before it caused a serious problem. I was to go to the Health Centre to get it removed, but then I got my period and the loop just came out itself (38204).

Given the value placed upon women’s health, and the connection between this and the ideal of restraint, the side effects of modern contraceptives dealt a double blow to their acceptability and, while today younger women are more prepared to at least try modern contraceptives, their poor reputation persists. This experience of, or fear of, unacceptable side-effects is related to a quite high discontinuation rate, where women abandon a contraceptive method within a short time of beginning it. This is no real indication of a lack of desire to limit fertility, but rather the problem of finding an acceptable means:

Lute bore seven children, despite her own intentions and her mother’s strong advice to have only four. The first two children were very close together in age, and she aborted the third pregnancy which followed soon after in 1971, using Fijian medicine and massage. After her third child (fourth pregnancy) in 1973, Lute took the pill for a month but it gave her headaches, so she tried using condoms. When this was unsatisfactory Lute and her husband practised withdrawal. When she became pregnant for the fifth time, in 1975, she again aborted. In 1976 she gave birth to a still-born child (sixth pregnancy), and had another child in 1978. In 1980 she had another abortion (eighth pregnancy), and in 1981 another child. After this birth one of her fallopian tubes was infected and was tied, but she was too frightened to have a complete tubal ligation. She and her husband continued to practice withdrawal until 1988, when they had another child (tenth pregnancy) (40801).

7.3 The availability of family planning services
From the beginning of the programme, the policy of the Ministry of Health was to make available a choice of contraceptive methods. This ‘cafeteria’ approach was intended to counter discontinuation of contraception by making alternative methods available from a national network of health centres. Figure 7.1 shows the changing popularity of modern contraceptive methods in the national population from 1968, when this information first became available. This is the one category of information where the Ministry of Health does not produce figures differentiated by ethnicity. These figures, therefore, refer to women of all ethnicities in Fiji. The loop rapidly declined in popularity following a campaign in the mid-1960s to promote its use. The proportion of women using the pill peaked in 1973 and, by 1987, represented only 12
Figure 7.1 Use of modern contraceptives in Fiji, 1968-1987

Source: Ministry of Health, Annual Reports.

Figure 7.2 Use of modern contraceptives in Kadavu, 1980-1987

Source: Ministry of Health, Kadavu Province records.

Note: In comparing these two figures, the different levels of recorded contraceptive use should be noted. According to Ministry of Health figures (1987) 19.4 per cent of Kadavu women aged 15-44 used contraceptives (excluding those using 'other' methods) while 32.1 per cent of the national population of women used modern contraceptives.
per cent of current contraceptive users. The popularity of the condom has been sustained, but its use is disproportionately greater in the Indian community. The depo-provera injection was introduced in Fiji in 1975 and, in Kadavu, has been available since 1980. Its reliability and convenience have promoted its use, despite its commonly experienced side-effects. The greatest increase has been in the incidence of tubal ligation. In some part this increase is automatic for, as acceptance is an irreversible decision, the method cannot be discontinued.

These figures confirm what Cleland (1975:78) found fifteen years ago. He concluded that the largest part of the decline in fertility in Fiji resulted from sterilization, particularly of Indian women. While Indian women experimented with all methods, in the long term most either used the pill or condom as reversible methods or underwent tubal ligation. While they similarly experimented, Fijian women tended to chose the pill (from which there was a high drop-out), practise withdrawal (which generally is less reliable than the condom), or accept tubal ligation as a terminal measure. Depo-provera was not then available; today this has almost displaced the pill as the method of choice in the national population, and has completely done so in the Kadavu population (Figures 7.1, 7.2). In his study, Cleland (1975:76) noted a strong difference between the rates of sterilization for Indian and Fijian women. The question that remains, and which this study cannot answer either, is why there is a major difference in contraceptive behaviour with regard to this one particular method. Figure 3.7 showed a consequence of this level of sterilization of Indian women, in consistently declining age-specific fertility rates in the older age-groups.

Figure 7.2 shows the use of contraceptives distributed by the Ministry of Health in Kadavu from 1980-1987. These details were not available for the period before 1980, for the records had been passed up the administrative hierarchy, and details discarded as they were progressively aggregated. The nursing sister at Vunisea Hospital had not completely discarded the original records over five years old, as is practice, but found them in a store room, partially rat-eaten but still mostly legible. Figure 7.2 shows a declining use of the pill, the loop, and condoms. The figures for condom use are quite unreliable; they measure distribution rather than application, and very few women in the study population said they used them. There has been a sharp increase in the numbers of women using the depo-provera injection, despite the frequent complaints which were expressed to me about its side-effects. This increase partly reflects its recent introduction. Sterilization has become the most

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21 Fijian men have the reputation of being reluctant to use the condom but, as many do practice withdrawal, this is not necessarily an indication of their chauvinism or antipathy towards birth control. Fijian men almost always are circumcised and Indian men rarely so. Surgically-induced desensitivty of the penis may be related to the unacceptibility of condoms.
used form of contraception, although now only marginally more popular than depo-provera. The greater use of ‘other’ methods is a sign of some women’s dissatisfaction with reversible methods - the pill, the loop, the condom and the injection - yet their reluctance to undertake a permanent solution by being sterilised. What ‘other’ included was not specified in the records, but would probably include withdrawal, periodic abstinence, and ‘traditional’ contraceptives.

In 1987 sterilization was the most common method used, yet women resident on Kadavu and who opted for this needed to travel to Viti Levu for the operation. While there was a hospital at Vunisea with operating facilities and trained medical staff, tubal ligation was not performed on the island. From 1974, students of the Fiji Medical School were encouraged to specialise and from this time the range of services offered at any hospital has depended upon the particular skills of the doctors. The decision to perform tubal ligation or not purportedly rests with the doctor concerned, and none of the doctors in charge of Vunisea Hospital over the past decade, at least, have chosen to perform this operation. This is, in any event, the manner in which officials of the Ministry of Health explain the arrangement. There are insufficient detailed data to adequately examine how significant the spatial configuration of health services throughout Fiji really is. Nevertheless, it is apparent that in this case, certainly, the allocation of services is congruent with the political structure and ideology of the national health system.

As medical staff prefer the tubal-ligation operation to follow immediately after child-birth, this necessity to travel away from Kadavu requires a woman to have made a firm decision sometime prior to giving birth and, most likely, to have made arrangements to stay in Suva and give birth there, so as to minimise travel in the immediate post-partum period. Their probable inconvenience aside, such arrangements make a woman’s decision to become sterilised a public matter. In this important respect, there was a significant difference in the services available to Suva and Kadavu women. The numbers of women opting for sterilization could well be related to the additional effort and community attention that arranging this required. Contraceptive prevalence figures, therefore, demonstrate availability as well as choice.

Despite the apparent range of choice, the degree of method switching was not great among the women of this study. Perhaps because many women had negative expectations of contraceptives, when they experienced some disadvantage they were as likely to abandon all contraception. This high drop-out rate is compounded by the Ministry’s apparently poor follow-up system of previous clients. Many women spoke of trying the pill or injection for a short time, leaving it, and never visiting or being visited by nurses again. This neglect of follow-up has two effects on contraceptive use: first, these women are virtually lost to the programme because they have tried it,
apparently been dissatisfied, and left. Secondly, this leaves them unprotected and possibly beyond the future reach of the programme. A recent national survey (Mendoza, 1988:72) found 42.6 per cent of all women who had ever used a method discontinued doing so, and almost a third (28.1 per cent) indicated that they did not intend to use any family planning method in the future.

The overall use of the government’s family planning services, therefore, relates to differences in the quality of care given and the accessibility of service (Bedford and Brookfield, 1979:213). While there probably are spatial variations in choices of method, these cannot be taken at face value. Certainly they do not support the view (eg. Fairbairn, 1970:149) that attitudes relating to, and practice of, contraceptive use would have diffused from urban women to rural women. The family planning campaign was launched nation-wide, and its message carried throughout Fiji in radio broadcasts, by government officers, and in newspapers which periodically reach villagers.

7.4 Revitalising the programme

That there is a need to revitalise the family planning programme is acknowledged by the Ministry of Health (Mendoza, 1988:84; Bienefeld, 1984:13; Fiji Government, 1986: 266). The Ministry indirectly refers to its defeat by living in the glory of apparent initial success. In a recent family planning promotion (Fiji Times June 25, 1988) the Minister of Health referred back two decades to the early success of the programme:

Our family planning programme became so successful that it also received international recognition. The crude birth rate of 38.02 per 1000 population in 1963 was reduced very quickly to 30.0 per 1000 by 1968, some two years ahead of schedule. Fiji’s success story in family planning is well known. We have been able to control the size of our population to be in harmony with our economic development.

This statement makes no reference to more recent failure to meet targeted birth rates and, to this extent, his final statement is inappropriate. The present national initiatives of the family planning programme remain those which launched it: the recruitment of contraceptors and public education. Given the official view that the performance of the family planning programme is related to two factors - the knowledge, attitudes and practices of the target population, and the nature and level of programme inputs (Mendoza, 1988:2) - these two initiatives might appear the only logical policy options.

Even in 1990, almost thirty years after the inception of the family planning programme, its progress is therefore considered to depend upon better public education. In an effort to invigorate the programme, in 1988 the national organisation
of Fijian women's associations, the *Soqosoqo Vaka Marama*, was awarded a two million dollar grant for this purpose. Yet every recent study of family planning in Fiji has found a high level of knowledge about modern contraception. Sixteen years ago, the Fiji Fertility Survey found some knowledge of family planning to be almost universal among the married female population of Fiji (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 1976:81). In the same period, Cleland (1975:106) found no evidence that reluctance to practice contraception was concentrated amongst the uneducated or poor of Suva. A more recent, national questionnaire-based survey of women aged 15 to 44, of all races, found 9 per cent had never heard of family planning but most of these women were aged between sixteen and nineteen (Mendoza, 1988:61). I also found there was a high level of knowledge about family planning among the women I interviewed, both in Kadavu and Suva. While some of the older women professed ignorance, almost none of the women now fertile said she did not know of family planning.

The emphasis at the national level is still upon increasing contraceptive prevalence rates. Although their records of contraceptive prevalence are well-known to be inaccurate, the Ministry of Health still refers to them to provide a quantitative measure of the programme's success. The inaccuracies come from irregularly updated record cards, inconsistent counts of denominator populations, and limited acknowledgement of method discontinuation. The problem of maintaining accurate records is greater in towns where the population is mobile and many people obtain their contraceptives from outlets other than government health clinics. The family planning targets set by the Ministry for the Ninth Development Plan period (1986-1990) calculated that to achieve the targeted national birth rate of 25/1000, the protection rate would need to increase from 30 per cent in 1986 to almost 45 per cent in 1990. To accomplish this would require a national increase in the number of acceptors from 46,600 in 1986 to 85,500 in 1990, with over 34,000 to be recruited in 1990 alone (Ministry of Health, 1986:86). Given that in almost thirty years the Ministry of Health had managed an acceptance rate of only 30 per cent, it would seem this target was unlikely to be met. The responsibility for effecting high acceptance rates is, nevertheless, passed down the Ministry hierarchy to district nurses. In 1988, for example, district nurses in Kadavu received the following congratulations and admonishments from their immediate superior:

To a district nurse responsible for a population of 728, with 138 fertile women:

22 This study did, however, find that men were often poorly informed about birth control (Mendoza, 1988:85).
23 A survey which was part of a Family Planning Awareness Campaign conducted in Suva in 1987 noted the discrepancy between the 29.1 per cent protection rate recorded by the Ministry of Health and the 58.4 per cent of the sample population which practised some form of family planning.
Thank you for the decrease in birth rate from 30/1000 in 1986 to 26/1000 in 1987, but your Family Planning Rate has also decreased from 28 per cent in 1986 to 21 per cent in 1987.

To a district nurse responsible for a population of 911, with 170 fertile women: Comparing your birth rate with 1986 birth rate, it has increased by 5 per cent, while your Family Planning Rate has also gone down 1.5 per cent.

Beyond the question of the appropriateness of these measurements in small, mobile populations, one can imagine the dismay with which a district nurse considers her chances of substantially changing these rates in a small community, particularly where the methods she is promoting are not well received. The feeling of defeat then passes back through the hierarchy to the Central Ministry, with an apparent vindication of the view that the people are too traditional to accept family planning. Yet there is still little evidence that the programme has met with more success in the more 'modern' milieu of Suva, for the official prevalence rate is similar, while the more youthful population holds down the crude birth rate (Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 1976:85).

In Fiji, as elsewhere, the evaluation of programme success rests upon quantitative measures of fertility rate change and contraceptive prevalence. This focus upon the quantity of services, however, ignores the manner in which they are used, and the important consideration of the quality of care rendered (Bruce, 1989:1). Indeed, the institutional need to measure programme inputs produces a quantitative bias which itself is a powerful determinant of programme style (Bruce, 1989:5). Some recent writers point to more qualitative measures of family planning programme success, and suggest that improvements in the quality of services may more effectively improve programme performance.

Jain (1989) and Bruce (1989) strongly suggest that improvements in the quality of services will indirectly raise the acceptance rate by increasing user satisfaction and continuity of use. Jain (1989:5) further demonstrates that it is more effective to maintain users in the system by providing them with better support than to constantly recruit new users. The potential effect for improved services is greatest where societal demand for child spacing and fertility regulation is low or unsteady (Bruce, 1989:2). The quintessential service should comprise choice of method and quality of service - which includes such considerations as waiting time, training and competence of staff, privacy and courtesy accorded the client, hours of operation, and accessibility in terms of distance, travel time, cost of travel and cost of services (Jain, 1989:4). Another consideration is the opportunity for women to change methods in response to their life cycle stages.
This assessment fits very well with the attitudes and experiences described by women in the study population, resident in either Kadavu or Suva. Not all women have the same intention to contracept, nor does this intention remain constant over the fertile period. Nevertheless, there remained a strongly held value in spacing children and a common concern over the means by which to limit one's pregnancies. To this extent, the family planning programme has been quite unsuccessful for, despite policies of recruitment and official statements about the need to educate women about the advantages of family planning, women themselves suggested that their needs for contraception were not being met.

7.5 The power of the paradigm

The problem, therefore, is related to a negative view of women and a particular definition of ‘traditional’ people - which, in Fiji, is constructed from the image of tradition as the opposite condition to modernity, and this bound together with both the specific cultural and political values applied there to Fijian tradition. Writing from another part of the world, Batalla (1966:89-92) argued that those who apply social science knowledge to development issues need be aware of the nature and consequences of their mental models. In his review of anthropological studies, Batalla noted a heavy psychological emphasis which promoted the idea that problems in public health related to beliefs on health, on communication problems derived from cultural differences and similar subjects. He pointed out that while these undoubtedly were factors to consider in development, by focusing upon the psychological characteristics of people, attention was diverted from more structural causes of underdevelopment. Cultural manifestations of a problem would not produce improvement of life conditions, he argued, because they do not suggest any alterations in the structures that have determined their existence. Another important theme was that of social and cultural ‘disorganization’, a state of maladjustment or conflict brought about by too rapid change, and therefore best avoided. Consequently, the idea that cultural change is slow and evolutionary, and therefore slow, long-term change is a preferable developmental goal, has considerable currency (cf. Mathur, 1989:78). Another idea is that of multiple causation, by which all phenomena are a product of countless small and diverse causes. According to Batalla (1966:91) argues, the problems of marginal societies with traditional culture are seen to originate in the very existence of such societies. By their consequences, these ideas were disempowering:

Thus as we do not believe that our poverty has a psychological origin, nor that it results from the ideas and images peculiar to our cultural tradition,

24 Kingsley Davis (1963) demonstrates this approach in his multi-phasic theory of fertility change.
nor that our basic problems can be explained by 'deficiencies' in channels of communications; so we do not believe that studies on these themes will give us the knowledge that we fundamentally need to face our problems (Batalla, 1966:92).

Packard et al (1989:405) explain that research into medical systems has mostly polarised between studies of macro-level national and international changes, and studies of community dynamics which examine such issues as household decision-making, local attitudes towards birth control, and local health services. Less considered have been the causal linkages which connect macro-level transformations at the national or international level with processes situated within local communities. Packard et al (1989:405) identify this linkage to be essentially the political economy within which both macro and micro levels of change operate. This chapter has argued the same point. Detailing local responses to implicit or explicit policies has little pragmatic value without consideration of the broad context of those policies. Similarly, while state policies may be explicit in some respects, so too may they operate in a broader institutional context in which other priorities have precedence. As Singer (1989:1196) explains:

The need to reinsert societal cases back into the world economic system for understanding ...can be seen in critical medical anthropological studies of the relationship between the State, health policy, and resource allocation...This means an examination of contemporary health policy and practice in relation to the legacy of colonialism and the development of underdevelopment on the one hand and the emergence of neocolonialism and the functioning of a comprador elite on the other.

While this theme underlies much of my thesis, the present study has not exhausted this research agenda. Rather, it suggests that these relationships demand closer examination in Fiji.

Eyles (1990:157) defines the major ordering principles for understanding health care systems as the level of economic development and the political structures and ideologies in which they operate, and the allocational mechanisms which they employ. The thesis has dwelt upon the political contexts of policies related to fertility levels and reproductive health. This chapter has looked at the take-over of the local system of health care by the state-operated and directed administration, and the quite separate visions of women's health held by the community and the state administration. By default, rather than by direct intent, the allocation of services to women has followed from the official perception of their needs and expected responses. The example was given here of facilities for tubal ligation but, more broadly, the issue is one of the quality, rather than of the quantity of services available. Possibly, it could be argued that the Fiji Government cannot afford to
upgrade its health services. Given that declining Fijian fertility rates do not have a
high political priority, it could also be argued that the system, as it stands, works well.
The counter-arguments would be that operating a health care system in a half-hearted
manner is, ultimately, a complete waste of resources. Secondly, any suggestion that
women do not warrant more appropriate services is short-sighted for it ignores the
positive development contribution of effective fertility control.

7.6 Conclusion
This chapter has reviewed the progress of the family planning programme from the
experiences of women who participated in it. The views and reservations expressed
by these women about the services provided strongly support more academic
arguments that quality of service greatly influences the number of participants. The
main issue here is not the actual progress of the programme but the way in which it
was evaluated, and how the inferences drawn from that evaluation have proved an
impediment to its success.

Women in the community almost never referred to the rubric of modernity in
explaining why they did use these contraceptives -although commonly they would
refer to ‘tradition’ in explaining why they did not. Rather, they referred to the
conditionality of their decisions. Not all women set out to substantially restrict their
fertility, yet few produced the number of children they were biologically capable of.
Even where there is a high demand for children, therefore, most people undertake
some actions which lead to the control of the numbers or spacing of their children.

After thirty years of contraceptives being promoted and available in Fiji, these Fijian
women mostly relied for birth control upon the practice of withdrawal or occasional
abstinence, herbal contraceptives, the depo-provera injection or tubal ligation. While
many women at some stage had tried using the contraceptive pill, this method was of
declining popularity, as were condoms and IUDs. There now is evidence that, beyond
any inherent problems with a particular method, the conditions of its initial
introduction is a critical factor in its continued acceptability. In retrospect, perhaps,
rather than lauding the success of the family planning programme in Fiji, it should be
regretted that the bolt was shot on the entire array of modern contraceptive
technology.

Kaplan (1990:18) refers to the common sociological assumption that non-
Western people have static rational systems, and that when this statis is broken by
Western contact a unidirectional development occurs, from closed to open, traditional
to modern, magical to scientific. The real losers in being portrayed as traditional
people were Fijian women. While not all women have the same requirements, the
assumption that they do not use family planning services because they have no desire
for contraception is quite decidedly not the way in which these women expressed their
own experiences. From such an assumption proceeds the corollary that there are no alternatives to modern contraceptives, and that these modern methods are necessarily considered desirable by women. But the use of contraception is a trade-off, between the worry of becoming pregnant and the risk to one's health.
8.1 Introduction

In examining the institutional setting for Fijian fertility behaviour over the twentieth century, this thesis has focused on processes of change and their consequences. The explanation has been directed by an orientating, rather than substantive, framework (Giddens, 1979, 1981, 1983; Hagerstrand, 1978; Hull, 1987; McNicoll, 1978, 1980; Neale, 1987), and has ranged across a variety of scales and levels — from details of individuals to interactions between groups of people sharing certain characteristics, to government policies and ideologies. Theorising about fertility change has most often considered either individual behaviour or large-scale social processes. Relating these levels of abstraction has long been a conundrum, one for which a methodology and theoretical orientation which focused on sets of interacting individuals exercising choices within a normative framework, provided some solution.

While my thesis has been concerned with events in Fiji, changes to local demographic regimes have not been unique to that country’s experience of colonialism. Either intentionally or unintentionally, governments commonly have altered local power relationships, arrangements of resource allocation, and patterns of mobility, mortality and fertility (e.g. Cordell and Gregory, 1987; Manderson, 1987, 1989; McNicoll, 1980; Robinson, 1981; Wightman, 1990). Neither was the substantivization of a colonial ideology there a unique perversion of reality. As Wu et al. (1989:3) explain, in all cases ‘national identity is a social construct that selectively exploits and interprets a particular history and tradition.’ At issue, therefore, have been neither the merits nor improbities of colonialism. More pertinent have been the implicit, localized uses of ‘culture’ and ‘tradition’ that lay behind highly emotional debates about social and political priorities (Wu et al. 1989:6). In twentieth century Fiji, population trends have been a focal issue in such debates.

I have sought to demonstrate that the demographic behaviour of people is powerfully influenced by institutional incentives or constraints. That is not to propose, however, that the structure of society denies the agency of individuals; structure and agency cannot be separated in this way (Giddens, 1981:19). A discussion of population change posed at a political and ideological level begs the question of how this discourse translates into behavioural changes at an individual or community level. To address this, the study drew upon Hagerstrand’s concept of a limited domain of experience, a tangible and situation-specific context for behaviour. Life biographies clarify the interaction of individual and collective life transitions with historical
conditions (Hareven, 1987:xiii). They provide an understanding of uncertainty in history by indicating the choices and constraints that confront people and the contexts in which their actions occur. This acts as a counterfoil to notions of powerless people caught up in processes of large-scale structural change (Tilly, 1982:202).

8.2 Political interests and theoretical perspectives
From the beginning of the colonial period in Fiji, the condition of the Fijian population was a political issue. Early concern was held over the detrimental effect on ‘primitive’ Pacific societies of contact with ‘civilised’ Westerners, and the decline of Pacific populations was thought to be almost inevitable (Corney et al, 1896). Beyond this, however, the organisation of public health and public order, and the codification of Fijian ‘tradition’ to serve the purpose of their separate development, were intimately connected with the expansion of state power over Fijian society (Thomas, 1990). Colonial governance affected Fijian demographic processes directly and indirectly: directly through regulations governing marriage and family life, programmes directed at mortality reduction, and incentives to promote fertility; and, less directly, through the manner in which Fijian village society was incorporated into the national political economy. In this setting, the idea of ‘tradition’ took on a distinct meaning. It also took on political meaning, particularly so after the arrival of Indian immigrant workers.

In a broader perspective, ideas about Fijian governance corresponded well with contemporary views about the natural order of society. In common were theories of social evolution, derived from Darwinian theory. The system of governance designed for Fijians under Governor Gordon arose out of then-fashionable ideas about the developmental stages of societies (France, 1969; Thomas, in press:5). Categorised as having reached a ‘middle stage of barbarism’, Fijians were considered well suited to village life and the control of their tribal leaders, but requiring protection and enlightened guidance into the modern world (France, 1969: 118). The explanatory paradigm of an evolving society entered at many levels. It justified, for example, providing opportunities for social mobility to the ‘natural’ leaders before the less-ready masses. It explained the authority of colonial government to restrict Fijian customs and institutions deemed contrary to their progress (Thomas, 1990:162). The rubric of the ‘March of Progress’ was applied to explain economic changes in Fijian village life, to rationalise the desire of individual families to leave the fold of the village for their own economic advancement (Knapman, 1987:41; Macnaught, 1982:103). The progress of social evolution predicted the demise of kin-based society with increased mobility and the inevitable disintegration of Fijian culture as chiefly control failed over geographical distance (Nayacakalou, 1957:56). It also provided an explanation of the essential difference between Fijians and people of other ethnicity in Fiji (Kelly, 1989).
Evolutionary theories entered directly into nineteenth-century social science, carrying with them enduring visions of 'tradition' and 'culture' and the natural order of social life (Cancian et al., 1978:320; Moore, 1988:13; Smith, 1980:59). The idea of social evolution underlies theories of the emergence of the modern family and the primary individual, and the decline of kinship controls on individual behaviour (Parsons, 1949; Shorter, 1975). It directs notions of the evolving rationality of modern man (Mercer, 1984:181) and, thereby, contributes to arguments over the rationality, or otherwise, of the fertility decisions of pretransitional populations. The evolutionary model portrays behavioural patterns as inherently slow-changing and following in the wake of shifts in cultural values, tastes and attitudes (cf. Stern, 1987:134). Concepts of social evolution also underlie much of the discussion about the status of women as it relates to their fertility behaviour (Moore, 1988:13). The model of demographic transition, as it was formulated by Notestein (1945), fitted well this evolutionary paradigm of social change. Indeed, in its dominant interpretation, that of the process of modernization, the demographic transition maintains the currency of theories of social evolution at the heart of demographic theory.

The imagery of evolution has, therefore, cast a powerful light over past and contemporary views of many facets of life. The conditions of tradition and modernity are thereby seen to be inversely related (Wu et al., 1989:2). To become modern is to become less traditional, and both poles on this continuum are regarded as being exclusive and homogeneous.

The convergence of theoretical perspectives and political interests is particularly germane to this history of Fiji. Social theory has an essential social and political function. It is not coincidental that an important effect of empirical positivist social science is to legitimise existing policies and the status quo, through the continual underscoring of the 'rightness' and 'inevitability' of existing institutions (Mercer, 1984:164). Perlman (1976:245) describes sociological paradigms as 'useful perceptual screens [which are] designed to filter out evidence that contradicts convenient and comfortable belief systems'. She (1976:247) goes on to argue that explanatory paradigms have a material force where they converge with political advantage to direct social policies:

...social scientists give academic respectability to a world view which conforms with prevailing prejudices and gives policy makers confidence and legitimacy.

A consequence is the mutual reinforcement of theory and policy through labelling; thus people may be referred to as marginal, or destitute, or traditional, all of which labels carry political values (Cameron, 1985:146; Perlman, 1976:250; Wood, 1985:9). However, social scientists and policy-makers have not been coerced into a conspiracy of silence; rather, the ideological bases of their theories tend not to be questioned. As
Wood (1985:1) notes, these processes of control and regulation pass largely unrecognized:

> It is our conviction that the significance of labelling has been underestimated as an aspect of policy discourse, and especially for its structural impact...upon the institutions and their ideologies through which we are managed.

In this case, the identification of Fijians as traditional ties in well with the political value of the paramountcy of Fijian interests. The idea that Fijian society requires special protection against the forces of twentieth century change endures, as was demonstrated by the rhetoric which accompanied the 1987 military coups. In combination with their particular cultural and political values, this construction of tradition presents a consistent vision of the past - Fijian people as a conservative and uninformed peasantry; and a coherent view of the present - with Fijian women generally cast in the role of a traditional people clinging for socio-economic and political reasons to a culturally-patterned pronatalism.

### 8.3 Understanding the process of fertility change

As a general description of long-term demographic change, the concept of demographic transition has a certain value. But, while the pattern of change it describes fits rather loosely with the experiences of different societies, it has more serious short-comings as an interpretative and explanatory framework. The paradigm does not adequately describe or explain processes of change and, hence, it misdirects policy: ‘human history does not have an evolutionary shape’ (Giddens, 1984:236). To express dissatisfaction with this transitional paradigm is not in some manner to argue that demographic change does not occur. The point is, rather, that these sweeping and speculative ideas of development and transition provide no substitute for history (Kreager, 1986:132). Giddens (1979:198) explains that time is commonly identified with social change. This implicitly associates stability with timelessness - in a mythical state called tradition. Culture is identified as providing continuity in people’s behaviour and so becomes identified with constraints on change (eg. Bavadra and Kierski, 1980:22). Yet people’s behaviour is conditioned, rather than constrained, by their culture.

This study focused upon a specific history, or demographic regime: that of a Fijian community in the twentieth century. By examining change in its distinct social, economic and political contexts it was possible to move entirely away from the idea of tradition as unchanging and culture as a category, and consider instead tradition as being a reactive characteristic of social actors. Considered from this angle, the process of social change is not a process of loss of ‘culture’, of identity, family, or self
determination but rather a process of social institutions transforming under the dual influences of the past and the present.

8.3.1 The pace and direction of change
The evolutionary image of demographic transition suggests that behavioural change has both a fixed direction and a slow or continuous tempo. Yet there now is evidence from other parts of the world that fertility change can be a discontinuous process in which rapid behavioural change is both possible and probable. Drawing an analogy from Kuhn's model of scientific revolutions, Stern (1987:134) argues that fertility change is more a paradigmatic than evolutionary transition. At an individual level, lives can change suddenly yet, at an aggregate level, the multiplicity of changes can cancel each other out. In considering the pace of change, the ecological fallacy commonly is applied - in assuming that aggregate rates of change represent the behavioural patterns of individuals.

The Fijian population has been subject to strong forces for rapid change since at least the early nineteenth century, but the direction of changes within it since then has not been unilineal. There is substantial evidence of practices of birth limitation from the earliest historical records in the nineteenth century, though this can not necessarily be identified as the traditional condition. The further one goes back in time the more nebulous the notion of tradition becomes. The increased participation of women in the economy now, by choice or otherwise, is in some ways a circle back to the pre-colonial significance of women as producers. In this respect the intervening generations provide the break with the past, rather than the current generation (Pirie, 1976:22).

It is difficult to precisely describe the fertility of the national Fijian population in the early twentieth century because statistical data are limited for early decades. Crude birth rates in the first four decades of this century ranged between 32/1000 and 37/1000, apart from a steep drop immediately after the influenza epidemic of 1918 (Figure 3.2). In aggregate, the pattern of change over most of the twentieth century was subtle until fertility rates declined quite sharply in the 1960s. There is some evidence that levels of fertility rose slightly in the middle of the century before their decline (Figures 3.3, 3.6). The cohorts in this study which demonstrated increased fertility were those women born between 1924 and 1943. Several reasons why fertility might have risen can be suggested. Political leaders made occasional comment about the need for the Fijian population to ensure its survival through reproduction. However, by their being enshrined in the historical record, these remarks possibly have received more attention than their effects warranted. If, nowadays, similar injunctions

1 Kuhn's model postulates that scientific history is marked by sharp breaks when one paradigm is replaced by another. Stern develops this idea with reference to Gidden's theory of structuration (1984) and the work on life courses of Wallace (1980) and Elder (1978).
to limit the size of one's family have little real effect, even with the powerful public media that now exist, why should we believe people took more cognisance of such directives in the past? One more likely reason is that the village system of governance - whereby the domestic role of Fijian women was promoted and opportunities or pressures towards alternative lifestyles were rare - exerted a pronatalist effect. Furthermore, the average lengths of first, second and third birth intervals in the study population declined slightly over the three generations, but most sharply for women born in the 1920s to early 1940s. This may reflect the impact of the long-waged campaign against Fijian medicine, which discredited the back-up roles of herbal contraceptives and abortion in child-spacing and, thereby, increased reliance on more 'ideal' methods - post-partum abstinence and lactational amenorrhoea, before modern contraceptives were introduced. In the national Fijian population since 1946, the inter-cohort decline in fertility has been concentrated at lower ages, although age-specific fertility rates for women aged 15-19 have recently risen slightly (Figure 3.6). Declines in fertility levels of women aged 30 to 49 years occurred most sharply in the inter-censal period 1966-1976, but were not substantial.

Yet, these aggregate measures mask a number of separate events. The pattern of change has not been monotonic. For example, while the average age at marriage has risen slightly, the proportion of women who have spent most of their adult years in marriage has declined and the number having prenuptial births has risen. The patterns of individual life-lines showed that intra-cohort variability has increased on an inter-cohort basis, a pattern which has been found elsewhere (eg. Florez and Hogan, 1990:18). Ryder (1965) suggested that fertility change occurs when there is a marked discontinuity between the experiences of one cohort and those of its predecessor. In this study population, such an interruption is marked by the younger cohort of Generation 2 - those who were born between 1945 and 1954, the elder of whom began bearing children in the mid-1960s.

Hareven (1978:7) proposed that social change can also occur through important discontinuities in family and work life within the same cohort. The lives of women in this study population confirms these conclusions. Their life-lines show that, over the three generations, considerable changes have occurred in young women's behaviour related to family formation. While the past century and a half in Fiji has been characterised by rapid, fundamental social change, wider opportunities for women's education and labour force participation became available after the 1950s. Over the past thirty years there have been sharp increases in the degree of urban residence, in levels of female educational attainment and in rates of female employment in the formal sector.

As opportunities have expanded for women to gain education and professional qualifications to work beyond the village, so too have women taken advantage of them. This population was too small to provide firm evidence of social-class-specific
fertility transitions as has been done elsewhere (eg. Florez and Hogan, 1990; Kertzer and Hogan, 1989; Schneider and Schneider, 1984). On a smaller scale, however, a similar process was identified, of women of status being first to acquire opportunities for professional work, and of their subsequent marriage and child-bearing patterns. This cast light upon the relationship between fertility and education which is the most consistently confirmed inverse correlation (Cochrane, 1983). Where they took up opportunities for advanced education and, subsequently, for secure and rewarding employment, women generally had smaller families. As the financial costs of child-rearing and the occurrence of marital disruptions have increased, so too has the movement of other women - especially those without husbands - into the work force. As the opportunity structure has become more diverse, so too has the fertility behaviour of the community become more variable.

8.3.2 The agency of individuals and families
Hull (1983:284) notes how scholarly debates over fertility theories commonly take up one or other extreme view: that individuals make no real fertility decisions or, conversely, that all fertility behaviour implies important decisions. Hypotheses relating the status of women to their fertility often are couched in terms of a transition from conditions where women lack autonomy over their reproduction to those which allow their free and scientifically-informed choices. This transformation from a traditional to a modern condition may entail a transformation of attitudes or of economic values. The general image is, however, that as patriarchal structures and the power of the family recede, the status of women rises and their personal autonomy is enhanced. Thus indices of development, such as urban residence, education, employment, and smaller family sizes are taken as signals of modern attitudes and the improved status of women. Both the theoretical and political interpretations of tradition foster the interpretation that Fijian women have been relatively slow to adopt modern contraceptives because they are tied into a pronatalist culture. At the root of these arguments is a denial of people as capable, knowledgeable agents. Giddens (1979:254) notes the denial of the importance of reasons in human conduct: that human beings reflexively monitor their conduct via the knowledge they have of the circumstances of their activity.

The image of evolution implies that 'modern' people are able to act upon their new knowledge of the world. Using life histories to determine how people have, in fact, behaved had an important advantage, for it was not necessary to assume, as so frequently it is in fertility research, that people will behave in accordance with their expressed attitudes and values and, therefore, that their actions are intentionally directed. Inspired by transitional theory, some researchers have set out to characterise individuals as modern or traditional by charting their characteristics. For example, Vlassoff (1988) developed a typology of behavioural traits - a twenty-item additive
scale to differentiate modern and traditional women which was constructed after months of residence in an Indian village - yet this cross-sectional identification raises some questions. Would an individual’s rankings on such a scale be the same if the researcher returned to resurvey the population at a later time? Does modernity grow upon an individual, or across a community in a steady wave, or does it affect individuals through a series of minor events which, Zen-like, impact upon one’s consciousness in a bolt?

During the war I was staying in Suva, where my husband was in the army. A lot of girls were in Suva then and there were lots of Americans and other kai valagi around. I remember one day I went to the house where some girls I knew were living. I saw this thing there that I had never seen before, and I picked it up and asked my friend, ‘what’s this’? She told me it was a condom, that’s what they used when they stayed with their [men] friends so the semen wouldn’t go inside and make a baby or so they wouldn’t catch the sickness susua na dra [venereal disease]. There was plenty of that around then. Then I thought, well that’s really what does happen, eh. Yes, it’s the wai [semen] that makes the baby. I really understood it then. And I thought that condom was a really smart idea...But it’s good for that kind of thing, not for using with the one you really love, it’s not the same thing (40003, aged 67).2

Even more powerful inducements to behavioural change than new knowledge or attitudes can be changed life circumstances. Furthermore, choices and opportunities are highly conditional. The relationship between education and fertility, for example, is general rather than specific. One problem with measuring education is that it is fixed in one period of a woman’s lifetime and therefore cannot change, although the rest of her life very well might. The value, in terms of possible employment, of that education also changes over a person’s lifetime, also having qualifications and actually using them are separate matters.

Both the debates over decision-making and over the status of women are, therefore, based upon over-simplified models. Hull (1983:389) explains that individuals do make decisions, but they are not necessarily all about fertility. As women experience access to wider opportunities, and pressures to exploit these, they may well have fewer children - although this need not be a simple choice in which some other value is substituted for child-bearing and rearing. Rather, it may represent, both in the lives of individuals and of the community, the exigencies of modern life and of multiple competing roles and choices. To this extent, it is simplistic to assume that women’s status necessarily rises, or necessarily falls, with development. In dealing with the contingencies of their lives, the women of this study described their behaviour in much broader terms than simply their fertility. Thus, for example, the decision to have an abortion at a certain time is conditional on one’s situation then and

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2 This is not to suggest that Fijian women generally are unaware of the role of semen in conception. At the time this woman was young, however, sexual matters were rarely discussed between women. Women of this older generation said they generally found out about such things through experience.
could bear little reference to the value one generally placed upon children, one's feelings of distaste or approval regarding abortion, or one's intellectual, economic or emotional commitment to modernity. So too, her decision to enter the work-force may reflect a woman's autonomy, or the necessity that she assume responsibility for the support of her children or other family members.

Women commonly explained their contraceptive behaviour in terms of such trade-offs, most especially between limiting their fertility and jeopardising their health, but also within the political environment of the community and household. The sense of tradition, in the sense of time-honoured practice, was quite confused. Older women recalled methods of herbal contraception which had fallen into disrepute during their days; others posed a contrast between 'natural' Fijian herbal medicines and the artificial, dangerous ones offered by the Ministry of Health. What was missing, overall, was the notion of a clear direction of change from traditional pronatalism to modern contraceptive use. What was consistently expressed was the knowledge that whatever decision a woman made - to contracept in some manner, to abort, or to have a child - carried consequences of its own and, in this regard, decisions were rarely ideal. While the balance of matters to consider might vary somewhat between rural or urban women, or those working in or outside the home, this theme of conditionality was persistently expressed. To this extent, women who did use modern contraceptives did not express this to be a 'modern' thing to do, but rather another option to be tried or exploited.

Therefore, while there have been strong continuities between the life-courses of the three generations of women, so too have individual lives changed quite abruptly. The occurrence of sudden shifts in fertility behaviour suggests that the conventional focus upon knowledge and attitudes as significant determinants of behaviour exaggerates the role of individual intentionality in fertility change (Handwerker, 1989; Elder, 1988; Stern, 1987). Indeed, behavioural change may precede attitudinal change. The life histories collected here suggested that many choices are conditional rather than ideal, and that people's attitudes and values are required to keep up with their changing fortunes, as much as the other way around. People operate in decision-making environments which can change markedly over their child-rearing years. Increasingly, women lead complicated lives, with both expanded choices and greater conflict among their multiple roles.

8.3.3 The idea of natural process
If demographic change were intrinsically a matter of cultural evolution, we might expect this process to operate somewhat independently of extrinsic change. Yet, while people's responses to opportunities were patterned by cultural and gender values, the genesis of these opportunities lay in structural change in the Fiji economy and polity. At a global scale, each society has a unique history, but there have been strong
similarities between colonial policies and timetables (eg. Manderson, 1987; O'Brien, 1987; Hunt, 1988). The process of 'modernization' through the Third World had a great deal to do with the chronology of wider economic, technological and political developments. The timing of critical changes was not, therefore, intrinsic to a particular society but was connected with political, technological and economic changes in the world system.

In that the demographic transition is projected as an inevitable change, albeit a change which can become stagnated by socio-economic conditions, this paradigm appears to float above politics. Yet, studies of the recent historical experience of Third World societies, in particular, have suggested that the modern state is a powerful element in modifying discrete population regimes, which may or may not be en route to a particular stage in the 'demographic transition'.

Official records in Fiji project the view that policies intended to modify population characteristics were efficacious. However, where the State attempted to intervene directly, it was not particularly successful. Despite the official concern and occasionally Gilbertian interventions of the government in its early years, it is difficult to prove that rhetoric produced at that level actually did motivate people directly to modify their behaviour. The life-histories suggested, rather, that the agency of the state in demographic change was broader and more indirect, acting through other policies to direct the overall pattern of change, to modify structures of power, and to distribute opportunities for social mobility. By its reification of Fijian tradition and through the Fijian Administration, the colonial government effected a considerable degree of penetration into Fijian society, intervening in all spheres of life and promoting new economic activities. Directly or otherwise, State-related activities profoundly influenced Fijian land-ownership, religion, marriage and family patterns, economic activities and occupations, education, and opportunities for social and geographic mobility - all of which are generally considered to be features of cultural life most related to fertility decisions. The impact of politics upon local structures of power influenced the pattern of the life-courses of individuals, and so conditioned the contexts in which many aspects of their behaviour occurred.

It has been suggested that state power indirectly influences fertility behaviour by adopting the welfare role of the family, by weakening traditional associations and, thereby, encouraging the emergence of primary individuals. As kin-related rewards to high fertility diminish, so do levels of fertility (Casterline, 1989:305; Mayer and Muller, 1986:223; McNicoll, 1988:11). However, as this and other studies have

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4 For example, official reports and documents of the colonial government (internal documents, such as Provincial Council reports and the Colonial Secretary's Office correspondence reveal more ambivalence); and in the modern period, Ram, 1977; Mataitoga, 1983; Laquian and Naroba, 1990; various reports of the Ministry of Health and the Fiji Family Planning Association.
shown, traditional family and community structures can endure economic change and spatial dispersal (Cancian et al., 1978; Kreager, 1986: 136). Family ties link people of the community, wherever they may reside. Despite early predictions of the inevitable decline of Fijian society with increased dispersion from the village, ties of kinship are sustained and nurtured in town by the continuing round of *oga*, the residential proximity of family members, and the family networks through which employment is often located, and some material support - if only temporary - can be found. Of course perfect communality is no more characteristic of urban Fijian society than it is of rural society. Some poor relatives find themselves 'poor in relatives' (Bourdieu, 1977:61), and married women, in particular, may be restrained from returning to their village homes by the costs of the *oga* that would be involved. Nevertheless, kinship ties have adjusted to operating over distance, rather than atrophied (Bakker, 1986). It is not true, therefore, that patriarchial pressures to high fertility recede with distance but, rather, these may appear more or less relevant to people’s situations at different stages of their lives.

With regard to intentional fertility policy, the Fiji family planning programme continues to draw plaudits but these refer back to its initial period of success in the 1960s. While the programme certainly assisted for a good degree of the decline in fertility levels, it neither initiated nor sustained this decline. As Chapter Seven argued, the agency of the state has two aspects: its capacity to effect policy-directed change and the power of official ideology. The official and local explanations of the progress of the family planning programme were quite disparate. Official interpretations, grounded in the vision of transition, stressed the efficacy of public education and the promotion of contraceptives, and the need to overcome cultural obstacles to contraceptive use. The local explanation of the progress of the family planning programme was quite different. To these women, the fact of contraception was not new: there were both local methods of herbal contraception and herbal or manual abortion, and people well-known as practitioners in these. The government promotion of contraceptives did not mesh well with these local practices for two essential reasons. First, the public promotion of contraceptives denied the community understanding that contraception was pragmatic rather than ideal practice. Second, the new technology of birth control was identified as artificial, powerful and hazardous to health. This perception was only strengthened by official denials of the likelihood of these methods causing side-effects.

8.4 Implications for fertility-related policy in Fiji
While modernization theory has been tattered by research into the recent historical experiences of Third World societies, it remains pervasive in explanations of fertility change, particularly because of the powerful paradigm of the demographic transition. It also remains powerful because this understanding was current at the time many
family planning programmes were initiated, it provided their design and rationale, and thereby became part of the institutional structure of these programmes.

The interpretation of culture as an inhibitor to change is fostered by constant synchronic comparisons between the fertility of ethnic groups, particularly between Fijians and Indians. The explanation of why Fijian fertility is currently higher than Indian fertility is routinely couched in terms of culture, of the traditional character of Fijian women, yet this argument essentially is rooted in political rather than cultural history. The images of tradition and modernity are often invoked to explain differences between Fijians and Indians. The argument here has been that Fijians and Indians have had parallel but different histories, so to attribute contemporary differences between these groups to ‘cultural difference’ is tautological and ahistoric. The politicisation of population trends in Fiji explain this readiness to ‘explain’ demographic behaviour by reference to ethnic stereotypes. Health administrators, for example, still insist that Fijians are motivated to higher fertility by political fears, or for cultural reasons dislike contraception. This view is fostered by the institutional framework in which demographic statistics are collected - a design which has strong historical links in the colonial construction of ethnicity. What is commonly ignored is that when any two cases are compared - let alone cases of such complexity - the least likely result is that their characteristics would be identical. Over time, the vital rates of the Fijian and Indian communities weave in and out of each other, but the overall pattern of change is similar - which might suggest their similarities were of more significance than their differences (eg. Figures 1.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.7).

Apart from quite crude considerations of residential or educational differences (eg Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 1976), in Fiji little interest has been given to differences within each ethnic category. Indeed, the insistence on the essential significance of ethnic difference provides a mental blinker against evidence that knowledge of contraceptive techniques is widespread, that there are not substantial differences between rural and urban women, and that the rubric of traditional versus modern women does not fit well with social realities in Fiji. Demographic measures of variance between groups within a population suggest these differences are generated within these groups. In their slowness to change, relative to Indian women, Fijians might appear snared in tradition. In the same manner, this paradigm provides a comfortable explanation for the differential success of family planning programmes: they were supplied with modern contraceptives but they remain trapped in their traditions and would not accept. The transition paradigm appears apolitical in its ostensibly impartial explanations for different rates of change: demographic characteristics of societies transform as they pass from traditional to modern conditions.

Yet getting concepts to match reality is only a first step in social science research. Batalla’s (1966:89) suggestion to social scientists is pragmatic: that their
best protection against unwitting conservatism is that they be aware of the nature and consequences of their mental models. Batalla's (1966) critique of applied anthropology, while old, is not outdated. It identifies a central contradiction which remains between fertility theory and policy: fundamentally conservative theory posing as a driving force for social action. The paradigm of demographic transition is conservative where the change from traditional to modern conditions is interpreted to involve socio-psychological changes. The vision of social evolution is conservative, in that it suggests that societies present resistance to directed changes, or that rapid change is unnatural or undesirable (Batalla, 1966:90). More generally, seeking an explanation of particular fertility trends in local 'culture' has an essentially conservative function. If culture is considered to reflect an autonomous and self-perpetuating design for behaviour, this can conveniently account for whatever seems to resist analysis (Ross, 1986:218) and thereby serve to justify the status quo. It suggests, furthermore, that the locus of the 'problem' is with the people and not the wider structures of their society. Thus the cultural determinants of fertility may be studied, and possibly compared with other cases, without reference to the importance of the social formations in which these 'cultural factors' occur (Singer, 1989:1194).

By stressing this function of culture, so defined, the focus of attention moves from matters of structural change and conditions of service delivery, where it more pragmatically could be. Furthermore, Fijian women exhibit more than one category of behaviour - their behaviour varies along lines of access and opportunity, lines which suggest routes along which policies might be pursued, rather than, in effect, waiting for culture to somehow modernise.

However, as Perlman (1976:250) explains, a concrete set of circumstances persists regardless of any theory of change, or characterisation of people. Where people are labelled as traditional, uninformed, or unwilling to change, they also are disempowered and poorly served (Mercer, 1984: 159; Wood, 1985: 11). The focus upon attitudes and knowledge in fertility research has taken attention off the processes of behavioural change. It also detracts from the understanding of the roles of structural factors and societal institutions in fertility change. Such is the nature of labour markets and women's access to them, social stratification, and the role of the state in directing the pattern of social and economic change. The social reality that persists is the inefficacy of methods women still use to control their fertility. In mostly rejecting modern methods of contraception, the women of this study were not displaying a lack of knowledge but a good understanding of the consequences of medical technologies.

Meanwhile, the focus of family planning effort remains on public education and on recruiting increasing numbers of acceptors. The programme is tired and virtually defeated, but given its theoretical orientation, it seems it is the only logical way to proceed. One might argue that in the present political climate there is little government enthusiasm for the reduction of Fijian fertility. These views surface
occasionally, but rarely in written form. If this should be the case, however, it represents a particularly short vision. As Bienefeld (1984:14) cogently explains, faster population growth for Fijians serves neither the national nor their communal interests, for it may increase political and economic polarisation. Nor is it possible to assume that inaction (or action) would clearly provide a numerical advantage to either group. Of course, this view supposes, with little basis, that people include national interests in their calculus of decisions. Women will, no doubt, continue to make more personal decisions about their lives and their ambitions for their children, although their access to modern contraceptive technology could be restricted if service levels decline. The coups of 1987 had a demographic consequence in the increased flow of Indian emigrants from Fiji, and this might shed a brighter light upon the anachronistic nature of such concerns.

Clifford Geertz (1963) explained that history shares with other symbol systems the characteristic of providing ‘models of’ reality and ‘models for’ reality. In quoting Geertz, Levine and Scrimshaw (1983:666) suggest that such a description of history explains how people behave and view the world. But they ignore the other side of the argument, that this also explains how social scientists behave and view their subjects. In considering the agency of culture in fertility change, the interrelatedness of culture and politics tends to be ignored. Yet Fiji is one of many plural societies that were forged by the colonial encounter, where the realm of social policy is an arena of contending power groups in which ethnic and cultural identities are used, produced and manipulated to achieve economic and political goals. Neither demographic theory nor population policy can propose to be disengaged from this political realm.

5 Bienefeld (1984:5) refers to the frequency of such statements, most made unofficially.
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