

**WHY DO PEOPLE WANT AND HAVE THE
FAMILY SIZES THEY DO? INFLUENCES ON
FAMILY SIZE PREFERENCES AND BEHAVIOUR**

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this study are to investigate influences on the family size preferences and current family size of parents of one to three children, as well as whether they perceive their family as being completed or not.

One hundred and two parents participated in this study. The subjects were obtained through word of mouth, contacting childcare centres and advertising. Each subject completed the Family Size Questionnaire and the Childbearing Questionnaire. The Family Size Questionnaire was developed by the researcher and contained questions on the subjects' family size preferences and their own families. The Childbearing Questionnaire (W. Miller, 1994) consists of two sections which measure positive and negative childbearing motivation.

The results of this study showed that older subjects want more children than younger subjects, parents with more siblings want more children than those with fewer siblings, and the more children parents currently have, the more children they want. Parents with high positive childbearing motivation want more children, as do those with low negative childbearing motivation. Older subjects had higher current family sizes, as did those who were younger when they had their first child. Parents with high positive childbearing motivation are more likely to be completing their families. Higher education levels and wanting fewer children predicted having completed one's family.

Current family size and desired family size may continue to influence each other once childbearing has begun. Traditionally important variables in the area of fertility were not found to influence family size preferences in this sample. This may be related to the possibility that family sizes are decreasing because people are weighing up the advantages and disadvantages more closely on an individual basis. Traditional ideas of what constitutes a family seem to be changing.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. PARENTHOOD AND FAMILY SIZE NORMS

1.1. The Norm of Parenthood in Western Society

Traditionally the idea of a family has been commonly assumed to consist of married parents with dependent children. This belief is epitomised by the following comment made by a parent; “it’s not a family unless you’ve got children” (Busfield & Paddon, 1977, p1). Bearing and raising children clearly represents a major role in adulthood. Despite advances in contraceptive technology which have given adults freedom of choice over whether to become parents, the majority of people in Western society still choose to undertake the tremendous responsibility involved in raising children.

However, over the last few decades New Zealand’s families have changed a great deal, as in the rest of the Western world. Only 14% of New Zealand families now consist of a father as breadwinner, mother at home, and children, whereas this was commonplace 30 years ago (Watson, 1995). About two-thirds of New Zealanders do not feel that children are needed for fulfilment (Heylen Monitor, 1994). Between 1986 and 1991 there was a 14% increase in childless couples (Department of Statistics,

1991). Traditional ideas of what constitutes a family may be less relevant to younger people, and this change represents a significant departure from previous generations.

Richards (1985) found that few couples in her study had firmly decided on a specific number of children to have. Most couples had simply assumed before marriage that they would have children, and left the specific decisions involved until later. Those who had decided on a particular family size before they had children often changed their minds after having their first child, and realising what was involved in parenthood. Many researchers have suggested that, rather than being a single decision made at one point in time, the family size decision should be characterised as a sequential decision process, which involves an ongoing reassessment of the family's circumstances (Back & Hass, 1973; Bulatao, 1981; Crawford & Boyer, 1984; Kyriazis, 1979; McClelland, 1983; Miller, 1994; Namboodiri, 1983; Richards, 1985). The effect of having each successive child itself is seen as being particularly important in this decision process (Namboodiri, 1983). Thus it can be seen that even where specific family size goals are decided before childbearing, changing circumstances, including the experience of having each child, are likely to lead to a reassessment of these aims.

This study was conducted in order to investigate the influences on how many children people want and have, as well as to investigate influences on whether the family is perceived as completed or not. These issues are important for a variety of reasons. Firstly, in the late 1960s and early 1970s the world's overpopulation problem was highlighted (Blake, 1974; Hobart, 1973). While the level of concern dropped in the

1980s there has been an increased focus on environmental issues in more recent years, and this is obviously linked to the problem of overpopulation. Influences on how many children people want and have, as well as whether they have completed their families or not, will be important factors in determining a country's population and thus warrant further investigation.

Secondly, the size of family that children are born into affects them. Several researchers have concluded that children in larger families receive fewer resources, including parental attention and encouragement. This has negative effects on their development, including educational and occupational outcomes (Blake, 1981, 1985; Clausen & Clausen, 1973; Heer, 1985). Thirdly, family size can also affect the parents. Although the effects are not clearcut, it has been suggested that larger families create more pressure on the parents and this may lead to decreased marital satisfaction, especially if some or all of the children were unwanted (Clausen & Clausen, 1973). Influences on how many children people want and have, as well as whether the family is completed or not, may be important factors in determining happiness and satisfaction for both the children and parents in the family, and are thus worthy of investigation.

The rest of this introduction will cover a review of family size norms, the theoretical background to this study, previous studies of influences on family size, and the hypotheses investigated in this study.

1.2. Family Size Norms in Western Society

Pohlman (1969) has suggested that conformity to societal norms is likely to be a strong influence on desired family size. It has been common in past decades to view large families as virtuous- as being better than smaller families which have often been seen as selfish (Rainwater, 1965; Pohlman, 1969). There is much greater agreement on two being the minimum acceptable family size, than there is on a maximum acceptable family size, with families of five or more children being successively less acceptable (Busfield & Paddon, 1977; Griffith, 1973; Richards, 1985; Ware, 1973). Few people may want families of five or more, since these families are seen as being too large to provide for well, but large families may still be seen as less undesirable than the single child family (Busfield & Paddon, 1977; Richards, 1985).

The evidence of many studies of family size overwhelmingly points to a postwar desired family size norm of two to four children (Busfield & Paddon, 1977; Chilman, 1973; Freedman, Coombs & Bumpass, 1965; Griffith, 1973; Pohlman, 1969; Russo & Brackbill, 1973; Westoff, Potter & Sagi, 1963; Thompson, 1974; Young, 1974). West and Morgan (1987) found that 65% of people chose two children as the ideal number for a family. The family size norm has clearly narrowed since the late 1960s so that two children is by far the most popular choice (Cartwright, 1976; Davidson & Moore, 1992; Leridon, 1981; B. Miller, 1987; Miller & Pasta, 1993; Oakley, 1986; Richards, 1985; West & Morgan, 1987).

Traditionally the great majority of people have believed only children to be disadvantaged (Griffith, 1973; Hawke & Knox, 1977), with people expressing the idea that it is not fair to the child, and that it is selfish on the part of the parents. Crawford and Boyer (1984) found that women with one child experience the strongest pressure to have more children, with childless women not experiencing as much pressure. Despite evidence that the negative stereotype of the only child is not justified, Hawke and Knox (1977) found that there was a growing tendency for people to want either two children or no children, with few wanting to have one child. However, Oakley (1986) has also reported that there has been a marked shift to low fertility options, with an increasing proportion of women planning to have one or two children, or no children, and decreasing proportions planning to have more than two children.

Several trends in Western society have been related to the decrease in family size over the last 20 to 30 years. These include the focusing of attention on the worldwide population problem in the 1960s and 1970s (Blake, 1974; Hobart, 1973; West & Morgan, 1987), the changing roles of women, particularly their labour force participation (Hobart, 1973; Scanzoni, 1975; Stolzenberg & Waite, 1977; Teachman, Polonko & Scanzoni, 1987; West & Morgan, 1987), and increased availability of contraceptives, including the development of the birth control pill (Hobart, 1973; West & Morgan, 1987).

Other related factors which have had an impact on decreased family size include the delaying of marriage and childbearing (Davidson & Moore, 1992; Teachman et al., 1987), the separation of marriage and childbearing due to increased cohabitation and

changing attitudes regarding the importance of children to a marriage (Leridon, 1981; Teachman et al., 1987), and the increasing rates of separation and divorce, although the relationship between fertility and remarriage is complicated (B. Miller, 1987).

New Zealand family sizes. Stirling (1994) reported that the average number of children for Pakeha in New Zealand is 2.12, while for Maori it is 2.28. This compares with the height of the baby boom when the figures were four and six respectively. The 1991 Census also revealed that the most common family size in New Zealand is the one child family with 39% of families with children containing one child, 36% being two children families, and less than 25% having three or more children (Department of Statistics, 1991). This is obviously related to the notable increase in sole parents since 1986. Whereas the one child family is the most common where there is a sole parent (55%), the two child family is still the most common when there are two parents living together (38%) (Department of Statistics, 1991). Other likely factors in the rise of the one child family are the growing trends for people to postpone both marriage and childbearing, as well as to live in de facto relationships.

1.3. A Theory of the Influences on Family Size

Miller & Pasta (1988, 1993; W. Miller, 1981, 1992, 1994) have developed a general theory of childbearing motivation, desires and intentions which includes family size desires and intentions as major components. The theory refers to motivation as a psychological trait that can lead people to take action. The basic premise of the theory is that when childbearing motivations become active, a desire for children or a

particular family size is experienced. Before any actual specific behaviours occur these desires are first transformed into intentions. This happens once there has been an assessment of the reality of individual circumstances, and a commitment to take action has been made (W. Miller, 1994; Miller & Pasta, 1988, 1993).

Childbearing motivation is theorised to influence both childbearing desires generally and family size desires, while there are also five categories of non-motivational influences on family size desires (Miller & Pasta, 1993). These five categories are: personal value systems, including such things as education and income; family background factors, including number of siblings; life cycle factors, which refer to current family size and age variables; situational factors, and personality traits. Miller and Pasta (1993) found that the one situational factor they included in their study did not affect family size desires, and the personality traits measured also did not strongly influence family size desires. Kiser & Whelpton (1958) and Westoff et al. (1963) also found very weak or non-existent relationships between personality variables and family size desires. Situational and personality variables were thus not included in this study.

In previous research, such as that done by Miller and Pasta (1993), simultaneous regressions have been used in which sociodemographic variables such as education and age, and psychological variables such as childbearing motivation, have been used to predict family size variables. However, the results of such research are confusing as the effects of these different categories of variables are confounded.

In order to clearly separate the effects of sociodemographic and psychological variables, hierarchical regression must be used, in which the sociodemographic variables are entered first and their effects examined. The psychological variables can then be entered, thus controlling for the influence of sociodemographic factors (such as gender and education level). The current study uses hierarchical regression to separate the effects of selected sociodemographic and psychological variables on desired and current family size.

2. FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE FAMILY SIZE

2.1. Lifecycle Factors

Current family size. Kiser and Whelpton (1958) found that the size of family a couple currently has is related to both desired family size at the time of marriage and desired family size if life could be lived over again. Kiesler (1977) suggested that the idea that having children follows a conscious decisionmaking process, which includes following definite preferences and motives, is not the only possibility, since the behaviour of having children should be seen as a potential cause of preferences and attitudes.

While the relationship between desired family size and current family size may be due to people achieving the family size they want, family sizes that are smaller or larger than planned will tend to be later rationalised by adjusting the desired family size accordingly (Pullum, 1983; Westoff, Mishler & Kelly, 1957). Kiesler (1977) studied

post hoc justification explicitly and found that there was a strong effect of justification on people's stated family size preferences, which was especially pronounced when the family was completed. Family size desires and intentions have been found to increase after a birth (W. Miller, 1981, 1994; Miller & Pasta, 1993; Udry, 1983) and this may be due to such rationalisation.

Current age. Being older has been found to be related to lower desired family sizes (W. Miller, 1981; Pullum, 1983; Rindfuss & Bumpass, 1976; Westoff et al., 1963). W. Miller (1994) found that the older people are the less likely they are to want another child, though they may still intend to have a child especially if it would be the first. Rindfuss and Bumpass (1976) have reported that aspects of age which may affect childbearing include alternative activities competing for one's time, the likelihood that others will have finished their childbearing, concern at having less energy for childbearing and childrearing, and the norm regarding the 'proper' ages for childbearing and childrearing which is related to the increased likelihood of health problems. Miller and Pasta (1993) suggested that age is a less important factor than moving between different lifecycle stages of marriage and having children.

Age at marriage. The younger a person's age at marriage the higher desired family size is likely to be, although this association may not be very strong (Bulatao, 1975; Miller & Pasta, 1993; Pullum, 1983; Westoff et al., 1963). A younger age at marriage also tends to lead to a greater completed family size (Bumpass & Mburugu, 1977; Busfield, 1972; Rindfuss & Bumpass, 1976; Russo & Brackbill, 1973; Westoff et al., 1963). Russo and Brackbill (1973) pointed out that the younger the age at marriage the

more years that women are at risk of becoming pregnant, and this is obviously related to the importance of contraceptive efficiency. Busfield (1972) found that despite the increased use of contraception the relationship between age at marriage and family size remained quite substantial.

Family size preferences may be directly affected by age at marriage (Busfield, 1972). Women who marry at young ages will have had less experience of alternatives to familial roles and their socialisation experiences may lead them to want to assume family responsibilities as soon as possible (Busfield, 1972; Bumpass & Mburugu, 1977; Rindfuss & Bumpass, 1976). Education is an important variable in this regard as further education tends to expose people to a wider variety of adult roles, and education may also be an important factor in the acquisition of contraceptive knowledge (Busfield, 1972). Busfield (1972) also suggested that couples with a more segregated pattern of roles may be selected into the younger age at marriage groups through a relationship with social class. Increased age may also raise awareness of the costs of raising children (Busfield, 1972).

Age at first child. Greater age at first birth is associated with a smaller family size (Bumpass & Mburugu, 1977; Bumpass, Rindfuss & Janosik, 1978; Busfield, 1972; Freedman, Thornton & Wallisch, 1981; Lee & Bulatao, 1983; Presser, 1978; Pullum, 1983; Rindfuss & Bumpass, 1976). Women who are very family oriented and who want a large family may be more likely to start their childbearing while very young. Unplanned births at young ages can trap couples into finishing education early and accepting low status jobs. Family roles will then tend to be emphasised because

alternative roles are less accessible and the opportunity costs of having children are decreased, leading to higher desired family sizes (Freedman et al., 1981; Lee & Bulatao, 1983).

2.2. Background Factors

Gender. Traditionally women have been found to prefer more children than men (Cartwright, 1976; Gerson, 1986; Hobart, 1973; Russo & Brackbill, 1973). However, evidence has also been found to suggest that there are no gender differences in desired or intended family size (Coombs, Coombs, & McClelland, 1975; Miller & Pasta, 1993; Simon & Primavera, 1976; Vinokur-Kaplan, 1977), and that men prefer more children than women (Haskell, 1977).

Education. Those with higher levels of education tend to prefer smaller families (Blake & Del Pinal, 1979; Coombs, 1979a, 1979b; McClelland, 1983; W. Miller, 1994; Miller & Pasta, 1993; Ware, 1973; White & Kim, 1987). However, Janowitz (1976) found that the relationship between education and family size is complex and involves such factors as increasing knowledge of birth control, as well as broadening one's horizons and leading one to spend more time working. Education also affects age at marriage, so that more educated women tend to marry later and thus be exposed to more alternative roles before marriage (B. Miller, 1987; Easterlin, 1983; Janowitz, 1976).

Ware (1973) found that more highly educated people favour more strongly the family size norm of two children. More highly educated people tend to perceive fewer benefits and more costs involved with having more children, and thus value large families less than those with lower levels of education (Blake & Del Pinal, 1982; Cochrane, 1979). Education also tends to decrease family sizes by increasing tastes for other goods relative to children and it may provide a new lifestyle less compatible with children.

Income. Those with higher incomes and those of a higher socioeconomic status have generally been found to want and have smaller sized families than those with lower incomes and socioeconomic status (Coombs, 1978, 1979b; Coombs & Sun, 1978; Clifford, Davis, Mustian & Tobin, 1975; Kyriazis, 1979; W. Miller, 1981, 1994; Miller & Pasta, 1993). However, results in this area have been mixed. Blake and Del Pinal (1979) and Miller and Pasta (1993) have found that income is only weakly related to family size desires, while Hobart (1973) found no support for the hypothesised relationship. Others have found the opposite pattern of results when families are planned, or very small (e.g. Kiser & Whelpton, 1958; Kyriazis, 1979)

2.3. Number of Siblings

There have been many studies which have documented a small positive relationship between one's number of siblings and either one's own actual family size (Adamek & Koller, 1984; Brannon, 1979; Bumpass & Westoff, 1970; Cartwright, 1976; Clausen & Clausen, 1973; Duncan, Freedman, Coble & Slesinger, 1965; Johnson & Stokes,

1976, B. Miller, 1987; Stokes & Johnson, 1977; Westoff et al., 1963; Zimmer & Fulton, 1980) or one's own desired or planned family size (Adamek & Koller, 1984; Cartwright, 1976; Hendershot, 1969; Miller & Pasta, 1993). Duncan et al. (1965) found that while the effect of one's number of siblings on family size is small, it is clearly seen in that those who have come from large families are much more likely than those from smaller families to have large families themselves.

The relationship between one's number of siblings and one's own family size is smaller for men, and this may be because they have been provided with more resources in their own families (Duncan et al., 1965; Zimmer & Fulton, 1980). Women from large families may receive less education, leave school earlier, get married younger and start having children earlier, which will lead to them having larger families themselves than women from smaller families (Duncan et al., 1965). Improving one's lifestyle relative to that of one's parents through education is less likely to lead to a similar family size compared with those who experience a similar lifestyle to their parents (Adamek & Koller, 1984; Johnson & Stokes, 1976).

Attempting to recreate relationships from the familiar setting of one's own family may lead people to have similar family sizes as their parents (Duncan et al., 1965). Children learn social norms about family size from their parents, and this may lead them to have a similar number of children, especially if they are happy at home (Adamek & Koller, 1984; Davidson & Moore, 1992). Those from small families may have more modern value orientations and thus want, expect and have smaller families themselves (Brannon, 1979).

2.4. Gender Role Orientation and Religiosity

Gender role orientation. Modern attitudes towards gender roles are related to smaller family sizes, while traditional attitudes are related to larger family sizes (Beckman, 1979; Booth & Duvall, 1981; Haskell, 1977; B. Miller, 1987; W. Miller, 1981, 1994; Miller & Pasta, 1993; Scanzoni, 1975; Scott & Morgan, 1983; Tickamyer, 1979; Turner & Simmons, 1977; Wicks & Workman, 1978; Wrigley & Stokes, 1977).

Working, being more educated and having a modern gender role orientation are all related and tend to increase age at marriage and the likelihood of working after marriage. All of these factors tend to increase age at first birth and decrease the total family size (Scanzoni, 1975; Tickamyer, 1979; Wrigley & Stokes, 1977). One's present number of children also influences sex role behaviour and attitudes (Beckman, 1979). However, attitudes to sex roles may be the most important influence on desired family size. For example, almost 80% of women with a modern sex role attitude wanted a family of two or fewer children compared with half of the women with a traditional sex role attitude (Wrigley & Stokes, 1977).

While sex role attitudes have a strong effect on desired family size for women, there is no such effect for men (Khoo, Krishnamoorthy & Trlin, 1984; Travis & Seipp, 1975). Women still take the majority of the responsibility for childcare in most cases (Hoffman, 1978; Teachman et al., 1987). Thus the family size decision has widely different implications for men and women and it can be seen that women's sex role

attitudes will have more of an effect on their desired family size than men's sex role attitudes.

Religiosity. Religiosity has been considered to be a more important variable in relation to fertility than religious denomination (Hobart, 1973; Miller & Pasta, 1993; Oakley, 1986). Those who are more religious have been found to want and have more children than those who are not very religious (Davidson & Moore, 1992; Hobart, 1973; W. Miller, 1981, 1994; Miller & Pasta, 1993; Oakley, 1986). Thompson (1974) also found that those who had more normative religious and traditional values tended to want three or more children, while those who placed a high value on more individual goals wanted two or fewer children.

The early socialisation of religious values is probably very important to the development of family size preferences (Russo & Brackbill, 1973; Wicks & Workman, 1978). For example, Krishnan (1990) found that more religious, less educated people were more committed to traditional ideals related to families, and thus wanted larger families.

2.5. Childbearing Motivation

Previous research shows that people who are highly motivated to have children have more children than people who are less motivated to have children (Gerson, 1986; W. Miller, 1981, 1994; Miller & Pasta, 1988, 1993). The birth of each child may increase childbearing motivation at first, but then decrease it as desired family size becomes

closer. Family size desires will be increased by each birth until the desired family size is reached (Beckman, 1987; W. Miller, 1981, 1994).

Previous evidence has been mixed regarding the influence of normative pressures as opposed to childbearing motivation at different desired family sizes. Normative influences have been found to be most important before couples start their families (Crawford, 1979; Udry, 1982). It has also been suggested that there is a family size threshold below which normative influences dominate family size preferences and above which more individual considerations of costs and benefits dominate (Namboodiri, 1974, 1983).

However, a more deliberate weighing of advantages and disadvantages was not found to be restricted to those planning higher numbers of children (Crawford, 1979). Miller and Pasta (1993) also found that childbearing motivation is a very important influence on family size desires only for those who want up to two children while nonmotivational factors are relatively unimportant. However, for family size desires of more than three children, childbearing motivation was found to be unimportant with nonmotivational factors, including religiosity, predicting family size desires above three children.

2.6. Whether the Family is Completed or not

There is very little research comparing those who have completed their childbearing and those who are still completing their families. However, some research has

suggested that those who do not want more children may be more likely to work fulltime, less likely to believe in the importance of having children to the woman's role, and more likely to believe that motherhood is less important than working outside the home, than those who do want more children (Davidson & Moore, 1992). Those who do not want any more children tend to be older and to have married later than those who do want more children (Namboodiri, 1974). Education, income and religion may be more important for those with more children in terms of distinguishing between those who have completed their childbearing and those who have not (Namboodiri, 1974).

3. HYPOTHESES OF THE CURRENT STUDY

A large sample of New Zealand parents completed a questionnaire concerning their families. Based on previous research the following hypotheses were investigated.

3.1. Hypotheses regarding Sociodemographic Variables

1. Older parents will have a lower desired family size and a higher current family size.
2. Parents who were older when they got married and had their first child will have a lower desired family size and current family size.
3. Females will have higher desired family sizes than males.
4. More educated parents and those with higher incomes will have a lower desired family size.

5. People from larger families will have a higher desired family size than those from smaller families.

3.2. Hypotheses regarding Psychological Variables

1. A higher desired family size will be related to a higher current family size.
2. Less religious parents and those with modern attitudes about men's and women's roles will have a lower desired family size.
3. Higher positive and lower negative childbearing motivation will be related to a higher desired family size.

CHAPTER TWO

METHOD

1. SAMPLE

The sample consisted of 102 adult subjects from three New Zealand cities: Christchurch, Auckland and Invercargill. The great majority of them were from Christchurch. All the subjects were parents who had either one, two or three children. They also had to be able to categorise themselves as either: those who had completed their childbearing or those who were still completing their families.

Of the 102 subjects, 75 were female and 27 were male. Seventy-two of the subjects had completed their childbearing while 30 were still completing their childbearing. Thirty-eight of the subjects had two children, 34 had one child, and 30 had three children. The subjects ranged in age from 23 to 71, with the mean age being 36.5.

As can be seen from Table 1, the great majority of subjects were Caucasian New Zealanders, with very few subjects being Maori or Pacific Islanders. Most of the subjects were married, with small numbers being divorced, separated, widowed or in de facto relationships. The largest number of subjects identified themselves as having

no religious denomination, with Anglicans and Roman Catholics being the most common denominations.

Table 1: Ethnicity, marital status and religion of the sample

		N
Ethnicity	NZ Caucasian	86
	Other	13
	NZ Maori	2
	Pacific Islander	1
Marital status	Married	87
	De facto	4
	Divorced	6
	Separated	3
	Widowed	2
Religion	None	30
	Anglican	26
	Roman Catholic	20
	Other	15
	Presbyterian	11

2. PROCEDURE

Subjects were contacted using word of mouth, advertising and contacting childcare centres. The subjects completed the questionnaires at home and subsequently returned them to the experimenter. Of 210 questionnaires that were distributed, 49% were returned and had been completed.

All subjects were asked to read the information and instructions on the front cover and carefully complete the questionnaire booklet. The booklet consisted of two questionnaires- the Family Size Questionnaire (developed by the researcher) and the Childbearing Questionnaire (W. Miller, 1994) which was also slightly modified by the researcher.

Participation in this study was voluntary and subjects were free to withdraw their participation. The study was conducted anonymously and the results were confidential with envelopes being used to conceal the questionnaires when they were collected in groups. Envelopes could also be used when individuals were returning the questionnaires, as all subjects completed the questionnaires independently. Subjects were informed that by completing the questionnaires it was understood that they had given their consent to participation in the research.

Ethical approval for this study was given by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee before the study commenced.

3. MATERIALS

3.1 Family Size Questionnaire

The Family Size Questionnaire was developed for this study and consisted of two major sections: 'Background Information' and 'Family Size Preferences'. Several stages of pretesting were conducted and revisions were made accordingly.

The 'Background Information' section contained questions asking for the gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, religion, income and education of the subjects, as well as whether they had completed their families or not. In order to ascertain their religiosity, all subjects had to rate the importance of religious expression or belief in their lives on a five point scale from 'Very Important' to 'Very Unimportant'. Subjects also rated how often they had been to religious services of worship in the past year on a five point scale from 'At least once a week' to 'Not at all'. The intercorrelation for these questions was $r = 0.69$. These questions were taken from W. Miller's (1994) research on childbearing motivation (See Appendix). The subjects' responses were summed to provide their religiosity score.

In order to ascertain their gender role orientation, male subjects rated their agreement with the following statements regarding men's roles outside the home on a five point scale from 'Agree Strongly' to 'Disagree Strongly': 'A man's most important role is as the breadwinner' and 'A man's greatest natural ability lies in pursuing his work or career'. The intercorrelation for these questions was $r = 0.62$. Female subjects rated

their agreement with the following statements regarding women's roles inside and outside the home on the same scale : 'Having a challenging job or career is as important as being a wife or mother' and 'A woman's most important role is in the home'. The intercorrelation for these questions was $r = 0.56$. These questions were taken from W. Miller's (1994) research on childbearing motivation (See Appendix). The subjects' responses were summed in each case to give their score for gender role orientation.

Subjects also answered questions asking the number of their children, age when they had their first child, the gap between marriage and having their first child, and their own number of siblings.

The 'Family Size Preferences' section asked subjects to rank eight of the sixteen possible family compositions from zero children to three boys and three girls. This was in order to provide a measure of the subjects' underlying preferences for large or small families, as measured by the number preference scale developed by Coombs et al. (1975). The ranking of family sizes shows whether subjects prefer large or small families by showing whether choices after the most preferred number of children are for more or fewer children. The scale ranges from one, representing a bias towards a very small family, to seven, representing a bias towards a very large family. For example, the ordering 2406 is labelled 3 on the scale and indicates a preference for a moderately small family. Research has shown that the scale is both reliable and valid (Coombs, 1974, 1979a).

Subjects who were still completing their families were then asked how many children they now want to have altogether. Subjects who had completed their families were asked how many children they would want if they could have life over again. The subjects were also asked for their family size preference given ideal circumstances. Preference questions such as those used in the Family Size Questionnaire have been shown to be both reliable and valid (MacDonald, Simpson & Whitfield, 1978; McClelland, 1983).

3.2 Childbearing Questionnaire

The Childbearing Questionnaire (W. Miller, 1994) was developed from the Maternal Attitude Questionnaire used in Miller's (1981) original research on the psychology of reproduction. It was used in this study in a slightly modified form.

The Childbearing Questionnaire consists of two sections which measure the two primary orthogonal motivations of positive childbearing motivation and negative childbearing motivation (W. Miller, 1994). In the positive childbearing motivation section four point Likert scales were provided for the subjects to rate the desirability of 27 items that describe positive aspects of having children, while in the negative childbearing motivation section 20 items that describe negative aspects of having children were rated on these scales. These items were taken from Appendix 1 of Miller's (1994) research which contained the most recent form of the Childbearing Questionnaire (See Appendix).

The Childbearing Questionnaire was modified slightly for this study. The items in the Childbearing Questionnaire are listed in W. Miller (1994) under the headings of their subscales. The version of the Childbearing Questionnaire used in this study was constructed by spreading the questions from each subscale throughout each section, so that the likelihood of response bias would be lessened.

The instructions from W. Miller's (1981) Maternal Attitude Questionnaire were changed slightly and generally made shorter. The wording of the Childbearing Questionnaire was also changed to recognise de facto relationships. The word 'relationship' was substituted for 'marriage' and 'partner' was used instead of references to 'spouse', 'husband' or 'wife'. The Childbearing Questionnaire has been shown to be a reliable and valid measure of childbearing motivation (W. Miller, 1981; Miller & Pasta, 1993).

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

1. Descriptive Results

As can be seen from Table 2, the mean desired family size for the whole sample was 2.73. Two children was clearly the most popular desired family size, with 32% choosing this size of family. Family sizes in the range of two to four children were chosen by 94% of the sample. The subjects' desired family size was the same as their current family size in 25% of cases. Almost 50% of those who had completed their families and had two children chose their current number of children as their desired family size, compared with 25% of those who had three children and 22% of parents with one child. A family size of two children is therefore not only the most popular choice in the sample as a whole but it is also a family size which many of the parents of two children are happy with.

Desired family size given ideal conditions was found to be higher, with more variation than ordinary desired family size, with the mean ideal desired family size being 3.23. The most popular family size was four children, with 37% choosing this option and the great majority of subjects (91%) gave family sizes of two to four children. Almost half of the subjects (47%) had the same desired and ideal desired family size. More

than half of subjects who had completed their families (56%) gave the same answer in both cases, compared with only 27% of subjects who had not completed their families. Of those giving the same desired family size in each situation, 46% chose two children, 31% chose four children, and 13% chose three children.

Underlying family size preferences as measured by Coombs et al.'s (1975) number preference scale were found to favour moderate sized families, with 41% of subjects falling into this category.¹ The rest of the subjects were split evenly between underlying preferences for small families and large families, although no subjects fell into the category defined by the largest underlying preferences.

The subjects were well educated, with 59% having a tertiary qualification, and 13% having a postgraduate qualification. The sample was also affluent, with almost two thirds having household incomes of \$40000 or more, and half of these having incomes of \$60000 or more. However, about 10% of the subjects had a very low income of less than \$20000. In the sample as a whole, the level of positive childbearing motivation was higher than the level of negative childbearing motivation.

¹ The ranking order of family sizes of an underlying preference for a moderate sized family is 2460.

Table 2: Means and standard deviations of sociodemographic and psychological variables for the sample

	Mean	Standard deviation
<u>Sociodemographic variables:</u>		
Current family size	1.96	0.80
Education (0-6)	3.41	2.00
Income (0-5)	3.09	1.72
Age (years)	36.53	8.71
Age at first child (years)	27.07	4.17
Age at marriage (years)	23.67	4.31
Gap- marriage to first child (months)	45.13	30.82
¹ Marital duration (years)	11.40	7.03
Number of siblings	2.50	1.61
<u>Psychological variables:</u>		
Desired family size	2.73	0.86
Ideal desired family size	3.23	1.05
Underlying family size preference (1-7)	3.94	1.15
Religiosity (0-8)	3.00	2.60
Gender role orientation (0-8)	5.04	2.06
Positive childbearing motivation (1-4)	2.70	0.48
Negative childbearing motivation (1-4)	2.33	0.47

Note ¹Married and de facto subjects only (N= 91).

2. Correlations with Desired Family Size

As can be seen from Table 3, desired family size is significantly correlated with several sociodemographic variables. As expected, the more children parents currently have, the more children they want and older parents are more likely to want a bigger family than younger parents. In a related vein, those who have been married longer also tend to want more children than those who have been married for less time. Parents who were from bigger families themselves are more likely to want bigger families than those who had fewer brothers and sisters, as was expected. Against predictions, the parents' age when married and had their first child was not related to desired family size. In addition, and against predictions, parents' income, education levels and gender all had nonsignificant relations with desired family size.

Table 3 also shows that desired family size is correlated with several psychological variables. As predicted, parents with high positive childbearing motivation wanted significantly more children than those with low positive childbearing motivation, while those with high negative childbearing motivation wanted fewer children compared to those who have low negative childbearing motivation. Against predictions, religiosity and gender role orientation had no significant relations with desired family size. Finally, parents who had completed their families wanted about the same number of children as those who had not completed their families.

Table 3: Correlations between desired family size and sociodemographic and psychological variables

Variables	<i>r</i>
Sociodemographic variables:	
Current family size	.30**
Age	.29**
¹ Marital duration	.22*
Number of siblings	.21*
Gap- marriage to first child	-.19
Age at first child	-.18
Income	-.17
Age at marriage	-.10
Gender	.07
Education	-.05
Psychological variables:	
Positive childbearing motivation	.31**
Negative childbearing motivation	-.25*
Religiosity	.17
Gender role orientation	-.15
Whether family completed or not	-.07

Note ¹Married and de facto subjects only (N= 91).

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

3. Correlations with Current Family Size

As can be seen from Table 4, as expected, parents who had been married longer had significantly more children than those who had been married for a shorter amount of time. In addition, as expected, those who were younger when they had their first child currently had significantly more children than those who were older when they started childbearing. Against predictions, age at marriage was not related to current family

size. Parents who have completed their families currently had significantly more children than those who have not completed their families, not surprisingly. More religious parents were also found to have significantly more children than less religious parents.

Table 4: Correlations between current family size and sociodemographic and psychological variables

Variables	<i>r</i>
Sociodemographic variables:	
¹ Marital duration	.58***
Age	.48***
Gap-Marriage to first child	-.26**
Age at first child	-.23*
Age at marriage	-.09
Gender	-.06
Number of siblings	-.05
Income	.02
Education	.00
Psychological variables:	
Whether family completed or not	.59***
Religiosity	.26**
Gender role orientation	-.05
Positive childbearing motivation	.02
Negative childbearing motivation	-.01

Note ¹Married and de facto subjects only (N= 91).

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

4. Correlations with whether the Family is Completed or not

Table 5: Correlations between whether the family is completed or not and sociodemographic and psychological variables

Variables	<i>r</i>
Sociodemographic variables:	
Age	.52**
¹ Marital duration	.51**
Education	.17
Age at marriage	.06
Income	-.05
Age at first child	-.04
Gender	.00
Psychological variables:	
Positive childbearing motivation	-.27*
Negative childbearing motivation	-.01
Religiosity	.15
Gender role orientation	.15

Note ¹Married and de facto subjects only (N= 91).

The dependent variable was scored so that 1= completed family and 0= not completed family

** $p < .001$.

* $p < .01$.

Seventy-one percent of subjects indicated that they had completed their families, whereas 29% indicated that they had not. Table 5 shows that parents who are older, as well as those who have been married longer are significantly more likely to have completed their families. Age at marriage, age at first child, income and education levels, and gender had no relations with whether the family was completed or not. Those who have low positive childbearing motivation are significantly more likely to have completed their families than those with high positive childbearing motivation.

However, levels of negative childbearing motivation had no relation to whether or not parents had completed their families. Religiosity and gender role orientation were also found to have no relation with whether the family was completed or not.

5. Multiple Regression Analyses

Multiple regressions were performed in order to predict the unique effects of each of the independent variables on the dependent variables. Shared variance in the independent variables is taken into account in such analyses, so that the unique effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable can be assessed (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Hierarchical analyses were used in which the sociodemographic variables were entered first in the regression equation, and the psychological variables were added in a second set. Significant effects for psychological variables would thus show that psychological variables influence desired family size, current family size or whether the family was completed or not, over and above the influence of sociodemographic variables.

Not surprisingly, several of the sociodemographic variables were highly correlated. It is misleading to enter all such variables into regression analyses because of the problem of multicollinearity (see Cohen & Cohen, 1983). The most important sociodemographic variables were current family size, age, marital duration, education, income and gender. Current family size, age and marital duration were all strongly correlated, as were education and income. The sociodemographic variables of current family size, education and gender were thus chosen as representative of the most important sociodemographic variables. In all subsequent regression analyses

multicollinearity was not a problem, with all correlations among the independent variables being less than $r = .61$.

6. Predicting Desired Family Size

Table 6: Standardised regression coefficients and correlations from a hierarchical regression predicting desired family size

Independent variable	r	Beta
Set 1: Sociodemographic		
Current family size	.31**	.31**
Education	-.05	-.03
Gender	.08	.09
R ² increase in Set 1		.10*
Set 2: Psychological		
Whether family completed or not	-.07	-.30*
Positive childbearing motivation	.35***	.25*
Negative childbearing motivation	-.24*	-.22*
Religiosity	.15	.05
Gender role orientation	-.12	.00
R ² increase in Set 2 over Set 1		.22***
Total R ²		.32***

Note The Set 2 coefficients were obtained with all variables entered into the equation. The Set 2 R² is the increase in variance over the Set 1 variables. The final R² is the total variance explained with all variables entered. N= 97.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 6 shows that having more children currently was a significant predictor of wanting more children. Among the psychological variables, being parents with high positive childbearing motivation, parents with low negative childbearing motivation and parents who have not completed their families all significantly and uniquely predicted wanting more children. The psychological variables explained a significant amount of variance over and above that explained by the sociodemographic variables.

7. Predicting Current Family Size

As can be seen in Table 7, the sociodemographic variables do not predict current family size. However, wanting more children and having completed one's family significantly predict having more children currently. These psychological predictors explained a great deal of variance in comparison to the sociodemographic variables alone, which explained very little variance.

Table 7: Standardised regression coefficients and correlations from a hierarchical regression predicting current family size

Independent variable	r	Beta
Set 1: Sociodemographic		
Education	.00	-.01
Gender	-.05	-.06
R ² increase in Set 1		.00
Set 2: Psychological		
Whether family completed or not	.60**	.64**
Desired family size	.31*	.33*
Positive childbearing motivation	.02	.04
Negative childbearing motivation	.00	.05
Religiosity	.27*	.12
Gender role orientation	-.06	-.05
R ² increase in Set 2 over Set 1		.52**
Total R ²		.52**

Note The Set 2 coefficients were obtained with all variables entered into the equation. The Set 2 R² is the increase in variance over the Set 1 variables. The final R² is the total variance explained with all variables entered. N= 97.

* $p < .01$.

** $p < .001$.

8. Predicting whether the Family is Completed or not

Table 8 shows that having more children currently and being more educated significantly predict having completed one's family. Wanting fewer children significantly and uniquely predicts having completed one's family. The psychological variables again explained a significant amount of variance additional to that explained by the sociodemographic variables alone.

Table 8: Standardised regression coefficients and correlations from a hierarchical regression predicting whether the family is completed or not

Independent variable	r	Beta
Set 1: Sociodemographic		
Current family size	.60***	.60***
Education	.17	.18*
Gender	.01	.08
R ² increase in Set 1		.39***
Set 2: Psychological		
Desired family size	-.07	-.22*
Positive childbearing motivation	-.28*	-.17
Negative childbearing motivation	.03	-.03
Religiosity	.14	.03
Gender role orientation	.14	.08
R ² increase in Set 2 over Set 1		.11**
Total R ²		.50***

Note The Set 2 coefficients were obtained with all variables entered into the equation. The Set 2 R² is the increase in variance over the Set 1 variables. The final R² is the total variance explained with all variables entered. N= 97.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

1. Summary of Results

This study investigated influences on the family size preferences of a sample of Christchurch parents of one to three children. The results show that many traditionally important variables in this area, such as age at marriage and first child, gender, income, education, gender role orientation and religiosity had no relationship with desired family size. Many of the hypotheses outlined in the introduction were thus not confirmed. Older subjects were found to want more children than younger subjects, which was the opposite relationship than that which was expected.

However, some predictions were confirmed. For example, the more siblings subjects had, the more children they wanted. The results also confirmed the prediction that parents who currently have a larger family want more children than those with smaller families. Also confirming predictions, parents with high positive childbearing motivation want more children as do those with low negative childbearing motivation.

Being a parent who is still completing his or her family was also found to predict wanting more children.

The study also investigated possible influences on current family size and whether the family is completed or not. Older subjects were found to have more children currently, as were those who were younger when they had their first child, with both of these results confirming predictions. Those who had been married longer, more religious subjects and those who had completed their families were also found to have more children currently. Older subjects, those who had been married longer and subjects who are highly educated were found to be more likely to have completed their families. Those with high positive childbearing motivation are more likely to be completing their families, while negative childbearing motivation had no effect on this variable. Wanting fewer children was also found to predict having completed one's family.

The results of this study also showed that among Christchurch parents of one to three children, two children is the most popular family size, with two to four children being chosen by the great majority. This finding is in line with the family size norms common in recent times in the Western world, which have been found to favour families of two to four children with families of two children becoming the most popular family size.

2. Influences on Desired Family Size

Sociodemographic influences. As hypothesised, one's current number of children and desired family size were found to be highly related in this study. The hierarchical multiple regressions showed that currently having more children predicts wanting more children. It is likely that desired family size and current family size influence each other once childbearing is started, and that rationalisation plays a part in this relationship. Wanting a high number of children may thus lead to having a high number of children, while having a high number of children is also likely to lead to people stating that their desired family size is at least as high as the number of children they currently have.

Few parents in this sample favoured one or no children. However, given that the participants already have children, this is hardly surprising. Indeed, the findings of the current study were that for 25% of the parents, their desired family size was the same as their current family size, and 66% of parents had a desired family size that was higher than their current family size. Nine percent of the sample wanted fewer children than the number they currently had. This finding may also be explained by parents increasing or decreasing their desired family size according to how many children they currently have. Thus, current family size may be both a cause and a consequence of desired family size.

One's number of siblings was found to be a small but significant factor in this study, as hypothesised. While family size norms have narrowed substantially, those who do want large families may have been influenced by their own family background.

Against predictions, being older was found to be related to wanting more children, rather than fewer. It is possible that this is related to the older subjects being from a different generation, when family sizes were larger, and it was normative to want more than two children. Moreover, against predictions, age at marriage and age at first child were not related to desired family size. It is possible that these variables may have more of an impact on current family size, due to the influence of such factors as contraceptive efficiency, fecundity and available time for childbearing (Busfield, 1972).

Although it was hypothesised that women would want more children than men, the finding of this study was that men and women had similar desired family sizes. This finding is in agreement with some past research (Coombs et al., 1975; Miller & Pasta, 1993; Simon & Primavera, 1976; Vinokur-Kaplan, 1977).

Also against expectations education and income levels were unrelated to desired family size. While results of previous studies have conflicted, the results of this study indicate that people increase their desired family size by half a child on average, when asked to imagine ideal circumstances for their family, including having no financial

worries. For some parents the perception of financial constraints seems to make a real difference in considering how many children they would like to have. However, almost half of the sample chose exactly the same family size in both cases, indicating that for some parents their financial position is irrelevant to their family size preferences. This may be because they are well off financially, or because their family size preferences are not largely dependent on their financial situation.

Psychological influences. As hypothesised, parents with high positive childbearing motivation were found to want more children, as were those with low negative childbearing motivation. Moreover, the hierarchical regression analysis showed that these variables maintained their relations to desired family size when current family size was controlled for. The regression analysis also showed that being a parent who is still completing his or her family predicts wanting more children. This may be related to people initially having unrealistic ideas about having children, and the burdens of having a large family.

Gender role orientation and religiosity were also found to have no relationship with desired family size, in contrast to predictions. The lack of relationships in this sample between desired family size and the variables of gender, education, income, gender role orientation and religiosity may be related to the overrepresentation of those with higher education and high incomes in the sample and the fact that it is a New Zealand sample, since previous research has been based on overseas samples. Other variables, such as age and current number of children, are also becoming important due to such

modern trends as postponement of marriage and childbearing, increased use and efficiency of contraception and changing women's roles. The decrease in family sizes generally may also have taken the focus away from some of the traditionally important variables in predicting family size preferences and actual fertility.

While this study did not directly investigate whether normative influences or more individual considerations of costs and benefits influence desired family size, above and below a certain family size threshold (Namboodiri, 1974, 1983), childbearing motivation, age and current family size were found to be important influences on desired family size. However religiosity, which indicates a form of normative pressure did not influence desired family size. It seems that whereas in the past normative pressures such as religious values and ideology were very important in determining family size desires, such influences are now less important than individual considerations, wherein a weighing up of costs and benefits is the major influence on family size preferences (Crawford, 1979; McDaniel, 1984).

3. Influences on Current Family Size

Sociodemographic influences. As expected, older parents had higher current family sizes than younger parents. Not surprisingly, those who had been married for longer also had higher current family sizes. Being older when childbearing was begun did lead to a lower current family size, while age at marriage did not affect current family size. Age at first child may be more relevant to current family size, because of the trend towards postponement of marriage and childbearing and their increasing

dissociation. Delaying marriage and childbearing for other reasons may lead to a small family because there is less available time for childbearing, or it may also be that people deliberately delay childbearing in part because they want a small family.

Psychological influences. More religious people currently had more children. This finding may have arisen due to chance, since current family size does not represent completed family size for the whole sample. The results of hierarchical multiple regressions also showed that wanting more children predicts having a higher current family size. Not surprisingly, having completed one's family also predicts having more children currently.

4. Influences on whether the Family is Completed or not

Sociodemographic influences. As would be expected, older parents and those who had been married longer were more likely to have completed their families, in agreement with Namboodiri (1974). However, in contrast with the findings of Davidson and Moore (1992) and Namboodiri (1974), age at marriage and income did not affect whether the family was completed or not. This may be because the present study did not compare parents of the same number of children as to whether they had completed their families or not, as was the case in the other studies. Being more highly educated was also a significant predictor of having completed one's family, a finding which may suggest that education is an important variable in distinguishing between parents as to whether they are likely to have more children or not.

Psychological influences. Parents with high positive childbearing motivation were found to be significantly more likely to be still completing their families, while negative childbearing motivation was not related to whether the family is completed or not. This result may be due to the high levels of positive childbearing motivation which characterise the early stages of childbearing, as found by Beckman (1987) and W. Miller (1994). The more children people have, and the closer they get to their desired family size, the more they may become aware of the negative aspects of childbearing. The hierarchical multiple regression analysis showed that wanting fewer children predicts having completed one's family, and that having more children currently also predicts having completed one's family. Moreover the regression analysis also showed that the effect of desired family size remained when current family size was controlled for.

5. Limitations

This research examined family size preferences of individuals only. However, partners can have a strong influence in this area, and individuals may have reported a joint preference, rather than their own preference. Since participants filled in the questionnaires independently of the researcher, they may also have discussed their answers with their partners, although they were instructed not to do this. Subjects may also have given socially appropriate answers, which is an unavoidable problem with this kind of research.

Females, and those who had completed their families were overrepresented in the sample. In addition, the sample was largely Caucasian, with high incomes and high levels of education. Such a restriction of range on these variables may have contributed to the null findings obtained in this study, with regard to some of the sociodemographic variables.

The questionnaire used in this study was long and covered many areas. This may have contributed to the high refusal rate as well as the fact that some questionnaires came back incomplete. Better measures of subjects' gender role orientation and religiosity would perhaps have been provided by the inclusion of more questions designed to measure these phenomena. Hypothetical family size questions can also be problematic. Questions asking what subjects would do if they could have their lives over again are highly conjectural.

6. Future Research

Influences on family size preferences may be changing, and thus warrant further investigation. Whereas in the past variables such as education, income and age at first child were important influences on desired family size, the results of this study suggest that other factors such as current family size and childbearing motivation may be relevant in contemporary New Zealand contexts. Family size norms have narrowed in recent decades, and trends such as greater labour force participation of women, greater use of contraception, and postponement of marriage and childbearing have had a big impact on family size preferences and childbearing behaviour.

The present study focused only on parents of one to three children, whereas the influences on family size preferences may be different for parents of larger families. Comparisons between parents of large and small families could also be made, in order to examine whether childbearing motivation, lifecycle variables or background variables such as education and income, are bigger influences for parents of large families than they are for small families.

Finally, further research is necessary in order to examine the links between desired family size, current family size and whether the family is completed or not. Research into the attitudes that parents have towards family size generally, and in relation to their own children, is needed. The attributions parents make for desired and current family size may also be of particular interest.

7. Conclusions

Age, current family size and childbearing motivation were found to be the most important influences on family size preferences in this New Zealand sample. Current family size and desired family size may continue to influence each other once childbearing has begun, and people may rationalise unplanned family sizes by adjusting their desired family size up or down. Traditionally important variables of age at marriage, age at first child, education, income, gender, religiosity and gender role orientation were not found to influence family size preferences in this sample. This may perhaps be related to the general decrease in family sizes, along with associated trends of recent times, such as the increased use and efficiency of

contraception, changing women's roles and the postponement of marriage and childbearing, as well as the separation of marriage and childbearing due to increased cohabitation.

While childbearing motivation variables are a strong influence on desired family size, it is possible that family sizes are decreasing because people are weighing up the advantages and disadvantages more closely on an individual basis, rather than being swayed by normative pressures such as religious influences. Traditional ideas of what constitutes a family seem to be changing. Children are seen as necessary for fulfilment by fewer New Zealanders than ever before, and childlessness is increasing. Smaller families are also becoming more common, as people recognise the financial and emotional advantages for both parents and children, and possibly also the environmental advantages for the wider society.

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APPENDIX

FAMILY SIZE RESEARCH

Information and instructions-Please read carefully

The aim of this research project, consisting of two questionnaires, is to develop a greater understanding of the factors that affect family size. The Family Size Questionnaire first asks for some background information about you and your family. It then asks about your family size preferences, or how many children you want, as well as your gender and spacing preferences. The Childbearing Questionnaire has two parts, one which asks about your feelings about the positive aspects of having children, and one which asks about your feelings about the negative aspects of having children.

These questionnaires can be filled out by people who have one, two or three children. They must also be able to confidently say either: A) that they are still completing their family, that is, they plan to have more children, or B) that they have completed their family, that is, they are not planning to have any more children.

These questionnaires are anonymous- you are not required to give your name. Your answers will remain confidential and will be used with other answers as group data. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may at any time withdraw your participation, including withdrawal of any information you have provided. By completing these questionnaires, however, it will be understood that you have consented to participating in this research, and that you consent to publication of the results with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved.

On Pages 7 and 9 people who are still completing their families will have different questions to answer than those who have completed their families. Please follow the instructions concerning which questions to answer. Please fill out these questionnaires by yourself, rather than discussing them with anyone else, including your spouse or partner. Please answer all of the questions, according to the instructions, even if you

are unsure about your answers to some questions. Please answer the questions as clearly and honestly as possible, according to the way you really feel. The Family Size Questionnaire should take about 15 minutes to complete, and the Childbearing Questionnaire should take about 10 minutes to complete.

FAMILY SIZE QUESTIONNAIRE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please circle the appropriate category, except for Question 3.

1. Please indicate whether you have completed or are still completing your family.

Completing Completed

2. Gender : Male Female

3. Age (in years):

4. Marital Status : Never Married Married Divorced Separated

DeFacto/Living Together Widowed

5. Religion : Roman Catholic Anglican Presbyterian Methodist

Baptist Other (Please state) None

6. Ethnicity : New Zealand Caucasian/Pakeha New Zealand Maori

Pacific Islander Asian Other (Please state)

7. Annual Household less than \$20000 \$20000-30000 \$30000-40000

Income (approximate): \$40000-50000 \$50000-60000 \$60000+

Note: If your income changes quite a lot from year to year, please circle the category which includes your income for the **last twelve months**.

8. Highest Educational Qualification :
- School Certificate
 - Sixth Form Certificate
 - Higher School Certificate/University Entrance
 - University Bursary/Scholarship
 - Tertiary Level Certificate/Diploma
 - Bachelor's Degree
 - Postgraduate Degree
 - Other (Please state)

9. Please tick the expression which **most** indicates how important religious expression or religious belief is in your life.

Very Important _____ Moderately Important _____

Neither Important Nor Unimportant _____ Moderately Unimportant _____

Very Unimportant _____

10. Please tick the expression which **most** indicates about how often you have been to religious services of worship in the past year.

At least once a week _____ Every two or three weeks _____

Every month or two _____ A few times a year _____

Not at all _____

For each of the following statements, please circle the expression which **most** indicates your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement.

Males only (Females - skip to Question 13.)

11. "A man's most important role is as the breadwinner"

Agree Strongly	Agree Mildly	Neutral
	Disagree Mildly	Disagree Strongly

12. "A man's greatest natural ability lies in pursuing his work or career"

Agree Strongly	Agree Mildly	Neutral
	Disagree Mildly	Disagree Strongly

Females only (Males- Please go on to the next section.)

13. "Having a challenging job or career is as important as being a wife and mother"

Agree Strongly	Agree Mildly	Neutral
	Disagree Mildly	Disagree Strongly

14. "A woman's most important role is in the home"

Agree Strongly	Agree Mildly	Neutral
	Disagree Mildly	Disagree Strongly

Your Children

15. How many children do you have at the moment?

16. How many boys and how many girls?

17. How old were you when you had your first child?

18. In years and months, how long after you got married or began living together did you have your first child? (Answer only if this applies to you.)

19. If you have more than one child, please write down the gaps between each of your children in the spaces below.

Birth of first child to birth of second child = Years Months

 second to third child = Years Months

Your Family Background

20. How many brothers and sisters did you grow up with?

21. Were you the oldest child, the youngest child, or somewhere in the middle?

FAMILY SIZE PREFERENCES

Answer this section thinking of how you feel about the number of children in a family.

Please answer even if you are uncertain.

22. Please read carefully through the following list of types of family, thinking about how much you like each one of them. Then please rank them in order from 1 (most preferred) to 8 (least preferred), by placing a number beside each one, on the right.

Please do **not** use the same number more than once, and do not leave any out.

0 children

1 boy and 1 girl

1 girl and 2 boys

1 boy and 2 girls

3 boys

3 girls

2 boys and 2 girls

3 girls and 3 boys

The next questions have headings above them showing you which ones to answer. If you are in the **Completing** group, please answer the questions headed **Completing**. If you are in the **Completed** group, please answer the questions headed **Completed**. The heading **All** indicates that from that question on **everyone** should answer all of the questions.

Completing

23A. How many children do you now **want** to have altogether?

If uncertain, give a range. For example, write “2 or 3” if you are not sure whether you want two or three children altogether.

Completed

23B. If you could start life over again, what number of children would you choose if you could have just the number you **want** by the time you finish?

If uncertain, give a range. For example, write “2 or 3” if you are not sure whether you would want two or three children altogether.

On the next page is a list of things that can influence people’s feelings and decisions about the number of children they want. Please read carefully through this list now, thinking of which are the **most** important to you.

Then, if you are still **Completing** your family, please answer Question 24A. If you have **Completed** your family, please answer Question 24B.

- Religious beliefs about children and family life.
- Your age and/or your spouse or partner's age.
- A preference for boys or girls, or a particular combination of each.
- How close or how far apart to have children.
- Wanting to avoid having an only child.
- Financial considerations, including effects on housing or available space.
- Effects on your relationship with your spouse or partner.
- Effects of the experience of parenting your first child, or first children.
- Effects on your health or your spouse or partner's health.
- Influence of or pressure from your spouse or partner.
- Influence of or pressure from your friends or family.
- A wish to have **or** not to have the same sort of family size as you grew up in.
- Interference with your career or your spouse or partner's career.
- Amount of practical support in childrearing from your spouse or partner.
- Love of children/Enjoyment of children.
- Effects on personal freedom and time for yourself.
- Providing companionship for your first child by having more children.
- Concerns about world overpopulation, and its effect on the environment.
- Effects of pregnancy and/or childbirth.
- Encouraging sharing and cooperation in your children.
- Ability to devote more time, energy and attention to each child in a smaller family.
- Childcare resources available.
- Amount of worry and hassles, including discipline problems.
- Encouraging independence and confidence in your child or children.

Completing

24A. Please complete the following exercise thinking of those items in the list above that **are** important to you in choosing the number of children that you now want to have altogether.

Choose the **six** most important items, and rank them in order from 1 (most important) to 6 (least important), by placing a number beside your chosen items on the right.

Please do not rank two or more items as equally important.

Completed

24B. Please complete the following exercise thinking of those items in the list above that **were** important to you in the actual decisions you made, resulting in your current family size. Do this by following the instructions starting from the word “Choose” in Question 24A above.

All

25. If you could choose the gender of your children, which of the following options would you choose? Please tick one option.

- | | |
|--|-------|
| More boys than girls, or only boys | _____ |
| More girls than boys, or only girls | _____ |
| An equal number of boys and girls | _____ |
| No gender preference ie you would not want to choose | _____ |

26. If you could have exactly the number of children that you want, and **choose** the spacing between your children, about how big would you **want** the gaps to be?

Answer by using the categories below to list the gaps between each of your children, in the list provided. Include the gap between getting married or starting to live together and the birth of your first child.

For example, if you would want the gap between your first and second children to be less than 12 months, write “A” in the first space below.

A) Less than 12 months

B) 12 months to 2 years

C) 2 years to 4 years

D) 4 years or more

Marriage/defacto to birth of first child =

first to second child =

second to third child =

third to fourth child =

fourth to fifth child =

27. If you had the **ideal** circumstances for your family- in terms of money, housing, childcare arrangements and so on, how many children would you **choose** to have, knowing that you could have exactly the number you would want?

28. Which, if any, of the issues of family size, and gender and spacing preferences, had you previously considered, before reading this questionnaire?

CHILDBEARING QUESTIONNAIRE

Part 1

Below on the left are listed some things which are associated with getting pregnant and having children. Read over the list and indicate how desirable each one is to you by circling one of the four answers in the column on the right. In doing this please try to show what aspects of childbearing are more or less desirable for you. There are no right or wrong answers- please answer by choosing the response which is **closest** to the way you feel. If you feel that an item is very desirable, then circle the word "Very". On the other hand if you feel that an item is not desirable, or that it does not apply to you enough for you to have some feelings about it, then circle the word "Not". Some of the questions have different options for men and women. Please answer in terms of the appropriate option for you.

	<u>How Desirable</u>			
1. Feeling a baby move and kick inside me/ my spouse/partner.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
2. Having a child who will carry on my family traditions.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
3. Having my child be a success in life.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
4. Feeling needed and useful through my baby.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
5. Knowing that I am fertile.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
6. Giving my spouse/partner the satisfaction of parenthood.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not

7. Being the centre of a large active family.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
8. Playing with my child.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
9. Having my child provide me with companionship and support later in life.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
10. Giving birth to a baby/Helping my spouse/partner give birth to a baby.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
11. Strengthening our relationship through a child.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
12. Having my child contribute to society.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
13. Having a helpless baby to love and protect.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
14. Having my family and friends admire me with my baby.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
15. Breast/bottle feeding a baby.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
16. Fulfilling my religious feelings about family life.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
17. Guiding and teaching my child.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
18. Feeling more complete as a woman/man through my baby.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
Q19. Having a son.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not

- | | | | | |
|--|------|------------|----------|-----|
| 20. Holding and cuddling a baby. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |
| 21. Providing my parents with a grandchild. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |
| 22. Sharing childraising with my spouse/partner. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |
| 23. Having a daughter. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |
| 24. Devoting myself and much of my time to raising children and being a mother/father. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |
| 25. Fulfilling my potential by having children. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |
| 26. Experiencing the special love and closeness that a child provides. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |
| 27. Living a fuller, more enriched life through my child. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |

Part 2

In this part of the questionnaire are listed some of the things associated with pregnancy and having children which can be undesirable. Use the same way of answering as in Part 1, except remember that this time “Very” means very undesirable, “Moderately” means moderately undesirable, etc. Thus, if you feel that an item is very undesirable, circle the word “Very”. Or, if you feel that an item is not undesirable or, again, that it does not apply to you enough for you to have some feelings about it, then circle the word “Not”.

How Undesirable

- | | | | | |
|--|------|------------|----------|-----|
| 1. Having an unhappy and poorly adjusted child. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |
| 2. Being kept from my career or job by a baby/Having my spouse/partner kept from a career or job by a baby. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |
| 3. Straining our relationship with a baby. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |
| 4. Being responsible for a needy and demanding baby. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |
| 5. Worrying about the health and safety of my child. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |
| 6. Spending time and energy involved in childcare. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |
| 7. Experiencing the discomforts of pregnancy/Seeing my spouse/partner experience the discomforts of pregnancy. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |

8. Having a baby who is born deformed.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
9. Having a baby who strains my health/ my spouse/partner's health.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
10. Having to put up with the mess and noise that children make.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
11. Worrying whether I am raising my child the right way.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
12. Having a child who is a burden to my spouse/partner.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
13. Burdening our family finances with a child.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
14. Experiencing the pain of childbirth/ Seeing my spouse/partner experience the pain of childbirth.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
15. Having a child who embarrasses or disgraces the rest of the family.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
16. Taking care of a baby who is disagreeable and irritating.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
17. Taking care of a sick child.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not
18. Having a child who makes it necessary for me/my spouse/partner to have a job.	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not

- | | | | | |
|---|------|------------|----------|-----|
| 19. Feeling guilty or inadequate as a parent. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |
| 20. Having a baby who takes away my freedom to do other things. | Very | Moderately | Slightly | Not |

Thankyou for taking the time to fill in these questionnaires. It is greatly appreciated.
If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at the number below.

Contact number: Tracey Clark
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