[Ed. Note *The three lead articles in this issue suggest that the Council on Anthropology and Education is interested in the application of anthropological concepts and methods to educational institutions, both formal and informal, outside the political borders of the United States. Two of the Council's standing committees, numbers 5 and 10, direct their attention to specific concerns outside the U.S. Additionally, CAE readership abroad amounts to 137, distributed as follows: Canada, 66; Asia, 9; Latin America, 14; Europe, 12; South Pacific and Australia, 13; Africa, 2; Near East and North Africa, 21. We hope future issues of the* Quarterly *will contain articles of interest from some of these international scholars.]*

DEMOGRAPHIC SOCIALIZATION: DIRECT AND INDIRECT

Alan Howard
University of Hawaii

In view of the dramatic significance accorded to population processes by social scientists in the past few years, it is somewhat surprising that so little attention has been paid to the manner in which human beings learn about demographic events. It would seem that the way that people come to conceptualize such events as childbirth, residential movement, and death is of critical importance for programs oriented toward affecting their demographic behavior; yet the literature dealing with such learning is sparse indeed. The emergent field dealing with these issues has been labeled "population socialization," which has recently been defined as encompassing:

"*. the various processes through which persons at all stages of the life cycle become oriented to matters directly or indirectly related to population. It includes the areas of population communication and population education, but is much broader than these in scope since it also deals with unplanned ways in which persons learn about population facts, attitudes, values, norms, and behavior.*"[1]

Within the scope of this definition, we might do well to distinguish the informal processes by which "folk demographies" are developed from the more formally organized processes associated with the concepts of "population communication" and "population educa-

tion," which I regard as essentially synonymous.[2] The latter sub-fields are primarily concerned with strategies and techniques for effectively transmitting information about demographic processes to target populations. They are oriented toward change with varying emphases, depending upon the degree to which motivational or cognitive restructuring is conceived as the goal. At one extreme are programs that focus almost entirely on changing motivation, with the aim of altering demographic behavior in a direction prescribed by the "educators." Those of us who see in such programs an unpalatable assault on people's values and lifeways are not surprised, and may indeed be somewhat gleeful, when the propaganda fail to achieve their goals. At the other end of the spectrum are those programs that emphasize the transmission of information with demographic relevance, with the aim of bringing to awareness the presumed relationships between population phenomena and other values and conceptions held by a people. A recent working definition offered by UNESCO exemplifies this approach.

"*Population education may be defined as the educational process which assists individuals and groups to learn the probable causes and consequences of population phenomena for themselves and their communities (including the world); to define for themselves the nature of the problems*

related to population processes, population size and distribution and population composition; and to assess the possible and effective means by which the society as a whole and they as individuals and/or members of groups may be able to respond to and influence these processes to enhance the quality of life, now and in the future."[3]

The same working document suggests for consideration two general goals for population education, one relating primarily to the educational system and the other to the population situation.

(a) "The general goal of population education in relation to the population situation is suggested to be: to help learners understand how population processes, population size, distribution and composition, affect the society and the individual, and to help learners develop the knowledge and skills necessary to evaluate the impact of population changes as well as the impact of personal and public decisions affecting population trends; thus, the learners are enabled to make personally and socially responsible population related decisions.

(b) "The general goals of population education in relation to the educational system is suggested to be: to assist with and contribute to the processes of educational renovation and innovation through the introduction of possibly new contents, and new methodologies."[4]

These are goals that I believe most anthropologists interested in education or population can relate to without strain, and that might be used to prompt some serious thinking about the potential research contributions they could make toward such an end. The main outcome of such an endeavor can be labeled "population efficacy," an understanding of how one's ecological system operates, along with a sense of competence and acquisition of the skills required to affect the system.[5]

Although schools come to mind as the obvious institution for assuming the responsibility for developing population efficacy, "there is very little evidence to suppose that schooling systems are presently potent population socializing agencies, or that they can be made so in any rapid or facile way."[6] One solution is to use out-of-school agencies and institutions as arenas for population education, to complement if not substitute for in-school programs. But there is a more basic problem that we must confront, and that is the way in which conceptualization of population phenomena articulate with traditional folk demographies. J.A. Johnson has recently stated this problem in a succinct manner·

"In traditional societies there is considerable pressure exerted upon the young to conform. In providing a more objective view of population

phenomena we are, in effect, asking the young to make decisions contrary to long-established social norms. We are seeking to socialize outside of the context of the society. This is no minor problem and to complicate the matter there is a related difficulty. How valid is the educator's objective view of population, given that in so many (less) developed societies there may be few real trade-offs in terms of quality of life benefits which may accrue to the young even were they to make more objective population decisions?"[7]

Johnson concludes that without a better research base to establish the nature of children's folk demography and the "hidden population curricula" to which they are exposed in schools, we are in danger of building syllabi of instruction which lack real relevance to the learner.[8] Research into the formation of folk demographies is also essential if we are to avoid exacerbating problems of social and cultural conflict produced by the introduction of externally-derived population content. To some extent this problem is minimized by emphasizing informational content rather than attempting to directly aim at motivational and value change, but even in its purest forms the manner in which such information is presented generally has powerful value-laden overtones. Thus, the same basic information can be presented in a pedagogical framework that challenges a learner's basic propositions about the world and the way it works or builds upon them. But if we are to build upon underlying premises, and hence minimize conflict, we must first discover what they are and how they were learned.

I do not wish to belabor the need for research into the processes by which folk demographies are formed—processes I would choose to incorporate under the label "demographic socialization." Let me simply point out that in a recent review of research in this field, Susan Gustavus noted that:

"Within this broad range of potential topics (the learning of attitudes, facts on behaviors relevant to fertility, mortality, migration, population size, composition, growth, or distribution), the empirical literature to date has emphasized fertility attitude learning, or more specifically, factors related to the formation of family size preferences among children and adolescents. The processes of factual learning about population, methods for transmittal of behaviors, and the learning of attitudes toward migration, mortality, or related cultural phenomena have all been relatively neglected."[9]

A Framework for the Study of
Demographic Socialization

As a way of introducing our discussion of demographic socialization as a field for inquiry, I would like to present a concept of culture that may prove useful,

3

given our previous formulation of the problem. I conceive of culture as an assemblage of propositions about the nature of the world in which people live. The most elementary propositions concern categorical distinctions (which phenomena are to be classified as alike, which different). The distinction between male and female is a universal example. A secondary set of propositions concerns relationships between categorically distinct phenomena. One type of relational proposition concerns attributes of categories; for example, the statement "men are strong" is a proposition about the relationship between the category men and a physical or psychological concept. Another type of relational proposition concerns relationships between categories perceived as directly interactive. In the example we are pursuing these would include prescriptions and proscriptions for behavior as well as beliefs about the effects of interaction between men and women on the participants. At still more complex levels are propositions about the effects upon a relationship of other relationships, culminating in a set of propositions that place a relationship in a complex system (e.g., the division of labor between men and women is an integral part of a social system involving specific relationships between a population and its environment, a political economy etc.). One further type of proposition needs to be mentioned and it is of prime importance for our concerns. This is the domain of meta-propositions, or a set of propositions about the formation of propositions, including concerns about the legitimacy of various propositions. The scientific method is, of course, an example of a meta-propositional set but there are obviously other ways for establishing the acceptability of a proposition, including its acceptability (or unacceptability) to other persons, its consistency with other acceptable propositions, its opposition to unacceptable propositions, and so on.

Now, in defining culture as an "assemblage of propositions" as distinct from a "system," I am purposely choosing to emphasize the variation that exists within any population concerning acceptable beliefs. Indeed, if I were to describe all the acceptable propositions about any class of phenomena for a population consisting of two or more persons, I would find a proportion that are shared and a proportion that are unique to sub-sets or even to individuals. Also, we typically find propositions that appear to be contradictory, even within the same individual. In stating this, I do not mean to deny that systematic sets of propositions exist, only that to assume so is likely to be misleading. There are a great many other issues raised by the propositional approach to culture but space does not permit me to address them here. Instead, I would like to consider some aspects of demographic socialization from this viewpoint.

Let me begin by defining socialization as the process by which information is transmitted to individuals, leading to the formation of propositions about the world in which they live or the modification of propositions already held. Demographic socialization then refers to processes that generate or modify propositions about demographic events and processes. I would further like to distinguish "direct" socialization (the explicit presentation to an individual of propositions concerning demographic events and processes) from "indirect" socialization (the transmission of information which does not directly implicate demographic phenomena but from which propositions about them are formed).

Direct demographic socialization can therefore be thought of as the transmission of messages about birth, residential mobility, and death, the major events in the demographic trilogy At the elementary level, these messages provide a set of categorical distinctions (e.g., types of birth, such as "premature," or "cesarean"); at the secondary level are messages about the relationship of these events to other conceptualized entities (e.g., "premature births are dangerous," a proposition relating that type of birth to a set of potential health outcomes). An exploration of all propositions explicitly presented to an individual relating each demographic event (childbirth, residential movement, death) to other conceptualizations would constitute a description of that person's direct demographic socialization. The content, extensiveness, and complexity of direct demographic socialization is variable within every differentiated group and is associated with such variables as exposure to elaborate versus restricted codes in the family, school, peer group, and the like.[10] Typically, individuals are exposed to contradictory propositions (e.g., a pregnant woman is beautiful; a pregnant woman is ugly) that they may or may not resolve with an encompassing proposition. There is much more to be said about direct demographic socialization but let us go on to a consideration of the indirect processes, which are generally more profound in their impact on behavior, are more interesting, and are more difficult to study.

For the most part, indirect socialization occurs at the more complex levels of the formulation of propositions about the effects of relationships on other relationships, and in the formation of meta-propositions. I am assuming here that it is only rarely or in unusual contexts (such as schools) that individuals are presented with explicit statements about the relationships between relationships (as, for example, in the set A→B, B→C, A→C). More usually, these are left implicit, as when propositions about the same or similar categories of phenomena are juxtaposed. Here, of course, learning contexts are of considerable importance, for it is context that provides frames for juxtaposing propositions in a redundant manner, suggesting relationships between relationships. For this reason I find Majorie Muecke's

recent work of special interest; she shows very nicely the juxtaposition of propositions inherent in the traditional Thai and Western childbearing contexts. An important point to keep in mind is that contexts vary in the power they exert on this type of proposition formation. Powerful socializing contexts involve various combinations of redundancy, strong cathexis, and unambiguous information transmission. They are powerful in the sense that they generate the same type of propositions about relationships in a high proportion of participants. Weak socializing contexts involve less redundancy, weak cathexis, and include more ambiguous information. Being weak, they generate a wider range of propositions, for the inferences to be derived are not so clear.

I should make it clear at this point that inferential propositions of this order are generally not articulated and are unlikely to be conscious, which presents us with a methodological problem. These propositions must be inferred from people's intuitions of orderings that make sense versus those that do not. As researchers, we must therefore generate hypotheses about such propositions and present them to our informants to obtain their intuitive judgments. Meta-propositions, which consist of propositions about the formation and acceptability of propositions, are likewise generally learned indirectly and by inference. They concern such aspects of cognition as procedures (or rules) for making inferences and whether relationships are to be treated as deterministic or probabilistic. They also specify methods for determining the acceptability of propositions, as previously indicated. We should simply acknowledge here that the main techniques used by people to test propositions is their consistency with personal experience and their acceptability to significant others, which, of course, has been a chronic problem for educators who are all too frequently in the role of "insignificant" others.

What does all this have to do with behavior and, specifically, demographic behavior? I would argue that propositions are the raw materials of decision-making processes, demographic and otherwise. Thus, in any given behavioral context, persons draw from their total pool of propositions those that apply to the circumstances as they perceive them. What they perceive or feel generates an ordering of propositions with some salient and others, which may be equally applicable, reduced to insignificance. In part, we can think of this process as involving a set of propositions that relates conscious thoughts to possible actions, resulting in plans for behavior. Also of relevance are propositions intervening between plans for behavior and the actions themselves. Perhaps the best example of such intervening propositions have to do with locus of control—with whether the actor perceives himself, either personally or as a member of a class of persons, as having a significant effect upon the outcome. The significance of such propositions has been well documented for demographic behavior.[11]

Let us now consider some of the major problems of population educators. In the first place, it should be obvious that we are dealing with a complex process involving multiple levels of discourse. If we are to be true to the definition of population education offered at the beginning of this paper, then we must recognize that what we are doing is presenting people with rather complex propositions about the relationship between population phenomena and other aspects of the world in which they live. Frequently these propositions are in direct conflict with those previously learned, a problem that has not gone unnoticed by most population educators. But underlying these directly presented propositions are a set of complex third-level propositions (about the relationship between relationships), as well as meta-propositions that are more often than not left implicit. The point to be made is that the efficacy of message transmission probably depends far more on the compatibility of propositions at this level than on the overt level of dialogue. Knowledge of a people's folk demography at this "deep" level would, therefore, seem to be essential for effective communication (which may be thought of as the incorporation of propositions by learners into their decision-making program). Research into this area, including the development of appropriate research techniques, thus appears to be a desperate need that remains to be met.

Notes

1. "Recommendations of the conference." Population Socialization Conference, East-West Center, Honolulu, 16 December 1974.

2. Johnston, J.A. "Population Education and the Socialization of the Young." Paper presented at Population Socialization Conference, East-West Center, Honolulu, 16 December 1974.

3. "International Study of the Conceptualization and Methodology of Population Education," UNESCO, Paris, March 1975.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Report of Working Group on "Action Research and Management." Population Socialization Conference, East-West Center, Honolulu, 16 December 1974.

6. Johnston, J.A., *op. cit.*

7 *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. Gustavus, S.O. "Fertility Socialization Research in the United States: A Progress Report." Paper No. 35, East-West Population Institute, July 1975.

10. Bernstein, B. *Class, Codes and Control, Vol. I, Theoretical Studies Towards a Sociology of Language,* London. Routledge Kegan Paul, 1971.

11. Fawcett, J.T. and M.H. Bornstein, "Modernization, Individual Modernity, and Fertility " In Fawcett (ed) *Psychological Perspectives on Population,* Basic Books, 1973.