CHAPTER - III
MATERIALS AND METHODS

MATERIALS

The data for the present study were collected from Maligaon Railway Colony area of Guwahati in the district of Kamrup, Assam.

A total of 752 households, 394 from the Assamese and 358 from the Bengali, comprise the sample of the present study. In all, 827 ever-married women belonging to 752 households from the two population groups were interviewed. The households were randomly selected from each of the population groups. The married couples of different age groups having at least one child were personally interviewed by the investigator.
PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS

A preliminary investigation in the study area was undertaken as a basic step in the overall research process. This investigation was expected to provide significant insight into various aspects involved in the entire scope of the study. To conduct this pilot survey, a total of twenty households were surveyed at random, 10 from the Assamese population and 10 from the Bengali population. Necessary modifications were made in the schedule after this pilot survey.

THE MAIN STUDY

Following the preliminary investigation, three comprehensive interview schedules, keeping in view of the specific objectives and nature of the study, were prepared. The first schedule was household schedule, designed to record demographic composition of the families. It was designed in order to obtain information on a wide range of topics - name, age, sex, marital status, age at marriage, educational status, occupation, total number of persons living in the household, etc.

The second schedule was designed to cover the total fertility history of all ever-married women, survivability of their children and various factors relating to fertility and mortality.

The third schedule was designed to collect information regarding family planning method, ideal family size, value of children, etc.
DETAILS OF THE METHODS

Each of the ever-married women from the respective households, was interviewed personally through the designed schedules to collect household and individual level information. Data regarding age, sex, marital status, education, occupation, etc., were collected for all the members of the households to obtain information on the general demographic profile of the population. Comprehensive individual level information, i.e., information with respect to ages at various stages of life; pregnancy / birth history; particulars to each conception; fertility and gender preferences; knowledge, usage and attitude towards family planning methods; etc., were gathered for exploratory fertility, child mortality, family planning methods usage analyses. All these information were cross-checked from other members of the households.

The Retrospective Approach proved to be useful to gather consistent information on ages at various stages of life of the respondents. At first, the calender months, years in respect of the requisite information were asked. Failing to obtain the calender date the responses were corroborated by relating to the important events, historical or cultural. Such as, the year of independence, natural disaster like earthquake of Assam in 1950 and establishment of NF Railway Headquarters at Maligaon, etc. These were again cross-checked.
Information on birth histories of the respondents was obtained by *Life History Approach* which required detailed probing for events of respondents' reproductive life, viz., menarche to marriage; first conception; outcome of conception; place of delivery; survival status of the offspring; if dead, causes of death; duration of breast feeding, ages at which supplementary food were introduced; then from this period to the second conception, and thus to the menopause.

Thus, a combination of approaches, retrospective approach, life history approach, were adopted to check the consistency and accuracy of responses.

**DURATION OF THE FIELD WORK**

The preliminary investigation in the study area was undertaken in 1996 (June-August). The collection of data for main study was carried out during the months of November 1998 to March 1999.

**DATA PROCESSING**

The data in the study have been analysed using extensive tabulations by standard statistical techniques. The methods described by *Barclay (1958)* were followed for calculating different fertility and mortality rates.