

"desired." Yet the National Fertility Study of 1965 shows, for whites, very close agreement among ideal, desired, and intended family size: the average "ideal" is 3.24, "desired" is 3.29, and "intended" is 3.16 (3). In further misunderstanding of the surveys the authors make the amazing statement that "almost all low-income parents" have an "expressed preference for less than four children." They confuse an *average* with a *proportion*. Actually, although the average preference is for fewer than four, approximately 40 percent of the women with incomes "under \$3000" said in 1960 that they wanted four or more children (4). As for the categorical claim that Negro couples desire smaller families than do white couples, Table 1 of the authors' own article shows that this claim is true only for well-educated Negroes. Poorly educated ones want more children than comparable whites, except for white Catholics.

Continuing to dispute the evidence, the authors object to opinion polls as against "in-depth" studies on birth control. The "in-depth" question from the 1965 study that they claim I ignored (the results were, in fact, not published) runs as follows (5): "Most married couples do something to limit the number of pregnancies they will have. In general, would you say you are *for* this or *against* this?" If this question is superior, why are the results, tabulated by educational level (Table 2 of the Harkavy article), essentially the same as the polling data? Both sources show the least approval of birth control among respondents with only a grade school education.

Defending their idea of a great "need" for government assistance in family planning, Harkavy *et al.* turn to the overworked and ambiguous concept of "excess fertility." The concept, as applied to couples, was carefully defined when first used in the 1960 Growth of American Families Study. It was concerned with whether the respondents "really wanted" another child at the time of the last conception. If the respondent said that she, her husband, or both had not wanted another child, this was defined as "excess fertility." But the authors of the 1960 study emphasize that in 50 percent of such cases *one* spouse "really wanted" another child. The original authors also caution that "many wives who said that they had not 'really wanted' another child before the last conception also said . . . that if they could have just the number they wanted and then stop, they would have the same number they had and even more" (5, p. 236). As defined in the actual studies, "excess fertility" obviously cannot be equated with "unwanted" pregnancies; yet such an equation has been a principal argument favoring a federal program.

The estimate of the five million women who "want" and "need" contraception is grossly overstated. It includes sterile women, birth control users, objectors, and women seldom or never having intercourse. Our reestimate, correcting for the errors just mentioned, shows that the number is *substantially fewer than two million*. This estimate does not imply that the women need federal services, but merely that they need contraception.

Harkavy and his colleagues are right that family planning for the poor is not a means of population control. It is not even a "first step" to that goal. But until now this has not been clear; the government has been sold a risky program as part of a population-control package. This program invites charges of genocide, dissemination of dangerous drugs, and subversion of moral standards—ironically, it now appears, for the purpose of "health" and a dubious welfare goal. The insensitivity to such risks, as well as the paradoxical confusion of goals, is exemplified by Senator Gruening's support of the statement that (6) ". . . whatever might be the long-range adverse effects of the pill . . . women prefer to take their chances. They would risk any possible ill effect rather than become pregnant."

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References and Notes

1. The principal documents under discussion are: O. Harkavy, F. S. Jaffe, and S. M. Wishik. *Implementing DHEW Policy on Family Planning and Population* (1967, mimeographed; available from the Ford Foundation. New York); *Report of the President's Committee on Population and Family Planning: The Transition from Concern to Action* (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1968); and *Hearings on S. 1676, U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Foreign Aid Expenditures* (17 volumes of testimony concerning "the population crisis").