

Despite the inverse relationship just described, I may have overemphasized the lesser approval of birth-control programs on the part of persons of lower economic and social status. After all, in recent years approval often has been high even among people at the lowest social levels. Among women with only a grade school education, the percentage of those favoring birth-control programs averaged 73 percent in polls taken between 1959 and 1964; among men at the lowest educational level, the corresponding average was 66 percent. Yet it is undeniably true that, throughout the period for which data are available, the people who needed birth-control information most, according to recent policy pronouncements, have been precisely the ones who were least in favor of a policy that would make it widely available.

The truth of this conclusion becomes more evident when we move to an analysis of a question asked on the 1966 Gallup poll: Do you think birth-control pills should be made available free to all women on relief who are of childbearing age? This question presents the public with the specific issue that is the focus of current policy—namely, birth control especially for the poor. A summary of the replies to this question is given in Table 5, together with average percentages of people who, in the five surveys made between 1959 and 1964, replied that they approved birth control generally.

TABLE 5.—PERCENTAGES OF WHITE U.S. MEN AND WOMEN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 21 AND 44 WHO, IN A 1966 POLL, EXPRESSED APPROVAL OF FREE DISTRIBUTION OF BIRTH-CONTROL PILLS FOR WOMEN ON RELIEF, AND AVERAGE PERCENTAGES OF INDIVIDUALS IN THIS AGE GROUP WHO, IN POLLS TAKEN BETWEEN 1959 AND 1964, EXPRESSED APPROVAL OF BIRTH CONTROL. PERCENTAGES APPROVING AND NUMBERS OF INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED ARE GIVEN AS TOTALS AND ALSO BY EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS.

Item	Men			Women		
	1966		1959-64 (average %)	1966		1959-64 (average %)
	%	N		%	N	
Total.....	65	264	82	71	385	81
Education:						
College.....	82	98	87	75	197	87
High school.....	58	142	82	70	392	81
Grade school.....	38	24	66	59	32	73
Economic status:						
1.....	79	80	89	70	110	87
2.....	69	75	84	76	99	82
3.....	59	65	83	70	91	80
4.....	39	41	74	67	76	78

It is clear that the overall level of approval drops when specific reference to a poverty-oriented birth-control policy is introduced. The decline is from an average of approximately 80 percent for each sex during the period 1959-64 to 65 percent for men and 71 percent for women in 1966. Of most significance, however, is the fact that the largest proportionate drop in approval occurs among members of the "target" groups themselves—the poor and uneducated. In particular, there is a remarkable drop in approval among men at this socio-economic level. There is a 42-percent decline in approval among men who have had only a grade school education and a 29-percent drop among those with a high school education. Among the college-educated men the drop in approval is only 6 percent. The results, by income, parallel those by education: there is a 47-percent drop for men in the lowest income group but only a 9-percent drop for those in the highest income bracket. Even if the tabulations are restricted to non-Catholics (data that are not presented here), the results are essentially the same.

If the ghetto-oriented birth-control policy urged on the federal government meets with limited public enthusiasm, how does the public view extension of that policy to teen-age girls? This question is of some importance because a notable aspect of the pressure for government-sponsored family-planning programs is advocacy of making birth-control information and materials available at the high school level.

The Committee on Population of the National Academy of Sciences urges early education in "family planning" in order to prevent illegitimacy (2, p. 13).