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by

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All manuscripts are processed through the Editorial Subcommittee and evaluated and approved by its members in collaboration with invited reviewers of relevant specialties.

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FAMILY PLANNING, FERTILITY DECLINE, AND FAMILY SIZE PREFERENCE IN HONG KONG: SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Introduction

After the Second World War and especially during the last two decades or so Hong Kong has emerged rapidly as an industrial metropolis and an important centre for international trade. Her population has more than doubled from approximately two million in 1951 to over four million in 1972. About 80 per cent of this population live in the urban areas of roughly 20 square miles, despite a total land area of nearly 400 square miles, thus resulting in a population density of the order of more than 200,000 per square mile which is certainly among the highest in the world. In some commercial-residential districts and many of the public housing estates, the spot density is even several times higher. A population of this magnitude and in such a state of crowdedness is bound to have grave implications for housing, education, health, welfare, and other social services, especially in a place that is deficient in inhabitable land and natural resources, and a place where employment is highly competitive and where the health of the economy is largely dependent on the fluctuations of the international market. Although a lot was achieved in the last two decades in such areas as public housing and development of new towns to decentralize part

of the population, and conditions of living have generally improved, the "population pressure" has hardly dissipated. During this period the importance of and need for limiting population growth began to receive more public attention and discussion which more or less came to a peak around the activities of World Population Year 1974 many of which were sponsored by the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong. However, there is to date no official population policy on the part of the Hong Kong Government other than the effects on population distribution that the new towns being developed would bring and a recent tightening up of immigration control with respect to migrants from mainland China.[1] The task of promoting the limitation of family size in an organized manner is left almost entirely to the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong.

This paper is about family planning in Hong Kong. It will first describe some characteristics and achievements of family planning in Hong Kong and its contribution, along with changing social and economic conditions, to the recent fertility decline in Hong Kong. It will then review some data showing family size preferences of some married women and students to demonstrate the emergence of a small family norm in Hong Kong. The essence of these general observations is to suggest that the future prospect of fertility control in Hong Kong is rather favourable.

The data used in this paper come from a variety of sources. They include Government censuses, statistics compiled by the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong, and several survey studies undertaken by the Social Research Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Family Planning and Fertility Decline in Hong Kong

The first organized effort in promoting birth control in Hong Kong started in 1936 with the founding of the Hong Kong Eugenics League, predecessor of the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong. Family planning activities did not, however, begin to take off until the mid-fifties, when the Family Association of Hong Kong, instituted in 1950, rapidly expanded its services and acquired a good number of clinics with Government subventions. Beginning from 1965, recruitment of clients or persuasion of mothers to adopt family planning concentrated on the Maternal and Child Health centres and many hospitals, a method which later developed into the Association's post-partum programme. In the early sixties, the Association started their information programme aimed at motivating the public to know about contraception. This programme has been gradually intensified and diversified, utilizing a variety of communication channels. A separate Information, Education, and Communication Department was formed in 1976. Over the last two decades,

a change in the theme of family planning communication, as expressed, for example, in the Association's posters, reflects more or less the change in the general notion of family planning in this period. The early posters typically showed the woes and difficulties brought about by a large family and on the whole tended to arouse a pathetic feeling. Later posters, especially those of the last few years, were much more "positive" and "lively" as they mostly appealed to a desire for planned and small families. The accent turned to the happiness that such families are likely to bring. To many people, family planning used to mean at best preventing a larger family after the fact of many births. According to the Family Planning Association's records, the peak parity of acceptance of contraception among its recruited clients was six or above in 1961.[2] This is basically the same as reported by Richard and Margaret Coughlin in a study of 300 women applicants to the Family Planning Association's central clinic in 1958-59. They reported that about 52 per cent of these women had four or more children already.[3]

The intensification of the Family Planning Association's activities in the sixties included the introduction of the IUD (intra-uterinal device) in 1964-65 and the oral pill in 1968. These two methods of contraception (now particularly the pill), together with sterilization which

is more commonly adopted among older mothers, have been the main methods accepted by women. Since 1965 the characteristics of acceptors of contraception recruited by the Family Planning Association in terms of age and parity showed a notable change. The proportion of younger mothers (under 25 years of age) increased from 18 per cent in 1965 to 26 per cent in 1969, and the proportion of acceptors with parity two or below increased from 29 per cent in 1965 to 62 per cent in 1969.[4] Thus, family planning was attracting more and more younger mothers at an increasingly earlier stage in their childbearing experience. Indeed, some of the findings from two surveys confirm this. From Robert Mitchell's Urban Family Life Survey carried out in 1967 by the then Social Survey Research Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Survey on the Impact of Industrialization on Fertility in Hong Kong (referred to later in this paper as the Fertility Survey) undertaken jointly by the Social Research Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong in 1972, we know that the practice of contraception has tended to start at lower pregnancy levels, especially among younger mothers. Thus, for instance, the modal starting point of contraception among mothers under 30 years of age was after the second pregnancy in 1967 but was after the first in 1972. Similarly, 58 per

cent of mothers 30 to 34 years of age in 1967 reported starting contraception practice after the fourth pregnancy, but 48 per cent of mothers of the same age group in 1972 reported that they started such practice after the first or second pregnancy.[5] According to the Fertility Survey of 1972, 65 per cent of the 2270 reproductive age women studied had used contraception sometime in the past. The proportion of ever-users rose to three-quarters or more among those in the 30-39 age group as contrasted with 47 per cent among those aged 45-49. The findings also showed earlier practice of contraception among the younger women. Of those under 30 years of age, for instance, about 11 per cent started to practise contraception before the first pregnancy and about 45 per cent after it.[6] Therefore, it would be reasonable to predict that the likelihood of Hong Kong's married women to have used contraception relatively early in their reproductive cycle will be increasingly larger in the years to come. It would also be plausible to infer that the awareness of planning and spacing births is on the rise.

What effect would all this have on fertility in Hong Kong? The empirical evidence just cited indicates that the past decade (roughly since the mid-sixties) has witnessed more married young women taking to family planning at an early stage in their married life. That decade has

also witnessed a rather phenomenal decline in the birth rates of Hong Kong, both overall and age-specific (see Tables 1 and 2). The decline in the crude birth rate during the early sixties, i.e., 1961-65, was predominantly a result of changes in the age structure of the population brought about by the last war. Birth rates declined during and just after the war years, thus leading to a relatively low proportion of females of early childbearing ages about twenty years later. However, as Freedman and his associates pointed out, almost all of the decline in the crude birth rate in the years after 1965 was due to true decline in fertility.[7] Similarly, a recent United Nations monograph on Hong Kong's population reports that "for the period 1965-1971, . . . some 90 per cent of the decline in the birth rate was the result of decline in age-specific birth rates."[8] The crude birth rate began to fall below 20 per thousand in 1971 and is currently about 18 per thousand, which is drastically below the near-40 per thousand level in the fifties. Further, as shown in Table 2, age-specific birth rates have reduced substantially almost throughout the childbearing ages. It should be noted that between the years 1965 and 1968 fertility decline was particularly substantial in the younger childbearing ages. Thus, the birth rates for the 20-24 and the 15-19 age groups dropped 37 per cent and 34

Table 1 Crude birth rates, 1961 - 1976

Year	Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)
1961	35.0
1962	34.0
1963	33.5
1964	30.7
1965	28.1
1966	25.3
1967	23.7
1968	21.7
1969	21.4
1970	20.0
1971	19.7
1972	19.5
1973	19.5
1974	19.3
1975	18.2
1976	17.7

Sources: Rates for 1961 to 1971 were taken from United Nations, The Demographic Situation in Hong Kong (ESCAP Country Monograph Series No. 1, 1974), table 119. Rates for 1972 to 1976 were taken from Census and Statistics Department of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics, (January 1977), table 15.1.

Table 2 Age-specific birth rates for selected years from 1961 to 1976

Year	Births per 1,000 women aged						
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
1961	47	238	313	231	139	57	9
1965	41	252	318	211	122	39	3
1966	29	213	291	203	111	42	3
1967	29	178	268	201	123	40	6
1968	27	158	234	170	102	36	2
1970	18.2	155.1	233.1	168.6	87.0	30.9	4.7
1971	17.0	145.6	243.8	162.5	83.6	28.4	3.6
1972	17.4	139.3	248.0	145.8	77.4	25.8	3.2
1973	17.9	132.5	243.3	141.8	72.4	23.5	3.2
1974	18.8	133.3	219.2	137.4	65.7	21.1	2.5
1975	17.8	121.5	198.6	126.0	54.5	18.3	2.4
1976	17.4	109.7	192.1	119.6	48.9	14.6	1.5

Sources: Rates for 1961 and 1965-68 were taken from Ronald Freedman et al., "Hong Kong's Fertility Decline, 1961-68," Population Index 36(1) (January-March 1970), 3-18. Rates for 1970 and 1971 were taken from United Nations, op. cit., table 120 which computed them from the vital statistics compiled by the Census and Statistics Department of Hong Kong. Rates for 1972 to 1976 were supplied by courtesy of the Census and Statistics Department of Hong Kong.

per cent respectively. The corresponding figure for the 25-29 age group is 26 per cent, and declines for the older age groups are relatively much smaller. As pointed out by Freedman and his associates, a more rapid decline in fertility among the younger age groups is likely to lead to greater and probably more permanent decline in overall fertility.[9] This is an important factor that partly accounts for the fact that the crude birth rate has continued to remain low after it fell below 20 per thousand in 1971 even though the relatively large proportions of the female population toward the bottom of the population pyramid in 1961 have begun to enter childbearing age in the seventies.

Why has fertility declined in Hong Kong? The findings concerning the practice of contraception and the activities of the family planning programme during this recent period of fertility decline tend to suggest that the family planning programme has probably played an important role. It would be difficult indeed to determine just how much of the fertility decline was actually due to the family planning programme of the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong and how much is attributable to changing social and economic conditions in Hong Kong. It would be correct, however, to say that both sets of factors have brought about the fertility decline.

Rapid industrialization of Hong Kong in the last decade or two has been accompanied by a rapid expansion of education, first at the primary level and then at the secondary level. From the censuses of 1961 and 1971, we know that the proportion of persons with a secondary school education or above among the economically active population increased from 27 per cent in 1961 to 33 per cent in 1971. Since 1971 education has been free in Government primary schools and school attendance rate among primary school age children has reached rather close to 100 per cent. Efforts are now under way to provide at least up to three years of secondary schooling to as many youths as possible. It is only logical to expect, therefore, a continual rise in the general level of educational attainment in the population.

The social and economic consequences of a rising educational level are of course many, including, for instance, rising and more diversified expectations of life, delayed marriage, increasing employment of women in a wider variety of occupations in a society that is undergoing industrialization and modernization, greater exposure to and hence acquaintance with contraceptive knowledge, greater desire for upward social mobility, and probably a higher degree of awareness of and inclination towards planning and achievement. All these tend to favour and encourage a

motivation to limit family size. That higher educational attainment is closely associated with smaller family size and greater use of contraception is already well documented in a great number of studies concerned with fertility.[10] In the case of Hong Kong, it has been found both in the Fertility Survey cited above and in the People of Kwun Tong survey, also conducted by the Social Research Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong,[11] that even after controlling for age, the better educated mothers clearly tended to have fewer children. Indeed, the data from these surveys indicate that for women aged 25-34, for example, those with a post-secondary education had an average of roughly 1.8 children while those without any schooling had over three on the average.[12]

In the context of modern industrial Hong Kong, better education is probably associated with a change, subtle and complex as it may be, in people's attitudes towards traditional Chinese values concerning the family, including such themes as the centrality of patrilineage and hence strong preference for boys as male heirs, the submissive role of women vis-à-vis men and that of children in relation to parents, and the large family ideal. It is not unlikely, therefore, that children and having children are viewed not so much with an eye to their possible contribution to the social prestige of the family or to the old-age security of

the parents as with a concern over what the family can afford or provide in terms of the quality of life that would be available to their children. Indications of this pattern are found in the People of Kwun Tong Survey. When asked what they thought was the primary advantage of having children, only less than one-tenth of the eight hundred odd parents interviewed mentioned "perpetuation of the family line" and a similar proportion mentioned "security against old age." By contrast, almost two-thirds of them mentioned "emotional satisfaction" or "fun to the family." However, emotional strain and financial burden were most often cited as disadvantages of having children. This suggests a very practical and realistic approach to assessing the value and cost of children. As life in Hong Kong is becoming in many ways increasingly competitive and, to the lament and frustration of many an urbanite, threatened by a soaring crime rate, it is not surprising that the great majority of the parents in the survey said that the things they were most concerned about their children were the latter's study, safety, and staying away from bad elements and influences of the society.

Another aspect alluded to above of the family pattern brought about by rising educational levels and other influences of industrialization is that inter-spouse relationship in the average Hong Kong family has by and

large become equalitarian although the husband is still relatively dominant. This is borne out by a number of studies of the Hong Kong family.[13] In the People of Kwun Tong Survey, it was found that the better educated couples tended to engage more frequently in discussion of birth control compared with the less educated ones, and that those couples who had some or much such discussion experience were considerably more likely than those who had little or none to have been users of contraception sometime in the past.[14]

One of the factors that have brought about more equalitarian husband-wife relations is possibly the expansion of female economic opportunities which is certainly closely associated with rising educational levels but which also tends to affect family structure and fertility motivation independently of education. With the continual growth of the Hong Kong economy in the last couple of decades, employment opportunities in both the manufacturing and service sectors have expanded and diversified. Relatively new industries such as electronics and toy-making, along with the traditional textile and garment industries, are all employing large numbers of female workers. At the same time, the expansion of Hong Kong's international trade has rapidly given rise to expansion of all sorts of clerical and service occupations

for the more educated females. The censuses of 1961 and 1971 showed that, on the whole, female economic activity rates rose substantially for the younger age groups. In the 20-24 age group, for example, the economic activity rate was 51 per cent in 1961 but was almost 70 per cent in 1971.[15] For many of the younger and unmarried females, the increased occupational opportunities, coupled with expanding educational opportunities, are most likely to lead them to orient themselves towards some sort of occupational career and to remain unmarried for some more time than would otherwise be the case. Indeed, data from the censuses show that there have been substantial declines in the proportion married for females under 25 years of age, thus indicating a tendency to postpone marriage (see Table 3). For married females, the increased employment opportunities may have encouraged a desire to delay childbirths or not to have too many children. Thus, both in the Fertility Survey and in the People of Kwun Tong Survey, it was found that family size and employment of mother are negatively associated. That is, those mothers who worked full-time, as compared with those who worked only part-time or who did not work at all, either at the time of the survey or even before marriage, tended to have on the average significantly fewer children.[16] Naturally, the causality of the relationship between fertility and work

Table 3 Percentage of female population married, under 30 years of age for selected years

Age	Year			
	1961	1966	1971	1976
15 - 19	6.4	4.7	2.9	3.9
20 - 24	51.0	42.7	32.3	31.5
25 - 29	83.4	85.2	79.5	74.0

Sources: Reports on the 1961 census, the 1966 By-Census, the 1971 census, and the 1976 By-Census.

can be either that some women work because they have fewer children or that some women have fewer children because they work. In the case of the latter, which may be on the increase under the influences of improved education and better employment opportunities (this has yet to be empirically confirmed), a more conscious effort to control and space births would be called for.

From the above discussion it seems reasonable to argue that the social and economic conditions of Hong Kong in the last couple of decades have been such that there is now in the population a greater demand for limiting family size than ever before. It is, in a sense, "timely" that family planning technology and the family planning programme in Hong Kong developed actively also during this period. The activities of the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong, augmented by the diffusion effect of these activities, have, as Freedman argues, met a good part of the demand for birth control. Freedman also argues that the Association may have helped to define and to increase that demand.[17] Given the continuing pattern of Hong Kong's social and economic conditions and given that the Family Planning Association will continue to expand its educational as well as clinical services, then this argument seems plausible indeed.

Having seen that the recent fertility decline in Hong Kong is largely the result of both the development of the family planning programme and the trend of social and economic conditions, let us now turn to an examination of some data on family size preference which may shed some light on the future prospect of fertility control in Hong Kong.

Family Size Preferences in Hong Kong

Based on census information and the findings of the surveys cited earlier, we know that in Hong Kong the present average family size or the average number of children a married couple have living with them is around 3.5. This number would be different if we are looking at different parts of the population. In the resettlement estates, for example, which are the older types of public housing accommodating generally families of lower socio-economic status, the average family size would be around five or even sometimes six. In spring 1975 a group of 224 first year undergraduates at the Chinese University of Hong Kong taking an introductory sociology course were asked to answer a questionnaire concerning family life and family size. The average size of the families from which these students came was found to be just a little over five. Their families were earning a median income of approximately HK$2,100 (US$420) a month which by Hong Kong standards was

roughly upper-lower class. More than half of their fathers and about 80 per cent of their mothers had no more than a primary school education.

There is a good amount of empirical evidence to show that almost irrespective of the actual family size, both the parents' generation and the younger generation such as these students demonstrate a remarkable convergence in family size preference. Such convergence is especially well-defined among the youths and suggests a norm of the "ideal" family being one comprised of two to three children.

In the People of Kwun Tong Survey, the mothers were asked how many children they would like to have if they had the choice to start all over again. In responding to this question they were reminded to take all their previous life experiences into consideration. The results are presented in Table 4 which also lists the average actual family size of each age group and the percentage of each age group preferring two children. It can be seen that while the average actual family size varies from 1.39 to 5.14 across the span of the age groups, there is considerably less variation in the average preferred family size, i.e., from 2.74 to 3.41. It should be noted that while the mothers under 30 years of age tend to prefer somewhat more children on the average than what they already have (many of them have two children or less), the mothers aged 30 and older

Table 4 Actual and preferred family size by mother's age

Mother's age	Mean actual family size (A)	Mean preferred family size (B)	Difference (B) - (A)	Modal preferred family size	% preferring two children	Base N
Under 25	1.39	2.74	1.35	2	40.4%	(47)
25 - 29	2.32	2.85	0.53	2	37.9%	(87)
30 - 34	3.49	3.12	-0.37	3	29.0%	(93)
35 - 39	4.22	3.23	-0.99	4	28.3%	(145)
40 - 44	5.05	3.53	-1.52	4	17.3%	(162)
45 or older	5.14	3.41	-1.73	4	16.3%	(215)

Source: People of Kwun Tong Survey (1973-74), Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

all tend to prefer a family size smaller than their own, especially among the older mothers. It should also be noted that the percentage of mothers preferring two children increases substantially among the younger mothers. Thus, there are close to 40 per cent of the mothers under 30 who think that two children would be ideal if they could start all over again. The overall pattern is quite clear that the younger women are much more likely to favour a small family. This has a special significance when one takes into account that the survey was taken in Kwun Tong, an industrial town that contains a very high proportion of families (about 80 per cent) living in public housing estates which for the most part belong to the lower end of the socioeconomic scale in Hong Kong. It suggests that, assuming a fairly typical preference for small families among the upper social strata, there is probably not much class difference in the notion of what an "ideal" family size ought to be. This, indeed, is also suggested by findings on "desired" family size of the Fertility Survey which used a more comprehensive Hong Kong-wide sample. In that survey, it was found that although younger mothers desired smaller families than older mothers, there was no significant difference in the average desired family size for mothers within each age group but across various types of housing which roughly correspond to the various social strata.[18]

When the data in Table 4 are analyzed in greater detail by taking into consideration the variation in preferred family size according to both actual family size and mother's age, we notice certain interesting patterns of how the preferred family size is "affected" by the actual family size. Table 5 shows, for each age group, the percentage of mothers preferring the same family size as the actual family size among those with a particular actual family size. We see that, on the whole, the likelihood for mothers to prefer the same family size as the actual family size is highest when the actual family size is three and second highest when the actual family size is two. In other words, it appears that women tend to be most contented with their fertility performance when they actually have two or three children.

Furthermore, from the same data but not directly shown in Table 5, we found that (a) when the actual family size reaches five or more, the overall tendency is overwhelmingly preferring fewer children, and that (b) given the actual family size is two or smaller, the majority tend to prefer two children, almost irrespective of the mother's age.

From the above analysis of family size preferences of women in the People of Kwun Tong Survey, we may state the following observations: (1) Younger mothers tend to

Table 5 Percentage of mothers preferring same family size as actual family size by actual family size and age

Mother's age	Actual family size							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7+
Under 25	0.0 (9)*	5.6 (18)	30.8 (13)	40.0 (5)	0.0 (1)		0.0 (1)	
25 - 29	0.0 (6)	13.3 (15)	50.0 (34)	60.0 (15)	40.0 (10)	16.7 (6)		0.0 (1)
30 - 34	0.0 (2)	0.0 (2)	61.5 (13)	41.4 (29)	48.0 (25)	15.4 (13)	0.0 (4)	0.0 (5)
35 - 39	0.0 (2)	50.0 (2)	71.4 (21)	72.0 (25)	69.4 (36)	21.7 (23)	19.0 (21)	0.0 (15)
40 - 44	0.0 (3)	0.0 (2)	60.0 (10)	72.2 (18)	57.1 (35)	20.6 (34)	14.3 (28)	0.0 (32)
45 or older	0.0 (3)	14.3 (7)	70.6 (17)	80.0 (20)	64.5 (31)	12.5 (40)	6.7 (30)	0.0 (67)

Source: People of Kwun Tong Survey (1973-74), Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

* Base number for percentage.

prefer a smaller family size than do older mothers, but the difference is not as great as that between the actual numbers of children they have. (2) Having as many as five children is generally considered to be too many. (3) While more of the younger mothers prefer two children, mothers of all age groups who actually have two children tend to prefer two children also.

Thus, family size preference is responsive to the actual family size as well as to the mother's age, perhaps more so to the former than to the latter. On the one hand, there is more convergence toward the ideal of a two-child family among younger mothers. On the other hand, actually having a two-child or three-child family seems to be particularly satisfactory.

To gain some idea of how the younger generation of these Kwun Tong mothers thought about family size, their children between the ages of 17 and 21, if any, were asked how many children of their own they would want in the future. We obtained replies from a total of 116 such youths from 90 families. Only 76 such youths, however, indicated a distinct family size preference. About half of these responses preferred two children, and another 30 per cent preferred three.

In the survey of 224 first year university students mentioned before, the question was also asked as to how many

children they would like to have in the future. As it turned out, 58 per cent of them preferred two children and 28 per cent preferred three. No one preferred more than four. In fact, this pattern remains basically the same regardless of the size of their family of orientation, as shown in Table 6. When asked what number of children would make a family too large, 36 per cent of the students said four and 41 per cent said five, thus resembling the pattern of the Kwun Tong mothers almost none of whom preferred to have more than five children if they had the choice to start all over again.

These data on family size preference, limited in representativeness as they may be, do suggest a rather consistent phenomenon. Both married women with actual childbearing and child-raising experience and the younger generation who are soon to establish their own families tend to favour a small family of two to three children. We have seen that this tendency among the younger generation is particularly strong. While the family size preference of the married women is influenced by the number of children they actually have, that of the youths is not influenced by the number of their siblings. Of course, the meaning of family size preference is different for the two categories of persons. In the case of the youths, such preference is purely anticipatory and essentially tentative. It is

Table 6 Students' family size preference by size of family of orientation

Preferred family size	Size of family of orientation				All
	1-2	3-4	5-6	7+	
1	4.2%	1.5%	5.6%	9.1%	4.9%
2	56.5	61.2	57.8	54.5	58.0
3	21.7	29.8	32.2	20.5	28.2
4	17.4	7.5	4.4	15.9	8.9
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
(N)	(23)	(67)	(90)	(44)	(224)

Source: A survey on students' fertility socialization (1975), Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

subject to change and may well not agree with their actual family size in the future. However, the fact that their preference is so highly converged towards the two- or three-child family does reflect a conception of the desirability of a small family widely shared among the youths of today. In the case of the mothers, by contrast, the preferred family size is very much a result of more or less assessing what the actual family size has meant in the light of past and present life experiences. This does not mean that family size preference is always a rational product, for it certainly contains emotional and intuitive elements as far as the meaning of having and raising children is concerned. Nevertheless, the emergence of a marked preference for two or three children cannot but suggest that, after all, social conditions in Hong Kong and the considerable publicity given to family planning in recent years have indeed crystallized a desire for small families, even if only as an ideal. But it is doubtful that this desire remains purely the mothers' own ideal, for it is quite possible for parents to impart it, though perhaps in a wide variety of forms and in subtle and unintentional ways, to their young who are likely to be socialized by many other sources and influences, such as the mass media and peers, to accept and even internalize the norm of small families.

Conclusion and Discussion

I have in this paper tried to portray the relevance of family planning in Hong Kong around basically the following three points: (a) family planning in Hong Kong as an organized programme to facilitate limiting family size is only a relatively recent event; (b) fertility in Hong Kong started to decline markedly since the mid-sixties and has remained at a low level as a result of both changing social and economic conditions favouring a desire for smaller families on the one hand and the expansion of family planning activities and services on the other; and (c) on the individual level, there is now in Hong Kong a marked tendency for both the parental generation and the younger generation to prefer a small family of two to three children.

It was noted earlier in this paper that when fertility was declining in the mid-sixties, it was largely due to a true decline in fertility especially among the younger age groups. This means that the effect of further keeping fertility low would be more permanent. The birth rates of recent years seem to indicate that this indeed has been the trend.

The sixties in Hong Kong was a decade of rapid expansion in education, among other developments. The youths of that decade, and the years that followed, being

direct beneficiaries of that expansion, would in all likelihood grow up to be a generation of supporters of small families. The evidence we have does suggest that this is the case. Indeed, it is not just small families that the younger generation has now widely accepted, but also relatively late marriage and child spacing. Thus, for example, the two hundred odd university students cited before showed a modal preference for males to marry at the age of 28 and females at 25. The first child, more than 40 per cent of them thought, should not be born until two years after marriage and the second child another two years after that. Another 22 per cent thought that the second child should come three years after the first.

It would be difficult, of course, to execute a study which follows a cohort of present-day youths until they marry and have children to see whether their future fertility behaviour is consistent with their preferences and attitudes as youths. Naturally, all kinds of intervening factors are likely to operate which result in deviations of actual behaviour from values and norms. However, judging from the fact that more younger married couples are taking to birth control before the first childbirth and that the concept of family planning is increasingly gaining acceptance, it would be reasonable to suppose that the future fertility behaviour of our

present-day youths in Hong Kong would be what may be expected given their current overwhelming support of the two- or three-child family.

This is not to say, however, that promoters of family planning in Hong Kong need to be complacent. The task of educating and motivating the public must continue, although that task is in many ways benefiting from the social environment of an industrializing and modernizing Hong Kong which is, as we have seen, conducive to preferring small families. In fact, as is well known, the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong has been giving increasing emphasis on educational and motivational work in various forms and through various channels, and much of this is directed at the younger age groups of the population. Hong Kong being such a large metropolis, however, just the work of the Family Planning Association would not be sufficient. It has been advocated, especially during the World Population Year of 1974, that much more population-related material and certain forms of family planning knowledge ought to be incorporated into the school curriculum. Although not much progress has been made along this direction, it must be stressed that socializing both men and women at an early age to the rationale for family planning in the context of Hong Kong society should take a more deliberate and systematic form, as it would be if

it becomes part of one's formal education, if Hong Kong is really serious about keeping its fertility rate as low as possible in the future.

Judging from the fairly wide acceptance of contraception, the increased use of contraception for child spacing rather than for preventing an already large family from getting larger, and the emergence of a norm of two or three children as the ideal family size, it may be said that the family planning programme in Hong Kong has achieved a sizeable success. On the whole, there has been little or no significant cultural resistance to contraception although the large family ideal used to be a core value of traditional Chinese familism. Yet difficulties are still present, such as the relatively low rate of contraception acceptance among certain dialect-ethnic groups (e.g., those of Chiu Chow origin) and the fisherfolk. Preference for boys still persists to some extent, even among the better educated. Thus, for example, nearly two-thirds of the undergraduates studied in one of the cited surveys indicated that they would want a third child, hoping that it would be a boy, if the first two turn out to be girls. The same study also revealed that the students' knowledge of contraceptive methods was rather inadequate. There is certainly plenty of room for more active informational, educational, and communicative work on the part of the

Family Planning Association. At the same time, there is also an increasingly strong case for appealing for a more active and direct role on the part of the Hong Kong Government in helping to promote family planning and hence to achieve the purpose of fertility control in an otherwise overly large population for what Hong Kong can accommodate.

Notes

[1]Migration from China was an important factor in the increase of the population of Hong Kong following the change of government in China in 1949. Such migration continued, though to a much reduced extent, throughout the years since (except for an influx in 1962). It now no longer has any appreciable effect on Hong Kong's population growth.

[2]Family Planning Association of Hong Kong, Twentieth Annual Report, 1970-1971, p. 26.

[3]Richard J. Coughlin and Margaret M. Coughlin, "Fertility and Birth Control Among Low Income Chinese Families in Hong Kong," Marriage and Family Living, 25 (May 1963), 171-177.

[4]K.C. Chan, "The Influence of the Family Planning Programme on Hong Kong's Fertility Decline." (A paper prepared for the World Population Year Programme, April-May 1974. Mr. Chan is Statistics and Evaluation Officer of the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong.)

[5]Quoted in K.C. Chan, op. cit. See also C.Y. Choi and K.C. Chan, "The Impact of Industrialization on Fertility in Hong Kong: A Demographic, Social, and Economic Analysis" (Working paper of the Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, September 1973), p. 108.

[6]C.Y. Choi and K.C. Chan, op. cit., p. 108.

[7]Freedman and his associates prepared a series of three reports on fertility trends in Hong Kong using estimates prepared under the joint auspices of the Hong Kong Family Planning Association and the University of Michigan Population Studies Center: Ronald Freedman and A.L. Adlakha, "Recent Fertility Declines in Hong Kong: the

Role of the Changing Age Structure," Population Studies 22 (2) (July 1968), 181-198; Ronald Freedman, D.N. Namboothiri, A.L. Adlakha, and K.C. Chan, "Hong Kong: the Continuing Fertility Decline, 1967," Studies in Family Planning, No. 44 (August 1969), 8-15; and Idem., "Hong Kong's Fertility Decline, 1961-68," Population Index 36 (1) (January-March 1970), 3-18.

[8]United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, The Demographic Situation in Hong Kong (ESCAP Country Monograph Series No. 1, 1974), p. 94.

[9]Ronald Freedman et al., "Hong Kong's Fertility Decline, 1961-68," Population Index 36 (1) (January-March 1970), p.4.

[10]The following are just a few examples: Robert O. Blood, Jr. and Donald M. Wolfe, Husbands and Wives: The Dynamics of Married Living (New York: The Free Press, 1960), pp. 130-131; Bom Mo Chung, James A. Palmore, Sang Joo Lee, and Sung Jin Lee, Psychological Perspectives: Family Planning in Korea (Seoul: Korean Institute for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, 1972), pp. 181-186; The Chinese Center for International Training in Family Planning, Population and Family Planning in Charts, Taiwan Area, Republic of China, 6th edition (Taichung, 1975), p. 23; Ann Cartwright, How Many Children? (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), chapter 10; and Charles B. Nam and Susan O. Gustavus, Population: The Dynamics of Demographic Change (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), pp. 118-121.

[11]The People of Kwun Tong Survey, carried out by the Social Research Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1973, aimed at studying the relationships between socio-economic characteristics of the family and family structure on the one hand and fertility and family planning behaviour

on the other. Kwun Tong is a relatively new industrial-residential town of Hong Kong, with a population of approximately half a million. Included in the survey were a total of 818 families. In two-thirds of these, both husband and wife were interviewed; in the majority of the rest the wife was the respondent. Like the Fertility Survey of 1972, the People of Kwun Tong Survey was supported with funds from the Asia Foundation.

[12] See C.Y. Choi and K.C. Chan, op. cit., pp. 87-88, and Pedro Ng (with the collaboration of Chung Ching-ngor and Davy Leung) The Family and Family Planning in Kwun Tong: An Overview of Findings (Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1976), pp. 91-92.

[13] See, for example, Lawrence K. Hong, "The Chinese Family in a Modern Industrial Setting: Its Structure and Functions," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1970); and F.M. Wong, "Maternal Employment and Family Task-Power Differentiation among Lower Income Chinese Families," (Working paper of the Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1972.)

[14] In the People of Kwun Tong Survey, it was found that 70 per cent of the wives who were secondary school educated or above had discussed birth control with their husbands "sometimes" or "often," as compared with 46 per cent among those wives without any schooling. Of those wives who had often discussed birth control with their husbands, 87 per cent had used contraception sometime in the past; the corresponding figures for those who had "seldom" and "never" discussed birth control with their husbands are 51 per cent and 26 per cent respectively.

[15] United Nations, op. cit., table 52.

[16]C.Y. Choi and K.C. Chan, op. cit., p. 84; and Pedro Ng, op. cit., p. 96.

[17]Ronald Freedman et al., "Hong Kong's Fertility Decline, 1961-68," p. 12.

[18]C.Y. Choi and K.C. Chan, op. cit., p. 92.