

THE TIMING OF THE FIRST BIRTH, FEMALE ROLES AND BLACK FERTILITY

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One of the most marked differentials in fertility in the United States is by race. Black women not only have higher fertility than white women, but the difference has been increasing over time. Moreover, even though their actual fertility is higher, black women express a desire for fewer children than do white women.

These facts take on added dimension when it is considered that certain differences by race in the roles of women would seem to encourage the lower fertility of black relative to white women.¹ One such difference is the greater participation of black women in the labor force. It has been argued that employment outside the home is an important stimulus for reducing desired family size.² But, in the case of the blacks, if outside employment has influenced fertility desires, it has not succeeded in transforming desire into effective action. Another relevant difference by race in female roles is reflected in the higher rates of marital instability among blacks; black women are not as likely to be married for as long a period of time as are white women. This may restrict the fertility desires of black women, but it does not seem to play a major role in restricting their actual fertility.

If black women have higher rates of labor force participation and marital instability than white women, why isn't their

fertility relatively lower? The answer undoubtedly lies in the cultural and socioeconomic differences between the races. Such an explanation, however, is not particularly revealing of the *process* by which cultural and socioeconomic differences affect fertility. It is the purpose of this paper to suggest an approach to the study of fertility that should reveal this process as it relates specifically to the roles of women. The focus is on the timing of the first birth, which also represents the initiation of the mother role. Various hypotheses will be proposed concerning the impact of the timing of the first birth and motherhood on other roles and subsequent fertility. Because roles and fertility interact, various hypotheses will be considered regarding the effect of role participation on fertility behavior, both the first birth and subsequent fertility. Differences in completed fertility between white and black women, accordingly, will be explained by differences in their role and fertility patterns generated by differences in their timing of the first birth.

It should be noted at the outset that the hypotheses suggested here are **only** partially supported by secondary sources of data. Further research is clearly needed to test these hypotheses in a more rigorous way. Moreover, if it is established that the timing of the first birth is an important determinant of subsequent role and fertility behavior among women, much more knowledge is needed about the determinants of the timing of the first birth, not just in terms of female role behavior but also in terms of the determinants of female role aspirations; i.e. sex-role socialization. Such a broad view should lead to a better understanding of fertility differentials by race and by other factors such as socioeconomic status and religion.

The first part of this paper will be a review of other approaches to the study of black fertility and what such studies have contributed to the understanding of differences by race in completed fertility. The next step will be to discuss in depth the fruitfulness of focusing on the timing of the first birth.

REVIEW OF OTHER APPROACHES

Census and vital statistics data have permitted many descriptive studies of trends in black fertility over time.³ Farley, for example, analyzed such data to show that black fertility dropped sharply between 1880 and the 1930's—when most blacks were still in the rural South—then rose in subsequent years as blacks became more urbanized, declining again only in recent years.⁴

Census and vital statistics data have also been analyzed to indicate how nonwhite fertility differs from white fertility. This, too, is an essentially descriptive approach. A recent example is the work of Kiser, *et al.*, which delineates both the trend over time and a cross-sectional view of color differences in fertility.⁵ The trend analysis showed that the color difference in overall fertility has increased since World War II. The cross-sectional analysis demonstrated that, in 1960, nonwhite fertility was notably higher than white fertility among young women, among women in rural farm areas and among women in the South.

Moving from a specification to an explanation of the fertility differentials by color, census, vital statistics and survey data provide a basis for considering the significance of socioeconomic distinctions between the races. These distinctions are usually based on the status of the women's husbands and, accordingly, the samples are often limited to married women living with their husbands. Socioeconomic differences between white and nonwhite husbands do not adequately explain the higher fertility of nonwhite as compared with white women. In general, at comparable levels of the husband's education, occupation and income, nonwhite women maintain a higher level of fertility than do white women. A study that gives consideration to the nonfamilial socioeconomic differences of *women* in relation to fertility explores one notable exception to the general pattern: the lower fertility of ever-married nonwhite women who have attended one or more years of college relative to their white counterparts.⁶ This exception of lower fertility was explained,

in part, by the higher rates of marital instability and the higher labor force participation rates of nonwhite relative to white ever-married college-educated women.

Differences in family structure between whites and blacks—which may be related to differences in socioeconomic status—also have been considered as an explanation of fertility differences by color.⁷ Here the higher rates of marital instability among blacks relative to whites is viewed as relevant to the understanding of the *higher* fertility of blacks, as blacks also have higher rates of illegitimacy.

An opportunity to go beyond broad structural explanations and consider specific differences between color groups in fertility attitudes and behavior was afforded by the inclusion of nonwhite as well as white women in the national fertility surveys of 1960—the Growth of the American Families (GAF) study—and of 1965—the National Fertility Study (NFS). However, limitations were inherent in the sample designs of these two surveys for the study of black fertility, notably the inclusion in the sample of only married women, husband present.⁸ Nevertheless, several aspects of color differences in fertility were explored, the focus being on color differences in cumulative past and expected fertility.⁹ In this context, it is noted that:¹⁰

... nonwhites have had more births than whites and expect about the same number of *additional* births, yet they are less able to control their fertility. As a result, it seems likely that nonwhite wives will have more additional births than they expect to have.

The findings of the national fertility surveys suggest that the high fertility of blacks relative to whites results from their higher rates of both timing failures and unwanted births. These higher rates, in turn, are explained largely in terms of white-nonwhite differences in contraceptive practice. Both the 1960 and 1965 national fertility surveys indicated that married white women are more experienced ever-users of contraception than are married nonwhite women; they use more effective methods and time their first use earlier in the childbearing period.¹¹

What accounts for differences between black and white

couples in contraceptive practice? Differences by race may be in knowledge of methods and favorable attitudes toward their use.¹² Such differences may also be in motivation to use contraception consistently and effectively. Unfortunately, little is known about this. The national fertility surveys consider differences between black and white women as to whether a birth was unwanted¹³ or in excess of desired family size.¹⁴ These are rough indicators of motivation to control fertility, but the analyses are essentially descriptive.

The investigators may have been analytically limited in exploring the reasons for differences by race in timing failures and unwanted births because of their focus on the last birth. This focus reflects their interest in explaining differences in completed family size. Although this is unquestionably of major concern, it may be that early events in the process of child-bearing are equally, if not more, significant determining factors.

THE TIMING OF THE FIRST BIRTH

An alternative approach to the study of completed fertility—and differences by race in completed fertility—is to analytically begin with the start of reproduction; that is, the first birth. As most women, both black and white, do have at least one child, it would seem that the timing of the first birth, rather than having a first birth *per se*, is more relevant.¹⁵ Accordingly, the first step will be to examine differences between blacks and whites in the age of mothers at first birth.

Of all women who had a first birth in 1967, nonwhites were, on the average, about two years younger than whites: the median age was 22.2 for whites and 20.1 for nonwhites.¹⁶ A white-nonwhite difference of similar magnitude obtains for all parities. Although the differentials are based on period data, they suggest that nonwhites do not compensate for their early timing of the first birth relative to whites by spacing future births over longer intervals. This is supported by recent census data on birth intervals. Table 1 shows that not only is the

TABLE I. MEDIAN INTERVALS BETWEEN BIRTHS OF CHILDREN OF FIRST TO FOURTH ORDER BORN TO WHITE AND NONWHITE MOTHERS, 1955 TO 1964, BY EDUCATION

<i>Education and Intervals</i>	<i>White Mothers 1960 to 1964 (months)</i>	<i>White Mothers 1955 to 1959 (months)</i>	<i>Nonwhite Mothers 1955 to 1964 (months)</i>
Total			
First marriage to first birth ¹	14.2	15.7	7.6
First birth to second birth	25.7	27.7	23.1
Second birth to third birth	31.7	32.0	23.0
Third birth to fourth birth	30.9	30.3	22.3
Not a high school graduate			
First marriage to first birth ¹	12.8	13.7	5.4
First birth to second birth	24.4	28.7	22.2
Second birth to third birth	30.5	31.6	22.4
Third birth to fourth birth	29.6	31.0	22.0
High school, four years ²			
First marriage to first birth ¹	14.2	15.9	6.9
First birth to second birth	26.2	27.2	25.4
Second birth to third birth	32.3	32.1	25.3
Third birth to fourth birth	31.7	30.2	23.1
College, one year or more ³			
First marriage to first birth ¹	17.2	19.1	
First birth to second birth	26.3	27.7	
Second birth to third birth	32.2	32.6	
Third birth to fourth birth	32.2	28.5	

¹ This interval is restricted to births since first marriage.

² Includes among nonwhites, women with college, one year or more.

³ Whites only.

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, CURRENT POPULATION REPORTS, Series P-20, No. 186, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1969, Tables 24 and 25.

interval shorter between first marriage and the first birth for nonwhites than whites, but so are subsequent intervals up to the fourth birth.¹⁷ This holds true even when controlling for differences by color in educational attainment.

The net outcome of differences by color in the timing of the first birth and subsequent spacing, for cohorts that are near the end of their reproductive period, is about one birth more, on the average, for nonwhites than for whites. In 1960, white mothers aged 40 to 44 years had an average of 2.9 births per mother; nonwhite mothers of this age group averaged 3.9. For women aged 45 to 49 in 1960, the averages were 2.8 and 3.9

for white and nonwhite mothers, respectively. It may well be that this white-nonwhite difference in completed fertility is generated by white-nonwhite differences in the timing of the first birth. How might this come about?

The earlier timing of first births among nonwhites than whites suggests that proportionately more nonwhites do not plan their first births. This is supported by data from the 1965 National Fertility Study on currently married women, husband present.¹⁹ It was found that blacks had proportionately more unwanted (i.e., never-wanted) first births than did whites: a "medium" estimate of 12 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively; blacks also had more timing failures among first births than did whites: 50 per cent and 36 per cent, respectively.²⁰

These differences are, no doubt, largely a consequence of more effective contraceptive use among married whites than married blacks as previously noted, although data on this by parity as well as by color have not as yet been published for the 1965 study.²¹ Greater abortion experience prior to the first birth among whites than nonwhites may also be an important factor, but no reliable data on this are available. If all women are considered rather than married women only, the timing of sexual experience regardless of marital status becomes another important factor. Nonwhite women, for example, may become sexually experienced at an earlier age than white women, which in turn may encourage their relatively early first births. But, as shall be discussed later, no evidence exists that firmly supports this hypothesis.

Obviously, data are needed that will indicate more about how various means of fertility control, the "intermediate variables,"²² affect the timing of the first birth and how they determine differences by race in such timing. Moreover, information is needed on how various means of fertility control are affected by the timing of the first birth and differences by race in this regard. Does an early first birth, for example, affect attitudes and practice toward abortion and contraception? If an early first birth, particularly an unwanted early first birth, alters

a woman's motivation to control her fertility, it may well affect her subsequent birth control attitudes and practices. And this may be more commonly the experience of black women than of white women. But why should a woman's motivation to control her fertility be altered by an early first birth? This question will be explored in the following analysis of role patterns.

THE MOTHER ROLE IN RELATION TO OTHER FEMALE ROLES

Having a first birth means becoming a mother,²³ unless the child dies or is given up for adoption. The permanence of motherhood makes it the most critical of all role transitions.²⁴ If a woman has her first birth early, this may limit the nature of a woman's options in alternative roles, both familial (wife) and nonfamilial (student and worker). Levels of attainment in such roles may be affected: the duration of marriage and the socioeconomic status of the husband with regard to the wife role, educational attainment with regard to the student role and occupational and income status with regard to the work role. A restriction of role options would make having additional children more acceptable, even if not highly desired. If the first birth is postponed, either by delayed sexual experience or the successful control of her fertility in or outside of marriage, the woman does not accustom herself to repeated pregnancy and, by experiencing high attainment in alternative roles, may want even fewer children than previously desired. As a double effect, she may become more highly motivated to effectively practice birth control than if she had an early first birth. Differences by race in completed fertility may thus be a consequence of differences by race in role and fertility patterns as generated by differences in the timing of the first birth.

What evidence indicates that black and white women differ in their role and fertility patterns? First, consider the mother role.

Most women eventually become mothers, but this appears to be a more likely event for whites than blacks. Table 2 reports

TABLE 2. PER CENT CHILDLESS OF ALL WOMEN AGED 15 AND OVER, BY AGE AND COLOR, 1960

<i>Age in Years</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Nonwhite</i>
15-19	91.4	87.9
20-24	45.6	46.8
25-29	20.9	28.1
30-34	15.5	23.6
35-39	15.5	25.4
40-44	18.3	28.7
45-49	22.6	31.2
50 and over	25.2	28.7

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, UNITED STATES CENSUS OF POPULATION, 1960, Subject Reports: Women by Number of Children Ever Born, Final Report PC (2)-3A, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1964, Tables 16 and 17.

the per cent childless—the converse of motherhood—for all women in 1960 by age and color. It may be noted that only for women 15 to 19 years of age is childlessness more prevalent among whites than nonwhites. This may reflect the earlier timing of first births for nonwhites than whites among those who become mothers, as previously noted, although nonwhites may less frequently adopt this role. Cohort data lend support to this contention. For the cohort of women born in 1940 to 1944, 59 per cent of nonwhites were childless at age 20, as compared to 68 per cent of whites.²⁵ For an older cohort of women who have reached the end of their reproductive spans—women born in 1910 to 1919—nonwhites have both a smaller percentage childless at age 20 and a larger percentage childless at age 45 to 54 relative to whites:²⁵

<i>Women Born</i>	<i>Per Cent Childless</i>	
	<i>At Age 20</i>	<i>At Age 45-54</i>
Whites	81	19
Nonwhites	66	31

These data suggest that proportionately more nonwhite women than white women who postpone a first birth in their teens (voluntarily or involuntarily) may be postponing them forever.

The present focus will be restricted to only those women who become mothers, for the primary interest of this paper is in assessing the significance of the timing of the first birth as it relates to female roles and subsequent fertility. It may be postulated that early motherhood has profound repercussions and may be as significant in a sociologic sense as an early first birth may be in a demographic sense; that is, the age at which one becomes a mother may have a critical effect on the attitudes toward and subsequent participation in other roles. This is vividly portrayed by Campbell for the case of the unmarried girl who has an early first birth:²⁶

The girl who has an illegitimate child at the age of 16 suddenly has 90 per cent of her life's script written for her. She will probably drop out of school; even if someone else in her family helps to take care of the baby, she will probably not be able to find a steady job that pays enough to provide for herself and her child; she may feel impelled to marry someone she might not otherwise have chosen. Her life choices are few, and most of them are bad. Had she been able to delay the first child, her prospects might have been quite different, assuming that she would have had opportunities to continue her education, improve her vocational skills, find a job, marry someone she wanted to marry, and have a child when she and her husband were ready for it. Also, the child would have been born under quite different circumstances and might have grown up in a stable family environment.

It may also be postulated that attitudes and participation in roles other than mother may play a major part in motivating women to postpone the timing of their first birth. Thus, in the situation portrayed by Campbell one may question how the girl's other role attitudes and participation (or lack of) may have accounted for an early illegitimate first birth.

To help clarify how female role and fertility patterns are generated, and how racial differences in such patterns emerge, different female roles—wife, student and worker—will be considered separately in relation to the role of mother.

TABLE 3. ESTIMATED NUMBER OF ILLEGITIMATE BIRTHS PER 1,000 UNMARRIED WOMEN 15 TO 44 YEARS OLD, BY COLOR AND AGE, 1965

<i>Age in Years</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Nonwhite</i>
Total (15-44)	11.6	97.7
15-19	7.9	75.9
20-24	22.2	152.6
25-29	24.3	164.7
30-34	16.6	137.8
35-44	4.9	39.0

Source: Campbell, A. A. and Cowhig, J. D., The incidence of illegitimacy in the United States, *Welfare in Review*, 5, Table 1, 1967.

Mother and Wife

The role of mother may or may not be concurrent with the role of wife. When it is concurrent at the time a woman has a birth, the birth is regarded as legitimate. When these roles are not concurrent at such a time the birth is regarded as illegitimate. Illegitimacy, then, may be defined as the role pattern of mother/nonwife at the time of birth. Some interesting distinctions are found between black and white women in this role pattern.

It may be seen in Table 3 that illegitimacy is higher among nonwhites than among whites, most notably in the youngest ages. As for differences by color in various means of fertility control, it is not known if this is a consequence of a greater prevalence of nonmarital, particularly premarital sexual experience among nonwhites than whites,²⁷ less effective contraceptive experience,²⁸ less frequent abortion experience²⁹ or combinations thereof. As will be discussed shortly, the difference by color may also be in the desire and opportunity to legitimize births that are conceived out of wedlock. The net effect, whatever the case, is not only more prevalent illegitimacy but *earlier* illegitimacy for nonwhite than white women. The median age among women whose first births were illegitimate in 1964 was 18.2 for nonwhites and 19.3 for whites.³⁰ To understand the determinants of differences by color in the timing of all first

TABLE 4. PER CENT OF FIRST LIVE BIRTHS PREMARITALLY CONCEIVED AMONG EVER-MARRIED WOMEN BY EDUCATION, COLOR AND TIMING OF BIRTH FOR THE COHORT OF WOMEN FIRST MARRIED IN 1960 TO 1964

<i>Education and Color</i>	<i>Total First Live Births Premaritally Conceived</i>	<i>Timing of First Birth</i>	
		<i>Before Marriage</i>	<i>Within Eight Months After First Marriage</i>
Total			
White	21	4	17
Nonwhite	50*	28	22*
Not a high school graduate			
White	32	7	25
Nonwhite	64*	45	19*
High school, four years			
White	18	3	15
Nonwhite ¹	36*	12	24*
College, one year or more			
White	11	1	10
Nonwhite	NA	NA	NA

* Derived by interpolation.

¹ Includes women with college, 1 year or more.

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, CURRENT POPULATION REPORTS, *op. cit.*, Tables 19 and 20.

births, then, it is important to study the process by which early illegitimate as well as legitimate first births occur.

Differences between black and white women may be found in premarital sexual experiences as well as in the age at which this first occurs. Age at first premarital sexual experience may be a determinant of effective contraceptive practice during the premarital period. Knowledge of sex, contraception and the reproductive cycle may be minimal at very young ages, discouraging effective use. Unfortunately, the data available on age at first premarital sexual experience are typically biased by the fact that the samples are composed of women who not only have had premarital sexual relations but also have been unsuccessful in controlling their fertility and have not married; i.e., unwed mothers.³¹

If premarital conceptions occur and are not terminated by abortion they may encourage early marriage; that is, the timing

of the wife role. The tendency to legitimize births by marriage appears to be greater for whites than nonwhites. For the cohort of women first married in 1960 to 1964 (see Table 4),³² only about four per cent of the births of white women occurred before marriage, as compared with 28 per cent of the births of nonwhite women.³³ The percentage who premaritally conceived (including those who legitimized their births by marriage) was about twice as great for nonwhites than for whites, even when controlling for differences in education between the two groups. The ratio of first births occurring before marriage to total first births premaritally conceived is about one in five for whites, but less than one in two for nonwhites. These ratios vary markedly by education, but only for nonwhites who are not high school graduates is it more likely that they will *not* marry than marry before the birth of a premaritally conceived child. It should be noted, however, that these data refer to a cohort of ever-married women and do not include women who have not (as yet) married.

The median age at time of first marriage is about the same for white as nonwhite women (Table 5). However, nonwhite women are more likely than are white women to marry at a very early age (14 to 17 years). This may be a consequence of

TABLE 5. MEDIAN AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE AND PER CENT FIRST MARRIED AT AGE 14 TO 17 FOR ALL EVER-MARRIED WOMEN AGED 14 TO 49 IN 1960, BY AGE AND COLOR

<i>Age in Years in 1960</i>	<i>Median Age at First Marriage</i>		<i>Per Cent First Married at Ages 14 to 17</i>	
	<i>White</i>	<i>Nonwhite</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Nonwhite</i>
14 to 19	16.9	16.6	69.3	75.6
20 to 24	19.1	18.9	28.0	35.0
25 to 29	22.1	21.5	15.1	24.3
30 to 34	19.9	19.8	21.5	29.4
35 to 39	20.5	20.3	16.9	25.6
40 to 44	21.2	20.9	14.9	24.4
45 to 49	21.7	21.1	14.3	23.9

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, UNITED STATES CENSUS OF POPULATION: 1960, Subject Reports, Age at First Marriage, Final Report PC(2)-40, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1966, Table 1.

the earlier start of childbearing among nonwhites. The differential propensity to marry following pregnancy (greater for whites than nonwhites) may be offset by the larger proportion of nonwhite women becoming premaritally pregnant at these ages.

It seems reasonable to conclude that for women who do become mothers,³⁴ proportionately fewer nonwhites than whites will have an opportunity to experience the wife role exclusive of the mother role because of the earlier timing of the first birth. For women who have their first birth after marriage, the length of time in which the wife role will be experienced exclusive of the mother role will be less for nonwhites than for whites. Perhaps this explains, in part, the higher rate of marital instability of young nonwhite, ever-married women than their white counterparts (see Table 6).³⁵ An early first birth may interfere with the adjustment process of newly married couples,³⁶ particularly if they are having economic difficulties—and nonwhites are of lower economic status than whites. Moreover, nonwhite women may more readily accept separation or divorce as a solution to marital problems after children are born than may white women. As Rainwater notes, many black women view the status of “having been married” as being of more importance than “being married.” He continues: “For Negro lower-class women . . . first marriage has the same kind of importance as having a first child. Both indicate that the girl has become a woman but neither one that this is the last such activity in which she will engage.”³⁷ Such attitudes may serve to minimize the effect of marital instability on subsequent fertility.

But the relation may also be examined in the other direction: does marital instability affect the timing of the first birth? A broken marriage occurring before a first birth may serve to delay its timing beyond what may otherwise have occurred if the marriage remained intact. Whether such a delay would actually occur depends upon the extent to which sexual relations occur outside of marriage and, for those who have non-marital sexual relations, the extent to which birth control is

TABLE 6. PER CENT SEPARATED, DIVORCED OR WIDOWED OF ALL EVER-MARRIED WOMEN* AGED 14 TO 24 IN 1960, BY AGE AND COLOR

<i>Age in 1960 and Status of Broken Marriage</i>	<i>Whites</i>	<i>Nonwhites</i>
14 to 17		
Separated	3.6	12.0
Divorced	2.0	1.9
Widowed	**	1.3
18 and 19		
Separated	2.7	9.7
Divorced	2.3	1.3
Widowed	**	.9
20 and 21		
Separated	4.0	11.5
Divorced	4.3	2.3
Widowed	**	1.0
22 to 24		
Separated	1.9	12.5
Divorced	2.5	2.9
Widowed	**	.5

* Ever-married includes, in addition to separated, divorced and widowed, the categories of married, spouse present, and married spouse absent but not separated.

** Less than .1 per cent.

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, CENSUS OF POPULATION, 1960, Subject Reports, Marital Status, Final Report PC(2)-43, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1966, Table 1.

effectively practiced (contraception and abortion). If nonwhites, as is suspected, have sexual relations more frequently outside of marriage and practice birth control less frequently and less effectively than do whites, then the effect of marital instability on postponing the timing of the first birth may not be as great for nonwhites. Also, the effect of marital instability on restricting subsequent fertility may not be as great. Unfortunately, data are not available to test these hypotheses.³⁸ Relative differences by color in the speed with which remarriage occurs may also be relevant, but data are lacking in this regard as well.

In sum, it appears that the wife and mother role pattern is quite different for black women than for white women. Being married is less a prerequisite for motherhood for black women. This is reflected in the relatively high rate of premarital con-

ceptions, the lower propensity to marry prior to the birth of the premaritally conceived child and the higher rates of marital instability among black as compared with white women. The extent to which the differences between black and white women in attitudes and values toward illegitimacy contribute to these structural differences (and vice versa) needs to be investigated. It may be that illegitimacy today, as in the past, is normatively less stigmatized among blacks than whites, but favorable attitudes and values in this regard may be determined—or at least reinforced—by its widespread prevalence.³⁹

Mother and Student

The mother role in relation to the student role is a neglected role pattern. Educational attainment in relation to fertility, however, has often been studied, consistently revealing a clear inverse relation.⁴⁰ Although educational attainment is actually a measure of the duration of the student role, it is rarely studied as such. Consequently, little is known about how fertility affects attitudes and participation in the student role and vice versa. Some differences between black and white women in this regard may be hypothesized.

First, consider the effect of the timing of the first birth on the student role. An early first birth may interrupt the education of women as early as the junior high school level. As nonwhite women have their first births about two years earlier than do white women, one would expect the mother

TABLE 7. PER CENT OF FEMALES AGED 14 TO 34 ENROLLED IN SCHOOL BY AGE AND COLOR, 1967

<i>Age in Years</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Nonwhite</i>
14-17	93.1	89.2
18 and 19	41.0	35.9
20-24	15.4	12.6
25-29	3.3	6.3
30-34	2.9	1.4

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES, 1969, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1969, Table 149.

role to interfere with the student role more drastically and more frequently for nonwhites. This hypothesis is supported by data on school enrollment.

Table 7 indicates that fewer nonwhite females than white females were enrolled in school in 1967. Of course, not all females who drop out of high school do so because of pregnancy, but it does seem to be a major reason—and more so for nonwhites than whites. It has been reported that of all female high school dropouts in 1963 (total United States), 49 per cent of nonwhites, as compared to 38 per cent of whites, left school because of pregnancy.⁴¹

The greater participation in the student role of whites than nonwhites is revealed for college-age females also, with one exception: a greater percentage of nonwhite women aged 25 to 29 are in school than are white women of these ages. An interpretation of this exception is precluded by the fact that the percentages for both color groups are small.

Although an early first birth can prematurely terminate the student role,⁴² the relation can be viewed the other way: wanting to continue one's education may be a motivating factor in preventing an early first birth. This may take the form of postponing premarital sexual relations or marriage, or of encouraging the effective use of contraception or abortion during this early period. Motivation to remain in school, in turn, is determined by such factors as the quality of education, the wish to achieve, emotional support to pursue one's education and the lack of alternative role pressures (such as the economic need to work). These factors undoubtedly favor the white woman over the black woman. Accordingly, it would seem that the role of student is not only more likely to be interrupted by the early timing of the first birth for black women than for white women, but that it is more difficult to prevent this from happening to black women.

Mother and Worker

Most American women assume the role of worker at some

time (and several times) during their lifetime. At any one point in time, almost half of all women of reproductive ages are in the labor force. The percentage is higher for blacks than for whites. In 1969, for example, it is estimated that about 46 per cent of white women aged 15 to 49 were in the labor force, as compared to 51 per cent of black women.⁴³ For each color group in 1960, women in the labor force had lower fertility than women not in the labor force—for all ages.⁴⁴

The lower fertility among women in the labor force has led to many discussions about the causal linkages between the two.⁴⁵ At issue is whether women work because they have fewer children or whether they have fewer children because they work and want to continue doing so. Undoubtedly, both factors are operative, but it is not clear how they operate.

Little is known about the timing of births and their effect on labor force participation. Such knowledge would seem to be essential to an explanation of a neglected issue: why black women, who have higher fertility than white women, also have higher labor force participation rates than do white women. Either labor force participation has a less restricting effect on the fertility of black women than on white women or having children does not discourage black women from working as much as it does white women, or both. In any case, differences between white and black women in the timing of the first birth may be a relevant consideration.

Table 8 shows that among young women of the ages when most first births occur (15 to 24), the role of mother is more commonly concurrent with the role of worker for nonwhites

TABLE 8. LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES FOR MOTHERS AGED 15 TO 24 BY AGE AND COLOR, 1960

<i>Age in Years</i>	<i>White</i> <i>(Rates per 100 mothers)</i>	<i>Nonwhite</i>
15 to 19	18	23
20 to 24	20	31

Source: Derived from United States Bureau of the Census, UNITED STATES CENSUS OF POPULATION: 1960, Subject Reports, Women by Number of Children Ever Born, *op. cit.*, Table 30.

TABLE 9. PER CENT CHILDLESS AND CHILDREN EVER BORN TO WOMEN AGED 15 TO 24 BY AGE, EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND COLOR, 1960

<i>Age and Employment Status of Women</i>	<i>White</i>		<i>Nonwhite</i>	
	<i>Per Cent Childless</i>	<i>Per 1,000 Total Women</i>	<i>Per 1,000 Total Women</i>	<i>Per 1,000 Ever- Married</i>
15 to 19 years	46.4	117	202	1,247
Labor force				
Employed	65.4	73	233	1,120
Worked 35 hours or more	67.0	67	221	1,111
Worked less than 35 hours	70.6	87	237	1,039
Unemployed	56.3	47	207	1,195
Not in labor force	54.4	133	284	1,152
Never worked	38.9	134	195	1,290
	36.0	95	153	1,299
20 to 24 years	25.0	993	1,288	1,999
Labor force				
Employed	49.0	44	860	1,612
Worked 35 hours or more	51.1	413	829	1,566
Worked less than 35 hours	56.0	355	715	1,413
Unemployed	33.8	638	1,076	1,858
Not in labor force	33.9	769	1,090	1,891
Never worked	12.7	1,448	1,647	2,235
	10.0	1,560	1,583	2,283

Source: See Table 8.

than for whites; that is, the labor force participation rates are higher for nonwhite mothers than for white mothers. In Table 9 it may be seen that childlessness and the number of children ever born vary more by employment status for white women than for nonwhite women.

The role of worker, then, seems to be more an alternative to the role of mother for young white women than for young black women. The expense of early and unexpected motherhood among women whose economic resources are limited undoubtedly increases the necessity to work and restricts the options of remaining a student or housewife, although these options may be preferred. Black women, as has been seen, not only have earlier first births than do white women, but proportionately more of their first births are unplanned. Moreover, the economic resources of black women and their families are more limited than those of white women. Young black mothers, therefore, more than young white mothers, may be pushed into the labor force out of necessity. This greater necessity among black women to work when they become a mother may be further encouraged by their relatively high rates of illegitimacy and marital instability.⁴⁶

Vital statistics data on employment and pregnancy status in 1963 (Table 10) lend support to the hypothesis that young black women more often than young white women enter the labor force as a consequence of motherhood. Nonwhite wives were *less* likely to be working during their first pregnancy (i.e., before their first birth) than were white wives. However, for higher order pregnancies, the reverse is true. It is also interesting to note that variation by birth order in employment status while pregnant is less for nonwhite wives than for white.

It may also be argued that employment is less of a deterrent to fertility—and an early first birth—for black women than for white women because of the low-status jobs most nonwhite women occupy. Table 11 shows the occupational distribution in 1960 of both employed white and black women. Over half of all black women were service workers, mostly private house-

TABLE IO. PER CENT OF WIVES EMPLOYED DURING PREGNANCY BY COLOR AND LIVE-BIRTH ORDER, 1963, LEGITIMATE LIVE BIRTHS

<i>Live-Birth Order</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Nonwhite</i>
All birth orders	31	34
First child	59	43
Second child	25	33
Third child	22	29
Fourth child	17	29
Fifth child and over	13	34

Source: United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare. EMPLOYMENT DURING PREGNANCY, Series P 22, No. 7, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1968 Table B.

TABLE II. DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED WOMEN BY MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND RACE

<i>Major Occupational Group</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>
Total employed women	100.0	100.0
Professional, technical and kindred workers	13.8	7.2
Managers, Office and Proprietary, except farm	4.0	1.0
Clerical and kindred workers	32.6	7.6
Sales workers	8.7	1.5
Craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers	1.3	.6
Operatives and kindred workers	15.7	12.7
Service workers, except private household	12.5	21.4
Private household workers	4.1	35.7
Laborers, except farm and mine	.5	1.0
Farmers and farm managers	.5	.6
Farm laborers and foremen	1.0	2.9
Occupation not reported	5.3	7.9

Source: Price, D. O., CHANGING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEGRO POPULATION, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, Table IV-3.

hold workers. Such employment offers little more than financial gain—and not much of that. The situation for white women is relatively better than for black women.⁴⁷ A third of white women are in clerical and kindred occupations. The nature of employment, then, may be more crucial than employment *per se* in controlling fertility and postponing the timing of the first birth.

Although broad occupational groups are only crude indicators of the potential satisfaction to be found in employment, a comparison of the fertility of women in these different groups is revealing. For employed, ever-married women aged 35 to 44 in 1960, little difference is found between the fertility of white and nonwhite women: employed nonwhite women, on the average, have about .4 of a child more than employed white women (Table 12). For both white and nonwhite women, relatively high occupational status is associated with relatively low fertility. A comparison of whites with nonwhites in similar occupational groups reveals that nonwhites generally do *not* have higher fertility than whites. The major exception is women in agricultural employment; the other exceptions show only minor differences. Nonwhite women show notably *lower* fertility than white women for professional, technical and kindred workers, and for private household workers who are living in.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, similar data are not available for younger women nor can the timing of the first birth or duration of employment be determined. Such controls might provide a better understanding of why differences by color in fertility are minimized for employed women in similar occupational groups.

A comparison of employed mothers only shows a greater difference in fertility between white and nonwhite women than does a comparison of all employed women: nonwhites average about .8 of a child more per mother than do whites (Table 12).⁴⁹ A general pattern of higher fertility among nonwhites than whites obtains even when controlling for similar occupational groups. But an examination of the differences by color for mothers with relatively high occupational status shows they are not large. Indeed, for professional, technical and kindred women who are mothers, nonwhites have slightly fewer children ever born than do whites. It is for employed mothers in very low status occupations where the difference by color in fertility is most pronounced. Longitudinal data are needed with additional controls to explain this outcome.

TABLE 12. CHILDREN EVER BORN PER 1,000 EMPLOYED WOMEN AND PER 1,000 EMPLOYED MOTHERS, ALL EVERMARRIED AND AGED 35 TO 44, BY MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND RACE, 1960

Major Occupational Group	Children Ever Born			Per 1,000 Employed Mothers		
	Per 1,000 Employed Women			Per 1,000 Employed Mothers		
	White (a)	Nonwhite (b)	Difference (b-a)	White (a)	Nonwhite (b)	Difference (b-a)
Total employed women	2,123	2,485	+362	2,560	3,345	+785
Professional, technical and kindred workers	1,973	1,627	-346	2,414	2,324	-90
Managers, Office and proprietors, except farm	1,879	1,897	+18	2,383	2,631	+248
Clerical and kindred workers	1,787	1,747	-40	2,268	2,420	+152
Sales workers	2,206	2,111	-95	2,509	2,852	+343
Craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers	1,959	1,884	-75	2,465	2,696	+231
Operatives and kindred workers	2,309	2,161	-148	2,711	2,938	+227
Service workers, except private household	2,545	2,567	+22	2,892	3,402	+510
Private household workers, total	2,836	2,864	+28	3,254	3,798	+544
Private household workers, living in	1,817	1,352	-465	2,656	2,251	-405
Private household workers, living out	2,906	2,913	+07	3,285	3,838	+553
Laborers, except farm and mine	2,496	2,584	+88	2,882	3,480	+598
Farmers and farm managers	3,017	5,296	+2,279	3,427	5,827	+2,400
Farm laborers and foremen	3,165	5,001	+1,836	3,517	5,681	+2,164

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, UNITED STATES CENSUS OF POPULATION: 1960, Subject Reports, Women by Number of Children Ever Born, *op. cit.*, Tables 35 and 36.

In sum, it appears that the timing of the first birth may influence not only the employment status of women but also their occupational attainment. Employment status and occupational attainment prior to the first birth, on the other hand, may be a determinant of the timing of the first birth. Limited occupational alternatives of relatively low status may not be effective in discouraging early motherhood and subsequent high fertility. This may help to explain differences between black and white women in mother and work role patterns. It may be that the earlier first births among black women, by restricting educational attainment (the student role), restricts the nature of job options relative to white women. Job options may also be restricted by racial discrimination.⁵⁰ If employed white women had to pursue the kinds of jobs that black women commonly hold, undoubtedly much fewer white women would be working. Black women do not have as much of a choice as to whether to work as do white women; they are less often married and more disadvantaged economically. An early first birth makes matters worse. Thus, although the overall employment rates of black women are higher than of white women, the nature of employment available to young black women is a relatively ineffective stimulus toward reduced fertility.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

It is proposed in this paper that the timing of the first birth is a critical factor in generating subsequent fertility. The general hypothesis is: the earlier the timing of the first birth, the higher the completed fertility. The process by which early fertility generates high fertility, it is contended, has to do with participation in roles other than that of mother. This can be examined in a rigorous way by, first, considering how various means of fertility control may affect or be affected by an early first birth; second, by considering participation in roles alternative to mother (which may occur concurrently

or sequentially) and how such participation may affect or be affected by an early first birth; and, third, by examining how these interrelations may generate high fertility. The lack of data has limited a direct demonstration of this process, but the data available from secondary sources have permitted the exploration of various aspects of the general hypothesis as a means of explaining differences between black and white women in completed fertility. Essentially, it is argued that the earlier timing of the first birth of black women and their different role and fertility patterns may largely explain the differences by race in completed fertility. At the risk of becoming even more speculative, some of the more specific hypotheses that emerge from the analysis and their implications will be considered. Surely further research is needed before any definitive conclusions can be drawn.

Black women appear to become more sexually experienced at an earlier age than do white women and/or are less effective users of birth control (contraception and/or abortion) at these young ages. As more black women than white women are unmarried when their first birth occurs—and the illegitimacy rates are quite high for black women—one would expect that more first births among black women are unwanted than among white women.⁵¹ Even among married women living with their husbands, it seems that proportionately fewer black women than white want their first birth, either ever or at that time.

Black women not only have earlier first births than do white women, but their spacing of subsequent births is shorter. It appears, then, that the first birth, perhaps because it occurs earlier, generates higher fertility for black women than for white women. To understand this process, the interaction between female roles and fertility must be considered.

It has been argued here that the impact of the mother role on participation in other roles is greatest at the time of the first birth. That is, having a second or higher order birth does not generally have as dramatic an effect on participation in other roles as having a first birth. This may be particularly true

with regard to unplanned first births and even more so for early unplanned first births.

The data on early contraceptive practice suggest that the earlier the time of the first birth, the more likely the birth was a timing failure; it may follow also, the more likely it will have a restrictive effect on a woman's social and economic status. When nonfamilial role options to be shared with motherhood, and possibly wifehood, are limited to a few low-status choices subsequent fertility—wanted or unwanted, legitimate or illegitimate—may be easier to accept. Consequently, motivation to effectively practice contraception and/or abortion after an early unwanted first birth may be minimized.

These hypotheses may help to explain the puzzling finding that, at least among married women, black women desire fewer births than do white women, but have higher fertility. This may be largely a consequence of the greater experience among black women of the disruptive effects of children generated by an early first birth. Black women have their first births considerably earlier than white women (on the average, about two years earlier), and they are of lower social and economic status than white women (both with regard to family and individual status). The impact of an early first birth is felt more directly by black women, first because it occurs earlier for black than for white women and, second, because *before* having their first birth white women are generally of higher status than black women. Their educational attainment is higher; they are more likely than black women to obtain economic support from their boyfriend, husband or family; and they are not as likely to have to work in jobs as dull or as laborious as those most employed black women occupy. If white women do work, they are more likely to be white collar workers than are black women. Being a secretary is generally not a highly rewarding job, but relative to domestic work it has far more appeal and pays more.

It may well be that motivation to effectively control fertility emanates basically from a personal preference to participate in

nonfamilial activities; when such participation is solely a matter of necessity, motivation may be minimal. The higher the social and economic status of the possible nonfamilial alternatives, the more attractive they may be. Accordingly, women may be more motivated to pursue these alternatives and, consequently, control their fertility. Moreover, the more a woman aspires to high social and economic status from a lower position, the greater may be her motivation to control her fertility; she needs to minimize her handicaps. This latter hypothesis may help to explain the lower fertility of college-educated black women relative to their white counterparts.

In discussing the relative differences between black and white women it should be borne in mind that for all women an early unplanned first birth may have serious social and economic as well as demographic consequences, not only in possibly setting women back but also in keeping them from moving ahead. This is why, from a policy standpoint, the welfare of women may be benefited more by trying to avert an unplanned first birth than by trying to avert excess fertility. Campbell makes this point in the context of family planning strategies to reduce poverty:⁵²

The importance of child spacing is emphasized here, because many of the publicly supported family-planning programs now in operation first reach the mother when she is in the hospital to give birth to a child. Although there are many good reasons for taking advantage of the maternity ward setting, there should be additional programs to reach the potential mother before she has her first child. In a very real sense, it may be more important to delay the first child than to prevent the seventh.

This should be a family planning strategy for all women, above and below the poverty line. It should serve to reduce their completed fertility and to enhance their social and economic status. It can only be an effective strategy, however, if challenging and rewarding activities are offered as alternatives to early motherhood.

REFERENCES

¹ In this paper, roles are defined behavioristically, not normatively. Accordingly, by female roles is meant those activities in which women participate.

² Blake, J., Demographic Science and the Redirection of Population Policy, in Sheps, M. C. and Ridley, J. C. (Editors), *PUBLIC HEALTH AND POPULATION CHANGE*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1965, pp. 41-69.

³ Inasmuch as blacks constitute the great majority of nonwhites in the United States, (about 94 per cent in 1960), the two groups will be referred to interchangeably in this paper. Often data for nonwhites are not further classified by race.

⁴ Farley, R., Recent Changes in Negro Fertility, *Demography*, 3, 188-203, 1966.

⁵ Kiser, C. V., Grabill, W. H. and Campbell, A. A., *TRENDS AND VARIATIONS IN FERTILITY IN THE UNITED STATES*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1968.

⁶ Kiser, C. V. and Frank, M. E., Factors Associated with the Low Fertility of Nonwhite Women of College Attainment, *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, 45, 427-449, October, 1967.

⁷ Taeuber, I. B., Change and Transition in the Black Population of the United States, *Population Index*, 34, 122-151, 1968.

⁸ Only 57 per cent of the nonwhite women aged 18 to 39 in 1960 were currently married, husband present, as compared to 76 per cent of white women (see United States Bureau of the Census, *CENSUS OF POPULATION, 1960*, Subject Reports, *Marital Status*, Final Report PC(2)-4E, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1966, Table 1). Moreover, a substantial proportion of nonwhite mothers have their births out of wedlock; in 1966, for example, 28 per cent of all nonwhite births were illegitimate, as compared to four per cent of all white births (United States Department of Labor and United States Department of Commerce, *RECENT TRENDS IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF NEGROES IN THE UNITED STATES*, Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 26, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1968, p. 23).

⁹ It was found that nonwhite wives had an average of 2.7 births per woman, a group of white wives matched on several of the same socioeconomic characteristics as were nonwhites (including religion) had an average of 2.1 births per woman and all white wives in the sample had an average of 2.3 births per woman; "most likely" expected fertility averaged 3.6, 2.9 and 3.1 births per woman, respectively. Whelpton, P. K., Campbell, A. A. and Patterson, J. E., *FERTILITY AND FAMILY PLANNING IN THE UNITED STATES*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966, Table 182.

¹⁰ Whelpton, Campbell and Patterson, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

¹¹ Whelpton, Campbell and Patterson, *op. cit.*; Ryder, N. B. and Westoff, C. F., Use of Oral Contraception in the United States, 1965, *Science*, 153, 1199-1205, 1966; Westoff, C. F. and Ryder, N. B., Family Limitation in the United States, paper presented at the meeting of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, London, 1969.

¹² In addition to the national fertility studies, some small area studies have been done on differences between whites and blacks in attitudes toward family limitation. See Blair, A. O., A Comparison of Negro and White Fertility Attitudes, in Bogue, D. J. (Editor), *SOCIOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO FAMILY PLANNING RESEARCH*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1967, pp. 1-35; and Mendoza, E., Socioeconomic Correlates of Attitudes toward Family Size, in Bogue, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-70. For small area studies of blacks only, indicating their poor knowledge and understanding of contraception and reproduction and their distinctive "language of fertility," see Beasley, J. D., Harter, C. L. and Fischer, A., Attitudes and Knowledge Relevant to Family Planning Among New Orleans Negro Women, *American Journal of Public Health*, 56, 1847-1857, 1966; and Kantner, J. F. and Zelnik, M., United States: Exploratory Studies of Negro Family Formation—Common Conceptions about Birth Control, *Studies in Family Planning*, 47, 10-13, 1969.

¹³ Westoff and Ryder, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Whelpton, Campbell and Patterson, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Proportionately more black women than white women never have a first birth (i.e., are childless) before the end of their childbearing period. See Table 2 for 1960 data on childlessness.

¹⁶ United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, *VITAL STATISTICS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1967, Volume 1, Natality*, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1969, Table 1-11.

¹⁷ It should be noted that the interval between first marriage and first birth, by definition, is restricted to births after marriage. This restriction excludes proportionately more first births for nonwhites than for whites, because nonwhites are much more likely than whites to have a first birth prior to marriage.

¹⁸ United States Bureau of the Census, *UNITED STATES CENSUS OF POPULATION 1960, Subject Reports, Women by Number of Children Ever Born*, Final Report PC (2)-3A, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1964, Tables 16 and 17.

¹⁹ Bumpass, L. and Westoff, C. F., The "Perfect Contraceptive" Population, *Science*, 169, 1177-1182, 1970.

²⁰ The "medium" estimate was derived by averaging the per cent of first births that were unwanted by both spouses with the per cent of first births that were unwanted by at least one spouse.

²¹ The 1960 GAF study (Whelpton, Campbell and Patterson, *op. cit.*) does not report such data.

²² "Intermediate variables" refers to the set of variables that link the social structure with fertility and that were specified by Davis, K. and Blake, J., *Social Structure and Fertility: An Analytic Framework, Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 4, 211-235, 1956. In this paper it is contended that female roles are a major aspect of the social structure that is linked with fertility.

²³ A woman can also become a mother by adopting a child. As good data on adoption are not available by color and as the timing of adoption is generally late (after attempts to have one's own child have failed), the issue of adoption will not be considered in this paper.

²⁴ For a discussion of the unique features of the parental role and the relative impact on women of the parental role as compared to marital and occupational roles, see Rossi, A. S., Transition to Parenthood, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 30, 26-39, 1968.

²⁵ United States Bureau of the Census, CURRENT POPULATION REPORTS, Series P-20, No. 186, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1969, Table 12 and 13.

²⁶ Campbell, A. A., The Role of Family Planning in the Reduction of Poverty, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 30, 236-245, 1968.

²⁷ Studies on nonmarital sexual experience usually focus on the premarital period. The samples in studies dealing with the prevalence of premarital sexual experience are highly selective and do not indicate differences by race. The Kinsey data suggest that a greater proportion of nonwhite than white women have premarital sexual experience, but difficulties arise in generalizing from these data. Moreover, it must be remembered that these data refer to the early postwar period (median date of interview: 1946). See Kinsey, A. C., Pomeroy, W., Martin, C. E. and Gebhard, P. H., SEXUAL BEHAVIOR IN THE HUMAN FEMALE, Philadelphia, W. B. Saunders Company, 1953; Gebhard, P. H., Pomeroy, W. B., Martin, C. E. and Christenson, C. V., PREGNANCY, BIRTH AND ABORTION, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1958. A recent study concerned with attitudinal differences toward premarital sex among both black and white college-educated women suggests that, at least for such women, blacks may be sexually more permissive than whites: Reiss, I. L., Premarital Permissiveness Among Negroes and Whites, *American Sociological Review*, 29, 688-698, 1964.

²⁸ Rainwater claims that contraception is usually not part of early sexual relations among black women as sex is erratic. He characterizes the black female's attitude toward sex as one of acceptance of its inevitability but, fundamentally, one of ambivalence. Rainwater, L., The Crucible of Identity: The Negro Lower Class Family, *Daedalus*, 172-216, 1966. The hostility between the sexes among blacks may be more prevalent than among whites and, consequently, may represent a greater impediment to effective contraceptive practice among the former. Liebow, E., TALLY'S CORNER, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1967.

²⁹ Some evidence indicates that spontaneous abortions are more common among nonwhites than whites (Erhardt and Jacobziner, 1956; cited in Gebhard, Pomeroy, Martin and Christenson, *op. cit.*). Gebhard and his associates, in comparing a sample of young, urban, northern Negro women with a similar sample of white women in the 1950's (the Kinsey study), found a difference in the incidence of spontaneous abortion, but not in induced abortion. The data are reported separately for premarital and postmarital conceptions. No color differences were found in the percentage of premaritally conceived pregnancies that are aborted (spontaneously or deliberately). Again, one must be cautious in generalizing from these data.

³⁰ United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, TRENDS IN ILLEGITIMACY IN THE UNITED STATES, 1940-1965, Series 21, No. 15, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1968, Table 7.

³¹ See, for example, Vincent, C. E., Haney, A. and Cochrane, C. M., Familial and Generational Patterns of Illegitimacy, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 31, 659-667, 1969. This is a study of black, unwed mothers only. Their median age at first sexual intercourse was close to 16: 15.8 for the poverty-level group and 16.2 for the lower-middle-income group.

³² The median age at first marriage was about the same for whites and nonwhites in this marriage cohort: 20.1 for white women and 20.0 for nonwhite women. United States Bureau of the Census, CURRENT POPULATION REPORTS, Series P-20, No. 186, *op. cit.*, Table 16.

³³ These national data are consistent with the preliminary findings of a Detroit study conducted by Pratt and cited in Goldberg, D., Fertility and Fertility Differentials: Some Observations on Recent Changes in the United States, in Sheps and Ridley, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-142. For a 1960 marriage cohort, about one-fifth of white women and two-fifths of nonwhite women had premarital conceptions followed by a live birth.

³⁴ As previously noted, proportionately fewer nonwhite women than white women become mothers.

³⁵ The per cent separated in Table 6 may be slightly inflated as a consequence of some never-married women with children misreporting their marital status as separated or divorced. The higher illegitimacy rates among nonwhites than whites suggest that such misreporting of marital status would be more prevalent among nonwhites, serving to inflate the differences by color in marital instability. It may be, however that more whites than nonwhites misreport illegitimacy.

³⁶ This hypothesis is supported by a study by LeMasters, E. E., Parenthood as Crisis, *Marriage and Family Living*, 19, 352-354, 1957. Of the 46 couples interviewed (all parents), 83 per cent indicated "extensive" or "severe" crisis in adjusting to the first child. Also, Christensen and Meissner drew a sample from official marriage, birth and divorce records in Tippecanoe, Indiana, and found that women with premarital pregnancies had disproportionately high divorce rates. The order, moving from greater to lesser likelihood of divorce, was: delayed marriage following pregnancy, early marriage following pregnancy, early pregnancy following marriage and delayed pregnancy following marriage (Christensen, H. T. and Meissner, H. H., Studies in Childspacing: Premarital Pregnancy as a Factor in Divorce, *American Sociological Review*, 18, 641-644, 1953). For a more general review of the literature on the economic as well as marital effects of the timing of the first birth (dealing mostly with white samples) see Pohlman, E., The Timing of First Birth: A Review of Effects, *Eugenics Quarterly*, 15, 252-263, 1968.

³⁷ Rainwater, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

³⁸ Although census data are available on marital status by children ever born, the marital status of the woman at the time of each birth—which is needed to test the hypothesis—is not indicated.

³⁹ Vincent argues that "Negro illegitimacy today does not fulfill the function, for either Negroes or whites, that it served within the earlier economic system of plantation life in the South." (Vincent, C. E., UNMARRIED MOTHERS, New York, The Free Press, 1961, p. 14.) Nevertheless, the trend between 1940 and 1962 was an increase in illegitimacy particularly for nonwhites and particularly among older women. See Davis, K., Some Demographic Aspects of Poverty in the United States in Gordon M. S. (Editor), POVERTY IN AMERICA, San Francisco, Chandler Publishing Co., 1965. This suggests that the role pattern of mother/nonwife during this period was becoming a more desirable option than remaining an unmarried childless woman or marrying a man strictly to legitimize the birth.

⁴⁰ Kiser, Grabill and Campbell, *op. cit.*

⁴¹ United States Department of Labor, *THE NEGRO FAMILY: THE CASE FOR NATIONAL ACTION*, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1965.

⁴² Some women may return to school after their first child is born, but maternal responsibilities as socially proscribed would tend to discourage this among those who are not highly motivated and economically able to afford child care costs.

⁴³ United States Bureau of the Census, *CURRENT POPULATION REPORTS*, Series P-20, No. 189, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁴⁴ United States Bureau of the Census, *UNITED STATES CENSUS OF POPULATION*, 1960, Subject Reports, *Age at First Marriage*, *op. cit.*, Table 6.

⁴⁵ Ridley, J. C., Number of Children Expected in Relation to Nonfamilial Activities of the Wife, *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, 37, 276-296, 1959; Stycos, J. M. and Weller, R. H., Female Working Roles and Fertility, *Demography*, 4, 210-217; Blake, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶ An alternative to employment for mothers in financial need is welfare assistance. In line with the reasoning of this paper it may be that the need for welfare could be reduced if efforts to avert an early unplanned first birth were promoted. The often-stated, but undocumented argument that welfare serves to increase fertility usually refers to *additional* fertility.

⁴⁷ Relative to employed white and black men, the occupational and income status of employed white and black women is quite low; see Price, *op. cit.* For an analysis of the limited occupational participation of women in the labor force, see Oppenheimer, V. C., *The Female Labor Force in the United States: Demographic and Economic Factors Governing its Growth and Changing Composition*, Population Monograph Series, No. 5, Berkeley, University of California, 1970.

⁴⁸ A comparison of the fertility rates for white and nonwhite wives aged 35 to 44 years (employed and unemployed combined) by the occupational group of husbands shows a somewhat different pattern, notably a greater excess of nonwhite relative to white fertility in the low-status, nonagricultural occupational groups. See Kiser, Grabill and Campbell, *op. cit.*, Table 10.9.

⁴⁹ This greater difference reflects the greater prevalence of childlessness among employed nonwhite relative to white women of these ages.

⁵⁰ Similarly, job options for both black and white women may be restricted by sex discrimination.

⁵¹ Of course, some illegitimate births may be wanted, probably more frequently among black women than among white women. Bernard notes: "At least one element of the old plantation family pattern persists even in the urban slum family of today: the relatively greater value attached to motherhood than to wifehood." Bernard, J., *MARRIAGE AND FAMILY AMONG NEGROES*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966, p. 104.

⁵² Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

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