

OPINIONS OF LOW-INCOME NEGRO MOTHERS  
IN EL DORADO, ARKANSAS, CONCERNING  
FAMILY PLANNING

by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	ii
LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	iv
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE . . . . .	4
Poverty in the United States . . . . .	4
Illegitimacy . . . . .	8
Sex Education . . . . .	11
Family Planning . . . . .	12
III. PROCEDURE . . . . .	15
IV. RESULTS . . . . .	20
Background Information . . . . .	20
Family Planning . . . . .	21
Birth Control Methods Known and Practiced . . . . .	24
Preparation for Marriage . . . . .	27
Sex Education . . . . .	29
V. CASE STUDIES OF MOTHERS . . . . .	33
VI. DISCUSSION . . . . .	49
VII. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS . . . . .	55
Implications for Action and Research . . . . .	57
REFERENCES . . . . .	60
APPENDIX . . . . .	64

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Place of Residence and Information Concerning the Families of Homemaking II Students . . . .	16
2. Section of Town, Number of Girls Living in Each Section and Number Whose Family Income is Below the Poverty Line . . . . .	18
3. A Comparison of Education Level of Respondents and Husband/Boyfriends . . . . .	21
4. Marital Status, Number and Ages of Children and Age of Mothers . . . . .	22
5. Mothers' Opinions Concerning Family Planning .	23
6. Mothers' Opinions on Ideal Number of Children, Ideal Age to Have First Baby and Ideal Spacing of Children as Compared to Actual Number of Children Had, Age of Respondents When First Baby Was Born . . . . .	25
7. Mothers' Comments on Pregnancy . . . . .	26
8. Attitudes of Husband/Boyfriends Toward Birth Control as Perceived by Mothers . . . . .	28
9. Mothers' Preparation for Married Life . . . . .	30

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Adams and Gallagher (1963) estimated that 224,300 babies were born out-of-wedlock in 1960. Sixty-three percent of the illegitimate births reported for that year were to nonwhite mothers. There were 91,700 illegitimate births to teen-age girls; of this number 43,400 had reached the age of eighteen years, but 48,300 were girls of school age.

Out-of-wedlock births have dramatically risen during the past twenty-five years, from about 89,000 in 1940 to an estimated 291,000 in 1965 (Herzog, 1967). This is reason to be concerned especially for those who work with high school students. Many of the unwed mothers come from impoverished circumstances. There are today more than 5.4 million families, containing more than seventeen million persons, with total incomes of only \$2,000 a year (Miller, 1965). Family planning definitely can be a major instrument in reducing and preventing poverty in this group (Sheppard, 1967).

Many of the persons with high fertility rates exhibit a low economic level of living. A reduction in the birth rate in this group could greatly improve the living conditions of many of these persons (Champion, 1967). Negroes comprise one such group whose fertility remains high although

there are modern contraceptives available in our society (Blair, 1967).

Sex education is one tool that can be used for eradicating ignorance, misunderstanding and fear that leads to sex experimentation. Sexual behavior cannot be isolated from the total behavior of the human being (Glassberg, 1959), and as one gains insight into his own sexuality he will be able to direct his sexual impulses into desirable channels (Kirkendall, 1957). He will develop attitudes and skills that will enable him to live easily with his sex needs (Kirkendall, 1957).

Unplanned and unwanted pregnancies are major concerns of society. Of particular concern is the low-income group, partly because of the large numbers of children in those families but mostly important because of the conditions in which the children are born and reared and the manner in which such conditions affect the growth and development of the children.

For many persons the slum is an immobile society that is like cancerous disease in the body; when a part is infected, the whole body is affected. The cycle of poverty prevents many from taking the long stride toward a better life, and affects every response and relationship of the individual. Because of these conditions and concerns, this study was undertaken. The objectives of the study were:

1. To investigate the opinions of twelve low-income Negro mothers concerning birth control.

2. To determine to what extent, if any, available information and community facilities are being utilized by low-income Negro families in El Dorado, Arkansas.
3. To determine to what extent low-income Negro mothers are preparing their teenage daughters for adult life.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Poverty in the United States

The United States is the richest country in the world and yet, nearly ten million families are living in poverty (Chilman and Sussman, 1964). This is one-fifth of the total population. Of the poor in this country, twenty-two percent are nonwhite and nearly one-half of all nonwhites live in poverty (Miller, 1965). These people did not choose to be poor, but they have been caught in an environmental trap that perpetuates itself from generation to generation through poor job opportunities, high rates of unemployment, large families, inadequate education, inadequate housing, and stunted ambitions (Chilman and Sussman, 1964). Their chance for escape is slim; for only rarely can those burdened by poverty fight through to free themselves, because poverty, to many, becomes an iron circle that is difficult to break (Keyserling, 1964). The chronic evils of poverty produce a psychological condition, which corrodes the native strength and capabilities of a person to help himself; and as a result there are crippled, twisted, apathetic, emotionally starved and self-defeated people whose energy is drained and whose motivation and self-confidence have been destroyed (Sorle,



1962). There are some eleven million children living in such homes today. This represents one-sixth of the youth (Miller, 1965) of which 350,000 will drop out of school this year (Sherman, 1965). These youth are victims of an immobile subculture that tends to impose upon them a life devoid of human dignity (Strom, 1964) for the slums do not create; they destroy. And today one-fifth of this nation is living in slums (Keyserling, 1964). For the Negro child this often means growing up without sufficient clothing and food. It often means living in overcrowded quarters where the street is the only playground (Epstein, 1965). It means growing up in large families where the father is often absent, because the strain is too great for rearing large families with small incomes and no job security (Moynihan, 1965). It means growing up fast and living fast (Davis, 1965) for the world of the slum child is wide open to exploration and exploitation: dope, crime, delinquency, and sex. It means that only about one-third of these youth reach eighteen having lived all their lives with both parents (Hallstones, Martin and Wing, 1966).

Poverty-stricken people exist almost everywhere in this country, except in the luxurious and exclusive suburbs. Fifty-four percent of the poor live in cities, sixteen percent live on farms and thirty percent are rural nonfarm residents. Over forty percent of all farm families are poor, but eighty percent of all nonwhite farmers live in poverty (Hallstones, Martin and Wing, 1966). Less than half of the

poor people are in the South, but a southerner's chance of being poor is twice that of a person living in the rest of the country (Miller, 1965).

Poor people tend to have more children than do people with high incomes (Sheppard, 1967). Negro families are one-third larger than white families (Inman, 1965), and Negro parents tend to have children earlier, more frequently and later in life (Sheppard, 1967). This is reflected in the percentage of families among this group headed by a person under twenty-two years of age and those headed by a person between fifty-four and sixty-four with children under the age of six (Sheppard, 1967).

The Negro woman is three times more likely to have her marriage disrupted than the white woman and more often by separation than divorce (Chilman and Sussman, 1964). According to Moynihan (1965), the chronic unemployment of the Negro father, who has little education, has led to the break-up of the Negro family. He said that in 1960 there were 39,000 families with four or more children headed by married women who were separated from their husbands. Sherman (1965) estimated that ten percent of the children in the United States are living in fatherless homes, and over sixty percent of the mothers have no more than a grade school education. One million of those mothers are between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, of whom 400,000 are unemployed and 200,000 are underemployed.

The fundamental problem of the Negro, as Moynihan

(1965) saw it, is the position of the male. The Negro father tends to hold jobs with a minimum of either prestige or income. In 1963, of the nonwhite family heads who worked at all, or were at that time working in their longest or only job, one-third were working or had worked in farming, domestic service or laboring occupations. In addition to low-income and low-prestige, Moynihan (1965) believed that the Negro father is burdened with high rates of unemployment at the time when family responsibilities are most heavy.

The chances of a poor father moving out of poverty himself, according to Sheppard (1967), is affected by the number of children he has and by the spacing of their births. In 1964 he found that forty-five percent of all children under eighteen in poor families lived in homes with at least five children in contrast to only seventeen percent of non-poor children living in families of this size. He concluded that family planning can be a major tool in alleviating poverty.

The roots of poverty run deep. Its symptoms — lack of aspiration, illiteracy, indifference to self-betterment (Miller, 1965) — affect the whole behavior style of its victim: his goals in life, his moral values, his dreams, hopes and faith in himself (Chilman, 1965). The subculture of poverty induces and reinforces certain behavior patterns in people. Unplanned legitimate and illegitimate birth rates among poverty-stricken people is a behavior pattern (Inman, 1965). Poverty has many roots, but unlike a tree

it never will be destroyed by sawing it off at the ground (Miller, 1965). The evils of poverty can only be eradicated through better job opportunities, education, and the elimination of high birth rates, which itself is a result of poverty and is caused by poverty (Sheppard, 1967). One major task at hand is to help people limit the size of their families.

### Illegitimacy

Society always has looked upon reproduction as a function of marriage. It accepts marriage and the family as its cornerstone; consequently, there are problems of illegitimacy that come from the social, environmental and emotional conflicts of such a society (Adams and Gallagher, 1963). Society views illegitimacy as an act of social irresponsibility (Rashbaun, Paneth, Reher, and Greenberg, 1963); nevertheless, it involves young and middle-aged men and women, intelligent and mentally deficient persons, the educated and uneducated, white and nonwhite, rich and poor (Garland, 1963).

Historically speaking, as long as marriage was considered an economic advantage and intended for those who had wealth and property to pass on to their young, illegitimacy as such did not exist for the great majority of people. But when marriage took on moral and religious significance and became synonymous with the family as an institution, a different situation came into focus. Marriage not only carried

an important economic function, but also became the basic unit of society. Through the spread of Christianity throughout the western world, more emphasis was placed upon the sacredness of the home. Heavy penalties were exacted from those who violated the moral code, because extra-martial sexual relations meant disgrace especially when the coming of a child publicized and confirmed the fact. With this situation, the problem of illegitimacy came into existence (Young, 1954). One might argue that civilization pays for setting its standards so high (Wimperis, 1960).

As civilization developed, society realized the importance of a stable family as providing security for its children and of providing social and cultural continuity from generation to generation. This required regulating and controlling man's sexual urges, or more accurately, of their expression. This control has never been easy to maintain and therefore, society has reacted violently to infringement of the sexual code that most threatened the fabric of the family pattern (Wimperis, 1960). What was not realized, according to Poffenberger (1960), was that sexual control involved a conflict between sex drives and the social self. Sexual behavior cannot be isolated from the total behavior of the human being (Glassberg, 1959), because sex is not something that is done, but something that defines the person (Steichen, 1965). Sexual feelings will always be a part of the individual and knowledge of motivation and personal needs will aid in living adequately with sex. A person can

order and direct his sexual impulses in much the same way that he manages his other impulses; however, this ability for direction is influenced by psychological factors. The person who matures emotionally, achieves normally in his educational and occupational pursuits, and has a positive self-concept has the capacity for directing his sexual impulses (Kirkendall, 1957). Growing up in poverty where sexual experimentation proves a person's masculinity is a difficult place to learn self-direction. According to Duvall (1962), members of lower class families usually are active in direct sex experiences with the opposite sex in their middle teens, because they are burdened neither by social pressures for supporting the sex code, nor by urgent reasons for postponing pregnancy. They are the young people who had to grow up fast. They are the ones who live in environments where they must be a man or a woman at thirteen or fourteen (Davis, 1965).

Poverty causes illegitimacy; illegitimacy is caused by poverty: a vicious cycle that continuously repeats itself. In 1963, twenty-four percent of all nonwhite births in this nation were illegitimate (Moynihan, 1965). In 1964, the Chicago Board of Health reported that 2,833 girls of seventeen years of age and under gave birth out-of-wedlock. In 1965 this number rose to 3,144, an increase of eleven percent. Over seventy-five percent of those girls lived in areas of the city characterized by the lowest per capita income, the highest rates of illegitimacy, and the lowest

levels of educational achievement. Of this particular group eighty-three percent in 1964 and eighty-five percent in 1965 were Negroes (Wright, 1966).

In New York City alone, 13,000 children are born out-of-wedlock each year (Adams, 1961). Nonwhite and Puerto Ricans contribute more than eighty-two percent of those births.

In Buffalo there has been more than a threefold increase in the over-all percentage occurrence of illegitimacy: from 483 in 1950 or four percent of the total live births to 1,257 in 1964 or more than twelve percent of the total births (Anderson, Jenss, Mosher, and Richter, 1966).

Illegitimacy is a nationwide problem. It stems from personal and socio-cultural factors that include poverty, migration, urbanization, lack of education, weak or ambivalently held moral standards, inadequate parent-child relationships, social and emotional deprivation, and immaturity (Garland, 1963). Through overcoming the tyranny of unwanted pregnancies society can be liberated from some of the evils and misery that plague it. Possibly, one solution is through proper sex education of the young people.

### Sex Education

Parents have the prime responsibility for sex education (Foster, 1963), yet Burchinal (1960) found that fathers were inactive in providing their daughters with basic sex information. Although two-thirds of the girls in his study

reported that their mothers were the first sources of sex information, better than fifty-nine percent of the unmarried girls believed that their sexual knowledge was inadequate for marriage. This was true for girls of both high and low socio-economic status. This study is in agreement with that of Bardis (1963) who found that college students who had not had family life courses had only vague concepts of basic sex terms.

Lack of sex education is a real problem for young people (Poffenberger, 1960), but somehow they are expected to have the skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding that would help them to make their own intelligent choice among competing and liberal moral codes (Rubin, 1965). Those who cannot stand up are treated with scorn, blamed for their wretchedness, and are undermined in their self-respect.

Young people need an adequate sexual understanding for the development of an integrated and mature personality (Harper and Harper, 1957). The schools must take over where the families need support. Through the prevention of unplanned, undesirable procreation, families will be able to chart their own course of self-rejuvenation.

#### Family Planning

Family planning refers not merely to the number of children born but also to the timing and spacing of births (Sheppard, 1967). There is evidence, according to Sheppard (1967), that many of the great health problems of the female



in poor families are caused by high fertility rates. He said that a large number of children born over a long period of years may not only constitute a threat to the mother's health, but also the health of her children. This is especially true for babies born less than a year apart, for those born while the mother is in her teens, and for those born after the mother is over the age of thirty-two.

Major studies such as the Growth of American Families Study (Freedman, Whelpton and Campbell, 1955, 1960) have precisely confirmed the long-time observation of many writers that many people with low-incomes have been unsuccessful in planning their families. Miller (1966) asserted that low-income families do not want more children than do high-income families, but they have more because they do not have the information or the resources to plan their families effectively.

Several studies have attempted to discover the child-bearing aspirations of mothers with low incomes. Rainwater (1960) found that low-income mothers actually wanted two to four children but had an average of four to five.

Corkey (1964) reported the work of Darity (1963), who studied the women in the Mecklenburg birth control clinic in Charlotte, North Carolina. Darity found the desired number of children was one or two as contrasted to the actual number of four or five.

Planning the size of the family is a function of the family. Death rates have been reduced much faster than

birth rates which remain extremely high in poverty-stricken families of this country (Corkey, 1964). Infant mortality in the United States has dropped from one hundred per 1,000 children born alive in 1914 to twenty-five per 1,000 in 1962 (Corkey, 1964). Low-income mothers, in contrast to mothers at other socio-economic levels, are bearing more children and for longer periods of time. They now find themselves with more children than they ever hoped for or can properly care for (Corkey, 1964).

Low-income Negro women can be benefited by limiting their families to the desired size. As they gain confidence and ability to control the size of their families, they may gain faith in themselves as worthy, effective people. Then and only then can progress be made toward the all important goal: every child a planned child. Family planning can aid in breaking the chain of poverty.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURE

The investigator during the 1967-68 school year taught a class of Homemaking II students in which twenty-five Negro girls were enrolled (Table 1). Twelve mothers were selected to participate in the study according to these criteria: 1) their daughters were enrolled in Home Economics II; 2) they had annual incomes of \$3,000.00 or less; and 3) they came from a Negro section of town (Table 2). No mother who was contacted refused to cooperate.

Two mothers from each section of town whom the investigator knew and believed would be comfortable with the interview schedule were selected; however, two sections were represented by only two students. All four girls came from low-income families.

The interview schedule (Appendix, page 69) was planned to cover four major areas: family planning, birth control methods known and practiced, preparation for marriage, and sex education. An attempt was made to explore with the mothers the attitude of their husband/boyfriends toward family planning and birth control methods. The mothers were asked their opinions concerning sex education for their teenage daughters focusing upon content and who would be

TABLE 1

PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND INFORMATION CONCERNING  
THE FAMILIES OF HOME MAKING II STUDENTS

Student	Section of Town	Information Concerning the Family
A	St. Louis	*Mother: Waitress in Negro cafe; ADC Father: No legal father
B	St. Louis	*Mother: Cook in restaurant; ADC Father: Separated
C	St. Louis	Mother: Maid in private home Father: Separated
D	St. Louis	Mother: Housewife Father: Works in a plant
E	Rock Island	*Mother: Housewife Father: Unemployed - formerly worked as church janitor
F	Rock Island	*Mother: Maid in nursing home Father: Deceased
G	Rock Island	Mother: Cook in private home Father: Divorced
H	Rock Island	Mother: Maid in private home Father: Divorced
I	Fordville	*Mother: Maid in private home Father: Retired
J	Fordville	*Mother: Unemployed; ADC Father: No legal father
K	Morning Star	*Mother: Housewife Father: Self-employed (painter)
L	Morning Star	*Mother: Unemployed; ADC Father: Divorced
M	Douglas	*Mother: Works in nursing home Father: Deceased

TABLE 1--Continued

Student	Section of Town	Information Concerning the Family
N	Douglas	*Mother: Housewife Father: Janitor in department store
O	Douglas	Mother: Works at a hospital Father: Janitor in a school
P	Douglas	Mother: Housewife Father: Teacher
Q	Fairview	*Mother: Unemployed; ADC Father: Separated
R	Fairview	*Mother: Housewife Father: Works for trucking company
S	Fairview	Mother: Maid Father: Works at a plant
T	Fairview	Mother: Substitute teacher Father: Teacher
U	Fairview	Mother: Maid Father: Deceased
V	Fairview	Mother: Cook in a restaurant Father: Separated
W	Fairview	Mother: Maid in private home Father: Works at a plant
X	Fairview	Mother: Cook; ADC Father: No legal father
Y	Fairview	Mother: Cook Father: Deceased

\*Mothers selected for interview

ADC - Aid to Dependent Children

TABLE 2

SECTION OF TOWN, NUMBER OF GIRLS LIVING IN  
EACH SECTION AND NUMBER WHOSE FAMILY  
INCOME WAS BELOW THE POVERTY LINE

Section of Town	Number of Girls Living in Each Section	Number Whose Income Was Below \$3,000 a Year
I Douglas	4	3
II St. Louis	4	3
III Fairview	9	6
IV Rock Island	4	4
V Fordville	2	2
VI Morning Star	2	2
Total	25	20

responsible for such education.

General background information was secured on each respondent: age, place of birth and population, ages of children, and education of respondents and husband/boy-friends.

The interview schedule was pre-tested for clarity and understanding. As a result of this experience, with two mothers, two questions were re-worded.

The subjects were contacted by telephone by the investigator to ask for their cooperation and to schedule appointments. All mothers were on time except two who had to re-schedule their appointments because of work conflicts. All of the interviewing took place at the home of the investigator

where it was hoped that the subjects could talk in a relaxed, private atmosphere.

They came to the interview by various means: three drove their own cars, three were brought by their husbands, two rode with their employers, one came in a taxi, two walked, and one came with a friend. The interviews were from forty minutes to one hour and fifteen minutes in length.

Five doctors, the ADC director and the director of the Board of Health in El Dorado were contacted by letter. They were asked about the facilities and information available to lower-class Negro mothers in the area of family planning, and whether the mothers were utilizing them effectively.

A letter was received from the office of the Board of Health. The Board of Health personnel did not feel free to answer some of the questions and said she had no means of answering the others. No response was received from the doctors or the ADC director.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Background Information

Five of the mothers were married, two had never been married, two had deceased husbands, and three were either separated or divorced. The seven mothers who did not have husbands reported they had boyfriends.

Their ages ranged from thirty to fifty-five years of age. Six of the mothers ranged in age from thirty to thirty-four years; two were from thirty-five to thirty-nine; and four were forty or above.

The highest grade level that the mothers had completed ranged from fifth grade to twelfth grade as compared with third grade to eleventh grade for the husband/boyfriends (Table 3). Five mothers had some elementary education (5th and 6th); three had some junior high training (7th, 8th, 9th); two had some senior high work (10th, 11th); and two were high school graduates. As for the husband/boyfriends, five had some elementary education (3rd to 6th); six had worked in junior high (7th to 9th); and one had some high school work (11th).

All of the mothers were born in El Dorado or in small towns surrounding El Dorado. Five of the husband/boyfriends



TABLE 3

A COMPARISON OF EDUCATION LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS  
AND HUSBAND/BOYFRIENDS

Respondents	Highest Grade Completed By Mothers	Highest Grade Completed By Husband/Boyfriends	Age of Respondents
I	5th	4th	32
II	5th	3rd	40
III	5th	6th	55
IV	6th	4th	40
V	12th	9th	37
VI	10th	8th	30
VII	5th	3rd	39
VIII	11th	8th	34
IX	9th	7th	33
X	8th	9th	32
XI	12th	11th	42
XII	7th	9th	30

were born in El Dorado, two in Louisiana, and five in small towns near or around El Dorado.

The number of children born to each mother ranged from one to twelve (Table 4).

#### Family Planning

Only one mother had an adequate idea of the meaning of family planning. She said that family planning meant "space between children." Two said that they did not know, one

TABLE 4  
 MARITAL STATUS, NUMBER AND AGES OF  
 CHILDREN AND AGE OF MOTHERS

Respondents	No. of Children	Ages of Children	Ages of Mothers	Marital Status
IX	12	17,16,14,13,12, 11,9,8,6,2,1,1	33	Married
IV	11	26,23,22,20,18, 17,15,13,12,9,7	40	Husband: Deceased
I	7	17,15,11,8,6,4, 2	32	Never Been Married
VII	7	24,22,17,14,12, 10,2	39	Married
III	6	40,36,22,19,18, 16	55	Husband: Deceased
V	6	16,15,13,10,8, 5	37	Married
VI	5	14,11,3,2,1	30	Separated
VIII	5	17,13,12,10, 2 months	34	Separated
X	5	17,5,3,2,1	32	Never Been Married
XI	5	23,21,20,18,17	42	Married
XII	5	16,15,13,11,9	30	Divorced
II	1	17	40	Married

said it was "keeping the house clean," and seven thought the meaning had to do with budgeting and management. One mother's answer had a religious overtone. She said, "It's hard to plan them 'cause it ain't left up to you" (Table 5).

A high school education seemed of great importance to

TABLE 5  
MOTHERS' OPINIONS CONCERNING FAMILY PLANNING

Respondents	Comments Concerning Family Planning
I	"It's hard to plan them, 'cause it ain't left up to you."
II	"Space between children."
III	"Better home living."
IV	"You and your chillons sit down and plan how to spend your money."
V	"Planning your family living on a budget."
VI	"I just don't know."
VII	"Keeping your house clean."
VIII	"Spending your money right."
IX	"Try to stretch the little you have to take care of your family. Actually it's doing the best you can."
X	"Well, it means doing the best you can for your children. Trying to make a good home for them."
XI	"Taking care of your family properly. Letting them come first."
XII	"I don't know."

the mothers. Most of them said that a woman should finish high school before her first baby was born. Eighteen was mentioned most often as being a "good age" for a woman to have her first baby. One said, "The younger the better, you grow with the child and this is good." Another said, "Well, she really don't have nothing to do with it, that's God's

work." Still another said, "She ought to wait 'till she is married; every child ought to have the same daddy." See Table 6 for other comments.

Most of the mothers thought that every two years was about the right spacing for children. Two thought every three years was correct, and one said, "Once a year and get it over with." Another answered, "Let God rule."

All of the subjects believed that children were necessary in a family. The majority gave reasons having to do with combating lonesomeness and having children to help around the house.

Concerning the ideal family, six said that two children are ideal, four thought three or four, one said it was left to God, and one said, "Let her conscious (sic) be her guide." See Table 6 for a summary of opinions.

#### Birth Control Methods Known and Practiced

None of the mothers had adequate knowledge of reproduction. They knew that sexual relations was involved in conception, but they could not explain the process.

Only three women had vague ideas of the time of the month that a woman was most likely to become pregnant. Three thought when the sap rises one would get pregnant. "Anytime you have an intercourse with a man" was the answer given by three. One simply stated that pregnancy was caused by God. One subject wondered if the change of the moon affected the chance for becoming pregnant. See Table 7 for other

TABLE 6

MOTHERS' OPINIONS ON IDEAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN, IDEAL AGE TO HAVE FIRST BABY AND IDEAL SPACING OF CHILDREN AS COMPARED TO ACTUAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN HAD AND AGE OF RESPONDENTS WHEN FIRST BABY WAS BORN

Respondents	Ideal No. of Children	No. of Children Respondents Had	Ideal Age to Have First Child	Age of Respondent When First Child Born	Ideal Spacing of Children
I	"Let her conscious be her guide."	7	"The younger the better."	15	"Let God rule."
II	3	1	20	23	Every 2 or 3 yrs.
III	2	6	18	15	Every 2 or 3 yrs.
IV	3 or 4	11	16	14	Every 2 yrs.
V	2	6	24	21	Every 2 yrs.
VI	3	5	18	16	Every 3 yrs.
VII	2	7	"She ought to wait 'til she is married."	15	Every 2 yrs.
VIII	3 or 4	5	19	17	Every 2 yrs.
IX	2 or 3	12	19 or 20	16	Every 2 yrs.
X	2	5	17 or 18	15	Every 3 yrs.
XI	2	5	18 or 19	19	"Once a year and set it over with."
XII	"That's left up to God."	5	"She really don't have nothing to do with it. That's God's work."	14	Every 2 yrs.

TABLE 7  
MOTHERS' COMMENTS ON PREGNANCY

Respondents	How Does a Woman Become Pregnant?	When is the "Best" Time to Get Pregnant?
I	"God planted a seed."	"When the sap is rising."
II	"I don't know."	"A few days before or after your period."
III	"By having sex relations."	"Before and after your period."
IV	"In the summer you have more nature than you do in the winter."	"When the sap is rising."
V	"She has sex and it just happens."	"Springtime, it seems to me."
VI	"Well, she has an intercourse with a man, and when she knows anything, there she is."	"Anytime you fool with a man."
VII	"I don't know."	"The Lord has something to do with it."
VIII	"When she has sex with a man."	"After she starts her period."
IX	"Well, you just mess with a man and that's it."	"Anytime you mess with a man."
X	"Well, she just gets knocked up is all I know."	"Mess with a man long enough."
XI	"Just before her period."	"Once a month before your period."
XII	"I just don't know."	"I don't know if the change of the moon has anything to do with it."

opinions.

Five women had knowledge of at least one method of preventing pregnancies: birth control pills, Zonitors (suppositories), diaphragms, and prophylactics were the ones mentioned. Three listed douching with vinegar with one adding Blue Seal vaseline first. Four responded that they did not know and one of these said she would be afraid to use anything.

Only two women reported that their husband/boyfriends used preventive measures in order to avoid pregnancy. Prophylactics were those that were mentioned. Only one stated that her husband was in favor of birth control measures. One said that her boyfriend "is beginning to believe in it." This particular mother was fifty-five years old (Table 8).

Six mothers said that they had never used anything to keep from getting pregnant. One of these said that she would be afraid to. Three of these said that they had used vinegar; one said she also used soapy water. One had used a suppository and two were taking birth control pills that were prescribed by their doctors.

The three who had used vinegar had stopped because they said it had not prevented another pregnancy; all of them have had more children. The two who were taking the "pill" reported that they had not had another pregnancy.

#### Preparation for Marriage

Three of the subjects said that their mothers had

TABLE 8

 ATTITUDES OF HUSBAND/BOYFRIENDS TOWARD BIRTH  
 CONTROL AS PERCEIVED BY MOTHERS

Respondents	How Do You Think Your Husband/Boyfriend Feel About Birth Control?	Does He Ever Use Anything?	What?	How Does He Feel About It?
I	"I believe I ought to have as many as God wants me to have. He thinks like me."	No		
II	"He don't like it."	No		
III	"Beginning to believe in it."	No		
IV	"He don't like it."	No		
V	"He's for it."	Yes	Prophy-	"He doesn't want to use them all of the time."
VI	"He don't believe in it."	No		
VII	"Well, he thinks you ought to have as many as for you."	No		
VIII	"He doesn't want to use nothing."	No		
IX	"He ain't for it."	No		
X	"He doesn't like it."	Sometimes	Prophy- latics	"He don't like them."
XI	"He don't think you ought to prevent it."	No		
XII	"He's just like me, what's for you, you can't get around it."	No		



prepared them for menstruation; three said it was their mothers who told them where babies "really" come from. Three got their information from either observing their mother, sister or a friend in childbirth. One, who had no mother, was told by her father after he discovered that she was pregnant. Only one said that her mother told her about sexual intercourse. The others either got their information from their peers, in school and out, or from relatives (Table 9).

Eight mothers reported that they had prepared their daughters for menstruation. One mother said that she told the older daughter and the older daughter told the younger girl. Three reported that they had not told their daughters about menstruation. All of the mothers said that they thought their daughters knew where babies come from.

#### Sex Education

All of the mothers except two wanted their daughters who were enrolled in Homemaking II to know about birth control methods. Most of them thought that their daughters would be promiscuous and needed something to protect themselves. One of those who said she did not want her daughter to have this information thought that whatever is going to happen will happen. The other one said, "She should have the babies if it's God's will."

Five mothers reported that their daughter never talked about sex with them, but seven reported talking with their daughters about sex. Boy-girl relationships was the topic

TABLE 9

## MOTHERS' PREPARATION FOR MARRIED LIFE

Respondents	When Did You First Learn About Menstruation?	How Old Were You?	Age When Your Period Started	Age When You Learned Where Babies Come From	Who Told You?	How Did You Learn About Sex (intercourse)?	How Old Were You?
I	"When I started. Nobody told me."	12	12	15	Nobody	"From the boy next door."	13
II	"At 10, my mother told me."	10	11	10	Mother	Mother	10 or 11
III	"When I started. Nobody told me."	12	12	"When I got mine."	Nobody	"From the man that I married."	14
IV	"When I started."	13	13	13	"I saw Mama have one."	"My best friend's brother."	13
V	"Nobody told me."	13	13	16	"Friends at school."	"Got it from friends at school."	16
VI	"When I started."	14	14	16	Mama	"From my boy-friend."	14
VII	"When I was a child."	13	14	12	"I saw Mama have my brother."	"From my boy-friend."	14

TABLE 9--Continued

Respondents	When Did You First Learn About Menstruation?	How Old Were You?	Age When Your Period Started	Age When You Learned Where Babies Come From	Who Told You?	How Did You Learn About Sex (intercourse)?	How Old Were You?
VIII	"When I started."	13	13	15 or 16	"Friends at school."	"From my boyfriend."	15
IX	"My mother told me when I was about 14."	14	14	14	"My mother told me."	"From my girlfriend."	13
X	"When I started. Nobody told me."	13	13	13	"My girlfriend told me."	"My girlfriend."	13 or 14
XI	"My mother told me when I was about 12."	12	12	12	"I saw my sister have hers."	"From school-mates."	14
XII	"When I started."	13 or 14	14	14	"Finally my Daddy told me I was fixing to have a baby."	"From a girl cousin of mine."	13

most often discussed. Two said that they did not want their daughters to have any kind of sex knowledge before marriage.

Ten of the mothers thought that the classroom was the best place to talk about sex. They further thought that home economics should be the class to teach sex education and that boys and girls should be enrolled in the class. Four of the mothers had taken home economics in high school.

With regard to the question, "What is the best way to learn about sex?" eight of the mothers thought that the best way was the trial and error method; however, three said the classroom and one said by talking with others. It could be that this question was not clear, because ten had already stated that the classroom was the best place to talk about sex.

Eleven of the mothers felt comfortable with the interview and one felt "sort of comfortable."

Ten of the mothers thought that the investigator had information that would be of help to them. Being able to communicate with teenagers was a big concern of theirs. One mother thought that a program needed to be developed where more boys could have sex education. Four mothers thought that perhaps through parent education classes (men and women) the investigator's services could be utilized in this area. One mother was particularly interested in having birth control information explained to her.

## CHAPTER V

### CASE STUDIES OF MOTHERS

In this chapter a brief case study on each mother will be presented in order to summarize each respondent's point of view.

#### Respondent I

The subject was thirty-two years old, had seven children and had never been married. Her children ranged in age from two to seventeen. She was fifteen when her first child was born. Nobody had prepared her for womanhood. She stated that she started to menstruate when she was twelve years old and she did not know what was happening to her. "It just come on me," she said. She dropped out of school in the sixth grade.

Family planning to her meant that a supreme being was in charge of sexual behavior and man has no control whatever over personal actions. The supreme being planted a seed in the woman and she became pregnant. Possibly, her religious training has influenced her beliefs in this direction. She stated that she had been a Baptist all of her life; possibly meaning since she was in her early teens.

She evidently did not fully understand the question:

"What would you say are some things a person could use or do to keep from getting pregnant?" She talked about abortions and mentioned that people use herbs and douch with vinegar and lysol to accomplish this.

The fertile period was not known to her and she thought that springtime was the "best" time to get pregnant because this was the time that the sap was rising and one's nature automatically increased.

She was pregnant when she found out that babies grow inside the female's body, but she had learned about intercourse much earlier (thirteen years of age). The boy next door was her source of information.

Her boyfriend did not favor birth control; consequently, he had never used any kind of contraceptive. She did not know of a reliable method of preventing pregnancy. Douching with vinegar was the practice she had used, but she had stopped after realizing that it was not a reliable method.

She believed that "one should have as many children as God wants her to have since it takes people to run the world." A woman need only be guided by her conscience.

She thought that parents should grow with their children and that the younger they were when they had their family, the better. She seemed to believe that youth itself solved all the problems of childrearing.

She had told her daughter about menstruation prior to her menstrual period. The daughter knew where babies come

from because she had been at home when one baby was born. She believed very strongly that her daughter needed no sex knowledge before she married because "she will pick it up." The mother had never discussed sex with the daughter and thought that the trial and error method was the "best" way to learn about sex. She did not state any help that she wanted from the investigator.

#### Respondent II

The subject was married, forty years old and had only one child. She had never wanted another child. She completed the fifth grade in school and was twenty-three years old when her daughter was born.

This respondent was the only one of those interviewed who knew that family planning was concerned with spacing children.

Being able to cope with family problems was a concern of hers. She thought that a woman should be at least twenty years old when her first baby was born so that she would be mature enough to understand the problems and responsibilities involved in caring for a family.

The ideal spacing of children was listed as two or three years. She was concerned about the health of the mother especially if there were too many children and too close together.

She could not explain conception, but she did have a vague idea concerning the fertile period. She had heard of

birth control pills and prophylactics as being methods of preventing unwanted pregnancies, although neither she nor her husband had ever used any kind of contraceptive. She wanted more information on birth control and thought her family doctor was a good source for this information.

The subject's mother had prepared her for menstruation when she was about ten years old and had also discussed intercourse with her. The subject prepared her daughter for menstruation and she talked about sex with her. She wanted her daughter to have birth control information and thought that she needed this information now. She saw this as being a protection for the girl.

She definitely wanted her daughter to have sex information before she married and again she mentioned birth control information as a safeguard for unwanted children. She felt inadequate to give her daughter this kind of instruction and thought it should be done in school but preferred that sex education be taught in home economics classes with boys and girls in the class.

A parent education class where parents could be taught basic sex knowledge and they in turn could teach their children was suggested as a contribution that the investigator could make.

#### Respondent III

The subject was fifty-five years old, her husband was deceased and she had six children. She dropped out of



school when she was in the sixth grade.

Family planning meant to her "better home living." She thought that a woman should be at least eighteen before her first baby was born. The ideal spacing of children was every three or four years, so that all of the children would not be in high school at the same time. This seemed important to her.

She did not understand conception, but she did have a vague idea of the fertile period. She had never practiced birth control, but she had heard of the "pill." Her boyfriend had never used contraceptives, but she reported that he was beginning to favor birth control.

The family doctor was listed as a source of birth control information and she would like to have such information.

Although she thought that children were necessary in a family, two children were ideal and she had not wanted another child at the time of her last pregnancy.

Nobody had prepared her for the menstrual period and she was married when she learned about sexual intercourse. Likewise, she was married when she learned where babies come from.

She made an attempt to prepare her daughter for menstruation when she was ten years old. Her daughter knew where babies came from because she had discussed pregnancy with her mother. She wanted her daughter to have birth control information now because she feared an unwanted pregnancy.

The daughter was free to discuss sex with her mother

and they usually discussed boy-girl relationships. She wanted her daughter to know about conception before she married. She thought that this information should be part of the home economics curriculum and boys should be included in such instruction.

The trial and error method was listed as the best way to learn about sex. It could be that this question was not clearly understood in as much as she wanted the daughter to learn about sex education in the classroom. She wanted help in understanding teenagers.

#### Respondent IV

The subject was a widow with eleven children. She was forty years old and had a sixth grade education. Her first child was born when she was fourteen.

She had not been prepared for womanhood prior to her first menstrual period. She reported that she cried all day, because she thought she had cut herself. She learned where babies come from at thirteen when her mother gave birth at home. Her best friend's brother taught her about sex when she was thirteen.

She believed that children were needed in the family to help with home chores, but she had not wanted another child before her last pregnancy (seven years ago). She favored a family of three to four children as being ideal and thought that a woman should be at least sixteen before her first baby was born. She stated that she had been too young

when her first baby was born. The children should be spaced so that the mother can properly prepare for the next child.

The words "family planning" meant budgeting to her and "in the spring" was the "best" time to get pregnant. She did not understand how a woman becomes pregnant, but she did think that she knew some birth control methods. She stated douching with vinegar but using vaseline first, and coitus interruptus (withdrawal), both of which are unreliable practices. Her boyfriend did not approve of birth control and therefore had never taken any kind of preventive measures. She wanted more information on birth control but had no idea where she could get such information.

The subject told her daughter about menstruation when the child was about ten years old. The daughter talked about sex with her mother and she knew where babies came from. The subject thought that her daughter needed to know about birth control. She wanted her to have this information now and she wanted this instruction to take place in home economics in a class of boys and girls.

The "best way" to learn about sex was reported as through experience.

Being able to communicate with teenagers was a great concern of hers and was one area in which she wanted help.

#### Respondent V

The respondent was thirty-seven years old, married, and had six children. She was twenty-one years old when her

first baby was born. She graduated from high school and had taken home economics while in high school.

Family planning was thought to mean budgeting. Twenty-four was given as the ideal age to have a first baby so that the woman could complete her education. Two children were listed as ideal with a spacing of two years between the children.

She reported four birth control methods — suppositories, birth control pills, diaphragms and prophylactics — but did not understand how conception takes place. Springtime was thought to be the fertile period.

Her husband favored birth control and used prophylactics sometimes but did not want to use them all the time. She was taking birth control pills and had not had another pregnancy since she had been taking them. The youngest child is five years old. The family doctor was listed as a source of information on birth control and she wanted more information.

Thirteen was the age she had learned about menstruation; however, she was not told prior to her menstrual period. She was sixteen when she learned where babies come from and about sex. She got her information at school.

The mother had talked to her daughter about womanhood when the child was about twelve. The daughter freely talked about sex with her mother. They especially talked about petting. She wanted her daughter to know about birth control and wanted this taught in home economics in a mixed

group.

She said that one should learn about sex after she is married which is contradictory to what she said about sex education in the classroom. Possibly she was thinking of sex experience.

Boys in home economics was a concern of hers. She believed that not enough boys were being reached and that they definitely needed sex education.

Although she thought that children were important in a family, she had not wanted another child before her last pregnancy. She wanted help in interpersonal relations.

#### Respondent VI

The subject completed tenth grade in school, was separated from her husband with five children and was thirty years old. She was sixteen when her oldest child was born.

A high school education was valued by her. She stated that a woman should be at least eighteen before the first child is born so that she could finish high school first.

She did not know the meaning of family planning but thought that children should be spaced three years apart. She reasoned that it was better for the mother's health not to have children too close together and she also thought that proper spacing would give the parents time to save money for the arrival of the new baby. Her last three children were only one year apart.

She did not understand conception. She did know about

the "pill" and had recently been given the "pill" by her family doctor. Her boyfriend did not favor birth control and had never practiced any method. She had no knowledge of the fertile period and thought that anytime a woman had intercourse she was likely to get pregnant.

Three children, according to the respondent, made an ideal family. She thought that children were company for one around the home. She had not wanted another child before her youngest child was born.

No one told her about menstruation and she was pregnant before she knew where babies came from. Her boyfriend told her about sex when she was fifteen.

She told her daughter about menstruation when she was twelve. The daughter knew where babies come from because she had observed the mother in childbirth. She wanted her to know about birth control.

Sex education was important to her and she wanted home economics to include this subject. She wanted boys to be enrolled in the class with the girls. The classroom was also listed as the "best way" to learn about sex.

The subject wanted the investigator to teach an adult class (men and women) in family planning.

#### Respondent VII

The respondent was thirty-nine years old, married (her husband retired) and had seven children. The youngest child was two. She completed the fifth grade.

She found that children were a lot of help around the house, but she did not want another child before her last baby was born.

Family planning was thought of as keeping the house clean. When she was asked how old a person should be before having a child, she answered "A woman should be married before having a baby." She believed that every two years was often enough to have a child because she thought it was better on the mother's health. She had spaced her children in this fashion. She realized that perhaps she had too many children herself and said that two children were ideal.

She had no concept of conception, had never heard of any birth control method, and said she would be afraid to use any kind of contraceptive. Her husband felt the same as she. She would welcome information on birth control but did not know where she might get this information.

Her mother told her about menstruation when she was thirteen; she learned where babies come from at twelve. She observed childbirth at home when her siblings were born. Her boyfriend told her about sex when she was fourteen.

She did not tell her daughter about menstruation. Her daughter knew where babies come from, but she had never talked about sex with her. She wanted her to know about boy-girl relationships before she married, and wanted her to have birth control information. She thought that home economics should include sex education and that boys and girls should study it together. She said that the "best way" to learn

about sex was in the classroom.

She saw a class for adults, discussing family planning as being worthwhile.

#### Respondent VIII

The subject was separated, thirty-four years old, and had five children. The youngest child was two months. She completed the eleventh grade in high school.

Family planning meant, "spending your money right" to her. The ideal age to have a first baby was nineteen so that the mother would be out of high school, and the ideal spacing of children was every two years. The mother's health was her greatest concern here.

She did not understand conception but thought that four children were ideal. Her boyfriend was not in favor of birth control and had never practiced any kind of method of avoiding pregnancy; however, she had douched with vinegar but this had not been effective in preventing pregnancy.

She did not know the fertile period. Nobody had told her about menstruation prior to her first menstrual period. She was thirteen when she first started. Her friends at school told her where babies come from, and she got her sex information from her boyfriend when she was about fifteen.

She wanted birth control information but was not aware of any source where this might be secured.

The daughter was prepared for womanhood by the subject and she talked about sex with her. She wanted the daughter



to know about birth control methods. She believed that sex education should be taught at home but thought that home economics could do a better job.

Communication with teenagers was the area in which she wanted help.

#### Respondent IX

The subject was thirty-three, married, and had twelve children. She completed junior high school (ninth grade).

She thought that family planning meant stretching the dollar to provide adequately for the family.

She did not know how a woman became pregnant and did not know of any practices to prevent pregnancy. Her husband did not favor birth control and had never used any contraceptives. She did not want another baby before her last pregnancy.

The ideal family consisted of two to three children who had been spaced two years apart.

She did not have any idea about the fertile period. She did want her daughter to know about birth control. She also wanted this information for herself but did not know where she could get it.

The subject's mother told her about menstruation and where babies come from. Her girl friend told her about sex when she was thirteen.

Her older daughter had told the younger girl about menstruation. She discussed boy-girl relationships with her

daughter and the daughter was free to talk about sex with her mother. She wanted her to know about venereal disease and birth control before she was married. She thought that this training should be a part of home economics. She wanted training in family planning for adults (men and women).

Respondent X

The subject was thirty-two, had five children; had never been married. The youngest child was a year old. She was fifteen when her oldest child was born.

She said that family planning means "doing the best you can for your children; trying to make a good home for them." Eighteen was the ideal age to have a child and she added "after she finishes high school and marries." She thought that children should be spaced about three years apart; because she said, "You know, it costs so much to have a baby now and the doctor wants his money before you have it. So this would give her time to sort of get on her feet." The ideal number of children was listed as two.

She could not explain how a woman becomes pregnant. She said, "Well, she just gets knocked up, is all I know." In answer to the question: What is the "best" time to get pregnant? she said, "Mess with a man long enough."

She was not prepared for womanhood and she did not prepare her daughter.

Her boyfriend used prophylactics sometimes, but did not like to. She douched with vinegar and soapy water. She

wanted help in interpersonal relations.

Respondent XI

The subject completed the twelfth grade in school, was married, and had five children. She was forty-two years old. She was nineteen when her first baby was born.

Family planning to her meant "taking care of your family properly; letting them come first." The ideal age to have a first baby was eighteen or nineteen "so that she would be out of high school." The ideal spacing of children should be "once a year and get it over with."

She had a vague idea of the fertile period. She knew it was before the menstrual period but could not give the exact number of days.

Her mother had prepared her for menstruation and she observed her sister give birth.

She wanted her daughter to have birth control information "so that she could protect herself." Her husband was not in favor of birth control methods because "he don't think you ought to prevent it."

She had never used any kind of contraceptive but she had heard of the "pills" and she thought that maybe the family doctor would provide her with birth control information. She has not had a child in seventeen years so maybe she thought that she did not need this information.

Her greatest concern was to learn to communicate with her daughter.

## Respondent XII

The subject was thirty years old, had five children and was divorced. She completed the seventh grade in school. She had been a member of the Baptist church since she was fifteen years old but was not a regular attendant at the time of the interview.

She felt that it is not man's job to plan his family, but it was the work of God. But she went on to say, "If it is God's plan, the children should be spaced every two years apart so it won't be so hard on her."

Neither she nor her boyfriend favored birth control. Their philosophy was "what's for you - you can't get around it."

She did not want her daughter to have birth control information and she did not want her to study sex education in the classroom because she reasoned that "she will learn it sooner or later." She could not think of any way that the investigator's services could be used.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSION

There are many people who believe that low-income Negroes have no desire to limit the size of their families and that many Negro women give birth to illegitimate children for personal financial gains. These beliefs were not found to be valid in this study.

The "ideal" number of children reported by mothers in this study, was from two to three. The actual number of children born to the mothers ranged from five to twelve. Evidently, many of the children in these families were unwanted. The sample in this study did not want large families, but they had more children than they wanted because they lacked effective means and knowledge for limiting family size. The majority wanted birth control information, but had no idea where such information could be obtained. Many of the mothers in this study demonstrated that they tried to limit the size of their families. Many used antiquated home methods that were ineffective. Many of them realized that these unreliable methods were not preventing them from becoming pregnant. Perhaps out of despair, they continued to use them, hoping that somehow they would be spared another pregnancy.

Many studies (Freedman et al., 1960; Darity, 1963; and Rainwater, 1960) have confirmed these facts. Jaffe (1964) stated that this was fully demonstrated in the 1960 Growth of American Families Study (Freedman et al., 1960), which was a replication of the 1955 Growth of American Families Study of a representative national sample of white wives in their childbearing years. There were nonwhite as well as white wives sampled in 1960. The Growth of American Families investigators, according to Jaffe (1964), found that nine out of ten American wives, white and nonwhite, thought two to four children the ideal size. Lower-income couples wanted somewhat smaller families than higher-income couples. He found it especially noteworthy that nonwhites wanted a significantly smaller average number of children than whites. White wives wanted a minimum of 3.1 and a maximum of 3.5 children, while nonwhites wanted a minimum of 2.7 and a maximum of 3.0. Forty-six percent of the nonwhites wanted no more than two children, compared to twenty-nine percent of whites.

Jaffe (1964) argued that in a similar manner, the Princeton Study (Westoff et al., 1961) showed white collar wives wanted 3.3 children whereas 3.2 children were wanted by blue collar wives. This same preference of nonwhites for smaller families was shown in Jaffe's (1964) report of Bogue's (1962) study of Chicago families.

Jaffe (1964) saw evidence that these findings apply also to the most impoverished Americans: those who are on

relief and those who depend on public health facilities. He stated that the findings of the 1960 Greenleigh study of ADC families in Chicago showed that ninety percent of the mothers with out-of-wedlock children had not wanted to have the child. Shostak (1965) concluded that it was the suburban women who possessed really ambitious fertility attitudes and not the women of the city slums.

According to Jaffe (1964), the Growth of American Families authors drew the conclusion that the vast majority of nonwhite mothers did not have ready access to private physicians during the childbearing period and that some of the most effective methods of birth control were usually prescribed by private physicians for their private patients. Shostak (1965) also saw the lack of guidance on the part of the professional social workers as being a factor important to this group. He pointed out that for years the social workers' lips have been sealed on the subject of birth control. The conclusion can be drawn that many low-income families have no effective means for obtaining contraceptives and family planning information.

Many people find it difficult to understand the pockets of poverty amidst an affluent society. The conditions in which many people live would be unbelievable to many. If the poor happen to be Negro, there is even more deprivation.

The young Negro child who grows up in poverty lives in an environment that forces him to grow up fast. He must take adult responsibilities many times by the time he is thirteen

or fourteen. The street often is his only recreation center, and it is often in the street where he learns his roles and where he acquires his self-identity. He learns quite early that one must either beg or steal for the sake of survival, for often he comes from a home where there is very little food, insufficient clothing and inadequate living arrangements. His parents are either unemployed or underemployed.

In the 1967-68 school year the investigator taught a Homemaking II class at Washington High School, El Dorado, Arkansas, in which twenty-five Negro girls were enrolled. Out of this class only five girls came from families which had annual incomes above \$3,000.00. Out of the sample of twelve mothers, only five were living with husbands. Of the five husbands, one was unemployed, one retired, one self-employed (painter) and two were underemployed (one worked as a janitor and the other at a trucking company). Out of the seven mothers who headed their households, three were unemployed and receiving public assistance, two were domestic workers and two were in service occupations (cafe employees).

A Negro child growing up in poverty lives in a home with few educational tools to arouse his intellectual curiosity. His parents often are uneducated and often there is a communication barrier between the parents and the child. In this study only two mothers and none of the men were high school graduates. .

According to Miller (1965) the symptoms of poverty are lack of aspiration, illiteracy and indifference to self-



betterment. However, in spite of poor environmental conditions, the mothers in this study seemed to have high aspirations for themselves and their children. Those mothers wanted their daughters to finish high school and five talked in terms of college. One mother had a daughter in college at the time of the interview. They wanted their boys and girls to receive sex education in the high school because they wanted their children to be better prepared for adult life than they had been. The mothers wanted birth control information for their daughters. There was a fear that these teenagers would have unwanted pregnancies.

These mothers were concerned about their reputations and what others thought of them. They constantly emphasized in the interviews that a woman should be married before she becomes pregnant.

They recognized their own failures and unpreparedness as mothers and wanted their children to have better opportunities. Many had not been prepared themselves for womanhood and yet many made a real attempt to prepare their daughters. They realized that their own knowledge of sex was inadequate, but many had discussed this topic with their daughters.

There was a desire for self-improvement in this group. They wanted adult education classes for themselves. They particularly asked for help in interpersonal relations. Being able to communicate effectively with their daughters was a great concern to them. There was a concern for their roles as mother, wife and provider. The elements of management

were brought up throughout the interviews. One of the most noteworthy emphasis was a desire for training for their husband/boyfriends in the whole area of family planning. This could very well be the key to improving the quality of family life in this group.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The purposes of this study were 1) to investigate the opinions of twelve low-income Negro mothers concerning family planning; 2) to determine to what extent available information and community facilities are being utilized by low-income families; and 3) to determine to what extent, if any, low-income Negro mothers are preparing their daughters for adult life.

The investigator taught a Homemaking II class during the 1967-68 school year in which twenty-five Negro girls were enrolled. Twelve mothers, whom the investigator knew, were selected to participate in the study according to these criteria: 1) their daughters were enrolled in Homemaking II; 2) they had annual incomes below the poverty line; and 3) each came from one of several Negro sections of town.

An interview schedule was prepared to cover items which other investigators had explored in various ways: family planning; knowledge and use of birth control; preparation for marriage of both mothers and daughters; and sex education for daughters.

Background information was secured on each respondent: age, place of birth, marital status, age of children, and

education of respondents and their husband/boyfriends.

Five of the respondents were married, two had never been married, two had deceased husbands, and three were either separated or divorced. The latter seven reported having boyfriends.

The mothers ranged in age from thirty to fifty-five with only two above forty. Their educational level ranged from fifth grade to twelfth grade. Only two were high school graduates. The number of children born to each mother ranged from one to twelve with a total of seventy-five children born to the twelve mothers.

Only one mother had an adequate idea of the meaning of family planning. The majority of the others thought it had to do with budgeting and family management.

A high school education seemed to have been valued by the mothers. Most of them said that a woman should finish high school before her first baby was born.

All of the subjects except two thought the ideal family size to be two to four children. Eleven of the mothers had actually had from five to twelve children. One mother had only one child. Four mothers had given birth at 15; two at 14; two at 16; one at 17; one at 19; one at 21; and one at 23.

None had basic knowledge of the conception process. Only five had knowledge of sound birth control methods. Only two husband/boyfriends used preventive measures to avoid pregnancy. Only one respondent reported that her husband

was in favor of birth control. Six of the mothers had never used any kind of contraceptive; three had used unreliable methods. Two were taking birth control pills at the time of the interview.

The majority of the subjects were not prepared for womanhood by their mothers. Only three were told where babies come from by their mothers. The others received their information from observation of childbirth, or from peers, friends or actually experiencing pregnancy.

Although they did not have the basic knowledge of sex education themselves, eight mothers had made an attempt to prepare their daughters for womanhood. Seven reported that they had discussed sex at home with their daughters. Boy-girl relationships was the topic most often discussed. Realizing their own inadequacies in giving training in this area, ten of the mothers wanted their daughters to study sex education in high school home economics with boys enrolled in the class. The majority wanted their daughters to know about birth control. Many of the mothers wanted help in communicating with their teenage daughters.

#### Implications for Action and Research

Home economics always has been concerned with improving home and family life. Just how much has been done for the low-income family may not be recognized easily. It appears, from this limited study, that more emphasis needs to be put on sex education in the high school curriculum with learning

opportunities for both boys and girls.

All areas of home economics should be taught at the high school level, but more stress needs to be put on the area of human development and the family. Not one time was it suggested, during the interviews, that the investigator teach them to plan a balanced meal or construct a dress, although these are important. Repeatedly the subject requested information on interpersonal relationships. Being able to communicate with their daughters was one of their greatest concerns. Being able to perform their roles effectively as mother, wife, and provider was most valued by them.

Parent-education groups need to be organized on a large scale to provide instruction in the whole area of family planning. Ideally these groups will be organized to include both men and women from low-income groups. The home economics teacher, social studies teacher and counselor would make an excellent team for this instruction.

Basic adult education must become a part of every high school curriculum. Provisions need to be made for those adults who will not come to the school. High school students and graduates could provide a real service in taking the instruction to them.

The public agencies need to recognize the great contribution that they could make in this whole area of family planning. They need to know of the desire of low-income women to have birth control information and find means for complying with their desire. Passing out pamphlets might

not be enough.

And last, the society must not only recognize and understand the problems of the poor, but the poor must be heard. Learning about their problems second-hand is not enough. They know possibly better than anyone else what they need and want. They must have help in finding ways of meeting those needs. Society must stop doing things for them, and provide the experiences and opportunities for them to do for themselves. Only then can the roots of poverty be destroyed.

More research needs to be designed to get at the strengths of the poor. For too long we have looked at only the negative side. By positively looking at this group as human beings and not as things, "those people," it might possibly be in the near future that we can eradicate the stigma, stereotypes and prejudices that hamper all of us from making real progress in the whole area of human relations.

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APPENDIX

(This letter was sent to the ADC Director, Director of the Board of Health, and five doctors.)

1118 Wilson Street  
El Dorado, Arkansas  
April 15, 1968

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am employing this method to ask for your cooperation in a limited study that I am currently conducting at Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, in partial fulfillment for the requirement for a Master's Degree in Family and Child Development. Participation in this study will involve your completion of a short questionnaire (which I am enclosing) to determine what facilities and information are available to lower-class Negro women to help them limit the size of their families and to see if these women are utilizing the available means effectively.

All information secured will be kept confidential. I will need the questionnaire on or before May 15, 1968. Please call UN 3-4479 after 4:00 p.m. if you have any questions regarding this matter.

Thank you for any consideration that you may give.

Yours truly,

(Mrs.) Irene K. Lee

## (Questionnaire Sent to Doctors)

## QUESTIONNAIRE

No. \_\_\_\_\_

1. Approximately what percentage of your patients are Negro women?  
 Less than 10 per cent \_\_\_\_\_  
 More than 20 per cent \_\_\_\_\_
2. Approximately what percentage of your Negro women patients are members of the lower socio economic class?  
 Less than 50 per cent \_\_\_\_\_  
 More than 50 per cent \_\_\_\_\_
3. What percentage are ADC women?  
 Less than 50 per cent \_\_\_\_\_  
 More than 50 per cent \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you provide all of your women patients with birth control information?  
 Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
 No \_\_\_\_\_
- If you differentiate among your patients, on what basis do you make the difference?
5. Do your lower-class Negro women ask for information on birth control?  
 Most of the time \_\_\_\_\_  
 Some of the time \_\_\_\_\_  
 Very few times \_\_\_\_\_  
 Never \_\_\_\_\_
6. What percentage of the babies born to lower-class Negro mothers (your patients) are born out-of-wedlock?  
 Less than 40 per cent \_\_\_\_\_  
 More than 50 per cent \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is the average age of Negro out-of-wedlock mothers in our locality?

8. What would you say are the most important factors contributing to illegitimacy in this area?
  
9. What can the Negro community itself do to combat the problems of illegitimacy?

(Questionnaire sent to the ADC Director and the Director of the Board of Health.)

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What type of services do you provide for low-income (married and unmarried) Negro mothers?
  
2. How many family units do you serve?  
  
How many individuals?
  
3. What is the average number of children in the families that utilize your services (low-income Negro families)?  
  

Less than 4	_____
From 4 to 8	_____
More than 8	_____
  
4. What is the number of homes from which the father is absent?
  
5. What kind of information is available to these families (low-income) on birth control?
  
6. What is the average number of requests you receive per month for birth control information from low-income Negro families?
  
7. What do you think is the Negro community responsibility in helping to disseminate information on birth control to low-income families?
  
8. When and to whom should such information be given?



## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

No. \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you belong to a church: How long? Which church? Have you changed your religion lately? If so, from which religion?
2. Where were you born? Population? When did you move to El Dorado?
3. What is the highest grade in school that you completed? What about your husband/boyfriend? Where was he born?
4. How old were you when your first baby was born? How many children do you have other than \_\_\_\_\_? Ages? How old is your oldest child?
5. What do you understand the meaning of "Family Planning" to be?
6. What is a "good age" for a woman to have her first baby? Why do you say that? If you were giving advice to a younger woman, how often would you tell her to have a baby? Would you explain that further?
7. If someone asked you if children are necessary in a family, how would you answer that person?
8. Suppose that a woman who had no children asked you how many she should have, what would you say?
9. If someone asked you to explain just how it is that a woman becomes pregnant, what would you say?

10. What would you say are some things a person could use or do to keep from getting pregnant?
11. Would you want \_\_\_\_\_ who is in Homemaking II to know about these? Whom? Why?
12. What is the "best time" to get pregnant?
13. When did you first learn about menstruation? About how old were you then? Where did you learn this? How old were you when you first started your period?
14. About how old were you when you first learned where babies "really" come from? Who told you? How did you learn about sex (intercourse)? How old were you?
15. How do you think your husband (boyfriend) feels about birth control? Does he ever use anything to keep you from getting pregnant? What? How does he feel about using it?
16. Have you ever used anything to keep from getting pregnant? What? Where did you get it? How long did you use it? Why did you stop? Have you had any more children since you stopped?
17. Would you like to know more about birth control methods that either you or your husband (boyfriend) could use? Is there any place here in El Dorado where you could get this information? Where?

18. Before your last pregnancy did you want another child?
19. Did you tell \_\_\_\_\_ about menstruation? When? When did her period first start? Do you think she knows where babies come from? Why do you say so? Does she ever talk about sex with you? What are some of the things you discuss about sex with her? What information along this line would you want her to learn before she marries? Where do you think she should learn this? Do you want her to learn this in the classroom? Which class should teach this sort of thing? Why? Do you think boys and girls should learn about this together?
20. Did you take home economics in school?
21. What is the best way to learn about sex?
22. Is it easy for you to talk about the things we talked about today? What makes you feel that way? Do you think it's important for you and me to sit down and talk about this?
23. Is there any information that you don't have that I could help you with?
24. Who is your doctor?

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

OPINIONS OF LOW-INCOME NEGRO MOTHERS  
IN EL DORADO, ARKANSAS, CONCERNING  
FAMILY PLANNING

by

IRENE KATHY JOHNSON LEE

B. S., Arkansas Agricultural,  
Mechanical and Normal College, 1961

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Family and Child Development

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1968

The purposes of this study were 1) to investigate the opinions of twelve low-income Negro mothers concerning family planning; 2) to determine to what extent available information and community facilities are being utilized by low-income families; and 3) to determine to what extent, if any, low-income Negro mothers are preparing their daughters for adult life.

The investigator taught a Homemaking II class during the 1967-68 school term in which twenty-five Negro girls were enrolled. Twelve mothers, whom the investigator knew, were selected to participate in the study according to these criteria: 1) their daughters were enrolled in Homemaking II; 2) they had annual incomes below the poverty line; and 3) each came from one of several Negro sections of town.

An interview schedule was prepared to cover these items: family planning; knowledge and use of birth control methods; preparation for marriage of both mothers and daughters; and sex education for daughters.

Data were summarized and brief case studies were presented. Five of the mothers were married, two had never been married, two were widows, and three were either separated or divorced. The mothers ranged in age from thirty to fifty-five with only two above forty. Their educational level ranged from fifth to twelfth grade. Only two were high school graduates. The number of children born to each mother ranged from one to twelve.

Only one mother had an adequate idea of family

planning. All of the mothers except two wanted from two to four children. Eleven of the mothers had from five to twelve children. One mother had only one child. None had basic knowledge of the conception process. Only five had knowledge of sound birth control methods, and only two had used reliable methods.

The majority of the mothers were not prepared for womanhood, but many had made a real attempt to prepare their teenage daughters. Ten of the mothers wanted their daughters to study sex education in high school home economics with boys enrolled in the class. The majority wanted their daughters to know about birth control methods. Many of the mothers wanted birth control information, but they did not know where they could get this information. They also were interested in parent education classes for themselves and their husband/boyfriends.