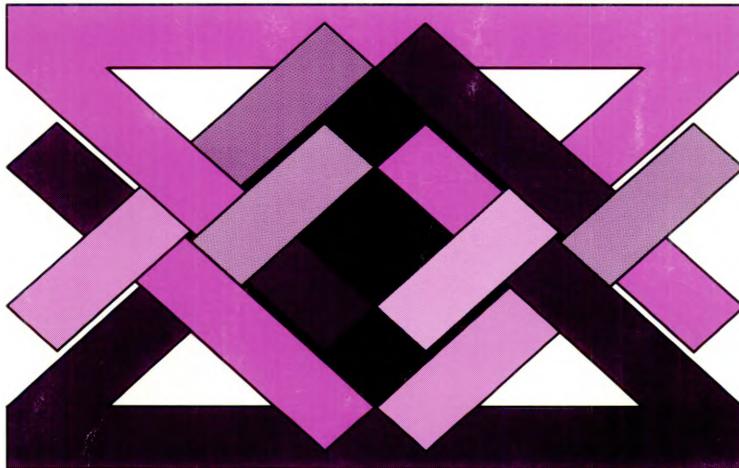


Work and Family Patterns of American Women



The Family Life Cycle: 1985
Maternity Leave Arrangements: 1961-85

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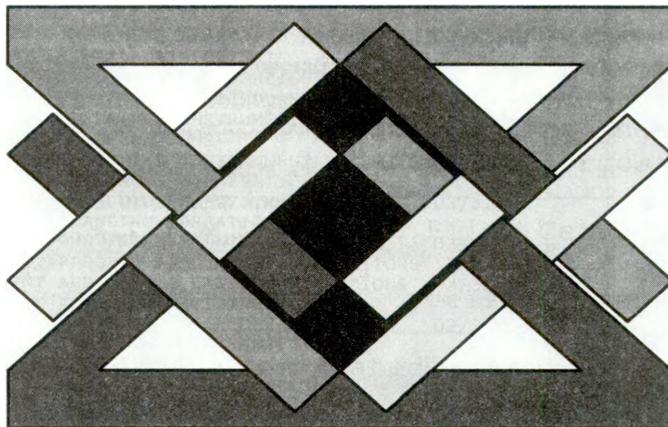
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Work and Family Patterns of American Women



The Family Life Cycle: 1985
Maternity Leave Arrangements: 1961-85

Issued March 1990



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Preface

An implicit redefinition of the roles of women in U.S. society is among the most important social and cultural transformations of the past several decades. There is now a broader acceptance of the involvement of women in activities beyond those of wife and mother and consequently, the array of options available to American women is wider than ever before. Gains in post-secondary education and in employment and earnings by women are associated with this broadening social perspective about women. It is unclear what forces are most responsible for these changes, although economic needs, technological improvements in fertility control, and a drive toward self actualization in one's chosen field of concentration are all certainly contributors.

The papers in this report focus on some of the social, demographic, and economic consequences of the expanding roles for women. Arthur Norton and Louisa Miller in "The Family Life Cycle: 1985" show trends in the frequency and timing of marriage, divorce, remarriage, and fertility across several generations of women. Martin O'Connell in "Maternity Leave Arrangements: 1961-85" presents research on factors associated with childbearing and labor force participation.

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By Martin O'Connell

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The Family Life Cycle: 1985

By Arthur J. Norton and Louisa F. Miller

Introduction

During the last few decades, important social, economic, and demographic trends have added to the number of events signaling major transitions in the lives of families and individuals. In social science research, these transitions have been recognized and categorized for creating a construct called the family life cycle (FLC) (Loomis, 1936; Glick, 1947; Duvall, 1971). Glick (1989) provides a particularly useful history of family life cycle studies in the context of social research. Family life cycle measures provide a statistical perspective to observe the frequency and timing of important events influencing a family's structure as it passes through its life course. The FLC is a descriptive tool that permits analysis of the family as a dynamic entity changing as members flow from one status to another.

One common type of analysis based on FLC measures involves determining the economic circumstances of families at various life cycle stages to more fully understand the relative economic needs of families as they move through the life cycle (Murphy and Staples, 1979). Another type of life cycle analysis concentrates on major social and demographic changes—trends in fertility, age at marriage, marriage dissolution—and how these trends alter the frequency and timing of FLC events.

Early FLC studies considered basic life cycle stages to include first marriage, birth of first child, birth of last child, last child leaving home, and death of spouse. These stages represented the typical family as it passed from the beginning to the end of its "life." Recent shifts in patterns of marriage, fertility, and divorce have added several important dimensions to the FLC. As behavior that was once atypical has become more nearly typical, the typology of traditional life cycle stages has had to be modified to accurately describe contemporary family development.

At a minimum, additional FLC stages of divorce and remarriage were needed in

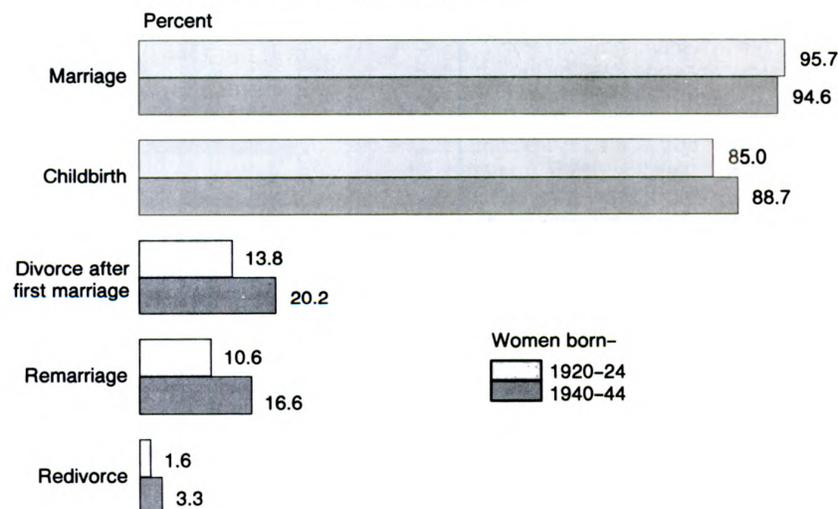
order to take account of two events that are increasingly common in the lives of people and families. Studies estimate that at least one-half of all recent marriages can be expected to end in divorce and that the majority of divorced persons will eventually remarry (Norton and Moorman, 1987; Martin and Bumpass, 1989). The addition of these stages brings new complexity to FLC analysis insofar as the extended FLC measures begin to describe events occurring to more than one family. For example, divorce can be defined as effectively ending the existence of one family while creating one or more new families. Similarly, remarriage can be defined as creating a new family while ending one or more previously existing families.

The figure illustrates the character of change in life course experiences of women approximately one generation apart. It shows the frequency with which women experienced various life course events according to whether they were born during the 1920–24 or 1940–44 periods. Clearly, the younger women are more likely to have ended a marriage in divorce, to have remarried, and to have redivorced. There is no

statistical difference between the two groups of women in the proportion ever married. A higher proportion of the younger women had ever borne a child reflecting the generally declining rate of childlessness among women born between 1900 and 1940 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1984 and U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, 1988). (For cohorts born in 1940–44 and later, the rate of childlessness has increased.) Thus, the most dramatic changes between the two groups of women have involved the likelihood of divorcing and remarrying.¹ Redivorce is also increasing but affects such a small minority of women that it is not reasonable to consider it a major life cycle event. The differences between the two groups of women in the proportion experiencing divorce, remarriage, and redivorce will become

¹ The increase in the proportion of women remarrying between the 1920–24 birth cohort and the 1940–44 birth cohort (+6.0 percent) is statistically different from the increase in the proportion of women having children between the same two cohorts (+3.7 percent) at the 87-percent level of confidence. The usual minimum level of confidence accepted by the Bureau of the Census is 90 percent.

Figure
Women Who Experienced Certain Life Cycle Events, by
Year of Woman's Birth: June 1985



even more striking when the younger women eventually complete their divorcing and remarrying; activities the older group, on average, has completed. The important point is that the family life cycle increasingly involves transitions associated with divorce and remarriage and that a statistical portrayal of the modern family life cycle would be seriously deficient without including these events as explicit stages. Norton (1983), Hill (1986), and Hohn (1987) are among the researchers who have attempted to adapt the FLC to accommodate some of the important new events common to modern families.

One way to present FLC measures so that they reflect the current realities of family living is to show data for several family types. This paper offers information on major FLC events for different "family types" characterized by the marriage and fertility histories of women. Each family type's FLC data are represented by the median age of women at various FLC stages. The presumption is that the frequency and timing of life course events for women mirrors those of their families. Family life cycle measures thus presented indicate significant points of stress and/or need during the lifetime of families.

Data and Definitions

The data used for this paper were collected in a marriage and fertility history survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census in 1985. The survey was sponsored by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and was a supplement to the June 1985 Current Population Survey (CPS). The survey asked detailed questions about the marriage and fertility histories of women in a national sample of approximately 60,000 households. Answers to the questions provided the basis for calculating the statistics on the frequency and timing of marriage, divorce, remarriage, and childbearing shown in tables A through I. The 1985 survey is the latest in a

series of quinquennial surveys on marriage and fertility done by the Census Bureau with the sponsorship of NICHD. Several studies of the family life cycle have focused on data from earlier surveys in this series (Norton, 1974; Spanier and Glick, 1980; Norton, 1980; Norton, 1983).

This paper examines the marriage and fertility experiences of women born between 1920 and 1954. For the most part, the analysis concentrates on mothers but some data are shown for the marital histories of women who have never borne a child. The tables show data for 5-year birth cohorts of women according to marriage history, race and Hispanic origin, education, and family income in order to provide a basis for comparing FLC information across demographic, social, and economic strata.

The maximum number of FLC stages shown in this paper is six: age of women at 1) first marriage, 2) birth of first child, 3) birth of last child, 4) separation before divorce after first marriage, 5) divorce after first marriage, and 6) remarriage after divorce (for women married twice). Notably missing from this typology are the traditional FLC stages indicating the age of a woman when her last child left home and at the death of her spouse. These two stages have been omitted from this

presentation for different reasons. In the case of the "last-child-left-home" stage, previous measures were based on the assumption that the child left the parental home when he or she married for the first time. Recent trends toward later age at marriage, the relative fluidity of young adult living arrangements as they move from and to their parents' homes, increased formation of one-person households among young adults, and more extensive cohabitation involving young adults in nonfamily households have rendered that assumption obsolete (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989). There is currently little empirical evidence available to use as an alternate measure.

Unquestionably one of the most important demographic trends in recent times is the increased longevity of both men and women. For marriages that survive to the death of a spouse, this development means a much longer post-childbearing interval shared by couples. However, the "death-of-a-spouse" stage has not been used in this analysis because of the concentration on women of relatively young ages, the oldest being 65 in 1985. The age restriction was imposed to give more emphasis to the impact of social trends in marriage, separation, divorce, and remarriage after divorce on the family life cycle.

Table A.
**Ever-Married Mothers at Stages of the Family Life Cycle,
by Year of Birth: 1985**

Stage	All mothers born 1920-54	Birth cohort						
		1920-24	1925-29	1930-34	1935-39	1940-44	1945-49	1950-54
Total (in thousands)	40581	4819	5181	4930	5199	6212	7118	7122
Median age at—								
First marriage	20.4	21.0	20.7	20.2	19.9	20.3	20.5	20.3
Birth of first child	22.3	23.3	22.7	22.0	21.5	21.9	22.4	22.4
Birth of last child	28.8	31.5	31.1	30.1	28.7	28.0	27.9	27.3
Years between age at—								
First marriage and first birth	1.9	2.3	2.0	1.8	1.6	1.6	1.9	2.1
First birth and last birth	6.5	8.2	8.4	8.1	7.2	6.1	5.5	4.9
Average number of children per woman	2.89	3.18	3.38	3.45	3.27	2.82	2.44	2.20

Differences Between Cohorts

Overall Trends

Tables A to D present data on the timing of major transitions during the life courses of several different family types. Table A shows family life cycle measures for the 40.6 million women born between 1920 and 1954 who had ever been married and borne a child by the survey date. Comparing behavior of the different 5-year age cohorts of women from the oldest (those born from 1920 to 1924) to the youngest (those born from 1950 to 1954), the data show a trend over time of an increase in fertility followed by a decline (as measured by the average number of children ever born per woman). The estimates of age at first marriage show a decrease followed by an increase. The shift toward lower fertility and later age at marriage appears to have occurred among women born in the latter half of the 1930's and the first half of the 1940's. Women born in the 1950-54 period were still in their early thirties when the survey was taken and had not yet completed their marriage and childbearing experiences. Once they have completed marriage and childbearing, it seems likely that the age at first marriage estimate for these

women will increase as compared with the previous cohort, while the average number of children born by women in this group will decrease slightly, as women who begin their childbearing at later ages generally complete their reproductive lives with smaller families.

The age of ever-married women at the birth of their first child varied across cohorts in a similar fashion to age at first marriage. However, the age of women at the birth of their last child has steadily decreased over time, as family size has decreased for cohort families since the late 1930's. Consequently, the younger cohorts have spent increasingly fewer years bearing children. Overall, one would expect that women will follow, with some degree of variation, the basic patterns shown in table A, regardless of family type.

Mothers Still in Their First Marriage

Table B shows FLC information for once-married mothers who were still in their first marriage at the time of the survey. Age at first marriage for these women decreased for successively younger cohorts of women born between 1920 and 1939 and increased for each successive cohort born after

1939,² the same trend as for all ever-married mothers. A similar trend exists regarding age of mothers at the birth of their first child with the cohort of women born between 1940 and 1944 serving as the turning point beginning a trend toward later age at first birth. The data also indicate the interval between first marriage and first birth declined across cohorts born before 1940 but increased for those born in 1940 or later. This increase for younger women is consistent with the recent pattern of delaying childbearing which may, in turn, be related to timing concerns associated with career and education activities of young women. Age of women at the birth of last child shows a fairly steady decline across cohorts from the oldest to the youngest women.

Among women born before 1940, the average number of children ever born fluctuated between 3.2 and 3.4 births per woman. For women born in 1940 or later, the average number of children ever born per woman declined from 2.8 for the 1940-44 cohort to 2.2 for the 1950-54 cohort. Overall, the data for women born since 1940 indicate a now familiar pattern of change in the direction of later onset of childbearing, fewer children, and earlier completion of childbearing.

Mothers with Marital Disruptions

Tables C and D show FLC data for women whose first marriage had ended in divorce but who had not remarried (table C) and for women who were in a remarriage after ending a first marriage in divorce (table D). These data show that having had a divorce and being remarried after divorce are behaviors associated with distinct timing of FLC measures. For example, mothers born before 1940 who were divorced after

Table B.
Once-Married, Currently Married Mothers at Stages of the Family Life Cycle, by Year of Birth: 1985

(Excludes separated women)

Stage	All mothers born 1920-54	Birth cohort						
		1920-24	1925-29	1930-34	1935-39	1940-44	1945-49	1950-54
Total (in thousands)	25194	2645	3203	3118	3262	3795	4497	4674
Median age at—								
First marriage	20.9	21.5	21.0	20.5	20.3	20.9	21.2	21.0
Birth of first child	22.9	23.9	23.2	22.4	21.9	22.6	23.2	23.4
Birth of last child	29.2	32.1	31.3	30.2	28.9	28.6	28.6	28.0
Years between age at—								
First marriage and first birth	2.0	2.4	2.2	1.9	1.6	1.7	2.0	2.4
First birth and last birth	6.3	8.2	8.1	7.8	7.0	6.0	5.4	4.6
Average number of children per woman	2.85	3.19	3.29	3.40	3.20	2.77	2.46	2.21

² The median age at first marriage for the 1950-54 birth cohort of mothers will most probably rise further as more of the birth cohort both marry for the first time and have children for the first time.

Table C.
Once-Married, Currently Divorced Mothers at Stages of the Family Life Cycle, by Year of Birth: 1985

Stage	All mothers born 1920-54	Birth cohort						
		1920-24	1925-29	1930-34	1935-39	1940-44	1945-49	1950-54
Total (in thousands)	3590	287	334	370	449	656	776	720
Median age at—								
First marriage	20.4	21.9	21.5	21.2	20.2	20.1	20.0	19.8
Birth of first child	22.0	23.7	23.2	22.8	22.1	21.5	21.7	20.8
Birth of last child	27.2	31.0	30.4	29.1	28.5	27.0	26.3	24.0
Separation before divorce	32.7	44.0	43.7	40.2	37.5	34.4	31.2	27.3
Divorce	34.2	46.3	46.3	41.5	39.5	36.1	32.5	28.7
Years between age at—								
First marriage and first birth	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.9	1.4	1.7	1.0
First birth and last birth	5.2	7.3	7.2	6.3	6.4	5.5	4.6	3.2
Average number of children per woman	2.65	3.04	3.23	3.17	3.14	2.72	2.33	1.93

Table D.
Twice-Married, Currently Married Mothers at Stages of the Family Life Cycle, by Year of Birth: 1985

(Excludes separated women and women whose first marriage ended in widowhood)

Stage	All mothers born 1920-54	Birth cohort						
		1920-24	1925-29	1930-34	1935-39	1940-44	1945-49	1950-54
Total (in thousands)	4485	311	374	512	588	787	957	957
Median age at—								
First marriage	19.0	19.1	18.9	18.6	18.8	19.2	19.3	19.0
Birth of first child	20.8	21.9	21.7	20.4	20.4	20.6	20.8	21.0
Birth of last child	27.6	28.8	29.9	28.7	27.5	26.9	26.8	26.8
Separation before divorce	26.1	27.8	27.1	28.9	28.9	27.6	25.7	23.9
Divorce	27.3	28.9	29.2	30.5	30.2	28.8	26.7	25.0
Remarriage	30.9	35.4	34.5	35.1	34.9	33.3	30.1	28.1
Years between age at—								
First marriage and first birth	1.8	2.8	2.8	1.8	1.6	1.4	1.5	2.0
First birth and last birth	6.8	6.9	8.2	8.3	7.1	6.3	6.0	5.8
Average number of children per woman	2.76	2.78	3.23	3.47	3.28	2.82	2.39	2.19

their first marriage and who had not remarried generally had comparatively older ages at first marriage than twice-married mothers who had divorced after their first marriage. Mothers born in 1940 or later who divorced after their first marriage but did not remarry had a lower age at first marriage than mothers in an intact first marriage but a higher age at first marriage than mothers who divorced

and remarried.³ This pattern of difference in age at first marriage for

³ For the 1940-44 birth cohort, the difference between the median age at first marriage for once-married, currently married mothers (20.9 years) and for once-married, currently divorced mothers (20.1 years) is significant at the 85-percent level of confidence. The usual minimum level of confidence accepted by the Bureau of the Census is 90 percent.

the younger cohorts is consistent with the findings reported by Norton and Moorman (1987) indicating an inverse relationship between age at first marriage and likelihood of divorce.

Mothers in a remarriage (whose first marriage had ended in divorce) had the youngest age at first marriage of the three marital history groups (family types), as well as a considerably younger age at separation before divorce and age at divorce than women who divorced but never remarried. Thus, across family types, mothers born between 1920 and 1954 who were still in their first marriages generally had the highest fertility.⁴ Among younger women (those born in 1940 or later), an older age at first marriage characterizes women still in their first marriage.⁵ Among the ever-divorced mothers, early marriage and divorce characterize women who divorce after first marriage and subsequently remarry.

Women born in 1940 and later were still in their thirties and early forties when the survey was taken and had not completed their marriage, divorce, and childbearing careers. The ages at FLC events shown for these women will increase as these women finish marrying, divorcing, remarrying, and having children. It does not seem likely, however, that the basic comparative patterns across cohorts and across family types will be altered. Unlike the pattern for women of other family types, women who divorced after their first marriage but had not remarried by the time of the survey showed an across-cohort general decline in both age at first marriage and in age at the birth of first child. These women also show declining fertility (after the 1920-24 birth cohort) and markedly declining age at divorce when comparing cohorts from the oldest to

⁴ The difference between the average number of children ever born to mothers still in their first marriages (2.85) and to mothers in a remarriage after a divorce (2.76) is significant at the 87-percent level of confidence. The usual minimum level of confidence accepted by the Bureau of the Census is 90 percent.

⁵ See footnote 3.

the youngest women. Not surprisingly, since these women ended their only marriage in divorce, they also have lower overall fertility than women in either of the other two family types.⁶

Women who remarried after their first marriage ended in divorce (table D) show little change in age at first marriage across cohorts. Age at first marriage occurred at around 19 years for women regardless of their year of birth. These women also had a comparatively younger age at the onset of childbearing especially for women born starting in the 1930's.⁷ (There seems to be a general positive relationship between age at first marriage and age at the beginning of childbearing for women regardless of year of birth or family type such that the direction of change if not the magnitude is similar.)

The span of childbearing years (the difference between the ages at birth of first and last children) for women who divorced and remarried was slightly longer than that of women still in their first marriage and considerably longer than that of women who divorced but did not remarry. The latter's fertility was probably truncated prematurely by separation and divorce, while fertility for women who divorced and remarried was only interrupted by separation and divorce. Fertility for women of each family type followed the same general pattern of across-cohort shifts from a period of increasing fertility among the

older cohorts to one of decline among the younger cohorts.⁸

Differences shown in table D between cohorts in ages at divorce and remarriage indicate no significant variation between the groups of women born before 1940 but decreasing ages at these events for women born in 1940 or later.

The data in tables A through D show differences in FLC measures according to birth cohort and family type. Even though there are clear differences in FLC measures according to family type, there seem to be overriding patterns of behavior among mothers in specific birth cohorts (e.g., declines in fertility among younger women as compared with an increase in fertility among successive cohorts born before 1935, a decline in age at first marriage across cohorts for mothers born before 1940, and a subsequent increase in age at first marriage across cohorts born in 1940 or later).⁹ This suggests that all women may respond in a general way to the prevailing conditions unique to historical time. To further pursue this possibility the next section of the paper presents FLC information for selected groups of women according to social and economic characteristics as well as according to birth cohort and family type.

Characteristics of Recent Cohorts

Many things can have an effect on the timing and prevalence of family life cycle events. Earlier tables have shown that the birth cohort to which a woman belongs is related to the timing of significant events in her life, and indeed to the number of children she has borne or will bear. Actual historical events (e.g., the Great Depression and World War II), the fashion of the times, and other things that occur during the

life courses of birth cohorts can lead to different life-course trends among different birth cohorts.

In addition to birth cohort effects, demographic characteristics also have effects on the timing of life-course events and the average number of children a cohort of women has borne or will bear. Tables E–H deal with demographic characteristics. Mothers born between 1940 and 1944 are the main focus of this section. These women would have been roughly between 41 and 45 years old at the time of the survey. They were old enough to have completed their childbearing and most of their marital events, yet young enough to reflect patterns of life-course behavior currently present among young women. In fact, it may be that the women of the 1940–44 birth cohort represent the beginning of the modern era of relatively low fertility, later age at marriage, and high divorce rates.

Table E shows data for ever-married mothers born between 1940 and 1944. This is a very gross delineation since most mothers (and most women for that matter) marry at least once by the time that they are 41 years old. In fact, 87.3 percent of all of the women born between 1940 and 1944 had both borne a child and been married by the survey date.

Among ever-married mothers born between 1940 and 1944, Blacks married for the first time at a slightly later age (20.9 years) than Whites (20.2 years).¹⁰ The apparent difference between the median age at first marriage for Black mothers (20.9 years) and for Hispanic mothers (20.2 years) is not statistically significant.¹¹ Black mothers had a slightly younger median age at first birth (21.0 years) than their White (21.9 years) or Hispanic (21.8

⁶ The difference between the average number of children ever born to mothers who were divorced after their first marriage and had not remarried (2.65) and to mothers in a remarriage after a divorce (2.76) is significant at the 83-percent level of confidence. The usual minimum level of confidence accepted by the Bureau of the Census is 90 percent.

⁷ Among mothers born between 1950 and 1954, there is no statistically significant difference between the median age at first birth for twice-married, currently married mothers whose first marriage ended in a divorce (21.0 years) and the comparable median for once-married, currently divorced mothers (20.8 years).

⁸ The apparent increase in the average number of children born to once-married, once-divorced mothers between the 1920–24 cohort and the 1925–29 cohort is not statistically significant.

⁹ See footnote 2.

¹⁰ The difference between the median ages at first marriage for Black (20.9 years) and White (20.2 years) ever-married mothers is significant at the 87-percent level of confidence. The usual minimum level of confidence accepted by the Bureau of the Census is 90 percent.

¹¹ Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

years) counterparts.¹² This seeming anomaly can be explained by the higher proportion of Black children born before first marriage (U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, 1989 and earlier years, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1986 and earlier years).

Ever-married White mothers born between 1940 and 1944 had fewer children on average (2.77) than either their Black (3.22) or their Hispanic (3.48) analogues. Fewer births are associated with a shorter period of childbearing, which is reflected in the number of years between the median age at first and last birth for these groups. White mothers had their births compressed into an interval of 6.1 years, Black mothers spent about 7.2 years in childbearing, and Hispanic mothers spread their births over a period of 8.4 years.¹³

Age at first marriage and age at first birth are both positively related to income and to educational attainment (see table E). This is not surprising since women often delay marriage and childbearing until they have finished their formal education. Further, since it is well-documented that education and income are positively correlated (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987), one would expect that income would have the same relationship to age at first marriage and age at first birth that education does. The average number of children per mother is inversely

¹² There is no statistically significant difference between the median ages at first birth for White ever-married mothers (21.9 years) and for Hispanic ever-married mothers (21.8 years). The difference between Blacks (21.0 years) and Hispanics (21.8 years) is significant at the 84-percent level of confidence. The usual minimum level of confidence accepted by the Bureau of the Census is 90 percent.

¹³ There is no statistically significant difference between the average number of births for ever-married Black mothers (3.22) and ever-married Hispanic mothers (3.48). Also, the difference between the length of the periods of childbearing for Black (7.2 years) and Hispanic (8.4 years) mothers is significant at the 87-percent level of confidence. The usual minimum level of confidence accepted by the Bureau of the Census is 90 percent.

Table E.
Ever-Married Mothers Born From 1940 to 1944 at Stages of the Family Life Cycle, by Selected Social and Economic Characteristics: 1985

Characteristic	All mothers born 1940-44 (thous.)	Median age at—			Years between age at—		Average number of children per woman
		First marriage	Birth of first child	Birth of last child	First marriage and first birth	First birth and last birth	
Race and Hispanic origin:							
White	5376	20.2	21.9	28.0	1.7	6.1	2.77
Black	656	20.9	21.0	28.2	0.1	7.2	3.22
Hispanic origin ¹	373	20.2	21.8	30.2	1.6	8.4	3.48
Family income:							
Less than \$10,000	738	19.8	20.8	28.4	1.0	7.8	3.49
\$10,000 to \$19,999	1127	19.8	21.0	27.8	1.4	8.8	2.97
\$20,000 to \$29,999	1143	20.2	21.8	28.0	1.8	8.2	2.76
\$30,000 to \$39,999	1099	20.3	22.0	27.8	1.7	5.8	2.64
\$40,000 to \$74,999	1445	20.6	22.4	27.9	1.8	5.5	2.62
\$75,000 and over	348	21.7	23.8	28.8	2.1	5.0	2.61
Years of school completed:							
Less than 12 years	1165	18.7	19.9	28.1	1.2	8.2	3.54
12 years	2933	19.9	21.3	27.4	1.4	6.1	2.75
13-15 years	1135	20.8	22.6	28.2	1.8	5.6	2.63
16 years or more	980	22.4	24.9	29.8	2.5	4.9	2.38
16 years	569	22.4	24.6	29.5	2.2	4.9	2.47
17 years or more	411	22.4	25.3	30.3	2.9	5.0	2.25

¹Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

correlated to both income level and education. Mothers with a family income of less than \$10,000 had an average of 3.49 children per mother while those with a family income of \$75,000 or more had an average of only 2.61 children per mother.¹⁴ A similar relationship held for educational attainment: mothers with less than a

¹⁴ Family income was transcribed from information first obtained at the time a household entered the Current Population Survey and updated when it re-entered the survey. For about one-quarter of the sample, the data are for the year ending June 30, while for the other quarters the data are for the years ending March 31, April 30, and May 31, respectively. Income is based on the respondent's estimate of total family money income in broad, fixed income levels. Previous research has shown that the use of broad income levels to record money income tends to reduce the rate of nonreporting while increasing the likelihood that the amounts reported will be significantly understated as compared with results from more detailed questions. The family income data used in this paper have not been adjusted for nonreporting of income.

high school diploma had an average of 3.54 children per mother while those with at least 5 years of college had only 2.25 children on average.

Mothers Still in Their First Marriage

The pattern of the life-course events of mothers born between 1940 and 1944 who married once and were still married to (and living with) their original husbands at the survey date closely mirrors the pattern for ever-married mothers from the same birth cohort (see tables E and F). The only notable difference is the tendency for the median ages at first marriage, first birth, and last birth to be slightly older for the once-married, currently married mothers.

Some differences among demographic groups are noted in the likelihood that ever-married mothers will be married to and living with their first husbands on the survey date. White and Hispanic mothers are more likely to be living with their first spouse (63.1 percent and

Table F.
Once-Married, Currently Married Mothers Born From
1940 to 1944 at Stages of the Family Life Cycle, by Selected Social and
Economic Characteristics: 1985

(Excludes separated women)

Characteristic	All mothers born 1940-44 (thous.)	Median age at—			Years between age at—		Average number of children per woman
		First marriage	Birth of first child	Birth of last child	First marriage and first birth	First birth and last birth	
Race and Hispanic origin:							
White.....	3391	20.8	22.6	28.5	1.8	5.9	2.74
Black.....	274	22.0	21.4	28.7	-0.8	7.3	3.01
Hispanic origin ¹	222	20.8	21.7	30.2	1.2	8.5	3.48
Family income:							
Less than \$10,000.....	204	20.3	20.8	29.3	0.5	8.5	3.87
\$10,000 to \$19,999.....	517	20.0	21.8	28.6	1.8	7.0	2.94
\$20,000 to \$29,999.....	691	20.6	22.4	28.6	1.8	6.2	2.75
\$30,000 to \$39,999.....	800	20.7	22.5	28.0	1.8	5.5	2.71
\$40,000 to \$74,999.....	1128	21.0	23.0	28.4	2.0	5.4	2.61
\$75,000 and over.....	261	22.2	24.4	29.8	2.2	5.4	2.70
Years of school completed:							
Less than 12 years.....	627	19.0	20.0	28.1	1.0	8.1	3.50
12 years.....	1845	20.2	21.8	27.7	1.6	5.9	2.72
13-15 years.....	660	21.4	23.3	28.8	1.9	5.5	2.56
16 years or more.....	663	22.8	25.7	30.7	2.9	5.0	2.40
16 years.....	385	22.7	25.5	30.5	2.8	5.0	2.47
17 years or more.....	277	23.1	26.2	31.0	3.1	4.8	2.30

¹Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

59.5 percent, respectively) than Black mothers (41.8 percent).¹⁵ Women in high income families are also more likely to be living with their first spouse. Only 27.6 percent of ever-married mothers in families with incomes of under \$10,000 were still living with their first spouses at the survey date, compared with 75.0 percent of those women in families with incomes of \$75,000 or more.

The relationship between educational attainment and the likelihood of an ever-married mother still being in her first marriage (and living with her spouse) is not as straightforward. Only 53.8 percent of ever-married mothers who completed less than 12 years of

¹⁵ There is no statistically significant difference between the proportion of White ever-married mothers still living with their first husbands (83.1 percent) and the comparable proportion for Hispanic ever-married mothers (59.5 percent).

school were still married to and living with their first husbands, while 67.7 percent of those with 16 or more years of school completed were still living with their first spouses. However, a consistent positive relationship does not exist. There is a fall in the proportion still in their first marriage among those with 13 to 15 years of school completed.

Mothers With Marital Disruptions

Although the differences are not statistically significant, table G shows that once-married, currently divorced mothers born between 1940 and 1944 appear to have slightly fewer children on average than ever-married mothers (of which they are a subset) born during the same period. What is most interesting is how few ever-married mothers got divorced and never got remarried (by the survey date)—only

10.6 percent.¹⁶ This proportion varies significantly by certain demographic characteristics. Black ever-married mothers are more likely (19.4 percent) than White (9.5 percent) or Hispanic (9.9 percent) ever-married mothers to be once-married and currently divorced at the survey date.¹⁷

Poorer ever-married mothers are also more likely to be once-married, currently divorced than their wealthier counterparts. For example, 23.4 percent of those with family incomes of less than \$10,000 per year were once-married and currently divorced at the survey date, while only 1.7 percent of those with a family income of \$40,000 or more had the same marital history. Of course, being currently divorced, and thus not having a husband's potential income available, helps to explain the lower income level of divorced mothers. No similar relationship can be seen with the educational attainment data.

Table H shows the FLC of twice-married, currently remarried (after divorce) mothers born between 1940 and 1944. These mothers married at a younger age than mothers who had been married once and were currently divorced. They also separated and divorced at significantly younger ages (generally their mid- to late-twenties) than their counterparts who were divorced from their first spouses (generally in their mid-thirties) but had not remarried by the survey date.

The typical cell size in table H is too small to make valid comparisons for most demographic characteristics. However, White ever-married mothers (13.5 percent) were more likely than Black (7.6 percent) and Hispanic (8.3 percent) ever-married mothers to be

¹⁶ This is less than the 12.6 percent of ever-married mothers who were living with a second husband (at the survey date) after having been divorced from a first husband.

¹⁷ There is no statistically significant difference between the proportion of White ever-married mothers who have been once-married and are currently divorced (9.5 percent) and the number of Hispanic ever-married mothers who have been once-married and are currently divorced (9.9 percent).

Table G.
Once-Married, Currently Divorced Mothers Born From 1940 to 1944 at Stages of the Family Life Cycle,
by Selected Social and Economic Characteristics: 1985

Characteristic	All mothers born 1940-44 (thous.)	Median age at—					Years between age at—		Average number of children per woman
		First marriage	First separation	First divorce	Birth of first child	Birth of last child	First marriage and first birth	First birth and last birth	
Race and Hispanic origin:									
White	513	19.9	34.9	36.2	21.5	26.8	1.6	5.3	2.60
Black	127	21.9	33.2	35.0	20.9	27.9	-1.0	7.0	3.30
Hispanic origin ¹	37	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
Family income:									
Less than \$10,000	173	19.8	34.2	36.1	21.3	26.8	1.5	5.5	3.09
\$10,000 to \$19,999	236	19.8	34.8	36.1	21.0	27.3	1.2	6.3	2.69
\$20,000 to \$29,999	129	20.7	34.7	36.8	21.3	25.9	0.6	4.6	2.66
\$30,000 to \$39,999	48	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
\$40,000 to \$74,999	25	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
\$75,000 and over	6	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
Years of school completed:									
Less than 12	122	19.0	33.2	35.6	20.8	28.4	1.8	7.6	3.31
12 years	272	19.8	34.9	36.7	20.9	25.9	1.1	5.0	2.80
13-15 years	131	20.5	34.5	36.1	21.5	27.0	1.0	5.5	2.66
16 years or more	131	21.6	34.3	34.9	23.4	27.4	1.8	4.0	2.05
16 years	67	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
17 years or more	64	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)

B Base less than 75,000.

¹Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Table H.
Twice-Married, Currently Married Mothers Born From 1940 to 1944 at Stages of the Family Life Cycle,
by Selected Social and Economic Characteristics: 1985

(Excludes separated women and women whose first marriage ended in widowhood)

Characteristic	All mothers born 1940-44 (thous.)	Median age at—						Years between age at—		Average number of children per woman
		First marriage	First separation	First divorce	Second marriage	Birth of first child	Birth of last child	First marriage and first birth	First birth and last birth	
Race and Hispanic origin:										
White	727	19.2	27.8	29.1	33.4	20.7	26.8	1.5	6.1	2.80
Black	50	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
Hispanic origin ¹	31	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
Family income:										
Less than \$10,000	68	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
\$10,000 to \$19,999	125	19.2	26.8	28.2	32.0	20.4	27.5	1.2	7.1	3.34
\$20,000 to \$29,999	142	19.0	26.8	28.1	33.9	20.5	27.7	1.5	7.2	2.84
\$30,000 to \$39,999	155	19.2	29.3	30.2	33.4	20.9	26.9	1.7	6.0	2.38
\$40,000 to \$74,999	199	18.9	26.9	28.0	32.6	20.3	25.5	1.4	5.2	2.76
\$75,000 and over	61	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
Years of school completed:										
Less than 12 years	138	17.8	26.0	27.5	29.5	19.1	28.3	1.3	9.2	3.53
12 years	410	19.1	27.9	29.2	33.7	20.6	26.4	1.5	5.8	2.65
13-15 years	142	19.3	26.6	27.5	33.5	20.3	26.9	1.0	6.6	2.82
16 years or more	96	20.5	29.2	30.7	35.2	23.0	27.5	2.5	4.5	2.52
16 years	61	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
17 years or more	34	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)

B Base less than 75,000.

¹Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

twice-married, once-divorced, and currently married at the survey date.¹⁸

Childless Women

Women who complete their childbearing years with no lifetime births (whether by choice or otherwise) are clearly following an anomalous FLC course. Only 5,000,000 (or 11.0 percent) of the 45,581,000 ever-married women born between 1920 and 1954 were still childless by June 1985 (see table I). Of course, some of these women in more recent cohorts were still in their childbearing years in June 1985 and may still give birth sometime after the survey date.

Childless women had later median ages at first marriage regardless of the

¹⁸ There is no statistically significant difference between the likelihood of Black (7.6 percent) and the likelihood of Hispanic (8.3 percent) ever-married mothers being twice-married, once-divorced, and currently married at the survey date.

Table I.
Ever-Married Childless Women at Stages of Marital Life,
by Year of Birth: 1985

Stage	All childless women born 1920-54	Birth cohort						
		1920-24	1925-29	1930-34	1935-39	1940-44	1945-49	1950-54
Women ever married (thous.) . . .	5000	636	590	456	394	526	913	1485
Median age at first marriage . . .	23.3	24.0	22.5	22.5	24.8	22.7	23.3	23.5
Women married once, currently married (thous.)	2775	311	333	227	207	276	536	887
Median age at first marriage . . .	24.7	25.3	23.9	23.2	25.7	23.1	24.4	25.7
Women married once, currently divorced (thous.)	733	43	43	68	70	82	165	263
Median age at:								
First marriage	22.9	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	22.6	23.0	21.8
First separation	30.4	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	31.4	30.9	27.0
First divorce	31.5	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	33.3	31.8	28.3
Women married twice (currently married), divorced after first marriage (thous.)	608	58	55	59	49	81	117	189
Median age at:								
First marriage	20.6	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	22.3	21.3	20.1
First separation	26.8	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	30.1	26.7	24.6
First divorce	27.6	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	30.3	27.9	25.6
Second marriage	31.9	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	34.2	32.4	29.6

B Base less than 75,000.

particular marital history path that they followed. Among all ever-married women born between 1920 and 1954, those who were childless had a median age at first marriage of 23.3 years, fully 2.9 years higher than the median (20.4 years) for their counterparts who had had at least one lifetime birth. Childless women who had been married once and were currently divorced were both separated and divorced at younger ages than their counterparts who had had lifetime births. The older median age at first marriage combined with the younger median age at separation means that childless women with this marital history only lived with their spouse for a median of 7.5 years. This is much shorter than the median of 12.3 years that women with at least one lifetime birth (and the same marital history) lived with their spouses. Twice-married, currently married childless women whose first marriage ended in divorce spent 6.2 years living with their first spouse, while their counterparts

with lifetime births spent 7.1 years with their first spouse.¹⁹

Discussion

This paper has presented information, in the context of a family life cycle frame, on recent trends affecting family development. The data are from the most recent quinquennial survey of marriage and fertility histories conducted by the Bureau of the Census and sponsored by the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development. The results of this survey represent the most recent large national source of information available on life cycle measures and serve as the latest in a series of family life cycle updates. Taken together, the various studies of the family life cycle (dating back to Loomis' 1936 study) provide a unique way of looking at how major changes in marriage and fertility behavior appear to have affected family development processes and timing over a comparative span of several generations. Shifts in patterns of family development have important implications for the family service policies and programs of public and private sector agencies. Early or late first marriage, early or late onset of childbearing, the frequency and timing of marital disruption, and the number of children borne per woman are all indicators that have a far-reaching influence on the efficacy of programs designed for families.

Data from the 1985 study show that younger cohorts of women have a tendency to marry later, begin childbearing later and have fewer children.

They also divorce more often and do so at a younger age than women in older cohorts. Within cohorts there are fairly pronounced differences between social, demographic (exclusive of age), and economic groups. Despite these differences, members of the same birth cohort show an overriding commonality

¹⁹ The apparent difference in the median number of years spent living with a first spouse (6.2 years versus 7.1 years) is not statistically significant.

with respect to basic patterns of life cycle change.

The findings reported in this paper not only corroborate other studies' conclusions with respect to the

direction and magnitude of change in marriage and fertility behavior, but provide a useful perspective from which to analyze timing patterns. Whether one is marketing household goods and

services or providing public assistance for families, knowledge of the timing of events is critical to planning successful interventions.

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Maternity Leave Arrangements: 1961-85

by Martin O'Connell

Introduction

This study analyzes employment patterns and maternity leave arrangements used by women who had their first child born between January 1961 and December 1985. While major increases in the labor force participation of women with young children occurred during this period, little is known about the leave arrangements used by women during their pregnancy or about job exit and re-entry rates of women at the time of their first birth. It is important that we understand how current trends in fertility and employment have evolved so we can anticipate changes in childbearing and labor force patterns of women during their early years of family formation.

We examine these issues using retrospective fertility and employment history data from the 1984 and 1985 panels of the Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) conducted early in 1986.

Work History During Pregnancy

Between 1961 and 1985, the proportion of women having work experience before the birth of their first child increased. Among women who had their first births in 1961-65, 60 (± 2.2) percent worked 6 or more months continuously before the birth of their first child; by 1981-85, 75 (± 1.7) percent had reported a similar work experience.¹

Employment during pregnancy also became increasingly common: it rose from 44 (± 2.2) percent in 1961-65 to 65 (± 1.9) percent in 1981-85. The women most likely to work during first pregnancy are relatively older women, White women, and women who had at least a high school education.

Most women who work during pregnancy are full-time workers: since 1961, between 80 and 90 percent of pregnant workers reported that the last

job they held before their child's birth was a full-time job (35 or more hours worked per week). Among women who worked during their first pregnancy in 1981-85, 78 (± 2.0) percent worked during their last trimester (less than 3 months before their child's birth), and 47 (± 2.4) percent were still at work less than one month before their child's birth.

Maternity Leave

This sharp change in employment patterns coincided with increasing proportions of women receiving maternity benefits from their employers. In the early 1960's, only 16 (± 2.4) percent received maternity or paid leave with an assurance that their job would be held for them after their child's birth. Most women, 63 (± 3.2) percent, quit their jobs at some point during their pregnancy or shortly after giving birth.

Twenty years later, the situation had completely changed: in 1981-85, 47 (± 2.4) percent of pregnant workers received maternity benefits, while the proportion quitting their jobs fell to 28 (± 2.2) percent. The women most likely to have received maternity benefits in the 1980's were relatively older at the birth of their first child, college educated, fulltime workers, and those who worked into their last trimester.

Employer financial contributions for maternity benefits have also increased since the 1960's: 81 (± 2.9) percent of expectant mothers on maternity leave in 1981-85 received cash benefits, compared with only 50 (± 8.3) percent in 1961-65. In both periods, however, only about one-half receiving cash payments reported receiving full compensation for all their leave time.

Returning to Work

Not only do more women now work longer into their pregnancy, but they also return to work at a more rapid pace. Only 17 (± 1.6) percent of the women who had their first birth in 1961-65 were working by the 12th month after their child was born; by 1981-84, this proportion increased to 53 (± 2.1) percent. In fact in 1981-84,

one-third were working 3 months after their child's birth. This level of workforce participation was not attained by women who had their first birth in the early 1960's until 5 years after childbirth.

Which women are most likely to return most rapidly to work? Women employed during their first pregnancy. Of all employed women, teenagers, Black women, and high school dropouts are most likely to return to work within 6 months of their child's birth even though they were least likely to have worked during pregnancy. Greater financial dependency upon their own earnings as the principal source of their total family income possibly accounts for their rapid return. This suggests that the factors related to the likelihood of working during pregnancy, such as labor force and educational experience, are different from those that induce women to return to work after childbirth.

In addition to demographic factors, two highly significant characteristics associated with a mother's rapid return to work are the number of months before the child's birth she stopped working and whether the employer provided her with any maternity leave benefits. Seventy-one (± 3.6) percent of women who had a first birth in 1981-84 and who stopped working within 1 month of their child's birth returned to work within 6 months after childbirth. A similar proportion (71 \pm 3.7 percent) returned to work within 6 months if they had received maternity benefits during or after their pregnancy. The overall average for all employed women in this period was 56 (± 2.4) percent. This rapid return reflects both the commitment of the women to their work and employer, and the reduction in time spent searching for a new job, given an assurance of job security after childbirth.

Definitions and Population Coverage

Childbearing and labor force experience information was derived from personal interviews of a combined total of about 9,000 women in wave 8

¹ Figures following the \pm notation in this section represent ± 1.6 standard errors of the estimated statistics or the 90-percent confidence level for the estimate.

Table A.
Distribution of Women, by Age at First Birth: 1960-85

(Numbers in thousands)

Year	Number of first births	Percent	Age at first birth			
			Less than 20	20-24	25-29	30 or older
1985	1,555	100.0	23.7	35.6	26.9	13.8
1980	1,546	100.0	28.2	39.2	24.1	8.6
1975	1,319	100.0	35.1	39.2	20.4	5.3
1970	1,431	100.0	35.6	45.6	14.8	4.0
1965	1,157	100.0	38.0	44.6	12.1	5.3
1960	1,090	100.0	37.0	43.2	13.0	6.8

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics of the United States, annual issues.

of the SIPP 1984 panel and wave 4 of the 1985 panel. The interviews were conducted between January and April 1986 (January through March for the 1984 panel interviews). (See appendix C for an overview of the SIPP program and appendix D for a facsimile of the SIPP questionnaire.)

The term "first pregnancy" as used in this report refers to the pregnancy of the respondent's first live-born child (excluding stillbirths, miscarriages, or voluntary abortions). The work history data collected in this survey refer to the actual dates when women stopped and started working and not the dates of employment. (Labor force surveys usually count women on maternity leave as being "employed, at a job" even though they may not be actually "working" at that job during their period of maternity leave.)² Data shown in this report cover the period from January 1961 to December 1985. Since the survey was conducted early in 1986, worker participation rates for the year after childbirth cannot cover all first births born during calendar year 1985 as insufficient time would have elapsed after childbirth for a full year's worth of data. For this reason, return to work statistics cover only births occurring through calendar year 1984.

Only a minimal amount of information was collected about the specifics of the jobs pregnant women held and returned to after childbirth as the

questions potentially spanned a quarter century of the respondent's memory. The respondents were asked their full time/part time work status during the last job they held before childbirth and their first job held after childbirth, and the type of leave they used during pregnancy and up to 6 weeks after giving birth. Plans for including a similar set of questions are currently under consideration for new panels of the SIPP introduced after 1990.

Social and Economic Circumstances of the First Birth

This section briefly describes some of the factors associated with the likelihood of a woman working during her first pregnancy. Subsequent sections will show the relationship between these employment patterns

and the type of leave arrangements an expectant mother is likely to secure.

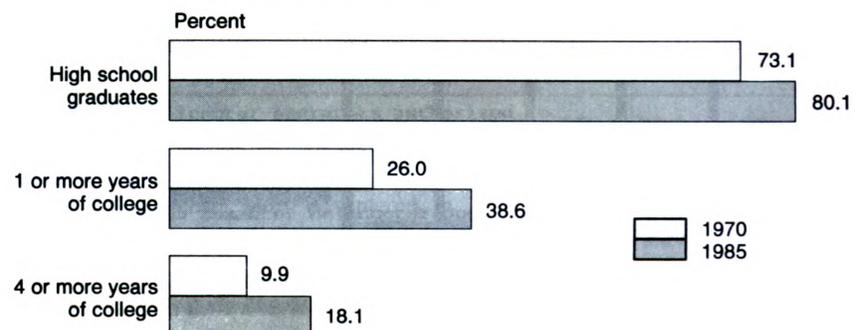
Consequences of Delayed Childbearing

Delays in childbearing among young women have contributed to growing numbers and proportions of first births to older women. Vital statistics data (table A) show that 41 percent of the first births occurring in 1985 were to women 25 years old and over, up from 20 percent in 1960.

A shift in childbearing to older ages produces cohorts of expectant mothers who on average have potentially more education and labor force experience than would cohorts of younger mothers. Vital statistics data in figure 1 graphically reveal the changing educational attainment levels of first-time mothers since 1970 (when such data first became available). Between 1970 and 1985, a 50-percent increase in the proportion of women who completed at least 1 year of college was recorded (from 26 to 39 percent), while the proportion graduating from college also increased from 10 to 18 percent.

Increases in educational attainment are noted principally for first time mothers 25 and over (table B-1). In 1985, 60 percent of first-time mothers 25 to 29 years old and 72 percent of first-time mothers 30 years old and over had 1 or more years of college completed, compared with 53 and 42 percent, respectively, in 1970. A large increase also was recorded in the proportion of

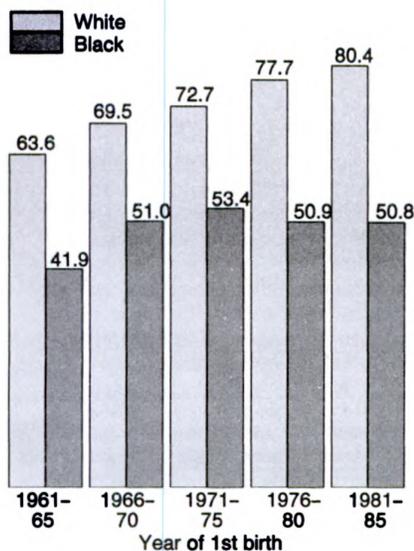
Figure 1.
Educational Attainment of Women at the Time of Their First Birth: 1970 and 1985



² This latter definition is used in the Current Population Survey.

Figure 2.
Women Who Worked
Continuously for Pay 6 or More
Months Before Their First Birth, by
Race: 1961-65 to 1981-85

(In percent)



first-time mothers 30 years and over who were college graduates.

Work history data from SIPP also show increasing proportions of women with labor force experience before their first birth. For example, 75 percent of all women who had their first birth in 1981-85 reported having worked 6 or more months before their child was born, compared with 60 percent for women who had their first births in 1961-65 (table B-2). Throughout the period, White women consistently reported higher levels of work experience than did Black women before the birth of their first child (figure 2).³

³ Mott and Shaw (1986) also noted that during the 1950's, the level of prebirth employment among Black women was below that of White women. They partly attribute this difference to the younger age of Blacks at their first birth, therefore, giving them a shorter period of adult life in which to be employed.

Teenage mothers recorded little consistent change since the early 1960's in pre-birth work activity, probably because school enrollment made any continuous length of employment very difficult, even for as little as 6 months (table B-2). However, increases in work experience were up sharply for women 25 and over between 1961-65 and 1981-85.

Summarizing these trends, we find increasing delays in childbearing to older ages in recent decades associated with increases in educational attainment and labor force experience for first-time mothers. These changing circumstances suggest that women have developed greater attachment to the labor force. In turn, this behavior will manifest itself in increasing proportions of women working during their pregnancy and working longer into their pregnancy.

Other researchers have also concluded that work attachments developed by women before their first birth may generate a greater commitment or psychological need for work after childbirth to establish a continuity of social behavior in their life after their pregnancy.⁴

What factor is most likely to influence a woman's decision to work during her pregnancy? Probably her employment status immediately before her pregnancy. Among first-time mothers who ever worked 6 or more consecutive months before their first birth, 83 percent also worked during their pregnancy in 1981-85, up from 70 percent among first-time mothers in 1961-65 with similar work experience. Among those who never worked 6 or more months before their first birth, very few decided to work during their pregnancy: only 8 percent did so among women with first births in 1981-85, not significantly different from the 6 percent reported for 1961-65.

This suggests a significant degree of continuity in labor force behavior both before and during a woman's first

⁴ See Presser (1989), Mott and Shapiro (1983), and McLaughlin (1982).

pregnancy, and that the circumstances influencing a woman's decision to work during her pregnancy will be similar to those associated with her working before her first pregnancy.

Employment Status During First Pregnancy

Overview of Trends

Between 1960 and 1985, the proportion of females in the civilian noninstitutional population age 16 years and over who were employed increased from 36 to 50 percent.⁵ Employment during first pregnancy also increased in this period (figure 3). Forty-four percent of women who had their first births in 1961-65, were employed during first pregnancy; this increased to 65 percent by 1981-85.⁶ Most women worked full-time during their pregnancy, regardless of the point in the pregnancy

⁵ Bureau of Labor Statistics (1989, table 2).

⁶ Comparative international data from Australia in 1984 indicate that three-quarters of women who had their first birth in May 1984 worked during their pregnancy (Glezer, 1988).

Figure 3.
Women Who Worked During Their
First Pregnancy: 1961-65 to
1981-85

(In percent)

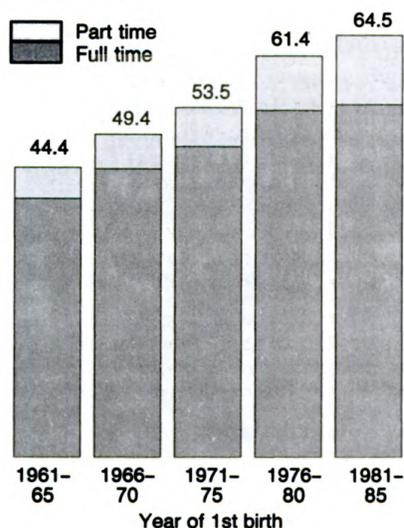


Table B.
Women Working Full Time at Last Job Held During Pregnancy:
1961-65 to 1961-85

Subject	Year of first birth				
	1961-65	1976-80	1971-75	1966-70	1961-65
Percent working full time before first birth	83.7	86.6	86.9	89.5	89.5
Stopped working before birth:					
Less than 1 month	86.6	89.1	89.9	91.8	86.2
1 month	83.0	90.8	91.5	91.8	91.9
2 months	76.7	84.5	83.7	90.0	86.2
3 to 5 months	76.6	79.8	86.9	86.5	91.8
6 or more months	80.7	83.2	80.0	85.1	87.5

Full-time employment status refers to last job held before birth of child.
Source: Derived from table B-6.

when they left work. Since 1961, between 80 and 90 percent of women who worked during their first pregnancy worked full-time at the last job they held before their child's birth (table B).

Women Who Work During First Pregnancy

The likelihood of working during one's first pregnancy varies significantly by age, race, and educational level.⁷ Between 1961-65 and 1981-85, the percentage of women employed during their first pregnancy was consistently higher for women 25 and over than for teenagers, for White women than for Black women, and for women with 1 or more years of college completed than for women who did not complete high school (table C). The data also show that women who had premarital births were less likely to be employed than were women who had their first birth within or after their first marriage.

Logistic regressions, which take into account the complex sampling design of the SIPP, are used to analyze the likelihood of being employed during

⁷ The level of educational attainment in this report from SIPP data sources is as of the survey date in 1988, not at the time of the child's birth. Estimates of educational attainment at birth from SIPP are overstated for very young mothers who had children in the 1960's and 1970's and who may have subsequently furthered their schooling after their child's birth. See appendix A for a discussion of the extent of this problem.

pregnancy (table B-4).⁸ The parameters for each of the individual factors (main effects) show the log of

⁸ For a detailed description of the statistical routine, CPLX, used in this report see Fay (1982). An updated version of this program and the documentation for it is available from the Census Bureau.

Table C.
Women Who Worked During Their First Pregnancy, by Selected Characteristics: 1961-65 to 1961-85

(In percent)

	Year of first birth				
	1961-65	1976-80	1971-75	1966-70	1961-65
Employment status ¹ :					
Total	64.5	61.4	53.5	49.4	44.4
Full time	54.0	53.1	47.6	44.2	39.7
Part time	10.5	8.3	5.9	5.2	4.7
Age at first birth:					
Less than 18 years	16.8	23.5	25.1	19.1	25.0
18 and 19 years	38.9	40.8	38.3	40.1	29.2
20 and 21 years	59.3	57.4	57.4	50.8	49.4
22 to 24 years	71.9	73.1	66.6	61.4	56.8
25 to 29 years	82.3	81.1	73.1	66.2	54.4
30 years and over	83.4	74.0	60.7	44.3	51.9
Race:					
White	69.3	65.5	57.0	51.6	46.7
Black	42.9	40.5	39.8	37.9	32.2
Child born:					
Before first marriage	45.4	41.7	42.0	42.9	36.7
Within first marriage	72.1	67.5	56.9	50.6	46.5
After first marriage	73.0	69.4	67.9	58.3	40.7
Educational attainment:					
Less than high school	24.9	28.2	25.6	26.0	21.8
High school	66.5	61.0	53.7	50.2	48.8
College, 1 to 3 years	79.8	72.5	62.6	57.8	51.5
College, 4 or more years	83.8	81.8	77.0	67.0	62.9

¹Refers to status at last job held before child's birth.

the odds of women working during their pregnancy over the entire 25-year study period, controlling for all other variables in the regression. The interactions of the four demographic factors (age at first birth, race,⁹ marital status at childbirth, and educational attainment as of 1988) with the categorical variable for the period of the child's birth, show if any of the foregoing relationships have altered during the 25-year period.

The multivariate analysis in table B-4 supports the differences noted in table C with one exception: no difference by marital status at first birth is found in the likelihood of working during pregnancy. Since a high proportion of premarital births are born to Black women, teenagers, and women with

⁹ When references are made to White women in any of the logistic regressions or accompanying models shown in this report, the reference is to White and all other races, excluding Black.

relatively low levels of schooling—all groups with low employment levels—the marital status variable as shown in table C was apparently representing the effects of all these factors (all of which persist in the multivariate analysis) rather than intrinsically having any effect by itself.

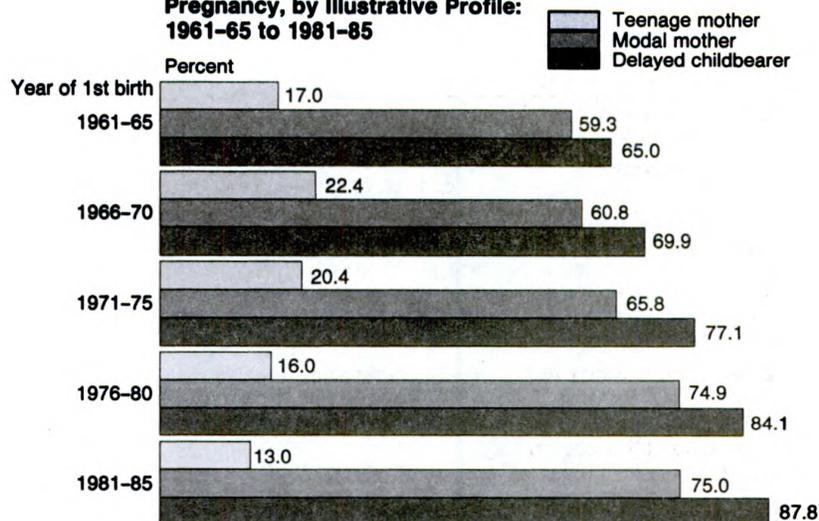
The interaction of the marital status variable with the birth cohort indicator (table B-4), however, suggests that women who had postmaritally born children in the late 1970's were significantly more likely to work during their pregnancy than were women who had postmaritally born children in the late 1960's.

The sizes of the individual parameters show that a woman's age and her level of educational attainment are the most significant factors related to the odds of working during first pregnancy. These factors broadly represent the labor force experience and job skills associated with increasing age which would influence the likelihood of a woman working, regardless of her fertility status.

Also noted are increasingly divergent trends in employment by age at first birth and levels of schooling. Very young women did not experience significant increases in employment during their pregnancy, compared with women 25 and over, while high school dropouts lost ground in employment by 1981-85.

The interaction of the race and education variables also suggests that White women are more likely to work during their pregnancy if they graduated from high school than if they did not. In addition, among women having their first birth at ages 20 or 21 years, those with 1 or more years of college were less likely to have worked during their pregnancy than were women who had gone no further than a high school education. This latter group had probably finished their schooling before their pregnancy and may have been already working at the time of the birth. College educated women becoming mothers at age 20 to 21, however, were probably enrolled in school at the

Figure 4.
Women Who Worked During Their First Pregnancy, by Illustrative Profile: 1961-65 to 1981-85



time of their pregnancy rather than being at work.

Three Illustrative Profiles of Working Women

The analysis so far indicates that the women most likely to work during their pregnancy are older women, White women, and women with high levels of educational attainment. Few, if any, increases in work force participation are noted since the 1960's for teenagers, Black women, high school dropouts, or women who had a premarital first birth. Some of the changes that have occurred over time in the proportion of women who worked during their pregnancy are summarized in figure 4 which develops three hypothetical profiles of American mothers based on the logistic regression in table B-4.

The Teenage Mother. At one end of the labor force spectrum is the young Black woman, her first birth as a teenager born premaritally, and having less than a high school education, possibly as a result of the premarital birth. About 92 percent of all first births in 1985 to Black teenagers were to unmarried women and 63 percent of births to Black teens (all marital statuses and parities combined) were

to women who failed to complete high school.¹⁰

Expectant mothers fitting this profile had employment rates during pregnancy that never exceeded the 25 percent level (figure 4). Among women giving birth in 1981-85, 13 percent had worked during their pregnancy, down from 22 percent in the late 1960's. Perhaps the initiation of programs to enable pregnant women to remain in school or the availability of greater social welfare benefits in recent years have resulted in the lower levels of employment experienced by these young women during their pregnancy.

The Modal Mother. The average or modal American woman since the 1960's at the time of her first birth is White, married, a high school graduate, and between 22 and 24 years of age. Figure 4 shows that 75 percent of expectant women with these characteristics in 1981-85 worked during their pregnancy, up from 59 percent in 1961-65. Having finished

¹⁰ These statistics are based on vital registration data for 1985 from the National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics of the United States, 1985, Vol. I-Nativity, tables 58, 72, and 76.

high school, in all likelihood while teenagers, these women probably had several more years of potential labor force experience before their first birth than the teenage mother group, and their higher employment rates during their first pregnancy suggest this experience.

The Delayed Childbearer. Women who delay their first birth until age 25 or older make up a growing segment of first time mothers (table A). The majority of women who delay their first births to this age are White women and married women. In comparison to the previous group of women, most first time mothers at older ages have completed at least 1 year of college (63 percent in 1985).¹¹

About two-thirds of women with these characteristics worked during their first pregnancy in the early 1960's; by 1981-85, almost 9 out of every 10 of these women worked during their first pregnancy. Given such a high rate of employment during their pregnancy, it is very likely that many of these women had worked prior to their pregnancy and would continue working after becoming pregnant.

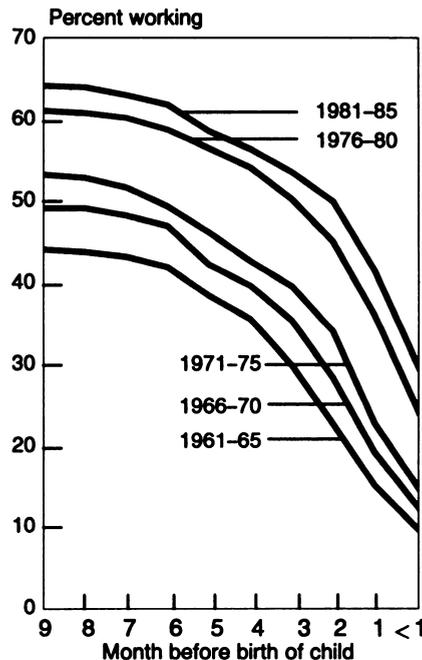
Duration of Work During First Pregnancy

Overview of Trends

As previously noted, the proportion of expectant mothers who worked during their pregnancy increased by about 20 percentage points between 1961-65 and 1981-85. This difference still persisted when the proportions were examined more closely according to single months before childbirth (table B-5). Even among women working within 1 month of their child's birth, 31 percent were employed in 1981-85, compared with 10 percent among women who had their first children born in 1961-65.

Proportions working on a month-by-month basis are graphed in figure 5 for the entire length of the pregnancy. Although all birth cohorts of women show a declining pattern of worker

Figure 5.
Women Working During Their First Pregnancy, by Month Before Birth: 1961-65 to 1981-85



rates during pregnancy, there was an unusually large upward shift in the curves between 1971-75 and 1976-80 by about 10 percentage points, both at the beginning of the pregnancy and throughout the pregnancy. The typical increase observed between successive 5-year birth cohorts was usually about 3 to 5 percentage points before and after the 1976-80 birth cohort of children. The increase in the late 1970's occurred in the context of unusually large increases in the proportions of women working, regardless of parity.¹²

In addition, an increasing proportion of employed women are working closer to their child's birth (table B-7). About one-half of all women who worked

¹² The proportion of women 16 years old and over employed increased from 42 percent in 1975 to 48 percent in 1980 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1989, table 2). This 5-year increase was larger than that observed between consecutive 5-year intervals on either side of this period.

during their pregnancy in 1961-65 worked into their last trimester (less than 3 months before the child's birth). By 1981-85, this proportion increased to slightly over three-quarters of all expectant mothers. In fact, almost one-half of women in the most recent birth cohort who worked during their pregnancy were still working less than 1 month before their child was born, up from 23 percent in 1961-65.

Women Who Work the Longest

The preceding section indicated that older women, White women, and women with more years of schooling were more likely to work during their pregnancy. But, some employed women are more likely than others to work longer into their pregnancy. Table B-7 summarizes changing patterns of employment between 1961 and 1985, while table B-8 shows the results of a logistic regression which examines the likelihood of working during the last trimester among women who worked during pregnancy.¹³ The regression results show that college-educated women and women who were full-time workers were more likely to work during their last trimester.

Furthermore, interaction terms in the regression suggest that full-time workers who had at least 1 year of college were more likely to work than were full-time workers who were high school dropouts.¹⁴ The parameters of the birth cohort variable also indicate that significantly more women worked in their last trimester in the most recent birth cohort than in prior time periods.

The birth cohort interaction terms in the regression suggest that in the early 1960's, the women who worked longer into their pregnancy were those in need of greater financial assistance: teenage

¹³ The proportions of women who worked in their last trimester of pregnancy and within 1 month of their child's birth are shown in table B-7.

¹⁴ McLaughlin (1982), in his analysis of employment patterns of pregnant women between 1968 and 1972 also concluded that the higher level of educational attainment, the greater the delay in leaving the labor force as the birth approaches.

¹¹ Ibid., table 72.

women, part-time workers, and high school dropouts who may have sought employment if they were unable to continue their schooling (table B-8). These women may have expected that they would more be more dependent on their own incomes for the support of their family than older, more educated women, hence, they worked longer into their pregnancy.

Employment patterns had changed so by 1981-85, women 25 and over at the time of their first birth, college-educated women, and married women worked relatively longer into their pregnancies than did their younger, less educated, and unmarried counterparts. Women in the 1980's may work longer into their pregnancy for reasons other than immediate financial needs. Perhaps they view their jobs from a long-term perspective and feel that a reduction in time lost from a job during pregnancy would increase the likelihood of job retention after childbirth and enhance their long-term opportunities with their employer.

This survey was not designed to investigate either the "institutional norms" that may govern employer attitudes toward women working during pregnancy or the attitudes of the women and their husbands toward working during pregnancy. Are employers more tolerant of pregnant women as workers today than they were 25 years ago? Have they altered their perceptions of a pregnant woman's productivity or her ability to serve clients or customers? Has medical advice to pregnant women changed during this period regarding maternal health aspects of working while pregnant? And if circumstances have changed, are they a reflection of true changes in attitudes or rather the exigencies of business policies as women today increase their share of the labor force?

Maternity Leave Arrangements: 1961-85

Changes in Leave Arrangements: An Overview

This section presents an overview of the type of leave arrangements women used either during their pregnancy or up to 6 weeks after the birth of their child. The survey specified five categories of leave, and the respondents were free to check all applicable leave arrangements (2 percent of the respondents provided multiple answers to the question). The five categories were: 1. Quit job 2. Maternity/sick/paid leave 3. Unpaid leave of absence 4. Let go from job 5. Never stopped working

The unpaid leave of absence category designated leave without pay but with an informal agreement that the woman would be able to return to work within an agreed period after childbirth. The maternity/sick/paid leave category represented leave with either a cash payment of benefits or a formal agreement regarding retention of employee benefits such as job security or seniority.

Table D presents the overall changes in the type of leave arrangements used

Table D.
Leave Arrangements Used by Women Who Worked During Their First Pregnancy: 1961-65 to 1981-85

(Numbers in thousands)

Type of leave	Year of first birth				
	1981-85	1976-80	1971-75	1966-70	1961-65
Number of women	5,239	4,414	3,700	3,435	2,797
Percent.	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Leave arrangement:					
Quit job	28.3	41.3	51.1	58.9	62.8
Maternity/sick/paid leave	46.6	34.0	23.4	18.3	16.0
Unpaid leave	20.3	20.2	20.8	17.6	14.1
Let go from job	4.6	4.9	4.6	4.2	5.0
Never stopped working	2.8	2.0	1.7	1.4	2.7

Note: Individual leave arrangements exceed 100.0 because of multiple answers.

by women who worked during their first pregnancy since the 1960's. In the early 1960's when less than one-half of women worked during their pregnancy, 63 percent of pregnant working women quit their jobs before their child's birth. This was the most commonly identified type of job termination mentioned by women regardless of their social or economic circumstances (table B-9, Part D).¹⁵

Maternity leave or unpaid leave of absence were less frequently used in the early 1960's, together totaling about 30 percent all leave arrangements. Five percent of pregnant women were let go from their job, a proportion that did not vary throughout the entire study period. Likewise, no more than 3 percent of women over this entire period stated that they never stopped working either during or after their pregnancy.

By 1981-85, the most commonly mentioned type of arrangement was some form of maternity or paid leave, amounting to 47 percent of all

¹⁵ The only exception being among Black women where no statistical difference was found between the use of maternity leave or voluntarily quitting one's job.

arrangements.¹⁶ A decline in the proportion of women quitting their job either during their pregnancy or within 6 weeks of their child's birth had occurred since the 1960's, so by 1981-85 only 28 percent of pregnant women had voluntarily quit work before their child's birth. The proportion taking an unpaid leave of absence remained at

¹⁶ Referring again to the Australian maternity leave survey of 1984 (Glezer, 1988), 44 percent of pregnant Australian workers interviewed replied that they had received maternity leave benefits. Among the principal determinants of taking maternity leave were having a high level of education and a high status occupation, and a strong commitment to working before their first pregnancy.

about the 20 percent level since the 1970's.

Current Leave Arrangements: 1981-85

Sharp contrasts are evident for the most recent cohort of mothers in the type of leave arrangements mentioned by pregnant workers in different socioeconomic categories. Younger women today are more likely to quit their jobs or to be let go from work than are women who have their children at relatively older ages (table E). About twice as many women (43 percent) who had their first birth between ages 18 and 22 quit their jobs in 1981-85, compared with women who had their first child at age 25 and over (20 percent). In addition, about 14 percent

of 18- and 19-year-olds were let go from their job while pregnant, compared with only 2 percent of women age 30 and over at first birth.

Older women are also more likely to receive maternity benefits than are younger women. In all probability, the greater labor force experience and job security enjoyed by older women translates into better benefits when interrupting their job to have their baby.

No significant differences by race are found in either quitting work, receiving maternity benefits or taking an unpaid leave of absence. Black women, however, were twice as likely to be let go from their jobs when pregnant than were White women (8.7 and 4.2 percent, respectively). Even after controlling for other factors in the

Table E.
Type of Leave Arrangements Used by Women Who Worked During their First Pregnancy: 1981-85

(Numbers in thousands. Percent distribution may exceed 100.0 because of multiple answers)

Characteristic	Number of women	Percent	Quit job	Maternity sick/paid leave	Unpaid leave	Let go from job	Never stopped working
Total.....	5,239	100.0	28.3	46.6	20.3	4.6	2.8
Employment status at last job:							
Full time.....	4,387	100.0	25.2	51.7	19.6	3.6	2.9
Part time.....	851	100.0	44.1	20.2	24.4	10.0	2.7
Stopped working before birth:							
Less than 1 month.....	2,475	100.0	13.8	59.5	24.0	0.5	6.0
1 month.....	914	100.0	30.0	51.7	19.1	2.8	-
2 months.....	682	100.0	38.4	41.7	15.4	5.4	-
3 to 5 months ¹	709	100.0	49.7	18.0	18.6	14.6	-
6 or more months.....	458	100.0	55.1	18.1	13.0	13.8	-
Age at first birth:							
Less than 18 years.....	136	100.0	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
18 and 19 years.....	405	100.0	42.3	19.7	22.6	14.2	3.2
20 and 21 years.....	772	100.0	42.7	34.6	15.4	6.2	2.9
22 to 24 years.....	1,249	100.0	29.6	45.0	22.8	2.2	1.3
25 to 29 years.....	1,816	100.0	20.8	55.6	21.0	3.7	2.3
30 years and over.....	860	100.0	18.9	60.1	19.3	1.8	5.1
Race:							
White.....	4,612	100.0	28.6	46.6	20.3	4.2	2.8
Black.....	508	100.0	26.3	47.6	17.8	8.7	2.3
Child born ¹ :							
Before first marriage.....	1,071	100.0	35.5	35.6	19.2	8.7	4.3
Within first marriage.....	3,794	100.0	27.2	48.9	20.8	3.3	2.2
Educational attainment:							
Less than high school.....	377	100.0	50.7	20.4	15.3	12.2	5.2
High school.....	2,340	100.0	29.2	43.0	21.5	6.9	1.4
College, 1 to 3 years.....	1,336	100.0	29.1	49.4	19.7	1.8	3.6
College, 4 or more years.....	1,184	100.0	18.6	59.0	20.3	1.0	4.2

- Represents zero.

(B) Base too small to show derived measure.

¹ Data not shown separately for births occurring after first marriage because of too few sample cases.

Table F.
Logistic Regressions for Using a Specific Type of Leave Arrangement for First Births: 1981-85

Characteristic	Quit job		Maternity leave		Unpaid leave		Let go from job	
	Coefficient	Standard error	Coefficient	Standard error	Coefficient	Standard error	Coefficient	Standard error
Constant	-0.209	0.143	** -1.477	0.191	** -1.535	0.164	** -2.497	0.196
Age at first birth:								
Less than 20 years	0.224	0.174	** -0.865	0.248	0.115	0.240	** 0.716	0.279
20 and 21 years	** 0.381	0.114	-0.016	0.138	* -0.332	0.187	-0.021	0.377
22 to 24 years	-0.057	0.128	* 0.234	0.126	0.167	0.162	** -0.749	0.370
25 years and over	** -0.548	0.129	** 0.647	0.127	0.050	0.141	0.054	0.264
Race:								
White ¹	0.142	0.125	-0.130	0.100	0.066	0.119	* -0.337	0.198
Educational attainment:								
Less than high school	** 0.441	0.185	** -0.467	0.211	-0.254	0.220	0.487	0.312
High school	** -0.278	0.104	* 0.191	0.107	* 0.206	0.118	* 0.431	0.220
College, 1 or more years	-0.164	0.135	* 0.276	0.142	0.048	0.152	** -0.918	0.279
Employment status at last job:								
Full time	** -0.315	0.086	** 0.621	0.106	* -0.182	0.099	** -0.410	0.161
Left work last trimester	** -0.618	0.082	** 0.785	0.082	* 0.168	0.099	** -0.974	0.133
Degrees of freedom	87	(X)	87	(X)	87	(X)	87	(X)
Jackknifed X2	4.21	(X)	0.42	(X)	5.77	(X)	3.48	(X)

X Not applicable.

* Coefficient significant at the 0.10 level.

** Coefficient significant at the 0.05 level.

¹ Includes White and all other races except Black.

Note: Coefficients represent the log of the odds of using that specific leave arrangement during first pregnancy.

logistic regressions shown in table F which analyze the likelihood of securing each particular type of arrangement, the odds of being let go from a job during pregnancy were greater for Black women than White women.

(Prior analysis, not shown in this paper, indicated that the women's marital status at time of birth provided no significant explanatory contributions to the logistic analysis once age at childbirth and race controls were included in the regressions, as very high proportions of premarital births occur to Black women and to teenagers. Hence, the marital status variable became redundant and was dropped from the analysis.)

The logistic analysis in table F also shows that high school dropouts were most likely to quit their jobs during pregnancy and least likely to receive maternity benefits. Women with 1 or more years of college were also the least likely workers to be let go from their jobs during pregnancy. The group of women most likely to obtain an unpaid leave of absence were neither

women with the least or most education but women with 4 years of high school.

Two employment characteristics—hours worked per week and when the woman left work during her pregnancy—proved to be the most consistently significant factors across all four types of leave arrangements shown in the logistic regressions in table F. Full-time workers and women who worked into their last trimester were more likely to obtain maternity benefits and less likely to either quit their jobs or be let go by their employer than either parttime workers or women who left work before their last trimester of the pregnancy.

Unpaid leave of absence from a job was also obtained more frequently by women working in their last trimester. Part-time workers, as opposed to full-time workers (who were more likely to receive paid or maternity leave), were more likely to receive an unpaid leave of absence.

Job Quitting During Pregnancy: 1961-85

The major changes in leave arrangements since 1961 have been the declines in the proportion of women quitting their jobs during their pregnancy and the increases in the proportion receiving maternity benefits. As the distribution of leave arrangements has changed over time, so have the characteristics of the women likely to obtain different arrangements.

The regression for the entire 1961-85 period (table B-10) shows that women 25 and over at first birth, full-time workers and women who worked in their last trimester were the least likely candidates to quit work during their pregnancy, much as they were in 1981-85.¹⁷ In fact, the relative gap

¹⁷ It should be noted that the logistic regression in table F for the 1981-85 period is completely derivable from the regression in table B-10 by adding the birth cohort*factor interactions to each main effect parameter.

between younger and older women, and between women who did or did not work in their last trimester, widened by 1981-85, as noted in the birth cohort interactions with these two variables (table B-10).

However, while the results from the 1981-85 analysis (table F) indicate no differences in job quitting by the race of the women, for the entire 1961-85 period, White women were more likely to quit their jobs during pregnancy than were Black women (table B-10).

In 1961-65, 66 percent of White women quit their jobs during pregnancy, compared with 39 percent of Black women (figure 6). Greater declines in job quitting by White women than by Black women in the past two decades resulted in no statistical difference in the proportion quitting by 1981-85 (29 and 26 percent, respectively). Perhaps in earlier years, White women were more likely or financially better able to give up their labor force ties than Black

Figure 6.
Percentage of Women Who Quit Their Jobs Before Their Child's Birth, by Race: 1961-65 to 1981-85
(Limited to women who worked during first pregnancy)

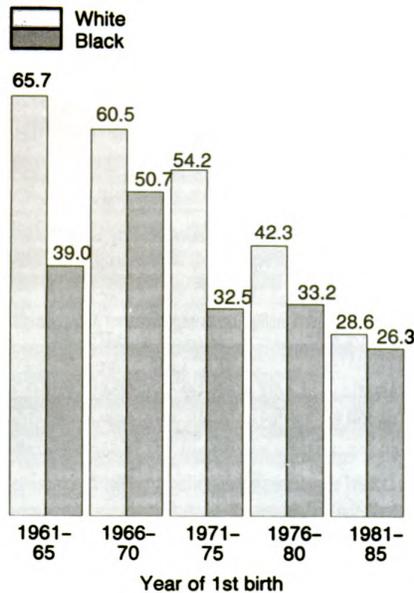


Table G.
Degree of Employer Payments for Maternity Leave for the First Birth: 1961-65 to 1981-85

(Numbers in thousands)

Employer payment	Year of first birth				
	1981-85	1976-80	1971-75	1966-70	1961-65
Number of women on maternity leave	2,440	1,502	867	629	449
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Paid for all leave	42.0	39.0	29.5	26.3	24.8
Paid for some leave	38.9	33.4	27.8	27.9	24.8
No payment for leave	19.1	27.6	42.8	45.8	50.3

Note: Question asked was "Did your employer pay for all or part of your leave through maternity benefits or sick pay?"

women if they had less intention of returning to work after childbirth.¹⁸

The logistic analysis in table B-10 also shows no overall differences by educational level in the likelihood of quitting one's job during pregnancy for the 1961-85 period.¹⁹ Between 60 and 65 percent of pregnant workers quit their jobs in the early 1960's, regardless of educational level (table B-9, Part D). No differences in job quitting by educational level were noted in the early 1970's with an overall level of about 50 percent quitting their jobs (table B-9, Part B). By 1981-85 the proportion quitting their jobs during pregnancy was still at the 50 percent level among high school dropouts but only 1 out of 5 college graduates reported quitting their job during their pregnancy (table E).

Maternity Leave During Pregnancy: 1961-85

Women with at least one year of college were the most likely recipients of maternity benefits over the 1961-85

¹⁸ Mott and Shaw (1986) also found less discontinuity among Black women than White women during the 1950's in work activity immediately before and after childbirth.

¹⁹ Since the educational attainment level is at the time of the survey in 1986 and not at the time of the birth, it is possible that the educational patterns for the 1981-85 period more accurately portray the likelihood of job quitting during pregnancy than do the relationships noted over the entire 1961-85 period.

period as indicated by the logistic regression in table B-11. Full-time workers, women 25 and over at first birth, and women who worked into their last trimester were also more likely to receive maternity benefits. Perhaps the greater relative gains in labor force experience and schooling made by older mothers since the 1960's have given them the edge in securing these benefits.

The odds of Black women receiving versus not receiving maternity benefits over the entire 1961-85 period were greater than that of White women. However, relative increases in the likelihood of receiving maternity benefits by White women over this period resulted in 47 percent of all women, regardless of race, receiving maternity benefits by 1981-85 (table E). The interaction between the race and the birth cohort variables in table B-11 indicate that for more recent birth cohorts, White women have made greater relative gains in securing maternity leave than Black women.

The three-fold increase in the proportion of pregnant working women receiving maternity leave between 1961-65 (16 percent) and 1981-85 (47 percent) is not just the result of increases in the proportion of women working closer to the time of their child's birth. If the monthly distribution of the time that women left work during their pregnancy was the same in 1981-85 as it was in 1961-65, the aggregate percentage of women receiving maternity benefits in 1981-85

Table H.
Employer Payments for Maternity Leave for First Births: 1981-85

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Number of women	Percent	Employer paid for—		
			All leave	Some leave	No leave
Total.....	2,440	100.0	42.0	38.9	19.1
Employment status at last job:					
Full time.....	2,268	100.0	42.9	39.5	17.5
Part time.....	172	100.0	29.4	31.1	39.5
Stopped working before birth:					
Less than 1 month.....	1,472	100.0	45.6	39.3	15.1
1 month.....	473	100.0	38.4	36.0	25.6
2 months.....	284	100.0	33.7	41.1	25.2
3 or more months.....	211	100.0	36.0	39.8	24.2
Age at first birth:					
Less than 20 years.....	85	100.0	(B)	(B)	(B)
20 to 21 years.....	267	100.0	40.3	33.7	26.0
22 to 24 years.....	562	100.0	34.9	43.3	21.8
25 to 29 years.....	1,009	100.0	44.6	38.7	16.7
30 years and over.....	517	100.0	44.8	41.3	13.9
Race:					
White.....	2,150	100.0	42.3	38.0	19.7
Black.....	242	100.0	42.8	49.3	7.9
Child born::					
Before first marriage.....	381	100.0	41.1	37.2	21.8
Within first marriage.....	1,855	100.0	41.6	39.1	19.3
After first marriage.....	203	100.0	47.0	40.5	12.6
Educational attainment:					
Less than high school.....	77	100.0	(B)	(B)	(B)
High school.....	1,005	100.0	44.6	38.1	17.3
College, 1 to 3 years.....	659	100.0	40.3	38.4	21.3
College, 4 or more years.....	698	100.0	41.8	41.9	16.3

(B) Base too small to show derived measure.

would still have increased to 36 percent.

Women receiving maternity/sick or other paid leave benefits during first pregnancy were also asked if their employer paid for all or part of their leave. These responses shown in table G indicate that increasing proportions of pregnant workers are receiving cash payments associated with maternity leave.

in 1961-65, about 50 percent of women receiving maternity benefits received some monetary compensation. There were no significant changes in the next 10 years but by 1976-80, the proportion receiving cash benefits had increased to 72 percent and by 1981-85, 81 percent of women with maternity

benefits reported receiving some cash benefit. Throughout the study period, about one-half of those receiving some cash payment received it for all their leave.²⁰

The extent of cash payments received by pregnant workers on maternity leave by selected characteristics is shown in table H for women who had their first birth in 1981-85. The sample size and associated standard errors make it difficult to distinguish group differences in the proportion of women having all of

²⁰ Leave arrangements only refer to those used during their pregnancy and up to 6 weeks after childbirth. Information was not obtained on the extent of payments made to employees who were on maternity leave more than 6 weeks after their child's birth.

their leave paid for, but obviously, full-time employees, older workers with more job experience, and women working close to the time of childbirth would be the most likely employees to received full compensation.

Returning to Work Overview of Trends

Even more dramatic than the changes in the labor force participation of women during pregnancy has been their increasingly rapid return to work after the birth of their child. Figure 7 shows the cumulative monthly proportion of women working after their first birth. Working within one year of childbirth was a fairly rare occurrence in the early 1960's. Only 14 percent of mothers with newborns had returned to work by the 6th month, increasing to only 17 percent by the 12th.²¹ Among

²¹ Mott and Shaw (1986) estimated that between 20 and 25 percent of White women who had their first birth between 1945 and 1959 worked in the first year after their child's birth.

Figure 7.
Women Working at a Job, by
Interval After First Birth:
1961-65 to 1981-84

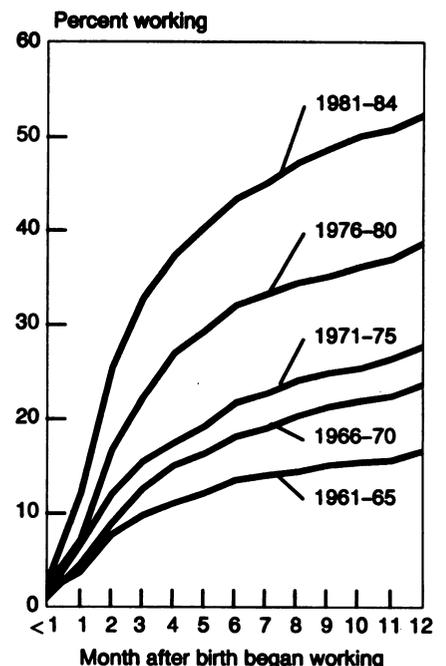


Table I.
Women Working Full Time at First Job After Birth of First Child,
by Interval After Birth: 1961-65 to 1981-84

Month returned to work	Year of first birth				
	1981-84	1976-80	1971-75	1966-70	1961-65
Percent working full time:					
Less than 3 months.....	76.5	78.8	85.8	76.8	81.2
3 to 5 months.....	57.1	74.7	75.5	77.4	75.9
6 to 12 months.....	55.9	69.1	66.4	75.6	73.0
13 to 24 months.....	(X)	67.0	61.8	70.5	71.2
25 to 36 months.....	(X)	58.7	66.0	61.3	68.1
37 to 48 months.....	(X)	52.3	65.0	74.0	67.1
49 to 60 months.....	(X)	59.8	61.2	70.0	69.0

X Incomplete data for this interval.
Source: Derived from table B-12.

women having their first birth in 1981-84, 44 percent had already returned to work 6 months after childbirth, increasing to 53 percent by the twelfth month.

The data also indicate that among women who returned to work by the 12th month after childbirth, most had returned by the 3d month. Between 50 to 60 percent had returned 3 months after birth while 75 to 85 percent were working by the 6th month. This relationship remained consistent throughout the 1961-84 period (table B-5).²²

In response to the questionnaire item on whether the first job held after childbirth was a full-time or part-time job, most responded that the first job was full-time (table I). Throughout the 1961-85 period, about 75 to 85 percent of women returning to work less than 3 months after childbirth returned to work full time. But among women beginning work 3 to 12 months after childbirth, a smaller proportion in 1981-84 (57 percent) returned to work full time, compared with women who had their first birth in 1961-65 (74 percent).

Perhaps in previous years when relatively few women returned to work within 1 year of childbirth, those who did may have been financially pressed to work, so when they returned to work,

²² McLaughlin (1982) also reported similar proportional rates of return within the first year after the child's birth during the late 1960's and early 1970's.

they returned full-time. It may also be that today's employers are more willing to hire or re-hire mothers with newborns on a parttime basis structuring jobs to accommodate the mother's family obligations.

Prior Work Experience During Pregnancy

Work experience during pregnancy is an important determinant of how rapidly women return to work. Among women having their first birth in 1981-84, 59 percent had returned to work by the 6th month after their child's birth if they had worked during their pregnancy, compared with only 16 percent among women who had not worked during their pregnancy (table B-5). Differences by work experience were found in earlier periods but at lower levels: 21 percent of women who worked during their pregnancy in 1961-65 returned 6 months after their child's birth, compared with only 8 percent who did not work during their pregnancy.

And among women who worked during their pregnancy, the longer into the pregnancy they worked, the more rapidly they returned to work. For the 1981-84 birth cohort, figure 8 illustrates the proportion of women who returned to work within 6 months of their child's birth by the interval from their child's birth when they left work. Among women employed during their first pregnancy in 1981-84 who left work less than 1 month before their child's birth, 71 percent had returned within 6

months after childbirth, compared with 36 percent among women who left their job 3 or more months before their birth. Relatively large differences in the likelihood of returning to work were also found during the 1960's and 1970's by duration of work during pregnancy (table B-13).

Maternity Benefits and Returning to Work

Figure 9 shows that since the mid-1960's, recipients of maternity benefits returned to work more rapidly than those not receiving benefits. Among women who gave birth in 1981-84, 71 percent of those who received benefits returned to work less than 6 months after childbirth, compared with 43 percent among women not receiving any benefits.

Offering maternity benefits with the promise of job retention may encourage more women to work longer into their pregnancy and to return to work more rapidly as income loss associated with job search costs and time would be minimized. Maternity benefits, however, may not equally affect the

Figure 8.
Percentage of Women Returning to Work Less Than 6 Months After First Birth, by Month Left Work During Pregnancy: 1981-84
(Limited to women employed during first pregnancy)

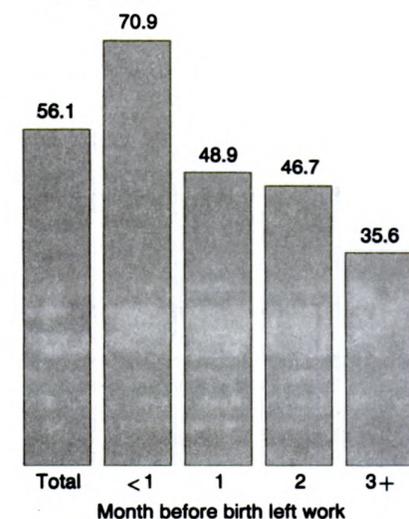
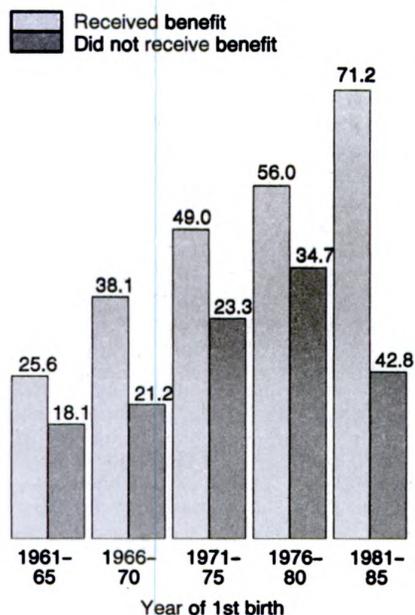


Figure 9.
Percentage of Women Returning to Work Less Than 6 Months After First Birth, by Maternity Benefit Receipt: 1961-65 to 1981-85



likelihood of returning to work among women in different occupations. Some occupations, by the nature of their skill level, daily work schedule, or pay scale, may not engender long-term commitments among workers.

Entry level jobs which young people occupy or occupations which utilize workers on a part-time basis are typical of occupations which persons may view as only temporary. Hence, maternity benefits may not offer strong inducements for a rapid return to work, regardless of current or prospective family size, if the job is viewed only from a short-term perspective.

Table J illustrates the median years of job tenure for a spectrum of occupations in which women make up significant proportions. Tenure is defined as the number of years a person currently in that occupation has worked in that job for his or her entire working life. Obviously, occupations like teachers, nurses, and accountants,

which require a high degree of training and education, are found among the occupations with greater than average tenure. Jobs like typists, receptionists, waitresses, cashiers, and child care workers, which tend to employ relatively young people, have low occupational tenure.

It is important, then, to consider the effect of maternity leave benefits in the context of the nature of the occupation itself. Unfortunately, the maternity leave questions in SIPP did not ask occupation before and after childbirth. When the association between maternity leave receipt and returning to work is examined in later sections, this omission will be addressed to the extent possible by controlling for factors such as age at

childbirth and educational level which are likely to affect the chances of returning to work after childbirth.

Likelihood of a Rapid Return to Work

In general, the most important factor related to a rapid return to work after childbirth is a woman's work history during her pregnancy, even after controlling for other socioeconomic characteristics. An examination of the magnitude of the logistic regression coefficients in table B-14 clearly indicates that women who worked during first pregnancy were more likely to return to work within 6 months of their child's birth than women who were not employed during their pregnancy. The interaction of the employment

Table J.
Female Employees, Median Years of Tenure, and Median Age of Employees, for Selected Occupations: 1987

(Numbers in thousands. Number employed includes both males and females)

Occupation	Number employed	Percent Female	Median years of—	
			Tenure	Age
All employees	112,440	44.8	6.6	35.8
Teachers:				
Secondary school	1,172	54.3	12.5	39.8
Elementary school	1,329	85.3	12.4	39.0
Licensed practical nurses	406	97.0	10.3	36.9
Registered nurses	1,588	95.1	9.3	36.5
Hairdressers	743	89.3	8.9	35.5
Accountants and auditors	1,255	45.7	7.6	35.0
Secretaries	4,107	99.1	7.5	36.1
Bookkeepers, accountants, and auditor clerks	2,004	92.4	7.1	38.9
Sewing machine operators	755	91.0	6.6	37.8
Private household cleaners and servants	472	96.0	6.2	45.9
Nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants	1,324	90.4	5.6	36.5
Typists	843	94.6	5.2	32.8
Computer operators	911	66.0	4.8	31.3
Maids and housemen	602	84.6	4.6	38.2
Waiters and waitresses	1,383	85.1	4.2	25.9
Bank tellers	467	90.6	3.8	28.4
Cooks, except short-order	1,627	50.1	3.8	29.3
Receptionists	766	97.5	3.3	31.4
Child care workers:				
Private household	405	96.9	2.7	21.9
Not private household	827	96.0	2.7	34.2
Cashiers	2,286	83.0	2.4	24.4

Note: Number of employed persons and percent female refer to monthly averages for 1987. Median years of tenure and age refer to occupations as of January 1987. Tenure refers to the cumulative number of years a person has worked in his or her current occupation, regardless of the number of employers, interruptions in employment, or time spent in other occupations.

Source: Number of employed persons and employed females are from U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1989, table 642. Occupational tenure and median age are from Max L. Carey, "Occupational Tenure in 1987: Many Workers Have Remained in their Fields," Monthly Labor Review, Vol. 111, No. 10 (October 1988), table 3. Data source is the January 1987 Current Population Survey; standard errors for the medians shown in this table are not available from the published article.

variable with the birth cohort indicator also indicates that these differences have widened over time, stressing the increasing ties between labor force behavior immediately before and after childbirth.

However, the characteristics of those women most likely to return to work after their first birth are not necessarily the same as those who were most likely to have worked during their pregnancy. Previously it was shown that the women most likely to work during first pregnancy are relatively older women at first birth, White women, and high school or college educated persons (table B-4).

The results of the logistic regression in table B-14 show quite a different profile of women most likely to make a rapid return to work. Among all women who had first births between 1961 and 1985, teenagers, Black women, and women with premarital first births were most likely to be working within 6 months of their child's birth, after controlling for the effects of employment during pregnancy. This suggests that women who are most dependent on their own earnings for their family's support return most rapidly to work. College-educated women, who were previously shown to be more likely to work during their pregnancy than high school dropouts (table B-4), return to work after childbirth no faster than the average for all mothers in the survey.

Other researchers²³ similarly agree that economic need is more likely to be an important factor in generating rapid returns to work after childbirth than it is in determining the likelihood of working before one's first birth. Concerning prebirth labor force activity, other characteristics such as job skills and educational attainment levels may be more important in determining employment opportunities.

Using the same three hypothetical socioeconomic profiles of women developed in earlier sections, estimated proportions of women returning to work within 6 months of childbirth are shown

²³ See Mott and Shaw (1986) and McLaughlin (1982).

in table N based on the logistic regressions in table B-14. For comparative purposes, model-based estimates of the proportions of women who worked during pregnancy (based on the loglinear regression in table B-4) are also shown in the table.

Among women who did not work at all during their pregnancy (column 1), the proportions returning to work within 6 months of childbirth have been very low since the 1960's for all three categories (table K). Only about 10 to 15 percent of teenagers who did not work during their pregnancy began working less than 6 months after childbirth. For the other two groups (the modal mothers and delayed childbearers), the level was less than 10 percent before the 1980's, increasing to only 15 percent by 1981-84.

Among women who worked during their pregnancy in the 1960's (column 2), 30 to 40 percent of the teenage mother

group returned within 6 months of their child's birth compared to 15 to 20 percent for older, married women with relatively more schooling (table K). This pattern suggests that in the 1960's, women who returned to work most rapidly were probably those women who were in greatest economic need to support their families. Relatively older, married women who may have had other financial resources to support themselves other than their own income, returned only half a rapidly.

By the 1970's, 50 percent of women in the teenage mother group who worked during pregnancy had returned to work within 6 months of childbirth, a proportion which has not changed since reaching this level. However, increases in the rapidity of returning to work since the 1970's are noted for the modal mother and delayed childbearer groups who worked during their

Table K.
Model-Based Estimated Percentages of Women Working During First Pregnancy and Working Less than 6 Months After Birth of First Child: Three Illustrative Cases, 1981-65 to 1981-85

Category and child's birth cohort	Percent working less than 6 months after birth		Percent working during pregnancy
	Did not work during pregnancy	Worked during pregnancy	
Teenage mother:			
1981-85 ¹	12.0	50.4	13.0
1976-80	12.4	52.8	16.0
1971-75	15.1	50.1	20.4
1966-70	15.3	40.5	22.4
1961-65	10.8	30.6	17.0
Modal mother:			
1981-85 ¹	14.7	56.3	75.0
1976-80	6.4	35.0	74.9
1971-75	6.4	27.7	65.8
1966-70	7.0	22.1	60.8
1961-65	5.5	17.4	59.3
Delayed childbearer:			
1981-85 ¹	14.8	56.5	87.8
1976-80	8.8	43.2	84.1
1971-75	5.6	25.1	77.1
1966-70	5.4	17.8	69.9
1961-65	4.5	14.7	65.0

¹Period for working after birth refers to 1981-84.
 Note: Characteristics of the three illustrative groups are as follows:
 Teenage mother: Less than 20 at first birth, Black, premarital first birth, and high school dropout.
 Modal mother: 22-24 at first birth, White, married, high school graduate.
 Delayed childbearer: 25+ at first birth, White, married, 1 or more years of college completed.
 Source: Derived from loglinear regressions in tables B-4 and B-14.

pregnancy (second column of figures in table K). About one-quarter of the women in the modal mother and delayed childbearer groups returned within 6 months of childbearing in the 1971–75 period, increasing to 56 percent, for both groups, by 1981–84.

Regardless of economic need, returning to work rapidly after childbirth is becoming the norm among all social groups. But although differences in returning to work had greatly diminished among these three groups by the 1980's, the teenage mother group was still highly unlikely to have worked at all during their first pregnancy, compared with the other two groups of women (third column of figures in table K).

Re-Entry by Former Workers

The previous section showed the importance of work experience during pregnancy in affecting the likelihood of working after first birth. This final section examines how rapidly women return to work within 1 year after their child's birth among those employed during their pregnancy. Separate analyses were done for women returning to work within 6 months and 6 to 11 months after their child's birth.

Among women employed during their pregnancy, the likelihood of returning to work within 6 months of childbirth was greater for teens, Blacks, and high school dropouts (table B-15). Although women with these characteristics are more likely to return to work if employed during their pregnancy, they were initially less likely to have been employed during their pregnancy (table B-4). Pregnant workers with these characteristics, then, may represent a select group of persons with more pressing economic needs, hence their more rapid return to work.

There were no significant associations between early returns and the woman's marital status at birth or whether her last job before pregnancy was full time or part time. However, women who worked during their last trimester of their pregnancy or who were the recipients of maternity benefits,

returned to work more rapidly than their counterparts.

The strong associations found between these two work-related variables and rapid returns to work may be indicative of highly motivated working women or women promised a job after childbirth by their employer. If the latter is the case, maternity benefits are measured not only in immediate monetary benefits given to pregnant workers but also in indirect benefits which reduce time and money involved in searching for a new job. These costs would be incurred by women who either quit their jobs or who were let go from work.

A second regression analysis for women who returned to work 6 to 11 months after their child's birth was performed (table B-16), omitting from the analysis women who had already returned to work within the first 6 months. Very weak associations were found as compared with the previous results. No differences were found in the likelihood of returning to work by race or receipt of maternity benefits. Women working into their last trimester of pregnancy were still more likely to return to work during this second 6 month period after their infant's birth and in this instance so were married women.

Persons 22 to 24 years old and high school graduates, the modal age-education profile of first-time mothers, were also less likely to return in this period as they were in the first 6 months after childbirth. It could be that these women withdrew from the labor force for longer time periods in anticipation of subsequent childbearing. A longitudinal analysis of married women by Jones (1982) for the period 1970 and 1975 suggested that women who intended to have at least one more child (at any given birth-order level) enter the workforce at a slower pace after their most recent birth than women whose last birth marked the completion of their intended family size.

Conclusions

This study has discussed the changes in the employment behavior of women

before and after the birth of their first child and the type of leave arrangements that employed women used during their pregnancy and after childbirth. Today, women have their first child at older ages and have more schooling and labor force experience before their first birth than did their predecessors. Increasing proportions of women are working during pregnancy, rising from 44 percent in 1961–65 to 65 percent in 1981–85. Among women working during pregnancy, the proportion working into their last trimester increased from 52 to 78 percent during this same period.

Even more remarkable in the last 25 years has been the change in the role women play as family providers within the first year of their child's life. In the early 1960's, very few women, only 1 out of every 6, were working before their child's first birthday; now, one-half of women with newborns are working within a year of their child's birth.

The women most likely to work during their first pregnancy are relatively older women, White women, and women who had at least a high school education. But among women who did work during pregnancy, teenagers, Black women, and high school dropouts were most likely to return to work within 6 months of their child's birth. Apparently, women who depend primarily on their own income to support their new family are most likely to return quickly to work, even though they were least likely to have been employed during their pregnancy.

A shift in leave arrangements used by women at the time of their first birth has accompanied this change in the workforce. Between the 1961–65 and 1976–80 periods, women most often quit their jobs during pregnancy: by 1981–85, the situation had reversed as almost one-half of all women received maternity benefits while only 28 percent reported quitting their jobs.

Strongly associated with the receipt of maternity benefits is the rapid return to work after childbirth. Maternity benefits, in addition to providing monetary assistance to a mother-to-be, give assurance to a pregnant

worker that her job will be waiting for her after giving birth. As such, maternity leave indirectly reduces employee time and costs associated with searching for a new job. Maternity leave policies can also benefit employers by reducing potential costs and lost time associated with finding new replacement workers.

Recent media attention has focused on the potential work disruptions experienced by female executives at the time of their first birth.²⁴ Although the SIPP questionnaire did not ask about the occupation of the women during their pregnancy, we can put together a likely demographic profile of a female executive and estimate the proportion returning to work after childbirth.

Demographically, suppose this hypothetical executive had her first child in her late twenties, was White, had a college education, and was married at the time of her birth. Suppose also, that being an executive, she worked full time at her job during her pregnancy, worked into her last trimester, and received maternity benefits from her employer. The current estimated proportion of women with these characteristics who would return to work less than 6 months after

²⁴ See the article by Schwartz (1989) and the follow-up commentaries (Olofson, 1989) this article generated.

Table L.
Total Amount of Time Lost Before and After First Birth Among Women Employed During their First Pregnancy: 1961-65 to 1981-84
(Numbers in thousands)

Time lost	Year of first birth				
	1981-84	1976-80	1971-75	1966-70	1961-65
Number of women	4,237	4,414	3,700	3,435	2,797
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than 3 months	25.0	16.3	11.5	7.2	6.9
3 to 5 months	22.1	18.6	10.1	9.7	6.9
6 to 8 months	11.7	8.4	8.3	7.4	5.6
9 to 11 months	6.7	4.9	4.4	4.8	4.0
12 or more months	34.6	51.8	65.8	70.9	76.6

their child's birth is 70 percent (as estimated from the logistic regression in table B-15 for the most recent period).

The one demographic factor among all of those mentioned that contributes most to this overall estimated proportion is whether or not she had received any maternity benefits during her pregnancy. If no maternity benefits were received, only 44 percent of the women with these characteristics are estimated to return to work within 6 months. A maternity benefit consisting of an offer of job retention after childbirth must be considered to be of primary importance in understanding why some women return to work faster than others.

As a final summary, table L presents the overall changes in the time lost

from work by women employed during their pregnancy. In 1961-65, only 7 percent of pregnant workers reported losing less than 3 months from their job either during their pregnancy or after birth, while 77 percent lost at least 12 months time from work. By 1981-84, one-fourth of all pregnant workers lost less than 3 months while the proportion losing 12 or more months declined to 35 percent.

This transition in employment patterns, accomplished by both working longer into the pregnancy and returning more rapidly after childbirth undoubtedly reflects changes in attitudes and needs by the mother, her family, and her employer. Time lost from work because of childbearing is being reduced from a career halting event to a relatively short-term interruption in the course of a woman's working life.

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