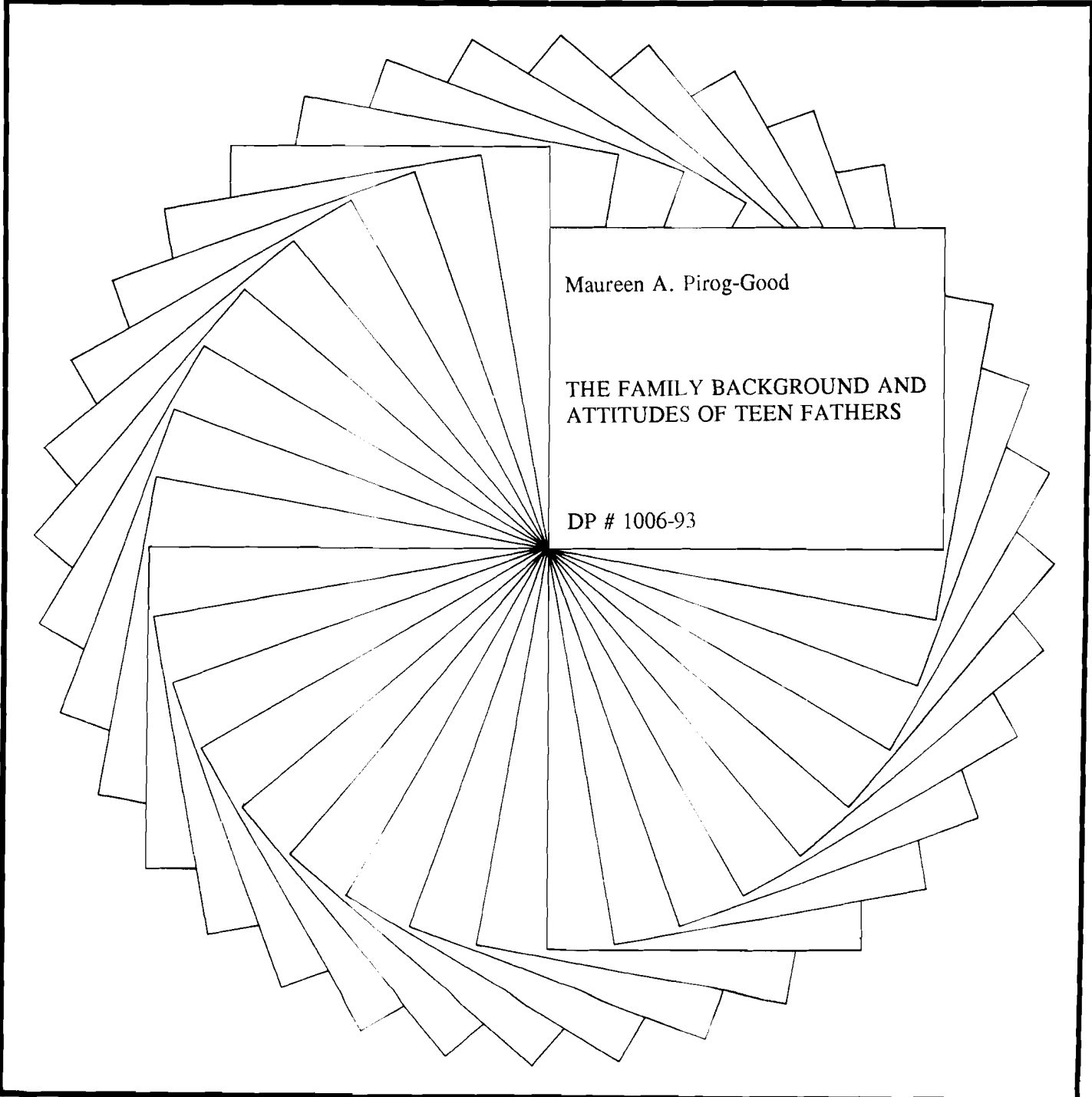


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Discussion Papers



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THE FAMILY BACKGROUND AND
ATTITUDES OF TEEN FATHERS

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The Family Background and Attitudes of Teen Fathers

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Abstract

The author examines the family background and attitudes of teenage fathers. She finds that a greater percentage of teen fathers than of teenagers who are not fathers come from poor and unstable households whose members are less educated; moreover, the fathers of teenage dads are less likely to hold professional positions and are more likely to be blue-collar workers than are the fathers of other teenage males. Also, teenage fathers have lower self-esteem, and a greater percentage of them believe that fate--and not they themselves--controls their lives. Generally speaking, for whites, being a teenage father is associated with having a low self-esteem, an external locus of control, and conservative sex-role attitudes, whereas for blacks, it is not. Data are from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experiences--Youth Cohort.

The Family Background and Attitudes of Teen Fathers

This article examines the family background and attitudes of adolescent fathers. Relatively little is known about teen fathers, as most research on adolescent parenting has focused on mothers and their children, with good reason. The United States has a higher rate of teen pregnancy than any other industrialized country (Jones et al., 1985); in 1990 alone there were 533,483 births to women under the age of twenty (NCHS, 1993). Further, despite some controversy over the consequences of early parenting (Geronimus & Korenman, 1991), consensus continues to grow indicating that young mothers and their children suffer adverse outcomes that are varied and substantial (Miller & Moore, 1990; Hofferth & Hayes, 1987; Waite & Moore, 1978; Teti & Lamb, 1989; McAnarney & Hendee, 1989). Moreover, the public costs of adolescent parenting are increasing, having already been \$19.83 billion in 1988 (Stone & Waszak, 1989; Burt & Levy, 1987). In that same year, over 50 percent of all Aid to Families with Dependent Children expenditures went to families in which the mothers were adolescents when their first child was born (Stone & Waszak, 1989). Because of the high personal and social costs of teen parenting, the antecedents, consequences, and factors associated with adolescent motherhood have been widely researched.

In contrast, young fathers have seldom been the target of research. Our understanding of this population is not as broad or deep as that of young mothers. Currently, there are only eight published studies of young fathers that use nationally representative data. Two of them (Russ-Eft et al., 1979; Card & Wise, 1978) used Project TALENT data representative of fifteen-year-olds in 1960 to examine the antecedents and consequences of teenage paternity. Their results may be out of date, however, because significant social changes have occurred since 1960 with respect to adolescent sexuality and parenting. A recent study (Hanson et al., 1989) used a nationally representative sample of high school sophomores in 1980 from the High School and Beyond (HSB) Survey to examine selected characteristics of adolescent fathers, including their family backgrounds.

Five studies utilized various years of the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experiences–Youth Cohort (NLSY), which contains a nationally representative sample of 6,403 young men, of whom over 650 can be identified as adolescent fathers. However, three of these studies concentrated on other issues, such as behavioral problems of young fathers (Elster et al., 1987) or the educational and marital outcomes and initial living arrangements of adolescent fathers with their children (Marsiglio, 1986, 1987). While the remaining two NLSY studies (Lerman, 1986; Michael & Tuma, 1985) discussed the family backgrounds of young fathers, both grouped teenage fathers together with young men who became fathers in their early to mid-twenties. Further, the Lerman study focused exclusively on young men who did not reside with their children.

The current study expands the earlier work on adolescent fathers in four key respects. First, unlike the Project TALENT and HSB samples, the NLSY data used by this author does not focus exclusively on an in-school population. This difference is potentially important, given that adolescent fathers disproportionately drop out of high school (Marsiglio, 1986, 1987; Pirog-Good, 1992) and hence may not be accurately captured in samples of students only. Second, unlike the other NLSY studies that have discussed the family backgrounds of young fathers have (Lerman, 1986; Michael & Tuma, 1985), the present analysis examines teenagers only, among whom fathering a child is more selective than among men in their early twenties. Third, this study used more detailed information on the home lives of young men than that provided by the single existing study of the family backgrounds of teen fathers (Hanson et al., 1989). Previous studies have used measures of household composition at a point in time. In contrast, the NLSY has data to permit construction of variables reflecting household composition for the first eighteen years of a respondent's life. Fourth, because of the relatively large number of observations on adolescent fathers available in the NLSY, race-specific attitudinal and family background differences for adolescent fathers and other young men are

provided. The results of the analyses find important differences for whites, blacks, and males of other races.

FAMILY BACKGROUND AND ATTITUDES OF ADOLESCENT FATHERS: WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Family Background

The literature on the intergenerational transmission of attitudes and behaviors suggests that household structure and changes in this structure may be key determinants of the behavior and attitudes of children in adolescence and early adulthood (Michael & Tuma, 1985; Anderton et al., 1987; McBroom et al., 1985; Thornton, 1991; Benson et al., 1992). What can be gleaned from the limited literature on the backgrounds of adolescent fathers suggests that they are more likely to come from disrupted and disadvantaged backgrounds. There has been a series of studies which have touched briefly on the topic of the family backgrounds of adolescent or young fathers but which used small and nonrepresentative samples of fathers. For example, the first of these studies (Pauker, 1971) used data on personalities of 5,701 ninth-grade boys in Minnesota in 1954, of whom 94 later reported fathering a child out of wedlock. Of these 94 boys, 7 percent were from broken homes, a percentage three times higher than that of a control group matched on school, age, and socioeconomic status based on the father's occupation. Russ-Eft et al. (1979), in addition to their analysis of the Project TALENT data, conducted a case history analysis of twenty-eight adolescent fathers. They found that nine of the fathers had some stressful situation in their family such as separation or divorce of parents, abandonment by one of the parents, or chronic ailments affecting one or both of the parents. Fry and Trifiletti (1983) identified ninety-five adolescent fathers whose partners were attending prenatal or abortion counseling clinics. They found that 59 percent of the adolescent fathers came from mother-absent or father-absent households, or from families with a stepparent. Rivara et al.

(1985) studied one hundred black teen fathers from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, who were identified by mothers attending the University of Tennessee Center for Health Sciences Prenatal Clinic. Compared to controls, the teen fathers were more likely to have mothers who were teenage parents (77 percent v. 53 percent). The authors concluded that teenage fathers came from an environment in which teenage pregnancy was common, accepted, and believed to only minimally disrupt their lives.

Studies based on large samples of students appear to echo the findings of the smaller studies. Using the HSB data, Card and Wise (1978) found that at age fifteen, boys who later became adolescent fathers already had lower educational expectations and came from households with lower socioeconomic status. Hanson et al. (1989) found that teen fathers more likely to be black, live in the South, live in a single-parent household, have a mother with fewer years of education, and come from low-income families. Robbins et al. (1985) studied 2,158 young adults first interviewed as seventh graders. Among males, having a pregnant girlfriend was associated with low parental socioeconomic status.

The studies using the NLSY have focused primarily on topics other than the backgrounds of teen fathers and/or have included males who had become parents by their mid-twenties. Nevertheless, these studies have reinforced the notion that teen fathers are more likely to come from low-income and disrupted households. For example, Elster et al. (1987) found that adolescent fathers were less likely to have lived in an intact household at age fourteen. Lerman (1986) studied absent fathers up through age twenty-five and found that young absent fathers were more likely than other young men to come from families on welfare. Michael and Tuma (1985) found that family background variables were only significant in determining the fertility outcomes of white males but not of black or Hispanic men.

Attitudes

Because of limited research on adolescent fathers, little is currently known about the attitudes of this population. Consequently, this article provides a description of three key attitudinal measures of teen fathers: self-esteem, locus of control, and sex-role attitudes. Previous research has found that self-esteem is correlated with juvenile delinquency, academic performance, and psychological depression (Rosenberg et al., 1989), as well as with adolescents' concerns about health, school, and family problems (Harper & Marshall, 1991). Additionally, among adolescents, low self-esteem and an external locus of control are associated with higher levels of alcohol abuse, drug use, delinquency, depression, low perceived access to occupational opportunities, and higher levels of social estrangement (Downs & Rose, 1991).

Little is understood about the self-esteem and locus of control of adolescent fathers and how these measures change after the birth of a child. In a prospective study of Houston students who eventually became teen fathers, self-esteem as well as feelings of powerlessness were unrelated to the eventual status of the subjects as adolescent dads (Robbins et al., 1985). However, other prospective studies have found attitudinal differences to exist between teen fathers and their peers. Lower educational expectations (Card & Wise, 1978; Hanson et al., 1989), a more external locus of control, a lesser attachment to the importance of working, and greater acceptance of nonmarital childbearing have been reported among men who eventually became adolescent fathers (Hanson et al., 1989).

Among retrospective studies of adolescent fathers, the findings on locus-of-control measures have been mixed. Some have found an external locus of control among adolescent fathers (Hendricks, 1981; Hendricks & Fullilove, 1983; Hendricks & Montgomery, 1984), whereas others have rejected the fate orientation which implies an externalization of responsibility (Hendricks, 1980;

Robinson et al., 1983). These studies have relied, however, on small, nonrepresentative, and largely black samples.

While the sex-role attitudes of adolescent fathers have not been discussed in the literature, conformity to the stereotypical masculine role has been found to be predictive of delinquent behavior (Horwitz & White, 1987). Other attitudes, not discussed in this article, have been touched on in the literature on adolescent fathers. One small, retrospective study found that adolescent dads had greater feelings of anxiety, rejection, guilt, and self-blame than did adolescent men who were not fathers (Fry & Trifiletti, 1983).

DATA AND METHODS

This study is based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experiences–Youth Cohort (NLSY), a panel of 6,403 males ages fourteen to twenty-one in 1979. At the time the analyses for this article were conducted, ten years of data were available, 1979–1988. Approximately 93 percent of the survey participants were interviewed in each survey year. Further, because the NLSY oversampled blacks, Hispanics, and poor whites, the data contain a larger absolute number of teen fathers than would be found in a representative national survey. There are over 650 observations on young men who became fathers prior to the age of twenty. Because of the oversampling of some demographic groups and survey attrition over the years of the panel, weights are provided for each survey year so that nationally representative estimates can be generated.

While the NLSY data are limited, they are arguably the best existing data on teen fathers (Sonenstein, 1986; Card, 1986). The NLSY surveys were conducted by well-trained interviewers. There is a wealth of information on respondents, with over 28,000 variables contained in the 1979–1988 surveys. While the emphasis of the surveys was labor market experiences, substantial fertility data are available. However, as with other data focused on male fertility, the reliability of

these data has been called into question; Mott (1983), for instance, found unresolved discrepancies in 28 percent of the birth records of male respondents as of the 1981 survey. The most common discrepancy was the report of a birth in a later survey year that had occurred prior to an earlier survey but had been unreported. The possibility that some fathers may not have been immediately aware of their children's births or were initially unwilling to admit their paternity could account for these discrepancies. Given that there are at least four years in which to capture late reports of births to teens, this problem should be minimized by using the full fertility histories available in the NLSY. However, a later analysis of the male fertility data (Mott, 1985) estimated that the underreporting of live births in this population was perhaps as high as 12 percent. Consequently, the NLSY data are likely to be biased in favor of fathers whose involvement with their children is above average, given that they are willing to admit their paternity at least once. Further, given that some teen fathers are probably misclassified as young men who delayed parenting until age twenty or later, the differences between teen fathers and men who parent later in life will be underestimated.

The analyses presented below primarily include descriptive, statistical methods such as frequencies, means, cross-tabulations, and t-tests. Because the NLSY data are weighted to reflect the nation as a whole, the number of observations in national tables are quite large, approximately sixteen million, and almost any statistical tests based on this number of observations would be significant. Therefore, all statistical tests using weighted data were modified. They are based on the actual number of observations in the table (maximum 6,403) while maintaining the distribution given by the weighted data. Furthermore, family background, normal maturational processes, and whether or not the respondent had already become a teen father may well have shaped responses to questions about attitudes. Consequently, in addition to the descriptive statistics, OLS regressions predicting locus of control, self-esteem, and sex-role attitudes are also provided. Despite the obvious nonnormality of the error term, I relied on the asymptotic properties of OLS for the distributions used in testing the

hypotheses. Regressors in these models include the respondent's age at the time of the interview, family background characteristics, and two teen father variables.

Finally, it is important to reiterate that attitudes are treated as dependent rather than independent variables. Attitudes are not static but rather shape our lives and change in response to events in our lives. Thus, it is possible to argue that differences in the attitudes of young men make them more or less inclined to become adolescent fathers and that becoming a teen father causes attitudes to change. To examine both possibilities, whether or not a young man had become a teen father by the date an attitude is measured is included as an independent variable in all regression models. Significance of this variable would suggest that becoming a teen father causes self-esteem to increase or decrease, locus of control to become internal or external, and sex role attitudes to become conservative or liberal. In addition, whether or not a young man becomes a teen father after the respective survey date is also included in most regression models. This variable is intended to capture the unobserved and unmeasured characteristics of young men who will eventually become teen fathers. Significance of this variable would imply that the unmeasured characteristics of prospective teen fathers make them differ from their peers on sex role attitudes, locus of control, and self-esteem even prior to a first teen birth. This variable is not intended to suggest that becoming a teen father, which may occur as late as five years after the measurement of these attitudes, *causes* attitudes to change.

RESULTS

Overall, teen fathers appear to depart in many respects from young men who do not become fathers in their teen years. According to the NLSY data I examined, young fathers come from all racial backgrounds: among those who were age fourteen to twenty-one in 1979, 65 percent (or 791,000) were white; 29.9 percent (or 361,000) were black; and 4.9 percent (or 55,000) were

Hispanic or of other races. While the majority of teen fathers were white, they were significantly overrepresented in the black and other nonwhite racial categories. Teen fathers were 15.0 years old, on average, at their first intercourse, 1.4 years younger than young men who delayed parenting until age twenty or later. The age of teen fathers at first sexual intercourse was significantly different from that of young men who postponed paternity, across all racial categories. However, black teen fathers engaged in intercourse the earliest, at age 13.6, while teen fathers of white and other races experienced a first intercourse at ages 15.6 and 15.3, respectively.

Family Background

A variety of family background variables were examined and the results are displayed in Tables 1 and 2. As anticipated, none of the results concerning teen fathers are encouraging. The first variables examined were the years of education completed by the parents of teen fathers. Except for the fathers of black adolescent dads, the parents of teen dads completed significantly fewer years of education than did the parents of men who deferred parenting. Perhaps the better-educated parents of the latter made a greater effort to influence the circumstances under which their sons formed families. Moreover, those parents were likely to be able to afford more alternatives to adolescent parenting, such as college, thereby reducing the attractiveness of early parenting. Information and availability of contraception may have also been greater among the children of well-educated parents (Kantner & Zelnik, 1972).

The fathers of teen dads were less likely to hold professional positions and were more likely to be employed as laborers, a fact which probably reflected their lower level of education. However, this pattern differed across races. Among whites, the fathers of teen dads were less likely to hold professional positions and were more likely to work as craftsmen or laborers. Among blacks, the fathers of teen dads were less likely to hold clerical positions or to work as farmers. There were no significant differences in occupational categories for fathers of teen dads of other races.

TABLE 1

Family Characteristics of Teenage Males, by Race

	All		Whites		Blacks		Other	
	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers
Mother's education, 1979	10.548**** (595)	11.746**** (5339)	10.720**** (318)	11.920**** (3821)	10.740* (228)	11.090* (1206)	6.750*** (45)	8.940*** (285)
Father's education, 1979	10.408**** (530)	12.014**** (4964)	10.630**** (303)	16.270**** (3675)	10.320 (181)	10.470 (1003)	7.530*** (42)	9.680*** (261)
Father's occupation, 1979								
Professional	.093****	.246****	.119****	.279****	.040	.048	.069	.136
Sales	.027	.045	.038	.052	.005	.005	.016	.023
Clerical	.018*	.035*	.023	.037	.010*	.028*	.000	.030
Crafts	.231*	.188*	.288****	.197****	.115	.132	.190	.123
Army	.024	.019	.018	.018	.031	.019	.022	.052
Laborer	.245****	.164****	.245****	.154****	.266	.228	.133	.146
Farming	.024	.035	.027	.035	.007*	.025*	.074	.100
Service	.038 (671)	.047 (5732)	.037 (356)	.045 (4037)	.036 (261)	.055 (1349)	.079 (50)	.094 (315)
Number of siblings, 1979	4.150**** (671)	3.234**** (5723)	3.719**** (356)	3.011**** (4033)	4.893** (261)	4.475** (1344)	5.340* (50)	4.470* (315)
Number of older siblings, 1979	2.295**** (628)	1.937**** (5402)	2.080** (327)	1.830** (3792)	2.711 (249)	2.611 (1275)	2.381 (48)	2.324 (304)
Age of oldest sibling, 1979	24.332**** (492)	25.081**** (4199)	25.196** (252)	24.194** (2878)	24.990 (202)	25.015 (1056)	24.130 (34)	24.934 (244)

(table continues)

TABLE 1, continued

	All		Whites		Blacks		Other	
	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers
Highest grade completed by oldest sibling, 1979	11.648**** (483)	12.467**** (4149)	11.650**** (249)	12.560**** (2849)	11.770** (199)	12.008** (1040)	10.590* (31)	11.632* (240)
Household below poverty threshold, 1979	25.2**** (587)	12.2**** (5155)	.186**** (315)	.086**** (3665)	.384 (229)	.347 (1203)	.331 (39)	.224 (265)
Household below poverty threshold, 1987	19.0**** (442)	9.0**** (3676)	.160**** (239)	.074**** (2652)	.258* (166)	.200* (834)	.241* (35)	.110* (173)
Any household member receive magazines at age 14	48.1**** (668)	67.9**** (5684)	.539**** (356)	.724**** (4004)	.382 (259)	.434 (1339)	.275** (49)	.447** (313)
Household receive newspaper at age 14	74.8**** (670)	84.8**** (5712)	.799**** (356)	.881**** (4026)	.675 (260)	.690 (1341)	.547 (50)	.602 (314)
Any household member have a library card at age 14	60.5**** (670)	74.7**** (5709)	.589**** (356)	.766**** (4024)	.656 (261)	.645 (1341)	.463** (49)	.632** (313)
Residence in the South, 1979	.390**** (621)	.302**** (5226)	.319** (325)	.260** (3717)	.563 (255)	.601 (1299)	.186 (37)	.202 (180)

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experiences-Youth Cohort.

Significance levels: **** = $p < .001$, *** = $p < .01$, ** = $p < .05$, * = $p < .10$.

TABLE 2
Living Arrangements of Teenage Males Prior to Age 18, in 1988, by Race

	All		Whites		Blacks		Other	
	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers
Lived with both biological parents	.454**** (562)	.683**** (4591)	.469**** (283)	.713**** (3194)	.417**** (234)	.514**** (1138)	.532 (42)	.591 (236)
Ever live with stepparents	.211**** (557)	.106**** (4576)	.242**** (279)	.103**** (3183)	.162 (233)	.123 (1134)	.148 (42)	.140 (236)
Ever live with adoptive parents	.024 (555)	.021 (4571)	.028 (278)	.027 (3179)	.007 (232)	.014 (1134)	.023 (42)	.007 (235)
Was there any time R was not living with biological, step, or adoptive parent	.305**** (557)	.119**** (4569)	.319**** (281)	.107**** (3176)	.273**** (231)	.172**** (1136)	.329 (42)	.237 (235)
Age R stopped living with a parent - 1st time	13.64**** (535)	15.32**** (4453)	13.923**** (276)	15.661**** (3142)	12.920 (214)	13.154 (1058)	14.640 (42)	14.281 (232)
Ever live with a foster parent	.010 (558)	.006 (4564)	.008 (282)	.005 (3185)	.010 (231)	.010 (1120)	.031 (42)	.021 (236)
Ever live in a children's home, group care home, detention center, or other institution	.025**** (559)	.005**** (4566)	.029**** (282)	.005**** (3185)	.014** (232)	.003** (1122)	.031 (42)	.018 (236)
Number of times R stopped living with parents	1.57*** (309)	1.40*** (1698)	1.793**** (156)	1.443**** (1024)	1.174 (132)	1.161 (566)	1.580 (19)	1.560 (100)

(table continues)

TABLE 2, continued

	All		Whites		Blacks		Other	
	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers
<i>For those who did not live with parents until age 18, the percentage whose living arrangements changed prior to age 18 because of:</i>								
Parent's death	.213 (278)	.233 (1552)	.210 (148)	.227 (965)	.215 (110)	.246 (487)	.276 (18)	.325 (94)
Parent's illness	.013 (278)	.004 (1552)	.019* (148)	.005* (965)	.006 (110)	.003 (487)	.000 (18)	.000 (94)
Parents unable to care for R	.046 (281)	.032 (1556)	.047 (149)	.032 (968)	.037 (111)	.038 (487)	.121 (19)	.042 (95)
Agency/court took R away because of neglect or abuse	.010 (278)	.007 (1552)	.007 (148)	.006 (965)	.010 (110)	.011 (487)	.000 (18)	.008 (94)
R got in trouble and was taken away from parent	.018 (278)	.008 (1552)	.024 (148)	.009 (965)	.009 (110)	.003 (487)	.000 (18)	.026 (94)
R ran away from house	.008 (278)	.017 (1552)	.009 (148)	.017 (965)	.009 (110)	.003 (487)	.000 (18)	.096 (94)
Left to get married	.066**** (278)	.002**** (1552)	.010**** (148)	.002**** (965)	.000 (110)	.003 (487)	.102*** (18)	.007*** (94)

(table continues)

TABLE 2, continued

	All		Whites		Blacks		Other	
	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers
Left to go to college	.000 (278)	.013 (1552)	.000**** (148)	.015**** (965)	.000 (110)	.006 (487)	.000 (18)	.020 (94)
Left to get a job or enter the military	.076 (278)	.042 (1552)	.085* (148)	.040* (965)	.059 (110)	.040 (487)	.062 (18)	.047 (94)
Left to be on own	.211**** (278)	.108**** (1552)	.236**** (148)	.118**** (965)	.154*** (110)	.064*** (487)	.289** (18)	.080** (94)

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experiences-Youth Cohort.

Significance levels: **** = $p < .001$, *** = $p < .01$, ** = $p < .05$, * = $p < .10$.

R = respondent (i.e., teenage male).

Teen fathers of all races came from households with more siblings, 4.1 versus 3.2. Thus, because they were raised in larger households, it may be that the teen fathers desired larger families and hence became parents at earlier ages. Direct evidence on this subject is mixed. In 1979, the NLSY respondents were asked the number of children they thought were ideal and the number of children they desired. The responses of the young men who became parents prior to age twenty did not differ from the responses of their peers. However, both questions were repeated in the 1982 survey, at which time teen fathers desired more children (2.58 versus 2.36, $p < .001$) and felt that more children were ideal. Thus, attitudes regarding the number of children desired and considered ideal probably diverge from the rest of the adolescent male population after becoming a parent. That is, differences in these attitudes are most likely not caused by early births, but rather becoming a teen father may cause changes in attitudes about family size.

Regarding siblings, more older siblings were found in the households of whites (2.08 versus 1.83). Overall, the eldest siblings of teen dads were either the same age or older than the eldest siblings of young men who were not teen dads. However, the eldest siblings of teen dads completed less education than the eldest siblings of young men who delayed parenting, irrespective of race. Hence, the parents and siblings of adolescent fathers were less well educated than those of young men who became parents at or after age twenty.

In 1979 and 1987, teen fathers were approximately twice as likely to live in households below the poverty threshold. This result was most pronounced for whites and teen fathers of other races. White teen fathers were also more likely to live in the South than were white teens who were not fathers (nearly one-third of white teen dads resided in the South). There was no geographical clustering of teen fathers among blacks or other races.

Another indicator of the quality of the home lives of teen fathers was their access to cultural capital (i.e., newspapers, magazines, availability of a library card). The availability of books and

magazines is an indicator of children's exposure to the wider world and predicts greater schooling (Moore et al., 1978). Others have considered the accessibility of reading materials in the home to be a measure of the income devoted to developing human capital (Krein & Beller, 1988). In the NLSY data, a smaller percentage of the teen-father households received magazines or newspapers, or had a householder who possessed a library card. This result held for all three forms of cultural capital for whites. Teen fathers of other races were less likely to have access to magazines or a library card. No significant differences were found for blacks.

Family instability appeared to have been much more prevalent among the teen-father population. As shown in Table 2, only 45.4 percent of teen fathers lived with both parents until age eighteen, in contrast to 68.3 percent of other young men. This result is by far the most pronounced among whites, where 46.9 percent lived with both parents until age eighteen, compared to 71.3 percent of white males who delayed parenting. A smaller but significant difference existed among blacks, whereas no differences were found for males of other races. White teen dads were also more likely to have lived with stepparents. White and black teen dads were more likely to have lived in a children's home, group care home, detention center, or other institution.

White teen fathers were roughly three times more likely to have stopped living with a biological, step, or adoptive parent prior to age eighteen. Among blacks, adolescent fathers were approximately 60 percent more likely to have stopped living with a biological, step, or adoptive parent prior to age eighteen. When they left these households for the first time, white teen dads left at the age of 13.9. While the difference between black teen fathers and nonfathers was not significant, blacks leaving biological, step, or adoptive households also left at very young ages, 12.9 versus 13.1 years of age.

White teen fathers exited and reentered their family households more often than young white men who delayed parenting. This was not true of teen fathers of black or other races. Whites were

more likely to leave their family households because a parent became ill, because they got married or got a job or entered the military, or because they went to live on their own. White teen fathers were less likely than other white males to leave their family households to go to college. Among blacks, teen fathers were more than twice as likely as black men who delayed parenting to leave to be on their own. Teen fathers of other races were more likely to leave to get married or to live on their own.

Attitudes

The results of the descriptive statistics of the attitudinal scales are given in Table 3, while the regression results for white and black respondents are displayed in Tables 4 and 5. The Rotter locus-of-control scale is a four-item scale measured in the 1979 survey which ranges between $-.75$ for least in control and $.75$ for most in control. The scale attempts to measure to extent to which respondents maintain a fate orientation versus a belief that they control their own destiny. As noted earlier, the evidence on the locus of control of young fathers is mixed. Bivariate analyses of the NLSY data support a more external fate orientation among teen fathers of all races (Table 3). Further, irrespective of whether locus of control was measured before or after the youth had become a teen father, all teen fathers and males who eventually became teen fathers had a more external fate orientation in 1979 than did men who delayed parenting until age twenty or later (not shown in table). Moreover, the locus-of-control scores were virtually identical for males who had already become teen fathers and males who would eventually become teen fathers ($.094$ and $.103$, respectively [result not reported in Table 3]).

Standardized regression coefficients and tests of significance in the locus-of-control models for whites and blacks are presented in columns one and two of Table 4. These regressions controlled for selected family background characteristics as well as for the age of the respondent at the time of the interview. Family characteristics included in the regressions were the number of years of schooling

TABLE 3

Attitudes of Teenage Males, by Race

	All		Whites		Blacks		Other	
	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers	Teen Fathers	Not Teen Fathers
Rotter scale: locus of control, 1979	.095**** (663)	.201**** (5627)	.109**** (353)	.214**** (3961)	.081* (256)	.135* (1325)	-.027* (50)	.085* (310)
Self-esteem, 1980	.428**** (624)	.479**** (5400)	.412**** (333)	.485**** (3812)	.467 (243)	.462 (1277)	.338 (44)	.392 (285)
Self-esteem, 1987	.465**** (552)	.531**** (4556)	.441**** (276)	.536**** (3183)	.512 (231)	.506 (1121)	.448 (41)	.496 (228)
Sex-role beliefs, 1979	.030**** (663)	.093**** (5627)	.003**** (353)	.089**** (3961)	.086** (256)	.139** (1325)	.049 (50)	.034 (310)
Sex-role beliefs, 1982	.038**** (640)	.160**** (5437)	.013**** (337)	.162**** (3838)	.097*** (249)	.165*** (1282)	.091** (50)	-.025** (288)
Sex-role beliefs, 1987	.144 (552)	.175 (4556)	.122* (276)	.174* (3183)	.203 (231)	.208 (1121)	.084 (41)	.070 (228)

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experiences-Youth Cohort.

Notes:

All scales range from -.75 to .75. For the Rotter scale -.75 = least in control, while .75 = most in control.

The self-esteem scale is set such that -.75 = very low self-esteem, while .75 = very high self-esteem.

Sex-role attitudes are measured such that -.75 = very conservative, while .75 = very liberal.

Significance levels: **** = $p < .001$, *** = $p < .01$, ** = $p < .05$, * = $p < .10$.

TABLE 4

Locus of Control and Self-Esteem of Teenage Males, by Race

	Locus of Control		Self-Esteem			
	Whites	Blacks	Whites 1980	Blacks 1980	Whites 1987	Blacks 1987
T_DAD	-.036**	-.005	-.008	.006	-.049***	-.007
T_DAD_AFTER	.002	-.040	-.039**	.006		
MOM_ED	.053**	.009	.095****	.091***	.042	.095**
DAD_ED	.127****	.112***	.100****	.086**	.126****	.042
SIBS	-.024	-.096***	-.030*	-.050	-.058***	-.053****
POVERTY	-.013	-.054***	-.043***	-.031	-.098****	-.169
BOTH@14	.005	.025	-.024	.003		
BOTH_B-18					.015	-.007
SOUTH	-.004	-.022	-.008	-.077***	-.017	-.081**
AGE	.171****	.069**	.155****	.119****	.008	-.007
Prob. > F	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0001
Adj. R ²	.064	.039	.073	.052	.056	.054
N	3532	1032	3475	1036	2448	696

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experiences-Youth Cohort.

Notes:

For the locus-of-control Rotter scale $-.75$ = least in control, while $.75$ = most in control.

The self-esteem scale is set such that $-.75$ = very low self-esteem, while $.75$ = very high self esteem.

Significance levels: **** = $p < .001$, *** = $p < .01$, ** = $p < .05$, * = $p < .10$.

TABLE 5

Sex-Role Attitudes of Teenage Males, by Race

	Whites 1979	Blacks 1979	Whites 1982	Blacks 1982	Whites 1987	Blacks 1987
T_DAD	-.023	-.038	-.052***	-.002	-.038*	.014
T_DAD_AFTER	-.022	-.069**	-.003	-.064**		
MOM_ED	.066***	.096***	.066***	.075**	.013	.093**
DAD_ED	.070***	.029	.043*	.028	.052*	.043
SIBS	-.049***	-.028	-.026	-.022	-.040*	-.006
POVERTY	-.047***	-.093***	-.051***	-.071**	-.067****	-.109***
BOTH@14	-.030*	-.002	.016	.005		
BOTH_B-18					.021	-.037
SOUTH	-.033**	-.036	-.049***	-.052	-.014	-.008
AGE	.066****	.058*	.075****	.031	-.058***	-.070*
MOM_WORK	.127****	.042	.084****	.105***	.041**	-.020
Prob. > F	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0056
Adj. R ²	.058	.042	.041	.038	.019	.021
N	3488	1021	3332	954	2364	668

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experiences-Youth Cohort.

Notes: Sex role attitudes are measured such that -.75 = very conservative, while .75 = very liberal.

Significance levels: **** = $p < .001$, *** = $p < .01$, ** = $p < .05$, * = $p < .10$.

completed by the respondent's mother and father in 1979 (MOM_ED and DAD_ED), the number of siblings as of 1979 (SIBS), whether or not the youth lived in the South or in an impoverished household in 1979 (SOUTH and POVERTY), and whether or not the youth lived with both parents at age fourteen (BOTH@14). Because the youngest NLSY respondents were age fourteen in 1979, "living with both parents at age 14" was the measure of family composition used in the regressions. The more comprehensive measure, "whether or not the youth lived with both parents from birth till age 18," would be inappropriate here, since many of the respondents had not turned age eighteen as of 1979. Two teen father variables were also included: T_DAD indicates whether or not the respondent had become a teen father by the 1979 interview, and T_DAD_AFTER indicates whether or not the respondent became a teen father after the 1979 interview. The inclusion of the latter variable is not intended to suggest that becoming a teen father after 1979 caused attitudinal differences in 1979. Rather, this variable is included to capture the unobserved characteristics of young men who eventually became teen fathers. It is these characteristics which are not directly observed that may lead to changes in attitudes.

Having become a teen father prior to the measurement of locus of control in 1979 resulted in a more external locus of control for whites but not blacks. Hence while black and white teen fathers both appeared to possess a more external locus of control in the bivariate analyses, these results no longer held for blacks after controlling for age and family background. The unobserved characteristics of young men who eventually became teen fathers had no discernable effect on locus of control. Factors which appeared to result in a more internal locus of control for both blacks and whites included being older and having a more highly educated father. Given that the sample ranged in age from fourteen to twenty-one in 1979, the extent to which respondents were subject to the direction of parents and teachers was likely to vary substantially, and consequently, it is reasonable to believe that older youths may well have had more discretion and control over their lives. Further,

more highly educated fathers may have had greater discretion in their careers, which was conveyed to their sons, and may have been better able to afford educational and enriching activities that imparted a sense of control to their children. For whites, a more highly educated mother was also associated with a more internal locus of control. For blacks only, living in an impoverished household and living with more siblings resulted in a more external locus of control. To the extent that these variables represented the financial constraints of the household and the time constraints of parents, it makes sense that they were inversely related to feelings of being in control of one's destiny.

Self-esteem was measured for survey respondents in 1980 and 1987 on a ten-item Likert scale; respondents were asked to strongly or somewhat agree or disagree with statements such as "I am a person of worth." The ten items were averaged and scaled such that $-.75$ represents very low self-esteem and $.75$ represents the highest self-esteem. As shown in Table 3, in both 1980 and 1987, teen fathers performed slightly worse on the self-esteem scales than did young men who deferred fathering children. Interestingly, in 1980, when some young men had not yet become teen fathers, the lowest self-esteem scores were found among males who were currently childless but who eventually became teen fathers. In comparison to this group, young men who had already become teen fathers had significantly higher esteem ($.384$ versus $.461$, $p < .001$ [result not reported in Table 3]). This finding is consistent with the suggestion of others that disadvantaged youths may use adolescent parenting as a step toward higher self-value and future achievement (McAnarney, 1985; Stiffman and Morse, 1986; Stiffman et al., 1987). When race-specific estimates were examined, however, the lower self-esteem of teen fathers held solely for whites. The self-esteem measures of blacks and other teen fathers did not depart significantly from that of their nonfather peers (Table 3).

Regression results concerning self-esteem are given in columns three through six in Table 4. Regressors in these models included `MOM_ED`, `DAD_ED`, `SIBS`, and `BOTH@14`, as described above. The educational and sibling variables were only measured once in 1979 in the NLSY, and the

variable for living arrangements at age 14 was time invariant. The variables POVERTY, SOUTH, T_DAD, and AGE were measured at the 1980 or 1987 interview dates depending on whether the dependent variable, self-esteem, was measured in 1980 or 1987. T_DAD_AFTER indicates whether or not the respondent became a teen father after 1980; a comparable variable was not included in the 1987 regressions, as all respondents were older than age nineteen in 1987 and, consequently, no one became a teen father after that date. BOTH_B-18 was used instead of BOTH@14 in the 1987 regressions and indicates whether or not the respondent lived with both biological parents from birth to age eighteen. This is a more comprehensive measure than BOTH@14 and is more appropriate in the 1987 regressions, as all respondents were at least twenty-two years of age in 1987.

The regression results for self-esteem were somewhat mixed. After controlling for family background and the age of the respondent at the time of the interviews, self-esteem was diminished by having become a teen father only for whites in 1987. In 1980, young white men who would eventually become teen fathers *after* 1980 had lower self-esteem. This does not suggest that becoming a parent up to three years after the measurement of self-esteem *caused* self-esteem in 1980 to be diminished. Rather, unmeasured characteristics of young white men who had not yet become teen fathers but who would eventually become teen fathers resulted in lower self-esteem. Again, this lends support to the notion that as a consequence of becoming a teen father, the self-esteem of white males may increase to the level of white males who delay parenting. Consistent with the bivariate results, the self-esteem of black males did not appear to be affected by teen fatherhood.

Having better-educated parents generally promoted higher self-esteem among whites and blacks. Again such parents may have had greater personal and financial resources such that the young men could have participated in more activities which enhanced self-esteem. While older youths reported higher self-esteem in 1980, the age of respondents was not a significant determinant of self-esteem seven years later. It is possible that there was more age-specific variation in self-esteem

among males between the ages of fifteen and twenty-two than between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-nine. Having more siblings was negatively related to self-esteem for all respondents in 1987 and for whites in 1980. Living in an impoverished household adversely affected the self-esteem of whites but not blacks in 1980 and 1987. On the other hand, living in the South was associated with lower self-esteem on the part of blacks but not whites in both years.

Sex-role beliefs were measured in 1979, 1982, and 1987. The sex-role-beliefs scale measured the extent to which respondents adhered to traditional roles concerning men and women, especially the role of women in the workplace. It is an eight-item Likert scale in which respondents were asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with statements such as "A woman's place is in the home, not in the office or shop" and "Women are much happier if they stay at home and take care of children." The eight items were averaged and ranged between $-.75$ and $.75$. Negative values represent strongly held conservative beliefs, such as women are happier in traditional roles, whereas larger, positive values represent more strongly held, less traditional opinions, such as "Men should share the work around the house with women, such as doing dishes, cleaning, and so forth."

As shown in Table 3, in 1979 and 1982, teen fathers held considerably more traditional beliefs than young men who delayed parenting until age twenty or later. Further, in both of those years, young men who had already become teen fathers as well as young men who would eventually become teen fathers held more conservative sex-role beliefs. However, young men who had not yet become teen fathers held the most conservative opinions in both years. Although it is not shown in Table 3, young men who would eventually become teen fathers held significantly more traditional sex-role beliefs than young men who already were teen fathers in both 1979 and 1982. As the cohort aged, however, all young men began to adopt more liberal sex-role beliefs, and by the 1987 survey, the differences between teen fathers and other young men were not statistically significant. Further,

this pattern was similar for all racial categories except that sex-role differences remained significantly more conservative for white teen fathers in 1987.

The sex-role beliefs regressions presented in Table 5 also controlled for age and family background and included the variables MOM_ED, DAD_ED, BOTH@14, BOTH_B-18, and SIBS, as defined above. Again, "living with both parents at age 14" (BOTH@14) was used in the 1979 and 1982 regressions when many survey respondents were under age eighteen, whereas "whether or not the respondent lived with both parents from birth till age 18" (BOTH_B-18) was used in the 1987 models when respondents were at least age twenty-two. The variables T_DAD, T_DAD_AFTER, POVERTY, SOUTH, and AGE were measured in 1979, 1982, and 1987, depending upon the year in which the dependent variable was measured. Finally, because this scale focused in large part on the role of women in the workplace, "whether or not the respondent's mother held a job in the labor force in 1979" (MOM_WORK) was included as a dummy variable in all regressions. This variable was measured only for 1978 and 1979, and consequently, the 1979 response to this question was used in all models.

Having become a teen father was associated with more conservative sex-role beliefs in 1982 and 1987 for whites only. Hence while the bivariate results suggested that over time teen fathers grew to be more like their peers with regard to these attitudes, the models which controlled for maturation and family background suggested that white teen fathers were more conservative than their peers in later survey years. On the other hand, blacks who had not yet become teen fathers but who eventually parented in their teen years held the most conservative sex-role beliefs. By 1987, however, when all blacks had already become teen fathers, their sex-role attitudes did not differ from young black men who delayed parenting until age twenty or later.

Variables that were generally associated with more liberal sex-role attitudes for whites and blacks were higher levels of parental education, particularly maternal education, and not living in an

impoverished household. Whites who lived in the South held more conservative sex-role beliefs in 1979 and 1982. In 1979 and 1982, older youths appeared to have held more liberal sex-role attitudes, except for blacks in 1982; by 1987, however, the older respondents held more conservative sex-role beliefs. This suggests that sex-role attitudes initially became more liberal and then began to become more conservative as respondents neared their late twenties. Having a working mother was associated with more liberal sex-role attitudes, particularly among whites. Having lived with both parents at age fourteen was only weakly related to sex-role beliefs for whites in 1979.

CONCLUSIONS

In the cohort of young men who were aged fourteen to twenty-one in 1979, there were roughly 1,207,000 teen fathers. This translates into 7.3 percent of all males aged fourteen to twenty-one in 1979. While teen fathers constitute a diverse population, they fare worse than young men who defer parenting until their twenties or later on most family background variables examined. Teen fathers are drawn in greater proportions from poor, minority, and unstable households. Household members generally acquire less education, and when the fathers of teen dads are present in the households, those fathers are less likely to hold professional positions and are more likely to be employed as laborers. The differences between teen fathers and their peers are, however, most pronounced for whites.

The nature of the attitudinal differences between adolescent fathers and young men who delay parenting depends on whether one examines the bivariate or multivariate results. The multivariate results which controlled for age and family background suggested that white but not black teen fathers had a more external locus of control. A belief that one's future is controlled externally may bode poorly for constructively incorporating white teen fathers into the lives of their children or for paying

child support. Irresponsible behavior concerning one's children may occur when individuals externalize responsibility for their actions.

The multivariate results suggested that the self-esteem of blacks was unrelated to whether or not they fathered a child in their teens. For whites, however, young men who became teen fathers after 1980 but not young men who had already become teen fathers had lower self-esteem than their peers. This suggested that becoming a teen father may have actually improved the self-esteem of white males. By 1987, however, when all men were at least age twenty-two, white teen fathers had lower self-esteem, even after controlling for family background and age. Hence, any improvements in self-esteem that might have occurred soon after a birth were no longer evident seven years later.

Finally, the multivariate analyses revealed that the sex-role attitudes of white adolescent fathers were significantly more conservative in 1982 and 1987 than the sex-role attitudes of their peers. This result departed from the bivariate analysis, which found that differences in these attitudes diminished over time. Hence, controlling for age and family background made a significant difference in the results concerning the sex-role attitudes of white males. For blacks, young men who eventually became teen fathers after the 1979 and 1982 survey dates had significantly more conservative sex-role attitudes. However, the sex-role attitudes of blacks who had already become teen fathers did not depart from those of young men who delayed parenting. Hence, while blacks who were about to become teen fathers held more conservative sex-role beliefs, they appeared to have become more similar to their nonfather peers after having a teen birth.

Overall, there are numerous differences between teen fathers and young men who delay parenting. These differences appear to be more pronounced among whites. Nevertheless, youth from minority, poor, and unstable households appear to be at the greatest risk of becoming teen fathers. Constructive activities which promote high self-esteem among this population may deter young men from parenting in order to enhance their self-image. Further, teen fathers, particularly whites, need

to be taught that they are responsible for their actions and for the welfare of their children. Stricter child support enforcement legislation clearly signals that society feels that parents themselves should care for their offspring, rather than have their childrearing expenses paid for by government programs and subsidies. Finally, whites who have already become teen fathers and blacks who are about to become teen fathers have very conservative sex-role attitudes relative to their peers. Trends suggest that more and more women, in general, and mothers of young children, specifically, are involved in the labor force for self-fulfillment and to meet the financial needs of their families. Young fathers must become more tolerant of working wives and mothers, particularly as the financial situation of young mothers and teen couples is likely to be precarious.

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