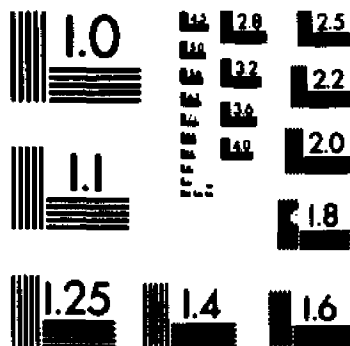
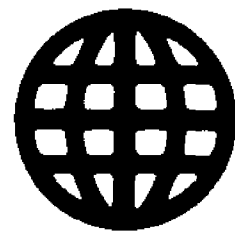


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**THE STATUS TRANSITION OF LOW-INCOME TEENAGE MOTHERS**

*City University of New York*

**Ph.D. 1986**

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**THE STATUS TRANSITION OF LOW-INCOME TEENAGE MOTHERS**

**By**

**Lorraine P. Mayfield**

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in  
Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,  
The City University of New York**

**1986**

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

1/31/86  
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Chairman of Examining Committee

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William Kornblum

David Caplovitz  
Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

**ABSTRACT****THE STATUS TRANSITION OF LOW-INCOME TEENAGE MOTHERS**

by

**Lorraine P. Mayfield****Advisor: Professor Hylan Lewis**

This study of the status transition of low-income females concentrates on the pathways to adulthood. The change from adolescence to adulthood is a complex process in American society, both in the timing and in the sequencing of events which mark the transition and reflect social norms. In this investigation of young women's status transition, the hypotheses are keyed to expect racial and age differences. The quantitative data used in this research come from a 1978 baseline survey of low-income young people who were eligible for the Youth Incentive Entitlement Pilot Program (YIEPP). Using this national stratified random sample, this analysis examines the family backgrounds, schools, jobs, and aspirations of 3,832 young women, aged 15-19 years, who live in both urban and rural poverty areas. I hypothesize that adolescent motherhood will modify the adolescent status and life course of young women in significant ways. The technique of event analysis is used to identify changes in social status.

The analysis of the situations and the behaviors of teenage mothers and their positions in three social institutions shows considerable variation in pathways to becoming an adult. Two main themes emerge: first, the event of becoming a mother during her school years creates for a young woman an abrupt transition to adult status; second, the variation in the status transition of school-aged mothers is influenced by both race and age.

White mothers are significantly more likely than black youths to choose the pathway of early marriage and family formation, while black mothers are more likely to delay marriage and to continue to receive family support. Younger mothers (ages 15-17 years) in contrast to older mothers (ages 18-19 years) are more likely to maintain social relationships that reflect adolescent status. The career aspirations of teenage mothers that are projected for age 30 appear to be unrealistically high and not feasible, given these mothers' low educational aspirations.

The adulthood status of school-aged mothers is economically marginal inasmuch as a majority remain economically dependent either on poor families or on financially insecure husbands.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The incidences of motherhood among the adolescent females has received considerable attention in popular as well as scholarly literature. Those magazine and newspaper articles that use a human interest approach to the problem refer to teenage motherhood, particularly motherhood out-of-wedlock, variously as an "avalanche which has reached epidemic proportions," an "epidemic" or "a growing crisis" (Auletta, 1984; Brozan, 1985; Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1976). At least nine major studies concerning the consequences of early motherhood for young women appeared between 1976 and 1981 (Furstenberg, 1976; Kellam, 1979; Morrison, 1979; Russ-Eft et al., 1979; Sandler, 1979; Haggstrom et al., 1981). The findings of these investigations echo, in general, Arthur A. Campbell's (1968:238) prediction that "the girl who has an illegitimate child at age 16 suddenly has 90 percent of her life's script written for her." The indications are that this is a dismal life script for the larger proportion of such women. Many young women are prematurely catapulted from adolescence into adulthood.

Many newspapers and magazines focus on the dramatic proportions of the problem. In an article published in Parade Magazine, a national newspaper weekly, Ken Auletta reports that "children are having children at a rate of 1,540 per day, about 64 an hour" (Auletta, 1984:5). Louise Meriwether (1984:94) warns that teenage motherhood in the black community "threatens not only the future of our children but the very survival of the black race." In the week preceding Mother's Day 1984, Mayor Marion Barry announced a major campaign to reduce the number of adolescent pregnancies in the District of Columbia. The campaign was to be based on the notion that there is little joy in teenage motherhood (Barry, 1984:C4). Eleanor Holmes Norton (1985:43) observes that poor black families are experiencing startling and unsettling changes. The disruption of black family life is reflected in the fact that over half of black children are born to single women, many of them teenagers. In a Time Magazine cover story, "Children Having Children," the serious dimensions and social costs of teenage pregnancy and motherhood were highlighted (Wallis, 1985).

Many of these reports in the mass media focus on the human interest aspects of teenage motherhood and on the lives of the mothers. Some articles provide case studies

of young women in various parts of the United States that include descriptions of how they cope with an abrupt change in status. For example, we learn of "Lucinda, 17, with smooth olive skin and a pretty oval face, who first became pregnant when she was 15. Lucinda, who lives in Phoenix, says it was an accident" (Auletta, 1984:6). Then there is "Zuleyma, a 16-year-old mother, whose 5-month-old daughter is now part of a fourth generation of all-female households" (Wallis, 1985:87). Stories such as these usually underscore the assertion that these teenagers are locked into a cycle of poverty with wretched life possibilities. In addition to recording case studies, numerous stories discuss the various programs and organizations which offer help to teenage mothers (e.g., Project Redirection, Texas Association Concerned with School-Age Parents; the National Organization for Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting).

A large number of research studies have sought to identify the consequences of adolescent childbearing for both teenagers and their children. The descriptions of the social effects of adolescent childbearing characteristically feature the adverse effects on mothers' educational attachments, economic resources, and employment opportunities.

The magnitude of the problem is also illustrated by various statistics. Contrary to some popular impressions, the rate of adolescent motherhood has declined steadily from a high in 1957 to close to an all-time low in 1978 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1980). Until recently, there was a slight rise in the birthrate for teenagers under 17, but since 1975, this rate also has been declining steadily (Chilman, 1983). The birthrates for both black and white teenagers have been declining since 1957. The birthrate for black teenagers has been higher than for whites at all time periods, but the gap between the two racial groups has been reduced.

The fact that changes are occurring in the rate of teenage motherhood does not diminish its seriousness or its threats to the current status and future status of many young women; or to various institutions, including the family, the educational system, and the economy. In fact, Table 1-2 shows that the illegitimacy ratios of both white and black young women has steadily increased since 1955.

The number of female heads-of-household increased during the 1970s. Table 1-3 shows that black female-headed families dramatically increased. Teenagers, 15-19 years old, are a significant segment of black heads-of-household.

In recent years, the percentage of out-of-wedlock births to adolescents of both races has increased more than it has for women in older age groups (O'Connell and Moore, 1980). Between 1975 and 1980, nonmarital births to teenagers 15-19 years old increased from 223 to 253 per 1,000 live births (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Vital Statistics of the United States, 1981:65). An increase in births to unmarried 15-to-19-year-old female youths has continued virtually uninterrupted for whites, and there has been a slight decrease for blacks (See Table 1-1).

One major implication of out-of-wedlock motherhood is that such mothers are likely recipients of or candidates for public assistance. Teenage mothers are the fastest growing group in the welfare population (Moore and Bart, 1982:23). Currently, more than 300,000 welfare mothers are teenagers. Researchers estimate that the approximately 600,000 births to teenagers each year cost federal, state and local governments as much as 8.6 billion dollars annually in welfare and medical expenses (Moore and Bart, 1982:1). These increased expenditures reflect one aspect of the increased involvement of the federal government in the issue of adolescent motherhood.

One indication of the federal government's sponsorship of programs to deal with problems related to adolescent

TABLE 1-1

Out-of-Wedlock Birth Rates in the United States by  
Mothers (15-19 years) by Race, 1955-1980  
(Births per 1,000 Unmarried Females)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Whites</u>	<u>Non-Whites</u>
1980	16.0	83.0
1979	14.9	87.1
1978	13.8	83.9
1977	13.6	86.4
1976	12.4	84.6
1975	12.1	88.1
1974	11.1	88.8
1973	10.7	89.7
1972	10.5	92.7
1971	10.3	92.4
1970	10.9	90.8
1969	10.0	85.6
1968	9.8	82.8
1967	9.0	80.2
1966	8.5	76.9
1965	7.9	75.8
1964	7.3	74.0
1963	7.0	73.8
1962	6.5	74.1
1961	7.0	77.6
1960	6.6	76.5
1959	6.5	80.8
1958	6.3	80.4
1957	6.4	81.4
1956	6.2	79.6
1955	6.0	77.6

Sources: Monthly Vital Statistics Report, summary report - natality statistics, Vol. 24, No. 11, February 13, 1976; Vol. 22, No. 12, March 20, 1974; Vol. 23, No. 8, October 31, 1974; Vol. 23 No. 3, June 7, 1974; Vol. 22, No. 7, October 2, 1973; 1970 Vital Statistics, "Trends of Illegitimacy - U.S., 1970-1965," HEW, February 1968, Table 2. National Center for Health Statistics, 1982.

TABLE 1-2  
Illegitimacy Ratios by Age of Mother and Race,  
1955-1979

	<u>White</u>		<u>Black and Other</u>	
	<15	15-19	<15	15-19
1955	421.3	63.6	800.6	406.6
1960	475.4	71.6	822.4	421.5
1965	572.8	114.3	864.0	492.0
1970	578.7	171.0	941.9	613.5
1975	709.6	229.0	990.9	747.2
1979	749.7	303.3	984.6	825.2

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, annual volumes.

TABLE 1-3

Percent of Families Female-Headed

	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Spanish Origin</u>	<u>Total</u>
1940	10.1	17.9		
1950	8.5	17.6 <sup>a</sup>		9.4
1960	8.1	21.7		10.0
1965	9.0	24.9		10.5
1970	9.1	28.3		10.8
1971	9.4	30.6		11.5
1972	9.4	31.8		11.6
1973	9.6	34.6	16.7	12.2
1974	9.9	34.0	17.4	12.4
1975	10.5	35.3	18.8	13.0
1976	10.8	35.9	20.9	13.3
1977	10.9	37.1	20.0	13.6
1978	11.5	39.2	20.3	14.4
1979	11.6	40.5	19.3	14.6
1980	11.6	40.2	19.2	14.6
1981	11.9	41.7	21.8	15.1
1982	12.4	40.6	22.7	15.4
1983	12.2	41.9	22.8	15.4

<sup>a</sup>Black and other

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1965b, 1971b, 1972, 1973a, 1973b, 1974, 1975a, 1975b, 1976a, 1976b, 1977b, 1978a, 1979a, 1979b, 1980, 1981b, 1982a, 1983b, and 1984a.

pregnancy and childbearing dates back to 1962 when the Children's Bureau of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) funded a demonstration program at the Webster School in Washington, D.C. The Webster School Project combined a special school program with health and social services. Another indication of government sponsorship occurred in 1971. In that year, the HEW Secretary, Elliot Richardson established the Inter-Agency Task Force on Comprehensive Programs for School-Age Parents, with the U.S. Office of Education as the lead agency. The task force sought to encourage the provision of comprehensive services to young parents and their children. As a result of these forerunning efforts of government sponsorship, the formation of young parents' programs gained momentum with the implementation of regulations issued under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which forbids schools receiving federal funds to discriminate against or exclude students because of pregnancy or parenthood. Previously, pregnant students were often expelled or placed in homebound programs to prevent their association with other students (Zellman, 1981).

During the 1970's, several hundred comprehensive programs provided services for young mothers. In 1978,

legislation (Titles VI, VII, and VIII of the Health Services and Centers Amendments of 1978) created an Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Program (OAPP). Although adequate appropriations were authorized for OAPP, it has been underfunded since its inception. Nevertheless, it funds research and demonstration projects nationwide, provides an information base with respect to adolescent pregnancy and parenthood, and furnishes services to close to 16,000 teenagers (U.S. Department of Labor, 1981).

#### Perspectives on Adolescent Childbearing

The various attempts to interpret adolescent sexuality and to explain childbearing among youths reflect a variety of competing perspectives. Included among these perspectives are those that variously emphasize changing sexual norms and values, young women's ignorance of sex and their bodies, and welfare as an incentive to childbearing. In this section, I examine these views in more detail.

Given the contemporary climate, matters of sex and sexual activity tend to be more highly publicized and more openly discussed now than they were in the period before 1960. The sexual revolution provides for more tolerant and liberal attitudes toward nudity in movies, homosexuality,

and the availability of pornography.\* Some argue that youths are under tremendous pressure to engage in premarital sex--pressure from their peers, from the movies, and from television advertising.

There is empirical data to support the perceptions that there is increased sexual activity among young men and women. Zelnick et al. (1979:177) found that two-thirds of American teenage women have had intercourse before they reach 19 years of age. Zelnick and Kantner (1980:237) found that 80 percent of contemporary adolescent men and women over 17 have experienced sexual intercourse outside of marriage; this suggests greater permissiveness with regard to traditional sexual norms.

Increased sexual activity, changing attitudes about sex, and failures to use contraceptives have placed young women at greater risk for pregnancy. Since the advent of birth control pills, women have had greater responsibility for preventing pregnancy than they had before this type of contraceptive was available (Zelnick and Kantner, 1980:239). Zelnick and Kantner (1980) find that teenage women generally seek contraception after they have

---

\*It also generates a backlash that emphasizes family values and encourages religious fundamentalism.

initiated intercourse. Fear of the side effects of contraception, as well as the delayed use of contraceptives, affects the rate and incidence of pregnancy among youths. Non-use of contraceptives is associated with an orientation to sex that stresses pleasure and a view that planning interferes with the desired spontaneity in sexual relationships (Luker, 1975; Reschelt, 1976; Mayfield, 1981).

Luker (1975:30-35) also finds that young women frequently have difficulty accepting their own sexuality. According to Luker, some women use a costs-benefit decision-making approach that involves weighing the costs and benefits of effective contraceptive use against the costs and benefits of a possible pregnancy. Luker indicates that costs include: 1) acknowledgment costs, the psychic costs of acknowledging that one is actually having intercourse; 2) the planning costs--the psychic costs of planning ahead to have coitus; 3) the costs of continuing contraceptive use--the psychological difficulty of continuing to use contraceptives without having a regular partner. The majority of women studied viewed the benefits of pregnancy largely in terms of whether it made for a closer relationship with the men they cared about, and if

it did, they were willing to risk pregnancy in order to attain or maintain a close relationship.

The research literature indicates that there are significant income and class differentials in sexual behavior and possibly in orientations (Chilman, 1983:103). Persons of the less upwardly mobile, blue-collar class and those in the lowest socioeconomic groups tend to take more risks with respect to sexual freedoms and contraceptive use than do those in the middle classes (Clark, 1965; Hogan, 1984; Williams and Kornblum, 1985). One assumption is that since many in the lower classes feel little hope for the future and view society as essentially hostile and dangerous, that there are dispositions to "live for the moment" and to take risks. This behavior is a correlate of the fact that they feel powerless in controlling their lives (Clark, 1965; Rainwater, 1970; Rubin, 1976; Hogan, 1984). Sexual orientations for pleasure and riskier sexual behavior are among the reasons offered to explain the higher probability of childbearing among low-income youths (Mayfield, 1981:36; Chilman, 1983:246).

Another perspective with respect to teenage motherhood is based on the belief or assertion that welfare provided to low-income families encourages pregnancies. A preeminent feature of this perspective is that government

subsidies in the form of welfare payments provide incentives to bear children often and repeatedly. There is no empirical support in scholarly research for this rather persistent notion that women, including teenage youths, have children in order to receive welfare benefits (Presser and Salsberg, 1978:239; Furstenberg, 1976).

### Teenage Motherhood in Sociological Perspective

There is growing public awareness that teenage motherhood is not the special problem of any one economic, ethnic or social group. It is a social issue which not only affects individual lives, but cuts across major societal institutions--the family, educational, and economic institutions. Adolescent motherhood impinges on young women's lives in ways that possibly restrict their options and affect their aspirations.

Adolescent parenthood is closely intertwined with the family as an institution; in particular, early motherhood reflects and affects changing sexual norms, marriage, and family structure. One of the functions of the family is the regulation of its members sexual behavior. With the development and widespread availability of contraceptives, many of the inhibitions against the use of sex as recreation are disappearing. During the 1970's, sexual

activity among unmarried women aged 15-19, living in metropolitan areas, rose by two-thirds. By the end of the decade, 46 percent of them reported that they had had intercourse. The increase was most dramatic among white women--especially young women aged 15-17, whose rate of sexual activity doubled. Between the middle and end of the decade, the increase in teenage sexual activity was entirely accounted for by unmarried whites (Zelnick and Kantner, 1980:240). Although the proportion of black teenagers who are sexually active continues to be higher than that of whites, the gap between the racial groups has closed considerably (Zelnick and Kantner, 1980:240). There has been no significant change in the average age at which young women initiate sexual intercourse--16.4 years for whites and 15.5 years for blacks. The rate of increase in sexual activity has been similar at every age. In the early 1970's, race, socioeconomic status, residence, and religious affiliation were all related to age at first intercourse. But many of these distinctions are beginning to disappear as premarital sexual activity increases among all elements of the population (Zelnick and Kantner, 1980:240). These changing sexual norms inevitably threaten a family system which is based on the assumption that partners will have an exclusive and mutually gratifying

sexual relationship.

Few young women, and even fewer young men are marrying in their teens. In 1978, only 6.9 percent of young women and 1.6 percent of young men aged 14-19 were married. This compares with 7.7 percent and 2.1 percent of comparable young people 10 years earlier. Although there was only a small decline over the decade in the percentage of white teenagers married, there was a much sharper decrease among blacks--the percentage dropping from 7.7 percent to 3.4 percent of young women, and from 1.4 percent to 0.5 percent of young men (U.S. Department of Commerce, "Marital Status and Living Arrangement," 1982). The decline is partially attributable to the decreasing tendency of teenagers to marry in order to legitimize a premaritally conceived birth.

The increase in sexual activity and the decline in marriage rates result in steep increases of out-of-wedlock births, unless there is a sufficient increase in contraceptive use among the unmarried to prevent them (Zabin et al., 1979:215).

The single-parent family is now emerging as the most common alternative to the traditional two-parent nuclear family. Not only are teenagers less likely to marry, but teenager parents who marry are far more likely to separate or divorce than couples who postpone childbearing until

they are into their twenties. Marriage disruption is twice as likely among teenagers who married before 20 than among those who wait until they are into their twenties (Teachman, 1983:110). The trend is evident among women of both races, but it is more distinct among whites than blacks (McCarthy and Menken, 1979).

Teenage motherhood not only has pronounced impact on the family but also on educational institutions. Prior to the early seventies, and before Title IX of the Educational Amendment Act of 1972, which prohibits sex discrimination in federally-assisted educational programs, pregnant teens and school-aged mothers were commonly expelled from schools (Zellman, 1981). As of 1972, young mothers cannot be excluded from school; however, educational institutions offer few programs which take into account young mothers' special needs. As a result, 80 percent of teenage women who drop out of school do so because they are pregnant (Zellman, 1981). There are many obstacles to teen mothers returning to school after having a baby, including a lack of child-care facilities and medical attention (Wallace, 1974:82; Mayfield, 1981:24). When child care services are provided, a major hurdle is removed. Unless young mothers have family or kin who can provide child care, they are likely to be deterred from attending school.

Since education is an important avenue to occupational and financial success, and effective adulthood, many young mothers need access to vocational training in order to qualify for higher paying, and nontraditional occupations. In the past, young women have been excluded from enrollment in vocational training areas, such as agricultural, industrial, technical, and trade programs.

Adolescent motherhood interacts with economic institutions in several ways; among other things, this interaction is reflected in differential rates of unemployment, welfare, and poverty. Unemployment is not spread uniformly throughout the United States. Women, blacks, and other minority groups are likely to be unemployed at higher rates; and the unemployment rate for teenagers is higher than that of adults. Over the past 25 years, the employment status of black youths has been steadily deteriorating. Nearly one-half of the black teenagers looking for work fail to find jobs (U.S. Department of Labor, December 1984). Figures for black teenage females are the most disturbing. In 1958, over 75 percent of black females between the ages of 16 and 19 were unemployed, compared to 65 percent of white female teenagers. In 1983, 83 percent of black female teenagers

were unemployed as compared to 55.5 percent of all white female teenagers--in twenty-five years, the gap had widened by 15 percentage points. Young black mothers are even more likely to be excluded from the labor market (U.S. Department of Labor, December 1984). This trend of high unemployment among black female youths is likely to continue due to racial discrimination, to lack of marketable skills, and to unrealistic expectations of work. These labor market characteristics of youths contribute further to the possibility that adulthood for the erstwhile adolescents who become mothers will be a premature and seriously flawed status. One possible indicator of flawed adult status of young mothers is the need to accept welfare payments.

Teenage childbearing is associated with dependence on public assistance. Many teenage mothers with small children to take care of, little education, and no jobs, become dependent on welfare. In 1975, about half of the \$9.4 billion invested in federal Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) went to families in which the women had given birth as a teenager. As of 1981, about one-fourth of teenage mothers were receiving welfare (Moore and Bart, 1982:2).

Families headed by teenage mothers are likely to be living in poverty. The rise of the female-headed family during the 1970s was accompanied by a "feminization of poverty." By 1980, two-thirds of female-headed families were receiving child welfare. The 1980 median annual income of families headed by women under age 25 was \$3,953. Such families have incomes only about one-fifth as high as those of all families and three-tenths as high as those of young husband-wife families (U.S. Department of Labor, 1981).

The apparent persistence of poverty among black female-headed families suggests to some a culture of poverty that recycles from one generation to another. Studies of teenage mothers suggest that there is some empirical basis for concluding that some poor households transfer poverty to successive generations (Bacon, 1974:337). Kilson (1981:68) who subscribes to this view, writes, "Among the economically weakest segment of Afro-Americans--perhaps 35 percent of black households--there is ample evidence of structural and cultural ingredients that transmit poverty across generations." This view is disputed by findings from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) which show that the poverty population in any one year is not impoverished in

subsequent years (Corcoran, 1984:246). For the persistently poor in the PSID sample, low-income women who headed their own households, marriage was the most important factor associated with increased economic well-being. This improvement held true for both white and black women, but marriage itself was much more frequent among white women (Duncan, 1984:61). Wilson and Neckerman, in their study of census data, find that the increasing rate of joblessness among black males is associated with high percentages of out-of-wedlock births and female-headed households (Wilson and Neckerman, 1985: 27). Their data show that black women, especially young black women, are facing a shrinking pool of "marriageable" (economically viable) men. They conclude that the status of low-income blacks is not determined by a culture of poverty but by the marginal status of black men in the labor force.

#### The Research Problem

With the rise of female-headed families, and with more women and their families living in poverty, this research is especially concerned with understanding the transition to adulthood among young women who are not only from poverty backgrounds but who are also directly involved in early motherhood.

The examination of the literature and some direct field experience with a group of low-income young women lead to the anticipation that the experiences and consequences of motherhood for youth during school years will differ significantly from those of adolescents unencumbered by the responsibility and care of a child.\* Case studies and other experiences underscore the basic premises of this study: that motherhood may hasten the transition

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\*The field work that served as a background for this study and that helps to inform the statistical analysis covered two extensive periods--first, when I was the research associate for a demonstration project, "Employing Disadvantaged Youth in Low Income Areas," for one year in 1979; and second, when I was the ethnographer for Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation's research and demonstration program, Project Redirection, for nine months in 1980-1981. As a research associate in East Harlem in 1979, I interviewed 35 young mothers at the Mt. Sinai Adolescent Health Center and in their homes. In addition to studying the impact of early motherhood on their work behavior, I interviewed young mothers about their birth control knowledge and usage.

As an ethnographer, under the direction of a Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation anthropologist, my field research took place for nine months in Harlem, starting at the Harlem Young Men's Christian Association. Project Redirection participants were overwhelmingly black, 17 years or younger, and from poverty backgrounds. There I met with 45 program participants at the program site. After two months, I selected five black, young mothers whose experiences represented a range of social situations, family backgrounds, and economic disadvantages within the larger, low-income group. Over a period of time, observations and interviews crystallized into case studies on each young mother (Mayfield, 1981).

from adolescent to adult status; and that the transition set in motion by motherhood among low-income teenagers is likely to exhibit distinctive features.

This is a study of status transition that examines the indicators of status change among a sample of 886 teenage mothers. These indicators were drawn from a data set developed for and used by the Youth Incentive Entitlement Pilot Project.\*

The research problem stems from research questions and hunches about the ways in which, the particular areas in which, and the extent to which motherhood acts to modify the status and the life course of low-income adolescent women. Does motherhood act to propel low-income teenagers from adolescence to adulthood? Do low-income mothers, as compared to low-income non-mothers, necessarily tend to live apart from their families; to be separated from educational institutions; to have incomes of their own by virtue of work or welfare? Are educational and occupational aspirations affected by motherhood? Is the effect of motherhood upon status transition affected in

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\*The Youth Incentive Entitlement Pilot Project (YIEPP) was one of four experimental programs established under the Youth Employment and Demonstration Projects Act in 1977. YIEPP provided school and work experiences to low-income minority youths who had either dropped out of school or had difficulty finding jobs.

significant ways by the race and age of low-income female adolescents?

The research questions and the specific design that has been developed to answer these questions and to test related hypotheses concerning the status transition of contemporary low-income adolescent mothers will be described in Chapter III.

CHAPTER II  
THE TRANSITION FROM ADOLESCENCE TO ADULTHOOD:  
RELEVANT THEORY AND RESEARCH

Concept of Status Transition

The concept of status transition is used here to refer to the process of changing from one set of expected positional behaviors in a social system to another as well as the results of the process. Various terms are used by sociologists to denote this phenomenon; role changing (Banton, 1965; Burr, 1972); status passage (Glaser and Strauss, 1971); transition (Levinson, 1978). Status transition is important because it strongly influences the behavior and social identity of those who participate in the process. One of the central features to be considered in status transition is position (status)--one's specific location in a social system. A position carries with it expectations concerning what the person who occupies that place in the social system ought to do. Role behavior consists of acts which are related to the expectations associated with a particular social position.

The strength of the status transition concept is that it permits detailed cross-sectional views of positions,

expectations, and behaviors. The theoretical model of status transition includes 1) antecedent conditions which underlie role transition or those events which trigger shifts in behavior; 2) role transition, in which a great deal of role confusion and strain may be experienced in discarding old roles and adjusting to the demands of new ones; and 3) acceptance of the responsibilities and demands of new positions. It should be noted that all changes in life do not entail social role transitions. Characteristically, status transitions occur when individuals move across positions that involve relatively long periods of time, such as school entry, pregnancy, divorce, and job change. Status transitions also occur when persons continue to occupy positions but the expected behaviors associated with these positions change drastically. Examples of this kind of change are situations in which employees are faced with sudden change in responsibilities and situations in which parents act upon new ideas about children's responsibilities.

Glaser and Strauss (1971:3-5) indicate that the important characteristics of status transition include the extent to which a role transition is scheduled or unscheduled, the degree to which it is socially prescribed

and socially scheduled, and the length of time a social system keeps a person in transition between two social locations. The first characteristic, the extent to which status transition is scheduled or not, concerns the anticipation of change. The more chance is a factor in antecedent conditions, the less probable it is that the transition will be anticipated. Conversely, anticipation is stronger when transition is effectively controlled.

Anticipatory socialization prepares individuals for scheduled status change. The degree to which the status transition is socially prescribed and socially scheduled reduces role strain. A status transition that is normatively governed is often marked by collective ceremonies or "rites de passage." Clear markers or indicators provide demarcation between the two roles. The next section discusses three ways of viewing status transition which are the time-series analysis approach, the life course approach, and the event analysis approach.

### Perspectives on Status Transition

Different perspectives on the concept of status transition are provided by the time-series analysis approach, the life course approach and the event analysis approach. Each of these approaches draws on a different

tradition and has particular strengths and limitations.

The time-series tradition has generally emphasized aggregate phenomena. This approach provides a view of status transition as being temporal in nature and emphasizes the aggregate life cycle. One limitation of this approach is that it does not fully take into account the interrelated events which mark a status passage or causation in the transition.

The life course approach also does not focus on explaining causation in status transition. (Initially, this approach focused on the description of the conjugal family and its stages.) The life course perspective tends to emphasize individual rather than aggregate aspects of time. The concern is with how much time individuals or collections of individuals spend in a given life state. Recently, a number of researchers have been using and have expanded this approach to examine the timing and order of events in an individual's life (Elder, 1975, 1978; Hogan, 1980; Marini, 1978, 1984).

The approach of this investigation is built on the event analysis model, which views status transition as boundary crossing. The event analysis approach recognizes that there are transitional points that are culturally and

socially defined in the process of crossing status boundaries. These transitional points generally reflect life crises. Sydel Silverman (1975:309) defines life crises as

...those periods in the life span at which there is some disruption of continuity--a transition from one culturally defined stage of life to another, and at which time there is regularly expected individual stress. Such crises are frequently but not necessarily ritualized; they may coincide with but are not the same as rites of passage.

Life crises such as birth, puberty or death are important points in the physical or social development of an individual. Various ceremonies or rituals are designed to mark the transition from one phase of life or social status to another (Turner, 1967). These life crises are not only the concern of the individual who experiences the transition, but they also mark changes in the relationships with other people and with the institutions connected to them. Life crises affect not only the individual but also significant others and the institutions which are integral parts of the individual's life.

Silverman (1975:310-311) suggests that the study of life crises can be seen as a kind of event analysis--a way of detecting the social functions and the status

individuals have in their societies. She suggests that a number of questions may be asked about these transitions:

1. The time of the crisis. What specific transition does it coincide with (physiological changes, psychological reorientation, status transition)? In particular, what social functions are assumed or discarded at this point?
2. The nature of the identity crisis involved. What do conflicts concerning self-concepts reveal about the experiences of assuming or discarding a role?
3. Changes in social relationships. Does the crisis consist of any breaks in former relationships, formulation of new ones, changes in the nature of ongoing ones? What social ties are exploited during the crisis period--who is called upon to do what?
4. Economic aspects of the crisis. Does the crisis period involve any economic exchange or expenditures?

Silverman uses the event analysis approach to study what functions women have in Italian society, the relative importance of their different functions, and the timing and interweaving of functions throughout the life cycle. Her data are drawn from a community in the province of Perugia in central Italy between August 1960 and September 1961. Her findings show how the event-analysis perspective permits refinement of key transitions in women's lives; and how marriage is viewed as a reorganization of resources within the community. Using this approach, she is able to

differentiate the crisis of marriage upon rural peasant women and village women. In each category the event of marriage is diverse and reflects different expectations with regard to reproduction and to labor skills contributed by women to their new families (Silverman, 1975:318-319). The limitation of this approach is that it is cross-sectional and fails to take into account aggregate time.

#### The Event Approach to Study Teenage Motherhood

The event approach is useful for the study of status transition among teenage mothers. Motherhood may be seen as a critical event in adolescents' lives that is often unscheduled and that frequently creates disruptions which make for crisis. Such a life crisis is not only the concern of the individual who experiences it, but also creates changes in relationships with family members, peers, and social institutions, such as school and work. The event of becoming a mother disrupts the normal processes of adolescent life and is likely to trigger an abrupt transition to an adult role.

The event approach to status transition provides a means to examine the social functions and aspects of roles

that are assumed or discarded when a teenager becomes a mother. It provides a means to examine breaks or changes in former relationships and in other areas, such as, in economic circumstances, family support arrangements, and attachments to school. Event analysis is a way to identify changes in social status that are brought about by the life crisis of motherhood among teenagers.

#### Transition From Adolescence to Adulthood

Rules are found in every society that govern the passage to adulthood. In some societies, this transition is sharply demarcated, highly routinized and marked by rituals or ceremonies; in others, the events and patterning of the transition are less distinct.

In American society, the change from adolescence to adulthood is a complex process both in the timing and in the sequencing of events that mark the transition. The ages of persons at the occurrence of events, such as, departure from the household of origin, exit from school, entry into the labor force, marriage, establishment of a new household, and entry into parenthood, are variables to be studied. These events and their sequences are indicative of social norms, and they provide markers for transitions. Research has examined some of these

transitions among young women and the order in which they occur--specifically, exit from school, entry into the labor force, entry into marriage, and entry into parenthood (Hogan, 1978; Winsborough, 1978; Marini, 1984).

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is marked by a series of events that ideally represent movements from economic dependence and participation in the family of origin to economic independence and establishment of a family of procreation. Bensman and Rosenberg (1979:88) write that adulthood is

achieved when a young person no longer needs financial assistance from his parents. It is fully realized when he supplies such assistance to his parents and to his children. The provision of financial aid symbolizes a certain measure of self-sufficiency and social responsibility. Insofar as financial independence is a good indicator of the beginning of adulthood, late entry into the labor force severely retards it.

Daniel J. Levinson, et al. (1978:281), describe the stages and the process involved in the transition to adulthood in the following terms:

We conceive of Leaving the Family (LF), as a period of transition between adolescent life, centered in the family of origin, and entry into the adult world. In our sample, (LF) ordinary occupies a span of some 3-5 years, starting at age 16-18 and ending at 20-24. It is a transitional period in the sense that the person is half in and half out of the family: he is making an effort to separate himself from the family, to develop a

new home base, to reduce his dependence on familial support and authority, and to regard himself as an adult making his way in the adult world.

The separation from the family proceeds along many lines. In its external aspects, it involves changes such as moving out of the familial home, becoming financially less dependent, and getting into new roles and living arrangements in which one is more autonomous and responsible.

To be considered an adolescent is to be supported by family, to be financially dependent on family, and to attend school. On the other hand, adult status is defined as the opposite. Adults leave their families of origin, are economically self-sufficient, and are more likely to be detached from prescribed secondary educational institutions. Levinson and his colleagues point out that the transitional period is a time during which the person is half in and half out of his or her family of origin.

Turner (1967:13) marks the various phases of the status transition and points out that all rites of transition are divided into three phases: separation, margin (or limen), and aggregation. The separation phase consists of symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual from an earlier fixed status in the social structure. During the next phase, the marginal phase, the status of the subject is ambiguous; he or she passes through a realm that

has either few or none of the attributes of the past or coming status or has attributes of both. In the aggregation phase, the third stage, the passage from status to status is consummated.

Using this model, teen mothers would likely fall within the marginal stage of status transition; this is a stage where they are likely to experience ambiguity and paradox and to exhibit a confusion of the indicators of adolescent and adulthood status. The process of becoming adults is complicated by the rules and the impact of the regulations of different institutions and by the influence of significant others upon schooling, relations to the labor force, family participation, and goals and aspirations.

Marini (1984:81) finds that there is considerable variation in the temporal sequencing of events and in the ordering of status changes involved in the transition to adulthood. Her findings suggest that the transition to adulthood represents a continuum and that adolescent and adult statuses overlap. She finds that a sizeable proportion of both sexes experience entry into some aspects of adult family roles prior to leaving full-time student roles and prior to entering the labor force. One implication for this study might be that low-income youths

view the transition to adulthood in ways which combine aspects of the adolescent status.

Effects of Motherhood on Transition from  
Adolescence to Adulthood

There are conflicting views about the consequences of adolescent motherhood on status transition. Various researchers find that motherhood creates an abrupt transition to adult status (Bacon, 1974; Ladner, 1972; Rainwater, 1970; Schultz, 1969). Others argue that early motherhood has negative consequences but does not necessitate adult status for teenagers (Furstenberg, 1976; Whitted, 1978).

Some researchers (Ladner, 1972; Stack, 1974) report that low-income young black mothers gain maturity, strength, autonomy, and respect in the community. Ladner (1972:220), in her anthropological study of black adolescent females in a St. Louis ghetto, concludes that a girl becomes a woman through having a baby; that she performs motherhood functions and joins the community of experienced mothers. According to Rainwater (1970:26), adolescence was not seen as a life stage or as a period of preparation for maturity in the groups he studied; rather

he suggests youths moved directly into adulthood when they become parents.

Ladner (1972) confirms this proposition when she writes about low-income black girls. She adds that it seems that for this group, pregnancy was the real measure of maturity, the dividing line between adolescence and womanhood. Ladner (1972:212) writes:

If there was one standard for becoming a woman that was accepted by the majority of the people in the community, it was the time when girls gave birth to their first child. This line of demarcation was extremely clear and separated the girls from the women.

Stack (1974), in her anthropological study of low-income black families and youth in a midwestern city, finds that young black mothers often stated that having a baby made them feel more mature and responsible. Within their homes, young black mothers were granted freer social lives with less parental controls. Early and out-of-wedlock childbirths are not held to be desirable in the low-income black community, they are usually viewed as an unfortunate but frequent event (Ladner, 1972; Rainwater, 1966; Schultz, 1969).

On the other hand, other researchers present the view that early motherhood, an event which has serious negative

consequences, does not necessarily propel youths into adult roles. Furstenberg's (1976:37) longitudinal survey of 400 predominantly black and economically disadvantaged adolescent mothers in Baltimore reveals that early motherhood may present no serious obstacles to remaining an adolescent and to continuing in high school. His results indicate that young mothers were most apt to return to school if they held high educational goals and had help with child care. Mothers who remained single were more likely to receive help from their families, including child-care assistance.

In her study of 408 New York City women in several age brackets, Presser (1975) finds that 60 percent of the first births were unplanned and that teenage mothers did not consider themselves adults.

The recent literature on young white mothers, especially those from low-income families, shows that marriage is likely to be viewed by both men and women as a requirement if a girl becomes pregnant; thus, the white teenage mother is likely to enter the adult role of wife (Rubin, 1976; Howell and Frese, 1982; Kenkel, 1981). On the other hand, Wilson and Neckerman (1985:32) argue that young black mothers delay marriage because they are facing

a shrinking pool of "marriageable" (that is, economically stable) men, a problem with which white women are not faced.

The evidence suggests that early motherhood has serious adverse consequences for young women, inasmuch as teenage mothers, in comparison to mothers who begin childbearing in their early twenties, are much more likely to drop out of school because of the pregnancy, to be without employment experience, to bear other children early, and to be on public assistance after the birth (Furstenberg, 1976; Haggstrom et al., 1981; Moore et al., 1979). One of the issues of this research is to examine the extent of the relationship of early motherhood to status transition.

The following sections look specifically at research findings on the effects of motherhood among teenagers on family support, early family formation, attachments to educational institutions, work experience, welfare status, and aspirations.

### Family Support and Early Family Formation

Researchers examining the causes and consequences of motherhood among adolescents have generally overlooked the social context in which early childbearing takes place. Few studies address the amount of family support available

to teen mothers (Furstenberg and Crawford, 1978:280; Haggstrom et al., 1981:118). The amount of family support and assistance to young mothers is key to understanding the dynamics and the realities of the transition from adolescence to adulthood. When examining the living arrangements and residential dependence of teen mothers, Furstenberg and Crawford (1978:284) find that virtually all the non-mothers resided with the parents or a parent surrogate. Teenage mothers leave home in larger proportions than do non-mothers. The study conducted by Haggstrom et al. (1981:119) revealed that teen mothers who marry were more likely than non-mothers to move away from their families. The overwhelming majority of respondents in their study who married left their parental homes. They note that parenthood effects are not as great as the enormous effects associated with marriage. About two-thirds of all the women who became single mothers were living at home at the time of the interview; two years later, more than half of them were still living at home.

Overall, teenage motherhood results in an earlier establishment of separate household units, removing mothers from financial and other support that had been available when they lived at home (Furstenberg and Crawford, 1978:285). Financial support is reduced as teenagers move

away from their families. The data establish that teenage mothers are less likely than non-mothers to rely on parents or relatives for financial support (Haggstrom et al., 1981:122).

In conventional thinking, when a young woman marries, she assumes the role of adult. The dominant American cultural norms prescribe entry into the marital role during the youth's twenties. Although, early marriage is associated with higher fertility, economic difficulties, and greater risk of divorce (Teachman, 1983:125), it is an important indicator of adulthood status.

Rubin (1976) describes the importance of marriage for whites. In her study of a sample of California white, blue-collar families, she writes (1976:41):

For most working-class girls getting married was, and probably still is, the singularly acceptable way out of an oppressive family situation and into a respected social status and the only way to move from girl to woman.

For this group, premarital pregnancy for men and women automatically meant marriage (Rubin, 1976:67). Elder and Rockwell (1976) analyzed the causes and consequences of timing of marriage among white women born between 1919 and 1925. Using data from the National Fertility Studies of

1970 and 1965, they find that early-marrying women were more likely to come from low socioeconomic origins, especially if they failed to finish high school. Howell and Frese (1982:46) confirm this finding in their study of 945 southern teenagers in 1975. They find that white females tended to marry earlier and drop out of school at higher rates than blacks. Kenkel (1981:435) reports in his study of 311 low-income, southern high school girls that white youths were less willing than black youths to postpone marriage and were more likely than black youths to have goals of being only wives and mothers.

In low-income black communities, marriage to legitimize a child has often been seen as not very practical. Premarital births of a first child are characteristically viewed as "mistakes" (Ladner, 1972:216; Stack, 1974). Since all too often the low-income father of the baby is an unemployed or underemployed youth with little chance for financial improvement, the community sentiment might typically be that marriage has a good chance of succeeding and should preferably be entered into when a couple wants to live together and can establish its own home in order to live together. Lacking these possibilities as a couple, the mother and child often opt to live with relatives.

Although fertility is highly valued, early marriages to legitimize children is not the dominant practice in the segments of the black communities studied (Furstenberg, 1976; Ladner, 1972; Wilson and Neckerman, 1985). Early marriages are perceived as having negative effects on youths' educational achievement. Ladner writes (1972:216):

It is exceedingly difficult for parents to think of supporting a grandchild on an already insufficient income, and perhaps more difficult to accept the fact that their daughter's life has already come to a sudden halt insofar as her educational and economic progress are concerned.

#### Work Experiences and Receipt of Welfare

This section addresses the impact of motherhood on work experiences and receipt of welfare. The most common income sources of teen mothers are personal earnings, public assistance, and husband's earnings (Furstenberg, 1976:161).

Unemployment among young mothers is found to be 70 percent (U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 1984). A finding of the six-site demonstration project conducted by the Women's Bureau with a sample of 439 teenage mothers is that these young people lacked previous work experience. Given the high rate of unemployment for black females, those who are mothers are even more disadvantaged in attempting to enter the labor force. Lack of child-care

facilities and difficulties in finding work are two prime factors which keep teenage mothers out of work (Wallace, 1974:82). Black mothers want to work but experience difficulties in finding work or in providing for child care (Wallace, 1974:82; Furstenberg, 1976:176).

Welfare is an important source of income for young women in poverty. Furstenberg (1976:270) shows that his respondents went on and off welfare in response to changes in the job market. Since teenage births often occur out of wedlock and the mothers are poor, these mothers are more likely to receive welfare. Women who have never married are considerably more likely to be welfare recipients (Haggstrom et al., 1981; Moore et al., 1979). The major indicator of status as a welfare recipient is single motherhood (Haggstrom et al., 1981:122). To a large extent, this finding is an inevitable consequence of the rules that determine welfare eligibility; these rules make it difficult for non-parent and two-parent households to qualify for benefits.

Previous work experience enhances work and career development, but few teenage mothers have had previous experience. Work experience is a vital component in making career decisions. The Final Report of the Adolescent

Mothers' Initiative Project (U.S. Department of Labor, 1981:6), a six-site demonstration project to increase the employability of 439 teenage mothers, concludes that

...the participants' prior work experience seemed to affect their present initiative and their level of eventual benefits from program components. Participants with previous work experience appear to gain the most from training programs as evidenced by positive shifts in their job choice preferences.

Furstenberg (1976:271) concludes that young black mothers want to work and that they vehemently reject the notion that welfare is an acceptable alternative to work. Further, he indicates that there is no evidence that either cultural values regarding life goals and commitment or a sense of futility about the future predisposed the young mothers to seek welfare. However, these values and attitudes do not necessarily predict the decisions that young black mothers make about work and welfare. Unemployment, crowded households and a desire to establish independent households influence the decisions about work and welfare.

The barriers to work are related not so much to the attitudes of young people as to the structure of the work force and to career preparation (Ross 1978:48). Disadvantaged youths' lack of career preparation makes it

difficult, if not impossible, to select appropriate fields of work.

Wallace's (1974:82) study of black young women, emphasizes the major difficulties that they experience involving finding jobs. The salient fact here is that a major difficulty of low-income young mothers is the lack of child care.

### Educational Status

Early motherhood has serious negative consequences on the educational careers of young women (Chilman, 1983; Furstenberg, 1976; Presser, 1975; Waite and Moore, 1978). Teenage mothers are much more likely than non-mothers to drop out of school and to have low educational attainment. The lack of availability of child care is a critical factor in the failure of mothers to return to school. Furstenberg (1976:137) and Whitted (1979:68) find that when family members provide child-care support, the highly ambitious mothers return to and complete high school.

Motherhood imposes responsibilities which disrupt the educational processes of teenagers. Teenage mothers complete fewer years of schooling than do their peers who are not mothers (Moore and Hofferth, 1978); and the younger

the mother when she gives birth to her first child, the fewer years of schooling she will complete (Bacon, 1974:338).

Moore et al. (1979:8) find that the mother's race has significant effects on schooling. The educational deficit associated with having a first child early in life is less for young black women than for their white counterparts. Early childbearing interferes with formal education far less among blacks than among whites (Moore et al. 1979:8). Since teenage parenthood is much more common among blacks than among whites, adaptive mechanisms for dealing with this occurrence seem likely to be better established in black families and neighborhoods as well as in school systems with a high proportion of black students (Moore et al. 1979:8). Among young black women, only those births occurring at the youngest ages of mothers are associated with educational losses. Early childbearing appears to have a strong negative effect on the schooling of white teenagers and a moderate negative effect on the schooling of black teenagers.

Because the timing of motherhood is a critical influence on young women's educational attainment, especially among whites, and because educational attainment is a powerful determinant of occupational status, early

childbearing is, therefore, likely to diminish the overall career attainment of women.

### Aspirations of Teenage Mothers

Aspirations are viewed as predictive of subsequent adult attainment, because they are seen as orientations to the future at the critical period when youths are about to act on educational and occupational choices. Although the study of adolescent aspirations and plans has received considerable research attention (Crowley and Shapiro, 1982; Dawkins, 1981; Herzog, 1982; Marini, 1978), few studies address specifically the goals and ambitions of teen mothers. The studies that do focus on teen parents' aspirations suggest that teenage mothers tend to have unrealistically high goals; for example, teen mothers aspire to professional occupations, such as, school teachers, nurses, and social workers.

Polit et al. (1982:45) find in their national study of 514 teen mothers that about half the respondents said they wanted a high school diploma or General Education Diploma and that over 20 percent reported they planned to receive a Bachelor's degree or higher. Haggstrom et al. (1981:65) report that non-mothers had higher educational goals

than mothers. Over three-fourths of non-mothers in this study group planned to attend college immediately after high school. Their data show that teenagers who desired to attend college the year after completing high school changed their plans when they became mothers.

The goals of teenage mothers appear to be affected by racial background. Black teens express aspirations to pursue academic credentials and are more likely than white teens to be enrolled in school. Polit et al. (1982:45) provide evidence that young black mothers have significantly higher educational goals than do young white mothers.

Although occupational aspirations expressed by teenage mothers suggest relatively high ambitions, they are also general and vague. Polit et al. (1982:52) find that over two-fifths of their sample indicated that a bright future for them included a "good job." Three-fourths of this sample did not specify what a good job would be. When occupational goals are projected for the next five years, nearly half of teen mothers plan to be working in nursing, clerical, and service occupations; less than five percent of the respondents expect to have high-status professional jobs. Overall, older teen mothers are more likely than

younger mothers to have specific occupational goals in mind. The older teen mothers' occupational goals are less ambitious than those of younger mothers. Generally, all young mothers express a positive orientation to work and expect to work in the future.

A summary of the literature on the educational and occupational goals of young mothers suggests that a good proportion of them expect to or plan to complete high school, and a sizeable percentage (20-15 percent) aspire to obtain their Bachelor's degrees. Racial differences are indicated in the expressed educational aspirations inasmuch as the expressed educational goals of black youths are more ambitious. Further, indications are that the overwhelming majority of young mothers prefer to work and consider a good job to be as important to their future as education is (Polit et al., 1982:52-61).

The research literature describes a variety of ways in which motherhood affects adolescents' lives. Mothers who are adolescents are less likely to receive continued family support than adolescent non-mothers. Teen mothers are more likely to marry and establish their own households. Early childbearing frequently means that the young mothers face obstacles in continuing their schooling and participating

in the labor force. As a measure of dependency and economic vulnerability, they are more likely than their non-mother counterparts to receive welfare. Motherhood appears to have a negative effect on the career goals of some teenagers.

Much of the research that addresses racial differences is primarily concerned with educational differences. More information is needed on the effects of race and age on motherhood among adolescents and the implications of motherhood in these categories for adult status. Most recent studies of out-of-wedlock births have focused on low-income black youths; there is little recent research on the consequences of early motherhood among white mothers.

**CHAPTER III**  
**RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The five major questions which underlie this study are:

1. What are the effects of the events of low-income youths becoming mothers upon the following indicators of adult status and status changes?
  - (a) Family relationships, including
    - (i) Marriage; and
    - (ii) Establishing an independent household.
  - (b) Economic independence, including
    - (i) Participation in the labor force; and
    - (ii) Direct receipt of welfare.
  - (c) Educational activity, including
    - (i) School enrollment and attendance; and
    - (ii) Type of school attended.
  - (d) Orientations to the future, including
    - (i) Educational aspirations; and
    - (ii) Career goals.
2. Which indicators of adult status are relatively more frequent for status transition among low-income young mothers?

3. How and to what extent does the event of a low-income female youth becoming a mother affect the normal process of adolescent status transition? Does it result in:
  - (a) Full and immediate transition to adult status?
  - (b) Partial transition to adult status?
  - (c) Ambiguity or indeterminacy of status?
4. In what ways are the events of status transition of young low-income mothers affected by race and age?
5. What are the implications of the findings of this study for (a) public perception and opinion, (b) social science concepts and research, and (c) social policy?

The design of the research is based on the following questions and related hypotheses:

1. What impact does motherhood have on the relationship between teenagers and their families? To what extent does motherhood lead to marriage and to establishing independent families?

The relevant hypotheses are:

- (a) Mothers are more likely than non-mothers to live apart from their families;
  - (i) Black mothers are more likely than white mothers to live with their families;

- (ii) Younger mothers are more likely than older mothers to live with their families.
  - (b) Mothers are more likely than non-mothers to marry and establish their families;
    - (i) Black mothers are less likely than white mothers to marry; and
    - (ii) Younger mothers are less likely than older mothers to marry.
  - (c) Mothers are less likely than non-mothers to receive support from their families;
    - (i) Black mothers are more likely than white mothers to receive support from their families; and
    - (ii) Younger mothers are more likely than older mothers to receive support from their families.
2. Does motherhood hasten economic independence from the family?

The hypotheses are that:

- (a) Mothers are more likely than non-mothers to be currently employed;
  - (i) Black mothers are less likely than white mothers to be currently employed;
  - (ii) Younger mothers are less likely than older mothers to be currently employed;
- (b) Mothers are more likely than non-mothers to receive welfare directly;
  - (i) Black mothers are less likely than white mothers to receive welfare directly;

- (ii) Younger mothers are less likely than older mothers to receive welfare directly.

3. What impact does motherhood have on attachments to educational institutions?

The hypotheses are:

- (a) Mothers are less likely than non-mothers to be currently enrolled in school;
  - (i) Black mothers are more likely than white mothers to be currently enrolled in school;
  - (ii) Younger mothers are more likely than older mothers to be currently enrolled in school.
- (b) Mothers are less likely than non-mothers to be enrolled for the full school year;
  - (i) Black mothers are more likely than white mothers to be enrolled for the full school year; and
  - (ii) Younger mothers are more likely than older mothers to be enrolled for the full school year.
- (c) Mothers are less likely than non-mothers to attend day school as opposed to evening school;
  - (i) Black mothers are more likely than white mothers to attend day school;
  - (ii) Younger mothers are more likely than older mothers to attend day school.
- (d) Mothers are more likely than non-mothers to be enrolled in General Educational Diploma (GED) programs;

- (i) Black mothers are less likely than white mothers to be enrolled in GED programs; and
  - (ii) Younger mothers are less likely than older mothers to be enrolled in GED programs.
4. Does motherhood influence long term aspirations specifically, educational and career goals?

The hypotheses are:

- (a) Mothers are less likely than non-mothers to aspire to attend college and pursue a professional career;
  - (i) Black mothers are more likely than white mothers to aspire to obtain a college education and professional career; and
  - (ii) Younger mothers are more likely than older mothers to aspire to obtain a college education and professional career.

#### Research Design

This comparative study of the status transition of adolescent mothers and non-mothers is based upon secondary analysis of data collected during 1978 in a study of the school-to-work transition of low-income youth. A subset of data from the Youth Incentive Entitlement Pilot Project (YIEPP) is used. These data offer several advantages for a study of the impact of motherhood among teenagers and of the relationship of motherhood to status transition.

The data set provides extensive information concerning the school, work, and family lives of a large national sample of low-income youth. The YIEPP data set has indicators of the family, school, and work attachments, as well as the aspirations of the youths.

The large sample size of the YIEPP data set makes it possible to categorize respondents by motherhood status and by race and age. The effects of motherhood upon status transition are inferred by comparing a series of measures among the various groups and categories. The prime measures are 1) family relations and support, 2) economic independence from the family, and 3) attachment to educational institutions. The YIEPP young women are classified by parenthood as of early summer of 1978 for purposes of this study.

#### General Description of Data Set

The Congress enacted the Youth Employment and Demonstration Projects Act in 1977. YIEPP was one of the four experimental programs established under the Act in response to high unemployment among young people, especially among minorities. The quantitative data used in this comparative analysis are from a 1978 baseline survey

of young people who were eligible for the Youth Incentive Entitlement Pilot Project.

The baseline survey was conducted by Mathematical Policy Research, Inc.; its purpose was to collect data on the basic demographic characteristics, the family background, and the self-esteem of the youths as well as on the behavior and expectations of these low-income young people in the areas of schooling, training, and work. The baseline data were used to plan school-to-work programs and subsequently to measure the effectiveness of the entitlement programs. The baseline survey was not identified with the demonstration programs; that is, the respondents were not informed that the survey had anything to do with YIEPP. The findings of the baseline survey are reported in Schooling and Work Among Low-Income Households.\*

The survey included youth who 1) had lived in the geographic areas of the entitlement projects for at least 30 days, 2) were 15 to 19 years old, 3) had not received a high school diploma or certificate of high school equivalency, and 4) were economically disadvantaged in the

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\*The sampling procedures and description of the YIEPP sample are based on sections from Suzanne Barclay et al., Schooling and Work Among Youth From Low-Income Households: A Baseline Report from the Entitlement Demonstration (New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1979).

sense that the family or household in which they lived had an income level at or below the poverty line established by the federal government's Office of Management and Budget.

The sample for the baseline survey was selected during February and March, 1978. First, screening interviews were administered to a stratified random sample of approximately 130,000 households to determine the presence of eligible youth. Interviewers subsequently returned to each eligible household and administered the baseline survey to the youths and their parents during the spring and early summer of 1978.

Interviews were conducted with 7,553 youths who were eligible for entitlements in eight states across the country; four locations were areas in which entitlement projects were located, and the other four locations were matched comparison sites. The project locations were Baltimore, Maryland; Cincinnati, Ohio; Denver, Colorado; and eight rural counties in Mississippi (Adams, Claiborne, Covington, Franklin, Jefferson, Jones, Wayne, and Wilkinson). The comparison sites were Cleveland, Ohio; Louisville, Kentucky; Phoenix, Arizona; and six counties in Mississippi (Clarke, Humphrey, Lauderdale, Shirley, Smith and Washington).

The sex, race and age characteristics of the full sample of 7,553 are shown in Table 3-1.

TABLE 3-1

Sex, Race and Age Characteristics of Youth Incentive  
Entitlement Pilot Project (YIEPP) Sample  
(Percent)

		<u>%</u>
Sex	Males	48
	Females	52
Race	Whites	16
	Blacks	71
	Hispanics	12
	Other	1
Age	15 years	14
	16	30
	17	27
	18	18
	19	11

Several other characteristics of the full sample are pertinent. The mean level of family income for the total sample was \$6,395. In most of the study sites, more than 50 percent of the respondents derived their income from earnings. In five localities, Baltimore, Cleveland, and Cincinnati, slightly more than 55 percent of the respondents received some type of welfare assistance, especially Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

### Comparison of YIEPP Data Set With Other Data

The YIEPP data set compares favorably with several other bodies of information which describe or have relevance for adolescent motherhood and this investigation; in fact, this data set offers several advantages.

First, the sample contains 886 mothers and 2,946 non-mothers. This provides a sub-sample of young women that is large enough to permit comparative analyses of mothers and non-mothers groups in some detail and to provide for controls by race and age groupings.

Another major advantage of the YIEPP data is its timeliness. The youths were interviewed in the late 1970s; and it is highly likely that the survey data capture much of the effect of recent and contemporary perspectives, and experiences in relationship to motherhood and status transition.

A third strength of the YIEPP data is that it includes low-income youth from eight states in both urban and rural localities, many of whom are school dropouts; this is a population which is infrequently surveyed.

By contrast, the sample used in National Longitudinal

Study of the High School Class of 1972\* captures only seniors in high school, thus totally excluding the young people who are out of school. The focus on seniors has another limiting consequence in that the younger age groups are excluded.

The main problem with using survey data collected by Project Talent is that the results are now quite dated. The surveys were conducted between the early 1960s and 1971. Similarly, the five-year longitudinal data collected by Furstenberg (1976) is now dated, having been generated during the late 1960s and early 1970s. A further limitation of the latter data set, in the context of the present research concerns, is that Furstenberg's data consist predominantly of information gathered about black teenagers.

On the whole, the YIEPP data is a good source for examining the consequences of early motherhood and the incidents and probable stages involved in the status transition of low-income female youths. This useable sub-sample of mothers and non-mothers provides variables that are relevant to the specific concerns in this research

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\*The sample used in Gus Haggstrom, et al., Teenage Parents: Their Ambitions and Attainments (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1981).

about status changes; these concerns include family support, educational attainment, labor force participation, and aspirations of low-income young mothers.

#### Subsample Used in this Study

The analysis in this research is confined to the females in the YIEPP sample because the focus of this research is on the effects of motherhood on young women's status and goals. Table 3-2 describes some of the key characteristics of this subsample of 3,832 by parenting status, i.e., mothers and non-mothers. Several differences between the two groups are revealed. Blacks and whites constitute nearly equal proportions in each group of mothers and non-mothers.

The young mothers and non-mothers are considerably different. The proportion of those mothers who are younger (15-17 years) is not very different from the proportion of mothers in the 18-19 years old category, approximately one-half. On the other hand, more than three-quarters of non-mothers are in the younger (15-17 years) range.

TABLE 3-2

General Characteristics of Sub-Sample of  
Teenage Mothers and Non-mothers

	<u>Mothers</u>		<u>Non-Mothers</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Race</u>	886	23	2946	77
Black	667	75	2128	72
White	219	25	818	28
<u>Age (In Years)</u>				
15	37	4	620	21
16	143	16	919	31
17	241	27	764	26
18	251	28	451	15
19	214	25	192	7
<u>Highest Grade Completed</u>				
8th and less	204	23	295	10
9-11	585	66	2121	72
12th	97	11	530	17
<u>Marital Status</u>				
Single	762	86	2799	95
Married	87	10	118	4
Separated/Divorced	34	4	29	1
<u>Presently Living With Family</u>	647	75	2681	91
<u>Families Receiving AFDC</u>	549	62	1355	46
<u>Teenagers Receiving AFDC Directly</u>	159	18	60	2

The educational differences between mothers and non-mothers in the sub-sample are sizeable. Mothers have less education than non-mothers; a larger proportion of mothers fall in the 8th grade or less category and a smaller proportion have completed the 12th grade.

A larger percentage of the mothers are married. A corollary to this fact is that the percentage of mothers who are living with their families is smaller than the percentage of non-mothers who live with their families. Finally, teenage mothers are more likely than non-mothers to be receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in their own right or to be a part of households which receive this type of welfare assistance--one in eight mothers and one in 30 non-mothers.

A summary list presents the several differences between mothers by key characteristics of the sub-sample.

TABLE 3-3

Summary List of General Characteristics of Sub-Sample  
of Teenage Mothers and Non-mothers

Teenage Mothers

Ratio of three blacks to one white.

The median age is 18 years.

Two-thirds of mothers completed the eighth grade. One of ten mothers have not completed high school.

Nine of ten are single.

Three-fourths of mothers presently live with their families.

Approximately six of ten mothers live in households which receive AFDC.

Approximately one-fifth of mothers have their own welfare budget.

Teenage Non-Mothers

Ratio of three blacks to one white.

The median age is 16 years.

Approximately three of four non-mothers completed the eighth grade. One in five have not completed high school.

Nearly all non-mothers are single.

Nine of ten non-mothers live with their families.

Approximately half of non-mothers live in AFDC households.

Only two percent of non-mothers have their own welfare budgets.

### Key Variables and Analytical Constructs

Three indicators are used in the comparison of mothers with non-mothers in order to get evidence of changes in particular areas involved in the transition from adolescence to adulthood; these indicators suggest the extent to which the transition to adulthood occurs and is completed. The three areas (dependent variables) noted earlier are 1) family relations and support, 2) economic independence from the family, and 3) attachment to educational institutions. The aspirations of mothers and non-mothers with respect to education and careers is examined as well.

The key variables that are used to examine the research questions and test the hypotheses are listed below:

#### Independent Variables

1. Motherhood
  - mother
  - non-mother
2. Race
  - black
  - white
3. Age
  - younger group - 15-17 years
  - older group - 18-19 years

### Dependent Variables

1. Family Relations and Support

- living with family
- marital status
- financial support
- child care support

2. Income of own

- currently employed
- receiving welfare

3. School Attachment

- currently enrolled
- enrolled full year
- enrolled in day school
- enrolled in GED program

4. Aspirations

- college education
- professional career

### Status Change Indicators and Key Variables

Motherhood, is measured by the question in the YIEPP survey which asks, "Do you have any children?" Indications of changes in status are dealt with as follows:

#### Indicators of dependent variables

1. Family relations and family support

- living with parent/guardian
- financial or child care support from family
- marital status of respondent

Changes in this area are measured by the following questions:

"Does respondent live with parent/guardian now?"

"Do you receive any allowance or money from your parents or guardians on a regular basis?"

"Are you married, widowed, divorced, separated or had you never been married?"

"(Is/Are any of) your child(ren) regularly cared for by someone else during the day?"

"About how much does this care usually cost you per week?"

"About how many hours each day are they usually cared for?"

"How many miles, if any, do you have to travel to deliver your child(ren) to this care?"

2. Economic Independence From the Family

-currently employed

-receipt of welfare

These questions measure the changes in the above areas:

"Did you do any work at all last week, not counting work around the house?" Please include any unpaid work for a family business or farm.

"From January 1977 to now did you or (Names) receive any payment from AFDC, that is, Aid to Families with Dependent Children?"

3. Attachment to Educational Institutions

-current school enrollment

-full- or partial school year enrollment

-day or evening school enrollment

-enrollment in GED programs

Questions from the YIEPP survey that are used to indicate changes in this area are:

"Are you currently enrolled in a junior high school, or any kind of high school program, or in a GED program?"

"Were you enrolled all year or just part of the year?"

"Did/do you usually attend classes during the day or in the evening?"

"Were you in a GED program then? (From September 1977 to now)"

4. Long-term Educational and Occupational Aspirations:

-level of educational expectations

-level of occupational expectations

Questions from the YIEPP survey that are used to indicate aspirations are:

"How much education do you think you will actually end up getting?"

"What kind of work do you think you probably will be doing when you are 30 years old?"

Analytical Constructs

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is marked by a series of interrelated events that represent movement from economic dependence and participation in the family of origin to economic independence and establishment of a family of procreation. Adolescents are expected 1) to

receive substantial economic and social support from the family of origin; 2) not to be in the labor force; and 3) to be attached to school. These expectations are categorically opposed to those associated with adult status, especially with reference to school attendance and participation in the labor force.

As noted earlier, I describe the two statuses in terms of the following dichotomies in order to draw inferences about the impact of early motherhood on the transition from adolescence to adulthood: 1) receiving or not receiving support from their families; 2) having or not having own income from work or from welfare; and 3) attached or not attached to educational institutions. The effects of motherhood on educational and occupational goals are also examined. Mothers and non-mothers are compared in terms of these three indicators of status. Further, black and white mothers, and younger (15-17 years) and older (18-19 years) mothers are compared.

#### Statistical Analysis of Data

The statistical procedures for comparing the dependent variables across the selected categories of respondents use cross-tabular analyses generated by the Statistical Package

for Social Scientists. Non-mothers are used as a comparison or control group in order to describe the effects of motherhood on low-income teenagers' transition to adulthood. The variables of race and age are controlled in order to establish their significance for motherhood status. The chi-square test is used to answer the question of whether or not the differences between percentages are statistically significant. The larger the differences between the observed and the expected frequencies, the larger the value of chi-square. When the value of chi-square is larger than expected by chance, it is assumed the results did not occur by chance. It is customary to use either a five percent or one percent level of significance in making decisions about hypotheses. The levels of significance of tables are indicated by the asterisks beneath each table. For example, one asterisk represents chi-square at the 10 percent level, two asterisks represent chi-square at the five percent level and three asterisks represent chi-square at the one percent level.

The next chapter presents the empirical findings as they relate specifically to the research questions and hypotheses that have been outlined in this chapter.

CHAPTER IV  
STATUS TRANSITION OF TEENAGE MOTHERS:  
THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The literature provides several clues concerning the consequences of adolescent motherhood, and these findings often conflict when they are examined in the context of status transition. Conflicting pictures and explanations of adolescent motherhood are likely results of the various samples used and of the different time periods in which studies were conducted.

This investigation seeks to provide findings that will help to clarify and update the pictures and explanations of status transition among adolescent low-income females. The basic expectation that the literature and I present is that motherhood propels young women into adult status. One of the tasks of this research is to examine the extent to which this very general proposition needs to be qualified or amended. For research purposes, I anticipate that young mothers are more likely than non-mothers to be living in their own households; that they will not be attached to schools; and that they are more likely to be employed.

This chapter examines the specific research questions and hypotheses that were set forth in Chapter III. Particular findings and analyses are presented as a means of describing and explaining the events as well as the contexts involved in the transition of young mothers--black and white, relatively young and relatively old--to adult status.

#### Effects of Motherhood on Teenage Families

The first questions this research seeks to answer are "What impact does motherhood have on the relationship between teenagers and their families?" and "To what extent does motherhood lead to marriage and establishing independent families?" These questions are key because pregnancy during adolescence typically occurs premaritally and usually is unintended. Early motherhood increases the likelihood that low-income teenagers will remain in poverty either by straining resources of their family of origin or by creating unstable marriages.

Since teenage girls are generally living with their families when they become pregnant and then mothers, the crisis of an unexpected birth frequently has severe consequences, especially among poor and marginally poor families. One probable consequence is additional strain on

family resources already limited because of poverty. A frequent further consequence is the creation of a single-parent household. In the past decade there has been a precipitous rise in female-headed households, and most of these families are poverty-level. Another possible consequence is an early marriage. Early marriages are known to end in divorce, and adolescent parents are more likely than their non-parenting counterparts to have unstable marriages by age 29 (McCarthy and Menken, 1979).

Several dimensions of the impact of motherhood on family life and behavior are examined through use of this sub-sample of low-income females. First, the living arrangements of mothers are compared with those of non-mothers. Second, the marital status of mothers is examined; this is done in order to learn whether mothers are more likely than non-mothers to marry and to establish their own households. A third dimension examined is the availability of family support. The analysis of mother and non-mother differences includes an examination of racial and age differences.

It is hypothesized that 1) mothers will have a different and more independent relationship with their families of origin than will non-mothers; 2) larger

proportions of mothers will live away from their families; and 3) mothers are both more likely than non-mothers to be married and more likely not to receive financial support.

In the following section, we examine the relationships among the independent and dependent variables described earlier and indicate the support or lack of support for the various related hypotheses. Again this is done in order to describe and evaluate possible events and stages in the transition of low-income young women.

#### Current Living Arrangements

One of the significant differences between mothers and non-mothers in this sample is revealed clearly when current living arrangements are examined. The overwhelming majority of female youths live with their parents or guardians (Table 4-1); however, mothers are more likely than non-mothers to live apart from their families--nearly one in five (18 percent) as opposed to one in twenty (5 percent) respectively. These associations are statistically significant in the direction hypothesized, and they suggest that motherhood frequently impels teenage mothers to establish their own households at an early age. The establishing of a separate household is a prime

indicator of adulthood and an important gesture of independence from parents.

TABLE 4-1

Present Living Arrangements of Teenagers  
by Parenting Status\*

	<u>Mothers</u> (N=886)	<u>Non-Mothers</u> (N=2,946)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Living with parents or guardians	75.0***	91.0***
Not living with parents or guardians	18.0	5.0
Unknown	7.0	4.0

\*\*\*p < .01 < ,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

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\*The levels of significance between frequencies are indicated by asterisks next to the percentages. One asterisk represents chi-square at the 10 percent level, two asterisks represents chi-square at the 5 percent level, and three asterisks represents chi-square at the 1 percent level.

Racial differences in the living arrangements of black and white mothers were anticipated. Several researchers (Ladner, 1972; Furstenberg, 1976; Rainwater, 1966) show that young black females continue residing with their families after giving birth. The data used here confirm that black mothers are significantly more likely than white mothers to continue to live with families. Table 4-2 shows that the overwhelming majority of black mothers--more than four out of five (83 percent)--are living at home. On the other hand, one half (49 percent) of the white mothers are living with their families. These associations are statistically significant. The indications that black mothers' families continue to provide residential assistance to young black mothers suggests that these mothers are not pushed out of their parents' or relatives' homes by the event of motherhood--and thereby toward this aspect of adulthood--as much as young white mothers are.

TABLE 4-2

Present Living Arrangements of Mothers by Race

	<u>Black</u> (N=667)	<u>White</u> (N=219)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Living with parents or guardians	83.0***	49.0***
Not living with parents or guardians	10.0	40.0
Unknown	7.0	11.0

\*\*\*p < .01 ,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

Age is viewed as an important variable as it relates to teenagers' living arrangements (Furstenberg, 1976; Furstenberg and Crawford, 1978). For the purposes of this investigation, "younger" mothers are earlier defined as 15-17 years of age. It is expected that they are more likely to live with their parents than are older mothers. Therefore, the fact that they are legally under the age to live on their own, in part may account for the willingness of parents and guardians to provide a variety of support. The data presented in Table 4-3 confirms the expectation that younger mothers are more likely than older mothers to be living with their families at the time of the interview. For older mothers (18 and 19 years old) in this sample, nearly one in three (30 percent) are living away from their families, compared to about one in twelve (8 percent) of the teens who are 17 or younger. This statistically significant association between age and living arrangements suggests that age weighs heavily in families' decisions to provide residential assistance for their daughters who become parents. Age is a factor that affects young mothers' moves toward establishing independent households.

TABLE 4-3

Present Living Arrangements of Mothers by Age

	<u>Younger</u> (N=421)	<u>Older</u> (N=465)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Living with parents or guardians	86.0***	61.0***
Not living with parents or guardians	8.0	30.0
Unknown	6.0	9.0

\*\*\*p < .01,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

One primary event related to living away from the family of origin is the act of getting married. The expectation in American society is that married couples normally establish their own households. The next set of hypotheses addresses the relationship between motherhood and the act of getting married among the young women in this sample.

Early Marriage

Premarital pregnancy is one of the accompaniments of adolescent marriage. Early marriage of adolescents in households of lower socioeconomic status is linked with early parenthood (Elder and Rockwell, 1976; Chilman, 1983). Some researchers suggest that youths from lower

social-class origins who lack appropriate role models and status satisfactions are more likely to be attracted to sexual involvement and marriage as a means of gaining adult status and of seeking to establish independence (Clark, 1965; Ladner, 1972; Rainwater, 1970; Rubin, 1976). Further, it is suggested that many young women might view marriage as a way to escape from an oppressive family situation and to gain social status (Rubin, 1976). Another probable strong motivation of young mothers to marry is to legitimize pregnancies. Research findings lead to the anticipation that marriage rates will be higher both among white teenage mothers and among older teenagers.

The overwhelming majority of teenagers in this sample are single (Table 4-4). One in ten mothers are likely to be currently or previously married as compared with one in 25 non-mothers. When racial and age characteristics are taken into account, there are considerable differences in the marital status of mothers.

TABLE 4-4

Marital Status of Teenagers by Parenting Status

	<u>Mothers</u> (N=886)	<u>Non-Mothers</u> (N=2946)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Single	86.0***	95.0***
Married	10.0	4.0
Separated/Divorced	4.0	1.0

\*\*\*p < .01,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

The national data on marital status show that 18- and 19-year-old black females are less likely to be married than white females in the same age group (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1983). Howell and Frese (1982) and Kendel (1981) find similar differences in the marital behavior of black and white mothers. Rubin (1976) points out that white low-income mothers experience relatively greater social pressure to marry. Table 4-5 presents the findings concerning marital status by race. These findings indicate

TABLE 4-5

Marital Status of Mothers by Race

	<u>Black</u> (N=667)	<u>White</u> (N=219)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Single	95.0***	60.0***
Married	4.0	28.0
Separated/Divorced	1.0	12.0

\*\*\*p < .01,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

that the overwhelming majority (95 percent) of black mothers are single.\* The marital status of white mothers is significantly different--60 percent of them are single. Despite the frequency of marital breakup for adolescent marriages, more than one in four (28 percent) of white mothers are currently married. The associations are statistically significant, indicating that racial background is a factor in marriage for teen mothers (an indicator of adulthood).

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\*I found that very few black teenage mothers chose to marry the father of the baby during the field research in Harlem during 1981 (Mayfield, 1981:43).

Table 4-6 shows present living arrangements of low-income mothers, in this sample, by both race and marital status. The overwhelming proportion of single mothers live with families or guardians. Black mothers who are currently or were previously married are more likely to still reside with their families (slightly less than two in three, or 63 percent). In contrast, white mothers who are or were married and reside with their families account for slightly less than one in three, or 29 percent. Since the number of married black mothers is small, the statistical difference is only marginally significant.

TABLE 4-6

Present Living Arrangements of Mothers  
by Race and Marital Status

	<u>Never Married</u>		<u>Currently or Previously Married</u>	
	<u>Black</u> (N=553)	<u>White</u> (N=107)	<u>Black</u> (N=33)	<u>White</u> (N=87)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Living with parents or guardians	85.0**	63.0**	63.0*	29.0*
Not living with parents or guardians	15.0	37.0	37.0	70.0

\*.05 < p < .10, x<sup>2</sup> test of significance  
 \*\*.01 < p < .05, x<sup>2</sup> test of significance

Since age is an important determinant of the timing of marriage for mothers, the expectation is that young mothers are less likely than older mothers to marry. In addition, the research indicates that age is a major consideration in predicting marital behavior of mothers (Moore et al., 1979; Haggstrom et al., 1981). The data in Table 4-7, which shows that older mothers are twice as likely to be married as their younger counterparts (18 percent versus 9 percent), sustain the hypothesis of this study. The associations between age and marital status are statistically significant, confirming that age greatly influences the critical adult-like act of getting married.

TABLE 4-7

Marital Status of Mothers by Age

	<u>Younger</u> (N=241)	<u>Older</u> (N=465)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Single	91.0**	82.0**
Married	7.0	12.0
Separated/Divorced	2.0	6.0

\*\*\*p < .01,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

The important fact for our purposes here is that teenage mothers are more likely to marry than are their non-mother counterparts. However, black mothers and younger mothers are less likely to enter matrimony. An important indication of mothers' relationships to their families is the amount and kind of financial support available to them. The next section considers the availability and the use of family support as factors that might influence the transition and the definition of adulthood for teenage mothers.

### Family Support

This section places early childbearing within a social context. It is widely assumed that mothers rely on their families for economic assistance, child care services, and emotional support. Several researchers (Stack, 1974; Furstenberg and Crawford, 1978) show that parents, siblings, kin, and fictive kin help black teenage mothers to cope with their new responsibilities. Little research has empirically tested these propositions regarding family support for young white mothers or controlled analysis for age differences. This section examines the role played by families in providing support and assistance to mothers

according to race and age. The expectations are that mothers receive less family support than non-mothers and that race and age influence family support to teen mothers.

For the purpose of this study, family support is defined in two ways--financial assistance and child care assistance. Since the sample is of families whose incomes are at or below poverty-level, the probabilities are high that a baby would create an additional strain on limited family resources. Fewer teen mothers than non-mothers are expected to receive money from families because of the birth of children.

Mothers are less than half as likely as non-mothers to receive financial support from their families. Table 4-8 shows that 12 percent of mothers reported they received financial assistance from their families as compared to 30 percent of the non-mothers. The indications are that youths from poverty-level homes are unable to count on economic support from their families and that the incident of motherhood significantly reduces the possibility of such assistance.

TABLE 4-8

Teenagers Receiving Financial Support From Their Families  
by Parenting Status

	<u>Mothers</u> (N=886)	<u>Non-Mothers</u> (N=2946)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	12.0***	30.0***
No	87.0	69.0
Unknown	1.0	1.0

\*\*\*p < .01,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

It is suggested that inasmuch as early childbearing is prevalent among low-income blacks, families in this category tend to be accepting of responsibility for support of youthful mothers (Ladner, 1972; Stack, 1974). In keeping with such assertions, it is hypothesized that black mothers in this sample are more likely than white mothers to be dependent on their families for economic support. Table 4-9 shows that one in seven black mothers and one in fourteen white mothers report receiving regular allowances from their families. These statistics suggest that the black mothers in this sample depend on their families for

TABLE 4-9

Mothers Receiving Financial Support From Their Families  
by Race

	<u>Black</u> (N=667)	<u>White</u> (N=219)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	14.0**	7.0**
No	85.0	92.0
Unknown	1.0	1.0

\*\* .01 < p < .05, x<sup>2</sup> test of significance

economic support more than white mothers do.\* Additional evidence of the disposition and practice of black families to be relatively more providing of support than white families is found in these findings: that in this study group, black mothers live at home in greater proportions than white mothers do (as seen in Table 4-3), and that black mothers at home receive more support. This later association is but marginally significant, because less than one-fifth of mothers, black and white, receive this support.

Since younger mothers are likely to continue to reside at home, it is expected that they are more likely than older mothers to receive financial support from their families. Given the age factor, younger mothers have fewer options than older mothers for the economic independence

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\*During my field research in Harlem in 1981, I found that black teenage mothers generally turn to their families for support after delivery. Pestac, a 16-year-old mother comes from a family of seven children. Pestac dated and had sex with her boyfriend for three years prior to her pregnancy. Although Pestac's mother encouraged her to have an abortion, Pestac refused. During her childhood, she lived variously with her mother and her aunt and her cousins. Pestac is close to her many siblings and cousins. Their pattern of mutual sharing enables them to support a large number of people. Pestac's siblings and cousins provide child care to her daughter, which allows Pestac to return to traditional high school (Mayfield, 1981:39).

that might come from work, receipt of welfare, or the support of husbands. Table 4-10 shows that one in six younger mothers receives support as compared with one in nine of the older mothers; this financial support comes frequently as an allowance from families. This observation indicates that younger mothers are less likely than older mothers to assert their economic independence from the family, are more dependent on its resources, and in this regard, are less "adult" than older mothers.

TABLE 4-10

Mothers Receiving Financial Support From Their Families  
by Age

	<u>Younger</u> <u>(N=421)</u>	<u>Older</u> <u>(N=465)</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	16.0**	9.0**
No	84.0	90.0
Unknown	*	1.0

\*less than 1 percent

\*\* $.01 < p < .05$ ,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

Another type of support needed by teenage mothers is child care assistance. With child care provided, mothers

may be able to go to school or to work, if indicated or wished. Although the respondents in the study were not directly asked to identify providers of child care assistance, information is available on the costs, the length of time the service was provided, and the number of miles traveled for this service. In this context, the inference is made that if the cost of child care is zero, if the number of hours of services provided is greater than eight hours per day, and if there are no miles traveled for the service, then the family or kindred are providing child care services to the mothers. Differences in family-provided child care assistance related to the race and age of the mothers are projected. Specifically, it is anticipated that 1) a significantly higher proportion of black mothers than white mothers will receive child care support from families, and 2) younger mothers will tend to receive more child care support from families.

Table 4-11 shows that slightly less than half of the black mothers reported they can depend on someone else for child care, while only one-fourth of white mothers reported this. About half (48 percent) of black mothers, in contrast to a quarter of white mothers in this sample, receive this child care free. On the other hand, more than

four out of five (83 percent) white mothers in comparison to nearly two out of three (64 percent) black mothers receive child care assistance for more than 8 hours of the day. The overwhelming majority (over 80 percent) of both black and white mothers do not travel for this service. It is confirmed by these data that black mothers are more likely than white mothers to receive family-provided child care assistance; and the difference is statistically significant, as seen in Table 4-11.

TABLE 4-11

Indicators of Child Care Support for Mothers by Race

	<u>Black</u> (N=667)	<u>White</u> (N=219)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Someone Else Cares for Child</u>		
Yes	48.0***	25.0***
No	52.0	75.0
<u>*Weekly Cost of Child Care</u>		
\$0	69.0***	51.0***
\$1-14	10.0	10.0
\$15 & over	21.0	39.0
<u>*Daily Number of Hours Care Provided</u>		
1-7	23.0***	9.0***
8	13.0	8.0
9-24	64.0	83.0
<u>*Miles Traveled for Child Care (One Way)</u>		
0	86.0**	80.0**
1-3	10.0	15.0
4 & over	4.0	5.0

\*These percentages are based on the mothers who actually received child care assistance from other persons--320 black mothers and 55 white mothers.

\*\* $01 < p < .05$ ,  $x^2$  test of significance

\*\*\* $p < .01$ ,  $x^2$  test of significance

It is reasonable to expect that age would affect the amount of child care support as well as the financial support that teen mothers receive. Table 4-12 shows that younger mothers are more likely than older mothers to receive child care support. Three-fifths of younger mothers in contrast to slightly more than one-quarter of the older mothers, have persons assisting in the care of their children. Families provide child care for the younger teen mothers most often--76 percent of younger mothers pay nothing, 76 percent report having child care for nine or more hours per day, and 82 percent do not travel to receive the service. Only 27 percent of older mothers have other persons caring for their children. Older mothers are more likely to pay for this service, and only 50 percent of them have it for 9 hours or longer per day. Most child care support for both younger and older mothers is provided locally.

Free child care service appears to be available to nearly half of black mothers and to over half of younger mothers. The indications are that the family support serves to enable both black mothers and younger mothers to continue aspects of adolescence; family support is a prime source of housing, limited financial assistance, and child care service for these two categories of low-income teenage mothers.

TABLE 4-12

Indicators of Child Care Support for Mothers by Age

	<u>Younger</u> (N=421)	<u>Older</u> (N=465)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Someone Else Cares for Child</u>		
Yes	60.0***	27.0***
No	40.0	73.0
<u>*Weekly Cost of Child Care</u>		
\$0	76.0***	48.0***
\$1-14	11.0	9.0
\$15 & over	13.0	43.0
<u>*Daily Number of Hours Care Provided</u>		
1-7	14.0***	35.0***
8	10.0	15.0
9-24	76.0	50.0
<u>*Miles Traveled for Child Care (One Way)</u>		
0	82.0**	91.0**
1-3	13.0	6.0
4 & over	5.0	3.0

\*These percentages are based on the mothers who actually received child care assistance from other persons--251 younger mothers and 124 older mothers.

\*\* $01 < p < .05$ ,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

\*\*\* $p < .01$ ,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

The following propositions about the effects of early motherhood of low-income youths upon their status transition emerge from the preceding analysis:

Effects of Motherhood on Teenage Families

Mothers and Non-Mothers: General

- . Female youths who are mothers are more likely than female youths who are not mothers to establish their own households.
- . Teenage mothers are more likely than non-mothers to marry; however, the majority of teenagers are single.
- . Fewer school-aged mothers than non-mothers rely on family financial support.

Black Mothers and White Mothers

- . Black teenage mothers are more likely than white teenage mothers to live with their families.
- . Young black mothers are more likely than white mothers to delay marriage.

- . Black mothers are more likely than white mothers to receive family support in the form of financial and child care assistance.

#### Younger Mothers and Older Mothers

- . Older teenage mothers are more likely than younger mothers to live away from their families.
- . Younger mothers are more likely than older mothers to be dependent upon their families' support because they are less likely to marry.

The effect of the event of motherhood on family support of young low-income women varies significantly according to race and age of the subjects. Black mothers and younger mothers are more likely to receive family support because they tend to continue to reside at home. Family support can play a key role in the determination of whether or not teenage mothers return to school or go to work outside the home, and thereby, it is an important determinant of the transition to adulthood. The next section examines the impact of motherhood on economic independence.

Effects of Motherhood on Economic Independence  
from the Family

The pressures and responsibilities of motherhood place a variety of economic demands on adolescents and young women. Mothers who are less dependent on their families must consider other means of economic support, among them are work and the direct receipt of welfare. The participation of teenage mothers in the labor force is examined in this section; that is, whether they are employed or looking for work, and whether they receive welfare. Teenage mothers appear to be overrepresented among those receiving government assistance (Moore and Bart, 1982). Relatively more teenagers than older women resort to receiving welfare immediately after childbirth. Given a definition of adulthood that includes relative economic independence from families, the expectation is that mothers' behavior would reflect one aspect of adulthood status to the extent that they have their own financial resources, and that they are more likely to receive welfare.

The extent to which young mothers participate in the labor market is examined by testing the hypothesis that mothers are more likely to be currently employed or to have

engaged in a recent job search; that is, to have been looking for work in the past month. The data presented in Table 4-13 show that 1) in fact teenage mothers are somewhat less likely to be working than non-mothers (18 percent versus 27 percent); and 2) although they are not working to the same extent as non-mothers, teenage mothers want to work (87 percent vs. 73 percent). Possible explanations for these data are that 1) mothers face obstacles to labor-force participation, particularly in the lack of child care and the absence of skills, and 2) mothers are more likely than non-mothers to be looking for work because financial pressures related to motherhood impel them to seek jobs.

TABLE 4-13

Percentage of Teenagers Currently Employed and Teenagers  
Looking For Work By Parenting Status

	<u>Mothers</u> (N=886)	<u>Non-Mothers</u> (N=2946)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Employed	18.0**	27.0**
Looking for Work in past four weeks	87.0***	73.0***

\*\* $.01 < p < .05$ ,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

\*\*\* $p < .01$ ,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

Over the past 25 years, the employment position of black youths has been steadily deteriorating, this is especially true for young black females. In 1958, 22.8 percent of black female teenagers (ages 16-19) had jobs compared to 35 percent of white female teenagers had jobs. In 1983, only 17.0 percent of black female teenagers who had jobs as compared to 44.5 percent of all white female teenagers--a gap of more than 27 percentage points (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1983). It is anticipated that race (black) will have negative effects on female teenage employment; that is, that black mothers are less likely than white mothers to be currently employed or to have engaged in a recent job search. The data confirm that black mothers are

less likely to be currently employed. About one in six (17 percent) of black mothers are currently working in contrast to one in five (21 percent) of white mothers who held jobs (Table 4-14). These associations are only marginally significant. Similarly, black mothers are more likely than their white counterparts to look for work. Nine in ten (90 percent) of black mothers said they had been looking for work in the past month\*, and eight in ten (79 percent) of white mothers had been involved in a job search. These findings indicate that teenage mothers want to work regardless of their racial backgrounds.

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\*In the absence of legitimate employment outlets and opportunities in urban areas, street activities among some young women that frequently involve prostitution, drug abuse, and theft offer immediate cash payoffs. To the extent that "street activity" and hustling do this, they constitute a strong counterforce to legitimate employment and career aspirations. Carol is an attractive 18-year-old black teenage mother living in New York City with a two-year-old son. She dropped out of school in the ninth grade. After her son was born, Carol planned to return to school but was told by school officials that she would have to repeat the ninth grade if she returned to a traditional high school. She has not returned. Carol's major activities and efforts focused on getting money from the father of her child, who deals in drugs, and on her own street hustling (Mayfield, 1981: 26-27).

TABLE 4-14

Percentage of Mothers Currently Employed and Mothers  
Looking For Work By Race

	<u>Black</u> (N=667)	<u>White</u> (N=219)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Employed	17.0**	21.0**
Looking for Work in past four weeks	90.0***	79.0***

\*\* $.01 < p < .05$ ,  $\chi^2$  test of significance  
 \*\*\* $p < .01$ ,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

If the legal age for employment were the sole consideration, it would follow that younger mothers would be less likely to be currently employed or looking for work. However, the data for this study reveal that there is little difference in the work behavior of younger and older mothers. Table 4-15 indicates that less than one-fifth of mothers in each age group are working. The age of mothers does not appear to affect labor force participation since both younger and older mothers are equally likely to be looking for work.

TABLE 4-15

Percentage of Mothers Currently Employed and Mothers  
Looking For Work By Age

	<u>Younger</u> (N=421)	<u>Older</u> (N=465)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Employed	17.0	19.0
Looking for Work in past four weeks	88.0	86.0

\*\* .01 < p < .05,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

Receipt of Welfare

Since the research literature indicates that there is a strong association between the receipt of welfare and early motherhood (Moore et al., 1979; Haggstrom et al., 1981), the hypothesis here is that youthful mothers are more likely to receive welfare directly than youthful non-mothers. The criteria for eligibility would eliminate most youths without children as qualifiers for welfare benefits. The expectation is that white mothers will be more likely than black mothers to receive welfare, because more of them have established households, a key indicator of adult status. It is also anticipated that age will be a significant factor influencing the receipt of welfare, in

as much as it affects both welfare eligibility criteria and the probability that mothers will have established their own households.

The hypothesis with respect to the effect of motherhood status on welfare status is supported. The data presented in Table 4-16 show that almost one in five (18 percent) mothers have their own welfare budgets, in contrast to one in fifty (2 percent) of non-mothers. It should be remembered, however, that the majority (82 percent) of mothers are not welfare dependent.

TABLE 4-16

Teenagers' Direct Receipt of Welfare  
by Parenting Status

	<u>Mothers</u> (N=886)	<u>Non-Mothers</u> (N=2946)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	18.0***	2.0***
No	61.0	80.0
Unknown	21.0	18.0

\*\*\*p < .01,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

The hypothesis with reference to racial differences in the receipt of welfare by mothers is not substantiated. Table 4-17 shows that one in five (20 percent) black mothers receive welfare directly as opposed to one in nine (11 percent) white mothers.\* This finding suggests that black teenage mothers are more likely than white mothers to be single heads of households; and that white mothers who are more likely to be married and who ostensibly have husbands' support are not eligible for welfare assistance.

TABLE 4-17

Mothers' Direct Receipt of Welfare by Race

	Black (N=667)	White (N=219)
	%	%
Yes	20.0**	11.0**
No	59.0	65.0
Unknown	21.0	24.0

\*\* $.01 < p < .05$ ,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

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\*None of the black teenage mothers studied in the field research that complements this study reported that they aspired to having their own AFDC grants as a means of supporting themselves in the future. These mothers argued that AFDC grants are insufficient to provide the kind of life that they wanted for themselves (Mayfield, 1981:27-28).

Twenty percent of older mothers and two percent of younger mothers receive welfare (Table 4-18). It is likely that older mothers are receiving welfare to support their families, because they are more likely to live away from their parents and guardians.

TABLE 4-18

Mothers' Direct Receipt of Welfare by Age

	<u>Younger</u> (N=421)	<u>Older</u> (N=465)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	2.0***	20.0***
No	69.0	62.0
Unknown	29.0	18.0

\*\*\*p < .01,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

The data show that black mothers who live at home are more likely than white mothers who live at home to receive welfare (Table 4-19). On the other hand, white mothers, who are more likely than black mothers to live away from their families, are more likely to receive welfare.

TABLE 4-19

Percentage of Mothers' Direct Receipt of Welfare  
by Living Arrangement and Race

	<u>Living with Parents or Guardians</u>		<u>Not Living with Parents or Guardians</u>	
	<u>Black</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>White</u>
Receive Direct Welfare	35%**	15%**	65%*	85%*

\*\*  $.01 < p < .05$ ,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

Table 4-20 shows that the percentage of mothers who received welfare by marital status and race. Single mothers, especially black mothers, are more dependent on welfare. Again the small sample size inflates the proportion of white mothers who receive welfare. Tables 4-19 and 4-20 suggest that the single parents who live away from home are in most need for public assistance. Black mothers who are not married evince greater economic need than do single white mothers when black mothers are away from their family networks.

TABLE 4-20

Percentage of Mothers' Direct Receipt of Welfare  
by Marital Status and Race

	<u>Never Married</u>		<u>Currently or Previously Married</u>	
	<u>Black</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>White</u>
Receive Direct Welfare	91% <sup>**</sup>	54% <sup>**</sup>	9% <sup>*</sup>	46% <sup>*</sup>

\*\* .01 < p < .05, x<sup>2</sup> test of significance

The following propositions about the effects of teenage motherhood upon economic independence from the family emerge from the preceding analysis:

Attachment to Work and Welfare

Mothers and Non-Mothers: General

- . The majority of low-income teenagers are not working; approximately one in four teenage non-mothers and one in five teenage mothers are employed.
- . The overwhelming majority of teenage mothers want to work; approximately nine in ten mothers and three in four non-mothers reported they are looking for work.

- . Teenage mothers are less likely than teenage non-mothers to develop work skills and habits; this is one result of limited participation in the labor market.

#### Black Mothers and White Mothers

- . There is virtually no difference in the employment rates of black and white teenage mothers. Each group is likely to be unemployed even though both groups report a high interest in work.
- . Black teenage mothers are more likely than white mothers to have their own welfare budgets.
- . The outcomes above, with respect to attachment to welfare, are associated with living arrangements and marital status. Black teenage mothers who less often marry and live away from home are more dependent on public assistance, while white teenage mothers who more often marry more and live at home are less dependent on welfare.

### Younger Mothers and Older Mothers

- . Younger teenage mothers are equally as likely as older teenage mothers to be working and looking for work.
  
- . Youthful mothers are more likely than youthful non-mothers to receive direct welfare benefits, approximately one in five teenage mothers have welfare grants.
  
- . Older school-aged mothers are more likely than younger school-aged mothers to have their own welfare budgets; one in five older mothers in contrast to one in fifty younger mothers receives direct welfare.

The event analysis approach to understanding the life course of teenagers shows that the economic dimensions of adulthood are affected by labor force participation and income from other sources, such as welfare, family support, and marriage.

### Effects of Motherhood on Educational Attachment

Teenage motherhood affects the amount of schooling young women are able to achieve. Early childbearing is associated with significant educational loss (Moore et al., 1979; Zellman, 1981). Research shows that the majority of teenage mothers never obtain a high school diploma by age 29 (Chilman, 1983). Teenagers who become pregnant and decide to have the child usually leave school, at least for a short time, in order to give birth. Once having left school they often do not or cannot return. School-aged mothers are considerably more likely than non-mothers to discontinue their formal education (Moore et al., 1979). However, highly motivated teen mothers who receive encouragement or help from others are likely to continue their education (Furstenberg, 1976; Whitted, 1978).

In examining the impact of motherhood on education, four indicators are used to measure teenagers educational attachment. They are: 1) current school enrollment, 2) full- or partial school attendance, 3) attendance at day or evening school, and 4) attendance at alternative school settings (GED programs). Each of these indicators of school attachment is examined by race and age. The prediction is that the role of mother will conflict with

the role of student and decrease the attachment of mothers to the traditional high school. The assumption is that if mothers are able to attend school, they are more likely than their peers who are not mothers to participate in alternative school settings, for example, evening school or General Education Diploma (GED) programs. The following sections examine this prediction.

One measure of educational attachment is whether or not mothers are in school. Given the new demands of motherhood, the expectation is that mothers are less likely than non-mothers to be currently enrolled in school. Table 4-21 shows that motherhood has a negative effect on school enrollment; the association is statistically significant. Two-thirds of mothers are not enrolled in school at all, whereas only one in four (26 percent) of non-mothers are not in school. Motherhood is highly associated with dropping out of school.

TABLE 4-21

Current School Enrollment of Teenagers  
by Parenting Status

	<u>Mothers</u> (N=886)	<u>Non-Mothers</u> (N=2946)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Enrolled	33.0***	74.0***
Not Enrolled	67.0	26.0

\*\*\*p < .01, x<sup>2</sup> test of significance

The hypothesis that black mothers are attending school in greater proportions than white mothers is supported by Table 4-22 which shows that two of every five black mothers are likely to be enrolled in school in contrast to one in fourteen of white mothers--41 percent versus seven percent.\* The rate of enrollment for white mothers is remarkably low; only seven percent are currently enrolled

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\*All of the black families in my field research sample gave support to their teenage mothers continuing their educations. Support was most effective when it was focused and specific--involving for example, help with child care. Kelly is an example. Kelly is 17 and her son is a year and a half. Although she originally planned to marry the father of her son, her parents persuaded her not to. Her father is employed; her mother, who has a long work history, is currently unemployed and provides child care for the baby. The family expressed positive attitudes toward work, a desire for upward mobility, and encouraged Kelly to "make something" of herself. (Mayfield, 1981:24).

in school. The overwhelming majority of white mothers had dropped out of school at the time of the interview.

TABLE 4-22

Current School Enrollment of Mothers by Race

	<u>Black</u> (N=667)	<u>White</u> (N=219)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Enrolled	41.0***	7.0***
Not Enrolled	59.0	93.0

\*\*\*p < .01, x<sup>2</sup> test of significance

The hypothesis that younger mothers are more likely to be in school than older mothers is confirmed. Table 4-23 shows that more than one-third (37 percent) of younger mothers attend school currently, while slightly more than one-fourth (28 percent) of older mothers are enrolled. The marginal statistical significance suggests that age is not as important in determining school enrollment as some other variables, for example, such as family support and marriage.

TABLE 4-23

Current School Enrollment of Mothers by Age

	<u>Younger</u> (N=421)	<u>Older</u> (N=465)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Enrolled	37.0**	28.0**
Not Enrolled	63.0	72.0

\*\*\*.01 < p < .05, x<sup>2</sup> test of significance

The next section examines the amount of commitment to school attendance that mothers make over the course of the school year. The mothers were asked if they participated in school for all the school year or for just a part of it. The expectation is that mothers are less likely than non-mothers to be enrolled in school for the full academic term. The data in Table 4-24 sustain this hypothesis which

shows that approximately a third (32 percent) of the mothers attended school, whereas nearly nine out of ten (88 percent) of the non-mothers attended.

TABLE 4-24

Full- or Partial-Year Enrollment of Teenagers  
by Parenting Status

	<u>Mothers</u> (N=886)	<u>Non-Mothers</u> (N=2946)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>School Enrollment</u>		
All year	32.0***	88.0***
Part of the year	63.0	12.0
Unknown	1.0	0.0

\*\*\*p < .01,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

Inasmuch as black mothers demonstrated a greater attachment to school, it is to be expected that a larger percentage of them, as compared with white mothers, would remain in school all of the school year. Table 4-25 reveals that two of five black mothers and one of nine white mothers attend school full time--40 percent versus 11 percent.

TABLE 4-25

Full- or Partial-Year Enrollment of Mothers by Race

	<u>Black</u> (N=667)	<u>White</u> (N=219)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>School Enrollment</u>		
All year	40.0***	11.0***
Part of the year	55.0	88.0
Unknown	5.0	2.0

\*\*\*p < .01,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

Younger mothers are more likely than older mothers, to be enrolled in school for the full year. Table 4-26 reveals that nearly half (48 percent) of younger mothers are in school for the full year, while only slightly less than one-fifth (19 percent) of older mothers are enrolled in school for that time. This suggests that full-time enrollment is probably more feasible for younger mothers, since they continue to live at home and are more likely to receive child care support (as shown in Table 4-12).

TABLE 4-26

Full- or Partial-Year Enrollment of Mothers by Age

	<u>Younger</u> (N=421)	<u>White</u> (N=465)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>School Enrollment</u>		
All year	48.0***	19.0***
Part of the year	49.0	76.0
Unknown	3.0	5.0

\*\*\*p < .01,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

Typically teenagers attend traditional high schools which provide daytime sessions. Adults, who are marginally attached to educational institutions, are more likely to attend school in the evening because of full-time work or other responsibilities. For those students who are currently enrolled in school, the type of school they are attending is examined. Table 4-27 shows that mothers are less likely than non-mothers to attend day school; nearly three-fourths (71 percent) of non-mothers are going to day school. In contrast a larger percentage of mothers than non-mothers attend evening school--one in 14 (7 percent) versus one in 50 (2 percent).

TABLE 4-27

Day or Evening School Attendance of Teenagers  
by Parenting Status

	<u>Mothers</u> (N=886)	<u>Non-Mothers</u> (N=2946)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>School Attendance</u>		
Day	26.0***	71.0***
Evening	7.0	2.0
Not in School	67.0	26.0

\*\*\*p < .01, x<sup>2</sup> test of significance

As measured by attendance, black mothers and younger mothers are more attached to school. The hypothesis that black mothers are more likely than white mothers to attend day school is confirmed by examining the data in Table 4-28. One third (32 percent) of black mothers who attend school do so during traditional hours; this is in contrast to one in twenty (five percent) of white mothers. Black mothers attend evening school in larger proportions than white mothers--9 percent versus 2 percent.

TABLE 4-28

Day or Evening School Attendance of Mothers by Race

	<u>Black</u> (N=667)	<u>White</u> (N=219)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>School Attendance</u>		
Day	32.0***	5.0***
Evening	9.0	2.0
Not in School	59.0	93.0

\*\*\*p < .01,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

Given age and the family support available, it is reasonable to expect that younger mothers are more likely than older mothers to be enrolled in day school. This is confirmed when we look at the data in Table 4-29.

TABLE 4-29

Day or Evening School Attendance of Mothers by Age

	<u>Younger</u> (N=421)	<u>Older</u> (N=465)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>School Attendance</u>		
Day	34.0**	21.0**
Evening	3.0	7.0
Not in School	63.0	72.0

\*\* $.01 < p < .05$ ,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

Thirty-four percent of younger mothers compared to twenty-one percent of the older group attend day school.

Since mothers are less likely to be living with parents, the assumption is made that if they are interested in continuing their educations, they would seek alternative educational programs that would be available during convenient hours. There is an expectation that mothers would use the General Education Diploma programs more often than non-mothers. The data in Table 4-30 confirm this expectation. Although few of either group seek General Education Diplomas, mothers are more likely to do so; however, the relationship is not very strong, and the number of cases is small.

TABLE 4-30

Teenagers Enrolled in General Educational Diploma Programs  
by Parenting Status

	<u>Mothers</u> (N=886)	<u>Non-Mothers</u> (N=2946)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Enrolled	10.0**	4.0**
Not Enrolled	22.0	70.0
Not in School	68.0	26.0

\*\* $.01 < p < .05$ ,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

Since black mothers are more likely to enroll in regular high school programs, the prediction is that they are less likely than white mothers to be enrolled in General Educational Diploma programs. However, the data do not support this supposition. Black mothers are more likely than white mothers to attend GED programs--12 percent vs. 3 percent (Table 4-31). However, the association between the racial backgrounds of teen mothers and GED enrollment is of marginal significance.

TABLE 4-31

Mothers Enrolled in General Educational Diploma Programs  
by Race

	<u>Black</u> (N=667)	<u>White</u> (N=219)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Enrolled	12.0**	3.0**
Not Enrolled	29.0	4.0
Not in School	59.0	93.0

\*\* .01 < p < .05, x<sup>2</sup> test of significance

In a similar way, the expectation is that younger mothers would be less likely than older mothers to be enrolled in GED programs. The expectation is that 18- and 19-year-old mothers would take advantage of GED programs more than their younger counterparts would, because they depend less upon child care arrangements and are more likely to be married. Table 4-32 shows that about one in eight (12 percent) older mothers attend GED programs in contrast to one in twenty (5 percent) younger mothers.

TABLE 4-32

Mothers Enrolled in General Educational Diploma Programs  
by Age

	<u>Black</u> (N=421)	<u>White</u> (N=465)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Enrolled	5.0	12.0
Not Enrolled	32.0	16.0
Not in School	63.0	72.0

The expectations that motherhood would affect attachment to educational institutions are borne out in numerous specific ways. Although the majority of mothers are school dropouts, black mothers are more likely both to attend traditional high schools and to take advantage of various types of alternative schooling offered, including evening and GED programs. Younger school-aged mothers also have a greater attachment to school than older mothers do. It is probable that black mothers and younger mothers are better able to continue their schooling in a fashion similar to that of non-mothers; they receive substantial family support, especially child care.

The following propositions about the effects of teenage motherhood upon status transition emerge from the preceding analysis:

Attachment to Educational Institutions

Mothers and Non-Mothers: General

- . The majority of teenage non-mothers attend high school on a full-time basis, whereas approximately two out of three teenage mothers do not.
  
- . Teenage mothers are more likely to enroll in alternative educational programs, such as GED programs and evening schools.

Black Mothers and White Mothers

- . Although motherhood has an adverse effect on the school enrollment of all teenage mothers, its effects on the school enrollment of black mothers is less.
  
- . White teenage mothers are more likely than black teenage mothers to be school dropouts, although more than half of each group are dropouts.

- . Black teenage mothers are more likely to attend school the entire school year.
- . Black teenage mothers are also more likely to participate in alternative educational programs.

#### Younger Mothers and Older Mothers

- . Younger teenage mothers are more likely than older teenage mothers to participate in educational programs, although the large majority of each group are dropouts.
- . It is highly probable that the outcomes above, with respect to the relative greater school attachment and participation of black teenage mothers and younger teenage mothers, are functions of the facts that both black teenage mothers and younger teenage mothers have more family support in the areas of economic support and child care assistance; that they are less likely to be married; and that they are less likely to establish independent households.

The weighing and analysis of the various events in the life courses of black and white teenagers, such as motherhood, becoming older, and attending school, are useful in measuring the pathways, the pace, and the quality of the transition to adulthood. Thus far, the data suggest that the transition to adulthood for both white and older mothers is hastened because of their detachment from school; this is one aspect or component of adult status.

### Effects of Motherhood on Aspirations

The effects of motherhood on aspirations are examined in the context of the assumptions that higher education is an important part of the American dream for a good proportion of American youths, and that college education is closely associated with upward mobility. For purposes of this research, the hypothesis is advanced that motherhood reduces the aspirations of young women; specifically, that mothers are less likely than non-mothers to aspire to college educations and professional careers.

Table 4-33 shows that only one in seven (14 percent) of these teenage mothers aspire to finish college, while nearly one-third (29 percent) of non-mothers plan to earn a college degree.

Table 4-34 shows that approximately one-half of both mothers and non-mothers aspire to professional/managerial careers. Approximately one-half of each grouping--48 percent of mothers and 54 percent of non-mothers--aspire to careers that connote relatively high prestige and economic rewards. The paradox with reference to these career aspirations is that while both mothers and non-mothers want prestigious careers, they do not indicate that they are planning to undergo the training that is

necessary for these careers. This suggests serious lacks in effective knowledge of the demands of professional careers. Limited participation in the labor force and the lack of vocational preparation foster distorted views of the preparation and experiences needed for success and achievement in the work world.

TABLE 4-33

Teenagers' Aspirations for College Completion  
by Parenting Status

	<u>Mothers</u> (N=886)	<u>Non-Mothers</u> (N=2,946)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>College Completion</u>		
Yes	14.00***	29.0***
No	86.0	71.0
Unknown	*	0.0

\* less than 1 percent

\*\*\*p < .01,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

TABLE 4-34

Teenagers' Aspirations for Professional/Managerial  
Occupations by Parenting Status

	<u>Mothers</u> (N=886)	<u>Non-Mothers</u> (N=2,946)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Professional Aspirations</u>		
Yes	48.00**	54.0**
No	52.0	46.0

\*\* .01 < p < .05, x<sup>2</sup> test of significance

Research has indicated that more black than white mothers expect to earn higher education credentials (Polit et al., 1982). Analysis of the data for this study produces findings that show there are mixed results with respect to racial differences. Specifically, black mothers are more likely than white mothers to aspire to complete college. Table 4-35 shows that 16 percent of black mothers, in contrast to seven percent of white mothers, plan to finish college. Both black and white mothers share high occupational goals: over half of each group plan professional and managerial careers.

TABLE 4-35

Mothers' Aspirations for College Completion by Race

	<u>Black</u> (N=667)	<u>White</u> (N=219)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>College Completion</u>		
Yes	16.0**	7.0**
No	84.0	90.0
Unknown	0.0	2.0

\*\* $.01 < p < .05$ ,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

TABLE 4-36

Mothers' Aspirations for Professional/Managerial  
Occupations by Race

	<u>Black</u> (N=667)	<u>White</u> (N=219)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Professional Aspirations</u>		
Yes	49.0*	46.0*
No	51.0	54.0

\*.05 < p < .10, x<sup>2</sup> test of significance

The data that describe younger mothers' high-level occupational aspirations might suggest that their aspirations are unrealistically high and impractical. Table 4-37 shows that the younger mothers are less likely than older mothers to aspire to completing college; however, the younger mothers still project relatively high occupational goals. Table 4-38 shows that three of five (58 percent) younger mothers and two of five (39 percent) older mothers project high occupational careers. The fact that large proportions of younger mothers do not plan to finish college may be explained by their overriding desires to finish high school and the perceptions that college attendance seems a distant goal. This speculation is

grounded in the fact that younger mothers project high long-range educational aspirations, while their short-range objectives are low.

TABLE 4-37

Mothers' Aspirations for College Completion by Age

	<u>Younger</u> <u>(N=421)</u>	<u>Older</u> <u>(N=465)</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>College Completion</u>		
Yes	4.0**	23.0**
No	96.0	76.0
Unknown	0.0	1.0

\*\* $.01 < p < .05$ ,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

TABLE 4-38

Mothers' Aspirations for Professional/Managerial  
Occupations by Race

	<u>Younger</u> (N=421)	<u>Older</u> (N=465)
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Professional Aspirations</u>		
Yes	58.0	39.0
No	42.0	61.0

Most of the teenage mothers have aspirations that appear unrealistically high: although 14 percent of mothers want to finish college, one-half (48 percent) envision having professional careers by age 30. The aspirations of black mothers, and especially of younger mothers, suggest the larger credibility gaps.

In summarizing, the following propositions about the effects of early motherhood on aspirations emerge from the preceding analysis:

Effects of Motherhood on Aspirations

Mothers and Non-Mothers: General

- . Reduced educational goals are associated with motherhood. There is a significant difference in the percentages of mothers and non-mothers who plan to obtain college degrees.
- . There is little difference in the occupational aspirations of youthful mothers and non-mothers.

Black Mothers and White Mothers

- . Black teenage mothers have higher educational aspirations than do white teenage mothers.
- . Black teenage mothers are slightly more likely than white teenage mothers to project aspirations for professional occupations.

Younger Mothers and Older Mothers

- . Older teenage mothers are more likely than younger teenage mothers to want to earn college degrees.

- . Younger teenage mothers in comparison with older mothers have very high occupational aspirations.

At this point, the following might be concluded: teenage mothers' aspirations are extremely high, projecting a fantasy for their lives at 30. These unrealistic aspirations might suggest that youthful mothers are in the adolescent stage where they are still planning their futures. Further, low-income teenage mothers have limited exposure to those educational institutions and to work which might provide more realistic orientations.

It is appropriate now to link the research questions and the empirical findings more directly to the problematics of status transition.

The five research questions raised earlier are:

1. What are the effects of the events of low-income youths becoming mothers upon the following indicators of adult status and status change?
  - (a) Family relationships, including
    - (i) Marriage; and
    - (ii) Establishing an independent household.
  - (b) Economic independence, including
    - (i) Participation in the labor force; and
    - (ii) Direct receipt of welfare.

- (c) Educational activity, including
    - (i) School enrollment and attendance; and
    - (ii) Type of school attended.
  - (d) Orientations to the future, including
    - (i) Educational aspirations; and
    - (ii) Career goals.
2. Which indicators of adult status are relatively more frequent for status transition among low-income young mothers?
  3. How and to what extent does the event of a low-income female youth becoming a mother affect the normal process of adolescent status transition? Does it result in:
    - (a) Full and immediate transition to adult status?
    - (b) Partial transition to adult status?
    - (c) Ambiguity or indeterminacy of status?
  4. In what ways are the events of status transition of young low-income mothers affected by race and age?
  5. What are the implications of the findings of this study for (a) public perception and opinion, (b) social science concepts and research, and (c) social policy?

In assessing status transition for low-income teenage mothers, several indicators appear more frequently in their respective categories. In the case of mothers as a whole the following indicators reveal their adult status in

contrast to non-mothers:

<u>Adult Status Indicators</u>	<u>Mothers</u>	<u>Non-mothers</u>
No financial support	87%	69%
Not in school	67%	26%
In school part of the year	63%	12%

The indicators of adult status for black and white mothers which reflect a high proportion of adult status are as follows:

<u>Adult Status Indicators</u>	<u>Black Mothers</u>	<u>White Mothers</u>
Living away from family	10%	40%
Currently or previously married	5%	40%
Not in school	59%	93%

The indicators of adult status which are more frequent for status transition among younger and older mothers are as follows:

<u>Adult Status Indicators</u>	<u>Younger Mothers</u>	<u>Older Mothers</u>
Living away from family	8%	30%
Not in school	63%	72%

Although these indicators are suggestive of the relative importance of each criterion for status transition, a more sophisticated analysis is needed to test the true salience of these indicators. In this chapter, specific indicators of status were used to trace movement from one social institution to another. The following charts show the extent to which various categories of teenagers conform to the three major indicators of adulthood status (as presented in Chapter III).

The analysis has shown that for low-income female youth becoming a mother does not automatically make for a full and immediate transition to adult status. Chart 4-1 shows that although one in five teenage mothers live away from home, the overwhelming majority of teenage mothers do not. The analysis has also shown that being an "adult" on one or several indicators of adult status does not insure adult status on the other indicators. For example, the lack of financial support for black mothers is not associated with marriage or employment (Chart 4-2). Chart 4-3 presents another example in which the high dropout rate for younger mothers is not associated with independent living arrangements or marriage. The findings in the study suggest that the event of motherhood results in partial

movements to adult status, and that in the great bulk of cases, this results in significant indeterminacy or ambiguity. The extent and quality of adulthood status among teenage mothers varies in terms of the criteria used. Some of the implications of the findings presented here are discussed in the final chapter. In the summary chapter, criteria are used to locate teenage mothers in social institutions and to indicate the varying nature of status transition.

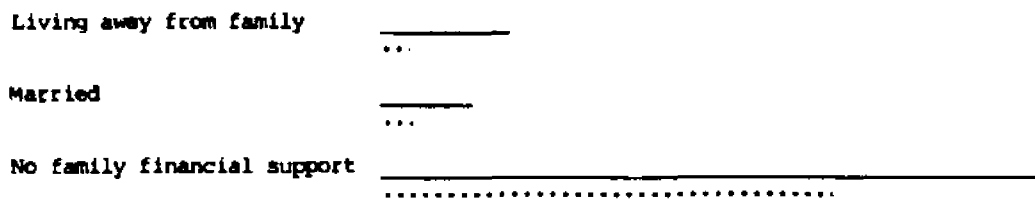
CHART 4-1

Profiles of Status Transition of Low-Income  
Teenage Mothers and Non-Mothers

\_\_\_\_\_ Mothers  
..... Non-Mothers

Indicators of Adult Status

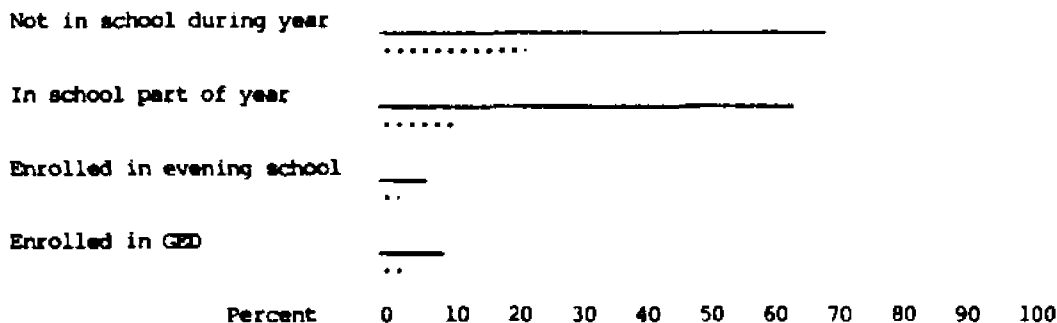
I. Family Relations & Support



II. Economic Independence From Family



III. Educational Status



Percent 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

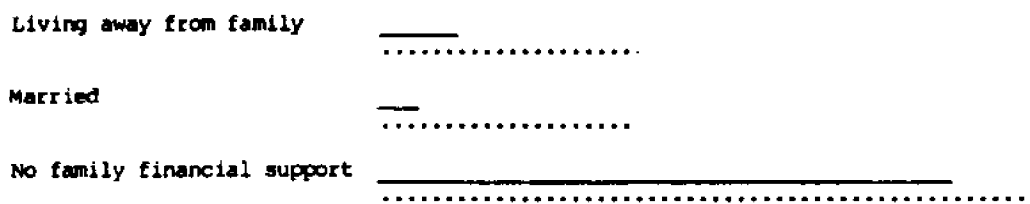
CHART 4-2

Profiles of Status Transition of Low-Income  
Teenage Black and White Mothers

\_\_\_\_\_ Black Mothers  
..... White Mothers

Indicators of Adult Status

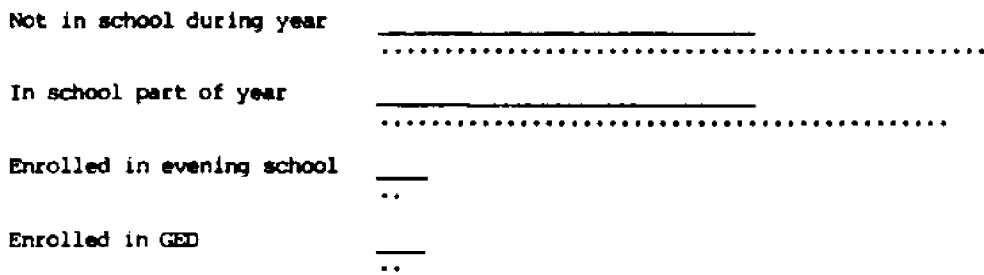
I. Family Relations & Support



II. Economic Independence From Family



III. Educational Status



Percent 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

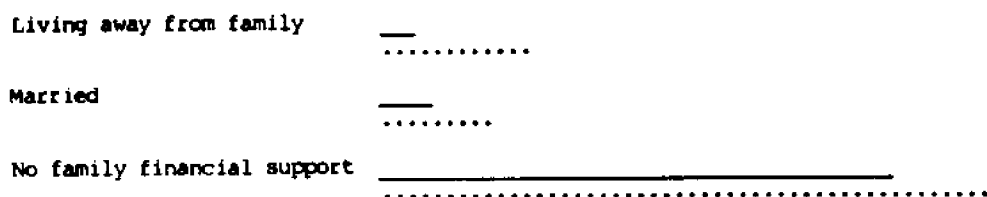
CHART 4-3

Profiles of Status Transition of Low-Income  
Younger and Older Mothers

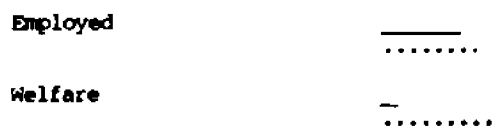
\_\_\_\_\_ Younger Mothers  
..... Older Mothers

Indicators of Adult Status

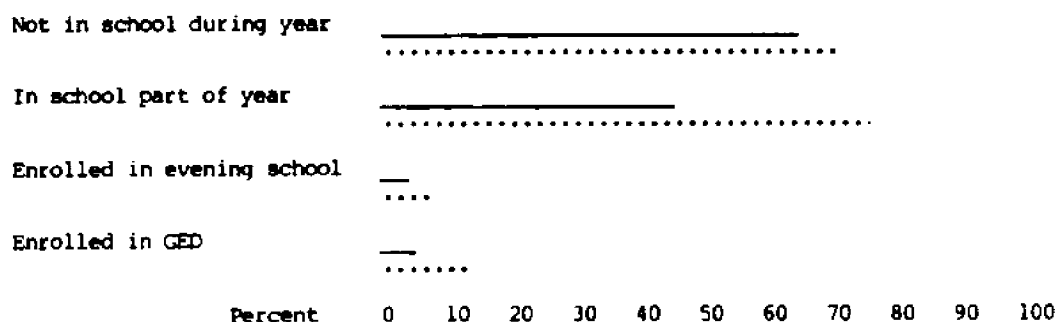
I. Family Relations & Support



II. Economic Independence  
From Family



III. Educational Status



Percent 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

**CHAPTER V**  
**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Introduction

During the past 15 years, there has been a wide-spread claim that the United States is experiencing an "epidemic of teenage pregnancy." American teenagers become pregnant and give birth and have abortions at significantly higher rates than do youths in other industrialized nations, e.g., Britain, the Netherlands, France, (Brozan, 1985). Although pregnancy rates among black American teenagers are much higher than rates among white teenagers, this does not account for the United States' high rates compared with other industrialized nations. The consequences of motherhood of adolescents have been examined, and for the most part, general predictions of negative consequences are made (Macon, 1974; Furstenberg, 1976). Teenage childbearing is closely associated with leaving school early, youth unemployment, welfare, and early marriages and divorces. Concern has increased in both the black and white communities, because the percentage of out-of-wedlock births among teenagers of both races has been higher in recent years (O'Connell and Moore, 1980; Wallis, 1985).

The public discussion about the consequences of teenage motherhood brings into focus issues about how teen mothers are to be viewed and the public policies needed to help them. This research investigation sought to understand some of the consequences of motherhood for low-income female youths by examining whether early motherhood propels young women into adult status or whether teen mothers remain in the adolescent status, in part or in toto. The expectation was that motherhood has the effect of hastening teenagers from adolescent to adult status. The specific questions are repeated below.

A secondary analysis of a subsample of YIEPP data was used to describe, analyze and explain the effects of early motherhood among low-income teenagers. The basic assumption was that school-aged mothers are expected, in larger proportions, to 1) live away from their families, 2) be separated from school 3) have their own incomes--the three factors that mark the transition to the status of adulthood.

The objectives of this concluding chapter are to 1) restate the theoretical concepts which help to inform the research, 2) place the research findings in a theoretical context, and 3) discuss some implications of these findings for theory and policy.

### Status Transition and Adolescent Motherhood

Status transition, as described in Chapter II, involves the process of changing from one set of expected positional behaviors in a social system to another. For example, one's status strongly influences the behavior and social identity of the person who participates in the transition to adulthood. In this context, motherhood is viewed as a physiological event which triggers a shift in behavior and leads to discarding old roles, adjusting to the demands of new ones, and accepting the responsibilities and demands of the new status.

Glaser and Strauss (1971) identify several dimensions which help clarify the transition process, the degree to which the transition is prescribed, and whether it is scheduled. Since teenage motherhood is not a socially prescribed event or condition in American society, it necessarily creates ambiguity and paradox in young women's lives. Since early motherhood is generally unscheduled, it reduces the chances that the transition to adulthood will be planned and follow a normal course. In American society there are few rituals or ceremonies which mark the transition into adulthood for most youths, especially when parenthood outside of marriage is involved. These factors

increase the difficulty of assessing the movement of contemporary teenagers to adult status.

This study uses the event analysis approach to viewing status transition; it focuses on status transition as "boundary crossing"; that is, the movement from one position to another, e.g., from adolescence to adulthood status. Adolescence stretches from the onset of puberty to young adulthood. It is the time of life when plans and aspirations are made for adulthood. During this time, youths are generally supported by their families, both financially and emotionally, and are expected to attend school. Entrance to young adulthood is less easily defined. Generally, the beginnings of the new status are marked by departure from family of origin, establishment of a new household, exit from school, and entry into the labor force. Some of the pathways to adulthood available to young women include 1) entering early marriage and parenthood 2) finishing school and starting to work and 3) becoming a parent prior to marriage and/or work. The prime concern of this study has been the extent to which motherhood helps propel low-income young women into a premature adult status.

Conflicting views about the consequences of entry into motherhood during school-aged years have been presented in previous research. Some studies suggest that girls become women through having children (Ladner, 1972; Stack, 1974; Bacon, 1974; Rainwater, 1970). On the other hand, other researchers maintain that early motherhood does not necessarily provide a reason for teenagers to move into adult roles (Furstenberg, 1976; Whitted, 1978). However, most of these studies focus on the teenagers' attitudes about their status and do not take into account the roles the teenagers actually play. Silverman (1975) provides several indicators that assess status and the process of status transition which emphasize behavior, rather than attitudes. She examines the timing of the event which creates the transition, the nature of event, changes in social relationships and the economic aspect of the event. The position of this study is that changes in social relationships and in positions in social institutions are the effective means to identify and to measure the process of status transition.

**Status Transition of Low-Income Adolescent Mothers:  
Research Results**

The following questions guided this research:

1. What are the effects of the events of low-income youths becoming mothers upon the following indicators of adult status and status change?
  - (a) Family relationships, including
    - (i) Marriage; and
    - (ii) Establishing an independent household.
  - (b) Economic independence, including
    - (i) Participation in the labor force; and
    - (ii) Direct receipt of welfare.
  - (c) Educational activity, including
    - (i) School enrollment and attendance; and
    - (ii) Type of school attended.
  - (d) Orientations to the future, including
    - (i) Educational aspirations; and
    - (ii) Career goals.
2. Which indicators of adult status are relatively more frequent for status transition among low-income young mothers?
3. How and to what extent does the event of a low-income female youth becoming a mother affect the normal process of adolescent status transition? Does it result in:
  - (a) Full and immediate transition to adult status?
  - (b) Partial transition to adult status?
  - (c) Ambiguity or indeterminacy of status?

4. In what ways are the events of status transition of young low-income mothers affected by race and age?
5. What are the implications of the findings of this study for (a) public perception and opinion, (b) social science concepts and research, and (c) social policy?

#### Effects of Teenage Motherhood on the Family

This section describes the impact of motherhood on the social relationships between teenagers and their families. Mothers are more likely than their non-parenting counterparts to live apart from their families than non-mothers; and race and age affect teenagers' relationships with their families.

The examination of the indicators of family relationship and support (that include living arrangements, financial or child care support from family, and marital status) sustains the prediction that mothers are more likely to live apart from their families than non-mothers. In this sense, they tend to be more adult in status and behavior.

Black and white mothers exhibit distinct differences with regard to living arrangements. Black mothers are especially more likely to live with their families. The finding of this study that the majority of black mothers

continue to reside with their families coincides with the findings of Kenkel (1981) and Howell and Frese (1982).

Mothers are more likely than non-mothers to marry. Motherhood is associated with early marriage as an independent variable. Mothers are approximately three times more likely to have been previously married than are non-mothers. Black teenage mothers are less likely to be married than their white counterparts. This finding supports those of other researchers who have found that young black women are less likely to get married and that whites tend to marry earlier (Kenkel, 1981; Rubin, 1976; Howell and Frese, 1982; Furstenberg, 1976; Wilson and Neckerman, 1985). Another conclusion to be drawn from this study is that younger teenage mothers are less likely to be married than older teenage mothers.

The amount of family support for young mothers, as measured by financial assistance and child care, is influenced by both living arrangements and marital status. Teen mothers are less likely than non-mothers to rely on parents and guardians for financial support. Examination of the data produces distinct differences between black and white mothers, and younger and older mothers. Black mothers are more likely than white mothers to receive financial support; younger mothers are more likely than

older mothers to receive regular allowances from their parents and guardians.

One outstanding conclusion is that teenage black mothers and younger teenage mothers are very likely to remain or to become dependent on parents and relatives. This conclusion is supported by the patterns of child care assistance provided by families of black and younger mothers. A larger proportion of families of black teenage mothers provide help with child care than do families of white mothers. Further, younger mothers are much more apt to receive child care support than are older mothers.

The indicators of family relations of teenage mothers suggest that considerable ambiguity and inconsistency mark this aspect of the approach and transition to adult status. Using this criterion alone, the conclusions with reference to adult status transition of teenage mothers are as follows:

Family Relationships (Marriage and Independent Households) as Indicators of Adult Status of Teenage Mothers and Non-Mothers

- . Mothers, as a whole, are more likely than non-mothers to approach or assume adult status; they are more likely to marry and more likely to have departed family households.

- . Black mothers are less likely than white mothers to 1) get married, 2) leave home, and 3) continue dependence on family support, including child care assistance.
  
- . Younger teenage mothers are less likely than older teenage mothers to 1) get married, 2) leave home, and 3) continue dependence on family support, including child care assistance.

Again, using this one criterion of status transition, although teenage mothers in general tend to move into, or to be pushed into, this area of adulthood more than non-mothers do, black teenage mothers and younger teenage mothers are characteristically more dependent and in an ambiguous sense, "less adult." The ambiguity appears to have less to do with maturity or the quality of behavior and family interaction among black teenage mothers and younger teenage mothers than it has to do with the pragmatic adaptations to social and economic realities, such as the shortage of eligible and gainfully employed young black men (Wilson and Neckerman, 1985).

**Effects of Teenage Motherhood on Labor Force  
Participation and Receipt of Welfare**

The needs for economic resources are critical for teenagers with children, particularly because they are less likely to receive family support. Two sources of income outside of the family were examined, employment and welfare. Labor-force participation of young mothers is related to their racial background, age, and the availability of child care assistance. Studies (Furstenberg, 1976; Mayfield, 1981; Polit et al., 1982) show that teenage mothers are willing to work and that they reject welfare in principle as an acceptable alternative to work.

The impact of motherhood on labor force participation is measured by examining current employment rates and the percentages of mothers looking for work. Further, the proportions of mothers and non-mothers who receive direct welfare aid are examined.

Although it was expected that mothers would be more likely than non-mothers to be currently employed and to have engaged in a recent job search, the findings of this study indicate that teenage mothers are less likely to be working than teenage non-mothers. However, the prediction

that there would be a relationship between motherhood and looking for work is sustained; the clear indications are that the overwhelming majority of teenage mothers are looking for work. The lack of child care assistance appears not to prevent mothers from looking for a job.

In view of consistent and continuing high unemployment rates for black youths, there was an expectation that black mothers would be both less likely to be currently employed and to have engaged in a recent job search than would white mothers. In fact, the findings are mixed. Whereas black teenage mothers are less likely than white teenage mothers to be currently employed, the overwhelming majority of black mothers are looking for work.

Similarly, when the legal age restrictions for work and employers' presumed preferences for older teenage workers were taken into account, the anticipation was that younger mothers would be less likely both to be currently employed and to be seeking a job. The data present a different picture--younger mothers are equally as likely as older mothers both to work and to look for work.

Since less than a fifth of the teenage mothers are employed, it was anticipated that welfare (e.g., Aid to Families with Dependent Children) would be an important

source of revenue for mothers. As expected, mothers are significantly more likely than non-mothers to have their own welfare budgets. Both black and white mothers receive welfare, but black mothers are twice as likely as white mothers to receive direct welfare. It appears that since black mothers are both more likely than white counterparts to be single heads of households and to experience greater unemployment, that they are more likely to be dependent on public assistance. Younger teenage mothers are less likely than older teen mothers to receive direct welfare. A very small proportion of younger mothers receive welfare, whereas a fifth of older mothers receive welfare.

When the economic independence of teenage mothers, specifically their participation in the labor force and the direct receipt of welfare, is considered as an indicator of status transition, the findings of this study are as follows:

Economic Independence (Labor Force Participation and Direct Receipt of Welfare) as Indicators of Adult Status of Teenage Mothers and Non-Mothers

- . Although teenage mothers are in the labor force to a lesser extent than teenage non-mothers, they evince as strong or stronger desires to work.

- . Even though the majority of black teenage mothers live with families and receive family support, they evince a strong desire to work.
- . The relative ages of teenage mothers does not impact significantly on their participation and desire to participate in the labor force.
- . Teenage mothers are more likely than teenage non-mothers to have their own welfare budgets.
- . Both white and black teenage mothers tend to receive direct welfare to a significant degree; however, black teenage mothers are twice as likely as white teenage mothers to receive direct welfare.
- . The greater use of direct welfare by black teenage mothers appears to be a function of the fact that they are more likely than their white counterparts to be both single heads of households and to experience unemployment.
- . Younger teenage mothers are less likely than older teenage mothers to receive direct welfare.

Using labor force participation as a criterion of adulthood, because mothers are less likely to be in the labor force, they are in this sense "less adult"; however, their dependence on and receipt of welfare makes them "more adult" inasmuch as this is a source of funds received outside of the family.

#### Effects of Motherhood on Attachment to Educational Institutions

Educational attachment is measured by a number of indicators including: current school enrollment, and full- or partial-year enrollment. The type of school program is used as an indicator to determine the type of commitment to education. It was anticipated that differences in school attachment would occur between mothers and non-mothers, black and white mothers, and younger and older mothers.

It was found that mothers are less likely than non-mothers to be currently enrolled in school; this is related, of course, to the responsibilities and tasks of motherhood. The majority of female youths who are not mothers attend school, whereas only a third of teenage mothers are in school. Black mothers are more likely than white mothers to attend school, because black mothers are

more likely to live at home and have child care support available to them. Two of every five black mothers are enrolled in school, whereas the overwhelming majority of white mothers had dropped out of school. Younger mothers are more likely than older mothers to be enrolled in school.

Mothers are less likely than non-mothers to be enrolled for the full school year. Because black mothers were more likely to be enrolled in school at the time of the interview, it was anticipated that black mothers would be more likely than white mothers to attend school for the full year. The prediction of the relationship between race and attending school for most of the year was accurate, in that teenage black mothers are approximately four times more likely than white mothers to attend school for the full year. Similarly, younger teenage mothers are more likely than older mothers to be enrolled for the full school year.

It was anticipated that mothers are likely to have atypical educational experiences; for example, teenage mothers are 1) less likely than non-mothers to attend day school and 2) more likely than non-mothers to enroll in alternative school programs. These expectations are confirmed. Teenagers without children are more likely to

attend traditional day school than mothers are. Although a slightly higher percentage of youthful mothers than non-mothers attend evening school, mothers are only slightly more likely to use alternative school settings.

Black mothers are more likely than white mothers to attend both day school and evening school. The expectation that black mothers would be less likely than white mothers to be enrolled in GED programs is not supported; black mothers are significantly more likely than white mothers to be enrolled in GED programs. Black mothers are more attached to school than white mothers; and black mothers use more and different types of educational settings.

Younger mothers are significantly more likely than older mothers to attend day school. Younger mothers are also less likely than older mothers to be enrolled in GED programs. The findings about younger mothers parallel those about black mothers; both of these groups are likely to be in school, as are teenagers without children, and in this regard, they are more "adolescent" than white mothers and older mothers.

Effects of Teenage Motherhood on Educational  
and Occupational Aspirations

Generally, the expectation of this study was that motherhood would reduce the aspirations of teenagers, and more specifically that the teenage mothers would be less likely than non-mothers to aspire to a college education and professional career.

The educational and occupational goals of mothers and non-mothers, black and white mothers, younger and older mothers, are not synchronized, that is, their respective educational and occupational goals do not coincide. For example, most youths expect to achieve professional careers without indicating at the same time the expectation of finishing college. Even though youthful mothers are less likely than non-mothers to aspire to a college education, mothers and non-mothers expressed in the same degrees expectations that they will have professional or managerial careers at the age of 30. For both mothers and non-mothers, aspirations for careers appear to be unrealistically high, because only one in three of each category plans to obtain a college degree. Mothers are only slightly more likely than non-mothers to consider non-professional careers, such as those that involve clerical and service occupations.

Black youthful mothers are almost twice as likely as white youthful mothers to aspire to college educations. Black and white youthful mothers share to an equal degree aspirations to have established prestigious careers by age 30.

Age does not seem to affect the patterns of apparently unrealistic career aspirations that characterize a sizeable proportion of younger and older teenage mothers. It was anticipated that younger mothers are more likely to aspire to achieve a college education; however, the findings show that younger mothers are less likely than older mothers to aspire to earn college degrees. Only four percent of younger mothers plan to finish college. By a wide percentage margin, younger teenage mothers are more likely than older teenage mothers to expect professional careers. Fewer older mothers have such high career goals.

Schooling and career aspirations of teenagers--indicators or orientations to the future--are factors of significance for the process of status transition to adulthood. The significance of the related behaviors and projections is summarized as follows:

Schooling and Career Aspirations and Projections as Indicators of Adult Status of Teenage Mothers and Teenage Non-Mothers

- . Teenage mothers are not likely to remain in school; however about one in three in this study are enrolled in school.
  
- . Black teenage mothers are more likely than white mothers to attend school; a larger proportion of white teenage mothers than black teenage mothers drop out of school.
  
- . Youthful mothers are more likely than youthful non-mothers to attend evening school and to be enrolled in alternative school programs.
  
- . Black teenage mothers are more likely than white teenage mothers to attend school for the full school year.
  
- . Younger teenage mothers are more likely than older teenage mothers to attend school for the full school year.

- . Black teenage mothers are attached to school more than white teenage mothers; they are more likely than white teenage mothers both to attend day school and to be enrolled in GED programs.
  
- . The educational and occupational goals of all adolescents tend to be not synchronized to a large extent; career aspirations of youthful mothers and youthful non-mothers tend to appear unrealistic.
  
- . Black adolescent mothers are twice as likely as white adolescent mothers to aspire to attend and to graduate from college.
  
- . Apparent inconsistency and unreality lie in the facts that younger teenage mothers are less likely than older teenage mothers to aspire to obtain college degrees; yet they are more likely than older teenage mothers to expect professional careers.

As has been the case with each of the indicators of adult status described and discussed previously, the

examination of the schooling and career aspirations of teenage mothers results in a mixed and somewhat ambiguous picture insofar as the status transition of teenage mothers from adolescence to adulthood is concerned.

### Summary and Implications

This investigation examined how the event of motherhood affects the status transition of low-income young women from adolescence to adulthood. Using various behaviors as indicators of these two statuses, I examined how likely mothers were to fit into these positions in contrast to teenagers without children. Two main themes emerged from this analysis. First, motherhood does appear to create an abrupt transition for young women. Mothers are less attached to their families of origin, and are both more likely to have married and to receive less family support than their non-parenting counterparts. Mothers, for the most part, are detached from educational institutions, are less likely to be enrolled or to have invested a full year in school at the time of the interview. Although mothers are not likely to be working, they are more likely than non-mothers to have their own source welfare support. A second major theme relates to the variation in the status

transition of teenage mothers as a function of the influence of race and age. Other independent variables particularly the teenagers' race and age should be taken into account in order to describe and to explain the complex dynamics of the approaches and pathways of low-income adolescent females to adult status.

The conclusion to be drawn from the findings that compare black and white teenage mothers is that young black mothers' behavior appears to be more indicative of adolescent status; inasmuch as black mothers are more likely than white mothers to continue to live with their families, are less likely to marry, and are more likely to receive greater family support, including child care assistance. Although black mothers want to work as expressed by their job searching activities, they are less likely than their white counterparts to be attached to the labor market and more likely to receive welfare. Teenage black mothers are more likely to retain features of adolescence when educational measures are used.

White mothers, on the other hand, are more likely to live away from home, to marry early and to receive minimal family support. Nearly all of the white mothers are out of school and are marginally attached to educational institutions. Although a sizeable percent of white mothers

do work, they, too, are looking for work. Overall, using these measures, the behavior of white mothers exhibits more of the characteristics associated with adult status than is the case for black mothers, inasmuch as key aspects of status are largely dependent on family and school.

Age differences exist in the school-aged mothers' relationship to school institutions. When considering age, younger mothers' roles in relationship to family and educational institutions place them in adolescent status. Younger mothers are more likely to continue to reside with their families of origin and to receive a considerable amount of support from them, particularly assistance in child care which enables them to return to school. Younger mothers are just as likely as older mothers to work and to be looking for work. However, younger mothers are less likely to have income of their own through welfare in comparison to the 18 and 19 year old mothers.

Older mothers' behavior clearly reflects more of an adult status. They are less likely to live at home, to receive family support and are more likely to marry than younger mothers. Further, older mothers are less likely to be enrolled in school and are more likely to work and receive welfare to maintain their more independent households.

The major conclusion of this study is that the complex and rugged pathway to adulthood for a sizeable proportion of low-income youths may start with the event of becoming a mother before marriage and subsequent entry into the labor force. This conclusion holds implications for the public's perception of adolescent mothers, for social science theory and conceptualization and for social policy.

The popular perception of low-income adolescent mothers is based on a negative stereotypical image. Typically, young mothers are viewed as immoral, unmotivated and as hopeless about their futures. American cultural stereotypes focus on how blacks more than whites are caught in the devastating culture of poverty. Popular perception is also based on teenager mothers occupying adolescent status suggested by such terms as "children having children" or "babies having babies." The findings in the study suggest that low-income teenage mothers are in a marginal status, where they possess characteristics of both adolescence and adulthood. The findings also suggest that teenage mothers are not a monolithic group; background factors, for example, race and age affect the pace and the complexity of their transition to adulthood. In addition, the data showed that low-income teenage mothers are not hopeless about their futures but remain optimistic about their lives.

The conclusions derived from this study suggest important implications for social science theory and conceptualization. First, there is a need to redefine and refine the concept of, and pathways to adult status for low-income female teenagers. Since low-income female teenagers are sexually active and are not strongly motivated to prevent births, they are likely to become parents before the completion of high school and entry into the labor force. However, early motherhood for low-income youths does not dictate adult status. This study showed that black mothers and mothers under the age of 17 continue to maintain adolescent status when they continued to reside with their families and remained in school. Therefore, becoming mothers during teenage years in the low-income community is not a clear demarcation of adult status. This new "marginal" and "ambiguous" status for teenage mothers challenges the findings of Ladner (1972) and Rainwater (1970) when they write that early motherhood in low-income black communities is a "clear demarcation" of adult status. Although there are no formal "rites of passage" to adulthood in low-income communities, there is a marginal status which is characterized by traits of both adolescent and adulthood statuses. Further research is needed to address the length of time which teenage mothers occupy

this marginal phase; it is anticipated the marginal phase would vary for different categories of youths when considering class, race and age differences. In addition, it is indicated that serious attention should be given to including the study of adolescent men in the broader concerns of the literature on adolescent fertility.

Since many low-income teenage mothers are optimistic about their futures, the challenge is to increase the opportunities for them to complete their schooling to enter the labor force and to create viable marriages and families. The conclusions in this study suggest a great need for policies and practices that will drastically reduce adolescent fertility, improve and increase educational and occupational opportunities for both low-income black young men and young women. It is indicated that serious attention should be given to developing and instituting realistic education with respect to sex and human sexuality that will be available at the earliest practical age and through early adulthood. This would include knowledge about, and greater availability and accessibility to contraceptives for teenage women and men. For the foreseeable future and as a practical matter the educational system needs to provide appropriate child care facilities to accommodate teenage mothers.

Although this study focuses on low-income teenage mothers and although there is patently a need to strengthen adolescent mothers' ability to compete in the labor force, special attention must be given to extend the kind and quality of job training and economic opportunities to low-income young men that enable them to become economically viable husbands and fathers.

**APPENDIX**

TABLE A-1

Summary Table of Percentages of Youths Reflecting  
Adult Status by Parenting Status

<u>Adult Status Indicators</u>	<u>Mothers (N=886)</u>	<u>Non-mothers (N=2946)</u>	<u>Statistical Significance</u>
<u>1. Family Relations &amp; Support</u>			
Living away from family	18%	5%	***
Currently or previously married	14	5	**
No financial support from family	87	69	***
<u>2. Educational Attachment</u>			
Not in school	67	26	***
Part of school year	63	12	***
Evening school	7	2	**
GED enrollment	10	4	**
<u>3. Economic Independence From Family</u>			
Employed	18	27	**
Welfare	18	2	**

\*\*.01  $\leq$  p  $\leq$  .05,  $\chi^2$  test of significance  
 \*\*\*p  $\leq$  .01,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

TABLE A-2

Summary Table of Percentages of Mothers Reflecting  
Adult Status by Race

<u>Adult Status Indicators</u>	<u>Black (N=667)</u>	<u>White (N=219)</u>	<u>Statistical Significance</u>
<u>1. Family Relations &amp; Support</u>			
Living away from family	10%	40%	***
Currently or previously married	5	40	***
No financial support from family	85	92	***
<u>2. Educational Attachment</u>			
Not in school	59	93	***
Part of school year	55	88	***
Evening school	9	2	***
GED enrollment	12	3	**
<u>3. Economic Independence From Family</u>			
Employed	17	21	**
Welfare	20	11	**

\*\* .01  $\leq$  p  $\leq$  .05,  $\chi^2$  test of significance  
 \*\*\* p  $\leq$  .01,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

TABLE A-3

Summary Table of Percentages of Mothers Reflecting  
Adult Status by Age

<u>Adult Status Indicators</u>	<u>Younger (N=421)</u>	<u>Older (N=465)</u>	<u>Statistical Significance</u>
1. <u>Family Relations &amp; Support</u>			
Living away from family	8%	30%	***
Currently or previously married	9	18	**
No financial support from family	84	90	**
2. <u>Educational Attachment</u>			
Not in school	63	72	**
Part of school year	49	76	***
Evening school	3	7	**
GED enrollment	5	12	**
3. <u>Economic Independence From Family</u>			
Employed	17	19	**
Welfare	2	20	***

\*\* .01  $\leq$  p  $\leq$  .05,  $\chi^2$  test of significance  
 \*\*\* p  $\leq$  .01,  $\chi^2$  test of significance

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