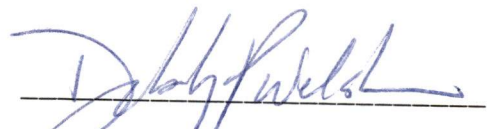


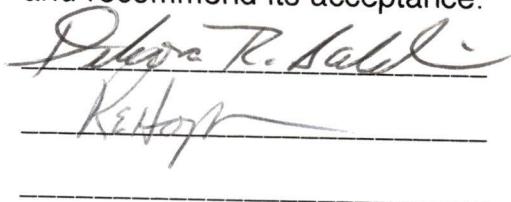
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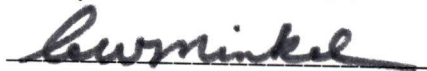


Deborah Welsh, Major Professor

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Accepted for the Council:



Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of The Graduate School

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH SUBSEQUENT CHILDBEARING
AMONG YOUNG UNWED MOTHERS

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Roxie F. Massey
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ABSTRACT

Previous studies have documented associations between self-esteem, locus of control, a number of demographic and family background variables, and premarital childbearing. The present study, a secondary analysis of longitudinal data, examines these variables, and the number of children born to young mothers over a 14 year period (1979-1993). The sample consists of 914 never-married young women who were between the ages of 14 and 22 when first interviewed in 1979. Self-esteem levels did not differ between young women who had no children, those who had 1 child, and those who had 3 or more children. Also, there were no significant differences found in the locus of control orientation for these 3 groups. Of the demographic and family background variables, age at first birth, mother's education, father's education, educational goals, age at first sex, socioeconomic status (SES), and father/stepfather in household were found to be significantly different for the 3 groups. No significant differences were found in the frequency of religious attendance. It was concluded that demographic variables concerning a young woman's context, aspirations, and her sexual history are all significant determinants of the number of children born to the young mothers, while her psychological characteristics are not.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent Childbearing

A vast literature has accumulated over the past several decades describing the causes and consequences of adolescent pregnancy (see Miller & Moore, 1990 for a review). In general, this literature emphasizes the deleterious impact pregnancy has on the adolescent, her baby, and society in general (Hofferth & Moore, 1979; Millman & Hendershot, 1980). These studies indicate that once an adolescent has a baby, the likelihood of additional births is greatly increased, and that these mothers and their children are at increased risk for living a lifetime of poverty. However, many adolescents do not follow this negative trajectory so widely discussed by politicians and community leaders. Many unwed mothers who give birth during the teenage years reorganize their lives and go on to become self-supporting (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, & Morgan, 1987). Upchurch & McCarthy (1990), for example, argue that early motherhood does not necessarily produce educational failure and economic dependency, but often results in socioeconomic achievements that are no worse than those of women in similar circumstance who bear children in later years. Similarly, Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, & Morgan (1987) found few and less dramatic differences between early and late childbearers on negative and social outcomes. In a longitudinal study, these authors found that a significant percentage of Black adolescent mothers from very disadvantaged circumstances have managed, by their late twenties or early thirties, to achieve an adequate or even good living for themselves. A large number of these adolescent mothers were able to finish their high school education, find

employment, and move away from welfare dependency. Additional births, however, may impede this process of becoming self-sufficient for these young mothers.

Few studies have been conducted that attempt to identify the population at greatest risk for having additional children during the teenage years. The studies that have been conducted have tended to focus on subsequent pregnancy as an inevitable outcome of having a premarital birth during adolescence. The primary focus of these studies has been on the probability and timing of subsequent pregnancies, and on the racial differences of teenagers who have additional births (McLaughlin & Micklin, 1983; Mott, 1986). For example, Mott (1986) reported that the youngest Black mothers in his sample (those 16 and under) were more likely than the youngest White mothers to have a rapid second birth (within 2 years). The oldest White mothers (those 19-22) were more likely than the oldest Black mothers to have an additional child quickly. In the current study, we are interested in examining factors associated with the particular trajectories taken by young unmarried mothers. We examine a number of psychological, demographic, and family background variables in our investigation of subsequent childbearing among unwed mothers.

The statistics pertaining to subsequent pregnancies among adolescents are not encouraging. Adolescents who become pregnant are reported to be at greater risk for experiencing repeat pregnancies outside of marriage (Millman & Hendershot, 1980; Mott, 1986), and those pregnant adolescents who choose to become parents are reportedly faced with a host of economic and social challenges (Moore & Waite, 1977; Card & Wise, 1978; Moore, 1978). These authors conclude that a teenager who has a child decreases her chances of

economic self-sufficiency, and that the children born to these mothers face long-term negative life chances. Other research, however, suggests that the eventual outcome of adolescent mothers, particularly in the area of educational attainment, depends on the adolescents' prior characteristics, rather than just on the age when they bear their first child (Upchurch & McCarthy, 1989). In addition, the adolescents' families often extend a great deal of support to the young mothers and their children. Their provision of child care assistance, instructions in child care, as well as financial assistance and emotional support serve to lessen the negative impact associated with the adolescent birth (Baldwin & Cain 1980; Mott & Maxwell, 1981). These studies show that when adolescents remain in their homes, relatives, the maternal grandmother in particular, often help out as the young mother struggles to complete her education and enter the labor force (Furstenberg et al., 1987). This is perhaps most evident among urban Black adolescents where in many instances, these infants are born into networks of kin who assist each other in bearing the stresses of disadvantaged lives (Anderson, 1990). The teenager draws on the support of the kin network for raising and supporting the child while she continues her education and enters the labor force.

Significance of Study

The majority of the studies on out-of-wedlock childbearing has focused on first-time pregnant adolescents or first premarital births in assessing the impact of self-esteem and/or locus of control on out-of-wedlock childbearing. The present study investigated the impact that self-esteem and locus of control may have on repeated childbearing outside of marriage. The following question was addressed: What is the difference in the self-esteem level and

the locus of control of young women who have no children, young women who have 1 child, and young women who have 3 or more children outside of marriage? In addition, the current study also addressed the following question relating to demographic and family background variables: Are there differences in these variables for young women who have no children, young women who have 1 child, and those young women who have 3 or more children outside of marriage? The included variables are: age at first birth, mother's education, father's education, frequency of religious attendance, age at first sex, socioeconomic status (SES), educational goals, and the presence of a father or stepfather in the household.

The determination of these factors in adolescent childbearing may lead to a better understanding of the causes of the subsequent childbearing rate by this population. This study may be useful to educators and health professionals in identifying girls at high risk for repeat pregnancy, and in planning programs which might aid in the prevention of repeated childbearing among adolescents.

The objective of this study was to analyze whether psychological, demographic, and family background variables contribute in some way to an increased risk of subsequent childbearing outside of marriage. The present study is a secondary analysis of data collected in a national survey, the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY). We utilized Rosenberg's Self-Esteem measure and items from Rotter's Scale of Locus of Control to assess the self-esteem and locus of control of young mothers with one child born outside of marriage, young mothers with 3 or more children born outside of marriage, and a control group of young women with no children. We also utilized interview items related to demographic and family background characteristics.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Adolescent Sexuality

Teenagers are reportedly having sex in increasing numbers. Forrest & Singh (1990), for example, reported that the number of adolescents aged 15 to 17 who ever had sexual intercourse rose from an estimated 33 percent in 1982 to 38 percent in 1988. Among adolescents aged 18 to 19, the estimated rise was from 64 to 74 percent. Teenagers may be motivated to engage in sexual activity for reasons similar to those that motivate single adults and married couples to indulge in sexual activity. According to Shulman (1967), these reasons include: reproduction, pleasure, consolation, self-affirmation, excitement, relaxation, distraction, stimulation, and also as a kind of sharing, as a gift, or to get the feeling of belonging. It is difficult, however, for adults to accept that teenagers may engage in sexual activity for the same reasons many of them do. Rather, we define this behavior among adolescents as socially inappropriate or deviant (Welsh, Rostosky, & Kawaguchi, in press). This lack of acceptance, according to Goldfried and Davidson (1976) results in a lack of good models and reliable information regarding sexual behavior and its consequences. Thus, teenagers are experimenting with sexual behavior without adequate knowledge of the long-range consequences or sufficient information to make well-informed decisions as they attempt to integrate sexuality into their relationships.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem has been associated with premarital pregnancy during the

teenage years. Rosenberg (1965) refers to self-esteem as "a positive or negative attitude toward a particular object, namely, the self." Positive feelings about oneself are formed when the immediate environment is stable and nurturing (Rosenberg, 1965). Rosenberg showed that young children make comparisons in their immediate environment prior to the formation of self-esteem. The individual with negative feelings toward himself, or low self-esteem, is likely to be more vulnerable, less assertive, awkward with others, and feel isolated. According to Rosenberg, "low self-esteem makes them relatively submissive or unassertive in their dealings with others."

Crockenberg & Soby (1989) suggest that an adolescent may become pregnant as a way of bolstering self-esteem. According to these authors, "the adolescent may expect motherhood to improve her status: as a mother, she will have an important task to perform. She may also expect the baby to love her and the baby's father to feel bound to her." Luker (1975) makes the case that an adolescent with low self-esteem may be unconcerned about avoiding pregnancy simply because there is little to lose if she becomes pregnant. If she does not expect educational or career success, early pregnancy and parenthood will not interfere with any important individual goals and will carry little personal "cost."

The literature relating self-esteem and first pregnancies and/or premarital births among adolescents has not been consistent. Whereas some studies have found that low self-esteem/self-concept is related to an increased risk of pregnancy among adolescents (Barth, Schinke, & Maxwell, 1983; Elkes & Crocitto, 1987; Horn & Rudolph, 1987; Paik, 1992), other studies have found no significant differences, or only weak associations, between self-esteem and premarital pregnancy (Lineberger, 1987; Robbins, Kaplan, Martin, 1985;

Robinson & Frank, 1994; Streetman, 1987) . Smith, Johnson, and Findlay (1994) found that pregnancy was related to self-esteem for European American adolescents, but not for African American adolescents. These authors examined the self-esteem scores of pregnant, parenting, and never-pregnant African American and European American adolescents. Their findings indicated that pregnant African American adolescents tended to have better self-esteem scores than pregnant European American adolescents, and similar scores to the two groups of never-pregnant adolescents. The never-pregnant groups in the sample also had significantly better scores than the pregnant European American adolescents. They concluded that out-of-wedlock childbearing among African American adolescents is likely to be received less negatively by significant others, and is likely to result in an elevated status for these youths. Whereas European American adolescents likely receive much harsher reactions from their immediate environment and the larger cultural community.

The inconsistent nature of this literature may be attributed to a variety of methodological factors in the studies. Some of the studies used small convenience samples, while others lacked adequate comparison groups. Still others used cross-sectional retrospective rather than prospective longitudinal data. Another possible explanation for the inconsistent nature of the data is that self-esteem becomes a factor only when these young mothers continue to have babies out of wedlock. That is, since a number of these girls become pregnant by default (Lineberger, 1987) or, as the accidental result of unprotected intercourse, we would expect, that of the girls who become pregnant, some will have high self-esteem, while others may have low self-esteem. Those with low self-esteem would likely be the ones who have additional births in an attempt to

recreate the feeling of being loved by an infant and as a means of holding on to the new baby's father.

Locus of Control

Locus of control has received some attention in the study of premarital pregnancy. In defining locus of control, Rotter (1966) stated that "the effect of a reinforcement depends upon whether or not the person perceives a causal relationship between his own behavior and the reward." External control, as explained by Rotter is "when a reinforcement is perceived by the subject ...as the result of luck, chance, or fate, as under the control of powerful others, or as unpredictable because of the complexity of forces surrounding him." A belief in internal control according to Rotter is when "the person perceives that the event is contingent upon his own behavior or his own relatively permanent characteristics."

Research on the relationship between locus of control and premarital pregnancy has failed to produce consistent results. Some researchers have reported a positive relationship between external locus of control and premarital pregnancy (McIntyre, Saudargas, & Howard, 1991; McLaughlin & Micklin, 1983), whereas others have reported no association between this variable and premarital pregnancy (Robbins, Kaplan, & Martin, 1985). Locus of control has been associated with premarital pregnancy through its influence on an adolescents use of contraceptives. For example, adolescents with internal locus of control have been reported to be more effective contraceptive users (Steinlauf, 1979). This finding, however, has been contradicted by other researchers (Harvey, 1976; Herold, Goodwin, & Lero, 1979). Herold et al. (1979) found no significant correlations between locus of control and

contraceptive behavior, the effective and ineffective contraceptors did not differ in their orientation of control.

The inconsistent nature of this literature relating locus of control and premarital childbearing likely parallels the nature of the literature on self-esteem and out-of-wedlock childbearing. That is, teenagers who become pregnant may have either an internal locus of control or an external locus of control. However, we would expect that those girls who become pregnant repeatedly might likely feel that they have little or no control over their lives. These girls would likely perceive fate or chance as determining the outcome of their lives, and thus fail to actively prevent additional births.

Subsequent pregnancies among disadvantaged and particularly minority youths might likely indicate an attempt to exert some control over their lives. For instance, a share of the "good life" or the "American Dream" may seem unobtainable to these youth, particularly those who feel that access to these things is under the control of powerful others. Having a family might be viewed by the teenager as the one thing that is within her power to control.

Demographic and Family Background Characteristics

Family background characteristics have been shown to be significant determinants of the incidence of teenage pregnancy. Many researchers attribute the high rates of premarital pregnancy to factors of the teenagers environment such as socioeconomic status and the presence of a father in the household. Lower SES youths are reported to have higher first-time and repeat pregnancy rates than higher SES youths. Mott (1986), measured SES by the level of parental education and found that those young mothers whose mothers did not finish high school were more likely to have a second birth within 24

months of the first as compared to those whose mothers did complete high school. Similarly, Paik (1992), from his sample of girls attending a special school for pregnant girls, found that those girls whose mothers dropped out of high school had 28 percent more repetitive pregnancies than those girls whose mothers finished high school (18%).

The presence of a father in the household has been shown to have a negative relationship with continued out-of-wedlock childbearing. Teenage girls in father-absent households reportedly engage in sexual intercourse at earlier ages and have intercourse more frequently than girls from two-parent families (Zelnik & Kantner, 1980). This would put them at increased risk for higher rates of unplanned pregnancies. Gispert, Brinich, Wheeler, & Krieger (1984), from their comparison of adolescent girls who had been pregnant once with adolescent girls who had become pregnant at least twice during the same period, found that those adolescents who had become pregnant only once tended to come from homes in which a father was present. Zelnik & Kantner (1980) argue that adolescents from one-parent, low-income families often experience deprivations in affection, security, and a sense of significance, which lead them to seek fulfillment elsewhere.

Some studies have found strong associations between religious involvement, premarital intercourse, and becoming pregnant before marriage (Zelnik, Kantner, & Ford, 1981). The influence of religion on a teenager's behavior likely depends on how frequently she participates in religious activities, and on how strongly she adheres to religious teachings. Although Kantner & Zelnik (1972) reported that the more regular the church attendance, the lower the proportion of their sample with sexual experience, Zelnik et al. (1981) reported that greater religious attendance did not affect the likelihood of

becoming pregnant before marriage. One possible explanation for these findings is that some religions hold strong views against contraceptive use. Therefore, although fewer adolescents may be experimenting with sex, those who do, may not be protecting themselves from pregnancy because of religious teachings against birth control use. In a more recent study, Plotnick (1992) found mixed effects of religious attendance. He reported that, for Catholics, those adolescents who attended services less regularly were more likely to become pregnant than were those who attended regularly. For non-Catholics, however, religiosity was unrelated to the likelihood of premarital pregnancy.

Early dating, and subsequent sexual activity has been identified as a risk factor for adolescent pregnancy. Furstenberg (1976) and Zelnik (1980) note that frequent dating over a long period of time is eventually accompanied by sexual intercourse. Those young people who begin to date at an early age tend to develop steady relationships sooner, and to have sexual intercourse sooner than adolescents who begin dating later (De Anda, 1982). These younger girls are exposed to the risk of early pregnancy through inadequate contraceptive practices. Younger girls are argued to be less well informed about contraceptive measures and how to obtain them than are older teenagers and rely on often times reluctant male partners to provide protection from pregnancy (Zelnik & Kantner, 1980).

The literature reports that adolescents who give birth are likely to have a second birth soon; and the younger the age, the greater the likelihood (Meyerowitz & Malev, 1973; Card & Wise, 1978, Trussell & Menken, 1978, Ford 1983, Mott, 1986). Trussell and Menken (1978) found that during the first three years, women whose first birth occurred at ages 15-17 have .79 additional children; while those who experienced a first birth at 20-24 have only .66 -- a

difference of 20 percent. Between the fifth and tenth years after the first birth, the younger mothers have 47 percent more children, and between the 10th and 15th years, 72 percent more than the older mothers.

Hanson, Myers, and Ginsburg (1987) reported that high educational expectations reduce the likelihood of premarital childbearing. Those teenagers who have high long-term educational expectations tend to have long-term goals that motivate them to delay sexual activity, or to be more careful contraceptors if they do engage in sexual intercourse. Plotnick (1992) reported similar findings from his examination of teenage pregnancy and its resolution. He found that high educational expectations had a negative relationship with premarital pregnancy, while it showed a positive relationship with abortion. Thus, those teenagers having positive attitudes toward education and clear educational goals avoided becoming pregnant, or tended not to give birth if they did.

For the purposes of the current study, the following hypotheses will be tested:

- I. a.) Young women with 3 or more children will have lower self-esteem than those young women with 1 child and those with no children.
 b.) Young women who have 3 or more children will have more external locus of control than those young women with one child and those with no children.
- II. The self-esteem level of young women who have 3 or more premarital births will decrease from time 1 (1980) to time 2 (1987).
- III. There will be significant differences between the 3 groups on demographic and family background variables (age at first birth, mother's education, father's education, frequency of religious attendance, educational goals, age at first sex, SES, father/stepfather in household).

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Population and Sample

The present study looks at the similarities and differences between the young woman who has no children, the young mother who has 1 child, and the young mother who continues on to have 3 or more children out of wedlock. For this study we analyzed data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY), which is a nationally representative sample of 12,686 persons who were 14 to 22 years of age when interviews were first conducted in 1979. Subsequent interviews have been collected annually. The sample for the present study was restricted to those never-married females who either had no children, or who had borne at least one child by 1993. The time from initial interview (1979) to 1993 represents a period of 14 childbearing years for the sample. The final sample (n=914) is small compared to the original sample because many of the young women married and/or divorced between 1979 and 1993. The first group consisted of young mothers who had 1 birth outside of marriage (n=206) and the second group consisted of young mothers who had 3 or more children (n=169) outside of wedlock. A control group (n=541) that consisted of young women who had no children was used for comparison. Those young mothers who had 2 children were excluded from this sample because we were interested in determining the differences between the young mothers who had one child and stopped, and those young mothers who continued on to have a number of children outside of marriage. Those young women who either married and/or divorced over the period of data collection were also excluded from this sample because of the complexity of determining

which, if any of their children were born outside of marriage.

Procedures

Respondents to the NLSY answered the 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), and a four-item subset from the Rotter Scale of Locus of Control (Rotter, 1966). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale contains 10 statements of approval or disapproval and is set on a Likert-type scale which requires subjects to respond to each descriptive item by indicating the degree to which each item describes the self. The four response choices are strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. High scores imply high self-esteem. Respondents answered the self-esteem items in 1980 and again in 1987. The NLSY only has responses on four paired items adapted from the Rotter scale for internal-external locus of control. This scale measures the extent to which persons believe they have control over their lives through self-motivation and self-determination (internal control) as opposed to the extent that chance, fate, or luck controls their lives (external control). High scores correspond to an internal locus of control. The locus of control items were answered in 1979.

The analysis also included background variables that have been shown to be associated with nonmarital childbearing by previous research. The variables included for this analysis were: age at first birth, mother's education, father's education, SES, frequency of religious attendance, educational goals, age at first sex, and the presence of a father or stepfather in the household. The items relating to frequency of religious attendance and educational goals were answered in 1982. Items relating to the remaining variables were answered in 1979.

The current analysis focused on the effects of locus of control, self-esteem, and demographic and family background variables on subsequent premarital births. We examined the role of these variables in predicting never-married mothers with multiple children. A multivariate analysis of variance or MANOVA was computed on the 11 variables to determine whether there were significant differences in the 3 groups of young women. A two-tailed t-test was used to compare the 1980 and the 1987 self-esteem measures.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

General Characteristics of the Sample

The sample for the present study consisted of 914 never-married females between the ages of 14 and 22 when data was first collected in 1979. The ethnic origin of this group was 46.6 % Whites, 47.6 % Blacks, and 5.8 % Hispanics (Table 1).

Table 1. Age and Ethnic Origin

Category	<u>n</u>	%
Ethnic Origin:		
White	426	46.6
Black	435	47.6
Hispanic	53	5.8
Age:		
14-15	251	30.3
16-17	251	30.3
18-19	240	29.0
20+	86	10.4

Approximately 30.3 % of the sample were 14 and 15 year olds, 30.3 % were 16 and 17 year olds, 29.0 % were 18 and 19 year olds, and 10.4 % were 20 years of age and above (20+). These data are presented in Table 1.

A total of 541 of the subjects reported having no children. Of this group 61.7 % were Whites, 33.5 % were Blacks, and 4.8 % were Hispanics. Three-hundred seventy-three of the subjects had given birth to either 1 child or 3 or more children (3+). Of those subjects with 1 child, 27.8 % were Whites, 63.9 %

were Blacks, and 8.3 % were Hispanics. Of those subjects with 3 or more children, 20.8 % were Whites, 73.2 % were Blacks, and 6.0 % were Hispanics (Table 2).

Table 2. No. of Children by Race

Race	No. of Children					
	0 <u>n</u>	%	1 <u>n</u>	%	3+ <u>n</u>	%
White	334	61.7	57	27.8	35	20.8
Black	181	33.5	131	63.9	123	73.2
Hispanic	26	4.8	17	8.3	10	6.0

Of the 14 and 15 year olds in the sample, 33.6 % had no children, 24.3 % had 1 child, and 27.2 % had 3+ children. Of the 16 and 17 year olds, 29.7 % had no children, 36.2 % had 1 child, and 25.3 % had 3+ children. The 18 and 19 year old group consisted of 26.6 % with no children, 30.8 % with 1 child, and 34.2 % with 3+ children. Of the 20+ group, 10.1 % had no children, 8.7 % had 1 child, and 13.3 % had 3+ children (Table 3).

Table 3. No. of Children by Age Group

Age Group	No. of Children					
	0 <u>n</u>	%	1 <u>n</u>	%	3+ <u>n</u>	%
14-15	163	33.6	45	24.3	43	27.2
16-17	144	29.7	67	36.2	40	25.3
18-19	129	26.6	57	30.8	54	34.2
20+	49	10.1	16	8.7	21	13.3

Findings by Hypotheses

Data were analyzed to examine the relationship between self-esteem, locus of control, and subsequent childbearing. There were two hypotheses stated for this analysis. The results are presented in Table 4. The first hypothesis (1a.) stated that "young women with 3 or more children will have lower self-esteem than those young women with 1 child and those young women with no children." Analysis of Variance revealed no significant differences between the three groups on their self-esteem assessed in 1980, $F(2, 426) = 0.82, p > .05$, or in 1987, $F(2, 426) = 1.27, p > .05$.

Table 4. Self-Esteem and Locus of Control in 3 Groups of Young Women

Child	Self-Esteem (1980)		Self-Esteem (1987)		Locus of Control	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
0	23.96	2.15	24.16	1.96	11.59	1.61
1	23.66	2.21	24.47	1.77	11.64	1.49
3+	23.70	2.81	24.04	2.32	11.75	1.48

The second hypothesis (1b.) stated that "young women who have 3 or more children will have a more external locus of control than those young women with 1 child and those young women with no children." The mean difference in locus of control scores for the 3 groups was not statistically significant, $F(2, 426) = 0.31, p > .05$ (Table 4).

Hypothesis II stated that "the self-esteem level of young women who have 3 or more premarital births will decrease from time 1 (1980) to time 2 (1987)." A two-tailed t -test was used to compare the levels of self-esteem on the two measures. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. 1980 and 1987 Self-Esteem for Mothers with 3+ Children

Self-Esteem	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
1980	23.49	2.58	160	-1.004	0.3171
1987	23.77	2.54	159		

The t-value of -1.004 with p = 0.3171 indicated no significant difference between the 1980 and the 1987 self-esteem measures.

Hypothesis III stated that "there will be significant differences between the 3 groups on demographic and family background variables." These results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Demographic and Family Background Variables for 3 Groups of Young Women.

No. of Children	0		1		3+	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Mother's Education	12.12	2.99	10.54	3.07	9.61	2.81
Father's Education	12.30	3.73	10.03	3.50	8.99	3.68
Religious Attendance **	2.86	0.48	3.09	0.50	2.73	0.49
Educational Goals	15.53	1.96	14.50	2.07	12.77	2.06
Age at First Sex	17.70	2.04	17.08	1.89	15.99	1.73
SES *	0.17	0.38	0.37	0.49	0.63	0.49
Father/Stepfather *	0.69	0.46	0.53	0.50	0.39	0.49

Note. * These variables are dichotomous variables and should be interpreted as percentages. ** Values 1-3 indicate low frequency, 4-6 high frequency.

The mean level of education completed by the respondents' mothers differed significantly between the 3 groups, F (2, 426) = 25.55, p < 0.0001. Significant differences were found in the mean level of education completed by

the respondents' fathers, $F(2, 426) = 30.71, p < 0.0001$. The frequency of religious attendance for the 3 groups was not significantly different, $F(2, 426) = 1.31, p < 0.2711$. The mean educational goals were significantly different for the 3 groups, $F(2, 426) = 57.82, p < 0.0001$. The mean age at first sex for the 3 groups was significantly different, $F(2, 426) = 23.22, p < 0.0001$. The 3 groups also differed on their SES, $F(2, 426) = 37.15, p < 0.0001$. Finally, there were significant differences between the 3 groups as to whether their father or stepfather lived in their home, $F(2, 426) = 12.94, p < 0.0001$. Table 7 presents group differences on the preceding variables.

Table 7. Group Differences in Demographic and Family Background Variables

No. of Children	0	1	3+
	<u>M</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>M</u>
Mother's Education	12.12 _a	10.54 _b	9.61 _c
Father's Education	12.30 _a	10.03 _b	8.99 _b
Educational Goals	15.53 _a	14.50 _b	12.77 _c
Age at First Sex	17.70 _a	17.08 _b	15.99 _c
SES	0.17 _a	0.37 _b	0.63 _c
Father/Stepfather	0.69 _a	0.53 _b	0.39 _c

Note. Means in the same row that do not share subscripts are significantly different.

The mean difference in age at first birth for the 2 groups of young women with children are presented in Table 8. This difference was statistically significant, $F(1, 364) = 144.71, p < 0.0001$.

Table 8. Age at First Birth for 2 Groups of Young Mothers

No. of Children	1		3+	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Age at First Birth	22.66	4.62	17.88	2.52

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study have been presented in this chapter. The study sample was described in terms of ethnic origin, age, and categories of children. There were two hypotheses which dealt with self-esteem and/or locus of control and a third hypothesis which addressed demographic and family background variables previously identified as influencing pregnancy among adolescents. The first hypothesis (Ia.) which stated that "young women with 3 or more children will have lower self-esteem than those young women with 1 child and those young women with no children" was not confirmed as no significant differences were found among the 3 groups. Hypothesis Ib. also was not confirmed as no significant differences were found among the 3 groups. This hypothesis stated that "young women who have 3 or more children will have a more external locus of control than those young women with 1 child and those young women with no children." Hypothesis II stated that "the self-esteem level of young women who have 3 or more premarital births will decrease from time 1 (1980) to time 2 (1987)." This hypothesis was not confirmed as no significant differences were found in the self-esteem scores as measured in 1980 and in 1987. Of the demographic and family background variables stated in hypothesis III, age at first birth, mother's education, educational goals, SES, age at first sex, and father/stepfather in household were found to be significantly

different between the 3 groups. On the father's education variable, the no child group was significantly different from the two groups with children, while no significant differences were found between the group with 1 child and the group with 3 or more children. The respondent's frequency of religious attendance was not significantly different for the 3 groups.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

Findings from this study suggest that demographic variables concerning young womens' contexts, aspirations, and sexual history were all associated with subsequent pregnancy, while the psychological characteristics examined were not related to subsequent pregnancies. Specifically, age at first sex, values regarding educational aspirations, parent's education, the age at which a young woman begins to have sexual relations, if there was a father or stepfather in the household, and SES were all associated with subsequent pregnancies in this sample. The psychological variables examined, self-esteem and locus of control, were not associated with number of subsequent children.

Although teenage pregnancy and childbearing have been the focus of considerable research in recent years, little emphasis has been placed on the teenager's environment in the determination of factors associated with subsequent childbearing. Lower socioeconomic status, for example, has been linked with teenage pregnancy through early sexual experimentation and frequent sexual activity. Teens from low-income, single-parent households are reported to have higher rates of premarital intercourse and to experiment with sex at earlier ages (Zelnik & Kantner, 1980). These adolescents who become sexually active at early ages are at risk for becoming pregnant early, and are capable of bearing several additional children while still adolescents. Many of these teenagers are from households in which the parent is likely stressed by personal and economic difficulties and may not be able to provide adequate

supervision or emotional or social support to their daughters.

The finding that the age at which a mother bears her first child is associated with subsequent pregnancy is consistent with previous literature (Card & Wise, 1978; Ford, 1983; Meyerowitz & Malev, 1973; Millman & Hendershot, 1980; Mott, 1986; Trussell & Menken). Additionally, associations between age at first sex and subsequent childbearing is consistent with previous data (de Anda, 1982; Furstenberg, 1976; Zelnik, 1980). These findings suggest that interventions focusing on reducing pregnancies in adolescents should start early. These younger girls who are having sexual relations early might not fully comprehend the consequences of unintended pregnancy, particularly repeated pregnancies. One example of a program designed to delay the initiation of sexual intercourse of young teens has shown some promise. Postrado & Nicholson (1992) evaluated two programs designed to help 12- to 14-year-old teens resist the pressure to become sexually active. Their evaluation of Growing Together, a parent-daughter workshop designed to increase positive communication within families about sexual information and behavior, showed that nonparticipants were two and one-half times more likely than the participants to initiate sexual intercourse during the year being studied. Although the results were only slightly significant, this program fared better than the other program evaluated; Will Power/Won't Power. This latter program was designed to increase skills in avoiding early sexual involvement. Evaluation indicated that participation alone did not account for any differences in the likelihood of initiating sexual intercourse during the year of study.

That parents' education is associated with subsequent pregnancy is consistent with Paik (1992) who reported differences in the rate of repetitive pregnancies for girls whose mothers had less schooling. Associations between

SES and subsequent childbearing is consistent with Mott's (1986) findings measuring SES by parental education. Less education and subsequent lower socioeconomic status combined with single-parent households have been linked with subsequent pregnancy through early and more frequent sexual intercourse (Zelnik & Kantner, 1980). Girls in father-absence households in particular, are reported to have sexual intercourse at earlier ages and more frequently than girls from two-parent families.

These results provide evidence that educational goals have a significant impact on subsequent pregnancies among teenage mothers. This is consistent with previously published literature on teenage pregnancy (Hanson, et al. 1987; Plotnick, 1992) that reported that teenagers with positive attitudes toward school and clear educational goals are less likely to become pregnant or to give birth premaritally. These data encourage programs that focus on providing assistance in identifying and achieving long-term educational and occupational goals. Facilitating these teenagers in setting long-term goals for themselves, particularly those who have experienced a first birth, might go a long way in preventing repeat pregnancies. Consequently, since adolescence can be a time of heightened friction between a teenager and her parents, mentoring programs which provide the adolescent additional emotional and social support could serve to motivate the adolescent to continue her education and take a path other than continued childbearing. Rubenstein, Panzarine & Lanning (1990) described one such program aimed at preventing repeat pregnancy and school drop-out among adolescent mothers. The Peer Companionship Project recruited adolescent mothers within a prenatal and parenting program to serve as peer counselors to a younger group of pregnant and socially isolated teenagers. The counselors were provided with group training, supervision,

support, and a paid employment experience, while they provided positive role-modeling, and emotional support to the younger counselees. Evaluation of the program showed some encouraging results for the counselors and the counselees. At the one year follow-up, no repeat pregnancies had occurred among the counselors, after 2 years, all six counselors had completed high school or had obtained a GED, and only one had experienced a repeat pregnancy. A three year follow-up showed no additional repeat pregnancies. Two of the counselors were in college, one was studying to be a nurse, and two were employed. One year after beginning the program, no repeat pregnancies had occurred among the six counselees. Lack of funding prevented further follow-up of the counselees.

The absence of significant findings relating religious attendance to subsequent childbearing in this sample is consistent with Zelnik et al. (1981) who found that greater religious attendance did not affect the likelihood of becoming pregnant before marriage. One possible explanation for these findings is that, although some of the young women may have attended religious services frequently, perhaps they do not have strong religious convictions. Those young women who attended church less frequently could hold more conservative religious attitudes that help them to resist the pressure to become sexually active although they do not attend services regularly.

The results of this study must be considered against the background of the limitations. First, although the sample included only never-married women, a number of the mothers were beyond their teenage years when they first gave birth. Additionally, these subjects were between 14 and 22 years old when data collection first began, and many had already finished high school, or were at least past the age that a teenager attends high school, when they had their first

child. The factors that help to explain the incidence of subsequent pregnancies among older teenagers and young adult women are not the same as for those who are younger when they give birth. The consequences would not be the same for the older mothers. The older mothers are beyond the high school years, and are likely already settled in the labor force. In addition, unwed childbearing may more often be a planned occurrence at older ages. Thus, future longitudinal analyses might restrict the sample to never-married participants who all gave birth during the teenage years. Research with preteen and mid- to late-teens would allow greater generalizability of the results to teenagers who give birth outside of marriage.

A second limitation of the study is that the degree to which the locus of control scores are reliable is limited by the shortened version of the instrument used in this survey. This survey, the NLSY, used only four paired items from the Rotter Scale of Locus of Control. Future studies should utilize a more reliable measure.

A third limitation of the study is that all participants never married during the course of the entire period of investigation (14 years). Many unmarried adolescent mothers later marry, and often times divorce. These individuals were excluded from our sample. Our results regarding the predictors associated with various pathways following unmarried pregnancies may not be generalizable to the group of women who marry subsequent to their pregnancies.

Conclusions

Despite the limitations, this study has initiated important work on the significance of environmental characteristics as they relate to subsequent

childbearing in this population. Its large sample size, diversity, and longitudinal nature are all strengths of the investigation. The absence of significant findings relating self-esteem and locus of control to subsequent childbearing suggests that future research should focus more on factors in the adolescent's environment rather than on psychological characteristics.

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