

Fertility Intentions of African American Adolescent
Males from Low-Income Backgrounds

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Abstract

The United States has the highest teenage pregnancy rate among Western industrialized nations. Moreover, poverty is positively correlated with teenage pregnancy. To examine the issues of poverty and pregnancy in more detail, over 10,000 youths aged 10 to 19 were enrolled in the Mobile Youth Study, a multi-cohort longitudinal study on risk behavior between 1998 and 2008. Surprisingly, in my analyses, African American adolescent males from highly impoverished neighborhoods in Mobile, Alabama, were more desirous of impregnation than their female counterparts. A stratified random sample of 100 13-19 year old males were surveyed and interviewed about their fertility intentions. 66% of adolescent males indicated on their surveys that they would be at least slightly happy if they impregnated someone during the next year. According to the regression model, reported age of first intercourse, female partner's pregnancy desire, and low level of literacy were statistically significant predictors for impregnation desire.

Introduction

The United States has the highest teenage pregnancy rate among Western industrialized nations (Corcoran, Franklin, and Bennett 2000). The adolescent birthrate in the United States is 49.1 live births per 1,000 girls (CDC 2009). Presently, this rate is nearly twice the rate of the UK, more than 3 times the rate of Canada, and more than 10 times the rate of the Netherlands (United Nations Statistics Division 2006). As a consequence, teenage pregnancy has become a controversial social issue that has

attracted considerable media attention during the past several decades. This attention has been even greater recently as teenage pregnancy rates rose by 3% in the past year, after a 34% decline over the past 14 years (CDC 2009).

There has been a tremendous amount of previous research examining the relationship between poverty, race, expectations, and adolescent childbearing (Glikman 2004 and Kelly 1997). Key findings of these studies show that teenage pregnancy rates are not evenly distributed within the United States' population. Adolescents from low income backgrounds are much more likely to become teenage parents than their middle-class counterparts (Singh, Darroch, and Frost 2001). Adolescence is an important developmental epoch, which can be impacted by poverty, to influence the life course of millions of Americans. Poverty appears to be associated with earlier sexual experience and increased sexual activity during early adolescence. Adolescent pregnancy has negative implications for the general population as well; for instance, in 2004 alone, adolescent childbearing cost United States' taxpayers 9.1 billion dollars (Hoffman 2006).

Adolescent pregnancy, while often not completely planned, is not entirely accidental either (Edin and Kefalas 2005). I aim to examine the prevalence of impregnation desire in very low-income African American adolescent males in Mobile, Alabama. In addition, I analyze the behavioral and social factors that are related to this desire within this population.

Gender and Desire for Parenthood

There is a large body of research on adolescent childbearing which is mostly focused on adolescent mothers (Glikman 2004). There is no consensus on the reason

why teenage girls become mothers. It is a commonly held stereotype that teenage mothers are victims of abuse or poverty, and are promiscuous, ignorant, welfare-dependent, childish, neglectful, love-starved, and emotionally imbalanced (Kelly 1997). It is believed that many teenage girls intentionally choose motherhood to fill an emotional void or to gain status (Falk, Gispert, Baucom 1981). Young women from disadvantaged backgrounds may intentionally enter motherhood, viewing it as one of the only routes to gain economic independence and adult status (Ineichen 1986). Though research shows that the vast majority of teenage pregnancies are unplanned (Zabin, Astone, and Emerson 1993), many girls, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, do not view young motherhood in negative terms (Turner 2004). According to Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas, “poor girls coming of age in the inner city value children highly, anticipate them eagerly, and believe strongly that they are up to the job of mothering—even in difficult circumstances” (2005).

In comparison, there has been little research on teenage fathers (Glikman 2004). This is of particular concern because of the research demonstrating the influence of adolescent male attitudes on their girlfriend's reproductive decision-making (Cowley and Farley 2001). Although adolescent fathers rarely have been the focus of teenage pregnancy studies, researchers now are beginning to pay more attention to them (Dallas, Wilson, and Salgado 2000). Evidently, adolescent fathers differ from adolescent mothers in their level of child development knowledge, thought process for selecting physical methods of discipline, expectations for paternal role behaviors, and feelings about child support payments and establishing legal paternity (Dallas, Wilson, and Salgado 2000). Dallas et al. showed that while both groups had significant gaps in knowledge, adolescent

fathers generally had less knowledge on child development than adolescent mothers. Previous research has shown that the majority of adolescent fathers come from economically deprived backgrounds (Glikman 2004). It also is hypothesized that fatherhood acts as a segue into adulthood for low-income adolescent males, especially those who do not intend to pursue a college degree (Frewin, Tuffin, and Rouch 2007). There are a number of risk factors that have been associated with teenage fatherhood. In particular, low academic performance, low socio-economic status, single parent households, and participation in delinquent behaviors are all positively correlated with teenage pregnancy in adolescent males (Thornberry, Smith, and Howard 1997).

Though the risk factors have been identified and their statistical significance verified, the reasons underlying adolescent males' impregnation desire are still unclear since pregnancy desire and actual pregnancy are not synonymous, and there is little research done that assesses their relationship (Rivara, Sweeney, and Henderson 1985). Most previous research on impregnation desire has assumed that women possess agency, and males are unwitting actors who impregnate their partners entirely by accident. There are no known prospective studies that examine desire conception, so this notion is untested. I believe that some adolescents would be happy to impregnate their female partners or at least would not mind, that prospect, given the high rate of unprotected sexual intercourse among the adolescent population (Kotchick, Dorsey, Miller, and Forehand 1999). This view by adolescent males is critically important since it has been shown that the best predictor of an adolescent girl's attitude toward pregnancy is her perception of her boyfriend's desire for a baby (Cowley and Farley 2001).

It is often debated whether most adolescent pregnancies occur by accident or design (Zabin, Astone, and Emerson 1993). Research has shown that although few pregnancies are clearly intentional, most are not entirely accidental either, since the couple did not actively avoid pregnancy (Turner 2004). In this paper, I will explore the concept of ambivalent desire and its underlying motivations. Ambivalent desire was defined previously as the subject “feeling unsure about the specific timing of a pregnancy but not having it completely unintended”(Heavey, Moysich, Hyland, Druschel, and Sill 2008). Heavey et al. showed that adolescent pregnancy desire and pregnancy ambivalence were common occurrences and that 37% of the pregnant adolescent girls indicated that they had ambivalent pregnancy desire (Heavey et al. 2008). Many others studies are similar to those by Heavey et al. and focus on already pregnant adolescents instead of their non-pregnant counterparts when addressing pregnancy desire. This is problematic because reported desire is likely shaped by their present condition, and therefore it unknown if the factors associated with adolescent pregnancy are the same as pregnancy desire. In a two-year study on reproductive behavior of inner-city African American adolescent girls, it was found that the odds of becoming pregnant tripled for adolescent girls who indicated that they wanted to conceive at the start of the study; however, this relationship was not statistically significant (Zabin, Astone, and Emerson 1993). Furthermore, most of the previous studies have focused on female adolescents who are not pregnant; therefore, it is not known whether the factors influencing pregnancy desire are the same ones that influence male impregnation desire.

This manuscript helps fill that void by reporting levels of impregnation desire

among male adolescents, both fathers and non-fathers, living in high-poverty neighborhoods in Mobile, Alabama. I draw on two major sources of data: The Mobile Youth Survey, and a smaller survey of African American adolescent males in Mobile that I conducted. The Mobile Youth Survey assesses pregnancy desire; however, the assessment is limited since the respondent can only choose from three response categories, “I would be happy”, “I wouldn’t care one way or the other”, and “I would be angry or unhappy”, and therefore the extent to which the participant would be happy or unhappy cannot be determined. My survey analyzes impregnation desire using a seven-point scale that provides a more refined assessment of impregnation desire. Additionally, my assessment analyzes attitudinal congruency by asking about female partner’s expected level of pregnancy desire using the same seven-point scale. Instead of looking at the entire MYS population, my assessment targets African American adolescent males between the ages of 13-19 since their pregnancy desire levels exceed that of African American females and Caucasian males. Both the prevalence of pregnancy desire and the predictive factors will be analyzed in this paper.

Review of Literature

There are several well-characterized social and behavioral factors that are related to adolescent pregnancy. It remains unclear if all of these factors are also related to impregnation desire as well. Factors being examined in this study include, poverty, race, hopelessness, delinquency, and expectations of the future.

Poverty

There are numerous studies that show that poverty is positively associated with adolescent pregnancy (Pirog-Good 1995; Furstenburg and Weiss 2000; Glikman 2004),

In fact, roughly 80 percent of teenage mothers were living at or near poverty levels before they became pregnant (Luker, 1996). Studies also show that teenage fatherhood disproportionately affects young men from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Card and Wise 1978; Hanson, Morrison, and Ginsburg 1995; Dearden, Hale, and Woolley 1995).

There are many hypotheses that attempt to explain the relationship between poverty and adolescent childbearing. It is believed that adolescents living in the inner-city are more likely to become parents due to “their lack of realistic prospects for participation in the mainstream economy” (Zabin, Astone, and Emerson 1993). Others blame the “culture of poverty”, and think that “economic disadvantage derides youths’ future career expectations and provides a model of complacency and governmental dependence” (East, Khoo, and Reyes 2006).

Race

Race is another significant factor in teenage pregnancy. African American adolescent pregnancy rates are significantly higher than Caucasian adolescent pregnancy rates (Brooks-Gunn and Furstenberg 1989). The most recent data show the birth rate for African American adolescent girls at 63.7 per 1000, while it is 26.6 per 1000 for their Caucasian counterparts. Studies have also demonstrated that African American adolescent males are more likely to engage in sexual activity at an earlier age and are more likely to have had multiple sex partners compared to their Caucasian counterparts (Davies et. al 2004). The intersection of race and socio-economic class is important. African American adolescents are more likely to live in poverty than their Caucasian counterparts (Corcoran, Franklin, and Bennett 2000). Research has shown that neighborhood effects on pregnancy rates are quite significant (Crane 1991); however, the

full effects of the interaction among poverty, gender, race, and neighborhood on teenage pregnancy has not been thoroughly explored.

Hopelessness

One of the most significant problems afflicting adolescents in low-income inner city neighborhoods is the feeling of hopelessness about the future (Bolland 2003).

Hopelessness can be defined as “an individual’s expectation that highly desired outcomes will not occur or that negative outcomes will occur, and that nothing will change for the better” (Joiner and Wagner 1995).

Ethnographic literature on inner-city life argues that adolescents react to their uncertain futures by abandoning conventional, long-term approaches to success and engaging in high levels of risky behavior (Anderson 1999). It has been found that children living in impoverished and violent neighborhoods “may despairingly conclude that they have neither the resources nor the likelihood of achieving lasting or socially approved outcomes. For them, socially unacceptable and risky... alternatives may become highly attractive” (Lorion and Saltzman 1993). Other research in this field has led to similar conclusions on the relationship between poverty and risk behavior (Anderson 2000; Corcoran, Franklin and Bennett 2000; Carraway, Reinke, and Hall 2003, Crane 1991; East, Khoo, and Reyes 2006, Edin 2005; Glikman 2004; Miller 2004).

John Bolland conducted one of the few quantitative studies on this subject in Mobile County, Alabama in 1999. In his study, he administered surveys to 2,468 low-income youth between the ages of 9 and 19. The questionnaire included six questions on hopelessness that were adapted from the Hopelessness Scale for Children. Bolland found that nearly 50% of males and 25% of females had moderate or severe feelings of

hopelessness (Bolland 2003). Moreover, hopelessness predicted each of the risk behaviors considered, including desire for teenage pregnancy.

It is often believed that pregnancy desire in adolescence is a function of low expectations (Zabin, Astone, and Emerson 1993). Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize that hopelessness, which is based upon a system of negative expectations concerning self and future life, is positively-correlated with pregnancy desire, since teenagers with low expectations likely see few negative consequences associated with early childbearing.

In a secondary analysis of the MYS data performed by Yen (2008), the results show that pregnancy desire rates are not uniform across the MYS population. When analyzing the change in pregnancy desire status from T and T-1, hopelessness becomes a statistically significant factor. Thus, when adolescents report high level of hopelessness, they become more desirous of pregnancy. This finding is true for both male and female adolescents

The motivations and risk factors behind adolescent male impregnation desire have not been adequately explored. Moreover, most of the studies being conducted are intervention studies (Dallas et al 2000; Davies et. al. 2004, Frewin et. al, 2007; Glikman 2004, Thornberry et al 1997; and Weinman et al 2004). Though it is known that hopelessness is about twice as prevalent among adolescent males than females residing in impoverished communities (Bolland 2003), the high prevalence of hopelessness does not completely explain why African American adolescent males desire fatherhood.

Although the level of hopelessness is a statistically significant variable in predicting change in pregnancy desire, it impacts Caucasian teenagers differently than

African American teenagers in these communities. When analyzing the interaction between gender and hopelessness, Caucasian adolescent males with high levels of hopelessness are much more likely to desire pregnancy compared with their African American and mixed race counterparts. This is particularly, surprising, since overall, Caucasian males are less desirous of pregnancy compared to their African American and mixed race counterparts

A statistical interaction between race and gender yields the most surprising finding. African American and mixed race adolescent boys are more likely to become desirous of pregnancy than their female counterparts. Though female Caucasian respondents made up less than one percent of the MYS sample, they are significantly more likely to become desirous of pregnancy than their male counterparts.

This study is unique in that adolescent pregnancy desire of males and female are measured over a period of several years rather than at a single point in time. Though there have been many research studies that have shown that poverty is linked to teenage pregnancy, this study shows that levels of hopelessness in individuals within these communities played an important role in pregnancy desire. The impact of hopelessness on change in pregnancy desire differed by race and gender. This study found that there is significant variation in pregnancy desire in teenagers based on race, gender, and level of hopelessness. The interaction of these variables makes pregnancy desire a very complex issue. Though African American adolescent boys are more desirous of pregnancy than Caucasian boys, the reverse is true for girls. Similarly in regards to gender, African American boys are more desirous of pregnancy than African American girls, however, the reverse is true for their Caucasian counterparts. Although hopelessness is positively-

correlated with change in pregnancy desire for all groups, a general rule that holds for all races and genders cannot be made. It is therefore important to examine the interaction of these variables, rather than simply viewing pregnancy desire from a single dimension.

The finding that African American adolescent boys were more desirous of impregnating someone during the next year, compared to their female counterparts challenges many mainstream assumptions about teenage pregnancy. One key assumption that my research directly challenges is the notion that adolescent boys are unwitting actors who impregnate their female partners purely by accident.

Delinquency

There are a multitude of studies showing that adolescent fatherhood is associated with delinquency (Dearden, Hale, and Woolley 1995; Hanson, Morrison, and Ginsburg 1989; East, Khoo, and Reyes 2006). Studies show that adolescent fathers are twice as likely to be in trouble with the law compared to their non-father counterparts (Dearden, Hale, and Woolley, 1995). Though delinquency clearly is positively correlated with adolescent pregnancy, it is unknown how it relates to impregnation desire.

Expectations of the Future

Inner-city teenagers lack realistic prospects of participating in the mainstream economy (Zabin, Astone, and Emerson 1993). It is believed that impoverished adolescents who don't attain academic or professional success will have lower levels of self-efficacy, and therefore be more desirous of pregnancy (Concoran, Franklin, and Bennett 2000). Adolescent males living in extreme poverty may view parenthood as an area that they may be competent in, and therefore they may not view it negatively.

Adolescents with high educational expectations are less likely to become teenage fathers whereas “those who perform poorly in school or who are not committed to achieving long-term educational and employment goals are probably less inclined to adopt a responsible orientation toward reproductive issues than those who are more motivated to achieve education and employment goals, because they believe an unplanned pregnancy is less likely to disrupt their future” (Marsiglio 1995). It is unknown how these expectations of the future impact impregnation desire.

Potential Predictive Factors of Adolescent Impregnation

There are several social and behavioral factors that numerous studies have shown to be related to adolescent pregnancy. It is unclear if and how these factors are related to impregnation desire since there is very little existing literature on this subject. There are two prospective studies that directly measure attitudes towards fatherhood.: Marsiglio 1993 and Abma, Martinez, Mosher, and Dawson 2004. These studies document the prevalence of desire and its predictors.

Abma et al. found that the majority of adolescent boys from a nationally representative sample in the National Survey on Family Growth would become upset if they impregnated a female. 51% of the respondents indicated that they would be “very upset” if they got someone pregnant now, and another 33% said they would be “a little upset”. Caucasian adolescent males were more likely to be very upset than their African American counterparts, 59% versus 36% (Abma et al. 2004).

Marsiglio found that both race and socio-economic status were significant predictive factors that were positively correlated with impregnation desire. He used a four-point scale to assess attitudes towards impregnation. Response categories to the

question, “If you got a girl pregnant now, how would you feel? I would feel...” included, very upset, upset, pleased, and very pleased. Being African American and living in a poor neighborhood were both statistically significant factors correlated with positive attitudes towards impregnation. African American adolescents living in neighborhoods in poor physical condition had the most positive views on impregnation while Caucasians living in the most affluent neighborhoods had the most negative views towards impregnation. 15.0% of the African American adolescents living in the worst housing would be very pleased to get a girl pregnant and 38.2% of the group would be very upset. The figures were 1.2% and 79.9%, respectively, for the Caucasian group (Marsiglio). Interestingly, the African American group with the worst housing had a high level of ambivalent desire.

Data and Methods

The first step in this study was conducting a secondary analysis of the MYS dataset during the summer of 2008. John Bolland assisted in the analysis, which led to the discovery that African American adolescent males who participated in MYS were more likely to desire impregnation compared to their female counterparts.

My original role in the Mobile Youth Survey was minor; I contacted participants and administered surveys as a research assistant. The next step involved designing a survey, administering the survey, and conducting interviews with adolescent boys who had participated in the MYS in 2008 during January 2009. In this step, I was the principal investigator.

The Mobile Youth Survey

The Mobile Youth Survey (MYS) is a multiple cohort longitudinal annual survey of youth aged 10-19 from 13 low-income neighborhoods in Mobile and Prichard, Alabama. Mobile is a city of approximately 200,000 located in the southern part of the state. In 2000, 46.1% of Mobile's population was African American and 22.4% lived in poverty. Median household income was \$31,445. Of the residents of Prichard, 83.3% of a city of 30,000 located in Mobile County, were African American, and 44.1% of the residents lived in poverty. Median household income was \$19,544. In 1990, 42% of African Americans in the MSA lived in high-poverty census tracts, placing Mobile third in the nation in this measure of concentrated poverty (Jargowsky, 1997).

Mobile County ranks near the bottom of the state, which ranks among the worst in the nation, in problems associated with youth. In 2000, Mobile County ranked 55th among 67 Alabama counties on the composite Kids Count indicator of child well-being; and Alabama ranks 47th on this same indicator. The bulk of the poverty in the MSA is found in a small number of inner city neighborhoods located in Mobile and Prichard. Those neighborhoods are the focus of the MYS.

The neighborhoods in the study were represented in 23 different block groups within 14 census tracts. According to the 2000 census, 23,500 residents lived in this area. Of the impoverished neighborhoods originally selected, seven were public housing developments, and six were non-public housing. Poverty rates ranged from 31.5% to 81.4%, with the median poverty rate being 57.2% in the MYS neighborhoods. The median household income in 1999 was approximately \$12,000. The neighborhoods were selected purely by economic characteristics, not racial ones; however, the sample was

overwhelmingly African American. Only 4% of the population who participated in MYS was of mixed race and less than 1% was Caucasian.

In 1998, the Mobile and Prichard Housing Authorities provided the Mobile Youth Survey with a list of addresses where youths between the ages of 10 and 18 were listed on the lease. The study targeted half of these apartments. The leaseholder in each of the targeted residences was contacted within an 11-week period, and asked to verify that appropriately aged youths resided at that address. Additionally, half of the residences in the selected non-public housing neighborhoods were randomly targeted. In each residence where a youth stayed, the youth was asked to participate after the study was explained to both the caregiver and the youth. The caregiver was asked to sign a consent form. A time was then scheduled for the youth to attend a group-administered survey. Youths who agreed to participate were guaranteed confidentiality and \$15 for their participation. Youths living in non-targeted apartments were allowed to participate as well, provided that parental consent was obtained. From 1999 and onwards, all of the 1998 participants were targeted, regardless of where they currently reside (Bolland 2003).

Surveys were conducted at group administrations in schools, churches, and other community buildings. If a respondent could not attend a group administration, they took the survey at their home using the same procedure. Questions were read aloud by a survey administrator to all respondents to ensure that reading level did not impact respondents' ability to answer the questions. When respondents did not understand a question, the survey administrator would explain it to the group. Respondents who appeared to have difficulty keeping up were taken to a separate area where the questions could be read to them individually. Each respondent was paid \$15 for completing the

survey. The total time for completing the survey, including check-in, administration, and payment averaged 90 minutes. The response rate in 1999 was 83.4%, and the cooperation rate was 89.6% (Bolland 2003).

Original survey on pregnancy desire

After completing a secondary analysis, I selected African American boys between the ages of 13 and 18 who participated in the MYS in 2008. Most of the boys resided in three public housing neighborhoods. I then selected all male African American participants who were the correct age who lived in the Roger Williams Homes, R.V. Taylor Homes, and Josephine Allen Homes. The stratified random sample yielded 201 participants.

Only participants who marked “male” on the 2008 MYS were included in my sub-sample. Race was also controlled for by only including participants who had indicated that they were African American on the 2008 MYS and not checked any other race or ethnicity boxes; mixed race MYS participants were excluded from the sub-sample. I controlled for socio-economic status by only including participants who resided in public housing neighborhoods, since all of these residents had parents or caretakers with incomes small enough to qualify for the housing subsidy. Though there was some variation, it was relatively small compared to the variation within the entire MYS population. In order to recruit efficiently, I only included participants from the three largest public housing neighborhoods. According to the 2000 census, the median household income and poverty rate for each selected neighborhood are as follows: Josephine Allen Homes \$13,810 and 56.7%; Roger Williams Homes \$11,236 and 56.7%; R.V. Taylor Homes and \$9,963 and 64.6% (Bolland 2007).

I assigned each participant with a random number. I then geo-coded each neighborhood by their assigned number. I chose the initial household within each block in each neighborhood by number and then systematically canvassed each neighborhood. I then went door-to-door and recruited the selected participant. I obtained parental consent and participant assent to ask them to complete a survey specifically focusing on attitudes towards teenage fatherhood and to participate in an oral interview on this topic.

During the administration of the survey, I read the questions aloud to the participant and he marked his answers in a booklet. These surveys were all done in the participant's home. After the completion of the paper survey, each subject participated in brief semi-structured interviews that lasted for approximately five minutes that focused on his attitudes toward adolescent fatherhood, how adolescent fatherhood would affect his plans, and how adolescent fathers and their non-father counterparts differed. These interviews were recorded by a digital recorder and were later transcribed and coded. Participants were compensated \$10 for their time. I had a 100% participation rate.

Variables and Measurements

Pregnancy desire was my dependent variable, and it was assessed using a single ordinal variable using a seven-point scale. Respondents were asked, "How would you feel if you got someone pregnant during the next year?" Response alternatives included: "I would be very happy", "I would moderately happy", "I would be slightly happy", "I wouldn't care one way or the other", "I would be slightly angry or unhappy", "I would be moderately angry or unhappy", and "I would be very angry or unhappy". Based on their response, they were given a number ranging from 1 to 7.

I analyzed a number of independent variables. Some of the variables were items on my 28-item survey, conducted in January 2009, while others are derived from the 2008 Mobile Youth Survey. Participants took the 2008 Mobile Youth survey between May 15th and July 30th, 2009, so there was an approximately 6-month lag time between surveys. I was able to conclusively match 95% of the participants to their 2008 MYS responses to analyze a wider set of behavioral variables.

Age was measured by the question “what is your current age?” I targeted participants between the ages of 13 and 18. I determined age based on the birthdates that participants provided for the 2008 MYS. Due to the difference in birthdates provided or recorded, my final sample was between the ages of 13 and 19.

I analyzed several sexual behavior variables. Age of first intercourse was measured by the question “how old were you when you first had sexual intercourse?” Response alternatives included “I have never had sexual intercourse”, “10 or younger”, “11”, “12”, “13”, “14”, “15”, “16”, “17”, “18”, and “19”. I recoded the respondents who never had sexual intercourse as missing values, and thus my regression model only measured respondents who have had sexual intercourse in their lifetime. Current sexual activity was determined by the two questions “Do you currently have a steady girlfriend?” and “Are you two having sexual intercourse?”. Response categories for both questions were “yes” and “no”. Participants that answered the first question in the negative were coded as missing values. Condom use was measured by the question “Were you wearing a condom the last time you had sexual intercourse?” Response alternatives included, “yes”, “no” and “I have never had sexual intercourse”. Participants who indicated that they never had sexual intercourse were coded as using condoms since

they did not participate in unprotected sexual intercourse. This group of people was effectively excluded in my regression model since age of first intercourse variable excluded participants who had never engaged in sexual intercourse. Respondents who reported using a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse were coded with a “1” while those who reported not using a condom were coded with a “2”.

I analyzed several variables that measured feelings and expectations of the future. The question, “how would your girlfriend or female partner feel if she got pregnant within the next year?” was asked. The same 7-point scale in determining impregnation desire was used. The employment expectation variable was measured by the question, “do you see yourself having a full time job that would pay enough to live on the next 5 years?” Response alternatives included, “yes”, “no” and “I’m not sure”. Job expectations were evaluated on a 3-point scale; respondents who answered “no” were coded as a 1, respondents who responded with “I’m not sure” were coded as a 2, and respondents who said “yes” were coded as a 3. College expectations were measured by the question, “do you expect to go to college?” response alternatives included: “yes”, “no”, and “I’m not sure”. Responses were coded using the same 3-point scale. The variable “misspelled street name” is a proxy for low level of literacy. On the January 2009 survey, respondents were asked to write their street address on a cover sheet for tracking purposes; respondents who spelled their street name differently than the published name were coded as a “0” while respondents who spelled their street name correctly were marked as “1”.

Family characteristics were also measured. On the 2008 MYS, respondents were asked, “how often do you live with the person most like a father to

you?” Response alternatives included: “I don’t have anyone who is like a father to me”, “all of the time”, “most of the time”, “some of the time”, and “none of the time”. I regrouped these response categories so that there would be three response classes. I combined “I don’t have anyone like a father to me” with “none of the time”, and I also combined “some of the time” with “most of the time”. Respondents who lived with their father figure all of the time was coded as a “1”, respondent who lived with their father figure some of the time was coded as a “2”, and respondents who lived with their father figure none of the time or lacked a father figure were coded as a “3”. The other family characteristic I looked at was supervision. I created a supervision scale by adding 6 items on the MYS together. Items, “Does your mother or father know who you hang out with” and “Does your mother or father know exactly where you are most afternoons (after school) and during the day on weekends and during the summer?” have the response categories “no” and “yes”. The question, “how much does your or mother or father really know about what you do most afternoons (after school) and during the day on weekends and during the summer?” has the following response categories: “they don’t know”, “they know a little”, and “they know a lot”. The question, “how much does your mother or father really know about where you go at night?” has the following response categories: “I don’t go out at night”, “they don’t know”, “they know a little”, and “they know a lot”. The next question, “does your mother or father try to find out how you spend your time”, has the following response categories: “they don’t try”, “they try a little”, and “they a lot”. The final question “how much does your mother or father really know about how you spend your time?” has the response categories: “they don’t know”,

“they know a little”, and “they know a lot”. The supervision scale has a Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient of .760.

Delinquency was measured with two separate scales. The first scale was a hopelessness scale. This scale was created from questions derived from the January 2009 survey. The hopelessness scale is a composite of the following four survey items “there’s no use in really trying to get something I want because I probably won’t get it”, I might as well give up because I can’t make things better for myself”, “ I don’t have good luck now and there’s no reason to think I will when I get older” and “ I never get what I want, so it’s dumb to want anything”. Response categories for each question were “true” or “false”. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient for this scale is .529.

The second scale was a delinquency scale that was constructed from five variables. The first two derived from the January 2009 survey. The items, “have you ever been suspended or expelled from school” and “have you ever been arrested” had “yes” and “no” as response categories. The next three items were dichotomous variables derived from the MYS. The items questions were “have you ever gotten drunk on alcohol or high on drugs”, “have you ever carried a gun?” and “have you ever carried a knife or razor?”. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient for this scale is .649.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Table One: Variables related to impregnation desire

Variable Name	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Range
Impregnation desire	4.64	5	2.130	1-7
Age	16.11	16	1.588	13-19

Age of first intercourse	13.51	13	1.669	10-18
Condom use	1.15	1	.359	1-2
Current sexual activity	.39	0	.491	0-1
Female partner's pregnancy desire	4.31	5	2.135	1-7
Misspelled street name	.73	1	.446	0-1
Job expectations	2.90	3	.389	1-3
College expectations	2.76	3	.571	1-3
Delinquent Behavior	.592	3	6.464	0-23
Hopelessness	.150	0	.479	0-3
Supervision Scale	13.258	13	2.551	6-17
Presence of father figure	2.054	2	.843	1-3

The majority of adolescent boys, 66%, stated that they would at least be slightly happy if they impregnated someone in the next year. Surprisingly, 24% of adolescent boys claimed that they would be “very happy” if they impregnated someone during this time frame. Only 17% of the adolescent boys noted that they would be “very angry or unhappy”. This suggests that the majority of adolescent boys have an ambivalent desire to become adolescent fathers. These percentages are significantly higher than the levels reported by Abma et al. and Marsiglio. This difference may be attributed to the fact that my survey had more response categories and thus captured respondents who were ambivalent about impregnation. Additionally, MYS participants are one of the most disadvantaged groups of adolescents in the United States and thus may have had different outcomes compared to their more advantaged peers.

The participants in my survey are a subsample of MYS. The MYS participants are not representative of the population as a whole; however, it is an excellent sample for low-income African American youth. Like many groups of low-income African American youth, the MYS youth have behavioral and attitudinal differences compared to youth in the US population as a whole. For instance, the adolescent boys in this sample report having sexual intercourse at a much younger age compared to adolescent boys in the general US population. According to a report published by the CDC in 2002, the average age of first intercourse for males is 17.0. Teenagers in this population become sexually active at a younger age compared to the teenagers in the United States population as a whole. 76% of participants in my study reported having sexual intercourse once in their lifetime. The most common reported age for first intercourse

was 13; over half of the sexually active teenagers in my study had sexual intercourse by age 13. At age 14, 55% of participants reported having sexual intercourse at least once. Reported age of first intercourse has a statistically significant relationship to pregnancy desire. Even when controlling for age of participant, age of first intercourse is still significant at the .05 level.

Surprisingly, the correlation between pregnancy desire and actual fatherhood was .176. This relationship was not statistically significant. This is likely due to the fact that only 8% of my sample stated that they already had a child. Reported illicit drug use and pregnancy desire did not have a statistically significant relationship. This is likely due to the fact that illicit drug use is underreported; only 7% of participants reported using an illicit drug during the past year.

Table 2: Frequency table of impregnation desire

Level of Pregnancy Desire	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very angry or unhappy	17	17.0	17.0
Moderately angry or unhappy	4	4.0	21.0
Slightly angry or unhappy	9	9.0	30.0
Wouldn't care one way or the other	4	4.0	34.0

Slightly happy	24	34.	58.0
Moderately	18	0	76.0
happy	24	18.	100.0
Very happy		0	
		24.	
		0	

Regression Models

Table 3. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients Predicting Desire for Impregnation^a

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	.266 (.206)	-.021 (.214)	-.145 (.187)	-.121 (.197)
Age of first intercourse	.311 (.175)	.313 (.162)	.411** (.143)	.335* (.152)
Condom	-.795 (.692)	-.300 (.666)	.062 (.581)	.097 (.597)
Current sexual activity	.871 (.518)	.564 (.524)	.509 (.464)	.435 (.477)
Female partner's desire for		.323* (.131)	.467*** (.120)	.478*** (.123)

pregnancy				
Misspelled		.801	1.854***	2.115***
street name		(.521)	(.524)	(.558)
Job		1.446*	1.595*	1.311
expectations		(.699)	(.668)	(.717)
		-.137	-.066	-.146
		(.429)	(.367)	(.380)
College				
expectations				
Delinquent			.046	.060
behavior			(.031)	(.033)
Hopelessness			-.363	-.435
			(.560)	(.581)
Level of				.114
supervision				(.091)
Presence of				-.180
father figure				(.270)
Intercept	-3.257	-4.778	-6.996	-5.608
	(2.919)	(3.735)	(3.391)	(3.846)
Adjusted R	.138	.288	.500	.506
Square	.013	.001	.000	.000
Significance	63	63	55	53

^a Standard errors in parentheses

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Model 1 predicts impregnation desire by examining age and sexual experience. Specifically, the effects of current age, age of first intercourse, condom use, current sexual activity, and lifetime sexual activity on impregnation desire were measured. The model predicts 13.8% of the variation in impregnation desire. The overall statistical significance is .013. None of the individual variables are statistically significant.

Model 2 adds variables that measure future expectations and literacy to Model 1. The effects of female partner's desire, misspelled street name, job expectations, and college expectations on impregnation desire were measured. The predictive power of the model significantly increases; Model 2 explains 28.8% of the variation in impregnation desire. The overall statistical significance of the model is .001.

In Model 2, the only statistically significant variables in predicting impregnation desire were female partner's desire for pregnancy and job expectations. Female partner's desire for pregnancy is positively correlated with impregnation desire, meaning that for every point female partner's pregnancy desire increases on the on the 7-point scale, impregnation desire increases by .323 points on the same scale. Job expectation is also a positive predictor for impregnation desire. According to the model, when job expectations increase by one unit, impregnation desire increases by 1.446 points. The effect of female partner's desire for pregnancy has a greater magnitude compared with job expectations since the standardized coefficients are .332 and .234, respectively.

Model 3 adds a delinquency scale and hopelessness scale to Model 2. The effects of delinquent behavior and hopelessness were measured. The predictive power of the model further increases; Model 3 explains 50.0% of the variation in impregnation desire. The overall statistical significance of the model is .000.

In Model 3, female partner's desire for pregnancy, job expectations, misspelled street name, and age of first intercourse are the statistically significant predictors for impregnation desire. Female partner's desire for pregnancy becomes a stronger predictor in model 3; for every point that female partner's desire for pregnancy increases on the pregnancy desire scale, impregnation desire increases by .467 points. Job expectations also becomes a stronger predictive factor; however, the increased power of this predictor is slighter. For every unit job expectations increases, impregnation desire increases by 1.595 points. The standardized coefficients are .474 and .246, meaning that power of female partner's desire for pregnancy as a predictor increases in both absolute and relative terms.

The variable misspelled street name becomes a statistically significant positive predictor in Model 3. On average, respondents who misspelled their street name have impregnation desire scores 1.854 points lower than those who spelled their street name correctly. In Model 3, age of first intercourse becomes a statistically significant positive predictor for impregnation desire. Surprisingly, for sexually active respondents, every year respondents delay sexual activity their impregnation desire score increased by .411 points. Misspelled street name and age of first intercourse have standardized coefficients of .366 and .329, meaning that magnitude of their effects are greater than that of job expectations but less than female partner's pregnancy desire.

Model 4 adds a supervision scale and a variable measuring the proportion of time that their father figure lived with them to Model 3. When the family characteristics are included, the adjusted R-square value increases slightly; the variables in Model 4 explain 50.6% of the variation in impregnation desire. The overall statistical significance of the model remains at .000.

All of statistically significant predictors in Model 3 are still statistically significant predictors in Model 4, with the exception of job expectations. This means that that one or more of the newly added variables that measure family characteristics accounts for the variation in impregnation desire that was previously attributed to job expectation; however, neither level of supervision or presence of a father figure are statistically significant individual predictors in Model 4.

In Model 4, female partner's desire for pregnancy becomes a stronger predictor; for every point that female partner's desire for pregnancy increases on the pregnancy desire scale, male impregnation desire increases by .478 points. The variable misspelled street name becomes a much stronger predictor too. On average, respondents who misspelled their street name have impregnation desire scores 2.115 points lower than those who spelled their street name correctly. Age of first intercourse is still a statistically significant positive predictor for impregnation desire; however, the power of its effect becomes slightly weaker in Model 4. For sexually active respondents, every year respondents delay sexual activity, their impregnation desire score increased by .335 points. The standardized coefficients were .485 for female partner's desire for pregnancy, .404 for misspelled street name, and .267 for age of first intercourse. This shows when family characteristics are controlled for, the predictive power of female

partner's pregnancy desire and misspelled street name increase while the predictive power of age of first intercourse decreases.

The variables in Model 4 account for slightly more than half of the variation in pregnancy desire in low-income African American adolescent males residing in public housing neighborhoods in Mobile, Alabama. Though an adjusted R-square value of .506 is quiet high, it also illustrates the fact that there are many unknown factors that influence impregnation desire. Many of these factors are likely to be idiosyncratic.

Discussion

My data shows that the difference in age and sexual behavior accounts for very little variation in impregnation desire. Model 1 only explains 13.8% of the variation in impregnation desire. This is surprising, given the numerous articles that suggest that variation in sexual behavior is a significant, if not primary, factor in predicting adolescent pregnancy. This finding suggest two important points. First, the factors that predict adolescent pregnancy may not necessarily predict impregnation desire. Second, the factors that predict impregnation desire may not be the same for adolescent populations with different socio-economic and racial characteristics.

One of the few statistically significant predictors for impregnation desire is age of first intercourse. It becomes a statistically significant predictive factor in Models 3 and 4, after hopelessness and delinquent behavior are controlled for. This is likely due to the fact that adolescents who are delinquent and have high levels of hopelessness have sexual intercourse at a younger age.

For those adolescents who were sexually active, delaying sexual activity increased impregnation desire. This seems counter-intuitive since there is a large amount

of literature indicating age of first intercourse is negatively correlated with adolescent pregnancy. It seems likely that among sexually active adolescents, those who delay sexual activity are less capricious and are less likely to impregnate someone purely by accident. Those who have delayed sexual activity may desire a child by their own choice. Of note, adolescents who remained abstinent were not included in this model. It is likely that adolescents who have remained abstinent are delaying sexual activity to avoid pregnancy, and therefore it is inaccurate to say that adolescent males who delay sexual activity are more desirous of impregnation.

Age is not a statistically significant predictor for impregnation desire in any of the models, though it was a statistically significant factor when predicting change in pregnancy desire in this population using the MYS 3-point pregnancy desire scale (Yen 2008). Models 3 and 4 show that age of first intercourse rather than absolute age is statistically significant. This shows that age, as an independent variable, doesn't really matter much since the participation in sexual behavior is the real statistically significant predictor when the other variables are held constant. This suggests that age and age of first intercourse are at least moderately correlated. In fact, they have a positive bivariate correlation of .504.

Reported condom use was not a statistically significant factor in predicting impregnation desire. This may be attributed to the fact that only 15% of respondents reported not using a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse. The high rate of reported condom use is likely an exaggeration, since respondents may be embarrassed to reveal that they have had unprotected intercourse during a one-on-one interview. The low rate of reported condom non-use limits variation within this variable.

Current sexual activity was also not statistically significant in any of the models. This may be attributed to the fact that adolescents who never had sexual intercourse were excluded from the model. There were 30 cases in which a respondent indicated that they had had sexual intercourse in their lifetime but were not currently having sexual intercourse, so some variation does exist.

Adolescent romantic relationships are often very transient. Frequently, these relationships form and dissolve in a matter of a few months or even a few weeks. Though 89% of respondents reported having a steady girlfriend, the length of their current relationship was not assessed. Current sexual activity is likely to be highly idiosyncratic and be partially a function the length of their current romantic relationship. Given that current sexual activity was measured in a single point in time, it is not surprising that it is not a statistically significant predictor of impregnation desire.

Expectations about the future and low levels of literacy play a much larger role in predicting impregnation desire compared to the sexual behavior variables. Female partner's desire for pregnancy is statistically significant in models 2, 3, and 4; misspelled street name is statistically significant in models 3 and 4; and job expectations are statistically significant in models 2 and 3.

Misspelled street name is a proxy for especially low levels of literacy. Respondents who misspelled their street name were significantly less likely to state that they desired fatherhood. The power of this predictor increased in every successive model. In the general population, poor academic performance is associated with adolescent pregnancy (Thornberry, Smith, and Howard 1997). In this population, there may not be a large variation in literacy given that 66% of respondents made at least one

error when writing their street address. One can hypothesize that respondents with extremely low levels of literacy may face more day-to-day challenges and may feel less capable of functioning independently. These adolescents may anticipate the challenges associated with parenthood as more daunting than their peers with higher literacy skills who face less day-to-day challenges.

Low level of literacy becomes a statistically significant negative predictive factor in models 3 and 4, after hopelessness and delinquent behavior are controlled for. This is likely due to the fact that adolescents who have participated in delinquent behavior and have high levels of hopelessness have comparatively lower levels of literacy.

Job expectation is a positive predictor for impregnation desire. This means that the more sure a respondent was that he would have a full time job that would pay enough to live on in the next 5 years, the more the respondent desired impregnation. Though this notion may seem counterintuitive, since pregnancy desire is thought to be a function of low expectations (Zabin, Astone, and Emerson 1993), given the unique context of this study this finding seems perfectly logical.

Providing financial resources to their future children was one of the most common themes that surfaced when discussing impregnation in the interviews. Currently having a job, or believing that one could be obtained, significantly shaped a respondent's attitude toward impregnation desire. Respondents who believed that they were going to get a job within the next 5 years were most desirous of impregnation, regardless of their actual prospects. One respondent stated, "I would be very happy... I'm working and getting my GED and I am anxious to have lots of little boys".

Conversely, respondents who did not have a job and did not believe they could easily obtain one indicated that they would be less desirous of becoming a father. One respondent stated, “I'd be unhappy because I don't have a job and no way to support the child”. Another respondent corroborated this point by saying, “I would be very angry...because I can't afford to take care of it.” A respondent who was already a father underscored this point by saying that having a child “would be a bad thing... I'm not working, I'm not able to support another baby”.

When the family characteristic variables are added in Model 4, job expectations are no longer a statistically significant predictor for impregnation desire. This means that the variation in impregnation desire that was previously attributed to age is actually related to level of supervision or presence of father figure, though neither variable is statistically significant. Job expectations were relatively weak predictors since there was little variation in response; 92% of respondents indicated that they saw themselves getting a full time job that paid enough to live on within the next 5 years.

College expectations was not a statistically significant predictor in impregnation desire, though it was negatively correlated with impregnation desire. Though the effects are not statistically significant, respondents who had higher college expectations were less desirous of impregnation. The lack of statistical significance is partially due to the limited variation in college expectations; 83% of respondents indicated that they expected to go to college.

Given the high unemployment and low high school graduation and college attendance rates in inner city neighborhoods, it is fair to surmise that most of these respondents have unrealistic expectations of the future. Based on the interview, many

participants seemed to have a limited understanding of the responsibilities parenthood entailed or the severity of the consequences of adolescent pregnancy.

One sexually active respondent stated that he “would be unhappy and mad” if he got someone pregnant, “because I would get in trouble with my mama and get a whooping...for getting a girl pregnant”. Another respondent seemed to have little understanding of the repercussions of teenage fatherhood, when he stated that he would be happy to get somebody pregnant “cuz you want to try something new, like you want to have kids”. These responses focus on short-term effects rather than a lifetime commitment, and indicate a lack of realistic expectations of what fatherhood truly entails.

Many participants did not think fatherhood would significantly impact their life trajectory. One respondent illustrated this point by stating “It wouldn't affect me. It would just make me want to do what I do and go to school so I can get out and get a good job.” Another respondent stated, “It wouldn't affect me at all because I don't have plans”. Several stated that fatherhood would actually improve their lives. One participant stated that he would be happy to have a child since he would leave his legacy behind. “I know that if I die I have something to carry on after me”.

Many participants acknowledged the negative aspects of fatherhood. Less money, fewer educational and recreational opportunities, and the pressure of getting a job were commonly discussed themes. One respondent stated that if he became a father during the next year, “I wouldn't be able to go to high school and play basketball which is what I would usually want to do cause I would have to take care of the baby”. Another respondent mentioned, “I won't be able to do things I want to do like play college football”. Another respondent said that if he became a father during the next year, there

would be “no more hanging out, strictly business, no more going to clubs and having fun. You can't like, you know, there are some things you got to cut off”.

Delinquency and hopelessness were not statistically significant predictors for impregnation desire. The reason why hopelessness is not statistically significant is likely due to a lack of variation within the variable since 80% of the respondents answered every hopelessness question in the negative, and thus had a hopelessness score of zero. Delinquency was also not statistically significant. Though delinquency scores ranged from 0-23, only 10% of respondents reported participating in any of the behaviors. Since all of the variables in the delinquency scale were for serious offenses, substantively participating in one behavior is probably not very different from participating in several.

Level of supervision and presence of father figure were not statistically significant predictors for impregnation desire. This may seem strange given that these are significant predictors in many studies; however, the substantive variation for this variable within this population is small. Given that the living situation is very fluid for much of this population, supervision is often times lax and isn't consistently the responsibility of a single individual. Only 11% of respondents answered every question on the supervision scale in the affirmative. Presence of father figure is also fluid for much of the MYS population. 30% of respondents live with the person most like a father to them all of the time; however the person they list as their father figure varies from year to year. Only 14% of respondents reported living with their father at least most of the time. Thus, it would be fair to surmise that the majority of MYS respondents do not live in a stable two-parent household and the variation in these factors will be substantively small.

Conclusion

The desire for fatherhood ties in the larger theme of unrealistic desires. Although participants reported high levels of hopelessness, paradoxically, they reported extremely favorable life course expectations. 83% of respondents expected to attend college in the next five years, however, 74% of respondents had been suspended or expelled from school and 32% of respondents had been arrested. Additionally, 73% of participants made at least one error when writing their street address. Furthermore, all but one participant who mentioned college attendance in the interview believed that they would obtain an athletic scholarship in college. These incongruent responses suggest that teenagers from these neighborhoods have unrealistic educational aspirations.

High levels of delinquency may represent an inability or unwillingness to adhere to mainstream societal norms. These individuals are less likely to be successful in obtaining a job, attending college, or fully participating in mainstream society. Participating in delinquent behavior may also imply a lack of interest in mainstream societal goals, as well as an inability to resolve conflict with an authority figure in an appropriate manner. This may indicate a lack of efficacy.

It is unclear the extent to which adolescents are aware of these inconsistencies in their responses. These participants report high levels of hopelessness as well, given credence to the idea that they are somewhat aware that their expectations are unrealistic. Given this, adolescent males from these neighborhoods may see fatherhood is seen as a reasonable path for attaining adulthood. Markers of adulthood such as going off to college, getting a first job, moving out of a parent's home, and getting married are often out of reach for this population despite the fact that many believe that they will attend

college and attain a full-time job. Many view parenthood as a more attainable way of achieving this adult status. Interestingly, many of the respondents seem to lack basic knowledge about the implications of parenthood.

My findings also suggest that the factors influencing impregnation desire are not the same factors that are influencing adolescent fatherhood. It is unknown if respondents who claim to be more desirous of impregnation are more likely to father a child within the next year compared to adolescents who claimed not to desire impregnation. Though there is a positive correlation between expressed pregnancy desire and actual adolescent childbearing in girls (Zabin, Astone, and Emerson 1993), the relationship between the two is unknown in adolescent boys. A longitudinal study has to be conducted in order to assess this relationship.

In the future, I plan to expand this study to examine impregnation in 500 African American adolescents in the MYS population. Increasing the sample size will help determine if my original results are an anomaly or not. I specifically want to examine 250 adolescent males and 250 adolescent females in order to determine if there is still a difference in impregnation desire in adolescent males versus pregnancy desire in adolescent females using the more nuanced 7-point scale.

I also plan to expand the oral interviews section. Although it is known that reported female partner's pregnancy desire is a strong positive predictor for impregnation desire in low-income African American adolescent males, the reasons behind this are unknown. Asking respondents specifically about their partner's desire and its role on their own desire will allow me to determine if they are primarily projecting their own

desire onto their partner, or if they are adopting the views of their partner. I plan to integrate my quantitative and qualitative data more fully using Atlas.ti.

I also hope to replicate this study in a city in another region of the country with similar demographic characteristics. Possible sites to replicate this study include Baltimore, Camden, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Chicago. Having a comparative study would prove or disprove the notion that my findings are a largely a southern phenomenon. If I found comparable results in another city, I would be able to extrapolate my findings to low-income African American adolescent males in the United States, rather than the ones just in Mobile.

Endnotes

¹ Birthrate is a more accurate measure than pregnancy rate because pregnancies that end in miscarriage or abortion are often never recorded. Adolescent birthrate measures the number of live births by mothers between the ages of 15 and 19 and compares this number to the size of the population in this demographic.

¹ Caucasian males comprised of less than 1 percent of the MYS population. Due to sample size, analyses involving Caucasian male and female participants are limited.

¹ Misspelled street name is not a perfect measure for gauging low levels of literacy. Though a participant misspelling their street name does aptly denotes low-level of literacy skills it does not capture respondents with low literacy skills who happen to spell their street name correctly. Spelling one's street name correctly may be partially attributed to the specific name of the street and how easy it is to spell. Given that 66% of the respondents made at least one error when writing their street address, it is safe to say that this measure does not fully capture low-literacy levels in this sample.

¹ Age of first intercourse is measured for sexually active adolescents. The 25% of respondents who reported never having sexual intercourse are not included in this figure.

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