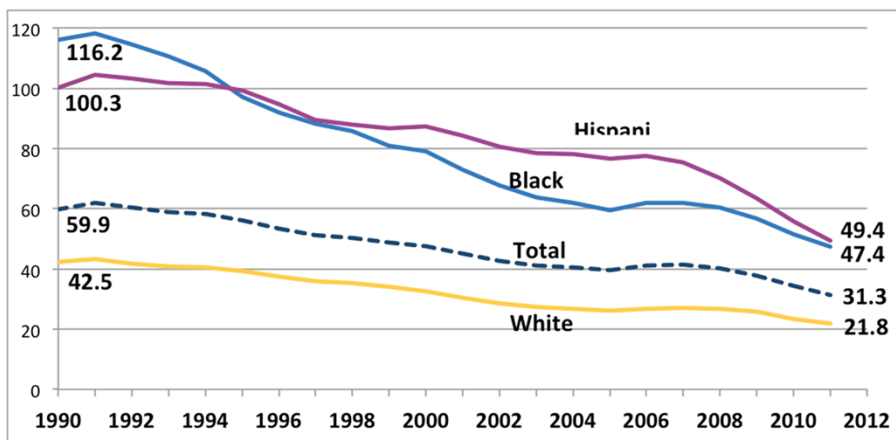


Motherhood, Marriage, and Adult Crime

Crime and the Life Course
SOC 401D

Birth rates per 1,000 females ages 15-19, by race/ethnicity, 1990-2011



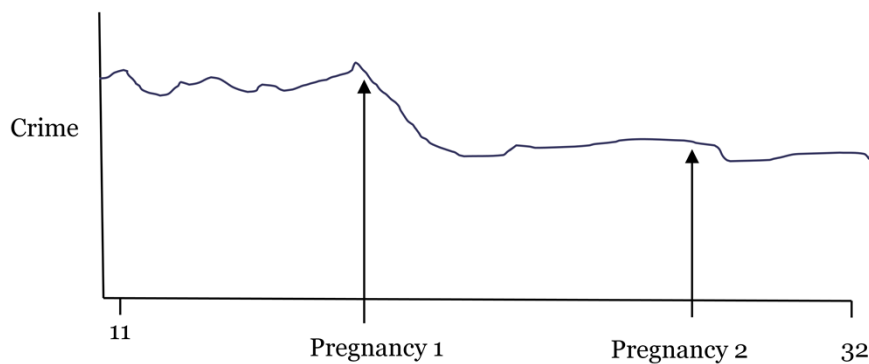
Source: Hamilton, B. E., Martin, J. A., & Ventura, S. J. (2012). *Births: Preliminary data for 2011*. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

Motherhood and Desistance

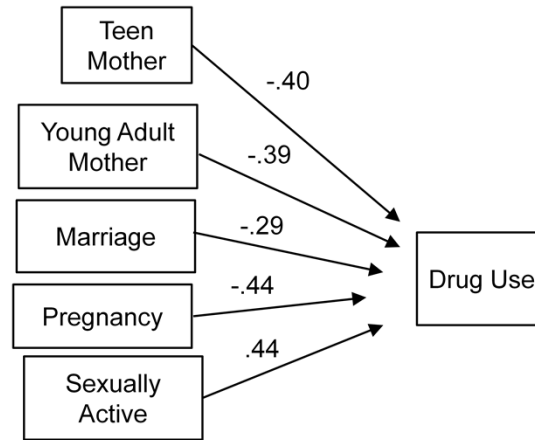
- **Denver Youth Survey**
 - Sample of disadvantaged neighborhoods
 - 10 year longitudinal study of 567 females
 - 10-16 years of age at wave one
- **Motherhood as a Turning Point**
 - Provides meaning in the lives of disadvantaged females
 - Transformation of self to adopt an identity of mother
 - Desist from drugs, alcohol, and delinquency

Motherhood and Desistance

- Problem: Selection into Motherhood
 - Sex and pregnancy produce desistance
 - E.g., impulsivity or low self control
- Solution: Within-Individual Change



Motherhood and Desistance Results



But what are the causal mechanisms explaining this effect?

The Mating Game In Disadvantaged Neighborhoods (Elijah Anderson)

- **Inner-city Philadelphia**
 - Joblessness, extreme disadvantage
 - Bleak futures for men and women
 - Lack of jobs prevent men from attaining self-respect and forming stable family relationships
- **Perspectives of Street Males and Females (Adaptation)**
 - **Street males: gain status in the peer group by sexual conquests**
 - Devalue fatherhood and family life
 - Impregnation is evidence of sexual conquests
 - Cannot imagine fatherhood
 - **Street girls: dream of being married, mother, domestic family life**
 - Learn dream of middle class lifestyle from popular culture
 - Fall in love, become a housewife and mother

Mating Game, Con't

- Mating Game: Contest Between Boys and Girls; Winner and Loser
 - Girls : Dream of being carried off by Prince Charming
 - Boys: Desire for sex without commitment; children without responsibility
 - Boys: Getting over a young woman's sexual defenses
 - The "rap": verbal element, telling girls what they want to hear, confirm dreams of family life (perfect rap lines over time)
 - Presentation of self: dress, grooming, looks
 - Derives from peer group: group sanctions
 - Girls: Use sex as a bargaining tool for attention
 - Fast crowd valuing promiscuity
 - Pregnancy may become a rite of passage to adulthood (few alternatives)

Pregnancy & Baby Clubs

- **Pregnancy**
 - Birth control viewed as woman's responsibility
 - Little to lose by becoming pregnant
 - Hopeful that pregnancy will win the male over to her dream
 - Males likely deny fatherhood
 - Support from peer group
 - "Tricked" and "Tagged"
- **Baby Club**
 - Girls hang out on the streets in peer groups
 - Often from female-headed families
 - See selves as "hip," being cool, surviving on wits, having fun
 - Some girls become pregnant; others follow
 - Girls give support to mothers, praise babies
 - Competition: good looking, well-dressed babies, compliments
 - "Looking good" offsets stigma of teen motherhood

Why Poor Mothers Put Motherhood Before Marriage (Edin and Kefalas)

- **Eight Disadvantaged Neighborhoods in Philadelphia**
 - Interviewed 162 mothers earning less than \$16k
 - Black, white, Latino
- **Poor Mothers Revere the Institution of Marriage**
 - But it appears a pipe dream in the moment
 - Perhaps a future event
- **Girls hook up early**
 - Local boys hanging out (propinquity)
 - Pregnancy happens quickly (less than a year)
 - Less than 20 percent were carefully planned
 - Often go off birth control due to side effects
 - Sometimes deliberately want to get pregnant
 - To be loved, have intimacy
 - Have responsibility

Why Poor Mothers Put Motherhood Before Marriage (Edin and Kefalas)

- **Eight Disadvantaged Neighborhoods in Philadelphia**
 - Interviewed 162 mothers earning less than \$16k
 - Black, white, Latino
- **Poor Mothers Revere the Institution of Marriage**
 - But it appears a pipe dream in the moment
 - Perhaps a future event
- **Girls hook up early**
 - Local boys hanging out (propinquity)
 - Pregnancy happens quickly (less than a year)
 - Less than 20 percent were carefully planned
 - Often go off birth control due to side effects
 - I didn't want to get pregnant, but I wasn't doing nothin to stop it
 - Sometimes deliberately want to get pregnant
 - To be loved, have intimacy
 - Have responsibility

Why Poor Mothers Put Motherhood Before Marriage (Edin and Kefalas)

- **News of Pregnancy: Shock, then happiness**
 - ◻ Viewed as a gift; as inevitable
 - ◻ 25% had had an abortion in the past
 - Affluent: 67% of unplanned pregnancies result in abortion
 - Poor: 50% of unplanned pregnancies result in abortion
- **Decision to Bring Pregnancy to Term**
 - ◻ “Do the right thing,” not take the “easy way out.”
 - ◻ “I can handle it,” “I’m not a trifling teenager.”
 - ◻ Most are eager to have the child, planned or not.
 - ◻ Pregnancy offers hope for a better future; abortion ends that hope
- **Motherhood provides meaning**
 - ◻ Lower class worldview: put motherhood first
 - ◻ Affluent class worldview: twenty-somethings put education and careers first; children can wait
 - ◻ For the lower classes, careers are pipedreams; children offer tangible sources of meaning

Why Poor Mothers Put Motherhood Before Marriage (Edin and Kefalas)

- **News of Pregnancy: Shock, then happiness**
 - Viewed as a gift; as inevitable
 - 25% had had an abortion in the past
 - Affluent: 67% of unplanned pregnancies result in abortion
 - Poor: 50% of unplanned pregnancies result in abortion
- **Decision to Bring Pregnancy to Term**
 - “Do the right thing,” not take the “easy way out.”
 - “I can handle it,” “I’m not a trifling teenager.”
 - Most are eager to have the child, planned or not.
 - Pregnancy offers hope for a better future; abortion ends that hope
- **Motherhood provides meaning**
 - Lower class worldview: put motherhood first
 - Affluent class worldview: twenty-somethings put education and careers first; children can wait
 - For the lower classes, careers are pipedreams; children offer tangible sources of meaning
- **Motherhood as a turning point**
 - Mothers avoid nightlife and focus on the child
 - Change reference groups away from street youth
 - View motherhood as transforming their lives

The Dream Dies

- **Men: Pregnancy often results in denial, abandonment, demand for abortion**
 - Sometimes brings the couple closer
 - Physiological changes in mother
 - Easy to stay away from drugs, alcohol and partying
 - Males: no such incentives
- **Dream Dies—Couples Split**
 - Lack of money is a factor
 - More important:
 - Father's criminal behavior
 - Spells of incarceration
 - Intimate violence
 - Chronic infidelity
 - Drugs and alcohol
- **Women still see marriage as desirable**
 - Among women who have a child out of wedlock, 70% eventually marry
 - But want to test their partners; can't find desirable partners