Young Disadvantaged Men: Fathers, Families, Poverty and Policy, A Fast Integrative Overview

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Helping Disadvantaged Men
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Young Disadvantaged Men: Fathers, Families, Poverty, and Policy
Smeeding, T. M., I. Garfinkel, and R. Mincy, co–editors
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cover below
fliers with discount on chairs or in lobby
ANNALS Background : Why?

- Fall 2008 – new Director at IRP responded to “Innovative Strategies for Increasing Self-Sufficiency” (ISIS) project from ACF
- Issue of low income men arose and was important theme for ISIS and IRP
- F 2008: Jim Kemple and “Career Academies” first seminar (thanks Ron)
- 2008-2011 Recession magnified already chronic jobs problem for low skill men
- S 2011: Eloise Anderson and her WI plans—applying lessons to practice
Issue Background

• The Great Recession is and was especially damaging for young (under age 30) undereducated men (secondary school only, including GED, or less) and structural economic forces are impeding the recovery for men.

• These are the truly “lost generation”

• What is the state of knowledge about their condition and their roles as fathers and partners?

• What are the policy options for improving well being amongst fathers and their families?
Quick Overview to Set the Stage

A. Openers—young men as fathers and their familial and economic situations

B. *Perfect Storm*: bad economy (low earnings; unstable families (MPF); rising incarceration rates; not much policy support— a multidimensional look

C. Policy and the Situation Now: not pretty—low skill men become invisible - disconnectedness, long periods of joblessness, rising poverty
A. Young Low Skill Men as Fathers
• How many men (high school degree or less) are fathers by age 30? 70 percent
• How much earnings? 62 percent earn less than $20,000 (in 2002!)
• How about their family situations (mothers and kids)? Very unstable and troublesome
Who are having the kids? fatherhood, motherhood and having a baby

Two ‘extreme’ but defining scenarios:

• *FIRST* finish schooling, get decent job/career, find a partner, make a plan, *THEN* have a baby

or

• *FIRST* have a baby—*THEN* worry about school, job/career, partner, and definitely do not have a plan!

Most young disadvantaged men and women are in the second situation
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Percent with First Birth by Age 25(^a)</th>
<th>Percent with First Birth by Age 40(^a)</th>
<th>Average Number of Children Born by Age 40(^a)</th>
<th>Median Age at First Birth(^b)</th>
<th>Completed Fertility: Percent of All Children Born(^a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dropouts</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Grads(^c)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Graduate</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
\(^b\) Langton (2010) using 2002 NSFG.
\(^c\)Includes GED holders.
Many Kids with Poor Life Chances

Over a ‘lifetime’ (women and men up to age 40 in 2004), the total number of kids (total fertility) in each mother’s education grouping (similar education or less for fathers) suggests that 48 percent of all kids in the USA today come from parents with low educational backgrounds.

Poverty is high for kids and rising and poverty is not good for kids or for their upward mobility as adults.

Jobs and work skills for parents are solution, meantime, income support for children is an important stop gap for kids.
B. Young Father, as Breadwinner, Partner and Parent: The Perfect Storm

• Marriage rates are very low and falling for the youngest adults (under 50 percent overall and only 30 percent for nonwhites under age 30)

• Complication #1—the labor market joblessness and low wages, structurally and cyclically

• Complication #2—multi partner fertility (MPF) outside marriage is high

• Complication #3—incarceration is high especially for dads and for kids of incarcerated dads

• Complication #4—poor income support system and unforgiving child support system for men

• Rough estimate of overlaps
C. Policy for Men, General Principles

• First understand the intricacies of low employment, low pay and unstable families and how they affect fathers, partners and children –as WI is doing now

• Policy should emphasize both prevention and dealing with consequences of bad decisions

• Policy should provide more incentives and rewards for good behaviors

• Try to maintain and strengthen relationships between father, mothers and their children
ANNALS : The Volume

- Describe the state of affairs for young (undereducated and disadvantaged) men and their economic status: as fathers, partners, and their interactions with kids
- Comment across lines and papers: culture, race, family change and status
- Some specific policy options to help families by helping low-income men
- Comments on policy realities and discussion
The State of Affairs: Descriptive Surveys of What We Know

- **Economic Situation** of Low-Educated, Low-Income Men (*Andrew Sum*, Northeastern University)
- **Low-Income Men as Fathers** (*Lawrence Berger and Callie Langton*, University of Wisconsin–Madison)
- **Low-Income Men as Partners** (*Kathryn Edin University and Laura Tach*, Harvard University)
- **How Do Low-Income Men and Fathers Matter for Kids?** (*Marcia Carlson and Katherine Magnuson*, University of Wisconsin–Madison)
Crosscutting Commentary

• Culture and context
  \((Alford Young, \text{University of Michigan})\)

• Race
  \((Devah Pager, \text{Princeton})\)

• Family Structure and Family Change
  \((Frank Furstenberg, \text{University of Pennsylvania})\)
Policy Perspectives: Helping Families by Helping Low-Income Men

- **Child Support**: Responsible Fatherhood and the Quid Pro Quo  
  *Maria Cancian* and *Daniel Meyer*, IRP and University of Wisconsin–Madison

- **Schools, Non-Schools and the Transition to Work**: Linking Young Men to Stable Jobs  
  *Carolyn Heinrich*, IRP, University of Wisconsin–Madison and *Harry Holzer*, Georgetown

- **Incarceration and Prisoner Re-Entry Policy**:  
  *Steven Raphael*, University of California, Berkeley

- **Policies that Strengthen Fatherhood and Encourage Healthy Family Relationships**:  
  *Virginia Knox*, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation; *Phil and Carol Cowan*, UC Berkeley

- **Income Support Policies for Low-income Men and Non-custodial Fathers**:  
  *Ron Mincy*, Columbia University
The short story

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http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc281d.pdf

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