

"Ain't I a Woman?" Motherhood and Status Deprivation

Introduction

The exercise would seem to work best with readings or discussions of gender, family structure, social stratification and life chances. The activity begins with a modified version of an SSDAN exercise created by Elizabeth Jordan, "The Explosion of Teenage Motherhood: Myth or Reality?" The concluding activity, exercise 2, is designed to give students an introduction to generating and testing a formal hypothesis.

Learning Objectives

Skill

- Have students gain additional practice in constructing and presenting evidence to test and evaluate ideas. (That is, constructing and interpreting numerical tables in support of substantive conclusions).
- Have students test a deductively derived hypothesis.

Substance

- Have students explore some popular notions about the explosion of teenage motherhood since the 1960s.
- Have students appreciate the difference between a psychological explanation (causes are internal or individualistic) and sociological (causes are external).

Outline of the exercise 1 (*modified Jordan exercise*)

1. Go to <http://www.ssdan.net/datacounts/data/>
2. From there, click "Browse" on the left sidebar. Find "**custom**" in the drop-down box and select it.
3. Scroll down through the list of data sets until you find **tnfm5090.dat**. Highlight and click "submit."
4. You can also click [here](#) to open the dataset in WebCHIP.

Dataset: TNFM5090, U.S. Census data prepared by Population Studies Center at University of Michigan.

1. Once you have opened the file containing dataset TNFM5090, generate marginals to show all variables in the dataset and describe percent down/across
2. Generate crosstabs to provide the actual data for items 1 through 5 on the Worksheet. Note any surprises.

Worksheet: Teenage Motherhood

1. Over the last few decades, has there been an increase in the rate of teenage motherhood? In other words, is the percentage of teenage girls with children higher today than 20 or 40 years ago? Draw a bar for each year to show your estimate of the percentage of teenage girls who had children in that year.
2. How many (give a number not a percentage) teenage girls had one or more children in 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1990?

Your findings

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

Create a graph or draw a bar chart to show the actual % of teenage girls who had one or more children in 1950 to 1990. (Hint: combine categories 1, 2, and 3+ on the variable CHILD.) Please note: The remaining questions pertain only to 1990.

3. Of all teenage mothers in 1990, what percentage is black and what percentage is not black?
 - a. Your Findings
4. Of all black teenage girls, what percentage has one or more children?
 - a. Your Findings
5. Of all nonblack teen girls, what percentage has one or more children?
 - a. Your Findings
6. In 1990, how many black teenage girls had one or more children? Give a number, not a percentage.
 - a. Your Findings
7. In 1990, how many nonblack teenage girls had one or more children?
 - a. Your Findings

Comment on the explosion of teenage motherhood in the U.S.

Outline of the exercise 2

Now that you have completed exercise1, let's examine an idea. Can it be that young women in society who have little social satisfaction in their status relative to others in the society will more likely accept motherhood as a means of improving their status and, perhaps, self-satisfaction? Could it be that during certain periods in a society's history and for certain categories of young females, womanhood is not only a very important status to achieve, but for some, motherhood is the most accessible way of achieving it?

Follow the instructions above to open the file containing the dataset TNFM5090.

(You can also click [here](#) to open the dataset in WebCHIP.)

- a. Modify the dataset and omit categories 15 through 17 on AgeTeen.
- b. Continue to modify. This time combine 1, 2, 3+ on Child. Label the combined categories (1, 2, 3+), and rename it 1+.
- c. Now do a marginal tabulation to see if the modified items are as they should be. What percentage of women has 1+ children?

Comment on the reason for removing females who are less than 18 years old. Do 18-year-old females in the U.S. have a social and legal status distinct from those females under 18? What might be the implications of this for rates of motherhood among 18-20 year olds?

At this point we are ready to test the idea that some young women are more likely to seek a more satisfying social status by becoming mothers. What might be the relationship between low social status, restricted opportunities for social satisfaction, and motherhood among young women? (Hint: control Year, Race and Educ. Do a crosstab of Child/AgeTeen, and then create a percentage down.)