



Early Parenthood

Margaret Rosenheim

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"Eloquently attests to the fact that teenage parenthood is a complex, multi-dimensional problem defying single-focused, easy solutions. . . . A 'must read' for program planners and policymakers."ÐÐBernice Weissbourd, Family Focus

"Bound to be of great value in the reconsideration of public policy toward teenage pregnancy in the United States."ÐÐRobert H. Bremner, Professor Emeritus, Ohio State University

"A very impressive collection of essays . . . intelligent, balanced, and imaginative."ÐÐJoel F. Handler, School of Law, U.C.L.A.

Teenage parenthood has been a newsworthy issue since the 1970s. The "epidemic of kids having children" led to demands for increased sex education and access to contraceptives. Despite major public and private efforts, rates of teenage pregnancy have not fallen significantly since the '70s. In fact, rates of teenage births have recently begun to rise. This lack of progress plus startling new evidence about the health and developmental consequences of early parenthood have touched off a fresh round of debate on the problem: Is teenage parenthood simply accidental or an intended alternative for disadvantaged teens who see no advantage in delaying childbirth? Do infant survival rates depend more on socioeconomic conditions than on the age of the mother? Do teen mothers necessarily end up with less education and more poverty than older mothers with the same socioeconomic background?

The contributors to this interdisciplinary volume reexamine the assumptions underlying conventional approaches to teenage pregnancy prevention and reassess how the growing problem of early parenthood ought to be addressed in the coming decade. They consider the problem of early parenthood within the larger social context of prolonged transition from adolescence to independent adulthood in post-industrial society. They also look at how the institutional contexts of early parenthood differ historically, cross-nationally (in Korea and Sweden), and by class, race, and age in the United States. This collection of essays helps to clarify the interrelated problems of teenage pregnancy, single parenthood, and welfare dependency, and sharpens the focus of pregnancy prevention and family support policies for the 1990s.

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