

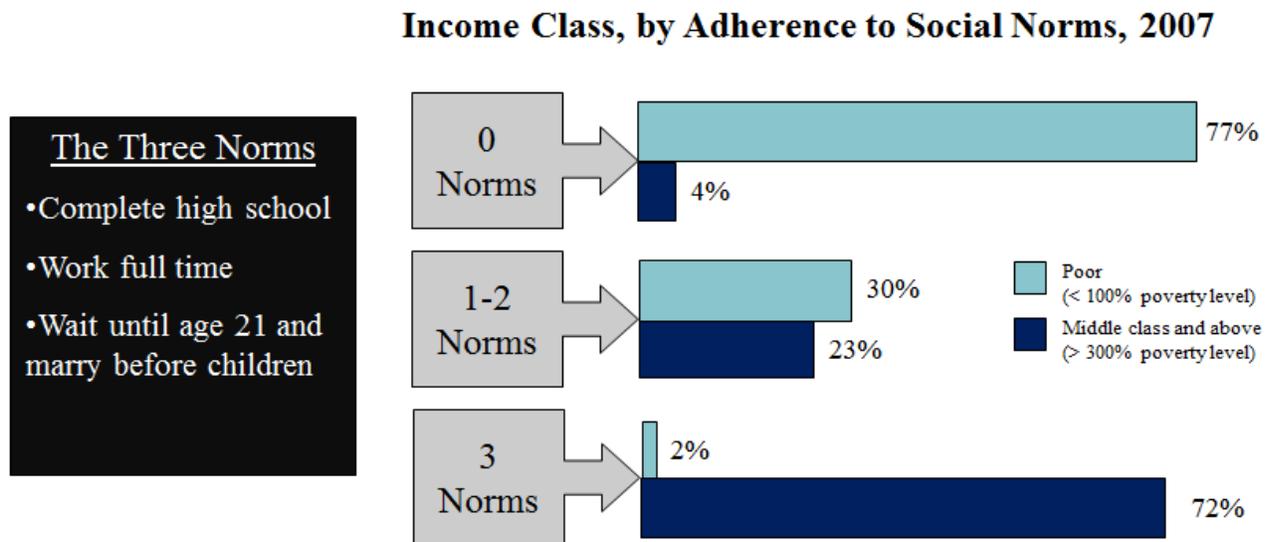
Education for Personal Responsibility

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State and federal governments in the U.S. devote a considerable portion of their budgets to fighting poverty and promoting opportunity. Between the two levels of government, the nation now spends around a trillion dollars annually on programs for poor and low-income individuals and families.¹ Yet progress against poverty has been modest and economic mobility has been stagnant for decades, while other nations have less poverty and more economic mobility than the U.S.² Why has progress been so slow?

Figure 1: What Accounts for Success?



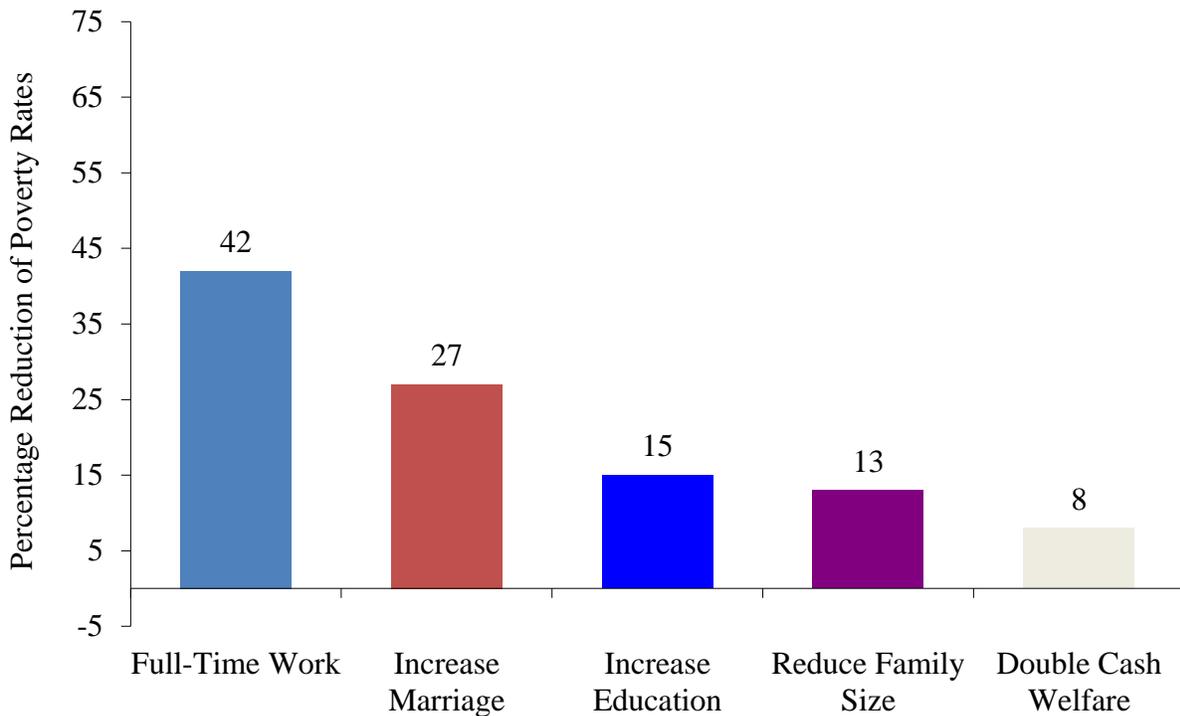
Source: Authors' calculations based on the U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey.

Several years ago, using Census Bureau data representative of the U.S. population, my colleagues and I analyzed the probability that individuals would live in poverty or have a middle-class income³ given how many of three norms of personal responsibility they had followed. The three behavioral norms are whether the person obtained a high school degree, whether the person worked full time that year, and whether the person had waited until age twenty-one to marry and whether the person married before having children. The results showed that those who violated all three norms had a 76 percent chance of living in poverty and a 7 percent chance of being in the middle class in a given year (fig. 1). By contrast, those who followed all three norms had a 2 percent chance of living in poverty and a 74 percent chance of reaching the middle class. Thus, those who followed what might be called the “success sequence” of finishing at least high school, working, and waiting until age twenty-one to marry and marrying before having children were highly unlikely to live in poverty and had a very good chance of entering the middle class.

Now consider a second statistical exercise based on the population of U.S. adults, again using Census Bureau data. Suppose we wanted to know whether behavioral changes would have an impact on the poverty rate. For example, would there be an impact on the poverty rate if all adults worked full time at whatever wage they actually earn for part-time work

or, if they don't work at all, worked full time at the average wage earned by other Americans with their level of education? Similarly, would there be an impact on poverty if couples married at the same rate as they had in 1970? To find out, we simulated an increase in the marriage rate to its level in 1970 by randomly matching single mothers and unmarried men who were similar in age, education, and race. We also performed separate simulations based on assuming that everyone had at least a high school degree and earned the same wage as other high school graduates, that no family had more than two children, and that cash welfare benefits were doubled.⁴

Figure 2: Five Potential Pathways to Reducing Poverty and Promoting Opportunity



Source: Based on Adam Thomas and Isabel V. Sawhill, "For Richer or for Poorer: Marriage as an Antipoverty Strategy," Journal of Policy Analysis Management vol. 21, no. 4 (October 2002): 587-599; Ron Haskins and Isabel V. Sawhill, "Work and Marriage: The Way to End Poverty and Welfare," Welfare Reform and Beyond Policy Brief, The Brookings Institution (September 2003).

The results are summarized in figure 2. Our simulations suggest that the most effective way to reduce poverty would be for everyone to work full time. Full-time work, under our assumptions, would reduce the poverty rate by 40 percent. Increasing the rate of marriage to its 1970 level would be associated with a reduction in the poverty rate of a little more than 25 percent. Increasing education to the level it would be if everyone had at least a high school degree and reducing family size so that no parents had more than two children would be associated with a reduction in poverty of around 15 percent and 13 percent, respectively. Some idea of the magnitude of these impacts can be obtained by comparing them with the impact of doubling the level of cash welfare. All are superior to the modest 8

percent reduction associated with doubling cash welfare. Thus, increasing full-time work would reduce the poverty rate by about five times as much as doubling cash welfare. It will not escape notice that the factors shown in this exercise to be most effective in reducing poverty are similar to the behavioral norms shown in figure 1 to be closely associated with avoiding poverty and achieving a middle-class income. Both exercises suggest that increasing work rates, marriage rates, and education would substantially reduce poverty rates and increase the odds of earning a middle-class income.

Both of these statistical exercises are, in the jargon of social scientists, correlational in nature—meaning that the levels of two factors tend to be related in the sense that as the value of one increases or declines, so does the other. Both analyses show that education, work, and marriage are correlated with poverty and income. But under the rules of social science, showing that two factors are correlated does not permit the conclusion that one causes the other. The major concern here is that some unobserved and unmeasured characteristic of the individuals could be responsible for the observed correlations. For example, motivation or intelligence could be associated with both high levels of education, work, and marriage as well as lower poverty rates and higher income. But there is abundant evidence, much of it from studies whose design permits causal conclusions, that increasing education, work, and marriage would reduce poverty rates and increase income. In the separate sections below on what schools can do to increase work rates, increase educational attainment, and prepare adolescents for responsible behavior regarding their choices on family formation, I will review some of the literature that supports the claim that these three factors are causally related to poverty and income.

An important, if somewhat obvious, point to make about the review of evidence on helping young people make better choices about work, education, and the kind of family they want to create is that the choices many of them now make—often without good advice or good examples in their families and neighborhood to follow and with little understanding of the long-term consequences of their choices—do not promote their economic well-being. The major implication of the two statistical exercises reviewed above is that if these choices could be improved so that adolescents and young adults could get a job that allowed them to work full time at a reasonable wage, get more education, and wait until age twenty-one to get married and have a baby, their economic status would be greatly improved. There are no grounds to think that without some intervention, the life-course choices made by young people will improve anytime soon. So the question before us is whether intervention programs that schools conduct can help young people improve these life-shaping choices.

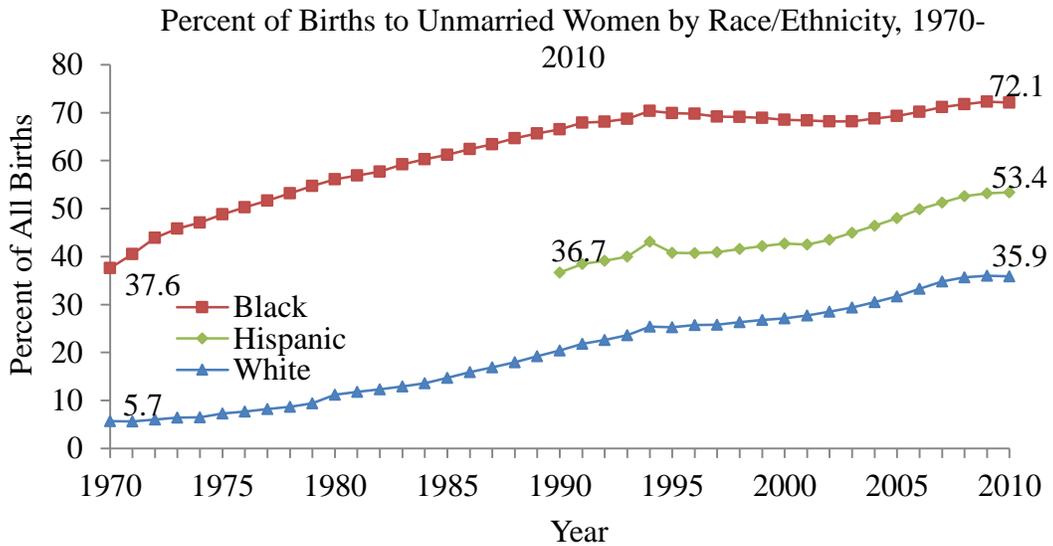
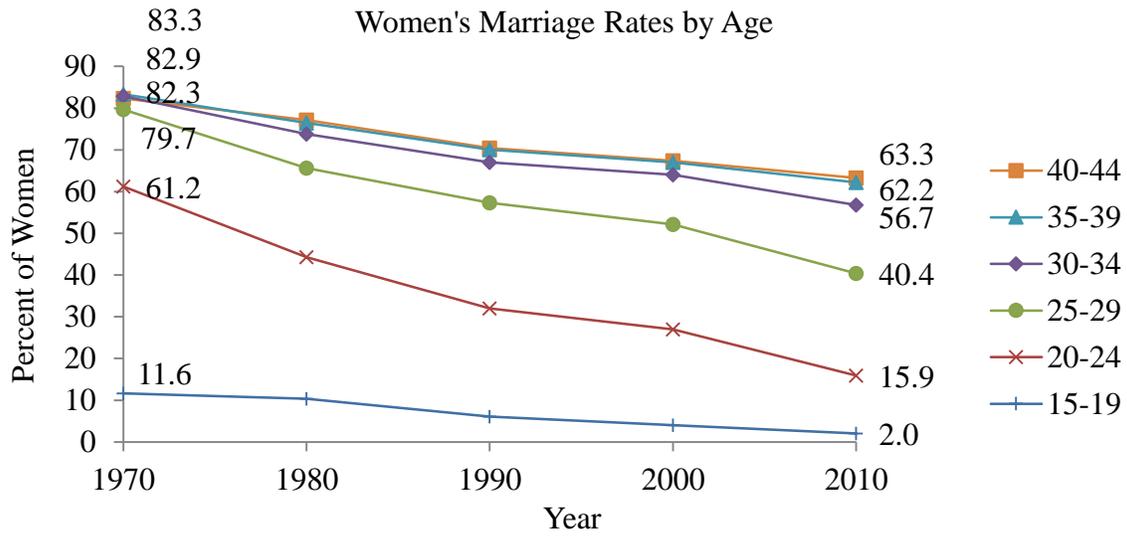
Preliminary Considerations

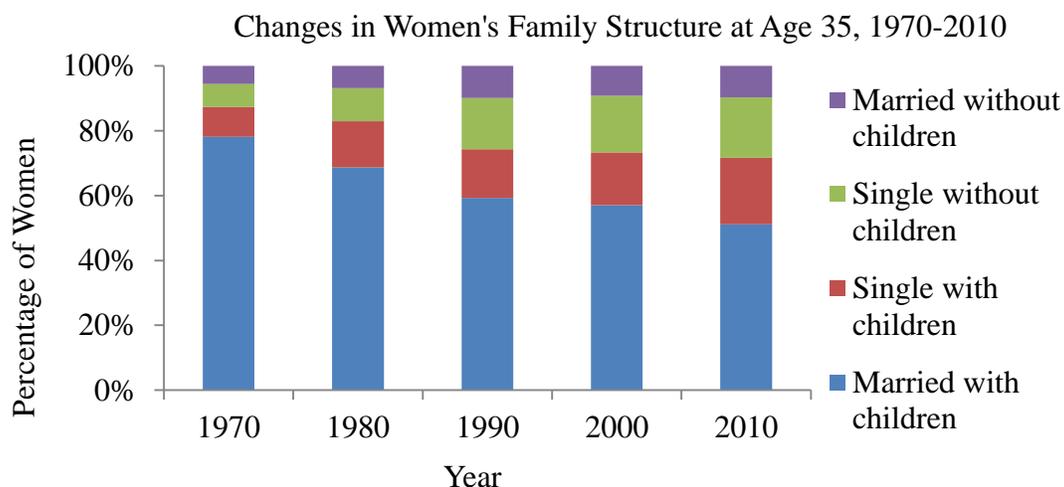
Before examining the role of schools in helping children make better life-course choices, three nonschool issues should be addressed. First of all, work, education, and marriage hinge on choices made by individuals. Although individuals can (at least partially) overcome bad choices made early in life with later choices, it is an unfortunate fact about the chronology of modern life in advanced economies that choices that individuals make during childhood, especially during adolescence, often have long-term consequences.⁵ This generalization applies especially to decisions about education, sex, and delinquent

behavior. If a sixteen-year-old drops out of school, his odds of marriage, employment, and earnings shift in a negative direction. Further, in the case of teen births, research shows that the decisions of two sixteen-year-olds have important consequences for themselves, the child they create, and for society, not least by increasing the odds that both the teen parents and their child will impose costs on government. In fact, these costs begin within months of conception because most teens who give birth are eligible for Medicaid, which pays for prenatal care, delivery, and postnatal care. Medicaid pays for around 75 percent of teen births at a cost of around \$2.3 billion annually. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy estimates that the total national cost that teen births impose on all levels of government for health care, child welfare, and (later) incarceration is \$9.4 billion.⁶ The point is that the life-course decisions being examined here have immediate consequences at least by adolescence and can alter the remainder of a person's life—all the more reason schools should attempt to help adolescents learn to avoid bad choices.

A second issue that should be a major part of the discussion about improving the life choices made by young people is that parents play an important role in guiding their children to make good choices. Parents can be models for the advantages of good choices; parents can directly intervene when children make a mistake, to put them back on the right path; and parents' involvement with their children from birth until they leave home for college or work contributes mightily to children's development, including the life-course decisions being examined here. Greg Duncan and Richard Murnane have shown that there are vast differences between how much wealthy parents and poor parents spend on enrichment experiences for their children such as sports, high-quality child care, home learning materials, trips to museums and similar educational facilities, summer camps, music lessons, and private tutoring.⁷ But beyond parenting differences related to money, studies show that highly educated parents spend more time with their children than less-educated parents; that they use this time productively in activities that stimulate language and cognitive development; that they speak more to their children during the preschool years so that by the time the children reach public schools, they have superior vocabulary skills; and that their parenting style (maternal sensitivity and responsiveness to the child during the preschool years) is more conducive to child development than the parenting style of low-income families.⁸

Figure 3: Dramatic Changes since 1970 in Family Composition





Source: Author's calculations from the decennial census (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000) and the American Community Survey, 2010.

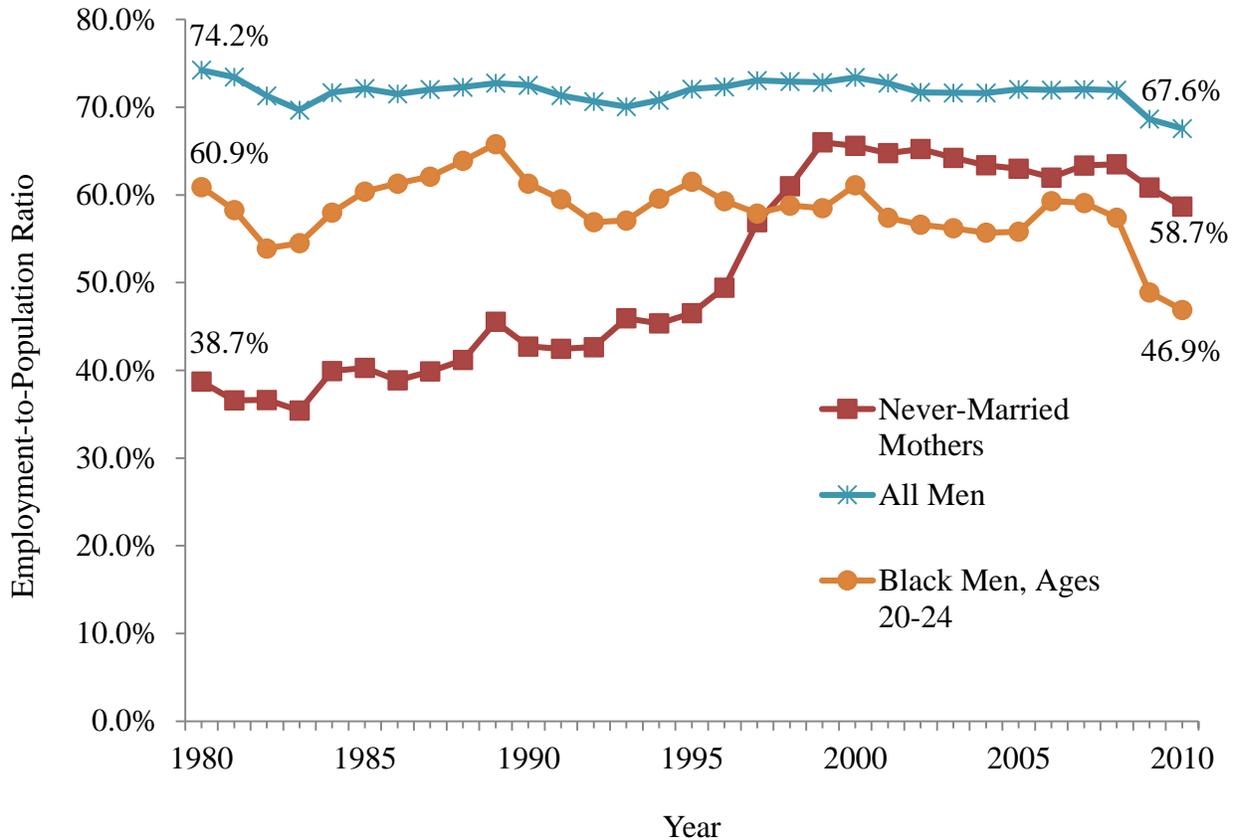
Thus, even though parents can have an immensely positive impact on their children's development, behavior, and life choices, research makes it all too clear that poor children, minority children, and children from single-parent families have parents who are less likely to stimulate their development when they are young and who are less likely to give them guidance throughout their childhood years.⁹ These findings underscore the importance of the dramatic changes in family composition that have taken place among American families over the last four decades. Figure 3 shows the rapid decline of marriage rates for women of all ages; the historic increase in nonmarital births that are, in part, a result of declining marriage rates; and the impact of these two changes on family composition since 1970. The upshot is that more children are living with a single parent and fewer are living with married parents. It follows that an increasing portion of the nation's children lives in the family form in which they are about four times more likely to be in poverty and less likely to experience parenting that supports their development and positive behavior—including the life-shaping choices they make. As so often happens with the nation's social problems, society must fall back on the schools to help young people, especially the disadvantaged ones, make better life choices.

What the Schools Can Do

Thus, in this chapter, I explore the proposition that schools should focus more attention on how to get students, especially those from poor and single-parent families, to accept more personal responsibility for their decisions about work, education, and family composition. More specifically, I examine what the schools can do to help children and adolescents improve the quality of their life-course decisions and acquire the knowledge and experiences that will support these improved choices.

I. Work

Figure 4: Employment-Population Ratio for All Men, Never-Married Mothers, and Young Black Men, 1980-2010



Note: People who are in the military or who are incarcerated are not included in the data.

Source: Brookings tabulations of data from the CPS Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 1980-2010.

For young adults from low-income families, the key to financial well-being is work. If work rates could be improved—especially for males, whose work rates have been falling for decades—the nation’s poverty rate would fall and kids from low-income families could escape poverty and improve their future incomes, with possible impacts on their marital prospects. Unfortunately, historical trends in the work rates of American adults are decidedly a mixed bag. Figure 4 shows the employment-to-population (E/P) ratio for all men, never-married mothers, and black males between the ages of twenty and twenty-four. The E/P ratio is the broadest measure of employment because everyone in the demographic group under examination is in the denominator and the number of people in that group who have a job is in the numerator. Unlike the unemployment rate, the E/P ratio includes people in the group who have dropped out of the labor force (but not those who are in the military or incarcerated; see the source note to figure 4).

The picture for never-married mothers, the group most likely to live in poverty, is encouraging. Their work rates skyrocketed between roughly the mid-1990s and the recession year of 2001. Since then, their work rates have diminished somewhat, but they were still about 25 percent higher in 2010 than in 1995, before welfare reform provided both positive and negative incentives for mothers on welfare or eligible for welfare to work. During the period of increased employment among these mothers over the second half of the 1990s, poverty rates among children in female-headed families and black children (who are disproportionately in female-headed families) fell steadily and reached their lowest level ever. These population-wide results are consistent with the claim from our two statistical exercises above that increased employment will lead to reductions in poverty.

But the picture is not as encouraging for males. Work rates among males have been declining for more than three decades for reasons that are not altogether clear. If work rates among all men are worrisome, work rates among young black men are alarming. The E/P ratios of young black men were less than 60 percent in only nine of the last thirty-one years and are now under 50 percent. We can't build self-sufficient families or a community when fewer than half the young men are working.

Can the schools play a role in helping all young people, especially young minority males, increase their work rates? Most schools focus their efforts on helping students learn basic skills and prepare themselves for education at two- or four-year colleges. For those concerned primarily with students from poor and low-income families, as I am here, the focus should be on placing a greater emphasis on the work and career goals of students who seem unlikely to attend a post-secondary institution. In addition, schools should make a special effort to help disadvantaged students who would have difficulty in four-year institutions because of their poor academic preparation. Of course, there are students from poor families who are highly qualified, not just for four-year colleges but also, in some cases, for elite colleges. Those students should be identified early and helped with their college selection and with obtaining scholarships, both issues with which most low-income parents would have difficulty giving good advice. If these superior students from poor families can be directed toward four-year schools, as we will see (figs. 5 and 6), their economic futures have a very high probability of boosting them well above the economic levels of their parents and even above that of the average household. But schools should also provide an intense focus on two-year colleges, including or especially the certificate programs most of them offer, for disadvantaged students who are not well qualified for four-year institutions.

It follows that an important strategy the schools should employ to augment the career choices of the mediocre students from poor families in order to help them secure their financial future is education that includes acquiring skills that are of practical use in the market place. At least two strategies are supported by rigorous evidence of success.

The first is the career academy. Few education programs have stronger evidence of success. The academies usually enroll around 200 students in grades nine through twelve in order to create small learning communities. Students take classes in both academic and

technical subjects that are often organized around career themes. Importantly, the programs emphasize practical experience in the work world by forming partnerships with local employers. Academy students have the opportunity to work directly with employers in their community and engage in activities such as job shadowing, career fairs, and hearing from guest speakers from local businesses. Employers also teach students how to locate potential jobs and how to apply. This instruction includes help with preparing resumes and tips for participating in job interviews.

The research firm MDRC evaluated career academies using a gold standard design implemented at eight sites and involving a total of nearly 1,400 students, 85 percent of whom were Hispanic or black. The study followed students from all eight sites for eight years after their expected graduation date. Perhaps the most notable impacts during the school years were on increased attendance and school credits earned, as well as—based on interviews with students—a sense of attending a school with a “family-like” atmosphere. But the most notable impacts occurred at the eight-year follow-up point. Program participants earned a total of \$16,704 more in 2006 dollars (approximately \$19,300 in 2013 dollars) over the eight years of follow up than did students in the control group. This effect, which was concentrated mainly among young men, is due to increased wages, more hours worked, and greater employment stability, all signs of greater labor-force attachment.

Perhaps most surprisingly, at the eight-year follow up when participants were in their mid-twenties, there were several impacts on marital status and parental status, both for the full sample and especially for young men who participated in the academy program. More specifically, a young man in the academy program was 33 percent more likely to be married and living with his wife and more than 45 percent more likely to be a custodial parent than a young man in the control group.

Of course, it is not clear that all the nation’s approximately 2,500 career academies produce similar impacts on the education, work, and family composition choices of young people. Nonetheless, this trifecta of impacts shows that well-implemented school programs can have major impacts on the decisions that young people, many or even mostly from poor families, make about all three elements of the success sequence.

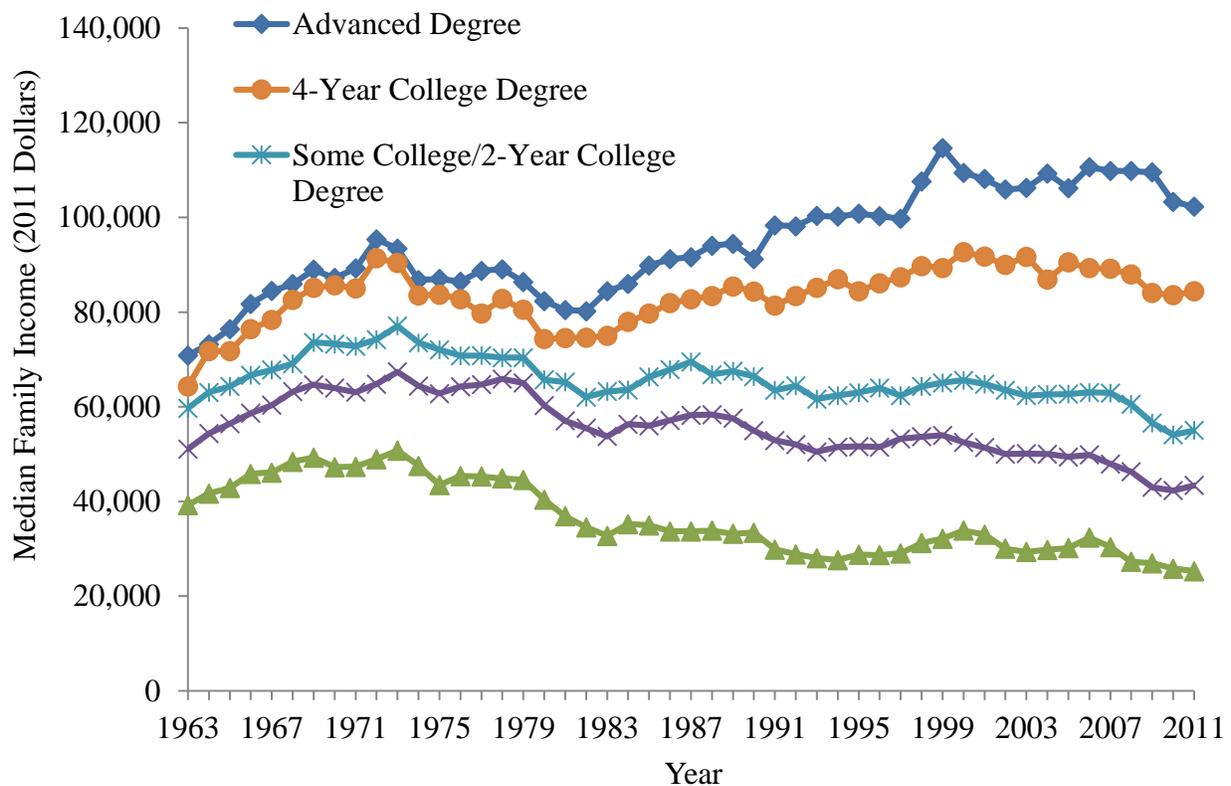
Happily, it should be possible to augment the work impacts of career academies by combining them with youth apprenticeship programs. Consider an apprenticeship program that the Georgia State Legislature established in 1992 legislation. Students learn about the program during their freshmen and sophomore years and can join the program as juniors or seniors. The program features around 2,000 hours of work-based training and another nearly 150 hours of related coursework. The outcome of the program is that students not only earn their high school diploma but also earn a certificate of industry-recognized competencies relevant to occupations that require at least a moderate level of skill (and often much more), such as electrician, plumber, and welder. This certificate can be of great value when high school graduates are looking for their first job. Surveys of employers indicate that they are highly satisfied with the program and with the program graduates

they hire. In fact, more than 95 percent of employers say that the program is beneficial to their company and that they would recommend the program to other employers.

I end this section on work by putting in a good word for the often-demeaned value of low-wage jobs. Schools should aim to help young people qualify for skill-based employment or move on to two-year or four-year colleges, but they should do so while emphasizing that the first step to financial success is often a low-wage job. One of the most important aspects of American social policy is the stream of work support benefits that Congress created over the past several decades to provide assistance to low-income workers, particularly those with children. These work supports include the Earned Income Tax Credit, the Child Tax Credit, food stamps, school lunches, Medicaid, and childcare assistance. It is not unusual for a single mother with two children to receive \$7,000 or even more from this package (not counting the Medicaid coverage) of work supports, most of it in cash. The work support system greatly increases the incentive for low-wage work by ensuring both that work pays and that even unskilled workers are almost always better off working than on welfare. As importantly, many workers begin in low-wage jobs and, by accumulating work experience and perhaps some formal training, move on to better jobs, often with better employers.

II. Education

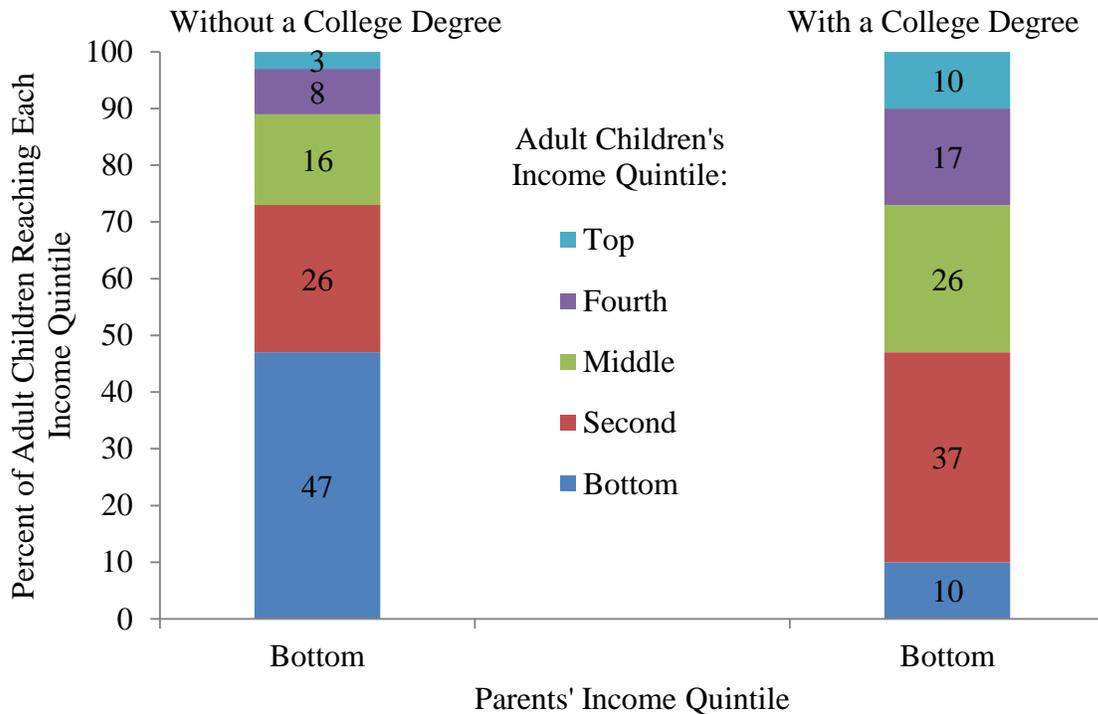
Figure 5: Median Family Income of Adults Age 30-39 by Education Level, 1963-2011



Source: *Income Figures from Brookings Tabulations of data from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey, 1964-2012. Adjusted to constant dollars using annual averages of the CPIAUCNS from FRED (<https://research.stlouisfed.org/fred2>).*

Figure 5 captures the relationship between years of schooling and family income for people during their prime earning years, between the ages of thirty and thirty-nine. Three points about the figure are notable. First, for every year since 1963, as a group, people with more education made more money than people with less education. In fact, as improbable as it might seem, the lines representing the relationship between education and family income never touch. That’s more than four decades, over which none of data points violate the conclusion that the average income of Americans with more education is greater than the average income of Americans with less education. Second, the line graphs portraying the average income of people with different levels of education are getting further and further apart over time. In 1963, the difference in family income between those without a high school education and those with an advanced degree was about \$32,650. In 2011, the difference was a little over \$77,000, well over twice as much as in 1963 (all in constant 2011 dollars). The payoff to education is growing over time. Third, for more than two decades, only those with a four-year degree or an advanced degree have, on average, experienced increased annual income.

Figure 6: Chances of Getting Ahead for Adult Children With and Without a College Degree from Families of Varying Incomes



Note: Income adjusted for family size.

Source: Pew Economic Mobility Project, Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across Generations, July 2012, Figure 18.

An important part of the story about education and income implied by figure 6 is that in order to earn a decent income, most people will need some education beyond high school. For kids from poor families, getting a college degree is associated with an enormous positive impact on their adult income. Figure 6, based on the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), shows the income of adult children whose parents were in the bottom income quintile. The bar graph on the left is for adult children who did not earn a four-year college degree, while the bar graph on the right is for adult children who did earn a four-year college degree. Obtaining a college degree noticeably shifts the entire distribution of income in the second generation. For example, 47 percent of those without a college degree themselves wound up in the bottom income quintile as adults, compared to 10 percent of those with a college degree. Similarly, without a college degree, only 3 percent of adult children whose parents were in the bottom income quintile made it all the way to the top quintile, compared to 10 percent of those with a college degree. The point is that even children from families in the bottom quintile can dramatically alter their economic future by obtaining a college degree.

Many studies demonstrate that a large number of children from low-income families are not prepared for college. The PSID shows that whereas 53 percent of children from the top quintile obtain a four-year degree, only 11 percent of children from the bottom quintile achieve a college degree.¹⁰ There are many reasons for the low rate of college completion by children from poor families, but among the most important is their lack of academic preparation for college.¹¹ The National Assessment of Educational Progress rates the preparation of high school students for college work as basic, proficient, or advanced. Of students eligible for the National School Lunch Program, only 21 percent were proficient or advanced in reading and only 10 percent were proficient or advanced in math. By contrast, among children from families with incomes above the cutoff for school lunch, 44 percent were proficient or advanced in reading and 32 percent were proficient or advanced in math.¹² Children at the basic level are considered to be poorly prepared for college work.

This lack of academic preparation prevents many children from low-income families from entering quality four-year institutions—but what about community colleges? What if these marginal students knew that they needed education beyond high school and, after being honest with themselves about their lack of preparation for a four-year college (perhaps with advice from teachers or counselors), decided to continue their education at a community college? For many students, even the academic requirements of a community college calls for serious and sustained effort if the student is to be successful. Unfortunately, experience with the remedial English and math courses required of many students who lack basic skills when they enroll in a community college shows that these programs usually fail.¹³

Despite these problems with students who enter community colleges with academic deficits, recent programs developed at community colleges around the nation are beginning to show that these deficits can be overcome. Two approaches to helping these

students have been tested by random-assignment designs. In one approach, MDRC tested a strategy called “Learning Communities” at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn. The basic intent of the program was “to build social cohesion among students and faculty” and to help students develop better study skills. The study assigned incoming freshmen participating in the program to groups of fifteen to twenty-five students. These small groups of students took three courses together: an English course pitched at their level of performance; a regular college course, such as psychology or sociology; and a “student success course” that taught effective study habits and other skills related to academic success in college. The faculty members in the program coordinated their assignments and met together periodically to review the progress of participating students. The study randomly assigned nearly 1,500 students participating in the experiment, mostly from low-income and minority families, to the program group or the control group and followed for two years. At the end of two years, students participating in the Learning Communities said in an interview they felt “integrated” into the school community and felt more engaged in their courses. They also passed more courses and earned more credits during their first semester, moved more quickly through their remedial English course, and were more likely to pass a required English skills assessment test. All these effects were modest but nonetheless demonstrate that marginal students can be helped to be more successful at community college. The key now is to build on the success of the Kingsborough approach.¹⁴

A second approach, tested at Delgado Community College in New Orleans, examined the impact of giving students a \$1,000 scholarship for two semesters if they attended college at least half time and maintained a C average. Most of the students, who the program randomly assigned to an experimental or control group, were single mothers in their twenties. There was an array of effects of the scholarship, including an increased likelihood of attending school full time, greater persistence in staying in college, and completing more credit hours. Evidently, for students trying to balance family responsibilities, work, and a community college education, a little cash can go a long way toward clearing time to concentrate on schoolwork.

Thus, there is ample evidence that if students from disadvantaged backgrounds participate in career academies during high school, their work rates, income, and marriage rates can be enhanced. Similarly, if disadvantaged students can be helped to enroll in two- or four-year colleges, there are programs that can help them succeed—which, in turn, will give them an advantage in the job market. The key to success is developing programs tailored to the special needs of students from poor families that aim to help them make better decisions about work and college. If more high schools and colleges offered the types of programs reviewed here and paid attention to implementing them aggressively with good teachers, more students from poor families could boost their prospects.

In this section, I have emphasized efforts to help young people from poor families enroll in and complete a bachelor’s degree at a four-year college or complete an associate degree or professional certificate at a community college. But I would also emphasize that obtaining a high school degree is still the basic requirement for avoiding poverty and pursuing economic mobility. One of the three basic norms in the success sequence that helps people avoid poverty and enter the middle class is obtaining a high school degree. As significantly,

a high school degree is the gateway to subsequent education at community colleges and four-year colleges and thus, in all likelihood, to earning a middle-class wage. Based on everything we know (see figure 5 for a good example), it is better to have a high school degree than to not have a high school degree. In raising the sights of the schools to help more kids prepare for two- and four-year colleges, we should not lose sight of the vital importance of a “mere” high school degree.

III. *Marriage and family composition*

Family background has major impacts on children’s development as well as their school performance.¹⁵ In general, research shows that the best rearing environment for children is a married-couple family.¹⁶ Yet, as portrayed so vividly in Figure 3 above, it would be difficult to exaggerate the extent to which family composition has changed in America over the last four decades, with the result that more and more children are being reared by single parents.

There is only modest evidence that schools can do much to boost marriage rates,¹⁷ but there is good evidence that delaying the age of first childbirth until young women and men are in their twenties can promote education and subsequent employment.¹⁸ An important way that schools can help teens be responsible and take an important step toward fulfilling one element of the success sequence is to teach them about responsible sexual behavior. The federal government, under both Republican and Democratic administrations, has made a major commitment to providing funds for communities, including schools, to establish programs that teach teens to avoid early sex and pregnancy. Republicans and Democrats often differ sharply about whether programs should focus exclusively on teaching abstinence or also include instruction about methods of birth control.¹⁹ Even so, most programs do both.²⁰

Preventing teen births is one of the rare social issues about which one can state unequivocally that great progress has been made. The teen birth rate has been cut by 36 percent since 2007 and by an impressive 57 percent since 1991. In 1991, 61.5 of every 1,000 female teens gave birth. By 2013, the number giving birth had declined to 26.6 per 1,000.²¹ One reason may be that a number of programs that meet high standards of program evaluation have been shown to be effective in reducing teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), or some aspect of teen sexual activity. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), implementing legislation enacted by Congress in 2009, reviewed over 1,000 studies of teen pregnancy prevention programs and found that thirty-one model programs had evidence of success on one or more of these measures.²² HHS is now funding more than one hundred local programs with the new money that Congress provided in the same 2009 legislation—most are being conducted in the public schools, most use one or more of the thirty-one model programs, and all are being carefully evaluated (largely by random-assignment designs) to ensure that they continue having impacts.²³

The HHS systematic review of pregnancy prevention programs is part of a major initiative by the Obama administration to reduce the teen pregnancy rate by expanding what is now

widely referred to as evidence-based policy. Although definitions vary, the two primary characteristics of the Obama definition of evidence-based policy are (1) directing the highest possible proportion of federal grant funds to programs that have been shown by rigorous evaluations to produce positive impacts (2) and requiring all programs receiving federal funds to conduct high-quality evaluations and use the results to improve the programs. The administration’s vision is that following evidence-based policy over many years will gradually increase the share of federal dollars being spent on programs known to produce significant benefits and simultaneously develop additional programs and practices supported by rigorous evidence.²⁴

Table 1: Overview of Selected Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program Models Eligible for Tier I Funding, Including Impacts

Name of Program	Brief Description	Impact
Aban Aya Youth Project	Middle schools; African American students in grades 5-8; Afro-centric social development curriculum; four-year period (risky sexual behaviors)	Male participants reported having had less sexual intercourse; no program impact for female participants
Adult Identity Mentoring (Project AIM)	Middle schools; low-income youth ages 11-14; group-level youth development intervention; twelve sessions over six weeks (risky sexual behaviors)	<i>Three months later:</i> participants were less likely to report having had sexual intercourse <i>A year later:</i> males were less likely to report having had sexual intercourse; no program impact for females, sexually inexperienced youth, or the full sample
Children's Aid Society (CAS) -- Carrera Programs	After school programs or community-based organizations; youth ages 11-12; holistic approach; seven years (pregnancy prevention)	Female participants were less likely to get pregnant or to become sexually active; no program impact for male participants
FOCUS	Specialized settings; female Marine Corp recruits ages 17+; curriculum-based intervention; four two-hour sessions (pregnancy and STD prevention)	<i>Eleven months later:</i> sexually inexperienced were less likely to report having had multiple partners since graduating; no program impact on number of

		partners for sexually experienced; no program impact on condom use
It's Your Game: Keep it Real	Middle schools; students in grades 7-8; classroom and computer-based program; twelve fifty-minute lessons over two years (HIV, STI, and pregnancy prevention)	<i>A year later:</i> less sexually experienced were less likely to report having initiated sexual activity
Project TALC	After school programs or community-based organizations; adolescent children with HIV-positive parents; intervention based on social learning theory; twenty-four sessions over four to six years (HIV and pregnancy prevention)	<i>Four years later:</i> participants were less likely to report being teenage parents
Rikers Health Advocacy Program (RHAP)	Specialized settings; incarcerated inner-city adolescent males ages 16-19; problem-solving therapy approach; four, one-hour sessions over two weeks (HIV prevention)	<i>Ten months later:</i> heterosexual participants with pre-jail sexual experience reported higher frequency of condom use during vaginal, oral, or anal sex; no program impact on number of sexual partners or frequency of anal sex
Teen Outreach Program	High schools; disadvantaged and high-risk youth in grades 9-12; youth development framework; nine months of programming including twenty-five sessions of curriculum and twenty hours of community service (youth development)	<i>At end of school year:</i> female participants were less likely to report a pregnancy

An important characteristic of the federal teen pregnancy prevention programs is that communities have a great deal of flexibility in picking the kind of programs they favor. And the fact that they can select from a list of thirty-one programs, including several that are abstinence based (see table 1 for examples), means they have a wide range of program characteristics from which to choose. Moreover, the Obama administration allows about 25 percent of the 2009 funding (which now totals over \$200 million a year for the major

evidence-based programs) to be spent on innovative programs, so communities have even more choices.

There is no doubt that many schools are interested in either having their own pregnancy prevention program or teaming with other community-based organizations to support such programs. I know of no definitive evidence on the overall quality of these programs or even a representative sample of the programs, but based on reading many documents and talking with people in the field in recent years, I would not be surprised to find that many of the programs produce modest results, more or less like most other intervention programs run in the schools. However, the research reviewed by HHS in its evidence review shows that there are thirty-one program models with strong evidence of success. HHS is now three years into working with over one hundred local sponsors to determine whether these evidence-based model programs can be scaled up to more and more sites.

Thus, there is solid evidence that if schools implemented evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs that fit local values, especially regarding abstinence-only approaches and so-called comprehensive approaches that feature both instruction in abstinence and in use of effective means of birth control, they could help teens make better decisions about whether to remain abstinent—and, if the teens decide to engage in sexual intercourse, to use birth control effectively. Moreover, there are a variety of sources of federal and, in many states, state and local funding to pay for these programs. This funding includes programs like those outlined above, specifically devoted to reducing teen pregnancy, as well as more general sources of funding that can be used for teen pregnancy prevention like Medicaid, the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant, and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.²⁵

In short, we have programs that have proven to be effective in limiting both teen sexual activity and pregnancy, and we have multiple sources of funding for these programs. If more schools followed the evidence-based path and mounted good programs while evaluating their impacts and using the results to improve their programs, more teens would avoid the long-term barriers to a productive life imposed on them by a teen birth or avoiding the birth through abortion, which may also have long-term effects. Again, helping teens make responsible choices will pay off for them, for the children they bear later in life, and for society.

Conclusion

The argument of this chapter is that schools can play an important role in helping children and adolescents make good choices about education, work, and marriage. This is in no way to suggest that the traditional goals of education—to give students a solid footing in English, math, history, and the sciences—should be diminished. However, students—especially those from poor and minority families—should be constantly exposed to teachers, coursework, and programs that emphasize the importance of personal responsibility. Several programs that rigorous evaluations have shown help students make responsible choices in work, education, and marriage are available for schools and communities to use. Students should know that educational attainment (years of schooling) is the most direct determinant of adult income, and they should know that sexual activity

carries grave consequences. Additionally, the schools, working with parents and community organizations, should ensure that adolescents are encouraged to participate in community-based programs that teach healthy behavior and encourage sexual abstinence—and, where abstinence fails, use of effective forms of birth control. Students from poor and minority families in particular should be given the opportunity to take courses that give them marketable skills and direct exposure to the world of work. Schools can and must balance the goals of preparing students for four-year colleges, two-year colleges, and employment and take seriously the proposition that learning about and accepting personal responsibility for life-course choices regarding work, education, and family are vital to their success.

¹ “Spending for Federal Benefits and Services for People with Low Income, FY2008-FY2011: An update of Table B-1 from CRS Report R41625, Modified to Remove Programs for Veterans,” Congressional Research Service, Memorandum to the Senate Budget Committee, October 16, 2012, http://www.budget.senate.gov/republican/public/index.cfm/files/serve/?File_id=0f87b42d-f182-4b3d-8ae2-fa8ac8a8edad; Ron Haskins, Testimony to the Budget Committee on Federal Spending, U.S. House of Representatives, April 17, 2012; Nicholas Eberstadt, *A Nation of Takers: America’s Entitlement Epidemic* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 2012).

² Miles Corak, “Income Inequality, Equality of Opportunity, and Intergenerational Mobility,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, forthcoming.

³ Defined as at least three times the poverty level or about \$56,000 for a family of three in 2013.

⁴ These simulations were originally reported in Ron Haskins and Isabel Sawhill, *Work and Marriage: The Way to End Poverty and Welfare*, Welfare Reform and Beyond Policy Brief #28 (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2003).

⁵ Isabel Sawhill, Quentin Karpilow, and Joanna Venator, *The Impact of Unintended Childbearing on Future Generations* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2014), http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/09/12%20impact%20unintended%20childbearing%20future%20sawhill/12_impact_unintended_childbearing_future_sawhill.pdf; Martha J. Bailey, *Fifty Years of Family Planning: New Evidence on the Long-Run Effects of Increasing Access to Contraception*, Working Paper 19493, NBER Working Paper Series (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2013), <http://www.nber.org/papers/w19493.pdf>.

⁶ *Counting It Up: The Public Costs of Teen Childbearing: Key Data* (Washington, D.C.: National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2013), <http://thenationalcampaign.org/sites/default/files/resource-primary-download/counting-it-up-key-data-2013-update.pdf>.

⁷ Greg J. Duncan and Richard J. Murnane, *Restoring Opportunity: The Crisis of Inequality and the Challenge for American Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2014).

⁸ Ariel Kalil, “Inequality Begins at Home: The Role of Parenting in the Diverging Destinies of Rich and Poor Children,” in *Families in an Era of Increasing Inequality: Diverging Destinies*, eds. Paul R. Amato, et al. (New York: Springer, 2014); Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley, *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children* (Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes, 1995); Jane Waldfogel and Elizabeth Washbrook, “Early Years Policy,” *Child Development Research* (2011): 1–12, doi: 10.1155/2011/343016.

⁹ Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

¹⁰ Julia Isaacs, Isabel Sawhill, and Ron Haskins, *Getting Ahead or Losing Ground?: Economic Mobility in America* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution and the Pew Charitable Trusts Economic Mobility Project, 2008), 96.

¹¹ Ron Haskins, Harry Holzer, and Robert Lerman, *Promoting Economic Mobility by Increasing Postsecondary Education* (Washington, D.C.: Economic Mobility Project, Pew Charitable Trusts, 2009).

¹² Andrea Venezia and Laura Jaeger, “Transitions from High School to College,” *Future of Children* 23 (2013): 117–36.

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- ¹³ Thomas Brock, *Evaluating Programs for Community College Students: How Do We Know What Works?* (New York: MDRC, 2010).
- ¹⁴ Michael J. Weiss, et al., *A Random Assignment Evaluation of Learning Communities at Kingsborough Community College: Seven Years Later* (New York: MDRC, 2014).
- ¹⁵ James S. Coleman, et al., *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Educational Statistics, 1966).
- ¹⁶ Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur, *Growing Up with a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps* (Cambridge, MD: Harvard University Press, 1994).
- ¹⁷ Daniel T. Lichter and Deborah Roempke Graefe, *Finding a Mate? The Marital and Cohabitation Histories* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999).
- ¹⁸ Jane Leber Herr, *Does it Pay to Delay? Decomposing the Effect of First Birth Timing on Women's Wage Growth* (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2008), http://users.nber.org/~herrij/Herr_PayToDelay_May08.pdf; Jennifer B. Kane, et al., "The Educational Consequences of Teen Childbearing," *Demography* 50 (2013): 2129–50.
- ¹⁹ Ron Haskins, *Show Me the Evidence: Obama's Fight for Rigor and Evidence in Federal Social Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), chapter 3.
- ²⁰ Douglas Kirby, *Emerging Answers: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy* (Washington, D.C.: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2001).
- ²¹ Brady E. Hamilton, et al., "Births: Preliminary Data for 2013," *National Vital Statistics Reports* 63, no. 2 (2014).
- ²² Haskins, *Show Me the Evidence: Obama's Fight for Rigor and Evidence in Federal Social Policy*, chapter 3.
- ²³ For details of how the evidence review was conducted, see *Identifying Programs That Impact Teen Pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Infections, and Associated Sexual Risk Behaviors, Review Protocol: Review Protocol, Version 2.0* (Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, 2010), http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/db/eb-programs-review-v2.pdf; for a list and characteristics of the 31 programs and a searchable data base, see "Evidence-Based Programs," Office of Adolescent Health, last modified August 21, 2014, http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/db/tpp-searchable.html.
- ²⁴ Ron Haskins, *Show Me the Evidence: Obama's Fight for Rigor and Evidence in Federal Social Policy*.
- ²⁵ For a list and overview of most of these sources of funding, see Federal Funding Streams for Teen Pregnancy Prevention (Washington, D.C.: National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2014), <http://thenationalcampaign.org/resource/federal-funding-streams-teen-pregnancy-prevention>.