

# 1

## Boys as Fathers: Coping with the Dilemmas of Adolescence

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Little is known about the effects of having a child during adolescence on the later development of teenage fathers, and even less is known about the parental and spouse behavior of these males. Popularly held notions that a pregnancy during adolescence adversely affects the subsequent development of teenage fathers and that these males are poor husbands and inadequate fathers are premature. Although the data that do exist generally support these ideas, the empirical evidence is meager. Males who become fathers during adolescence, in comparison to those who do not, appear to be somewhat more likely to divorce (Kellam, Adams, Brown, & Ensminger, 1982; Moore & Waite, 1981), abandon their partners and babies, and suffer later educational, vocational, and economic losses (Card & Wise, 1978; Lorenzi, Klerman, & Jekal, 1977; Marsiglio, Chapter 5). The magnitude of these group differences is not large, however. Further, much variation exists in the impact that fatherhood has on adolescents, and not all males are adversely affected to an equal degree. Lastly, these findings are neither substantively nor methodologically incontrovertible, and more work is needed to identify the immediate and long-term effects of teenage pregnancy on adolescent fathers.

Besides identifying the consequences of becoming a father during adolescence, explanations are needed that account for the association between fatherhood and its various stresses and problems. One reasonable and commonly held belief among many researchers and practitioners who focus on adolescent parents is that the problems these teenagers experience are to some extent the result of their youth. The following excerpt from Elster, McAnarney, and Lamb (1983) illustrates this point: "Because of the adolescent's age and because of the stressful events that frequently accompany youth pregnancy and parenthood, clinicians and investigators have questioned the ability of adolescents to parent