CHILDREN, SCHOOL AGE, 6–15

With the onset of school age, the notable propensity of children to consume increases, but this is balanced somewhat by earnings which they contribute,[1] and even more by the resulting relaxation of family strictures on employment of their mothers. Whereas over 23 percent of preschool children are in poverty, only about 21 percent of those 6 to 15 are in poverty, and this sinks rapidly to about 15 percent of those aged 16 to 21. The effects of such school-age juveniles on family fortunes are nevertheless obvious in the following table:

	By age of head			
	Under 22	22 to 54	55 to 64	65 plus
Percent of all poor families having children 6 to 15	11	70	31	14
Percent of all nonpoor families having children 6 to 15	1	54	15	5
Percent, all poor families of all families, regardless of presence of children 6 to 15	26	13	12	22

Of the 8.2 million poor children of these school ages, 86 percent are in families headed by a person aged 22 to 54, and in this particular group a third are in families headed by a woman. In other words, 28 percent of the poor children 6 to 15 are in families headed by a woman aged 22 to 54; with another 3 percent in families headed by older and younger women, a total of 31 percent of these poor children are in matriarchal households.

THE PRIME EARNING YEARS, 22 TO 54

Of all the poor, about 65 percent are found in families headed by persons aged 22 to 54. This condition prevails despite the fact that in these ages adults have the best employment record and often average the best level of income in all their working lives. As previously noted regarding poor children, concentration of poverty totals in these age groups is often an arithmetical result of having unemployed children present in so many families having low incomes throughout their lives. This adds to the number in the family without commensurate increase in income, and for extended periods it prevents the mother from leaving her preschool children to augment the family income, whether she is the wife of the low-income husband or the woman raising her family without a husband.

With at least a sixth of the poor families in this age group of head containing youths 16 to 21 years old, such programs as Job Corps, by sheer arithmetic, may place a noticeable number of families (and people) above the poverty line, since the program removes at least one person from the household while simultaneously adding a cash allotment of up to $600 per year to the family income.

[1] About 20 percent of males aged 15 are in the labor force, versus only about 9 percent of those aged 13 and probably practically none below age 10.