TEENAGE CHILDBEARING AS AN ALTERNATIVE LIFE-COURSE STRATEGY IN MULTIGENERATION BLACK FAMILIES

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This paper summarizes the findings of a three-year exploratory qualitative study of teenage childbearing in 20 low-income multigeneration black families. Teenage childbearing in these families is part of an alternative life-course strategy created in response to socioenvironmental constraints. This alternative life-course strategy is characterized by an accelerated family timetable; the separation of reproduction and marriage; an age-condensed generational family structure; and a grandparental child-rearing system. The implications of these patterns for intergenerational family roles are discussed.

KEY WORDS: **Unwed teenage childbearing; Black families; Intergenerational family roles; Grandmotherhood**

Teenage childbearing, particularly for black adolescents, is often described as a nonnormative life event that perpetuates myriad negative outcomes for the teen mother, her child, and her family of origin (McCluskey et al. 1983). Although it is true that adolescent childbearing is considered to be a violation of expected behavior in most black families (Burton and Bengtson 1985; Ladner 1988; Scott-Jones and Nelson-LeGall 1986) and can produce negative outcomes (Baldwin and Cain 1980; Grazi 1982; Hofferth 1987; Mott and Marsiglio 1985; Presser 1971; Waite and

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Moore 1978), a nonnormative, problem-based interpretation of the circumstances is not appropriate in some cases (Buchholz and Gol 1986; Lancaster and Hamburg 1986; Mayfield 1986; Morris 1981; Murcott 1980; Phoenix 1988). The inappropriateness lies in the attempts of some researchers to analyze childbearing patterns among black adolescents according to social norms inferred from aggregate profiles of the mean age of childbearing and marriage in the general population (Hogan 1985). These norms may not correspond to the childbearing preferences of adolescents and families in certain sociocultural contexts.

Hamburg (1986) suggests that teenage childbearing, within certain poor black subgroups, reflects an alternative life-course strategy rather than a nonnormative life event. She argues that adolescent parenthood may be a response to compelling developmental, social, and economic requisites that are specific to the teen mother's subculture (Ladner 1971; Stack 1974). Furthermore, the long-term outcomes of teenage childbearing in these subcultures are not necessarily as devastating as mainstream impressions imply (Furstenberg et al. 1987). Rather, early childbearing may be perceived as a viable option that fosters individual growth, family continuity, and cultural survival in an environment in which few other avenues for enhancing development are available.

The purpose of this paper is to present findings from a 3-year exploratory qualitative study of a sample of multigeneration black families who view teenage childbearing as an alternative life-course strategy. The families are members of a small, homogeneous black community named, for the purposes of this presentation, Gospel Hill. Specific attention is devoted to describing the social and environmental mechanisms that influence the promotion of teenage childbearing in these families. The implications of adolescent childbearing for the roles of family members are also discussed.

DIMENSIONS OF THE ALTERNATIVE LIFE-COURSE STRATEGY

Four aspects of an alternative life-course strategy are pertinent to the discussion of teenage childbearing and family life in Gospel Hill: (*a*) accelerated family timetables; (*b*) the separation of reproduction and marriage; (*c*) the relationship between an age-condensed family structure and intergenerational caregiving; and (*d*) a grandparental child-rearing system.

Accelerated Family Timetables

As individuals move through the life course, their trajectories represent a succession of culturally defined roles and statuses that are linked

to prescriptive age-graded timetables (Elder 1985; Fallo-Mitchell and Ryff 1982; Foner and Kertzer 1978; Hamburg 1986; Modell 1980; Neugarten et al. 1965). Prescriptive timetables, which are norms or beliefs about the appropriate age ranges for specific life-course transitions, vary by context (Hagestad and Neugarten 1985). They are culturally constructed and refined according to people's shared interpretations of a variety of factors, including perceived longevity, access to social and economic opportunities, membership in particular social organizations (e.g., work force), environmental constraints, and family needs (Burton and Stack 1989; Fry and Keith 1982).

The life course of an individual is guided by multiple timetables (Elder 1975; Neugarten and Hagestad 1976), which define progression through the educational system, the work force, and families. The timetable most salient to this discussion concerns family development.

Families, as cultural units, devise timetables for the movement of individuals through predictable phases of family development and changing generational structures (Hagestad 1986a; Hareven 1982). Family timetables address the timing and sequencing of events such as marriage, the birth of a child, and the transition to grandparenthood (Hareven 1977). A number of studies have indicated that the family timetables of mainstream middle-class Americans, broadly defined, advocate that childbearing preceded by marriage occurs in the young adult years (early- to mid-20s) and the transition to grandparenthood in mid-life (mid-40s to late 50s; Neugarten et al. 1965; Rindfuss et al. 1988; Spanier and Glick 1980; Sprey and Matthews 1982). In contrast, the timetables of families in which teenage parenthood is the norm are accelerated. The appropriate age for becoming a parent is presumably the mid-teen years, followed by marriage in the mid- to late-20s and grandparenthood in the mid-30s.

Accelerated timetables in poor black teenage childbearing families may reflect the coalescence of several forces. First, individuals in these families may have a truncated view of the length of the life course given the life expectancies of black men and women. Current estimates of life expectancies at birth are 63.7 years for black males and 72.3 years for black females compared with 70.7 years and 78.1 years for white males and females, respectively (Farley and Allen 1987). In addition, the mortality rates of black men age 25–44 are notably higher than the rates of their white counterparts. In 1984 the mortality rate of black men in this age range was 2 to 2.5 times higher than that of white men (Farley and Allen 1987). Although precise estimates by socioeconomic status are not available, it has been suggested that mortality rates are even higher at younger ages for poor blacks (Jackson 1988). High death rates are related to the consequences of poverty, including limited access to quality medical care, deficient diets, and substandard living environments.

Given the realities of life expectancies and death rates, it is plausible that individuals in some black families may collectively envision survival to a "ripe old age" as an unlikely prospect. As such, they may construct family timetables that sanction transitions to culturally defined family roles at younger ages (Cottle 1976; O'Rand and Ellis 1974; Seltzer and Troll 1986).

A second factor related to accelerated family timetables concerns the cultural definition of adolescence as a distinct life period. In some contexts, families have abridged perceptions of the age boundaries of adolescence (Bush and Simmons 1987; Hamburg 1974). Although the absolute age range of adolescence in America is not rigidly defined, most would agree that it encompasses the period from age 12 to about age 18. For families in which teenage childbearing is normative, the age period delineated as "adolescence" could begin much earlier, at approximately 9–10 years of age, and end much sooner, at around age 13 or 14. Delineating the end of adolescence as the early teen years is related to the onset of menses, the initiation of sexual activity, and the increased responsibility for the care of siblings and the household. In some cultural enclaves, these occurrences are markers of the transition to adulthood (Ladner 1971; Lancaster and Hamburg 1986; Weisner 1987; Zelnik et al. 1981).

The Separation of Marriage and Reproduction

A second feature of the alternative life-course strategy concerns the dramatic increase during the last two decades in the proportion of births to unwed adolescents, particularly black teenagers (Hogan 1987; O'Connell and Moore 1980; Vinovskis 1988). In 1955, within the general population, 14% of all births to teenagers were out of wedlock compared with 56% in 1984 (Furstenberg et al. 1987). The percentage of all births to black unwed teenagers rose from 47 to 88% during this same period (Hayes 1987).

Staples (1985) has offered a challenging explanation for the increasing separation of marriage and childbearing among black females. He contends that a woman's decision to bear children out of wedlock is related to the quantity and quality of the available pool of marriageable black males. Basically, he argues that because of the high rates of mortality, incarceration, and interracial mating there is a shortage of black men relative to black women during the marriageable years. This shortage is confounded by the lack of "desirable" males—that is, males who are gainfully and regularly employed and "can meet the normative expectations of husband and father" (Staples 1985:1010). Furthermore, he

states that the inability of black males to meet marriageability standards is directly related to social and economic forces that essentially "tie their hands." These forces include changes from a manufacturing to a technological work force, which eliminated jobs for a large number of black men; inferior education, which many black men experience because of attendance in urban public schools; and institutional racism, which impedes black males' opportunities for employment and career mobility (Macleod 1987).

When faced with limited prospects for marriage, rather than remaining childless as well, teenage females may perceive bearing children out of wedlock as a viable alternative. That alternative is often indirectly supported by families who tend to help the teen mother more if she remains single (Chilman 1980), and by a welfare system that provides full benefits to young mothers only when their mates are absent from the home (Moore and Caldwell 1977). Together these behaviors work to increase the marginality of black men in the lives of the teen mothers and their children.

The Age-Condensed Family Structure and Intergenerational Caregiving

The third aspect of the alternative life-course strategy that is important to the discussion of teenage childbearing and family life in Gospel Hill concerns the age-condensed generational family structure (Burton and Dilworth-Anderson in press). This family structure emerges when teenage childbearing is a consistent behavior across generations in families (Ladner and Gourdine 1984). Vertically, the age-condensed structure comprises three or more tiers in which the age distance between generations is short—roughly 12–17 years, compared with 20–26 years in young-adult childbearing families and 30–40 years in delayed childbearing families. Horizontally, it is characterized by intragenerational expansion, which is a direct result of teenage childbearers producing more children per generation than individuals in families in which delayed childbearing is the norm (Bengtson and Dannefer 1987; Card and Wise 1978; Hagestad 1986b; Knipsheer 1988; Moore and Hofferth 1978).

Age-condensed families have a greater number of people across and within generations who are also closer in age than people in the families of later childbearers. Comparatively speaking, these distinct features create a paradox for both delayed and teenage childbearing families in terms of the advantages and disadvantages of the size of intergenerational caregiver pools and economic resources.

In delayed childbearing families the pattern of fewer children and

greater distances between generations is a trend in direct conflict with the caregiving needs of children and dependent elderly parents (Treas and Bengtson 1987). Smaller families mean that there will be fewer siblings to share the sometimes considerable burden of caring for a frail elderly parent. Conversely, elderly parents may be physically and socially "too old" to assist in the care of their grandchildren. The trade-off for a limited intergenerational caregiver pool is economic stability. Families that delay childbearing are much more likely to have viable economic resources than families that do not (Eggebeen and Uhlenberg 1989; Hayes 1987).

In contrast, given the fact that teenage childbearing families have more children per generation, it is likely that they have a broader array of potential caregivers, including older children who can assist in the care of their younger siblings, young adults who can help older family members, and young grandmothers who can parent the infants of teen mothers (Hogan 1987). The trade-off in this situation, however, is often scarce economic resources. Teenage childbearers are more likely to be poor, with fewer economic resources to be distributed within a larger kin network (Hofferth and Moore 1979).

Grandparental Child-Rearing System

The final aspect of the alternative life-course strategy is a child-rearing system characterized by grandmothers raising their grandchildren. Compared with mainstream child-rearing systems, which advocate children being raised by their biological parents, a system involving grandmothers who serve as surrogate parents to their grandchildren has historically been a common feature of black family life, particularly teenage childbearing families (Frazier 1939; Gillespie 1976; Jones 1973; Tinsley and Parke 1984).

Black grandmothers have responded to the assumption of the surrogate parent role as a result of teenage childbearing in a variety of ways. Most studies suggest that the mothers of teen mothers assume the role of surrogate parent to their grandchild with minimal reservation (Ladner 1988; Mayfield 1986; Smith 1975; Stevens 1984; Wilson 1986). My own study of a small sample of working-class black grandmothers age 25–38 (Burton 1985), however, highlights an alternative reaction. The majority of young grandmothers studied refused to assume the primary role in rearing their grandchildren. These grandmothers felt that being a surrogate parent for their grandchild did not fit with their current life-course activities—that included a variety of "young-adult" roles involving work, education, friendships, romance, and even their own continued childbearing.

A rare and somewhat controversial response by young grandmothers who parent the children of teen mothers was also noted (Burton 1985). A few of the young grandmothers studied had covertly and sometimes overtly encouraged their teenage daughters to bear a child (Rosenstock 1980). There are two reasons why these grandmothers promoted early childbearing by their daughters. Some of these grandmothers had also been teenage childbearers and consequently had limited opportunities to rear their own children during infancy because their mothers had served as the surrogate parent to their child. Still others felt that they had not been good parents to their own children and longed for a "second chance" to raise a child. In both situations grandparenthood provided these women with the opportunity to fulfill unrequited parenting desires.

THE FAMILIES OF GOSPEL HILL

Methods

Gospel Hill is a small, semirural black community in the northeast portion of the United States. It comprises five city blocks bordered on three sides by working-class white residential communities and on one side by an industrial park. The residents of Gospel Hill are primarily low-income black women who are descendants of families that migrated to this community from Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia during the late 1940s. A number of these women and their children participated in the study described here. The study, which began in January 1985 and ended in March 1988, was an exploratory qualitative investigation of the effects of teenage childbearing on low-income multigeneration black families.

The primary sample interviewed for this study involved 20 four-generation female lineages ($n = 53$); each lineage unit included a young mother (age 14–26), grandmother (age 35–45), and great-grandmother (age 56–68). The median ages of the mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother generations at the time the interviews began were 18, 37, and 56, respectively. All but three of the respondents gave birth to their first child as teenagers.

With the exception of two families, all of the participants lived in multigeneration households composed of four to nine people and headed by respondents in the grandmother generation. The median household income was $750 per month. The primary source of income was welfare.

In terms of education, the median number of years of school completed by the young mothers was 12, the grandmothers, 10 years, and the great-grandmothers, 7 years. Only one of the respondents, a young mother age 21, was married. The remainder had never been married (77%), were divorced (19%), or were widowed (2%).

Twenty-two black males (age 14–56) were also interviewed during the course of this study. Fifty-nine percent of the males were the brothers, sons, and grandsons of the primary respondents, 37% were not related to the lineages, and 5% were married to a female respondent. Five of the men had completed high school and all but two were unemployed. None of the men disclosed information concerning their monthly incomes. In terms of marital status, two of the men indicated that they were legally married, eight had common-law marriage arrangements, seven had never been married, and three were separated or divorced.

Data concerning teenage childbearing and family life in Gospel Hill were collected from participants using a variety of qualitative field research strategies, such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and informal participant observation in community and family events. Three key informants, all members of the Gospel Hill community, also provided valuable insights.

Analysis of the data principally involved identifying consistent themes that emerged in interviews, group discussions, and participant observations. These themes were identified by coding transcribed interviews and field notes.

Results

The data suggest that unwed teenage childbearing is an accepted normative life-course strategy for black females in Gospel Hill. Four interrelated factors were consistently linked to the emergence and maintenance of this strategy: an accelerated timetable for family role transitions, the low probability of marriage for black women, the need for a viable pool of intergenerational caregivers, and the desires of grandmothers to parent their grandchildren.

The lives of females in Gospel Hill are governed by accelerated family timetables comprising specific age norms. In 95% of the families studied ($n = 20$), the order and timing of family-role transitions for women were designated as follows: entry to motherhood between the ages of 15 and 18 followed by marriage at age 28–30 and grandmotherhood at age 34–36. Figure 1 illustrates the consistency in perceptions across generations in this sample regarding early role entries as well as the actual timing of the respective role transitions for family members. It is impor-

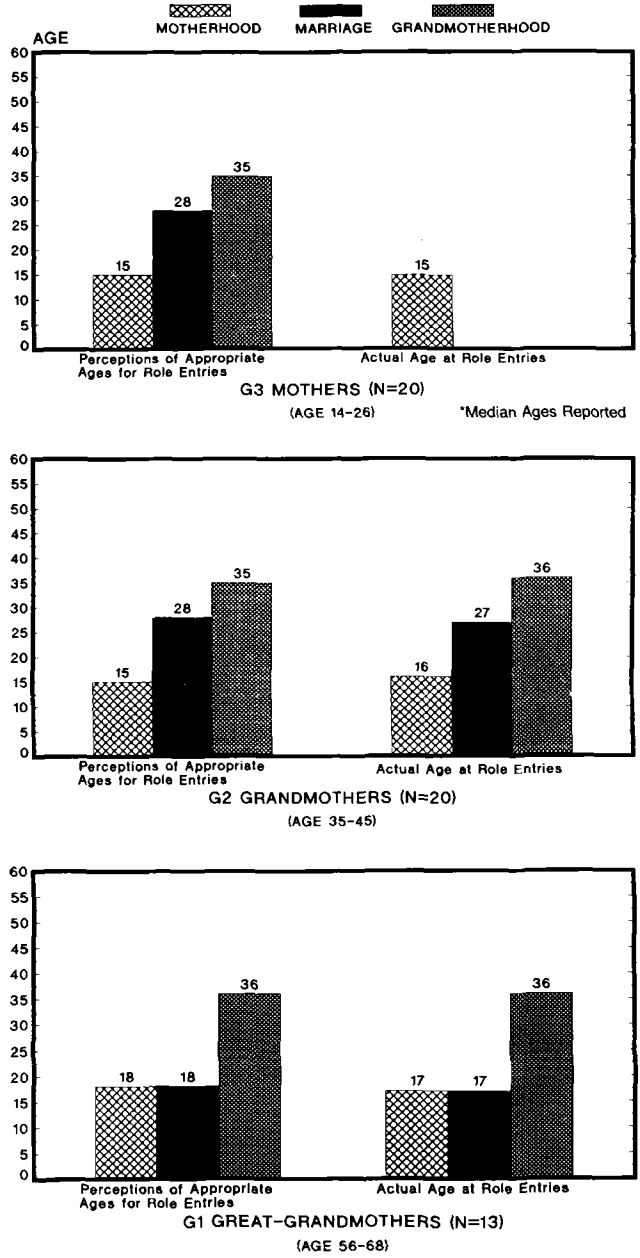

Figure 1. Respondents' Perceptions of Appropriate Ages* for Role Entries (Motherhood, Marriage, Grandmotherhood) and Respondents' Ages* at Role Entries.

tant to note that the timing and sequencing of these transitions do not correspond to mainstream notions of the normative family life course.

An additional feature of the norm structure in these families is that designated females within the lineages were "required" to give birth to their first child at a young age. The basis of the expectation concerns the relationship between the timing of childbearing and the transition to grandmotherhood. Early childbearing was considered necessary in these families to ensure that older women in the lineages would have the opportunity to experience the parent role. The role of parent was not behaviorally experienced until a woman became a grandmother. Mothers did not raise their children. The tradition was for grandmothers to raise their grandchildren. Because of the physical demands of rearing young children, these women believed that it was important to become a grandmother as young as possible so that they would have the "energy" to engage in parental behavior. Comments from a 35-year-old potential grandmother illustrate this belief:

> I suspect that my daughter (14 years old) will have a baby soon. If she doesn't I'll be too old to be a grandmother and to do the things I'm supposed to do, like raise my grandchild.

These lineages' preference for accelerated transitions is in part a function of their perceptions of mortality in the environment in which they live. All the respondents indicated that they had witnessed the early deaths of relatives and friends and, as such, had developed a very truncated view of the individual life course. The number of deaths of individuals at young ages is by no means extreme in Gospel Hill, but the community is so homogeneous and close-knit that individuals often interpreted their life-course possibilities in light of what happened to individuals around them. Ninety-one percent of the women interviewed ($n = 53$) perceived their life expectancy to be 60 years. A 21-year-old mother commented,

> I've been seeing people die when they are around 58 all my life. I'm surprised that my grandmother (age 62) is still around.

Another factor related to the perpetuation of accelerated timetables and unwed teenage childbearing concerns the shortage of marriageable black men in the community. The shortage is not solely a matter of quantity; it is an issue of black males' preferences for mates. All of the females interviewed indicated the black males in Gospel Hill chose to be "upwardly mobile" by mating interracially.

According to 82% of the males interviewed ($n = 22$), one way to achieve status in Gospel Hill, an environment in which black males have

limited access to employment, is to be involved with a white female. Such a relationship is believed to elevate a black man to a higher status in the community. One 23-year-old male respondent explained,

> Being with a white woman is risky here, but it is worth the risk. This is the *only* thing I've got in my life that says I'm equal, that says I'm a man.

A 14-year-old mother offered her perceptions of how this circumstance affected her plans for future marriage:

> Ever since I can remember I always expected to have a baby when I was 15 or 16 but I never believed I would ever have a chance to get a husband. One of the things my grandmother always said, "Pay your dues to your kin because they will take care of you. There ain't no reason to waste your time on a colored man because they don't want us no way."

Because of black males' preference for forming relationships with white women, members of the black female lineages in the community rely on their female relatives for emotional and instrumental support. As one 58-year-old great-grandmother stated,

> The best way to make sure that you have enough able bodies to take care of the needs in the family is to start the women having children as soon as they can.

The primary means that young women employ to fulfill this early childbearing expectation, given the constraints imposed by the interracial mating patterns of black males, are mate-sharing, migrating out of the community to become pregnant and then returning, and procreating with white males.

Given the limited possibilities for marital unions between black women and black men, and given grandmothers' desires to raise their grandchildren, the women of Gospel Hill have devised an intergenerational system of support with specific role responsibilities for female family members. The system of support operates at two levels. Level one involves primary caregiving tasks and is characterized by the distribution of caregiving duties to nonadjacent generations. As Figure 2 illustrates, the primary role responsibility for grandmothers in these lineages is the care of their grandchildren, while the principal duty for their daughters (teen mothers of the grandchildren) is the care of the great-grandmothers in the lineages. A 19-year-old mother described the rationale of nonadjacent generational caregiving:

> My grandmother raised me. Now it's time for me to give her something back. It's O.K. if my mother raises my child for now. If she didn't, I couldn't do as much as I do for my grandmother.

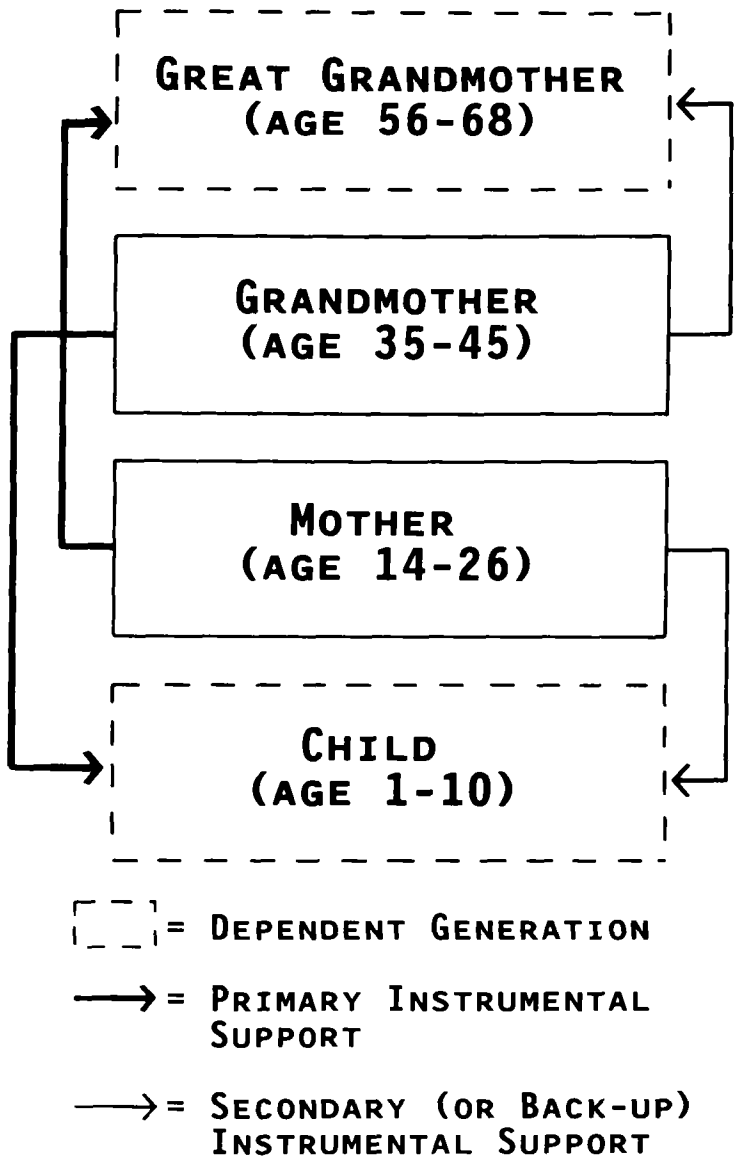

Figure 2. Intergenerational Paths of Primary and Secondary Instrumental Support Responsibilities* ($n = 20$ Lineages)

The second level of support involves the family duties of females who do not have children. Girls who have not yet reached the childbearing years assist in the care of babies, toddlers, and great-grandmothers. Young women who do not have children by the age of 18 move to other cities, find jobs, and send money home to supplement the income of family members. Over the course of this study, the 53 females interviewed indicated that an average of 2 women per family assumed this role. The women who provide this type of family support remained childless. In return for the financial assistance they provided for their families, the expectation is that they will be taken care of when they are in need. A 26-year-old mother described her role in caring for an aunt who had provided financial assistance for the family:

> About a year ago my Aunt Bertha (48 years old), who lives in Boston, got cancer. She was really sick. I went to Boston and brought her back home. I took care of her and my grandmother at the same time until both of them died.

There were, however, exceptions to the rule of young women who left Gospel Hill to work and also remained childless. These exceptions were particularly noted among the youngest generation of female adults. In one family, during the last 2 months of the study, three sisters, who had left Gospel Hill in the preceding 4 years, returned home unwed and pregnant. What followed after the birth of their children was a period of tension in the family over the distribution of financial resources and caregiving responsibilities. Subsequently the grandmother assumed responsibility for the care of her three additional grandchildren (the total number of grandchildren was now five) while the three daughters worked at part-time jobs and contributed to the financial resources of the family.

In contrast to the duties of females, the role responsibilities of males in the family are ambiguous. Both the male and female respondents indicated that few familial duties are assigned to males. As young children, boys could assist girls with household tasks. Once male children reach later childhood, however, their energies are invested outside the home. Beginning at about age 10, the socialization of boys is primarily in the hands of peers and older men in the community who instruct them in the ways of survival in Gospel Hill. These instructions focus on job opportunities for black men, male/female relationships, and sexual behavior.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper has provided a brief description of a community in which black multigeneration families view teenage childbearing as an alterna-

tive life-course strategy. Four aspects of this strategy have been presented: accelerated family timetables, the separation of marriage and childbearing, patterns of intergenerational caregiving in age-condensed families, and grandparental child-rearing systems.

Several important questions have emerged concerning interpretations of the data from the Gospel Hill study. The first concerns the prevalence of teenage childbearing as an alternative life-course strategy. Are there other communities in which patterns comparable to those observed in Gospel Hill exist?

The response to this question must be prefaced with the recognition of the limitations of the Gospel Hill study. This study was an exploratory investigation involving a nonrandom sample of respondents selected from a community that is not representative of the black population in general. When the findings from this study are reviewed, it is important not to divorce the data from the context, thereby attributing the life-course patterns of black families in Gospel Hill to black families in general or to poor black families specifically.

In terms of how pervasive the strategies of Gospel Hill families are, at this point in time only speculations can be offered because few empirical studies have examined the underlying normative structure of teenage pregnancy in specific cultural contexts. Paradoxically, the characteristics of Gospel Hill are simultaneously rare and common. Gospel Hill is rare because of its unique, context-specific set of co-occurring economic, social, and psychological factors that collectively contribute to the prevalence of teenage childbearing as the life-course strategy of choice for individuals and families. The set of factors includes high rates of black male unemployment, the preferences of black males for procreating with white females, "designated" teenage childbearers, grandmothers' needs to fulfill parenting urges, and a skip-generation pattern of caregiving and dependency. The Gospel Hill situation is common because parts of the community profile and family practices are prevalent in other contexts (Hogan and Kitagawa 1985). For example, grandparental child-rearing systems, early reproductive strategies, and low parental involvement on the part of males are found in some African, Hispanic, white, and North American Indian subcultures (Alvirez and Bean 1976; Draper 1989; McLanahan 1988; Redhorse 1980).

There are other questions regarding the interpretation of strategies in Gospel Hill: How did alternative life-course strategies in Gospel Hill evolve, and how long will they prevail? The responses to these questions concern fundamental human behaviors—survival and investment in kin.

To begin, the female family structures of Gospel Hill evolved to their current state over the last three generations. As the economic position of

men in the community became more precarious and as men progressively began selecting white females as mates, the existing tradition of early childbearing increased in importance for black females. The black females promoted an adaptive strategy for individual and family survival based on precise norms and sanctions encouraging early childbearing. Early childbearing created compact intergenerational family structures with viable caregiver pools for women. Because of the close proximity in ages and life stages of adjacent generations, grandmothers could feasibly raise their grandchildren, and teenagers and young adults could take care of their surrogate parents—their grandmothers.

Through time, what has happened in Gospel Hill is that women are investing more heavily in a vertical female kin system. These women perceive that through their investment in female kin, they will have access to a support system for raising children and being cared for in old age (Jarrett 1989). The phenomenon of women relying on a female support system is not new. It emerges in contexts in which men are unable to contribute predictably to family maintenance (Hogan 1987; McLanahan 1988).

Will this alternative life-course strategy continue in Gospel Hill? The black men and women of Gospel Hill are caught in a feedback loop fueled by economic and social constraints. The feedback loop has two principal components that reinforce each other—the marginality of black fathers in black families and the shortening of generations. Men are either expelled by women or remove themselves from families because they can't or won't contribute to family support. Women shorten generations through early childbearing to create what is perceived as a viable female support system. In turn, foreshortening generations increases the marginality of men. Even if men wanted to contribute to the care of their children, the quick turnover of generations in these female lineages would not give the men enough time to establish themselves as economically stable adults. Essentially, babies are born and grandmothers take over the mother/father role before young men have a chance to get out of the starting blocks.

The bottom line is that the alternative life-course strategy of Gospel Hill residents will continue unless there are dramatic transformations in the economic opportunities and value systems of black men and women in the community. Increased job opportunities, for example, will have to be made available early in the life course of black males, enabling them to keep up with the current pace of shortening generations by women. More importantly, however, the prevailing negative attitudes of black men and women toward each other will have to change. In their efforts to survive, the black males and females of Gospel Hill have fostered distrust of each other. Unless that trust, along with respect, pride, and

status, is restored to relationships and to how individuals feel about themselves, the life paths of black men and women in Gospel Hill will become increasingly divergent.

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