

students, practitioners or scholars in social work. Available in paperback, it should be reasonably affordable. The printing is perfect and the references immense.

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Adolescent Mothers in Later Life, Frank F Furstenberge Jr., J Brooks-Gunn, and S Philip Morgan, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987 (xiv +204pp, US\$29,95 hbk).

Adolescent Mothers in Later Life is a longitudinal follow up study of the original Baltimore research described in **Unplanned Parenthood - the Social Consequences of Teenage Childbearing** (1976, and referred to in this publication). The original research studied between 300 - 400 mostly unmarried teenagers, over a 5 year period, who had sought prenatal services in the mid 60's, most of whom were black low income females in their mid teens. The groups' experiences were then compared, in areas such as education, occupation, income, fertility, and marital decisions, with their classmates who had delayed child bearing.

The follow up, carried out in 1983-84, looked at the life courses of over 300 families over three generations, and intended to produce results useful for policy makers and practitioners concerned with the issue of teenage motherhood and its role in the maintenance of an underclass in society. The study also explores the interconnection between a mother's life decisions and her children's 'life course trajectories'.

While in many countries today there is increasing concern over the issue of single mothers and school girl pregnancies, the authors point out that teenage child bearing was never uncommon in the US, although only in the mid-twentieth century did a substantial percentage marry and have children. The prevalence of early parenthood in 1950's, for example, was far more common than today, with nearly half of all women marrying in their teens and a quarter having a first child before 20. However, by 1970 adolescent pregnancy had suddenly emerged as a 'social problem' and increasingly gained wide public concern into the 80's.

The authors see this shift in public attitudes as largely a longstanding demographic change, with adult fertility taking a dramatic plunge (as a result of contraception, easier legislation on abortion, etc) not seen in teenage pregnancy. In addition, with the ascendancy of the marriage age in the 60's, there was a growing number of teenage births to unmarried women. The shift from early to late marriage patterns is partly explained by changing economic opportunities, the doubling of unemployment between the '60s and '70s, and the viability of early marriage. Higher education also began to be seen as the vital ticket to the labour market.

Black families in particular experienced the most dramatic change, with marriage among teenage blacks virtually disappearing over the last two decades. However, rather than being viewed as a black trend, this is now seen as a pace setter for the larger population with the major difference between early child bearing in the past and present, teenage fertility, now occurring outside marriage. With early marriage in any case failing to survive, children of teenage mothers also have a far higher probability of living in single parent families.

The original Baltimore study highlighted the struggle of early parenting both for the mothers and children involved, with the majority of participants seemingly destined to live a life of social and economic disadvantage. This book, however, tries hard (perhaps too hard) to disprove the stereotype of the inevitable poverty cycle, and reliance on welfare, of teenage mother. There is, however, little evidence of the "remarkable and surprising results" of the study in respect of longstanding adaptation to early parenthood, heralded in the inside book cover. Rather, while the stereotype may be exaggerated, the evidence found it not wholly wrong. While still well below their counterparts, many were better off

today in most respects, apart from any substantial change in marital status, than they were a decade ago. In a similar area, longitudinal studies by David (1986) in a follow up report of the history of children born to women twice denied abortion in Czechoslovakia, and other longitudinal studies done in Sweden and Finland, clearly show the widening differences between these and other children. Here unsupported women faced enormous financial hardship and complex social and emotional problems, with resultant effects on the children concerned. David's research subsequently led to changes in Czechoslovakian policy towards first term abortions. While this book's concern is only that of the adolescent mother in later life, both the importance of the prevention of unwanted pregnancy and the advantage of well planned pregnancy and birth are apparent, but are barely addressed at all in this book.

While the majority of teenage mothers do not make out nearly as well as they probably would have if parenting had been postponed, some do break out of the poverty cycle. The book correctly points out the importance of determining what conditions, in the long term, constrain or promote successful adaptation. The study showed that some teen mothers were able to stage a recovery in adulthood - ie return to school after dropping out, find work after welfare dependency, curtail fertility after one or two more births, with the life events at the time of adolescence not the only ones to affect later adjustment. While some may have been 'late bloomers', the most dramatic routes identified in this process were marriage and voluntary sterilisation.

However, from a policy perspective, opportunities for recovery in adulthood are seen as barely having been tapped, with those services offered to disadvantaged mothers already making some profound differences. Ameliorative programmes focusing on education, child care, job training and job opportunities, both for the disadvantaged females and males (to increase the chances of stable marriage), are seen as an important part of a much needed developmental approach. The author notes (p153):

"The maintenance and augmentation of programmes of adult education, job training and family planning services may be highly cost effective approaches of dealing with half of our sample who become chronic or near chronic welfare dependents".

Where mothers can begin to overcome the disadvantages of early parenting, the study also showed that the increasing economic independence of the mother will also have a positive effect on children of teenage mothers, regardless of their early welfare status and negative childhood experiences. Change occurs across the life span and results show it is never too late for effective intervention. The authors argue for greater involvement at federal and local level, and the development of a national policy towards teen pregnancy rather than the current piecemeal and often contradictory strategies.

With regard to our own situation, the book has relevance in its exploration of teenage pregnancy, not as a new phenomenon but rather in relation to its changing social context and the way it is publicly viewed. However the concern over school girl pregnancies and 'baby dumping' in the current Zimbabwean context, means that identification of different areas for effective intervention are crucial. Here too this book is helpful, with its emphasis on policy formulation in the area of successful adaptation and recovery in the mothers' later teenage and adult years. Policy makers here would also do well to reconsider the consequences of immediate school expulsion for pregnant school girls, and often the responsible school boy as well. The recognition of the possibilities for change at different stages of life, rather than a predetermined inevitability, is also useful.

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