

Mothers' Differential Treatment of Their Adolescent Childbearing and Nonchildbearing Children: Contrasts Between and Within Families

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This study examined mothers' differential treatment of adolescent sibling pairs in 2 family contexts: families with and without an adolescent childbearing daughter. Results based on mothers' ratings and children's ratings revealed that the mothers of childbearing daughters treated all of their children less affectionately than did the mothers of nonchildbearing adolescents. In families with a childbearing daughter, mothers expected a brighter future for and treated their never-pregnant daughter(s) more favorably than their childbearing daughter, and mothers' harsh treatment toward their children was correlated with high financial stress, excessive time spent caring for their daughter's child, and younger children's sexual behavior and drug and alcohol use. Findings highlight the preferential parenting that occurs within the families of childbearing teens and suggest its ramifications.

Differential parental treatment constitutes an important component of siblings' nonshared experiences within the family (Daniels & Plomin, 1985; Hetherington, Reiss, & Plomin, 1994). Recently, research designs that purposefully select family contexts that would be expected to have large variation in the degree of parents' differential treatment have been used to more fully understand how large differences in parents' treatment of their children impact children's development (e.g., families with a disabled or chronically ill child, families that have both stepchildren and biological children; McHale & Pawletko, 1992; Mekos, Hetherington, & Reiss, 1996; Quittner & Oipari, 1994). Studying differential parental treatment within these relatively atypical family contexts is also useful for clarifying the larger family dynamics within such families and for understanding the patterns of parental investment across children in such families.

In this article, we describe research comparing mothers' treatment and expectations of their children in two markedly different family contexts, namely, within families that have a teenage childbearing daughter and within families that have only nonchildbearing adolescent children. By studying differential maternal treatment in these two family contexts, differences between family types and within family type (i.e., between siblings within a family) can be examined.

For example, comparisons between family contexts can shed light on whether mothers' parenting styles differ for families of childbearing teens and families that have only nonchildbearing adolescent children. Previous research suggests that the mothers of pregnant and parenting adolescents are less close with, less connected to, and hold lower future expectations for their children than do the mothers of children who do not become pregnant during adolescence (reviewed in Miller, Benson, & Galbraith, 2001).

In contrast, within-family comparisons can reveal how mothers might differentially treat siblings within a family. For example, the nonshared experiences of children within families that have an adolescent childbearing daughter are theoretically significant for explaining potential disparities in sisters' fertility timing. Sociologists have long observed that early parenting is often accepted or even encouraged for some young women within families, whereas it is not for others (Burton, 1990; Stack, 1974). In their work on *kin-scripts*, or the framework used to understand and describe family roles, norms, scripts, and life course, Burton and Stack examined family norms concerning the timing of childbearing and described how family needs and family obligations often dictate early versus more normatively timed childbearing for its adolescent members (Burton & Stack, 1993; Stack & Burton, 1993). Other research, although not examining adolescent childbearing per se, has shown that families distribute available resources (in the form of parents' time, money, and emotional investment) on the basis of the unique qualities and potential of each individual child (Behrman, Pollack, & Taubman, 1982; McGarry & Schoeni, 1995; Rosenzweig & Wolpin, 1988). Thus, it may be the case that parental inequities serve to channel young women within a family along divergent life pathways, one perhaps toward early mothering while another is encouraged to pursue educational or job-related goals.

However, the differential maternal treatment patterns observed within families that involve both a teenage child-

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bearing daughter and other nonchildbearing children could have also been formed in response to the daughter's early motherhood. That is, having a daughter become pregnant and bear a child would likely require some internal realignment of family roles and family dynamics (East, 1998; Furstenberg, 1980). Changes in parents' treatment and expectations for their children would also invariably occur as the family unit transitions and adjusts to the teenager's birth (Cox & Paley, 1997; McKenry & Price, 2000). The current study does not attempt to make deductions about the causes of mothers' greater differential treatment within families that have an adolescent childbearing daughter, just to identify that these patterns exist to a greater extent relative to families that have only nonchildbearing adolescent children.

In addition to examining both between- and within-family differences in mothers' parenting, we examined whether conditions of family stress and mothers' attitudes about the timing of parenthood co-occur with mothers' treatment and expectations for their children (within both family types). For example, high family financial strain, single parenting, and—for the families of childbearing teens—mothers' time spent caring for their daughter's child, might plausibly be related to mothers' harsh parenting and pessimistic future expectations for their children (Gutman & Eccles, 1999). Further, we expected that these particular family stressors would relate to mothers' differentially harsh treatment of their childbearing daughter relative to other nonchildbearing children in the family, given that it is the daughter who has in many ways caused (or, at least, worsened) the family's hardships.

With regard to financial strain, much research has shown that as family economic hardship increases, mothers' punitive treatment of their children increases and mothers' optimism about their children's future educational and job success declines (Conger, Ge, Elder, Lorenz, & Simons, 1994; McLoyd, Jayaratne, Ceballo, & Borquez, 1994). Thus, we expected that high family financial strain would co-occur with mothers' punitive treatment and low expectations of their children (in both family contexts). In addition, it is widely recognized that significant financial stress is experienced in the wake of an infant joining the household, whether it be for adult married couples (Shapiro, Gottman, & Carrere, 2000) or for the families of childbearing teenagers (Geronimus & Korenman, 1993). The financial stress experienced by the families of childbearing adolescents thus may exacerbate mothers' differentially harsh treatment toward the childbearing daughter given that her childbearing likely compounds the family's economic strain.

Mothers' single parenting status has also been linked to harsh and critical parenting (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Single parenthood will be examined in the current study as a condition of family stress and as a predictor of mothers' negative treatment and low future expectations for their children within both family contexts. The mothers of childbearing teens may be particularly stressed if they are unmarried and parenting (and grandparenting) alone (Burton, 1995, 1996). Thus, single parenting may pose an additional stressor for such mothers, possibly contributing to mothers' differentially harsh treat-

ment directed toward the teenage childbearing daughter relative to the other children within the family.

A stressor unique to the families of childbearing teens is that, within such families, the teen's mother often provides much hands-on care to the teen's child (Burton, 1995, 1996; East, 1999). This attentive grandparenting, however, occurs while mothers need to simultaneously parent their own children. Such dual parenting responsibilities likely cause role strain and role overload (Goode, 1960), which would be likely to heighten mothers' harsh treatment of their children (Crnic & Greenberg, 1990). Moreover, the excessive caretaking demands placed on mothers may cause them to be more differentially negative toward their childbearing daughter—again, the indirect cause of the mother's stress—relative to the other children within the household.

Mothers' attitudes and expectations about the timing of parenthood might also contribute to their harsh and differential treatment of their children, particularly for families with a teenage childbearing daughter. For example, in cases where mothers view the parenting role as bringing about much status and social standing (Burton, 1990; Stack, 1974), mothers would likely differentially favor a teenage childbearing daughter over their other children. Conversely, in situations wherein mothers view early parenting as problematic and as bringing about many hardships, they might show differentially negative treatment and hold less optimistic future expectations for their childbearing daughter relative to their nonchildbearing children. In these cases, mothers may "de-invest" in their childbearing daughter and shift their hopes and affections away from this daughter and toward their nonchildbearing children, whose life options are likely to be greater.

Finally, given that mothers' differential negative treatment has been associated with adjustment difficulties of the slighted child (McGuire, Dunn, & Plomin, 1995; Volling & Elins, 1998), it would seem important to examine the extent to which mothers' differential negative treatment is associated with children's problematic outcomes (i.e., drug and alcohol use, sexual behavior) for children in both family contexts. Thus, we analyzed the extent to which children's problem behaviors were related to each of the family process variables analyzed in this study (i.e., mothers' differential negative treatment, financial strain, mothers' single parenting, mothers' parenting attitudes, and—for children in teenage childbearing families—mothers' time spent caring for their daughter's child). These analyses were conducted separately for childbearing teens and their siblings and for nonchildbearing teens and their siblings to examine whether the impact of such determinants varies for children within each family type.

The Current Study

The current study addressed the following five hypotheses: First, the mothers of teenage childbearing daughters will treat their children more differentially and more harshly and hold lower future expectations of all of their children than will the mothers of only nonchildbearing adolescents. Second, mothers with a teenage childbearing daughter will treat this daughter less affectionately and hold lower future

expectations for her relative to the other children within the household, whereas no between-siblings differences will be apparent for mothers' treatment and expectations of their children within families of only nonchildbearing children. Third, mothers' harsh treatment and low expectations for their children will be related to high financial strain and single parenting for both family types and, for families that involve a teenage childbearing daughter, mothers' time spent caring for their daughter's child. In families with a teenage childbearing daughter, such family stressors will also be related to mothers' differentially harsh treatment of their childbearing daughter relative to their other nonchildbearing children. Fourth, mothers' attitudes (e.g., beliefs that early parenting is not problematic and that it incurs a high social standing) will be correlated with mothers' differentially positive treatment toward their childbearing daughter relative to their other (nonchildbearing) children. Fifth, children's problem behaviors (e.g., sexual behavior, drug and alcohol use) will be associated with mothers' differential negative treatment, conditions of family stress, and mothers' parenting attitudes for children within both family contexts.

The sample used to address these issues consisted exclusively of Hispanic and African American families. Although certainly not representative of U.S. society as a whole, this sample is pertinent to the issues at hand given that Hispanics and African Americans historically have had the highest teenage birthrates (Martin, Park, & Sutton, 2002). Moreover, this sample provides the opportunity to examine how mothers' treatment of their adolescent children might vary by race/ethnicity and by daughters' childbearing status. Thus, in this study we also examined whether mothers' treatment and expectations for their children differed for Hispanic and African American mothers and whether the family's race/ethnicity in interaction with the presence of a teenage childbearing daughter was associated with mothers' treatment and expectations for their children.

It should also be noted that both mothers' affectionate treatment and mothers' harsh treatment of their children were examined in the current study because these two domains are thought to comprise unique and distinct aspects of parenting (Daniels & Plomin, 1985). Moreover, mothers' treatment and expectations were assessed by mothers, older teenage daughters, and the early adolescent children within families to provide a more discriminating view of the preferential parenting dynamics that occur within families.

Method

Participants

Participants derived from a research study of 193 families, approximately half of which involved a teenage childbearing daughter (95 families) and half of which involved only nonchildbearing children (98 families). Only those families in which the mother, the teenage daughter, and an early adolescent younger sibling participated were included in the current analyses. (The original study required only that at least two family members participate.) This involved 57 families with a teenage childbearing daughter and 63 families with only nonchildbearing children, or

60% of all original families in the former category and 64% of all original families in the latter category. These inclusion rates were comparable between the two family types, $\chi^2(1, N = 193) = 3.40, ns$. Participants from families included in the present analyses did not differ significantly (in background or adjustment characteristics) from participants within families not included in the current analyses.

All families were recruited into the study by first identifying eligible older daughters. Primigravida 15- to 19-year-old women were recruited during their pregnancy or immediately postpartum (a) from a university hospital teen obstetric clinic (35%), (b) from four surrounding Planned Parenthood clinics (24%), and (c) by snowball sampling (41%). Never-pregnant teenage women (also between the ages of 15 and 19 years) were recruited from the university hospital's Adolescent Medicine Clinic (28%), from the same four local Planned Parenthood clinics used to recruit the pregnant and parenting teens (16%), and by participant recommendation (56%). Teenagers' gravida status was verified by medical chart review when possible. All recruitment sites were located within San Diego, California, with pregnant and parenting and never-pregnant women recruited within a 15-mile (24.2-km) geographic radius.

The younger siblings of pregnant, parenting, and never-pregnant teens were eligible for the study under the following conditions: (a) they were between 12 and 17 years of age and had never been pregnant or, for males, had never knowingly caused a pregnancy; (b) they were either the full-biological sibling or half-sibling of the older sister; (c) both the younger sibling(s) and the older sister were currently living together with their (biological) mother and had lived together for at least the last 5 years; and (d) no other child within the family (or within the household) had become pregnant or fathered a child as a teen. Thus, in all families that involved a childbearing daughter, only one daughter was currently parenting her first and only child, and this daughter's pregnancy was the first adolescent pregnancy to occur within the family. Teenagers' children were, on average, 15 months old (age range = 6 months to 19 months) at the time of the study, and all children were living with their (teenage) mother and her family. All eligible younger siblings within a family were invited to participate in the study. This yielded the following sample: 44 families had only one younger sister participate, 46 families had one younger brother participate, 10 families had both a younger sister and a younger brother participate, 10 families had two younger sisters participate, and 10 families involved some other constellation of younger siblings participating. Approximately 90% of all eligible families invited to participate did so.

The age and racial/ethnic breakdown of participants (per family type) is shown in Table 1. Of note is that families with a teenage childbearing daughter were approximately 60% (Mexican American) Hispanic and 40% African American, and families with only nonchildbearing children were approximately 70% Hispanic and 30% African American, $\chi^2(1, N = 120) = 1.55, ns$. This closely reflects the racial/ethnic population of the recruitment sites. Parenting older daughters were significantly older (18.8 years) than nonparenting daughters (17.8 years), but all other participants were of comparable age and race/ethnicity. The younger children within families were approximately 15 years old. The average income of families with a childbearing teen was significantly lower than that of families without a childbearing teen, and more families with a childbearing adolescent were receiving governmental financial assistance at the time of the study (53%) than families with all nonchildbearing children (30%). The level of financial strain (described further below) was comparable in both family types, and mothers' mean educational level was the 10th grade, with families with and without a teenage parenting daughter having similarly educated mothers. Family size did not differ for families with and

Table 1
Description of Participants by Family Type

Characteristic	Childbearing daughter (<i>n</i> = 57)	Nonchildbearing daughter (<i>n</i> = 63)	Difference statistic
Mothers			
<i>n</i>	57	63	
Age (years)	40.3	39.7	$t(119) < 1$
Culture/ethnicity			$\chi^2(1, N = 120) = 1.55$
Hispanic	60%	70%	
African American	40%	30%	
Older daughters			
<i>n</i>	57	63	
Age (years)	18.8	17.8	$t(119) = 3.59***$
Culture/ethnicity			$\chi^2(1, N = 120) = 1.55$
Hispanic	60%	70%	
African American	40%	30%	
Younger daughters			
<i>n</i>	43	42	
Age (years)	14.6	14.8	$t(84) < 1$
Culture/ethnicity			$\chi^2(1, N = 85) = 1.14$
Hispanic	60%	71%	
African American	40%	29%	
Younger sons			
<i>n</i>	32	41	
Age (years)	15.2	14.8	$t(72) = 1.01$
Culture/ethnicity			$\chi^2(1, N = 73) = 2.29$
Hispanic	56%	73%	
African American	44%	27%	
SES indicator			
Family income	\$15,090	\$19,030	$t(119) = 2.51*$
Receiving aid	53%	30%	$\chi^2(1, N = 120) = 6.20*$
Length of aid	3.1 yrs	3.0 yrs	$t(119) < 1$
Financial strain ^a	2.8	2.7	$t(119) < 1$
Mothers' education	Grade 9.8	Grade 10.1	$t(119) < 1$
Mother currently married	38%	68%	$\chi^2(1, N = 120) = 10.70**$
No. children in household	3.5	3.4	$t(119) < 1$

Note. SES = socioeconomic status. See text for description of items.

^a Score range = 1–5, with higher numbers indicating more financial strain.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

without a childbearing teen, but significantly fewer mothers of childbearing teens were currently married (38%) than mothers of only nonchildbearing children (68%).

The data presented in this report were gathered at a second time of assessment of the main study. (The primary variables of interest to the current study, e.g., mothers' treatment of their children, were not assessed at Time 1.) The Time 2 assessment was conducted 13 months after the Time 1 assessment. At Time 2, 94% of the original families were able to be located and re-interviewed. The families who participated at Time 2 did not differ significantly from the families who did not participate at Time 2 in background demographic characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, family income, mothers' educational level).

Procedure

All participating families were home visited by two female research assistants who were bilingual in English and Spanish. All participants completed a short interview and a self-administered questionnaire. All questionnaires had an approximate reading level of Grade 4.6 (as gauged by the Flesch–Kincaid readability method from the Microsoft Word spell-check feature). There was an English and a Spanish version of the interview and questionnaire for mothers only (older daughters and younger children completed all forms in English). Thirty-seven percent of mothers completed the

interview and questionnaire in Spanish. The Spanish version of the interview and questionnaire was identical in meaning to the English version as ascertained through back-translation. There were no significant differences in responses between Spanish-speaking and English-speaking mothers, and equivalent percentages of mothers of childbearing teens (36%) and mothers of nonchildbearing teens (39%) completed the forms in Spanish. The home visit lasted about 1 hr.

Measures

The subscales of interest in the current study were mothers' treatment and future expectations for each participating child. For mothers' treatment, the following variables were assessed: mothers' positive treatment of each participating child, mothers' harsh treatment of each participating child, mothers' differential treatment of the older daughter relative to each younger child, and younger children's perceptions of mothers' preferential treatment of the older daughter relative to themselves. For the first two constructs, mothers, older daughters, and younger children rated identical items, reworded to obtain the respondent's perception. For mothers' future expectations, mothers responded about the likelihood that each participating child would attain specific school and career achievements, and the older daughters and younger children responded about their own perceived likelihood of attain-

ing these milestones. In addition, numerous indicators of the family's economic situation, mothers' attitudes, and the older daughter's and younger children's adjustment were assessed. Scale information and the items that comprise each scale are described below.

Mothers' positive treatment. Five items were used to assess mothers' positive treatment toward the older daughter and each participating younger child. The items were the following: "How often during the last 3 months has your mother [have you]: praised or complimented you [your daughter]?"; "been affectionate with you (such as hugged or kissed you)?"; "had a good time with you?"; "have you felt close to your mother [your child]?"; and "made you feel good about something you did?" Response options ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*more than once a day*), such that high scores were indicative of warm and affectionate treatment. The Cronbach alpha values for mother ratings of older daughters and younger children were .86 and .85, respectively, and the Cronbach alphas for older daughters' and younger children's ratings were .87 and .86, respectively.

Mothers' harsh treatment. Five items were used to assess mothers' harsh treatment toward the older daughter and each participating younger child. The items were: "How often during the last 3 months has your mother [have you]: gotten angry at you [your daughter]?"; "criticized you?"; "shouted or yelled at you?"; "gotten into an argument with you?"; or "punished you?" Response options ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*more than once a day*), such that high scores were indicative of harsh, critical treatment. Cronbach's alphas for mother ratings of older daughters and younger children were .80 and .71, respectively, and Cronbach's alphas for older daughter ratings and younger children's ratings were .89 and .82, respectively.

Mothers' differential treatment. Mothers were then instructed to make direct comparisons about how they treat their teenage daughter and each participating younger child. Mothers were reassured in the instruction for these questions that treating different children differently is normal and natural. Three questions (modeled after the Sibling Inventory of Differential Experience; Daniels & Plomin, 1984) asked about differential positive treatment (i.e., who is easier to praise, easier to be affectionate with, and feel closer to). Response options ranged from 1 (*it's a lot easier to praise [older daughter's name]*) to 5 (*it's a lot easier to praise [younger child's name]*), with a middle response option of 3 (*I praise both children about the same*). Because we were particularly interested in how the younger children were treated, only scores of 4 and 5 (i.e., where the younger child received a preferential score) were summed across the three items. Thus, possible scores ranged from 0 to 3, with high scores reflecting more positive differential treatment toward the younger child. Cronbach's alpha for these items was .80.

Three questions also asked about mothers' differential negative treatment of their children (i.e., who needs to be punished more, who is harder to handle than the other, and whether the mother needs to be more strict with one child than the other). Response options ranged from 1 (*I need to be a lot more strict with [older daughter's name]*) to 5 (*I need to be a lot more strict with [younger child's name]*), with a middle option of 3 (*I am strict with both children about the same*). Again, we targeted the younger children in these scores and summed only scores of 4 and 5 across the three items. The possible score range was 0 to 3, with high scores reflecting more negative differential treatment toward the younger child. Cronbach's alpha for these items was .82.

Younger children's perceived partiality by mother. We used the Rivalry/Perceived Parent Partiality scale of the Sibling Relationship Questionnaire (Buhmester & Furman, 1990) to assess younger children's perceptions of their mothers' preferential treatment toward the older sister relative to themselves. This scale

includes the items, "Who is treated better by your mother?"; "Who gets more attention from your mother?"; and "Who does your mother usually favor?" Response options range from 1 (*I am almost always favored*) to 5 (*My sister is almost always favored*), with a middle response option of 3 (*neither of us is favored*). Responses were scored such that high scores indicated mothers' preferential treatment toward the older sister. Cronbach's alpha for the current sample was .79.

Older daughters' and younger children's future expectations. The following five items were used to assess mothers' future expectations of their older daughter and each participating younger child: "As you think about [this child's] future, how likely is it that he or she will graduate from high school?"; "... continue his or her education after high school?"; and "... get a good job or be successful in a career?" as well as "How far will he or she probably go in school?" and "How far do you want him or her to go in school?" Response options ranged from 1 (*not likely at all*) to 5 (*very likely*), with high scores indicative of high expectations of school and job achievements. Older daughters and all participating younger children responded to the identical items, reworded to obtain their perspective (e.g., "How likely is it that you will graduate from high school?"). Cronbach's alphas for mothers' ratings of their older daughters and younger children were .89 and .88, respectively, and Cronbach's alphas for older daughters' and younger children's ratings were .78 and .81, respectively.

Family financial stress. Mothers responded to four items modeled after McLoyd et al.'s (1994) and Conger et al.'s (1994) work on family financial strain, for example "How often does your family have problems paying for basic needs like food, clothing, and rent or house payments?" and "How difficult has it been to pay the family bills within the last 3 months?" Responses ranged from 1 to 5, with high scores indicating high financial stress. Cronbach's alpha for these four items was .80.

Mothers' time caretaking their daughters' children. The mothers of adolescent childbearers were asked to indicate the number of hours per week they spent caring for their daughter's child. The range was 0 to 126 hours, with a mean of 26 hours per week.

Mothers' attitudes. Two indices of mothers' attitudes were assessed: mothers' perceptions of the problems incurred from early parenting and mothers' perceptions about the status gained from childbearing. Mothers' perceptions about the problems incurred from teenage parenting were assessed with five items that asked how teenage childbearing would affect a teen's chances of finishing high school, going to college, getting a good job, and having a good marriage and family life as well as how it would affect a teen's life in general. (Questions asked about the effect on a teenager in general and not about the effect on the mother's parenting daughter in particular.) Response options ranged from 1 (*it would be a lot easier*) to 5 (*it would be a lot harder*). With the current sample, the Cronbach's alpha for these items was .84.

Mothers' perceptions of the potential status gained by childbearing were assessed with five statements, for example, "In my neighborhood and community, having a child of your own makes you an important person" and "... gains you the respect of others." Response options ranged from 1 (*disagree*) to 5 (*agree*), such that high scores reflected perceptions that high status is achieved from childbearing. With the current sample, the Cronbach's alpha for these items was .93.

Drug and alcohol use and sexual behavior of older daughters and younger children. Five items asked about the frequency of older daughters' and younger children's drug and alcohol use (e.g., smoked marijuana, drank beer or wine) within the past 6 months, with response options ranging from 1 (*never did this*) to 5 (*did this more than 10 times*). Cronbach's alpha for older daughters' ratings was .85, and the alpha for younger children's ratings was .83.

The sexual behavior of younger children was assessed by asking whether they had ever voluntarily engaged in a series of 11 specific behaviors with a person of the opposite sex. Items ranged from holding hands (coded as 1) to kissing, necking (“French kissing for a long time”); light petting above the waist (“touching breasts over clothes”); light petting below the waist (“touching genitals over clothes”); heavy petting above the waist (“touching breasts under clothes or with no clothes on”); and heavy petting below the waist, to sexual intercourse (coded as 11). Each participant received a score that reflected the highest level of sexual behavior in which he or she had engaged. This sexual activity progression scale has been shown to reflect the typical developmental progression toward sexual intercourse among U.S. adolescents and has been validated by studies on early, middle, and late adolescents (Smith & Udry, 1985).

Results

Differences in Mothers’ Treatment of Their Children by Family Type

To determine whether mothers with and without a teenage childbearing daughter treated their various children differently, we computed a series of multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVAs) on mothers’ treatment scores, which are shown in Table 2. This was done by first evaluating the interaction between family type and race/ethnicity (a 2 × 2 MANCOVA) for the following sets of scores: mothers’ treatment of their older daughters, mothers’ treatment of their younger daughters, mothers’ treatment of their sons, mothers’ differential treatment scores, older daughters’ treatment scores, younger daughters’ treatment scores, and younger sons’ treatment scores. Analyses of mothers’ differential scores initially controlled for the gender of the younger child. (Further analyses of younger child gender effects are described below.) Next, the main effects associated with family type (while controlling for race) and race/ethnicity (while controlling for family type) were analyzed separately for the seven sets of scores described above. All MANCOVAs controlled for the ages of the older daughter and younger child (where relevant), family income, family welfare receipt, and mothers’ single parenting because the two family groups differed in these aspects at the time of the study. In the presence of a statistically significant multivariate *F* value, we computed follow-up analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs; incorporating the same controls as the MANCOVA) on the individual scores.

Results of the Race/Ethnicity × Family Type interaction MANCOVAs showed two significant effects. These were for mothers’ treatment toward their older daughters, $F(2, 112) = 3.67, p < .05$, and mothers’ treatment toward their younger sons, $F(2, 65) = 3.20, p < .05$. ANCOVAs of the individual scores revealed that Hispanic mothers of childbearing teens perceived that they treated their older daughter more harshly ($M = 2.43$) than did African American mothers of childbearing teens ($M = 2.08$), $F(1, 113) = 8.23, p < .01$. Hispanic mothers of childbearing teens also perceived that they treated their sons more harshly ($M = 2.78$) than did African American mothers of childbearing teens ($M = 2.37$), $F(1, 66) = 4.97, p < .05$. Hispanic and African American mothers of nonchildbearing teens rated equiva-

Table 2
Scores of Mothers’ Treatment of Their Children by Family Type

Mothers’ treatment	Childbearing daughter			Nonchildbearing daughter		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Mother ratings						
Older daughter			57			63
Positive	3.20	0.58		3.82	0.83	
Harsh	2.31	0.79		2.37	0.65	
Younger daughter			43			42
Positive	3.49	0.72		4.01	0.82	
Harsh	2.43	0.56		2.30	0.76	
Younger son			32			41
Positive	3.43	0.58		3.85	0.70	
Harsh	2.60	0.69		2.30	0.70	
Younger child ^a			75			83
Differentially positive toward	0.59	1.02		0.50	0.96	
Differentially negative toward	0.90	1.10		0.61	1.05	
Older daughter ratings						
Self-report			57			63
Positive	3.01	1.06		3.15	0.95	
Harsh	2.51	1.21		2.40	0.85	
Younger daughter ratings						
Self-report			43			42
Positive	3.08	0.96		3.37	1.04	
Harsh	2.51	0.74		2.69	0.99	
Mother prefers older sister	3.04	0.79		2.51	0.81	
Younger son ratings						
Self-report			32			41
Positive	3.30	0.90		3.39	0.99	
Harsh	2.65	0.70		2.33	0.77	
Mother prefers older sister	2.74	0.57		2.86	0.87	

Note. All scores ranged from 1 to 5, except for the differential scores, which ranged from 0 to 3. Higher scores indicate more positive or negative treatment, respectively.

^a Score shown is for younger children of both genders.

lent levels of harsh treatment directed toward their older daughters and sons.

Results of the MANCOVAs testing for family type differences indicated five statistically significant effects. These occurred for mothers’ treatment of their older daughters, $F(2, 112) = 9.49, p < .01$, mothers’ treatment of their younger daughters, $F(2, 77) = 4.72, p < .05$, mothers’ treatment of their younger sons, $F(2, 65) = 4.38, p < .05$, mothers’ differential treatment, $F(2, 151) = 3.40, p < .05$, and older daughters’ perceived treatment by their mothers, $F(2, 112) = 5.95, p < .01$. In addition, younger daughters’ perceived treatment by their mothers approached statistical significance, $F(3, 76) = 2.68, p < .06$. Results of the ANCOVAs indicated that, as hypothesized, compared with the mothers of childbearing teens, the mothers of only nonchildbearing children treated their older daughters significantly more positively, $F(1, 113) = 18.44, p < .001$;

treated their younger daughters more positively, $F(1, 78) = 4.21, p < .05$; and treated their younger sons more positively, $F(1, 66) = 3.98, p < .05$, and less harshly, $F(1, 66) = 4.19, p < .05$ (means shown in Table 2). For the differential treatment scores, the mothers of childbearing teens treated their younger children more harshly (relative to the older daughter) than did the mothers of only nonchildbearing children, $F(1, 153) = 4.05, p < .05$. For the older daughter scores, childbearing daughters perceived that their mothers treated them more harshly than did nonchildbearing daughters, $F(1, 113) = 9.05, p < .01$. Finally, for younger daughter ratings, the younger girls in teenage childbearing families perceived that their mothers preferred their older sister to a greater extent than did the younger girls in teenage nonchildbearing families, $F(1, 78) = 10.15, p < .01$.¹

Results of analyses testing for main effects of race/ethnicity revealed only one significant effect and that was for older daughter ratings, $F(2, 112) = 7.05, p < .01$. Results of the ANCOVAs revealed that African American older daughters perceived that their mothers treated them significantly more harshly ($M = 2.79$) than did Hispanic older daughters ($M = 2.26$), $F(1, 113) = 17.63, p < .001$. There were no race/ethnicity differences in older daughters' perceived positive treatment by their mothers.

Finally, in efforts to uncover whether any gender differences were present in mothers' differential treatment of their children, we computed three MANCOVAs on mothers' differential scores, testing for the following interaction effects: Family Type \times Race/Ethnicity \times Younger Child Gender ($2 \times 2 \times 2$), Family Type \times Younger Child Gender (2×2), and Race/Ethnicity \times Younger Child Gender (2×2). Only the Family Type \times Younger Child Gender MANCOVA approached significance, $F(2, 128) = 2.76, p < .06$. Further analysis revealed that the mothers of childbearing teens treated their younger sons more harshly relative to the older daughter ($M = 1.29$) than these mothers treated their younger daughters relative to the older daughter ($M = 0.60$), $F(1, 129) = 6.13, p < .02$. Mothers' differential negative treatment of their younger son and younger daughter (relative to the older daughter) was equivalent for the mothers of nonchildbearing children ($M_s = 0.63$ and 0.61 , respectively).

Differences in Children's Future Expectations by Family Type

To examine whether the future expectations of children differed in families with and without a childbearing teen, we computed Family Type \times Race/Ethnicity (2×2) ANCOVAs on mothers' future expectation scores of their older daughters, their younger daughters, and their younger sons (separately) and on older daughters' expectation scores, younger daughters' expectation scores, and younger sons' expectation scores. The mean scores per family member for the two family types are shown in Table 3. As before, these analyses controlled for the ages of the older daughter and younger child (where relevant), family income, family welfare receipt, and mothers' single parenting.

Table 3
Future Expectation Scores of Children by Family Type

Expectations	Childbearing daughter			Nonchildbearing daughter		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Mothers' expectations of						
Older daughter	3.80	0.99	57	4.38	0.70	63
Younger daughter	4.21	0.90	43	4.40	0.67	42
Younger son	4.09	0.80	32	4.37	0.73	41
Older daughter's expectations ^a	4.25	0.70	57	4.46	0.54	63
Younger daughter's expectations ^a	4.00	0.82	43	4.24	0.56	42
Younger son's expectations ^a	4.27	0.59	32	4.31	0.52	41

Note. All mean scores could range from 1 to 5, with higher values indicating greater expected success.

^a Refers to expectations of their future.

Main effects for family type and race/ethnicity were also analyzed.

Results of the ANCOVAs indicated a significant Family Type \times Race/Ethnicity effect for mothers' expectations for their younger daughters, $F(2, 77) = 10.37, p < .001$, and for mothers' expectations for their younger sons, $F(2, 65) = 7.79, p < .01$. Further analyses revealed that Hispanic mothers of childbearing teens expected less for their younger daughters and younger sons than did African American mothers of childbearing teens. The means were 3.94 ($SD = 0.48$) and 3.88 ($SD = 0.57$) for Hispanic mothers' expectations for their younger daughters and sons, respectively, and 4.71 ($SD = 0.54$) and 4.37 ($SD = 0.74$) for African American mothers' expectations for their younger daughters and sons, respectively. The reverse was true for families with only nonchildbearing children. That is, Hispanic mothers of nonchildbearing teens expected more for their younger daughters and sons than did African American mothers of nonchildbearing children. The means were 4.51 ($SD = 0.73$) and 4.47 ($SD = 0.96$) for Hispanic mothers' expectations for their younger daughters and sons, respectively, and 4.12 ($SD = 0.63$) and 4.06 ($SD = 0.99$) for African American mothers' expectations for their younger daughters and sons, respectively.

Results of the ANCOVAs testing for family type differences indicated three significant effects. These occurred for mothers' expectations for their older daughters' futures, $F(1, 113) = 19.36, p < .001$; older daughters' expectations,

¹ To conclude more confidently that it is family type underlying differences in mothers' treatment and not the effects of family type differences in family income or mothers' single parenting, we tested for family group differences in the outcomes shown in Table 2 only for low-income ($< \$25,000$ per year), single-mother families, while statistically controlling for younger children's age, gender, and race and older daughters' age and race. Results of these analyses showed that almost all of the statistically significant results shown in Table 2 still held. However, because only 49 families were involved in these analyses (versus the 120 families included in the MANCOVA results shown in Table 2), we do not report these specific results.

$F(1, 113) = 4.40, p < .05$; and younger daughters' expectations, $F(1, 78) = 4.06, p < .05$. All three effects favored a perceived brighter future for older daughters and younger daughters within families without a childbearing teen (mean scores shown in Table 3).

Finally, only one significant main effect for race/ethnicity emerged, and this was for older daughters' expectations, $F(1, 113) = 15.50, p < .001$. In this case, African American older daughters perceived a significantly brighter future for themselves ($M = 4.62, SD = 0.50$) than did Hispanic older daughters ($M = 4.27, SD = 0.63$).

Within-Family Differences in Mothers' Treatment and Expectations of Their Children

Next, we examined within-family differences in mothers' treatment of their children. These analyses involved contrasting mothers' positive treatment of their older daughter, for example, versus mothers' positive treatment of their younger child within teenage childbearing families and, separately, within families with only nonchildbearing children. To do these comparisons, we first had to ensure that only one sibling contrast was performed for each family. Thus, for families wherein multiple younger siblings within a family participated, we chose the oldest younger sibling to be included in these contrasts. This yielded the following sample sizes: 36 childbearing teens were contrasted with their younger sisters, 29 childbearing teens were contrasted with their younger brothers, 34 nonchildbearing teens were contrasted with their younger sisters, and 35 nonchildbearing teens were contrasted with their younger brothers. The mean ages of the included younger siblings were not meaningfully different from all participating younger siblings, and the ages of both the older daughter and the younger sibling were controlled for in all contrasts.

Results of these contrasts indicated two significant differences in mothers' treatment scores within families that involved a childbearing teen. As hypothesized, the mothers of childbearing daughters perceived significantly less close and less affectionate relations with their older (childbearing) daughter ($M = 3.21$) than with their younger daughter ($M = 3.47$), $F(1, 40) = 4.18, p < .05$. However, mothers treated their sons more harshly ($M = 2.66$) than the older (childbearing) daughter ($M = 2.31$) $F(1, 29) = 10.60, p < .01$. As expected, no within-family differences were found for mothers' treatment of their children in families that involved only nonchildbearing children.

When examining within-family differences in mothers' future expectation scores, two contrasts were significant for families that involved a childbearing teen. As expected, the mothers of childbearing daughters were significantly more optimistic about their younger daughters' futures ($M = 4.16$) than about their childbearing daughters' futures ($M = 3.64$), $F(1, 40) = 7.39, p < .01$. In addition, childbearing teens were more optimistic about their own futures ($M = 4.25$) than were their mothers ($M = 3.80$), $F(1, 55) = 14.60, p < .001$. No significant within-family differences were found for mothers' expectations for their children within families that involved only nonchildbearing children.

Associations Between Conditions of Family Stress and Mothers' Treatment and Expectations

To examine whether mothers' harsh treatment and low expectations of their children were related to conditions of family stress, we computed correlations between mothers' treatment and expectations scores, their ratings of financial stress, their single-parenting status (coded as 0 = not single and 1 = single), and, for families with a childbearing daughter, the amount of time mothers spent caring for their daughters' children. We computed correlations separately for the two family types (using the entire study sample), and younger sons' and younger daughters' ratings were merged to form one group to reduce the number of correlations computed. Younger children's gender was then partialled out of all correlations involving younger children. All correlations also controlled for family race/ethnicity.

Results (shown in Table 4) indicated that within families that involved a childbearing teen, high financial stress was associated with mothers' less positive treatment of their older daughters and of their younger children, and more differential negative treatment toward their younger child relative to their older (childbearing) daughter. High financial stress was also related to younger children's perceived less positive treatment by their mothers. Single parenting status was not related to any of mothers' treatment or expectation scores within families with a childbearing teen. However, a high number of hours mothers spent caring for their daughters' children was significantly related to mothers' harsh treatment of their older daughter and mothers' harsh treatment of their younger children.

Within families that involved only nonchildbearing children, no significant relations were found between financial stress and mother' parenting, and only one significant correlation emerged for single parenting: Single parenting was associated with mothers' less positive treatment of the older daughter (as rated by older daughters). Conditions of family stress were not associated with any of the future expectation scores for either the older daughter or the younger children within either family context and thus are not shown in Table 4.

Associations Between Mothers' Parenting Attitudes and Their Treatment and Expectations

To examine whether mothers' treatment and expectations were related to their parenting attitudes, we computed correlations between mothers' treatment and expectation scores, their attitudes about the status attained by childbearing, and their perceptions about how problematic early parenting is. Correlations were computed separately for the two family types, and all correlations controlled for the family's race/ethnicity. Again, scores for younger sons and younger daughters were merged to form one group to reduce the number of correlations computed, and children's gender was then partialled out of these correlations.

Results (shown in Table 5) indicated that within families that involved a childbearing teen, mothers who ascribed a high social status to parenting treated their younger children harshly and had younger children who perceived limited future school and job achievements for themselves. Of

Table 4
Correlations Between Conditions of Family Stress and Mothers' Treatment of Their Children by Family Type

Mothers' treatment	Childbearing daughter			Nonchildbearing daughter	
	Financial stress	Single mother ^a	Hours mother spends in childcare	Financial stress	Single mother ^a
Mother ratings					
Older daughter					
Positive	-.28*	-.22	.14	-.16	-.15
Harsh	.04	-.08	.33*	.05	-.03
Younger child ^b					
Positive	-.23*	-.15	-.04	-.13	.03
Harsh	.17	.04	.30**	.17	.05
Differentially positive toward	-.10	-.02	-.10	.15	.19
Differentially negative toward	.24*	.16	.12	.03	.11
Older daughter ratings					
Positive	-.18	.05	-.07	-.12	-.27*
Harsh	-.10	-.16	.21	-.17	.09
Younger child ratings ^b					
Positive	-.26*	-.11	-.06	.14	.10
Harsh	-.12	-.10	.19	-.17	.05
Mother prefers older sister	-.03	.07	.06	.01	-.15

Note. All correlations controlled for the race/ethnicity of the family.

^a Coded as 0 = mother currently married, and 1 = mother currently single. ^b Correlations controlled for younger child's gender.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 5
Correlations Between Mothers' Parenting Attitudes and Their Treatment and Expectations of Their Children by Family Type

Mothers' treatment and expectations	Childbearing daughter		Nonchildbearing daughter	
	Status attained by childbearing	Early parenting is problematic	Status attained by childbearing	Early parenting is problematic
Mothers' ratings of treatment				
Older daughter				
Positive	-.16	-.26*	-.36**	.29**
Harsh	.14	.04	.10	-.16
Younger child ^a				
Positive	.10	.10	-.34**	.39***
Harsh	.32**	-.26*	.08	-.14
Differentially positive toward	.07	-.01	-.05	-.03
Differentially negative toward	-.01	-.09	.01	-.09
Future expectations				
Mothers' expectations of				
Older daughter	-.02	-.05	-.27**	.31**
Younger child ^a	-.07	.15	-.23	.20
Older daughter's future expectations of self	-.06	-.15	-.27**	.09
Younger child's future expectations of self ^a	-.25*	.10	-.04	.09

Note. All correlations controlled for the race/ethnicity of the family.

^a Correlations controlled for younger child's gender.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 6
Regression Coefficients of Family Process Variables Predicting Children's Outcomes by Family Type

Family process variable	Childbearing daughter			Nonchildbearing daughter		
	Older daughter's drug/alcohol use	Younger child's drug/alcohol use	Younger child's sexual behavior	Older daughter's drug/alcohol use	Younger child's drug/alcohol use	Younger child's sexual behavior
Mother differentially negative toward younger child	-.04	.29**	.22*	.12	.40***	.16
Hours mother spends in childcare	.29*	.22*	.25*	—	—	—
Mother's importance of childbearing	-.12	.21*	.04	-.05	-.27*	-.14
Mother's perceived problems with early parenting	.05	.14	.16	-.05	-.32*	-.13
Participant's age	-.01	.44***	.52***	.28*	.13	.44***
Participant's gender ^a	—	.03	-.08	—	-.18	-.28**
ANOVA						
<i>F</i>	1.32	5.65***	7.40***	2.14	4.97***	6.11***
(<i>df</i>)	(5, 51)	(6, 68)	(6, 68)	(4, 58)	(5, 77)	(5, 77)
<i>R</i> ²	.09	.34	.41	.10	.25	.31

Note. Values shown are standardized regression coefficients. Dashes indicate that the variable was not entered.

^a Coded as 0 = female and 1 = male.

* *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001.

interest, mothers' perceptions that early parenting is problematic were associated with mothers' less affectionate treatment toward their older (childbearing) daughter but with less harsh treatment of their younger children.

For families that included only nonchildbearing children, mothers who perceived that parenting brings about a high status treated their older daughters and younger children less affectionately and perceived lower future achievements for their older daughters. In addition, daughters themselves rated their futures less optimistically. (Conversely stated, mothers' perceptions that parenting does not bring about a high social status were associated with mothers' more optimistic future expectations for their older daughters and the older daughters' more optimistic future expectations.) Mothers' perceptions that early parenting is problematic was positively correlated with mothers' positive treatment of their older daughter and their younger children and with mothers' high future expectations for their older daughter. All of the correlations involving older daughters' and younger children's ratings of maternal treatment were not statistically significant (for both family types) and thus are not shown in Table 5.

Family Process Variables Predicting Children's Adjustment

To determine how the family process variables included in this study were related to children's adjustment, we computed multiple regression analyses on the scores for children's drug and alcohol use and sexual behavior using the following six predictors: mothers' differential negative treatment, mother-rated financial strain, mothers' single parenting status, the two scores of mothers' parenting attitudes, and—for the families of childbearing teenagers—mothers' time spent caring for their daughters' child. In addition,

younger children's perceived mothers' partiality scores were used to predict younger children's behavior outcomes. We computed regressions separately for childbearing teens and their siblings and for nonchildbearing teens and their siblings to examine whether the determinants might vary for children within each family context. Sexual behavior was analyzed for younger children only because it was not assessed for older daughters. In addition, participants' age, race/ethnicity, and gender (for younger children's outcomes) were entered as controls into the equations.

The results of the regressions conducted with the predictors described above showed that the following predictors were not significantly related to the dependent variables in any of the equations: financial stress, mothers' single parenting, younger children's perceived mother preference, and youths' race/ethnicity. These predictors were subsequently deleted from the regressions so as to reduce the number of variables per equation.²

Results of the reduced regressions (shown in Table 6) indicated that, for families that included a childbearing teen, mothers' differential harsh treatment toward the younger child was related to that child's drug and alcohol use and the child's sexual behavior. Also within teenage childbearing families, a high number of hours mothers spent caring for their teenage daughter's child was positively associated with the older daughter's drug and alcohol use and with younger children's drug and alcohol use and their sexual behavior. In addition, when mothers ascribed a high status to childbearing, the younger children within teenage child-

² The results for the full regression equations (including all predictors) and the results for the reduced regression equations (those shown in Table 6) differed only slightly, with virtually the same statistically significant results for each.

bearing households were likely to use drugs and alcohol more frequently. The age of the younger child was also highly associated with their drug and alcohol use and their sexual behavior. For families that included a childbearing teen, the family variables analyzed contributed 34% and 41% of the variance in younger children's drug and alcohol use and sexual behavior, respectively.

For households that included only nonchildbearing adolescent children, younger children's frequent drug and alcohol use was associated with mothers' differential negative treatment and mothers' perceptions that parenting does not incur a high social status and that early parenting incurs few problems. Older age was also related to the older daughter's more frequent drug and alcohol use and to younger children's sexual behavior. Younger children's gender (i.e., being female) was also related to more promiscuous sexual behavior. For families that included only nonchildbearing children, the family variables analyzed contributed 25% and 31% of the variance in younger children's drug and alcohol use and sexual behavior, respectively.

Discussion

The results of this study begin to reveal the parenting dynamics that are unique to families that involve a childbearing adolescent. Specifically, with the use of mothers' ratings and children's ratings, we found that the mothers of childbearing daughters treated all of their children less positively than did the mothers of only nonchildbearing children. It is difficult to know whether these findings reveal mothers' less affectionate parenting in response to the stresses incurred from the teen's early parenting or whether these results reflect mothers' long-standing treatment patterns that existed prior to the teenager's pregnancy and may have indeed contributed to the pregnancy. Disentangling the specific processes that contribute to early childbearing (particularly within families) is a complex issue and a central challenge in this area of research (Geronimus, 1991). Nevertheless, at least as studied during the postpartum period, the mothers of teenage childbearing daughters appear to provide less affection and praise to their children and are more harsh and critical toward their sons and their older daughters than are the mothers of nonchildbearing adolescent children. Given that a warm and supportive mother-child relationship is associated with a reduced risk of adolescent pregnancy (reviewed in Miller, Benson, & Galbraith, 2001), this does not bode well for the younger children within households that include a childbearing teen and may present a risk of early pregnancy for such siblings.

One of the more interesting aspects of this study's findings, we think, pertains to mothers' differential treatment and expectations across children within the two family contexts. These results indicated that in families with a childbearing teen, mothers treated their younger daughters more favorably and had more optimistic future expectations for them than they did for their teenage childbearing daughter. Thus, the younger daughters within these families enjoy mothers' preferential treatment relative to the childbearing daughter, *vis-à-vis* mothers' affections, closeness, and expectations. In one sense, these findings could be interpreted

as a family adaptive process, wherein mothers shift their investment from the teenage childbearing daughter to a younger daughter, one whose future appears brighter and more promising. However, these findings could also be used to explain the older daughter's early pregnancy. That is, mothers may have been historically more critical and pessimistic about the older daughter (relative to the younger daughter), and this differential treatment may have contributed to the older daughter's early pregnancy. Perhaps the teen's pregnancy was her way of acting out against her mother's favoritism of another daughter within the family.

Some interesting Race/Ethnicity \times Family Type interactions were also found. For example, Hispanic mothers of childbearing teens treated their older daughters and younger sons more harshly than did African American mothers of childbearing teens. This may reflect the relatively lower tolerance of early parenting within Hispanic families relative to African American families, with Hispanic mothers' harsh treatment perhaps an attempt to curb further repeated early pregnancies by their children (Burton, 1990; Oropesa, 1996). Regarding mothers' expectations of their children's futures, African American mothers expected more for their younger children in families with a childbearing teen than did Hispanic mothers. It may be that among African American families, after a teenage daughter becomes pregnant and bears a child, mothers place higher and more demanding expectations on their other children for future school and job success (Ladner, 1988). Alternatively, this may reflect more long-standing differences, wherein early parenting is accepted or even expected for some daughters within African American families, whereas other daughters are channeled to more vocational pursuits (Stack & Burton, 1993).

Among other findings, within families that involved a childbearing adolescent, mothers' harsh and less positive treatment of their children was related to high financial stress and mothers' time spent caring for their teenage daughters' children. Mothers who are responsible not only for the care of their own children but also for their children's children undoubtedly suffer from role strain and role fatigue (Goode, 1960). It is not surprising, then, that mothers who provide extensive care to their grandchildren are more punitive and critical of their own children.

There were also some notable findings pertaining to mothers' attitudes. For example, within families that involved a childbearing daughter, mothers' perception that parenting incurs much status was correlated with mothers' harsh treatment of their younger (nonchildbearing) children. This may reflect mothers' disappointment of (or impatience for) their younger children not yet achieving parenthood. Also within families with a childbearing daughter, mothers who perceived early parenting as problematic were likely to treat their older (childbearing) daughter less positively but their younger child less harshly. The extent of mothers' harsh treatment of each of their children, therefore, appears to stem from mothers' expectations and beliefs about the importance and appropriate timing of parenthood.

In addition, regarding youths' adjustment, mothers' differential negative treatment was associated with younger children's drug and alcohol use (within both family types)

and with the sexual behavior of the younger children within teenage childbearing households. Given the other results of this study indicating that the younger siblings of childbearing teens are disfavored under conditions of high family stress, such conditions might be particularly devastating for the outcomes of these younger siblings. In fact, one could imagine a scenario wherein a teenager's childbearing creates a host of stressful circumstances that cause strained parenting among mothers, which in turn contributes to the problem behaviors (i.e., drug and alcohol use and sexual activity) of the children within these households. This type of family-level process may motivate repeated early pregnancies across children within the family and could explain the disproportionately high teenage birth rates among the sisters of childbearing teens (East, 1998; East & Jacobson, 2001).

There are several limitations of the current study that should be considered in interpreting the results. Perhaps the most significant limitation was the absence of information about mothers' parenting prior to the older daughter's childbearing. This would have been useful for deciphering whether mothers' investment patterns, as observed in this study, were evident prior to the daughter's pregnancy. Future research that follows these types of families prospectively and longitudinally at closely timed intervals across the daughter's transition to parenting would reveal how parents' investment in their various children change in response to a daughter's early parenting.

Another limitation was that many families who participated in the original study were excluded from the current analyses because of nonparticipation of a family member (e.g., a mother, older daughter or younger child did not participate). Although the inclusion rates were comparable for both family types, this criterion might have affected the study's results. We maintain that for the purposes of this study—that is, to determine how mothers' treatment of their children differs between and within families with and without a childbearing teen—it was necessary to omit the families with incomplete family (triad) data. To not have done so would have obscured comparisons across family members and between family types.

In addition the initial inequities in background socioeconomic indicators that existed between the two family groups (e.g., family income, welfare receipt, and mothers' single parenting) may have seriously tainted the contrasts between family types. This should be considered when interpreting study findings. In addition, the study sample included only Hispanic and African American families from one urban area. Different results may be obtained when studying different populations. The sample size of African American families was also particularly small (42 families), and although the general results found for African American families in this study are similar to other reports (e.g., Ladner, 1988; McLoyd et al., 1994), the current results for this group should be interpreted cautiously.

In addition, sibling birth order within the family was confined to the teenage childbearing sister always being older than the other children within the household (as specified by this study's eligibility criteria). Parents' treatment and expectations of their children are known to differ based

on children's birth order with, for example, parents more likely to discipline an older child than a younger one (Volling & Elins, 1998). Thus, the fixed (i.e., older) birth order of the childbearing daughter limited the conclusions one might have drawn had childbearing status been varied across sibling position.

Implications for Application and Public Policy

The results of this study indicate that adaptive, preferential parenting dynamics may occur within families with a childbearing teen. This pattern takes the form of mothers' greater expectations for and more favorable treatment toward their never-pregnant daughters relative to a teenage parenting daughter. From a prevention standpoint, mothers' differential treatment and expectations of their children may explain why some girls within a family experience a teenage pregnancy and others successfully postpone childbearing until adulthood. Results also suggest, however, that under conditions of family stress, the younger siblings of childbearing teens experience their mothers' angry and punitive treatment, and this treatment relates to younger siblings' drug and alcohol use and sexual activity. Such younger siblings clearly are at risk of problem behavior and an early pregnancy themselves and would likely benefit from intensive individualized attention (East, 1998). From a family practitioner's perspective, these results highlight some of the dynamics that occur within families with a teenage childbearing daughter and can alert those who work directly with such families about these kinds of within-family phenomena. With continued research into these types of within- and between-family dynamics, we hope to be able to elucidate more clearly how an adolescent's pregnancy and parenting impact the family system and affect the other children in the household.

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