INTRODUCTION

For our work within the MARIAL, we seek to build a biocultural model of embodied stress and differential well-being, based on an approach that deploys two important but still evolving approaches to biology and to culture. The first uses the body as a lens through which to study the action and production of different lived experiential worlds. This approach builds on psychobiological models of stress, affective regulation, and reactivity. The second uses individual beliefs, values and behavior (practices, relationships) to examine the construction and evaluation of local, personal and interpersonal meaning, particularly in relation to relative social status. This line of investigation deploys the concepts and analytic techniques of cultural consensus modeling, status incongruity, and cultural models and schema analysis. In this working paper, we discuss our reformulation and operationalization of next-generation cultural consensus modeling (CCM), and analyze preliminary data from a pilot study of schemas for family scheduling in relation to models for the material, emotional, and moral economy of everyday life and life course in working American families.

Across several of its major ongoing research efforts, the Laboratory for Comparative Human Biology is investigating the relationships of social context with individual lived experience with respect to differential well-being, both in terms of mental and of physical health. Much of our work involves combining biological measures with psychosocial and sociological ones. Such work is the classic province of epidemiology. As epidemiologic methods have increased in sophistication and ever more complex models of social-ecological factors in differential well-being have evolved, the bones of correlational structures underlying health risk have become increasingly clear. Correspondingly, the desire to clothe those bones with the flesh of everyday life and with the processes that articulate relationships of risk, has escalated. Thus, there is increasing interest in augmenting quantitative studies of families and family life, with understanding of cultural and psychosocial dynamics. The main challenge has been to link the very different orders of data, qualitative and quantitative, to distinguish the pathways to divergent outcomes. For some time, we have wished to incorporate measures of cultural epidemiology and social positionality into our ongoing epidemiologic work. This desire informed our interest in joining the MARIAL, with its mandate to study social process and experience in everyday lives of ordinary people. Our research proposal and ongoing program reflects that aim. Here, we report our reworking of CCM and insights already gained from an ongoing pilot study.

BACKGROUND

Anthropologists and life course developmental researchers have outlined how sociocultural systems inculcate distributed cognitive models or “scripts” that inform how individuals negotiate

Our working model concerns linkages of cultural models of middle class status to specific practices and lifestyle choices (routines and rituals) that, conjointly with internalized schemas, shape psychobiological states that represent embodied meaning and reflect physiologic processes constituting the bases of health and well-being. This aspect of our work engages the challenge of bringing cultural models onto the ground and into the everyday realm of the individual. The issue becomes critical if we wish to link individual-level phenomena such as physiologic stress or depressive symptoms, to cultural phenomena such as notions of success, social status, or family life. We need tractable constructs to effect such bridging, which is the reason that we find cultural consensus modeling highly promising. With some modifications, CCM allows us to:

- **localize** Localize “culture” to individual beliefs, values, and schemas that constitute working cultural logic on the level of the individual. Individual responses to questions comprise the grist of cultural consensus modeling: good prior ethnographic work is required to formulate an initial set of questions that will tap into the domain of interest. Further rounds of questioning key informants and modifying the question set accordingly are required to establish the appropriate set. This set is then given to all individuals in the sample under study: response sets from individuals represent the local/personal instantiations of that domain (in our case, we will probe about 3 or 4 domains, e.g., “middle class” or “social status,” “success,” “stress,” “family”).

- **locate** Locate individual understandings or practices on the field of what others in the culture think/do/know. A core concept of culture is that it is shared; nevertheless, individual responses on specific items may be shared or idiosyncratic. All responses to question sets can be expressed in terms of distributions, and individuals can be located on that distributional map of response variation. The process of question set formulation for a domain ensures that the set engages a domain of shared knowledge/belief/action. The original formulation by Romney, Weller and Batchelder (Romney, et al. 1986), along with current applications by Dressler and colleagues, take a knowledge- or competence-based view. Respondents are asked to represent the normative or “culturally correct” response; hence, respondent answers are treated as measures of their “cultural competence.” Competence reflects ability to report the dominant cultural model but does not represent what the individual personally
knows/thinks/does. We have expanded both the concept and the protocol for CCM to elicit a set of responses about not only what is “out there,” but also what is the case for the individual, a measure of what may be termed “cultural congruence,” as well as cultural burden.

- **temporalize** In common with much of anthropological thought, CCM lacks a developmental perspective, and does not address the question of how individuals come to hold the models and use the working cultural logic that they do. Similarly, perceptions of and goals for the future (including cultural models of the life course) markedly shape behaviors and assessments in the present, but have rarely been studied by anthropologists and are altogether absent in CCM. Absence of a developmental approach therefore prevents the use of CCM for understanding the sources and consequences of individual variation.

- **generalize** Generalize from all responses to characterize kind and strength of shared understandings about the focal domains under study. This is the more usual way of thinking about culture, and cultural consensus measures provide another means to talk about shared knowledge or, more comprehensively, about cultural schemas and models.

Thus, our CCM approach aims to expand the usual ecological (Bronfenbrenner 1999; Bronfenbrenner, et al. 1984; Bronfenbrenner and Ceci 1994) or ecocultural (Gallimore, et al. 1989; Nihira, et al. 1994; Weisner 1998; Weisner 1996; Weisner, et al. 2001; Weisner 2001; Weisner and Bernheimer 1998) models of both stress and life course development, to locate each individual with respect to the social world of possibilities, constraints, and pathways in the construction of both the life course, and everyday life (Bruner 1987; Bruner 1990; Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura 1999; Eccles, et al. 1993; Fischer and Ayoub 1994; Moen and Wethington 1999; Shore 1996d; White and Siegel 1984). We call these **individual locations** in the social milieu **positionality,** reflecting how individuals negotiate the affordances and constraints embedded in the socioecological environment, and how they manipulate and interpret networks of meaning to their own benefit (or detriment).

**Cultural consensus measures: expanding the constructs**

Working with data from North Carolina and local Atlanta informants, and from discussions with our colleagues in the MARIAL about cultural meanings and operationalizations of core domains such as, “middle class,” “social status,” “family” and “family life,” we have significantly expanded the scope of cultural consensus analysis from its knowledge-based orientation to one that also engages “working cultural logic.” Such logic involves dynamic cognitive deployment of contingencies (hierarchies of resort), goals and valuations, as well as gut- or reflex-level senses of what is “right,” appropriate, or desirable. Both hot (gut) and cool (reflective) modes of logic guide ongoing motivations, emotions, and behaviors. Question sets are needed to probe both kinds of logic.

Previous efforts to measure cultural models and positionality have focused largely on the extraction of normative models and their statistical validation (Dressler, et al. 1998a; Dressler, et al. 1998b; Garro 2000; Romney 1997; Romney and Moore 2001; Shweder, et al. 1990; Webster,
The original CCM work by Romney and colleagues aimed to identify domains of cultural “knowledge” that could then be related to other cultural domains and so on, to essentially map the distribution of cultural knowledge. Dressler’s interest in using CCM to characterize relative social status and life achievement as sources of stress, led him to focus initially on a competence notion of individual culture. Cultural competence concerns the degree to which the individual “gets it,” and can accurately represent modal population views. Of course, one may be perfectly knowledgeable about a domain, and yet not be able to achieve it. After early work, Dressler clearly recognized this, and went on to add the notion of cultural consonance, which is the degree to which the individual conforms to the population norm.

Yet it is immediately apparent that more may be needed to understand both “social positionality” and working cultural logic for individuals in relation to experiential stress. What may be important is not what the population says, but rather what the individual thinks is true of the community. Therefore, how successful a person is in living up to what they believe to be the norm, may be what generates stress. We have called this cultural convergence. Additionally, not all things may be equally important. A person could succeed in a number of minor regards, but fail on the single most important item in a dimension. Therefore, ranked significance or importance of an item may moderate the impact of the item with respect to perceived well-being. We represent this notion as cultural congruence. Further, someone may know cultural norms with respect to specific items or even an entire domain, and yet think that those norms do not apply to them (regardless of whether they conform or not). We assess this possibility by measuring cultural relevance. Finally, CCM has never considered the perceived difficulty or burden (in energy, time, money/resources) imposed for achieving socially mandated priorities. Individuals may know, buy in to, and achieve these priorities, and yet find them very onerous. Perceived burden is a known contributor to stress or distress, and thus we will assess cultural burden.

Additionally, a substantial amount of heterogeneity is lost in the process of identifying cultural norms and individual competence and achievement, including the existence of multiple alternative models of economic achievement, social status, and the lifecourse (Cooper 1999; Shore 1996a; Shore 1996b; Shore 1996d; Shore 1998). Rather than viewing these alternative models as “noise” around a hypothetical cultural center point (Cooper 1999; Dressler, et al. 1998a; Dressler 1988; Dressler and Bindon 2000; Garro 2000; Shore 1996a; Shore 1996b; Shore 1996d; Shore 1998), we are specifically investigating stable recognized alternatives in social roles and developmental trajectories, (recognized in the earliest developmental research within anthropology (Bateson 1958; Bateson 1987)), and will characterize individual positionality, in terms of both cognitive endorsement (“cultural consensus”) and “real life” approximation (“cultural consonance”) to cultural and subcultural models.

Recall that our goals is to get at working cultural logic, not just a cultural “competence” scale, to support epidemiologic, individual-based but population-level studies. We therefore have expanded the conceptual frame of CCM to reflect these concerns, as follows:

**cultural consensus** (cultural domain)

Population distribution of responses to a question set (finalized as a coherent domain).
**Cultural Competence** (knowledge of norms)
Based on individual’s response to “What is true of your community” versus the modal responses of the community [score or ratio “correct”]

**Cultural Consonance** (adherence)
Conformity to cultural model = degree to which s/he actually meets/fulfills the cultural model
Based on individual’s response to “What is true for you” versus the universe of modal answers established *for the population* (cultural consensus)

The above 3 constructs constitute the bases of current CCM by Dressler and others. We have added the following constructs:

**Cultural Convergence**
theory vs. praxis
Based on modal individual responses to “What is true for you” versus the modal responses *from the individual* on “What is true of your community”

**Cultural Congruence**
Endorsement of cultural model, to what degree s/he buys in to the cultural model
Based on individual response to “What is important for you” [rank importance] versus rankings assigned for “What is important/valued in your community” (pilesort for ranking)

**Cultural Relevance**
Degree to which the cultural model applies to you.
  to what degree the individual sees the model as relevant/applicable to him/her
  (we find some individuals have difficulty distinguishing between what is important (congruence) and what is applicable (relevance) to them)

**Cultural Burden**
Difficulty of realizing/enacting the cultural model; what degree of difficulty s/he experiences meeting (resisting?) the cultural model
Based on individual responses to “How difficult is it to...”
Ask about difficulty for each item in the matrix. Then do pilesort for ranking.
Burden = $\sum d$
  where $d$ = item difficulty rating (See possible variation in calculation, Appendix 2.)

Alternates/competing models
Current CCM literature does not accommodate the notion of alternate or competing models that may be equally coherent and potentially recognized by members of the same culture. Our interest, then, is to tease out alternate models and the degree to which individuals endorse and enact either alternate models on their own, or a set of alternate models that can be deployed as required or desired.

**Toward a developmental approach to CCM**
The foregoing discussion has highlighted the need for a development approach to CCM. With specific regard to the MARIAL focus on working families, two aspects of the cultural models of the life course are salient. First, are those around mid-life development and life course that inform adult values, goals, priorities, and practices of adults in constructing and navigating through both the macro-architecture of their adult lives, and the micro-architecture of everyday life. Second, cultural models about development of children and the means by which their immediate and long-term needs are met, inform the actions these same adults in their roles as parents. Appendix 2 gives our current method for deriving models of mid-life course.

METHODS
Identification of cultural models and derivation of structured measures

The ethnographic methods described in this section are used to (1) elicit models of economic and social success, of parenting and family function, and of lifecourse achievement, (2) identify how individuals position themselves with respect to these models (both in terms of cognitive endorsement and “real life” approximation), (3) test how this relates to individual stress (mental and physical), and (4) characterize participants' understanding of how individual behavior and extrinsic events may act to “derail” these agendas.

The ethnographic data collection process proceeds in a series of iterative stages with ongoing data coding and analysis, allowing each stage of data collection to become more refined and attuned to local context, and to the full range of individual concerns and emphases (including subcultural models). The method has previously proven useful for extracting cultural models in such domains as economic success (Dressler, et al. 1998a; Dressler, et al. 1998b; Dressler 1988; McDade 2001) and social support (Dressler and Bindon 1997; Dressler and Bindon 2000; Handwerker 1999), and comprises the following steps:

1. Semi-structured interviews, to determine culturally-relevant concepts and vocabularies
2. Focus groups (used in this study) or individual follow-ups, to check acceptability of ethnographers’ understandings of the above
3. Creation of scales for pilot testing, yielding preliminary quantitative tests
4. Application of measures with large, targeted sample

1. Cultural logics and theme extraction: Semi-structured interviews (N~24)

To accomplish familiarity with local vocabularies and logics for thinking about (1) economic success/social status, and (2) the lifecourse trajectory/life histories, we presently are recruiting 12 families (4 in each in dual parent dual income; dual parent multi-income; single parent single income with an attempt to spread income) through child development centers east of Atlanta. Families in this pilot study are collecting 1 week’s prospective records of activity will engage in semi-structured interviews, according to the guidelines below. These interviews are transcribed and coded by theme, and the results are being used to construct a “shortlist” of themes in the following domains:

- Economic achievement/social status
  - perceptions of SES and class
  - components of class (i.e. economic security, “lifestyle,” ownership of certain consumer goods, conspicuous consumption, other sources of value)
personal endorsement or rejection of these class/SES indicators
- relationship of SES/class to social status among peers, within family, in local community, in broader social world
- alternative routes to social status

- **Organization of daily life and setting of family priorities**
  - identification of priorities informing organization of family life (e.g., security, stability, stimulation/fun)
  - assessment of degree to which child needs organize these priorities (e.g., learning and developmental opportunity, nutrition and physical health, psychological needs)
  - intrinsic and extrinsic “derailment: in organization of everyday and ongoing family life (i.e., what can impair or disrupt achievement of these priorities, including child illness, “chance” events, job loss)
  - gender and allocation of responsibilities for production of family life
  - alternative organization of family and daily life

- **Lifecourse achievement and derailment**
  - important points of lifecourse achievement/transition (e.g., marriage, employment)
  - intrinsic and extrinsic “blocking” of lifecourse goals (i.e., what can stand in the way of these points of accomplishment, e.g., discrimination, “chance” events)
  - salient lifecourse “turning points”
  - personal endorsement of pathways to “success”
  - alternative life course trajectories

2. **Theme-testing and refinement:** Focus groups (N≈32)

Themes derived from the above interviews are tested in focus groups organized by gender and work status. The primary purpose of these focus group sessions will be to test ideas about SES/social status and lifecourse trajectories for their cultural validity across different ethnic and gender groups. Discussions explore gender or subcultural differences in endorsement or emphasis of certain perspectives on SES/social status and the lifecourse. These gender/class homogeneous perspectives also provide a context in which hidden or latent models that are specific to certain group configurations may emerge, for testing in the next stage of methods development. We will also use the focus group to examine the relationships expressed between these perspectives and attitudes to norm-breaking and antisocial behavior of the type assessed in the YAPA behavioral symptoms sections. Focus groups will each consist of 8 participants of the same sex and ethnic group, balanced across the poverty and family stability groups.

3. **Piloting measure prototypes (N≈32)**

Results of the focus group sessions are used to construct a series of formalized measures for direct piloting with 32 new participants, again stratified on the four family/work and income configurations specified above. Measures of SES/social status will consist of quantitative ratings of subjective perceptions (Dressler 1991b; Goodman 1999; Goodman, et al. 2001; Goodman, et al. 2000; McDade 2001). Participants will be asked to rate the perceived normative salience of a set of derived indicators of socioeconomic/social status (i.e. owning a house), then rate their own endorsement of these indicators, and their perceived chances of future accomplishment in these
socioeconomic and lifestyle domains. Exploratory analysis will examine group means by family/work category, to further test for the possibility of subcultural norms in socioeconomic achievement. This will be tested formally when the measure is applied to the full sample (described in the next section).

Measures of lifecourse trajectories will consist of a cardsort approach (Gore and Leuwerke 2000; Graham-Bermann and Bresco 2000; Murray and Lopez 1999; Parkinson and Totterdell 1999; Sardy 2000; Truscott, et al. 1999). The structure and content of this approach builds directly on the “Hopes, Goals, and Expectations” scale developed by Jane Costello for an earlier study of adolescent development (Costello 2002; Costello, et al. 1999). Cards with salient lifecourse transitions, such as buying a house, identified from the previous two stages of ethnographic research, will be handed to participants, who will be asked to retain lifecourse event cards that are important to them, rate each of these cards in terms of personal salience, and place them on a lifecourse timeline of ideal achievement (see Appendix 3). The boundaries of this timeline will be defined by individual participants’ best estimates of their total lifespan (Burton 1990; Chisholm 1999). Participants will then be asked to estimate the chances of achieving each lifecourse achievement event (Jessor 1996).

Subsequently, participants will be asked to rate the probability of a series of events and behaviors “derailing” them on the path towards these points of achievement, using a series of “derailment cards” (see Appendix 3). Just as cards for significant life achievements, these events and behaviors will be determined from preliminary ethnographic interviews and focus groups (steps 1-2). This stage of the research will help explore how individuals connect their own behaviors with lifecourse outcomes, and will thus outline a fuller picture of causal attributions across the lifespan (Aldwin 1994; Alsaker 2000; Brown and Siegel 1988; Kaplan 1999; Sapolsky 1998). As such, it will help probe the cognitive phenomenology of the association in GSMS between “unreasonably high” life expectations and high levels of conduct problems.

While both domains of data collection will be more structured and formalized than initial ethnographic interviews and focus groups, participants will be prompted to suggest salient issues that are not covered in the derived SES/social status and lifecourse measures. Results from this stage of data collection, including associated suggestions, will be used to finalize the final set of SES/social status markers and achievement/derailment cards, for use in the larger epidemiological sample.

4. Quantitative application of qualitatively-derived measures (N~128)

Our procedures for scale development and preliminary testing (1-3, above) yield final versions of measures to assess (a) models of economic achievement/social status, (b) models of family life priorities in everyday life, and (c) models of mid-lifecourse development and derailment. Using the above sampling strata, 128 participants (64 families, 16 each of dual income dual parent, single income dual parent, multiple income dual parent, single income single parent) will complete these final measures. The sample size will allow formal statistical testing for subcultural norms related to socioeconomic achievement and lifecourse development (see Appendices 2, 3). For each domain (economic, family life, lifecourse), derived scale scores will provide the following metrics (see Appendix 2-3 for further details):
• individual knowledge of cultural and subcultural models (*cultural competence*)
• individual achievement/expected future approximation of cultural/subcultural models (*cultural consonance*)
• individual approximation/expected future approximation of personal models (*cultural convergence*)
• individual endorsement of cultural and subcultural models (*cultural congruence*)
• individual value placed on meeting/achieving cultural models (*cultural relevance*)
• individual burden of meeting/achieving cultural models (*cultural burden*)

In addition, specifically with respect to models of the lifecourse derailment, a series of metrics will be derived to represent (see Appendix 2 for further details):

• individual endorsement of cultural and subcultural models of lifecourse disruption/derailment (*derailment consensus*)
• perceived chances of disruption/derailment from cultural/subcultural daily life or lifecourse ideals (*cultural derailment*)
• perceived chances of derailment from personal lifecourse ideals (*individual derailment*)
• divergence between “generalized” and “personalized” concepts of lifecourse derailment, a potential mediator of perceived threat to achievement (*derailment dissonance*).

For purposes of comparison and validation of the above measures, three existing scales which measure similar properties as the above will also be applied. For comparison of metrics concerning socioeconomic/social status, we will apply the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (Goodman, et al. 2001). For comparison of metrics concerning models of the lifecourse and lifecourse derailment, we will apply the 10-item Perceived Life Chances scale (Jessor 1996) and the Expected Life Span (Burton 1990; Chisholm 1999) scales.

**E.2. Pilot data**

We are presently in the pilot phase of the Twenty-first Century Families study. Families for the pilot are being recruited through a Child Development Center that provides childcare with educational enrichment. Each pilot family is asked to collect one week’s worth of daily activity data. The family is visited 3 or 4 times: once, when they are enrolled into the study, consent is obtained, and the goals and procedures of the study are explained. After a family has collected the first day’s data (i.e., on the second day of the study week), they are visited and the previous day’s records are thoroughly reviewed in the form of a debriefing session that reconstructs the activities, settings, actors, and emotions that comprised the day. Gaps, if any, are filled in, and participant questions are sought and answered. The interviewer also asks a few questions about lifestyle, family and work, life priorities, sources of hassle, and the dynamics and pragmatics of family. The goals here are: 1. to help participants become fluent in translation of their day’s experiences into the terms of the study, and 2. to obtain basic ethnographic information to inform CCM.

We find that the daily schedule protocol provides an effective, reality-based, experience-near entry into the goals, practices, desires, values, and emotional landscapes of people’s lives in the
far more efficient way than nearly any other technique. After the second interview, participants are telephoned every other day to continue to debrief and answer questions. The interviewer may visit if it seems warranted. Finally, on the evening after the final day of data collection, the family is again visited to go over all recorded data and resolve ambiguities or gaps, and then to engage in a semi-structured discussion of the components of our 3 focal domains (economic/social achievement, family life, life course). We find that, at this juncture, families are engaged and primed to cover these topics directly and efficiently.

Three families have completed the pilot protocol, and form the basis for discussion in the following section.

**Family 1**
- 2 parents, 2 children (boy 5, boy 3 yo)
- both parents employed in insurance industry
- no relatives in town
- own single family home

**Family 2**
- 2 parents, 2 children (girl 7, girl infant)
- both parents employed (mother: elementary teacher; father: self-employed contractor)
- paternal relatives in town
- own single family home

**Family 3**
- 1 parent (mom), 1 child (boy 9 yo)
- mother has 2 jobs: full-time desk job in lawyer’s office; part-time babysitting at church daycare
- father in town, employed, provides support, has custody of son 2 days/week
- paternal relatives in town (paternal grandmother provides care)
- own single family home

**DISCUSSION**
Our extensive observation and interview of families across the socioeconomic and demographic spectrum in the ongoing, population-based Great Smoky Mountains Study (GSMS) in western North Carolina, and our current intensive data on and discussion with everyday activity of focal families in western Atlanta, provide a broad basis from which several foundational themes have emerged. Readily apparent pragmatics drive the activities, discourse, and cares of working families that are, in turn, informed by an underlying set of models and moral economic structures that inform the contexts, priorities, and meanings of family life. Our focus on models about economic achievement and social status, family life, and life course development allows us to access these organizing structures.

The following discussion commences with a summary of the cultural (themes, models) and associated structural elements and patterns of daily life revealed by our ethnographic work so far. It then proceeds to analyze the how organizing cultural features generate priorities (goals,
motivations), costs (in social/interpersonal, emotional, and material terms), and rewards (in productivity through the work of the family) that infuse the lives and life courses of working American families.

**Pragmatics**

Content and flow of everyday life for American families are organized by a set of pragmatics on which attention and concern are necessarily focused. Such pragmatics include:

- remunerative work
- housing
- transportation
- social support
- school
- child care
- communication
- health, health care
- safety
- religion and leisure vary much more widely as foundational for family pragmatics. Families vary, but each may be viewed as a desirable but less foundational, more optional pursuit.

Pragmatics represent not only goals and resources, but also constraints. They set up a series of trade-offs for allocation of time, value, and social or material resources. Such trade-offs or tensions include:

- family vs. work
- family vs. personal needs
- interdependence vs. autonomy
- commitment vs. flexibility (applies to personal life, children, work)
- planning/triage vs. spontaneity (particularly important across life domains or/and between partners)
- mobility (work, lifestyle) vs. social support and social security
- material vs. social quality of life
- present needs vs. future goals (applies to children, work, relationships, leisure)
- people outside vs. people inside the domestic circle
- productive vs. unproductive activity (in terms of meeting economic, family, or life goals)

Children order and re-order these trade-offs depending on their perceived needs (based on age, individual differences, vulnerabilities and strengths, future life course options).

**Moral goods**

Cultural models and value structures inform the production and allocation of moral goods that shape the moral economy of the family. The moral economy of the family, in turn, both drives and is manifested in the tangible economy of the family. The currencies of the tangible economy are time, and material and social goods, while the availability and allocation of these currencies constitute dynamics of family economy. All of the currencies have the additional property of having a temporal component such that their relative perishability and time-varying value play important roles in organization of family life. For instance, social support becomes a
critical good for parents of children at particular ages during which childcare constraints are paramount. At later ages, availability of money for educational opportunity assumes greater value for advancing child welfare and social support becomes markedly less important. Finally, the moral and material economies of the family shape its emotional economy as well.

For the middle class families we have studied so far, children mandate a set of non-negotiables and arrange further priorities that reshape the moral economy of the family. Absolute priority is given to:

- **Security/safety** This very large and important domain includes:
  - material and psychosocial ease and comfort
  - well-being
  - stability
  - control

Physical and mental health, and physical and mental development are tied in to this domain.

- **Opportunity, development** Approximately as large and important as the first, this domain includes:
  - physical and psychosocial growth
  - learning, self-improvement
  - progress, advancement
  - choice
  - creativity
  - risk (not really a key element, but a corollary)

Phrases indexing this domain include: “be all you can be”, “make something of yourself”, “nothing ventured, nothing gained”, “give it a try”.

Less critical, but still important:

- **Social integration** Memberships (desired or actual) in communities or social structures (e.g., ethnicity, class, region, religion, occupation) underpin this domain.
  - belonging
  - fitting in (involves language, dress, behavior)
  - responsibility, duty
  - manners, codes of behavior

Identification of referent community is key here, because it has a pervasively organizational influence. Ambiguities and family tensions may swirl around choice of reference community. Usually, families and their members have several communities of reference that both enrich and complicate family life. The domain of social integration strongly engages these psychosocial dimensions:
  - identity
  - peer relations (peers are particularly important in American life, and families socialize for this orientation)

**Security/safety**

Several lines of evidence underscore the primacy of this domain for shaping family lives. Parents uniformly reported child supervision as a “non-negotiable” component of child care. The parental priority that the child never be alone applies across specific child ages and includes a
limited set of persons deemed eligible to provide supervision. A child is never to be left absolutely alone until “after the teenage years.” Need for surveillance was justified by domestic (e.g., accidents, possibility of illness, unregulated media use, poor eating behavior, prioritization of use of time (homework, practice), misbehavior) and external (getting lost, falling into bad company, “psychos”) dangers to physical, psychological, moral, and developmental well-being. Parents are usually very clear about acceptable caregivers for children (which also lapped on to cost/choice of daycare, school). For the mother of Family 3, the only acceptable caregivers for her son were father, paternal grandfather, school, and day care center. For others, besides kin or professionals, and in a pinch, a babysitter or highly familiar and trusted neighbor mother or grandmother were possibilities. Besides concerns about immediate safety and security, the concern for regulated environments and contexts for behavior projected directly into the learning and developmental domain as well. These goals revolved around the child’s acquisition of skills and abilities to self-organize, self-regulate, and self-monitor their daily lives as adults (e.g., emotions, behaviors, setting and meeting priorities, self maintenance).

The need for supervision and safety can collide significantly with parent work around the problem of child illness, which absolutely removes the child from daycare or school, and requires parental presence and care. Hence, parents universally cited child illnesses as the primary source of schedule disruption and stress. Having a backup or flexibility for accommodation of this contingency (a willing grandmother, flexible boss or work in the home) hence assume high importance. The self-employed father and his parents in Family 2 provided strong backup for after-school supervision and dealing with illnesses. Consequently, this family reported lower stress levels despite the fact that the mother was in a highly structured daily work schedule as schoolteacher. On the other hand, she also pointed to the long summers at home as a major plus for supervising and enriching child experience when they too were out of school on summer holiday. This same family exemplified the merits of social support, in that getting the children to school was outsourced to the paternal grandparents and greatly relieved the morning schedules of the parents. Family 1 underscored the difficulties if social support is lacking: the mother in particular repeatedly cited the absence of parents or other relatives in town as the reason for low schedule flexibility and high daily stress for meeting family needs.

A meta-goal in this domain was provision of stability and a degree of graded, age-appropriate predictability and simplicity deemed essential for child well being and development. Thus, parents carefully juggled children’s schedules to ensure that they would be regular, not too complex, and highly buffered. Therefore, the daily activity reports of the individual children in the study were relatively stable and simple, but the impact on parents was huge. Stability and simplicity children’s days contrast markedly with the corresponding complexity of the parents’ schedules required for the production of their children’s days. For instance, for Family 2 the seven year old daughter’s day may consist of: go to school, mother-daughter day activities at school 12:30-2:30, ballet lesson, homework. Adult activity to produce this day consisted of: grandmother takes her to school, mother takes off work for mother-daughter activities (an has to put off MD appointment to do so), father picks up from school and takes to ballet, mother picks up from ballet on the way home from work. Parents often went through extensive, complicated loops to effect triage for all of the children and to coordinate efforts between the two of them. For instance, one parent may drop off a child at a well-regulated activity (a 9-year-old’s birthday party) and go on to pick up the other, smaller child and take it home for after-school care and
routines, while the second parent may pick up the elder child from the party on the way home from work, go home and supervise children while the first parent leaves and shops for or takes out the evening’s meal.

Opportunity, development

After the non-negotiable priority of supervision, parents showed a pervasive involvement in providing extracurricular activities for their children. Indeed, regular provision of extracurricular activities constitutes the single most significant source of additional parental time and stress. Each child needs these activities and because the appropriate activities are determined by child age, temperament, and abilities, at any given time, each child is engaging in totally different extracurricular activities from those of each of the others. For instance, parents in Family 1 showed extraordinary coordination to act as a tag team that, acting independently and synchronized by telephone, Palm Pilot, and e-mail, delivered, supervised, and picked up children from a host of extracurriculars (team sports, sport lessons, music and other lessons, peer social events, seasonal activities (puppet show, county fair, amusement park)). Coordination and planning of activities was a major reason for valuing communication resources (cell phone, e-mail, portable music, DVD) and reliable cars.

Although the amount of parental effort and care devoted to provision of extracurricular activities seems to reflect a high value placed on such pursuits, we have had difficulty getting parents to articulate the reasons that these activities are so important. Such activities apparently provide important developmental opportunities not accessible through school. These include: skills (physical, social, self regulation), health, exploration and opportunity to sample a range of settings and activities, and just plain fun (also seen as important for child well-being). As described in the previous section, parents enact highly complex coordinated support activities to allow each of their children to have access to these opportunities, and they show considerable willingness to tailor activities to the child’s particular needs, interests, and abilities.

Subordination of parental schedules and energies to children’s needs was understood to be a “non-negotiable” element of parenthood. Meeting family needs thus superseded personal ones: the mother in Family 3 had a completely scheduled life (it was easy for her to report in 15-minute chunks), and only gets solo leisure time by scheduling herself to be away from the house. The only exception was occasional craft work at home, but otherwise domestic things that need to be done flow in a continuous stream of demand.

Despite the absolute primacy conferred on subordinating parent needs to meet the children’s, mothers were more constrained to ensure the basic needs for child well being, while fathers were more likely to be allocated the easy or fun parts. For instance, in Family 1, although both parents put in roughly equivalent time and responsibility for child supervision, housework, and child illness emergencies, the mother took care of the younger and admittedly more difficult child, whereas the father cared for the older, “easy” child. The mother reported that she had no leisure time, whereas the father reported that he did. This difference was both a matter of perception (mother reported commuting as travel time, father also reported it as solo leisure) and of fact (the father went out several times with friends or used the basement exercise room to work out; the mother did not). The father viewed this as important maintenance activity to “stay sane” and was willing to let other things slide, while the mother was not. Such findings coincide with reports of
family studies by Elder, Lamb, Goodnow, and others. Particularly when children are small, parental development is on hold, which is a major reason why achievement of parental career or other life goals (e.g., travel) drive the scheduling of child bearing.

**Synergy and conflict among “non-negotiables”**

Considerable gain as well as substantial tension arise when the above domains converge or conflict. Synergies among pragmatics also define priorities for work and family life, and the allocation of family resources. Significant linkages operate around housing, as follows:

- **housing and safety**
  
  “right” home = “right” neighborhood
  “right” neighborhood = “right” people
  “right” people = good behavior, safety, security, maintenance of desirable ecology of living, healthy environment (includes green spaces, absence of pollution), good social support, positive community

- **housing and education, child development**
  
  “right” home = “right” neighborhood
  “right” neighborhood = “right” people
  “right” people = good school, good playmates and parental supervision, array of desirable extracurricular activities/learning opportunities for children

- **housing and life course development, security**
  
  “right” home = “right” neighborhood
  “right” neighborhood = “right” people
  “right” people = maintenance of property values, community peers for parents

Obtaining the right family housing trumps many other pragmatic concerns: parental convenience and commute time, availability of resources for other pursuits (leisure, advanced education), type of work (in terms of hours, remuneration, enjoyment, flexibility), and (particularly for mothers) location of work.

Potential sources of tension are obvious in the nature of the domains themselves. Ones often mentioned by families include:

- needs for stability versus those for growth or change
- family responsibility vs. personal growth (our category of “solo time” often elicits narrative about this tension)

Similarly, developmental and life course expectations for change in communities of reference (e.g., peers, family, interest groups, occupation) are structural, expected, and celebrated if seen as positive. Yet they can be difficult to negotiate (e.g., adolescent period) and a cause of tension or conflict if outcomes are contested or not valued.

That conflict among foundational goals generates tension and produces stress is reflected in the observation that status incongruity (conflict between endorsed goals and extent to which they are met) has been directly linked to mental and physical well-being.

**The work of the family**

Working families operate within a wider set of structures, affordances, and constraints that define the social and material economies within which they operate. In our work so far, we find that American working families are confronted with structural factors that heighten the value and
extent of, and need for, family work. By family work, we mean the time, energy or creativity, and material and social resources that must be committed on a long-term basis, to the production of the conditions for family life. Unpacking the complex of values and structures involved illuminates the American preoccupation with “lifestyle” and the pervasive concern for that elusive, indefinable element, “quality time”.

**Social ecology of the family and the privatization of public goods** We previously listed the pragmatics entailed in family life, including housing, transport, education, and health. With the rise of the post-industrial state, many societies (particularly European and Japanese) identified provision of “family goods” with “social goods,” the logic being that it was in the social interest to support the family in the production of healthy, well socialized, educated, and productive members of society for the future. Often, this involved the state extending into the public sector the services, goods, and environments that might otherwise have been purchased by elites. For education, there was public support through university level (with near-absence of private alternatives). For housing, there was promotion of urbanism, density, and expensive but durable construction. The constraints of small, expensive housing were offset with provision of parks and recreation facilities (pools, public walks and paths, sports facilities, spas), handsome urban spaces and public amenities (livable streetscapes, cultural facilities). For transport, there was safe, reliable, high density, affordable public transportation over short and long distances, with heavy taxation on cars by type and engine size. For child care, there was professionalization of staff with provision of crèches, labor laws mandating extensive parental leaves, and a maintenance of salaries to track family costs. For health, there was extensive public support of prevention and treatment.

By contrast, the moral economy of the U.S. not only is disinterested in provision of family goods by the public sector, it also mitigates against it by stigmatizing dependency and valorizing self reliance. Thus, for transportation, we have provision of extensive roadways and near-total reliance on cars that individuals buy and maintain, reinforced by poor, patchy, unsafe, unreliable, and expensive public transportation over short and long distances, the exception being long-distance air transport beyond convenient reach of cars and that is fully privatized. For childcare, we lack labor laws mandating parental leave or supporting wage levels to reduce dependence on dual incomes, we have privatized, non-licensed caregivers, and we rely on fully fee-paying child care services the quality of which is roughly graded to cost. Health care, particularly for families with children, is wholly privatized for the middle class, regionally heterogeneous in quality and access, variable and largely unregulated by employer and type of employment, while preventive maintenance is rarely included in insurance. Hence, we have increasing and large number of employed un- and underinsured. Provision of outdoor recreation, recreation facilities, and green spaces is largely home-based, hired (through membership in country or other clubs, selection of neighborhood or community), or purchased from camps or vacation facilities. Even education has been heavily assaulted by calls for privatization and individual choice, with disinvestments (public money and parent time) in public schools, education policy uninformed by research, and politicization and de-secularization. Hence, educational quality, school safety, and peer socialization have been increasingly commodified and require payment from an early age (daycare onward).
Public and political discourse suggests that domestication of public goods for families is a moral matter because individuals should work to produce these goods for themselves. Further, domestication finds justification in the value placed on control, identity, and choice, all wrapped in the virtue of individual freedom. After all, how can one have a meritocracy if one has not earned it, but instead is riding on the back of shared public good? Privatization of family goods raises the overhead required to produce the desirable conditions of middle class family life. This high overhead is paid from family work and production, in terms of money, time, land, labor, energy, creativity, and social relationships. Moreover, economists have repeatedly noted the impact on entry of mothers into the paid labor force, first as part-time and increasingly, full-time laborers outside the home.

**Family work and the production of lifestyle** The work of the American middle class family, then, is to *produce the requisite conditions* for achieving the overarching goals of safety/security; development, choice, and realization of opportunity, and identity/social position. Such conditions include domestic production of childcare, education, housing, communication and transportation, health care, and leisure. Thus, the work of the family merely begins with remunerative work, but extends to the use of resources generated from work, along with the personal resources of time, social relations, and ingenuity, for supporting production of family life. As noted earlier, the moral economy of the family prioritizes the material economy of the family, and the choice of and access to family goods (housing, school/daycare, transport, leisure, religion) define the social and physical ecologies of everyday life and lifecourse development. Remunerative work can promote or constrain (in money, time, energy) such access to and choice of family life conditions. Further, because the conditions of meritocracy dictate that parents cannot directly transfer social status and security to their children, the primary route to social reproduction is through production of the conditions to maximize the child’s development, access to social goods and resources for life course progression, and realization of potential as an adult who has attained more than the parents had done. In other words, parents must do all they can to ensure that the child can do it on its own, albeit with support.

A product of all this work is “lifestyle,” a nebulous but omnipresent concept that signifies the set of material and social conditions, activities, and constraints (or lack thereof) that define the architecture and furnishings of everyday life. Lifestyle also represents the hedonic, emotional, aesthetic qualities emergent from that set. If the work of the family is to produce the conditions for meeting key life goals, then lifestyle represents the outcome of that work on the individual, domestic level. Curiously, the individual impact of lifestyle (on life satisfaction, child development, life course development) are elided from this construct, satisfaction being presumed to flow (through a twist of circular thinking) from having a satisfying lifestyle.

The insight that domestic economy revolves around production of the conditions of family life further helps to illuminate the concept of “quality time”. Quality time appears to represent unstructured social or fun time together, and its hallmark is that it is unmarked by the family work of “lifestyle production.” Parents reported heavy family involvement in a seemingly unremitting stream of domestic tasks (e.g., cleaning, home improvement, paperwork), and the continuous triage of childcare and extracurricular activities: such efforts serve to produce conditions of family life. Despite such manifestly intense, evidently effective activity on multiple levels, parents bemoaned the lack of “quality time.” Indeed, the parents providing the “best”
family conditions often lament the loudest. Such vociferous regret may represent agonistic as well as self-reinforcing behavior (“I work so hard for my family that I have no time to just hang around”). Perceived lack of quality time may also reflect the toll of emotional and interpersonal costs that servicing the domestic economy entails. Indeed, valorization of such intensive parental effort that there is little or no opportunity for interpersonal pay-offs (in terms of rich social relationships or personal reward and development) underscores the extent to which the parent has internalized and realized the mandate to subordinate self needs to those of children and family. Thus, the very high, largely unaffordable overhead of domestic production soaks up family resources and leaves little if any quality (non-production, non-work) time.

CONCLUSION

Our goal in work for the MARIAL is to bridge the epistemological and methodological gulf between the blooming, buzzing world of immediate, lived experience and behavior, and abstracted probabilistic population-level patterns of differential well-being. Our work to develop and apply next-generation formulations of and methods for CCM aims to construct that bridge. CCM is grounded in ethnographic inquiry and analysis, as our outline of the methods and report of our ethnographic work demonstrate. Such work allows us to map the landscapes of meaning, intention, and activity that rest on cultural substrates of value, practice, and belief. Hence, ethnographic work delineates cultural substrates that organize all aspects of life in so pervasive a manner as to be both transparent and absolutely opaque. Such understanding therefore is a prerequisite for deeper analysis of the why and how of behavior and experience at a particular time and place. In itself, however, ethnography cannot and does not probe individual variation and its precise sequelae, though it may help us understand the sources of each. A translational step is required. At the level of the individual, the distributive and probabilistic terrain laid out by material and cultural ecologies finds concrete manifestation in a specific set of circumstances, behaviors, and perceptions (including working cultural logics, beliefs and models, emotion and memory) that act as proximal mediators of individual outcomes. Ethnographic analysis supports formulation of hypotheses and instruments for probing the social positionality and associated affective experiences of individuals that constitute proxemics and outcomes. Epidemiologic work allows us to survey the costs and benefits of cultural and related social forces in terms of differential operation at the level of the individual.

The methods detailed in the text and appendices represent a substantial conceptual and operational advance on existing CCM. The methods detailed are being used in our CCM work both in Atlanta and in the GSMS (subject of separate grants), with fieldwork by Jason DeCaro and Ryan Brown, respectively. We are well in to Step 1 of CCM, the qualitative ethnographic interview phase that we have streamlined by combining it with monitoring of daily activity. Our preliminary ethnographic findings have identified pragmatics, priorities, and tensions that infuse the everyday activities of working American families. Pragmatics and priorities represent the grist for generating lists and probes that elicit working cultural logic by individuals. Two foundational themes have emerged, the one concerning safety, stability, and security, and other concerning growth, development, and progress. Concurrent operationalization of the two organizing themes represents a dynamic source of synergy and tension in the organization and experience of working parents’ everyday lives (Nuckolls 1998). Insight into this dynamic tension therefore provides an entry into understanding and representation of the lives that CCM decomposes into discrete minutiae.
In sum, CCM enlists qualitative and quantitative methods that open a direct window onto the occupations and preoccupations, emotional and social landscapes, and sources of stress and satisfaction in the everyday lives of working American families. The power of this approach is presaged by the preliminary findings reported here. As such, CCM facilitates bridging among levels of analysis to probe the wellsprings of differential well being, from quantitative measures of time allocation to those of physical function or psychosocial status, to a qualitative sense of the meaning, experience, and trajectory of a life.

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Appendix 1. Generalized procedure for deriving the cultural consensus questionnaire

A. Select a set of key informants
   “full range of cultural knowledge regarding some cultural domain” must be sampled
   1. survey: random selection of 600
   2. survey data from first 400 used to generate socioeconomic clusters
      hierarchical cluster analysis of 22 vars => 4 clusters
   3. in each cluster, chose 12 key informants, 6 male, 6 female; 6 <45, 6 >45
      *persons closest to cluster centroids and meeting these criteria were selected

B. Cultural consensus
   1. “think about entire community, not own behavior”
   2. rate 27 lifestyle items “not, somewhat, very” important to person being a “success in life”
      OR
      rate importance of 7 sources of social support for coping with 7 different types of
      problems
   3. test for consensus
      use ANTHROPAC 4.02
      ratio 1st eigenvalue: 2nd eigenvalue≥3 = sufficient sharing to assume shared domain. By
      definition, this formulation excludes subcultural models. For this reason, we will test the
      value of using items included by >50% of respondents.

C. Cultural competence
   1. individual loading on 1st factor = informant’s cultural competence coefficient
   2. construct answer key = weighted average of ratings for each item, weight=individual
      cultural competence coefficient

D. Cultural consonance
   1. score survey responses by [n of items “correct” (rank ≥2) in the model/total possible] x
      100

A-D comprise “classic” CCM analysis. Details of derivation of our additional dimensions are
given in Appendix I, using the social status domain an example.

E. Cultural convergence
   1. individual report of community ideal
   2. against individual attainment

F. Cultural congruence
   1. ask respondent to do pilesort of importance of each item
   2. score congruence by loading individual attainment of item by ranked individual
      importance

G. Cultural relevance
   1. scored relevance of item to individual
   2. community importance of item is factored by individual

H. Cultural burden
   1. ask respondent to do pilesort of difficulty/burden of each item
   2. score burden by loading individual burden of item by ranked individual importance
Appendix 2. Data Collection and Reduction, Models of Economic Achievement and Social Status

Steps 1-3: Cultural and subcultural themes. Determination of local cultural/subcultural logics for perceiving and achieving status in the socioeconomic domain, exploration of individual strategies for ascribing to and matching these cultural and subcultural models.

Step 1. Semi-structured interviews (n=16):
- Creation of “master list” for potential markers of social/socioeconomic status, outline “alternate routes” to status
- Collect data according to following themes:
  - perceptions of SES and class
  - components of class (i.e., economic security, “lifestyle,” ownership of certain consumer goods, conspicuous consumption, other sources of value)
  - personal endorsement or rejection of these class/SES indicators
  - relationship of SES/class to social status among peers, within family, in local community, in broader social world
  - difficulty or burden in conforming to social status markers
  - alternative routes to social status

Step 2. Focus Groups (n=32):
- Explore group differences in above themes
- Refinement (trimming) and addition of social/socioeconomic status markers.
- Further outlining of alternate routes to social status and discrete identities associated with these alternate routes.

Step 3. Methods Piloting (n=32):
- Further refinement of social/socioeconomic status markers items (based on means and distribution of salience scores, additional suggestions from participants)
- Factor analysis to determine existence of discrete routes to social/socioeconomic status (possibly segregated by gender and ethnicity).
- Finalization of measure for use with larger sample.

Step 4. Quantitative Application (n=196):
- Extraction of three main domains of data
  a. Individual report of community salience of social/socioeconomic status markers. Example: “Please mark the appropriate place on the scale below: In our community, it is important to own a nice house that others admire.”
  b. Individual endorsement (personal affective loading) of social/socioeconomic status markers. Example: “Please mark the appropriate place on the scale below: It is important that I own a nice house that others admire.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No opinion/disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
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<td>[Number from 0-100 will be derived using a scaled tape.]</td>
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c. Ranked individual salience (prioritization) of social/socioeconomic status markers. Use pilesort employing cards for each scale item. Example: “Which of these items is the most important for you personally. [Participant picks card] Now pick the next most important, and then sort the rest from most to least important.”

d. Ranked community importance (prioritization) of social/socioeconomic status markers. Use pilesort employing cards for each scale item. Example: “Which of these items is the most important for people in your community. [Participant picks card] Now pick the next most important, and then sort the rest in order of importance (most-least).”

e. Individual approximation/expected future approximation of these items. Example: “I own a nice house that others admire.”

f. Individual approximation/expected future approximation of these items. Example: “The community view of the importance of home ownership really applies to me, regardless of whether I think it is important or not.”

g. Modal (entire sample) and subcultural (factor analysis) endorsement for each of the above items (sample means).

h. Individual burden or difficulty in attaining or maintaining social/socioeconomic status markers. Example: “Please mark the appropriate place on the scale below. My current housing was very difficult to afford and now to keep up.”

i. Ranked individual attainment burden of social/socioeconomic status markers. Use pilesort employing cards for each scale item. Example: “Which of these items is the most burdensome or difficult for you to get and keep. [Participant picks card] Now pick the next most difficult, and then sort the rest by difficulty.”

Calculation of 7 main scales from these domains

- A “cultural ideal” set of status markers will be constructed, consisting of all of the markers retained by > 50% of the total population sampled. Individual scaled responses are standardized (mean = 0, sd = 1).
- **CULTURAL CONSENSUS** [factor analysis]
  population of responses for cultural model.
- **CULTURAL COMPETENCE** = \( \sum [\text{mean}(a) - (a)] \)
  matching of individual models with cultural or subcultural models.
  Where \( a \) = reported community significance of item and \( \text{mean}(a) \) = mean of all population responses for the item
- **CULTURAL CONSONANCE** = \( \sum [\text{mean}(a) - (b)] \)
  matching of individual lifestyle with cultural or subcultural ideals
Where $b =$ reported individual achievement on item

- **CULTURAL CONVERGENCE* = $\sum[(a) - (b)]$
  matching of individual lifestyle with individual ideals

- Cultural competence and cultural consonance measures will be calculated with separate subscales of items, if identified as subcultural or intracultural patterns for identity formation. This determination will be conducted with varimax rotated factor analysis of results for individual ratings of the personal salience of markers for social/socioeconomic status, guided by factors analysis conducted during methods piloting.

- **CULTURAL CONGRUENCE* = $\sum[(c)(a)]$
  Where $c =$ ranked importance of item

- **CULTURAL RELEVANCE = $\sum[(d) - (a)]$
  Where $d =$ scored relevance of item

- **CULTURAL BURDEN* = $\sum[\text{mean}(e) - (e)]$
  Where $e =$ scored burden of item
  This is relative burden. Personal burden might better be assessed by: $\sum[(e)(c)]$, or by $\sum[e]$.

*In the socioeconomic domain, these are variants of what is sometimes referred to as “lifestyle incongruity” (Bindon, et al. 1997; Dressler and Bindon 1997; Dressler 1991a; McDade 2001; McGarvey 1999). Here we distinguish between what the individual endorses versus what the individual says the community endorses.
Appendix 3. Data Collection and Reduction, Models of the Lifecourse and Lifecourse Derailment

We focus largely on mid-life events: completion of education, first permanent full-time job and work progression, marriage, child bearing, home ownership

Steps 1-3: Cultural and subcultural consensus/mapping individual strategies. Determination of local cultural/subcultural logics for charting and marking points of lifecourse achievement and transition, exploration of individual strategies for ascribing to and matching these cultural and subcultural models.

Step 1. Semi-structured interviews (n~24):
- Creation of master list of points of lifecourse transition and achievement, as well as major interventions (caused by extrinsic factors and/or individual behavioral decisions) that can derail achievement of these life goals.
- Outline of potential alternate routes through the lifecourse (including high and low risk strategies, subcultural alternatives)
- Collection of data in the following domains:
  - important points of lifecourse achievement/transition (e.g., marriage, employment)
  - intrinsic and extrinsic blocking of lifecourse goals (i.e., what can stand in the way of these points of accomplishment, e.g., discrimination, “chance” events)
  - salient lifecourse turning points
  - personal endorsement of pathways to success
  - alternative life course trajectories

Step 2. Focus Groups (n~32):
- Refinement (trimming) and addition of important lifecourse events and important factors which may block their achievement.
- Capitalizing on more homogeneous ethnic and gender groups, further outlining of alternate routes through the lifecourse and subcultural alternatives for lifecourse decision-making, including high and low risk strategies.

Step 3. Methods Piloting (n~32):
- Further refinement of lifecourse events list and associated roadblocks (based on means and distribution of salience scores, additional suggestions from participants)
- Factor analysis to determine existence of discrete routes through the lifecourse (possibly segregated by gender and ethnicity). This will be based on grouping and salience of important lifecourse components, as well as individual estimations of the most likely lifespan (personal estimates of longevity).
- During debriefing, explore individual strategies for decision-making with relations to the lifecourse, life goals, and potential barriers to these goals. Explore individual strategies for negotiating among multiple possible lifecourse strategies.

Step 4. Quantitative Application (n~128)
Eight main domains of data

a. Expected lifespan
b. Individual groupings of lifecourse events (i.e. getting married, buying a house, owning a personal car, etc.)
c. The associated idealized ages for these events (i.e. getting married at age 25, buying a house at age 30, owning a personal car at age 35)
d. Individual salience ratings for these events. Example: It is important to me to get married by age 25 (continuous scale, see below)

e. Individual perceived likelihood of accomplishing these events/goals. Example: I will get married by age 25 (see above scale).
f. Individual choices of potential life goal barriers (e.g., dropping out of school early, getting pregnant, involvement with delinquent peers, encounters with the justice system) [up to three for each life event]
g. Perceived general salience of these potential derailment processes. Example: If someone gets into too much trouble with the law, it may prevent them from getting married (see above scale).
h. Perceived degree to which these potential barriers apply to the self. Example: If I don’t watch my behavior, I will get in trouble with the law and lower my chances of getting married, it may prevent me from getting married. (see above scale).

Calculation of seven main scales from these domains

- A “cultural ideal” lifecourse will be constructed, consisting of all of the life-events retained by > 50% of the total population sampled.

- **CULTURAL CONSENSUS** will be calculated by percentage of these “cultural ideal” events picked by individuals. In turn, this percentage score will be modified by cultural consensus in idealized ages and perceived salience for each life event. These modifiers will be standardized (mean = 0, sd =1).

\[
\text{Cultural Consensus} = \% \text{ events chosen} - \sum (*|\text{mean}(c) - (c)|) - \sum (*|\text{mean}(d) - (d)|)
\]

- Cluster analysis will use individual likelihoods of picking individual items (along with their associated salience and idealized ages) to determine the existence of subcultural variants (within or across ethnicity) in definition of the ideal lifecourse. If such subcultural models emerge, individuals will also be tested for “subcultural competence” against each such model.

- **CULTURAL CONSONANCE** will be calculated by perceived personal ability (or projected ability) to fulfill cultural and subcultural ideals:
Where e = perceived personal ability to fulfill cultural and subcultural ideals
\[ \sum [\text{mean}(d)(e)], \text{ for each subset of events associated with a cultural/subcultural model.} \]

- **INDIVIDUAL CONSONANCE** will be calculated by perceived personal ability (or projected ability) to achieve all life goals of high personal salience:
\[ \sum [(d)(e)], \text{ for individual subset of high-salience lifecourse events.} \]

- **DERAILMENT CONSENSUS**: A “cultural ideal” of life event derailment will be constructed, consisting of all of the derailment processes retained by > 50% of the total population sampled. Individual derailment consensus scores will be calculated as the percentage of these events picked by individual participants.

- **CULTURAL DERAILMENT (derailment from cultural ideals)** will be calculated for each cultural and subcultural subset of life events. For each subset of events, this will consist of the perceived individual potential for derailment, scaled by salience.
  Where mean g = mean potential of all chosen disruptive events to foreclose possibility of achieving life goal, and mean (c) = mean cultural/subcultural salience of each event
\[ \sum [\text{mean}(g), _ \text{mean}(c)], \text{ for each subset of events associated with a cultural/subcultural model.} \]

- **INDIVIDUAL DERAILMENT (derailment from individual ideals)** will be calculated for individual lifecourse models. For these personal subsets of events, this will consist of the perceived individual potential for derailment (mean[g]), scaled by (d).
  Where d = individual salience of each event
\[ \sum [\text{mean}(g), (d)], \text{ for individual subset of high-salience lifecourse events} \]

- **DERAILMENT DISSONANCE** will measure individual potential to dissociate general causality from consequences related to the self:
Where h = mean perceived personal potential of all chosen disruptive events to foreclose possibility of achieving life goal
\[ \sum [(g) - (h)] \]