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# The Impacts of Adolescent Parenthood on Latino Mother's Educational Attainment

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# ADOLESCENT PARENTHOOD AND IMPACT'S ON EDUCATION

The Impacts of Adolescent Parenthood on Latino Mother's Educational Attainment

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MSW Clinical Research Paper

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The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

### Abstract

Adolescent parenthood is an important topic that has been researched for many years. It has an overall effect on social work practice, policy, and research. Although teen parenthood has declined in the United States, birth rates remain high compared to other countries. This study examines the impacts of adolescent parenthood on the lives of seven Latina mother's educational attainment. There were many factors that influenced the women's lives. Some of the factors included what their educational goals were prior to becoming pregnant, how their families reacted to their pregnancies, how the dynamics in their families changed, and how their education was directly impacted by their pregnancies. The mother's shared their experiences candidly. The findings of the study represent a very small sample size of women from a specific well known highly populated Latino neighborhood in the Metro area. Implications for policy, practice and social work research are reviewed.

### **Acknowledgement**

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**Table of Contents**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
I. Introduction	5
II. Literature Review	7
III. Conceptual Framework	19
IV. Methodology	21
V. Findings	24
VI. Discussion	37
VII. References	45
VIII. Appendices	
a. Appendix A – Information Sheet	51
b. Appendix B – Telephone Script	53
c. Appendix C – Interview Questions	54
d. Appendix D – Informed Consent	55
e. Appendix E – Mental Health Resources	57
f. Appendix F – Transcriber Agreement	58

## **Introduction**

The Impacts of Adolescent Parenthood on Latino Mother's Educational Attainment

### **Presenting the Problem**

Adolescent pregnancy is a topic that is very complex. Most often, the stigma and stereotypes that come with the topic are negative. This stigma dates back to the mid 1900's. Dogan-Ates & Carrion-Basham (2007), states "the girl that has an illegitimate child at the age of sixteen suddenly has 90% of her life's script written for her...Her life choices are few; and most of them are bad". Teenage parents with multiple risk factors often have poorer outcomes such as higher rates of depression, suicide, and high school drop outs among others (Wrona, 2010).

### **Scope of the Problem**

Teenage pregnancy rates have been declining for the past fifteen years. Although the numbers have decreased, teenage pregnancy still has an impact on society. More than 75% of all unmarried adolescent mothers receive public assistance within five years of the birth of their first child (Romo & Segura, 2010). Examining the impacts of adolescent parenthood is important from both an economic and psychological standpoint. Taylor (2009), states that women who give birth during adolescence are overrepresented among Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients today. Researching the Latino population is important because it focuses on a culture that is rapidly growing in the United States. Romo & Segura (2010), state that out-of-wedlock birth rates are higher among Latinos compared to White women. Dogan-Ates & Carrion-Basham (2007), state that teen mothers are more likely to have poor prenatal and pregnancy complications, psychological distress, and depressive symptoms due to high responsibility of

parenthood. Depression is commonly studied when examining adolescent parenthood, as it is expected to be a common occurrence and a likely moderating factor for other outcomes (Hollo & Savio Beers, 2009).

### **Significance to Social Work Practice**

Adolescent pregnancy is a social issue that has been studied for many years. The topic has been researched most often categorizing the effects that race has on adolescent pregnancy. More detailed research has been done which focuses specifically on the culture of adolescent Latinos and the resiliency they exhibit. Adding another factor to the research, such as the adolescent pregnancy demographics, would produce an even smaller number of results. For the purpose of this research, the researcher is defining Latino as somebody of Latin American descent.

The purpose of this study is to examine the impacts that parenting has on the educational attainment of young mothers, specifically in the Latino culture. There are many factors that tie into this research. For example, what are the rates of adolescents becoming pregnant? What does research show about educational attainment in regard to this population? What impact does one's culture (values, parent-child relationships, acculturations) have on their experience as an adolescent parent? And finally, what impact does adolescent parenting have on educational attainment for Latinas? The following literature review will be addressing themes found through out research pertaining to adolescent pregnancy in Latina's. These themes include general risk factors, causes, and the impact of adolescent parenthood on poverty, school, family dynamics, and health. Other themes are "cultural risks", drop-out rates, resiliency, and services that are available to adolescent parents.

## **Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

Adolescent pregnancy remains a hot topic in society. Society has mixed feelings, thoughts, and opinions about children raising children. Currently in pop culture, reality television examines the lives of teen moms during their day to day lives and documents their experiences. These types of television shows give some insight to what it is like to be a pregnant adolescent. Does it paint an accurate picture of the challenges that adolescent parents are faced with? How does their pregnancy impact their family life? How does the experience of pregnancy and then parenting affect the educational attainment of the teens? The researcher will examine literature on adolescent parenting and its effects on the educational attainment of Latina mothers.

### **Teenage Pregnancy Significance**

Seventy-five percent of all children of single teenage parents grow up in poverty in the United States (Mollborn, 2007). Clemmens, Grey, Meadows-Oliver, Ryan-Krause, Sadler, Seitz, and Swartz, (2007) state that although teen pregnancy rates are declining, almost half a million adolescent women give birth each year in the United States. Eleven percent of all United States births are to adolescent mothers, (Hollo & Savio Beers, 2009). The researcher has shared statistics on adolescent pregnancy. Risk factors in present literature will now be discussed.

### **Risk Factors**

In an article on midlife impacts of adolescent parenthood, Lounds Taylor (2009) examined the midlife outcomes of adults who became parents before the age of twenty and compared them to sample adolescents who gave birth after adolescence. This study



found that adolescent child bearers completed less schooling, were physically less healthy, had unstable marriages, and did not have high status occupations during midlife. Lounds Taylor (2009) also recognized risk factors that contributed to adolescent parenthood. They included living in poverty, being raised by a single parent, failing to complete high school and having a father that is not consistent in one's life.

In an article by SmithBattle (2009), the author found that teen mothers' long-term outcomes reflected legacies of unequal life chances that began in childhood and persisted into their 30's. The adolescents that participated in the study were from low income households and would be considered "disadvantaged". "The popular press and professional literature have described teen pregnancy as the beginning of a downward spiral that includes dropping out of school, depending on welfare or minimum wage jobs, and remaining single, poor mothers" (SmithBattle, 2009 p.409).

Hollo & Savio Beers (2009), states that adolescent pregnancy has been associated with interpersonal and environmental factors. These factors include a minimal amount of child-parent connectedness, and parental monitoring: Permissive parental attitudes towards sex, community and family disorganization, parents of the adolescents being teen parents, the absence of positive peer relationships, and low rates of contraceptive use. This study explored environmental, educational, social, and behavioral factors in relation to teen parenting as well as the limited data available on outcomes of adolescent mothers and their infants.

Mollborn (2007) studied past research on the lack of material resources available to teenage parents and it's affect on life outcomes. The author hypothesized that material resources explain why there is an educational penalty for becoming a teenage parent. The

lack of resources such as housing, child care, and financial support explain the negative effect of teenage parenthood on educational attainment. The author also states that research has focused on emotional and psychological health and not housing, child care, and financial support.

Frisco (2008), states that research has examined the relationship between adolescent sexual behavior and educational attainment extensively. Traditional wisdom about the causes and consequences of teen parenthood does not take resources into account according to Mollborn, (2007). In public discourse, the personalities, aspirations, deviant tendencies, and race/ethnicity of teen parents are the frequently cited reasons for adolescent parents' failures (Mollborn, 2007).

### **History of the Literature**

In a pioneer longitudinal study, Furstenberg (1976) examined the outcomes of adolescent pregnancy in terms of life circumstances for both the mother and the child. Furstenberg (1976) discovered a variety of implications that arose after the adolescent participant became pregnant with his research. Findings included adolescents having a small amount of understanding of methods of birth control available although they did not have immediate access to it. Most of the adolescents were "surprised" that they became pregnant and a little over half of the participants casually received a minimal amount of parental guidance in regards to sexual education. Many of the adolescents that participated in the Furstenberg study (1976), (between one-half and two-thirds of the female drop-outs), cited pregnancy and/or marriage as the principle reason for leaving school.

Davis & Wright (2008), state that popular stereotypes about the futures of adolescent mothers and their children are exaggerated, but not untrue. Although early childbearing creates clear social and economic disadvantages for individuals in their study, the majority of adolescents demonstrated resiliency by finishing school, establishing regular employment, and raising well adjusted and academically successful children. The article states that a pregnant adolescent's educational ambitions and goals are the one set of attitudes that consistently predict later economic stability and success. Davis & Wright (2008) propose the idea of examining social context in terms of early child bearing being a part of a bigger problem; poverty. The authors argue that society needs to take a look at the bigger picture to truly understand. Past literature on adolescent pregnancy was discussed. The researcher will now describe the impact that adolescent parenthood has on one living in poverty.

### **The Impact of Parenthood & Poverty**

In an article by Romo & Segura (2012), the authors state that statistics show that education is a main predictor of poverty. Clemmens, et al. (2007) found that many teen mothers have multiple poverty-related and academic difficulties that predate their childbearing. "It is becoming clear that there are improved outcomes for both teen mothers and their children if the young mothers are able to remain in school and complete their high school education, which places them in a better position to prepare for college, specialized training, or employment" (Clemmens, et al., 2007). The researcher will now discuss the impact that adolescent parenthood has on educational attainment.

### **The Impact of Parenthood on Educational Attainment**

Remaining in school for adolescents despite pregnancy is important. Clemmens, et al., (2007) state that teen mothers have an opportunity to both learn and prepare for motherhood by staying in school despite complexities that will arise. The authors also state that it is important for the teen to have daily contact with a healthy support system. Young single mothers from low-income neighborhoods are more likely to attend low-performing schools that do not provide them with a learning environment that prepares them for higher education (Romo & Segura, 2012). According to Mollborn, (2007) a high school degree is a pre-requisite for post secondary schooling and a minimum requirement for most attractive employment opportunities. Finishing a two or four- year degree would be even more beneficial. For many adolescents, a degree of higher education is not within their grasp. For teen mothers who try to attend high school classes, child care is often a determining factor in their success or failure (Clemmens, et al., 2007). Numerous studies have indicated that young mothers are less likely to complete high school and more likely to earn lower incomes than their counterparts who delayed child bearing (Davis & Wright, 2008).

### **The Impact of Parenthood on Family Dynamics**

An adolescent's life changes in its entirety once they find out they are pregnant. The relationships that they have in their lives are also effected which includes the dynamics within her family. Anecdotal reports indicate that an adolescents childbearing can unify a family and bring a family closer (Chien & East, 2010). On the contrary, things can fall apart. An adolescent's childbearing might trigger family conflict or it could also enhance family closeness. Chien & East (2010) state that studies of adult

married couples have concluded that families likely experience increased conflict and disruption as family members learn to cope with the challenges and demands of a needy infant. Family conflict has also been observed in the families of childbearing teenagers in regard to who is responsible for and in charge of the baby's care (Chien & East, 2010). There are other factors that the study describes which impact the lives of ones' family. These include: an unplanned pregnancy vs. planned, financial strain, preparations for parenting, and the amount of stress parenting causes.

For adolescents expecting a child, the roles within the family may change. Wrona, (2010) states that closer relationships with parents may be maintained as many adolescent parents continue to rely on their own families for support during childrearing.

Adolescents may also seek childcare for their infants from their family. According to Clemmens et al. (2007), school-based child care centers are not commonly found in communities depending on the need for the service. Clemmens et al, (2007), discusses difficulties that sometimes arise when the adolescent's family is providing child care. Difficulties that may arise include conflict within the family.

Some minority groups view teen pregnancy as normal or a valuable phenomenon (Dogan-Ates & Carrion-Bashan, 2007). The authors state that the maternal role is highly valued among Latinos; furthermore pregnancy may signify the accomplishment of a planned goal, mainly becoming an adult. There is a correlation between families who support adolescent pregnancy and those who allow the adolescent parent to continue living at home. According to Chien & East (2010), eighty percent of adolescent mothers continue to live with their family of origin until their baby is one year. The researcher has discussed the impacts that adolescent parenthood has on family dynamics. In the

following paragraph the researcher will discuss impacts that adolescent parenthood has on one's health.

### **Impacts of Parenthood on Health**

Early childbearing can lead to a number of health implications. According to Hollo & Savio Beers (2009), pregnant adolescents are at increased risk for complications such as anemia, poor maternal weight gain, toxemia, increased mortality, and premature delivery in the United States. Findings indicate that younger teens are less likely to initiate early prenatal care, with less than half of pregnant 10-14 year olds beginning prenatal care in the first trimester. Teen mothers are more likely to have poor prenatal care and pregnancy complications; psychological distress and depressive symptoms due to high responsibility of parenthood; and higher suicide rates compared to other teens (Dogan-Ates & Carrion-Bashan, 2007). Teenage mothers are at risk of increased maternal depression (Perez, 2009). The researcher will now discuss drop-out rates of adolescents that become pregnant.

### **Drop-Out Rates**

Findings reveal that one third of pregnant teens drop out of school either before or right after child birth (Dogan-Ates & Carrion-Bashan, 2007). Research shows two primary causes of decreased educational attainment among teenage parents compared to nonparents: 1) increased resource needs, and 2) lack of available resources among adolescent parents according to Mollborn (2007). The author states that the obligation to work and support family members is a commonly cited cause for dropping out among teen parents.

Research has also shown that adolescent mothers that have poor educational outcomes are more likely to drop out of school because of pregnancy, (Perez 2009). The author also found that seven out of ten adolescent mothers drop out of high school before graduation.

Drop out rates can also be influenced by the age of the mother at the time of birth and the number of other children the teen mother has given birth to. Clemmens et al., (2007) states that teen mothers who are able to remain connected to their high schools have fewer subsequent births during adolescence, better long term economic outcomes for their family, and better behavioral, social, and academic development of their children. The researcher has discussed drop-out rates of adolescents that become pregnant. Adolescent mother's higher education will now be discussed.

### **Number of Teens that Enter College**

Daniels et al., (2012) found that women who eventually become mothers have higher risks of dropping out of college than those who remain childless, but whether fertility expectations are associated with the decision to go to college, or whether this association varies by gender remains unknown.

In an article by Daniels, Kim, and Raley (2012), the researchers studied the association between adolescent fertility expectations and college enrollment. The authors found that an adolescent's decision of pursuing higher education may be influenced by their anticipated adult family responsibilities, to the extent that these compete with full-time employment. As described in the article, 64% of recent high school graduates enrolled in degree granting institutions. Daniels, et al, (2012) also found that there are correlations between education and fertility transitions that suggest that adolescents that

go on to college after high school are typically not forming families. The researcher will now discuss different programs and services that are available to adolescent parents in regards to educational attainment.

### **Services/Programs for Adolescent Parents**

In an article by Romo & Segura (2012), the authors state that the solution for meeting the needs of pregnant and parenting adolescents is for schools to integrate comprehensive programs that tap into a variety of community resources. They take a strong position on it being necessary for teens to receive a high school education if they want to have a promising future. They believe that having supportive, teen-friendly parenting programs in high schools, especially programs including school-based child care for infants and toddlers offer young mothers valuable and necessary services to help them become more competent mothers, complete their high school education, and have their children enrolled in safe stimulating child care, Clemmens, et al., (2007).

Davis & Wright (2008), state that there has been minimal research conducted on the day-to-day experiences of adolescent mothers in school settings and how educators support young parents during this crucial time. Knowing such information would enhance our understanding of the needs of parenting adolescents in school settings and inform efforts to create school climates that encourage higher retention and graduation rates.

Clemmens et al., (2007) also described the benefits of providing teen parents specialized support and a child care center located within their school. The authors state that a benefit of school based models is that there is daily contact between highly trained and skilled health and educational professionals and young mothers and their children (Clemmens et al., 2007). Clemmens et al., (2007) indicate the benefits of this type of



program and the impact that it has on the relationship between mother and child increased rates of continued education and eventually graduation.

According to Mollborn (2007), providing financial aid packages similar to those offered in higher education provides financial resources and reduces the need for paid work among teenage parents. The increase of General Equivalent Programs (GED) has enabled many adolescent parents to complete high school requirements (Perez, 2009).

In an article by Davis & Wright (2008), the authors state that educators possess the potential to enhance the life chances of pregnant and parenting students by offering extended social support networks. The article states that positive and supportive relationships with teachers and other caring adults in a school environment consistently contribute to the social and academic well-being of disadvantaged adolescent students. Davis & Wright (2008) also state that the social support theory impacts the overall well-being of adolescent mothers by focusing on relationships and the impact that the relationship has on the stress they face in their new roles. Perez, (2009) states that the presence of social support tends to decrease many of the negative outcomes often associated with teenage parenthood. The researcher will now examine the Latino culture and the impact that adolescent pregnancy has on family dynamics.

### **Latina Parenthood and Impacts on Family**

The experience of a Latina youth's family life could be described as being complex because of the emphasis on familialism. The emphasis on the family as a unit stems from rich values that have remained with many Latino families even after assimilating to a Westernized culture. In regards to adolescent pregnancy, there are major geographic, racial, and ethnic disparities in the adolescent birth rate. Hollo & Savio Beers

(2009) state that in 2006, the teen birth rate for Hispanic women ages 15-19 was higher than that of whites or non-Hispanics. In 2002, the Hispanic pregnancy rate was 81.5% and the birth rate was 83.4% (Perez, 2009).

Latinos have nearly twice the national teenage birthrate as women of other races/ethnicities (Chien & East, 2010). Their study focused on Latino teens, specifically from the Mexican culture, that are parenting and how it affects their family life. The authors hypothesized that both family conflict increased as well as closeness with adolescent pregnancy because of the value of family in the Latino culture. The researcher will now discuss risk factors that pertain specifically to adolescent Latinas.

### **Risk Factors for Latina Adolescents**

In an article by Dogan-Ates & Carrion-Bashan, (2007), the authors described many risk factors that Latina adolescents face in regards to teen pregnancy. Some of the risk factors include low academic achievement, being less likely to discuss sex with parents, and low career aspirations. Perez (2009) studied a group of pregnant and non pregnant Latina female (13 to 19 years) and found that teens receiving information on sexuality from their parents are less likely to become pregnant. The authors also found that Latino adolescents are less likely to use condoms or other forms of contraceptive methods. Gender traditionality is emphasized within the Mexican American culture according to Chien & East, (2010). This means that their daughters are often socialized toward mothering, child care, and family roles. The researcher has discussed many themes that were apparent throughout the research. The researcher will now briefly discuss how many adolescents overcome barriers associated with parenting and how they display resiliency.

**Resiliency**

In an article by Hollo & Savio Beers, (2009), the authors examine many definitions of the word “resiliency” in adolescents. One of the definitions states that resilience is not only fostered by the individual, environment and protective processes but can itself foster positive attributes in individuals. The research states that resilience can enable people to develop social competency, skills in problem solving, a critical consciousness in relation to oppression, autonomy, and a sense of purpose. Adolescent Latinas experienced greater support for their pregnancies than non-Latina pregnant adolescents (Dogan-Ates & Carrion-Bashan, 2007). Davis & Wright (2008), state that evidence of resiliency suggests that a number of young women have the capacity to overcome overwhelming odds to establish better lives for themselves and their children.

**Conclusion**

This literature review addresses the relevance of adolescent pregnancy and the impact it has on education. Within the Latino community, understanding the family relationships of this increasing population and identifying possible protective factors will help researchers and practitioners to better support Latina youth during the transition to parenthood (Wrona, 2010). Gathering information and contributing to the understanding of adolescent Latino parenthood experiences will provide social workers with information on the Latino population. Exploring the risk factors, causes, and effects that parenthood has on education is beneficial. Examining the programs that are available, teen health, and the impacts that it has on family dynamics provides social workers with a greater understanding.

The following research question will be examined: What are the impacts of teen pregnancy on the educational attainment of Latina mothers?

### **Conceptual Framework**

A large portion of the research that is currently published regarding adolescent pregnancy focuses on the hardships that adolescent's face and the negative impacts that accompany parenthood. A child transitioning into adolescence is difficult in this day in age. Adolescents are forced to face many circumstances and new experiences. It is a time of learning, exploring, and developing.

Minority children/adolescents face some hardships that children/adolescents of non-minority backgrounds are not subject to. In a study by Arrington & Wilson (2010), a cultural diversity perspective of risk and resilience is noted. It is described as an integrative model of developmental competencies. The authors suggest that background variables such as socioeconomic status, culture, ethnicity, race, and stratification processes such as racism and discrimination are critical factors in the development of youth. In addition to being a minority adolescent when one becomes pregnant, balancing the two can become quite difficult. The study suggests that adolescents who find themselves in this predicament tend to fall into poverty and have difficulties later in life. Some of the time, the adolescents are able to overcome hardships.

There is growing research that focuses on the strengths and resiliency in young parents. The conceptual framework that will be used to understand adolescent parenthood is that of resiliency. In a study conducted by Romo & Segura, (2010) adolescent pregnancy is viewed as a "social problem". The focus of this research shifted to empowering single mothers to pursue their educational goals instead of the latter. According to Romo & Segura (2010), the developmental assets framework takes into consideration that external (e.g., schools, communities, and family members) and internal

factors (e.g., self efficacy, commitment to learning) that reduce health compromising behaviors (e.g., sexual risk behavior) and increase such thriving behaviors as school success among youth. Romo & Segura (2010), indicate that the more developmental assets possessed by young mothers, the more resilient they can become. The more resilience a mother has the greater likelihood of their academic success.

There are many definitions for the word resilience. The researcher will be using the definition of resiliency as described by Arrington & Wilson, (2000). The authors define resilience as being relational: it should be examined in reference to a subjective experience of stress, an inventory of resources, and what he terms as biography of success and failure. "Processes that foster resilience in youth are defined as protective factors as factors or characteristics that act to decrease the likelihood of a negative outcome. The characteristics include one's family, school, and community (Arrington & Wilson, 2000).

Adolescents that are transitioning into motherhood can strengthen their determination to succeed (Romo & Segura 2010). This positive outlook on life creates opportunities for adolescents that are parenting. Many adolescent's adapt their aspirations to incorporate their motherhood status, or, as one teen mother stated, "This is just another obstacle, but it doesn't have to stop you" (Camarena, Ferrie, Minor, & Melmer, 1998 p. 132). In the following section, the researcher will now describe the methodology.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

Qualitative research was used to conduct my research study. The researcher chose this method of research over quantitative because collecting quantifiable data is beyond the scope of this study. Human behavior does not occur on the basis of predetermined lockstep responses to preset events or situations. Rather, human behaviors are an ongoing and negotiated interpretation of objects, events, and situations (Berg, 2009, p. 14). The researcher examined the impact of adolescent parenting on academic achievements in Latina women. The researcher interviewed a sample of women that were adolescent parents and focused on their experiences.

### **Sample & Recruitment**

The researcher interviewed seven women that were adolescent mothers. The women identified themselves as Latina. The researcher chose to interview women that were at one time adolescent parents. They were great sources of information, as they were able to provide realistic experiences that are common amongst adolescent parents. Participants were recruited through a nonprobability sampling strategy known as snowball sampling. The strategy of snowball sampling involves first identifying several people with relevant characteristics and interviewing them or having them answer a questionnaire (Berg, 2009 pg. 51). Berg (2009) states that the subjects are then asked for the names (referrals) of other people who possess the same attributes as they do and in effect, a chain of subjects driven by the referral of one respondent of another.

The researcher identified two well known, established women in a highly populated Latino community in Saint Paul, Minnesota. The women were interested in recruiting participants for this study because they have an interest in contributing to the research and were adolescent mothers themselves. The recruiters attended an alternative

high school with many other pregnant adolescents. Therefore, they were able to assist in the research by identifying women that were adolescent parents and distributed the information sheet regarding the study (Appendix A). The information sheet was provided along with some background information and the purpose of the study was explained. When the women expressed an interest in the study, they contacted me. Once the women contacted the researcher, the details of the study were explained (see Appendix B), and a time and place was scheduled for the interview.

### **Data Collection**

Data for this study was collected during seven individual, semi-structured interviews consisting of ten interview questions (See Appendix C). Interview questions revealed experiences of adolescent parenthood using open-ended questions. The face-to-face interviews took anywhere from 20 minutes to 50 minutes. The interviews were conducted in various private locations such as the library at St. Catherine University, Caribou Coffee, and participant's homes. The interviews were recorded with a voice recorder and were then transcribed.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

Prior to the interview taking place an informed consent was signed (See Appendix D). The informed consent outlined the purpose, risks, and privacy of the information obtained. The specific details of the study were discussed with the participants and questions that came up were answered. The participants were reminded that their participation in the study was voluntary and if they at any time felt that they wanted to stop the interview, they are able to do so. Some of the information that could have potentially come up for the participants might have been difficult to relate or discuss.

Sensitive topics such as socio-economic status, discrimination, and hardships were discussed which was thought to have the potential to bring about unwanted or uncomfortable feelings. The researcher provided all participants with a handout (See Appendix E), which contained contact information for mental health services in the Twin Cities if they felt the need to speak with someone.

The participants were informed of my attempts to protect their confidentiality as the researcher. The information that was collected is being kept on a personal laptop that no one else has access to. The names of the interviewees as well as identifiable information have been extracted from the study to protect the identities of the participants. The researcher used pseudo names to discuss the participants. The data that has been collected will be destroyed after the study is complete by May, 2013.

### **Data Analysis**

The interviews have been transcribed by the researcher and a research assistant. The data was reviewed using content analysis. Content Analysis is a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings Berg, (2009, p. 338). The text will be analyzed using this method to get raw details of the participant's lives. Berg, (2009, p. 343) states, "From this perspective, content analysis is not a reductionistic, positivistic approach. Rather it is a passport to listening to the words of the text and understanding the perspectives of the producer of these words". Themes have been noted and compared to the literature that has been collected on the topic. The transcripts have been reviewed and analyzed with a research assistant to ensure the reliability and validity of the themes and patterns found.



### **Strengths & Limitations**

There are both strengths and limitations to this study. Strengths include the qualitative research design; snowball sampling, and the process for analyzing the data. Strengths of the study include the process of content analysis. Berg (2009), states three advantages to using content analysis with qualitative research. They include: 1) it can be used non- reactively, no one needs to be interviewed; 2) it is cost effective, and 3) it provides a means to study a process that takes place over an extended period of time that reflects trends in society. Another strength of the study is snowball sampling. Using this method for obtaining participants targets a specific population that has specific backgrounds that are necessary for the study.

Limitations include the small sample size, structure of the interview, the year in which participants were adolescent mothers compared to present time experiences, and the sampling method.

### **Findings**

The purpose of the study is to examine the impacts that parenting has on the educational attainment of young mothers, specifically in the Latino culture. There are many factors that contribute to the research. To explore these factors I asked questions pertaining to the adolescent's educational goals before becoming pregnant, how adolescent pregnancy impacted family dynamics, was there supports in place that effected the adolescent staying in school, and what impact did adolescent parenting have on educational attainment for the participants. For confidentiality purposes, the researcher has changed the woman's given names to pseudo names which are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1.  
Demographic Information for Study Participants

<u>Name</u>	<u>Current age</u>	<u>Age they became pregnant</u>	<u>Number of children</u>	<u>Disruption in school</u>	<u>Education completed</u>
Susan	52	16	3	Dropped out	GED → Some Tech College
Roxy	48	17	2	Yes, alternative H.S.	Culinary degree
Laura	57	16	2	Dropped out	GED → Some Tech College
Kate	36	18	4	Yes, alternative H.S.	Tech College- 1 yr until associates
Diane	18	17	1	Yes, alternative H.S.	H.S. Diploma
Danielle	18	15	1	Yes, alternative H.S.	Tech College- 14 credits to complete associates
Alicia	18	17	1	Dropped out	11 <sup>th</sup> Grade

After analyzing the interview transcripts, several themes emerged as impacts on education for adolescent parents. All of the women discussed their pregnancies as being unplanned and the women discussed their primary support systems. They discussed how their education was impacted and how their families reacted to their pregnancies. The women all discussed how they felt once they realized they were pregnant and also what their educational goals were prior to becoming pregnant. The women also discussed their overall experience as an adolescent parent.

Seven Latina women were interviewed for this study. The women’s ages ranged from 18 to 57. They became pregnant between the ages of 15 and 17. Out of the seven women, four of them continued having children. Out of the seven women interviewed, one of them married the father of her first child. None of the women are still in a

relationship with the father of their child. The women were able to share their experiences on how adolescent parenthood not only impacted their education but also how it changed their lives.

### **No Educational Aspirations**

The women interviewed discussed how they felt about school and their education prior to becoming pregnant. Several of the women talked about not liking school prior to becoming pregnant and not having a desire to pursue post-secondary education. Susan, a 52 year-old mother of three, spoke about not liking school at that time of her life. She reported, "Well, I wasn't doing good in school to begin with. I was the "party girl" so I wanted to at least graduate high school but that didn't happen though. I dropped out and then got my GED."

Roxy, a 48 year-old mother of two also did not think about her educational future prior to becoming pregnant. She reported, "I didn't really have goals back then. Honestly, I just lived every single day just thinking about that day. My sisters had all dropped out of school so it's not like I took it seriously."

Kate, a 34 year-old mother of four was asked to describe her educational goals prior to becoming pregnant. She stated:

I didn't have any. I didn't really think about my future when I was a teenager. I didn't think I HAD a future. During my upbringing I wasn't really taught to value who I was or ummm I wasn't shown how to hold a job or how to value education.

Laura, a 57 year-old mother of two described not really being into school before becoming pregnant. She stated:

Well...before I became pregnant that's when I met my...my...first husband...well my ex husband I should say...he is the father of my child but ummm I was going to school but I wasn't really into it because I was more into him. My education suffered...I didn't like the school I was going to. And I actually dropped out when I became pregnant.

Although Susan, Roxy, Kate, and Laura stated in their interviews that they did not have goals for their education prior to becoming pregnant, they all did eventually pursue higher education. The other three participants, Alicia, Danielle, and Deja did describe aspirations to finish high school and go onto college before becoming pregnant. Although Alicia wanted to pursue secondary education, she was not able to once she became pregnant. She dropped out of school in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Danielle is currently enrolled in a Beauty School in the Metro area and will receive her license in two months. Deja completed one semester at a Community College in the Metro area and plans to enroll in classes at another Community College in the fall that is more convenient.

### **Shocked and Afraid**

All of the participants were asked what their initial feelings and thoughts were when they found out they were pregnant. The participants all described initially feeling many different emotions but there were a few that kept coming up. Laura stated:

I thought...(pause)...wow, oh my god, I was in shock, I didn't know that this could happen to me but then again I didn't really know anything about pregnancy and I didn't know anything about birth control either...at that age. So, I was kind of like...in awe...

Deja, an 18 year-old mother of one described how she felt when she found out she was pregnant:

When I found out I was pregnant I couldn't believe it. It was shocking. I was afraid. I didn't know how I was going to tell my Mom. I was not going to tell her at first because I was afraid of what she would say or do. I didn't want her to kick me out and I knew that she didn't like my boyfriend.....so I just waited and then I started having bad morning sickness and she found out.....She heard me throwing up a few days in a row and then she just asked me.

Alicia, who became pregnant just last year at the age of 17, reported feelings of stress, panic, and being scared. She reported:

I was thinking that I was pregnant before I even found out that I was. I felt different. I was too scared to go and get a test though. My boyfriend actually told me to just go and get one... then ummm I took it and it came back positive. I told my grandma because I was staying with her and she kicked me out. Then I started getting really panicked because my boyfriends family didn't know and I couldn't stay with them...and my Mom and I really didn't talk. She was living on a friend's couch. And my Dad had his own little perfect life with his new family. I don't talk to him at all because of his wife. So, I was stressing. I dropped out of school the day I got kicked out and went to sleep at Tessie's with my mom. I had no choice. I didn't want to go to a shelter. And I didn't really have any friends at all.

Kate and Susan both reported that they were very naïve at that time of their lives but Susan also was the only participant that reported feelings of happiness. Susan stated:

Well.....I was not ready for it that's for sure. Both of my older sisters were also pregnant....but I was young and naïve I thought. I was afraid but then I was happy. I loved my boyfriend at the time and I was happy.

Danielle was the youngest participant to become pregnant at 15 years-old. She was the only participant that mentioned being worried about how her life was going to change and what pregnancy meant for her future. She reported:

I was afraid to tell my parents. I was afraid of all the changes that were going to come. I thought that me and my boyfriend we were using protection....I was surprised. I was worried about not finishing my plan, not graduating.

### **Negative Impacts on Family Dynamics**

Family dynamics are very complex. Every family contains varying personalities, opinions, belief systems, and values. The participants described the changes that occurred within their family system when they found out they were pregnant. Kate, Susan, and Alicia were kicked out of their homes when their pregnancy was revealed. Kate reported, "Well I got kicked out. When my mom found out she did try to uhhh hurt me... (*long pause...*)

Alicia had a similar experience. She reported, "I told my grandma because I was staying with her and she kicked me out."

Susan reported that her family expected her to grow up fast because she had become pregnant. She reported:

I ahhh was expected to grow up fast. My boyfriend was eighteen and my mom wanted me out of the house. So we got an apartment and I dropped out of school.

I still spent time with my sisters and my family, we were close. Not much was different. I just didn't live at home anymore.

Susan explained that her family dynamic prior to becoming pregnant and after didn't change much. She was essentially treated the same way; like an adult.

Laura, chose to move out of her parent's house when she found out she was pregnant. She explained that she was already spending a lot of time at her boyfriend's house prior to her pregnancy. Laura was sixteen years-old at the time. She reported:

Well I was living kind of like...well staying with my....the father of my baby at the time and my parents didn't know I was pregnant at the time and so umm my father came to get me with his police officer friend...he came and got me from ummm... Steve's...I'll just refer to him as Steve...he came and got me at his apartment and then took me home. And then that's when I told my father and my mother that I was pregnant. So then they decided that I couldn't do nothing about my pregnancy and would have the child. They decided that I could go back to live with him. I was about two months pregnant when they found out.

Although Danielle, (15 years-old at the time), Roxy (17 years-old at the time), and Deja, (17 years-old at the time) were allowed to stay living in their parent's homes, their family dynamics changed drastically. Danielle stated:

I remember the day that I told my mom and dad. My sister was there because I couldn't do it without her. And they just sat there. And it was quiet for awhile. And then my mom started to cry. And my dad got up and walked out of the room. I didn't talk to them all day. And the next day we went to church. When we got home from church, we sat at the table and just talked about it. They told me that I

had to stay in school. And when I turned 16 which was going to be when I was 5 months pregnant, they expected me to get a job. They said that I could stay living under their roof but my boyfriend was not allowed in the house. My sister and I were really close during that time. They were.....disappointed in me....

Deja described her family dynamic after her pregnancy as being crazy. She reported:

Well....ummm it was ah... (*long pause*).....CRAZY! My son is about to be 1 and.....my family is just getting used to the fact that I have a child. And that is hard. Everyone judged me at first. My mom would just snap on me and tell me that I was just going to be a welfare mom and that my life was going to be so different and hard. She told me that Ryan would leave me.....My auntie told me that I was so stupid for getting pregnant and when I told her that my baby daddy didn't want to be with me, she told me to just have an abortion.

Roxy described her family's perceptions of her changing. Her sisters were disappointed, her mom was angry at her, and her father felt sadness over her decision to have a baby at a young age. She reported:

When I found out I was pregnant I told my sisters first. They were a little disappointed in me I think because three out of the four of them were struggling financially and had young children. The oldest said uummmm....Her exact words were.....you are dumber than I thought. Mom is going to kick your ass because you should know better. My dad was pretty sad. I was really close to him. And then yep, my mom did try to kick my ass but my dad stopped her. She was livid. That is a perfect way to describe it.



**Support**

After interviewing the second participant, the researcher began thinking about the lives of the participants in terms of who they had to rely on for support during this difficult time in their lives. Four out of the seven participants described at least one of their primary support systems as being their mother. Alicia talked about her mom being so supportive of her pregnancy because she too was an adolescent mother. She reported, "My mom. She had me when she was young too, 17. So she knew what I was going through."

Danielle described that her family overall offered support but her sister and mother specifically played an important role. She stated:

My family was really there for me. My sister and my mom came with me to every appointment. When I was not feeling good, they would take care of me. When I was sad they would spend time talking to me... I was very lucky.

Other support systems that were reported by the other three participants were a cousin, a boyfriend, and aunts. All of the participants reported having some sort of support during their pregnancy.

**Disruptions in Education**

Adolescent parents have many choices to make once they start their new life path. Making the decision to continue high school was a big decision that all of the participants faced. Alicia, Laura and Susan dropped out of school when they found out they were pregnant. Laura and Susan went back for their GED's later in life. Laura reported:

Well I was sixteen when I dropped out. At that time I thought I was making a good decision so then I could concentrate on my pregnancy but then again later on after I got married, then I went back to school. And I got my GED.

Laura has taken some college courses online and is currently working as an administrative assistant.

Susan dropped out of school and was not eager to return. She felt that being a parent and staying in school was difficult. She felt stressed out. She reported:

Well I was not doing good in school to begin with. I was the “party girl”...I just didn't want to be there. That is how I met my boyfriend. Out at a party. I dropped out once I moved in with him and started working. Once I had Sarah I was not focused on school. It was hard being a parent and doing what I was supposed to do. My boyfriend and I were having problems....we ummm were poor...and Sarah was born with a medical condition....she was a sick baby. I was stressed out and not focused on school. I had my 2<sup>nd</sup> baby when my first born was two and felt even more stressed out and was really not thinking about going to school. And back then, getting your GED wasn't as big as it is today for teens. I wasn't treated differently I didn't think because I wasn't in school. Like I said, it wasn't that uncommon, especially in the neighborhood I grew up in.

Alicia is the newest parent out of all the participants. She had her son just 2 ½ weeks ago. She has plans to go back to school eventually. Alicia reported:

I knew that I wasn't going to go back when I found I was having a baby. I hated school and I just didn't want to deal with it anymore. So I plan on getting my GED. My mom said she would help me with the baby. He is just 2 ½ weeks.

### **Alternative Programs**

Roxy, Deja, Kate, and Danielle all had a common disruption in their educational path. The four participants transferred to alternative schools. For Deja, Danielle, Roxy, and Kate, it was an easier path to obtaining their diplomas. Deja stated:

Well I switched schools from a mainstream high school to an alternative school. So that was a change. I wasn't going to stop going though. When I was at the mainstream school, I didn't get along with a lot of people.... I would fight. I thought so many times, I would get suspended. My teachers were a mess. The principal was always bugging me, but at the alternative school, it was different because the type of school it was. All the kids there had problems so it was like, no one was judged.....we all had a lot going on...

Danielle discussed the benefits that she reaped from attending an alternative school versus a traditional school. She stated:

Well I stayed in school the whole time. The only thing that changed was my senior year.... I switched schools. I went to an alternative school so I could finish my high school classes and take college classes and work. Going to an alternative school opened up other doors for me as far as being a parent. I was so thankful that I transferred there because they had daycare so that took some stress off for me to have to find someone sit with my daughter during the day and then also in the night. So she went with me to school everyday. And then they also had parent groups. It was nice to meet friends and just connect with other girls in my position. A part of me wishes I would have went there right away when I found

out I was pregnant. But my parents really wanted me to stay at the school I was at, my old high school. So as soon as I could transfer, I did.

Roxy and Kate also attended an alternative school in the Metro area. Roxy described her school experience highlighting the daycare component as well as a nun who was hard on her but it was needed. She reported:

Well, I dropped out of school and enrolled in an alternative school. It was for bad ass kids and pregnant girls. That was exactly my experience there. A lot of my class mates were in and out of the juvenile system and used drugs and alcohol. And then there were us pregnant girls. My friend Joanne went there too. It was connected to a church and most of the staff were apart of the ministry. There was 1 nun.....Sister G. She was amazing. She had such a strong presence and demeanor. She just demanded respect but at the same time she wasn't there to judge any of us. She wanted us to learn. And she wanted us to make good decisions. And she loved our kids. There was a daycare at the school so once we gave birth, we could bring our babies with us to school and not have to stress about daycare. Even after I graduated I went back with the baby to visit.

### **Adolescent Pregnancy is Hard**

The participants were asked to describe their overall experience as an adolescent parent. All of the women except for Alicia (gave birth 2 ½ weeks ago), reported that overall, adolescent parenting was a hard/difficult experience. Laura and Deja described how their lack of access to resources and very little support at times made things very complicated. Laura reported:

Well I would have to say it was hard because without the support of an adult you know...It's really hard. Because you know, you don't really have the means to do things. I mean there were times...like...I didn't even have a washer or dryer...and I had a baby and he was allergic to pampers at that time and I had to use cloth diapers and so I would have to hand wash his diapers in the tub and use a stick and stir them around you know...use the wash board and rinse them out and hang them up to dry...it was a lot of work and it is important for now a days you know if there was a young person that was pregnant that I knew...I would say to them...you need to have a lot of support other than just the father of the child.

Deja reported:

My Ma was right, it is hard as hell. I don't drive so I have to constantly ask people for rides, wait on people, take the bus and I hate that. I have to find a babysitter and I don't have that many people I can ask. I feel bad when I leave him and he's sick (the baby). I don't go out. I don't do what I used to do. But on the other hand, I am happy and I love my baby. He needs me and I need him. Sometimes I feel like it's just me and him against the world...

Susan felt unprepared and then was just hit with her reality. She not only described her experience as hard but she also used words "scary, confused, out of control, and feeling alone."

Roxy describes her experience as being a struggle. She reported:

I struggled. I still struggle. My daughter has her own life but my son is twenty-six and still living at home. It was very hard and I wish that things would have been different. I was so naïve and thought that things were going to be a certain

way....and it wasn't. If I could do it over again....I would wish to take a different route than everyone else in my family and I would have waited.

Out of all of the participants, Danielle had the most familial support and was still living at home. She described her overall adolescent pregnancy experience as difficult:

Looking back now I wish I would have waited until I was at least eighteen to have a baby but I also learned so much about growing up from my experience. It was so hard to make things work out and graduate but I had my family and that made everything possible.

### **Summary**

Laura, Danielle, Roxy, Susan, Kate, Alicia, and Deja agreed to share their experiences of unplanned adolescent parenthood through interviews to contribute to research on educational attainment. As they recounted memories, new and old, the participants all had many things in common and many themes emerged through the interview process. The researcher will discuss how the current research and the life stories of the participants connect in the following section.

### **Discussion**

This study examined the lives of seven young women who became pregnant in high school. None of the women planned their pregnancies and once pregnant, none of them were sure what would become of their lives. How would they manage their adolescent years while becoming parents? The researcher will explore how the findings relate to the research previously discussed in the literature review.

The participants discussed their educational aspirations before and after becoming parents. They described how they reacted/responded to their pregnancies and

also how their new journey impacted their family dynamics. They spoke of how their education was affected by their pregnancies and who their support systems were. The mothers spoke about advantages that they had by transferring to an alternative school instead of staying at their mainstream high school and described their overall difficult experiences as adolescent parents. Although the information gathered from the women provides insight on their educational attainment, there are implications to the study. The limitations include: small sample size, the sampling method, and the sample not being a large representative of the larger group of young women in terms of demographics. Despite these limitations, information from this study will contribute to the research guiding social work practice and policy.

### **The Impact of Parenthood on Educational Attainment**

The first attainment threshold for students is to earn a high school diploma. Earning a diploma creates fewer opportunities today than it did in previous eras but it is a prerequisite for most professional jobs and post secondary programs (Frisco, 2008). All of the women in the study discussed how adolescent pregnancy impacted their lives. The women all discussed their educational goals prior to becoming pregnant and the how their pregnancy impacted their education. Frisco (2008), states that there has been extensive research on how adolescents' sexual behavior and educational attainment co-exist and two findings continue to emerge. The author suggests that 1) adolescents' sexual activity influences educational attainment through a negative consequence; non-marital parenthood and 2) Early sexual initiation and academic success are related. As the literature suggests (Mollborn, 2007), most researchers have found that on average, teenage parenthood is associated with decreased educational outcomes.

In an article by Daniels, Kim, Raley (2012), the authors discuss how fertility might influence educational attainment in early adulthood. The authors state that pregnancy, usually unplanned, curtails educational attainment. They also discuss how parenthood increases the chances of dropping out of high school and decreases the chances of college enrollment for both men and women. Out of the seven participants, Alicia's goals completely changed. She dropped out of school all together and does not have a plan on when she will go back. Four of the seven participants in the study had wanted to at the very minimum to graduate high school prior to becoming pregnant. Some of the participants dropped out of school and opted to get their GED. And as some literature suggests, some teens return to school after they become pregnant in an effort to improve opportunities for themselves and their children (Hollo & Savio Beers, 2009). Deja, Roxy, and Danielle made an easy transition into an alternative school with no disruption. The literature supports transitioning into alternative schools during pregnancy. Alternative schools typically provide flexible class scheduling and instructional practices (e.g., individualized learning contracts) to facilitate school attendance. Flexible scheduling can help prevent academic disengagement among adolescent mothers who may need to miss classes and assignments due to childcare or medical appointments (Romo & Segura, 2010).

The participants discussed other factors that coincided with parenting that influenced them pursuing education once they became parents. Some of the factors included having another child, not having child care, and wanting to focus on their new family. Susan wanted to focus on her family. She also had another child a year after her



first child was born which affected her choices in life. Laura decided to focus on her family and did not return to get her GED until 10 years ago.

### **The Impact of Parenthood on Family Dynamics**

The participants discussed how their family dynamics shifted as well as how their pregnancies were directly affected by the level of support they received from their family system. Often, teenage parents rely heavily on their own family for help and support when the baby is born, and a supportive family can help ease the transition into parenthood for adolescent parents (Wrona, 2010). Although an adolescent's child bearing might trigger family conflict, it can also enhance family closeness (Chien & East, 2010). Danielle discussed being thankful for how supportive her mother was during her pregnancy and thereafter. Hollo & Savio Beers (2009) state that grandparents play a unique and integral role in adolescent parents' lives especially as most adolescent mothers continue to live with their parents during pregnancy and following their child's birth. Hollo & Savio Beers (2009) also state that contrary to popular opinion, most teen parents, children and families do equally well (overall given their circumstances) compared to their peers, particularly when provided with strong social and functional supports.

Deja had a difficult experience within her family system when her pregnancy was exposed. She reported that her family is only now accepting the fact that she is a mother and her child is one year-old. Literature suggests that families of new adolescent mothers likely experience increased conflict and disruption as family members learn to cope with challenges and demands of a baby (Chien & East, 2010).

**Resiliency**

As the researcher, I was able to see a correlation between my experiences of witnessing adolescent pregnancy in my family and the participants. I witnessed resiliency up front and personal and was able to see resiliency in the participants.

In a pioneer longitudinal study examined by Davis & Wright (2008), resiliency was discussed in depth. The study found that adolescent pregnancy created clear social and economic disadvantages for many of the women involved but they demonstrated resiliency by finishing school, established careers, and raised children successfully.

Lounds Taylor (2009) further describes difficulties that adolescent parents face. One is being viewed as unacceptable by society for having a child outside of an acceptable age span and two; being unable to establish relationships with peers whom they can relate to.

From the interviews, the researcher gathered that overall the participants thought of their experience as being difficult. Hollo & Savio Beers (2009) highlights previous research focusing on the negative impacts that adolescent pregnancy has on one's life and suggests instead that in today's day in age, adolescent parenthood is not all horrible and good can come out of it. The authors state that several of the larger and frequently cited studies that describe poor outcomes for teen mothers are over twenty years-old and subjects may have been very different from today's teen parents, (Hollo & Savio Beers, 2009). Romo & Segura (2010), discuss adolescent's finding ways to stay in school despite their circumstance of being young parents.

**Implications for Social Work Practice**

The findings from this study indicated several implications for social work practice. The work and support of social workers is necessary for adolescents to stay in

school once they become pregnant. Social workers can also become a positive support system and assist the adolescent with making positive decisions that will impact their lives. This research will help current and future social workers to relate to adolescents that are pregnant or parenting and their families. The research gives social workers a stronger knowledge base on adolescent pregnancy and its impact on educational attainment. This research allows social workers to develop strategies, provide resources and support families who are experiencing adolescent pregnancy. This research provides social workers with personal experiences of women who have experienced adolescent pregnancy. This research provides insight in regards to clients and families they may encounter in their professional work.

### **Implications for Research**

The research done in this study produced further topics of research surrounding adolescent pregnancy and its impact on educational attainment. One topic that should be considered for future research is the impact that pregnancy has on education. Another topic for research is the impact that pregnancy has on family. There are many facets of research in terms of adolescent pregnancy and the disadvantages that occur but not many articles on adolescent pregnancy and resiliency.

### **Implications for Policy**

There are many policy needs related to adolescent parenting and education. Some needs that arose through the interviews and through literature include accessing social services, accessing programs (educational and general {housing options, daycare program}), educational systems (alternative schooling), and pregnancy awareness. Policy initiatives should focus on making it mandatory for teens to receive services from a social worker who then can assist in informing teens on how to access programs. Another need

for teens is giving them a more realistic picture of what parenting includes whether it is in a school setting or through a neighborhood program that focuses on being more aware of its implications.

### **Strengths & Limitations**

There were many strengths and limitations to this study. Strengths include the qualitative research design; snowball sampling, the process for analyzing the data, and the detailed life stories shared by the adolescent mothers. The semi-structured interview questions allowed for the women to speak freely and openly about their experiences.

Strengths of the study include the process of content analysis. Berg (2009), states three advantages to using content analysis with qualitative research. They include: 1) it can be used non-reactively, no one needs to be interviewed; 2) it is cost effective, and 3) it provides a means to study a process that takes place over an extended period of time that reflects trends in society. Another strength of the study is snowball sampling. Using this method for obtaining participants targets a specific population that has specific backgrounds that are necessary for the study.

Limitations included the small sample size, the year in which participants became mothers compared to newer mom's present time experiences, and the sampling method. I also made the assumption that I would find research on the stereotypical Latino cultural values impacting adolescent pregnancy in Latinos and although there were studies that discussed the topic, it was not as relevant as I thought it would be.

### **Conclusion**

Although adolescent pregnancy has decreased overall, it still has a direct impact on society. In 2011, a total of 329,797 babies were born to women aged 15–19 years, for a live birth rate of 31.3 per 1,000 women in this age group. This is a record low for United States teens in this age group, and a drop of 8% from 2010 (CDC, 2012). Adolescent parenthood is correlated with negative outcomes for both parents and their children that include lower rates of educational success for parents (CDC, 2012).

Adolescent parenting creates a different journey for teens that is often times difficult and full of change and challenges. This study focused specifically on the educational attainment of Latino adolescent mothers. Seven mothers participated in semi-structured interviews during this study. In their discussions, the mothers spoke about how their lives changes once they found out they were pregnant. They discussed initial feelings and thoughts, educational goals before and after finding out they were pregnant, how their family dynamics were changed, and how their education was impacted. Although there were limitations to this study, it has the potential to make a positive contribution to social work practice, research, and policy.

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## Appendix A

### Information Sheet about the Study

My name is Cassie LaBelle and I am a graduate student at St. Catherine University and the University of St. Thomas. I am conducting a research study to gather information on The Impacts of Adolescent Parenthood on Latino Mother's Educational Attainment. I am interested in the Latino population specifically. My hope is that I will

gather information that will impact the lives of future Latino adolescent teens that are parenting by providing insight to social workers and other professions that would be able to provide them with support and services.

I am hoping to invite the participation of adult women that experienced teenage pregnancy and parenting in my study. This will include one semi-structured interview that will take about 1 hour. The interview will be held at a public private meeting room in a library or at a community center; whatever is most convenient for you. The interview is voluntary and can be stopped at any point in time that you feel uncomfortable. You also have the option to not answer a question if you feel that you are unable.

The interview will be audio taped with your permission and transcribed by myself, my advisor, and a research assistant by March 15, 2013. I will change your name in the transcription to conceal your identity and the audio tapes will then be destroyed. The transcriptions will be placed on a USB flash drive in a locked filing cabinet in my home and I will be the only person that has access to the key. Once I submit my final paper, the transcriptions will be destroyed, no later than May 15, 2013. The information from this study will be used in my Research Project and may be published in a social science journal.

The interview questions will consist of questions pertaining to your experience as an adolescent parent. For example, Can you explain your feelings and thoughts when you realized you were pregnant? Can you explain your experience within your family dynamic when you were pregnant? How did your family respond to your pregnancy?

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me either by phone or email.

Contact information:

Cassie LaBelle  
651-XXX-XXXX  
Lxxxxx@stthomas.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, John Schmitt through St. Catherine University at (651) 690-7739.

Appendix B  
Telephone Script

Hello, thanks for contacting me. I am conducting a study gathering information and data on The Impacts of Adolescent Parenthood on Latino Mother's Educational Attainment for a research project. I am recruiting participants that are 18 or older in age. Are you over the age of 18 years old?

I would like to set up a time to conduct an interview that will take about one hour where you will be asked 16 questions total that cover 10 different topic areas. Is there a place that is private and convenient for you such as a nearby library or a community center? We could meet in a private meeting room for privacy.

At the time of our meeting, I will review the informed consent form with you and give you the opportunity to ask any questions of me prior to starting the interview.

If you have any questions in the meantime or if something else comes up and you are unable to meet with me at the time set, please give me a call and we can reschedule.

### Appendix C Interview Questions

1. Can you describe what your educational goals prior to becoming pregnant?
2. At what age did you become pregnant & was your pregnancy planned or unplanned?
3. Can you explain your feelings and thoughts when you realized you were pregnant?

4. Can you explain your experience within your family dynamic when you were pregnant? How did your family respond to your pregnancy?
5. Who did you consider your primary support system during your adolescent pregnancy?
6. Can you describe how your education was affected by your pregnancy? Were there any disruptions? Did you stay in school? How were you treated?
7. Can you describe any programs or services that you received that influenced your life during pregnancy (i.e., college prep programs, adolescent parent support groups, alternative schooling)? If you dropped out, what would have been beneficial to you to continue your education?
8. Can you describe your educational experience after having your first baby? How much education did you complete? Do you ever see yourself going back to school?
9. Can you share how you would describe your overall experience as an adolescent parent?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to add to the research that we have not already discussed?

#### Appendix D

##### Impacts of adolescent parenthood on Latino mother's educational attainment RESEARCH INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

#### **Introduction:**

You are invited to participate in a research study examining the impacts of adolescent parenthood on Latino mother's educational attainment. This study is being conducted by Cassie LaBelle, a student in the Graduate Social Work Program at St. Catherine

University and the University of St. Thomas. You were selected as a possible participant in this research because you contacted me after receiving the information sheet on what the study is about and you experienced adolescent parenthood. Please read this form and ask questions before you decide whether to participate in the study.

**Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of teenage pregnancy on Latina women's educational attainment. Eight people are expected to participate in this research.

**Procedures:**

The interview will be conducted in a meeting room for privacy. We will meet for one hour and will first review the consent form. You will also be given an opportunity to ask questions of me pertaining to the study so that you are completely comfortable with participating. This study will take approximately six months to complete from the date of the interview.

**Risks and Benefits:**

The study has minimal risks. It is likely that feelings may arise while sharing your experience as a young parent. These feelings may stem from difficult memories or remembering difficult times in your life. If at any time you are feeling uncomfortable and I observe you feeling emotionally distressed, I will ask you if you want to stop the interview. If so, we will continue at your discretion and I can provide you with a list of community resources that may be beneficial to you. If you do not want to continue, the interview will be concluded immediately and I will provide you with a list of community resources.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research. A potential benefit to participating in the research is the contribution of the data and information collected to the social work field.

**Confidentiality:**

Any information obtained in connection with this research study that could identify you will be kept confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable and only group data will be presented. I will keep the voice recorded information in my home in a locked cabinet in which I only have a key. I will destroy the tapes after my research assistant and I transcribe the interview no later than May, 2013. We will change your name during transcription so your identity will be unknown. Transcription notes will be kept in a password protected computer. I will finish analyzing the data by May, 2013 and will destroy the transcriptions no later than that date. I will discuss and share your experiences as an adolescent parent in my research paper with the sole intent to provide a general understanding and information to individuals working in the social service field or those interested in adolescent pregnancy.

**Voluntary nature of the study:**



Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relationship with St. Catherine University or the University of St. Thomas. You may choose to refuse to answer any interview question if you choose. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time and no further data will be collected.

**Contacts and questions:**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Cassie LaBelle at 651-XXX-XXXX. **You may ask questions now, or if you have any additional questions later, the faculty advisor, Catherine Marrs Fuchsel, Ph.D. will be willing to answer them.** She can be reached at 651-690-6146. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you may also contact John Schmitt, PhD, Chair of St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at (651) 690-7739.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, please know that you may withdraw from the study at any time and no further data will be collected.

---

I consent to participate in the study. I consent to provide information that will be voice-recorded during an interview.

---

Signature of Participant

Date

---

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix E  
Mental Health Resources

Mental Health Resources Inc: East	(St. Paul)	(651) 659-2900
Mental Health Resources Inc: Dakota	(Burnsville)	(651) 681-9366

Mental Health Resources Inc: Seward CSP Drop in	(Minneapolis)	(612) 333-0331
Lutheran Social Service & Family Resources	(St. Paul)	(651) 642-5990
Acute Psychiatric Services	(Minneapolis)	(612) 873-3161
Bridge	(Minneapolis)	(612) 377-8800
Catholic Charities	(St. Paul)	(651) 647-3100
Centro de Salud	(Minneapolis)	(612) 874-1412
Child Guidance Clinic	(St. Paul)	(651) 280-2051
Chrysalis (Tubman)	(Minneapolis)	(612) 870-2426
CLUES	(Minneapolis) (St. Paul)	(612) 746-3500 (651) 379-4200
Face to Face	(St. Paul)	(651) 772-5555
Genesis II for Families	(Minneapolis)	(612) 617-0191
Hamm Clinic	(St. Paul)	(651) 224-0614
Walk-in Counseling Center	(Minneapolis)	(612) 870-0565

Appendix F  
 Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement  
 The Impacts of Adolescent Parenthood on Latino Mother's Educational Attainment

I am conducting a study examining the educational attainment of Latina mothers that were adolescent parents.

This study is being conducted by: Cassie LaBelle under the advisement of my chair, Catherine Marrs Fuchsel, Ph.D., St. Catherine's University and University of St. Thomas.

**Confidentiality:**

Confidential information includes all data, materials, products, technology, audiotapes, computer programs and electronic versions of files saved to portable storage devices. One-time audio taped interviews lasting no longer than 60 minutes will be conducted by the researcher. The completion of the transcripts will be conducted with the researcher. The researcher will provide you with a USB drive to save the transcription on. Any transcriptions or electronic files produced by you will not include information that will make it possible to personally identify participants in any way. All audio tapes and transcriptions are to be kept in a locked file in the researcher's possession. No one else will have access to the records. No one else will have access to the USB drive in which transcriptions and electronic files will be kept. Once transcriptions have been completed and an electronic file compiled, you will save the transcription to the USB drive. When the transcriptions are complete, the USB cord will be returned to the researcher.

**Contacts and Questions**

My name is Cassie LaBelle. If you have questions, you may contact me at 651-XXX-XXXX or my research chair, Catherine Marrs Fuchsel, PHD, 651-690-6146. You may also contact the St. Catherine's University Institutional Review Board at 651-690-7739 with any questions or concerns.

**You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.**

**Statement of Agreement of Confidentiality:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the above information and agree to confidentiality as stipulated above. I further agree not to disclose, publish or otherwise reveal any of the confidential information received from the researcher or interview participants.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Transcriber**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

