

Adolescent Males Involvement in Pregnancy  
Prevention:  
Direction for Policy

A Grounded Theory Study Conducted by  
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# Learning Objectives

- How social biases regarding male involvement in teen pregnancy prevention have influenced education and health policy.
- Describe the findings from a research study.
- Apply these research findings to policy and program development.

# Teen Pregnancy

- The rate of teen pregnancy and births to teens in the United States has declined during the past decade.
- The United States still exceeds that of other industrialized nations (Wertheimer and Papillo, 2004).
- The majority of adolescents are having intercourse before high school graduation: 61.6 % by 12th grade (CDC, 2003).

# What We Know Male Involvement

- The decline in teen pregnancy **could be** related to STI prevention and the use of condoms by men.
- Recently there is greater awareness: Public Policy Statement issued by the Healthy Teen Network (2005).
- There is a lack of systematic research about **how** males are involved in pregnancy prevention.

# Qualitative Grounded Theory Study

- To identify how adolescent males prevent an unplanned pregnancy
- To better understand their perceived involvement in pregnancy prevention
- To generate theory explaining male involvement in pregnancy prevention.

# Participants

- 18 boys who were 18 years old, seniors at a parochial High School.
- 72% of the boys were practicing Catholics.
- 66% were caucasian. The others were Hispanic, African American, Korean, Polish and German.
- None of the participants were teen fathers

# Data Collection

- Individual Interviews conducted over a 12 week period of time.
- 1-2 Interviews per week.
- Data saturation was achieved by the 14<sup>th</sup> interview.

# Who Participated: Future Plans after Graduation

College	16	90%
Trade School	1	5%
Military	1	5%



# Who Participated: Overall Sexually Active

Sexually Active*	Total	Percent
<small>*Defined as having ever had sexual intercourse</small>		
Yes	11	61%
No	7	39%

# Glaring Findings

- Teen fatherhood ruins or stops goals.
- Pregnancy prevention protects future goals.
- These findings led to the development of the substantive theory “deliberate action to protect future goals”. This theory explains how these boys interpreted the meaning of and managed pregnancy prevention.

# Deliberate Action to Protect Future Goals



# The Contextual Core Concepts

- Depict the structure and environment that were influential for these teen boys

# Four Contextual Core Concepts

- social norms
- academic environment
- culture and religion
- myths and preconceived notions.

# Social Norms

- Many of the boys discussed that they received messages from society and the media saying that sexual activity is acceptable and even expected.

# One Boy's Comment

Yes, it's (sex is) pretty normal. They (couples) don't really go into depth about it but they feel it's ok. I have known some couples who have been dating for like a year and I don't think they were sexually active, so I think it goes both ways.

# Culture and Religion

- Religion was described as a protective factor for a few of the boys but not the majority of the boys.



# One Boy's Comment

I think it [religion] makes it [sex] more desirable, because they kind of like shame you, and say you shouldn't do this because it's wrong, so its kind of a rebellious feeling. That's how I felt early on, but then once you get into a relationship you don't really worry about it. Like, I didn't really check the bible or any of that stuff on what I shouldn't be doing.

# Academic Environment

- Academic demands, high expectations and structured time were viewed as protective factors.
  - Fostered a climate of responsibility.
  - Influenced motivation, accountability and goals.
  - Boys often compared themselves to boys in other schools that were at a disadvantage

# One Boy's Comment

....so schools like the public schools, they are like, you can try at school but you don't have to, you can just graduate. They are not telling them that they can be anything and they are not making them goal oriented.

# Myths and Preconceived Notions about Male Involvement

- Societal ideas about males and pregnancy prevention were upsetting to the boys.
  - Stereotyped male behavior
  - Perpetuated sexual risk taking ideas for younger teens.

# One Boy's Comment

- I think a lot more people are (abstinent) than you think. ....Some people don't know this and that kind of gives men a bad stereotype when it comes to that, like we kind of force women into it. ....I think overall, they respect each other a lot, more than people think.

# Core Psychosocial Processes

- These processes reflect the actions and behaviors these boys carried out to avoid an unintended pregnancy.

# Psychosocial Process Concepts

- Becoming aware
- Having goals
- Being prepared
- Avoiding risk
- Using protection.

# Becoming Aware

- Learning from others **over time**: parents, peers, siblings, cousins
- Experiencing pregnancy scares
- Acquiring knowledge: books, media
- Communicating with partner
- Committing to a good relationship



# Becoming Aware

"Just talking about it. Just being comfortable with the other person, you can't really have an intimate relationship without knowing anybody, probably be together a long time and knowing the other person."

# Having Goals

- It was important to achieve certain goals before becoming a father . The boys discussed:
  - priority setting
  - career planning
  - financial stability
  - settling down
  - steadiness
  - completing college

# Having Goals

"I would like to have kids around the time I get done getting my Masters or PhD."

"I've got to worry about my grades right now so I can actually support a family when I get to that time..."

# Being Prepared

- Careful preparation
- Always making sure
- What to do if something goes wrong
- Wanted to be ready
- Just in case

# Being Prepared

" We were definitely saying that we would not do it until we were both ready".

"Most guys just usually wear a condom and then the only time anyone really worries about anything is if the condom ends up breaking. I was worried and I called someplace to find the morning after pill."

# Avoiding Risk Abstinence

- Steering away and getting away from higher risk situations
- Staying busy with other activities
- Choosing to socialize with peers who also avoid risk
- Avoiding dating relationships with girls

# Avoiding Risk

## Abstinence

“I will still hang out with them and they might be smoking or dipping and I will be like I will catch you guys later.”

“I have friends that are Catholic and we just have a good time and don't have to worry about that because we are on the same page.”

# Using Protection

- Dynamic and Mutual
- Using Withdrawal
- Condoms
- Condoms and Birth Control



# Using Protection

"I guarantee everyday at school they are talking about close calls and stuff like that. It is very positive and everyone is trying to work on it."

"I think pregnancy prevention is 50/50. We both kind of lean on each other."

# What Do These Findings Tell Us?

- Boys seek out and struggle to get information about prevention
- Boys are very involved in the process of pregnancy prevention
- Boys see pregnancy prevention as a mutual responsibility

# What Does All this Mean?

- We need to Dispel the Myths and Preconceived Notions about Teen Male Involvement in Pregnancy Prevention
  - A long standing tendency to consider teen pregnancy a girl's problem (Troccoli & Whitehead, 2006)
  - "Boys will be Boys" suggests that males are not capable of being responsible individuals.
  - Social norms could discourage rather than encourage male involvement in pregnancy prevention.

# What Does All this Mean?

- It is important to focus on males as well as females when designing pregnancy prevention programs

# Implications for Policy

- Policies must assure that boys receive comprehensive, medically accurate human sexuality education that will promote sexual health and relieve the anxiety and uncertainty regarding the efficacy of contraception.

# Implications for Policy

- Program development must emphasize male responsibility for pregnancy prevention.
- Health care providers need to connect with teen boys whether it is in the medical clinic or the school clinic to provide access to reproductive health services and information. **Easier Access!**

# Policy Development

- Research Funding must further explore:
  - The contextual influences on teen male sexual responsibility and pregnancy prevention.
  - The relationship of future goal orientation and pregnancy risk for males
  - How other populations of teen males successfully avoiding teen pregnancy.
  - The deliberate actions to protect future goals.

# Conclusion

- The importance of exploring ways to enhance male involvement in pregnancy prevention has been undervalued for many years.
- There is increased public awareness regarding the teen male's role but program development and further research must quickly follow.
- Responsible fathering program should continue but it is essential that there is a parallel push for male involvement in pregnancy prevention.



# Last Thought

"If males are going to be held responsible for any children they produce than it is time to spend more public resources on helping them to avoid unintended pregnancies" (The Urban Institute, 1998, p.1).