



Myths and realities of teen motherhood

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Teen pregnancy: An epidemic”

Is it a national and local emergency?

- North Carolina: ninth in the nation for teen pregnancy rates
 - 2006 state rates nearly the same as those over the previous three years
- The four-year plateau follows a 13-year decline
 - The state's adolescent pregnancy rate has declined by 36% since 1992
- The total number of NC teens aged 15 to 19 who were pregnant in 2006 was 19,192
 - Nearly 29% of those were repeat pregnancies
 - The number of 10 to 14 year-olds who were pregnant in 2006 was 405



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- Among minority populations, Hispanic teens had highest rate, although their rate has dropped nearly 7% since 2003
- Black teens had pregnancy rate of 86.2/1,000, a 0.9% increase from 2005
- Disparity between white and minority teen pregnancy rates has narrowed since 1992
 - After increasing 24% between 1986-1991, the teen birth rate for girls aged 15-19 declined 35% from 1991-2005



Myths

- Stereotypes of teen parents
 - Uneducated
 - Irresponsible
 - Abusive
 - Immoral
 - Destined to a life of poverty
 - Know little about parenting
 - all teenagers know less about child rearing than older mothers



Myths

- Unplanned pregnancies during the teen years are associated with a number of social issues
 - Poverty
 - Overall child well-being
 - Out-of-wedlock births
 - Workforce readiness
 - Responsible fatherhood



Some facts

- Official child poverty rates fell by 23 percent
- Percentage of children living with a single mother declined for the first time in decades
- The decrease in the teen birth rate accounts for 26 percent of the reduction in the number of children under age six living in poverty between 1995 and 2002
 - In fiscal year 2004, teen pregnancy cost North Carolinians \$312 million in WIC, Medicaid, TANF and food stamps
- Interrupting this cycle of poverty and disadvantage is a critical social priority
 - Helping young women and men avoid early pregnancy is easier and much more cost effective than dealing with all of the problems that occur after their babies are born



Some facts

- Issues arise when young women choose to bear and rear their children without the personal economic resources or resources from a spouse
 - Ambivalence about allowing the government to take over the responsibilities of the family has caused policymakers to look for other means of addressing this phenomenon
 - Teen pregnancy remains a concern for child welfare
- Teen mothers are caught between separating from their families and the need for help in child rearing
 - A delicate balance must be in place for a teen mother to have the support she needs to be a good parent

From

http://ssw.unc.edu/fcrp/Cspn/vol1_no1/teen_pregnancy_and_parenting.htm



Some facts

- Teens who marry in response to pregnancy seem to have more difficulty than those who continue to live with their parents
- A teen can also have trouble in her family's home
 - When the teen's mother "takes over," the young woman's sense of herself as a parent is undermined
 - the mother who models parenting skills & encourages her daughter to assume the maternal role provides the most social support
- Child welfare workers should examine the dynamics between the teen mother and her family closely to understand whether a teen is truly a bad parent or whether her family is contributing to a sense of inadequacy



Some facts

- Young mothers not equipped as older mothers to provide an environment that enhances their infant's cognitive development
- Not more punitive than older mothers
 - Maltreatment often unsubstantiated
 - When cases are substantiated, neglect is cited more often than abuse
- High rate of depression and stress in teen mothers
- Suicide rate to be seven times that of non-mothers



Some facts

- Substantial physical and sexual victimization of children, adolescents & young women by acquaintances
 - Over 80% of young women have had at least one sexual victimization experience by the end of college
 - Over 78% of women have experienced at least one act of physical aggression by the end of college



Abuse has been related to

- An increase in sexually transmitted diseases in teens
- Unwanted teen pregnancy
- Teen prostitution
- Increased substance use and abuse
- Poor school performance and even academic failure
- Increased likelihood of being aggressive



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Teen pregnancy & victimization

- Two goals
 - to examine a number of risky behaviors in the context of girls' sexual victimization histories
 - alcohol and marijuana use
 - risky sexual behaviors & their outcomes (unintended pregnancies & STDs)
 - to examine the relationship between adolescent sexual behavior and symptoms of impulsivity and inattention



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Procedure

- ***Participants.*** 80 females, ages 14-19, and their female caretakers recruited through various community agencies
- Pregnancy group: $n = 40$: prior or current unintended pregnancy
- Non-pregnancy group: $n = 40$: no pregnancies
- Overall mean age = 17.2 years (Pregnancy group = 17.5 years; Non-pregnancy group = 17.0 years)
- Overall ethnicity: 96.3% African American
- family incomes less than \$30,000 (45% less than 15,000)
- 39% of their mothers had not graduated from high school
- most had single mothers



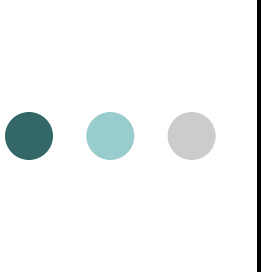
Measures

Measure	Rater		Format	
	Teen	Caretaker	Rating Scale	Interview
Demographic Questionnaire	X	X	X	
ADHD Rating Scale – IV	X	X	X	
Conduct Disorder Rating Scale	X		X	
Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC)	X	X	X	
Vocabulary subtest: WISC-III or WAIS-III	X			X
Structured pregnancy interview	X			X
Sexual Experiences Survey (SES)	X			X
Scale of Sexual Risk-Taking (SSRT)	X			X
Substance Use Inventory	X		X	
Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI)		X	X	



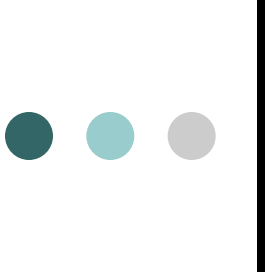
Results

- 74% of the teen moms compared to 39% of the non-moms had been sexually victimized
- Most had been either verbally coerced or experienced force or threat of force
- Age of victimization: 26% were 5-13; 39% were 14-15; only two were younger than 5
- Perpetrator's age: 62% were under 18 years old; 34% were 18-25; only one was older-58 years old
- Most girls (96%) knew the young men: boyfriend (59%); acquaintance (27%); family members (10%)



Differences between victims of sexual assault and non-victims

- More frequent and more serious delinquent behaviors
 - more lying, skipping school, using weapons, & physically hurting others
- More sexual partners—both well-known and not so well-known
- More alcohol and marijuana use during sex
- More STDs
- More symptoms associated with inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity



Differences between teen moms and non-moms (after controlling for victimization)

- First sexual experience at an earlier age (13.7 years vs. 14.9 years)
- More sex in the past year
- More bullying, threatening or intimidating others in the past 6 months
- More symptoms associated with inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity



Conclusion

- Unintended pregnancies among teens should be considered within the context of a possible history of childhood abuse and/or adolescent victimization