WHERE THE BOYS ARE: A SURVEY OF TEEN LATINO FATHERS IN STOCKTON

Sherley P. Pabustan
B.A., De La Salle University, Philippines, 1993

PROJECT

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

at

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

SPRING
2010
WHERE THE BOYS ARE: A SURVEY OF TEEN LATINO FATHERS IN STOCKTON

A Project

by

Sherley P. Pabustan

Approved by:

______________________________, Committee Chair
Francis Yuen, DSW

______________________________
Date
Student: Sherley P. Pabustan

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this project is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for the project.

Teiahsha Bankhead, PhD, LCSW  
Date  
Division of Social Work
Abstract

of

WHERE THE BOYS ARE: A SURVEY OF TEEN LATINO FATHERS IN STOCKTON

by

Sherley P. Pabustan

The purpose of this mixed design research project is to gather pertinent information on the barriers and challenges that contribute to the lack of involvement of teen Latino fathers in the upbringing of their children. The researcher interviewed five key informants who work closely with teen Latino fathers and distributed 25 survey questionnaires to Latino men who were once teenage fathers in Stockton, California. The results of the research project showed that financial instability, lack of education and availability of resources are major challenges that influenced teen Latino fathers’ involvement with their children. Significant findings to this research project include: Teen Latino fathers continue to remain involved with their children (80%), strong support obtained from family members (76%), maintenance of healthy relationships and equal share of custody with the mother of their children. A noteworthy finding to this research project is that respondents (100%) in the survey did not voluntarily avail of any of the local resources and services within the community. Key informants in the research project advocate for more Hispanic male mentors (role models) in the delivery of services to the target population. Social workers can better advocate by educating and bringing to
light the unique strengths and resiliencies that teen Latino fathers possess and dispel some of the negative stereotypes associated with this group. The findings from this research project challenge social workers to find ways to improve on the service delivery of existing programs, and advocate for policy and system changes to include services that are culturally and socially relevant to the target population.

__________________________________, Committee Chair
Francis Yuen, DSW

__________________________________
Date
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my husband Stephen Zanini, who has provided me with tremendous support, love and encouragement and believed in me more than I believed in myself. I would like to thank my beautiful daughter Isabella Zanini for providing me with inspiration and generously sharing her “mommy” time for the completion of this project. I would like to thank my family (Margaret Zanini and Arlene Pabustan) and friends (Ruth Moua and Tina Orallo) on whom I have relied upon on several occasions to ask for help and never turned me down - I am forever grateful.

I would like to thank Dr. Francis Yuen, for challenging us to do our best and being such a remarkable advisor!

Special thanks to the key informants and survey participants who took the time to respond to the interviews and survey questionnaires to provide valuable insights into this project.

Above all, I would like to give praise and glory to God for the wonderful blessings and the strength and perseverance to complete this project
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................................................ vi

List of Figures .............................................................................................................................................. x

Chapter

1. THE PROBLEM ........................................................................................................................................ 1

   Introduction ............................................................................................................................................ 1

   Background ............................................................................................................................................ 4

   Statement of the Problem ...................................................................................................................... 6

   Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................................................... 6

   Theoretical Framework ......................................................................................................................... 7

   Definition of Terms ............................................................................................................................... 10

   Assumptions .......................................................................................................................................... 10

   Justifications ........................................................................................................................................ 11

   Delimitations ........................................................................................................................................ 11

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE .................................................................................................................. 12

   History of the Issue ............................................................................................................................... 12

   Demographics ...................................................................................................................................... 13

   Socio Economic Status ......................................................................................................................... 14

   Characteristics of Responsible Fatherhood vs. the Barriers Encountered by Teenage Fathers ......... 14

   Latino Teen Fathers – Expectations and Challenges ........................................................................ 16
Latino Parental Influence/Cultural Values.................................................................17
Forms of Parenting Styles/Discipline ......................................................................19
Acculturation Defined ..............................................................................................20
Acculturation and Challenges Encountered by Latino Parents.................................21
Acculturation and Sexual Behavior Among Latino Teens .........................................24
Benefits of Fatherhood Involvement with Their Children ........................................25
Current Practice/Support Strategies/Interventions & Implications for Practitioners and Policymakers .................................................................25

3. METHODOLOGY .......................................................................................................30
   Introduction ..............................................................................................................30
   Research Design ....................................................................................................31
   Research Instrument ..............................................................................................32
   Data Gathering Procedures ....................................................................................33
   Study Population and Sample ................................................................................34
   Protection of Human Subjects ..............................................................................34

4. RESULTS ..................................................................................................................36
   Introduction ..............................................................................................................36
   Demographics .......................................................................................................37
   Teen Father’s Perception of Roles and Responsibilities .........................................38
   Availability of Support Systems ............................................................................42
   Factors that Influence and Affect Teenage Fathers’ Involvement with Their Children .................................................................43
Lessons Learned...........................................................................................................45
Summary..........................................................................................................................46

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION..................................................................................49
Implications for Social Work..........................................................................................51
Evaluation/Limitations/Implication for Future Researchers..........................................52
Reflection.........................................................................................................................53

Appendix A. Interview/Survey Questions: Adults as Teen Fathers...............................55
Appendix B. Interview Questions for Key Informants....................................................60
Appendix C. Consent to Participate..................................................................................61
References.......................................................................................................................63
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Teen fathers are significant and beneficial in the lives of children</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Involvement as teen parent with child</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Teen father’s relationship with mother of the child</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Availability of support systems</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Challenges encountered by teen Latino fathers</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1
THE PROBLEM

Introduction

What makes you a man is not the ability to have a child - it's the courage to raise one. ...Of all the rocks upon which we build our lives, we are reminded today that family is the most important. And we are called to recognize and honor how critical every father is to that foundation. (Obama, 2010)

The present study focuses on the whereabouts of Hispanic teenage fathers in Stockton. The qualitative and quantitative study explores the reasons behind teen Hispanic fathers’ lack of involvement in the upbringing of their children. The study identifies the challenges and barriers that hinder teen fathers from being responsible fathers to their children. The researcher focus primarily on Hispanic young fathers in Stockton to shed light on public health data indicators that problems involving risky sexual behaviors (early sexual intercourse, sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and teenage pregnancy) are predominant among ethnic minority adolescents, in particular Hispanic youths (Trejos-Castillo & Vazsonyi, 2009). In addition teenage fathers are a population often overlooked and understudied by a number of social service agencies and programs (McBride & Lutz, 2004).

The majority of the Latino populations in the United States are of Mexican heritage, followed by Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central American, and South American respectively (Ramirez, 2004). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2008), the Hispanic
group is the largest and fastest growing minority/ethnicity in the nation with the highest population located in the state of California. The Healthy Teen Network (2008) implicated that by 2040, the United States will constitute a “majority-minority” nation with Hispanics significantly leading the race.

Despite a plethora of empirical research and data available on the study, prevention and intervention of teenage pregnancy and parenthood, the bulk of the research tend to focus on the female pregnant and parenting teens while teenage fathers are unfairly misrepresented and understudied (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Gilliam, 2007; Glikman, 2004; Marsiglio, 2006). Teenage fathers are perceived by society in a negative light and the popular stereotype is that they are irresponsible, lazy and unwilling to become involved in their children’s lives (Bainbridge, 2008; Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Glikman, 2004). Traditionally, society has determined that the mother assume responsibility for the psychological and developmental needs of children. This concept can be traced back in history from the late 1800 to early 1900s referred to as the “tender years doctrine,” this doctrine was based on the premise that children, aged seven and younger would be placed in the care of their mothers at anytime during custody disputes, however despite the abolishment of this doctrine in every jurisdiction, this practice is still noticeably taking place in court rooms today (Rozie-Battle, 2003).

Research studies have shown that factors associated to becoming young fathers such as poverty, unemployment, low educational attainment, delinquent behaviors and emotional and psychological difficulties are the same attributes of young teenage mothers
(Bunting & McAuley, 2004), yet many of the programs and services only specifically cater to female pregnant and parenting teens (Glikman 2004; Marsiglio, 2006).

The intent of the author is to provide meaningful awareness and recognition on the important role the teen fathers play in the life of their children, with the exception that the involvement of the father does not cause physical and emotional harm or endanger the life of the mother and child. The author recognized that apart from limited data on teen fathers, there is very few data and research on Hispanic teen fathers, who are not exempt from stereotypical assumptions that perpetrate them as the “villains” that lack the commitment and personal responsibility towards their own children (McBride & Lutz, 2004; Rozie-Battle, 2003). Minority teenage fathers according to Fagan and Stevenson (1995) and Franklin and Davis (2001) have difficulty in fulfilling their roles as fathers to their children because of a society that is inundated with racism and discrimination that is often punitive towards minority fatherhood (as cited in McBride & Lutz, 2004). The author would like to provide a balanced view of the factors that account for the lack of involvement of young Hispanic teen fathers in the lives of their children.

Research studies suggest that teenage Latino fathers share the same sentiments as their female Latina counterparts when it comes to the welfare of their children and contrary to popular beliefs, Latino teen fathers want to play an active role in their children’s lives (Sherraden, Gonzalez, & Rainford, 2006). Furthermore, in a 2001 ethnographic study by Lesser, Tello, Koniak-Griffin, Kappos, and Rhys (as cited in Sherraden et al., 2006) they found that Latino adolescent fathers are willing to make
significant efforts to change their lifestyle for the sake of supporting and providing greater parental involvement to their children.

There are a myriad of issues that affect Latino teenage father involvement and connection with their children and among them are the cultural, societal, familial, interpersonal and personal factors (Marsiglio, 2006). In addition to these barriers, researchers have found that adolescent fathers, also face educational and financial difficulties very similar to young mothers that interfere with their ability to maintain relationships with the mother and their children (Bunting & McAuley, 2004).

Background

The issue of teenage pregnancy is not new and yet continues to be widespread topic of urgency and controversy. Despite multiple programs and services available that deal with the issue of pregnant and parenting teens, the United States has among the highest rates of teenage pregnancy and births in the western industrialized world despite the steady decline in teenage birth rates since the 1990s (Hoffman, 2006; Pregnant Teen Help, 2005). The rate of teen pregnancy in California is 4-12 times higher than the rates for France, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, and Japan (Constantine & Nevarez, 2003). According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the nation’s teen birth rate (TBR) from 2005-2007 has increased to 4.9% ending the decline in teen birth rates that began in 1991 (Brown & Suellentrop, 2009). The risk for early sexual intercourse and teen pregnancy is noticeably high among ethnic minorities’ particularly Hispanic youth (Trejos-Castillo & Vazsonyi, 2009). Latinas accounts for the highest rate of teen births of
any ethnic or racial minority in the United States (Martin, Hamilton, Sutton, Ventura, Menacker, & Munson, 2005).

Teen childbearing is such an important issue and of great concern because teen pregnancy is closely associated to poverty and single parenthood (Brown & Suellentrop, 2009). In a study by Armstrong (2001), teen parents are likely to drop out of school early and receive lower earnings compared to peers who delayed parenting. The financial implication to society is overwhelming as billions of tax dollars spent to address healthcare, educational and behavioral problems that are common among children of teenage parents (Berglas, Brindis, & Cohen, 2003; Constantine & Nevarez, 2003).

The female teen is often assumed to carry the greater burden of responsibility when she becomes pregnant despite both partners sharing equal accountability for the conception of the child. Teen pregnancy in the United States is often portrayed as the “girl’s” problem and the consequence of becoming pregnant and raising the child is placed solely on the female teen (Hust, Brown, & L'Engle, 2008).

Adolescent teen fathers seem to be given less consideration than their female counter-parts in the issue of teenage pregnancy, very few research studies have been done to include male teen involvement in pregnancy prevention (Bainbridge, 2008; Glikman, 2004; Marsiglio, 2006). A closer examination will be taken on the role of the male Hispanic teenage fathers as a result of mutual engagement in sexual activity, which ultimately results in pregnancy and rearing of a child. In a study by Lamb (as cited in Wiemann, Agurcia, Rickert, Berenson, & Volk, 2006) parenting by an adolescent mother
is most effective when there is strong emotional support from her family and the father of the child (Lamb as cited in Wiemann et al., 2006).

The problem of absentee fathers is noticeably significant for children of teenage fathers (Smith, Buzi, & Weinman, 2002). According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2009), responsible fathers who are committed to their children during infancy and early childhood contribute to the emotional security and enhancement of the verbal and math skills and overall development of their children.

Statement of the Problem

Teenage pregnancy is an issue that has raised social and political awareness and concerns. However the majority of programs and services tend to focus on the plight of the pregnant female teens and their children. The current study will focus on Hispanic teenage males in Stockton and determine what issues and challenges contribute to their lack of involvement. Hispanic Americans encompass the largest minority group in the United States (Varela, Vernberg, Sanchez-Sosa, Riveros, Mitchell, & Mashunkashey, 2004) and is estimated that by the year 2020 the Latino population is projected to reach 60.4 million (Afable-Munsuz & Brindis, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this project is to gather critical information from key professionals working closely with teen Latino fathers as well as Latino men who were once teenage fathers who will a) shed light into the degree of involvement teen males have in the upbringing of their children and b) identify factors associated with teen fathers’
involvement c) Explore the factors that contribute to the absence or lack of participation of teenage Latino males; d) How service providers can provide assistance and support to young teen fathers encountering barriers and challenges. e) What resources and programs can assist Latino teen fathers so that they can make positive changes for themselves and become productive members of their family, community and society?

Theoretical Framework

The study will utilize the ecological perspectives when interviewing and providing survey questionnaires to key informants and Latino young fathers. Urie Bronfenbrenner’s (as cited in McBride & Lutz, 2004) ecological framework recognized that a person is involved in a myriad of interrelated systems (micro, mezzo, exosystem and macrosystem) and the interaction between these systems significantly impacts human behavior. The ecological theory will provide an understanding into the relationship of the teen father with his environment, and how social, cultural and environmental systems affect his ability for involvement and lack of involvement with his child.

The ability of the individual to cope with life demands, according to Rothery (2008), is dependent upon access to resources such as emotional support systems, informational supports, financial ability to obtain the goods and services and the degree of affiliation within the community. Every individual has the potential and capability to overcome challenges in their lives with a certain amount of resiliency and thereby improve the quality of their lives (Saleeby as cited in De Jong & Miller, 1995). The “goodness of fit” is realized when there is a balance between demands and resources
(Rothery, 2008). The ecological theory is built on the premises that focus on the client’s strengths and abilities by providing accessibility to resources and tools that exist within his environment so that he can overcome challenges that exist within his life (Rothery, 2008).

The ecological theory will assist the author in gathering information from key informants and Latino young fathers that could lead to the identification and understanding of risk factors which lead to the absence and lack of paternal participation of male Latino fathers in the upbringing of their children.

The author utilized the social justice framework theory to show the importance of social action, and the formation of alliances with community groups, and organizations to promote awareness and social change (Prigoff, 2003).

In John Rawl’s (as cited in Blocker & Smith, 1980) theory of social justice, there are two major principles that account for a basic structure of society that is just: (1) Principle of greatest equal liberty which claims that every individual is to have an equal right to liberties and freedom; (2) The second principle is made up of two parts: (a) The difference principle based on the premise that social and economic inequalities be arranged to benefit the least advantaged; (b) Fair equality of opportunity (Blocker & Smith, 1980).

The social justice framework theory is built upon the premise that productive and healthy members of society require (1) access and utilization to life-supporting and life-enhancing resources; (2) the opportunity to participate in cultural institutions within their
society and be able to make decisions regarding important issues that affect their lives;
(3) individuals to continually flourish must be protected, respected and provided with
dignity in regards to their expression of individual uniqueness, cultural or religious
practices without fear of persecution (Prigoff, 2003). Society, according to Rothery
(2008) is made up of rules and social arrangements that determine the power, status and
economic privilege the individual acquires in relation to his environment and it is these
social arrangements that lead to oppression of a particular gender or race often
encountering limitations and barriers that privileged members of society do not.

Teenage young fathers, especially racial and ethnic minority are disadvantaged
members of society, because they have little access to education, services and support
systems to allow them to develop into potentially healthy members of society (Healthy
Teen Network, 2008).

The social justice theory is relevant to this research because it is based on social
work values that promotes the investment into public resources and the distribution of
these resources through programs and activities that will provide and benefit the largest
group of people and who are especially vulnerable, powerless and deprived of support
systems that are vital in the achievement of growth and development (Prigoff, 2003).
Definition of Terms

Key Informants

Refer to individuals who work and deal with Latino teenage fathers, and who had experienced becoming teenage fathers themselves. They may include social workers, service professionals, and community outreach workers and volunteers.

Hispanics or Latinos

For the purpose of this study will be used interchangeably. The federal government defines Hispanic or Latinos as any person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American descent (Ramirez, 2004). The majority of Hispanics or Latinos is of Mexican heritage and comprises sixty-five percent of the United States population (Camp-Flore & Fineman as cited in Westman, 2009).

Adolescent father

A teenage male who fathered a child between the ages of 13-18.

Assumptions

The assumptions of this study are the following: Teen Latino fathers encounter barriers and challenges that prevent them from assuming their parental responsibilities which often include personal, financial, cultural, familial, and societal factors; lack of programs and available services and resources that address the challenges that teen Latino father’s encounter in their pursuit to becoming responsible fathers.
Justifications

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of involvement of Latino teen fathers and to provide an understanding on the factors that led to their lack of parental involvement. This study utilized the information obtained from Latino men who were teenage fathers and from key informants who have provided various support services to teen fathers. It is crucial that an understanding into the attitudes and beliefs about teenage pregnancy from this particular ethnic group is explored to provide a better understanding into finding ways to address this overwhelming crisis that is teenage pregnancy (Vexler, 2007). Information gathered from interviews from the key informants and surveys of young fathers will provide valuable insights that will assist the author in providing useful information for future research studies and service providers who deal with teen Latino fathers.

Delimitations

The focus of the study is on Hispanic teen fathers in Stockton and although they account for a substantial portion of the population recommendations and research findings are specific to this particular ethnic group due to the sample size and research methods employed, findings from this study may not be generalized to other populations including other young Latino males.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History of the Issue

The issue of teen pregnancy and childbearing has been in existence for the past 40 years (Constantine & Nevarez, 2003). The impact to our society is overwhelmingly felt. A total of 6,776,230 teen births were reported from 1991-2004, costing taxpayers an astounding US $161 billion (Hoffman, 2006). California ranks first among teenage pregnancies in the nation (Berglas et al., 2003). The Advocates for Youth conducted a study during fiscal year 1996, and reported that the federal government spent $38 billion on families that began with teen pregnancies (Constantine & Nevarez, 2003). The California Department of Finance predicts that the decline in teenage pregnancy is temporary and will increase by 23% by the year 2008 (Constantine & Nevarez, 2003). The Latino adolescent population accounts for the highest birth rate of any racial/ethnic group higher and twice the national average teen births in the nation (Martin et al., 2005).

Early childbearing and parenting is considered chief risk factors that affect the ability of teenagers both male and female to develop into productive adults (Healthy Teen Network, 2008). In a study by Johnson (2003), parenting teens and their children are likely to experience hardship and poverty. They are less likely to finish high school and the majority will depend on public assistance because of their inability to obtain jobs. Several studies (Berglas et al., 2003; Constantine & Nevarez, 2003; Johnson, 2003) indicate that children of parenting teens have a high risk for health problems, such as low
birth weight and hospitalization because their mothers did not receive adequate prenatal care. In addition, the children of teen parents are more likely to be abused or neglected and placed in foster-care systems. Children of teen parents are at greater risk to develop social and behavioral problems and become involved in criminal activities, are less likely to graduate from high school and have a greater chance of becoming teenage parents themselves (Hoffman, 2006; Johnson, 2003). However research has shown that responsible paternal involvement can reverse these outcomes (Gavin, Black, Minor, Abel, Papas, & Bentley, 2002)

The plight of young pregnant teen mothers and their children have been the center of discussion for most research studies, programs and services. The inclusion of young teen fathers in academic literature and teenage pregnancy programs, noticeably, receive far less credit as a resource in the possible prevention of teenage pregnancy (Glikman, 2004). Teenage fathers can be a critical resource for the financial and emotional well-being of both the pregnant teen mother and her child (Glikman, 2004; Lamb as cited in Wiemann et al., 2006). However, the research data on the number of teen fathers is very limited (Bainbridge, 2008; Bunting and McAuley, 2004; Glikman, 2004; Marsiglio, 2006).

Demographics

In the United States the Latinos are the largest minority group to date. There are 40 million Latinos living in the Unites States, and 65% are of Mexican heritage (Camp-Flore & Fineman as cited in Westman, 2009). The Healthy Teen Network (2008) has
implicated that by 2040, the United States will constitute a “majority-minority” nation populated by Hispanic, Black and Asian youth under the age of 20 with less than 50% White. In the United States, Latina teens ages 15-19 have the highest birth rates compared to all racial/ethnic groups since 1995 and despite the decrease in birth rates in 1991, Latinas had the least percentage of drop in birth rates (Martin et al., 2005). The last 30 years has seen a dramatic increase in Mexican-born population in the United States (Westman, 2009).

Socio Economic Status

The poverty rate for Latino families well exceeds the poverty rate than the average U.S. population in general (Ramirez, 2004). Research studies have shown that Latino fathers in the United States are mostly young, poor with low educational attainment often engaged in delinquent behavior such as criminal activities, gangs and substance abuse (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Cabrera & Coll, 2004; Westman, 2009). Young teenage fathers seldom have the means to provide financial support to their female teenage partner because they are unemployed and are themselves recipients of the welfare system (Bunting & McAuley, 2004)

Characteristics of Responsible Fatherhood vs. the Barriers Encountered by Teenage Fathers

In a study by Levine and Pitt (as cited in Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998), there are four domains associated to responsible fathering: 1) Establishment of paternity or the declaration of legal paternity is profoundly considered the foundation of
responsible fatherhood. Once paternity is established the child benefits economically, socially, and psychologically. However, research shows that only one third of non-marital births in the United States are subjected to paternity testing. The reluctance to establish paternity by unwed young fathers, is due to the feeling that they are being deceived by the mothers and are helpless to stop it (Bunting & McAuley, 2004); 2) Impact of nonresidential fathers’ presence versus absence. Non-marital childbearing and divorce are the two major threats to paternal involvement. Statistical data shows that the majority of teenage births, in the United States, occur to unwed parents. About 50% of teenage fathers live with their children after birth, however, the researchers have indicated that teenage mothers who are in a relationship with young fathers decline over time, the breakdown in the relationship with the teenage mother results in less paternal contact with their children as the mothers themselves, along with the maternal grandparents serve as barriers (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Doherty et al., 1998); 3) Economic and financial obligation of the nonresidential fathers. Provision for child support is especially profound for unwed mothers who have not established legal paternity, the economic support for these children are very limited. In the study by Doherty et al. (1998), teenage fathers perceive involvement with their children as solely dependent on their ability to provide financial resources, their lack of ability to do so drive them to believe that their involvement is no longer necessary in the lives of their child. The pressure to provide financially coupled with their lack of involvement in the decision-making process regarding their children is perceived by young men as being associated to stressors that
accompany fatherhood. Furthermore, according to McLoyd (as cited in Doherty et al., 1998), fathers who are unable to assume the role of “bread winner” feel like they have failed in their responsibilities as fathers and are therefore demoralized causing a deterioration in their relationships with their children which are particularly common in fathers of color (Doherty et al., 1998); 4) Involvement of fathers. The emphasis is not on the economic support but more on the face-to-face interaction time the father can provide to his children. In a research study by Rozie-Battle (2003), the ability of an adolescent young father to provide emotional support to the mother and nurturance to his young child is dependent on the level of development of his own cognitive and psychosocial needs, while simultaneously navigating through the developmental task of adolescence. Rozie-Battle (2003) cited a study by Kahn and Bolton who found it common for many young fathers to be unprepared for fatherhood and that they experienced difficulty in assuming parental responsibility during the adolescent stage of development.

Latino Teen Fathers – Expectations and Challenges

Very little in terms of research has been done to address Latino teen males and their sexual practices and behaviors (Allen, Svetaz, Hardeman, & Resnick, 2008). An understanding in their roles in the prevention of pregnancy and use of contraception is also very limited (Gilliam, 2007). In the past few years, interest in teen fathers’ thoughts and opinions on sex, contraception and pregnancy has been ignited due to their substantial contribution to the reduction in teenage pregnancy (Marsiglio, 2006).
Gender roles play an important part in traditional Latino families (Westman, 2009). The practices of sexual activity for Latino teen males are considered a “rite of passage” compared to their Latina counterpart, who are strongly encouraged to abstain from sexual activity until they are married (Vexler & Suellentrop, 2006). A majority of teen Latino boys believe that there is a certain expectation within their own community to engage in sexual activity, often times they are less likely to use contraception the very first time they have sex (Vexler 2007; Vexler & Suellentrop, 2006). Young men who have sex with younger women are more likely to get their partner pregnant due to unprotected sex (Marsiglio, 2006). In a study by Gilliam (2007), there are four major reasons stated by young Latino males for not using condoms for protection: a) lack of condoms at the time of intercourse and do not care; b) males do not like using condoms during sex; c) birth control is the women’s responsibility and are ultimately accountable for the pregnancy d) Latino males believe the withdrawal method is still an effective form of birth control.

Latino Parental Influence/Cultural Values

Parents play a crucial role in the decision making of their adolescent children to become sexually active, therefore it is important to understand the role of parental supervision in Latino/Hispanic youth (Allen et al., 2008; Gilliam, 2007; Velez-Pastrana, Gonzalez-Rodriguez, & Borges-Hernandez, 2005). Studies have shown that parental supervision can deflect the decision of their teens to engage in early sexual activity (Velez-Pastrana et al., 2005). The family serves as a very strong influential component in
the Hispanic culture, especially when it comes to sexual outcomes (Allen et al., 2008; Westman, 2009). In a study by Vexler and Suellentrop (2006), Latino teens still rely on their parents for information on topics regarding love, sex and relationships. Furthermore, Latino parents and teens still believe that parents are significantly influential compared to peers, media, teachers and siblings when it comes to decisions about sex (Vexler, 2007).

Latinos are very rich in cultural values that can serve as a deterrent to early sexual activity and teen pregnancy (Gilliam, 2007; Velez-Pastrana et al., 2005; Vexler & Suellentrop, 2006). In a study by Trejos-Castillo and Vazsonyi (2009) the strong family values, cultural beliefs and positive parental relationships are considered safeguards against the risk of sexual behaviors and behavioral problems.

Familism or “familismo” is characterized by strong interpersonal relationships which include not only the parents but immediate family members such as aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, god-parents and close friends who usually live in close proximity (Allen et al., 2008). The positive connection between family members provides unity, strong social support systems, and interdependence with the completion of daily activities (Allen et al., 2008; Romero, Robinson, Haydel, Mendoza, & Killen, 2004; Velez-Pastrana et al., 2005). Familism has been associated with positive health outcomes (Romero et al., 2004) and higher academic achievement and aspirations and reduction in drug use (Valenzuela & Dornsbusch as cited in Romero et al., 2004).

“Machismo” pertains to a man’s virility, honor and prowess, and his ability to provide for his family. Latino men are considered in control when it comes to engaging in
sexual activity which is often interpreted as a form of encouragement to become sexually active as early as adolescence (Allen et al., 2008; Westman, 2009). The traditional roles of Latino men, such as machismo, can be seen as a negative connotation that actually contributes to early teenage pregnancy (Vexler & Suellentrop, 2006; Westman, 2009). However, a shift in paradigm can exist with proper education and training. Machismo can be beneficial in the prevention of teenage pregnancy, by emphasizing attributes such as being a “man of your word”, responsibility towards family, which can translate to promoting greater sexual responsibility towards a girlfriend or partner (Vexler & Suellentrop, 2006; Westman, 2009).

Respect or “respeto” is defined as the value of placing high regard for the authority of parents and elders, coupled with the expectations of politeness, obedience and lack of contention in all aspects pertaining to interactions with elders (Allen et al.; 2008).

Personalism or personalismo is a Latino cultural value defined as prescribing warmth, individual attention, and openness in human interactions (Vexler & Suellentrop, 2006, p. 21). Personalism embodies honesty and individual inner qualities when establishing social relationships (Allen et al., 2008).

Forms of Parenting Styles/Discipline

Allen et al. (2008) describes four different parenting styles: 1) the first is authoritative, describing parents with high nurturance and discipline. Parents are often described as demonstrative in their affections, actively involved in their children’s lives,
consistent and firm when it comes to disciplining their children. Authoritative parents encourage and provide their children with opportunities for growth and development, individualized thinking and freedom. They also set boundaries and limits that are fair and allow for independence. Furthermore, this form of parenting style is considered an optimal combination and is often referred to as positive parenting. Children and teens are socially competent, perform better academically, and avoid problem behaviors. Research studies indicate that cultural values such as familisimo, respeto, and personalismo are characteristics of an authoritative parenting style (Allen et al., 2008; Vexler & Suellentrop, 2006); 2) authoritarian is a form of parenting style that is described as domineering, hostile, aloof and controlling. Parents are more inclined to discipline their children but lack in nurturance; 3) Indulgent parents are excessively tolerant and accommodating, they are high in nurturance but low in discipline; 4) Neglectful parents are low in both areas of discipline and nurturance. Neglectful parents are considered passive and unengaged in the welfare of their children.

Acculturation Defined

Acculturation is a very complex process that involves the adaptation of immigrants and the receiving community (dominant society or host country) to new cultural values and belief systems through interactions with each other (Allen et al., 2008; Anderson & Middleton, 2005). Assimilation is achieved when immigrants decide to relinquish their culture of origin and adapt to the culture of the host country. According to Westman (2009), Latino acculturation is marked by three patterns: 1) The first is
assimilation and acculturation, which is the acceptance of one or more generations towards American traditions and life styles; and in the process, slowly shed their culture of origin (Afable-Munsuz & Brindis, 2006); 2) The second pattern involves the retention of Latino identities and language. The acculturating individual undergoes a process of assimilation and adapts to the host culture, however does not necessarily mean the loss of their original culture and beliefs (Afable-Munsuz & Brindis, 2006; Anderson & Middleton, 2005); 3) the third pattern is characterized when neither acculturation nor assimilation take place, resulting in isolation from mainstream society.

There are varying degrees of acculturation according to the model by Portes and Rumbaut (as cited in Lara, Gamboa, Kahramanian, Morales, Hayes, & David, 2005), the first is dissonant acculturation, when a child acquires cultural capital before their parents, leading to role reversal between parent and child; consonant acculturation, is when both parent and child acquire cultural elements at the same time, preserving parental authority; and lastly selective acculturation which involves mediation of the ethnic community between the parent and child.

Acculturation and Challenges Encountered by Latino Parents

The past 30 years have seen a steady rise of Latino immigrants in the United States (Allen et al., 2008). According to the study, first generation immigrants, who are born outside of the United States, comprise the largest portion of the Latino population since the 1980s. Many Latino families consist of first generation parents with second generation (children born in the United States) youths or adolescents. Latino parents are
faced with difficulties in raising their adolescent children in a culture that is completely foreign to them (Allen et al., 2008).

There are a number of barriers immigrant parents encounter in raising their children in America. These often include language barriers, loss of family connections, a clash in values and beliefs systems, role reversal, anxiety and fear about what the new environment can bring in terms of negative influences, such as susceptibility to substance abuse, delinquency, peer influences and sexual liberalism (Perreira, Chapman, & Stein, 2006). Latino parents express feeling of loss over the authority of their children and fear that American popular culture and peer influence take a much stronger hold than the values they have instilled in their children (Vexler, 2007).

First-generation Latino parents are at a disadvantage compared to youths who tend to acculturate faster than their parents (Vexler & Suellentrop, 2006). The parents tend to hold on to their authoritarian family roles and traditions which can create a gap between themselves and their children who are exposed to greater independence and individualism, as influenced by their school and social contact with their peers (Lum, 2003). Latino teens tend to adapt favorably to the culture of the United States which causes the “acculturation gap” between their parents and themselves, this can lead to conflicting opinions, ineffective parenting practices and adolescent problematic behaviors (Allen et al., 2008).

Trejos-Castillo and Vazsonyi (2009) describe adolescence as characterized by increased autonomy in the discovering of self, coupled with the exploration and extension
of their social and recreational networks. The warmth and closeness established early on between the parent and child remains; however, parents are now faced with the task of becoming innovative in monitoring and supervising adolescent activities at a time when the bond between the parent and child significantly diminishes as a result of the transition into adulthood (Trejos-Castillo & Vazsonyi, 2009). Latino teens continue to seek the guidance of their parents for information on love sex and relationships however parents are finding themselves faced with the dilemma of not knowing what to say or how to say it (Vexler & Suellentrop, 2006). Communication is a vital component of parenting practices and research studies show that teens who openly communicate with their parents on issues about sex, love and relationships are less likely to become sexually active, and increase the likelihood of using condoms or birth control (Allen et al., 2008).

In a study by Perreira et al. (2006), providing effective parenting strategies can be a challenge to Latino parents who are still struggling with acquiring new language skills. They feel helpless and alienated when they do not have the skills to communicate for and behalf of their children. Latino parents find themselves struggling when it comes to communicating and finding who their children are connecting with because in addition to the language barrier, they are unfamiliar with the culture and customs of their new environment (Perreira et al., 2006). The lack of ability of Latino parents to speak English forces them to rely on their children to communicate, which causes a shift in the hierarchical power structure in Latino families, as a result, parental authority diminishes
as children develop their own Americanized attitudes and personalities (Allen et al., 2008).

**Acculturation and Sexual Behavior Among Latino Teens**

In a study by Afable-Munsuz and Brindis (2006) acculturation plays an important part in the sexual risk taking of Latino teens, the more acculturated the teen the higher the risk for sexual behaviors. The study emphasizes two general theories that explain the influence of acculturation on the sexual and reproductive health of Latino teens: 1) Stress theory pertains to the pressures that immigrant teenagers undergo while adapting to a new culture that is different from their own. The more stress encountered, the greater likelihood of the immigrant teen to engage in high risk behaviors such as sexual promiscuity; 2) Cultural Norms theory is a change in values and traditional norms in regards to gender, sexual activity and family formation. In this particular theory, acculturation can lead to a loss of traditional norms such as *respeto*, which is the avoidance of conflict with parents as a sign of respect for elders and their authority; and *familism* the traditional Latino value that emphasizes on the importance of interpersonal connections with family, community and self. Teenagers who are less acculturated tend to refrain from engaging in behaviors such as sexual activity, which go against traditional values and beliefs and the more acculturated the teen, elevates the risk of engaging in sexual risk-taking behaviors (Afable-Munsuz & Brindis, 2006).
Benefits of Fatherhood Involvement with Their Children

Fathers have been stereo-typically perceived and judged by their financial capabilities in providing for their children; however researchers, theorist and practitioners recognize that they are more than just “breadwinners” and play many significant roles such as companions, caregivers, spouses, partners, educator, moral compass, defender and role model (Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004).

Researchers Lamb and Pleck (as cited in Doherty et al., 1998) proposed that there are four factors that contribute to optimal father involvement: 1) Substantial motivation; 2) Sufficient acquisition of parenting skills; 3) Readily available social support services to assist fathers in parenting; and 4) Fair treatment by social institutions and not merely judged by their employment status. The act of fathering is not a characteristic or a set of behaviors of individual men, nor is it a dyadic relationship between the child and the father, but a multilateral process which involves relevant stakeholders such as the father, mother of the child, offspring, extended family members, the community along with its cultures and institutions (Doherty et al., 1998).

Current Practice/Support Strategies/Interventions & Implications for Practitioners and Policymakers

Research suggests that the dilemma of absent fathers is notably significant for children of teenage fathers (Smith et al., 2002). Teen fathers is a population that has been disregarded by a number of social services agencies and programs, and minority fathers, in particular, are very reluctant in utilizing social or mental health programs because of
the negative implications attached to these services (McBride & Lutz, 2004). However, there is a steady and emerging recognition on the importance of the role of teenage males and young men in the prevention of teenage pregnancy (Marsiglio, 2006; Troccoli & Whitehead, 2006). Political advocates have expressed much concern about the alarming number of fatherless households and the increase in female-headed households and high poverty rates associated with one-parent families (Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004; Smith et al., 2002). The researchers further add that programs designed to specifically address the needs of young fathers can aid in the prevention of future pregnancies and be instrumental in increasing a positive relationship between the father and the child.

The programs and services that are available to young fathers are based on four assumptions according to Lane and Clay (as cited in Smith et al., 2002): 1. Fathers will attend programs if they are offered; (2) Participants who avail of the services will get their needs met; (3) Young fathers are automatically assumed to avail of the services offered to them; and (4) The services provided to these young fathers will produce positive outcomes.

The reality of the situation is that many programs are not welcoming to teenage young boys and young men, Troccoli and Whitehead (2006) have identified major challenges associated with involving teenage boys and young men in teenage pregnancy prevention and strategies for reaching them: (1) Teenage pregnancy is often an issue associated to the female teen from research studies, surveys, and the media. It is important to provide educational opportunities for both male and female teens about the
consequences and responsibilities associated to becoming teen parents. For programs to be effective in catering to the male teen population, programs should create an inviting atmosphere, which includes male staffing who are committed and can provide a connection and trusting relationship. Male-only programs that focus on activities that are of interest to the male teen population can actually contribute to retention of young men into the program; (2) Most young men are not in programs, most especially those considered high risk (neither in school or work) for teen pregnancy. The researchers suggest to go where the boys are, such as events that sponsor sporting activities, programs that they already attend such as school, community agencies and mandated services such as the juvenile justice system; (3) Parents encounter difficulties communicating issues related to intimate relationships that are sexual in nature with their sons, and which could ultimately lead to pregnancy and early parenthood. Parents find themselves in an uncomfortable position when talking about sexual relationships and generally believe that they have no influence when it comes to their teenager’s decision about sex. However, research and public polling findings suggest the contrary, parental influence plays a pivotal role in a teen’s decisions in matters pertaining to sex compared to their friends, teachers, religion or the media (Albert as cited in Troccoli and Whitehead, 2006). Research findings suggest that a healthy parent-child relationship can prevent adolescent challenges such as early sexual relationships, teen pregnancy and parenthood. Parental involvement and communication are vital in the prevention of teen pregnancy; (4) Customized program approaches to accommodate the different age
groups, cultural identity (ethnicity & religion), socio-economic status of teenaged boys and young men. Researchers suggest that it is important to take into account where teenagers and young men are developmentally, activities and sessions will be relevant if they are applied appropriately and at the right time.

Messages that are conveyed in programs should be culturally sensitive and identifiable to the young male or teenager’s family background, beliefs and characteristics, to provide a sense of belonging and familiarity. In general young men tend to ignore or lose interest in something that they cannot relate to or identify with. There is a correlation existing between a teen’s socio-economic status and their way of thinking and actions regarding sex and pregnancy according to researchers.

Practitioners working with teenage young boys or men who come from neighborhoods where there are high rates of unemployment, poverty, imprisonment, low educational attainment and health care opportunities, may find that preventing pregnancy is not a concern that is top on their list as dealing with basic survival needs. Programs need to go back to the basics and assist the young teens and young men in getting their high school diploma or GED, provide job and skills training and mentoring programs that will help them get back into mainstream society with a sense of hope and purpose; (5) Convey a message of prevention rather than a punitive approach regarding teenage pregnancy. According to the research findings of Troccoli and Whitehead (2006), when it comes to teenage pregnancy, young men are sought out by the law to make them financially responsible in fathering a child and while this is beneficial for the mother and
child, importance should be on their ability to provide positive involvement and become responsible fathers to their children.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research project focused primarily on teen Latino fathers and the barriers and challenges encountered in their involvement with their children. A review of literature suggests that teenage fathers are a population often misrepresented and understudied by a number of social service agencies and programs (McBride & Lutz, 2004). Furthermore, risky sexual behaviors such as early sexual intercourse, sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and teenage pregnancy are prevalent among minority adolescents, particularly Hispanic youths (Trejos-Castillo & Vazsonyi, 2009).

The purpose of this research project was to gather pertinent information from Latino men who were once teenage fathers as well as key professionals working closely with the targeted population who can assist in identifying contributing factors that lead to the non-involvement of Latino teen fathers in the upbringing of their children. What are the barriers and challenges encountered by this particular group that hinder their involvement with their children? The researcher gathered useful information that may assist future researchers as well as social workers and service providers who work closely with the targeted population in understanding and providing effective assistance and support to Latino teen fathers.
Research Design

The research is a descriptive survey study utilizing a mixed research design. A survey questionnaire was used to gather information from Latino fathers who were once teenage dads and interviews were conducted with key informants who have knowledge and experience working with Latino teen fathers. The research study utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of gathering and identifying factors that contribute to the non-involvement of Latino teen fathers with their children. The researcher developed a survey questionnaire with a series of 21 open-ended questions and five closed-ended questions (see Appendix A). The intended targeted participants for this survey were adult Latino men, ages 18 and up who were once teenage fathers. The survey questionnaire gathered information on the participant’s personal and family relationships, social and cultural background, education and involvement with the legal system as teenage fathers. The survey also allowed the respondents to impart and share their viewpoints, life experiences and lessons they have learned from being teenage fathers.

The researcher also utilized a structured interview guide (see Appendix B) to obtain expert opinion and information from five service providers or key informants with extensive knowledge and experience working directly with the target population. The interviews were conducted to obtain in depth insight and assist in identifying the barriers and challenges Latino teen fathers encounter in the involvement with their children.

The researcher acknowledges that the questions contained in the survey questionnaire posed minimal risk to the respondents because some of the questions
contained sensitive topics of information. To avoid and reduce the risk of discomfort, the participants were given the right to refuse to answer any questions that trigger discomfort and have the right to withdraw participation at anytime from the research study.

Participation is strictly voluntary. Once the subject agrees to participate, written consent is obtained and kept in a locked box. The researcher also prepared a list of counseling services and community resources readily available to participants who have difficulty in coping with intense emotions and feelings that may arise from the disclosure of their thoughts and feelings.

Research Instrument

The research instruments used for this descriptive research project were a survey questionnaire for Latino adult males, who were once considered teenage fathers and a structured interview guide for key informants or service providers who deal directly and provide services to Latino teen fathers.

The development of both data collection instruments are guided by the purpose of the research and informed by the current literatures. Major areas of interest were first identified and appropriate data collection items were then developed to gather relevant information. In the end a survey questionnaire with 21 questions and five open-ended questions was developed. An expert interview guide with 11 questions was also structured. The review of literature suggests that the issue of absentee fathers is most common for children of teenage fathers (Smith et al., 2002). Furthermore the researcher wanted to collect information that will help clarify or contradict the assumptions in the
review of literature that portray teen Latino fathers as neglectful fathers that engage in delinquent behaviors and who chose to remain uninvolved with their children.

Data Gathering Procedures

The participants for this descriptive research project were gathered mainly through purposive snowball sampling. Initially, the researcher elicited the assistance and participation of local service providers or key informants who had direct access to the targeted population. The researcher initiated contact with the key informants through written correspondence and telephone contact. The researcher explained in person to each of the service providers the purpose of the research project and also provided a sample of the research instruments, such as the interview guide questions, survey questionnaire and consent form. The key informants shared their knowledge and expertise by granting interviews to the researcher.

The key informants assisted the researcher in obtaining and providing survey questionnaires to the targeted population by using the snowball sampling method. The key informants provided the researcher with additional resources, such as referrals to other local community agencies and contact persons who have direct access to the target population and assisted the researcher in identifying and recruiting voluntary respondents to participate in the survey questionnaire.

The purposive snowball sampling utilized in this research study was significant because it assisted the researcher in locating the targeted population. The sampling methods enabled the researcher to identify and recruit the targeted population with the
least amount of time and resources but also reach a wider and diverse scope of respondents instead of a limited concentrated sampling of participants.

Study Population and Sample

The target population for the research project was males of Hispanic or Latino descent. The participants were male, 18 years and older who were considered teenage fathers at one point. The survey participants were obtained through schools, community agencies, and local programs that specifically provide services to Latino teen fathers. A total of 25 subjects participated in the survey questionnaire. Key informants interviewed for this research project consisted of individuals both male (n=3) and female (n=2) who work directly with teen fathers in schools, rehabilitation centers, juvenile system and non-profit community agencies. There were a total of five key informants interviewed. Each of the service providers interviewed in this research have experience ranging from 5-15 years of working with Latino teen fathers. Two of the five service providers were also once teenage fathers.

Protection of Human Subjects

The survey questionnaire used in this research study allowed Latino fathers to express their thoughts and opinions on what they perceived as the challenges and barriers they encountered in the involvement with their children as young teenage fathers. The survey provided the participants with a chance to impart their knowledge and experiences as teenage young fathers and the option to impart the lessons learned and gained from being a Latino teen dad. Prior approval was obtained from the CSUS Division of Social
Work Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in the fall of 2009, before any survey was distributed to the participants in this survey. Subjects who participated in the survey questionnaire were provided with a consent form that explained the purpose and rationale of the research study and assurance that their names and identity were kept confidential (see Appendix C). Participants were not asked to provide their names on the survey forms. Implied consent was obtained by the researcher prior to any interviews conducted with each of the key informants.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The intent of this research project is to gather information on the barriers and challenges that contribute to the lack of involvement of teen Latino fathers in the upbringing of their children. A review of literature suggests that teenage fathers are perceived in a negative light by society and the stereotype is that they are irresponsible, lazy and unwilling to become involved in their children’s lives (Bainbridge, 2008; Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Glikman, 2004). The following data will provide information and a better understanding of teen Latino fathers and the issues that they encounter in the involvement with their children.

In this research study, a survey tool was developed containing 21 questions that was followed by five open-ended questions. The five-open ended questions were added to capture personal beliefs and experiences as teen Latino fathers, and provide the participants with an opportunity to impart their knowledge and lessons they have learned as teen fathers. Once the survey questionnaires were completed, the researcher collected the data from the designated contact person or key informants and were analyzed and reviewed.

In addition to the survey questionnaire, the researcher also interviewed five key informants who are social workers, counselors, teachers, and service providers who work closely with teen Latino fathers. The interview guide consisted of questions regarding
availability of services for the targeted population, the types of needs and services teen Latino fathers often ask for, the challenges they perceive contribute to lack of involvement of the teen Latino fathers and what they believe can assist young fathers in promoting a positive father-child relationship.

**Demographics**

The researcher gathered information by distributing 150 survey questionnaires to schools, teen programs and local community agencies in Stockton, California, an area located in San Joaquin Valley. The targeted number of survey participants for this research was between 15-20. The researcher was able to obtain a total of 25 Latino male respondents, ages 18 and above that agreed to participate in the survey. The majority of the respondents (72%) in this survey did not complete high school and are considered second-generation Latinos.

The researcher also interviewed five local service professionals who work in schools, community agencies, rehabilitation centers and the juvenile justice system. The key informants had between 5-15 years of work related experience with the targeted population. Two of the key informants have first-hand experience as teen Latino fathers.

The data obtained from the survey questionnaire and interview questions are presented and subdivided into themes: (1) Perception of roles and responsibility; (2) involvement as teen fathers; (3) relationship with mother of children; (4) availability of support systems; (5) factors that influence and affect teen fatherhood involvement; (6) lessons learned by young teenage fathers.
Teen Father’s Perception of Roles and Responsibilities

The participants in this research share that their initial reaction upon learning they were going to be first time fathers was that of fear. A total of 80% (n=20) of the participants revealed they were scared, while 48% (n=12) shared they were happy to learn that they would be a father for the first time. Despite their fears, 68% of the participants (n=17) believed that they had the skills to raise a child as teenage fathers, while 24% of the participants (n=6) believed they did not possess the skills to become fathers, and 8% of the participants (n=2) were uncertain.

A total of 55% of the participants in this survey believed that engaging in sexual activity is not considered a “rite of passage” for teen Latino boys; however 45.5% believed it was an accepted practice. The participants convey that the Latino culture, inculcate the teachings of providing for the family and the value of responsibility. Regardless of being a teenage father, they are to provide financially for their children and take responsibility for their actions by sharing in all aspects of raising a child. The majority of the participants also stated that a responsible father to their children meant ensuring their children’s basic needs are met; they are emotionally supportive and physically available to their children. This means providing structure, discipline, loving affection, and becoming a good role model by keeping away from drugs, alcohol or gang related affiliations. Similar findings revealed in a research study by Martin and Mora (2006), that teen Latino fathers believed a major part of their role was providing
financially for their children, to be responsible and hardworking and keeping their children away from trouble.

The participants in this research survey strongly believe that they play a significant role in the lives of their children. A total of 21 participants or 84% agreed that they are a beneficial part of their children’s lives. A distribution of their answers is presented in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Teen fathers are significant and beneficial in the lives of children.](image)

**Involvement as Teen Fathers**

The findings in this survey show that that the majority (N=20) or 80% of the participants were constantly available to their children as teenage fathers while only 4% stated they were rarely (N=1) or never (N=1) available as indicated in Figure 2.
Figure 2. Involvement as teen parent with child.

The 4% who were rarely or never there indicate prison and relationship with the mother as major factors that kept them away from their child. The participants in this survey agree that despite the challenges they encountered they made sure that they were always there for their children.

The key informants interviewed in this research study suggest that providing role models “father figure” is essential to promote and educate teen fathers on responsible fatherhood. The key informants further add that a good family support system and positive relationship with the mother are factors that influence teen father’s involvement with their children.

**Relationship with Mother of Their Child Question**

About 60% of the participants agreed that the type of relationship they had with the mother of their children played a major role in the degree of involvement they had
with their children. A total of 84% of respondents in this survey learned that they were about to become teenage fathers from the mother of their children. The majority of the respondents (76%) in this study reveal that they had an equal share of custody with the mother of their children and were granted reasonable accessibility by the mother. Most of the participants share that the type of relationship they had with the mother of their children were mostly positive.

The top five answers participants describe as their relationship with the mother is presented in Figure 3.

![Relationship with Mother of their Child](image)

*Figure 3. Teen father’s relationship with mother of the child.*

The participants described their relationship with the mother of their children as loving, friendly, committed and supportive, openness in communication and healthy.
Availability of Support Systems

A total of 76% of the participants acknowledged having support systems during the time they were teenage fathers. The majority of respondents cited familial support, such as their mother, parents, siblings and grandparents as their primary source for support. See Figure 4.

Figure 4. Availability of support systems.

A total of 14 participants (56%) cited their mother as their major source of support while 13 participants or (52%) shared their sisters played an important part in providing assistance during the time they were teenage fathers. The respondents reveal that despite the news of their becoming teenage fathers, their parents (n=13) were supportive (44%). In the survey 21 of the respondents (84%) replied that their parents encouraged them to take responsibility and assume the role of fatherhood in spite of
being a teenage father. The survey data also showed that 60% of the parents of the participants were also teenage parents.

Further examination of the data reveal that none of the respondents (N=25) cited outside community agencies as a possible source for assistance despite being available to the participants at the time. There were 32% of participants who agreed that community services were easily accessible and useful however a combined 56% disagree and were unsure of the accessibility and usefulness of community agencies in assisting them with their roles as teenage fathers. The service providers interviewed for this research agree that the program agencies and services that are available are insufficient in addressing the needs of teenage fathers. Furthermore, the service providers concede that programs that are available are punitive and uninviting to teenage fathers in comparison to their female counterparts. The key informants interviewed in this research, stress the need for male role models that represent the target population, but also a need for acknowledgment and support for teenage young fathers by not just the service providers who work with them but also by society.

Factors that Influence and Affect Teenage Fathers’ Involvement with Their Children

There are two major barriers that respondents in this research study find influential in their involvement with their children: (1) A total of 64% (n=16) of respondents identified financial instability to take on the role of caring for a child as a major barrier which also relates to the finding of Martin and Mora (2006); (2) while 44%
(n=1) of respondents claim that the lack of education and availability of resources as teen fathers prove very challenging.

![Bar chart showing challenges encountered by teen fathers](chart.png)

**Table 5.** Challenges encountered by teen Latino fathers.

Other factors such as involvement in alcohol or drugs, gang affiliation, criminal history and refusal of mother to provide access to their children were also suggested by respondents as challenges that influence their involvement with their children. In addition, the respondents in this survey also disclose their desire to still be a teenager and not a father as a barrier in their involvement with their children.

The key informants in this research strongly advocate the need for more responsible male role models in providing services to teenage fathers. The key informants define responsible fathers as being a man of his word, who is physically, emotionally and mentally present in the lives of their children. According to the key informants, male role
models can demonstrate through example and educate the young teenage fathers about responsibility and accountability for their actions.

Key informants believe that in addition to the barriers disclosed by Latino teenage fathers in this survey, the negative stereotype on how society perceives teenage young fathers and the inequality of access to resources and program services for teenage fathers in comparison to their female counter are significant indicators that should also be taken into consideration. Key informants emphasize a major point that when people continually put young teen fathers down, they tend to believe and become the negative image that is being portrayed about them.

Lessons Learned

The most important advice participants in this survey would like to impart to teenage young men is to wait, practice safe sex and not to become teen fathers. One participant encourages young men to value their youth because only a small portion of your life is devoted to adolescence and a lifetime to being an adult.

The participants shared that if you are a teenage father, focus on your children and spend as much time you can with them. They encourage young fathers to stay in school and keep away from negative friends and bad influences. The participants recommend that young teenage fathers should take advice from responsible parents and family members because they understand and can provide useful information. One participant shared, that for young fathers who do not have a support system at home, he recommends government, educational and local church as resources that can assist and provide
resources to deal with the difficult issues of being a teenage father. Finally, participants in this research all agree that teenage fathers should realize that their number one priority should be their children and to never give up on them regardless of the situation.

Summary

The information provided by the participants in the survey questionnaire has provided valuable insight and pertinent information on the challenges and barriers that influence the involvement of teen father’s in the lives of their children. The two major challenges cited by the participants were financial instability and lack of education and available resources on becoming teen fathers. However, despite the challenges that the teen fathers encounter, the majority of participants remain involve in their children’s lives. Furthermore, they reveal that as part of their cultural heritage; they were taught to assume the role of fatherhood and equally share the responsibility of raising a child with the mother. The participants in this survey have relied on their families support in dealing with difficult and challenging experiences as young fathers.

The research study has found that despite the availability of community resources and services for teenage fathers none of the participants availed of the services. The key informants and survey participants both agree that currently, there are inadequate services for young teenage fathers and a lack of male role models available to young teenage fathers.

This research project has brought to light the complexity of issues that surround Latino teen fathers. While key informants and respondents agree that current services
lack access to making the connection to teen fathers, they also believe that teen fathers should also take personal responsibility when it comes to having unprotected sex. Furthermore, participants in this survey agree that their culture teaches them to be responsible yet they find themselves practicing unprotected sex and realizing too late that the inadequacy of their financial and educational attainment affects and limits their involvement with their children.

Social workers and service providers who have the opportunity to work with the target population must make an effort to connect with teens by being genuinely sincere in wanted to help and most of all respectful to the life experiences and culture that teen Latino fathers bring with them. The findings in this research project show that although there are service agencies available to teen fathers it does not necessarily mean that teen fathers will voluntarily avail of the services. Service agencies must be sensitive to the needs of teen fathers and hire more male staff that can identify and represent the target population and ultimately serve as role models who will provide genuine willingness in support of teen fathers. Agencies and services that deal with teen fatherhood should also include a component on the awareness and prevention of teen fatherhood and aggressively promote this in schools, community agencies, juvenile detention centers, sport centers and local churches. In a study by Vexler and Suellentrop (2006), they emphasize that the effectiveness and success of program agencies entail the inclusion and the involvement of community members such as law enforcement, clergy, teachers, parents, neighbors, business owners, etc that can keep the greater and less informed
community aware and informed that parenting and pregnant teens does not just involve female teens but recognize that teen fatherhood is also a major component that needs to be equally addressed.

Finally, educating and changing the negative outlook on how society perceives teen fathers is critical and perhaps this research project can inspire and ignite future researchers to possibly look closely into this subject matter.
Chapter 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research project is to understand and gather relevant information on the barriers and challenges that influence teen Latinos’ involvement in the upbringing of their children. Despite the abundance in research studies available for pregnant and parenting teens there is a significant disparity in related research for teenage fathers as compared to their female counterparts (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Gilliam, 2007; Glikman, 2004; Marsiglio, 2006), which creates challenges in designing specific intervention and prevention programs for this target population. The researcher recognized that in addition to limited data and studies on teen fathers, there is also very few research done on Hispanic teen dads.

One of the major findings that emerge from this study is teen Latino fathers consider financial instability and the lack of education and available resources as significant barriers that impact the involvement they have with their children. These findings is supported by Bunting and McAuley (2004) who found adolescent fathers experience financial difficulties that can hinder their ability in maintaining relationships with their children. Despite the availability of community services, not one of the participants in this survey chose to avail of services. They did not feel that the community resources were easily accessible or a possible source of support to young teenage fathers. Key informants in this research project, advocate for the need for more male responsible role models who are representative of the target population. They recommend adult
Latino males who have been teenage fathers that can mentor and share their experiences and provide support and encouragement to current teen fathers or any responsible male adult figure (teacher, coach, members of the community, etc.) who is willing to be a role model for teen fathers. In addition, key informants suggest the relevance of hiring sensitive and caring staff that understands the Latino culture and values, so that they may feel a true sense of belongingness and ultimately teen father’s themselves can positively promote community agencies to their peers as a potential source of support for them.

The participants in this survey and key informants acknowledge the greater accountability that teen Latinos play when practicing unprotected sex and despite what the culture teaches them about responsibility they continue to engage in unprotected sex. The participants and key informants suggest that apart from catering to teen fathers, services and programs should also vigorously promote the prevention and awareness of the consequences of teen fathers in conjunction with parenting and teen pregnancy. Community support and involvement is a major resource that can assist in the awareness and prevention of teen fatherhood. However the negative stigma continues to exist for teen Latino fathers in this research project and must be taken into consideration and vigorously addressed by future studies and research. In a study by McBride and Lutz (2004), they have found that society in general is quick to discriminate and often punitive towards minority fathers therefore making it difficult for teen fathers to fulfill their roles to their children.
The second major finding that became apparent as a result of this research project, is that teen Latino fathers are very much committed and are constantly available to their children despite the challenges and barriers that they encounter which contradicts the stereotypical assumption that portray teen Latino fathers as lacking the commitment and personal responsibility towards their children (McBride & Lutz, 2004; Rozie-Battle, 2003). The study shows that teen Latino fathers rely heavily on family members for support especially their mothers. It should be noted that the majority of parents of the participants in this survey were also teen parents. This study also showed that teen Latino fathers were strongly encouraged by their parents to assume the role of fatherhood and partake equal share of the responsibility with the mother of their children. Future studies and research should consider and explore the inclusion of parents and familial support systems as part of campaign to prevent teen fatherhood.

Implications for Social Work

The findings of the study is relevant to social work practice because it provides current and future social workers with a better understanding and awareness of the barriers and challenges of teen Latino fathers and provide opportunities for learning and improvement of service delivery for this particular population. Social workers will be able to respond effectively to the needs of the target population by understanding and appreciating the cultural values and belief systems associated to this particular ethnic group. To promote accessibility to services, social workers must make every effort to make positive connections with the target population and build on client strengths by
validating the individual life experiences and cultural aspects of teen Latino fathers and translating them into services that are appropriate and useful to them. Social workers can better advocate for the target population by educating and providing relevant information to the community and dispel some of the negative stereotype that teen Latino fathers encounter.

**Evaluation/Limitations/Implication for Future Researchers**

The current research project generated a total of 25 participants despite the distribution of over 150 survey questionnaires. The researcher recognizes that the respondents to this particular study are a hard to reach target population and not easily accessible even with the assistance of key informants since a majority of the survey questionnaires were not returned. A larger sample size could perhaps provide additional information and significant findings that is relevant to the study. The researcher recommends that future researchers provide incentives (i.e., gift certificates) to survey respondents to encourage participation in the study.

Future researchers should consider the inclusion of not only teen fathers but also the mother of their children in the survey questionnaire portion to compare and determine if there is a correlation in the answers provided. To further expand this research, participants should also be asked the question on what they recommend and suggest that can effectively improve service delivery and encourage youth participation in the prevention of teen parenting and pregnancy.
Reflection

The journey toward the completion of this thesis project has been a process of discovery and has provided many wonderful opportunities for learning. The researcher had a chance to meet amazing individuals who have selflessly shared their knowledge and life experiences and has truly inspired and made the researcher a better person and committed to serving the most vulnerable populations. The researcher realized that the challenges encountered in the process of the completion of this major task has made the researcher a much stronger person and that much closer to the fulfillment of a dream— the completion of a Master’s degree in higher education. The sky is the limit if you believe in yourself!
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Interview/Survey Questions: Adults as Teen Fathers

The purpose of this study is to determine barriers that affect teen fatherhood involvement in the lives of their children. Your participation in this study will assist the researcher in obtaining invaluable information that will shed light on the plight of young fathers which can be useful to future researchers but also possibly change the perception of how teenage fathers are generally perceived.

Note that participation in this study is completely voluntary

Directions: Please place a check mark in the corresponding boxes below. You may also skip questions that do not pertain to you or do not wish to answer. Once you have completed the questionnaire please submit to (Name of the administrator).

1. How did you learn you were about to become a teen father? (Please check all that apply)
   - Information obtained by asking the baby’s mother directly
   - Information obtained from medical provider, health clinic
   - Information provided by the mother
   - Information was received by friends of the mother
   - Information obtained by the family of the mother
   - Information was kept from me until child was born
   - Other, please specify______________________________

2. What was your initial reaction when you learned that you were going to become a father? Check as many boxes that apply
   - Happy
   - Excited
   - Accepting
   - Scared
   - Lost
   - Disbelief
   - Guilty
   - Panic
   - Other pls. specify
   - Denial
   - Denial
   - Denial
3. You had the skills to raise a child as a teenage father.
   - [ ] Agree  - [ ] Strongly Agree  - [ ] Disagree  - [ ] Strongly Disagree  - [ ] Don’t know

4. Do you think that teen fathers play a significant role and are beneficial in the lives of their child’s development?
   - [ ] Yes  - [ ] No  - [ ] Maybe  - [ ] I don’t know  - [ ] Other: please specify:

5. What kind of custody arrangement did you have with your child?
   - [ ] Shared Custody  - [ ] Full/Sole Custody  - [ ] Partial Custody  - [ ] No custody  - [ ] Do not know

6. Did you have support systems as a teenage father to deal with the responsibility of having a child?
   - [ ] Yes  - [ ] No  - [ ] other, please specify

7. If you answered YES on #6, who played an active/constant role in providing support and assistance to you? Please check as many boxes that apply:
   - [ ] Parents  - [ ] Brother/s  - [ ] Grandfather
   - [ ] Mother  - [ ] Sister/s  - [ ] Friends
   - [ ] Father  - [ ] Grandparents  - [ ] Service providers
   - [ ] Guardian  - [ ] Grandmother  - [ ] Other, please specify:

8. Where there any community resources available to you at the time that provided parent education and training to assist you in becoming a young teenage father?
   - [ ] Yes  - [ ] No  - [ ] Maybe  - [ ] I don’t know

9. Where the services easily accessible and useful to you as a teenage parent?
   - [ ] Yes  - [ ] No  - [ ] Maybe  - [ ] I don’t know  - [ ] Other, please specify:
10. Describe your involvement as a teen parent with your child?
☐ Constantly Available ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐ Other, please specify:
_______________________________________________________________________

11. Were you granted reasonable access to your child/children by the mother?
☐ Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐ Other, please specify
_______________________________________________________________________

12. Describe the relationship you had with the mother of your child as a teenage father? Please check all that apply:
☐ Loving ☐ Healthy ☐ Hostile
☐ Committed ☐ Open communication ☐ Forbidden
☐ Friendly ☐ Supportive ☐ Disapproved
☐ Civil ☐ No communication ☐ Other, please specify:
_______________________________________________________________________

13. Did the kind of relationship with the mother play a significant role in the degree of involvement you had with your child?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐ I don’t know ☐ Other, please specify
_______________________________________________________________________

14. What are the major challenges encountered as a teenage father? Check all that apply?
☐ Lack of education and available resources on becoming a teen father.
☐ Lack of emotional support systems to care for a child.
☐ Financially unready to take on the role of caring for the child
☐ Poverty ☐ Involved in alcohol or drugs
☐ Gang affiliation ☐ Criminal history
Emotionally unprepared to commit to the care of the child
Refusal of mother to provide access to the child
Others, please specify: _______________________________________________________________

15. I am □ 1st generation □ 2nd generation □ 3rd generation Latino.

16. How did your parents receive the news of your becoming a teenage father?

[ ] Supportive [ ] Excited [ ] Sad
[ ] Open [ ] Surprised [ ] Disgraced
[ ] Happy [ ] Hurt [ ] Embarrassed
[ ] Proud [ ] Angry [ ] Annoyed
[ ] Expected [ ] Guilty/feel responsible [ ] Don’t Care

[ ] Other, please specify: ____________________________________________________________

17. Did your parents encourage you to assume the role of fatherhood and all the responsibilities that came along with it despite being a teenager?

[ ] Yes, promoted equal share of responsibility between the mother and father.
[ ] Somewhat, believed that the mother has greater responsibility in the upbringing of the child.
[ ] No, believed that the mother should take sole responsibility.
[ ] Did not believe I was capable of handling the responsibility of child and would be better off without my involvement.

[ ] Other, please specify: ____________________________________________________________

18. Were your parents also teenage parents?

[ ] Yes □ No

19. Is it considered a “rite of passage” for teen Latino boys to engage in sexual activity?

[ ] Yes □ No
20. Did your parents talk to you about responsible sex education?
   - Yes
   - No

21. Highest educational attainment at the time you became a teenage father?
   - Less than 12th grade
   - High School graduate / GED
   - Some college

Open Ended Questions:

1. What do you perceive as characteristics of responsible fatherhood involvement?

2. What does your culture say about the role of a teenage father in the lives of their children?

3. What factors do you think can optimize maximize level of teenage fathers in the lives of their children?

4. What advice or suggestions do you think teenage fathers can benefit from?

5. Is there anything else that you think I would need to know that would be helpful in this study?

   --THANK YOU--
APPENDIX B

Interview Questions for Key Informants

1. How long have you been working with teenage fathers?

2. How did clients learn about your program?

3. What needs and services do teenage fathers often ask for and how do you address these needs?

4. Do you believe that there are sufficient services addressing teenage fatherhood?

5. What are characteristics of responsible fatherhood?

6. What are factors that influence teen fatherhood involvement?

7. What are the challenges and barriers do you perceive as reasons for lack of involvement and why?

8. Do you find that teenage fathers naturally want to become involved in the upbringing of their children?

9. What are things you believe can assist young fathers that promote a positive and healthy father-child relationship?

10. What are the most common stereotype impressions about teenage fathers?

11. Is there anything you would like add that would assist my research study?
APPENDIX C
Consent to Participate

I _______________ have been asked to participate in a research study under the direction of Sherley Pabustan, Master of Social Work student at California State University Sacramento (Division of Social Work). The researcher can be contacted at 209-598-6573. This research project will be under the supervision and direction of Faculty advisor Dr. Francis Yuen. He may be reached at 916-278-6943 or fyuen@saclink.csus.edu.

Purpose:
I understand that the purpose of this study is to gather pertinent information that will provide social workers and service providers with a better understanding of barriers and challenges that contribute to the lack of involvement among teenage Latino fathers.

Duration and Location:
I understand that the study will take place in a private office or a confidential location that is convenient and suitable to the participant. Furthermore I understand that the interview/survey will approximately take 30 to 60 minutes to complete.

Procedure:
I understand that as a participant, I will be asked questions about my personal and family relationships, cultural background, education, social status and well-being, and parenting skills and experience. The questions will be asked in the form of open-ended interview/survey questionnaire process.

Risk/Discomforts
I understand that the interview questions are of a personal and intimate nature and may cause the participant some discomfort in answering them. To minimize and/or eliminate discomfort or cause further harm, the participant has the option to refuse to answer particular questions or has the right to withdraw from the study at any given time. A list of community resources and counseling services will be made readily available to the participant should the need arise.

Benefits
I understand that by participating in this study, invaluable information can be gathered and collected that will be useful to social work practitioners, policymakers, researchers and service providers, who can enhance and improve service delivery and effectively address the needs of teenage fathers.

Confidentiality
I understand that the researcher will keep all information confidential. To further prevent disclosure of personal information, the participants will be assigned fictitious names that will be used by the researcher to refer to the participant in the study. A master list of the participants will be kept in a secure and locked container. All data will be destroyed 6 weeks upon completion and submission of the research project.

Right to Withdraw:
I understand that participation is voluntary and my refusal to participate in the study will involve no penalty or loss of rights to which I am entitled. I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without fear of losing any services or benefits to which I am entitled.

Signatures:
I have read this entire consent form and completely understand my rights as a potential research subject. I voluntarily consent to participate in this research. I have been informed that I will receive a copy of this consent should questions arise and I wish to contact Ms. Pabustan or California State University.

Printed Name & Signature of Research Subject _________________________ Date _________________________
REFERENCES


