

For our project, we are going to address the issue of teenage pregnancy, and the changes that occur in one's life during his/her school years. We will be looking at the viewpoints from the fathers' perspective and search for programs that will begin to work with single dads and lead them in the right direction with their new arrival.

Students and teachers can be affected from this issue in many ways. First of all, the students must begin to understand that their responsibilities will take a sharp turn causing them to make changes to lifestyle choices. They can no longer hang with friends after school. When the bell rings, they must run home to tend to their child. Homework and studying is usually done in shifts when the baby is playing or sleeping. Sitters must be arranged in advance in order to set up an evening or weekend activity with friends. Money has also got to be accounted for to provide proper nourishment and survival for the child. From the teacher's side, he/she must seek to be a positive role model for the student and encourage class participation at all times. He/She should also try and answer any questions that the young parent may have regarding the issue he/she is going through and/or direct him/her to someone who can help.

There are many long-term impacts of the problem on society. Many young adults choose to drop out of school to raise their children. "Teen males who become fathers before they are 18 are 40 percent less likely to graduate from high school..." (Rozakis, 1993, p.42). This places them in the work force with very minimal education, which usually puts them low on the pay scale. With very little income to live off of, the teens usually look towards welfare and other programs to help them raise their children. "Children born into poverty or a very stressful family often have a wide variety of

physical and emotional problems” (Rozakis, 1993, p. 42). Another problem comes about when the couple chooses to split up. Many young fathers are not prepared to accept the responsibility of parenting. Their initial reaction may be denial, fear, and/or a desire to escape. As the child grows, he/she is normally brought up in a single parent home with concerns such as “Does my Mama/Daddy not love me?” It is hard for the single parent to explain questions such as these without making the other parent look bad. Sometimes, the child lives his/her entire life never knowing who his/her Mom/Dad is. Many teens choose to put their child up for adoption. They feel that the child will be better off with a family and someone who can afford the expenses. However, until a home is found the child may spend his/her youth moving from foster home to foster home. Parents play an important role in their child’s developmental processes. Therefore, teens should repeatedly be informed of the changes that will occur and the importance behind making the right choices to avoid circumstances such as those listed above.

Effective programs can help to encourage teen fathers to become involved in the upbringing of their children. These programs can seek to reduce welfare, unemployment, and other social problems. Without these aides, teen fathers may not be able to finish school and support the child financially. The goal of programs such as these is to address the needs of young males by improving parenting skills, educational levels, employment capabilities, and social stability. Schools should take the challenge and provide the time and effort needed to positively implement programs for young fathers that will enable them to develop adult responsibilities and create an environment for the child in which he/she can grow and prosper. The main challenge of the schools should be to provide

programs that will create a helpful outlook on the new person in their lives while creating an opportunity to get the best education.

Bryan E. Robinson from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte wrote a book entitled Teenage Fathers in 1988. When opening this book, off hand one would think that there is going to be a biased opinion to this subject. On the first page he dedicated the book to his sister who was a teenage mother and has been married to the teenaged baby's dad for thirty years. However, when reading this book one will see teenage fatherhood hit from all angles. Robinson discusses myths of teenage fathers such as the Mr. Cool Myth. This myth describes the dad as one who usually has a fleeting, casual relationship with the young mother and has few emotional feelings about the pregnancy. Many studies prove this to be incorrect (Robinson, 1988). Father statistics are not always reliable however because many mothers will not identify the father or any information about the father. Robinson also discusses issues such as consequences of teenage fathers, psychological adjustment the dads go through, and program development for teenage fathers. This book is one of the only books that is entirely dedicated to this topic (Robinson, 1988). It covers many, but not all, topics of teenage fathers. The book does not discuss statistics fully or go into the topic about education and teenage fathers. It only relates teenage fatherhood to race, economic status, religion, and familiar values on their procreative activity (Robinson, 1988).

Shelby H. Miller wrote a book Children as Parents in 1983. Chapter seven entitled "The Babies Fathers" reported that most fathers from the ages of 14-35 were found to be about 18, not attending school, and working in a service-related job. The

majority of these teenaged fathers ended their education by dropping out before graduation and getting their GED. Many of the guys had only known their baby's mother for about a year and only visited the mother several times during pregnancy. After the baby was born the visits became less frequent, and money was provided inconsistently (Miller, 1983). There are very few programs offered to help teen fathers learn to make the right choices regarding their new issue. However, there is more progress being made to help teen fathers, but economic issues still arise in most cases. Miller did a great job by not singling any one group out. We felt that she covered all of the subject matter in an organized manner, however she did not go into great detail on how involved the fathers actually are with the baby and his/her mother (Miller, 1983).

Another review that we read about was by Nicholas J. Anastaslow, Ph.D. in 1982 called The Adolescent Parent. The information provided by this scholar has not changed in the past 19 years. Adolescent pregnancy is not a new phenomenon. One factor that may contribute to the high rise in teen pregnancies is that male and females are reaching physiological maturation at earlier ages than the past generations. Societies answer to this problem is marriage (Anastaslow, 1982). This book was very one sided. A lot of the information was aimed towards teenage mothers (Anastaslow, 1982).

Patricia L. East and Marianne E. Felice were two other scholars on this topic who wrote a book Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting. Chapter six entitled "The Partners of Adolescent Mothers" did a racially diverse study. This study performed in 1996 was used to chart relationships with teen mothers over a designated time period, compare adolescent fathers and adult father relationships with the mother, observe the support

provided by the father for the mom and baby, and the behavioral outcomes. As before, the number of fathers over 21 is decreasing with time (East & Felice, 1996). The teen fathers had an average education level of 11 years. Like in one of the studies stated above, the teen parents had known one another for less than one year. The fathers were not employed and 20% had been in a gang at some point while another 33% had spent some time in jail. The races were about equal in each area. This study did show that Hispanics were less educated and that Blacks had a higher out of wedlock births (East & Felice, 1996). Many of the teen fathers were found to be involved in high-risk behaviors including drugs, gangs, and/or crimes. This study was very informative and unbiased. The authors researched a lot of past studies in producing this article. Once again, the question regarding father involvement between the mother and child was not included in the report (East & Felice, 1996).

Our last scholars, Leslie M. Bonjean and Dennis C. Rittenmeyer, wrote Teenage Parenthood-The School's Response in 1987. This book very briefly discusses teenage parenthood. The topics covered range from the dimensions of adolescent parenthood including health care, social services, poverty, crime, and the educational system. Some other topics included were teenage pregnancy, adolescent development, sex education, and guidelines for program development (Bonjean & Rittenmeyer, 1987). The book does a good job of relating all of these issues to the educational system. "Of the 1 million teenage girls who become pregnant each year account for nearly half of all female dropouts. Many of the adolescent fathers also dropout, sometimes in order to find a job to support their new family" (Bonjean & Rittenmeyer, 1987, p. 11). The book addresses

many of the topics that correlate to teenage parenthood, but since they are discussed so vaguely, some issues were missed. The authors failed to discuss the students' backgrounds or give information about the schools who consider their teenage pregnancy rates to be serious. The idea of this book was to give information and convince schools that there needs to be programs to help with the problem of teenage pregnancies (Bonjean & Rittenmeyer, 1987).

Teenage pregnancy is not a new topic in American society, and many programs have been developed and implemented to address the problem; however, the emphasis has been primarily on the teenage mother and her child. In most instances, teenage pregnancy has been viewed solely as a woman's issue, with the adolescent father regarded as an unknown figure—more a culprit than a potential contributor to either the mother or his child (Marsiglio, Hutchinson, & Cohan, 2001).

School and agency counselors must continue to offer programs to support young mothers and their children, but this forgotten half of the teenage pregnancy problem cannot continue to be overlooked. Recently, the plight of the unwed, teenage father has begun to gain attention (Marsiglio et al., 2001). Why has it taken so long to recognize the needs of the teenage father? Young men in American society generally are expected to have it all together or pretend they do. Too often, single teenage fathers have been stereotyped as “players” who are interested only in their own pleasure. Because of these stereotypes, counselors, educators, and others did not believe that the young men recognized their need for help or that they would participate in programs designed to assist them. Studies now show that most teenage fathers do not

have it all together and are just confused, afraid, and anxious as the young women become pregnant (Schwartz, 1999).

In fact, most teenage fathers care about what happens to their children and need to be given the opportunity to explore their concerns and feelings; however, they do not usually ask for help on their own (Schwartz, 1999). Little information has been reported about the counselor's role in providing support for the unwed fathers. Articles on teenage pregnancy occasionally will include a paragraph suggesting that the young man should also be helped, but specific programs designed to assist the adolescent father are still rare (Marsiglio et al., 2001). Due to the lack of evaluations on teen father support programs that do exist, there is no statistical evidence showing how effective these programs really are.

Schools can decrease the need for supportive programs for teenage fathers through the use of several different methods. High schools can develop fundamental programs that support and encourage teenage fathers to continue to pursue their education. For example, Jose Escalante who is a 17 year-old single father has made it to his senior high school prom. According to the San Francisco Chronicle, during the past year, Jose struggled to balance school and child rearing duties. No one told Jose he was smart until he was 16, when the director of his high school fatherhood program, Montoya Graham, praised him. "As soon as he told me I was smart, I thought I was a genius. I actually thought I was the Don...That boosted my confidence up a lot" (Johnson, 2001, p. 2).

Schools should also be able to work together with community organizations in order to develop programs to provide sexuality education and counseling to teenage fathers. A good example of this kind of support program is called Boys to Men. Basically Boys to Men is an after-school program developed by a community organization in New York to prevent teen fatherhood (Lane & Clay, 2000). This program has been implemented in several schools in South Bronx in order to deter 10-16 year old boys from becoming teen fathers by providing them with mentoring, counseling, and constructive activities between the hours of 3:00pm and 6:00 pm. The program also has workshops on social and sexual issues, sports, and field trips. Now in it's second year, the program has had a 100% success rate in keeping their participants in school, out of jail, drug-free, disease-free, and child-free (Lane & Clay, 2000).

Another program from the same organization is called Young Fathers, which helps teenage fathers become good parents. This program helps teenage fathers between the ages of 14 and 21 take on the share of parental responsibilities, and serve as positive role models for their children (Lane & Clay, 2000). The program also provides parenting classes, educational and referral placement, team sports, and counseling. The senior Young Fathers participants serve as mentors for the boys in the Boys to Men program (Lane & Clay, 2000). The Young Fathers program is held at a community center rather than in the schools. Perhaps if it was held after school at the school, more students could participate due to the convenience, and not having to catch a ride.

Finally, school administrators, teachers, and educational policymakers should allow various forms of birth control to be taught in sex education classes. All high school

students should be fully informed about having safe sex, especially if they are already sexually active. Schools should also be able to recommend students to community clinics, such as Planned Parenthood or community centers, for more information that extends beyond school limitations.

As one would gather from the readings, the teen father has just as many responsibilities as the mother does. Both must learn to accept the consequences of their behavioral choices and act in a mature adult manner. In most cases the father tends to ease his way out of the picture and leave the situation on the mother's shoulders. Schools should implement programs for teen fathers to help provide encouragement and offer suggestions on how to become a respected, role model parent for the new arrival. By offering group sessions to discuss issues such as how to be supportive towards the pregnant mother and child after the birth the teen fathers can learn to cope with the situations they are in and provide advice and tips to one another. Being open about issues usually helps to reduce stress and provides positive encouragement when needed most.