

**TEEN FATHERHOOD:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF INVOLVED TEEN FATHERS**

By: Elden Eidse Siemens

**A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Social Work
University of Manitoba**

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ELDEN EIDSE SIEMENS

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University

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of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

Elden Eidse Siemens©1999

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Abstract

The qualitative research study described in this thesis focuses on the topic of teen fatherhood. The research was exploratory in nature and was structured in accordance with the following two research questions: a.) What, if any, are the common themes and characteristics shared by teen fathers? b.) What part, if any, does the teen father's concept of maleness play in his becoming a father? The study employed a purposeful sampling technique leading to in depth interviews with seven teenage fathers. All of the fathers in the sample were involved with their children. The data was collected through one-time individual interviews in which a semi-structured interview format was employed. All the interviews were tape recorded and then later transcribed for analysis. A number of different topics were covered in the interview format so as to elicit a wide range of responses from the fathers. Some of these included: past and present school and employment experiences, family make-up, childhood and life influences, gender role definitions, dating and sexual relationships, and their involvement during their partner's pregnancy. As well, the young men were asked to share their feelings and experiences about being a teen father. Teen fathers have largely been ignored in the teen pregnancy literature and there is currently no statistical method for gathering accurate numbers and related information about this population. This study makes a beginning contribution to the absence of information by providing important data on a sub-sample of fathers who remain

involved with their partners and their children. The young men interviewed in this study had all experienced major personal changes, including the acceptance of more responsibility, a decline in delinquent behaviours and a focus on future educational and employment goals since becoming fathers. Not only were the seven fathers all involved with their child, each was deeply committed to their child's well-being. This finding contradicts the stereotype which views teen fathers as uninvolved and indifferent about their relationship with their child. The study was able to obtain insights as to how these fathers defined the male role and from where they had obtained these definitions. Other findings provide new insights on the effectiveness of sex education, the role of social supports in teen parenthood (fatherhood), and the need for policy and practice to better reflect the existence of the involved father.

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Chapter One

Overview of Study

Men's issues have become an increasingly popular topic in both the world of research and literature. Through the influence of pioneering works such as Robert Bly's (1990) Iron John, both men and women have become more intrigued with the ever-changing and often difficult to define role of the man. When considering a research topic for my thesis, men's roles were something that I was interested in studying. In attempting to specify my research study I began to think of the role of fatherhood. Having been brought up by a father who was gentle, loving, and never quick to anger, I noticed that I did not adopt many of the stereotypical male traits. The role of fathers therefore was of interest to me, as I began to wonder what their role was in shaping the characteristics of a man. How influential was the father figure in determining the characteristics of the maturing male? What impact did the father have on his children and more specifically his sons? In the midst of my preliminary research, a friend mentioned a father type that is rarely discussed, the teen father. The topic instantly caught my attention, more specifically, how would a teen father role model to his son? As a teenager, this young father would still be wrestling with his own self-identity, coupled with myriad other adolescent developmental issues. In considering this one step further, I wondered of the difference between those teens that became fathers and those that did not. Was this a choice, and what, if any, role had their fathers played in their becoming

fathers at this early age? And moving the idea further along, I began to wonder if the teen father's concept of "maleness" in general contributed to his becoming a father.

The Absence of Teen Father Information

As I began to examine the statistics of teen fathers, another issue soon developed. I was struck with the complete absence of data on teen fathers. There was an enormous amount of information regarding the number of teen mothers, coupled with a plethora of sources from which to obtain a greater understanding of the teen mother population. What the statistics revealed was that teen pregnancy was definitely on the increase (Manitoba Department of Health, 1994; Manitoba Department of Family Services, 1994; Millar & Wadhera, 1997). In response to this increase in teen pregnancy, programs have been set up for teen mothers in many facets of the community that address issues from prevention to parenting classes. What was obviously missing was any programming or reference to teen fathers. When I contacted Vital Statistics in Manitoba, the office informed me that birth registries did not require the mother to identify the father. Most often the teen mother would not have put down the name, let alone the age of the father. Given this limitation, there was no method of tracking the exact number of teen fathers. In approaching other potential statistical resources (i.e., Statistics Canada, Manitoba Health, Child and Youth Secretariat) it became even clearer that the teen father was someone that society had all but completely forgotten. Although

there were thousands of teen mothers that were being noticed, written about, and programmed for, their partners appeared to be of little concern (East & Felice, 1996; Montemayor, 1986; Pirog-Good, 1995; Robinson, 1988). In my attempt to manipulate the existing teen mother data to obtain projected incidence rates for teen fathers, I learned that a large number of the teen mothers' partners were adult males (East & Felice, 1996; Jones & Battle, 1990; Millar & Wadhera, 1997; Robinson, 1988). Given this dynamic, a direct comparison of teen mother numbers to teen father population was impossible. It was therefore, very difficult to obtain an accurate account of the number of teen fathers that existed, especially with the complete absence of any formal statistical resource.

A review of the existing literature on teen fathers met with similar results. Again, much had been written about the teen mother and teen pregnancy, yet rarely was there information about the teen father (East & Felice, 1996; Hanson, Morrison, & Ginsburg, 1989; Jones & Battle, 1990; Joshi, 1990; Montemayor, 1986; Pirog-Good, 1995; Robinson, 1988; Sonenstein, 1986; Teti & Lamb, 1986). There were virtually no Canadian sources, and relatively few studies either in the United States or elsewhere. Therefore, I decided to focus my research on the phenomena of teen fatherhood. My goal became to find out more about teen fathers by allowing them to tell their story, and then attempting to describe this forgotten figure in the teen pregnancy issue.

Description of Research Study

This research study will concentrate on the teen father. The study will be largely exploratory, for as mentioned, little is known about the teen father. This absence of literature on the topic only serves to perpetuate society's lack of understanding regarding this population. With an exploratory approach unexpected issues and themes may develop thereby forming a clearer picture of the teen father. It is hoped that ultimately the research will create an opportunity for the teen father to tell his story, allow him to define himself, and thereby provide us with a better understanding of the teen father.

Chapter two contains a review of the literature that currently exists on the teen father. This review will focus on four specific areas. The first area of focus will be on providing information on the incidence rate of teen fathers. Although, statistics on the number of teen fathers that exist are difficult to obtain, the literature review will report on those statistics that have been tabulated. In the second section of the chapter, the focus will be on what the literature has to report about the demographic characteristics of the teen father. The final two areas of focus will concentrate on adolescent male developmental issues and possible antecedents of teen fatherhood. Through this literature review a clearer picture of the teen father will be created, as well as providing a better indication of the areas that need further exploration.

Chapter three will outline the methodology that the study

employed. As mentioned above, there is a definite lack of information regarding the teen father, therefore, a more descriptive exploratory approach was utilized. As a result the research was based on a qualitative research approach. The teen father was the unit of analysis in the study. A purposeful sampling method was used with the sample size consisting of seven teen fathers.

Data collection was achieved through the qualitative research method of interviewing. Individual teen fathers were interviewed on a one-time basis with a semi-structured interview format. The semi-structured process was employed in order to ask specific questions, yet, allow each individual the freedom to tell their own story. The teen fathers interviewed in this study were all currently involved with their child and partner. Therefore, the findings that were obtained describe a specific segment of the teen father population.

The subject of teen fatherhood remains largely unexplored and therefore a limited understanding currently exists. Although the study identified particular topics of interest, it was not limited to these few issues. As with any inductive study the researcher remained open to the ideas and themes that evolve through the data collection process. With this kind of approach new insights were attained, thus, leading to a more complete understanding of the research topic.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The research study that was undertaken does have its limitations. The small sample size makes it impossible to generalize the findings to the teen father population as a whole. Although the issues of reliability and validity were addressed, as with any qualitative study these measures are subject to criticism. Using interviewing as a method of data collection brings into question the role the interviewer as a completely objective information gatherer. Many potential problems exist such as misinterpretation of interviewee responses, the interviewee feeling uncomfortable with the method of questioning, and researcher bias skewing the results.

The research design, however, also offers some distinct strengths in terms of obtaining more information about the teen father. The semi-structured interview allows the teen father to expand on his answers and bring up issues that may have been stifled by a structured format or closed-ended questionnaire method. The individual interview also provides the interviewee with a setting in which he can freely talk about his feelings without fear of ridicule or embarrassment from others. Employing a purposeful sampling procedure ensures that the sample will be rich in the information that the researcher is trying to obtain.

Summary

The purpose of this research study is to achieve a greater understanding of the teen father. By employing a qualitative

research methodology I hope to generate new insights and create and increased awareness of the teen father. The research is exploratory in nature and designed so that the teen father is able to tell his own individual story. Although the information that is collected will be largely determined by the experiences the teen father chooses to share, two questions will be of importance to this research. Firstly, what, if any, are the common themes and characteristics shared by teen fathers? And secondly, what part, if any, does the teen father's concept of maleness play in his becoming a father?

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Teen pregnancy has become a growing concern in both Canada and the United States. An enormous amount of time and energy has gone into researching the issue and creating effective programs and resources to address the problem. Of concern is the lack of attention that this research and program planning has afforded to the teen father. Indeed, a vast majority of the information available on the topic of teen pregnancy pertains exclusively to the teen mother. This literature review will focus solely on the teen father. It begins by attempting to obtain past and current incidence rates of teen fathers. The next section of the review looks at the specific demographics that define the teen father population. The following two sections focus on adolescent male developmental issues and possible antecedents teen fatherhood. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature and its specific relevance to this study.

Statistics/Incidence Rate

The literature on teen pregnancy has received a great deal of attention in recent years. This is due largely to the ever increasing rates of teen pregnancy found throughout Canada and in the United States. Statistics on the incidence rate of teen pregnancies have also gained greater exposure as the issue of teen pregnancy becomes a growing social and economic concern. Unfortunately, most of the statistics gathered tend to concentrate

solely on the teen mother. Any material about teen parents almost exclusively focuses on the mother. It is not until recently that researchers and the helping profession have gone further than merely acknowledging the other teen parent, the teen father.

Reasons for the father being ignored are varied, however, one of the more noteworthy explanations comes from Judith L. Rosie-Battle (1990):

The attitude toward adolescent fathers is really not much different from the attitude of society toward fathers in general. Historically, the role of the father has been downplayed. The psychological and developmental needs of the child have been delegated as a responsibility and obligation of the mother. The father has not been viewed as a parent, he has only been perceived as a spouse/partner for the mother of the child. To state the matter bluntly, except for his financial contribution, the father is a disposable parent. In the case of adolescent fathers, the financial contribution is lacking or so minuscule that he indeed is a disposable parent in the eyes of society. (p.129)

The National Research Council (1987) states: "Beyond the difficulties of obtaining data, however, the lack of research on males reflects the fact that policy makers, services providers, parents, and teenagers themselves have traditionally regarded adolescent pregnancy and childbearing as a female problem" (p.243).

The result of this attitude is that information and data collection sources regarding births to teen parents have tended to focus only on the female. This issue is reflected in the following statistics gathered in the United States:

Prevalence of teenage fatherhood is high even though accurate rates cannot be calculated due to reporting difficulties. For example, of the approximately 3.7 million births in 1985, 500,100 birth certificates had no information on the father. This is largely due to the fact that mothers are unmarried and do not provide information regarding the father on the infant's birth certificate. In spite of this probable

underreporting in 1985, 107,650 births (22 percent of all births to teenage mothers) involved fathers 19 years of age and under. (Joshi, 1990, p.139)

Robinson (1988) suggests another reason for the difficulty in ascertaining how many teen fathers there are: "The exact number of teenage fathers is unknown because many mothers refuse to identify the father and in the past his age has not been a statistic of common interest" (p.8). Wayne J. Millar and Surinder Wadhwa (1997) in their study of Canadian teenage births found that the age of the father was more likely to be missing in births involving teenagers. Their statistics indicated that with women aged 15-17, the age of the father was not reported on 42% of births, and among women 18-19 the figure was 30%. The figure goes down substantially for women aged 20-24 where the percentage of non-recorded ages was 14%. Furthermore, their study found that the marital status of the mother also affects the likelihood of the age of the father being reported. Among married women aged 15-49 age of the father was not reported on 1% of births, as compared to 24% among single women and 19% among women who were separated.

Research concerning teen fathers has also often been skewed since data that has been presented has often come through inferential sources of information. Robinson (1988) writes:

The majority of data on teenage fathers ironically have been inferred from populations that contain no teen fathers. Generalizations regarding the adolescent father's contraceptive knowledge, attitudes toward pregnancy, and behaviour in terms of pregnancy have been drawn from practically every source except that of the teenage father: maternal interviews, adolescent fathers subsumed within larger population of older unmarried fathers, antecedent studies conducted on teenagers before they become fathers, and adolescent males who are not necessarily teenage fathers.

(p.73)

Freya L. Sonenstein (1986) reports the following about statistics and research on adolescent fathers:

The most remarkable fact about the research literature on male adolescent fertility behaviour is that there is so little of it compared to the literature on female fertility. Although teenage pregnancy and childbearing is recognized as a pressing social problem and considerable research has been conducted on the fertility behaviour of teenage girls, the male role in this process has not received much research attention. Even basic descriptive data are missing. There are few reliable national data on rates of sexual activity or contraceptive utilization among adolescent males, nor on the incidence of pregnancies and births attributable to them. (p.32)

In terms of United States statistics, Sonenstein (1986) offers the following:

For instance, although there were over half a million births to females between the ages of 15 and 19 in 1981 (National Centre for Health Statistics [NCHS], 1983), it is not definitively known how many of these babies were fathered by teenagers. Largely as a result of the high incidence of out-of-wedlock births, the age of the father is not listed on the birth registration forms for almost one-third (32%) of these births. As a result, the nation's vital statistics data system, the major source of information about the incidence of births to adolescent females, cannot generate comparable information for adolescent males. (p.32)

Some United States statistics that are available provide an approximate figure of the number of teen fathers: "In 1981 there were 129,336 babies born to fathers who were registered as under 20 years of age and there were probably many more teenage fathers of birth babies whose fathers' ages were not stated on the birth registration form" (Sonenstein, 1986, p.32).

Millar and Wadhera's (1997) study on the male partners of teenage mothers provides us with the only numbers for teen fathers in Canada. Their findings are based on an analysis of all births in Canada between 1992 and 1994. The information was gathered by

studying the data on births collected by the registries of vital statistics in the 10 provinces and 2 territories. The main focus of their research was on adult male partners, however some information on teen fathers is also available. For instance they report that in 1992-1994 teenage mothers accounted for 71,921 or 6% of all births in Canada. Teenage fathers were associated with 16,073 or 1.5% of all births in Canada from 1992-1994. As in the studies above many of the registries were missing information on the age of the father; thus, the teen father statistics are likely underreported.

In conducting my own search into the current incidence rates for teen fathers in Manitoba and Canada, I came across many of the same obstacles discussed above. The Vital Statistics Branch located in Winnipeg, Manitoba informed me that it would be extremely difficult for their office to generate accurate statistics on teen fathers in Manitoba. This was largely due to the method in which the birth registration form has been set up, in that it does not legally require the mother to provide information on the father of the child. I also received varied reports from individuals in the department, one of which stated that there was no space in which to enter the age of the father. Another stated that the information regarding the father provided by the mother could not be legally used in the birth registry without the consent of the father. The greatest obstacle I found, similar to the documented cases reported above, was that information concerning the teen father was left blank on a large percentage of the teen

birth registries.

Statistics Canada was also unable to generate any kind of accurate information. An agency representative stated that their most reliable figure would be obtained by focusing on the age of the "Heads of Households". This number, however, would have definite flaws in that it would not take into consideration the many teen fathers that may still be living with their own families. In using this method of data collection the total number would only be representative of the teen fathers that are actually living with their partners. As well, it is also often economically advantageous for single mothers not to report the presence of a male or father in the household, because by doing so they risk a decrease in their monthly income if dependent on the welfare system. Like all of the other statistical generating bodies, when it came to birth parents the focus was on the mother only.

Searches at the Manitoba Health Department met with similar results. Again, most statistics on "adolescent pregnancy" focused solely on the female parent. Given the inaccuracy of inferring statistics about teen fathers from teen mother incidence rates it is difficult to generate any kind of accurate numbers in terms of the incidence rate of teen fathers. Past studies have shown that a high number of the teen mothers' partners are adult males (East & Fierce, 1996; Jones & Battle 1990; National Research Council, 1987; Robinson, 1988; Sonenstein, 1986). East and Fierce (1996) report that: "From data that are available, it appears that less 20% of the partners are teenagers themselves, 20% to 35% were 20 to

21 years of age, and 45% to 60% are 21 years or older" (p.101). To reiterate, this is only from data that has been reported, and as noted earlier many teen fathers go unreported. In a data set collected by the National Centre of Health Statistics (United States) in 1994, the age of fathers was missing on 42% of birth certificates of babies born to teen mothers (East & Fierce, 1996). Millar and Wandhera (1997) also found that a large number of Canadian teenage mothers had adult partners. In their analysis of all registered births in Canada from 1992-1994 they found that in births to women aged 15-17, 54% involved partners 20 years or older. Furthermore, 78% of births to teen females at the median age of 17 involved males aged 19-30 and beyond.

In searching for accurate statistics on the incidence rates of teen fathers it became clear that no such statistics exist. As the literature points out time and time again, there has been very little attention given to the teen father. This was again extremely evident when approaching the various statistical organizations. Each had a great amount of information regarding teen pregnancy, however, it pertained exclusively to the teen mother. The methods of recording births also are set up so that information about the birth father is often not provided or insufficient. Changes need to be made in the recording of births so that the age and the name of the father appear on the birth certificate. The omission of this information will continue to hide the undoubtedly great number of teen fathers who are in need of some direction and support.

Demographics

The lack of accurately recorded incidence rates data naturally affects information available about teen fathers. Without reliable statistics regarding the number of teen fathers it is impossible to make sound conclusions about the general characteristics of this population. As the previous section states, we only have access to a very small percentage of teen fathers. Therefore, to make generalizations about the demographic make-up from this small proportion would be inaccurate. To further complicate matters, those studies that do exist are rife with research difficulties. Some of the difficulties described include: descriptive studies employing small sample sizes, lack of comparison groups, non-randomized designs, and unrepresentative sampling (East & Fierce, 1996; Hanson, Morrison & Ginsburg, 1989; Lerman & Ooms, 1993; Piorg-Good, 1995; Robinson, 1988; Sonenstein, 1986). Given these limitations any inferences in regards to the demographic make-up of teen fathers should be viewed cautiously.

In regards to this study, no demographic information is available on the teen father population in Canada. Any references in this paper, made to the demographic nature of teen fathers are taken exclusively from data acquired from the United States. Again, this speaks to the lack of comprehensive Canadian data.

In spite of these difficulties, in reviewing the literature and the findings from the various studies concerning teen fathers, some consistent themes do begin to emerge. Although authors and researchers agree that teen fathers are a heterogeneous group (East

& Fierce, 1996; Jones & Battle, 1990; Pirog-Good, 1995; Robinson, 1988; Sonenstein, 1986) some characteristics may put a teen male at greater risk of becoming a parent.

One of the most predominant demographic correlates of teen fatherhood is belonging to a low income family. In her analysis of the National Longitudinal Survey of Labour Market Experiences-Youth Cohort [NLSY], Maureen Pirog-Good (1995) found that: "In 1979 and 1987, teen fathers were approximately twice as likely to live in households below the poverty threshold" (p.359). The NLSY was a nationally representative survey done on males aged from 14 to 21 years. The survey was conducted over a ten year period (1979-1989) to study the labour market experiences of young males. Although the focus was on labour, Pirog-Good noted there was substantial information regarding fertility rates available. Of the 6,403 males involved with the NSLY, Pirog-Good was able to glean a sample size of 650 teen fathers. One limitation of her research however was the over-representation of Blacks, Hispanics, and poor Whites. This characteristic would undoubtedly bias her findings towards a higher number of teen fathers coming from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Robinson (1988) also reported that: "Although teen pregnancy is a national problem affecting all races and all socioeconomic groups, statistics indicate that low-income and minority teens have the highest rates" (p.9). Using nationally representative data from a research project in 1960, Project TALENT, Card & Wise (as cited in Hanson, Morrison, & Ginsburg, 1989) also found that at age

15, boys who later became teen fathers came from households with a low socioeconomic status. In her review of the literature Freya Sonenstein (1986) also confirmed that one of the prevalent correlates of teens becoming parents was a low-income status. One possible explanation for these higher incidence rates in low socioeconomic households is that these teen parents may be unable to afford abortion services. With this option unavailable to them a higher number of teens will choose to keep the baby, subsequently increasing the number of teen fathers.

A research project in the United States called The Teen Father Collaboration was designed to obtain more comprehensive information about the teenage father population (Klinman, Sander, Rosen, & Longo, 1986). This project collected data from eight different agencies who provided services to teen fathers. The agencies were located in California, Connecticut, Kentucky, Minnesota (2 agencies), New York, Oregon and Pennsylvania. The diversity of these locations provides one of the more well-rounded information sources regarding the characteristics of teen fathers. Data was collected by administering background information forms to all new clients, conducting initial interviews to establish a baseline data concerning present circumstances (i.e., future goals, child-care knowledge, etc.), keeping ongoing log records, mapping out progress made by client, and finally, having ongoing interviews with each of the fathers. In reviewing the statistics collected by these agencies in 1984, 245 teen fathers and fathers-to-be made contact with one of the eight agencies. The Collaboration reported that

there was a marked diversity in the ethnic and religious background of the participants. Twenty-three percent were White, 33% Black, 28% Hispanic, 8% American Indians and 5% Asian (Klinman, Sander, Rosen, & Longo, 1986). In terms of religious background most considered themselves to be either Protestant (39%) or Catholic (38%). Fifteen percent stated they had no religious affiliation and the remaining 7% reporting they belonged to one of a wide range of sects.

The majority of the young men (67%) were not enrolled in any educational program when first making contact with the Collaboration. "Many had dropped out because, as they reported, they were bored, did not like school, or needed a job" (Klinman, Sander, Rosen & Longo, 1986, p.167). The employment status of these young men was also particularly bleak. At the time of contact two out of every three were unemployed and half of those that reported having employment worked half-time.

It should be noted that the research design of the Teen Father Collaboration may be susceptible to certain bias. For example, the sample pertains only to teen fathers that chose to use the services provided by the agency. This choice in itself is a defining characteristic of the sample size in that they have decided to stay with and support their partner and child. Teens making this kind of commitment may share common traits, different than those who do not. This brings into question the generalizability of the study. These findings from the Collaboration research can only be viewed as descriptive of that specific population.

The Collaboration's statistics regarding the high number of participants that were not enrolled in an educational program would be consistent with what the literature says about the education levels of teen fathers. Robinson (1988) states that in his study done in 1982 with a sample size of 26 teen fathers "most of them described grades in school as average, many reported making D's and F's" (p.10). Of the 26 young men, 13 had a grade 10 or less education, 4 had completed grade 11, and the remaining 9 had finished high school. Robinson's study however, like many pertaining to teen fathers, has a very small sample size, and consists of non-random sample selection. In their review of the literature on teen fathers Patricia East and Marianne Felice (1996) concluded that based on prior studies there was definite evidence that young fathers had deficits in basic academic skills. Sandra Hanson, Donna Morrison and Alan L. Ginsburg (1989) did a comparison study of 148 teen fathers and 3,913 teens who did not father a child. The sample was taken from a nationally representative survey, the High School and Beyond Survey [HSB] which collected information on high school students beginning in 1980, with follow-up studies in 1982 and 1984. From this information Hanson, Morrison and Ginsburg gleaned a specific teen father population for the purposes of their comparison study. Given the small number of teen fathers (148) used as the comparison group, one must again interpret the findings as suggestive as opposed to definitive. When performing a bivariate analysis on the two groups regarding education it was found that teen fathers were: less likely to be

attending private schools, more likely to have discipline problems, have lower grade point averages and lower math and reading scores. However, when performing a multivariate analysis an interesting discovery was made. Only one of the school variables (discipline problems) had a significant influence on teens becoming fathers. "Young men with discipline problems increase their chances of early fathering by 46 per cent" (p. 592). The authors therefore state that the other education problems listed in the bivariate analysis are to be considered as risks as opposed to strong causal factors for teens becoming fathers.

The type of family make-up and background also appears to be an influencing characteristic for teen fathers. For instance, Pirog-Good (1995) studied various family background variables associated with teen fathers. She reports that parents of teen fathers completed significantly fewer years of education than those of non-fathers, and fathers of teen fathers also were less likely to hold professional positions and were more likely to be employed as labourers. Teen fathers came from households with more siblings and these siblings were also less educated than those from non-fathers. Family instability was also more prevalent for teen fathers:

Only 45.5% of teen fathers lived with both parents until the age of eighteen, in contrast to 68.3% of other young men. This result is by far the most pronounced among Whites, where 46.9% lived with both parents until the age of eighteen compared to 71.3% of white males who delayed parenting. (p.364)

Hanson, Morrison, and Ginsburg (1989) report that "young men who report that they were fathers are almost twice as likely to come

from single parent families (21 percent vs. 13 per cent) than were young men who reported that they did not father a child" (p.590). Sonenstein (1986) reports that adolescents who come from single parent households are more likely to initiate sex at an earlier age than those that come from two parent homes.

Adolescent Male Developmental Issues

The period of adolescence is filled with major changes and adjustments as children begin to map out their path towards adulthood. Dependence on their parents and family, which only a short time ago was acceptable and taken for granted, now feels uncomfortable. Peers with whom they interact at school, the media, and society at large dictate a shift toward independence and being an individual. Complete reliance on parent opinions and directives is weakened as external forces begin to influence beliefs and attitudes. This time is also marked by physical changes that create countless questions about their bodies and insecurities about their own normalcy. Amidst this shift to independence, change, and questioning, the adolescent acquires his/her first adult characteristic, the ability to procreate, to produce another human life. At the very time they begin this part of the journey towards adulthood, identity, cognitive, and emotional development are still in maturation. And yet, they are sexually adult. They possess no other adult identity; they cannot vote, they are not granted a driver's license, they cannot legally consume alcohol, or quit school, yet they have the ability to produce another life.

This is a very adult characteristic. It is also a major responsibility for a young person who wants desperately to be independent from parents, a young person who desperately wants to etch out an identity, in short, who wants to be seen as an adult.

As teens struggle with attempting to obtain independence and establish identity, where do they begin? Where do they receive the direction or indication of how they should act or be? Specifically, what do teen males see as their role in the world and how does this effect teen fatherhood issues? Douglas Teti and Michael Lamb (1986) look at sex-role learning as an extremely influential factor in the formation of teen males' images of what it means to be a man. These images in large part dictate who they are, will be, and what they believe are the expectations that society has of them.

Teti and Lamb (1986) point out that children develop a sense of gender and make generalizations about male and female roles as young as 2 to 3 years old. Weinraub, Clemens, Sockloff, Ethridge, Gracely, and Myers (1984) (as cited in Teti, & Lamb, 1986) also demonstrated that children as young as 26 months reliably knew their own gender and showed preference to sex-appropriate toys and show an awareness of sex-role stereotypes. Of importance for the purposes of this study is how these roles and stereotypes effect the behaviour and choices of teen males. More specifically, what part do they play in teen fatherhood? Teti and Lamb (1986) focus on how sex-role learning effects teen males' adjustment to fatherhood. They refer to the social-learning theory as key in how

roles are formed. Social-learning theory stresses environmental reinforcements, punishments and modelling as the ways in which we learn sex-typed behaviours. This is how gender identity is formed. By watching parents, older siblings, peers, media and other models children learn about their own gender and the behaviours appropriate for them. Behaviours are learned through the reinforcement of sex-appropriate behaviours and the punishment of those that are judged inappropriate.

"Role theory is a science concerned with the study of behaviours that are characteristic of persons within contexts and with various processes that presumably produce, explain, or are affected by those behaviours" (Biddle, 1979, p.4). This theory states that human behaviour is largely dictated through the acting out of specific societal role expectations. Bruce Biddle (1979) states a good example of role theory can be witnessed in the initial socialization of children:

Characteristic roles are performed in the family by fathers, mothers, older siblings and even newborn infants. In time, the infant learns role behaviours that are deemed appropriate for his or her life. He or she learns these through a variety of means, through *role playing* (that is, by practising the roles he or she sees performed by others) and *role taking* (that is, by internalizing expectations that are enunciated for him or her by others). The child, thus, develops a self-concept that is composed of (among other things) a set of role expectations for him or herself as he or she assumes various identities and enters different contexts. (p.7).

As in their early childhood, adolescents attempting to take on the roles of adults are influenced by the role models in their lives. In the past male role models have tended to rely heavily on the macho image. In this image sexual conquests are often seen as

symbolic of being a "true man". Young men growing up in this kind of environment come to view sexual activity as a way of proving their manhood (Teti & Lamb, 1986; Sonenstein, 1986; Robinson, 1988). As well, the patriarchal attitude that accompanies this mentality often engenders a sense of entitlement in the young male. That is, he feels that he is entitled to having a sexual relationship with a female as she is often viewed as a sex object and not a person. With this kind of attitude the teen male may be involved in many different sexual encounters and become increasingly involved in high risk sexual behaviour. This would in turn increase the likelihood of teen pregnancy, and according to this construct the young male would have initiated the sexual contact.

Teti and Lamb (1986) point out that many boys have a difficult time with identity formation due to the lack of a male role-model within the home. The authors state that traditionally the father has assumed the role of material provider for the family which in turn has made him less accessible within the home. The mother therefore has usually been the dominate gender figure in children's early development. In large part, young boys learn about maleness from the opposite-sex parent, while girls learn of the feminine role through direct experience/interaction with their mother. Through this developmental experience young boys often tend to identify more strongly with the mother than with father. The references made here to the "traditional role of the father" relate to a time when the father was the sole financial provider for the

family. Over time, especially in the last couple of decades, this traditional role has experienced some significant changes. Today, many, if not the majority of households rely on both the male and female to provide financially. In many families the female has become the family's primary breadwinner. Although positive in many respects, for many men this has further blurred what it means to be male. Ronald Levant (1997) writes that over the past 25 years women have learned to live with the major changes in the construction of their gender role. They have moved from the sole emphasis on domestic family duties to incorporating the demands of their own careers, as well. Men, however, have had more difficulty integrating their own changes. Although there has been an increase in men's openness to relationships and greater participation in emotional and domestic areas, many still cling to the traditional definition of what it means to be male. Levant writes the following of the effect this dichotomy has had on male role identity:

These new pressures--pressure to commit to relationships, to communicate one's innermost feelings, to nurture children, to share housework, to integrate sexuality with love, and curb aggression and violence-- have shaken traditional masculinity ideology to such an extent there is now a "masculinity crisis", in which many feel bewildered and confused, and the pride associated with being a man is lower than at any time in recent past. (p. 442)

In the traditional family model described by Teti and Lamb the lack of a male role model was the result of the father not being accessible due to work commitments. It would appear that those households which today do not subscribe to this traditional model may still lack a strong male presence due to what Levant calls the

"masculinity crisis". For, although, with the aforementioned changes men have become more accessible within the home, many of them are questioning their role as a father in the family and what it means to be a man. This in turn has further contributed to the lack of a clear male role model within the home, for many young boys.

Teti and Lamb (1986) also point out that boys are often punished more harshly for cross-sex behaviour and are encouraged more than girls to avoid such behaviours. This can create within boys, less flexibility, stereotyping and de-valuation of the female role and anxiety about their roles as males. Although drawn from a different era, the following quote from R. E. Hartley in 1959 (as cited in Teti, & Lamb, 1986) still captures the turmoil and confusion young boys seeking their male identity may often feel:

practically a perfect combination for inducing anxiety--the demand that the child do something which is not clearly defined to him, based on reasons he cannot possibly appreciate, and enforced by threats, punishments, and anger by those who are close to him. Indeed, a great many boys do give evidence of anxiety centred in the whole area of sex-connected role behaviours, an anxiety which frequently expresses itself in overstraining to be masculine, in virtual panic at being caught doing anything traditionally defined as feminine..... This kind of overreaction is reminiscent of the quality of all strong emotion precipitated in life before judgement and control have had a chance to develop. (p.22)

Young men therefore may come to rely on male stereotypes as a means of defining their gender identity. Their anxiety over appearing or being "feminine" often causes them to adopt roles which leave no doubt about their masculinity. Sonenstein (1986) describes how young males often adhere to the sex scripts that society has for males and females. For instance, boys are

socialized to "seek sexual contact, to evaluate each female as a potential sexual partner, to initiate sexual intercourse whenever possible and to assume that conception and its prevention are for the female to worry about" (p 38). Females however are taught that: "love is a prerequisite for sexual intercourse and that they should control how far the male goes" (p.38). That these sex scripts are learned at a young age is witnessed in Western Opinion Research's (1997) interview with 12 young males ages 11-14. When discussing the topic of sexual intercourse as a group the following was noted:

It seems that these boys think they are supposed to have sex but they are not really sure why. There was no talk of enjoyment or the emotional aspect of sex. It just seemed that sex is something that they are supposed to be talking about and trying to do. (p. 11)

Sonenstein (1986) reports on the differences in motivations for the first sexual experience of intercourse among males and females. Sonenstein quotes a study in done in 1975 in which 16 and 17 year olds were interviewed concerning their sexual activities. Males were likely to report that "my sexual desire" was an important reason for their having sex, whereas females were more likely to state "my partner's desire" and "deep strong feelings/love for partner" as their motivation. Different reactions to the first intercourse were also noted in that males usually felt proud and experienced, were as females were frequently worried about pregnancy. In the sample from above 34% of the females stated that they regretted their first sexual experience compared to 18% of males.

Teti and Lamb (1986) state that male stereotypes are especially rigid during adolescence. The adolescent male with an incomplete picture of maleness looks to his peers who, like him, struggle with the concept of what it means to be male. Peers become the focal point of identity formation as acceptance from them becomes monumental to maintain self-esteem and belonging. The stereotypical male "macho" persona, may therefore be exaggerated by male teens as their vehicle for peer acceptance. With each male so desperately wanting to be seen as masculine, teens rely on this exaggerated perception of what it is to be a man. This in turn can often lead to at risk sexual behaviour.

Developmentally, teens are also more at risk to pregnancy because of their faulty thinking which Robinson (1988) refers to as "the personal fable". This mind-set is characterized by the belief that states that "It can never happen to me". Teenagers often view themselves as invincible or immortal or that "nothing bad can ever happen to me". With this kind of thinking comes risk-taking behaviour in which teens will partake in activities that leave them vulnerable to some serious consequences. Jeffery Applegate (1988) concurs, pointing out that a contributing factor to this kind of risk-taking behaviour is the incomplete cognitive development of teens. Applegate states that formal operational thinking is usually not consolidated until late adolescence, and that prior to this teens have difficulty making "sound and moral judgements, planning for tomorrow and anticipating the consequences of their actions" (p.208). These dynamics, coupled with tendency for teen

males to exhibit independence and maleness through sexually active behaviour, leave many at risk to becoming teen fathers (Applegate, 1988).

Robinson (1988) reports that teens are also more at risk to pregnancy due to the episodic or unplanned nature of their sexual encounters. Given this unpredictable nature of sexual activity, contraceptive provision is hardly ever made in advance. Robinson quotes a study done by Bertrand Landry (1986) in which 86% of the teens interviewed knew about contraceptives, 75% knew where to get them, however only 16% of teens who became pregnant reported using contraceptives at the time they became pregnant. Sonenstein (1986) also reports that the most common reason cited by teenagers for not using contraception at the time of their first intercourse was that it was unplanned.

Antecedents of Teen Fatherhood

The literature suggests that the broader environment within which a young male grows up can be a factor in teen fathering. For instance Robinson (1988) states that teen pregnancy is more common today because of the increase of more liberalized social attitudes towards the issue. With these more forgiving attitudes teens are less inclined to take contraceptives. Robinson also states that youth are constantly being bombarded with sexuality through advertising, music, movies and television. The media portrays sex as romantic and exciting and usually fails to show the consequences of irresponsible sexual behaviour. This portrayal of sex as

enticing and without consequence further confuses the teen in terms of their own sexual activity.

As stated earlier, much of the literature points out that low socio-economic status is often a major correlate of teen fatherhood. A review of the literature indicates that teen males coming from a low socio-economic background are more likely to become teen fathers (Pirog-Good, 1995; Hanson, Morrison, & Ginsburg, 1989; Robinson, 1988; Sonenstein, 1986). Sandra Hanson, Donna Morrison & Alan Ginsburg (1989) state that the reason for this is teens who come from poor homes often feel that opportunities in life are enormously limited for them. They therefore may believe that the risks involved in early sexual activity have fewer negative consequences. This pessimistic attitude regarding the future increases the risk of teen pregnancy. For not only do these teen boys have unplanned opportunities for sex, their fatalistic view of the future gives them less reason to abstain from sexual intercourse. Robinson (1988) writes that teen males that come from low socio-economic backgrounds may have little hope in the future in regards to education or career occupation. These males may be at greater risk of becoming teenage fathers due in part to the belief that parenting is the one area in which they can succeed. Having failed at everything else that society tells them is important, and believing they will never attain higher education or career advancements, they may attempt to achieve success in the area of fatherhood. In a 1986 report the Children's Defense Fund (as cited in Robinson, 1988) concurred with this

theory as they issued the following statement regarding both male and female teens:

In a nation where one's worth is judged primarily in three areas---school, work, and family---it is not surprising that teenagers who cannot find a way to succeed in the first two areas find no reason to delay resorting to the third. For many teens who find that other options are limited or nonexistent, parenthood is filling a painful void. (p.6)

Family background and make-up appear also to be contributing environmental factors in teen fatherhood. In addition to factors such as low socio-economic status and lower educational levels, other family characteristics also appear to be contribute to greater likelihood of teen fatherhood. Hanson, Morrison, and Ginsburg (1989) state that the quality of the parent-child tie is an important component in teen pregnancy. They point out that teens with concerned, affectionate parents who are able to effectively communicate their feelings and values are less likely than their peers, to become involved in risk-taking activities. The researchers go on to say parents who closely monitor and censure the children's activities are also more likely to discourage both the opportunity for, and inclination to, sexual risk-taking behaviours. Robinson (1988) points out that certain attitudes and behaviours in regard to sexual activity are passed on from parents to their children, in what he terms: "the generation recidivism hypothesis" (p. 7). This theory states that the tendency to bear children out of wedlock runs in families due to the permissive beliefs and attitudes passed on from one generation to the next. Robinson quotes studies in which it was found that families and friends of teenage fathers had permissive

attitudes about premarital sex and pregnancy and that their parents responded favourably to the announcement of the pregnancy. Further data also indicated that teenage fathers came from a family environment where teen pregnancy was common as well as an accepted part of culture.

Another possible factor is that some teens may choose to have a baby. Western Opinion Research Inc. (1997) asked a focus group of 36 teens why they felt that some teens would consider "having a baby on purpose". The 36 teens were broken down into 3 groups of 12 with the sex and age ranges of each group being: males, 11-14 years old; females, 11-14 years old and the third group consisted of males 15-18 years old. The female group, provided answers such as: "wanted to keep her boyfriend, wanted to live by herself, gave her someone to care for and love and someone to love her" (p.8). The male group 11-14 felt some of the possible reasons would be: "did not want to be alone, wanted to start a new life, wanted to see what it was like" (p. 8-9). The 15-18 year old males stated the following: "wanted love and wanted to be loved, wanted to feel more responsible" (p.9). Of the responses provided one consistent theme emerged, that of wanting to be loved or not wanting to be alone. One explanation for this may be that teens at risk of becoming parents are in situations where they feel lonely or unloved. Having a baby may be seen as a way to combat this feeling of loneliness as well as providing the opportunity to give and receive love.

Related to this idea of loneliness and wanting to be loved is

the level of self-esteem of teen fathers. In her study of teen boys Maureen Pirog-Good (1995) found the following regarding self-esteem levels:

Interestingly in 1980, when some young men who had already become teen fathers, the lowest self-esteem scores were found among males who were currently childless but who eventually became teen fathers. In comparison to this group, young men who had already become teen fathers had significantly higher esteem. This finding is consistent with the suggestions that disadvantaged youths many use adolescent parenting as a step toward higher self-value. (p.369)

Self-esteem is a developmental issue for any adolescent. For those teens who are having difficulty being accepted into a peer group and are unable to recognize their own abilities and talents, having a baby may be a perceived way of feeling better about themselves. Adolescents may believe that being a parent will give them a greater sense of self-worth and also give them an unique identity among their peers. This belief, coupled with incomplete moral, cognitive, and emotional development may result in the decision to have a baby. Ironically it is this exact decision that could further compromise the adolescent's evolving identity formation.

Summary

The issue of teen pregnancy continues to be a growing problem in both Canada and the United States. Research regarding the subject has tended to focus solely on the teen mother and largely ignore the teen father. Historically, the teen father has been viewed as a person who will not be able to contribute anything to the raising of the child. Thus, teen pregnancy has come to be

largely defined as a female issue. This is especially evident when considering the lack of statistical information that is available on teen fathers. In conducting a literature review on the subject it became clear that there is no comprehensive method for determining the teen father population. This is largely due to the fact that birth registries have been set up in such a way that providing information regarding fathers is not required and therefore often not given. Missing information is the most prevalent on birth registries involving adolescent single women, the partners of most teen fathers. This phenomena makes it very difficult to determine the exact teen father population. The lack of a concise, clear method in which to gather statistical information on the teen father is an indication of how society has viewed him as of minimal importance on the issue of teen pregnancy.

In reviewing the literature on teen fathers that does exist, it became evident that much of the research that has been done on the population has been beset with difficulties. For instance, there is a lack of comparison studies, and a high number of non-randomized designs and unrepresentative sampling. Data on teen fathers has also often been gathered from populations that contain no teen fathers. For instance, information has at times been obtained from the female partners of teen fathers, or the young adult father population.

Some common themes regarding teen fathers did appear somewhat consistently in the studies that were reviewed. For instance, coming from a low socio-economic background seemed to be a common

characteristic of teen males who had become fathers. However, as noted, this may be largely due to the population that was sampled in the studies. Many of the studies tended to obtain their samples from groups of people that were more disadvantaged than the general population, thereby skewing the results. Low education attainment was another characteristic that appeared frequently in the research. As well, family background and make-up were seen as important factors in the teen father literature. Teen fathers were more likely to come from larger families where education attainment was often lower for both the parents and siblings. It was also noted that the fathers of teen fathers were more likely to be employed as labourers as opposed to holding professional positions. Attitudes and beliefs concerning sexual activity were also extremely important factors involving teen fathering. For example, Robinson (1988) referred to "generation recidivism hypothesis" which states that the tendency to bear out of wedlock children is due to permissive beliefs passed on from one generation to the next.

The literature also points out that adolescents are at a developmental stage where their cognitive and emotional abilities are still at a fairly immature level. During this same time period the issue of dating and opposite-sex relationships become an important part of their identity formation. With the constant bombardment of sex on television, in movies and the print media, the pressures to become involved in sexually active behaviour becomes increasingly difficult to resist for adolescents. With

only a weak sense of self and immature moral and cognitive development the teen becomes vulnerable to peer and societal messages which promote sexually active behaviours. The teen male may therefore become involved with this risk-taking behaviour without a clear understanding of all its possible consequences.

The literature also points out that boys may have a difficult time with identity formation due to the lack of a solid male role-model within their lives. Traditionally, the father was largely out of the home and therefore unavailable to the child. Coupled with this, over the past two decades the definition of maleness has been undergoing some major changes (Levant, 1997). Many men are struggling with what it means to be male in an age where women are gaining acceptance and recognition in environments that were once male-dominated. New role expectations are required which were, in the past, thought to be largely feminine. For the male child this may serve to further confuse an already blurred image of maleness. With this lack of male identity and direction many teens adhere to societal male stereotypes which rely heavily on the "macho" image, where sexual conquests are one of the defining features of what it means to be a man. Many boys are growing up with a major deficit in their understanding of what it means to be a man. They are therefore ill-equipped to enter the developmental stage of adolescence in which independence and an identity separate from parents is paramount. This is the stage in which acceptance and belonging to the peer group becomes the major criteria in defining self-esteem and self-worth. Male teens who are without clear

direction of what it means to be a man, look to each other for direction and identity. In the vacuum that has been created they tend to rely on stereotypes of maleness they find in the media. This, as the literature points out, is especially true in the early stages of adolescence. It is therefore important for teen males to have a firm understanding of what it means to be male given to them by someone other than their peers and the media. They need meaningful male-role models if they are to accept and believe that there is more to being male than the "macho" image.

It is this author's opinion that these developmental issues are of importance in addressing the subject of teen fatherhood. For, although the teen male is still in many ways developmentally immature, he has the ability to perform a very adult act. He has the ability to create another human life. More emphasis must be placed on addressing the developmental questions of identity facing teen males so that they become better equipped in making informed choices regarding their sexual activity. Identity and peer acceptance, and their relation to teen fatherhood needs additional research. Further exploration is needed in regards to the issue of maleness and how it relates to teen fatherhood. Are teen males at a loss as to what it means to be male? Do they therefore adhere to traditional stereo-types which promote sexual promiscuity? Are some becoming fathers in order to achieve what they see as the ultimate sign of masculinity? For it is as we began to explore and define some of these issues that we may be able to obtain a better understanding of why some teen males become fathers.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Teen pregnancy rates have been steadily on the rise over the past number of decades. An enormous amount of time and energy has gone into researching the issue and creating effective programs and resources to address the problem. In reviewing the literature on teen pregnancy it becomes clear that the focus is usually solely on the teen mother (Applegate, 1988; National Research Council, 1983; Battle-Rosie, 1990; Robinson, 1988; Sonenstein, 1986). A forgotten figure in this field has been the teen father. As a result little is known about the number of teen fathers, who they are, why they become teen fathers and other teenagers do not, and most importantly, what would be the best method of intervention in addressing the issue of teen pregnancy from a teen father perspective?

This study was interested in gathering descriptive information on the teen father. By focusing solely on the teen mother we are looking at only half of the teen pregnancy problem. The teen father is obviously a major part of the equation and if we are to address the issue comprehensively, we need to know more about him. As very little is known about teen fathers it was my intention to gather accurate information about them and create greater awareness about the subject. For decades the teen father has been of little concern for those researching the issue of teen pregnancy. In the past few years this is slowly beginning to change. However, many questions still go unanswered and little is being done about this

omission in the research.

This study of the teen father employed a basic research rationale which attempts "to contribute to fundamental knowledge and theory" (Patton, 1990, p.150). Through this approach the study attempted to provide a greater understanding of, and generate new insights regarding, teen fatherhood. The research was exploratory in nature and designed so that the teen father could tell his individual story, thereby allowing possible new themes and insights to develop. The study was also specifically interested in studying the relationship between teen fathers and their definition of maleness.

Theoretical Framework

As cited in the previous chapter: "Role theory is a science concerned with the study of behaviours that are characteristic of persons within contexts and with various processes that presumably produce, explain, or are affected by those behaviours" (Biddle, 1979, p.4). This theory states that human behaviour is largely dictated through the acting out of specific societal role expectations. During early child development stage children learn and practice role behaviours by watching and imitating the adults around them. In so doing, children begin to develop a sense of self, that is, in large part, made up of the role expectations in their immediate environment/s (Biddle, 1979).

As in early childhood, adolescents attempting to take on the roles of adults are influenced by the role models in their lives.

Traditionally the male role has been one of power, dominance, and one in which the man does not share emotional thoughts or feelings. Along with these attributes, traditional male role models often tend to rely heavily on the "macho image" in which sexual conquests are seen as the true measure of manhood. This traditional male macho image is of particular interest in the study of teen fatherhood. Adolescent males growing up with this type of role expectation may be more sexually active in order to prove their manhood. It follows that, these increased levels of sexual activity put these teens at greater risk to become fathers.

Another, related issue revolving around teen male role development is the lack of a definite male role model. According to Ronald Levant (1997), with an increasingly large percentage of households becoming dual-income the male role of "breadwinner" is becoming extinct. Levant reports that for a long time maleness has been defined in terms of being the person in the household who is the material provider. Father was the one who earned the money and, given his time spent out of the home (while at work), was more emotionally disconnected than the stay-at-home mother. Over the past few decades more and more women are entering the work force and an increasing number of them are the major income earners in the family. With this loss of the provider role comes a confusion of what maleness is and what the man's role is in the family. If he is not the breadwinner, the male may be forced to become more emotionally involved. This is again something that the male figure has traditionally had difficulty with: that is, expressing and

imparting emotions. The theory postulates that given this lack of a clear male role definition, teen males may revert to old stereotypes in which the roles are more explicitly defined (i.e., "macho image"). This in turn may create increased sexual activity, thereby increasing the chances of teen pregnancy.

This research study is exploratory in nature and is therefore is attempting to generate new insights and create a better understanding of teen fatherhood. A limited amount of information exists on the subject and as a result little is known about the teen father population. The guiding question in attaining a better understanding of the teen father will be: What are some of the common characteristics that teen fathers share? This research will also attempt to discover how relevant role theory is to the teen father phenomena. More specifically, what if any, part does the teen father's concept of maleness play in their becoming teen fathers?

Research Design

A long-standing debate exists between the two basic research method designs, qualitative and quantitative. The two are vastly different and some researchers would attest that they, indeed subscribe to two completely different paradigms (Magurie, 1987). Patricia Magurie (1987) states that quantitative research is associated with empirical-analytical inquiry which focuses on generating technical knowledge in the form of laws and theories to explain social behaviours. Michael Patton (1990) describes

quantitative research as rooted in scientific inquiry where the research is highly controlled and exacting (Patton, 1990). Sampling is done in a random method so the sample that is being studied is more likely to be representative of the whole population. Quantitative inquiry researches large groups of people in order to obtain an accurate picture from which to make generalizable conclusions.

Qualitative research is the foundation of symbolic, hermeneutic, or cultural inquiry which looks at how human interactions influence the rules governing social life (Magurie, 1989). Qualitative inquiry looks at the subjective side of the research. That is, it will sacrifice some objectivity, generalizability, and scientific accuracy to obtain a deeper level of understanding on each individual case (Patton, 1990). Qualitative research usually consists of in-depth interviews or participant-observer studies in which the researcher immerses him/herself in the culture of the people he/she is studying. It is not as concerned with numbers as is it is with understanding the specific circumstances revolving around each case (Tutty, Rothery, & Grinnell Jr, 1996). Indeed, the research findings are largely presented in words as opposed to the numerical information reported by quantitative study. Qualitative research is also often descriptive in nature. That is, it will tell a story and report on a small number of people. The basic purpose of qualitative research is to describe a specific population and present information as to how the sample is different than the larger

population. It tells us what sets one group apart and why this is so. Often, it is the forerunner to other studies as it will lay the groundwork for more specific (often quantitative) inquiry.

This study was based on a qualitative research paradigm. This is in part due to the lack of information on the teen fathers. As such, more ground level information needs to be obtained. As mentioned above, it is very difficult to obtain a large sample of teen fathers. In an attempt to find out the number of existing teen fathers this study discovered that there were no accurate sources for this information. The primary source of information, birth registries, are not designed to consistently detail this kind of data. It is therefore difficult to generate a large sample size and find out the basic demographics of the population. The lack of information regarding the number of teen fathers that exist would seem to indicate that society has largely ignored this population and deemed them of little significance. Statistics are usually collected on issues or populations that have a high profile and are believed to have major impact on society as a whole. Qualitative research is at times used to create awareness of a specific social phenomena, which in turn raises questions and generates further study of the issue (Cook & Reichardt, 1979; Sherman & Reid, 1994, Patton, 1990). A major goal of this research project was to create a greater awareness of the teen father population. It is hoped that through this people will begin to ask more questions about this missing piece of the teen pregnancy equation. If the teen father's story can be told on a personal level and the reasons as

to why they become teen fathers is made clearer, people may take note and begin to realize their importance.

Qualitative research uses words and narrative to report its findings. It takes small, purposeful samples and studies them in great detail. It asks questions that will tell the story of the sample population, so that others can better understand them. Given the level of understanding that presently exists regarding teen fathers, more descriptive research is needed so that people become more aware of them. With this greater awareness, interest grows, new questions are asked and further research is generated. As more information is collected we begin to get a clearer picture of the larger issue, in this case teen pregnancy. It is for the purpose of creating more knowledge and awareness that this research was done. A qualitative research approach was therefore employed in order to present a detailed account of the teen father story.

Sampling Issues

The research design was based on qualitative methods using an in depth open-ended interview format. It was descriptive in nature, with the intent of generating new information about the teen father population.

Michael Patton (1990) states that many of the decisions made regarding research design depend on the study's unit of analysis. David and Chava Nachmias (1987) define units of analysis as: "the entities to which our concepts pertain and which influence subsequent research design, data collection, and data analysis

decisions" (p. 525). The unit of analysis in this research design will consist of individual teen fathers. Given the lack of research involving teen fathers, especially in Canada, the main intent of the study was to ultimately allow each teen father to tell his own individual story. It was hoped that as each teen father shared his views, opinions, and story, a clearer picture of the teen father would come into focus.

One of the glaring differences between quantitative and qualitative research is the issue of sample selection. Quantitative methods rely on large sample sizes which usually employ a random selection process. Random assignment provides for a sample that is of one population; thus it enables one to generalize from the sample to the larger population. Qualitative samples are relatively small and often consist of purposeful sample selection. "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 1990, p.169). Purposeful sampling was therefore seen as an effective technique in attempting to generate more specific information and understanding of the teen father. In using this sampling process cases were selected that offered the greatest insight and understanding of the issue of teen fatherhood. The sample design consisted of a homogeneous sample, made up entirely of teen fathers. Information was gathered by interviewing each member of the sample on an individual basis. The interviewing format will be discussed in greater detail in the next section of this paper.

The sample for the study proved to be quite difficult to

obtain and required a lot of planning and networking with both individuals and organizations. In total seven teen fathers were interviewed, coming from a diverse mixture of programs and/or individual referrals. The original plan was to interview members of a teen father group (8-10 members) that was run out of a local high school in conjunction with a Child and Family Service agency. The plan had been devised as the result of several conversations with a teacher at the school who was interested in this study and believed some of the young men would be willing to participate. After a number of phone calls and a meeting with school personnel I came to learn that none of the teen fathers wished to be interviewed. One of the contact people, the facilitator of the group, stated that he had, on two separate occasions, presented the nature of my study and the opportunity for the teen fathers in the group to share their story. Both times all of the group members stated that they did not wish to take part in the study. Failing this I talked to the coordinator of the infant lab at the same school and asked if any of the teen fathers who participated in the lab would be willing to be interviewed. She stated that there was a good possibility of three or four young men who may interested. Two of the teen fathers agreed to meet with me to discuss the research in greater detail and subsequently, both consented to the interview. Of the two only one of them participated as the other failed to show for the interview due to extenuating personal issues. In the next two weeks attempts were made to re-establish contact with him, however, these proved to be unsuccessful as he

had stopped attending school and moved from his place of residence.

The other six interviewees were obtained from a number of different agencies or specific individuals. Three of them came from a private social service agency, which runs a variety of different programs. These three teen fathers were involved in a vocational program offered by the agency. The three other young fathers were referred respectively from: a down-town youth drop-in centre, a Child and Family Services agency, and through a personal acquaintance whose friend's foster son was a teen father.

The sample size was established according to the availability of teen fathers that were willing to be interviewed. During the interview process attempted were made to add to the sample size by employing a snowball sampling technique. That is, during the interview I would ask the participant if he knew of any other teen fathers that would like to be interviewed. This technique did not prove successful as all the asked participants stated their friends would not be willing to participate. Other subsequent contacts that were made involved the following: high schools with infant labs, parenting programs, Child and Family Service agencies, and private social service agencies. The decision to restrict the sample size to seven was largely determined by the fact that the last five interviews all consisted of eighteen to nineteen year old, involved, teen fathers. Due to the similarities in these referrals a saturation process had taken place and as a result little new information was being generated through these interviews.

The teen father population is, as shown, difficult to access and obtain information from. Patton (1990) states that it is difficult if not impossible to determine what is the right sample size. He provides illustrations of research where great contributions and discoveries were made with sample sizes of one to two subjects. Patton writes: "The validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with information-richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size" (p 185). The sample that was obtained for this study was relatively small, however, it was rich in information and ultimately provided a greater understanding of a specific segment of the teen father population.

Data Collection

The method of data collection for this research study consisted of qualitative interviewing. Michael Patton (1990) states that "we interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe" (p. 278). An interview uncovers issues that only the interviewee can confirm or deny and provides a greater insight into people's feelings, thoughts, and intentions. The interviewee becomes the expert, providing information regarding issues that are specific to his/her individual experiences.

There are three central interview styles in qualitative research: i.) the structured interview: questions are formulated prior to interview, with a fairly strict format and agenda; ii.)

unstructured: the interview format begins with a general question and more specific questions are asked pertaining to the response; and iii.) semi-structured: format is a combination of structured and unstructured (Tutty, Rothery, & Grinnell, 1996). For the purposes of this research a semi-structured interview format was employed. This kind of interview style made it possible to focus on specific themes and questions, yet, it was flexible enough to probe for greater insight into personal experiences and opinions. By employing this kind of strategy it was hoped that the research would have a greater potential of uncovering themes and subsequent insights into teen fatherhood.

Individual interviews provided a good forum to obtain rich descriptive information about a topic that has had very little research attention. While questionnaires are useful for exploring specific themes, the information that is obtained is confined to the parameters of the question. Interviews allow the interviewer to probe for greater clarity and pick-up on details that may have otherwise been missed (Glesne, & Peshkin 1992). Therefore, by employing interviews as the main form of data collection it was possible to obtain a more in depth picture of the teen father.

In order to test the effectiveness of the interview format I conducted one pilot interview. This initial interview allowed me to note any phrasing or wording of interview questions that might need altering in order to obtain a higher quality of responses. After reviewing the interview format with the respondent, studying the tape-recording, and meeting with my advisor, a few alterations

were made to improve the final guide (see Appendix A). These alterations included: a change in the ordering of questions in the Teen Fatherhood section, and using more concrete wording in the questions regarding gender role definition. As mentioned earlier, the questions were designed to elicit both general and specific information with the goal being to facilitate a conducive environment for the teen father to freely tell his individual story.

Central to any research study is the issue of informed consent. Participants in the interview were presented with all the information concerning the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, and given every assurance that their confidentiality and anonymity would be protected. Given that some of the participants were minors, I needed to obtain consent from their legal guardians. The guardians, therefore, needed to be informed of the research and subsequently a letter of research explanation was designed. A sample of the consent form can be found in Appendix B, and a copy of the letter of research explanation in Appendix C.

Reliability and Validity Issues

The reliability and validity of qualitative studies have often come up for debate among researchers. Qualitative research has been labelled as relatively weak in these areas when compared to the objective, statistically based, approach of quantitative study (Patton, 1990; Krefting, 1991; Kielhofner, 1982). Laura Krefting (1991) argues that there are sound assessment tools that are

available to the qualitative researcher that address these issues. She specifically refers to Egon G. Guba's (1981) model of assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research. In his model Guba provides sound assessment techniques which look at validity, reliability and the issue of researcher bias.

Egon G. Guba (1981) states that the issue of validity can be assessed in qualitative inquiry by testing the "truth value" of the researcher's findings. Truth value is the test to see if the researcher has established sufficient confidence in the truth of his findings. The criteria involved in testing truth value are: i.) establishing whether the researcher has spent sufficient time with his/her subjects and degree of familiarity between researcher and subject, ii.) reflexivity, which is the process of the researcher continually checking his/her own bias during the research process, iii.) member checking or asking the subjects to verify the information that you have gathered is correct and accurate, and iv.) using peers to evaluate your work. I employed steps two, three, and four in the interviewing process. As Guba suggests I documented my work to check for any personal bias that might have been skewing the results. I also verified my findings with the teen fathers I interviewed to ensure the information that they shared had been interpreted correctly. The only modification that was made occurred in step four, where I asked my advisor to evaluate my work as opposed to peers.

Reliability can be checked by what Guba (1981) refers to as the "consistency of research", that is, ensuring that your findings

are consistent throughout your study. One method of checking consistency is to record and describe the exact procedures that the researcher used in data gathering, analysis and interpretation. This was done through meetings with my advisor in which we discussed my research strategy to verify the findings. The reliability of my findings was also checked through Guba's "code-recode" method and by using an external coding person (my advisor) to ensure consistency during the analysis stage of the study. These two coding tests will be presented and discussed in greater detail in the next section of this chapter.

Guba's model also addresses the difficulty of researcher bias tainting the research findings, with the result being that they are no longer solely the function of the informants. This can be controlled for by an audit strategy. An audit strategy is a method in which an external auditor checks and critiques the complete history of the research study and looks for potential research bias. This was achieved through regular meetings and consultations with my advisor throughout the research process.

Data Analysis

The central purpose of data analysis is the organizing of information that is gathered during the data collection process into categories and themes which address the original research question (Tutty, Rothery, & Grinnell Jr., 1996). According to these authors, there are two distinct methods which can be used in qualitative data analysis. The first involves looking at the major

themes and patterns in the data and then breaking them down into smaller categories as distinctions occur. The second method takes the opposite approach in that it identifies the different specific or smaller themes in the data and then organizes those with similar meanings into larger categories. After studying these two options in more detail, I chose the second method of data analysis as I believed it better suited my own personal analytical style of thinking.

Having collected the information from the interviews, the first step in analyzing the data was to convert audio recordings into transcript form. Researchers seem to have varied opinions on whether it is important for the researcher to do it him/herself (Tutty, Rothery, & Grinnell, 1996). The general consensus is that the researcher can become more familiar with the data by performing the procedure themselves, however, one must weigh this benefit against the amount of time one can donate to the task. Due to various time constraints I chose to have someone else transcribe the interviews for me. Two of the interviews were of poor sound quality so I ended up transcribing these myself.

Michael Patton (1990) states that the most important detail to remember in analyzing the research data is to remain focused on the original research question. He suggests reviewing the initial steps in your research to clarify what you are looking for in the mounds of data that has been amassed. Once this is done the researcher must establish a clear method of analysis. As mentioned above, I employed the method of locating recurring small themes in

the data and categorizing them in a larger categories. Specifically, this was achieved by using the data analysis method outlined by Tutty, Rothery, and Grinnell (1996).

The analyzing of data began with the identification of meaning units which Tutty, Rothery, and Grinnell (1996) describe as: "segments of information that are the building blocks of a classification scheme. A unit can consist of a single word, a partial or complete sentence, a paragraph, or more." In the first phase of analysis, meaning units were identified in all of the seven transcripts. I then went back to the initial transcript and began the task of first level coding. This entails placing the meaning units into separate categories by assigning descriptive codes to each of the units. Each individual code was given a separate label and recorded into a code book. Once all the meaning units in the first interview had been identified and categorized, the same procedure was repeated with the remaining transcripts. Any new categories that emerged were subsequently labelled and recorded in the code book.

When the first level coding had been completed, two separate reliability checks were used to ensure the accuracy of the findings. The first consisted of Egon Guba's (1981) "code-recode" method, in which I coded three complete transcripts, left them for a couple of weeks, and then re-coded them. The correlation rates for these three re-coded transcripts were: .89, .91, and .93.; which indicate a high degree of reliability. The second test of reliability was an audit strategy, in which I asked my advisor to

code one of the transcripts, using the code book that I had designed. Once he had completed the coding he compared them to the coded transcript that I had provided. This test for inter-rater reliability produced a correlation rate of .78, which although lower than the code-recode method is still a fairly strong indicator of reliability.

After having tested for the reliability of the first level coding, I went on to the next stage of analysis, second-level coding. This procedure involves reviewing the seven transcripts and retrieving all of the meaning units that fit within the same category. This was done through a "cut and paste" method using a Word Perfect 5.1 computer word processing program. All similarly categorized meaning units were "cut" out of each transcript and then "pasted" into a separate document, under their identified heading or code. As Tutty, Rothery, and Grinnell (1996) state: "This process allows you to examine the units in the categories away from any association with the person who originally stated the idea." The completion of second-level coding then made it possible to start interpreting the data on a more abstract level as it had been one-step further removed from the original interviews.

The final step in the data analysis stage consisted of looking for meaning and relationships in the established categories. By studying the meaning units within the various classifications certain themes began to emerge and take shape. These themes then became the basis of theory-building and the eventual reporting of the study's findings and conclusions.

Limitations

Some of the general limitations associated with qualitative methods were identified in the opening chapter. The specific limitations of this study pertaining to sample characteristics and the absence of triangulation are discussed here.

Firstly, given the small sample size, it is difficult to generalize the findings to the larger teen father population. The seven respondents represent a small part of this population; thus the findings can be interpreted only at a descriptive level. The sample also consists only of involved fathers and therefore the data is describing a specific segment of the teen father population. Another limitation of the sample is that four of the seven respondents were nineteen years of age, one was eighteen, one was seventeen and the youngest was fifteen years old. This is a high concentration of respondents (five) who are older, and therefore, possibly more mature. The maturation process may affect their responses and as result the information may not be representative of a younger teen father sample.

The second area of limitation relates to the absence of triangulation. Triangulation is used in qualitative research as a means of validating the research's data. This is achieved by employing a secondary source of information to confirm the primary data that has been collected. This study did not employ a method of triangulation, in that the information that was obtained came only from the fathers that were interviewed. Due to this limitation the possibility exists that the data that was collected

may be biased, as it is told only from the respondents' perspectives.

Summary

This chapter has provided an outline for methodology that was used in this study's research on teen fathers. The majority of studies involving teen pregnancy focus solely on the teen mother and neglect the role of the teen father. This omission has resulted in a lack of understanding about the teen father and subsequently, virtually a complete disregard for researching the issue of teen pregnancy from a teen father perspective. More information is needed regarding the teen father. If the teen pregnancy research focuses only on the teen mother, we are only addressing a portion of the problem.

By employing a basic qualitative research approach this study hoped to "contribute to the fundamental knowledge and theory" (Patton, 1990, p.9) of the teen father phenomena. More descriptive studies are needed in order to tell the personal stories of teen fathers. As more information is amassed, greater awareness will be created, which can, in turn, provide the groundwork for further study, and perhaps new policy, programs, and services for this population.

Chapter Four

Research Findings

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the seven interviews that were conducted. The chapter's sections largely follow the interview format that was used during the data collection process, however, a few alterations have been made so as to improve the flow of the information presented. Direct quotations from the respondents are used in order to provide explicit examples of the reported findings. Quotations were taken from each of the seven interviews with all of the respondents represented in various sections of the chapter. Five of the respondents were, however, more effusive and detailed in their replies; thus for the sake of clarity their responses were used the most. Again the quotes were utilized in order to further substantiate the findings presented in the text and at times one quote is used to represent the views of a number of the respondents.

Demographics

Seven teenage fathers were interviewed. The ages of the boys were as follows: one fifteen year old, one seventeen year old, one eighteen year old and four nineteen year olds. The sample included, five aboriginal young men and two caucasian young men, one of the caucasian youths was of Ukraninan decent the other was a Mennonite.

The majority of the respondents came from low socio-economic

status families, with the exception of one where both of his parents had been employed (father: 20 years/ mother: 10 years) for a number of years at well paying jobs. Three respondents came from families where both parents did not have regular jobs, one where the father was on welfare and the mother had been a janitor for 25 years, and another where the father had seasonal employment and the mother was on social assistance. The remaining respondent lived in a foster home where both of the foster parents had secure full-time jobs. This respondent did have periodic contact with his mother, and he indicated she was unemployed. He had never met or had any contact with his father and therefore had no information about his father's socio-economic status.

Educational/Vocational Experience

The seven respondents were asked questions regarding different aspects of their educational and vocational experiences. Of the seven respondents six had dropped out of school. One of the students had been out of school for three years, two for two years and three had dropped out one year ago. The grade levels of those that had dropped out ranged from grade 9 to 11. The one respondent that was currently in school had been in his present school for one and half years. This respondent reported that he had been expelled from school seven times since September due to not meeting the school's attendance requirements.

None of the seven respondents reported having a very positive school experience. None of them had been involved in any extra-

curricular activities in the school. Attendance problems were a common theme in the respondents school experience due to a lack of motivation (1), influences that had lured them away from school (i.e., friends, partying, crime, alcohol, etc.) (3), problems with the school administration (1), and academic difficulties (2). Only one respondent spoke positively of school, however he stated that his friends had enticed him at that time to skip classes and get involved with other negative activities:

I loved school. The more I regret not going to school, I would have been out of school already. But I met friends that influenced me bad, we went stealing cars and all that. That's what got me in trouble, my friends, bad influences.

At the time of the interviews the majority of the respondents current educational/vocational involvement focused on a vocational theme. As mentioned, there was only one respondent in school at the present time and his main purpose for attending was the vocational component that the school had to offer. Three of the respondents were currently enroled in a work experience program through a private community agency. Two respondents were working full-time and the one remaining was currently unemployed and awaiting a response from the high school he had recently applied to.

The three respondents that were enroled in the work experience program were all happy and excited about the program's possibilities:

You've been there over a month now. And in terms of attendance, do you find it easy to attend?

In my first week, I had perfect attendance. Trying to get perfect attendance.

But you don't mind coming here? It's not a hassle?

No.

What is your goal right now for (vocational program)?

To get a job. Working on a resume for me. So that's why I'm coming.

The respondent currently in school stated that he really enjoyed the vocational training that the school was offering, yet strongly disliked the academic component. When asked his thoughts on school he stated:

It's okay in some ways, but in other ways, it's not that good...Well, shops are okay, and that's about it. I don't really like their academic courses here, because when I do them here, they give me the same work over and over and over, so it's no good for me. I got kicked out of this school about 7 times already.

Of the remaining three respondents the two that were working full-time were happy with their current positions, the other one was not working at the moment and not looking for employment at the time. He stated that he had quit his last work placement assigned to him by welfare and was now awaiting approval for his application to a local high school.

When asked about their future education plans, all six that responded directly to the question wanted to return and obtain their high school diploma. However all identified potential obstacles facing them. These obstacles included: problems with follow through in attending school; not being allowed to attend their previous school; the need for money, including a priority to provide for their child; and difficulties in knowing how to access adult education programs. The need to provide financially was a

priority for each and as a result presently affected their decision to return to school. This is illustrated in the following description:

Well, I was planning to go back but then this last year working at (company name) then (partner's name) got pregnant and then I figured, okay then now I'll probably be working for the rest of my life, you know, until we both get, like maybe further, like when our baby's a little older say (partner's name) gets a full-time job or something and I'm working part time then I can probably go to school part-time, you know, just finish my high school, but for now I'm just going to have to work.

Each respondent had past work experience with the jobs including: working in a lumber yard, painting houses, assisting a relative in commercial fishing, working in a manufacturing plant, sales, pizza delivery, working in bingo halls, and fire-fighting in remote northern communities. Of the two that were presently employed full-time, one worked in a nursing home as a cook's assistant and the other one was a delivery man for a paint company. When asked about their vocational interests each of the respondents had definite ideas of what they would like to do. There were varied interests, however, of note was that each of the job goals mentioned were realistic, not idealistic in nature. When asked about their personal chances of obtaining a job, opinions were divided. Three were very optimistic. While four were not very hopeful, two of the four were now more hopeful due to the vocational program they were in:

It was hard getting this job when I was 16 and 17. So I think it's probably hard for me now too. But hopefully maybe this (vocational program) will get me somewhere.

When asked for their opinion on whether it was hard for males their

age in general to get a job the majority agreed that it was difficult. One was somewhat more optimistic but felt it would be a challenge to get a job you actually liked:

Well, there's no lack of jobs out there. I believe if you're just willing to look hard enough, then you know, keep knocking on all the doors and hopefully you'll walk to the right one. It's just finding something that would be more substantial instead of going to a job that you're going to regret every morning, and get home at the end of the day and being crabby.

As indicated the majority believed that it was very hard for someone their age to get a job. Some of the respondents felt that potential employers were looking for older, more mature, and responsible people. Others cited a lack of education as being the main deterrent in young men their age obtaining a job. One respondent stated he was afraid to go look for a job. When asked why, he stated: "Because I didn't go to school".

Despite their fears and apprehensions all of the respondents were very focused on obtaining a job or maintaining the one that they were in. The priority for each was to be able to provide financially for their partner and child. All agreed that in order to obtain a job you needed to know people who could connect you with employers. It was these kind of connections or the opportunity to be enrolled in vocationally focused programs that the respondents felt greatly improved their chances for getting a job.

As mentioned, past school experiences for the majority of the respondents were not positive. These negative school associations could in the long run form obstacles in their decision to return. Again the major focus of the respondents at this time was to get a job, and for most of them school was not an immediate priority.

Family

The existing literature on teen fatherhood states that family dynamics, environment, and beliefs can be important determining factors in teens becoming fathers. This study, therefore, attempted to get a sense of how the respondents' families had impacted on them. The family make-up of the seven respondents was diverse with each one having his own unique family history. Of the seven respondents two came from a traditional nuclear family, only one of the two was currently living at home. Five of the respondents came from homes where the mother and father were separated, and in some cases the parents had been apart for the better part of the respondents' lives. One of the young men currently lived in a foster home. He did have some contact with his mother, but he had never met his father. Another respondent's father had abandoned him when he was three months old, however, the father had reconnected with him two years ago. Although there was still some contact the relationship at present appeared tenuous. The respondent presently lived in a home with his mother, grandmother, two uncles and his little brother. Of the seven respondents, three had lived with their mother for most of their lives, one had lived with his father since he was eighteen months old, and two had lived with both parents in the home.

All the respondents had siblings, with the largest family consisting of five natural siblings. There was no consistent birth order position in regards to the seven respondents with positions ranging from oldest to youngest. All but two of the respondents

actually lived with all their siblings in the house for the majority of their childhood. Some reported having step siblings they had never met. Of note was the fact that over time there had been a lot of movement and change in the lives of these five families.

Teen parenthood was very prevalent within the families of the teen fathers interviewed. Of the seven respondents, six had other teen parents within their immediate family. Some also had cousins that were teen parents. One respondent had a sister with four children at the age of twenty with the sister having had her first child at age fourteen. Another respondent reported that both he and his whole sibling unit had been teen parents. One respondent stated that his parents had been teen parents, and he believed that this may have been a factor in their being able to eventually accept his teen fatherhood.

There was a great deal of variation in each respondent's sibling living situation. One of respondents was the oldest in the family, with his younger siblings at the ages of five and seven years old. Another lived with his younger 8 year old brother, however, at present had no idea of his older sister's whereabouts or what she was doing. Of the seven respondents' siblings three had their high school diploma and had gone on to post secondary school, one of whom was attending university. The majority of the respondents' older siblings had dropped out of high school and were presently unemployed. Four of the respondents had sisters who were single parents and currently unemployed or collecting welfare

assistance. One of the respondents reported having older brothers who had never really had a job and were involved in the drug culture. Another respondent's older brother was currently serving a seven year sentence in Stony Mountain Penitentiary.

When asked about the relationship with their parents, five of the respondents presented as having a tenuous to negative relationship with their father. One stated that he had a positive relationship with his father yet it appeared as though they did not spend a lot of time together. Another had a positive relationship and had spent a lot of time with his father while growing up. Three of the respondents had a fairly distant relationship with their fathers due to marital break-up or abandonment. One of the respondents stated he had never met his father, while another had been abandoned at three months and had reunited with this father two years ago. He stated that he now saw his father once in a while and the relationship appeared somewhat tenuous. A common theme running through the father/son relationship was that the father figure was not very strong in the respondent's life. Again only two of the respondents spoke about having a positive relationship and learning things from their fathers.

The mother was a more prominent figure in five of the respondents lives, with two of the respondents describing their relationship with their mother as very important in terms of their character development. The respondent who had lived in a foster home for a number of years credited most of the gains he had made to his foster mother's influence and the time he had spent with

her. Four of the respondents stated that they felt like they were closer to their mother than their father. One respondent reported that he had lived with his father for most of his life and that his contact with his mother had been very minimal. Later on in his life he had reconnected with his mother and lived with her for a while however the relationship was strained and he soon moved out. The respondent went on to say that he had remained in contact with her, but she passed away very suddenly, as witnessed in the following quote: "...and then a year later I met (girlfriend's name), and we moved in together. Two days later, she came over, met (girlfriend's name), and passed away. Out of the blue, she was young, 38". Later in the interview, the respondent stated that he wished his mother could have been alive to see his little girl as he was sure she would have enjoyed her. In the majority of the interviews the mother was the parent that was more involved in the respondents' lives and in most cases the more prominent care-giving figure.

Past Influences in Teen Father's Life

The respondents were asked about past influences in their life in order to ascertain, what, if any, part they may have played in their becoming a teen father. All of the respondents were able to mention positive figures or influences present in their life while growing up and in the present. Some of them specifically credited these people with helping them turn their lives around and instilling the personal values that they adhered to in the present:

...but I have another brother, he's not my biological brother, whatever, but I met him through CFS. Actually, he's the biggest role model of my life. When I was living with my father, CFS told him that I'm a lost cause, go spend time with him so we can say we tried. And what happened is we became really good friends. After he stopped working at Child & Family, we still hung out, at hockey games, music events, just a variety of things.

Another respondent spoke about the foster family he had lived with and credited the foster mother as being a major reason for where he was today:

The main thing was because I was with (foster mother's name), they're Christians. I don't think I'd be like this if I wouldn't have been with them...Well, I talked about my problems. I never used to talk about my problems to anyone, like with people and everything, but I could with her.

Some respondents answered the question of influence in their life by talking about people who had negatively influenced them. Four of the respondents stated that they had family members who had been negative role models. This had inspired them to not be like them. One spoke about seeing his uncles in jail and knowing that he did not want to be like them and therefore tried to stay out of trouble. Another talked about how his father had been a model of what not to become and therefore he had tried to do the opposite of his father. Others spoke of looking up to older brothers when they were growing up who were direct negative influences on them. Two spoke of how they had followed their brothers' lead and become involved in delinquent activities and in one case developed a serious drug problem. Both shared however, that they had been able to break free of this influence and were now committed to staying out of trouble and completely separating themselves from that life:

...it was just like hanging around with him. If he'd steal,

he'd give me something. He'd give me some money. I don't know. It's a way of making money. Then I started stealing after that. I quit stealing about a year and half ago. Because I found out my girlfriend's pregnant, I just stopped.

Although all of the respondents could name definite influences in their lives, some found it more difficult to identify hero figures. Three of the respondents stated that they never had hero figures growing up. Others mostly talked about musicians or sports figures who they had idolized and looked up to.

All of the respondents had specific interests or hobbies that they were interested in. Five of them were into sports and enjoyed participating in various sports. Two of the respondents were very interested in music with one stating it was a major part of his life. The remaining respondent liked to draw and construct things with wood. All stated these interests had been important to them growing up and they still enjoyed pursuing them. Most of the participants, however stated that since becoming a father it was quite difficult to continue pursuing these interest due, to the demands of fatherhood.

The respondents' friends were also see as a major influence in their lives. All but one of the respondents felt that their friends had affected them negatively in the past. They stated that most of them had been into partying, drugs and in some cases crime. The definite theme that came through in talking with the respondents was that they had changed a lot in terms of how they viewed their friends and about the values and activities with which they were involved.

I have a lot of friends, most of them, I don't really hang

around with them that much any more cause they just, I don't know it's like all they want to do is score with girls and drink and party and all that crap and I am kind of beyond that so right now it's mostly my work buddies and a couple of friends I talk to now and then...they're more together, you know, you can still talk to them about serious things and you can carry on a conversation...

When asked about what they had talked about with their friends a common response was girls and sex. Four of the respondents reported that a disrespect for girls was a theme in their past conversations with friends.

All of the respondents stated they had friends that were teen parents, and six of them had teen father friends. Five of the respondents stated that their friends had become fathers after them, and one had a friend that became a father before him. Only one of the seven had a friend that had remained involved with the baby. There was a definite sense of disgust regarding the attitude of the friends they knew that were not involved and did not care for their children.

They are just pricks. I don't know. Just like whatever. They don't give a rat's ass about nothing, you know. Same with (girlfriend's name) friends. So that's why we don't really hang around with them that much.

Views on Teenage Sexuality

The respondents were asked some questions on various aspects of teenage sexuality. The questions were designed in order to obtain information on: how sex was discussed amongst friends, birth control, pre-marital sex, and to acquire a general sense of the respondents' attitudes towards sexuality. The first area of questioning concerned the topic of sex. The respondents were asked

who they felt thought more about sex, girls or boys. All seven stated that boys thought about sex more and they also believed that boys talked more about sex. Six of the respondents also reported that among teenage boys there was definite pressure to have sex. There were differing views as to where this pressure came from with one stating that it was society in general. He clarified his point by saying; "it's the 90's" and that everyone was doing it. He referred to movies, television and magazines that all promoted sexual activity and therefore there was pressure to have sex. Four of the respondents stated that the pressure came from friends or peers.

...cause with my friends there was always a couple of guys that were still virgins, right? And they got picked on all the time.

Others also added that the pressure to have sex for teenage boys often just comes from within. That is, as boys reach puberty all they think about is sex, "... it's always on their minds. Like 100% of the day. Like young people think about sex. Well guys anyways." The respondents stated that they felt it was only natural for teenagers to want to have sex and that a lot of teenage boys were acting on that desire.

There were mixed responses when asked who they thought would initiate sex more often, the boy or girl? Three of the respondents stated the male, two felt that both genders would initiate, that is, neither did it more and two stated, that the females initiated it. Of interest was one respondents reasoning as to why the girls would initiate sex more often:

I guess more along the lines of the feeling of rejection, if she rejected you from having sex, how stupid you'd feel and think you'd look, so you let them start everything going on, this way you don't feel stupid.

Later on in the interview process when the respondents were asked who had usually initiated the sexual contact in their previous relationships five of the seven reported that it had been their partner. This came as somewhat of a surprise as it contradicts the stereotype of the boys being the pursuers in sexual relationships (Sonenstein, 1986). As noted above, according to the opinion of five of the seven respondents the females would initiate sexual contact more often or the same number of times as males. This is of particular interest, as all the respondents stated that they felt that boys thought and talked about sex more than girls.

When asked about their views on birth control, all of the respondents stated that it was important to use it. Two of the respondents felt that it was important for teens to use birth control for both the risk of pregnancy and the threat of sexually transmitted diseases [STD's]. The majority mentioned risk of pregnancy as being the most important reason for using birth control. Opinions on who was responsible for ensuring the use of birth control were mixed with one believing it was the female's responsibility, one the male's and the others stating it was the responsibility of both.

Five of the respondents were asked about their views on pre-marital sex. All of them stated that they did not see anything wrong with having sex before marriage. The respondents, however, mentioned that birth control should be used and there should be

mutual consent: "If it feels right and you're both consenting, as long as you're not forcing one another, I don't see anything wrong with it." Two of the respondents talked about the need for a definite commitment and loving the person before having sex.

...you shouldn't do it unless you care about the person, or you feel that there could be some kind of relationship there. You don't have to be married as long as you both care about each other and you want to do it for the feelings not just for the fact to get off because you're horny.

The teen fatherhood experience had not changed any of the respondents' views that there wasn't anything wrong with pre-marital sex. They had, however come to recognize the importance of birth control and realizing that commitment and loving the person needed to be a part of having sex.

Participants' Opposite Sex Relationships

Previous Dating Relationships

In an attempt to find out about past dating patterns and attitudes towards their partners the respondents were asked about their previous dating relationships. Most of the respondents stated that they had started to date between the ages of 10-13. Early dating was usually done in large groups which included: pre-teen dances, parties in private homes, school functions and other group oriented activities. Again, most stated that they were usually not alone with their girlfriend when first beginning to date. The majority stated that their more serious dating started at age 14 or 15. The smallest number of girls dated up to the present by one respondent was 5 and the most was 10. There was no

bravado from any of the participants about how many girls they had dated, no bragging about high numbers or past sexual exploits. Four of the respondents stated they had not dated a lot of girls and none of the young men interviewed stated they felt they had dated a lot of girls. As a whole the group was very respectful in talking about their past relationships without any of the respondents presenting as though numerous sexual conquests were something to take pride in.

Sexual Activity in Previous Relationships

The respondents were also asked about their sexual activity within their previous relationships. Five of the respondents reported having previous sexual relationships prior to their current partner. The two remaining respondents stated they had never had sex (ages 17 and 19) in their past relationships, however both reported having been asked to have sex by a previous girlfriend. Of the seven, four had had more than one sexual partner prior to their current relationship.

Of the five respondents that had sex in their previous relationships, all five stated that there was no prior discussion about having sex. All of them stated that it just happened and no plans were made to actually have sex. As one respondent stated, "We didn't actually talk about it, it just happened, I guess". All five respondents also stated that there was no discussion about birth control, before having sex. Of the five that had sex, only one reported using a condom the first time. He stated that

although there was no discussion around birth control or protection for him it was just the natural thing to do. Another respondent stated that he started to use condoms or be more aware about birth control after his initial sexual encounter. The other three never used protection and no conversation about birth control took place.

Even though only one of the respondents used a condom, all of the respondents stated that they were anxious about getting their girlfriend pregnant or contracting an STD. Again the respondent who used a condom stated it was just a natural thing to do and something he did without thinking:

...It was never from my father, he never ever talked about the birds and the bees, you know. It was more along the lines of public awareness of sex education. That might have contributed to it but personally, I don't know, you want to feel personally safe and secure, so I guess if you're having sex for the first time with a girl you've only been dating for 2 weeks, no matter what, you're going to want protection.

It was difficult to ascertain why the others did not use protection or why there was no discussion about the issue. The only theme that emerged was that it was something that was just not discussed or thought about when the sex occurred. This could be attributed to the "heat of the moment" or the fact that there were never any plans made to have sex. Given the "it just happened" scenario that most of the respondents referred to, not using birth control may be largely attributed to this factor. Of note is that further on in the interview, five of the respondents stated that they preferred not to use condoms during sex, because the condoms were uncomfortable. There was also one respondent who stated he was embarrassed to put them on. Therefore, these reported difficulties

with condom use along with the "heat of the moment" scenario provide some of the reasons for the teens' failure to practice safe sex.

Of note was that one of the more sexually active respondents shared that although he never used a condom and birth control was never discussed, he often worried about his partners becoming pregnant. Even though this is something he worried about, his worry did not result with him practising safe sex. Some of this he attributed to him having sex at parties and either being drunk or high, however he also stated that the topic was just never discussed.

Participant's Current Partner Relationship

The respondents were also asked questions about their current relationship. This was done so as to see how the respondents had changed and to assess the level of commitment to their current partner. All seven of the respondents presented as being very committed to their current partner and wanted these relationships to work out. The respondents had all been with their partners for a considerable length of time, with each one having been in their current relationship for over two years. The longest relationship was three and one half years. At present, five of the respondents lived with their partners and two still lived at home with their parents. The five living with their partners were all eighteen or nineteen years old. The two living at home were fifteen and seventeen and both were making plans to move in with their

girlfriends in the future.

Of note was the level of commitment and strength of most of these relationships. Respondents shared how they and their partners had faced adversity together and survived and how their relationship had grown and strengthened as a result. One respondent shared how his partner's attendance at a women's group had helped them identify problems in their relationship and given them ways of dealing with them more effectively. He also reported that he was learning a lot about himself and his approach to problems and conflict:

Well I'm learning more, because, well, this program my girlfriend's in, and I'm talking more and telling her more what I feel, and when we're fighting, our fights are getting resolved, I'm not just walking out.

Another respondent spoke of many arguments and fights that they had gone through as a couple, yet they still remained together and deeply cared for and loved one another. As mentioned previously, one of respondents had kicked a cocaine habit and he largely attributed his success over the addiction to the support and caring that he had received from his partner. As a whole the relationships of the couples were presented as strong and having been tested at certain points in their time together.

Sexual Relationship with Current Partner

The length of time from the start of the couple's relationship to the first time they had sex ranged from two days to five months. As in their previous relationships there was little discussion regarding having sex prior to the initial encounter. For most of

them it just happened. One respondent reported that there wasn't any formal discussion around having sex, yet plans to have sex were indirectly communicated by talking about spending the night together after a friend's upcoming party. Discussion around birth control was also largely ignored with three respondents using birth control with no discussion, two not using birth control and not discussing the issue, and one reporting using a condom but unsure about any prior discussion. The remaining respondent who stated there had been discussion concerning birth control, reported that his partner had wanted him to use a condom, however he had refused.

All four of the respondents that initially used a condom chose not to at some point in their relationship. The main reason given for this decision was that wearing a condom felt uncomfortable, and therefore, they did not like using them. Some also spoke of the inconvenience of at times not having one available and having sex anyway because they could not be bothered to go out and buy one. When asked if they were thinking about the risk of pregnancy at the time, most stated they didn't really think about it, or their feelings superseded any thoughts of risk: "...mostly at the time there was just more instincts you know. Well feelings overcame smarts..." As well, similar to the classic "personal fable" response that Robinson (1988) speaks to, one respondent also stated that "I didn't think it could happen to me".

Of the seven pregnancies only one was planned. The length of time from the first sexual encounter, with their current partner, to the time of pregnancy ranged from shortly after the first

encounter to 1 1/2 years. For most the pregnancy occurred from 2 to 6 months after the initial time the couple had unprotected sex.

Pregnancy Stage

A crucial time in the teen fatherhood experience is the pregnancy stage. It is during this time that the father (and the mother) go through a whole range of emotions. In most cases the news or realization of the pregnancy comes as a unexpected event therefore is usually a great shock for the teen mother and father. In this study all seven expressed some form of shock or disbelief with the initial realization that their partner was pregnant. One respondent shared that he still felt he was in shock, four months after the birth of his son:

I didn't think of anything. I was shocked. I was with her when she went to the doctor's, she told us some things, but I don't even know what she said. I was really shocked.

How long did it take for the shock to go away?

I don't think I'm over it. I still sometimes don't believe I have a kid.

For the respondent and his partner who had chosen to have a child, even he reported feeling a sense of shock when they found out his partner was pregnant:

Well, I don't know because it wasn't really an unplanned pregnancy. We just weren't really trying or anything to have a baby. (Partner's name) said I think I'll go get a pregnancy test. Boom, she's pregnant. For the whole day, I had butterflies in my stomach and was thinking, okay, nine months to plan, I don't know. In shock. Well, I went with her and we were just, wow, looking at each other constantly and I just knew she had the butterflies in her stomach as well.

After the initial news of the pregnancy, the young fathers

experienced myriad emotions. Four of the participants reported a feeling of fear and anxiety as they were scared of all the unknown events that lay ahead.

Well, I was 17 at the time, just turning 17, I got chilled all over my body I guess, thinking, holy shit what happened? I was surprised man. The first couple of weeks, I didn't believe it. Then I started seeing her belly coming out more, I was like, holy. I thought they were all playing a joke on me, eh. It's not really something you think about when you're not the father, but when it happens. It's hard to look after a kid.

So would you say you were scared?

I was scared, yeah...I was happy, but I was scared to be a dad so young.

Another respondent stated that he was scared of what this meant for his future:

Scared. I knew it was going to be different. Harder.

Three of the other respondents reported that they went into denial. They found it hard to believe and started asking questions about the certainty of the pregnancy or thinking this just can't be true.

Well, I was at (location) when she told me that. And she said, I'm pregnant. I said, you're bullshitting me, you're not pregnant. She said, I am. I said, whatever, man. I couldn't say anything else, I kept repeating that. You're bullshitting me, are you lying, are you sure? That's all I kept saying in my mind. I didn't want to believe it.

A second respondent said:

...when I found out I was going to become a father, I denied it, because (partner's name) she went through her periods and everything, and I was there during those times, so one day she didn't have her period, and I said, what the hell. And she said, (respondent's name) I'm pregnant, and I said, no you're not. I denied it, and next month I was waiting, okay are you going to get your period this time. She never got it. She said I'm pregnant, and I said, no you're not. So we went and had a pregnancy test and we found out she was pregnant, and I was really shocked.

The majority of the respondents knew that the pregnancy would

change their lives forever. All of the respondents realized the gravity of the situation and the emotions they felt were in keeping with the seriousness of what had happened.

...she was a couple of months late and every day she was saying I might be pregnant, I might be pregnant and then one day we just figured okay, fine, that's it, you stopped your period, got a birth control test, right, or home pregnancy test, tried it out and sure enough she was. And then it was still a shock thinking you know, man, now we got to forget school and start working full time and, you know, we're going to be mom and dad soon as we got to find an apartment and all that.

Plans Made After Knowledge of Pregnancy

Amongst all these different emotions and thoughts about the future, plans and decisions need to be made regarding the pregnancy. With the couple being so young different options will be presented to them by the adults around them, as well as the couple themselves. Many teen parents with unexpected pregnancies feel that the baby will alter their lives so much that they decide to have an abortion early on in the pregnancy. Others carry the baby to term, however, given the many constraints that face the young parents, they decide to give the baby up for adoption. The seven respondents were asked about the plans that were made after the knowledge of the pregnancy. How did they come to the decision to keep the baby and did the fathers feel included in this decision? All of the fathers reported that they were definitely involved in the plan to keep the baby.

Yeah we talked. We didn't want an abortion. We were thinking about adoption, and we were thinking of, she didn't want me to get stuck, so she thought that she'd let me go. I didn't want that. I said the same thing to her, I said I didn't want to

hold you down, I'll take the baby and move away because you're young; we're both young. I was going to move to (location) and so my mom could help me, but we both thought we should keep it.

As with the example above, alternative options were discussed yet in the end the decision in all seven cases was to keep the baby. One respondent spoke of how his initial feelings were for his partner to have an abortion, however when she stated that she did not believe in abortions, he reconsidered. When asked about how he felt at first about his partner's stance on abortion, he stated he was disappointed and felt down about it. He stated that after having given it some thought he decided to support her with that decision and when the baby was born he was very happy about the choice.

We talked about it once in a while. I don't know, like do you want an abortion? I don't care, I wouldn't mind if you had an abortion, but if you don't want one, then that's okay. She said, I don't want an abortion, I don't believe in abortions. Okay, that's when I started staying with her, it's our kid.

Did you feel okay with that?

In a way I didn't. I was kind of upset at first, what do I do? Sometimes in life you have to respect what comes to you, I guess.

So were you part of that decision too?

I was part of the decision.

So when she said that she didn't want an abortion ...

I felt kind of down.

Would you have wanted that to happen?

In a way I did, but when I see her now, I would have regretted it. So I'm glad she didn't. I'm glad.

Unlike the two cases above, the remaining five respondents stated

that they never discussed other options, the decision was always to keep the baby.

The Reaction of Family and Friends to the Pregnancy

Along with all the thoughts and feelings experienced by the father and mother, comes the task of dealing with the reaction of family and friends about the pregnancy. Unlike most pregnancies where the reaction is usually positive and one of surprise and elation, teen pregnancy announcements are often met with displeasure, projection of guilt, and anxiety for the couple. The majority of the respondents stated that their families' initial reaction was one of being upset and anxious about what this meant for the couple's future. Most of them also reported a mixture of reactions from the family as a whole with some being happy at the news (usually siblings) and others being upset. All seven, however, stated that after some time had passed the initial feelings of upset and anxiety changed to support and problem-solving around future planning.

My family's reaction was, they were really shocked. Some of them, like my mom was happy, my little brother was happy, my uncles were happy, but my granny she was mad. She was really, really ticked off at me. Then after I told my aunties, some of them were happy, some of them were not. So I had a lot of people after me, giving me heck, and telling me I shouldn't ought to have did that and stuff like that.

The reaction from the friends was again mixed with only one respondent stating that his friends were happy for him. The prevailing theme was that the friends did not seem to understand the position taken by the teen father (i.e., staying involved),

with some friends mocking one respondent:

They laughed at me. You're stuck. You have a kid already. They laughed at me, you're shackled up aren't you now. Can't have fun any more, can't do what you want, can't party any more.

Others tried to convince a respondent to leave his girlfriend and not take care of the baby:

Well most of them were like, you're screwed now, your social life's over. Well, you don't have to do nothing you know, you don't have to take care of the baby, whatever. Some of them said that, some of them just expected, well some of them I'm not too close to, they said, well you could just say, well screw her and just find another girlfriend. It's no big deal, or whatever.

Some of the respondents reported that at the time of the pregnancy they had already lost touch with their friends, and did not care about how they felt about the pregnancy.

Teen Father's Involvement During the Pregnancy

After having made the decision to keep the baby, and having experienced the initial reactions from friends and family, thoughts and planning turn to what needs to be done before the baby's birth. In many ways the pregnancy stage is a time when the father can feel more distant from the experience as the mother goes through the many physical and emotional changes that are completely separate from him. The respondents were therefore asked about their involvement through the pregnancy and if they felt included in the planning and process.

All seven were very involved and felt included in the pregnancy stage. Three of the respondents lived with their partners throughout the pregnancy, while three lived together with

parents for part of the time. Only one partner lived with her parent the entire time. This was the partner to the youngest participant in the study (14 at the time of pregnancy). The respondents attended prenatal classes with their partners, with some reporting that even though they were very bored with the classes, they felt it important to attend. The respondents also reported attending some of the medical pre-natal appointments and sharing the experience of the first heartbeat or first image of the baby on the ultra-sound.

I like taking her because then I feel more involved and especially ultrasounds, you see the little baby on the screen, you can see it moving around, and you know that baby is in her stomach and you'll be holding him soon. That's my boy right there. The first time I found out it was a boy, I just flipped out. The nurse even said, whatever, (partner's name) you better calm your boyfriend down, he won't be able to get out the door with his head that swollen. So I said, I get the point.

Of the six respondents whose babies were already born, all of them were present (as were the plans for the expectant father) in the delivery room, and experienced the birth of their child. Each one spoke of the amazing rush of emotions they felt during this time. One spoke of it being a life changing experience and something that could not be duplicated.

Yeah, right from (partner's name) she went to my arms. Then I remember, right from (partner's name) into my arms, I went to (partner's name) and we held her together and that's when we both broke down. It was the most amazing moment in my life, and I tell you, I could play in front of a 100,000 people. I still wouldn't feel the way I felt that one day.

Being a part of the delivery was something that was totally new for each father and the experience was one they could have never predicted. The actual event was therefore filled with much awe and

an overwhelming rush of emotions and reactions. One respondent noted:

...I was freaking out. The first time I saw my boy when he came out, I freaked out. I didn't realize when they come they were going to be blue, so I was freaking, saying what the heck is this. I was freaking out. They said, the colour will come in, the colour will come in. He's alive. I was thinking, he'd better be. It was cool, though. I liked it. He was screaming as soon as he came out, but I was just thinking what the heck's the matter with him, because of his colour.

Another commented as follows:

Weird. It was very weird, cause I have never seen anyone give birth and that was my first time.

Still another talked about some of the contrasting emotions he had experienced:

...cause I was in the labour room with my daughter when she was born. I got two pictures. When I was in the labour room with (partner's name), seeing her lying in that bed sleeping so peacefully and going through her contractions perfectly, I was happy. But since she went into labour, I didn't really like it because she was pushing, she was screaming, she was swearing, everything. She pushed me away and I felt really bad for her. Her mother told me, don't feel bad if she pushes you away, it's just a reaction.

The respondent who was still awaiting the birth of his child stated that he had very definite plans of being present at the delivery.

Oh yeah, for sure. I'll be by her side 24 hours, I don't care who tells me, I don't care if the doctors kick me out, I'm not leaving, they're going to have to drag me out kicking and screaming.

All of the respondents spoke of their role in the pregnancy stage as something they wanted to be a part of. As is portrayed in some of the comments above each one of the respondent's bond and sense of responsibility grew as a result of the experience.

Teen Fatherhood Experience

Among the seven respondents the length of time of being a teen father varied from two years to one expecting a baby shortly. The father of the two year old was one of the younger participants in the study. He was seventeen years old at the time of the interview. The five remaining respondents' babies had all been born within the past year, their ages included: nine months, eight months, six months, five months and four months. One of the fathers reported that he kept in contact with another child, whom he believed was his child. This young boy was three years old and lived with the respondent's former partner's mother. Another respondent was supporting his partner's two-year old daughter from a previous relationship, who had lived with the couple since he moved in when she was five months old. The respondent reported that his step-daughter's biological father had inconsistent contact and hardly ever saw his child.

Changes Brought About By Teen Fatherhood

Each respondent was asked the question "How has being a teen father changed you?" All of the respondents stated that they believed that they were more responsible since becoming teen fathers. Things that had not mattered to them before, now mattered (i.e., jobs, education, parenting skills) and behaviours that they admitted they were guilty of in the past now irritated them when they saw others engaging in them. Each spoke of a definite maturing process that had taken place which had caused them to

think and act differently and more responsibly. One respondent talked about his determination to find a job:

...Like I would never have gone out and got a job so quickly. I wouldn't really care for work. I don't know, it's brought a lot of responsibility into my life, made me grow up a lot more. It really helps me to look for motivation to upgrade myself and really educate myself.

Another respondent spoke about a specific change in behaviour:

..... mostly it's because of the baby, because I drive an '82 Camaro right now, t-tops, 4 speed standard. I love that car, it took me to the beach a 100 times, cruising with the t-tops off, you know, smoking other cars at red lights, because even if they got bigger engines, I'll cut off cars or whatever. But now it's like, none of that, I'm going to be a parent soon. And it actually pisses me off if I got my nephew in the car or something, and I'm driving, and then some guy goes through a red light or stop sign, or they're squealing off at the red light with another car which I used to do all the time. But now, I get so mad, because what would happen if you spun out and hit my car and something happens to my nephew. You'd be kissing my exhaust system.

Each of the respondents reported that since becoming a teen father they did not go to and were not even interested in going to parties like they had been in the past. All of the respondents stated that they had been involved in partying in the past, and in many cases it was the main social outlet or function. Each one of the young men shared that drinking, drugs and wild parties was something they saw as somewhat juvenile and a waste of time.

I'm not partying. I don't party any more, because I have two kids to look after, and I want to see them grow and I want to see them get an education. When they're 15, 16 years old, I'll be about 34, 33 years old. I'll be young still. And they can come to me, have someone to look up to.

All of the respondents also mentioned that becoming a father had kept them out of trouble. Three of the respondents had been affiliated with street gangs, however, since becoming a father they

had stopped hanging out with these people.

Well, I just stuck with the gang. I guess I never really had a choice what to do. Now I guess I do. Now I'm trying to straighten my life, on a straight track. Going my own way.

Asked whether he credited that to his son he replied: "That's all I look forward to."

Some of the other respondents who had not been involved in gang activity also stated that being a father had made them think twice about going out with friends at certain times.

Well, I think of my kid before I think about me. Like if my friends are going out or doing something bad, I just won't go out and say no I don't want to do that. And show my daughter what's good and what's not, like be a role model for her.

One of the respondents also shared that he had successfully kicked a serious addiction to cocaine. He stated that the strength to so largely came from the love and commitment of his partner and the love that he had for his young boy:

When I was doing coke, she was with me through the whole thing, she'd try to pull me away, she was crying and all this stuff. Cared for me too much I guess. I just stopped one day for her and my boy. That was pretty good.

Most of the changes were stated in the positive sense and each one of them felt better about themselves because of the changes they had made.

However, there were things that had changed that had a negative effect on their personal lives. One of the respondents spoke of the loss of freedom since becoming a father and how the responsibility of supporting his partner and child at times caused him to yearn for the care-free life of adolescence he had once experienced:

You've got no freedom, you can't go and take all your money and go buy whatever you used to do. You can't go to the store and buy yourself a lot of junk food because you have your daughter to buy for first, so you get her stuff first, then you've got to get your own. You're left with only \$2, that's only a drink. It's really hard to be a teen father.

Another teen father spoke about how taking care of his child took away time from the things that he had enjoyed doing in the past. During the interview he had talked about a memorable snowboarding trip to British Columbia with his foster brother. Later on he stated that given his present situation he probably would not be able to do something like that again. He also enjoyed painting and working with wood, however when asked if he was pursuing those interest of late, he replied: "Umm, yeah, but, like my girlfriend, she needs my help too. The baby takes a lot of time. One person can't do it all."

Of note was how the focus of the teens had changed since becoming fathers. In a time when teenage boys are concerned about such things as cars, parties, sports, and friends, these young men were concentrating on how they would get a job so as to provide the basic necessities for their partner and child. Each one of the respondents spoke about how they felt responsible to be able to provide for their family and how that is all that mattered right now.

Yeah, I would like to get my grade 12, but if I can't get it, I can't get it. I'll just go work in a warehouse or something. Get some kind of job that pays me cash or something. I don't really care about my future. I just care about my daughter's future right now, that's all I care about.

Respondents' Opinions on Contributing Factors to Teen Fatherhood

When asked if they thought there had been any contributing factors in their lives that had played a part in their becoming a teen father, most of them felt that it had just happened. Of the seven respondents five believed that there was nothing in their past or current lives that had contributed to their becoming teen fathers. Of the remaining two, one had decided with his partner to have a child. He stated that his partner had told him she would like to have a baby and because he had complete confidence in her to care for the child he had agreed to it.

The other respondent came from a religious background and although he stated he didn't fully believe this, a big part of him thought that it was God's way of having him slow down. The respondent shared that he and his partner had become very involved in the party scene and the pattern their lives were taking was extremely negative. His upbringing therefore caused him to wonder if God had allowed this to happen knowing they would straighten out their lives:

Our parents are, they go to church, they're, we're Mennonites, I'm Mennonite so, my parents they go to church, they read the Bible every night, praying every night, so I think it might have something to do with it. Some of that's rubbed off on me a little bit, so I think that might have something to do with it, that God was trying to tell us, you know, grow up. You're going to screw everything up. Like, it started turning, it's still love, it started turning to obsession, you know, so we couldn't spend time without each other, we did, we were pissed off and started snapping at everybody and swinging. So it might be, I think maybe it's kind of a way to let us know, you know, straighten yourselves out or you're not going to be walking. Like with all the drinking and everything, I don't know, we might not even be standing here, you know.

Supports From the Family

Family support is a critical component in the success of any undertaking of a child or adolescent. The respondents in the study were asked in what ways (if any) were their family members supportive regarding their teen fatherhood experience. All seven respondents stated that they had received support from their families in a variety of ways. One respondent talked about being helped out financially, as well as receiving emotional support:

Yeah, like financially, and if (partner's name) upset, her parents will talk to her, my mom will talk to her, she can always talk to my sisters, you know, they're always around, someone to talk to, and borrow money off of, and they're always buying baby stuff, and now they're really into it.

Another spoke about receiving some much needed child-care from an older sibling:

Yeah. If we need to go shopping, and we can't take our boy, my sister watches him. We just take him upstairs and she watches him for me for half an hour while we go shopping. She always asks us to stay up there or something. She has a computer too. They always come down to play my 64 too. It's pretty nice, I guess.

Three of the respondents reported that they had lived with either their own or their partner's parents during part of the pregnancy. Two of the respondents' partners still lived with their parents and the fathers lived with his parents. Each of the respondents had strong family support networks built in from either the respondent's family or the partner's and in some cases both. The support would come from both parents and older siblings, with siblings often providing child-care for the couple.

Changes in Relationships With Friends

The respondents were also asked how teen fatherhood had changed the relationship with their friends. All seven respondents stated that they now spent less time with their friends. The majority of them reported that they felt that fatherhood had changed their priorities and how they viewed life, and subsequently they found it hard to relate to what their friends were doing. Some stated that they just "weren't into" what their friends were and there had been a shift in their own thinking. When asked if friends ever came over and asked him to go out and party, one respondent answered:

Yeah, my friends, they do that once in a while. They say, do you want to come over and party somewhere. I say, I don't have time for that...Kids, they say, why doesn't your girlfriend look after them. I say, can't do that because they need me. And they get upset with me and they just laugh at me. I just say, whatever.

As witnessed in the following quotes, the attitudes and interests of the respondents had changed considerably since becoming fathers. Activities they had participated in with friends, that were once a feature part of their lives, were now viewed as negative influences and something they did not want to do. One respondent described these changes in the following way:

We got high most of the time. Got high, played games and stuff like that. Played basketball. When they weren't doing that, I guess they were stealing. Now all I do is, is hang around with my girlfriend. Don't go nowhere, stay at her mom's, or else we go home and stay home. That's all I do now. Never go nowhere.

Another stated:

...It changed me a lot, because I know a lot of my friends they always go out, go and do this and do that. I tell them

it's not worth it man, you're going to do that and you're going to get yourself in trouble. Because I got myself in trouble doing the same thing they go out to do anyway.

One of respondent's long time relationship almost ended when his big brother figure disagreed with the couple's decision to keep the baby. The Big Brother felt that an adoption or abortion would be a better plan, however the respondent disagreed and a rift in the relationship resulted. The following was the response given to the Big Brother:

Mine was no, that's not going to happen. That's not what we're going for, that's not what we're going to do. On the other hand, it really made the relationship between (partner's name) and (Big Brother's name) sour...I didn't see him for a long time after that.

Teen Father's Current Involvement with Child and Mother

In terms of the respondent's current involvement with the child and mother, five of the respondents lived with the mother and child while two still lived at home while their partners lived with their own parents. The two respondents that were not living with the partners were the two youngest fathers; both were under 18. All seven were very involved with the child and shared many of the child-care duties with their partners. One respondent shared his most recent experience of staying up with his son who was suffering from a bad cold:

It's deadly having kids that young. I like it but sometimes you can't sleep at night. Like the last 3 days in a row, I was up at 4 in the morning...Like he'd be crying because he has a cold. He's had a cold for 2 weeks already. So he's crying and crying. So I was up until 4 then I woke up my old lady after and I'd get some sleep. So I didn't really get that much sleep.

Another respondent described how his partner and he shared the child-care responsibilities so that he could go to work and in turn she was able to attend school.

The majority of the fathers were closely involved with their children and took great delight in seeing their children grow and develop:

...so for the child, it's going to be a different upbringing for her because she's going to be surrounded by nothing but music. Like her mother's a drummer, her father's a guitar player, and she already likes to pick up a set of sticks and banging on the drums already, so it's kind of neat, seeing a 9 month old baby on the drum set...It's funny, she'll sit on her mother's lap and play along with her mother. She'll have the sticks, she gets in her mother's way, but it's fun to do that once in a while just for the fun of it. She has to wear these big earmuffs over her ears so she doesn't hurt her hearing or anything like that. Sort of a family thing.

As mentioned previously of the seven fathers, one father was supporting a two year old step-daughter who he lived with since she was five months old. Another father was supporting and keeping in contact with a three year old boy who he believed was his son. These two relationships were in addition to the children they had with their current partners.

All seven respondents were committed to staying involved with the child and mother. The majority of the teen fathers gained a sense of pride in staying involved and being responsible. They all stated that it felt good to contribute and that they had surprised themselves in terms of what they had accomplished thus far.

Like I'm the one that pays the bills and I bring most of the groceries in, look after my boy, and I like doing that now. That's what I do now. I have responsibilities.

So did you think, are you proud of what you can do now?

Yeah, I'm proud of it.

And what's that like, taking care of a little boy?

I like it.

What's it like if you're tired, you don't feel tired when you're with him, it's different?

I don't really feel tired. I just love him too much.

You don't feel frustrated when he's crying?

No. I'm not frustrated at all...I wasn't really ready but as soon as it came, I was ready. I was looking forward to it. Maybe the first month I was tripping every day, oh, what's going on. Then I was looking forward to it. Now I just love my son.

All seven of the respondents stated that leaving was never an option, the child was their responsibility, they had to stay.

...because it doesn't matter really, it's still your kid. It doesn't matter who the girl is or how you feel about her, it takes two to make a baby, not the girl, you know, you're just as responsible as she is, so even if you're not together and if you're not doing it together, you still have responsibilities, it's not all hers. And I've even talked to some of them and told them, you know, screw them, I don't care if he's my best friend, I don't care if he's not going to take care of the baby, he's not going to be there for you, or at least his kid and not going to do stuff for him, make him pay child support. He's on welfare, make him pay all his money to you, you know, it's still your baby. It doesn't matter, I mean really, can a girl get pregnant by herself?

Even though all of the respondents accepted the responsibility of fatherhood, some expressed duelling emotions of regret for the loss of freedom since becoming a father, but happiness for having the child in their life. For although they loved the child very much there was still a part of them that knew they were missing out on things and at times yearned for the freedom of their peers.

...I wish, for me, I wish I was still single. I look back in the past and I think once in a while, I got myself caught up in this. I wish I could change it, I wish I could change the

past, but I can't.

How are you about you can't change the past?

I feel good about it. I don't regret it at all.

It sounds like you don't regret it, but there's a part of you that you would like to change it?

Half of me regrets it, and half of me don't.

Some of the fathers stated that the reason they stayed involved with their child was that they did not want to repeat what their father had done to them. Specifically, some of the respondents stated that they had grown up without a father and had always wished that he had been around. They therefore were determined to be there for their own child and be the father they never had.

Well, yeah, I am committed to stay. Because what happened to me when I was a little kid, I was abandoned by my father, so I really didn't have nobody to look up to ever since I was a little kid, so I do want my daughter to look up to me and if me and my girlfriend do break up, I will go and see my daughter. I told (girlfriend's name) that if we broke up one of these days, I will come by to, I'll pay child support and I will help you get whatever you need for her. And I will come and visit her.

The reoccurring theme in my conversations with these young men was that leaving and not caring for the child just was not something they thought about. A bond had developed, through the pregnancy and for those (six of them) who had experienced the child's birth an even greater realization that this child was their responsibility.

...they can't look at it as being a bad thing. Like as I said, I'm being optimistic about this. This is a great thing, it's not everyone who can have a child. I've got a healthy, mature woman, a healthy mature child, not mature but ... It's probably the greatest thing that's ever going to happen to me. And it happened early, but it's still great.

Most Important Thing Learned Since Become a Teen Father

As noted above, all of the respondents stated that their lives had changed a lot since becoming a father. They viewed things differently and were focused on providing and doing what was best for their child. Each respondent was asked what was the most important thing they had learned since becoming a father. The responses varied and two were unable to articulate what the most important thing was. Two stated that they had learned that they could handle the responsibility of taking care of a young baby.

The most important thing I learned about myself would be that I can take on quite a bit of responsibility at one time. Because I didn't think I could take on this many responsibilities, cause at first I didn't think I could look after a baby,.....

One respondent spoke of how he was amazed at how much he loved his little girl. He clearly articulated that he would have never dreamed that he could love and care for someone this much.

Well, it's just my willingness to open up to, just taking a lot of time from what I love doing, music, and putting it all towards this one little child that's sitting there and looks at you and calls you dada. A couple of examples, I can't stand when, she often chokes, I get the worst feeling in the world. I just hate it, it's the worst thing. Sometimes I really hate loving her so much, I don't know if I'm wording that right because it sounds horrible, but because it just scares you so much that she could get hurt or anything. Or if she falls down, because she's starting to crawl now, and hurts herself, you feel so bad. Loving her and caring for her so much puts a lot of stress on you.....Feelings for your own child is really amazing, you never thought they existed until you actually have your own. I guess sometimes it still hasn't hit me that I'm a father. Other times, it's like, wow, I'm an actual father, this is my child sitting next to me, bouncing on my lap, calling me dada. It's an eye-opening experience.

Another respondent talked about how he had learned to be more sensitive to a woman's needs. He stated that through living

together, going through various struggles and situations he had really learned to better understand what women must go through and to be more sensitive to them. One respondent also shared how the most important thing he learned was to take life more seriously and to be more respectful of other people's feelings. He stated that he had come to realize that it wasn't all about him and that he needed to be mindful of others.

Opinions and Message Regarding Teen Pregnancy

The respondents were asked about their views on teen pregnancy and specifically about teen fatherhood. What was their perception of other teen fathers? Were other teen fathers involved to the extent that they were? The participants were asked if they were aware of any other teen fathers or what their knowledge was in regards to the teen fatherhood issue. The responses were varied with some citing cases where the father had stayed involved, however the majority of them felt that most teen fathers did not care. They stated that they knew of pregnancies that had occurred at parties or because the guy just wanted to have sex. In these cases the father usually did not stay involved. One respondent stated that a lack of commitment and love between the mother and father was the reason some fathers didn't stay.

...He even knew she was dumb and annoying and they both wanted sex, so they did it.

Is that the difference do you think?

That they didn't know the person? yeah.

Why do you think that is?

Because it was just about sex...it was a one night thing.

Another respondent concurred with this statement saying that a lot of his friends were just in it for a good time. They liked to party and usually sex was involved and if their partner became pregnant they did not feel there was any reason for them to take responsibility.

The difference is their mind is gone, and they took up a lot and their brains are just shot. And they think it's a joke, going and getting girls knocked up...I know guys like that, yeah. I know guys that get girls pregnant and leave them.

One respondent thought that it was the fear of the responsibility that lay ahead that caused them not to stay involved. Others agreed stating that some young fathers were unable to handle what was expected of them and therefore chose not to be involved at all.

If there's a guy out there that doesn't want to settle down, I just don't think he's ready for responsibility. I think he'd probably be more scared and fear is common for sure. Even with older people, 28, 29, I'm sure they're scared too, and I'm sure they've taken off too. I guess it would be more fear.

The same respondent, however, felt that often teen fathers get stereotyped as irresponsible and as not sticking around to help support the mother and child.

Like I recently, my best friend I grew up with, (friend's name), he just had a baby himself and you could tell it wasn't planned. He's not too happy about it, but he's doing it, you know, he's not going to back out. Cause people often, I guess the fathers in young pregnancies are stereotyped as, oh, they're just going to leave. Typical of a male... And it was really different because when I was walking around on the weekend, you know, I'd have 2 days off and walking around with my child and my girlfriend, I felt really good about walking around, eh. People would still look at you and think, yeah, they're probably mooching off the system and letting our tax dollar go.

The responses to the question of their knowledge about other teen fathers, clearly brought out some passionate thoughts and opinions. All agreed that it was the teen father's responsibility to stay involved and support the mother and the child. All were not impressed with the lack of follow through from some of the teen fathers they knew, and as mentioned, they felt that they were stereotyped as a result. There was a sense of pride in each for having made the decision to stay involved with their child.

The respondents were asked what their message would be to other teenagers regarding sex. All seven stated that their message would be to use birth control and be careful, because being a teen parent is difficult. One respondent talked about the commitment involved in being a teen father:

Well, if he's not ready to put his whole life towards this child, then give 80% of his attention, and only keep 20 to himself, and he's not ready to go work and be supportive and be there; use a condom. That's about the closest thing I could say.

Another spoke about needing to be ready for the changes that teen fatherhood would bring to your life:

I'd say use birth control. If you're not going to use it, be ready for what comes. Being a father is not as easy as it looks, it's pretty hard. There is a lot of things to do with having a baby. That's the way I see it.

A third respondent talked about the sacrifices that were required of a teen parent:

Have safe sex, use a condom, use birth control if you are going to have sex. Cause, it does, for some people it does screw up their lives, well not really screw up their lives, but they can't go to school cause they got to stay home and watch their kid.

Each of the respondents also shared that if you are not using a

condom or some form of birth control you should be prepared for the consequences. All of them agreed that having sex was a big decision and there needed to be some commitment involved before going ahead with it.

I do think that a guy should wait a long time before you become a teen father, they should stay with their girlfriend because they go through a lot too, they feel tied down, pressured, and they have no one to take it out on, because they feel tied down with their kid, wait until you can stick with the person.

All of the respondents had definitely changed their attitude towards sex, with each one seeing it as a serious step in a relationship. Their message to teenagers was clear, get to know your partner, make sure you love them and are committed to them, and most importantly practice safe sex.

Gender Definition

A specific area of this study's focus was on the teen father's views and beliefs regarding gender role definition. Questions were asked in hope of finding specific patterns in the male-female relationship and exploring whether these patterns were related to teen fatherhood.

When asked what characteristics they admired in a man, being a good provider was a common theme that ran through the responses. The participants stated that a man should be able to provide financially for their family and do so in a hard-working honest manner. Of note was that a lot of the responses also made references to being a good father, a supportive partner, and treating your partner with respect. The respondents voiced

feelings of disgust and anger when sharing stories involving teen fathers who did not stay involved with their children. There were similar feelings associated with men who were disrespectful to their partners, along with impassioned feelings relating to abusive males. As witnessed in the following quote, a respondent's tone often changed to one of anger when the abuse issue came up: "Someone that does that man, like he ain't no man, he's just a.... Can I swear? He's a fucking goof man, a fucking goof, at least that's the way I see it".

Some of the respondents also shared their views on equal division of labour within the household, breaking the stereotypical model the male as the sole provider and the female the primary care-giver. Other characteristics admired in a man included: the importance of commitment, loyalty, and the role of a male as a caring father and partner.

The respondents were also asked about their definition of a successful man. Here the answers were consistently about being financially successful and having a good job. Attaining a high school diploma (at minimum) or educational training was also viewed as something symbolizing success. Most of the respondents also stated the importance of being able to be independent of the welfare system and earning your money through hard work. Again, the main theme of their definition of a successful man was being a good provider and responsible in family matters.

When asked where these concepts of maleness had come from or what they believed had most influenced their beliefs in this area,

most of them stated that they were merely doing the opposite of what they saw as negative influences. Some of the respondents shared having male figures in their lives, either fathers or brothers who had come to symbolize that which they did not want to become: "...so, him as a parent, what he did was - his parenting skills were more based on what I can watch him do, so I know what not to do. Not to follow in his footsteps". Others also talked about having gone through earlier experiences which had in a sense "woke them up" regarding doing what was right and not getting into trouble: "...No, I didn't want to go to any Manitoba Youth Centre or anything like that. I don't ever want to go to jail, so I quit stealing, I quit fighting, I quit a whole lot of stuff". Apart from one respondent most of the them shared that what they had learned came from having either experienced or witnessed that which they did not want to become.

Participants were also asked about what characteristics they admired in a woman. Somewhat surprisingly physical looks or appearance were only mentioned by one respondent and he later on stated that this was by no means the most important characteristic. Having a partner that was caring was the most consistent answer regarding what was important in a woman. Responses also indicated that most of the participants admired women who spoke their mind and had a sense of independence and a strong sense of self, as witnessed in the following quote:

Mostly if they are outgoing, you know. Speak their mind. Don't care about hurting other people's feelings. I know it's kind of harsh but that's how my girlfriend was when I met her, you know. Most of my friends thought she was a bitch but I

would straighten them out quick 'cause she just said how she felt things, you know. She didn't pretend to be so nice if she wasn't and if she was in a bad mood she would show she was in a bad mood...

Another talked about women sharing in the provider role:

I guess even career orientated, instead of having a patriarchal society where they want to be barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen. Self-thought, independence.

In all the information that was collected on gender definition was not of the stereotypical nature that this author believed he would receive. The responses indicated a high level of respect for their partners, as well as viewing women as being strong and independent. The male characteristics that were admired by the respondents also represented a non-traditional definition of what it meant to be a man.

Chapter Five

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this research study was to achieve a greater understanding of the teen father. By employing an exploratory research model the study attempted to answer the question: What are some of the common characteristics that teen fathers share? In addition to this general question the study also wanted to know: What, if any, part does the teen father's concept of maleness play in their becoming a teen father? These two questions were the guiding influence as the research was designed and then later put into action. This section will discuss the findings that were obtained through the study and how they apply to these two questions.

The initial section reviews the sample that was gathered and how it dictated the direction of the research. In conducting exploratory research the study often evolves as the sample is created and information is collected. In short, the participants in the study lead the research, at times, to places that are unexpected. Such was the case with this study where the information that evolved was not predicted, however, it provided some valuable insight into a specific segment of the teen father population.

The next four sections in the chapter describe and discuss some of the research's significant findings and their implications to the teen father phenomena. The chapter then concludes with a summary of the research and some recommendations for policy,

practice and future study involving teen fathers.

Sample Representation

The sample that was used in this study is not truly representative of the teen father population in general. The original intent was to interview teen fathers who were both involved and uninvolved with their child. In fact the plan was to obtain information from both of these segments of the population thereby enabling me to do a comparison of the responses. As I began to reach out to various individuals and organizations, I soon came to learn that all of the teen fathers that were referred to me were involved with their children. This was something that I had not expected when I originally drafted the research proposal for this study. I, had assumed, due to the stereotype that exists about teen fathers, that most of the fathers I interviewed would not be involved and would have an aloof attitude towards their children and the role as father. This was definitely not the case.

Through the interview process my initial assumption that many teen fathers were not involved with their children was, however, confirmed. Many of the teen fathers interviewed either reported having friends who were uninvolved or knew of specific cases where the father felt no sense of responsibility toward his child. I therefore knew that the sample that I was working with was only a segment of the target population. In reviewing the study's sample-gathering procedure, I concluded that where I obtained the

interviewees did not have a bearing on the fact that they were all involved. Only one of the respondents was a referral from an organization that specifically worked with parenting issues. The others were either from work/education programs, Child and Family Services referrals, a downtown teen drop-in centre, or through personal contacts with people involved in the social services field. Given the fact that only one of the fathers was affiliated with a parenting program the chances of obtaining uninvolved fathers in the sample appeared to be fairly high. The diverse backgrounds of the referral sources also increased the likelihood of acquiring a good mix of interview candidates. The sample, however, consisted only of involved teen fathers.

One possible reason for this sampling characteristic is that teen fathers that are not involved in caring for their children may not want to participate in an interview process. This hypothesis was seemingly proven when my attempt to gain access to them failed. I asked some of the participants if their friends (who were uninvolved fathers) would be interested in sharing their story with me. All of them stated that it would be futile to try to contact these teen fathers as none of their friends would be willing to be interviewed. Conversely, it may be that teen fathers who are involved will be proud of their contributions and will also know that their decision to remain involved will be looked upon favourably by society. Therefore, my chosen method of data collection affected the type of sample that I obtained. Those planning future research studies should be aware of this dynamic

when designing their research methodology.

Another possible explanation for the sample outcome was that of the seven fathers that were interviewed five of them were eighteen to nineteen years of age. The decision to stay involved therefore may have been a result of increased maturity and greater understanding of their responsibilities. Although the two younger fathers were still very much involved with their children the argument could be made that the likelihood of involvement increases with age. This is also an area that would warrant further study and future research could focus on the correlation between age of the father and likelihood of involvement.

Although this study's sample is not representative of the teen father population, in that all of them are involved with their children, the information that was gathered is still very useful. The respondents were candid and sincere in their answers, thereby providing rich insights into this segment of the teen father population. The data that was collected is also useful in that it reveals a completely different image than that of the stereotypical uninvolved teen father.

As mentioned previously, five of the seven respondents were of aboriginal decent. Another characteristic of the sample, although not specifically explored, was that the majority of the respondents were aboriginal. A couple of factors could be involved in this high representation of the aboriginal culture. Firstly, anecdotal evidence suggests that the aboriginal culture is more accepting of teen pregnancies than mainstream cultures, although this remains to

be demonstrated by comparative research. It has been suggested that in some bands, fatherhood, is seen as a rite of passage into adulthood. This belief, handed down from one generation to the next may therefore be a factor in that five of the seven teen fathers interviewed were aboriginal and involved with their children. Robinson (1988) speaks of "the generation recidivism hypothesis" which theorizes that teen fathers are more likely to come from families that have a history of teen pregnancies. Due to a greater acceptance of teen fatherhood there is an increased likelihood of aboriginal families having a history of teen pregnancy. Robinson's theory would therefore further substantiate the reason for the larger number of aboriginal teen fathers found in this study's sample.

Secondly, historically the aboriginal culture has a large network of social supports that are available to assist the young father with his child. It was generally expected that the mother or grandmother of the teen father would assist or in some instances take over the child-care duties. The teen father was seen as too young to care for the child and needed to be taught and supported in these responsibilities. These strong social supports ensured that the child would be properly cared for and nurtured. This belief in social support is still a strong component in many of today's aboriginal families. Given this cultural characteristic the aboriginal teenager may foresee less difficulty in raising his child and as a result may be less deterred from becoming a teen father.

Teen Fatherhood as a Life Changing Event

The most significant information that was acquired from the research findings was the level of commitment that each father had to his child and partner. Prior to beginning the study this author assumed that the majority of the fathers in the sample would be uninvolved and have a low level of commitment. With each interview, however, this author was struck by the sense of responsibility that the respondents had for their child and partner. As was witnessed by some of the quotes in the previous section the fathers were planning their lives around providing for their family and caring for their child.

The respondents answered the interview questions with deep sincerity and wanted to convey their love for their child and how this experience had changed them. Each one of the respondents shared their own individual story of change with some having made dramatic shifts in priorities and how they viewed the world. The birth of their child (and in one case the expected birth) had caused them to rethink a lot of their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. All of the respondents were more careful not to get into trouble and had stopped their associations with friends from the past that would be a negative influence. One had broken free of his past gang involvement as well as having kicked a serious drug addiction. The life he was now leading was completely different, and he was extremely happy and comforted by the change. Each respondent attributed the changes they had made to their becoming a father.

A key time for the respondents was being present for the birth of their child. Each one had their own individual experience and emotions associated with it, however, it was a poignant life event for all of them. For most of the respondents it further solidified the commitment they had made during the pregnancy. The experience not only created an instant bond with their child it also deepened the respect and love that they had for their partner. Some of the respondents shared with great emotion the feelings of pride and caring they had for their partner while she was in labour. Within each interview there was a deep level of commitment and emotion regarding the birth of their child that I had not expected to find.

These findings indicate that there is a segment of the teen father population that is deeply committed to providing for and staying involved with their child. All of the fathers' main goal in life was to obtain a good job so that they could provide the basic necessities for their child. Each one of them also presented as deeply caring for their child and being very capable of sharing the child-care responsibilities with their partner. All of the respondents took an active role in child-care and were the main support to their partners. This role was not viewed as a negative obligation, but as their responsibility and in most cases, something they genuinely enjoyed. This responsibility was something they took very seriously and had great pride in.

These findings indicate the need for policies which reflect this highly committed segment of the teen father population. This study has shown that there are teen fathers that are deeply

committed to their child and want to support and contribute to his/her well-being. Policy makers should therefore take note of this fact and take steps to ensure the feasibility of these fathers remaining involved with their child and partner. Teen fathers can contribute and some are committed to doing so. Government, support organizations, and funding resources need to more aware of the potential in teen fathers. Teen pregnancy initiatives to date have largely focused on the female, and by broadening this focus to include the male the long term benefits of these interventions may substantially increase.

Sex Education and Practices

Another interesting finding involved the sex practices represented in the this study's sample. As discussed in the previous section all but one of the pregnancies was unplanned. All six unplanned pregnancies were the result of the respondents choosing not to use birth control. Each one of them knew the risks involved yet each one decided to take the risk. Some of the reasons for this decision included the following: did not have any birth control with them at the time and did not want to spoil the moment; using a condom was uncomfortable and took away from the pleasure of having sex; respondents feeling "it couldn't happen to them"; and emotions superseding sound judgement. Of note was that in most cases having sex without the use of birth control happened on more than one occasion.

Each of the respondents appeared to have a good grounding in

sex education and were aware of the proper birth control techniques. In short each one of them knew about having safe sex and the consequences of not doing so. When asked about how they came to have sex, the majority stated that it had "just happened". Most of them stated there was no prior discussion or plans made to have sex and as well there was no discussion about birth control. The practical application of sex education appears to be weak in this particular group of young men. All of them had a good grasp of sex education and were aware of the risks, however, each one of them decided at some point in time to ignore what they knew.

In addition to the above reasons given by the respondents for not consistently using birth control, another factor needs to be considered. Robinson (1988) points out that certain attitudes and behaviours in regard to sexual activity could be accounted for by what he calls: "the generation recidivism hypothesis". Robinson explains that the tendency to bear children out of wedlock runs in families where permissive beliefs and attitudes are passed on from one generation to the next. It would seem that becoming a teen parent is seen as somewhat more acceptable in these families. Of the seven respondents, six were able to name immediate family members, either grandparents, parents or siblings that had been teen parents. Of particular note was the fact that four of the respondents had older siblings that had been teen parents. One respondent reported that he and both of his siblings were teen parents. This study's findings are consistent with Robinson's theory: that is, the likelihood of becoming a teen parent increases

if there are other teen parents in the teen's family.

When asked what their message would be to other teenagers regarding sex, each one of the respondents stated they would tell them to practice safe sex. All of the respondents (including the one who planned the pregnancy) had a greater understanding of what it means to be a teen father and the commitment it requires. Through this realization they had come to the sincere conclusion that if teenagers were not ready to become parents and devote their entire lives to bringing up a child then they should always practice safe sex. There also appeared to be a greater understanding of the level of commitment to your partner that was needed before having sex. Most of the respondents stated that sex should not just be about "having a good time" but rather a honest show of affection to the other person.

Having experienced the thoughts, emotions, and just plain reality of becoming a father, these young men had obtained a deeper understanding of sex. Each one spoke of the changes their decisions had brought to their lives and how they now knew the importance of practising safe sex. Their stories could be used as valuable tools in the sex education curriculum. Their message was clear, "use birth control and view sex as a serious commitment to your partner". For these young men their lives had to be dramatically altered before they could fully comprehend what they had learned in their sex education classes in school. By sharing their experiences with other teens the lessons may come more easily.

The Importance of Support Systems

Social support systems are an extremely important component in an individual's life. Research has shown that with the help of a strong support network people can overcome physical and emotional obstacles they once thought were insurmountable. The teen fathers in this group recognized the importance of social support, specifically when it came to finding jobs. Each one of them mentioned that without personal connections or the assistance from the vocational program they were currently in, they would find it very hard to get a job. All seven of the respondents stated that it was difficult for someone their age to get a job by themselves. Their age, lack of education and work experience were seen as deterrents for potential employers. However, they expressed faith in their support networks and therefore were more optimistic about their chances.

Another important area of social support is that of positive influence. Each respondent had also benefited from positive influences in their lives over the years. All were able to name someone who had helped them while growing up. Although some had come from fairly disadvantaged situations and had a number of negative influences in their lives, each one had made use of the positive influences that were present and drawn strength from them. For some, these positive influences had come from outside the family: either through school, social service agencies, community clubs or sports organizations. It was these organizations and individuals, however, that had made a difference in their lives and

enabled them to see life from another perspective.

Support was also evident in their current lives, specifically in regard to the pregnancy. Although some of them expressed that their parents had been initially upset when learning of the pregnancy, all of the parents came to accept it and most went on to lend support to the couple. The two younger fathers were strongly supported by both sets of parents which made it possible to better care for the child. Both these respondents reported that their partner and child were living with the mother's parent/s at the time of the interview. One stated that his partner had lived with him and his family during the pregnancy, as the partner's father was having difficulty accepting the news of the pregnancy. After some time the father came to terms with the event and at the time of the interview the young mother and child were living with him. There also was a fair amount of sharing of responsibilities between the two sets of parents with each taking a major role in the care of the child.

The older respondents also had a great deal of support from their family members. In all cases either the parents or older siblings were involved in offering some sort of assistance for the young parents. Siblings were often reported as performing child-care duties so the teen parents could go to work, attend school, or run errands (i.e., grocery shopping) that would have been more stressful with their baby. In each case there was at least one set of the couple's parents that was involved and took an interest in the baby's well-being. This support and genuine bond with their

grandchild most certainly had positive spin-off effects for the young couple's situation.

Formal supports such as school day-care facilities or infant labs also made parenting a lot easier for the young parents. In one case both the respondent and his partner attended the same school. This enabled them to attend classes and spend parts of their day with their child in the school infant lab. Vocational programs and the supports offered through the formal instructional classes also provided the teen fathers with someone to listen to and support them in their situation. Downtown drop-in centres were also used by some of the respondents as an outlet and allowed the parent to feel less isolated. One respondent also commented on how his partner's parenting group was assisting them in working through certain relationship issues and as a result they were better equipped to handle conflict.

The findings in this study would therefore suggest that there is a correlation between social supports and a teen father's involvement with their child. The respondents in this study all reported having strong informal social supports that largely came from family members. Assistance in child-care, as well as, emotional, and financial support made the decision to care for their child feasible. The fathers also seemed to be aware of the benefits of social supports for, as reported, most of them attributed their job-finding potential to the support and assistance of others. The support from family members and formal organizations also increased the likelihood that both of the young

parents would attend school or maintain their employment.

Gender Definition

One of the specific areas that this author wanted to study was; what, if any, part does the teen father's concept of maleness play in their becoming teen fathers? Role theory states that human behaviour is largely dictated through the acting out of specific societal role expectations (Biddle, 1979). Who had set out the male role expectations for these teen fathers? Had they been obtained through a father figure or some other adult male family member? Or, was there an absence of male role modelling, which the literature suggests leads to a reliance on adhering to societal stereotypes (Teti & Lamb, 1986)? Gender definition questions were asked in the hopes of finding specific patterns related to the respondents' concept of maleness and its origin. The questions were designed in a concrete fashion to elicit answers involving this fairly abstract concept.

Of interest were the themes that emerged from the questions asked regarding gender definition. Again, contrary to the assumptions that this author made prior to the interview process all of the respondents had a healthy and respectful concept of both male and female roles. Some of the responses were based on the traditional concept of the male as the provider and the subsequent importance of employment (Rosie-Battle, 1990). The majority of the responses, however, reflected non-stereotypical attitudes and beliefs about male and female roles. This, as mentioned was

unexpected.

Apart from the specific questions about: i.) the characteristics they admired in a woman, ii.) in a man, or iii.) about their definition of a successful man, other parts of the interview also provided strong indicators of gender role views. For example, in discussing past female relationships each respondent demonstrated respect for women, and little, if any, bravado. Sexual conquests were never a focus in these discussions. Of note, however, was that their past friendships did include this kind of attitude, where the topic of girls and having sex were the main conversation. There were also references made to friends treating females as sex-objects and their having little regard for the emotional component to having sex.

All of the fathers saw themselves as being an important part of the daily child-care needs of the baby. All of them took an active role in independently taking care of the child, which in most cases was to free up the time for their partner to attend school or parenting programs. The respondents, although seeing themselves as the major providers, also admired women who could be financial contributors to the household as well. A strong sense of self and independence were also female characteristics that were admired by the respondents. In all, the responses indicated a non-patriarchal attitude toward women, with mutual respect an important component to a successful relationship.

The responses that were elicited indicated that these young men had in some way obtained a healthy concept of a male role

definition. Although most of the respondents had not experienced strong male role models with their fathers or any of their immediate family, each appeared to have received it from some other source. These sources included: their mothers, other adult figures in their childhood, foster parents, or their own commitment to do the opposite of what they had come to view as negative male behaviours. As was the case with the decision to stay involved with the baby, having a strong positive influential figure (social support, whatever the source) had a significant impact on the participant's life.

These respondents' gender definitions could also be attributed to a number of other factors. The teen fatherhood experience definitely had a major impact on all of the respondents and it may have played a role in their beliefs and attitude toward gender role definition. The answers that were given may therefore be more indicative of this change made after becoming a teen father. The age of the majority of the participants may also have a bearing on the gender role definition responses. As a result, the responses may be in part, indicative of these young men having gone through their own individual maturation process. A factor that also needs to be considered is that the answers were somewhat "scripted" so as to impress the interviewer. The possibility of a discrepancy in what was reported and the respondents' actual behaviour/attitude definitely exists. One limitation of this study's data collection process was that information was obtained solely from the teen father's perspective. No form of triangulation was employed so as

to verify the accuracy of the responses that were given by the fathers. The possibility of "scripted" answers does however, not detract from the fact that the young men were able to express these positive concepts. What it does indicate is that they are aware of these concepts and would like to implement them, if indeed they are not already doing so. Furthermore, it was my assessment that the respondents answered the interview questions with deep sincerity, with each one wanting to accurately convey their story. This suggests that the answers were not "scripted" and lends credence to the fact that these responses represent their true beliefs.

Summary

This research study has highlighted a specific segment of the teen father population, thereby providing new insights and creating a greater understanding of the teen father. For many years this population has been a largely ignored and subsequently forgotten piece of the teen pregnancy phenomena. Some recommendations follow in an attempt to ensure this topic is no longer avoided, as well as to generate ideas on how to better serve teen fathers.

The most glaring omission in our understanding of teen fathers is that of comprehensive quantitative statistics. As mentioned previously, they do not exist. It is therefore impossible to ascertain the number of teen fathers that do exist, their ages, or any other identifying information. Conversely, there is a vast body of literature and research data that does exist regarding the teen mother. As mentioned in the literature review, potential teen

father statistical resources such as Statistics Canada, Manitoba Health, and Manitoba Vital Statistics currently do not have any methods of accurately recording teen father numbers. In order to effectively and comprehensively address the issue of teen fatherhood these institutions need to recognize this segment of the Canadian population in the data gathering programs.

This descriptive research study featured a small segment of the teen father population. Although, not great in numbers, the seven respondents that were interviewed in the study provided some rich and useful insights about teen fatherhood. All of the seven respondents were involved and deeply committed to caring for their child and supporting their partner. Contrary to how society has stereotyped teen fathers as uninvolved and uncaring, these seven fathers felt a great sense of responsibility to their child and had made definite life changes in hopes of becoming a good father.

Policy-makers need to recognize that like these seven fathers, other involved teen fathers do exist and are in need of some assistance. All of the fathers interviewed were sincerely focused on obtaining a job so as to provide for their family. Each one of them reported that it was difficult for someone their age to get a decent paying job, however, they all stated some optimism due to various supports in their lives (i.e., vocational programs, relatives, etc.). All of the fathers were also active in the daily child-care responsibilities of their son or daughter. It was because of this involvement that some of their partners were able to attend school, parenting classes or vocational programs. For

these seven respondents social support was prevalent in key areas of their lives and may be the reason for their level of commitment and involvement. Most of the respondents benefited from family members who provided support financially, emotionally or by assisting with child-care needs. As previously noted, community programs were also important in assisting teen fathers in maintaining their high level of involvement. By identifying teen fathers and offering them access to various social programs that would help them find a job, learn effective parenting skills, as well as provide them with emotional support, more teen fathers may choose to stay involved. The prospect of being a father is a daunting reality for any man, and even more so for a teenager, however, with the proper supports and guidance in place maybe more young fathers will take up the challenge.

Of the seven teen fathers that were interviewed only one them reported that the pregnancy had been planned. The others were all a result of not using effective birth control techniques. Of note was the lack of planning and discussion that took place prior to the initial sexual encounter. The majority of the respondents stated they had not discussed having sex with their partner, nor had they talked about birth control methods. As well, all of the respondents chose for one reason or another to have unprotected sex at some point in their relationship, even though they were fully aware of the risk of pregnancy. When the teen fathers were asked what their message would be to other sexually active teens, all of them stated "to practice safe sex". They then went on to talk

about the responsibilities involved in being a father and the difficult sacrifices that had to be made as a result. For these teen fathers the sex education that they received in school or at home did not deter them from having unprotected sex. It was only after having become a teen father that the lesson was learned.

One of this study's research questions was to explore what part the teen father's concept of maleness played in their becoming teen fathers. It was theorized that a lack of strong positive male role models for teen males led to a greater reliance on traditional male stereotypes as way of defining maleness. Within this traditional definition males may view the number of sexual conquests as a strong masculine indicator. This male role definition would subsequently increase the sexual activity of teenage males thereby leading to a higher risk of pregnancy. This study was unable to provide evidence supporting this theory as the findings were mixed. Some of the fathers had negative male role models in their lives, yet they had chosen to use this experience as an incentive to practice non-traditional male values. Others had positive role models and had fashioned their beliefs according to these examples. The experience of becoming a father also appeared to have played a part in their current definition of maleness. Some respondents who had previously held more stereotypical views spoke of having changed and coming to realize the error in their prior beliefs of maleness. Further study is therefore needed involving teen fathers who have experienced and continue to subscribe to, traditional male role definitions.

Implications

The findings in this study indicated that there is a segment of the teen father population that is committed and significantly involved with their child and partner. Teen fathers have been stereotyped as uncaring and unwilling to get involved, and current policy and practice reflects this attitude. For example, policy measures that exist usually take a punitive approach in attempting to force the teen father to become involved. The lack of teen father research and literature is also indicative of the belief that the teen father is uninvolved and uncaring. Teen pregnancy is not only a one-dimensional phenomena, like the teen mother, the teen father issues need to be addressed. The respondents in this study had accepted the responsibility of being a father. They were actively involved in child-care, either employed or receiving training to obtain a job, and deeply committed to supporting their family. As noted earlier, each father had also made significant positive changes in their lives in order to meet challenges of fatherhood.

Policy and practice need to stress supports and opportunities rather than intervene with a punitive approach to young fathers. The fathers in this study wanted to be involved and each one had benefited from the formal or informal supports in their lives. Practitioners need to focus on connecting teen fathers with both informal community supports (i.e., family, neighbours, friends) as well as formal support networks. Policy makers need to implement programs that provide pre-natal programs that are more

comprehensive and adapted to the issues facing teenage parents. A child-care course for teen fathers would provide an educational intervention as well as the opportunity for fathers to share about their experiences in caring for their child. One of the fathers in the study commented on how his relationship with his partner had benefited from the parenting program she was attending. Like this couple, other teen parents may be better able to resolve conflict and learn about relationship dynamics through similar groups. Teen fathers would also benefit from getting together with other young fathers and talking about the concerns, problems or successes that they have/are experiencing. Many of the respondents in the study had lost contact with their friends due to the changes they had made since becoming fathers. A support group for teen fathers would be helpful in connecting with other young men who had gone through similar changes and in need of someone with whom to relate.

Policy makers need to be aware of the many social benefits that result from setting up programs to encourage and support the involvement of teen fathers. Each one of the teen fathers in the study was committed to obtaining a job and believed it was their responsibility to work and to not be dependent on the welfare system. The fathers were also actively involved in child-care so that their partner could attend school or parenting/vocational programs. This value of not wanting to be dependent on the welfare system and supporting their partners so that they would be more employable would undoubtedly decrease the number of young parents in need of social assistance. The shared child-care

responsibilities would also create less dependence on day-care facilities, producing less demand for subsidized day-care. There would also be long-term benefits for the child in having the opportunity to learn from and grow up with an involved father.

This study was able to obtain of useful information on the respondents' definition of maleness, however, more study on this subject is required. Future research could focus on the multiple influences on male role development. Each one of the respondents in this study had adopted a non-traditional definition of maleness, however, there were a variety of factors that appeared to affect their adoption of this belief. This study was originally interested in looking at how male role models, specifically fathers, in the lives of adolescent boys shaped and defined their concept of maleness. What was found was a number of different influences were involved, including: fathers, mothers, brothers, friends, the maturation process, adult male companions, and life experiences all affected the young men's definition of maleness. Subsequent research could study what influences in the adolescent's environment have the greatest impact and the implications this has on male role development.

The teen fathers in the study all expressed non-traditional views of maleness at the time of the interview. Given that all the respondents interviewed were involved with their children, it raises the question: Does having non-traditional views of what it means to be male increase the likelihood of involvement? Future research, could endeavour to answer this question by comparing

uninvolved fathers and involved fathers. This research could examine whether or not the definition of maleness affects teen father involvement with their children and if so, how?

Another comparison study (involved vs. uninvolved teen fathers) could look at the correlation between social supports and the likelihood of teen father involvement. The respondents in the study all had some form of social supports in their lives and it could be argued that this made the decision to stay involved more feasible. Future research could compare involved and uninvolved teen fathers looking at the possible correlation with social supports. This study's findings suggested that there was a correlation between social supports and teen father involvement, however, a comparison study of the two groups could produce more evidence of whether this is indeed the case.

Each one of the respondents had the same message to give to other teenagers who were having sex: "practice safe sex". Most of teen fathers also talked about how it was important to love and be committed to your partner before having sex. Although each one of the fathers loved and was committed to their child and partner, some talked about the loss of freedom and how the pregnancy had changed their future aspirations. The message for other teens to practice safe sex and to be aware of the risk of pregnancy would be clear and effective. This study would therefore suggest that sex education courses include teen fathers sharing their stories and their message of safe sex. Their experiences could serve as valuable resources in the prevention of unplanned teen pregnancies.

Finally, in order to generate further research and create an increased awareness of the teen father phenomena methods need to be developed which will more accurately tabulate the number of teen fathers that exist. Future studies could explore ways of how this can be achieved and/or work alongside one of the various statistical organizations to begin gathering this information. For it is as we are able to see the number of teen fathers that require assistance that we may begin to look at the need for more comprehensive interventions in addressing the issue of teen pregnancy.

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APPENDIX A

Sample of Interview Guide

Sample of Interview Guide

I'm doing a study on teen fathers. The reason I'm doing the study is because the teen father has largely been ignored or forgotten in our efforts to understand teen parenthood. I would like to gather information from teen fathers in order to build a better understanding of who they are, some of their teenage experiences and what things/people have influenced their lives. In short I want to ask you questions that only you can answer; as a teen father you are the expert. Some of the questions will be very general while others will be more specific. Hopefully, you will feel free to answer them as well as let me know that you wish to move on to another question. The information that I gather from the questions I ask, will be written up as a report. The report will outline the answers that I obtained, observe similarities from the answers and provide information about the teen father. Your answers will be kept completely confidential and the results will be presented in a manner which prevents any individual from being identified. Once I have collected and analyzed the data I would welcome the opportunity to share the results with you and get your opinion on my findings.

Do you have any questions?

I. Basic Information

How old are you?

Have you been attending this school for a long time? If so how long?/ What grade or specific program are you presently in?

Do you enjoy school? What parts do you enjoy? What parts do you dislike?

Are you involved in any special activities in school like sports teams, drama, etc?

What are your goals for the future in regards to school? Do you have a specific goal for employment, what would you like to do? How do you feel about the chances of someone your age being able to get a job? Do you think it is getting harder to find jobs?

Are you presently working at a part-time job?

What are some of you hobbies/interests?

II. Family

Tell me about the people whom you consider to be your family./ Do you live with them?

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS:

****Phrasing of supplementary questions largely dependent on participant's response to the main question (i.e., substitute named primary care-giver/s for mother and father).**

Are your mother and father both in the home?

Does your mother have a job? If so what is it? Has she been doing this for a long time?

Does your father have a job? (Same as above)

Do you have any brothers and sisters? How many? How old are they? Are they presently in school, working, unemployed?

III. Childhood Influences

When you were growing up which adult did you spend the most time with in your family?/ What sorts of things did you do with that person?/ What did you learn from this person?

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS:

What things did you and your father do together? / What sorts of things would you talk about? / Describe your father to me.

What things did you and your mother do together? / What sort of things would you talk about?

What do you feel you learned from you mother/father?

Did you have anyone you looked up to when you were growing up?(famous or someone you knew)/ Who were they?/ What was it that you liked about them or admired? / Has who you look up to changed overtime? If so, what was it that made you change your mind?

IV. Gender Role Definition

What are the characteristics you admire most in a woman?/ What are some that you feel are negative?

What are the characteristics you admire most in a man?/ What are some you feel are negative?

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS:

Describe to me a successful man./ Would your friends agree?/
Does this describe anyone you know?

Who do you feel influenced you most regarding what it means to
be a man? (i.e., father/mother/brother/sister/other?)/ What
makes you say that?

V. Friend Influences

Do you have one friend or a certain group of friends you hang
around with?

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS:

How did you become friends?

What are characteristics you admire in a friend?

What sort of things do you do with your friends?/ What are
some of your favourite activities?

What sorts of things do you talk about when you get together?
- do you talk about girls? What sorts of things do you
discuss concerning girls?

Subheading: Attitudes towards sex

Do you think boys talk about sex more than girls? less?
What makes you say that?

Who do you think is more preoccupied about having sex,
boys or girls? What makes you say that?

Do you think boys usually initiate sexual contact or do
girls? What makes you say that?/

Do you think boys your age sometimes feel pressured to
have sex? Have you felt pressured?

VI. Dating and Sex

At what age did you start going out with girls?

What did you do on your dates? / Were you usually alone or
with a group of people?

Have you gone out with a lot of girls?

Did the topic of sex come up in your conversations? / Who
initiated it? / Did the issue of birth control ever enter into

the conversation?

What are your views on birth control? (i.e., important?, what methods, who should take responsibility for it, etc.)?/ How was the matter of birth control dealt with?

How did you and the mother of your child decide to have sex? Was it planned/ acting on the moment?/at a party?/ by yourselves?

How long had you known her?

Did it occur to you that she could become pregnant?/ If so what caused you to still have sex?

Did she become pregnant soon thereafter?/ If not, when did she become pregnant?/ Did you continue having unprotected sex throughout?

What are your thoughts on pre-marital sex?/ Would you say that how you think about it has changed over time?

VII. Teen Fatherhood

Please tell me about your experience of being a teen father.

Can you think back to when you first knew that you were going to be a teen father?/ Could you tell me what your thoughts were?

When did you become a teen father?

Were you involved with the decision for the mother to keep the baby? Can you say more about that?

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS:

What was your family's reaction to your becoming a teen father?/ Has anyone else in your family been a teen parent?

What was your friends' reactions to your becoming a teen father?

-Did it change your relationship with them?

-Do you have friends that are teen parents?

-Were they teen parents before you?

What was your experience during the pregnancy?/ Where you involved in the planning for the baby's birth?/ Did you feel included?/ Were you invited in the planning?

Are you still involved with the baby and/or the mother? How?

-What is your role?

-Do you feel it is important for you to be involved?

How has being a teen father changed you?/ Has it effected some

of the decisions you have made over the past few years?/ If so, how?

****REFER BACK TO THE BASIC INFORMATION QUESTIONS/ HOW WOULD YOU HAVE ANSWERED BEFORE BECOMING A TEEN FATHER?**

What would be your message to other teens about being a teen father?

Do you think there are any things or circumstances that caused you to become a teen father?

What is the most important thing you have learned about yourself since becoming a teen father?

APPENDIX B

Statement of Informed Consent

Statement of Informed Consent

This research is being conducted as part of the requirements for a Master of Social Work program at the University of Manitoba. The purpose of the research is to develop a greater understanding of teen fatherhood. The participant's accounts will provide the framework to examining the various themes and issues relating to teen fatherhood, so as to provide a more complete picture of the teen father.

The account of each participant will be tape recorded in an individual interview with the researcher, lasting approximately 1 to 1 1/2 hours.

I understand that I may refuse permission for the tape-recording of the interview. I understand that the text of the tape-recording will be transcribed to print analysis, after which the tape will be destroyed.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary. I may refuse to answer any or all questions without penalty. I may withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. If I choose to withdraw from the study, I also have the option to withdraw the information that I have provided. I understand that my participation or non-participation in the study has no effect on any program services that I am currently receiving.

I understand that I will be given an opportunity to ask questions at any time during the study and after my participation is complete. I also understand that I will be given an opportunity to participate in a group session to discuss the findings. I understand that if I decide to participate in the group discussion, my identity may be revealed to others in the group. If I decide not to participate in the group meeting I can receive a written summary of the research once the study has been completed. I may contact the researcher by calling him at

I understand that any information I provide in the course of this interview will be kept in strict confidence, and that in no way will my identity be revealed during any stage of the data analysis or in publication of the research findings.

Having read and understood the nature of this research and my participation in it, my signature below signifies my willingness to participate.

Participant's signature

Date

Having read and understood the nature of this research and the participant's participation in it, my signature below, as the legal guardian of the above participant signifies my consent in allowing him to participate in the study.

Guardian of Participant's signature

Date

Researcher's signature

Date

APPENDIX C

Letter of Research Explanation

Letter of Research Explanation

Dear Participant:

Hello, my name is Elden Siemens. I am sending you this letter so as to provide some explanation regarding the research study that I am planning, which will require the participation of some teenage fathers.

I am currently working toward my Master of Social Work degree at the University of Manitoba. As part of my studies I am doing research on teen fathers. The reason I have chosen this topic is because the teen father has largely been ignored or forgotten in our efforts to understand teen parenthood. I would therefore like to gather information from teen fathers in order to obtain a better understanding of who they are, some of their teenage experiences and what things/people influenced their lives. In short I want to ask you questions that only you can answer; as a teen father you are the expert.

Some of the questions will be very general while others will be more specific. Hopefully, you will feel free to answer them as well as let me know that you wish to move on to another question. The information that I gather from the questions I ask, will be written up as a report. The report will outline the answers that I obtained, observe similarities from the answers and provide information about the teen father. Your answers will be kept completely confidential and the results will be presented in a manner which prevents any individual from being identified. Once

I have collected and studied the data I would welcome the opportunity to share the results with all participants and get your opinion on my findings. It is hoped that through this exercise a greater understanding of teen fathers will be created for others.

After having read this letter please share it with your parent/s or legal guardian/s so that they may have a better understanding of the research that I am doing. For if you should choose to participate in the study their consent will be needed.

Sincerely,

Elden Siemens