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AGENCY POLICIES AND PERSONNEL ATTITUDES
TOWARD ADOLESCENT FATHERS

by

Sandra Gunderson Warner

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family and Human Development

Approved:

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

1991

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ABSTRACT

Agency Policies and Personnel Attitudes
Toward Adolescent Fathers

by

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Utah State University, 1991Major Professor: Dr. Brent C. Miller
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Adolescent parenting research has typically focused on the mother and ignored the father. Researchers have suggested that adolescent fathers are disregarded as the child's other parent because their parenting role is devalued. An emerging body of literature indicates that adolescent fathers are excluded from the pregnancy and parenting services provided to adolescent mothers because they are viewed as unnecessary to the parenting process and unimportant to the child's development. Moreover, researchers have alleged that service providers treat adolescent fathers as outcasts based on stereotypical beliefs that they are uncaring, irresponsible victimizers who disappear at the first mention of pregnancy. However, there is no empirical evidence to support these claims.

The purpose of this thesis is to question these allegations and provide some evidence to either support or refute them. A survey of northern Utah agencies and the

personnel who provide pregnancy and parenting services to adolescent mothers was conducted as the means to investigate this issue.

The results of the survey do not provide conclusive evidence although they do suggest that the participating agencies and their personnel do not have policies or attitudes that intentionally exclude adolescent fathers from receiving services. Those surveyed consider fathers to be important to the pregnancy experience and the child's development. However, they do not make a deliberate effort to encourage adolescent fathers to take advantage of their services, nor do they employ effective strategies for making adolescent males aware of their services.

(91 pages)

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Adolescent pregnancy and childbearing have demanded society's attention and concern due to the approximately one million teenage girls who become pregnant every year in the United States (Hayes, 1987; Smollar & Ooms, 1987). The focus, however, has remained almost exclusively on the teenage mother and her child (Barret & Robinson, 1982; Parke, Power, & Fisher, 1980; Smollar & Ooms, 1987). Typically, the response of society toward adolescent fathers has been to ignore them completely (Barret & Robinson, 1982; Connolly, 1978; Kahn & Bolton, 1986).

Barret and Robinson (1986) proposed that adolescent fathers have usually been disregarded or excluded from consideration as the child's other parent because they were viewed as unnecessary in the parenting process and unimportant to the child's development. Based on a study of teenage family planning services, Hendricks (1980) suggested that agencies and institutions devalue the male role and intentionally exclude the unmarried father when planning for the mother and child. Sander and Rosen (1987) asserted that social service providers often treat teenage fathers as outcasts.

Studies have indicated that, given a chance, many adolescent fathers do want to be involved in the pregnancy as part of the decision-making process and as a means of support for the mother and child (Barret & Robinson, 1986;

Bolton & Belsky, 1986; Marsiglio, 1988; Redmond, 1985; Sander & Rosen, 1987). Moreover, adolescent fathers have expressed a need for psychological and emotional support (Elster & Hendricks, 1986; Sander & Rosen, 1987). Unless an effort is made to include the father in pregnancy and parenting services, however, he is likely to remain an outsider (Lamb & Elster, 1986; Kahn & Bolton, 1986). According to Sander and Rosen,

The lack of services for teenage fathers is particularly distressing in light of studies suggesting that an adolescent father's involvement in his partners' pregnancy increases the young mother's sense of confidence in her nurturing skills, heightens her sense of security after delivery and raises the father's self-esteem. (1987, p. 107)

A comprehensive examination of the literature on adolescent fathers revealed an abundance of assertions regarding the intentional exclusion of adolescent fathers from pregnancy and parenting services. No evidence was uncovered, however, to indicate that these assumptions had any empirical basis. Furthermore, the researchers who made these claims did not address the issue of marital status and whether or not attitudes differ toward married versus unmarried adolescent fathers (Gunderson-Warner, 1990).

Purpose

This study was conducted to provide empirical evidence that either supports or refutes the allegations that adolescent fathers are deliberately excluded from pregnancy and parenting services and that they are typically regarded

as serving an unnecessary and unimportant parenting role. Additionally, the provision of parenting services for adolescent fathers was examined based on the fathers' marital status.

Research Questions

Consideration of these issues raises many unanswered questions. Are adolescent fathers necessarily excluded by agencies who provide services to adolescent mothers because of negative attitudes or stereotypes the personnel may harbor? Do agencies overlook fathers simply because they are not in the habit of including them? Does a lack of funding prohibit agencies from offering services to adolescent fathers? Are agencies unjustly accused of denying services when fathers fail to take advantage of them? When fathers are included, do they receive individual attention and support or are they viewed only as a means of financial support? Is there a difference in the provision of services (or the omission of services) between adolescent fathers who marry the mother before conception, fathers who marry the mother after conception, and fathers who do not marry the mother? Do agencies encourage father participation and make an effort to involve them or do they expect adolescent fathers to initiate contact? Are the attitudes of agency personnel toward adolescent fathers consistent with agency policies?

This study addresses these concerns, condensed into the following research questions:

1. Do agencies and the personnel who provide services to adolescent mothers have policies and/or attitudes that necessarily include or exclude adolescent fathers?
2. Do personnel attitudes and agency policies regarding adolescent fathers vary according to whether the father is married to the mother and if the marriage occurred before or after conception?
3. In agencies that provide services to adolescent fathers, how are the fathers recruited and what do the services include?
4. If agencies are not providing services to adolescent fathers, why not?

Since adolescence is a somewhat vague term, for the purpose of this study, an adolescent father is defined as any male 19 years of age or younger who fathers a child.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Barret and Robinson (1986), research on teenage parenting did not include fathers until the mid-1970s. Moreover, numerous problems have been cited relating to the existing research on adolescent fathers. Robinson and Barret (1982) indicated that studies involving teenage fathers generally make inferences from information obtained from the adolescent mothers. Thus, data are confounded by the possibly biased nature of the source.

It has also been suggested that studies have been hampered by a lack of comparison groups and unrepresentative samples (Nakashima & Camp, 1984; Rivara, Sweeney, & Henderson, 1985; Robinson & Barret, 1987). Marsiglio stated,

Because of the difficulty of sampling teenage fathers, most of the scant research that has focused on teenage fatherhood has generally been exploratory in nature and based on small, nonrepresentative samples. (1987, p. 240)

To the list of methodological inadequacies, Lamb and Elster (1986) added atheoretical research strategies, the absence of replication studies, a proliferation of measurements of unknown reliability/validity, and failure to specify the appropriate group to which findings can be generalized. Because of the paucity of information regarding adolescent fathers and of weaknesses in the extant data, an accurate assessment of the adolescent father remains elusive.

A variety of issues surrounding adolescent fatherhood are addressed in the literature, albeit much is repetitive, speculative, or sparse. For the purpose of this review, information will be explored in the following categories: (a) adolescent fatherhood myths, (b) society's response and father's legal rights, (c) father's willingness and ability to provide support, (d) mother-father-child relationships, and (e) father's psychological well-being.

Adolescent Fatherhood Myths

Several studies suggest that adolescent fathers are stereotypically regarded by society as immature, uncaring, irresponsible, self-centered, exploitative culprits who are only out for a good time, have little self-control, and disappear at the first mention of pregnancy (Barret & Robinson, 1986; Kahn & Bolton, 1986; Parke et al., 1980; Robinson, Barret, & Skeen, 1983). Robinson described five commonly held myths about adolescent fathers which, he asserts, have guided research and policy-making.

- (1) The 'Super Stud' myth: he is worldly wise and knows more about sex and sexuality than most teenage boys.
- (2) The Don Juan myth: he sexually exploits unsuspecting and helpless adolescent females by taking advantage of them.
- (3) The macho myth: he feels psychologically inadequate, has no inner control and, unlike other adolescent boys his age, has a psychological need to prove his masculinity.
- (4) The Mr. Cool myth: he usually has a fleeting, casual relationship with the young mother and has few emotions about the pregnancy.
- (5) The phantom father myth: absent and rarely involved in the support and rearing of his children, he leaves his partner and offspring to fend for themselves. (1988, p. 47)

How prevalent these stereotypes are among professionals who provide services to pregnant adolescents is unknown.

Society's Response and Father's Legal Rights

The most common response of society toward adolescent fathers has been to ignore them completely (Barret & Robinson, 1982; Connolly, 1978; Kahn & Bolton, 1986). Barret and Robinson (1986) proposed that adolescent fathers have typically been disregarded or excluded from consideration as the child's other parent because they were viewed as unnecessary in the parenting process and unimportant to the child's development. Based on a study of teenage family planning services, Hendricks (1980) suggested that agencies and institutions devalue the male role and intentionally exclude the unmarried father from planning for the mother and child. Sander and Rosen (1987) asserted that social service providers often treat teenage fathers as outcasts.

The bulk of information regarding the father's legal rights comes from studies of unmarried fathers that include adolescents. In the summary report of the federally funded Young Unwed Fathers Project it states that "the legal status of young unwed fathers is ambiguous and in transition" (Smollar & Ooms, 1987, p. 4). The rights of the unmarried father to be informed of his paternity, to participate in the decision-making process relative to the pregnancy and the child, or to visit the child have not

been clearly established (Smollar & Ooms, 1987). A 1972 U. S. Supreme Court ruling guarantees unmarried fathers equal protection under the law (Pannor & Evans, 1975), but decisions regarding their parental rights are under state laws which are often inconsistent (Smollar & Ooms, 1987). The issue of fathers' rights becomes more complex with adolescents under the age of majority since they are legally regarded as children. According to Smollar and Ooms (1987), participants in the Young Unwed Fathers Symposium raised the issues of whether or not minor unwed fathers need special legal advice and protection and whether they should be accorded the same rights as adult fathers. These questions have yet to be answered.

The laws granting certain rights to unmarried fathers had an immediate impact on social agencies who could no longer exclude adolescent fathers from parenting services (Connolly, 1978; Pannor & Evans, 1975; Smollar & Ooms, 1987). Unfortunately, most adolescent fathers will not initiate contact for fear of being blamed or rejected (Barret & Robinson, 1982, Connolly, 1978; Earls & Siegel, 1980; Hendricks, 1980), and many agencies make only a token effort to involve the father (Barret & Robinson, 1982). As Connolly asserted,

there still remains a wide gap in practice between acknowledging the importance of the father's role and seeking him out in order to include him. This gap reflects historically biased attitudes toward the father. (1978, p. 42)

Father's Willingness and Ability
to Provide Support

Contrary to the belief that adolescent fathers disappear at the first mention of pregnancy, many studies have indicated that fathers frequently want to be involved with and support the mother and child, both financially and emotionally (Barret & Robinson, 1986; Bolton & Belsky, 1986; Connolly, 1978; Furstenberg & Talvitie, 1980; Kahn & Bolton, 1986; Marsiglio, 1988; Parke et al., 1980; Rivara et al., 1985; Sander & Rosen, 1987). A Study of 74 adolescent fathers and nonfathers making decisions about a hypothetical unplanned pregnancy found that all subjects wanted to be told about the pregnancy, 91% agreed to provide financial and emotional support, and 87% wanted to participate in child care (Redmond, 1985). As previously discussed, adolescent fathers generally face many barriers to their intended involvement because of society's attitude toward them.

In order to provide financial support, a young father may have to drop out of school and accept low-paying employment with limited opportunities for advancement. Even for teenage fathers who started out in higher paying union jobs, their peers who completed high school and delayed parenting quickly made up the difference in initial wages earned, and were considered better off occupationally and financially (Card & Wise, 1978). As Belsky and Miller explained,

Meeting this economic expectation of fatherhood is especially difficult for contemporary adolescent fathers because the occupational structure has changed immensely, and adolescents today are not yet fully prepared for continuous lifetime employment. Nowadays, completing high school and attending college or some other vocational training program are prerequisites for obtaining better paying jobs in our highly technical advanced society. (Belsky & Miller, 1986, p. 112)

The Young Unwed Fathers Project and the National Research Council's Panel on Adolescent Pregnancy and Childbearing emphasized the financial well-being of teenage families and the need for more vigorous efforts to encourage or enable young fathers to meet their obligation of economic support. It was recognized, however, that fathers who make very little or no money are simply not in a position to support a mother and/or child. Therefore, the National Research Council recommended instituting public jobs programs that would enable young fathers to contribute child support (Marsiglio, 1988). The Young Unwed Fathers Project suggested that for fathers under age 18, financial obligations might be postponed until adulthood, token support might be arranged, or in-kind services might be considered as a form of support (Smollar & Ooms, 1987).

These proposals may be at odds with the beliefs or wishes of the mother. One study found that even though several unwed fathers in financially poor situations contributed food, diapers, clothing, some child care, and some financial assistance, most of the teenage mothers considered these contributions inadequate (Hardy, Duggan,

Masnyk, & Pearson, 1989). Furthermore, the parents of the adolescent mother may prevent or discourage the unwed father from being involved. If the adolescent father does want to assume an active role in the lives of the mother and child, but is denied the opportunity to do so, he may feel exploited and resentful if he is expected to provide financial support (Marsiglio, 1988).

Mother-Father-Child Relationships

Belsky and Miller (1986) speculated on four types of teenage fathers and their relationships. On one extreme is the adolescent involved in an enduring relationship with sexual exclusivity and a sense of commitment. He probably sees the relationship as having a future. At the other extreme is the male who has a variety of sexual partners and few, if any, lasting relationships. He is unlikely to think in terms of the future regarding his sexual liaisons. Between these two extremes lie the teen who has an exclusive partner but is not yet committed to her, and the one who has several sexual relationships with a modest or low level of commitment.

Studies have indicated that most adolescent pregnancies are the result of a long-term relationship of one to two or more years duration (Barret & Robinson, 1986; Hardy et al., 1989; Sander & Rosen, 1987). Many adolescent fathers expressed feelings of affection, caring, love, or bonding with their partner (Barret & Robinson, 1986).

When the adolescent couple does not marry, the father tends to remain involved with the mother during the first year of the child's life although many start to lose the intimacy they shared before the pregnancy and most stop dating during that time (Furstenberg & Talvitie, 1980; Robinson, 1988). Hardy et al. (1989) reported that, following the birth of their child, 60% of adolescent mothers felt it unlikely they would marry the father and three-fourths thought it unlikely they would ever live together. Although their study was not limited to adolescent fathers, it does support other findings that estimate only 10-40% of adolescent parents eventually marry (Barret & Robinson, 1986; Robinson, 1988). On the other hand, young married couples do not appear to fare much better than those who do not marry. Adolescents have a distinctly higher separation and divorce rate than couples who marry later (Baldwin & Cain, 1980; Belsky & Miller, 1986; Lamb, Elster, Peters, Kahn, & Tavare, 1986).

In a longitudinal study of teenage mothers and fathers, Card and Wise (1978) found that, compared to classmates who postponed marriage and childbearing until their 20s, teenage parents had more marital disruptions and were more likely to have been married several times over the 11-year study. These findings held up when age at first marriage was controlled. According to Montemayor (1986), research on identity development indicates that a mature identity, and the subsequent capacity to form intimate relationships,

is rarely achieved before adulthood. Consequently, the teenage father may find it difficult to be an effective parent and husband if he lacks clarity about himself and his family roles. Without a firm sense of self, the adolescent may compete with the child for the mother's attention and feel threatened by the interest she shows in their baby. Furthermore, "the low capacity for intimacy found among most teenagers may be partly responsible for their marital dissatisfaction and discord may result in insensitive parenting" (Montemayor, 1986, p. 10).

Based on theories of cognitive and identity development, Montemayor (1986) offered some thought-provoking propositions about adolescent fathering capabilities. He explained that as an individual moves from childhood to adulthood, four cognitive developmental milestones are presented: (a) increases in factual knowledge, (b) improved understanding of verbal material, (c) the development of deductive reasoning, and (d) the appearance of executive control ability. He further suggested that because younger adolescents may have difficulty acquiring and using information about child rearing contained in written materials, they depend more on personal experience and trial-and-error learning.

Moreover, Montemayor posited that adolescents have a difficult time keeping schedules and planning for the immediate and long-term future, which could have a detrimental impact on effective infant care.

Further, a 'sensitive parent' has been described as one who can perceive the child's cues, correctly interpret them, and plan and implement an appropriate response. These skills require the abilities to generate and test hypotheses, select a plan of action, and monitor its effectiveness. Most adolescents do not possess these abilities to a high degree. (1986, p. 8)

Consistent with Montemayor's portrait, de Lissovoy (1973) found that adolescent parents know very little about child development and have unrealistic expectations for the child. That is, they expect an infant to be able to smile, sit, stand, walk, speak, toilet train, obey, and recognize wrong doing much earlier than normal. For example, the couples studied expected their babies to toilet train at about six months of age. The fathers' notions of child development tended to be more unrealistic than the mothers'. To illustrate, adolescent fathers thought a baby should be able to obey at 26 weeks of age and recognize wrong doing at 40 weeks, while adolescent mothers anticipated these behaviors at 36 and 52 weeks of age respectively.

For the most part, the adolescent parents in de Lissovoy's study were found to be impatient, insensitive, irritable, intolerant, and prone to physically punishing their children. He attributed the parents' behavior to ignorance, lack of experience, their personal, economic, and social frustrations, and their disenchantment with marriage. He concluded, "that the children of many adolescent marriages have a high risk of joining the number of battered and abused babies" (p. 25).

Bolton and Belsky (1986) indicated that adolescent parents do exhibit characteristics of adult parents who abuse their children. However, the recent emergence of research on adolescent parents and child abuse has continued to focus exclusively on teenage mothers.

Data reflecting the adolescent father-child relationship isn't completely hopeless. Unfortunately, it isn't particularly helpful either, as the majority of research is focused on the teenage mother and mixes adolescents with older fathers. Furstenberg and Talvitie (1980) did a five-year follow-up study of unmarried fathers and their children born to mothers under 18 years of age. They found that 26% of the fathers had contact with their children at least once a week, 27% had occasional contact, and 47% had no contact. The quality of contact between the fathers and their children was determined by the mothers who reported that 61% of both the fathers and children had high enjoyment, 6% of the fathers had high enjoyment while their children did not, 18% of the children had high enjoyment while their fathers did not, and 15% of the father-child pairs had low or no enjoyment. Additionally, about one-third of the fathers provided regular, albeit modest, financial assistance. In contrast, 81% of stably married fathers saw their children several times a week, the majority provided all or most of the financial support, and the quality of the father-child relationship was reported as highly enjoyable for 73% of the dyads.

The data on adolescent fathers taken from another study of unwed fathers of children born to young mothers (Hardy et al., 1989), showed that 54% of fathers under age 18 and 55% of fathers 18-19 visited the child daily during the first three months after delivery. Further, 27% of fathers under 18 visited weekly and 12% visited occasionally, while 24% of 18-19 year old fathers visited weekly and 15% visited occasionally. When the child was 15-18 months old, the daily visits dwindled to 18% of fathers under age 18 and 23% of those 18-19. Weekly visits increased to 42% and 33% respectively, and occasional visits grew to 27% for both sets of fathers. It should be noted that the percentage of fathers under 18 who stopped visiting their children during the study period doubled from 7% to 14%, and the percentage almost tripled for 18-19 year old fathers, from 6% to 17%. Overall, the number of contacts between these fathers and their children diminished substantially during the study period.

Very little evidence on the impact of the adolescent father-child relationship was found. Two studies that address the adolescent father's influence on the child's social-emotional and cognitive development were not conclusive in their findings. That is, the children of adolescent parents who scored higher on developmental measures were more apt to come from two-parent homes but their scores appeared to be influenced more by the family's

financial stability than by the presence of the father in the home (Baldwin & Cain, 1980; Parke et al., 1980).

Father's Psychological Well-Being

In contrast to the stereotype of the uncaring, unfeeling, self-centered teenage father, several studies revealed that adolescent pregnancy precipitated feelings of guilt, helplessness, inadequacy, fear, confusion, anguish, depression, worry, self-doubt, frustration, isolation, and anxiety for the young father. In general, these feelings are attributed to role conflicts and a lack of support (Barret & Robinson, 1981; Connolly, 1978; Elster & Hendricks, 1986; Kahn & Bolton, 1986; Sander & Rosen, 1987).

According to Kahn and Bolton (1986) some adolescent fathers may be able to use parenthood to resolve conflicts of adolescence, but role conflicts tend to intensify as the young father struggles between commitments to himself and to the mother and child. Furthermore, the adolescent's desire to achieve a positive self-image and sense of personal control is severely undermined when pregnancy and parenting decisions are made without regard to his thoughts or feelings. "Adolescent fathers find themselves in the uncomfortable position of wanting to make a difference and not knowing how" (p. 144).

Premature transition to fatherhood and its subsequent role conflicts was clearly portrayed by Lisa Connolly in

the article, "Boy Fathers"

Individual interviews of teenage fathers in a detention facility concluded that at least 75 percent of the youngsters did not wish to desert, be detached from or abandon their girlfriend or children. Although their immediate reaction was defensive and carried a certain John Wayne bravado, once they began talking, they opened a flood of anguish and doubt about their self-worth. They were confused about what was expected of them and what to do. Most of these boys had no concrete ideas about what the responsibilities of fatherhood are. (1978, p. 42)

Adolescent fathers have also expressed a need for psychological and emotional support as they often feel alienated from their peers and isolated from other sources of support (Elster & Hendricks, 1986; Sander & Rosen, 1987). Evidence regarding parents as a means of support is severely lacking. Hendricks's (1980) study of 20 black adolescent unwed fathers found that 70% considered their parents to be a major source of social support while other studies have merely cited the parents as supporting pregnancy resolution decisions (Lamb et al., 1986; Marsiglio, 1988; Redmond, 1985).

Researchers have suggested several benefits that may result from involving adolescent fathers in pregnancy and parenting services. The advantages include: (a) making the baby a reality to the father rather than just a concept (Pannor & Evans, 1975), (b) alleviating some of the stresses experienced by the mother which may positively influence the quality of maternal care (Lamb & Elster, 1986), (c) psychologically preparing the father to make responsible parenting choices (Earls & Siegel, 1980),

(d) promoting the socioeconomic independence of adolescent families (Kahn & Bolton, 1986), and (e) significantly impacting the psychosocial development of the child through father-child bonding (Smollar & Ooms, 1987).

Summary of Literature Review

Teenage fathers rarely seek help from an agency for fear of being blamed or rejected (Barret & Robinson, 1982; Connolly, 1978; Earls & Siegel, 1980; Hendricks, 1980). It is the exceptional adolescent father who is highly motivated to seek help despite the barriers, as was the father enrolled in the Teen Father Collaboration project who declared, "I was desperate for any kind of help--any kind of support I could get" (Sander & Rosen, 1987, p. 108). Perhaps agencies that provide parenting programs for adolescent mothers should make it their responsibility to include the father. Parenting programs and support groups could be beneficial in assisting adolescent fathers in their own development, child care skills, and parent-child relationships (McGovern, 1990).

As evidenced from the review of literature there is a growing body of research that centers on adolescent fatherhood. Unfortunately, many of the empirical investigations regarding teenage fathers are clouded by a variety of methodological problems. Thus, what we don't know about adolescent fathers still greatly exceeds what we do know. The extant literature offers much speculation

about the provision of parenting and support services to adolescent fathers, and about the implied attitudes of service providers. Yet, it appears that no one has bothered to find out if the allegations are actually true. Therefore, this study was designed to directly explore agency policies and the attitudes of service providers, in order to generate some insight into what has been mostly conjecture.

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

This study includes elements of exploratory and descriptive research. It is based on a survey of providers of adolescent pregnancy services. Agencies that provide medical, educational, and/or counseling services to pregnant teenagers and teenage parents were obtained from a five county area in northern Utah. This geographic area, consisting of Cache, Weber, Davis, Salt Lake, and Utah counties, accounts for approximately 75% of Utah's population and includes a greater number and variety of agencies than is found in other Utah counties.

Calls to agencies that specifically provide referrals for pregnancy and parenting services failed to generate a comprehensive list of agencies. Typically, the names of no more than a half dozen agencies were offered in response to a request for the names of agencies that provide pregnancy and parenting services to adolescents. Thus, agencies were ascertained from county telephone directories. A list of the agencies invited to participate in the study was included in the initial contact letter with a request that the names and addresses of agencies not on the list be written onto the reply form. These procedures yielded the most complete list known to be available of agencies in the five county area that provide pregnancy and parenting services to adolescents.

A letter of introduction requesting participation in a thesis study about pregnancy and parenting services provided to adolescents in Utah was sent to the director/supervisor of each agency's pregnancy/parenting program (see Appendix A). The letter explained that a questionnaire would be distributed to all personnel in the agency who are instrumental in providing these services. In addition, a written copy of the agency's policy or brochure that describes the services provided to adolescents was requested from agencies willing to participate. A reply form (see Appendix B) was furnished for the respondent to indicate whether or not the agency would participate, and the number of staff members for whom surveys should be provided.

Sample

In all, 71 agencies in the five northern Utah counties were initially invited to participate in the study (see Table 1). Based on their responses, 17 of these agencies were collapsed into 5. That is, letters were sent to every location representing one agency, and the agency administrator responded for all of them. In addition, two agencies were no longer operating. Of the 57 remaining agencies, 23 consented to participate, 6 declined, and 27 did not respond. One agency was excluded because of its policy regarding participation in research projects. Follow-up postcards sent to non-respondents yielded 19

Table 1

Agencies Invited to Participate by County

 Cache County

Bear River Social Services	LDS Social Services*
Cache County Health Dept.	Planned Parenthood*
Child & Family Support Center*	Young Mothers Program

Davis County

Davis County Health Dept.*	Family Support Center*
Family Counseling Center	Right To Life
Family Counseling Service*	Young Parents Program

Utah County

Children's Aid Society	Planned Parenthood*
Department of Social Services	Provo Women's Center
LDS Social Services*	Utah County Health Dept.*
Family Support and Treatment Center	

Weber County

Birthright*	LDS Social Services*
Catholic Community Services	Planned Parenthood*
Children's Aid Society*	Weber Community Health*
Crisis Pregnancy Program*	Weber County Health Dept.*
Family Counseling Service*	Your Community Connection*
Family Support Center	

(table continues)

Salt Lake County

Birthcare-Healthcare Assoc.	Maternal & Infant Program*
Birthright*	Northwest Community Health*
Catholic Community Services*	Options for Pregnancy
Children's Aid Society	Planned Parenthood*
Central Community Health*	Redwood Community Health*
Children's Service Society	SL City-County Health Dept.
Copperview Community Health*	SL Crisis Pregnancy Center
Family Counseling	SL Community Intermediate
Family Counseling Center	School Young Parents and
Family Support Center*	Parent Teen Alternative
Granite School District	Programs
Teen Parent Program*	Teen Mother & Child Program
LDS Social Services	Utah Issues*
Indian Health Care Clinic*	Utah Women's Health Center
Indian Walk-In Center	Wasatch Women's Center*
Institute of Human Resources	Youth Services Center*
Jordan Family Education	YWCA Teen Home*
Kearns Community Health*	YWCA Teen Outreach

Note. Does not total to 76 because some agencies have more than one location in the same county.

*Agencies that participated in the study. Totals more than 30 as all Planned Parenthoods were counted as one agency and the Family Support Centers in Davis and Weber Counties were counted as one agency.

additional agencies willing to participate. Five respondents provided the names of five agencies not on the original list. Two of the five agencies consented to participate, one declined, and two did not respond to the initial letter nor to the follow-up postcard. In all, 36 agencies agreed to participate. Upon receipt of the survey, four agencies determined that they did not offer the type of services needed for the study. Additionally, the survey returned by the sole respondent from one agency was apparently lost in the mail. This left 30 agencies that participated in the study (see Table 2).

The agencies in this study represent a wide range of services and philosophies including church sponsored social services, clinics that offer abortions as well as programs that are specifically anti-abortion, government-funded clinics, high school-based teen parent programs, and offender programs. It is believed that this sample may be generalizable to similar agencies outside of Utah. Agency personnel who provided the data consisted of directors or supervisors, counselors, clinicians, educators, and other staff members who work directly with adolescents. A total of 148 surveys were collected from the 30 agencies.

Measurement

A search of prior studies failed to uncover a useful measurement instrument, so a written questionnaire was

Table 2

Agency Response and Retention

Total agencies invited to participate	76
Less agency locations included with administrative office	(12)
Less agencies no longer in operation	(2)
Less agency dropped because of restrictive policy to participate in research projects	(1)
Less agencies determined to be inappropriate	(5)
Less agencies that declined to participate	(7)
Less agencies that did not respond	(18)
Total agencies returning surveys	31
Less survey lost in mail	(1)
Total agencies included in study	30

developed for this study. The survey instrument consisted of 27 questions; 8 pertaining to the provision of services to adolescent males and females, 18 asking for personal opinions about teenage pregnancy and parenting, and one requesting the respondent's gender (see Appendix C).

The survey was reviewed by five professionals employed in the reproductive health field. All five indicated that the survey was easy to understand and answer. One reviewer suggested that the instructions for the attitudinal portion of the survey be clarified to make it obvious that this section was asking for opinions rather than knowledge. Subsequently, the instructions for this section were changed to direct respondents to mark the box that corresponded to how much they personally agreed or disagreed with each statement. In addition, a cover letter on each survey stated, "For this aspect of the questionnaire I am seeking your personal opinions" (see Appendix D).

Confidentiality

In order to assure confidentiality, the only identifying information on the survey was a code indicating the agency the respondent worked for. Surveys were sent to each agency's contact person for distribution to participating staff. Respondents were instructed to staple or tape the survey together before returning it to the contact person. The survey cover letter informed all respondents that their

responses would remain confidential. Respondent's willingness to participate was regarded as implied consent. To guarantee that the issue of confidentiality was adequately addressed, the thesis proposal was reviewed and declared exempt from further review from the Institutional Review Board of Utah State University.

Data Transformation

The questionnaire answer alternatives were numerically precoded to facilitate direct transfer of the raw data into the computer for analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSSX) computer software. Upon receipt of the surveys, the researcher performed a spot-check for errors in the data before entering it in a data file. All data were entered in their original form on the Word Perfect 5.0 program in the researcher's personal computer. The data file was transferred by modem to the VAX file at Utah State University. A preliminary analysis of frequencies was run to examine the variables and locate any errors requiring further attention. No data clean-up was necessary.

CHAPTER IV
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Agency Policies

Agencies invited to participate in the study were asked to provide a written policy or brochure describing the adolescent pregnancy and/or parenting services they offer. Of the 30 participating agencies, 13 furnished a brochure, 3 provided their written policy, and 3 included their policy and brochure. Seven of the agencies indicated they did not have a written policy, three conveyed that they had a written policy but could not provide it, one stated that its policy for adolescents is the "same as adults," and two agencies did not respond at all to the request.

In all, 19 agencies provided some form of written description about the services they offer. However, none of the 16 brochures or 6 policy statements mentioned teenage fathers specifically. One brochure specified "parent education courses and support groups for youths and adults." One agency offered "an outreach program designed to help young men confront the challenges of unplanned pregnancy and parenting." A list of services provided by one agency that helps unwed teenage mothers included "counseling with fathers of the babies where appropriate." In addition, of the six agencies that provided policies, one specified unwed fathers and birth parents, one addressed teenagers in general, two referred simply to

parents, and two described services for teenage and adult females only.

The first two research questions ask in part, do agencies that provide services to adolescent mothers have policies that necessarily include or exclude adolescent fathers and do they vary according to marital status? The brochures and written policies received in this study indicated that none of the agencies have policies that necessarily include adolescent fathers, although one might argue that young men, youth, and unwed fathers imply teenage fathers. Four agency brochures specifically outlined services for females only. Thus, it could be concluded that these agencies necessarily exclude adolescent fathers from receiving services. Additionally, one agency policy and two agency brochures suggested that their services are specifically for unwed fathers.

However, the above posed research question cannot be adequately answered without the survey results. Although written policies were more the exception than the rule among agencies in this study, it was assumed that most of the agencies that offer services to teenage males would have unwritten policies regarding adolescent fathers participation in the services provided to adolescent mothers. Respondents were given a list of eight statements with the instruction to check those that most accurately describe their program's policy toward teenage fathers participation. The results (see Tables 3 & 4) demonstrate

Table 3

Agency Policy Toward Teenage Fathers Participating in the
Services Provided to Teenage Mothers: Response of Agencies

Agency Policy	Agency Response	
	<u>n</u> =30	(%)
1. Encourage father participation only if married to mother	0	(0.0)
2. Encourage father participation regardless of marital status	19	(63.3)
3. Encourage father participation only if mother agrees	7	(23.3)
4. Encourage father participation only if he demonstrates a desire to participate	4	(13.3)
5. Discourage father participation regardless of marital status	0	(0.0)
6. Discourage father participation only if not married to the mother	0	(0.0)
7. Neither encourage nor discourage father participation	1	(3.3)
8. Don't know policy	0	(0.0)
9. Missing	10	(33.3)

Table 4

Agency Policy Toward Teenage Fathers Participating in the
Services Provided to Teenage Mothers: Response of
Individuals

Agency Policy	Individual Response	
	n=148	(%)
1. Encourage father participation only if married to mother	2	(1.4)
2. Encourage father participation regardless of marital status	90	(60.8)
3. Encourage father participation only if mother agrees	43	(29.1)
4. Encourage father participation only if he demonstrates a desire to participate	30	(20.3)
5. Discourage father participation regardless of marital status	3	(2.0)
6. Discourage father participation only if not married to the mother	0	(0.0)
7. Neither encourage nor discourage father participation	21	(14.2)
8. Don't know policy	10	(6.8)
9. Missing	0	(0.0)

that almost two-thirds of the agencies encourage the father to participate regardless of marital status. Nearly one-fourth of the agencies encourage father participation only if the mother agrees and 13% encourage the father only if he shows a desire to participate. It should be noted that the results of agency responses for survey questions 1 to 8 were obtained by counting the number of individual responses in an agency and determining that a 60% response rate was adequate for representing the agency. That is, an agency with 10 respondents would require 6 agreements on an item to be counted as an agency response. Only 3 of the 148 respondents indicated that their agency discourages father participation regardless of marital status, and none of the respondents said their agency discourages father participation if he is not married to the mother.

The unwritten policy practiced by most of the agencies does not discriminate against teenage fathers based on whether or not they are married to the mother. As only three respondents gave any indication that adolescent fathers are discouraged from participating, it is concluded that no agency has an implied policy that excludes them intentionally. Thus, even though adolescent fathers are not necessarily included in the agencies' policies and brochures, their unwritten policies suggest that adolescent fathers are not necessarily excluded from receiving services.

Provision of Services

The third research question asks how agencies that provide services to adolescent fathers recruit the fathers and what their services include. Respondents were furnished a list of strategies their agency might use to make teenagers aware of their services. The options were given for females and males separately, and respondents were instructed to mark all that apply. The overwhelming majority of responses for both females and males were "word of mouth" and "referrals from other agencies" (see Tables 5 & 6). Following these were, "listed with information and referral" for both genders, "telephone directory" then "community outreach" for males, "community outreach" then "telephone directory" for females, and "advertising in local newspapers and magazines" for both.

Three survey questions asked respondents to indicate the pregnancy and parenting services their agency provides to teenage females and teenage males. Tables 7, 8 and 9 delineate the number of agencies that provide the specified services and the individual responses to each question.

As shown in Table 9, three (10%) of the agencies do not provide services to adolescent fathers. One of these agencies has a policy that outlines services for teenagers in general; the other two agencies do not have a policy. The agencies that provided written policies and/or brochures describing services for females only, do provide

Table 5

Advertising Methods Agency Uses to Make Teenage
Females Aware of Services: Response of Agencies
and Individuals

Advertising Method	Response			
	Agency		Individual	
	n=30	(%)	n=148	(%)
1. Newspapers/ magazines	10	(33.3)	52	(35.1)
2. Telephone directory	16	(53.3)	91	(61.5)
3. Information and Referral	23	(76.7)	102	(68.9)
4. Other agency referrals	30	(100)	135	(91.2)
5. Community outreach	19	(63.3)	87	(58.8)
6. Word of mouth	30	(100)	139	(93.9)
7. None	0	(0.0)	1	(0.7)
8. Other	3	(10.0)	32	(21.6)

Table 6

Advertising Methods Agency Uses to Make Teenage
Males Aware of Services: Response of Agencies
and Individuals

Advertising Method	Response			
	Agency		Individual	
	<u>n</u> =30	(%)	<u>n</u> =148	(%)
1. Newspapers/ magazines	5	(16.7)	33	(22.3)
2. Telephone directory	14	(46.7)	66	(44.6)
3. Information and Referral	17	(56.7)	76	(51.4)
4. Other agency referrals	19	(63.3)	90	(60.8)
5. Community outreach	13	(43.3)	63	(42.6)
6. Word of mouth	25	(83.3)	108	(73.0)
7. None	0	(0.0)	21	(14.2)
8. Other	2	(6.7)	21	(14.2)
9. Missing	3	(10.0)		

Table 7

Pregnancy Services for Teenage Females: Number of Agencies
Providing Service and Individuals' Response That Agency
Provides Service

Pregnancy Service	Agencies Provide		Individual Response	
	n=30	(%)	n=148	(%)
1. None	0	(0.0)	2	(1.4)
2. Referrals	27	(90.0)	130	(87.8)
3. Counseling	26	(86.7)	124	(83.8)
4. Pregnancy testing	14	(46.7)	78	(52.7)
5. Housing	8	(26.7)	28	(18.9)
6. Medical care	12	(40.0)	64	(43.2)
7. Pregnancy education	23	(76.7)	119	(80.4)
8. Financial assistance	10	(33.3)	66	(44.6)
9. Other	2	(6.7)	33	(22.3)
10. Missing	1	(3.3)		

Table 8

Parenting Services for Teenage Females: Number of Agencies
Providing Services and Individuals' Response That Agency
Provides Service

Parenting Service	Agencies Provide		Individual Response	
	n=30	(%)	n=148	(%)
1. None	0	(0.0)	4	(2.7)
2. Referrals	26	(86.7)	123	(83.1)
3. Counseling	25	(83.3)	118	(79.7)
4. Financial assistance	1	(3.3)	27	(18.2)
5. Parenting education	19	(63.3)	101	(68.2)
6. Employment assistance	6	(20.0)	28	(18.9)
7. Other	1	(3.3)	8	(5.4)
8. Missing	0	(0.0)		

Table 9

Parenting Services for Teenage Males: Number of Agencies
Providing Service and Individuals' Response That Agency
Provides Service

Parenting Service	Agencies Provide		Individual Response	
	n=30	(%)	n=148	(%)
1. None	3	(10.0)	25	(16.9)
2. Referrals	20	(66.7)	90	(60.8)
3. Counseling	22	(73.3)	95	(64.2)
4. Pregnancy education	11	(36.7)	72	(48.6)
5. Parenting education	14	(46.7)	76	(51.4)
6. Financial assistance	1	(3.3)	13	(8.8)
7. Employment assistance	2	(6.7)	13	(8.8)
8. Other	2	(6.7)	11	(7.4)
9. Missing	1	(3.3)		

services to teenage males. But how is one to know? The majority of agencies do offer referrals (86.7%) and counseling (73.3%) to teenage males, and more than a third provide pregnancy education (36.7%) and parenting education (46.7%) to teenage males. In contrast, only 2 of the 30 agencies offer employment assistance to adolescent males, while 6 agencies provide employment assistance to adolescent females.

Even though a large number of agencies do offer services for adolescent males, their teenage clientele is mostly female (see Table 10). When asked what percentage of their teenage clients are female, 53% indicated 90-100% and another 13% marked 70-80%. This does not mean, however, that a third of the teenage population receiving services is male, as 27% of the agencies did not respond or had less than 60% agreement on the percent female population. Also, it should be noted that several respondents apparently answered the question to reflect the percentage of their total clientele rather than teenage clients only. This conclusion is based on surveys that showed most of the service provision went to adolescent females, yet, the percent female teenage population served was marked as 10 to 30%. As evidenced by the individual responses, 70% of the respondents indicated that their teenage clientele is 90-100% female and an additional 13% of respondents estimated that 70-80% of their teenage clients are female.

Table 10

Percent Teenage Population Agency Serves is Female:Response of Agencies and Individuals

Percent Female	Response			
	Agency		Individual	
	n=30	(%)	n=148	(%)
1. 100%	6	(20.0)	58	(39.2)
2. 90%	10	(33.3)	46	(31.1)
3. 80%	2	(6.7)	9	(6.1)
4. 70%	2	(6.7)	10	(6.8)
5. 60%	0	(0.0)	4	(2.7)
6. 50%	1	(3.3)	4	(2.7)
7. 40%	0	(0.0)	0	(0.0)
8. 30%	1	(3.3)	3	(2.0)
9. 20%	0	(0.0)	1	(0.7)
10. 10%	0	(0.0)	6	(4.1)
11. 0%	0	(0.0)	0	(0.0)
12. Missing	8	(26.7)	7	(4.7)

If one were to draw a conclusion from the fact that 90% of the agencies surveyed do offer services to teenage males consisting mostly of referrals, counseling, and education, it would seem reasonable to suggest that adolescent fathers are adequately served by the agencies that provide services to adolescent mothers. However, after factoring in the methods these agencies use to recruit teen fathers and, especially, the percentages of their teenage clients who are male, it is clear that adolescent fathers rarely obtain or benefit from these services. This may be due, in part, to the insufficient effort of these agencies to make teen fathers aware of the services available to them, and the lack of encouragement or support for them to take advantage of the services.

Why Services Not Provided

For those agencies that don't offer services to teenage males, the research question is posed, "why not?". Since only three agencies specifically indicated that they do not provide services to teen males, it is not surprising that the majority of agencies said they do provide services when asked to mark the reason why their agency does not offer direct services to teenage males (see Table 11). Individual responses show that 26% of those surveyed believe their agency does not provide services because adolescent males don't request them. This finding supports the idea that agencies are not actively recruiting or

Table 11

Reason Agency Does Not Provide Direct Services to Teenage
Males: Response of Agencies and Individuals

Reason	Response			
	Agency n=30 (%)		Individual n=148 (%)	
1. Lack funding	3	(10.0)	19	(12.8)
2. Lack personnel	1	(3.3)	15	(10.1)
3. They have other options	0	(0.0)	11	(7.4)
4. They don't request our services	1	(3.3)	38	(25.7)
5. They don't need our services	0	(0.0)	8	(5.4)
6. Don't know	1	(3.3)	18	(12.2)
7. We <u>do</u> provide services to teenage males	18	(60.0)	83	(56.1)
8. Missing	8	(26.7)		

encouraging adolescent fathers to take advantage of their services. In addition, 13% of respondents indicated their agency lacks funding, and 10% said they lack personnel.

Personnel Attitudes

Along with agency policies, the first two research questions ask if the personnel who provide services to adolescent mothers have attitudes that necessarily include or exclude adolescent fathers, and do their attitudes vary according to the father's marital status. These questions were addressed in part two of the survey where respondents were instructed to mark the box corresponding to how much they agree or disagree with each of the 18 statements presented. As evidenced by the mean scores (see Table 12), a large number of responses fell into the neither agree nor disagree category. There are at least two possible explanations for this finding. A couple of respondents indicated that the statements were too general and each case needs to be judged individually. Based on the comments of two reviewers, there was concern that they might choose the wrong answer and betray their level of knowledge, so a neutral answer was less threatening. Of course, since the instructions asked for their personal opinions there could be no right or wrong answers, and many of the statements began, "In general." It can only be speculated that many respondents simply did not want to commit themselves.

Table 12

Mean Personal Opinion Scores of Agency Personnel About
Adolescent Parent Issues

Statement	*Mean Total (n=148)
1. Teenage mothers are more responsible than teenage fathers	2.71
2. Married teenage mothers are more responsible than unmarried mothers	3.41
3. Married teenage fathers are more responsible than unmarried fathers	2.91
4. Teenage mothers who marry before conception are more responsible than those who marry after conception	3.16
5. Teenage fathers who marry before conception are more responsible than those who marry after conception	3.04
6. In general, teenage males disappear at the first sign of their partner's pregnancy	3.14
7. Teenage mothers are more important to the child's development than teenage fathers	3.27

(table continues)

Statement	*Mean Total (n=148)
8. In general, teenage fathers want to support the mother and child financially	3.24
9. In general, teenage fathers want to support the mother and child emotionally	2.93
10. In general, the teenage mother's pregnancy experience improves if the father is involved	2.04
11. Most children of single teenage mothers do better if the father stays away from them	3.85
12. In general, teenage girls who become pregnant are looking for someone to love	2.43
13. In general, teenage boys who father a child are only trying to prove their masculinity	3.26
14. In general, teen fathers care more about themselves than the mother and child	2.75
15. If an unmarried father really wants to support the mother and child he will marry the mother	3.36

(table continues)

Statement	*Mean Total (<u>n</u> =148)
16. When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy the teenage mother should make the decision	2.64
17. When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy the teenage father should have equal say in making the decision	3.05
18. When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy the teenage father should have no say in making the decision	3.88

Note. Each statement was responded to using answer alternatives 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree.

*Lower scores indicate higher agreement.

Table 13 shows the personal opinion mean scores for female and male respondents separately. Unfortunately, 32% of those surveyed did not provide their gender, (as the last question on the survey, perhaps it was easy to overlook), so female scores are based on 84 (56.8%) respondents, and male scores account for 17 (11.5%) respondents. It is believed, however, that the 20:1 ratio of female to male personnel is a fairly accurate characterization of the total surveyed. A t test was done to compare means by gender using the separate variance estimate (see Table 14). None of the t values for the 18 items reached statistical significance indicating that females and males did not demonstrate any notable differences in their overall opinions.

By combining strongly agree with agree scores and strongly disagree with disagree scores, while excluding the neutral mid category, a somewhat different picture emerges (see Table 15). Removal of the neutral scores makes the numbers for each category of agree and disagree quite small for some items. Thus, these findings must be viewed with caution.

Nearly half of those surveyed agreed that teen mothers are more responsible than teen fathers (item 1), with close to 60% of male respondents in agreement compared to 40% of the females. There was also a tendency for respondents to view married teen fathers as more responsible than unmarried fathers (item 3), with male respondents once

Table 13

Mean Personal Opinion Scores of Agency Personnel About
Adolescent Parent Issues by Gender

Statement	*Mean Score	
	Female (<u>n</u> =84)	Male (<u>n</u> =17)
1. Teenage mothers are more responsible than teen fathers	2.88	2.82
2. Married teenage mothers are more responsible than unmarried mothers	3.44	3.35
3. Married teenage fathers are more responsible than unmarried fathers	2.99	2.88
4. Teenage mothers who marry before conception are more responsible than those who marry after conception	3.21	3.06
5. Teenage fathers who marry before conception are more responsible than those who marry after conception	3.13	2.88
6. In general, teenage males disappear at the first sign of their partner's pregnancy	3.21	3.35

(table continues)

Statement	*Mean Score	
	Female (<u>n</u> =84)	Male (<u>n</u> =17)
7. Teenage mothers are more important to the child's development than teenage fathers	3.36	3.00
8. In general, teenage fathers want to support the mother and child financially	3.27	3.59
9. In general, teenage fathers want to support the mother and child emotionally	2.94	3.29
10. In general, the teenage mother's pregnancy experience improves if the father is involved	2.12	2.35
11. Most children of single teenage mothers do better if the father stays away from them	3.82	4.23
12. In general, teenage girls who become pregnant are looking for someone to love	2.39	3.06
13. In general, teenage boys who father a child are only trying to prove their masculinity	3.26	3.65

(table continues)

Statement	*Mean Score	
	Female	Male
	(<u>n</u> =84)	(<u>n</u> =17)
14. In general, teenage fathers care more about themselves than the mother and child	2.80	2.82
15. If an unmarried father really wants to support the mother and child he will marry the mother	3.32	3.59
16. When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy the teenage mother should make the decision	2.68	2.88
17. When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy the teenage father should have equal say in making the decision	2.99	3.41
18. When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy the teenage father should have no say in making the decision	3.87	4.18

*Lower scores indicate higher agreement.

Table 14

Mean Personal Opinion Scores of Agency Personnel About
Adolescent Parent Issues Compared by Gender

Statement	<u>t</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>p</u>
1. Teenage mothers are more responsible than teenage fathers	.13	18.34	.895
2. Married teenage mothers are more responsible than unmarried mothers	.22	17.75	.826
3. Married teenage fathers are more responsible than unmarried fathers	.24	17.92	.813
4. Teenage mothers who marry before conception are more responsible than those who marry after conception	.36	18.15	.727
5. Teenage fathers who marry before conception are more responsible than those who marry after conception	.56	18.10	.580
6. In general, teenage males disappear at the first sign of their partner's pregnancy	-.32	17.38	.750

(table continues)

Statement	<u>t</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>p</u>
7. Teenage mothers are more important to the child's development than teen fathers	1.27	22.63	.217
8. In general, teenage fathers want to support the mother and child financially	-.82	17.69	.424
9. In general, teenage fathers want to support the mother and child emotionally	-.87	17.36	.398
10. In general, the teenage mother's pregnancy experience improves if the father is involved	-.54	17.09	.598
11. Most children of single teenage mothers do better if the father stays away from them	-1.19	17.65	.248
12. In general, teenage girls who become pregnant are looking for someone to love	-1.56	17.74	.136
13. In general, teenage boys who father a child are only trying to prove their masculinity	-1.01	17.35	.326
14. In general, teenage fathers more about themselves than the mother and child	-.06	17.35	.953

(table continues)

Statement	<u>t</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>p</u>
15. If an unmarried father really wants to support the mother and child he will marry the mother	-0.69	18.02	.498
16. When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy the teenage mother should make the decision	-0.44	18.20	.662
17. When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy the teenage father should have equal say in making the decision	-1.00	18.14	.332
18. When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy the teenage father should have no say in making the decision	-0.86	18.03	.399

Note. No t values reached statistical significance. All $p > 0.1$.

Table 15

Percent Personal Opinion Scores of Agency Personnel Who
Agree or Disagree with Statements About Adolescent Parent
Issues

Statement	Percent		
	<u>A</u> = Agree <u>D</u> = Disagree		
	Total (<u>n</u> =148)	Female (<u>n</u> =84)	Male (<u>n</u> =17)
1. Teenage mothers are more responsible than teenage fathers	<u>A</u> 47.9	40.5	58.8
	<u>D</u> 21.0	26.2	5.9
2. Married teenage mothers are more responsible than unmarried mothers	<u>A</u> 13.5	11.9	17.6
	<u>D</u> 47.3	47.6	17.6
3. Married teenage fathers are more responsible than unmarried fathers	<u>A</u> 39.2	35.7	52.9
	<u>D</u> 29.1	32.1	11.8
4. Teenage mothers who marry before conception are more responsible than those who marry after conception	<u>A</u> 25.7	22.6	29.4
	<u>D</u> 39.2	40.5	11.8

(table continues)

Percent

A = Agree D = Disagree

Statement	Percent			
	Total (<u>n</u> =148)	Female (<u>n</u> =84)	Male (<u>n</u> =17)	
5. Teenage fathers who marry before conception are more responsible than those who marry after conception	A	31.8	27.4	41.2
	D	36.5	39.3	5.9
6. In general, teenage males disappear at the first sign of their partner's pregnancy	A	22.3	17.9	29.4
	D	37.8	38.1	35.3
7. Teenage mothers are more important to the child's development than teenage fathers	A	31.1	28.6	35.3
	D	48.6	51.2	35.3
8. In general, teenage fathers want to support the mother and child financially	A	18.2	16.7	5.9
	D	37.8	40.5	23.5
9. In general, teenage fathers want to support the mother and child emotionally	A	31.1	28.6	23.5
	D	21.6	20.2	11.8

(table continues)

Statement	Percent		
	<u>A</u> = Agree <u>D</u> = Disagree		
	Total (<u>n</u> =148)	Female (<u>n</u> =84)	Male (<u>n</u> =17)
10. In general, the teenage mother's pregnancy experience improves if the father is involved	<u>A</u> 81.1	77.4	88.2
	<u>D</u> 2.7	4.8	0.0
11. Most children of single teenage mothers do better if the father stays away from them	<u>A</u> 0.0	0.0	0.0
	<u>D</u> 66.9	65.5	70.6
12. In general, teenage girls who become pregnant are looking for someone to love	<u>A</u> 54.7	53.6	47.1
	<u>D</u> 11.5	9.5	17.6
13. In general, teenage boys who father a child are only trying to prove their masculinity	<u>A</u> 14.9	11.9	11.8
	<u>D</u> 38.5	35.7	41.2
14. In general, teenage fathers care more about themselves than the mother and child	<u>A</u> 39.2	36.9	52.9
	<u>D</u> 17.6	17.9	5.9

(table continues)

Statement	Percent			
	A = Agree D = Disagree			
	Total (n=148)	Female (n=84)	Male (n=17)	
15. If an unmarried father really wants to support the mother and child he will marry the mother	A	14.2	16.7	11.8
	D	48.0	44.0	35.3
16. When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy the teen mother should make the decision	A	52.7	48.8	64.7
	D	27.0	25.0	23.5
17. When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy the teen father should have equal say in making the decision	A	30.4	31.0	23.5
	D	37.8	32.1	35.3
18. When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy the teen father should have no say in making the decision	A	4.1	4.8	5.9
	D	77.7	75.0	76.5

Note. Strongly agree and agree categories combined for percent agree; disagree and strongly disagree categories combined for percent disagree; neither agree nor disagree category excluded.

again reporting a much higher rate of agreement (53%) than females (36%). In contrast, married mothers are not believed to be more responsible than unmarried mothers (item 2) by either gender. It appears that the respondents don't believe that marrying before conception makes teenage mothers and fathers more responsible than marrying after conception (items 4 & 5). However, 41% of male respondents agreed while only 6% disagreed that teen fathers who marry before conception are more responsible than those who marry after. This compares to 27% of female respondents who agreed and 39% who disagreed. Again, both males and females were less apt to agree that teen mothers who marry before conception are more responsible than teen fathers. These results imply that marital status does affect the attitudes of agency personnel toward adolescent fathers more than adolescent mothers. Respondents were less likely to agree that teen fathers want to support the mother and child financially (item 8), whereas more agreed that they want to support the mother and child emotionally (item 9). Nearly half of the respondents did not agree that if an unmarried father really wants to support the mother and the child he will marry her (item 15).

Most of the respondents did not agree that teen fathers disappear at the first sign of their partner's pregnancy (item 6), although 40% chose to remain neutral on this issue. They also disagreed with the myth that teenage males father children to prove their masculinity (item 13).

There was notable agreement (53%) from the male respondents that teenage fathers care more about themselves than the mother and child (item 14). It is the percentage of those who disagree with the statement, however, that is more telling. Only 5.9% of male respondents and 18% of females disagreed. The largest majority of respondents (81%) agreed that the teenage mother's pregnancy experience is improved if the father is involved (item 10). Furthermore, a greater percentage of males (88%) than females (77%) agreed. No one agreed with the statement, "most children of single teenage mothers do better if the father stays away from them" (item 11). Indeed, 70% of males and 65% of female respondents disagreed. Moreover, most of those surveyed did not express the belief that teen mothers are more important to the child's development than teen fathers (item 7), although the male respondents were evenly split on this issue.

When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy, 53% of respondents agreed that the teen mother should make the decision (item 16). Most everyone agreed that the father should have some say in making the decision (item 18), while 30% agreed and 38% did not agree that the father should have equal say (item 17). These findings suggest that agency personnel do believe that teen fathers should be included in the pregnancy experience, and that they are not thought of as unnecessary in the parenting process or unimportant to the child's development.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

Concern has grown dramatically over the last two decades about teenage pregnancy and what we as a society should do to prevent it. Much has been written about this problem, and parents, schools, churches, and public and private agencies have developed strategies and interventions in an attempt to curtail unplanned adolescent pregnancies. Unfortunately, the bulk of these efforts were designed to reach only the female half of the pregnancy equation (Barret & Robinson, 1982). As scholars became aware of this discrepancy, studies of adolescent fathers started to emerge. There is now a growing body of research that centers on adolescent fatherhood.

Many of the empirical investigations regarding teenage fathers are clouded by a variety of methodological problems. According to Robinson and Barret (1982), many studies of teenage fathers make inferences from information obtained from the mother and may be seriously biased. Adolescent males are often included in studies of older unmarried fathers and not separated out. Unrepresentative sampling procedures are commonplace because a large representative sample is considered a complex and costly task. Thus, even though our knowledge and understanding of adolescent fathers has expanded over the past 15 years, there remains much to learn.

Research has had a positive impact on dispelling the commonly-held myths and stereotypes about adolescent fathers. Contrary to the notion that teenage fathers are irresponsible, uncaring, self-centered victimizers who are only interested in having a good time, and vanish at the first mention of pregnancy, studies paint quite a different picture.

An emerging profile indicates that many adolescent fathers definitely want to be involved with their babies as well as their girlfriends. . . .many are far more responsible than commonly believed. . . .yet they do encounter serious difficulties when facing adult decisions while still young. Although psychologically normal, adolescent fathers lack knowledge about sexuality, contraception, and child development. (Barret & Robinson, 1986, pp. 226-227)

A review of the extant literature revealed that, even though many adolescent fathers do not fit negative stereotypes, the agencies that provide adolescent pregnancy and parenting services may have policies and/or their personnel may have attitudes that reflect these stereotypical beliefs. Based on a study of teenage family planning services, Hendricks (1980) suggested that agencies and institutions devalue the male role and intentionally exclude the unmarried father from planning for the mother and child. Sander and Rosen (1987) asserted that social service providers often treat teenage fathers as outcasts. And, according to Barret and Robinson (1986), adolescent fathers have typically been disregarded or excluded from consideration as the child's other parent because they were viewed as unnecessary in the parenting process and

unimportant to the child's development. No evidence was uncovered, however, to indicate that these assumptions had any empirical basis. Furthermore, the researchers who made these claims did not address the issue of marital status and whether or not agency policies or personnel attitudes differ toward married versus unmarried fathers (Gundersen-Warner, 1990).

This study was conducted to provide empirical evidence that either supports or refutes the allegations that adolescent fathers are excluded from pregnancy and parenting services, and that they are typically regarded as serving an unnecessary and unimportant parenting role. Additionally, the provision of parenting services for adolescent fathers was examined based on their marital status.

Results were based on responses to a 27 question written survey collected from 148 personnel representing 30 northern Utah agencies that provide pregnancy and/or parenting services to adolescent females. Respondents included program directors, supervisors, counselors, clinicians, educators, and any other staff members who work directly with adolescents.

Conclusions

In answer to the question, do agencies have policies that necessarily exclude adolescent fathers and do they vary according to marital status, it was found that none of

the participating agencies had a written statement that specifically addressed teenage males, let alone excluded them. An unwritten policy that allows teen fathers to participate in the services provided to teen mothers, regardless of marital status, is practiced by about 63% of the agencies. None of the agencies discourage teen fathers from participating no matter what their marital status. However, females make up the majority of the teenage clientele these agencies serve. Thus, even though these agencies do not deliberately exclude adolescent fathers from services, these findings suggest that they are not necessarily included either.

Supporting this assumption is the finding that these agencies do not employ effective strategies for recruiting teen fathers. The method most often cited as a means for making teenage males aware of their services was "word of mouth", and less than half of the agencies indicated that they create awareness through community outreach. For the most part, these agencies rely on referrals.

Three agencies reported that they do not provide services to teenage males. However, three additional agencies indicated that their teenage clientele is 100% female and another 10 serve a 90% female teenage population. When asked why their agency does not provide services to teenage males, one-fourth of the respondents marked "they don't request our services". A minority of

agencies lack the funding or personnel to provide services to males.

These findings are concerning in light of evidence suggesting that teenage fathers rarely seek help from an agency. It is not surprising, then, that the majority of teen parents served by these agencies are female. As one respondent commented, "we really do need to start paying more attention to teenage fathers".

The results of the personal attitude portion of the survey cannot be regarded as conclusive since a large number of respondents opted for the neutral position in response to how much they agreed or disagreed with the 18 statements about adolescent parents. Thus, these findings should be regarded as preliminary.

Respondents tended to agree that teenage mothers are more responsible than teenage fathers, and that the marital status of the father does not make him any more or less responsible. They did not agree that teen males disappear at the first sign of pregnancy, but they did agree that teen fathers care more about themselves than the mother and child. They agreed that teen fathers want to support the mother and child emotionally but not financially. And they didn't agree that if he really wants to support the mother and child, the teen father will marry the mother.

Those surveyed did not see the teen mother as more important to the child's development than the teen father, they affirmed that the mother's pregnancy experience is

improved if the father is involved, and they opposed the idea that most children of single teen mothers do better if the father stays away. Respondents also conveyed that when deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy, the teen father should have some, but not equal say, and the mother should make the decision.

Ironically, these findings suggest that agency personnel do tend toward viewing adolescent fathers as irresponsible and uncaring, but they strongly favor including the father in the pregnancy experience and decision making process. Contrary to the assumption that service providers consider teenage fathers to be unimportant and unnecessary to the child's development, the agency personnel in this study indicated that the father should not be disregarded as the other parent and that their children are not better off without them.

Implications

This is the first known study that attempts to investigate the assertions previously made that agencies and the personnel who provide pregnancy and parenting services to adolescents have policies and/or attitudes that either prohibit adolescent fathers or scare them away from obtaining services. The results of this study suggest that agencies don't necessarily exclude adolescent fathers from receiving services, they simply do not expend much effort to let teen males know what services are available to them.

In addition, unwritten agency policies and the attitudes of the agency personnel in this study demonstrate that teenage fathers are welcomed and encouraged to take part in the services provided to adolescent mothers, but only if they are willing to request services or show a desire to participate.

It is evident from the disparate responses collected within each agency that their own personnel may not really know what services they provide. Thus, if an adolescent father contacts an agency, the services he receives could depend on the person he talks to. Investigative research could be conducted to examine how adolescent fathers are actually treated by such agencies by having males contact various agencies under the pretense of being an adolescent father seeking help.

Because of the diversity of agencies included in this study, the findings might be generalizable to other agencies outside of northern Utah. If this is true, it could be concluded that most agencies have no written policy addressing adolescent fathers and that teenage males are consistently omitted from agency brochures and other written materials. Without the benefit of empirical evidence, I propose that at least one-third of the one million adolescent pregnancies that occur annually in the United States are fathered by adolescent males. Based on this proposition there may be a third of a million or more teen fathers every year who could take advantage of

parenting services. Clearly the need to have policies and programs that include adolescent fathers is a crucial issue with serious social implications. Expanding the study to include agencies throughout the country could offer important insight into this issue. Perhaps the finding that most agencies exclude adolescent fathers from policy statements and program brochures is strictly a northern Utah occurrence but it could be a nationwide phenomenon as well.

Another research possibility uncovered by this study is whether or not male personnel would be better suited to serving adolescent fathers, conceivably as role models, as one researcher suggested (McGovern, 1990). The number of known males surveyed for this study was too small to draw conclusions but the attitudes conveyed by the survey results indicate that they are more negative toward adolescent fathers than females. A much larger study including more male providers is needed to adequately explore this issue.

Since the percentage of male teenagers these agencies serve is severely limited, the attitudes expressed by those surveyed may not reflect those of individuals who serve much larger teenage male populations. A study that examines the attitudes of agency personnel who serve a larger proportion of adolescent fathers is needed based on the assumption that such personnel should have more direct experience on which to form opinions.

In sum, this study does not provide conclusive evidence to either confirm or refute allegations that adolescent fathers are ignored and treated as outcasts by the agencies that provide services to adolescent mothers. As the only known empirical investigation to question these assumptions, this study does offer a first step in determining whether or not agencies and their personnel are guilty of prohibiting adolescent fathers from receiving services, even if it is because they just don't make the effort to include them as this study suggests. It is hoped that further investigation in this area may lead to a greater awareness that agencies and the personnel who provide services to adolescent parents can play a vital role in assisting adolescent fathers to become the responsible, nurturing, involved fathers they want to be given the support and understanding.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Invitation to Participate

Dear Director/Supervisor:

My name is Sandi Warner. I am a masters candidate at Utah State University in the Department of Family and Human Development. I am doing my thesis on pregnancy and parenting services provided to adolescents in Utah. Thus, I am requesting permission to include your agency in my study.

To gain the needed data for this research project, I am asking for a written statement of the pregnancy and/or parenting services your agency provides to adolescents. This might come from a written policy or brochure you could provide. Also, I will distribute a questionnaire to all personnel within the agency who are instrumental in providing these services. If your agency is willing to take part in this research, I will need to know the number of staff members who could be surveyed. Please be reassured that all information will be kept confidential.

I am including a list of agencies in your county that have been identified as those most likely to provide pregnancy and/or parenting services to adolescents. If there are any I have overlooked I would very much appreciate you letting me know who they are. (I am intentionally excluding private practice providers.)

For your convenience, I am enclosing a brief reply form and a stamped, self-addressed return envelope. I am grateful for your attention to this request and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Sandi G. Warner
Masters Candidate

3 enclosures

APPENDIX B

Reply Form

Agency Name _____
Address _____
Contact Person _____

1. This agency:
 will participate
 will not participate
 needs more information before a decision can be made
 does not provide pregnancy or parenting services

2.
 A copy of the written policy for providing pregnancy/parenting services to adolescents is enclosed.
 We do not have a written policy for providing services to adolescents.
 We have a written policy but I cannot provide a copy.

3. We have staff members who personally provide pregnancy and/or parenting services to adolescents.

4. The following agencies were not on your list (please include addresses if possible):

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation. Please return in the self-addressed envelope.

Sandi G. Warner
353 East 3350 North
North Ogden, UT 84414

APPENDIX C

Survey of Adolescent Pregnancy/Parenting Services
in Northern Utah

PART I. Adolescent Pregnancy/Parenting Services

1. This agency/program provides the following pregnancy services for teenage females (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. None | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Medical care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Referrals | <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Pregnancy education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Financial assistance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Pregnancy testing | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Housing | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Other (please specify) _____ | |

2. This agency/program provides the following parenting services for teenage females (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. None | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Parenting education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Referrals | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Employment assistance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Counseling | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Financial assistance | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Other (please specify) _____ | |

3. This agency/program provides the following services for teenage males (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. None | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Financial assistance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Referrals | <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Employment assistance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Counseling | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Pregnancy education | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Parenting education | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Other (please specify) _____ | |

4. This agency/program does not provide direct services for teenage males for the following reason(s):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Lack funding | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. They don't need our services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Lack personnel | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Don't know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. They have other options | <input type="checkbox"/> 7. We <u>do</u> provide services for teenage males |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. They don't request our services | |

5. If the agency you work for does offer services to teenage males, which of the following statements most accurately describe your program's policy toward teenage fathers participation in the services provided to teenage mothers (check all that apply):

- 1. We encourage the father to participate only if he is married to the mother
- 2. We encourage the father to participate regardless of marital status
- 3. We encourage the father to participate only if the mother agrees
- 4. We encourage the father to participate only if he demonstrates a desire to participate
- 5. We discourage participation by the father regardless of marital status
- 6. We discourage participation by the father only if he is not married to the mother
- 7. We neither encourage nor discourage participation by the father
- 8. I do not know what this program's policy is regarding the fathers participation

6. Approximately what percentage of the teenage population that you serve is female?

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. 100% <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. 70% <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. 40% <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. 10% <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. 90% <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. 60% <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. 30% <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. 0% <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. 80% <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. 50% <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. 20% <input type="checkbox"/> | |

7. Which of the following methods does your agency/program use to make teenage females aware of your services (Check all that apply):

- 1. Advertising in local newspapers/magazines
- 2. Telephone directory
- 3. Listed with Information and Referral service
- 4. Referral from other agencies
- 5. Community outreach
- 6. Word of mouth
- 7. None
- 8. Other (please specify)_____

8. Which of the following methods does your agency/program use to make teenage males aware of your services (Check all that apply):

- 1. Advertising in local newspapers/magazines
- 2. Telephone directory
- 3. Listed with Information and Referral service
- 4. Referral from other agencies
- 5. Community outreach
- 6. Word of mouth
- 7. None
- 8. Other (please specify)_____

PART II. Personal Opinions and Feelings

Please use the following codes to indicate how much you personally agree or disagree with the statements below and put a check in the corresponding box for each statement:

SA = strongly agree

A = agree

N = neither agree nor disagree

D = disagree

SD = strongly disagree

	SA	A	N	D	SD
9. Teenage mothers are more responsible than teenage fathers					
10. Married teenage mothers are more responsible than unmarried mothers					
11. Married teenage fathers are more responsible than unmarried fathers					
12. Teenage mothers who marry before conception are more responsible than those who marry after conception					
13. Teenage fathers who marry before conception are more responsible than those who marry after conception					
14. In general, teenage males disappear at the first sign of their partner's pregnancy					
15. Teenage mothers are more important to the child's development than teenage fathers					
16. In general, teenage fathers want to support the mother and child financially					

	SA	A	N	D	SD
17. In general, teenage fathers want to support the mother and child emotionally					
18. In general, the teenage mother's pregnancy experience is improved if the father is involved					
19. Most children of single teenage mothers do better if the father stays away from them					
20. In general, teenage girls who become pregnant are looking for someone to love them					
21. In general, teenage boys who father a child are only trying to prove their masculinity					
22. In general, teenage fathers care more about themselves than the mother and child					
23. If an unmarried father really wants to support the mother and child he will marry the mother					
24. When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy the teenage mother should make the decision					
25. When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy the teenage father should have equal say					
26. When deciding what to do about an unplanned pregnancy the teenage father should have no say in making the decision					
27. Please mark whether you are a female___ or male___					

APPENDIX D

Participant Letter

Dear Participant:

Your supervisor has generously accepted my request to survey the staff members in the agency/program where you work. The purpose of this study is to gather information for my masters thesis about the pregnancy and parenting services available to teenagers in northern Utah.

The first part of the questionnaire pertains to the services your agency/program offers for teenagers. I am asking that you answer these questions to the best of your knowledge without consulting your supervisor or other staff. Part two consists of several statements about teenage pregnancy and parenting which I am asking you to rate according to how much you agree or disagree with them. For this aspect of the questionnaire I am seeking your personal opinions.

In all, there are 27 questions which should take about 5-10 minutes to answer. When you have completed the survey, please staple or tape it together and return it to your supervisor so she/he can mail them all back to me. I am not asking for any identifying information, so please be assured that your responses will remain confidential.

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to participate in this study.