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ABSTRACT
                This study surveyed 133 counselors-in-training
(graduate students) on their perceptions of African American/Black,
Hispanic, and White males and females in a teen pregnancy situation
depicted in videotaped dramatizations. Overall, females were
perceived as more likeable than were males. Respondents were less
likely to encourage the Hispanic male to pursue his education. Males
of all ethnicities were expected to drop out of school and get a job
at a significantly greater rate than females. African American/Black
males were more likely to be counseled to encourage their girlfriends
to terminate pregnancy; counselor candidates were less likely to
suggest termination to Hispanic males. Other findings and
implications for counselor training and education for counseling
teenage parents of different ethnicities are discussed. (Contains one
table and nine references.) (SLD)

Attitudes of Counselor Trainees Toward
Teenage Pregnancy and Ethnicity Issues

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Abstract

This study surveyed 133 counselors-in-training on their
perceptions of African-American/Black, Hispanic, and White males
and females in a teen pregnancy situation. Findings indicated a
bias for the Hispanic adolescent male that he not be encouraged
to pursue his education. Males of all ethnicities were expected
significantly more than females to drop out of school and get a
job. African-American/Black males were expected to be more
encouraging of their girlfriend terminating the pregnancy. Other
findings and implications for counselor training and education
for counseling the teenage parent of different ethnicities are
discussed.

Attitudes of Counselor Trainees Toward

Teenage Pregnancy and Ethnicity Issues

Teenage pregnancy and parenthood is a societal concern

requiring the attention and collaboration of various

professionals including those in the counseling field (Kiselica &

Pfaller, 1993). Each year about one million adolescents in the

United States become pregnant; half of them carry their babies to

term and the other abort or miscarry (Hofferth & Hayes, 1987).

Teenage parents are an at-risk group who have diverse needs

and issues including the following: ambivalent feelings toward

their partner and parenthood; issues with their family of origin;

whether to continue their education and/or training; and

employment and financial concerns (Hendricks, 1988; Lindsay &

Rodine, 1989).

It is important that professionals helping such a population

be aware of their perceptions, and it is possible that their

attitudes towards teenage pregnancy may be effected by the

ethnicity of the teenage parent. Multicultural research findings

suggest that the counseling needs of teenage parents from various

ethnic backgrounds differ both within and between their cultures

(Kiselica et al., 1993). Thus, it seems that professionals in

the counseling field may be responding on the basis of: their

stereotypes, biases and prejudices; and/or sensitivity and

awareness of cultural variations related to teenage pregnancy and parenthood for different ethnic groups.

The purpose of the present study is to explore the attitudes counselor trainees have toward teenage pregnancy for three different ethnic groups: African-American/Black, Hispanic, and White. Issues addressed for all three groups include whether the teenage pregnant mother and/or father are perceived as somebody that should stay in school, begin working full time, get an abortion, give up the child for adoption, marry, whether they are perceived as a good future parent, the supports they see as available for these teenagers, and a few other variables. It is hoped that by assessing counselor biases toward adolescent pregnant mothers and the father, and by exploring differential perceptions of counselors due to cultural-ethnic variations of adolescents who are pregnant and the adolescent father, a framework may be provided for training counselors. It is important to dispel inaccurate stereotypes and to promote sensitivity toward adolescent pregnancy in different ethnic groups.

Methodology

Procedures

Graduate students in counseling were asked to volunteer to watch a short video and complete a brief questionnaire regarding what they observed. Volunteers were randomly assigned by course

to observe one of six video vignettes. After the volunteers observed the video they were asked to complete the questionnaire. Those students who did not wish to complete the research were not penalized.

Video Vignettes

The video vignettes were designed and created specifically for this research project. Each vignette lasted approximately three minutes. A female script and a male script were written to describe an adolescent in a teen pregnancy situation.

The university drama department was contacted to refer "White", "Hispanic", and "African American/Black" actors/actresses who could realistically portray an adolescent of 15 or 16 years of age. From the actors/actresses referred, one male and one female from each ethnic group was hired to read the script for the video. Each was also asked to read the script to note any statements that they did not believe were culturally appropriate (e.g., anything that they believed an adolescent from their culture would never say). Four judges, two graduate students and two faculty members, were used to ensure the similarity in acting and emotional tone of the vignettes.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire for this study was designed by the authors to obtain data on counselor perceptions of an adolescent in a teen pregnancy situation. Each question used a Likert-type scale of 1-7. The questions included perceptions of the individual on:

whether the person should drop out of school and begin to work full-time (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree), get a college education (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree), have an abortion (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree), give up the child for adoption (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree), marry (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree), how much control they have over the situation (1 = no control and 7 = complete control), whether this person would make a good parent (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree), how responsible they are for getting into this situation (1 = not very responsible and 7 = highly responsible), how much community support does this person have (1 = low support and 7 = high support), how much family support does this person have (1 = low support and 7 = high support), and how likeable is this person (1 = not at all likeable and 7 = highly likeable). A section of the questionnaire also asked for basic demographic information.

Participants

A total of 133 students enrolled in a masters or doctoral level counseling program at the University of Northern Colorado completed the questionnaire for this study. Data from 93 women and 40 men were used for analysis. The average age was 38.65 years. The majority, 87 of both men and women were White, 3.7 were Black/African American, 4.5 were Hispanic, and 3 Asian-American and .7 were categorized as other. The majority of the respondents were masters level students (85.1 in Agency

Counseling, the remainder were doctoral students in Counselor
Education, School Psychology and Counseling Psychology.

Results

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests were run to determine
differences in counselor perceptions by pregnant adolescent's
gender and race. When asked how likeable was this individual
nonsignificance was found for race, $F(2,128) = 1.09$, $p = .34$, but
a significant finding was found for gender, $F(1,128) = 4.38$, $p =
.04$, which indicated that females were perceived as more likeable
than males. All means and standard deviations are reported in
Table 1. Respondents were asked whether the adolescent should
drop out of school and begin working full time. On a scale from
1 to 7 significant findings were found for gender, $F(1,128) =
6.06$, $p = .02$, but not for race, $F(2,128) = 2.25$, $p = .11$.
Respondents felt males should drop out of school and work more
than females. When asked if the pregnancy should be aborted,
significant findings were only found for an interaction effect,
$F(2,128) = 6.38$, $p = .002$. Counselors were more likely to
suggest abortion as an option when viewing African-American/Black
males than when Hispanic male vignettes were viewed. When asked
if the child should be given for adoption, no significant
findings were found. When asked if this person should marry, no
significant findings were found. When asked if this individual
would be a good parent, significant findings were found for race,

$F(2,128) = 6.14$, $p = .003$. The respondents believed that African-American/Blacks and Whites are better parents than Hispanics. When asked what family support is available for this individual, a significant interaction effect was found, $F(2,128) = 10.08$, $p = .0001$. Hispanic females were expected to get more family support than White males, African-American/Black and White females, and Hispanic males. African-American/Black males were expected to get more support than Hispanic males. When asked what community support is available for this individual, no significant findings were found. When asked how much control does this individual have over the decision of what to do about the pregnancy, a significant gender difference was found, $F(1, 128) = 103.48$, $p = .0001$. Females were perceived to have greater control than males. When asked how responsible this individual was for getting into this situation, a significant interaction effect was found, $F(2,128) = 4.40$, $p = .01$. Black females were perceived to be more responsible for getting pregnant than Hispanic females. Finally, when asked if the individual should try to get a college education, a significant interaction effect was found, $F(2,128) = 4.11$, $p = .018$. Hispanic males were less likely to be encourage to get a college education than were all others.

Discussion

Little research has been done in assessing the attitudes of professionals in the counseling field towards teenage parents

Kisellca et al., 1995 . One study with secondary counselors revealed positive attitudes towards teenage parents (Cunningham & Burge, 1955 . However, no published study has directly assessed the attitudes of counselor trainees toward teenage pregnancy, and specifically as it relates both to gender and the ethnic group of the parent to be. Our findings suggest that there are variations in the perceptions of the female and male African-American/Black, Hispanic and White parent to be by counselors-in-training.

Some of our findings provide partial support for the notion that teenagers in a pregnancy situation are perceived similarly regardless of gender and ethnic group. For example, no significant differences were found in counselors-in -training attitudes on whether they would encourage the person to pursue marriage, adoption, or the availability of community support. These findings imply that both females and males of all three ethnic groups would be equally encouraged/discouraged to marry or give up the child for adoption.

Our other findings suggest that females and males of the three ethnic groups tended to be perceived differently by our sample of counselors-in-training. In particular, in terms of gender one of the major findings indicates that females in a teenage pregnancy situation are perceived as more likeable than males reporting their girlfriend being pregnant. Thus, pregnant females of all three ethnic groups were perceived as more likeable that they were pregnant than males of all three ethnic

groups reporting that they just found out that their girlfriend
was pregnant. This finding seems to indicate that there is a
bias against the teenage father who reports his feelings about
the situation as compared to his girlfriend. The question is
what are the effects of such a bias? Would the pregnant teenage
mother be more empathically treated and better understood by a
counselor than the male who reports his anguish over his
girlfriend's pregnancy? If this is the case then it would seem
that the needs of the teenage father could be neglected as
compared to those of the teenage mother. There is evidence that
there is a service bias against teenage fathers (Baldo, Breier,
Bader, & Lidmark, in submission). It seems that counselors-in-
training may not be immune to sexist biases against the teenage
father in terms of liking him less and possibly neglecting his
needs and/or perceiving him in a more punitive approach than the
females.

Another finding in terms of gender was that males would be
more significantly encouraged to drop out of school and work than
would females. This finding seems to indicate that teenage
fathers are more likely to be expected to take on the traditional
role of the provider and work for the family while the teenage
mother either continues with school and/or caretaking. This
finding is in accordance with research which shows that "...the
educational and occupational futures of young men are mortgaged
heavily by fatherhood" (Barth, Claycomb & Loomis, 1988, p.277).

While dropping out of school and working to support mother and child would seem to be consistent with societal expectations of the male gender role of provider, it would seem to limit other options, such as continuing school and working, continuing school and having the parents financial support, or continuing school and having government support. Our recommendation would be for counselors-in-training to be aware of such an attitude which might limit the potential for other options and thus keep an open mind to other alternatives.

Another gender difference, and an expected one, was that females were perceived as having more control over the situation than the males. Obviously the female has more control over keeping her baby, abortion, and adoption. She may feel helpless, lonely and pressured to make difficult decisions; however, she has the ultimate power to make that decision. If the decision is to keep the baby, which is the current trend, they both need support in determining their roles as caretakers. If the decision is to abort, or place the child for adoption, the emotional implications must be worked through for both the female and male adolescent (Allen-Meares, 1984).

With regards to decisions such as marriage and adoption, it was mentioned that no significant differences were found along gender or ethnicity. In terms of abortion, however, our sample of counselors-in-training reported that they would significantly recommend abortion as an option for the African-American/Black

...e reporting his girlfriend being pregnant. Why that would be
the case is difficult to explain. It may imply that the African-
American/Black father is perceived more as a person that should
... have a child. Research has shown that African-American/Black
adolescent fathers are a particularly difficult to reach
population, while at the same time they are a high risk group
(Smith, 1988). Smith recommends that "...working with Black
adolescent fathers challenges the profession to be less than
fashionable and to maintain its traditional role as advocate of
the disadvantaged" (p.270). Another finding was that the
African-American/Black female was perceived as more responsible
for her situation, that is pregnancy, than the Hispanic female.
One wonders if they would be more blamed because they are seen as
more responsible.

In terms of counselor's-in-training perceptions of family
support in these pregnancy situations, Hispanic females were seen
as getting more support from their families than African-
American/Black females, Hispanic males, or White males. Also,
African-American/Black males were perceived as getting more
family support than Hispanic males. The effects of these
perceptions can only be implied at this point. By perceiving
more family support, counselors may be more motivated to involve
the family of origin. A pregnancy changes an adolescent's
relationship with his/her parents. This is a concern that needs
to be addressed in counseling, regardless of gender or ethnicity.

Counselor-in-training, as our findings suggest, may encourage significantly less the Hispanic adolescent father to pursue a college education. It seems that they are encouraging social biases and prejudices. This may result in counselors failing to stress services available to them such as educational programs, special school arrangements and general equivalency diplomas.

A last finding was that African-American/Black and White adolescents were perceived as being better future parents than Hispanics. It can then be hypothesized that counselors may neglect or be more punitive of adolescent Hispanic parents. Again awareness of such racist biases may serve to sensitize counselors-in-training.

In conclusion, our findings point in the direction of counselors-in-training needing to clarify their attitudes toward teenage parents-to-be of different ethnicities. Educators of students in the counseling profession ought to prepare their trainees to be competent in dealing with teenage parents or to be aware enough of their prejudices to refer clients when necessary. It is our hope to encourage educators of counselors to find ways for their trainees to work through their sensitivities and biases so that eventually teenage mothers and fathers can be facilitated to have a growth experience during such a crisis time.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables
by Race and Gender

Variable	Hispanic		Black		White	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Marry						
M	2.34	2.32	3.10	2.47	2.96	2.67
SD	1.50	1.25	1.08	1.22	1.37	1.24
Adopt						
M	3.40	4.27	4.13	4.42	4.04	4.29
SD	2.13	1.55	1.18	.84	1.51	.90
Comm. Supp.						
M	3.34	3.95	3.61	4.00	3.65	4.14
SD	1.50	1.68	1.65	1.73	1.47	1.82
Likeable						
M	4.00	5.55	5.13	5.47	5.12	5.24
SD	1.89	1.41	1.38	1.47	1.21	1.58
Drop out						
M	1.93	1.36	2.32	1.79	1.77	1.62
SD	.96	.85	1.40	.98	1.18	.74
College						
M	4.13	5.41	5.06	5.79	5.65	5.19
SD	2.10	1.56	1.55	1.03	1.06	1.17
Abort						
M	2.40	3.59	4.16	2.89	3.35	3.43
SD	1.55	2.04	1.34	1.56	1.44	1.47
Parent						
M	2.67	3.14	3.97	3.79	3.58	3.71
SD	1.72	1.28	1.22	1.08	1.42	1.01
Family Supp.						
M	2.93	4.77	4.06	3.84	3.92	3.38
SD	1.91	1.41	.96	1.21	.84	1.43
Control						
M	2.93	5.09	3.35	5.52	3.15	5.52
SD	1.22	1.48	1.05	1.65	.97	1.08
Responsible						
M	5.67	4.41	5.74	5.84	4.96	5.85
SD	1.68	1.97	1.46	1.26	2.11	.96