

Qualitative Research on Adolescent Pregnancy: A Descriptive Review and Analysis

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This study examined qualitative research on adolescent pregnancy to determine designs and methods used and to discover emergent themes across studies. Most of the 22 studies reviewed were described as qualitative or phenomenological by design and included samples comprising either African-American and Caucasian participants or African-Americans exclusively. Based on analysis of the collective primary findings of the sample articles, four themes were identified: (a) factors influencing pregnancy; (a) pregnancy resolution; (c) meaning of pregnancy and life transitions; and (d) parenting and motherhood. Overall, the studies revealed that most adolescent females perceive pregnancy as a rite of passage and a challenging yet positive life event. More qualitative studies are needed involving participants from various ethnic backgrounds, on males' perceptions relative to adolescent pregnancy and fatherhood, and about decision-making relevant to pregnancy resolution, intimacy, and peer relationships.

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ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY, which impacts adolescents, their families, and society, presents a number of challenges and merits the concern of healthcare providers today. In 1994, national statistics revealed that approximately one million adolescent girls became pregnant every year (Alan Guttmacher Institute [AGI], 1994); however, recently teen pregnancies have declined to about 800,000-900,000 annually (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2000). Preliminary data for 2000 indicate 45.9 births per 1000 among women ages 15 to 19 years (Martin, Park, & Sutton, 2002), which represents a 26% decrease compared to adolescent birthrates reported in 1991. Although this is encouraging, the United States continues to have one of the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy and childbirth compared to other developed countries (AGI, 2002; Henshaw & Feivelson, 2000; Singh & Darroch, 2000). Pregnancy rates for adolescents in the United States are about four times greater than rates in France and Sweden and almost double those recorded by Canada and Great Britain (AGI, 2002).

Pregnancy during adolescence has been the focus of numerous studies over the past 20 to 25 years; yet, knowledge about the phenomena of adolescent pregnancy and prevention continues to be elusive and at best tentative. Gaining insight and understanding about adolescent pregnancy, particularly from the perspectives of young pregnant women, can facilitate the development of knowl-

edge that may be useful to nurses who provide care to pregnant adolescents. Several reviews of the quantitative literature have been done (Hofferth & Hayes, 1987; Kirby, 1999; Moore & Miller, 1990); however, reviews that synthesize the results of qualitative studies on adolescent pregnancy have not been published. Reviews of qualitative studies are of value and serve to illuminate issues and concepts that are not addressed in the quantitative literature. The purposes of this study were to (a) examine qualitative studies on adolescent pregnancy and determine methods used; (b) describe and analyze primary findings; (c) develop and define common themes across studies; and (d) recommend need for further qualitative research based on the review.

METHOD

Some reviews and metasyntheses of qualitative studies have been done (Barroso & Powell-Cope, 2000; Field & Marck, 1994; Jensen & Allen, 1994; Sleutel, 1998), but established and systematic

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guidelines, aside from critique and evaluation of methodology and quality of the components of the study, are lacking (Sandelowski, Docherty, & Emden, 1997). Sandelowski et al. (1997) stated, "In general, studies should not be excluded for reasons of quality, . . . there are wide variations in conceptions of the good, and in quality criteria" (p. 368). Research studies were not excluded based on their scientific merit to avoid exclusion of articles germane to the purpose of this study. However, universal standards for qualitative research study as described by Polit, Beck, and Hungler (2001) were considered when selecting articles and discussion of overall quality of the studies reviewed.

Criteria for inclusion of articles in the sample included the following: (a) published in a peer-reviewed journal from 1990 to 2000; (b) cited in nursing or related literature; (c) main focus on topic of adolescent pregnancy or parenthood; and (d) primary use of qualitative methods for data collection and analysis with emphasis on narrative data. Potential articles were obtained by accessing the following computer databases: Cumulative Index for Allied Health and Nursing (CINAHL), Psychological Literature (PsycINFO), PubMed, EMBASE, Social Work Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, and ERIC. Key words used included adolescent pregnancy and teenage pregnancy paired with other terms such as qualitative, grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography, hermeneutic, and descriptive research.

Database searches combined yielded 91 articles for possible inclusion in the sample. Of those 91 articles, most were cited in all databases. Although a number of studies (ranging from 2 to 478, depending on which search words were used) were cited as qualitative studies, many of them were descriptive, nonexperimental, and used quantitative methods. Abstracts of articles were read to determine whether to obtain full texts of the studies. If the abstract of an article revealed the exclusive use of standardized data collection tools, subscales, and other quantitative measures, the article was not reviewed further. Articles that focused on adolescent pregnancy and primarily employed qualitative methods were evaluated for possible inclusion in the sample. Based on the criteria for inclusion, the researchers selected 22 articles for the final sample.

As the focus of this paper was to review and analyze collective findings of qualitative studies on the broad topic of adolescent pregnancy, content of articles was not limited to a specific issue. All articles were reviewed based on a researcher-developed organizing framework. The models and

approaches for synthesis and review of qualitative research proposed and implemented by other researchers (Jensen & Allen, 1994; Jensen & Allen, 1996; Noblit & Hare, 1988; Sleutel, 1998) guided the development of the organizing framework and study. Each research study was carefully reviewed and summarized by the researchers according to this framework, which included the following criteria: author and discipline, sample, setting, research design and data analysis, purpose, and primary findings.

In addition, the findings of each article were independently read and reread by each researcher several times to search for and develop emergent themes across the collective findings and to identify any differences or contradictions. On multiple occasions, the researchers discussed their independent assessments of the findings of each study and impressions about development and definition of themes in order to reach consensus on their interpretations. The review and analysis was written and revised several times, which served to explicate the study results and provided further opportunity for analysis and synthesis of the data.

FINDINGS

Description of Studies Based on Researcher-Developed Review Criteria

Without exception, the studies included professional affiliations of the authors, and the majority (68%) of the studies were conducted by nurse-researchers. The number of participants across studies ranged from 7 to 80. Less than half (27%) of the studies included male subjects, and fewer males participated in individual studies compared to females. Studies according to composition of sample by race and/or ethnicity and number were as follows: African-American and Caucasian (5); African-American and Caucasian, race of eight participants not reported (1); African-American only (6); Caucasian only (2); Caucasian, race of one participant not reported (1); Caucasian and Hispanic (1); Latina, African-American and Caucasian (1); non-Hispanic White, Hispanic, African-American (1); Latina, African-American, non-Hispanic White, and mixed ethnicity (1); African-American, Caucasian, Hispanic, and mixed ethnicity (1); Hispanic (1); and no race reported (1).

Research designs were specifically cited in almost all (86%) of the articles. The most frequently cited designs were qualitative (9 studies) and phenomenology (6 studies). Only two studies (Lesser, Anderson, & Koniak-Griffin, 1998; Lesser, Ko-

niak-Griffin, & Anderson, 1999) identified ethnography as the research design and two investigators (Anderson, 1990; Burton, 1990) included language and methods congruent with ethnography but labeled their studies as qualitative. One study (Flanagan, McGrath, Meyer, & Garcia Coll, 1995) cited grounded theory as the research design used. Oxley and Weekes (1997) referred to their study as descriptive. Farber (1991), Sciarra and Ponterotto (1998), and Stevens (1994) did not specifically identify a research design; however, based on methods used and content, Farber's research employed a qualitative design. The study by Stevens fits with an ethnographic design, and Sciarra and Ponterotto's study was consistent with a grounded theory and ethnographic approach.

Seven studies clearly stated the use of one-time only interviews, and two studies implied the same. Nine studies collected data over an extended time frame (a few weeks to 4 years) but were not necessarily longitudinal. Data analysis procedures consistent with qualitative methods were cited and described in all of the studies reviewed; five studies included quantitative methods of data collection or analysis (Danziger, 1995; Flanagan et al., 1995; SmithBattle, 1995; Stenberg & Blinn, 1993; Stevens, 1994).

All of the studies provided a purpose or objective for the research endeavor. Overall, the findings of the studies were discussed in terms of emergent themes. Some of the studies (Arenson, 1994; Lesser et al., 1998; Mackey & Tiller, 1997; Oxley & Weekes, 1997; Stevens, 1994) referred to both themes and categories when discussing findings. A few studies did not address findings in terms of themes or categories. For example, Danziger (1995) described major findings as dimensions, and the studies by SmithBattle (1995) and SmithBattle & Leonard (1998) presented paradigm cases. Refer to Table 1 for a detailed summary of each study based on the following criteria: author(s)/discipline, sample/setting, and research design.

Themes Across Studies and Related Primary Findings

The collective findings of the studies reviewed in this analysis were categorized into four themes: (a) factors influencing pregnancy refers to influences associated with the phenomenon of adolescent pregnancy; (b) pregnancy resolution refers to decisions made about how to deal with the event of pregnancy; (c) meaning of pregnancy and life transitions refers to the participants' views of pregnancy and related life changes; and (d) parenting

and motherhood refers to concerns and issues related to childbearing and the maternal role. Themes are not mutually exclusive as some of the findings from the studies may be reflective of more than one theme. However, the researchers assigned studies to themes that were determined to be most representative of the focus of each study.

Factors Influencing Pregnancy

Many factors are thought to influence the incidence of adolescent pregnancy. Danziger (1995) explored how family processes and opportunities at school influenced pregnancy among African-American adolescent females. Family life was perceived as comprising emotional relationships, presence of rules in the home, and stressful events. School experiences included enjoying academics and family encouragement to stay in school. Based on the analysis of interview data, Danziger (1995) found that African-American adolescents who possessed a strong sense of enjoyment related to academics and school as youngsters along with the benefit of strong family encouragement and supervision, were successful in delaying early sex and pregnancy, and they graduated from high school.

Burton (1990) studied multigenerational factors that influenced adolescent childbearing in an African-American community. Participants viewed adolescent childbearing as a normal alternative life course strategy. Components of the alternative life course strategy, described as interrelated factors with general references to themes, included accelerated timetables related to family development and childbearing, low prevalence of marriage among African-American females, age-condensed family structure, and intergenerational care giving. The short age distance (approximately 12 to 17 years between generations) resulted in a varied group of familial caregivers and a grandparent childrearing system. Within this African-American community, adolescent mothers relied on female family members for material and emotional support. The following comments made by a 58-year-old great-grandmother and an adolescent mother illustrates the age-condensed family structure and intergenerational care giving.

The best way to make sure that you have enough able bodies to take care of the needs in the family is to start the women having children as soon as they can [great-grandmother]. My grandmother raised me. Now it's time for me to give her something back. It's O.K. if my mother raises my child for now. If she didn't, I couldn't do as much as I do for my grandmother [adolescent mother] (Burton, 1990, p. 133).

Table 1. Selected Characteristics of Each Study (Studies Alphabetized by Authors)

Author(s)/Discipline	Sample/Setting	Research Design
Anderson, 1990 Nursing	Volunteer, N = 40, 15 pregnant females, 13-18 y.o.; 15 male partners, 16-18 y.o. who had fathered their pregnancies. Race, 40% Black, 14% White. Hispanic: females 33%, males 20%. Mixed ethnicity: females 14%, males 28%. 10 provider staff members also included in sample. Juvenile detention facility.	Qualitative, multiple interviews implied.
Aquilino & Bragadottir, 2000 Nursing	Volunteer, N = 57, males and females, ages 14-19, grades 9-12 formed 7 focus groups. 26% African-American, 61% Caucasian; ethnicity of other participants not noted. Three high schools and one youth center.	Qualitative, focus group approach.
Arenson, 1994 Nursing	Convenience, N = 7, 5 White, 2 Hispanic females ages 13-19. Participants had one or more children. Pediatric clinic, Colorado, metropolitan area health district.	Qualitative, descriptive, one-time interviews.
Burton, 1990 Family Studies	Volunteer, N = 53, 20 multigenerational African-American families, mothers ages 56-68; 22 males ages 14-56; 59% related to female participants. Semi-rural low income African-American community.	Qualitative, longitudinal.
Clifford & Brykczynski, 1999 Nursing	Recruited, N = 9 African-American mothers, ages 15-16. Urban Texas high school.	Phenomenology, hermeneutic approach. One-time interviews.
Custer, 1993 Nursing	N = 21, Caucasian pregnant unmarried adolescents and their significant others. Midwest, metropolitan area.	Phenomenology, participants interviewed twice.
Danziger, 1995 Social Work	N = 80, purposive sample of African-American women, ages 15-20. Interviewed in a variety of sites, offices, libraries, homes.	Qualitative, life histories, participants interviewed twice.
Farber, 1991 Social Work	N = 28 unmarried mothers, 15-20 y.o., 16 Black, 12 White. Chicago area.	No design stated, one-time interviews.
Flanagan et al., 1995 Medicine	N = 42 teenage mothers, 11 non-Hispanic White, 18 Hispanic, 13 Black, participated in group and individual interviews, ages not specified (quantitative component involved 25 mothers, ages 14-18). Inner city.	Grounded theory, qualitative and quantitative methods.
Ivey, 1999 Nursing	N = 8 pregnant adolescents, ages 16-18; 4 African-American, 4 European American. Mothers of participants also interviewed. Participants recruited from public prenatal clinic and were interviewed in their homes.	Qualitative, descriptive, one-time interviews.
Lesser et al., 1998 Nursing	Convenience, N = 36; 14-18 y.o.; Latina, 23, African American, 6, non-Hispanic White, 3, mixed ethnicity, 4; less than 26 weeks pregnant, single gestation, no history of live births, planning to keep infant, no history of narcotic drug use or obstetrical complications. Urban, YMCA prenatal class.	Ethnography.
Lesser et al., 1999 Nursing	Purposive, N = 15 Latina, 11, African-American, 3, Caucasian, 1 (4 participants pregnant with second child; 8 had one child; 3 had 2 children). Interviews conducted in homes of young mothers.	Ethnography, one-time interviews.
Mackey & Tiller, 1997 Nursing	Purposive, N = 13, 14-19 y.o., mean age 16.9 years; 10 single, 2 married; 8 African-American, 5 White, 1 separated; 24-33 weeks gestation, intact Membranes, low income. Two medical centers, South east.	Qualitative, naturalistic, multiple interviews.
Montgomery, 2000 Nursing	N = 8 adolescent females experiencing a planned and first-time pregnancy, ages 14-17. Race not given. Prenatal clinic, New York City.	Phenomenological, one-time interviews.
Oxley & Weekes, 1997 Nursing	Convenience, N = 21, African-Americans pregnant with first child, 13-19 y.o., mean age 17.5 years. Subset (N = 10) interviewed twice. No medical or obstetrical complications. Clinics and private MDs offices, California.	Exploratory, descriptive.
Sciarra & Ponterotto, 1998 Psychology	N = 11, Hispanic mother/daughter dyads, average age of adolescent mothers at time of birth, 14.5 years. New York City	No design state.
SmithBattle, 1995 Nursing	Recruited, N = 16, 7 African-American; 9 non-Latina White mothers, ages 14-18 at time of delivery; mean age 16 years. Family members (number not given) and three male partners took part in some of the interviews. Socioeconomic status varied but not defined. Metropolitan, West coast not defined. Metropolitan, West coast.	Phenomenological hermeneutic approach, multiple interviews.
SmithBattle & Leonard, 1998 Nursing	N = 13, African American and non-Latina White young mothers (participants from SmithBattle's (1995) study; also, 11 of the original 18 family members and 3 male partners from the 1995 study participated). Mean age of mothers 15.6 at birth of first child; age range 15-18 at time of study. Five participants had given birth to additional children. Home setting.	Phenomenology, longitudinal, multiple interviews.
Stenberg & Blinn, 1993 Family Life Family Studies	Purposive, N = 14 pregnant teens, 13 White, 1 race not reported, ages 15-19, mean age, 16 years. Seven participants less than 6 months pregnant, 8 first-time mothers; 5 had experienced 2 or 3 previous pregnancies. School-based programs, Idaho.	Qualitative.
Stevens, 1994 Social Work	N = 36, 20 pregnant; 16 non-pregnant African-American participants ages 17-19, recruited from Family Planning and Clinic registration.	No design noted, one-time interviews implied.
Wayland & Rawlins, 1997 Nursing	Selected, N = 17, 8 pregnant teens, 9 teenage mothers, African-American, ages 15-18, mean age 16.8 years. Senior and junior high schools	Qualitative, descriptive, focus groups met weekly over 10-week period.
Williams & Vines, 1999 Nursing	Purposive, N = 7, White first-time mothers, ages 13-20; infants ranged in age from 2 weeks to 3 months. Community-based parenting program for young mothers at risk for abusing or neglecting their children.	Phenomenological, one-time interviews.

Multiple themes centered on the adolescent participants' experiences related to a planned first-time pregnancy were identified by Montgomery (2000) and categorized according to needs, wants, and themes related to pregnancy. However, the findings of the study focused on the concept of control that was identified as an overarching theme. Control over their lives and relationships

was an important factor related to the reproductive health choices made by adolescent females that led to a planned pregnancy.

Ivey's (1999) qualitative, descriptive study interviewed and observed pregnant adolescent/mother dyads to explore characteristics of adolescents at risk for pregnancy. Examples of themes identified from analysis of the pregnant adoles-

cents' interviews included "socially isolated, superficial peer relationships; sexually active because it 'just happened'; pregnancy usually unplanned but welcome; and little or no freedom to choose, make decisions, or control life circumstances, limited options for the future" (p. 95). Themes identified from interviews with the pregnant adolescents' mothers were listed as statements, for example: "reports that daughter is 'mature' and has assumed adult responsibilities for years (e.g., child care, cooking, shopping, cleaning); characterizes daughter's decisions as poor; and surprised that her daughter is pregnant, doesn't know how it could have happened" (p. 95). Findings indicated that females who experience social isolation, unrealistic expectations regarding home responsibilities, lack of control, and limited opportunity for decision-making or plans for the future may be at risk for pregnancy during adolescence.

Using a focus group approach, Aquilino and Bragadottir (2000) interviewed 57 high schoolers (ages 14 to 17) to explore their views on pregnancy and strategies for prevention. The main themes identified included (a) denial; (b) lack of planning ahead, failure to use contraceptives; (c) need for somebody to love, to be close to; and (d) to get attention. One participant stated, "Some girls do it [get pregnant] just to trap the guy" or "because of their families . . . they're [the families] not really close . . . they want somebody to love them" (p. 197). The adolescents were concerned about pregnancy and supportive of comprehensive sex education. "Don't tell them [young people] not to have sex, but teach that it is a really good decision not to" (p. 195).

Limited qualitative research reveals that adolescents are strongly influenced by their families and that family influence can either promote or inhibit adolescent childbearing. In Danziger's (1995) study, adolescents who delayed sexual intercourse had strong family support to stay in school. Burton's (1990) study illustrated strong family influence in that early childbearing was seen as assurance of future intergenerational care giving.

Pregnancy Resolution

Several studies explored how adolescents and their families solve problems related to adolescent pregnancy. Anderson (1990) used ethnography, randomly timed observations, and participant observation to explore how adolescent females in juvenile detention and adolescent males, who impregnated them, made decisions about their pregnancy. Relationships with family and their partners

were important in their decision-making. In addition, relationships were the foundation for the major themes that emerged from the data: responsibility, respect, and reputation. Responsibility referred to obligations toward friends, partners, and parents. In terms of the pregnancy, responsibility meant taking responsibility for the baby. Respect meant mutual giving and receiving of honor, solidarity, and loyalty. Respect was earned by exhibiting more responsible behaviors (eg, taking care of their baby). Reputation was earned through mutual respect and cooperation in their relationships. The adolescents wanted others to respect them and wanted to teach respect to their babies. These themes were consistent across ethnicity, sex, and religious groups.

Farber (1991) used semistructured interviews to examine the history of pregnancy resolution among adolescent mothers from various socioeconomic backgrounds. No specific research design was mentioned. Three themes were identified: (a) the adolescent's discovery of her pregnancy; (b) immediate reaction of the pregnant adolescent and her family's reaction; and (c) descriptions of the decisions about the pregnancy. There was no difference by class and race in terms of how the adolescents discovered they were pregnant. Decisions to keep the baby varied by class and race. Black middle-class families considered abortion, and white middle-class families considered adoption as ways of resolving pregnancy. Black and white lower socioeconomic families accepted that the adolescent would keep the baby.

Custer (1993) used phenomenologic and constant comparative methods to explore the meaning of adoption to unmarried, white, adolescent women. Custer (1993) identified key phenomena that influenced the adolescent's decision about adoption. The phenomena were (a) the absence of societal sanctions against adolescent parenthood; (b) knowledge about adoption; (c) failure of professionals to initiate discussions about adoption; and (d) belief that adoption would result in severe psychological distress. Themes were also referred to in Custer's discussion of the key phenomena.

For pregnant adolescents, their personal relationships with family members and other significant people seemed to be key to pregnancy resolution. Aspects of pregnancy resolution cut across class and race. In Farber's (1991) study, families of all races and social class were disappointed about their daughter's pregnancy. In addition, decisions about pregnancy resolution may not be made by the adolescent alone, but be influenced by family

and others. Decisions to consider adoption were influenced by race and class (Farber, 1991) and failure of professionals to initiate discussion about adoption (Custer, 1993).

Meaning of Pregnancy and Life Transitions

Most of the studies reviewed explored the adolescent's perception of pregnancy. Stenberg and Blinn (1993) analyzed diary entries to explore adolescents' feelings about self and body image during pregnancy. Pregnant adolescents expressed negative perceptions of their bodies and self, and they acknowledged the variability of their feelings. Self-image was perceived by most of the pregnant adolescents in terms of being "edgy," "worried," "depressed," "lonely," and "moody." They described their changing bodies as fat, ugly, and icky.

Mackey and Tiller's (1998) study examined the understanding of the pregnancy experience and preterm labor. The findings were described and discussed based on two broad themes, describing pregnancy and preterm labor and managing pregnancy and preterm labor. When describing pregnancy, one of the participants in Mackey and Tiller's (1998) study remarked that she found pregnancy to be "disgusting and uncomfortable." Another participant stated that she wanted an abortion but was unable to because her pregnancy was too advanced. However, some participants also expressed positive attitudes about pregnancy. For example, one participant remarked, "Well, I was happy and stuff like that, and he's [boyfriend] happy too. We're all happy" (Mackey & Tiller, 1998, p. 413).

Beyond responses related to describing pregnancy, the participants in Mackey and Tiller's (1998) study discussed preterm labor and managing the pregnancy and preterm labor. Participants revealed that they had limited understanding about the signs and symptoms of preterm labor. Those who received support, particularly from their mothers, were more likely to deliver close to or at full term.

Oxley and Weekes (1997) described the meaning of pregnancy and strategies to manage pregnancy. Themes were identified as the meaning of pregnancy, appraisal and perception of pregnancy, perception of support, and coping strategies. The theme perception of support referred to cognitive, emotional, psychosocial, and physical support received from family members, boyfriends, and community organizations. Coping strategies referred to behaviors used during pregnancy to meet

support needs and to ameliorate stress. The other themes were not defined clearly.

For most of the participants, pregnancy meant entrance into the adult world, even though they acknowledged that they were depending on family, particularly their mothers, for physical and emotional support (Oxley & Weekes, 1997). Well over half of the participants indicated that the mature role associated with pregnancy improved their outlook on life and brought them satisfaction. Some of the adolescents stated that because of pregnancy they were motivated to work harder in school and to engage in more healthful behaviors such as eating nutritious food and abstaining from drug and tobacco use.

The participants described pregnancy as being "easy" or "hard" depending on the availability of material resources and the level of support provided by family members and boyfriends. One participant stated, "It's kind of easy for me, because my mother's helping me. The father is still around and he helps out with things" (Oxley & Weekes, 1997, p. 176–177). On the other hand, one who described her pregnancy as "hard" remarked, "When I have to go to the doctor, they don't help. When I try to get my rest at the other house, there were a lot of people running in and out. So I couldn't get my rest" (p. 177).

In Clifford and Brykczynski's (1999) phenomenological study, nine African-American adolescent mothers' views on sexuality and related issues such as development, decision-making, relationships, and hopes for the future were examined. Four of the participants' narratives were developed into exemplars: (a) sand castles; (b) tough boys, soft hearts; (c) erosion of trust; and (d) staying the course. In addition, several themes were identified within each exemplar and were supported by excerpts from the data. For example, supportive extended family, feelings of love and concern for baby, depression, and pregnancy as rite of passage were some of the themes described in the exemplar titled sand castles. Similar to the findings reported by Oxley and Weekes (1997), Clifford and Brykczynski found that the participants believed that pregnancy and childbearing caused them to be more mature. Ida, a 15-year-old mother stated, "Since I had my baby, I have become more mature. It made me grow up" (p. 9). Although most of the participants implied that they, their families, and boyfriends were accepting and positive about having a baby, some were overwhelmed and experienced feelings of depression and thoughts of suicide. Ida disclosed, "Sometimes I get depressed.

Right now I know I am flunking ninth grade because of the days I have missed. Lots of time I really felt like killing myself to tell you the truth" (p. 9).

At first intercourse, most of the adolescent mothers who participated in Clifford and Brykczynski's (1999) study described being uncomfortable and not ready for the experience. The young mothers knew about birth control and talked about sex with their mothers. Participants engaged in consensual sex with their boyfriends, some talked about being in love, and others said they had sex to keep their boyfriends. Two experienced rape at first intercourse. Overall, the participants demonstrated abilities to survive difficult circumstances, provide for their children, and expressed hope for the future.

Using qualitative and quantitative methods, Stevens (1994) compared pregnant and nonpregnant adolescents' perceptions on transition to adulthood and found that both groups believed that they were mature enough to manage early parenthood. The findings implied that pregnancy and parenthood, although challenging, were perceived as advantageous from a developmental and maturational perspective. Pregnancy served as a benchmark for adult status. Seven themes, also referred to as thematic categories, were identified, but only three were defined and discussed. Care protective sensibility referred to affective behaviors related to loyalty and nurturance. Opportunity mobility referred to expectations in relation to social mobility goals such as career and education. Mate selection referred to value judgments about behaviors of male peers.

The pregnant females in Stevens' (1994) study were more inclined to view a sense of care and protection from a parental perspective and were more dependent on male partners for nurturance than were nonpregnant females. Compared to pregnant females, the nonpregnant females identified a broader network of nurturing relationships among female peers and older male family members. SmithBattle and Leonard (1998) used a phenomenological hermeneutic approach to examine the adolescent mothers' perceptions of self and views of the future. Two paradigm cases were presented: The first case illustrated how mothering can be transforming, and the second paradigm case depicted how difficult circumstances can make mothering problematic. Some of the young mothers found early pregnancy and childbearing to be transforming in a positive way and helped to assure a more stable and hopeful future. For example, one participant had engaged in drug use and fistfights

prior to becoming a mother. She reported that she is drug free, no longer engages in fighting behavior, and is teaching her child to resolve conflicts in a more constructive way. In response to the kind of person she wants her child to become, she stated the following:

Just treating others with respect and being who she wants to be without putting herself on a pedestal as if she's better than everybody else. Being happy and not violent or deceitful or mean or anything like that. And making sure that she does right to others (SmithBattle & Leonard, 1998, p. 40).

In contrast, another participant, who suffered from high blood pressure and kidney disease, revealed that young motherhood compounded existing difficult social relationships and circumstances and fostered more uncertainty and vulnerability for the future. SmithBattle and Leonard (1998) pointed out that this participant's negative life situation and hopeless view of the future were not due to adolescent childbearing but created by a world of poverty, violence, illness, and social exclusion.

Williams and Vines (1999) conducted a phenomenological inquiry by interviewing first-time adolescent mothers who had experienced abuse/neglect prior to pregnancy. Analysis of narrative data revealed five themes: (a) impoverished past; (b) disintegration of relationships; (c) emotional distance; (d) problem fixing; and (e) reconnecting. The authors stated that the themes were synthesized based on a framework identified as "broken past merging with fragile future." Themes were not specifically defined, but narrative data were used to illustrate each theme. Parallel to the findings of Arenson (1994), SmithBattle (1995), and SmithBattle and Leonard (1998), the participants in Williams and Vines's (1999) study considered adolescent pregnancy as a positive life event that transitioned them into adulthood and provided opportunity for personal growth. Williams and Vines (1999) recommended that nurses and concerned others base care and programs for adolescents who experience early maternity on a model focused on hope, understanding, and advocacy rather than on the commonly held negative view of adolescent pregnancy and childbearing.

Qualitative studies have found positive and negative responses to pregnancy. Some adolescents have negative self-esteem and body image during pregnancy (Mackey & Tiller, 1998; Stenberg & Blinn, 1993). Others view pregnancy as a means for becoming an adult (Clifford & Brykczynski, 1999; Oxley & Weekes, 1997; Stevens, 1994) and

have a more positive outlook on life (Oxley & Weekes, 1997; SmithBattle, 1995). Pregnancy has also been found to decrease problem behaviors such as drug use and fighting (SmithBattle & Leonard, 1998). For the most part, across studies, participants viewed early childbearing as a fairly normative and positive event that transitioned them into adulthood.

Parenting and Motherhood

Several qualitative studies have explored adolescents' perceptions and experiences of parenting. Lesser et al. (1998) used an ethnographic approach to explore pregnant adolescents' responses to a preparation for motherhood class curriculum. The adolescents in the class viewed the maternal role in terms of the themes: responsibility, respect, and reparation. Responsibility referred to behavioral changes expected as a result of the maternal role. Respect was an extension of responsibility and meant that if the adolescents had more responsibility (eg, motherhood), they should be respected. Reparation referred to the positive qualities of a good mother. The adolescents expressed a desire to mend the wounds received as a child by gaining respect by being good mothers and behaving responsibly.

Arenson (1994) used a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how adolescent mothers perceived themselves as parents. Their perceptions were based on the general themes of life events, relationships, perceptions of self in the world, information seeking, and strengths. Life events referred to life experiences that adolescents thought influenced their current situation. Relationships referred to family, friends, and others from whom the adolescent had received support. Perceptions of self in the world referred to perceptions of mothering abilities, self-efficacy, ability to speak up for what they believed, influences in their lives, and their philosophy of life. Information seeking referred to ways the adolescents sought information on parenting issues. Strengths referred to the positive qualities the adolescent described or exhibited throughout the interview. The participants described hope, vision, and foresight in their lives and believed that childbearing improved their lives tremendously.

Using ethnographic interviews, Lesser et al. (1999) found similar results. A purposive sample of 15 adolescent mothers with depressive symptoms was interviewed to explore their feelings about maternal role adaptation. Maternal role was identified as the major category and included the

primary themes of maternal protectiveness and reparation. Maternal protectiveness included three subthemes: (a) responsible maternal role behaviors; (b) "thinking like a mom;" and (c) child mental health promotion.

Responsible maternal role behavior included planning for the future and becoming financially independent. The subtheme, "thinking like a mom," referred to transitioning away from the egocentric thinking of adolescence to the more mature thinking of adulthood. Child mental health promotion meant the adolescent was trying to be a good role model for her children and was trying to control her temper. As in a previous study by Lesser et al. (1998), reparation emerged as a theme. Reparation referred to trying to heal childhood wounds by being a good mother. For example, some of the mothers stopped using drugs and finished high school.

SmithBattle (1995) used an interpretive-phenomenologic approach to explore the experience of African-American and Caucasian adolescent mothers' self-understanding of identity, development, and restrictions of motherhood. Three paradigm cases were described as (a) inheriting a diminished future; (b) inventing a future from an impoverished past; and (c) pressing into an open future. For one group of adolescents, inheriting a diminished future meant that the adolescents resented the unanticipated demands and conflicted relationships brought on by parenthood. For others, parenthood made them more responsive to the self and the baby and changed their vision of the future. Another group of adolescents was ambivalent about parenthood and thought it might interrupt their plans for the future; nevertheless, despite this belief, they were able to continue their education.

Wayland and Rawlins (1997) conducted a series of focus groups with 17 African-American adolescent mothers to describe their perceptions of parenting and childbearing. Seven themes were identified: artifacts (eg, items considered important such as diapers), sources of information, problems with parenting, strategies or remedies for dealing with problems, unique language (eg, boo-boo, noddin' off), lack of information, and misinformation. The young mothers relied heavily on their own mothers to assist with childrearing and looked to them for guidance and direction. Participants' comments about how parenthood affected their lives included the following examples: "You don't have no freedom to go as you please," "you just can't get up and go all the time now," and "I like staying home with her [baby]" (p. 17).

Motherhood and the influence of development on the maternal role was the focus of a grounded theory study conducted by Flanagan et al. (1995). Five topical categories were developed based on constant-comparative analysis of the narrative data. These categories, in an abbreviated form, included (a) description of self; (b) discussion of goal behavior; (c) discussion of life changes after giving birth; (d) description of quality of mothering; and (e) description of children. Specific themes were not noted, but the authors referred to the emergence of developmental themes related to motherhood and parenting. For example, one of the participant's comments, "Now I have something that is all mine, that belongs to me" (p. 274), was labeled as an egocentric perspective. The statement, "A good mother gets her baby milk and brings him [to] the doctor when he's sick" (p. 274) was described as a concrete, task-oriented response. Analysis of the qualitative data generated a hypothesis that indicated a relationship between the adolescent mother's conceptualization of her role as mother and her psychosocial and cognitive development; a positive correlation was reported.

Sciarra and Ponterotto (1998) interviewed 11 Hispanic adolescent mothers and their mothers to investigate the phenomenon of adolescent motherhood from a family systems theory perspective. The authors reported that core categories, themes, and patterns were identified based on analysis of narrative data that resulted in the emergence of a grounded theory on adolescent motherhood. No specific research design was stated. Themes were not specifically identified or defined, but the findings were reported according to the following headings: socialization into motherhood, relationship with and role of adolescents' mothers, adolescent motherhood and the larger family system, and the family of the future. Most of the adolescent mothers stated that they had engaged in childcare responsibilities before they became pregnant. One participant stated, "My cousin, she was living in my house—she had her baby. I used to take care of the baby, give him a bath, feed him, buy him things, be with him, take him outside, walk around. It was like being a mother. Like, he liked me a lot" (p. 752).

The findings of Sciarra and Ponterotto's (1998) study found that a sense of ownership [having a baby of your own] and self-esteem related to being a good mother were strong motivators for adolescent childbearing. Overall, adolescent motherhood was viewed as positive and provided stability for the adolescent participants and their mothers.

Motherhood during adolescence strengthened the bond between the mothers and their young daughters and led to increased dependence on the part of the adolescent mothers, which set the stage for potential conflicts related to the issue of separation and individuation.

Qualitative studies have found that many adolescents view parenting as a positive experience. Although they acknowledge the increased responsibilities and restrictions placed on their time, many adolescents view parenting as important to their lives and demonstrate a desire to meet the needs of their children by being good mothers.

DISCUSSION

It is interesting to note that the computer-based literature search yielded relatively few qualitative articles. Many of the articles identified via computer search using key qualitative terms were descriptive by design, not qualitative. Perhaps this is due to the way articles are coded for entry into the databases and to the inconsistent use of common qualitative terms. For example, some studies were not identified as ethnographic or phenomenologic (Burton, 1990; Stenberg & Blinn, 1993), and yet they included language and data analysis methods suggestive of these designs. Also, when using the key word "qualitative" many articles would be retrieved that were not qualitative, but they were descriptive and used data collection and analysis procedures consistent with a quantitative approach.

African-American and Caucasian participants comprised the samples of five of the studies, and six of the articles had samples that included African-American participants only (Burton, 1990; Clifford & Brykczynski, 1999; Danziger, 1995; Oxley & Weekes, 1997; Stevens, 1994; Wayland & Rawlins, 1997). Only two studies (Custer, 1993; Williams & Vines, 1999) included Caucasian participants exclusively, one study specifically focused on Hispanic participants (Sciarra & Ponterotto, 1998), and none of the studies included Asian or Pacific Islander participants.

Only six studies (Anderson, 1990; Aquilino & Bragadottir, 2000; Burton, 1990; Custer, 1993; SmithBattle, 1995; SmithBattle & Leonard, 1998) included male participants. This was not surprising, as female participants are more visible and accessible to participate in studies about adolescent pregnancy. Although males were noted as being part of the samples, the findings and discussion focused on the perspectives of female participants.

More qualitative studies that include a variety of ethnic groups and males are needed to gain insight

and understanding about the phenomenon of adolescent pregnancy from male and other ethnic groups' perspectives so that programs and interventions can be designed to meet their needs. According to Ventura, Curtin, and Mathews (1998), Hispanic females experience the highest rate of adolescent pregnancy in the United States. Even though adolescent pregnancy is low among Asian and Pacific Islander adolescents, those that are sexually active are at risk for adolescent pregnancy. There is a need to study and compare the experience of adolescent pregnancy among a variety of racial groups (Desmond, 1994; Oxley & Weekes, 1997).

Nineteen of the studies referred to themes or categories in their results sections and provided related discussion. Definitions of themes, ranging from specific to somewhat vague, were evident in most (14) of the articles reviewed. Anderson (1990), who identified three major themes, responsibility, reputation, and respect, provided definitions for each. For example, responsibility was defined as the participants' sense of obligation toward their friends, partners, and parents. Burton (1990) mentioned the existence of consistent themes but did not specifically define them. In her discussion of study findings, she made references to factors such as an accelerated timetable for family role transition and the desires of grandmothers to parent their grandchildren. These factors, which were supported by excerpts from the data, were most likely the themes. None of the studies provided clear definitions for what constituted a theme or a category; therefore, it was not possible to conceptually differentiate between the two.

In this study, although common themes were identified from the sample of articles as a whole, it is important to note that it is somewhat problematic to compare phenomena from studies that focus on different aspects of adolescent pregnancy and include varied sample populations. The authors experienced some difficulty in describing and interpreting a few of the studies reviewed due to vague explanations of the complex findings. Despite these limitations, the findings of this review and analysis yielded data that further develop research relevant to the phenomena of adolescent pregnancy and provide some direction for future study.

When discussing factors related to pregnancy, it is somewhat difficult to establish set trends or patterns due to the inherent complexities associated with influences such as culture, social and family, human development, and sexuality. Inter-

relationships between factors further complicate the issue. Even so, the findings of Aquilino and Bragadottir (2000), Danziger (1995), and Burton (1990) highlight the influential role of school, family support, and sociocultural familial traditions on the phenomenon of adolescent childbearing.

Decisions about resolving the pregnancy were most often not made in isolation. Pregnant adolescents usually involved families or partners in making their decisions. Although family support varied from study to study, for most adolescents, the family had an impact on their decisions. The samples were diverse, and it was difficult to draw consistent patterns or themes related to the phenomenon of pregnancy resolution. Little information was provided in the studies that dealt with the actual decision-making process. Anderson's (1990) study provided insight into how adolescents in detention make decisions about pregnancy resolution. However, adolescents in detention may make decisions very differently than adolescents who are not in detention. Incarceration and family support could have an effect on their decision to keep their baby, but Anderson did not explore that area.

In general, studies that explored the personal perspectives of adolescent females on pregnancy and its impact on their lives found that adolescent pregnancy was viewed as a normative and positive, albeit challenging, event. SmithBattle and Leonard (1995) found that pregnancy and childbearing brought meaning and positive life change into the lives of some adolescent females. Most pregnant and childbearing adolescent females believed that pregnancy caused them to become more independent and elevated them to adult status (Ivey, 1999; Oxley & Weekes, 1997; Stevens, 1994). On the other hand, some adolescents who experienced pregnancy and childbearing also expressed strong dependence on their own mothers for support during pregnancy and for childrearing (Mackey & Tiller, 1998; Oxley & Weekes, 1997; Sciarra & Ponterotto, 1998). For pregnant adolescents, feeling independent, while being dependent on their mothers, seems to be in conflict. However, among African-American families, it is common for female family members, other than the birth mother, to take an active role in the rearing of children (Burton, 1990; Hartrick, 1997).

Parenting was viewed as affecting the future of the adolescent mothers in positive and negative ways. Lesser et al. (1998) found that adolescents expected more responsibility and respect as a result of being a parent. Adolescents in Arenson's (1994) study described parenting as providing hope and

improving their lives. SmithBattle (1995) found that some adolescents were resentful or ambivalent about parenting, whereas others viewed parenting as having a positive impact on their lives.

Although it is challenging to interpret collective results across studies as it involves secondary analysis of the reported findings (Noblit & Hare, 1988; Sandelowski et al., 1997), it is useful to examine apparent commonalities to gain a sense of what predominant concepts or issues have been studied related to adolescent pregnancy. Further, having identified themes that emerged from the analysis of the collective findings of the studies reviewed, some questions are raised about areas that were not addressed. For example, issues related to the decision-making process involved in pregnancy resolution, intimacy, peer relationships, and the expectant fathers' role and perceptions of pregnancy were not evident in the research reviewed.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this review, it is encouraging to note the good quality of the qualitative research that has been done over the past several years. Most of the researchers interviewed participants more than once, and several used com-

plementary approaches such as participant observation and focus group discussions. Some of the studies (Burton, 1990; Danziger, 1995; SmithBattle, 1995; SmithBattle & Leonard, 1998; Stenberg & Blinn, 1993; Williams & Vines, 1999) were conducted over a 2- to 4-year period. However, just one study collected data from participants before and after giving birth (Mackey & Tiller, 1997), and SmithBattle's (1995) and SmithBattle and Leonard's (1998) studies were the only investigations that clearly stated long-term data collection from the same participants. More longitudinal study is recommended to strengthen the body of knowledge and for the development of theoretical models of adolescent pregnancy. In addition, research that includes not only ethnic populations but also Caucasian and male participants as well is needed. Moreover, based on the limited results of the computer literature search and the human complexities associated with adolescent pregnancy and childbearing, further qualitative research is warranted. And finally, there is a need to conduct more in-depth comprehensive reviews and analysis of qualitative studies to avoid unnecessary repetition and to reveal areas that require additional exploration.

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