Balancing Bicultural Heritage: Mexican American Teen Mothers'

Lived Experience

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THESIS

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This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Mark, and my sons, Ariel, Everett, Adrian and David, whose love and support mean everything.

And to my parents, Dave (in memoriam) and Adele Goldstein

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SUMMARY

This research was conducted to explore how Mexican American teen mothers experience the conflicting demands of their own adolescent developmental needs, bicultural identity, and mothering, and how these demands influence their young parenting. This understanding is important for providing insights into what these young mothers need to foster healthy development for themselves and their children.

An interpretive phenomenological approach was used to conduct in-person, qualitative interviews with 18 Mexican American young mothers who delivered their babies at ages 15 to 19 years old. Narrative interview data was transcribed verbatim and coded in order to identify key themes, with support from Atlas.ti (version 7.1.8) qualitative data management software. Main research findings were divided into two manuscripts. The first manuscript presents the themes related to ethnic identity, adolescence, and young motherhood for teen mother participants. The second manuscript describes teen mothers' perceptions of their changing relationships with family, peers, community, and transformational self with the advent of young motherhood.

The first manuscript describes how Mexican American teen mothers maintained a grounded Mexican heritage ethnic identity that they wanted to share with their babies. Their American identity was hard to verbalize, but instead is deeply embedded in their approach to daily life, and included wanting independence for raising their children. Autonomous thinking and craving independence from families overlapped with adolescent normative developmental stage goals, and influenced teen mothers to strive for proving their worth as good mothers. Young motherhood for these Mexican American teen mothers was experienced as powerfully authentic. Being an authentic mother meant protecting their babies by enfolding Mexican heritage mothering approaches to ensure their babies would find acceptance into their families and ethnic communities, fostering *familismo.*

SUMMARY (cont.)

The second manuscript describes how Mexican American teen mothers experienced dramatic changes in their proximal relationships as a result of early motherhood. Relationships with parents worsened with the advent of early motherhood for 8 of the 18 (45%) teen mothers, while it was perceived as improved for the other 10 teen mothers. The mothers who suffered worsening relationships with parents felt the lack of traditional *familismo* support that they had hoped for. Relationships with siblings and fathers of their babies were also perceived as improved or worsened, reflecting their level of involvement. Most mothers experienced loss of peer relationships, and felt lonely and ostracized from peers. Teen mothers felt negatively judged and disapproved of by neighbors, and co-ethnic people in public. Despite these challenges, motherhood for teen mothers was a transformational experience. Most (15 of 18) mothers transformed from being serious "partyers" prior to their pregnancy, to exemplary, *marianista* (traditional, idealized mothers) mothers, which included a heightened sense of religiosity.

Service providers should support Mexican American teen mothers' emerging life changes from adolescence to responsible motherhood. The importance of strong ethnic identity for these mothers should be recognized as a proactive coping strategy for dealing with stress, and as a means for guidance with their childrearing and proximal relationships. Even while acknowledging the importance of strong Mexican heritage, providers should not assume that these young mothers are receiving strong family support, or support from their baby's father or church. Service providers need to appreciate that these young mothers are striving to be authentic mothers, and support their strengths, rather than focusing on their deficits.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. <u>Background</u>

Mexican American teen girls aged 15 to 19 years have the highest teen birth rate of all ethnic groups in the USA (73: 1,000 births vs. Puerto Rican, 59.6:1,000; Black, 47.3: 1,000; White, 21.7: 1,000; Asian, 10.2: 1,000 births; Martin, Hamilton, Ventura, Osterman, & Mathews, 2013). Nearly 67, 000 babies were born to Mexican American girls aged 15 to 19 in 2012 alone (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Curtin, & Mathews, 2013). Negative effects of childbearing for adolescent mothers are widely recognized, including less education and income attainment, dependency on welfare, poor health outcomes for herself and her child, and psychological problems (Ng & Kaye, 2012; Pasley, Langfield, & Kreutzer, 1993; SmithBattle, 2007; SmithBattle, 2009; Trejos-Castillo & Frederick, H., 2011; Westman, 2009). Compared to other ethnic groups, Hispanic teen mothers are even more likely to drop out of high school and live in poverty (Ng & Kaye, 2012). Overall, children of teen mothers are at higher risk for cognitive developmental delays, behavioral problems, and experiencing abuse and neglect (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998; Connelly & Straus, 1992; Dukewich, Borkowski, & Whitman, 1996; Fessler, 2003; SmithBattle, 2007; SmithBattle, 2009; Trejos-Castillo & Frederick, 2011).

Despite these challenges and disparities, some Mexican American young mothers are able to succeed in building a hopeful future for themselves and their children. Generally, some teen mothers exhibit psychological and behavioral resilience shown in their tenacity towards school attendance, learned parenting skills, employment, and decreased delinquent behaviors (Estrada, 2012; Hotz, McElroy, & Sanders, 2005; Hunt, Joe-Laidler, & Mackenzie, 2005; Settlemoir, 2003; SmithBattle, 2009; Trad, 1993).

B. **Significance of the Study**

Hispanic people comprise this nation's largest ethnic minority group, numbering 53 million, or 17% of the U.S. population (US Census Bureau, 2013). Mexicans represent 65% of the total Hispanic population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). One out of every four babies in America today is born to an Hispanic mother, and nearly one third (32%) of all Hispanic female teenagers are mothers (Livingston & Cohn, 2010).

Early childbearing has been shown to be a contributing stressor to mental health issues among Hispanic teens (Dehlendorf, Marchi, Vittinghoff, & Braveman, 2010; Pasley et al., 1993; Trejos-Castillo & Frederick, 2011). This is not surprising, since adjustment to motherhood is occurring simultaneously with the challenges of normal adolescent ego (self) identity pursuit and physiologic changes (Marcia, 1980; Pasley, et al.,1993; Talaschek, Alba, & Patel, 2005; Westman, 2009). Adolescence heralds the intensified period of time when youth engage in identifying their personal strengths and weaknesses in order to establish their unique identities (Erickson, 1968; Lerner & Steinberg, 2009; Marcia, 1980; Westman, 2009). Resolution of this developmental conflict, seeking to answer the existential question of "who am I?" is requisite for an emotionally balanced undergirding that facilitates the quality of adult life that follows (Cunningham, & Spencer, 2000; Erickson, 1968). Developmentally, young motherhood is considered an "off time transition" (Pogarsky, Thornberry, & Lizotte, 2006, p. 333), disturbing socially desirable sequences such as educational attainment, independence from family, strong peer relationships, stable romantic relationships, and marriage before motherhood (Pogarsky et al., 2006; Sieving & Stevens, 2000). These young mothers are faced with important personal and parenting decisions at a critical time during adolescence when cognitive decision-making abilities are not fully matured, and neurological development is not complete (Goddings, Heyes,

Bird, Vine & Blakemore, 2012; Sisk, & Foster, 2004; Westman, 2009). For Mexican American teen mothers, these inherent challenges to early parenting are complicated by their dual ethnic identities based on their Mexican heritage and mainstream-dominant Anglo-American influences. While the role of acculturative processes on these issues is not clear, studies suggest that the crisis of ego identity development may be more challenging for adolescents whose home environments practice a different set of values, beliefs, and behaviors than school, peer, and public media contexts, especially if they perceive their ethnic group is associated with lower social status (Padilla, 2006; Phinney, 1992). As second generation teens selectively take on cultural traits from dominant American society while maintaining Mexican heritage cultural traits, they engage in selecting a bicultural *toolkit* that holds implements of social survival to avoid discrimination, such as language, rituals of daily life, and values (LaFramboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Padilla, 2006; Swidler, 1986; Swidler, 2001). Cultural influence on daily life choices of thought and action is strongest during unsettled times of life, such as teen motherhood, which represents a powerful identity transition (Swidler, 1986; Swidler, 2001).

Ethnic identity includes self-identification and a sense of belonging as an ethnic group member, formulated over time and exploration in a similar process as ego identity (Phinney, 1993). Recent literature reports the importance of strong ethnic identity as a buffer against stressors such as discrimination, economic hardship, depression, and risky behaviors for Mexican American teen mothers (Umaña-Taylor, Updegraff, & Gonzales-Backen, 2011).

Culturally, *familismo*, or valuing nuclear and extended family welfare over the comfort needs of the individual, is highly prevalent among Hispanic families (Crockett, & Zamboanga, 2009; Padilla, 2006; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos, Alvarez, & Turner, 2012; Steidel, & Contreras, 2003; Taylor, Larsen-Rife, Conger, & Widaman, 2012).

Familismo encompasses collectivism and filial piety; behaving in a respectful and loyal manner to one's parents, grandparents, extended family and ethnic community (Crockett & Zamboanga, 2009; Smith-Morris et al., 2012). Heightened sense of traditional family values and *familismo* have been reported to serve a protective, prosocial role, motivating Hispanic teens to avoid risky behaviors, and supporting teen daughters who do become mothers at a young age within a secure environment (Crockett & Zamboanga, 2009; Doğan-Ateş & Carrión-Basham, 2007). *Familismo* may also have contrary effects, as efforts to maintain family unison along with dependency needs of young motherhood may influence young Hispanic mothers to stay in emotionally or physically abusive households (Johnson, 2011).

Literature is lacking that describes the combined contexts of how Mexican American teen mothers perceive and experience conflicting developmental needs, their own ethnic identity, and how these influence their young mothering. This understanding is important for providing insights into what these young mothers need to foster healthy development for themselves and their children. Findings from this qualitative study can sensitive health care providers and social policy makers towards development of culturally sensitive and ethically sound interventions that support Mexican American teen mothers and their babies.

C. **Purpose of the Study**

This phenomenological research study was designed to fill conceptual and methodological gaps in the literature that focus on Mexican American teen mothers' associations with dual cultural strengths and vulnerabilities from a primarily quantitative perspective. There are no previous qualitative studies which combine the complex contextual factors of biculturalism (same as dual-cultural), adolescence, and young motherhood, from the teen mother's perspective.

The purpose of this study was: (1) to explore the lived experience of Mexican American teen mothers, focusing on their personal meaning structures of convergent identities of motherhood, biculturalism, and adolescent stage of development. Qualitative research uses an inductive, iterative methodology (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, thematic analysis of narrative data at a manifest level motivated the addition of a second study purpose: (2) to describe changing relationships for Mexican American teen mothers, including relationships with her parents, siblings, father of the baby, community, and her changing self.

D.   Methods

1.   Approach

This study used a cross-sectional, qualitative, interpretive phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research involves focusing in on, and discovering meanings from the study participants' point of view about their everyday life experiences, such as young mothering (Husserl, 1913/1952; van Manen, 1997). Exploring how Mexican American teen mothers make sense of and find meaning in their lived experience as young bicultural mothers required in-depth, face to face interviews to thoroughly capture and interpret their perspective (Patton, 2002). Research methods and study findings are presented in both Manuscript 1 and Manuscript 2.

2.   Sample and Setting

A purposive sample of 18 Mexican American teen mothers was recruited from a large prospective study comparing the effects of group and individual visit prenatal care on maternal-infant outcomes. This larger study compared two types of care as they were routinely offered at participating clinics, so none of the young mothers received special prenatal care or social work services as a result of their participation in that research.

Teen mothers who participated lived in six predominantly Hispanic communities located in some of the poorest areas of the state. Eight young mothers lived in a community that was 65% Hispanic, with only 53% of its population over 25 years old having graduated high school (City-data, 2013). The average community household income was $28,000 ($7000 individual income), and over 35% of the population lived under the poverty level (City-Data.com, 2013; Zipatlas, 2013). The other ten mothers lived in communities that ranged from 10 to 28% of the population living under the poverty level, and nine to 49% Hispanic (City-Data, 2013; Infoplease, 2014; Zipatlas, 2013). This information reflects general zipcode data, keeping in mind that individual neighborhoods of the young mothers were proportioned substantially with Hispanic people.

Actual recruitment occurred in three stages:

Stage 1: Key Research Personnel from the large study generated a list of mothers who gave permission to be contacted, had previously self-reported as Latina, and had birthdates including 1993 and later to capture mothers who were under age 20 at the time of their delivery. Waiver of consent for recruitment was obtained from both research Protocols.

At the time of the mother's post-partum interview for the large study, Key Research Personnel consulted the generated list of Latina teen mothers and briefly described the current study to the mother. If the young mother was interested in participating, her verbal permission was sought for the principal investigator (PI) of this research to contact her directly to complete screening and recruitment. The young mother was also given the PI's contact information so she could contact the PI directly.

As a reminder, Key Research Personnel mailed a study flyer to the young mother along with the larger study's post-partum mailing.

Stage 2: After the PI received permission to contact the interested mother, or the interested mother contacted the PI, telephone screening for inclusion criteria and eligibility was done, with reminders that the study was voluntary and confidential. If the young mother was eligible, an in-person interview was scheduled either at her own home, or at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Nursing private room.

Stage 3: PI mailed study flyers to all Latina teen mothers from the list generated from the larger study, and followed up with direct phone calls.

Inclusion criteria for participation in this study were: (a) having at least one parent who was born or raised in Mexico, (b) comfortable answering questions in English, (c) having up to two children under age four years, and (d) under 20 years old at time of delivery of her children.

3. Procedures

Approval for this research was granted by the University of Illinois at Chicago Institutional Review Board. Waiver of parental permission was obtained for minor subjects (under age 18) due to minimal risk of this study. Once the PI determined eligibility of the participants and they agreed to be in the study, individual interview dates were arranged. The semi-structured interview guide was created for this research by the PI. Questions included inquiries concerning ethnic identity, young age at motherhood, and motherhood itself. The study PI conducted all of the interviews, which lasted approximately one to two hours each. In-person interviews were conducted at the young mothers' homes, with the exception of one mother who requested to be interviewed at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Nursing due to perceived lack of privacy in her own home. Before each interview began, the participants had the opportunity to ask questions and read the informed consent/assent form before signing it.

Interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Observational notes were also written down during the interviews by the PI, and a reflective log was kept. All participants were given a written list of social services resources in her neighborhood to use at her own discretion. Fictional names have been used in the two Manuscripts to protect the confidentiality of the study participants.

4.   Data Analysis

Qualitative research is an emergent approach to both data collection and analysis that occurs simultaneously in the research process (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative data analysis involves some type of content analysis of narratives, creating categories of data, and developing codes that fit chunks of words into the categories, creating themes (Creswell, 2009; Nieswiadomy, 2008). Phenomenological analysis entailed "hermeneutic reflection" (van Manen, 1997, p.77) or, *interpretative reflection,* in order to draw out subtle and elusive common meanings of lived experience constructed and described by the Mexican American teen mothers. (Wertz, F. J., Charmaz, K., McMullen, L. M., Josselson, R., Anderson, R., & McSpadden, E., 2011).

Combining these methods, all of the interviews were coded for themes (lines of inquiry) with support from Atlas.ti software (version 7.1.8). Themes were expanded and reconstructed, using a hermeneutic (interpretive) approach, to find essential commonalities among young mother participants (Leonard, 1994; van Manen, 1997), culminating in overall feeling of their shared lived experience of bicultural teen mothering. Direct quotations from the participants were chosen to exemplify and support thematic categories.

5.   **Division of Data in Manuscripts**

Narrative data from this study has been divided into two manuscripts for future publication. The initial aim of this research was to explore the phenomenon of biculturalism, adolescence and young motherhood for Mexican heritage teen mothers. Teen mothers' narrative data supported strong direct connections among these concepts as directly influencing each other to affect teen mothers' daily lives, so they were analyzed and presented together in Manuscript 1. During the interviewing, coding, and consolidating processes of data collection and analysis, recurring themes and descriptions were observed concerning meanings of changes in important relationships, and how teen motherhood proved to be a personally transformational experience for the young mothers. These two major themes are exquisitely interconnected; as the teen mother herself transformed inwardly, her new motherhood identity and outward behaviors affected all of her proximal relationships. These changing relationships and transformational self were analyzed together and presented in Manuscript 2.

6.   **Rigor: Trustworthiness**

Criteria for establishing rigor, or robustness of naturalistic inquiry, are controversial and varied. They are largely derived from constructionist paradigms that seek to respect fidelity of the subjective lifeworld without losing a certain objectivity required for scientific contemplation (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Patton, 2002; Schwandt, 2000). Establishing integrity of research incorporates engagement in truth-telling. However, qualitative inquiry does not offer one sole interpretation of truth. As a prism refracts light in many directions, qualitative inquiry reflects externalities and internalities whose interpretation depends on one's angle of perspective (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 181). Pre-suppositions and values of the researcher are inevitably incorporated into the research, rendering truth context specific and subjected to multiple points

of view (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; McConnell-Henry, Chapman, & Francis, 2011; Schwandt, 2000; van Manen, 1997). Nonetheless, for ethical reasons alone, as researchers we seek to validate our findings, and maintain a legitimate stance next to quantitative colleagues. Rigor was evaluated for this research using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) original recommendations, with the addition of Creswell's (2009) guidelines.

Trustworthiness and authenticity are terms used to describe the accuracy of qualitative research findings, and are substantiated through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.21).

Credibility is a common term used to describe qualitative research accuracy, or authenticity, and can be based on the viewpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of the research (Creswell, 2009). Credible research supports the relationship between participants' meaning-perspectives, and the researchers' accurate representation of them in writing and interpretation (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Strategies used to enhance credibility in data collection and analyses were derived from Creswell (2009), and Lincoln and Guba (1985): (a) rich, thick description, (b) triangulation, (c) audit trail, (d) peer debriefing, and (e) clarifying biases.

a. Rich, thick description. In-person interviewing approach allowed for extended time with teen mothers, and provided the orientation for developing a trusting "conversational relation…with a hermeneutic thrust" (van Manen, 1997, pp. 97, 98). Face-to-face interviews promoted a sense of comfort for the teen mother participants as they were situated in the natural setting of their own homes, with their babies present. Even the one young mother who chose to interview at the University private room, chose to do so herself, for her own relaxation and sense of privacy. In-person interviews fostered ability to collect rich, thick, descriptive narratives,

emphasizing *verstehen* (understanding), and the capacity to increase validity through empathic reflection and identification (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002; Schwandt, 2000). Having one person conduct all the interviews promoted deeper understanding of the common elements of being a Mexican American teen mother.

b. Triangulation. Convergent use of several data sources adds credibility to the research (Creswell, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). Sources of data collection included: in-person interviews, close observations, follow-up clarification phone calls for 10 participants, field notes, and PI's reflective log to clarify personal biases and interpretations. Being able to observe teen mothers in their homes and neighborhood settings allowed for gathering experiential data by direct participation in the young mothers' lifeworlds, enhancing credibility and validation (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000; van Manen, 1997). As a purposive sample, it was known that these young mothers lived in lower income neighborhoods. This was validated by internet websites that listed the high percentage of families living under the poverty level in those neighborhoods (Demographic Data, 2014; Zipatlas, 2014). However, direct observations of the home and neighborhood settings left no doubt about the existence of poverty for almost all of the teen mother participants. Structural dilapidation of buildings, and apartments with high occupant to room-number ratios were evidence of the lower-income environments.

Observations were also made regarding the mother and child bonding and care-taking that provided a form of triangulation with regards to the participants' self-descriptions as appropriate, "good" mothers.

c. **Audit trail**. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and later checked against each other to ensure mistakes were not made during transcription. Credibility was supported by using computer software to store and organize the narrative transcripts, where systematic coding, memo writing, and capturing participant quotes was enabled for enhanced thematic reflection

(Saldaña, 2009). All interviews and field notes were utilized and double coded by collaboration with the research team. Including all cases enhances authenticity and reduces the bias of choosing ones that fit a prior idea of interpretation (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002).

d. **Peer debriefing**. Credibility and authenticity are important throughout the research process (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). Regular meetings with my research advisor and dissertation committee included in-depth discussions and feedback on the appropriateness of research design, recruitment, interview questions, probes, inter-coder reliability, creation of themes, and interpretations of participants' responses. This engagement in active feedback is known to enhance rigor, as interpretations go beyond those of only the primary researcher, and helps to expose biases (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002).

e**. Clarifying biases**. Self-reflection through log-writing and peer debriefing creates an "open and honest narrative" (Creswell, 2009, p.192), enhancing credibility. The ability to acknowledge how interpretations are influenced by my personal characteristics such as gender, culture, and socioeconomic status is also important (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002).

Dependability refers to the stable nature of the research inquiry, and how well others could follow the decision making process of the researcher for logic and traceability (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 392). This was established through the audit trail of transcribed interviews, use of Atlas.ti computer software for storing and viewing codes and themes, and use of the reflexive log for documenting the research steps and inner thoughts of the researcher.

Confirmability is the ability for the research to substantiate a clear connection between findings and interpretations (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Establishing an audit trail also supports confirmability, along with using multiple data sources (triangulation), and ongoing peer review throughout the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By extracting *in vivo* codes and

quotations, and writing them strategically throughout the data results, they serve anecdotally to involve the reader in teen mothers' lived experiences first hand, supporting the trustworthiness of my interpretive reflections (Saldaña, 2009; van Manen, 1997). Repeating the teen mothers' own words provided strength to the confirmability of the narrative results (Patton, 2002).

   Transferability for qualitative research implies that research findings are meaningful to others who share similar context and experience with the study participants (Chiovitti & Piran, 2003; Patton, 2002). While the reader decides if there is congruence among similar cases, it is up to the researcher to provide a rich, detailed account of the research findings from which to compare (Patton, 2002). Rich, multi-layered, descriptive data was collected by in-person interviews and close observations, fostering potential for "case to case transfer" (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 392).

II. Balancing Bicultural Heritage: Mexican American Teen Mothers Lived

      Experience

A.   <u>**Introduction**</u>

      Motherhood requires more than just the corporeal sojourn from pregnancy to childbirth, or the physical possession of an adopted child (Ruddick, 1995). Motherhood is the protective work engaged in to ensure children's survival, along with their cultural, spiritual, emotional, cognitive and social growth and development (Ruddick, 1995). Being a mother encompasses deep relationality, or the *lived human relation* of the mother and child within their shared existence. From a phenomenological perspective, this shared daily existence is referred to as the mother and child's *lifeworld* (Husserl, 1913/1952; van Manen, 1997).

      The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore meanings of motherhood as constructed by Mexican American teen mothers, whose lifeworlds' encompass the importance of their sense of identity with Mexican heritage and Anglo-American influences for raising their children, within the context of their adolescent stage of development.

      Hispanic people comprise this nation's largest ethnic minority group, with Mexicans representing 65% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). One out of every four babies born in America today is born from an Hispanic mother, and nearly one third (32%) of all Hispanic female teenagers are mothers (Livingston & Cohn, 2010). Most of what is known about Mexican American teen mothers is based on national data and quantitative scholarship, which have focused primarily on sexual correlates of teen pregnancy (age and intent of sexual initiation), family planning usage, birth outcomes, breast-feeding practices, and general socio-economics (Callister & Birkhead, 2002; Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995; Escobar, Nervi, & Gara, 2000; Hotz et al., 2005; Marsiglia, Kulis, Perez, & Bermudez-Parsai, 2011; Turner,

Kaplan, Zayas, & Ross, 2002). Despite such larger numbers of young Mexican American girls becoming mothers every year, little is known about their work of motherhood from their own perspectives. This research starts to fill the gap in the extant literature.

B.   **Review of Related Literature**

1.   **Teen Motherhood**

Teen mothers are generally evaluated through models of deficit functioning, as they are less likely to complete high school, more likely to live in poverty with their children, have higher rates of depression than older mothers, and perceive a lower quality of life overall (Campos, Barbieri, Torloni, & Guazzelli, 2012; Eshbaugh, Lempers, & Luze, 2006; Hotz et al., 2005; Ng & Kaye, 2012). Teen mothers are reported to give their children harsher discipline than older mothers, and their children (especially boys) are more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as substance use, gang membership, delinquency, teen parenthood, and unemployment (Furstenberg, 2007; Pogarsky, Thornberry, & Lizotte, 2006). Young mothers' level of cognitive maturity, impulse control, and realistic expectations about their child's developmental stage contribute to their abilities to parent appropriately (Kuhn, 2009; Jahromi, Guimond, Umaña-Taylor, Updegraff, & Toomey, 2014; Sieving, & Stevens, 2000; Tamis-Lemonda, Shannon, & Spellman, 2002).

Qualitative studies provide a more in-depth portrait of the complexity of overall teen motherhood experience. In her meta-synthesis of 18 qualitative studies, Clemmens (2003) reported that participants acknowledged young motherhood as hardship, especially while trying to stay in school or work while having to care for a baby. Time previously used for school work and peers was replaced with responsibilities of childcare and pediatrician appointments, fostering alienation from friends, and a lack of adolescent activities and socialization. Becoming a mother, on the other hand, had positively affected their lives, providing a stabilizing affect with

motivation to continue with school, improved self-esteem, and often improved relationships with families, but not necessarily improved relationships with fathers of the babies (Clemmens, 2003).

Minority teen mothers (Hispanic and African American) share similar developmental and life challenges as Caucasian young mothers, with additional concerns about their ethnic identity. Racial and culturally based stressors such as discrimination, acculturation stress, and higher chances of living in poor neighborhoods with inferior school systems compile to create disparities in quality of life (Geronimus, 2003; SmithBattle, 2007; Umaña-Taylor, Updegraff, & Gonzales-Backen, 2011). Hispanic and African American teen mothers are even more likely to live in poverty than Caucasian mothers (60% and 48% versus 39% for Caucasian mothers; Ng & Kaye, 2012), which is associated with poor psychosocial health. Minority mothers are acknowledged for teaching their children social and emotional survival skills regarding processing negative racial messages their children may receive, and affirming their positive ethnic cultural values with pride (Johnson, 2011; Vasquez, 2010; Zayas, 1994). For Mexican American mothers, social survival strategies need to be taught to their children based on their knowledge and experience of living in the class and race-conscious society of contemporary America (Padilla, 2006).

The importance of strong ethnic identity for Mexican American teen mothers has become salient in recent literature. Two quantitative studies of Mexican American teen mothers found that their ethnic identity affirmation and *familismo* (family commitment) were significant buffers for coping with discrimination, depression, risky social behaviors, and self-esteem (Toomey, Umaña-Taylor, Updegraff, & Jahromi, 2013; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2011). Strong ethnic identity has also been reported as an important determinant of mental health by Burnett-Zeigler, Bohnert, & Ilgen (2013). They found that for Hispanic, Black and Asian adults, those participants with

stronger ethnic identity and lesser acculturation to mainstream America had decreased odds of having a lifetime psychiatric disorder (depression, bipolar, anxiety, any psychiatric diagnosis).

The maternal role in Mexican culture is highly valued, and motherhood attainment offers a prestigious position in the teen's family and extended social milieu (Doğan, Ateş, & Carrión-Basham, 2007; Laganá, 2003). Theoretically, the prestige of motherhood should mean greater social support and acceptance, exonerating young mothers from the initial shame of early virginity loss. *Marianismo*, in reference to the saintliness of the Virgin Mary, is the Hispanic, culturally prescribed expectation that women should be more spiritually pure and moral than men, with motherhood exalting women to a self-abnegating, almost martyred role (Diaz-Guerrero, 1975; Doğan-Ateş & Carrión-Basham, 2007; Gil & Vazquez, 1996; Stevens, 1973).

However, positive affirmation of early motherhood is not routinely shared by the mainstream society, and therefore creates a source of acculturative stress for the teen mother (Fessler, 2003; SmithBattle, 2007; SmithBattle, 2009; Trejos-Castillo & Frederick, 2011; Westman, 2009). Other sources of acculturative stress may be experienced by teen mothers who receive criticism and emotional distancing from their families by not living up to expectations that are normative in their heritage cultural repertoire (Castillo, Cano, Chen, Blucker, & Olds, 2008; Castillo, Conoley, Brossart, & Quiros, 2007; Padilla, 2006). Second generation Hispanic teen mothers have been shown to suffer more mental health problems, higher divorce and single parenting rates, and worse perinatal outcomes than their first generation mothers (Callister & Birkhead, 2002; Davila, McFall, & Cheng, 2009; Masten, Penland, & Nayani, 1994; Pew Hispanic Center, 2011; Vega & Scribney, 2011).

2. **Adolescence**

Adolescents aged 15 to 19 years engage in ego identity formation versus role confusion, identifying personal strengths and weaknesses in order to establish their unique identities, sense

of self, and autonomy (Erikson, 1968; Lerner & Steinberg, 2009; Marcia, 1980). Developmental

tasks focus on self-discovery, increased abstract thinking and decision making abilities,

formation of close peer relationships, and emergence of romantic and sexual feelings (Sieving &

Stevens, 2000). Expectations of adolescence include freedom to experiment with personal

interests and relationships without adult responsibilities, and question family values previously

unquestioned (Pasley, et al., 1993). Common challenges of adolescence include

parental/adolescent conflict, mood disruptions, and engagement in risky behaviors (Hollenstein

& Lougheed, 2013). Adolescents living in a family context with a single or disabled parent,

poverty, or having immigrant parents with limited English capabilities all contribute to

accelerated stages of "adultification" (taking on adult roles before developmentally able or

appropriate to do so; Burton, Garrett-Peters, & Eaton, 2009, p.77).

Developmentally, young motherhood is considered an "off time transition" (Pogarsky,

Thornberry, & Lizotte, 2006, p. 333), disturbing socially desirable sequences such as educational

attainment, independence from family, strong peer relationships, stable romantic relationships,

and marriage before motherhood (Pogarsky et al., 2006; Sieving & Stevens, 2000). The stress of

early parenthood may influence dependency on more concrete thinking that may inhibit the

young mother from understanding the consequences of her decisions and actions (Sieving &

Stevens, 2000). Motherhood during adolescence blurs developmental boundaries between

adolescence and adulthood, furthering ambiguities in roles and expectations, especially in

families where generations are age-condensed into shorter distance between generations (Burton,

1997). Falling outside the parameters of socially constructed good timing for motherhood

reinforces the politicization and stigmatization of teen mothers as "bad mothers" who are unable

to nurture and care for their children based on their own young age (Hunt et al., 2005, p. 334).

3. Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity includes self-identification and a sense of belonging as an ethnic group member and is formulated over time and exploration in a similar process as ego identity (Phinney, 1993). While the exact role of ethnic identity and acculturation in adolescent development is not clear, studies suggest that the crisis of ego identity development may be more challenging for adolescents whose home environment practices a different set of values, beliefs, and behaviors than school, peer, and public media contexts, especially if they perceive their ethnic group is associated with low social status (Padilla, 2006; Phinney, 1992). As second generation Hispanic teens selectively take on cultural traits from American society while maintaining cultural heritage traits, they select a *bicultural repertoire* which affords them the ability to shape their unique dual ethnic identity and ultimately move easily between the two cultures, avoiding discrimination (LaFramboise et al., 1993; Padilla, 2006; Swidler, 1986; Swidler, 2001). Social discrimination is thought to play a part in how and what values are emphasized, especially if the teen mother has darker skin color and experiences prejudice (Padilla, 2006). For Mexican American teen mothers, strong heritage ethnic identity may provide a buffer against stressors of new motherhood if they maintain close bonds with their immediate and extended family. However, this may also be a stress factor if she wishes to raise her own child with values and behaviors that are not traditionally Mexican, such as eschewing traditional gender role socialization.

Familismo and its cultural value of familial obligations and support, imposes expectations on Mexican American teen girls to care for younger siblings at home, and perform house-keeping chores such as cooking and cleaning (Buriel, 1993; Diaz-Guerrero, 1975; Villarruel, 1998; Williamson, 2006). Thus, while Mexican American teen girls are taught to take on

mothering roles early on, the transition to their own motherhood seemingly eclipses any further opportunity for her to explore her own identity outside of the mothering role. The developmental task of independence from one's natal family is often thwarted by the teen mother's increased need for financial, physical, and emotional support (Pasley et al., 1993; Sieving & Stevens, 2000).

No prior studies describe the combined contexts of how Mexican American teen mothers perceive and experience the conflicting demands of their own developmental needs, ethnic identity, and mothering, and how these demands influence their young parenting. This understanding is important for providing insights into what these young mothers need to foster healthy development for themselves and their children. The aim of this study is to explore the lived experience of Mexican American teen mothers, focusing on their personal meaning structures of convergent identities of motherhood, biculturalism and adolescent stage of development.

C.   **Methods**

1.   **Approach**

This research employed an interpretive, phenomenological approach to identify, describe, and find meaning in everyday life experiences from the individual's subjective perspective (Husserl, 1913/1952; Patton, 2002; Van der Zalm & Bergum, 2000; van Manen, 1997). Underpinning a phenomenological approach, are the tenets that there is not one interpretation of the *truth*; truth is context specific and may be subjected to multiple interpretations, and that the pre-suppositions and values of the researcher are inevitably incorporated into the research (McConnell-Henry, Chapman, & Francis, 2011; van Manen, 1997).

2. **Sample and Setting**

Teen mothers for this study were recruited from the pool of Hispanic teen mothers who had participated in a large prospective study comparing effects of group and individual prenatal care on maternal-infant outcomes. Teen mothers lived in six communities, representing some of the poorest, lower income communities in Illinois. Eight young mothers lived in a community that was 65% Hispanic, with over 35% of the population living under the poverty level (City-data, 2013). The other ten mothers lived in communities that ranged from 10 to 28% of the population living under the poverty level, and nine to 49% Hispanic (City-data, 2014; Infoplease, 2014; Zipatlas, 2013). While this information is related to the general zip code areas, young mothers lived in neighborhoods that housed a high proportion of Hispanic families, where Spanish was often the first language spoken at home.

Four mothers were recruited by telephone at the time of their last interview for the longitudinal study. An additional 14 mothers were recruited after study flyers were mailed to their homes, and they contacted the researcher directly by phone call or text message. The operational definition of second generation Mexican American for this study follows that of Portes and Rumbaut (2001), and includes youth born in the U.S., or foreign born youth brought to the U.S. before late adolescence, having lived in the U.S. five or more years. Other inclusion criteria were (a) having at least one parent either born or raised in Mexico, (b) feeling comfortable answering study questions in English, (c) having up to two children under age four years, (d) under age 20 at the time of delivery of her children.

3. **Procedures**

This research was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Illinois at Chicago. Qualitative interviews were conducted in-person with young mothers, by the

study PI, using a semi structured interview guide composed of five main questions, with suggestive probes. Examples of questions are: (a) "What parts of Mexican culture are important to you for raising your child?" (b) "How does it feel to be a mother?" Eight demographic questions were also asked. All but one interview was conducted in the home of the young mother. One mother chose to interview at the University of Illinois campus due to her perceived lack of privacy in her own home. Interviews lasted from one to two hours, and were audio-recorded for later transcription.

The concept of validity, or integrity, does not have the same connotation in qualitative research as in quantitative research (Creswell, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Maxwell, 1996). Answering the question, "Are these findings sufficiently authentic?" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p.178), has become controversial in the qualitative research methods literature. Phenomenology in particular focuses on meanings as they are lived every day, in this case created by the participant young mothers. However, following Creswell's (2009) guidelines, measures were taken to insure trustworthiness of the research and include: (a) use of rich, thick description of data results, (b) triangulation of data sources; interview transcripts, written field notes of observations, and reflective log, (c) audit trail of audio recorded, transcribed interviews, and use of computer software to store and organize narrative transcripts, (d) peer debriefing by meeting regularly with research team throughout the research process for engaged feedback and inter-coder reliability, and (e) clarifying biases by continual self-reflection through log writing and peer debriefing.

4. **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis involves some type of *content analysis* of narratives, creating categories of data, and developing codes that fit stems and phrases into the categories, creating

themes (Creswell, 2009 & Nieswiadomy, 2008). Phenomenological analysis focuses on *thematic reflection,* drawing out subtle and elusive understandings of lived experience by the participants (Wertz et al., 2011). The audio recorded narrative interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded for themes (lines of inquiry) with support from Atlas.ti software (version 7.1.8). Themes were expanded and reconstructed, using a hermeneutic (interpretive) approach, to find essential commonalities among participants (Leonard, 1994; van Manen, 1997), culminating in overall feeling of their shared lived experience of bicultural teen motherhood. Direct quotations from the teen mother participants were chosen to exemplify and support thematic categories. Names used in this paper have been changed to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the young mothers and others mentioned.

D.   **Results**

The 18 teen mother participants were between ages 15 to 19 when they became mothers. Most participants were raised by single mothers, along with their siblings. More than half of the teen mothers' own mothers also had their first child during adolescence. Only four of the teen mothers were raised in households with continuous father presence. Reasons for father absence included divorce (12 families), extended father stays in Mexico (up to 10 years; 2 families), and father death (one family). Three of the teen mothers had never met their father. Being raised by single mothers meant many teen mothers lacked traditional Mexican heritage gender role relationship modeling in the home. Many felt their single mothers had been so busy and exhausted from long work hours that they did not experience adequate love, attention, and guidance in their parental relationships before their pregnancies. Most of the teen mothers described their adolescence before becoming mothers as lonely, turbulent, hanging around ethnic group peers who encouraged their substance use, school detachment, and delinquency. More

than half (ten) of the teen mothers had graduated high school (three had been expelled, two of whom received their GED later), four had dropped out of high school with no plans for completion, and four were still attending high school (or GED) at time of the interview (includes one teen mother that had been expelled twice). Three of the teen mothers had served time in jail.

All teen mothers were financially dependent on others for subsistence. All of them, including the three married teen mothers, were living with either their own family, or the father of the baby's family. Only one teen mother (unmarried) lived independently with the baby's father and baby in their own apartment. Father of the babies' involvement ranged from no involvement whatsoever (three), to uncertain involvement (two), living with father (ten), to being married to the father of her baby (three).

Findings emphasize meanings of the teen mothers' bicultural and motherhood identities; together forming the context for their lived experience as Mexican American teen mothers. Three major themes shared by these teen mothers were: (1) grounded ethnicity (2) hopes and dreams for autonomy, and (3) authentic mothering.

1.   **Grounded Ethnicity**

      a. Mexican although I live here.

The young mothers' identities as Mexican and Hispanic were firmly grounded and unquestioned. They were situated in primarily Hispanic neighborhoods, and had attended local schools. All but three mothers spoke predominantly Spanish at home. Personal contact with Caucasian Americans their own age was very limited. For example, Patricia was born in the U.S., but raised in Mexico until age eight, when her parents moved back to the U.S. Patricia gave birth to her daughter, Reyna, at age 19. She acknowledged her and Reyna's American citizenship, and her own education here, learning and speaking fluent English. However, Patricia

felt her ethnic group was entirely Mexican, and wanted Reyna to maintain her strong ethnic

identity:

> Anyway, I am Hispanic. It's like a big stereotype [checking boxes on forms]…she
> [Reyna] will grow up knowing that, even though I was born here, I am 100% Mexican,
> and I don't want her to lose her roots and stuff. I will take her to visit [Mexico] and stuff
> like that. She's [Reyna] mostly American. She's never gonna leave here, unless it's
> like visits. She'll grow up with all the customs and traditions of American life, but she
> will know that she has—that she is 100% Mexican. Her dad is full blooded, and I'm full
> blooded, so she is 100% blood Mexican, but she's obviously a US citizen, and she will
> know all the good-she knows English and-she understands English and Spanish now, so
> she will know that.

Even the teen mothers who had never experienced life in Mexico first-hand, felt solid in their

ethnic identification. Esperanza was born and raised in the U.S. and lived in a very low income

neighborhood. Although she herself had never traveled to Mexico, when asked who she thought

"Americans" were, she responded with the following:

> To be honest, without being racist or anything, I would not say Hispanics. Even if they're
> born here, I feel like we're not Americans. I would say American is someone who lives in
> a better environment, neighborhood. I would even say a person who has blue eyes and
> blonde hair. I know it sounds crazy…but yeah, that's what I feel like. When I fill out an
> application, I don't put American. I put Hispanic…if I put American, they see me. They
> see where I come from. They would say, 'Okay, you're Hispanic.' That's what they
> would label me as even if I have my Social Security card, everything; Hispanic.

Four of the mothers had one parent from a different Hispanic country, with whom they

also identified. Three teen mothers had a parent from Puerto Rico, one father was from Ecuador,

and another young mother's deceased biological father was both Puerto Rican and Peruvian.

While 13 of the mothers had babies fathered by young men who were fully Mexican, five teen

mothers had partners who were half Mexican, or Puerto Rican, Costa Rican, Ecuadorian, and

African American/Puerto Rican. None of the teen mothers had a parent or partner who was

Caucasian American. Although 14 young mothers were born and raised in the U.S. and four were born in Mexico but raised in the U.S., none of the young mothers truly identified themselves as being *American*. They felt their babies were also their same mixture of Latino ethnicities, with the probability they would feel somewhat Americanized as they grew up in the U.S. and were exposed to American schools and media. Relationships with their first generation parents, grandparents, friends, boyfriends/ husbands, and other family and community members, informed and authenticated teen mothers' Mexican identity, even if they themselves had never traveled to Mexico. Perceived daily life in Mexico served as a base reference from which most young mothers constructed their own identities as *Mexicans-in-America.* As Yolanda put it, "My cousins [in Mexico] think we're so Americanized, different from them. Well, we're not really different. I eat tortillas here. . . it's just that we live here."

b.   Habla Español, Speaking Spanish.

All of the young mothers in this study wanted their babies to learn Spanish, sometimes even before they learned English. Most of the parents of the teen mothers and their babies' fathers spoke predominantly Spanish, so they wanted to be sure their baby could communicate with their grandparents, and other relatives who spoke only Spanish. Teen mothers felt that speaking and understanding Spanish language was an important initiator into the Mexican culture right from the beginning. Some of the mothers had fears of losing their "Mexican roots" and wanted to guarantee a place for their child within the cultural boundaries of their communities by being able to speak Spanish fluently. As Paloma explained, "I really want her [daughter] to express her inner Hispanic." Many teen mothers felt that once their child learned fluent Spanish in the home, it would be easy for them to learn English at school. Not all the young mothers spoke fluent Spanish themselves, especially mothers who came from homes

where the traditional family structure of marriage was broken, and the mother spent a lot of time with peers rather than family. These young mothers (three in number), wanted their children to grow up speaking Spanish better than they did, and wanted to improve their own Spanish abilities now that they had a child.

All the mothers acknowledged future employment advantages for their child if they could become bilingual, making them "worth two persons." One young mother, Flor, experienced conflicted feelings for choosing to teach her daughter, Verónica, only Spanish, after Verónica had to spend time in the hospital treating her congenital health problems:

> 'Cuz she [Verónica] was going for therapy and everything, and they would speak to her in English. That's when I was like, I think I should have started in English first, because we're in the United States. You should learn English. That was kind of a mistake that I thought I did, but then again, she only went to therapy for two months…The therapists were English…they'll try to talk to her like, "give me this, give me that," I'm like, she doesn't really know English. I was like, it's fine. But when she's over here [at home], with us, or with his [father of baby's] family, she needs to know Spanish.

c.   Mexican is Catholic.

According to Patricia, "Everything [Mexican] has to do with religion. Everything that you do, every tradition or custom has a religious background, whether you know it or not." Religiously, all but two of the study mothers felt they were "completely Catholic," and only one mother felt she was "completely Christian." Religious beliefs, practices, and spirituality varied in strength among the young mothers. While four mothers did not indicate a sense of spirituality, 14 mothers expressed a strong sense of spirituality by saying things like, "When I was pregnant, I did that [prayed] a lot, and my daughter's healthy. Now I have God to thank for that." Staunch spirituality and belief in religious doctrine did not necessarily mean that mothers attended church. Paloma explained, "We don't really have time to go to church…but our family talks about it [religion] a lot…I make sure we have our prayers before we go to sleep." However, five

mothers did attend church fairly regularly, with four of them bringing their babies. All of the mothers wanted their babies to grow up sharing their religion. Some mothers felt a closer calling to their religion once their babies were born, and planned on attending church with their babies when they were older. Church attendance for herself and her son became so important to Valeria, she insisted, "He'll have to go by force." Rosalie wanted her daughter to be "committed" to Catholicism by going to church every Sunday and "having faith," proclivities she wanted to develop since becoming a mother.

Many times during interviews, mothers equated "Mexican" with "Catholic," while describing ethnically linked practices and beliefs they wanted to share with their babies. For instance, all of the mothers wanted to have their babies baptized, which includes appointing *padrinos*, or godparents for the baby, and involves meetings with the priest in the church. Several mothers wanted to be sure their babies would be baptized, receive first communion, and confirmation, all required for their child to be married in a Catholic church in the future. Mothers with daughters wanted them to celebrate their *quinceañera,* or *sweet 15* when they became teens. Traditional *quinceañera* is a celebration for young girls transitioning into young womanhood, and includes being blessed by the priest at a Catholic church mass, followed by a formal dance and dinner.

While baptizing the baby and appointing *padrinos* was a priority cultural practice for these young mothers, almost all of them lacked financial and familial resources required for carrying out their wishes at the time of interview. None of the mothers mentioned receiving tangible goods or financial support from their churches. Almost none of the mothers celebrated her own *quinceañera* due to lack of financial ability of her family, disrupted family functioning from parental divorce, or her own lack of interest due to her "rebellious" behaviors at that age.

Many mothers felt regret at the loss of this ethnic rite of passage, and wanted their daughters to experience a *quinceañera* in their future. As Rosalie explained, "I know she's [daughter] gonna have her *quinceañera*, regardless if she wants it or not…I want her to have her culture."

2.   Embedded American Identity.

Most of the mothers in this study did not profess to feel an "American" identity. In fact, as previously described, most mothers felt they were decidedly *not* American, especially in regards to how society at large viewed them. These mothers had been raised in predominantly Hispanic communities, and most of them said they had no American friends. Teen mothers with limited access to mainstream Americans were not sure about what characterized "American culture" except what they saw on television, or in public venues where they could observe "Americans" way of dress and interactions. However, it could be argued that modifying Mexican-mothering approaches, and pursuit of independence from babies' fathers and families, were goals influenced by the generic mainstream, multi-media culture, which typifies *Anglo-American* culture.

For some teen mothers, like Fabiana, "feeling American" emerged from under their deep-seated Mexican identity, when they used life in Mexico as their reference culture:

> I feel that I was not [raised] that very Mexican. Because I feel like my mom was
> more like that because she has seven brothers and sisters. . .it was all very strict. She
> lived in Mexico. They know you hafta respect your parents. You know that, hey, you
> hafta go out outside and go sell some stuff to make money for the house. I feel like even
> little girls in Mexico they go out and they wash clothes by hand, stuff like that. I feel like
> that's where the more American in me comes in I feel, because I wasn't raised like my
> mom was. I didn't hafta be a little girl and hafta go grab a pile of clothes and wash it on
> the big rock outside. I feel like that's…more of a Mexican thing I feel.

3.   Adolescence: Hopes for Autonomy

Almost all of the teen mothers emphatically declared their deep desire to prove family, friends, and community wrong about what failures they were perceived to be. Responding to the emotionally painful barrage of negativity, young mothers adamantly shared their determination to defy the low expectations of others, and not become "another statistic" about teen motherhood. These mothers perceived that they were currently dependent on their families and fathers of their babies for sustenance, due to their incomplete education and low job skills. Like most adolescents, mothers were concerned with others' perceptions of themselves, and they desired self-regulation and independence (McElhaney, Allen, Stephenson, & Hare, 2009). Catalina was 16 years old when she had her baby in her junior year of high school, completing her high school degree at an "alternative" school:

> I mean, I don't want to just be another statistic. The expectation of everyone is that teen moms will drop out of school and not get educated. I want to prove everyone wrong-that even though I am a teen mom, I can be as educated as everyone else and be something in life, and have a good life. I can be independent for myself and my baby. I don't want to always need my boy-friend and parents. Girls are always so dependent. I can do anything I want to do, like I want to become a nurse.

Several of the teen mothers felt fulfilled in their mothering role and had no immediate goals for future education or career choice. However, other teen mothers, like many adolescents, had hopes and dreams for future careers, but felt uncertain about specific choices. These teen mothers also wondered how they were going to balance going to school, and pursuing a career while also taking care of their baby. For example, 17 year old Rosalie felt overwhelmed with the thought of all of the possibilities she might entertain in her future, after she completed high school, but felt stressed when she thought about how to achieve a career and also spend time with her daughter:

I can't sleep…Yeah, I think about everything, my whole life. I wanna make a plan for myself, but my head's everywhere. I wanna do a lot of things. I don't know where to start and have my daughter involved in it. I wanna be successful…I wanna study everything. I wanna study criminal justice. I wanna learn how to train dogs. I wanna be an ultrasound technician. I wanted to join the Marines. That was always my dream, since I was a little girl. Since I had my daughter, I don't think I'm gonna do that. I wanna do a lot of things. I wanna be a mechanic. I wanna be a tattoo artist… I wanna learn all of it…it all depends how bad I want it.

4. **Authentic Motherhood**

a. Enfolding Mexican Motherhood.

For most of the young mothers, striving toward *being a Mexican mother* meant sharing

the tangible evidence of *Mexicaniana* such as cooking and eating Mexican cuisine, cleaning

house, celebrating Mexican holidays, speaking Spanish, and working hard like their own

mothers. One mother, Esperanza, felt that discipline in the form of threatening her child [in the

future] with a shoe, "chancla," and stories about " La Llorona" or "el cuyuy" [bogyeman], were

essential for maintaining the aura of Mexican motherhood authority. Fabiana strove to create a

"Mexican comfort zone" in her home, by feeding her two and a half year old daughter, Morgana,

"as much Mexican food as I can," speaking Spanish, and having Morgana watch Spanish-

language cartoons on the television.

All except two of the teen mothers had mothers that worked outside the home. The young

mothers understood their own mothers' relative independence as an Americanized influence over

family dynamics, not typical for traditional families living in Mexico, where mothers stayed

home and maintained domestic life, while fathers earned wages as "head of the household."

According to Fabiana**,** traditional mothers in Mexico don't drive cars, or even go out of their

homes without their husbands:

> It's just that what the man says-goes, especially in a Mexican family since the
> mother stays home, and the dad is "I'm the man. I'm the one with the pants. I bring
> bring all the money in." It's just like that. In a Mexican home everyone respects the man.

Since the majority of the study mothers came from single-parent homes, headed by their mothers, traditional Mexican gender roles were not generally modeled. In fact, most of the young mothers in the study felt they were left to fend for themselves growing up. However, even those young mothers who were not raised in traditional two parent homes were acutely aware of Mexican gendered cultural expectations from observing deferential treatment of their brothers by parents. They also learned from their boyfriends/husbands, extended family, and from the Mexican community in their neighborhoods, who acted as resources for "ethnic raw materials" (Jiménez, 2010, p.103).

Esperanza felt she was learning how to be both a Mexican *woman*, and *mother* from her boyfriend, who was raised traditionally, and expected them to live out traditional patriarchal gender roles. Esperanza's son, Miguel, was four weeks old at interview. She had this to say:

> I'm still learning how to be a Mexican [woman]. It's pretty sad, but no one's taught me. My mother, she really didn't…but every time I go to my grandmother's house she makes tortillas out of hand. Her house smells pure food. Her house is always clean. She's always cooking…In my culture, a woman has to know how to cook, clean, take care of the kids. She has to know all of this. By the time she finds someone, she knows all of this. My boyfriend was raised like that. His mother would clean for him, would fold his clothes, would cook for him. Once we got together, he expected that from me. He's like, "Can you make me this?" It's like; "I don't know how to do that." He would leave his dirty clothes everywhere, and he's like, "This house is dirty." I'm like, "Oh well, clean it." He's like, "What do you mean? *You're* supposed to clean it." I'm like, "What do you mean, *I'm* supposed to clean it?"

> I got stuck with—you would say, a *machista,* that's what they're called. A man that expects everything from a woman like that. I'm barely learning how to make enchiladas, chiles rellenos. I'm learning how to—I clean up after him, I wash his clothes. I would never do that. I never thought I'd ever be doing that for a man, and now I am, because, I mean, now I have my own family with him. He would come home from work. He would have food, house clean, and baby well taken care of.

b.   Improving Mexican Motherhood for Their Child.

Many of the young mothers in this study hoped to spend more time with their babies, and achieve open communication with their children, in a manner they never experienced with their own mothers. Almost all of the mothers felt their own mothers did not have "talks" with them about important feminine issues, such as menstruation, romance, and sex. Teen mothers voiced frustration, loneliness, and confusion, describing how their own mothers were not "there" for them, but instead followed the traditional Mexican cultural approach of being "strict," and avoiding intimate conversations. Some young mothers explained that their own mothers assumed they were not thinking about sex, let alone engaging in it, so there was no need to talk about it. Many of the teen mothers felt this lack of communication with their mothers contributed to finding themselves pregnant in their teens. These young mothers wanted to change this Mexican cultural approach with their own children, and planned on becoming "friends" with their child, "being there, all up in their business," so they would be able to talk about intimate topics and prevent subsequent teen pregnancies if they had daughters, and gang involvement if they had sons. Marta was 18 when she had her daughter, Emerald, three weeks old at interview. She wished her parents could have been "more like American parents" since she could never discuss dating issues with them, and her impressions from television were that American parents were "friends" with their children, sitting around kitchen tables, talking about everything. Marta's father would "explode" at the subject of dating, and she never felt comfortable talking with her mother.

Yasemin had dropped out of high school at age 16, and was 18 when she gave birth to her son, Rafael, 6 months old at interview. Her own mother had been a teen mother, and one of Yasemin's sisters became a teen mother at 15.When Yasemin was growing up, she felt her

mother didn't spend time with her and her sisters. Yasemin's eldest sister played the mothering

role for her. Yasemin worried that without sharing her time and support, Rafael would be bullied

into joining a gang when he got older, like her nephew:

> My mom, she works every day…she comes home tired…She never put attention to us.
> I'm gonna pay attention to Rafael, so he grows in a straight line, so he don't crook his
> life…I want him to finish high school. Get a diploma, go to college, yeah…He could talk
> to me. Yeah, I'm his mom, but I think that I could be his friend, so he so he could talk to
> me and I could tell him what's wrong, what's right. What he could do, what he can't do,
> so he stays out of trouble, you know?

Fabiana left high school after her parents divorced, and was 16 when she had her

daughter, Morgana, who was two and a half years old at interview. She wanted to communicate

better with her own daughter than she could with her mother, hoping to prevent Morgana's

following the turbulent path she had forged through adolescence:

> I feel like I can do what my mom didn't do, and that's because she's very Mexican…
> In Mexico it's like her family, her mom, is very strict, very Mexican woman. My
> grandma never talked to my mom about drugs, about sex, about friends, about anything
> because she had so many kids. How can you possibly give eight kids attention? But my
> mom never talked to me about sex or drugs because her mom never talked to her about
> sex or drugs.

> I will talk to her. I feel like as soon as she hits school I will always tell her how beautiful
> She is and how she should never let anyone talk down to her…I don't want her to
> get pregnant at 16, moving in with her boyfriend… I'm gonna talk to her about sex. I'm
> gonna talk to her about boys. I'm gonna let her know about drugs, about how kids easily
> influence you. That's one thing I wish someone would have been there to tell me.

c.   Being a Young Mother.

Motherhood for these young mothers was as real and powerfully bonding as motherhood

for women of any age. While mothers talked about disadvantages and challenges of becoming

mothers so young, they all expressed unmitigated love for their babies. Sometimes feeling young

and "still kinda stupid" about mothering skills, mothers also felt the advantages of a youthful

mentality, and having more energy than older moms. Many young mothers felt glad that they

would, ultimately, share more years with their babies over the course of their lifetimes than older

mothers get to share with their children. For instance; they anticipated young grand-motherhood,

and being able to play with their grandchildren while still healthy and energetic.

Feelings of lost youth, frustrations from emotional and financial dependency on fathers

of their babies, and families, softened into the fervent, timeless, maternal love all mothers feel

when thinking about the babies themselves. These young mothers experienced existential

moments, feeling themselves transition from being in oneself momentarily; (living for oneself, in

the moment--the paragon of adolescence), toward being in relation to the other; (living in

expanded time, for their babies-- implicit in the relationality of motherhood). Esperanza found

herself engulfed in such an existential epiphany when she attended a party with peers soon after

her son Miguel was born:

> It was weird because usually at parties I would talk about boys and, "Oh, where are we
> going next weekend?" I was actually talking about my baby at a party. We're sharing
> stories and it's like, "Wow." I would think in my head, "Oh my god, I'm talking about
> my son. I have a son."

> It's not the same no more. My world revolves around my son now, even at
> parties. It's all I would think about. I would call my mom, "Is my son okay? Is he fed?
> Is he [diaper] changed?" I will never have a day to relax no more. I feel changed. Before I
> was just I would say, reckless, I guess you would say. I didn't care about anything. I
> would just do whatever I wanted. Irresponsible…I was having such a great time.
> Now it's like, I'm calm. I stay home all day. Mother 24/7…but I feel like my son's not a
> bother to me. I don't mind waking up 4:00 in the morning to feed him.

Teen mothers worried about having enough money to provide essentials for their babies,

such as formula and diapers. Unemployed, Esperanza had to borrow money from her mother,

and pawn her jewelry to buy her baby "stuff." All of the young mothers were financially

dependent on their families and/or the father of the baby. Mothers worried about protecting their

babies from harm, now and in the future. Most of the mothers felt they did not trust other people,

even family members, to take loving care of their babies the way they did. Rosalie, for example,

quit going to high school after a babysitter dislocated her baby's arm when she was two months

old-Rosalie no longer trusted others to care for her baby. Some mothers, like Patricia, would only

trust family members to watch their babies, as a form of *familismo:*

> As far as daycare goes, I have not worked because I don't wanna put her in daycare.
> Cuz, well, at least in my family, we don't really believe in that cuz it's like who do you
> really trust with your baby? Cuz Mexican families are really close. There's always an
> aunt or somebody that's like, "I'll do it." But I don't have family here. . . so it's harder in
> that sense, but I know that if we were in Mexico, it'd be a lot easier.

Catalina graduated from an alternative high school, where many pregnant teens attended.

Catalina was valedictorian of her graduating class and brought her baby son to her graduation:

> Even though I'm young and I gave up a lotta things for him, but it's all worth it…
> There's some people that give their babies up for adoption and stuff like that. I think
> that's cruel. That's your baby. He came out of you. You made him. How could you just
> give him away? Being a teen mom is hard…it gets really hard, but you could do it. If you
> could do other things, then you could be a mom, too. You could do it for your child. He
> should be your encouragement to become a better person, to give him a brighter future.

> At first when I had him, it was really hard, because I didn't know what to do with him…
> It's like responsibility just hits you. I have to take care of him. He's mine forever, and
> he's always gonna be here. I have to take care of him really good, especially when he's
> little, because you don't know what's wrong with him. ..they get sick and they're so
> fragile and little…Every day is a new adventure…you don't know what new cute thing
> your baby's gonna do. You live for those moments, because that's what makes your day.
> I never knew a little child like that could make my day, make me feel so happy. It's
> really amazing, that little boy. He's my Life! [Catalina burst into tears].

E.   Discussion

For the teen mothers in this study, their lived experience of young, bicultural motherhood

manifested essential qualities and meanings surrounding embedded identities being Mexican,

American, and authentic young mothers. These teen mothers experienced motherhood as

profoundly attached to their babies like mothers of any age. Their young motherhood was sensed

as an opportunity to protect and improve qualities of traditional familial heritage culture, while

absorbing elements of American culture to enhance the future for themselves and their babies.

Motherhood for these young, Mexican American mothers meant acknowledging their

strong ethnic identity and their desire to pass it on to their children. While many of the mothers

lacked traditional Mexican family role modelling, they often accessed first generation family

members, boyfriends/husbands, and even neighbors to provide ethnic "raw materials" (Jiménez,

2010, p.117). For example, some young mothers had first generation boyfriends/husbands who

told them explicitly what culturally-scripted, gendered role behaviors they expected from the

mother, based on their own upbringing. Even though these young mothers were not completely

comfortable with some of the expectations due to embedded Anglo-American influences, and

developing ego identities; they complied, with the satisfaction that they were becoming a more

genuine "Mexican woman and mother." Supporting this quest for ethnic inculcation was the

young mothers' almost nostalgic sense of re-creating her vision of a traditional Mexican family

in a way she herself did not experience growing up. Mothers felt a certain urgency for their

children to learn Spanish language, and improve their own Spanish if they were not fluent

themselves. Ensuring their babies spoke and understood Spanish would allow for closer bonds

with grandparents and other first generation family members, the most able to further entrench

the baby in Mexican culture, and reinforcing *familismo* (Zayas, 1994). Young mothers expressed

understanding of how important these family bonds were for their babies, as *familismo* serves to

buffer against both economic and emotional hardships over the course of lifetimes (Delgado,

Updegraff, Roosa, & Umaña-Taylor, 2011; Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos, Alvarez, & Turner,

2012; Taylor, Larsen-Rife, Conger, & Widman, 2012; Zayas, 1994). Being situated in

neighborhoods that were heavily populated with co-ethnics who spoke Spanish, young mothers

also wanted their babies to be accepted within the cultural boundaries of authentic Mexican group identity, especially since most mothers had no Anglo-American friends themselves.

Young mothers' pursuits of ethnic authenticity for themselves and their children is congruent with a large research study conducted by Jiménez (2010), although his focus was not teen mothers in particular. Jiménez reported extensively about how second generation Mexican Americans experience relationships with first generation Mexican immigrants as opportunities to learn about and "practice ethnicity" (p. 110), continually replenishing strong Mexican identity, and keeping ethnic identity more salient for Mexican Americans than for European Americans, whose ethnic groups are not continuing to immigrate into the USA in large numbers.

A qualitative study by Vasquez (2010) reported on mothering strategies of middle-income, Mexican American adult mothers. This author found these mothers also wanted to preserve and pass on a strong sense of pride in Mexican heritage in their children by promoting the Catholic religion and *familismo,* teaching them Spanish language, preparing Mexican cuisine, and listening to Mexican music (Vasquez, 2010). These adult mothers also felt responsible for changing unequal gender roles scripted by *machismo and marianismo* by encouraging their sons to express feelings rather than acting out violently, and encourage daughters to succeed in school, as well as sons; behaviors considered Anglo-American (Vasquez, 2010). While some similarities with Vasquez's research emerged in the current study, a more defined "bicultural toolkit" was described for the adult, middle-income mothers than for these teen mothers. Adult mothers were better able to describe what Anglo-American culture meant to them, and how *machismo* and *marianismo* as traditional Mexican ethnic gendered roles influenced their lives and mothering strategies. However, even though adolescent mothers in this current research were raised mostly by single mothers in low-income, ethnically condensed communities, they shared

similar desires to improve communication with their children to prevent involvement in delinquent activities, and hoped their daughters would stay in school to avoid teen pregnancies, even though they themselves did not.

Motherhood during adolescence paradoxically accelerated the young mother's adultification process, while simultaneously intensifying her financial and emotional dependency on family and father of the baby. Mothers hoped for financial independence in their future, for themselves and their babies, a goal shared by most adolescents. Autonomous thinking emerged as they explained how they made decisions for their babies, and felt they would further develop their dreams when they were ready, but for now their babies' needs came first before their own. Many expressed feeling poised to prove others wrong about fulfilling the stereotype of the low-achieving, poor, delinquent young mother. The teen mothers in this study seemed to have increased impetus to speed the process of adolescence that normally bridges the passage from youth to adulthood by wanting to prove their worth as mothers, motivated by their babies.

Society and researchers alike tend to focus on the *outward,* deficit-oriented challenges facing young mothers of poverty, lower education, lower social status, and moral judgments concerning their sexuality and timing of motherhood (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998; Furstenberg, 2007; Hanna, 2001; Hotz, 2005; Westman, 2009). These young mothers are centered *inward,* struggling to develop their own *marianismo* strengths as the best, most authentic mothers they can possibly be to raise their babies lovingly, practically, guided by their ethnic cultural heritage and families. These findings defy the socially and politically constructed model of teen mothers as bad mothers, mothers who are unable to take care of or emotionally nourish their children; other stereotyped bad mothers being substance-abusing mothers, incarcerated mothers, and lesbian mothers (Hunt et al., 2005).

F. <u>**Strengths and Limitations**</u>

This research significantly contributes to the literature concerning Mexican American teen mothers and their mothering identities in relation to their ethnic and adolescent identities and developmental stages. This research focused on the meanings of the lived experiences of 18 Mexican American, English-speaking teen mothers who lived in predominantly Hispanic, lower income neighborhoods. They all had at least one parent born or raised in Mexico. Therefore, these study results may not represent all Mexican American teen mothers' lived experience, especially those from families living in higher income groups and residential locations outside of predominantly Hispanic communities.

Future research regarding Mexican American teen mothers should include longitudinal studies to learn about parenting experiences and quality of life outcomes over time. Research is also needed that explores the lived experiences of teen mothers' parents, and the fathers of their babies.

G. <u>**Implications**</u>

Health professionals and other service providers who come in contact with Mexican American teen mothers should remain cognizant of the importance *being a mother* is for these young women. These young mothers were doing their best to be successful in their mothering roles and their lives overall. Their sense of motherhood identity is equally powerful and consequential as for mothers who are older; a perspective widely overlooked in extant literature.

The importance of strong ethnic identity for Mexican American teen mothers should be recognized as a proactive coping strategy for dealing with stress, and as a means for guidance with their childrearing and proximal relationships. Care providers should consider learning some Spanish language which will foster a deeper level of understanding and respect for the young

mothers they serve in clinical settings. Providing a culturally competent healthcare environment will encourage young mothers to utilize services for themselves and their babies.

Social and health policies need to be continually assessed and developed to ensure these young mothers receive maximum support with a culturally sensitive approach. This knowledge should underscore interventions that support values of *familismo* by incorporating family members in young mothers' care.

III. Changing Relationships for Mexican American Teen Mothers

A.   Introduction

Motherhood in adolescence precipitates profound interpersonal and intrapersonal shifts

and changes in the young mother's relationships with her parents, siblings, fathers of her babies,

friends, communities, and self (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998; East, Slonim, Horn, & Reyes,

2011; Hunt, Joe-Laidler, & MacKenzie, 2005; SmithBattle, 2009). Some of these changes are

for the betterment of the relationship, and some changes are for the worse. Some relationship

changes are initiated by the teen mother herself, while others are thrust upon the teen mother by

her significant others or community. Dramatic changes also evolve within the teen mother

herself, in terms of her world view and perspective on her life and behaviors as she abruptly

traverses the threshold from adolescence to adulthood. This paper examines the changing

relationships from the perspective of Mexican American teen mothers.

B.   Review of Related Literature

Over 305,000 babies were born to teen mothers aged 15 to 19 years in the U.S. in 2012

alone (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Curtin, & Mathews, 2013). Almost 67,000 of these babies

were born to Mexican American girls (Martin et al., 2013). We know that early childbearing

creates vulnerabilities and health disparities, and has been shown to contribute to mental health

issues among Hispanic teens overall (Dehlendorf, Marchi, Vittinghoff, & Braveman, 2010;

Pasley, Langfield, & Kreutzer, 1993; Trejos-Castillo & Frederick, 2011).

Negative effects of childbearing for adolescent mothers are widely recognized, including

low education and income attainment, dependency on welfare, poor health outcomes for herself

and her child, and psychological problems (Pasley et al, 1993; Trejos-Castillo & Frederick, 2011;

Westman, 2009; Ng & Kaye, 2012). Hispanic teen mothers are the least likely to finish high

school of all ethnic/racial groups: less than 50% attain a high school diploma or GED by the time

they are 22 years old, and 67% of teen mothers overall live below the poverty level if they do not live with their own families (Ng & Kaye, 2012).

Hispanic teen mothers have long been the brunt of a "deficit-oriented stereotypical view" of teenaged parenting (Johnson, 2011, p.88), and longitudinal studies with Hispanic teen mother participants are lacking in the extant literature. Recent literature reports that many of these negative outcomes associated with teen motherhood, such as poverty, are in fact pre-existing social factors rather than direct consequences of teen pregnancy (Coley & Chase- Lansdale, 1998; Fessler, 2003; Geronimus, 2003; SmithBattle, 2009; Kulkarni, Kennedy, & Lewis, 2010). Other socially traumatic risk factors affecting adolescent mothers include gender bias, racism, substance abuse, parental mental illness, chronic family conflict, maltreatment as children, academic failure, and peer group rejection (Coley, & Chase-Lansdale, 1998; Furstenburg, 2007; Kulkarni et al., 2010, p.218).

All mothers experience changes in their self-identity and relationships when they become mothers (Shectman, 1980). These transitions may be especially important for teen mothers whose early transition to motherhood often interferes with their adolescent developmental goals and who are usually economically dependent (Kulkarni, Kennedy, & Lewis, 2010; Sieving & Stevens, 2000). These changes in relationships and self-identity may either moderate or exacerbate the negative consequences of teen motherhood described above. Few studies have examined these changing relationships and their impacts from the perspective of the young mother.

Conflicts and controversy with family concerning adherence to Hispanic culture, and gender role expectations contribute to psychological pressures regarding conformity with first generation parents' expectation versus U.S. teen cultural normative influences (Castillo, Cano,

Chen, Blucker, & Olds, 2007; Padilla, 2006; Wadsworth & Kubrin, 2007).101). Culturally, it is

generally accepted that *familismo*, or valuing nuclear and extended family welfare over the

comfort needs of the individual, is highly prevalent among Hispanic families (Crockett, &

Zamboanga, 2009; Padilla, 2006; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos,

Alvarez, & Turner, 2012; Steidel, & Contreras, 2003; Taylor, Larsen-Rife, Conger, & Widaman,

2012). *Familismo* encompasses collectivism and filial piety; behaving in a respectful and loyal

manner to one's parents, grandparents, extended family and ethnic community (Crockett &

Zamboanga, 2009; Smith-Morris et al., 2012). Maintaining family pride by acting dutifully for

the benefit of all family members is obligatory. Benefits of *familismo* include close-knit family

relationships, and emotional and financial support (Crockett & Zamboanga, 2009; Smith-Morris

et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2012). Heightened sense of traditional family values and *familismo*

have been reported to serve a protective, prosocial role, motivating Hispanic youth to avoid

initiating early sexual activity and substance abuse; but also supporting teen daughters within a

secure environment who do become mothers at a young age (Crockett & Zamboanga, 2009;

Doğan-Ateş & Carrión-Basham, 2007).

 Familismo may also have contrary effects as efforts to maintain family unison along with

dependency needs of young motherhood may influence young Hispanic mothers to stay in an

emotionally or physically abusive household (Johnson, 2011).

 Very few studies examined the subjective experience of Hispanic teen motherhood from

their own lived experience. These few studies are summarized below. Sciarra and Ponterotto

(1998) interviewed 11 mother-daughter dyads of varied Hispanic heritage, with the average age

of the mother at time of birth being 14.5 years old. While relationships with male family

members (fathers and brothers) were sometimes strained, they reported less conflict between

mother and daughter for all participants (Sciarra & Ponterotto, 1998). Teen mother participants experienced increased dependency and supervision by their own mother, sometimes in protection against hostility from their own fathers (Sciarra & Ponterotto, 1998). Motherhood was motivational for the teen mothers trying to finish high school. They found that having a new baby in the family smoothed out sibling relationships overall; a finding that was both supported and negated in a recent study by East, Slonim, Horn and Reyes (2011). East et al. (2011) interviewed younger siblings of Hispanic teen mothers about how their sister's young motherhood affected them and their family dynamics. They reported negative family relationship effects of increased stress and conflict, along with positive family relationship effects of loving bonds with the new baby, and feeling closer to the teen mother.

Several studies described early mothering as a catalyst for reducing risky behaviors such as substance use and gang affiliation as teen mothers become empowered by their new motherhood identity, acting more responsibly for their child (Clemmens, 2003; Hunt, Joe-Laidler, & MacKenzie, 2005; SmithBattle, 2009). Some teen mothers demonstrate psychological and behavioral resilience shown in their tenacity towards school attendance, learned parenting skills, employment, and decreased delinquent behaviors (Hotz, McElroy, & Sanders, 2005; Hunt et al., 2005; SmithBattle, 2009; Trad, 1993).

Little is known about how Mexican American teen mothers perceive benefits or harm from *familismo* expectations and obligations regarding close family relationships after becoming a young mother, or how their relationships change once they become a young mother.

Missing from current literature are the voices of Mexican American teen mothers themselves, reflecting on and sharing their constructed meanings of lived experience during this transformational period in their lives.

The purpose of this research is to describe changing relationships for the teen mother study participants, including relationships with the teen mother's parents, siblings, father of their baby, and community. It is important to gain awareness of these young mothers' subjective experience of how their motherhood influences proximal familial and social relationships.

C.   Methods

1.   Approach

Interpretive, hermeneutic phenomenology is the underlying conceptual guide for this research. The tenets of phenomenology as an approach to research are to explore meaning structures of everyday, lived experience from the subject's point of view, and transformed by narrative sharing with the researcher into a textual expression of its essence (van Manen, 1997, p.36; Plager, 1994). Exploring Mexican American teen mothers' *lifeworlds* (everyday life; van Manen, 1997, p.2), using qualitative methods, orients us to find meanings in the normally taken for granted life experiences of the teen mother participants, through conscious reflection and interpretation.

2.   Sample and Setting

A total of 18 Mexican American teen mothers participated in this study. Young mothers were recruited initially from the pool of Latina teen mothers who had participated in a large, prospective study comparing effects of group and individual prenatal care on maternal-infant outcomes. Teen mothers did not receive any special social services as a result of participation in the large study. Young mothers lived in neighborhoods that were predominantly Hispanic, and Spanish was often the first language spoken at home. General zip code profile information reported from ten to 35 % of the families in the participants' home communities lived under the

poverty level, and were from nine to 65% Hispanic (City-data, 2013; Infoplease, 2014; Zipatlas, 2013).

Inclusion criteria were (a) having at least one parent who was born or raised in Mexico, (b) comfortable answering questions in English, (c) having up to two children under age four years, and (d) under 20 years old at time of delivery of her children.

Young mothers were interviewed in their own homes, except for one mother whose chose to be interviewed in a private room at the University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Nursing.

3. Procedures

Approval for this research was granted by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Illinois at Chicago. In-person interviews were conducted over seven months by the study PI, with the guidance of a semi-structured interview guide, created for this study. Each mother was interviewed once, in-person, for one to two hours, and audio recorded. Examples of questions included: (a) "How has having your baby at a young age changed your relationships with your family?" (b) "What does your partner think about you having a baby so young?"

Strategies used to enhance credibility in data collection and analysis were derived from Creswell (2009), and Lincoln and Guba, (1985), and include: (a) rich, in-depth description, (b) triangulation; convergent use of data sources of in-person interviews, close observations, follow-up clarification phone calls for 10 participants, field notes, and PI's reflective log, (c) audit trail: audio recorded interviews were transcribed and later checked against each other to ensure no mistakes were made during transcription, (d) peer debriefing throughout the research process. Regular meetings with the research team ensured inter-coder reliability, and that interpretations went beyond those of only the primary researcher, clarifying biases.

4. **Data Analysis**

Max van Manen (1997) was chosen as the phenomenological methodologist, for his existential approach to analysis which allows for deep, creative interpretations of lived experience. Through his recommendations for analytical uncovering of themes, van Manen allows for several options such as the wholistic, selective, or detailed line-by-line approaches (pp.92-93), thus allowing un-restricted access to the narrative text. All of these methods were used to reflect upon, and analyze the transcribed data. General qualitative data management approaches were incorporated with initial and *in vivo* coding (Saldaña, 2009) of transcribed interviews, supported by Atlas.ti (version 7.1.8) qualitative computer software, to categorize and organize quotations and themes. Names of teen mothers and others in this paper have been fictionalized to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

D. <u>**Results**</u>

Mexican American teen mothers in this study were from 15 to 19 years old at the time they delivered their babies. Most participant teen mothers had experienced family and peer group turbulence before their pregnancies, only half having graduated high school at time of interview. Motherhood was mostly unplanned, but not undesired. As these young mothers changed inwardly, struggling to experience wholeness as mothers, their outward, social, and familial relationships changed definitively. Their lifeworlds became marked as relationships *before* they had their babies, and relationships *after* their babies were born. Themes emerged from the narratives describing changes in proximal relationships with parents, siblings, fathers of their babies, peers, ethnic communities, and self; converging in both positive and negative aspects.

1. Changing Relationships with Parents and Siblings

a. I disappointed my parents and they disappointed me.

Even before pregnancy, these teen mothers experienced many family disruptions and stressors, such as parental mental health issues, conflicts, deportations of family members, economic strain, poverty, and discrimination. Many teen mothers were raised by single mothers, most of whom had also entered motherhood in this way. During and after the pregnancy, eight of the 18 young mothers (45%) experienced a worsening of their relationships with either their mother or father, or sometimes both. Worsening relationships included teen mothers' own mothers showering them with verbal abuse, threatening to "throw them out" of the household, along with their baby, and cutting off money for their own personal needs, such as clothing and shoes. One teen mother with four siblings, had a particularly abusive mother who pushed her during pregnancy, and said things like, "I wish I never had you." She had been a teen mother herself, who, according to the participant, felt the financial and emotional weight of responsibility of the new baby in the household. These negatively changed mothers expected their daughters to work and earn their own money, even if the teen mother had only recently given birth, or was still in high school.

Three of the teen mothers suffered complete severance of their parental relationships. These young mothers struggled to understand and accept the felt rejection and sense of disappointment leveled at them by their parents. Patricia had this to say:

> I don't really speak to my mom any more…ever since I had her (baby)…cuz
> it's like…I had to drop out of college…cuz I got pregnant with her. That's when,
> actually, both my parents stopped talking to me. . . Just most honestly, Mexican parents
> think that no one is good enough for their daughters…I think it was the fact that I didn't
> finish school. Honestly, they wanted me to go really badly. I honestly went for them…
> you're gonna have to do what they say or you get kicked out..

> They never met her (14 month old baby), my parents. She only has one set of grandparents, [father of baby's] as far as she knows…(bursting into tears). They only have one daughter left, which is my sister, and they don't let her talk to me, either. I don't have any immediate family as of now.

Patricia's sense of the rejection was that she had greatly disappointed her first generation immigrant parents' dream for her to complete her college education and have a career; a dream that she herself did not share nor prioritize over becoming a mother. Paloma also sensed she had disappointed her adopted mother, Alejandra. She told Paloma her young motherhood meant she was acting just like Paloma's own young mother who had died from heroin addiction. Paloma didn't like derogatory remarks about her biological mother, but emphasized, "I'm nothing like her, so I don't really like that." Paloma added:

> Every little thing, she tells me to leave… She just tried kicking me out yesterday. My daughter spilled milk on the bed sheets and she's like, "Why don't you get the fuck out already? " That's stupid. . . I just feel unwanted. I just wanna get my own spot already… You can't just get up and get an apartment in a day.

Relationships with other family members also changed, sometimes dramatically, both positively, and negatively. Several teen mothers had older siblings who told them they were "stupid" for getting pregnant, even if they had become parents in their teens themselves. Their siblings expressed disappointment that the teen mother didn't learn from their (siblings) hardships by becoming young mothers. Some toddler aged siblings were jealous of the new baby in the household, and responded with hitting the new baby, or having temper tantrums. Several teen mothers had felt motherly towards their youngest siblings, but the birth of their own babies shifted these emotions to make room for developing mothering feelings towards their own infant. Esperanza shared: "I've felt like I was his [3 year old brother] mother already….Now we don't have a really good connection cuz he's really jealous right now."

b. Making good.

Ten of the teen mothers did experience an improvement in their connections with their parents, and some related improved relations with their siblings.

Several teen mothers felt they had lived through parent's disappointments with their previous adolescent behaviors, and having their baby softened feelings towards acceptance. Some of the teen mothers did not initially inform their estranged fathers about their pregnancies until after their baby was born. Their own mothers were complicit with this approach, fearing an angry, disapproving response from the teen mother's own father. Several of the participants' fathers were living in Mexico or a different state in the U.S. since separating from the teen mother's own mother, so the deceit was easy to accomplish. Some of these young mothers felt that their fathers overcame their anger after the birth of the baby, and offered financial support to them. For instance, Rosalie was 17 years old and lived with both her parents. She had a tumultuous relationship with her father, and an emotionally distanced relationship with her mother before her pregnancy, feeling she let them down with her rebellious, adolescent behavior. Since having her baby, Rosalie felt improved relationships, ascending toward acceptance from both of her parents, especially her dad. Rosalie had this to say:

> When I became a teenager, I feel like I—I dunno. ..I always wanted to do my own things without permission. I got so many piercings. I got tattoos. My parents never approved of that. . . My piercings? My dad would take them out. My tattoos, he has never confronted me over my tattoos, because he can't take them off…Me and him were constantly arguing over things that didn't make sense. It was my fault…I guess, I had my teenage moment, where I thought I knew everything…I was so stupid. I was barely a teenager. I ruined my bond with my dad…you can't say no to my dad, contradict the man of the house, authority...When I got pregnant, he wouldn't talk to me at all…He didn't find out I was pregnant until I was five months…cuz he seen my stomach growing…I was scared to tell them [parents] since I was really, really young. I was 15. ..My mom told me he would cry himself to sleep. . . after she was born, we had a talk…now we're getting closer again.

These teen mothers felt that while their initial rebellious behaviors disappointed their parents, they were able to gain back approval and more intimate relationships with them by being responsible and caring mothers to their babies and leaving negative adolescent behaviors behind.

Several of the teen mothers experienced improved relationships with their siblings, receiving support, advice, and help taking care of the baby. Esperanza was emotionally upset about the upheaval having her own baby caused in her close relationship with her three year old brother, but was grateful for her 12 year old sister's unexpected alliance. Her voice broke with emotion as she explained:

> As for my little sister, she's there for me more. She's only 12 years old, but she helps me a lot. During the beginning of my pregnancy, when I was going through problems with my mother and my boyfriend, it made me think about having an abortion, cuz no one was gonna help me out. My little sister, at her age, she was telling me, "I'll take care of the baby. I'll help you while you go to work or go to school." Hearing that from a 12 year old, it warmed my heart, like, "Oh my god, I do have help." It brought us closer.

2.   "Ni amigas, ni amigos," I have neither girlfriends nor boyfriends

Motherhood for these participants precipitated altered perceptions of their previous peers and friends. All of the teen mothers experienced changes in their approaches to friendship, and many of them suffered loneliness and feelings of complete loss of true, meaningful friendship once their baby was born. Young mothers whose pre-motherhood days were spent in the company of "gangbangers" (gang members) and "partyers," all expressed determination to separate themselves from those "negative" influences once they became pregnant. As Camila put it, "Hey, you need to grow up…There's more important things in life than whatever you guys are doing." Even though many of the teen mothers began to disapprove of their friends' continuation with substance use and delinquency, many mothers felt abandoned by friends who stopped

communicating with them after their babies were born. Many mothers lost trust in their friends, and some mothers felt their friends couldn't accept their pregnancies and motherhood. Zyanya expressed this lack of trust that was echoed by several other mothers; "I don't have any type of friends. I think its best because I don't trust nobody, honestly, I don't." Some mothers still hoped to maintain some level of friendship ties with some of their previous friends, since there were no immediate, better friendships to replace them. This was especially hard for the mothers whose babies were very young, and who felt their friends had "dumped" them once their baby was born. Catalina was 16 years old when her son, Gabriel, was born. Now one year since becoming a mother, Catalina continued to feel the sting of lost friendships:

> Ever since I got pregnant, I drifted apart from my friends. I stopped partying. ..They still wanna drink and do all that stuff. It's like, "You're pregnant, you can't do that with us… okay, well, bye." …When I was pregnant, some of my friends would come over. Afterwards, when I had the baby, they wouldn't. They just stopped coming over…You realize who your real friends are. If you were my friend when we're over here partying, then you should be my friend right now. If you're not, then that shows me you were just using me to just party with me, or using me for my money, to buy you liquor, or whatever. Now that I need you—I'm not saying I need you to buy my baby diapers or to take care of him. I just need you to be my friend…As a mom, you get stressed out. Sometimes you just need to go out for, I dunno, some fucking coffee—or just to relax your mind, talking with your friends. If you're not there for me when I need you, then I don't really need you at all.

Disappointment in friendships thrust both ways. Many mothers felt their friends disappointed them by lack of support, outright rejection, or quiet disappearance. They also sensed their friends' disappointment in them since they could no longer be the party-friend they were before their babies were born. Several mothers expressed frustration that they had to give up their "party life," and therefore adolescent identity, but their desire to be capable mothers committed them to leaving previous excessive engagement with peers, even if it meant suffering loneliness.

3. **Evolving space for father of the baby**

   a. Dilemmas and uncertainty

These teen mother participants had a complex range of involvement with the fathers of their babies. Thirteen of the 18 teen mothers had some continued romantic relationship with the fathers of their babies. Only three mothers had no further relationship whatsoever with their baby's father. Two other mothers received only some financial support for the baby, with the father visiting their baby, but no longer romantically involved. Both of these fathers were gangbangers (gang members). One of the young fathers had been in jail during the course of teen mother's pregnancy, but was "very supportive" when re-united with her. Another young father also had a history of jail time, and his own father was serving time in jail at time of interview. Two young fathers were attending high school, while others had either graduated or dropped out, some having attained the General Educational Development (GED) credential. None of the fathers attended college.

Ten of the young fathers lived with the teen mother and other family members, either in her family home, or with his family. Most of the young fathers paid rent if they lived in the teen mother's household, and one young father had another male roommate to share his room in the small apartment to help him pay the rent. Three couples were married, but still lived with their families, due to financial need, help with the care-taking of the baby, and sense of *familismo*, (the couple's rent helped the parents). Only one (unmarried) teen mother lived on her own with the baby and young father.

 Living together with the baby's father, did not always signify feelings of security for a shared future in the relationship for several teen mothers. Overall, the mothers did not talk about plans to marry their baby's father. Two mothers weren't sure if they wanted to marry the father,

even though he had asked them to. Many of the fathers of the babies had also matured with parenthood (according to the teen mothers). However, some of the teen mothers felt they were disappointing the father by not continuing to party and go out with peers since becoming mothers. Some teen mothers feared that differences in their stages of maturation were negatively affecting their relationships. Several of the mothers became emotionally distressed when describing their uncertain relationships with their baby's father. For example, Luz felt sure of the paternity of her son, Benedicto, but his young father withdrew from the relationship, wanting proof of his paternity before emotionally committing to embracing his role as father, and trying to re-establish the romantic bond with Luz. Luz explained:

> Well, he's not sure it's his…he wants to make sure it's his…I'm sure…yeah, cuz at first I thought it was some other guy's. We did the DNA. It was $270.00. ..yeah, but it wasn't his [other boyfriend]. That's why I told him. Now I'm for sure it's his. Now he doesn't believe me. Cuz when I was pregnant he had told me he doesn't care if it's his or not. He's gonna take care of him…He just says that he just doesn't want the kid to grow up like we did. I grew up without my father. He grew up without his mother. He doesn't want that for the kid. It if ends up being his, he wants to get together.

Wanting their babies to be protected from the emotional pain of being raised by a single parent like they were, several young fathers, according to the teen mothers, wanted to make the relationship "work out" so the baby would be raised with both parents. However, many of the teen mothers in this study expressed fears, conflicts, and determination to achieve personal independence, in case he should leave them in the future.

For example, Catalina's boyfriend, Xavier, was in jail during her pregnancy. When released at first, he acted "selfish," and was prone to excessive alcohol consumption. After their son, Gabriel, was born, he started staying home more, and "does less crazy things like he did before…now he's more mature and responsible." Xavier became very supportive to Catalina and Gabriel, and lived with them, Catalina's three brothers and parents. According to Catalina,

Xavier wanted to marry her. However, 17 year old Catalina still did not feel secure and

comforted with these positive overtures from Xavier:

> I don't always want to be depending on my parents or my boyfriend. I wanna be able to give my baby what he wants. I don't know if I'm gonna be with my boyfriend forever, that's what I worry about. He might get tired of the relationship and leave, then what would I do? …Mexican families are close and depend on each other, like the girls do the cooking and the guy works. But times are different now, back then people were married forever, now relationships are for a short time…I wouldn't leave the relationship. I want to be together for my little family. But a lot of guys abandon their families like nothing.

In contrast, other teen mothers did feel confident that the father of their baby was

dependable, and described how they [fathers] worked hard at their jobs in order to buy things for

the baby, even working two jobs after the baby was born, to earn additional wages. These young

mothers had many hopes and expectations for future involvement with the fathers of their babies.

For instance, they expressed expectations that their babies' father would be the one to have talks

about sex with their child, pay for music lessons, and teach their sons mechanical and athletic

skills.

b. Continuing for the baby

Fathers of the babies for two teen mothers were active gang members. While both

mothers broke off their romantic relationships with them, they still wanted to maintain a friendly

relationship so that the father could have some involvement with their baby, and contribute

financially. Their desire for this father/baby relationship was so strong; it seemed paradoxical

when viewed in relation of the teen mothers' determination to "leave negative people behind,"

and safety concerns for their babies. Paloma's ex-boyfriend, Armando, was the father of their

two year old daughter, Chelsea. He worked in a factory, and was a gangbanger, according to

Paloma. Paloma had lived with him and Chelsea, during her first year of life. Paloma's

relationship with Armando was conflicted and complex, and had descended into intimate partner

violence after Chelsea was born. When asked about her break up with Armando, Paloma had this

to say:

> Well, we're not together but he sees her every day of the week. He's really involved. He helps me financially, buys her things she needs, spends a lot of time with her. He's a really good dad…
>
> She [Chelsea] was almost a year already…Yeah, we would actually get into a lot of altercations, like physically. I didn't want my daughter to see that so I decided to leave. While I was pregnant I didn't have that problem because I wasn't hardly ever seeing him…Then, once my daughter came, he was more like everything was a little bit more back to normal. After that is when the physical abuse started and stuff like that…

Rosalie was 17 years old at time of interview. She broke up with her boyfriend, Diego,

because she felt he was a bad influence on her, encouraging her to leave high school as he had

done, and because of his gang involvement. Diego assured her that he had left the gang, but

Rosalie and her father would see him hanging around on the corner with gang members; which

included his uncles and cousins. Rosalie's father was opposed to Diego seeing his 14 month old

daughter, Claudia, for safety's sake, telling Rosalie, "He's a gangbanger, he can't raise her."

Even though she worried about Claudia's well-being with Diego, Rosalie still wanted to preserve

their father/child bond, and allowed him to be with Claudia during the day when she [Rosalie]

was in school. Rosalie had this to add:

> He [Diego] thinks it's hard, cuz the fact that my dad doesn't really let him come see her. him come see her. That's what he's really mad about. He wants to see his daughter. He wants to be able to raise her. He gets so frustrated with himself, like he didn't get to see her walk or say her first word. ..He wants to see his daughter grow up….
>
> Yeah, it's kinda hard living here. People around here don't care. They don't care about people….Gangs, the gangs' conflicts…Like my dad says, "you can't trust him walking with the baby." Cuz they wouldn't care if he's walking with the baby. They wouldn't care. They've done it before [killed someone].

4.   **Being a young mom in public**

An important contributor to the lifeworld, or everyday life, of the teen mothers in this

study, was the neighborhood environments they lived in. The young mothers in this study lived

in neighborhoods spread over six different communities in the state. Neighborhoods were

heavily proportioned Hispanic, and in some neighborhoods, Spanish was the predominant first

language spoken in the household (Zipatlas, 2014). These communities were low-income, and

one community in particular, was one of poorest zip codes in the USA, with about 21% of the

families earning less than $10,000 per year (Demographic Data, 2014). While there were many

benefits (ethnic cuisine and Spanish language prevalence) from the relative ethnic homogeneity

of the Hispanic communities, some teen mothers were struck by feelings of being judged and

disapproved of not only by their own families, but also by neighbors and complete strangers in

the community, who cast their disparaging glance as if they were extended family disappointed

by the young mother's failure to wait for older, married, motherhood.

Yolanda felt stigmatized as a young mother by the unkind "looks" she received from

strangers when in public with her baby. She felt it was also a gendered bias, and her 17 year old

boyfriend Román, agreed:

> He [Román] feels bad, because he knows that the woman's the one that's mostly
> judged. Yeah…people look at it as the mother's the one who's gonna have to struggle.
> When people see me, all they think is, "Oh, poor girl, she has a baby. It's too much
> struggle for her. I wonder if she's not going to school anymore? " When they see him
> it's like, "Oh, congratulations, you're having a baby, you're gonna work hard now.

Esperanza felt so judged when she was out in her community, she took refuge in
wearing a traditional Mexican amulet. She explained:

> I feel there's a lotta disadvantages of being a young mom. I get looked down on by the
> the mothers around here that are older than me. Grandmothers that I see walking, they just
> look at me in disgust when I walk with my baby cuz I'm a young mom…It bothers me.
> It's gotten to the point where I had bought this red thing, this bracelet. It's supposed to

protect me from people who are looking at me the wrong way. I have to buy that for my son so we won't get sick from that. That's what we believe in.

Guadalupe's lifeworld included working at a restaurant with American co-workers, expanding her feelings of being judged to include the broader "American" community:

I feel like in America, Americans don't expect a Mexican person to be successful, to graduate high school, to go to a university, to get married like when you're okay financially and all that stuff, when you have everything going for yourself. I feel like people saw me, "Hey, she's the typical Mexican teenager. Hey, she got pregnant. Her parents don't care. Where her parents at?" I felt very typical. Her [baby's] dad wasn't even there in the pregnancy, so it just made it more typical. Hey, she got pregnant by a deadbeat. She's a little Mexican girl that didn't even graduate high school.

5.   Situated with gangbangers

Almost all of the teen mothers worried about gangs in their neighborhoods since they became mothers, and described all Hispanic neighborhoods as gang-ridden. The young mothers worried about their babies' safety, and the vulnerability of their sons, in particular, being forced into a gang in the future. Esperanza explained it this way:

Being a young mom, I feel like I'm not gonna raise my son right. I feel like there's gonna be a lotta things I miss out on. I won't have have as much power on him because I'm young. This neighborhood's full of gangs. Every Hispanic neighborhood's full of gangs. I feel like being a young mom, when he's 18 I'm not going to be that far old. I'm still gonna be young. I feel like he's just gonna not have as much respect for me, like, "Oh mom, you're young. Why aren't you understanding of me being in the gang?" Like---no.

Several of the young mothers felt that living fearfully in a gang environment strengthened their impetus to go back to school and get a good job so they could move away from the gang neighborhood with their babies. As Rosalie put it, "I would never want to raise my daughter in this neighborhood. I need to go to school and get a career and get outta here, get my parents outta here."

6. "It took a kid to change my life"

The teen mothers in this study experienced transformational-selves under the influence of becoming mothers. All but three mothers had described themselves as serious "partyers" prior to their pregnancies. They hung around with peers, some gang-related, who reinforced and accelerated their self-destructive behaviors such as drug and alcohol use, ditching high school, and criminal behaviors. Three of the teen mothers served time in jail for drug use, vandalism, and violence, and were subsequently expelled from their high schools. Another four mothers chose to drop out of high school, getting their own mothers to sign the legal papers at age 16. Ten (56%) teen mothers did graduate high school or get their GED, and four were attending high school (or seeking GED) at time of interview, one of whom had been expelled twice before. Most of these mothers tearfully expressed gratitude toward their babies for "saving" them from continuing down their self-destructive paths, giving their pregnancies credit for infusing motivation to complete high school, or get their GED, stop partying, and distance themselves from peers who were negative influences. Many mothers described their high school environment itself as an aggressive, violent, overwhelmingly invalidating milieu. Motherhood became their reason to live, their legitimate grounds for extricating themselves from former bad influences, in order to embrace their motherhood identity with a more positive, healthy, self.

In high school, Paloma found herself in a compromised predicament she felt was dangerous, as she tried to defend her friend who got assaulted. After becoming a mother at 17, Paloma's changing self-identity compelled her to seek forgetfulness about that turbulent time in her life, and protect her daughter from knowing about her past self:

> Okay, freshman year I ended up getting kicked out of school because…one of my friends had got into a fight. Some guy hit him with a brick and split his head open. They told me

who the guy was so I confronted him and told him, "Hey, why did you do that?" Because my friend didn't gangbang. He thought he was a gangbanger, but he ended up hitting the wrong guy. I told him, "…Hey, he didn't even gangbang. You're bogus for that." …He threatened me and said, he was swearing, he was like, "Leave me alone before I stick my *thing* in you." I got mad and I ended up stabbing him, 'cause he was with three other guys. That was a threat to me. I got kicked out of school because of that [Paloma also went to jail].

I was probably 15, 16, when that was going on. About a year after that I got pregnant. I decided to leave all that stuff alone…all that stuff I told you about my high school and stuff, my kids are not gonna know that. I'm gonna lie to them... I don't want them to really know bad. I don't want to damage them…I want them to just see me as a role model.

Like Paloma and several other teen moms, Guadalupe felt if it were not for having her

baby at age 16, she might never have found motivation to stop using drugs and alcohol, and stop

following a destructive, adolescent peer-pack which eventually got her jailed by the time she

was15:

I mean, I hate to say it, but I was very—I was a rebel. After my dad left my mom, I didn't want to go to school. I smoked a lotta weed…I started smoking weed when I was 11. Started drinking alcohol. I didn't go to school. This was all throughout when I was 12, 13, 14…When I was 15 I went to rehab, I went to jail. I feel like I lost a big part of my childhood…I don't want my daughter's childhood to be taken from her the way mine was. I want her to do sports and go to school and finish her high school years…I don't want her to be like I was. I'm gonna do everything I can for, even if she doesn't have a dad, for her not to end up like me…

The life I lived prior to me being pregnant, I was very irresponsible…Now after having having her, I feel like I just did a whole 180. I'm goin' to school full time…I'm trying to be that responsible adult… Even though it took a kid for me to change my life, but hey, that's what had to happen…even though it's so hard for me to have her, I feel like if I wouldn'ta had her I don't know where I would be. I feel like I would be very lost, very still in my old rebel ways.

Many teen mothers felt their motherhood matured them quickly and deeply. While they

experienced disappointments in other relationships, and felt they were the source of

disappointment for parents, siblings, boyfriends, peers, and ethnic communities, their new

identity as a mother meant their relationship with their baby was the primary relationship in their

lifeworld. Above all, they did not want to disappoint their babies. They wanted to be the best mother they could possibly be. Rosalie spoke for many of the teen mothers when she shared: "I always say, before I die, I just want my daughter to tell me that she's proud of me."

E. <u>**Discussion**</u>

Mexican American teen mothers' narratives revealed both personal resilience and significant vulnerabilities, exemplified as changes in their important relationships with parents, siblings, fathers of their babies, peers, ethnic communities, and their own self-identity. Relationship changes were perceived as both for the better and for the worse. Changes in relation to others that were experienced as receiving emotional and financial support for herself and her baby, feeling loved and welcomed in her situated place of residence, feeling free from negative, moral judgments and disapproval, and feeling forgiven for past adolescent transgressions and conflicts, were expressed as "better." In contrast, changes in relation to others experienced as having disappointed significant others, receiving verbal or physical abuse and emotional and financial distancing were expressed as "worse," and precipitated their own feelings of disappointment in return.

Hispanic families are known to support and exhibit *familismo,* valuing loyalty and closeness among family members, and placing needs of the family before the individual (Crockett & Zamboanga, 2009). Hispanic families of parenting teens have been especially shown to be integral in supporting teen mothers within the family, developing closer and more stable relationships after the birth of an adolescent daughter's baby (Contreras, Mangelsdorf, Rhodes, Diener, & Brunson, 1999; East et al., 2011; Russell & Lee, 2006; Trejos-Castillo & Frederick, 2011). However, about half of the teen mothers in this study experienced this coming together of family resources and emotional support for themselves and their babies, but about

half did not. As previously mentioned, almost half of the teen mothers felt their relationships with parents had worsened after the birth of their baby, beginning even during their pregnancy. While the teen mothers understood they had disappointed their parents' expectations of them, they felt shocked at their relationships becoming more conflicted, "well, after I had the baby, it went back down to me and her always arguing." Worsened relationships with parents created emotional vulnerability and the desire to get out of their family home as soon as possible, a move that would risk plunging her and her baby deeper into poverty (Ng & Kaye, 2012).

Teen mothers in this study shared fears about their young age and lack of family support contributing to potential powerlessness for preventing their own daughters becoming teen mothers, and their sons joining gangs in the future. These fears are not unwarranted, as at least half of these teen mothers interviewed had mothers who also had their first baby during adolescence. Daughters of teen mothers in general are 22% more likely to become teen mothers themselves and their sons 13% more likely to end up in prison in their future (Schuyler Center, 2008).

Relationships with the fathers of their babies were the most volatile and unsettled of all relationships experienced by teen mothers. All of the teen mothers except for the three married participants shared a sense of uncertainty regarding current and future involvement with their baby's father. This uncertainty is validated by a recent national study concerning Hispanic teen mothers. The study reported that 60% of the teen mothers received no child support from their baby's father, and those who did, received only about $2000 a year, on average (Ng, & Kaye, 2012).

Peer friendship loss and rejection was a negative relationship change experienced by most of the teen mothers, which precipitated a cascade of introspection that evolved into a

changing sense of self for the teen mother. Adolescent peer friendships are known to play an important role in psychological and social development, and for resilience concerning socially at-risk, vulnerable youth (Compas & Reeslund, 2009; Kuperminc, Wilkins, Roche, & Alvarez-Jiménez, 2009). Losing this important cornerstone of adolescent socialization with the advent of motherhood, these teen mothers felt pushed even farther into adulthood, since they no longer felt they could participate in previously shared adolescent behaviors. Hanging out with friends, attending parties and consuming alcohol and drugs, no longer fit into their changing identities as mothers.

These mothers felt they had transformed themselves and their identities since becoming mothers, quickly evolving from shared self-destructive, adolescent peer traits, into becoming what in their own view was an honorable mother, worthy of her baby. Motherhood for these Mexican American teens included feelings of gratefulness to their babies, whose births inspired and motivated them to "be a better person." Marta stated what was repeated several times by other teen mothers, "If it wasn't for her [baby], I never would have graduated high school, and I never would have even t*hought* to go to college."

F.   **Strengths and Limitations**

The present research contributes to knowledge concerning low-income Mexican American teen mothers' changing selves and relationships influenced by young motherhood. Limitations of this research include the relative homogeneity of the purposive group of Mexican American teen mothers who were able to answer questions in English, had at least one parent born or raised in Mexico, and came from low-income, largely Hispanic neighborhoods. Therefore, research results may not be representative of Mexican American teen mothers living in higher income, or more culturally diversified neighborhoods.

While this study, along with other qualitative research, is not considered generalizable, meanings derived from good phenomenological studies should be transferable to other, similar populations, and resonate with a shared feeling of elucidation (van Manen, 1997).

Future research concerning Mexican American teen mothers should include heterogeneous immigrant generations, such as first and third generation Mexican heritage mothers, along with second generation mothers, to explore their sense of acculturation and its influence on mothering and family relationships. Important proximal relationships such as the young mother's own parents, boyfriend/husband, siblings, and peers should be included for a fuller understanding of how these relationships change with the advent of early motherhood. Longitudinal studies are needed to understand how Mexican American teen mothers fare over time, and how healthcare and social services providers can help support young mothers' strengths and personal resources for a better quality of life for themselves and their children.

G. __Implications__

Both anecdotally and as reported in literature, Hispanic families are known for their sense of *familismo*. However, in this study nearly half the Mexican American teen mothers did not have positive family support. Health professionals may assume that Hispanic teen mothers have more family and social support than may be actually true. Understanding that becoming a mother for these young girls does not guarantee emotional or financial support from parents, fathers of the babies, ethnic communities, or other important relationships, should guide our interactions in the clinical and health policy-making milieu. It is important to ask the young mother who comprises her emotionally sustaining relationships. As care providers, we can further help meet her individual needs by considering gaps in her *familismo* social support system.

Teen motherhood as a positive, transformational experience, results in young mothers acquiring a maturity level that exceeds their chronological age. Interactions in clinical settings should be used to foster this emergence toward autonomous adulthood by involving young mothers in decision-making processes regarding care for herself and her baby.

Loss of significant peer relationships means young mothers may become susceptible to loneliness and depression. These issues should be explored directly with young mothers. Appropriate resources can be recommended, such as therapeutic counselling, and young mothers' support groups in their community, where new, validating friendships can be formed.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

University of Illinois at Chicago Institutional Review Board Determination of Approval for Human Subjects Research

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT CHICAGO

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS)
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (MC 672)
203 Administrative Office Building
1737 West Polk Street
Chicago, Illinois 60612-7227

Approval Notice
Initial Review (Response To Modifications)

August 1, 2013

Phyllis Sommer
Women, Child, & Family Health Science
845 S Damen Ave
Women, Children, and Family Sciences, M/C 802
Chicago, IL 60612
Phone: (312) 996-7940 / Fax: (312) 996-8871

RE: **Protocol # 2013-0460**
        "Balancing Bicultural Heritage: Mexican American Teen Mothers Lived Experience"

Dear Ms. Sommer:

Your Initial Review application (Response To Modifications) was reviewed and approved by the Expedited review process on July 25, 2013. You may now begin your research.

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period: July 25, 2013 - July 25, 2014
Approved Subject Enrollment #:   40
Additional Determinations for Research Involving Minors: The Board determined that this research satisfies 45CFR46.404, research not involving greater than minimal risk.
Performance Site: UIC
Sponsor: None
Research Protocol:
   a) Balancing Bicultural Heritage: Mexican American Teen Mothers Lived Experience;
      Version 2; 06/22/2013
Recruitment Materials:

a) Schedule Interview Electronically; Version 1; 04/24/2013
b) Recruitment Text; Version 1; 04/24/2013
c) Study Mailing Flyer; Version 1; 04/24/2013
d) Recruitment Email; Version 2; 06/03/2013
e) Recruitment Telephone Script PI Stage 2; Version 2; 06/04/2013
f) Follow-up Telephone Script; Version 1; 06/20/2013
g) Voicemail Recruitment Script; Version 1; 06/26/2013

Informed Consent:
a) Consent/Assent Form; Version 2; 07/12/2013
b) A waiver of consent/assent has been granted for recruitment purposes only under 45 CFR 46.116(d) (minimal risk; subjects will be recruited from Protocol 2009-0065; all Mexican American subjects of Protocol 2009-0065 will be eligible to enroll in this study; additional recruitment procedures and documents have been approved under 2009-0065)

Parental Permission:
a) A waiver of parental permission has been granted for minor subjects for whom parental permission would not provide appropriate protections; subjects will have access to an advocate in loco parentis under 45 CFR 46.408(c) (minimal risk; all Mexican American subjects in Protocol 2009-0065, for which a similar waiver was granted, will be eligible for enrollment in this study)

Your research meets the criteria for expedited review as defined in 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) under the following specific categories:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes., (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including but not limited to research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Please note the Review History of this submission:

Receipt Date	Submission Type	Review Process	Review Date	Review Action
05/01/2013	Initial Review	Expedited	05/02/2013	Modifications Required
07/17/2013	Response To Modifications	Expedited	07/25/2013	Approved

Please remember to:

→ Use your **research protocol number** (2013-0460) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

→ Review and comply with all requirements on the enclosure,

"UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects"
(http://tigger.uic.edu/depts/ovcr/research/protocolreview/irb/policies/0924.pdf)

Please note that the UIC IRB has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Please be aware that if the scope of work in the grant/project changes, the protocol must be amended and approved by the UIC IRB before the initiation of the change.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please contact OPRS at (312) 996-1711 or me at (312) 996-2014. Please send any correspondence about this protocol to OPRS at 203 AOB, M/C 672.

<div align="center">Sincerely,</div>

<div align="center">Sandra Costello
Assistant Director, IRB # 2
Office for the Protection of Research</div>

Subjects

Enclosures:
  1. UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects
  2.   Informed Consent Document:
    a) Consent/Assent Form; Version 2; 07/12/2013
  3.   Recruiting Materials:
    a) Schedule Interview Electronically; Version 1; 04/24/2013
    b) Recruitment Text; Version 1; 04/24/2013
    c) Study Mailing Flyer; Version 1; 04/24/2013
    d) Recruitment Email; Version 2; 06/03/2013
    e) Recruitment Telephone Script PI Stage 2; Version 2; 06/04/2013
    f) Follow-up Telephone Script; Version 1; 06/20/2013
    g) Voicemail Recruitment Script; Version 1; 06/26/2013

cc: Barbara McFarlin, Women, Child, & Family Health Science, M/C 802
       Kathleen F. Norr (faculty advisor), Women, Child, & Family Health Science, M/C 802

Approval for Amendment #1 to Research Protocol and/or Consent Document-Expedited Review

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT CHICAGO

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS)
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (MC 672)
203 Administrative Office Building
1737 West Polk Street
Chicago, Illinois 60612-7227

Approval Notice
Amendment to Research Protocol and Consent Documents – Expedited Review
UIC Amendment # 1

September 10, 2013

Phyllis Sommer
Women, Child, & Family Health Science
845 S Damen Ave
Women, Children, and Family Sciences, M/C 802
Chicago, IL 60612
Phone: (312) 996-7940 / Fax: (312) 996-8871

RE: **Protocol # 2013-0460**
     "Balancing Bicultural Heritage: Mexican American Teen Mothers Lived Experience"

Dear Ms. Sommer:

Members of Institutional Review Board (IRB) #2 have reviewed this amendment to your research and consent forms under expedited procedures for minor changes to previously approved research allowed by Federal regulations [45 CFR 46.110(b)(2)]. The amendment to your research was determined to be acceptable and may now be implemented.

Please note the following information about your approved amendment:

> **Please note that investigator training for Susan Vonderheid will expire on 15 September 2013 and she will no longer be eligible to engage in research at UIC after that date unless or until her training is updated.**

Amendment Approval Date: September 5, 2013

Amendment:

Summary: UIC Amendment #1, dated 15 August 2013 and 22 August 2013, is an investigator-initiated amendment regarding the following:

(1) expansion of subject pool and revision of inclusion/exclusion criteria to change limits on subject's child's ages from "up to 1 year" to "up to 4 years," including all Latina mothers regardless of their

post-partum interview status, and removing any limits on subject's age; adding a phone call inviting all Latina mothers who agreed to be contacted to participate in this research and encouraging them to ask anyone else who may be eligible to contact the investigator (Initial Review application, v3, 8/15/2013; Protocol, v3, 8/15/2013); and

(2) submission of recruitment/consent documents reflecting the above (Mailing Flyer, v3, 8/15/2013; Recruitment Email, v3, 8/15/2013; Recruitment Telephone Script, v1, 8/15/2013; Consent/Assent Form, v3, 8/15/2013).

Approved Subject Enrollment #:   40

Performance Site: UIC

Sponsor: None

Research Protocol:
   a) Balancing Bicultural Heritage: Mexican American Teen Mothers Lived Experience; Version 3; 08/15/2013
Recruiting Materials:
   a) Study Mailing Flyer; Version 3; 08/15/2013
   b) Recruitment Email; Version 3; 08/15/2013
   c) Recruitment Telephone Script PI; Version 1; 08/15/2013
Informed Consent:
   a) Consent/Assent Form; Version 3; 08/15/2013

Please note the Review History of this submission:

Receipt Date	Submission Type	Review Process	Review Date	Review Action
08/22/2013	Amendment	Expedited	09/05/2013	Approved

Please be sure to:

→ **Use only the IRB-approved and stamped consent documents when enrolling subjects.**

→ Use your research protocol number (2013-0460) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

→ Review and comply with all requirements on the OPRS website under:
   "**UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects**"
      (*http://tigger.uic.edu/depts/ovcr/research/protocolreview/irb/policies/0924.pdf*)

Please note that the UIC IRB #2 has the right to ask further questions, seek additional information, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Please be aware that if the scope of work in the grant/project changes, the protocol must be amended and approved by the UIC IRB before the initiation of the change.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the OPRS at (312) 996-1711 or me at (312) 996-2014. Please send any correspondence about this protocol to OPRS at 203 AOB, M/C 672.

Sincerely,

Sandra Costello
Assistant Director, IRB # 2
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

Enclosures:

1. **Informed Consent Document:**
   a) Consent/Assent Form; Version 3; 08/15/2013
2. **Recruiting Materials:**
   a) Study Mailing Flyer; Version 3; 08/15/2013
   b) Recruitment Email; Version 3; 08/15/2013
   c) Recruitment Telephone Script PI; Version 1; 08/15/2013

cc: Kathleen F. Norr (faculty advisor), Women, Child, & family Health Science, M/C 802
        Barbara McFarlin, Women, Child, & Family Health Science, M/C 802

Approval for Amendment #2 to Research Protocol and/or Consent Document-Expedited Review

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT CHICAGO

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS)
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (MC 672)
203 Administrative Office Building
1737 West Polk Street
Chicago, Illinois 60612-7227

Approval Notice
Amendment to Research Protocol and/or Consent Document – Expedited Review
UIC Amendment # 2

March 3, 2014

Phyllis Sommer, MS, BSN, CNM
Women, Children, and Family Sciences
845 S Damen Ave, M/C 802
Chicago, IL 60612
Phone: (312) 996-7940 / Fax: (312) 996-8871

RE: **Protocol # 2013-0460**
"Balancing Bicultural Heritage: Mexican American Teen Mothers Lived Experience"

Dear Ms. Sommer:

Please note that the research training **expired** on **01/24/2014** for *Nicole Gonzalez* and on **02/20/2014** for *Candice Torres,* in addition the research training *will* **expire** on **04/20/2014** for *Michele Kelley*. All three of these individuals must respectively complete a minimum of two hours of continuing education in order to participate in the conduct of the research. You may refer them to the OPRS website, where continuing education offerings are available:

http://tigger.uic.edu/depts/ovcr/research/protocolreview/irb/education/2-2-2/ce_requirements.shtml

Members of Institutional Review Board (IRB) #2 have reviewed this amendment to your research and/or consent form under expedited procedures for minor changes to previously approved research allowed by Federal regulations [45 CFR 46.110(b)(2)]. The amendment to your research was determined to be acceptable and may now be implemented.

Please note the following information about your approved amendment:

Amendment Approval Date: February 27, 2014

Amendment:

Summary: UIC Amendment #2, dated 10 February 2014 and submitted to OPRS 20 February 2014, is an investigator-initiated amendment regarding the following:

(1) revising inclusion/exclusion criteria to include young Latina mothers with up to two children under the age of 4 (instead of 1 child under the age of 4); subjects were recruited from a previous study and it only became evident after data collection had started that subjects had more than one child under the age of 4; no recruitment of new subjects will be done (Initial Review application, v4, 2/10/2014).

Research Protocol(s):

      a)   Balancing Bicultural Heritage: Mexican American Teen Mothers Lived Experience; Version 4; 02/10/2014

Please note the Review History of this submission:

Receipt Date	Submission Type	Review Process	Review Date	Review Action
02/20/2014	Amendment	Expedited	02/27/2014	Approved

Please be sure to:

→ **Use only the IRB-approved and stamped consent document(s) and/or HIPAA Authorization form(s) enclosed with this letter when enrolling subjects.**

→ Use your research protocol number (2013-0460) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

→ Review and comply with all requirements on the enclosure,
    "UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects"
      (http://tigger.uic.edu/depts/ovcr/research/protocolreview/irb/policies/0924.pdf)

Please note that the UIC IRB #2 has the right to ask further questions, seek additional information, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Please be aware that if the scope of work in the grant/project changes, the protocol must be amended and approved by the UIC IRB before the initiation of the change.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the OPRS at (312) 996-1711 or me at (312) 355-2939. Please send any correspondence about this protocol to OPRS at 203 AOB, M/C 672.

                Sincerely,

                Jewell Hamilton, MSW
                IRB Coordinator, IRB # 2
                Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

Enclosure(s):   None

cc: Kathleen F. Norr, Women, Child, & Family Health Science, M/C 802
        Barbara McFarlin, Women, Child, & Family Health Science, M/C 802

Approval Notice for Continuing Review

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT CHICAGO

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS)
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (MC 672)
203 Administrative Office Building
1737 West Polk Street
Chicago, Illinois 60612-7227

Approval Notice
Continuing Review

May 19, 2014

Phyllis Sommer
Women, Child, & Family Health Science
845 S Damen Ave
Women, Children, and Family Sciences, M/C 802
Chicago, IL 60612
Phone: (312) 996-7940 / Fax: (312) 996-8871

RE: **Protocol # 2013-0460**
        **"Balancing Bicultural Heritage: Mexican American Teen Mothers Lived
Experience"**

Dear Ms. Sommer:

Your Continuing Review was reviewed and approved by the Expedited review process on May
19, 2014. You may now continue your research.

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period:	May 19, 2014 - May 19, 2015
Approved Subject Enrollment #:	40 (limited to data analysis of 19 enrolled subjects)
Additional Determinations for Research Involving Minors:	The Board determined that this research satisfies 45CFR46.404 research not involving greater than minimal risk.
Performance Site:	UIC
Sponsor:	None

Research Protocol:

b) Balancing Bicultural Heritage: Mexican American Teen Mothers Lived Experience;
   Version 4; 02/10/2014

Recruitment Material:

h) N/A – Limited to data analysis only

Informed Consent(s):

    c) N/A – Limited to data analysis only

Your research meets the criteria for expedited review as defined in 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) under the following specific categories:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes., **(7)** Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including but not limited to research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Please note the Review History of this submission:

Receipt Date	Submission Type	Review Process	Review Date	Review Action
05/12/2014	Continuing Review	Expedited	05/19/2014	Approved

Please remember to:

→ Use your **research protocol number** (2013-0460) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

→ Review and comply with all requirements on the OPRS website under:
    "**UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects**"
      (http://tigger.uic.edu/depts/ovcr/research/protocolreview/irb/policies/0924.pdf)

Please note that the UIC IRB has the right to seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Please be aware that if the scope of work in the grant/project changes, the protocol must be amended and approved by the UIC IRB before the initiation of the change.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please contact OPRS at (312) 996-1711 or email me at gberna7@uic.edu. Please send any correspondence about this protocol to OPRS at 203 AOB, M/C 672.

                Sincerely,
                Anna Bernadska, M.A.
                IRB Coordinator, IRB # 2
                Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

      Enclosure: None
cc: Barbara McFarlin, Women, Child, & Family Health Science, M/C 802
        Kathleen F. Norr, Faculty Sponsor, Women, Child, & Family Health Science, M/C 802

APPENDIX B

Telephone Recruitment Script for Key Research Personnel and PI

Teen Mothers Study
Telephone Recruitment Script

 Study PI or Key Research Personnel: I would like to ask if you are interested in participating in a study about new motherhood. You would receive an additional $50 gift card to participate. It will only take a couple of minutes to tell you about it now and then you can decide.

IF THE NEW MOM SAYS SHE DOES NOT HAVE TIME TO TALK NOW:
Ask when would be a good time to call and discuss this. Give Teen Mother Study phone number (847) 345-0485. Include a study flyer with PI contact information in her thank-you letter for the Healthy Pregnancy Study at one week or 6 months postpartum.

Day to call back (same day if she is available): _____Time:_____

If new mom has time: This new study is interested in your thoughts and feelings about your new motherhood experience. If you participate in this study, you will:
   ❖ Complete one interview in-person with the researcher soon.
   ❖ Interview will last one to two hours.
   ❖ Interview will take place either at your own home, or at the University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Nursing.
   ❖ Second interview or discussion possible lasting 30 minutes if needed for clarification
   ❖ Participation in this research is **voluntary** and **confidential**

Are you interested in participating in this study?

If NO: Thank you for your time and for participating in the Healthy Pregnancy Study. Good-bye and enjoy your new baby.

   ❖ **IF YES: Participant Interested, and <u>Key Research Personnel</u> are Recruiting:**
   ❖ Thank you for your interest in the Teen Mothers Study. I will give your contact information to the study primary investigator, Phyllis Sommer, Certified Nurse Midwife and Doctoral student at the University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Nursing, and she will contact you as soon as possible. You can also call or text Phyllis to ask questions and tell her you are interested in participating in the study at: **(847) 345-0485.** If mother would like PI's email address, say, **'psomme2@uic.edu'**
   ❖ We will also be mailing you a study flyer for the Teen Mothers Study along with our Healthy Pregnancy Study 'Thank-You' card. You may use Phyllis' contact information on the flyer to call, text, or email her that you are interested in participating in her study. Thank you.
   ❖ **<u>Participant's Contact Information:</u>**
Home phone_____

Cell phone_____

Home Address_____

Email_____

- ❖ **IF YES: Participant Interested, and <u>PI</u> is Recruiting:**
  Thank you for your interest in the Teen Mothers Study. What day this week (or next week) would be convenient for you to meet with me and conduct the in-person interview?

- ❖ Date of Interview_____

- ❖ Time of Interview_____

- ❖ Place of Interview**: Address**_____

  Do you have any questions?

  Confirm all **<u>contact information:</u>**

  Home phone_____

  Cell Phone_____

  Home Address_____

  Email_____

  Give the eligible participant the Teen Mothers Study cell phone number: **(847) 345-0485**

  and say, 'Please call or text me with questions or if you need to change your interview date or time.'

  If eligible participant requests my email address, say, **'psomme2@uic.edu'**

APPENDIX C

Recruitment Flyer

YOU ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY ABOUT
What is it like to be a new mother,

with a Mexican American Background ?

You will receive a $50 gift card to participate.

This research is interested in your thoughts and feelings about your new motherhood experience. If you participate in this research, you will:

- ❖ Have 1 child, up to age 4 years
- ❖ Complete one interview in-person with the researcher
- ❖ Interview will last one to two hours and be audio recorded so no answers are missed
- ❖ Interview will take place in your home, or at the University of Illinois, College of Nursing
- ❖ Possible follow-up interview or discussion lasting up to 30 minutes for clarification if needed

Participation in this research is voluntary and confidential.

This research is being conducted by Phyllis Sommer, Certified Nurse Midwife, Doctoral Student at the University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Nursing.

If you would like to learn more about this research:

- ❖ Call or text Phyllis at **(847)-345-0485**
- ❖ Email   Phyllis at: **psomme2@uic.edu**

Please share this flyer with any interested teen moms

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent/Assent Form

University of Illinois at Chicago
Research Information and <u>Consent/Assent</u> for Participation in Social Behavioral Research
Balancing Bicultural Heritage: Mexican American Teen Mothers Lived Experience

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form such as this one to tell you about the research, to explain that taking part is voluntary, to describe the risks and benefits of participation, and to help you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Principal Investigator Name and Title: **Phyllis Sommer**, Doctoral Student, Certified Nurse Midwife; Faculty Advisor: **Dr. Kathleen Norr**, Professor Emerita , Department of Women, Children, and Family Health Science, College of Nursing, **University of Illinois at Chicago**

<u>Why am I being asked?</u>

You are being asked to be a participant in a research study about young teenaged mothers who consider themselves to have both Mexican and American backgrounds. The study will include answering questions in English related to your thoughts and feelings about being a mother for the first time, being a teenager, and having both Mexican and American background.

You have been asked to participate in the research because you were less than 20 years old when you had your first baby, have both Mexican and American background, and your baby is not older than four years. Because of these conditions, you may be eligible to take part in the study.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Chicago. **If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.**

Approximately 40 teen mothers may be involved in this research at UIC.

<u>What is the purpose of this research?</u>

The purpose of this study is to learn more about how young, teenaged mothers who have both Mexican and American backgrounds, think and feel about being a mother for the first time, so that health care professionals can help support them in the best ways possible.

<u>What procedures are involved?</u>

Where will I go for the study?
This research will be performed at either the College of Nursing, University of Illinois at Chicago, or in the comfort of your own home.

You will need to come to the College of Nursing, or allow the primary researcher into your home, one time over the next 6 months. The study visit will take around 1 to 2 hours of your time.

What will I be asked to do? If you agree to participate in this study, you will:

- Answer questions in English regarding your thoughts and feelings about being a teenager, a new mother, having both Mexican and American background, and general background information.
- Allow the question and answer interview to be audio recorded by the researcher so no answers are missed.
- Allow up to 2 hours for the interview visit.
- Allow a possible follow-up interview or discussion lasting up to 30 minutes for clarification if needed.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life. There is a risk that others may find out information about you disclosed or collected during the research. There is a small risk of emotional discomfort with answering some questions, but you may decide not to answer any question you do not wish to without any consequences to you.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?

You will not directly benefit from participation in this study. The information we gain in this study may help nurses, other healthcare providers, and health policy-makers assist Mexican American, teenaged, new mothers like you, in the future.

What other options are there?

There are no treatments with this study. You can choose to be in this study or not. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate in this study, it will not affect your healthcare or any relationship you have with the University of Illinois at Chicago.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

Only the research team will know that you are participating in this study. Otherwise, information about you will only be shared with others after your written permission, or if necessary to protect your rights or welfare: or if required by law as in the case of child abuse.

The University of Illinois at Chicago Institutional Review Board, Office for the Protection of Research Subjects and the State of Illinois auditors may review research records to make sure that the research was conducted properly. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Audio-recorded interviews will not include your real name, but will have a coded name and number in order to protect your identity. The only persons who will have access to the original interview recordings are the study's primary researcher, research advisor, and the professional transcriber who will listen to the recordings to write them down, word by word, to be analyzed by the research team. Any computer files related to the study will be encrypted to restrict access. The list that matches your real name with your study number will be kept separately in a locked cabinet in a locked office. After five years, audio recordings and computer files will be erased.

What are the costs for participating in this research?

You do not have to pay to participate. You will have to pay your transportation costs if the interview takes place at the University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Nursing.

Will I be reimbursed for any of my expenses or paid for my participation in this research?
You will be given a gift card worth $50 as a thank you after your interview is completed.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?
You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without affecting your healthcare or relationship with the University of Illinois at Chicago. You may decline answering any study questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research study if circumstances occur which warrant doing so.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

Contact the primary researcher, Phyllis Sommer, Doctoral Student, Certified Nurse Midwife, University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Nursing, at: (847) 345-0485, or psomme2@uic.edu, or Faculty Advisor, Dr. Kathleen Norr, Professor Emerita, at: (312) 996-7940, knorr@uic.edu
- if you have any questions about this study or your part in it,
- if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research.

What are my rights as a research subject?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, including questions, concerns, complaints, or to offer input, you may call the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) at 312-996-1711 or 1-866-789-6215 (toll-free) or e-mail OPRS at uicirb@uic.edu.

Remember:

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

<u>Signature of Participant</u>

I have read (or someone has read to me) the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. I will be given a copy of this signed and dated form.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____
Printed Name of Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   Date

_____
Printed Name of Researcher

Healthy Pregnancy Study Participants:
We may want to obtain some information about your pregnancy from the Healthy Pregnancy Study for background information. Your signature below indicates that you give your permission for the Researcher to access this information. Information about your pregnancy will NOT be obtained from your medical or billing records. All the information for the Healthy Pregnancy Study was obtained from you directly. No data were abstracted from or inserted in medical or billing records in that study.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

Did not participate in Healthy Pregnancy Study:

Signature _____   Date_____

All participants in this study:
We may wish to collect more information about you and your baby in the future. Your signature below indicates that you agree to have us contact you to talk about whether you would be interested in participating.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

APPENDIX E

Interview Guide

Introduction, after verbal informed consent or assent has been obtained from participant:

I'd like to hear about your thoughts and feelings about being a young, new mother, and also being Mexican American. Please let me know if you would like to stop and take a break for any reason during the interview, or if there are any questions you feel uncomfortable about.

Context 1. Bicultural identity: Mexican plus American

1. What is it like for you as a young mother thinking about bringing up your baby with both Mexican and American background?

   Probes as needed:
   a. With which group do you feel you most belong? (Mexican, American)
   b. What ethnic group does your child belong to?
   c. What ethnic group does your partner; family, think you and your child belong to?
   d. How does this make you feel?
   e. How does this affect your choices for raising your child?

2. How important is it to you to bring up your child to be comfortable in Mexican culture?

   Probes as needed:
   a. What part of Mexican culture is important?
   b. How will you help your child feel comfortable in Mexican culture?
   c. Speaking, understanding, reading, writing Spanish language?
   d. Role as a boy/girl?
   e. Commitment to family, importance?
   f. Respecto? (respect of parents and older family members)
   g. What does your partner; family think is important?

3. How important is it to you to bring up your child to be comfortable in American culture?

   Probes as needed:
   a. What part of American culture is important?
   b. How will you help your child feel comfortable in American culture?
   c. Speaking, understanding, reading, writing English language?
   d. Role as a boy/girl?
   e. Commitment to family, importance?
   f. Sense of being independent from your family?
   g. What does your partner; family think is important?

Context 2. Young (teen) age at motherhood

4. How do you feel about having your child at a young age?

    Probes as needed:
    a. How do you think having your baby at a young age is different than if you were older?
    b. How do you think it is more difficult to have your baby at a young age?
    c. How do you think it is easier to have your baby at a young age?
    d. What does your partner think about your having a baby so young?
    e. What does your mother, father, brothers, sisters think about you having your baby at a young age?
    f. How has your having your baby at a young age changed your relationships with your family? Partner? Friends? Teachers?
    g. How has your body changed since you had your baby?

Context 3. New Motherhood

5. How does it feel to be a mother?

    Probes as needed:

    a. What do you want to do the same as your mother for raising your child?
    b. What do you want to do differently from the way you were brought up?
    c. What are things you worry about as you think about the future?
    d. What are things you look forward to as you think about the future for yourself and your child?

Demographic Information
a. What is the highest grade you have completed at school?
b. What is your plan about going back to school? Not going back to school?
c. What is your age now?
d. What is your birthdate?
e. What is your partner status? For example: seeing each other, living together, married, separated, divorced, partner not involved, financial support from partner?
f. Which parent was born in Mexico? Mother? Father? Both?
g. Where was the other parent born if not in Mexico?
h. What is the ethnicity of your mother, father, and the father of your baby?

Conclusion. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your feelings and experiences as a new young mother, and being Mexican American?

VITA

Phyllis Sommer

EDUCATION

PhD, Nursing   University of Illinois at Chicago, 2014
                                  Women, Children, and Family Health Science
M.S., Nurse-Midwifery   University of Illinois at Chicago, 1998
B.S.N., Nursing   University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, 1985

HONORS AND AWARDS

2013-2014   Nursing Dean Endowment
2013-2014   Seth and Denise Rosen Memorial Research Award
2012-2014   W. E. Van Doren Scholarship
2012-2013   Dean Joan L. Shaver Scholarship
2010-2012   Board of Trustees Tuition Waiver
1998   Hal Gold Memorial Scholarship
1985-present Sigma Theta Tau International, Honor Society of Nursing,
             Psi and Alpha Lambda chapters

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2006-2014   *CNM, WHNP*   Lake County Dept. Public Health, Waukegan, IL
2010-2011   *Graduate Research Asst.* University of Illinois/Chicago, Chicago, IL
1999-2008   *CNM, WHCNP*   Life Women's Health Center, Berwyn, IL
2001-2004   *CNM, WHCNP*   Mt. Sinai Hospital, Chicago, IL

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Peace Corps Volunteer,   Peace Corps, Washington, DC
Bush Midwife   Served in Niger, West Africa

CREDENTIALS

- *Certified Nurse-Midwife*, American Midwifery Certification Board
- *Women's Health Care Nurse Practitioner*, National Corporation for the Obstetric, Gynecologic and Neonatal Nursing Specialties
- *Registered Nurse*, Illinois Department of Professional Regulation

PUBLICATIONS

- **Sommer, P. A**., Norr, K., & Roberts, J. (2000).Clinical Decision-Making Regarding Intravenous Hydration in Normal Labor in a Birth Center Setting. *Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health, 45*(2), 114-121.
- **Sommer, P.** (1994). Traditional Midwives of Niger. *Midwifery Today, 32*, 22-24.

PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLISHED ABSTRACTS
- **Sommer, P.,** Norr, K., Vonderheid, S., Patil, C., Hennessey, M. D., Garcia, L, & Kelley, M. (2013, March). *Balancing Bicultural Heritage: Mexican American Teen Mothers Lived Experience.* Abstract and poster presentation, 37th Annual Research Conference, Midwest Nursing Research Society, Chicago, IL, March, 2013.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- **Masters Project qualitative study:** *Clinical Decision-Making Regarding Intravenous Hydration in Normal Labor in a Birth Center Setting.* In-person interviews of Certified Nurse-Midwives and Registered Nurses. Published results in peer-reviewed journal.

- **Research Assistant:** RO1 HD050708, Dr. Rosemary White-Traut, PI
  Feeding and Transition to Home for Preterms at Social Risk
  (1) Coded data from videos of preterm infants for Behavioral State, and Pre-Feeding Cues

RELEVANT RESEARCH SEMINARS ATTENDED

- **Institute for Heideggerian Hermeneutical Methodologies.**
  Workshop with Pamela Ironside (2013, June). Indiana University School of Nursing, Center for Professional Development, Indianapolis, Indiana
  (1) Hermeneutic Phenomenology as a Research Method
  (2) Thematizing Phenomena
  (3) Extending and Challenging Interpretations
  (4) Developing Interpretive Communities

- **9th Annual Qualitative Research Summer Intensive, The Odum Institute**, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.
  Workshops with Kathy Charmaz, & Catherine Marshall. (2012, July, August). Qualitative Research Design
  (1) Introduction to Grounded Theory: A Social Constructionist Approach
  (2) Progressing with Grounded Theory: Working on Your Analysis and Writing

LANGUAGE SKILLS
Proficient Spanish and some French

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS
American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM)
American Society for Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology (ASCCP)
Midwest Nursing Research Society (MNRS)