TEEN PREGNANCY AND MEDIA ENGAGEMENT: A USES AND GRATIFICATIONS STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Ewart Skinner, Advisor

While teenage pregnancy has been on the decline, overall, since the 1970s, the frequency of teenage pregnancy in the United States is much higher than its incidence in other major industrialized countries. Furthermore, in the U.S., in certain instances and communities, teenage pregnancy has remained at unacceptable levels. This dissertation explores teenage pregnancy from the perspective of teenage mothers focusing on their relationship with the media throughout the process of their pregnancy and into motherhood. This study also takes into consideration the contextual factors that impact media usage such as the environment in which participants live in, socioeconomic status, family background, interaction with peers, and school, among other possible influences. The novel approach taken here is the use of qualitative interviews from the Uses and Gratifications perspective, and the employment of Grounded Theory analysis. The participant sample comprises 30 students a school for teenage mothers in the Midwest. No previous academic studies have examined the engagement pregnant teenagers have had with the media. However, several studies have examined teenagers’ exposure to sexual content on television and their subsequent sexual behavior.

Research questions focus on how and when these young women find information pertaining to having a child before, during and after their pregnancy and their current engagement with the media. Responses among three groups of light, average, and heavy media usage show that pregnant teens and teen mothers usage of media was fairly consistent amongst the groups in terms of sharing progress of pregnancy and seeking health information about pregnancy online. Most of the teen mothers changed their attitude toward seeing sex in the media
after having their baby. Several pregnant teens/teen mothers decreased their social media activity or deleted their social media accounts due to drama and bullying.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

“I’m pregnant.”

Grief, sorrow, joy, happiness, anger, disappointment, hurt, excitement, fear, and nervousness are some of the emotions felt when the words “I’m pregnant” are first stated. If the person making the statement is a teenage woman, those emotions are amplified due to the American societal value that unmarried teenage women are not supposed to have children.

Statement of the problem

The potential for media to impact teen pregnancy positively and negatively has been undervalued and understudied. Very few extensive qualitative studies have been conducted in which pregnant teens have been interviewed about their pregnancies and their media use. Non-marital teen pregnancy has occurred for decades, but has mostly been studied from a sociological perspective. Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, and Morgan’s (1987) longitudinal study of 404 teen mothers in Baltimore, Maryland, which spanned from 1966 to 1984, is one of the few qualitative studies that interviewed pregnant teens/teen mothers. In their five-wave study, which looked at how teen or adolescent mothers make the transition to adulthood, they found that having a baby during the teen years “profoundly influenced the educational, occupational, and marital decisions of the early child bearers, which resulted in considerable detriment to their position at the time of the five year follow-up” (p. 11). About three-fourths of Furstenberg's sample population were black. Half lived in a two-parent home. One-fifth of the parents of the teen moms in the study were high school grads and three-fourths of the teen moms were birthed by teen moms. The Furstenberg study is a good introduction to the kinds of long-term issues that teen mothers face long after they have a child. With my study, I am looking to see the extent to which socio-cultural factors such as having a two-parent home and the education of the parents impact
pregnant teens/teen mothers’ usage of media and what media choices are made based on their situations.

The topic of “teen pregnancy” was first mentioned in the *Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature* in 1970, and appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1985 (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, & Morgan, 1987). The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) (2014) reported that the current teen birth rate is at its lowest level since 1957, when it reached 96.7 births per 1,000 women. In fact, the NCHS says the teen birth rate dropped 10 percent from 2012 (29.4 births per 1,000 women) to 2013 (26.6 births per 1,000 women). The birth rate has dropped across all age groups of teenagers. Despite the great news, the United States still leads other industrialized nations in teens having children. A United Nations study (as cited by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy in March, 2012) reported that in 2009, Australia’s teen birth rate was 16.5 births per 1,000 women. Spain’s teen birth rate was 12.2. In France, this rate was 10.2 and in Germany it stood at 9.8. Japan’s teen birth rate was 4.9 births and Britain’s only 2.5 births per 1,000 women.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that in 2013, the United States hit a record low for live births of babies born to women in the 15-19 age group. In that year, the teen birth rate was 26.5 per 1,000 women, which represented a drop of 10% from the previous year.

In Ohio too, teen pregnancy has reflected the national downward trend. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported that in 2011, Ohio's teen birth rate was 31.5 births per 1,000 women. This was an 8% drop from the year before. Locally, in Lucas County, the estimated number of teen pregnancies dropped from 42.5 pregnancies per 1,000 women in 2009 to 38.2 in 2010. For births recorded in the 15-17 age group between 2009 and 2010 in Lucas County, the rate per 1,000 women dipped from 24.8 births to 20.1 (McKinnon, 2012).
Historically and unfortunately, Lucas County has been one of Ohio’s teen pregnancy leaders. Prior to the most recent numbers that have shown a drop in the teen pregnancy rate in Lucas County, in 2007, a task force comprising heads of agencies in law, religion, education, nonprofit agencies, and other areas published a special report on the teen pregnancy problem in Lucas County, its possible causes, implications, and recommendations to alleviate the problem. The report stated that going back to 1989, Lucas County led the state every year except one in teen pregnancy. As of 2010, the Ohio Department of Health maintained that Lucas County still tops the state in teen pregnancy among women aged 10-19.

*Societal costs of teen pregnancy*

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy’s (NCPTUP) online report on taxpayer costs of teen pregnancy detailed the ways teen pregnancy affects society. The NCPTUP reported for 2010, teen pregnancy cost Ohio taxpayers $340 million as a result of lost federal, state and local taxes. Those losses came in the form of estimated losses from costs associated with public healthcare, child welfare, and loss of tax revenue, and the costs of supporting children of teen mothers who go to prison as they are at a higher risk of incarceration. The Lucas County Task Force Report on teen pregnancy referenced earlier went into further details on the financial strain teen pregnancy causes society, as well as the vicious circle of teen mothers giving birth to children who become teen mothers that is difficult to break. The NCPTUP reported that in Ohio, the “average annual cost associated with a child born to a mother 17 and younger is $4,534” (p. 23). The report cited the following risk factors associated with teen pregnancy:

- Extreme economic and social deprivation
- A family history of high-risk behavior
- Family management problems
• Family conflict
• Early and persistent antisocial behavior
• Academic failure beginning in late elementary school
• Low commitment to school
• Friends who engage in the problem behavior
• Favorable attitudes toward the problem behavior
• Early initiation of the problem behavior

Two other teen pregnancy risk factors cited in the task force report—family management problems and family conflict—have been directly associated with teen pregnancy. In reviewing data from the Lucas County Children Services (LCCS), I found that many child abuse and neglect cases involving teen pregnancy have been investigated by the agency. The data is alarming.

• One out of every 21 or 4.7% of investigations of child abuse or neglect involves children of teenage mothers.
• 35% of the cases receiving ongoing services involve a mother who, as a teenager, had given birth to a child. This is evidence that despite the decrease in teen pregnancy, severe problems still exist.
• Since 2002, 14% of teenage mothers involved with LCCS were daughters of teenage mothers who were involved with LCSS.
• A 13 year old was the youngest teenage mother involved in an investigation of child abuse/neglect in 2005.

While not stated, it is possible that the media could impact many of these factors. Also, no studies have been found that asked teen mothers if or how the media influenced what thoughts or attitudes they had about having a child prior to becoming pregnant. Communication theories
support the idea that behaviors can be learned from the media in the process of teen pregnancy (Bandura, 1986, 1994; Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1963). However, the extent of the media’s influence is little understood at this point due to a lack of empirical research on what roles media consumption and popular culture influences play in teen pregnancy. This project is an exploratory study of the engagement teenagers have with media before, during, and after pregnancy to ascertain their uses and gratifications of media technologies and media content. From discussions with young women in the area, it might be possible to hear in their own words whether early initiation of sexuality and subsequent pregnancy is associated with specific types of media consumption, or media use in general.

In another special study, the National Center for Parents at the University of Toledo (2006) collected data through questionnaires and interviews over two years with 304 mothers living in area prisons. Some of the report’s key findings, as they relate to teen pregnancy, include:

- More than 80% of the women were 21 or younger at the time of their first pregnancy.
- Almost a quarter of these were 16 years or younger during their first pregnancy.
- The median age at the time of the last pregnancy was 24 years and ranged from 13 to 46 years.

The teenage mother risk factors of low socioeconomic status, poor education, and abusive relationships were also common traits among the incarcerated women. Other studies support these commonalities among those women who have children in their teens. Rome, Rybicki, and Durant’s (1998) survey of 592 Ohio high school students who were involved in high-risk behaviors such as using cocaine, had a higher likelihood of becoming pregnant. Sexually active women who carried a weapon in the past 30 days were four times more likely to have been pregnant (p. 50). Pograrsky, Thornberry, and Lizotte’s (2006) analysis of the Rochester Youth
Development Study data found that boys in 7th or 8th grade in 1988 who were the offspring of teen moms, had “elevated risks of drug use, gang membership, unemployment, and early parenthood” (p. 332). Girls in that study who were born to teen moms “only had elevated risks of early parenthood” (p. 332). Low educational attainment by the mother was the most common factor.

The lack of having supportive and loving parents as well as a nurturing home has been shown in numerous studies to have detrimental effects, which could lead to teen pregnancy. Kramer and Lancaster’s (2010) meta-analysis of teen motherhood reviewed 34 journal articles from 1985-2009 that looked at teen pregnancy risks. They found in several studies that emotional stress and a dysfunctional family were associated with earlier menarche. The lack of a father was also associated with earlier menarche, and early initiation of sexual activity and adolescent pregnancy. In this study, I hope to see how these factors impact the pregnant teens’ life and if that extends over into their media selections.

Public health significance of teen pregnancy

Physiologically, many things are less likely to happen if the child bearer is a normal mature adult woman as opposed to an adolescent. Complications such as anemia (lack of red blood cells resulting in shortness of breath), pre-eclampsia (high blood pressure along with protein in the urine and abnormal weight gain) have been documented as being more common among pregnant teens (Usta, Zoorob, Abu-Musa, Naassan, Nassar, 2008). Partington, Steber, Blair, and Cisler (2009), as well as Khashan, Baker, and Kenny (2010) compared years of pregnancy data between teenage and adult women, and found similar results. Teen mothers are more likely to have premature and low birth-weight babies as compared to more mature women, with the likelihood being dramatically higher of having a premature second child. University of Toledo Medical Center Adolescent Health researcher Dr. Joan Griffith, in support of the Usta et
al., Partington et al., and Khashan et al. results, agreed by saying that the younger the adolescent, the more likely there will be complications during childbirth due to the still developing body of the mother. Dr. Griffith revealed in an interview that it is common for the babies of teenage mothers to be underweight because of the common teenage diet.

“…the adolescent diet is typically nutritionally poor. An OB (obstetrician) will say you should start your nutritional diet two years before you become pregnant to get healthy. The teenager’s diet is often fat food or fast food. It’s not high in iron or calcium. So if we look at just baseline, where are they? It’s the reason we have a lot of childhood obesity. Kids are over-nourished not malnourished. So you have to take into consideration the teenage diet…for the most part, in and of itself, is not nutritionally supportive of pregnancy.” J. Griffith (personal communication, June 14, 2011)

There are a couple of keys to addressing complications during a teen pregnancy. Dr. Griffith claimed age is one key; the younger the girl, the less developed the body is; therefore, “there are greater risks of severe medical complications” such as an obstructed delivery. Also, Dr. Griffith said time is a critical element as the earlier the adolescent can receive prenatal care in her pregnancy, the easier it is to handle the pregnancy.

Significance of the study

Over the last 20 years, teen pregnancy has seemingly formed its own genre on television and in films, with new shows being created every year. Stories ripped from news headlines have been turned into movies and many times, the pregnant teens/teen mothers on reality shows have become overnight celebrities. This phenomenon has caused speculation that teens are seeking to become pregnant to be on such shows, because by getting on a reality show, they can become rich and famous.
In June of 2008, 16-year-old Nickelodeon television star Jamie Lynn Spears, the younger sister of pop music superstar Britney Spears, gave birth to a baby girl named Maddie. In September of that same year, at the beginning of the Republican National Convention, Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin revealed that her 17-year-old daughter Bristol was pregnant. Bristol gave birth to a son, Tripp, that December. The most infamous teen pregnancy news story happened in Gloucester, Massachusetts during the 2007-2008 school year, when 17 girls were accused of forming a pact to get pregnant, which was made into a Lifetime original movie called *The Pregnancy Pact*. That number of pregnant girls was about four times the typical number in a school-year for Gloucester High School (Voss, 2008). No evidence of a pact was found after an investigation by school officials. As reported in several articles in media outlets such as the Daily Mail, USA Today, and LA Times, Mayor Carolyn Kirk blamed the pregnancy spike on many factors, including glamorization of teen pregnancy in pop culture and cuts to funding health classes at the high school (Gloucester Times, 2014). In Chicago in 2009, 80 girls were reported to be teen mothers at Robeson High School. That many could fill six pages of the high school yearbook (Moore, 2009). It was reported at the time that Chicago schools did not fund any pregnancy prevention programs even though 14% of babies born in Chicago were from teens. Memphis, Tennessee was the location of a news report in 2011 of another teen pregnancy explosion. In January of that year, it was reported that about 26% (90 women) of Frayser High School’s women were pregnant or had already had a child (Memmott, 2011). Almost all of the students who go to Frayser High School qualify for federal assistance (Madden, 2011). This is significant as low socioeconomic status is often identified as a risk factor associated with teen pregnancy. In May of 2014, parents called the principal’s office of Mesa High School in Mesa, Arizona to complain that two out of its 455-page yearbook featured teen mothers and their lives. The pages were titled “I’m working a double shift” (Creno & Henderson, 2014). A district
spokeswoman said the yearbook is meant to document the achievements of the senior class and “probably this would not fall into that category.” However, she also said the high school fully supports teen moms and is “100% behind” them. While the spokeswoman said she did not expect a change in policy in terms of what can and cannot be in the yearbooks, schools in Michigan and North Carolina in 2014 banned the inclusion of photos of teen moms holding their children.

Low socioeconomic status, cuts in funding for health/pregnancy prevention programs, and the media have all been given as possible causes of teen pregnancy. The aim of this study is to take a more encompassing look at teen pregnancy and in scope, examine its relationship with the media by means of qualitative interviewing of pregnant teens and teen mothers about their media usage over the course of having a child.

The media are often blamed for teen pregnancy because sexual content and teen pregnancy are so often displayed in movies and on television. Popular shows like MTV’s (Music Television) 16 and Pregnant and Teen Mom have been accused of glamorizing teen pregnancy due to the popularity of the shows’ stars. USA Today (Thompson, 2010) reported in 2010 that four stars of 16 and Pregnant (Maci Bookout, Catelynn Lowell, Farrah Abraham, and Amber Portwood) were “mainstays on (sic) their Celebrity Heat Index, which measures media exposure; Portwood topped the list for October, beating Angelina Jolie and Prince William.” An October, 2013 Facebook search for Amber Portwood turned up 18 different community fan pages, with the “official” fan page having over 104,000 likes. Teen Mom’s Farrah Abraham has parlayed her appearance on the show into a record deal, a New York Times Best Selling book, and two adult films. As of November, 2015, Abraham’s Facebook page has over 1.2 million likes. The MTV shows represent a small fraction of the teen pregnancy presence in the media. Four stars from 16 and Pregnant have become so popular that they have been fixtures on USA Today’s Celebrity
Heat Index, which measures media exposure in print, online, and television. *16 and Pregnant* star Catelynn Lowell said in a media interview:

I’m not trying to glamorize teen pregnancy. If anything, I’m trying to stop it or at least try to make (teens) make better decisions like using birth control. I’m doing the show for a good reason—to show teens that these are struggles that you go through when you become a young mom (Thompson, 2010).

With the notoriety and media attention comes the microscope on their lives, especially when things do not go well. *Teen Mom* star Amber Portwood has been in and out of court due to three felony domestic violence charges that were caught on tape by MTV during show tapings. Portwood hit and shoved her fiancé at the time. She violated a two-year probation sentence for domestic violence when she “got into a physical altercation and was found with prescription medication without having a prescription” (Huffington Post, 2012). For that, Portwood was sentenced to five years in prison. As part of the original trial for the felony charges, she disclosed that MTV was paying her $140,000 for a six-month run of *Teen Mom* (Kwiatkowski, 2011).

As a result of the spotlight that has been turned on the young women on teen pregnancy shows, some have intentionally attempted to become pregnant with hopes of getting on such shows, as MTV continued to cast more teen moms for future seasons (Shuter, 2010). Despite that, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy’s chief program officer, Bill Albert, said he fully supports the programs, “I might go so far as to say this (*16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom*) is the best public service announcement I have seen for preventing teen pregnancy in decades” (Thompson, 2010).

*Teen pregnancy in popular culture*

Over the last 20 years, the teen pregnancy theme on television and in movies has become pervasive. In the spring semester of 2011, I asked undergraduate students in a media effects class
at a Midwestern university for a list of television shows and movies that either referenced or focused on teen pregnancy. The students were received extra credit for submitting a list. The following is a list of what the students produced in this non-exhaustive list (in no particular order):

- *The Secret Life of an American Teenager* (TV)
- *Juno* (movie)
- *Teen Mom, Teen Mom 2, and Teen Mom 3* (TV)
- *16 and Pregnant* (TV)
- *The Pregnancy Pact* (TV movie)
- *Heart of America: Homeroom* (movie)
- *Precious* (movie)
- *Stephanie Daley* (movie)
- *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (movie)
- *Quinceanera* (movie)
- *Baby Love* (movie)
- *Lucy: A Teenage Pregnancy* (movie)
- *Sugar and Spice* (movie)
- *Gilmore Girls* (TV)
- *ABC: School Boy Father* (TV)
- *CBS: Babies Having Babies* (TV)
- *Baby Borrowers* (TV)
- *Mom at Sixteen* (TV movie)
- *Glee* (TV)
- *Raising Hope* (TV)
Some of the teen pregnancy themed productions achieved widespread pop culture popularity and critical acclaim. According to the Internet Movie Database (IMDB.com), *Juno*, released in 2007, grossed over $143 million. *Juno* is a movie about a white 16-year-old girl who becomes pregnant by her high school boyfriend, breaks up with him, gives up the baby to an upper-class couple, and then reunites with her boyfriend at the end of the movie. This lighthearted yet serious look at teen pregnancy won an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay. *Precious*, in 2009, was the antithesis of *Juno*. *Precious* was a dark movie about an overweight African-American girl (Precious) who was emotionally abused by her mother and sexually abused by her father. The sexual abuse caused Precious to get pregnant twice and she was diagnosed with HIV at the end of the film. *Precious* won Academy Awards for Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Supporting Actress. *Precious* grossed over $47 million. In television, MTV's teen pregnancy shows all draw tremendous ratings (*16 and Pregnant, Teen Mom, Teen Mom 2, and Teen Mom 3*). According to MTV, *16 and Pregnant.com* is described as:

…an hour-long documentary series focusing on the controversial subject of teen pregnancy. Each episode follows a 5-7 month period in the life of a teenager as she navigates the bumpy terrain of adolescence, growing pains, rebellion, and coming of age; all while dealing with being pregnant.

The show began in 2009 and consistently draws a large audience. Its second season premiere had 3.4 million viewers (Godwin, 2010). *Teen Mom*, a spinoff of *16 and Pregnant*, has also drawn large ratings. *Teen Mom* debuted in 2009 and followed the lives of four teen moms from the *16 and Pregnant* series. *Teen Mom*’s premiere was watched by 2.1 million people and earned MTV its best ratings in the 12-24 age group (Weprin, 2009). Following the success of *Teen Mom*,

- *Saved!* (movie)
- *Riding in Cars with Boys* (movie)
MTV created another *16 and Pregnant* spinoff called *Teen Mom 2*, which MTV.com described as “following the stories of four girls from the first season of *16 & Pregnant* who are facing the challenges of their first years of motherhood.” In December of 2011, *Teen Mom 2*’s season premiere was the highest rated show of any of the teen pregnancy themed shows, with 4.2 million viewers (Hibbard, 2011). *Teen Mom 3* ran in early 2012 and again featured girls that were on *16 and Pregnant*.

**Popular critiques and criticisms for the teen pregnancy genre**

Over the last 60 years, the way teen pregnancy and pregnancy, in general, have been treated and accepted in movies and on television has changed. Longtime *USA Today* entertainment reporter Claudia Puig (2008) noted this when she listed titles of movies from the past that dealt with pregnancy: *Girl in Trouble* (1963), *The Shame of Patty Smith* (1962), *Damaged Goods* (1961), and *You’ve Ruined Me, Eddie* (1959). Those movies, Puig noted, treated pregnancy as tragic and disgraceful. With the more recent treatments of pregnancy in films like *Juno* and the comedy *Knocked Up* (2007), having a child was seen as light-hearted and comical while being life-changing. *Entertainment Tonight* movie critic Leonard Maltin said women “no longer need to feel like victims” and that, “for decades, the very phrase ‘unwanted pregnancy’ was a synonym for soap opera” (Puig, 2008). He further added that the modern pregnancy films are popular because “we can all relate to them”. *Knocked Up* director Judd Apatow proposed the reason why comic pregnancy movies go over so well with audiences is because they give hope and people get to “see stories which treasure the idea of children” (Puig, 2008).

The biggest criticism of pregnancy-themed shows and movies is that we, as an audience, are not privy to the mother’s life before and after the baby’s birth, as much context is left out; or as University of North Carolina Journalism Professor Jane Brown said, “It’s missing three C’s:
there’s little commitment, no mention of contraception and rarely do we see negative consequences” (Kliff, 2008). Brown raised a valid point, especially about the consequences of having sex. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2011) reported that “nearly half of the 19 million new STDs each year are among young people aged 15–24 years”. The CDC reported that about 40% of U.S. high school students surveyed said they had not used a condom the last time they had sex. These statistics support the fact that there are large numbers of teens not using contraception, and they are contracting sexually transmitted diseases, which is not being portrayed on shows or in movies.

*MTV-related studies*

The MTV teen pregnancy series is a growing area of research as several studies within the past few years have focused on the effects of watching these programs. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (NCPTUP, 2010) conducted a telephone poll of 1,008 young people (ages 12-19, weighted to be nationally representative) in August and September of 2010 about MTV’s *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom*. Some of the questions and answers of that poll are as follows:

- *Teen pregnancy has been the focus of many entertainment programs recently. Thinking specifically about MTV’s 16 and Pregnant, do you think the show helps teens better understand the challenges of pregnancy and parenthood or does it glamorize teen pregnancy?* Eighty-two percent (82%) of those who said they had seen the show said they thought the show “help(s) teens better understand the challenges of teen pregnancy and parenthood and how to avoid it”. That’s compared to the 15% who said the show glamorizes teen pregnancy.

- *How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: When a TV show or character I like deals with teen pregnancy, it makes me think more about my own risk of*
getting pregnant/causing a pregnancy and how to avoid it. Forty-six percent (46%) agreed strongly with this statement. Thirty-four percent (34%) agree somewhat. Ten percent (10%) somewhat disagreed and 8% disagreed strongly.

- **How often would you say you and your parents have talked about sex, love, and relationships because of something you saw in popular media (like television shows)?**

One-third (33%) said they have rarely talked to their parents because of something they saw on TV. Nineteen percent (19%) replied “never.” Fourteen percent (14%) said “often”. This might speak to a relationship issue or a comfort-level issue in discussing sex and pregnancy with parents. On a separate question, 15% said *16 and Pregnant* glamorizes teen pregnancy.

In other findings, 76% of the participants said that references to sex and relationships in the media are good conversation starters with adults. Ninety-three percent (93%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they learned that having a baby was harder than they had imagined as a result of watching the shows. The agency said this finding was proof that “documentary-style shows, presented in ways that are appealing and interesting to teens, can be a useful way to start these conversations” (p. 4).

Brewer (2011) conducted two convenient sampled focus group interviews, one with teenage girls (15-17) and one with their mothers at a private Catholic school in Laurel, Maryland about the portrayals of teen pregnancy on MTV’s *16 and Pregnant*. The participants were “mostly middle socio-economic status” (p. 20). Three teen participants were white and two were black. Both groups, parents and their daughters, were separately asked similar questions about their television viewing habits, their thoughts about the MTV show, and their thoughts about teen pregnancy. However, the teen girls group was asked more in-depth questions about their perceptions of the show and “their personal discussions surrounding teen pregnancy” (p. 21).
The parents were asked about the accuracy of *16 and Pregnant* and whether or not the show “could be used as an effective teaching tool” (p. 21). All of the teens “adamantly” said the show gives the impression that motherhood is easy (p. 22). Watching the show with their peers was more common for the teens as opposed to watching it with their parents. The parents described the show as not completely accurate. They thought the show is not as raw as it should be and agreed with their daughters who commented that the show makes “motherhood look too easy” (p. 25). The parents also stated that the show’s portrayal of pregnancy is incomplete and that more time should be devoted to the parents of the teenage mothers on the show and what they are going through.

Wright, Randall, and Arroyo (2013) surveyed 313 female college students between 18 and 23 years of age about a possible connection between the viewing of *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom*, pregnancy-risk behavior, and the amount of communication with their parents about sex while the females were growing up. Almost 57% of the sample population was white and 18.5% were Hispanic, 13.1% Asian, 4.2% Black, 1.9% Middle Eastern, and 1% were defined as other. Wright et al. found that whites were more likely to watch *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom*. Also, for respondents whose fathers did not communicate with them about sex while growing up, the probability of these females recently engaging in sex increased, and the likelihood they watched the MTV teen pregnancy shows went up as well. Wright et al. also found that the probability of recent intercourse decreases “as exposure to *16 and Pregnant/Teen Mom* increases for females whose fathers communicated with them about sex growing up” (p. 58). The authors found that father-daughter sexual communication had a stronger statistical impact as compared to mother-daughter communication on the same topic.

Aubrey, Behm-Morawitz, and Kim’s (2014) study of 121 women between the ages of 14 and 18 in the U.S. revealed that those who regularly watched *16 and Pregnant* came away with
“beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions that were opposite to the intended goal of” the show, which is to prevent pregnancy (p. 1156). In other words, the participants believed that the benefits of having a baby outweighed the risks. Also, the participants did not see themselves at a high risk of pregnancy and were more likely to think that having a baby had more positive outcomes as compared to negative ones. Aubrey at al. explained that the reason for these unintended consequences was the result of “the show’s lack of attention to conception and contraception,” which ultimately led to the situation where the use of birth control was not a major concern for the teens. Also, at the end of the episodes that were used in the study—as in many television shows—there was a happy ending with mother and child forming a tight and loving bond. As part of the procedures, participants’ normative beliefs about teen pregnancy, their assessment of the risk of getting pregnant, and their attitudes about teen pregnancy were measured. The authors reported that the results of these measurements on values and beliefs about teen pregnancy showed a parasocial interaction with the teen moms on the show that was described as homophily, or “the degree to which viewers perceive themselves to be like the characters in terms of traits, abilities, and backgrounds” (p. 1147). And the more participants saw themselves like one of the televised teen moms, the less perceived risk they believed they had of becoming pregnant. Parasocial relationships can take many forms. Giles (2002) described them as either having a need to fulfill a social interaction as in being part of a group, having a connection with a particular person, no matter what show they appeared on, or having an affective connection in a way where the viewer has an emotional response to something a media figure did as if the viewer performed that behavior.

Two additional studies dealing with the impact of MTV’s teen pregnancy reality shows gained national attention in early 2014 reported conflicting results. One study, conducted by Martins and Jensen of Indiana University, found that heavy viewers of teen pregnancy programs
such as *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* believed that “teen moms had an enviable quality of life, a decent income, and involved fathers than did lighter viewers of these shows” (p. 19). Martins and Jensen also found that the viewing of the shows “significantly predicted perceptions of what it is like to have a baby as a teenager” (p. 18). For their study, 10 schools were asked to participate. Two schools agreed to do the study and 185 students from those schools were enrolled in the study. The schools chosen to be possible participants were included because their student populations were demographically consistent (median household income of $52,000 and ethnicity; 80% white) with U.S. national averages (p. 10). However, African-Americans and Hispanics in the two schools that participated were numerically lower than their national averages with 13% and 3% respectively. It is instructive to note that Martins and Jensens’ two schools were located in two counties in Indiana with two of the lowest teen pregnancy rates in the state, at 14 births per 1,000 young women.

The other study on the effects of MTV’s pregnancy programming that gained national attention was published by the National Bureau of Economic Research. The authors, Kearney and Levine, examined Google Trends, Twitter, Nielsen ratings, and Vital Statistics birth data to see if any fluctuations in data coincided with the airings of *16 and Pregnant*. This, they claimed, was “the first paper to offer a credible estimate of the causal effect of specific media content on teen childbearing rates” (p. 8). The study tracked searches and tweets about birth control and abortion from November 2010 to December 2010 while a season of *16 and Pregnant* was underway. Kearney and Levine’s data revealed that the regions where the show had its highest viewership also had some of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the U.S., which historically have been in the south and midwestern parts of the nation. The results showed that in areas that had high teen pregnancy rates, there was a spike in social media mentions and searches for terms
“related to birth control or abortion” when the show ran, and there was a 5.7% drop in teen births a year and a half after the show premiered.

While the television shows have given us a visual representation of the visible impacts that teen pregnancy has on families, having a baby as a teenager impacts much more than the mother, father, and child.

*Purpose of the study*

The purpose of this study is to examine the teen pregnancy and media association from the pregnant teen/teen mother’s uses and gratifications perspective. While examining how and why pregnant teens/teen mothers use the media, this study will also take into account the backgrounds of the participants, which will include: age, ethnicity, family size, living situation at home, parents' level of education, how much media is consumed daily, what social media is used and how many connections the participants have. Several previous studies have attempted to establish a causal link between sexual content viewed in the media and subsequent pregnancy, resulting in inconclusive findings. This study does not attempt to establish causality. However, its purpose is to take into consideration more contextual factors that can impact media usage, which helps us understand its role in the process of a teenager's life before, during and after pregnancy.

*Research design*

The research design is driven by two questions that Grounded Theory pioneer Glaser (1992) asked: "What is the chief concern or problem of the people in the substantive area, and what accounts for most of the variation in processing the problem? And secondly, what category or what property of what category does this incident indicate?” (p. 4). In studying the connection between teen pregnancy and the media, many variables and differing degrees of intensity come into play. Utilizing a Grounded Theory methodology "allows the relevant social organization and
socialpsychological organization of the people studied to be discovered, to emerge—in their perspective" (p. 5). For this study, I adopted a constructivist version of grounded theory that was created by Charmaz. Constructivist grounded theory, which will be described in detail later in this dissertation, allows flexibility on the part of the researcher in the "construction and interpretation of the data", while also allowing him/her to break free from the restrictive and rigid processes of earlier versions of grounded theory as used by Glaser and Strauss, Strauss and Corbin, and others. Extracting a theory from the data is an inductive process as theory or theories "rest on explicated abstract concepts" which have been discovered through the analysis of interview transcripts. The participants’ transcripts have been divided into three media usage groups (light, average, and heavy), according to their self-reported amount of media usage.

Since the primary instrument or tool for data collection in this study was the researcher, it was vital that the researcher have experience conducting qualitative interviews with an at-risk population. To help with experience gaining full human subject board approval and conducting interviews, I ran a pilot test of 13 qualitative interviews in the fall of 2011. Based on the results of that pilot test as well as recommendations from the dissertation committee, the list of interview questions was revised and 30 interviews were conducted in the fall of 2014 with a new sample population from the same Midwest school.

Research questions

The research questions are:

RQ1: Before becoming pregnant, where did the pregnant teens or teen mothers learn about sex and relationships? What were their sources of information?

RQ2: During pregnancy, how and what do pregnant teens communicate through media, and what media do they consume with regard to issues such as health concerns?
RQ 3: Post-pregnancy, how are teen moms using and engaging the media? Are they communicating with other teen moms? What kinds of information are they seeking and sharing?

Assumptions and limitations

Entering this exploratory study, given the turbulent lives of many teen mothers, as has been shown in past studies, still, I had no idea about the extremes to which the women I interviewed were living. Having been in education for 14 years, with half of those years in a graduate school setting, I assumed social media would have a major influence on their daily lives but again, I could not estimate how much of an impact social media had in their lives.

The results of this study are not generalizable to pregnant teens/teen mothers across the country. They are representative of the school where they were conducted. Since a constructivist grounded theory method was utilized, the results or coding may be open to interpretation. However, I described my process in as much detail as possible so the reader could follow along with my analysis and results.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1977, the teen pregnancy rate in the U.S. was 104.6 births per 1,000 women (Kost, K., & Henshaw, S., Guttmacher Institute, 2012). The Internet Movie Database (IMDB.com) lists The Love Boat, Three's Company, Soap, Fantasy Island, and Chips as the top five new shows of that year. Viewer ratings estimates (Classic TV database) show the top five most-watched programs that year were Happy Days, Laverne & Shirley, the ABC Monday Night Movie, M*A*S*H, and Charlie's Angels. In cognitive psychologist Howe's (1977) book Television and Children, which was devoted to studying the effects of television viewing on children, the topic of sex took up less than one page. In this period, “despite sexual jokes, double-entendres, and the occasional full-frontal nude episode,” interest in sexual content appeared to be low on the radar of researchers; therefore, according to Howe (1977), research on televised sex’s effects on children was nonexistent.

…my search for hard facts on this matter (sexual effects of media research) drew a virtual blank. There may be some truth in the assertion that children are harmed by television’s depictions of sexual aspects of life, or there may be no truth in it at all. One just cannot tell, since there is a lack of objective information. The necessary scientific investigations that would be required in order to provide reliable and valid evidence have not yet been undertaken (p. 104).

Howe found that the items that had drawn the most attention from researchers and parents up to the publishing of his book were the “possible effects of violent and aggressive acts portrayed via television upon children's behaviour, and upon their toleration of violence and attitudes towards it” (p. 8). While Howe has a British perspective, he had spent two years in the United States,
During which he estimated U.S. television programming to be worse than he expected. He also lived two years in Canada.

Howe believed there was a positive relationship between consuming more media and participating in risky behavior. “Adolescents who had engaged in more risky behaviors listened to radio and watched more videos and movies or television more frequently than those who had engaged in fewer risky behaviors, regardless of race, gender, or parents' education” (ibid. p. 24). Research indicates that “adolescents engage in many risky behaviors, and these behaviors have significant potential for adverse medical and social outcomes” (Klein, J.D., Brown, J.D., Childers, K.W., Oliveri, J., Porter, C., & Dykers, C., 1992). Furthermore, Chandra et al. (2008) explained that "exposure to sexual content on television predicted teen pregnancy..." and teens who were exposed to high levels of televised sexual content (90th percentile) were twice as likely to experience a pregnancy during a three-year period. In general, few studies focus on adolescent sexual media consumption and subsequent sexual behavior. This literature review found only one study exclusively centered on the connection between sexual media consumption and pregnancy of young women under the age of 20. However pregnancy, arguably, is one of the most important consequential outcomes of early engagement in sexual intercourse. Therefore, in this study, sexual content in media and its presumed correlate, sexual behavior and its potential outcomes, are addressed. Most studies in this area of research make predictions about adolescent behavior, such as engagement in sexual intercourse, based on exposure to sexual content in the media. The studies reviewed in this section propose that adolescents’ media exposure and their sexual behaviors are correlated. Those, and other studies reviewed here, fruitfully inform this study in that they establish the complex socio-cultural ways in which adolescents use and are gratified through media engagement. For example, adolescent media behavior studies by Brown, and Newcomer, (1991); Collins, Elliott, Berry, Kanouse, Kunkel, Hunter, & Miu (2004); Pardun,
L’Engle, and Brown (2005); the Kaiser Family Foundation (2005); Brown, L’Engle, Pardun, Guo, Kenneavy, & Jackson, (2006); Martino, S., Collins, R., Elliot, M., Strachman, A., Kanouse, D., & Berry, S. (2006); Ward and Friedman (2006); and Bleakley, Hennessy, Fishbein, & Jordan, (2008) attempt to establish correlations between heavy usage of sexual media content and sexual behavior. These studies do not establish causality between sexual content viewing and later sexual behavior, but they do establish the correlation between these two variables, and they help to give more clarity to the question of the media's impact on teen pregnancy.

Brown and Newcomer (1991) conducted a three-wave survey of 391 students at a city junior high school in North Carolina between 1978 and 1981. They looked at the extent to which televised sexual content caused adolescents to engage in sex at an earlier age than they might have, had they not watched such sexual content. Thirty-four coders were used from a university communication class to rank the content in programs on a three-way scale (0 for “not sexy”, 1 for “sometimes sexy”, and 2 for “very sexy”). An average score by the judges on that three-point scale determined the overall sexiness for the show. The participants in this study were not asked what they deemed to be sexy on television. They simply listed what shows they watched and at what times. Sexuality of the participants was measured by a simple binary (yes-no) response as to whether the adolescent had had sexual intercourse in the past. A Guttman scale was also used to measure participants' sexual experience on a continuum, from kissing to intercourse. Brown and Newcomer's results showed that non-virgins were “significantly more likely than virgins to be seeking sexy programming” (p. 84), and they concluded that teens who “selectively view sexy television are more likely to have had sexual intercourse, regardless of their friends’ encouragement or discouragement to have sex and regardless of their previous sexual experience” (p. 87). Their study held true across race and gender groups. Based on their findings,
Brown and Newcomer tentatively concluded that “causal direction flows from a high proportion of sexy television viewing to sexual activity rather than vice versa” (p. 87).

Collins, Elliott, Berry, Kanouse, Kunkel, Hunter, and Miu (2004) conducted a national longitudinal survey of 1,792 12- to 17-year-olds and conducted follow-ups a year later to determine if televised sex predicted and hastened sexual behavior. Coders from the Kaiser Family Foundation were brought in to break down the content into three separate categories (sexual behavior, sexual talk, and talk or behavior depicting risks). Collins et al. found those who reported having watched more sex at the baseline survey were more likely to initiate sex and progress to more non-coital sexual activities after one year (p. 280). As compared to those who watched no sexual content on television, the authors reported those who did see sexual content were twice as likely to have sex within a year. Collins et al. proposed that the frequency of sexual content on television and the way television characters act, combined with the viewing of sexual content over time, would cause adolescents to cultivate the idea that sex is a daily part of life. Parental involvement was a factor: “parental monitoring, parent education, living with both parents, having parents who would disapprove if the adolescent had sex, being religious, and having good mental health” were associated with a lower probability of intercourse initiation (p. 284). Factors associated with virgins starting sex at an earlier age included: “older age, having older friends, getting low grades, engaging in deviant behavior, and sensation-seeking” (p. 284). The authors concluded that “watching sex on TV predicts and may hasten adolescent sexual initiation” (p. 280). The findings also showed that many socio-cultural factors were associated with sexual television viewing, including: “older age, having mostly older friends, lower parent education, not living with both parents, less parental monitoring, less religiosity, poor mental health, sensation-seeking personality, deviant behavior, and low school grades” (p. 285). These
are factors which could possibly impact incidences of teenage pregnancy and may be central to adolescents’ engagement, and often preoccupation, with sexual content in the media.

Pardun, L’Engle, and Brown (2005) conducted media consumption and in-home health and sexuality interviews with 1,074 adolescents in southeastern U.S. One problem they encountered was that their definition of sexuality was too broad and achieving reliability was challenging (p. 81). Pardun et al. wrote:

…at first, we did not include sexual innuendo because it seemed too complicated for 12-year-olds. However, as training progressed, it became apparent that we were missing sexual messages. Therefore, we decided to code sexual innuendo if it was obvious to the coders. Training continued until all coders were able to identify the sexual content described in the coding guidebook (p. 83).

The usefulness of Pardun’s research, as it relates to this study, is it examined content in six media (music, movies, television, magazines, internet, and newspapers), in which adolescents might have come across sexual content. Pardun’s study utilized lists of media from the most popular TV shows, music, and movies from reputable sources including Nielsen, Billboard, and box office reports, which rank popularity based on number of viewers, downloads-sales, and ticket sales respectively. These were tested in classrooms and focus groups to ascertain whether the shows were truly popular among teens within their sample population. Pardun et al. found media selection for adolescents is more “based on salient issues in their daily lives (in this case, a budding interest in sex); adolescents do not consume media as a blank slate or without an agenda. It is purpose-driven” (p. 88).

In the most extensive and detailed study based on televised sexual content, the Kaiser Family Foundation (2005) content-analyzed 959 Nielsen top-rated shows overall and the top-rated teen shows broadcast in October, 2004 and April, 2005 from four commercial broadcast
networks, an independent broadcast station, three basic cable channels, and one premium cable channel. Seventeen University of Arizona undergraduate students coded sexual content into “sexually suggestive behavior, or talk about sexuality or sexual activity” (p. 14). Talk about sex occurred a lot more frequently than actual sexual behavior, with comments about their own or others' sexual interests being the most common. 1% of all sex talk on television that was coded was categorized as “expert advice/technical information” (p. 27). To qualify as “expert advice”, the discussion or information had to be presented by someone who had expertise or formal training on human sexuality such as a clinical psychologist or some other authoritative figure. For sexual behaviors, the coders found it occurs “in roughly one of every three shows (35%)” (p. 29). The sexual behaviors included: physical flirting, passionate kissing, intimate touching, sexual intercourse strongly implied, sexual intercourse depicted, special topics of talk and behaviors (first-time sex and oral sex). In one week of coding, 1,091 sexual behaviors were coded with passionate kissing (53%) being the most frequent. Implied and depicted sexual intercourse accounted for a combined 14% of the incidence. Another construct analyzed was safer sex messages: sexual patience (waiting to have sex), sexual precaution (“pursuing efforts to prevent STDs and/or unwanted pregnancy”), and depictions of risks and/or consequences of irresponsible sexual behavior which comprised only 4% of all sexual messages (p. 35). This suggests if adolescents use prime-time television programs as a source of sexual information about safer sex, the lessons learned are few, as the researchers found only about 1 out of every 25 instances where “the topic of sex arises on television is there any mention of a sexual risk or responsibility concern, even including all cases with only a minor emphasis on safer sex topics” (p. 35). This begs the question as to what adolescents actually get (in terms of substantive sexual health information) from watching television about the ramifications of having sex, because precautions and consequences are so rarely shown and discussed. This is why it is important to find out how
adolescents—or how pregnant teens/teen mothers learn about sex, or who or what are their socialization agents.

Brown, L’Engle, Pardun, Guo, Kenneavy, and Jackson’s (2006) two-wave in-home survey of 1,017 black and white adolescents (12-14 year olds) from 14 middle schools in central North Carolina examined consumption of sexual content in various media (music, movies, TV, and magazines). They found that for whites, “exposure to sexual content in music, movies, television, and magazines accelerates sexual activity and increases their risk of engaging in early sexual intercourse” (p. 1018). Overall, for blacks and whites, 12-14 year olds who had heavier sexual media diets were more likely than those with lighter sexual media diets to have engaged in sex by the time of the second self-interview. The inclusion of other forms of media besides television was a strength of this study. Brown et al. submitted that until the publication of their study, research on sexual content in media had either “focused almost exclusively on television or some kinds of television programming.” However, sexual content in music is another avenue that teens can be exposed to and therefore, possibly can influence their sexual behavior.

Martino, Collins, Elliott, Strachman, Kanouse, and Berry (2006) studied the effects of sexual content in music lyrics and subsequent changes in sexual initiation, or sexual experience to different portrayals of sex in such lyrics. Over 900 participants (938) completed all three waves of their national longitudinal phone survey of 1,461 12- to 17-year-old adolescents. They found “youth who listened to more degrading sexual lyrics at the second wave, initiated sex and progressed to more non-coital activity” (p. 430), and exposure to sex lyrics that were not degrading were not related to changes in sexual behavior. They concluded adolescents progressed more quickly in their sexual behavior, regardless of race or gender, when they listened to music that had objectifying and degrading lyrics (p. 437). Also, much like other
studies, the more teens consumed media, or in this particular case, music, “the more likely they were to advance in their non-coital sexual behavior and to initiate intercourse” (p. 439).

Ward and Friedman (2006) found that exposure to high levels of sexual content in media (television and music) correlated with attitudes about sex, gender stereotypes and sexual behaviors. In their study, 244 suburban high school students in Long Island, New York were split into two groups. One group (154)—the experimental group—viewed videos of women as sex objects from dramas and sitcoms such as *Seinfeld* and *Family Matters*, and the other group (90)—the control group—viewed nonsexual clips from the same shows. Those in the experimental group “expressed more stereotypical gender role attitudes” than those who were in the control group (p. 146). Media sources from which adolescents develop these attitudes and perceptions about gender and sexuality is important, as Ward and Friedman proposed those who found TV to be their “friend” or “companion” were more likely to buy in to the messages being seen, and to rely more on television for social norms and values (p. 150). For some adolescents, this could mean that the media is playing the role of a surrogate parent. The authors also found that more frequent viewing of talk shows and sexy primetime shows, and viewing TV for “companionship” (TV as companion) led to greater endorsement of sexual stereotypes (p. 146). The authors did not address co-viewing of television shows, such as with parents or with a boyfriend/girlfriend. These are important omissions since the ecology of viewing television with parents, and parental guidance or influence on media viewing have been shown to be strongly influential in terms of media viewing, behavior, and media literacy. Velde, Horst, Oenema, Timperio, Crawford, and Brug (2011) found children’s time spent with television was inversely related to family rules for viewing. While this study’s sample population was predominantly white (80%) as compared to 13% Asian, 5% Black, and .4% Latino, “students’ viewing motives emerged as the most consistent correlate of their sexual belief systems, demonstrating the power
of individual needs in shaping media influence” (p. 150). Other uses and needs that were satiated by watching television included watching as a habit and viewing as “just something fun to do” (p. 151). This is particularly relevant to this study and the exploration of how pregnant teens and teen mothers use the media throughout the course of their pregnancy.

Although not media-based, Herrman’s (2008) study of perceptions of teen births is noteworthy because it sheds light on what adolescents think about teens who have a baby and where or how they might have formed those impressions. Her survey of teen parents and non-parents (n = 120) between 12 and 19 years of age consisted of at-risk youth. Five of the participants were pregnant during the study and 19 already had children. Non-parenting youth believed having a child during the teen years led to an “increased focus on success, more mature judgment skills, better behavior, and a greater sense of responsibility” (p. 47). When asked about role models and positive influences, the participants listed parents, siblings, adult advocates, and some friends. Counselors and adults outside of the family were viewed as especially important because teens were not comfortable talking to their family about sex and other issues. “Peers” was the most often cited negative influence because many said their peers pressured them to have sex. It is surprising that the media did not come up in Herrman’s study. Asked if the participants mentioned the media because the media were not part of the scripted questions, Herrman followed with the thought that it was because her study took place just prior to the widespread appearance of teen pregnancy in popular culture (television and movies), which has some validity considering 16 and Pregnant did not debut until 2009.

For prevention of teen pregnancy, the participants in Herrman’s (2008) study recommended more education. Participants also suggested teen moms should educate other teens about the hardships of having a child. An adult mentor was mentioned as a necessity for the teen
to communicate her challenges and struggles. These results are compelling because neither the media nor anyone in the media was mentioned as either a positive or a negative influence.

Bleakley, Hennessy, Fishbein, and Jordan's (2008) two-wave longitudinal study of 501 adolescents in Philadelphia found the relationship between sexual content in media and sexual behavior to be mutually influential. In other words, those who were sexually active were more likely to seek out sexual content and those who viewed sexual content were more likely to become sexually active. This study by Bleakley et al. sought to see if social cognitive theory held true, that “seeing other adolescents in media enjoying sexual behavior with no negative consequences have an increased probability of observational learning and behavioral imitation” (p. 444). Also, the authors proposed that theories of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior could apply because mores are learned from direct experience or observation of others. The authors concluded that, “Children and adolescents, who may not all have first-hand sexual experience, learn and make inferences about sex and relationships from media” (p. 445).

A longitudinal study by the Children’s Hospital of Boston (2008) of 754 children claimed teenagers and children as young as 6-8 years old, who watched adult-themed movies and TV shows become sexually active at an earlier age than their peers. This highlights the now common apprehension that exists among the general public and in academic circles that in general, sexual media content may have a deleterious impact on American youth values and sexual behavior, with very damaging socio-cultural outcomes. As this problem is insufficiently explored, a study such as this may provide a deeper understanding of the issue, and thus contribute to our understanding of how youth engage media, and how they negotiate the socio-cultural intricacies or factors which arise within it at this media-saturated historical moment.

Cantor, Mares, and Hyde (2003) surveyed 196 undergraduate communications and psychology students at a large Midwestern university about their earliest memories of sexual
content. The participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire which asked them “to describe an instance of sexual media content that had a strong effect on them” (p. 10). In one subset of questionnaires, the authors modified the prompt to ask the respondents to describe an instance of sexual media content that had a strong impact on them when they were 10 years old or younger, if they could remember one (p. 10). The responses were coded for “type of sexual content” and the “type of media” where the message originated. The reactions ranged from physiological (increased heart rate, sweating, nausea, dizziness/fainting, crying, flushed face, sexual arousal, specific genital sensations, masturbation, tension/nervousness, and escape/avoidance) to emotional (shock/surprise, fear based on the program's contents, fear of being caught, disgust, sadness, anger/distress, incest/fascination, guilt/shame, amusement, happiness, and jealousy). Participants were also asked to describe any lingering effects or impact and the duration of those effects of the sexual content. An overwhelming majority, 91.6%, said their first encounter with sexual content came from the media. Seventy-four (or 74) of the participants said their memory was based on something that happened between the ages of 5 and 12. The rest (116 out of 196) said their first sexual media content encounter happened between 13 and 23 years of age. Movies was the most-mentioned media, followed by television. Sexual arousal was the most common physical reaction, although it was mentioned by only 17% and avoidance (closing the eyes or leaving the room) was the second most-mentioned response. Emotionally, disgust was the top response, followed by shock or surprise. Reinforcement of preexisting moral beliefs and the realization that sex could exist without love were the two top lingering or enduring effects of the participants' first encounter of sexual content. However, almost half (44.8%) said these thoughts lasted a day or less after seeing the media depiction of sex. Age made a difference in the first contact with sexual media. Those who recounted their first experience of seeing it at age 13 or older were equally likely to have either sought it out, stumbled on it, or viewed it because
someone else was watching it. Those who were younger “were most likely to have seen it because someone else was watching it, and least likely to have sought it out themselves” (p. 17). Age also mattered in terms of what was retained from the experience. Younger children remembered the more sensory experiences such as seeing nudity, kissing, and hearing sexual noises. Older children remembered the more complex facets of the sexual content, which required more complex cognition, such as dialog, same gender sex, and rape. Also, emotionally, younger children were more concerned with how others around them would react, whereas older children were more focused on how they themselves processed the content. Gender also made a difference in the responses, as men were more likely to recall sexual arousal, interest, and nudity. Women expressed more negativity, crying, and sadness toward their first encounter with sexual media. The context of the media exposure made a difference as well with most of the experiences occurring at home. Seventy-five percent of the time, no adult was present as a co-viewer; and the researchers suggest that if parents are not around or do not have a strong influence on the cognitive development of their children, the impact of the media could be negative. This dissertation takes an approach similar to Cantor et al. in that I asked pregnant teens and teen mothers to recall who taught them about media literacy, sex, love, and relationships, and if their thoughts had changed about seeing sex in the media after having a child. Also, it considers the environmental factors that may have an impact on media engagement.

Chandra, Martino, Collins, Elliott, Berry, Kanouse, and Miu (2008) claimed to be the “first to demonstrate an association between exposure to sexual content on television and a reproductive health outcome” within their study of television and its connection to teen pregnancies for girls and fatherhood for boys (p. 1052). Their cross-sectional sample population of 1,315 adolescents aged 12-17 across the country, who completed all three waves, was drawn
from telephone listings, school enrollment records, car registrations, magazine subscriptions, and warranty registrations (p. 1048). The researchers “selected programs that were popular with teens” from the previous television season and the participants indicated during the baseline survey of programs that were still popular. Those programs “contained high levels of sexual content”, which were then coded for the sexual content (p. 1049). Chandra et al. proposed adolescents whose television diet is heavy with sexual content will be twice as likely to be involved in a pregnancy over the following three years as compared to those who are not exposed to the same amount of sexual content. Under a third of the population of the original 2,003 participants who began the study, 744, had reported being a partner (the mother or father of a child) to a pregnancy by the third wave. Two-parent families were linked to a lower probability of pregnancy while variables that were associated with a higher likelihood of being involved in a pregnancy included: “female participants, black participants, and youths with more deviant behavior” as well as those “who intended to have children early” (p. 1051).

The present study pivots off Chandra et al. because, as its authors claim: “To our knowledge, no previous work has empirically examined associations between exposure to television sexual content and adolescent pregnancy” (p. 1047). They (Chandra et al.) argue that “there is increasing evidence that youth exposure to sexual content on television shapes sexual attitudes and behavior in a manner that may influence reproductive health outcomes.”

Social media and teen pregnancy

Modern social media, such as Facebook, has been a part of our social fabric since the early 2000s. Not much academic research has been conducted on how new social media influence pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers. However, the role social media might play in teenage sexuality and the reduction of teenage pregnancy has started to get the attention of governmental organizations. However, as noted in Chapter One, in a National Bureau of
Economic Research study, a causal relationship was made between the airing of *16 and Pregnant* and subsequent online searches and social media mentions of birth control and abortion, and an ensuing decrease in the teen birth rate in the South and Midwest, where the show is most popular.

The Pew Research Center's (2015) report on social media use by teenagers (13 to 17 years old) provides the most up-to-date information on the pervasiveness of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. An online survey was administered to 1,060 teens in a nationally representative sample from February to March of 2015. In addition, 1,016 parent-teen pairs were interviewed. Almost 9 in 10 (88%) 13-17 year-olds had a cellphone. Seventy-three percent had a smartphone. African-Americans (85%) had the highest percentage of smartphones, followed by Whites and Hispanics (both at 71%). Income did not have a dramatic effect on the ownership of smartphones as 77% of teens in homes that had $50,000 or more in income had a cellphone, versus 64% of those homes with under $50,000 in income. Online activity is a way of life for many teens. Over 90% said they went online daily with 24% being online “almost constantly” (p. 16). Facebook was the most used social media platform among teens. Seventy-one percent of all teens said they have a Facebook account. The average Facebook user had 145 friends. The second most popular form (52%) of social media was Instagram, a photo-sharing app. Girls used Instagram more than boys (61% to 44%). Instagram users averaged 150 followers. Another photo-sharing app, Snapchat, was popular among 41% of teens in this survey. Girls also used this app more than boys (51% to 31%). Twitter, a short-message social media app, was cited by a third (33%) of the teens as a platform they used. Older teens (15-17) used Twitter twice as much (42% to 21%) than younger teens (13-14). Typically, those who said they used Twitter had 95 followers. Google+ was also used by 33% of the teens in the survey with 33% of boys and girls saying they used the service, which allows people to
share videos, interests, and other updates. Vine (24%, a short-video sharing app) and Tumblr (14%, a short-form blogging platform) were the last used forms of social media.

Content of what was shared online was not surveyed in the Pew report. It is interesting to note African-Americans (34%) and Hispanics (32%) go online more frequently than Whites (19%). African-Americans and Hispanics happen to be the two ethnicities with the highest teen pregnancy rates in the United States.

Social media has become a valuable component in the fight against teen pregnancy. The CDC has funded efforts to combat teen pregnancy in states such as New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, Massachusetts, and Texas. The CDC website offers several links, messages, infographics, and other materials available for teens to post and share on various social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter. University of Florida social media specialist Bruce Floyd believes social media could get teens to think about the consequences of having a baby. He believes “social media platforms could have also contributed to the lower teen pregnancy rate” (Werley, 2011). In this literature review, only one study (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2014) has been found to show a strong correlation between teen pregnancy reality shows, social media, and a subsequent drop in the teen birth rate. North Florida Planned Parenthood CEO Staci Fox argues social media can have an impact on teenage pregnancy. Fox proposed social media gives teens a place to “speak in a familiar and comfortable medium” (Werley, 2011). Social media is at the heart of a current teen pregnancy prevention program in Richmond County, Georgia called “We Are Change”. The CDC reported Georgia’s teen birthrate in 2010 was 41.4 per 1,000 girls. The national rate that year was 34.3 per 1,000 girls. In 2010, We Are Change was given a $7.5 million grant by the CDC to create an online quiz to test teens’ knowledge on safe-sex methods as well as to share information on Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr about reproductive outcomes. The online quiz was designed by teenagers. We Are
Change Project Director Donna Elliston believes using social media is important because it reaches the teenagers where they are: “Teens are spending much of their time on Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter so we’re meeting them where they are. This is just one part of our effort to try to get the community to address an issue that all too frequently derails futures.” The CDC grant is also helping to fund two teen health clinics. Besides making teens more knowledgeable about sexual intercourse, another goal is to lower the teen birthrate by 10% by the end of 2015. By learning more about how pregnant teens and teen mothers use social media and their online habits (what they post, how much they share, what social networks they use, and so on), more methods could be devised to reach them in terms of education about health and sexual concerns.

Even though a distinct relationship between sexual content viewing and teen pregnancy has been clearly established, it is clear that a number of socio-cultural factors appear to saturate the contexts in which teen pregnancy appears—and that media, both traditional and new—are part of this context. Parents can play a vital role in how their child becomes oriented to the media. In a Kaiser Family Foundation (2010) study of 2,002 8-18 year olds’ media consumption, they found several alarming statistics relating to children and how they are growing up on media and parental supervision. First, daily media usage is going up. Eight-to-18-year-olds are spending 7 hours and 38 minutes a day with media, which is up from 6 hours and 21 minutes reported in a similar Kaiser study five years earlier. Second, whether it was television, video games, computers, or music, “the majority of 8-to-18-year-olds say they don’t have any rules about the type of media content they can use or the amount of time they can spend with the medium,” but with regards to computer usage, a little over half (52%) said they had guidelines about what they can do on the computer (p. 35). Third, children who have limited access to the media in the home such as not having a television in the bedroom, not leaving the television on in the background during family time activities like eating dinner, or having some media viewing
rules such as viewing time restriction, spend less time with the media than their peers. The
family unit and especially parents, play an important role in how the child uses the media.
Several prominent social scientists provide schemas which help contextualize and explain how
adolescents use the media and how sexual behaviors occur.
CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHOD

Two adolescent development theorists, Erik Erikson and Urie Bronfenbrenner, are particularly relevant to this study. Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Systems Theory and Model is a useful schema for analyzing how particular media ecologies may impact adolescent women. Erikson’s work on adolescent development will be discussed first. He is best known for proposing the eight stages of psychosocial development, which is his view of how people grow and develop from infancy through adulthood, through interacting with those around them.

Erikson believed we create or shape our identity based on our contact with others, or the relationships we have with those around us. His work on adolescent development deals with issues of identity and role confusion or role stability. It is relevant in studying how pregnant teens interact with the media, since teens spend hours on various media every day. As part of our development, Erikson devised a set of eight stages or crises that we pass through during our lives. Erikson labeled these crises as: *trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. role confusion, intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation*, and *ego integrity vs. despair*. These stages have prescribed age ranges but are fluid, as Erikson believed that all human beings do not pass through the stages at the same rate and that for some, unresolved issues may linger from one stage to the next. For example, in the adolescent stage (ages 13-19), labeled *identity versus role confusion*, the teenagers struggle with the onset of puberty, the discovery of sexual relationships, and trying to find their place in the world. Erikson (1968) stated:

They are sometimes morbidly, often curiously, preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are, and with the question of how to connect the roles and skills cultivated earlier with the prototypes of the day. In
their search for a new sense of continuity and sameness, which must now include sexual maturity, some adolescents have to come to grips again with crises of earlier years before they can install lasting idols and ideals as guardians of a final identity. (p. 128)

Being “preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others” can be a result of a number of experiences or influences. An element of this study seeks to explore whether the media have an influence on how an individual, in this case the pregnant teen, sees herself, and the importance of “environment” and “social reality”. Erikson’s ego identity, in the overall schema of this exploration of media and teen pregnancy, knowledge of socioeconomic status, education level, history of teen pregnancy in the family, family relationships, history of sexual activity, and so on, provides invaluable insights into the teen's environment that may more fully explain how and why teens become pregnant and how they deal with pregnancy and post-partum issues.

The act of “falling in love”, as Erikson said, can help influence the makeup of the adolescent’s identity because that person is “projecting one’s diffused self-image on another and by seeing it thus reflected and gradually clarified” (p. 132). Included in identity formation is the inclusion and/or exclusion into social groups that can be achieved through “skin color, cultural background, in tastes and gifts, and often in entirely petty aspects of dress and gesture arbitrarily selected as the signs of an in-grouper or out-grouper” (p. 132). It is difficult to gauge the extent to which adolescents use the media or parents, peers and others as well as other aspects of their environment to mold who they are. University of Toledo’s Dr. Griffith supports Erikson’s view about the internal conflicts adolescents have with pleasing others while trying to fit in. She believes that going through this stage while having a child further complicates matters in an adolescent’s life.
When I’m pregnant, I have disappointed somebody significant. The middle adolescent is also beginning to form relationships with peers. How am I going to maintain relationships with peers now that I am pregnant? My whole social network, perhaps, is going to be changed. The middle adolescent also begins to think about a future career. What am I going to be doing? I am pregnant. And for the most part, the biggest impact of adolescent pregnancy is a delayed and decreased educational achievement. It’s during this time that the adolescent looks to the opposite gender relationships. Is the father of my baby engaged in this relationship? Or was that an accident? Or did he drop me like a hot potato? So, from that standpoint, adolescent pregnancy is a double-whammy. I’m still trying to develop as a person. I’m still trying to achieve the milestones of where I am as an adolescent and now you add to that, I have to be responsible for another person. And I have no idea where the father is. So it is stressful. It has the potential to be a very stressful situation. As one of my teens told me when I told her she was pregnant, she said, “I can’t be, because if I tell my mama, she will want to put me out.” (Personal communication, June 14, 2011)

This internal struggle, as identified by Dr. Griffith, exemplifies someone experiencing difficulties in the industry vs. inferiority stage or the identity vs. role confusion stage. In this stage, a child deals with trying to figure out right from wrong, while also attempting to figure out moral values. In the age range prescribed by Erikson, 5-12 years old, some young adults may attempt to rebel. In the identity vs. role confusion stage, age 13-19 years, individuals figure out their place in society, start to think about possible careers, and also explore their sexual identity and relationship roles.

Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Model is another human development perspective that has been used in media ecology studies. Bronfenbrenner’s model attempts to
explain the interdependence of the individual and the layers of society surrounding him or her (family, school, community, and so on). As discussed earlier, bad family relationships and poor performance in school are at-risk factors for teen pregnancy, so a closer look at the social contexts in which teen mothers use the media is important in this study.

Two definitions central to Bronfenbrenner’s model (1979), shown on page 43, are also relevant to this study. The first is his definition of development as “lasting change in the way in which a person perceives and deals with his environment” (p. 3). The phrase “deals with his environment” indicates that Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model involves interaction and change. Further, Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined “ecology of human development” as:

…the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded (p. 21).

Again, interaction is emphasized. Bronfenbrenner acknowledged that change occurs as a person takes on different roles in an ever-changing environment. Prior to the creation of his model in the mid-1970s, behavioral science research, focused on the individual, rather than on the individual; and the environment as a whole. Bronfenbrenner argued that scholars believed the relationship between the individual and his/her environment was linear (unidirectional) rather than interdependent or mutually beneficial. This interactive aspect was the impetus behind his model.

Another point to note here is that in the process of becoming pregnant and dealing with pregnancy and motherhood, the social environment for teen mothers shifts consistently and significantly, even in their perception of these shifts. For this study, the question will be: what role do traditional and new media have in these shifts as these women adjust to the life change of having a child?
Figure 3.1 Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Model [image]. (n.d.).

3e_SbLI1Kbc/UkH085O8q5I/AAAAAAAAACw4/IAZ_AJdzGss/s1600/bronfenbrenner.jpeg
The figure on the previous page (3.1) suggests the most immediate environment affecting a person’s development is in the center, the microsystem. An individual in the middle of the diagram or in the center circle (microsystem) is surrounded by the places or settings in his or her immediate environment: family, school, peers, neighborhood play area, church group, and health services. In these settings, the individual has more frequent face-to-face, interpersonal interactions with the people in his or her life. The next layer is the mesosystem. The mesosystem includes the same items as the microsystem. However, Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated the mesosystem comprises the interrelations of “two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations among home, school, and neighborhood peer group; for an adult, among family, work and social life)” (p. 25). The interactions or relationships between such settings can impact development. For example, how well a child does in school is often heavily influenced by the child’s life at home; again, the values learned in the religious setting can guide the child at home or at school and vice versa. For example, Meschke, Bartholomae, and Zentall (2002) reported “Neighborhood (socioeconomic status, joblessness), peer (sexually active friends), familial (family instability, single-parent household, sibling sexual activity), and individual characteristics (race/ethnicity, gender, age, pubertal status) have all been associated with adolescent sexual outcomes” (p. 264). Meschke et al. found warmth, support, and good communication between the parent and child help promote quality adolescent sexual behaviors. Beyond the mesosystem is the broader exosystems layer. In the diagram on page 44, neighbors, legal services, social welfare services, mass media, and friends of family are identified as aspects of this layer. Other items such as community or the parent’s workplace could fit here as well. These entities can indirectly affect the developing adolescent. For example, if welfare services or benefits get cut, that affects life at home; the exosystems “social welfare services” item would have an indirect effect on the child. Or for another example, the
school board may prohibit cellphones within schools, which could impact the child; though the
child and the board may have never met. A federal restriction on the age at which a child can buy
a video game is another example, or limits on federal assistance and health care could impact a
teen mother. The macrosystem is the fourth layer in the model. This encompasses large,
overarching systems that have an impact on our lives. The diagram lists macrosystem as
“attitudes and ideologies of the culture”. A nation’s culture (which includes the economy and
religious ideology) would fit here. If the words “American culture” or “South Korean culture”
were placed in this ring, it would have an effect on the inner layers and their interactions.
Bronfenbrenner’s fifth layer, called the chronosystem, allows for change over time due to events
occurring in the outer layers. Bronfenbrenner (2005) proposed for a long time, a person’s
environment “was treated as a fixed entity” (p. 119). Changes can come in the form of a variety
of events and at different levels. Parental divorce, going to a new school, or having a baby as a
teenager would apply here.

Nevertheless, the changing home dynamics, be it a dual-working parents’ home, divorce,
or other circumstances instead—such as the parents’ marital status, family socioeconomic status,
and the role of media in the home, especially television—were concerns to Bronfenbrenner. He
was interested in how such issues negatively impact social development. Single parent, divorced
parents, and other familial changes are what he called the new demography. This new
demography has been shown to lead to negative consequences on children. Bronfenbrenner
(1986) cited the studies of Dornbusch, Carlsmith, Bushwall, Ritter, Leriderman, Hastorf, and
Gross (1985), and Steinberg (1985) which showed that children in single-parent homes are more
likely to “engage in adult disapproved activities (such as smoking, school misbehavior, and
delinquency)” than their peers who came from two-parent homes (p. 727). Gordon Berlin,
Executive Vice President of MRDC (Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation), a
nonpartisan social policy research organization that studies issues concerning disadvantaged families, testified to a U.S. Senate Subcommittee in 2004 about the effects of divorce on families. Berlin said, “Child poverty is inextricably bound up with family structure.” Also, Berlin testified that single parenthood is a contributing factor to the child being a school dropout, a teen parent, arrested, and/or unemployed.

In 1986, Bronfenbrenner reiterated his characterization of television from the 1970s and argued “the primary importance of television for child development may lie not so much in the behavior it prevents, and the behavior that can be prevented is family interaction” (p. 736). In other words, children displace interactions with parents with interactions between them and media. Even though the California Cable and Telecommunications website assesses only 16 million households across the country had cable in the 1970s and choices were limited for over-the-air television, Bronfenbrenner still saw television as something that caused family communication to break apart. Whether or not the media are truly pulling families apart, especially in the case of teen pregnancy, his point is of interest to this researcher.

Citing quantitative studies done on media usage and exposure on Canadian children, Johnson and Puplampu (2008) proposed a variation of Bronfrenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Model. Johnson and Puplampu, in remaking Bronfenbrenner’s model, created a more contemporary model (on page 47) that depicts adolescent media usage. Note that in Bronfenbrenner’s original model, mass media was in the exosystem, which was a reflection on the media at the time when over-the-air broadcast television and radio were the dominant media choices. Mass media, when Bronfenbrenner created the model, went from the programmer to the consumer without any interactivity between the two. The opposite is true today with cable television, satellite television, smartphones, social media, and the internet being prominent examples of media that are consumer-driven and interactive. Johnson and Puplampu created the
ecological techno-subsystem to “reflect conceptual recognition of reciprocal influences among
and within systems” (para. 16). They adapted current uses of technology into the Bronfenbrenner
layers. For example, they listed parental online access to their child’s schoolwork as belonging in
the *mesosystem* layer, and proposed that how the parent uses the internet at work could indirectly
affect their child’s home internet access (*exosystem*) (p. 4). This model, below, better reflects the
active audience participation engagement with the media that is true today, and may reveal
media interactions which may be crucial to gain an understanding of the role media play in
helping pregnant teens work through the pregnancy process.

![Figure 3.2 Johnson and Puplampu’s Ecological Techno-subsystem Model](http://www.cjlt.ca/index.php/cjlt/article/view/172/168)
Johnson and Puplampu’s study was able to incorporate as much media as possible to report how these impact teenagers’ lives on a daily basis. This study, along with its updated model, provides enough evidence based on media usage to relocate media from Bronfenbrenner’s *exosystem* to the *microsystem*.

Despite the fact that Johnson and Puplampu’s model shows the proliferation of media in a child’s life, parents still can have a strong influence on media exposure and media effects on their children. Fisher, Hill, Grube, Bersamin, Walker, and Gruber (2009) collected self-reported data from 1,012 adolescents in the second wave of a three-year longitudinal study in San Francisco and Los Angeles in 2003. Fisher et al. found that parental mediation was a “significant factor in countering these (sexually suggestive material) potential media influences” (p. 139). Setting limits on television viewing content and amount of viewing yielded the most prosocial effects. These limits resulted in what the researchers called a “surprisingly large” effect in reducing the likelihood that a child engaged in oral or vaginal sexual intercourse. Furthermore, parental limitations on viewing led to increased perceived negative outcomes of sex and lower expectations of pleasure (p. 139). These researchers suggested that parental co-viewing can be an important way to combat the negative effects of sexual media content on children, because parents would be able to explain situations on television, answer questions, and reinforce positive events and point out negative consequences. Cho and Cheon’s (2005) survey of 178 families about the context in which the internet is used at home found that “parents’ perceived control, obtained through shared web activities and family cohesion, was determined to actually reduce children’s exposure to negative internet content” (p. 488).

Parental restrictions on media were measured in the Kaiser Family Foundation’s (2010) study on the role of media in the lives of adolescents. In 2008 and 2009, a total of 2,002 8-18 year olds completed media use diaries for one week that covered topics such as the kinds of
media used, where media exposure took place, and parental controls. Regarding parental limits, the following results were found:

- Parents were stricter when it came to rules for what their children can watch on TV as compared to how much TV they could watch, as 46% had rules about what shows they could view versus 28% who said the time spent watching television was regulated. Only 26% of children in the survey said they had rules about what music they could listen to.
- Fifty-two percent (52%) said they had rules about computer/internet usage. Television was the next most regulated medium, with 46% saying they had guidelines about what they were allowed to watch. Video games and music were almost equal (30% and 26% respectively) in terms of regulated usage.
- Sixteen percent (16%) of the 8-18 year olds said they had free rein when it came to their time spent with the media.

Overall, media usage in the Kaiser report had gone up dramatically from the previous survey done five years earlier. Kaiser reported that in 2004, 8-18 year olds used the media over a 6 hours and 21 minutes stretch of time, but were engaged with different devices for a total of 8 hours and 33 minutes during that period. Five years later, the amount spent with media jumped to 7 hours and 38 minutes, and the total time spent overall with different media was 10 hours and 45 minutes. Also, users were grouped into light (<3 hours a day), moderate (3-16 hours a day), and heavy (16+ hours a day). Based on this increased usage of media combined with the lack of parental monitoring or guidelines, these findings are in accord with Johnson and Puplampu’s results that showed the amount of media in the daily life of an adolescent.

Uses and Gratifications

The primary concern of this study is the pregnancy experience of teenagers before, during and after their pregnancy, and their choices and consumption of a range of media during
that process. While acknowledging that males and females both contribute to teenage pregnancy, the focus here is on the women in the pregnancy partnership. The task is to understand how and why these young women use media and what they get from their media use and the meanings they derive from such use. Thus, the structure of this study is organized through the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) framework. Methodologically, Grounded Theory (GT) will be applied as a theory building tool via the analysis of data collected from teenage women going through the pregnancy experience.

Uses and Gratifications is a research perspective that examines why people consume media. Herta Herzog is cited for conducting the first U&G study when she interviewed 100 radio soap opera fans in the 1940s in her study, *On Borrowed Experience: An Analysis of Listening to Daytime Sketches*, about why these women followed their favorite shows. Herzog identified three reasons why people listened: emotional release, opportunities for wishful thinking, and obtaining advice (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009). Similarly, other early studies using the U&G perspective sought out the reasons why people tuned in to broadcast media programs (Ruggiero, 2000). Methodologically, these were qualitative studies in which researchers collected and categorized open-ended statements from participants. However, Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) criticized those early approaches for not looking deeply enough into the “psychological and sociological origins of the needs” met by media use; and researchers did not attempt to “search for interrelationships among the various media functions, either quantitatively or conceptually in a manner that might have led to the detection of the latent structure of media gratifications” (p. 509). Katz et al. found that U&G research around 1970 had evolved to include:

1. social and psychological origins of
2. needs, which generate
3. expectations of
4. the mass media or other sources, which led to
5. differential patterns of media exposure
Lasswell (1948) developed a four-function conception of media use: surveillance (as keeping citizens informed), correlation (providing responses to information), entertainment (a diversion), and cultural transmission (or socialization). McQuail, Blumler, and Brown (1972) further expanded the list of possible uses of media to include: diversion (more commonly known as escapism), personal relationships (known as personal interaction), personal identity (this refers to using the media for affirmation of self and beliefs or attitudes), and surveillance (to follow a celebrity or other person of interest). Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974, p. 511) synthesized the various propositions of U&G into the following five core assumptions:

1. The audience is conceived as being active (i.e. an important part of mass media use is assumed to be goal-directed) in terms of gratifications sought.

2. In the mass communication process, the initiative in linking need gratification and media choice lies with the audience member. This statement indicates a shift from the proposition that media influence audiences to the proposition that the audience has agency.

3. Media compete with other sources of need gratification. The needs served by mass communication constitute just a segment of the wider range of human needs. The expectancy value or extent to which people seek gratification through the media varies according to the character of the viewer and is not universal.

4. Many of the goals or gratifications obtained from mass media use can be derived from data supplied by the individual audience members themselves (i.e. people are sufficiently self-aware to be able to report their interests and motives in particular cases, or at least to
recognize them, when confronted with them in an intelligible and familiar verbal formulation).

5. Value judgments about the cultural significance of mass communication should be suspended, while audience orientations are explored on their own terms. This refers to the contextual setting in which people use the media. Not all contexts are the same.

The first and second assumptions oppose the perspective held by many in older communication research that the media act upon the audience, which is passive. The U&G view is that the audience is active and acts upon the media content.

The third assumption deals with our desire to fulfill our basic needs through various means. Maslow (1943) devised a hierarchy of human needs which includes: biological and physiological (food, medicine, air, water), safety (shelter, police), social (the need to feel loved and belonging), esteem (independence, responsibility, pride), and growth, which includes self-actualization (reaching potential, feeling a sense of accomplishment). Many sources, including media, may fulfill these needs.

Despite the proliferation of U&G research on traditional and new media and social media, in the context of disconcerting levels of sexual content, the still high incidence of teenage pregnancy in the U.S., with the attendant significant social and economic costs, abundant theoretical interest in adolescent development and media constructs, and the fact that several NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and governmental organizations have been deploying new media to reduce teen sexual initiation and pregnancy, no U&G media study explores the use of media through the process of adolescent teenage pregnancy and post pregnancy adapting to having a baby. Past U&G articles and studies published on adolescents and the media have included the following topics: media and identity (Brown, Dykers, Steele, & White, 1994), (Arnett, Larson, & Offer, 1995), media uses for self-socialization (Arnett, 1995b), private use of
media (Larson, 1995), sensation seeking and televised violence (Kremar & Greene, 1999),
sексuality and media practice (Steele, 1999), impulsive choices and problem behaviors (Wulfert,
Block, Ana, Rodriguez, & Colsman, 2002), predictors of violent film, computer, and website
content (Slater, 2003), antecedents of motives for television use (Roe & Minnebo, 2007),
motivations for social media use (Barker, 2009), dimensions of uses and gratifications for social
networking sites (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2010), and seeking sexual content in the media
(Bleakley, Hennessy, & Fishbein, 2011). Beginning with pregnant teenagers and teenage
mothers as active users of media, this exploratory study provides a new and different perspective
in understanding how pregnant teens engage with the media.

A study such as this would be useful in ascertaining what sort of media uses and
gratifications may be related to the attitude of teenage mothers toward sexuality and pregnancy
before they become pregnant, and how they use media during and after pregnancy. The women
in this study may approach using the media with certain expectations of gratifications sought,
either through the viewership of teen pregnancy reality programming, through social media
interaction, or through seeking medical advice online. It is unknown what gratifications have
been obtained from their media usage. It is important to hopefully gain an understanding of the
social process or processes that take place as these women progress through their pregnancies.

The fourth assumption deals with ascertaining the needs and goals of the audience
through “data supplied by individual audience members themselves” (p. 511). Instead of making
the participants fill out surveys, conducting individual interviews allows for a richer and more in-
depth dataset. So many variables are involved in the experiences a pregnant teen/teen mother has
with media, having the ability to ask follow-up questions and gather information about the
backgrounds of the participants might provide a clearer picture of their processes of media
engagement. University of Massachusetts Qualitative research author and professor Irving
Seidman believes that context is the key for interviewing, as it “allows us to put behavior in context and provides access to understanding their action” (Seidman, p. 10). Allowing the participants to describe their media usage, combined with grounded theory methodology to analyze the response, will allow the women's experiences to speak for themselves.

U&G assumption number five—suspending judgment about the effects of mass communication until we better understand audience orientation—has particular relevance to this study. Often, traditional media research is based upon presumed media influence without giving due consideration to audience agency. This is also a perspective held by the general public, and some highly publicized commentaries on teen pregnancy illustrate this presumption. For example, commenting on the alleged “pregnancy pact” by high school students in Gloucester, Massachusetts, the mayor of the city declared that the glamorization of teen pregnancy was responsible for the “pact”. However, to better understand the audience's orientation to media, it is essential to implement an effective methodology to attain or determine the audience's engagement, which will then hopefully accord a better understanding of the media's influence.

As an example of attempting to discern audience agency and engagement, Bleakley, Hennessy, Fishbein, and Jordan (2008) conducted a two-wave longitudinal sex and media web-based survey of 501 adolescents. The researchers focused on media use, subjective judgments of the amount and quality of sexual content in television, movies, music, magazines, and video games. They investigated potential mediating variables such as prior sexual behavior, and the psychosocial determinants of the adolescents' intentions to engage in (or abstain from) sexual intercourse. Bleakley et al. concluded the reasons why adolescents seek out sexual content in media “may vary, ranging from information gathering to seeking normative validation for their behavior” (p. 446). Such seeking of validation for behavior also falls into Erikson’s *identity versus role confusion* stage of development as adolescents figure out their roles within relationships, which
leads to the formation of their identity. Sometimes it also leads to confusion. The researchers’ report that adolescents using the media to "gratify" their needs is consistent with behavioral theories such as Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and Ajzen (1991) created the TRA and TPB respectively to explain how individuals weigh the ramifications or consequences of their behavior before deciding whether or not to engage in that behavior. Researchers Bleakley et al. proposed that "sexual activity successfully predicted exposure to sexual content in the media and sexual content exposure predicted a progression of sexual activity" (p. 456). They also found that the more parents disapproved of sex, the higher the level of exposure to sexual content (p. 456).

Grounded theory analysis

Grounded theory analysis was created in the 1960s by Glaser and Strauss as a way to “emphasize(s) the common experiences for a number of individuals” (Cresswell, p. 82). Grounded theory co-founder Glaser wrote that it “allows the relevant social organization and sociopsychological organization of the people studied to be discovered, to emerge—in their perspective” (1992, p. 5). Rather than beginning a research project with a testable theory, the theory is generated or produced after a systematic analysis of data, which can be original interviews, transcripts, or other forms of data collected by the researcher. The data can also be from archived, pre-existing sources. No matter what sources are used, the key is to “bring an open mind to what is happening, so that we can learn about the worlds and people we study” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 3). As described in the upcoming pilot interview summaries section, the interaction with pregnancy-themed media was determined by the depth or meaning of the shows and the interpretation of how interesting or how much the shows were comparable to these women's lives.
Traditional media researchers are typically within the scientific method paradigm, or as Babbie (1990) called it, the “traditional perspective” (p. 3). The researcher typically conducts a literature review to find out how the research question has been investigated previously. There is some debate in grounded theory studies whether conducting a literature review prior to data collection is acceptable, because some view a pre-data collection literature review as tainting the open-minded process necessary for a grounded theory study. However, Chamaz (2014) supports the necessity of literature review prior to data collection. She wrote:

...use it (the literature review) without letting it stifle your creativity or strangle your theory. The literature review gives you an opportunity to set the stage for what you do in subsequent sections or chapters. Analyze the most significant works in relation to what you addressed in your now developed grounded theory (p. 308).

The literature review, therefore, should yield a theoretical framework to guide the researcher in the study. Next, the researcher forms a hypothesis, or an educated guess about what an experiment will show. Then, in many traditional scientific cases, an experiment with a control group and an experimental (treatment) group is performed and data collected. The researcher analyzes this data, interprets it, and determines whether or not the hypothesis was supported or rejected. Finally, the researcher sometimes reworks the hypothesis, discusses limitations of the study, and suggests further directions for future study of the problem that was addressed.

Grounded theory includes some elements of the above-mentioned scientific method but in a different sequential order. Grounded theory practitioners may begin with “…a statement that identifies the phenomenon to be studied” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 38). In this study, the researcher investigates the engagement of media by teenage mothers. The focus is on the interaction between teen mothers and the media. After identifying the phenomenon to be studied and examining literature, the next step in grounded theory research is to collect data. As
previously mentioned, data can consist of interviews, transcripts, or other sources. Although data sources can take many forms, the researcher codes the data without any preconceived notion of what to code in terms of a theoretical concept. The researcher lets the trends emerge and must keep an open mind; otherwise, having a preconceived idea of what to look for is forcing the issue and causes the researcher to miss “what subjects in the substantive area under study consider, in their (italics added for emphasis) perspective, the true problems they face” (Glaser, 1992, p. 22). Glaser warns grounded theory practitioners to keep in mind that when coding, abstract problems and their processes should be examined and not units of measurement as in quantitative research. This coding process is included in a sequence where the researcher must follow a particular order to be considered a true grounded theory study. Buchanan and Bryman (2009) explained six key concepts of grounded theory.

1. *Theoretical sampling:* As the theory emerges, it helps the researcher determine where next to gather data. Theoretical sampling refers to the emergence of substantive and formal theories, which takes place in open coding (step 3).

2. *Constant comparison:* This is fundamental to grounded theory and means that the researcher must constantly analyze data while collecting it, looking for emerging trends as well as differences.

3. *Open coding:* This should be an unstructured review of interview transcripts or data, wherein the researcher looks for key words or phrases that help describe the process or phenomenon being studied, and not the person. The first categories typically form quickly during the first round of coding. Open coding is a combination of the first two processes (#1 and #2) described above. Charmaz (2014) observed, “Coding distills data, sorts them, and gives us an analytic handle for making comparisons with other segments of data” (p. 4).
It is still critical to keep preconceived theories out of the picture at this point. Using preconceived theories and especially using preconceived coding categories weakens a grounded theory study because: pre-existing categories for the specific phenomenon being studied “are harder to find, fewer in number, and not as rich; since in the long run they may not be relevant, and are not exactly designed for the purpose, they must be specified” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 37). In other words, using what worked as coding categories or theories in one study should not be replicated to different or even similar phenomena in another study.

During this open coding phase, it is permissible to formulate a hypothesis based on what has been observed thus far.

4. **Memos**: This is critical for the grounded theory researcher as he/she breaks down the data. Jotting down memos of how the data are being coded will help the reader understand how items were coded, categories formed, and theories derived. It helps the reader see the researcher’s thought process through a paper trail. In several of his books on grounded theory, Glaser often used the phrase “all is data”, which is a good rule to keep in mind as nothing should be excluded from consideration, and that includes the thought process, field notes, and impressions about subjects.

5. **Axial coding**: This is where the researcher takes the categories from the open coding process and looks for interrelationships between them. Once relationships are determined, descriptive categories are formed. Then the interrelationships are re-examined and new higher order, more broad categories are created.

6. **Selective coding**: This is the last step of coding where the researcher brings together the categories into larger core categories, which is where the theory emerges. For grounded theory, two types of theory emerges, substantive theory and formal theory. Glaser and
Strauss (1967) defined substantive theories as theories meant for sociological inquiry. They listed the following as examples: patient care, race relations, professional education, delinquency, or research organizations. Formal theories are meant for “conceptual area of inquiry” (p. 32). This is what researchers are more familiar with in terms of areas of study like stigma, deviant behavior, formal organization, socialization, status congruency, authority and power, reward systems, or social mobility. For example, in their grounded theory work on patients in cancer wards, Glaser and Strauss categorized “social loss of dying patients” as substantive theory and “social value of people” as formal theory. Their substantive theory caused Glaser and Strauss to hypothesize that “the higher the social loss of a dying patient, the better the care, and the more nurses develop loss rationales to explain away death” (p. 42). In other words, substantive is more particular to the phenomenon under study and the formal theory, while applicable to the study, can be more broadly compared to other situations and contexts.

Since Glaser and Strauss’ origin of grounded theory in 1967, there have been some deviations in methodology. While Glaser’s style stayed true to the theory-driven-by-data method of coding, Strauss (1987), and then Strauss and Corbin (1990) infused more structure and used grounded theory more for verification of existing theory, rather than pure generation of theory. This study employs a more contemporary version of grounded theory developed by Charmaz (2014). What is unique about Charmaz’s version of grounded theory, called constructivist, is that she makes an allowance for the unavoidable human element to be part of the process. She wrote:

The constructivist approach perspective shreds notions of a neutral observer and value-free expert. Not only does that mean that researchers must examine rather than erase how their privileges and preconceptions may shape the analysis, but it also means that their values shape the very facts that they can identify (p. 13).
The use of the word “constructivist” applies to the “researcher’s involvement in the construction and interpretation of data and to signal the differences between this approach and conventional social constructionism of the 1980s and early 1990s” (ibid: 14). Charmaz’s method is more flexible in terms of guidelines and stresses more of an “interpretive portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it” (ibid: 17).

The coding path that Charmaz’s constructivist approach is similar to Glaser and Strauss’ original grounded theory methodology, but there are some differences. While Glaser and Strauss preached constant comparison between the open and axial coding stages, Charmaz’s constructivist approach uses initial coding, in which researchers look at “fragments of data-words, lines, segments, and incidents-closely for their analytic import” (p. 109). Accordingly, Charmaz’s goal of this initial coding aligns well with Glaser’s method of being open-ended. Charmaz’s keys for coding at this stage are:

- Remain open
- Stay close to the data
- Keep your codes simple and precise
- Construct short codes
- Preserve actions
- Compare data with data
- Move quickly through the data

As the researcher quickly codes the data to stay as open-minded as possible without stopping to think, Charmaz recommends using gerunds to describe the actions of the participant’s situation. Using action words with an –ing ending “preserves the fluidity of their (subject’s) experience and gives you a new way of looking at it” (p. 121).
Here is an example of how I would code part of my transcript using Charmaz’s gerund style Codes are boldfaced in brackets.

First of all, “Missy,” tell me what your life was like before you got pregnant.

I was working. I was a line leader actually at the Impact Solutions which is like a cookie factory. I was going to school. I was like a junior and I was really starting to be a senior and I just got too caught up in the money. I was making a lot of money and I dropped out of school so I just happened to come back now that I can't so instead of getting a GED I decided to finish school and get my high school diploma since I'm close to graduating.

[I would assign a code of “working jobs” because it describes the action.]

So what led you to getting pregnant since you were so close to graduating and had a great job…

Well I was with my boyfriend for five years.

Okay.

And he was like my first for everything and we was working at the same place. He was working second shift and I was working third and he was living with his uncle and I happen to end up living with him.

[Here, I would assign a code of “dating co-worker”. Or “cohabiting with other parent”.

Is he still with you?

Yes.

What effects has pregnancy had on your life, let's start with positive?

Let's see… My daughter, she makes me strive to do better. I got a better outlook on life. I'm more responsible. It's not all about me anymore. I don't go out as much.

[Striving to do better]
Okay.

And probably that's it.

What about negative?

I can't do much. I got to spend more money. It's a big responsibility. It's just a lot to do, a lot to deal with.

After going through all the transcripts by coding in this manner, Charmaz’s second stage of coding is called focused coding. The goal of focused coding is similar to Glaser and Strauss’ axial coding in that the researcher now looks for “which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize your data incisively and completely” (p. 138). This is where inter-relationships between the initial codes are discovered. As part of the human element of the researcher, Charmaz describes the analytical process of focused coding as, “more than simply selecting and going forward with the codes that most interest you” (p. 140). By using the researcher’s insight in the coding and analytical process in focused coding, Charmaz says this can “lead you to make a phenomenon explicit that many people experience or witness but had not yet conceptualized. Your focused codes may lead you in unanticipated but exciting directions” (p. 140). Charmaz believes these unanticipated but exciting directions can lead the researcher to discover “aha” moments.

Whether a researcher adopts the Glaser and Strauss method of coding or Charmaz’s method, coding stops once theoretical categories are saturated or have reached a saturation point. This occurs when a particular incident or category has received enough codes (or a more familiar term “data points”) for the researcher to determine that the next incident will not yield a new category, and coding can therefore cease. Or, as Charmaz wrote, “categories are ‘saturated’ when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical categories” (p. 213).
Credibility is an important consideration in grounded theory. First, as a significant problem in grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967) identified credibility in *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Some researchers question the credibility of grounded theory because of its perceived lack of structure. Without acceptable levels of traditional social scientific structure, some argue there is an element of vagueness to the procedure of a grounded theory study. To account for this perceived deficit, Glaser and Strauss (1967) explained that, to combat the credibility and lack of clarity issues, it is up to the researcher to provide “an extensive abstract presentation of the overall framework and its principal associated theoretical statements, usually at the beginning and/or end of the publication and also in segments throughout it” (p. 228). In other words, it is vital that the researcher provides a play-by-play of the study so it can be replicated by another researcher. In this study, credibility was handled by outlining the parameters of the study, describing the conceptual, and physical context of the study, providing demographic details of the sample population, explicitly detailing the questions to be used in the data collection, explicitly self-disclosing my identity as a researcher by keeping extensive memos of the study as it progressed, and by providing an extensive abstract of the overall framework of the study.

Parts of this abstract throughout the research can be in the form of writing memos. Memos vary in length as well as detail but “the key element being that they capture the researcher’s thoughts on the data at that time” (Hunter, Murphy, Grealish, Casey, & Keady, 2011, p. 7). It is vital that the researcher make the coding and theory development explicit to the reader. Another way for the researcher to help alleviate any ambiguity concerns about theory is to “describe the data of the social world studied so vividly that the reader, like the researchers, can almost literally see and hear its people—but always in relation to the theory” (Glaser &
Strauss, p. 228). It is akin to painting a picture in the reader’s mind. The use of charts, tables, and several examples of how the data were coded will help build the researcher’s case for credibility.

The second way that credibility can be questioned in this study involves the researcher. I am a 45-year-old, educated, divorced, middle class, white male with no children. How can I bring any credibility to analyzing pregnant teens/teen mothers? The majority of researchers who study adolescent girls are women. The teen pregnancy problem is a bigger issue to minorities in low socioeconomic backgrounds. So with my background, using previous theory or research and connecting it to teen mothers and their use of media, would invite skepticism. Grounded theory is a way to negate that skepticism by allowing the data from the participants to produce the theory. Grounded theory would allow the researcher to replicate the same method in different settings and compare results. Furthermore, Glaser and Strauss (1967) emphasized that the grounded theory approach “is more trustworthy for consultations because both laymen and sociologists can readily see how its predictions and explanations fit the realities of the situation” as a result of it having been explicitly detailed by the author (p. 98).

Pilot test design

In the first, exploratory steps of this project, a pilot study was conducted using qualitative interviews and a Glaser-style grounded theory method for analyzing the data. A media uses and gratifications framework was used to solicit participants’ responses. A pilot set of 13 interviews was completed from September through December of 2011 at a school for pregnant teens/teen mothers in the Midwest. Based on that set of interviews, modifications were made to the list of initially developed interview questions, and another round of interviews with a new set of 30 participants at the same location were conducted in October of 2014.
Research questions

As stated earlier on page 20, following are the initially developed interview questions driving this study:

**RQ1:** Before becoming pregnant, where did pregnant teens or teen mothers learn about sex and relationships? What were their sources of information?

**RQ2:** During pregnancy, how and what do pregnant teens communicate through media, and what media do they consume with regards to issues such as health concerns?

**RQ3:** Post-pregnancy, how are teen moms using and engaging the media? Are they communicating with other teen moms? What kinds of information are they seeking and sharing?

The Research Setting

The interviews took place at a school for pregnant teen/teen moms in the Midwest. One administrator explained to me how she helped start the school for pregnant teens/teen mothers.

I helped with the development of a sex ed. curriculum with the school district and as we proceeded and implemented that, I ran up against people who have such strong passion (for helping others)…it just seemed as if this (pregnant girls/teen moms) was a whole population we were turning our backs on. So I think that’s probably why it started. I was here for 32 years so it just…it became a real passion of mine (personal interview June 6, 2011).

The school is free to attend but not everyone who could be a student at the school is enrolled. The administrator said there are about 800 births from teen mothers in Lucas County each year but about 25% (or 200 girls) end up at the school. Women are referred to the school and a meeting is set up with the prospective student and her parents (if she is under 18) where paperwork is filled out, a tour of the school is given, and then the woman’s former school approves of the transfer.
As part of the intake or registration process at the school, students are given a standardized baseline test to determine their math and reading levels. This is to get an idea of where the student’s abilities lie because many come to the school who have been out of school for a lengthy period of time. The women come from all over city in which the school is located. While the administrator stated the majority are from the city, 25% or more come from other nearby districts. However, the women do not share the same life stories as those of Bristol Palin or Jamie Lynn Spears. The administrator said many women come from backgrounds that are more like the lead character in *Precious* and grow up in rough family relationships. She disclosed, “We seem to have more girls that are homeless than we’ve ever had. Girls that have experienced so much domestic violence.” She added, “It overwhelms me when I see the children who have experienced violence of that sort. And it’s in the nice little suburbs where we live…that just doesn’t happen…not like this. And these girls, they see such things that you wonder how they do get to school.” According to literature provided by the school, those who go to this school are given “comprehensive social service support, including subsidized childcare”. In 2009-2010, 16 local organizations were listed as “collaborators” with the school. Those collaborators included local banks, health care, Job and Family Services, and the local Health Department. A nearby hospital offers mentorship and relationship classes that teach students about abuse and assertiveness. In the 2009-2010 school year, 211 students were enrolled at the school. Ninety-two (44%) made the Honor Roll. Fifty-three (25%) graduated that year. There were 5 repeat pregnancies, which was 2% of the student population.

The school principal approved this pilot project and it received full Human Subject Review Board Approval at Bowling Green State University. The school’s lead teacher recruited the 13 participants using the following questions:
• Have you seen any media that have dealt with teen pregnancy such as the films *Juno* and *Precious*? Or the MTV show *16 and Pregnant*? Or any other current media that have dealt with teen pregnancy?

• Do you feel comfortable sharing your teen pregnancy experience with a researcher who will keep your name confidential?

Participants who said “yes” to those questions were then given a consent form to take home to their parents to fill out and return to the school. Discriminate or purposive sampling was employed and 20 recruitment forms were passed out to 20 students who had the best attendance and all of them were returned. This recruitment process was replicated for the actual study three years later. I went to the school once a week and interviewed two girls on each visit in a corner office about 20 feet from the nearest classroom on the second floor. There was a long enough gap of time between the interviews so the participants would not cross paths and disclose their identity to each other.

Each participant was given a $5 Kroger gift card. Each participant filled out a short background sheet/consent form that asked about their: age, grade, ethnicity, number of siblings and where they fell in the birth order, and if they lived with one or two parents (or other living arrangement). All of the interviews were recorded on an audio cassette recorder. The tapes were transcribed by the primary investigator. The tapes, assent and consent forms are being stored in a secured location by the investigator prior to their destruction soon after the publication of the data. The interviews ranged in duration from 12 minutes to 35 minutes. Each participant was asked the following scripted questions:

• Describe your home life/family life as it is now.

• Describe your life prior to your pregnancy.

• How have your friends treated you?
• What effects (positive and negative) has pregnancy had on your life?
• How did pregnancy affect your relationships with your family?
• How did pregnancy affect relationships with your friends?
• In what other ways is your life different now that you are pregnant?
• In what ways is your life the same?
• About how much TV do you watch per day? Where do you spend most of your time watching TV?
• In an average week, about how many movies do you watch?
• What are your favorite types of movies to watch?
• Where do you mostly watch movies?
• About how long do you listen to music each day? Where do you listen to music the most?
• What are the major types of music you like to listen to?
• For about how long do you play video games each day?
• What are some of the games you like best?
• About how much time do you spend on the internet each day?
• Who are some of your favorite artists, musicians, or celebrities? Why do you like that specific person?
• How do you believe pop culture/media has impacted your life?
• Have you changed your behavior (dress, vocabulary, attitude) because of a song, movie, TV show, or video game? Yes or no and why or why not?
• Have you ever done something (good or bad) because you saw it or heard about it on TV/in a movie or song?
• Is there a particular musician, actor, or athlete that you dislike? What about that person do you dislike and why?

• Which has a stronger influence on you…media or your parents…and why?

• Regarding the media, in comparison to your pregnancy experience, what have the media gotten right about teens who have children?

• In comparison to your experience, what have the media gotten wrong about teens who have children?

• What were some expectations or ideas about pregnancy that you formed as a result of things you saw or heard in movies or on television?

• If you were to make a movie or a TV show about teen pregnancy, what do you think should be the most important thing to include in it? And why?

The questions that are boldfaced were either modified or taken verbatim from Draper’s (2005) dissertation for East Tennessee State University titled At-Risk Students’ Perceptions of the Impact of Popular Culture and the Media on Their Lives. In her qualitative study, she interviewed 16 alternative high school program students who all had the following in common: they kept up with popular culture, had at least one bad grade, claimed parents did not know what was going on in their lives, all watched a lot of television, and all said “the media and popular culture helped them deal with their emotions more than they had harmed them academically or behaviorally” (p. 120). All of the participants in this pilot project were asked more than the questions listed due to follow-ups for clarification. Draper purposely selected and interviewed a mixed (gender and race) population of 16 at-risk students at the alternative school program. Many of Draper’s questions were used here because her study was the only qualitative study found that addressed media usage and at-risk adolescents. For the purposes of this pilot study, Draper's study was valuable for clearing a study through the Human Subjects Review Board as
well as conducting interviews. However, as will be discussed later, using Draper’s questions posed some limitations.

Earlier, risk factors in other studies were identified, including the Lucas County Task Force report, as being linked to teen pregnancy. In review, these were:

- Extreme economic and social deprivation
- A family history of high-risk behavior
- Family management problems
- Family conflict
- Early and persistent antisocial behavior
- Academic failure beginning in late elementary school
- Low commitment to school
- Friends who engage in the problem behavior
- Favorable attitudes toward the problem behavior
- Early initiation of the problem behavior

All 13 girls were interviewed by this researcher. No matter what the living situation was (single parent, two parents, step parents, no parents), everyone said they had conflict with their parents. Three out of the 11 lived with their biological parents, but all three said they did not have good relationships with their parents. Two out of the three said they fought a lot with their parents and the third girl said her parents had been high on marijuana and crack for most of her young life but cleaned up once they found out she was pregnant. The median age of the pilot participants was 17. Eight were African-American, two were white, and three were mixed.
Pilot interview summaries

Below are the summaries of the 13 pilot interviews.

1. “Jenna” moved back home to be with her mom after living with a friend for three years. Her dad’s girlfriend comes home drunk and the two of them argue. Jenna said she slept through school and failed the first couple of years of high school due to the pregnancy. She blames “messin’ with the wrong boy” for her pregnancy. Jenna said all of her friends are teen moms. She thinks the 16 and Pregnant and Teen Mom shows are fake because they make it seem having a baby is easy. Jenna watches movies on Lifetime and BET (Black Entertainment Television) and listens to a lot of music. She said she is not impacted by media and pop culture and has not changed her behavior or attitude about anything due to the media. She does not like Lady Gaga because she is “too weird”. She said the media have gotten it right that having a baby is not easy and that it is expensive, while the media have gotten it wrong about how difficult it is. She said having a baby was easy for her. If she made a TV show/movie about teen pregnancy, she would advise teens to use birth control.

2. “Addison” lives with her mother, father, brother, and son. She was one of three interviewees that lives with her biological parents. Addison said she fights a lot with her parents. She said her life was on the wrong path with friends, drinking, getting into drugs, skipping class, etc. Addison said having a baby made her grow up and be more motivated and responsible. She said she watches a lot of movies every week. Addison thought 16 and Pregnant and Teen Mom promote pregnancy. She said those shows had parents that took care of the babies and the kids got to do teenage things. She spends a lot of time on the web and listens to a lot of music. She said the media have not influenced her but acknowledged dressing more conservatively now because
earlier she used to dress like the girls in music videos, which led her to point out that
she does not like Nicki Minaj because she is too provocative. She said *16 and
Pregnant* was realistic in that the dad did not stick around in one episode, which was
the case with Addison.

3. “Kendra” was one of two girls I interviewed who already had a child and was
pregnant again or had a second child. She lives only with her son. Kendra said
“runnin’ the streets” led to her pregnancy. Her mom and dad were not involved in her
life but her mom has been there more for her than her dad. Kendra denied the media
had influenced her. She said all of her friends (are teen moms) have babies too. Her
biological dad was not happy with her being pregnant again. Kendra said she thinks
*16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* are “stupid” shows because they make pregnancy
seem easy when it is not. She likes Oprah Winfrey because she “is a strong woman”
and does not like Jay-Z because he “worships the devil”.

4. “Stephanie” lives with her mom and her six kids. She said having a baby made her
become more respectful to her mom. She said *Teen Mom* makes people want to get
pregnant and found the show to be interesting. Stephanie watches three movies a
week and she looks up to Nicki Minaj because she raps about real stuff…relationship-
type stuff. She acknowledged being influenced by Nicki Minaj’s hairstyles and the
way she dresses. She idolizes Maya Angelou because she is a powerful black woman.
She said the media have had a stronger influence on her than her parents because “the
media talk about the whole world and it tells you what’s goin’ on”. Stephanie said the
media have gotten it right that your kids do not have to wear fancy name brand
clothes like what is seen in commercials. She watched *Teen Mom* because she said it
was interesting and she could relate to it.
5. “Natalie” did not have a good relationship with her dad as she said they were “not really close”. She said she watches “a lot of TV” with her favorite shows being: *Beavis ‘n Butt-Head* and *Secret Life of an American Teenager*. Natalie said she watched *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* “just to watch them” but said *Teen Mom* is realistic because the reality of having a baby smacks them in the face. She said she would get really bored if her cable went out because she has no life. She denied being influenced by the media but said her pregnancy experience was not like a movie where she and her baby’s daddy were in a relationship and things worked out. She said she had sex a lot of times with her ex and that led to her pregnancy.

6. “Liz” lives by herself with her 5-year-old and 1-year-old sons. Her dad is about to die and her mom moved out of town. Liz said her mom did not really care about her. Her mom was out at the clubs when she wanted or needed to go see a doctor. Liz cut off her friendships because she said they were getting into trouble (breaking into homes, committing crimes, etc.). She did not like *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* because it “made it seem like you goin’ nuts when you have a baby”. Liz listens to a lot of music and watches a lot of moves. She said she was depressed when she saw the movie *Juno* and cried. She said her parents have been more of an influence on her in a negative way than the media because she does not want to be like her parents, in that she wants to graduate from high school.

7. “Jaimee” gave up all of her friends to be with the baby’s daddy who is no longer in the picture. She said she fought a lot with her parents about “life in general”. She said she watches a lot of movies. Jaimee said her ex controlled her a lot in terms of how she dressed. She said the media have gotten it right that there is a lot of conflict with
the baby’s daddy and that the media have been wrong that the baby’s daddy will stick around.

8. “Ashley” lives with both parents but said the “chemistry with mom is real bad”. She said her mom and dad had been on crack for most of her life. Her aunt took custody of her for a while. She was in custody of Protective Services for a while as well. She watches four to five hours of TV a day. She said she watched 16 and Pregnant and Teen Mom to see how similar or different the TV teens were to her. She said TV/pop culture had an impact on her attitude about some things and the clothes she wears.

9. “Samantha” lives with her mom. She has watched 16 and Pregnant and Teen Mom ever since she was pregnant “to see how they life is”. She said the media have gotten it right that the family of the baby’s daddy does not help out. And she said the media have been wrong about teens being bad moms.

10. “Jennifer” said her dad is not in her life at all. She was 14 when she got pregnant. Jennifer watches a lot of TV and said she watched 16 and Pregnant and Teen Mom because “that’s how my life is.” Jennifer watches movies and watched Halloween 3, 4, and 5 in one week. She saw the Pregnancy Pact on Lifetime and thought it was "stupid" because she thought the girls should not get pregnant to keep a boy around. She listens to a lot of music. She said the media do not influence her a lot but acknowledged wearing fashion (shoes) that she saw on TV and acknowledged repeating lines she has heard in movies and on TV. She got the idea from the media that the baby’s daddy would be there and that is how relationships should be.

11. “Denise” lives with her mom and her sister. She spent a lot of time away from home and with friends. She said the media have not impacted her life but acknowledged changing her “dressing style” because she sees lots of styles on TV and tries them.
Denise said the media have gotten it right that kids who get pregnant will not finish school. She acknowledged forming expectations that the baby would cry all night and the baby would cause her to sit at home all day and do nothing.

12. “Latrice” lives with her mother and stepdad and her mom’s five children. She said she watches some TV and about three movies a month. She idolizes Beyonce because she is talented, smart, pregnant, and ready to settle down and she “got it all together”. Beyonce makes Latrice feel good while she said the girls on Teen Mom make her feel depressed because “it’s not like that for everybody.” She said Teen Mom was scary and makes people think “that’s how it’s gonna be.” However, she said raising her aunt’s daughter was a learning experience for her and that helped her be prepared for raising her own child.

13. “Angelica” lives with her mom. She said her relationship with mom is off and on. She said her mom gets mad over various things. Her dad was in jail. Angelica said he “flipped out” on her when she told him she was pregnant and they have not talked since. She likes reality shows such as 16 and Pregnant and Teen Mom and calls them “interesting” because of “seeing what they’re going through versus what I’m going through.” She said she watches a lot of movies. Angelica said the media have impacted her and made her think about relationships romantically and compare what she has seen on TV and how it is (in real life). She said she related to 16 and Pregnant and Teen Mom because she has a daughter and how some of the girls on the show are strong…so that makes her think she can be strong too.

Pilot results/discussion

In analyzing the responses from the participants as part of the theoretical sampling and constant comparison process, some themes immediately began to emerge. A strength of the pilot
test was the revelation of the frequency of contextual issues around what the women were dealing with at home. This became an indicator to revise the questionnaire and background information collected on the participants in order to gain a better picture of their lives. The original set of questions was good in terms of a starting point in finding out the women's thoughts on teen pregnancy, as they often indicated how much the shows mirrored their own pregnancy. However, unfortunately, the questions used that were adapted from Draper were inadequate for the type of coding envisioned for the study. Only a superficial analysis could be done. In retrospect, the questions were too direct and should have been more generalized and not narrow in scope in terms of asking about one particular form of media. At this stage, another option was to keep the same questions but putting in additional ones too. Asking questions specified for one media source guided the participants, as opposed to allowing them to speak freely. For example, if they were asked about what shows they watched on television, the participants' could restrict their response to just the television realm. But shows or programs are available in many different forms now, such as DVD, YouTube, streaming, and so on.

When discussing *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* or other teen-pregnancy themed media, almost all of the participants compared their lives surrounding the pregnancy (the birth, the relationship with the baby’s father, family involvement, and so on.) to what they had seen. Also, the relationships the participants had with their parents were either very bad or nonexistent. Music and programming on MTV (Music Television) and BET were often cited as favored entertainment. Fashion was the most common way media had impacted the participants, as many said they dressed like people they had seen in popular culture.

As evidenced by the pilot test, the responses given could be interpreted using Brown's (2000) *Media Practice Model* (MPM), shown on page 80, which focuses on the media and examines how people select, interpret, apply, and identify with the media. There are three key
dimensions to the *Media Practice Model*. First, rather than taking the linear approach that media have an effect on the audience, Steele and Brown declared their model “sees the media as an integral part of the continuous process of cultural production and reproduction that characterizes everyday life” (p. 556). Second, and relating to the first point, Steele and Brown said “*lived experience*” is an essential part because of the many variables that factor into media use such as: race, class, gender, religion, family life, friendships, peers, and success or failure at school. Steele and Brown reported the third dimension, *identity formation*, is central to adolescent development as it “shapes their encounters with media, and those encounters in turn shape their sense of selves in the ongoing process of cultural production and reproduction” (p. 557). This is a model that could be useful in understanding the responses from qualitative interviews. For example, as I found out, the teen mothers I talked to in my pilot set of 13 interviews made a conscious choice or selection to watch pregnancy-themed media to compare some aspect of their lives (pregnancy experience, baby’s father’s involvement, struggles, and so on) to what was seen on the shows. By interacting with the programs, as Steele and Brown argued, the adolescents were naturally cognitively and affectively engaged with its content. Next was the *application* stage, in which viewers compared what they saw on screen to their “existing attitudes, feelings, and prior learning” and then agreed with it or rejected it (p. 559).

Brown’s (2000) three recommendations for future research inspired this researcher and later were adopted in the second round of interviews. That approach involves the use of the *Media Practice Model* (see Figure 3.3 on page 79) which involves *identity, selection, interaction,* and *application* of what is seen in the media:

1. Look at the media with which teens are most engaged. Consider the whole media diet, not just one component.
2. Look beyond simple demographic differences. Conduct studies that can sort out how adolescents’ developing identities influence the selection, interpretation, and application of media content.

3. Evaluate the effectiveness of edutainment and media literacy programs. Can the media be used to promote healthy behavior among adolescents in the United States? Do media literacy skills affect young people’s use, interpretation and application of media content?
Figure 3.3 Media Practice Model (p. 556)
In the pilot study, participants were asked about their usage of the following media: television, movies, music (smartphone, iPod, and so on.), and the internet. Every participant said they consumed a lot, and various forms, of media. This revealed that: First, their lifestyle dictated their media choices. Many of the women said they listened to music on the way to and from school. Or they chose to listen to music at home while they did homework on the computer. Participants said they watched a lot of television and spent time on the internet (on Facebook and YouTube websites). This was consistent and seemed to be reflective of typical teenage interests. Second, the participants sought out the media to compare their lifestyle to the one portrayed on screen or in the media. The lifestyle and living situation the women were in at the time of the interview was gathered from a background questionnaire that the participants filled out prior to the beginning of the interview, as well as several closed-end questions that were asked during the interview. It was apparent the women's backgrounds influenced their views of the teen pregnancy reality shows as their descriptions included adjectives such as: fake, realistic, stupid, interesting, and scary. There could be a number of explanations to account for how and why the pregnant teens/teen moms provided these varied responses to the same programs. Getting more in-depth responses in this study on why and how pregnant teens/teen mothers used the media in different stages of their pregnancies could yield clues and richer data as to how media helped them identify their sense of self and what gratifications were obtained.

Incorporating ideas from the third recommendation by Brown (2000), based on the literacy levels the women bring to media content, insights may be gained into how pregnant teens/teen moms use media prior to their pregnancies and how they use the media throughout their pregnancy and early motherhood years. It would be useful to also know how pregnant teens/teen moms seek out information on relationships or health concerns. Essentially, what is necessary to be ascertained is how the lived experience of having a baby influences and filters
the way such women view the media. The “lived experience”, as Brown noted, can consist of “race, class, gender, developmental stage, and other factors” that can vary from one individual to the next (p. 36).

Organization of the study

In adjusting my list of scripted questions, I added the following (boldfaced) questions to my previous scripted set, while cutting several others that were too specific. Questions that were cut for the second round included ones that asked about number of hours spent watching TV per day, amount of movie watching, types of music listened to, amount of video games, and time spent on the internet. These queries were best served by the pre-interview background sheet that each participant filled out prior to the beginning of the interview.

- Describe your life prior to your pregnancy.
- What effects (positive and negative) has pregnancy had on your life?
- How did pregnancy affect your relationships with your family?
- How did pregnancy affect relationships with your friends?
- Growing up, who taught you about values and other important life lessons?
- On a daily basis, how do you communicate with your family and friends? Face to face or through media?
- Who, if anyone, has taught you about responsible use of the media?
- Describe your academic history (from grade school up to present).
- In what other ways is your life different now that you are pregnant?
- In what ways is your life the same?
- Before you were pregnant, where did you learn, or who taught you the most, about relationships? Who taught you or where did you learn about being in love?
• How often did you and your parents discuss sex, love, and relationships as a result of seeing something in the media (on TV, the movies, etc.)?

• How often did you and your friends discuss sex, love, and relationships as a result of seeing something in the media (on TV, the movies, etc.)?

• Please describe your feelings about or your reaction to sexual content in the media BEFORE and AFTER becoming pregnant.

• What sexual content have you seen in the media?

• Before you were pregnant, where did you learn, or who taught you, about pregnancy (having a baby) and taking care of a child?

• What have you learned from the media about issues that might come up during your pregnancy or health concerns?

• What have you learned from the media about good nutrition while being pregnant?

• What attitudes or thoughts did you have about having a child or having sex prior to your pregnancy? And were those thoughts influenced by the media?

• In the media or popular culture, who do you most identify or feel you have a connection with and why?

• How do you think others perceive you and why do you think that way? And why do you think others have that opinion of you?

• What do you think would be the most effective way to educate others about teen pregnancy? And why?

• Do you think shows (like 16 and Pregnant and Teen Mom) or movies about teen pregnancy help teens better understand the challenges of teen pregnancy and parenthood, or do they glamorize teen pregnancy?
• Who are some of your favorite artists, musician, or celebrities? Why do you like that specific person?
• How do you believe pop culture/media has impacted your life?
• Have you changed your behavior (dress, vocabulary, attitude) because of a song, movie, TV show, or video game? Yes or no and why or why not?
• Have you ever done something (good or bad) because you saw it or heard about it in the media?
• Which has a stronger influence on you…media or your parents…and why?
• Regarding the media, in comparison to your pregnancy experience, what have the media gotten right about teens who have children?
• In comparison to your experience, what have the media gotten wrong about teens who have children?
• If you were to make a movie or a TV show about teen pregnancy, what do you think should be the most important thing to include in it? And why?

Two new questions in the list above add substantively to the discussion broadly enough to include media responses, but also allow for a wide range of sources of information about relationships and having a child. These two new questions are:

• Before you were pregnant, where did you learn, or who taught you the most, about relationships?
• Before you were pregnant, where did you learn, or who taught you, about pregnancy (having a baby) and taking care of a child?

For a grounded theory study, this is a lengthy list of questions. However, I believe there are several reasons why having over 30 questions is appropriate. First, the accessibility to an at-
risk population like pregnant teens/teen moms is rare, so it was advantageous to get as many questions as possible approved by the full Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). If the HSRB had rejected or reworded questions, a significant number of questions would have remained to carry the study forward. Second, many of the questions are follow-ups to other questions. I ask the question “what effects (positive and negative) has pregnancy had on your life?” After that I ask “how did pregnancy affect your relationships with your family?” and “how did pregnancy affect relationships with your friends?” Questions of this type were needed to draw more information from the participants to guide me, the researcher, to ascertain the closeness of relationships in the participants’ lives. Third, Charmaz (2014) advises having “a detailed interview guide to think through the kinds of questions that can help them (new researchers) fulfill their research objectives” (p. 62). Charmaz also encourages the use of planned questions to help researchers “become aware of their interests, assumptions, and use of language” (p. 64). She believes this helps the researcher reflect upon the questions and whether or not the questions are helping him/her get the desired participant’s responses while also addressing the needs or purpose of the research. In terms of the number of interviews to be conducted, Charmaz advises the more, the better, especially when you “pursue a controversial topic; anticipate or discover surprising or provocative findings; construct complex conceptual analyses; use interviewing as your only source of data; and seek professional credibility” (p. 108).

For my comfort and peace of mind in terms of creating a proper grounded theory set of questions, I also looked at Charmaz’s (2014) list of 24 sample grounded theory questions about a life change. Following are examples of Charmaz's guidelines which parallel this approach:

Tell me about what happened [or how you came to ____________]?  

When, if at all, did you first experience ___________ [or notice ______________]?
[If so,] what was it like? If you recall, what were you thinking then? How did you happen to _______? Who, if anyone, influenced your actions? Tell me about how he/she influenced you.

Could you describe the events that led up to _______ [or preceded _______]?

What contributed to ________________?

What was going on in your life then? How would you describe how you viewed ________ before ________ happened? How, if at all, has your view of ________ changed?

How would you describe the person you were then?

Tell me how do you go about ______________. What do you do?

Would you tell me how you would describe the person you are now? What most contributed to this change [or continuity]?

What positive changes have occurred in your life [or ______] since ______?

What negative changes have occurred in your life [or ______] since ______?

Could you tell me about your views [and/or actions, depending on the topic and preceding responses] may have changed since you have ______________?

After having these experiences, what advice would you give to someone who has just discovered that he or she __________?
For the background information sheet, I added questions about the participant’s financial or socio-economic status (SES) and a question about whether the participant’s mother was a teen mother because these are common at-risk factors of teen pregnancy.

These modifications to the interview list of questions post-pilot testing are a recommended part of doing a grounded theory study. Creswell (2013) noted that past ethnographic studies have benefitted from refining interview questions and it has paid off in terms of developing relevant questions, assess(ing) observer bias, and adapt(ing) research procedures. The modified question instrument meets Glaser’s (1992) criteria for a well-constructed grounded theory study. Glaser's criteria are: fit, work, relevance, and modifiability. Does it fit from the subject’s, practitioner’s, and researcher’s perspectives? If so, then it should fit the “reality” as experienced by all who are involved in the study. Does it explain “major variations in behavior in the area with respect to the processing of the main concerns of the subjects”? If it has passed the fit and relevance tests, it has achieved relevance. In addition, a good grounded theory study should be modifiable whenever new properties or categories emerge. Modifiability is important in that if a conceptual theory is generated from the data, it is never thrown out; it is “modified to incorporate new concepts” (p. 15).

The sample population for the next round of interviews was larger and included 30 participants. The sample population was again a purposive cross-sectional sample. This time, each participant was given a $20 gift card, funded by the University of Toledo Department of Pediatric Research. Doubling the original sample population and using a new set of questions enabled me to reach a saturation point of data collection.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE STUDY

Thirty participants were recruited by the lead teacher at the same Midwest school where the pilot interviews were conducted. The interviews were done in October of 2014. After each day of interviews, I went back to my apartment and typed up the fieldnotes, which became my diary. I jotted down my observations of the participants and any trends I noticed as the interviews took place.

On the interview days, I was escorted to a storage room on the third floor that was accessed by going through a computer lab. Sometimes, there were a couple students there in the computer lab and other times, there were not. As far as privacy was concerned, this room was suitable.

Before the individual interviews began, I had the women fill out a background demographic sheet that asked for information about: age, grade, race, number of siblings, where they fell in the birth order, parental level of education, whether or not the participant's mom was a teen mom, highest grade the parents completed, the participants' living arrangement (with parents, guardian, by themselves, with their boyfriend, foster care, step-parent, grandparent, or other relative), receiving financial aid, social media usage, number of connections on social media and hours a day spent using various types of media (TV, radio, internet, newspaper, music, movies).

The majority of the women enrolled were African-American (66% or 20). Five identified their race as mixed (16.7%). Three were white (10%). Two were Hispanic (6.67%).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race index</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the women ranged in age from 14 to 19, but three were over the age of 19. The average age of the participants was 17.83 years and excluding the women who were over 20, the average age was 16.55 years. The median age of the participants was 18. Four of the women were pregnant at the time of their interviews. Twenty women already had one child. The remaining six participants already had two children. Most of the women gave birth to their child or had their first child between the ages of 14 and 16, as seen in Table 4.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age interval first birth</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14-16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most common living arrangement of the participants was living with their mother (13). Three women said they were living with their mom and dad. Three women were living with their father. Four women were living by themselves with their child or children. Two were living with the baby’s father. The remaining four were living under other circumstances (1 with father and grandparent, 1 in foster care, 1 with aunt, and 1 with mother and stepfather). Almost all of the women were born from teen mothers (see Figure 4.3).
Eighteen of the 30 women had at least one parent that graduated from high school while 13 biological parents of the 30 participants did not finish 12\textsuperscript{th} grade, with some dropping out as early as middle school. Only four participants said they had a parent who had attended college. The average number of siblings, which included step-sisters and step-brothers was 4.5 with the lowest being zero siblings and the most having 12. Twenty-two of the 30 women said they were receiving federal financial assistance of some kind.

One particular item of interest was the women’s responses on the background sheets to the social media usage prompts. All of the women said they used social media, Facebook being the most popular form as mentioned by 27 participants. Instagram was second most popular with 11 mentions. Seventeen out of the 30 women said they had at least 1,000 connections and/or friends on social media, and some responded to the “how many connections/friends do you have” prompt with “thousands,” “4,000+,” “so many I can’t count,” and “too many to count.” Figure 4.4 is a breakdown of the participants and the social media accounts they use. Participants with just a Facebook account had the largest percentage (64%), followed by
Facebook/Instagram/Twitter (17%), Instagram (10%), and Facebook/Instagram, Facebook/Instagram/Snapchat, and Facebook/Instagram/Twitter/Snapchat all had 3% each.

Figure 4.4 Pie chart of participants' social media accounts

![Pie Chart of participants' social media accounts](image)

Earlier in this dissertation, I listed the categories of media usage created by the Kaiser Family Foundation as “light”, “moderate”, and “heavy.” Those categories were adjusted for this study to be more realistic in the eyes of the researcher, since the average daily media usage has been described as being about 7.5 hours. In this study, light media users were 0-6 hours per day, average 6-12 and heavy was 16-plus. Seventeen women reported their media usage to be at the “heavy” stage of at least 16 hours a day with the internet and music being the most consumed forms of media used. Eight fell into the “average” category of 6 to 16 hours of media consumed with music as the most popular form of media. The rest (6) were light media users, consuming less than six hours of media per day. There was no observable age difference among the users, although the average medium (6-16 hours) user was younger (16.75 years old) than the heavy (more than 16 hours a day and 18.3 years old) and light (less than six hours a day and 18.2 years old) users.
Table 4.5 Breakdown of media usage levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media usage level</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The light, average, and heavy media users’ transcripts were separated and coded by group, starting with the light, then average, and then heavy media users.

Light media users

For the next three sections (light, average, and heavy media users), I will review how I went through the transcripts and coded them. I will start with “Mindy”, who had 500 friends on Facebook.

My questions are boldfaced black. My codes are in boldfaced black in brackets.

Mindy

“Mindy”, describe your life. What was it like before you got pregnant? What were you doing?

Mindy: I don't know, I mean, like any other kid...going to school, sports, coming home, going to friends' houses on the weekend, I mean, just the usual, going outside, riding bikes, hanging out, just...ya know.

[Living an active life, hanging out with friends]

Sounds like you had a very active lifestyle.

Mindy: Yeah.

Okay, cool. Let's start with the positive and negative effects of pregnancy. What positives has it had on your life?

Mindy: Well, I mean, it brought me and my parents a lot closer since I've had her. I mean, I don't know. Before then, really, I didn't really have...felt like I didn't have a lot of
people that cared, but after I've had her I know I can depend on her to always love me.

[Depending on child for love]

[Improving relationships with parents]

When you said you didn't feel like you had a lot of people that cared, do you mean like in your family, circle of friends...?

Mindy: Just like the circle of friends.

Okay. But your family still cared for you before?

Mindy: Yeah.

Okay. Did you have many friends before?

Mindy: Oh yeah. Before I got pregnant I had a lot.

[Decreasing friends after baby]

‘Cause you said you were playing sports and all. I'm guessing you were like (laughs) hugely popular.

Mindy: (laughs) Yeah.

Right?

Mindy: Yeah.

Okay. What about negative? What happened negatively?

Mindy: I lost a lot of friends for sure.

[Decreasing/losing friends]

Why?

Mindy: I don't know, I mean, I lot of their parents thought that if I got pregnant, then they started hanging out with me, then they were gonna...like it was a disease...then they were gonna get pregnant by hanging out with me. I don't know, and then a lot of them, just, uh, I really didn't have enough time to go to the mall all the time or go to basketball
games or football games because I was at home taking care of a baby.

[Losing friends]

Did people...say anything to you? Or, whether it was to your face...

Mindy: Uhh...yeah

Or on your Facebook or whatever?

Mindy: At first, people was actually calling me a ‘ho’ to my face. Just because I got pregnant. But, I mean, it can happen to anybody.

[Feeling shamed because of pregnancy]

(Later in the interview, Mindy discussed how she learned about media usage.)

Okay. Who, if anyone, has taught you about responsible use of the media? Like, do you watch...

Mindy. My mom.

Really. Your mom? What does she say?

Mindy: Uh, just, she's got a thing to where just before I post a picture she looks at me and says, “If you don't want your grandma, your mom or your pastor to see it don't put it on Facebook then.” She said that once it's on there even if you do delete it off your page it's still there so no matter what someone will always be able to find it.

[Following mom’s Facebook rules]

[Sharing baby’s life]

Yeah. So I take it...does your mom actually see your Facebook page?

Mindy: Yeah!

Really?

Mindy: Yeah, I mean, she goes on there every now and then just to see what's going on, but, I mean, other than that, that's it.
(Further into the interview, Mindy and I discussed where she learned about relationships and her reaction to sexual content in the media.)

**How often did you and your parents discuss sex, love and relationships; maybe you saw something on TV or the movies.**

Mindy: Uh, me and my mom, we did pretty frequently but me and my stepdad, not really, I mean, I wasn't as close as him.

**[Discussing relationships with mom]**

I see. Do you recall any certain issues you discussed with your mom? Anything that really stood out?

Mindy: Just, I mean, that it's not easy being a teen mom.

**Gotcha. How often did you and your friends talk about sex, love and relationships as a result of something you saw in the media?**

Mindy: Um, a lot I guess you could say.

**Really.**

Mindy: Yeah.

**Like what? Can you give me some examples?**

Mindy: Just how, we'd talk about what we'd want in a relationship...how we'd want to be treated, ya know, just...and then some people talked about other things.

**[Having more in-depth relationship discussions with friends]**

**Where did you, I guess, how did you get the idea of what you wanted? Like, was that something you maybe say in a movie or was it something you saw between your mom and stepdad that gave you those ideas?**

Mindy: I mean, it was a mix between movies and my mom and my stepdad, like I wanted a fairy tale ending with the whole big wedding and...
[Wanting a fantasy-movie-like wedding]

Were there some movies where you were like, oh, my gosh I have to have that
(laughs)?

Mindy: (laughs) Yeah, they lived happily ever after.

Wow, do you remember any movies that stood out?

Mindy: Um, I don't...for some reason Forrest Gump did (both laughing) with the way, I
don't know, because, she did, the girl (Jenny in the movie) really didn't let... she really
didn't let any of his disabilities get in the way of how she felt.

Interesting. That's cool. Um, please describe your feelings about, or your reaction to
sexual content in the media. Did it change, did you notice having a baby changed
your views on seeing sex in the media?

Mindy: Yes!

How so?

Mindy: Cause everybody now-a-days thinks it's so cool out here having sex when, I
mean, they don't really sit down and think, “Oh my God! What if I get pregnant!” Like,
just cause you're on birth control it don't mean nothin' because I got pregnant off the pills,
so, I mean...

[Changing views on sex in media]

So, do you think a lot of it had to do with the fact you were 15 when you got
pregnant?

Mindy: Yes.

How did that...I mean, did it change now that you're 17 and it's been some time
since you had your baby and you're like, whoa, do you feel a lot more mature?

Mindy: Yeah.
You see things from a totally different perspective?
Mindy: Yeah, I mean, when I was 15, before I got pregnant, I wasn't even thinking, ya know, like “what if” I did get pregnant? At the time I was thinking about basketball and volleyball and just hanging out with my friends...and...when I do graduate what college was I going to, parties, just wasn't really thinking.

Gotcha. Did you see any sexual content or have you seen any in the media that you recall?
Mindy: No.

Okay. Before you got pregnant where did you learn about and who taught you about pregnancy and having a baby and taking care of a child?
Mindy: Um, probably my mom mainly taught me about that.

[Learning from mom about having a baby]

Okay. What have you learned from the media about issues that might come up during your pregnancy or health concerns? Was there anything you saw, like on the internet, TV, Facebook, wherever where you were like, “Oh, my gosh, I better be careful” or...?
Mindy: Yeah, I actually seen a thing on Facebook one time about a stillborn that was...she looked regular size to me but...the mom had to have her while she was already dead. I don't know, just, it scared me. That I wouldn't be able to...carry the baby, or that something would go wrong and, you know, she'd end up dying and I'd still have to have her.

[Being scared about pregnancy from Facebook]

Wow. Yeah.
Mindy: Yeah, that really scared me at the time.
Wow, and you mean you saw that on Facebook.

Mindy: Yeah, it was like a video, it was like a slideshow of the baby after she'd had her and the funeral and...

(Later in the interview, Mindy shared more about her Facebook usage.)

Alright, about social media, you told me you have Facebook and...500 friends.

Alright! So, how much did you do Facebook before, during and after having your baby?

Mindy: Before? I don't know. My mom says I was on it almost all day before. But, I mean, as I got pregnant and found out, ya know, I didn't really, didn't really have the energy to be on there anymore. And now, I don't have the time to be on there all day, because I gotta watch her, make sure she's not getting into stuff...

[Spending less time on Facebook due to the baby]

So you didn't share a whole lot on Facebook during your pregnancy?

Mindy: No, not really. Actually, I didn't even, there at the end, I even had it deactivated because of a lot of drama was started.

[Deactivating Facebook]

Oh, you deactivated it when you got pregnant?

Mindy: Closer to the end, yeah.

What about now? Are you on it?

Mindy: Yeah, I'm back on it now.

[Returning to social media]

What do you talk about or do you...(laughing) did you get a whole new set of friends?
Mindy: Uh, I mean, I don't have a whole new set of friends on there, it's just, talking about what a baby does and getting ready for college and finishing school...

(This theme of people talking on Facebook about the baby came up again later when I asked her about how and where she formed perceptions about pregnancy.)

Regarding the media, in comparison to your pregnancy experience, what has the media gotten right about teens who have kids?

Mindy: Um, they, just that a lot of times the kids of teen moms end up being teen moms themselves.

[Ending up as teen moms themselves]

[Continuing the teen mom cycle]

Okay. In comparison to your experience what has the media gotten wrong about teens who have kids?

Mindy: That it's just the WORST THING THAT COULD HAPPEN. It could RUIN YOUR LIFE. That you'll never find somebody who's gonna want you because you already have a baby.

Where did you get that idea?

Mindy: Just, every, people always, “Oh, well, if you've got a kid there ain't nobody that's gonna want you. They're gonna think you're a ho.” Just cause you got a kid that doesn't mean nothing.

[Feeling pregnancy shame]

Did you see that on TV somewhere?

Mindy: Just, no actually. People that I know say that.

They're just like posting on...

Mindy: Yeah.
Other light media users had very similar storylines of living normally as a teen, which meant hanging out or partying and they also shared being in conflict with their boyfriend or with the “baby daddy”, losing friends as the pregnancy progressed, the baby improved relationships within the family in most cases. Also, all light media users said they at least talked about relationships with some members of their microsystem (family, friends, school, and WIC office). Friends was often the most named source in deeper discussions about sex and love. What is meant by “deeper discussions” is that some participants said that a discussion about sex with their mother often went to the extent of “Don’t do it. Don’t get pregnant”, while conversations with their friends discussed losing their virginity and being sexually active. What is important to note is that these discussions with friends often happen online as was seen in many of the interviews.

Light media users also described a change in attitude toward seeing sexual content in the media after having their baby.

_Hanna_

“Hanna” had thousands of friends on Facebook. This is how her attitude toward seeing sex in the media changed after she had her baby:

**Can you describe your feelings about or your reaction to sexual content before and after being pregnant? Like being pregnant, has it changed the way you look at stuff, how you see things in your life, ‘I don't like that anymore or I do like that?’**

Hanna: It's changed a lot.

_How so?_

Hanna: I don't know… Like, sex… I don't do it. I just be like no. That's why I'm in this predicament now.
Why, before it was like you were cool with that? Now that you're pregnant you're like don't like that so much anymore?

Hanna: I just don't like that so much no more.

Is it because of…

Hanna: I don't know. It's just like I don't know I won't think about it or nothing I can go days and weeks and months and just not care.

Gotch*a. What sexual content have you seen in the media?

Hanna: What you mean?

Did you see a sexy scene on TV? Have you seen like…

Hanna: Other girls have said that they've seen things on Facebook. Nude pictures…

There's a lot of new pictures every day, every hour, on Facebook.

[Seeing sexual content on social media]

Every hour?

Hanna: Yes.

That heavy?

Hanna: Sexual, yes. It just be like sometimes I done barely get on Facebook but when I do I swear.

People share all kinds of stuff?

Hanna: Yeah. Anything.

Isabel

“Isabel” had only 100 friends on Facebook. She said she sometimes is uncomfortable seeing sexual content in the media.
Please describe your feelings or your reaction to sexual content in the media. Did you notice, did your feeling about that change? Did they stay the same before and after you had your baby?

Isabel: Like how did I look at it?

Yeah.

Isabel: It weirds me out.

Did it weird you out before or now after?

Isabel: I think a little bit of both. More...I think I'm more okay with it after having my daughter since I know more what it's about now but like I don't know whenever I used to see it on movies and TV shows before I became sexually active I kinda got like weirded out by it.

[Not weirded out by sex on tv after having a baby]

What caused you to be weirded out?

Isabel: I don't know, we never really talked about it in my family like it was kind of like a closed off situation…so like seeing it was just like ‘oh my goodness.’

But now you've become more comfortable with that?

Isabel: Yeah.

Just because you had that. Okay. Now I get it. Yeah. What sexual content did you see in the media or have you seen in the media? Movies, TV shows, pictures on Facebook…

Isabel: Yeah. You see a lot of pictures and videos on Facebook and somewhat on TV shows I guess. The ones that I watch I don't really see a lot of in there but definitely on social media there's a lot. Maybe a little too much.
Alright, about social media. Did you use it before you got pregnant?

Isabel: A little bit, not as much as I would say I do now.

What about during your pregnancy?

Isabel: I wasn't allowed to use social media at all while I was pregnant.

[Staying off Facebook]

Why weren't you allowed? Who told you that?

Isabel: My mom because I went into premature labor and it was mostly because of stress and a lot of all the stress was coming from social media.

Okay. A lot of people were commenting about your pregnancy? They didn't like it?

Isabel: Just everything. He would say something about me, about me being pregnant, they would say stuff about my boyfriend, and just stuff.

Is he still in the picture?

Isabel: Yes.

Okay. Now are you back on Facebook now that you've had your baby?

Isabel: I was just recently allowed to be on Facebook.

[Returning to Facebook]

Okay, gotcha. Alright so are you talking about your baby at all or your pregnancy or your family?

Isabel: Yeah. Yeah it's mostly about my daughter.

Positive?

Isabel: Yeah. Positive, good things.
Missy

Next was “Missy”, who had over 1,000 connections combined through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Missy was the first woman I interviewed that said she learned about relationships from media figures Oprah and Dr. Phil while also discussing issues with her mother.

Before you were pregnant where did you learn about, or who taught you the most about relationships?

Missy: Really nobody. I just… I mean I watch movies and stuff but that's about all.

[Teaching herself about relationships]

What did you learn from movies?

Missy: I mean, I also watch like you know Oprah and I watch Dr. Phil.

[Learning relationships from Oprah and Dr. Phil]

Okay.

Missy: I mean, watch what my mom goes through and my sister, we would just talk about each other's problems and stuff.

Who taught you or where did you learn about being in love?

Missy: Really nobody, I don't know, it just happens.

It just happens, okay. How often did you and your parents discussed sex, love and relationships maybe as a result of something you saw on like Oprah or in a movie?

Missy: Oh we talk about it often.

[Talking about relationships with parents]

Really?

Missy: Well, me and my mom.

Do you recall any specific discussion you had about something in the media?
Missy: Not that I can remember.

**Okay. How often did you and your friends discuss or have the same discussion about things you saw in the media?**

Missy: Well, when I was talking to my friends we would talk about it a lot too...about different situations.

(Missy was also the first participant I interviewed who specifically mentioned the media as a source of information for her as well as a reason for her feeling fear about stillborns during her pregnancy.)

**Describe your feelings about your reaction to sexual content in the media. Did you notice, did your feelings change now that you've had a baby? Like if you see something sexy online or on TV you're like ‘I don't like that or I do like that’?**

Missy: Yeah.

**How has it changed?**

Missy: I don't know. I just thought that after you had a baby I have a different point of view on things and some things people say or do disgust me or...

**How so?**

Missy: I don't know, it's just... I don't know. I don't know.

**Okay. What sexual content have you seen in the media?**

Missy: Well on the news, this girl, she was spreading HIV to people, whatever, and they was trying to look for her after she lived in Toledo.

[Seeing sexual content in the news]

[Seeing health report on the news]

Really?
Missy: Yeah and she said well if you want to know if I slept with your man let me know and I'll tell you. So that was a big eye-opener like how devious people can be.

Yeah. Wow, okay. Before you were pregnant where did you learn about or who taught you about pregnancy and taking care of a baby?

Missy: School.

Okay. What have you learned from the media about issues that might come up during your pregnancy or health concerns, anything?

Missy: Can you say that again?

What have you learned from the media about issues that might come up during your pregnancy or health concerns? Like while you were going through pregnancy do you recall seeing anything or hearing anything?

Missy: Yeah, like the stillbirths, like the stillborns.

[Learning about birth defects from the news]

Where did you learn that are hear about that?

Missy: It was in the newspaper like people can't... Their babies, they're about ready to have their babies and their babies just come out dead for not having no cause to it. It gave me scares.

Oh yeah. Sure. What have you want from the media about good nutrition while being pregnant? Do you remember seeing anything about that?

Missy: No, just the doctor telling me to take my vitamins.

That's good advice. What thoughts or attitudes did you have about having a baby or having sex before you got pregnant?

Missy: I was scared.

Why were you scared?
Missy: Because the outcome of it, I didn't know how I would financially take care of the baby.

Okay.

Missy: How I would take care the baby, who would help me, who would be there for me. If the relationship, you know, if my boyfriend and I would change. Or my parents, it was just a lot going through my mind.

[Feeling scared about having a baby]

Why were you so scared like that though?

Missy: Because I'm an over thinker. I think stuff too much.

Okay. Were any of your fears possible because of stuff you've seen on TV or the movies about other teen moms?

Missy: Yeah like the movie teen moms like how they have a struggle.

Gabby

Gabby was the last light media user I interviewed. Gabby's interview was like several others where the participant said their conversations with parents about relationships and sex were superficial but with friends it was much deeper. Gabby's negative reaction to seeing sex in the media was more of a reflection of her adverse reaction to having a baby.

How often did you and your parents discuss sex, love and relationships as a result of something you saw the media? Whether it was TV or the movies or somewhere.

Gabby: My dad never talked about it. My mom, she would say to not get pregnant, that's about it. But she never talked me about it either.

So it wasn't like she saw something on TV? This is more like a mom to daughter talk?

Gabby: She was just like, 'hey don't do this'.
[Having superficial discussions with mom]

Right. Okay. What about your friends? Did you all have that kind of discussion about sex, love or relationships may be as a result of something you saw?

Gabby: No, my friends would just come up to be and say that they lost their virginity or stuff like that, but other than that, no.

Okay. Describe your feelings about or your reaction to sexual content in the media before and after being pregnant. Did your feelings about seeing that on TV or the movies change before the result of having two children?

Gabby: Yeah, change.

How so?

Gabby: I don't like to do it no more because of, like, I don't know. I don't want to get pregnant again.

Wow. So yeah. What sexual content have you seen in the media? Were there any shows or things online that you've seen?

Gabby: Just like movies and stuff.

Can you recall any movies in particular?

Gabby: No. It would just be a lot though.

[Seeing a lot of sex in movies]

Summary of light media users

The immediate thing that jumped out at me during coding of the light media users was the variations of involvement of the parents and friends, reflecting the role those people play in the young person’s development, in Bronfenbrenner’s microsystem, or the inner circle in one’s life, as compared to media figures or personalities. There was an improvement in interaction with at least one parent and other family members during and after the birth of the child. Light
media users expressed changing their views about seeing sexual content in the media after having their baby, with some “not liking sex” anymore because of the predicament they were in and being pregnant and seeing sex made them “not want to do it again” to thinking there is too much sexual content available. Many said what they had learned about relationships, pregnancy, health issues, and so on came as a result of learning from microsystem influences such as parents, friends, school, and the local WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) office. All light media users decreased their social media usage at some point during pregnancy. Some deactivated their accounts. Some kept posting minimal updates about the progress of their pregnancies and baby’s growth.

As I coded the light media users, I noticed that several of the young mothers faced similar pressures on social media in terms of being shamed and losing friends. That observation prompted several questions before I progressed toward coding the average media users group. Would those who consume more media have a considerably worse relationship with their parents? Would those who consume more media or interact with media more have more or less of a change in attitude towards seeing sexual content in the media? Also, as media usage increases, how does the comparison to one’s own pregnancy experience differ? And lastly, as media usage increases, would the occurrence of bullying and more sharing of their pregnancy increase?

Average media users

In analyzing the average media users, I saw many of the same trends that occurred in the light media users.

Kelly

“Kelly” liked listening to music and had 200 connections between her Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts. Her preferred method of communicating with her friends was
over the phone and social media. Much like the others, her number of friends decreased as her pregnancy progressed.

**Okay. How did pregnancy affect relationships with your friends?**

Kelly: A lot of them were mad so I lost a lot of friends.

**When you say mad, why would they be mad at you? Like, did they say something to your face or something?**

Kelly: They said they were disappointed and they didn't want to be my friend anymore.

**Wow, that's kind of mean. Wow.**

Kelly: Yeah.

**Did they tell that to you or did they say something on Facebook or somewhere?**

[Losing friends]

Kelly: They told that to me.

(At this current time in her life, Kelly has reduced her social media usage since she's been pregnant because “people shouldn't really know my business so I should just keep it off the internet.” Kelly’s response to seeing sexual content in the media caught my attention because of her strong reaction to it.)

**Okay, please describe your feelings and reactions to sexual content in the media. Did it change before you were pregnant or has it been different now that you're pregnant?**

Kelly: Yeah.

**How so?**

Kelly: Um, I don't really do it anymore?

**Okay. Do you have, like, an attitude toward it or against it?**

Kelly: Kind of.
What do you mean “kind of”?

Kelly: I just...I have....I just don't like doing that kind of stuff anymore.

[Self-regulating social media use]

Okay. What kind of sexual content have you seen in the media?

Kelly: Um...hmmm...(long pause)....I don't really know. I mean, I've seen it but I don't really know how to explain it, you know?

Was it like a soap opera or...a movie?

Kelly: A lot of movies.

A lot of movies? Okay. Do you recall any in particular?

Kelly: No.

[Seeing 'a lot of sex' in movies]

[Changing feelings about sexual content in media]

(That strong statement of dislike toward seeing sexual content in the media piqued my curiosity and was a recoding point for me. I “flagged” that as an area of attention to look at when going through my transcripts again.)

As an interviewer, the interview with Kelly was the toughest one I conducted. She and her father were not on the best of terms. He had been in prison, was out on probation, and was struggling to find a job. And now, Kelly and her father were having difficulty finding a place to live. She was struggling in school. Her mother had left when Kelly was two months old. Kelly had a very difficult time expressing her thoughts about having a baby as she said the pregnancy had not kicked in yet mentally.)

If you were to make a movie or a TV show about teen pregnancy, what do you think should be the most important thing to include in it? And why?
Kelly: Um, I don't know how to explain it because I'm still trying to...cause I don't really
got the hang of thinking that I'm actually pregnant, you know?

It hasn't sunk in yet?

Kelly: No.

You said you're five months in?

Kelly: Yeah. I just never thought it was gonna happen and I'm still...just don't think it's
real.

Why did you think it was gonna happen? You said you were dating your boyfriend
for three years?

Kelly: Yeah, I just...it didn't never feel like it was gonna happen.

Okay, so I guess, five...even five months in why hasn't it sunk in yet? Is there a point
where you think, “Oh gosh, now I'm pregnant”?

Kelly: Yeah.

When do you think that point will hit?

Kelly: When the baby comes (laughing). I just...I can't get hang of the feeling yet. I
mean, I can feel him move and everything but I just don't feel like it's real.

Wow. Okay. Why don't you feel it's real?

Kelly: I don't know, it just won't sink into my brain.

[Feeling disbelief]

Kelly had seen more in her 14 years of life than I had in 44 years. I was emotionally drained the
day I interviewed Kelly and two other women.

Patty

Average media user “Patty’s” views on seeing sexual content in the media have not
changed. She had not seen any sexual content in the media because her parents had it blocked on
their television. Patty said she used Facebook to keep in touch with her friends and discuss issues related to her pregnancy.

**Okay. About social media, did you use it before, during or after having your baby?**

Patty: All.

**All through it?**

Patty: Mm-hmm.

If so, how did you use it? How did you, who did you talk to?

Patty: Friends, on Facebook.

**Okay. What did you talk about?**

Patty: Anything.

Anything related to your pregnancy like, did you discuss it?

Patty: We talked about pregnancy, we talked about a whole bunch of other stuff.

**Okay. What areas of your pregnancy did you talk about? Were there, the good and bad side of it?**

Patty: Mm-hmm. (Yes.)

**Like, what did you share?**

Patty: Like, gaining weight and the difference in my appetite and stuff like that. We didn't share too much personal.

[Sharing pregnancy health details on Facebook]

(At two separate times during Patty’s interview, she compared her pregnancy experience to what she had seen in the media. The first time, she drew a comparison to *16 and Pregnant*.)

**Okay, very cool. Do you think shows like *Teen Mom* or *16 and Pregnant* help teens better understand it or do they glamorize it?**

Patty: Better understand it.
How so?

Patty: Because the moms that's on that show, they're like struggling raising babies. And some of them are raising them by themselves.

Okay. Do you feel that's kind of similar to you?

Patty: Mm-hmm. (Yes.)

How so?

Patty: Because I feel like, it's only my mom helping me raise my baby.

Okay, I can't remember. Did you say...is the “baby daddy” still in the picture?

Patty: When he wants to be. I haven't talked to him in a couple weeks.

[Comparing life to 16 and Pregnant]

(The other similarity Patty saw between her pregnancy and the media dealt with health concerns.)

Regarding the media, in comparison to your pregnancy experience, what have the media gotten right about teens who have children?

Patty: I mean, what do you mean like, you mean like...

In comparison like what you've been through, like was there something the media, whether it was a movie, TV show, some of the things you've seen on Facebook, you were like, yep, that's right. That's exactly the way it was.

Patty: Oh, mm-hmm.

What was it?

Patty: Like, when they had little commercials and plans on Facebook it would tell you like, that's a problem you had throughout your pregnancy like how much weight you gain during your pregnancy, your appetite changes, a whole bunch of stuff.

So you see, you get ads on Facebook that tell you about that stuff?
Patty: Yes!

Really.

Patty: Mm-hmm.

Comparing own pregnancy to media

Anna

“Anna” had very little interaction with her father even though she was living with him. She partied a lot and was dating someone for the last two years. She followed the typical storyline of losing friends throughout her pregnancy because “they don’t want to hang out with somebody with the baby”, meaning they would rather do normal teenager activities. I was curious if the women I interviewed who had less parental interaction would be heavier media users. Here is how Anna answered that question.

Okay. On a daily basis how do you communicate with your family?

Anna: I don't.

You don't?

Anna: I'm in my room all day.

Okay. How do you communicate with your friends?

Anna: Phone.

Okay.

Anna: Texting, yes.

Okay. Who if anyone has taught you about responsible use of the media?

Anna: Nobody.

Living alone

(Anna later said that she learned how to use the media on her own. Also, her feelings about sex in the media changed as a result of her pregnancy.)
Okay. How often did you and your parents discuss or your family discuss sex, love, and relationships as a result of something you saw in the media?

Anna: None.

Alright, what about you and your friends? Did you ever talk about things you saw?

Anna: No nothing that I've seen but things I've done like… [Figuring out things on her own]

Okay. Alright, can you describe your feelings about or your reaction to sexual content in the media? Have you noticed a change before and after you had your baby? Like things I've seen on TV, on Facebook, anything. Like if you’ve seen pictures, movies videos, whatever you saw, do you think about that stuff differently since you've had your girl? Or is it the same to you?

Anna: It's different like I used to be like...now it's normal.

Why do you think it's normal now?

Anna: Because people always do it. It's normal. To me.

What makes you think people always do it?

Anna: Because it's on movies like before I had my baby I was like 'oh, that's nasty' but now I got used to it so like it don't bother me as much.

I guess I'm trying to understand like how do you, how before did you think it was nasty?

Anna: No like if I went to a movie and there was like a nasty part I would be a like yuck; I would close my eyes be like okay.

But what led you to think now that it's okay?

Anna: Because I've done it.
Okay. Alright. Okay that makes sense. What's sexual content have you seen in the media? You said you seen movies. Do you recall any specific movies?

Anna: *Twilight.*

[Changing views on sex in the media]

(Anna was different from the others in how she used Facebook during her pregnancy. She was the only teen mom I talked to who used social media as an emotional outlet.)

**About social media, did you use it before you had your baby? Like Internet and stuff?**

Anna: Yeah, like Facebook.

**What did you talk about?**

Anna: What did I talk about on Facebook?

Yeah.

Anna: Nothing I would just track friends status like what you doing, just stuff like that.

**Like normal day-to-day stuff?**

Anna: Yup.

**Did you use it a lot when you're going through your pregnancy?**

Anna: Yeah.

**What did you talk about? What did you share?**

Anna: Feelings.

**What were your feelings?**

Anna: Emotional because I was pregnant.

**What kind of emotions you experiencing?**

Anna: I don't know, I was always sad.

**Why were you sad?**
Anna: Because I was pregnant.

Okay.

Anna: Pregnant people are always sad though. Sad or mad.

Alright. Since you had your baby, do you still talk on Facebook?

Anna: No, all I do is post pictures.

Why is it just posting pictures?

Anna: Because I don't have nothing to talk about. I'm taking care of my baby. I upload pictures so people can see her but I don't need to upload a status.

[Sharing feelings during pregnancy on Facebook]

(Anna also said she saw things on Facebook which reminded her of when she had anger issues, which eventually led to her reinforcing the point that her relationship with her parents was nonexistent.)

Okay. Ever done something good or bad because you saw it or heard it in the media?

Anna: When I was younger.

Like what?

Anna: Okay like if I seen fights on Facebook then I'll be like oh I want to fight or something and then I would just fight.

Because you saw it on Facebook? You want to fight?

Yeah I just sit there and watch it like I want to beat somebody up like this one day...

Wow, okay.

Anna: That's what I used to do. I don't do that no more.

Was it for any reason? A particular reason?

Anna: People were doing something I didn't like.
Oh because of something you like. Okay. Not just for the…

Anna: No, not exactly. If I'm watching a video of somebody getting beat up I'm like oh I wish this was this person.

[Living vicariously through others in the media]

Gotcha, okay. What has had a stronger influence on you the media or your parents?

Anna: You said what is what?

What has had a stronger influence on you? Media. Why?

Anna: Because it taught me the things I needed to know.

And your parents didn't?

Anna: No.

Well what did the media teach you that you needed to know?

Anna: Like when you have a baby you have to grow up and stuff. Like all of that basically. My dad didn't teach me that stuff.

Where did you learn this in the media?

Anna: TV shows.

Like which TV shows?

Anna: Of course 16 and Pregnant and we watch like other shows like even Disney Channel.

Disney Channel?

Anna: No I'm just saying like even Disney Channel like the parent is so mature and they try to teach their kids but they gotta learn.

[Learning from the media]
Adrienne

“Adrienne” came up with the ideal image of life or how she thought it should be from her favorite music.

How do you believe pop-culture and the media have impacted your life?

Adrienne: Like all the rap songs and stuff like that?

That's impacted your life? Rap songs?

Adrienne: Not really. Probably the little love songs where you think everything is cute and everything supposed to be perfect like that, just like the movies.

Your love life hasn't been perfect like a movie?

Adrienne: Yeah right. (Laughing)

[Comparing life to music]

(Adrienne also found that the teen reality shows bore some resemblance to her life in terms of family conflict.)

Like whether it's 16 and Pregnant, Teen Mom, movies, the news... Anything that's about teen pregnancy. Have the media gotten anything right? About teen pregnancy?

Adrienne: Yes, sometimes they get stuff right because like on the Teen Mom shows they show how the girls be stressing and girls do be stressed out and the parents and you and the baby like I'm the parent of the baby and I'm the parent of me.

What makes you think that way? Is that similar to your experience?

Adrienne: Sometimes it’s similar to my experience. My granny and dad try to tell me what to do with the baby like, put this on her! Like, no. That does not look right. They try to tell you what to do. Like 'I run this right here.'
Gotcha. In comparison to your experience what have the media gotten wrong about teens who have kids? Have you seen anything on TV or in the movies and you're like, no that's not the way it is?

Adrienne: Like they say that a lot of teens are getting pregnant, they just say that. Like a lot of teens are getting pregnant but that's because they're doing research and back in the day like far back in the day my granny said it was more teens getting pregnant than it is now. It just seem like it. Because of the shows in the media now it's just more social networking but back in the day they didn't have like social networking so we really didn't know but it was really it was more teens back in the day getting pregnant.

[Comparing media to personal experience]

Wanda

Before she became pregnant, “Wanda” was living with her biological mom and dad. She never got to be a teenager because she was taking care of a younger brother so much and her mother would “yell at me for certain stuff.” This caused Wanda to say she was scared of her mom at times because of how “aggressive” she was. Despite this, Wanda kept a positive outlook on life and shared that upbeat attitude with her social media network.

Alright so I'm going to ask you some questions about social media since I've seen that you do a lot. Did you use it a lot before and now during your pregnancy? Like always on social media?

Wanda: I've been always on social media even before I was pregnant.

Who do you talk to a lot?

Wanda: On social media, I've never really inbox, you would never catch me in-boxing anybody. I most likely do on Facebook where it's called Facebook games, like to be honest, let's be real, or I’ll take pictures. I love pictures.
Okay, alright. Do you talk about pregnancy at all?

Wanda: Yeah.

What do you share with people?

Wanda: I share how I'm feeling about my pregnancy, how I'm excited...I would say how I would be a better, how I will be a better mother or try to do my best as being a mother to my child. As being too young, how I will do certain stuff that some stuff I don't feel my mom and dad did with me or how they treated me. How they treated me I won't do to my child. Sometimes I share on the media me and my boyfriend, we take pictures or how often about him but I don't try to put too much business out there.

[Being different than parents]

[Sharing positive information]

[Inspiring others]

So it sounds like a very positive...

Wanda: Yeah.

Cool okay. Do you think shows like 16 and Pregnant and Teen Mom or movies about teen pregnancy help others better understand it or do they glamorize it?

Wanda: I really don't know because before I was pregnant, I used to watch 16 and Pregnant and Teen Mom and I used to be like 'they really go through a lot. What I think...I really think that people learn off of it. The ones that's not pregnant (learn off it). They really learn but sometimes just because people are pregnant, the young teenager that's pregnant, they do watch those shows. It don't have nothing to do with them admiring it. It's just sometimes they choose to get pregnant or it's probably no love there or no support or no guidance; so they choose to get pregnant, which I don't know why girls choose to
get pregnant off of no guidance or anything because if you don't have no guidance, how are you going to have guidance to raise your child? And give your child guidance? (Wanda said the teen reality shows have a greater impact on those not pregnant. She claimed those that have no support system or guidance at home are more likely to “get pregnant” because they have “no love” at home.)

[Learning from teen pregnancy reality shows]

Is that very different from your situation? Like why you got pregnant?

Wanda: Yeah, it wasn't on purpose, it wasn't planned it just, some girls I feel like they, they go with a boy that knows they gonna leave them and they’re just gonna have sex. Except for me I was friends with this person for a couple years and then we started dating, we wasn't thinking about having sex when we was dating until this summer. And like I made sure like I'm not trying to say this statement where it seem like I planned it but if I was to have a baby can this person help me out? So the next thing I know I was pregnant and he's supportive and I really feel bad for some girls out here that have babies and they just keep having them back to back and they don't have no father. They don't have no health, no support.

Summary of average media users

The last couple of average media users’ transcripts that I coded revealed nothing new in terms of codes relating to media. However, regarding the loss of friends during pregnancy, one participant revealed something new that I had not heard before. A 20-year-old with two children (2-and 1-year-old girls) said she did not lose friends when she became pregnant because “they had babies right after I did”. I mentally flagged that comment as something to look for among heavy media users because with more media usage, I speculated that effort would be made to maintain connections with friends.
**Heavy media users**

Before I began to code the heavy media users, I had wondered if family relationships would be the most strained here due to the higher amount of media exposure. I also wondered if the amount of interaction during pregnancy would be increased and would there be more negative comments toward the girls as a result of the pregnancy on social media. After going through the average media users, I found that their descriptions of media usage were a little more detailed. I was hoping for even more descriptive incidents of media activity from heavy media users.

*Barb*

The first heavy media user I coded was “Barb”, who partied a lot. She lived with her mom, who was separated from her husband. Barb made herself feel shame about becoming pregnant.

**What about relationships with your friends. How did pregnancy affect that?**

Barb: I didn't talk to nobody like, well like I did, I would have conversations with somebody that I wouldn't like call them and talk to them about the pregnancy because I just sat in the house all the time because sometimes I would be ashamed for getting pregnant so early like I looks like a little girl with this big old belly. Everybody is like what is she doing with that? Yeah. And like sometimes I thought about like my mama like I feel like I was a bad mom. I didn't scare her in the right way so I really didn't talk to nobody I just kept to myself and ate all the time.

**I saw you said that your mom was also a teen mom so did that, did you think about that a little?**

Barb: Yes she told me, she told me like it's hard. She'd tell me like it's hard and stuff but I didn't care. I wanted this, I just wanted my baby.
Gotcha.

Barb: It's okay. I got to feeling it's hard.

[Keeping to myself]

[Wanting my baby]

(Barb was different from the norm of the participants in that she was carefully building her friendships back up post-pregnancy.)

Alright, on a daily basis how do you communicate with your family and friends, face-to-face or through social media? Or your phone?

Barb: We like I don't know like. I really just like got my friends back not like I wouldn't call them friends but people I can like, I think I can call my friends but I don't know for sure yet because I had some bad friends and I don't want to surround myself around bad people so but like talking to them I mean I really got a lot to talk to like my deepest secrets that I would want to. I have conversations with people like what you doing or we can kick it or something.

[Recovering friends]

(Several times during my interview with Barb, she referenced the role social media had in shaping her views on sex in the media. The first time, Barb said that seeing sexual content was “normal” because of her sexual activity and subsequent pregnancy.)

Describe your feelings about or your reaction to sexual things in the media before and after being pregnant. Like having a baby, did that change things?

Barb: Like before I had a baby I'd seen like a sex scene or something in front of my mom or my granny I like just stopped looking but now I just be like… I'm grown so…

Why do you think that changed?
Barb: I don't know because like… Before I got pregnant I was still a virgin to them. Like I didn't want to tell them, I didn't know how to tell them. It's not like I wanted to tell them but I didn't know how. So it was like, I don't know. They didn't know about me having sex.

[Not telling parents about being sexually active]

[Changing views about sex in media]

I understand. Okay. What sexual content have you seen in the media?

Barb: Like the pictures they post on Instagram. It's just terrible pictures. I mean like it's just not Internet appropriate.

I understand, sure. Before you were pregnant where did you learn about or who taught you about pregnancy and taking care of a child?

Barb: Actually I've been babysitting my cousins every year. She had babies when she was a teen. She had her first baby when she was 16 and I was like 12 and like she wasn't a going-out type of person like who would leave the kids with anybody and I just had to learn because like anytime I come to stay the night over at my aunties house she would leave so I had to like learn and understand and then I just caught on. You were basically, because you were taking care of a kid yourself, I was stuck with a kid that wasn't even mine at 12 years old.

[Experiencing teen pregnancy early]

(The second social media reference occurred when Barb discussed how she formulated her thoughts about sex and pregnancy.)

What attitudes or thoughts did you have about having a child or having sex before your pregnancy? Were any of those thoughts influenced by the media in anyway?
Barb: Sometimes because sometimes people like post stuff like you see stuff and you be like 'oh I wonder how that is' or something like that.

**Like what?**

[Learning about sex through the media]

Barb: Like people having sex and stuff like I mean like pictures of like sex and stuff and you just be like wondering like well I would wonder like I would wonder what that would be like and then one day I met this dude, why been knowing him but one day we was just together and he tell me that I should do it to him and that was my baby daddy.

[Wondering or curious about sex on the web]

Gotcha.

Barb: I shouldn't have did that.

So more or less you were curious because of images you had seen on the Internet or anywhere.

Barb: Yeah.

[Seeing sex posted on the web]

[Being influenced by web content]

(Barb’s third reference to social media came when she discussed how much she shared of her pregnancy on social media.)

You mentioned that you had over 1,000 connections on Instagram. Have you shared like details of your pregnancy before, during and after having a baby?

Barb: Yeah, I like showed my stomach. I didn't show many pictures on there but I had pictures of my stomach on there and I had my baby shower pictures and stuff but it wasn't like, I don't post everything on the Internet because of the kind of stuff that they can like to do now. They can track where you are and stuff.
[Sharing baby/pregnancy progress]

(A fourth reference to social media by Barb occurred when she revealed that a friend of hers seemed to be following or modeling Barb's lifestyle. So, Barb and her friend used social media to stay in touch and get each other through tough times.)

Getting back to your whole social media thing, were there other ways like before, during and after having your baby that you may be reached out to others, your friends who have been going through the same thing and said hey how do you handle this or…

Barb: Yeah, well…

What did you all talk about?

Barb: My friend that I have, she had her baby like a year after mine so like sometimes we would talk about it like how hard it can be and like because I mean she don't got her "baby daddy." She's got this mom too so…

You were kind of like coaching her along?

Barb: Yeah, sometimes I think she got pregnant just because I did. Because she just, she follow everything I do. I don't know why.

You mean follow everything on like social media that you do? Or just in your life in general, everything?

Barb: Yes.

Okay.

Barb: Like just the way I dress and all of that. She just be copying me. It bothers me but it don't because she's younger than me so…

Really. So she's what 16 or 17?

Barb: She's 17.
Okay.

Barb: She I think like just I think she probably looks up to me. I don't know.

[Sharing hardships of pregnancy with a friend]

[Being a role model]

(A surprising response from the participants, especially from Barb, my first heavy media user, was that when asked how she would talk to other adolescents to educate them about teen pregnancy, she said interpersonal communication would be the best method.)

What do you think would be the most effective way to educate others about teen pregnancy?

Barb: I mean, if it like I don't know. It's just… It's like a good feeling to be a mom like you would love being a mom but it's just so young when you don't have nothing. You don't have like a lot to offer to a newborn child. You gotta make sure that child has everything he needs clothes and you got to get him back and forth to doctors’ appointments, it's like it's not easy. It's a lot.

How would you tell other people who are in your situation, how would you get that message to them?

Barb: You got to listen to your parents. They know everything. They tell you the truth.

What do you mean, I guess my question is how… Would you go speaking to other schools, would you do it your social media, would you tell them in a classroom, how would you do it?

Barb: I would speak to other schools. I'm not like a talker so it would be like… I would speak to people about it because like I've experienced that so I know it but like people always go by what they want to go by. They're not gonna listen to nobody but themselves.
The next two heavy media users went into more explicit detail in terms of their rocky relationships with their parents. Also, they offered more insight than others into their media usage during their pregnancies.

*Heidi*

“*Heidi*” lived with her baby daddy and her child. She had over 900 friends on Facebook. Heidi had one of the more turbulent home lives among the women I interviewed.

**How did pregnancy affect relationships with your family?**

Heidi: Well for me and my mama brought us closer. Me and my mom have never really been close and like with me coming and she showed me what she had to do in order to take care of us and stuff so I think it brought us closer.

**[Getting closer to mom]**

**What about your dad?**

Heidi: Yeah we kind of separated like he was really mad because like I was his only daughter at the time I got pregnant which I was 16 and he wanted me to get an abortion and I was already five months and they was saying like serious damage could happen to me. I could lose too much blood. He didn't care and me and him got into it really bad and we stopped talking for like a year and then he went to jail and he's just got out like I say about three months ago.

**[Keeping the baby]**

**What happened to him?**

Heidi: He… Drug charges.

Okay.
Heidi: And he like moved away when I got pregnant. He moved away and married and I didn't know nothing about it and then we just started back talking like three months ago and I think he's trying to make up for the time he missed and he always told me he just didn't know how to handle it. Like his only daughter being pregnant at 16. He just didn’t know how to handle it.

[Talking to dad again]

What about relationships with your siblings?

Heidi: Well, my oldest sister, me and her used to bump heads a lot because of, she used to say that I always acted like a baby and stuff like that so but my younger sibling… No I didn't like my brother. We used to always bump heads too because he used to always want to be in my room but I used to want to be by myself. I don't know why. But my younger sister, we was real close I talk to her about everything. We still close now how I was. Yeah, me and my older sister didn't get along for nothing. We argued over everything.

Wow. How did pregnancy affect relationships with your friends?

Heidi: Oh they moved on about they life like they don't care. It's like once you get pregnant you don't have no friends. All the friends that you thought you had, hanging out and going to parties, no they will not be there through your pregnancy at all.

[Losing friends]

Did anyone keep hanging around?

Heidi: No.

Heidi's relationship with her mother and her sister has been rocky.

Have you noticed ways that your life is different since you had your baby?
Heidi: At the time before I was living with my mom. She was like I don't know if she was doing drugs. I kinda think she was so like she would like come in and want to argue or pick fights with one of us, mostly me, so I moved in with my sister and she kind of got into that lifestyle was stripping and stuff which she still does now so she was about to move to Florida so she could strip and like I don't know nobody there and I just couldn't rip my baby from his father and that entire family and stuff like that because he's really close with him and she wanted me to move with her and stuff so I just basically moved and me and my baby's father we got back together and we just moved into a house together.

(Heidi was also the first participant who said she used a Facebook app to guide her along her pregnancy.)

**What have you learned from the media about issues that might come up during your pregnancy or health concerns? Do you remember when you were pregnant, did you go through the media or Google anything, look up anything?**

Heidi: Well they have this thing on Facebook where you can keep track of the months of you being pregnant and it tells you like now your baby can eat or open his eyes or suck his thumb.

**There's something on Facebook that does that?**

Heidi: Yeah.

[Using Facebook app to track pregnancy]

**You know what it's called?**

Heidi: I can't remember.

**I've never heard of that.**

Heidi: I think it's, I cannot remember what it's called.
I've never heard that, I'll have to look that up. I had no idea that even existed.

Heidi: Yet it tells you every month of your due date you just type your due date in and every month it will have a thing like your baby is this many, you have this many weeks to go, and your baby can open his eyes now or suck his thumb.

Okay. How did you know about that? Did someone tell you about it?

Heidi: I've seen a lot of other girls doing it.

[Seeing other pregnant teens using the app]

Okay. I had no idea.

Heidi: Yeah.

(A Facebook search for apps for pregnancy revealed several with the following names: Pregnancy Tracker by BabyGaga, Pregnancy Week by Week, Little One Pregnancy Calendar, Pregnancy Tickers, Ovia Pregnancy Android, Ovia Pregnancy, Pregnancy Talk, Pregnancy Calculator, My Pregnancy, Pregnancy, Pregnancy Countdown, My Pregnancy Today, H&P Pregnancy iPhone App, and Pregnancy. When Heidi mentioned the Facebook app use during our interview, I made a note of it. Later, I Googled pregnancy apps and printed out a few pages of information about the apps and took them in the next time I went to conduct more interviews. Louise Kaufmann appreciated the information and handed a copy of my printouts to the school nurse.

Heidi also said she had seen a lot of very graphic sex on social media and it is especially disgusting to see that now that she is raising a child.)

Describe your feelings about or your reaction to sexual content in the media. Has it changed or has it stayed the same since you've had your baby?

Heidi: All it has really changed.

How so?
Heidi: You will see like well I didn't really use Internet before I got pregnant so now you will see you like people recording each other and all that type of stuff on Facebook like and them showing they self and like and it’s people, sometimes it's people that I know and it would be dudes recording girls and everything like, it yeah it has really changed.

**How is it changed, what are your feelings towards that?**

Heidi: I feel like it disgusts me because I'm not one of those type of girls that would share everything or put it on your camera or anything for a guy so it really disgusts me.

(Heidi said the lifestyles that her mom and sister had been living influenced her negative feelings toward seeing sexual content in the media.)

*Bev*

“Bev” was living with her mom and three sisters. Her family situation was unusual in that her mom was a teen mom and she had older sisters who were teen moms. They were all disappointed in her pregnancy.

**How did pregnancy affect the relationships with your family?**

Bev: They were all heartbroken and they didn't want it to happen to me. They wanted me to like graduate and be able to move on.

**That's what your mom said? What about your brothers and sisters?**

Bev: My sister was not happy and my other sisters they were teen parents so but the one she wasn't happy she wanted to like, she wanted me to change and not be held back by a baby.

**Surprising to consider you had two sisters that were teen moms as well.**

Bev: Yeah.

**And they were mad at you?**
Bev: Well they were a little bit because they knew the struggle. They were disappointed because they knew how hard it was for them.

[Disappointing teen mom sisters]

(Following that, social media become a frequent topic of her interview. The first instance related to Bev being shamed about her pregnancy.)

Who if anyone talked to you about responsible use of the media?

Bev: My mom she opened my eyes on that because I don't like a lot of stuff on social media so she tried to like take it away like make it so I didn't have to deal with it.

Why what did she say?

Bev: She just had me delete my Facebook of the way. Like deactivated because there was a lot of negative things happening on there.

What were people doing?

Bev: Just saying like mean stuff like ‘oh you are a ho blah blah blah…’

Because you got pregnant?

Bev: Yeah.

[Deactivating Facebook]

(Bev also said she and her friends discussed each other’s relationships on social media and as far as her views on seeing sexual content in the media, like other teen mothers, those changed after having her baby.)

Please describe your feelings about or your reaction to sexual content in the media before and after having your baby. Have you noticed a huge difference in the way you think about it or your reaction since you had your baby?

Bev: Yeah.

How so?
Bev: I don't know. I used to be like oh my God it's a big deal but now it's just like …

**Why was it a big deal?**

Bev: Before?

**Like what do you mean it's a big deal?**

Bev: I don't know, it was just something that you didn't want to watch with your parents or something or see around your parent but it just different when you have a child because they know you have done the things that you seen on TV and the Internet and stuff.

**So you're totally like open now that you've had a child?**

Bev: Yeah.

[Feeling different about seeing sex in the media]

[Normalizing media sexuality]

(The internet was also a source of information for Bev as she had health concerns during her pregnancy.)

**What have you learned from the media about issues that might come up during your pregnancy or health concerns?**

Bev: I read a lot on the Internet when I was pregnant.

[Reading a lot of info from the internet]

**What were you looking up?**

Bev: I was always thinking like if there was something wrong with my child.

**Why, were you having issues?**

Bev: Yeah I had a very high-risk pregnancy.

**Like in early pregnancy?**

Bev: Yeah.
Okay.

Bev: Like I was high-risk the whole time and they didn't want me doing a lot of thing and I had test results that they said I had problems but he didn't come out with any problems.

Okay. Where did you find the stuff on the web?

Bev: Google.

Oh, you Googled it?

Bev: Yeah.

Okay. What have you learned from the media about good nutrition while being pregnant?

Bev: A lot of things because I used to get email from like magazines that I like and stuff. They would send me like how to… Good nutrition during pregnancy and after pregnancy.

What magazines are emailing you?

Bev: The Parent magazine.

Okay did you like register on the website?

Bev: Yeah.

Okay.

Bev: And then they emailed me.

Gotcha.

Bev: That's all.

[Seeking health information from magazines]

(Bev had another unique insight, this time relating to the MTV teen pregnancy reality shows, as she said she identified with the teen mothers on Teen Mom.)
What attitudes or thought did you have about having a child or having sex before you got pregnant?

Bev: Before I got pregnant I didn't think like I could get pregnant. I was like oh that's not going to happen to me.

Why did you think that though?

Bev: I don't know, because I was sexually active for a while with my son dad and then and like nothing ever happened I didn't get pregnant so I didn't think I could have kids.

Okay. In the media or pop-culture are there people you look up to or you feel you have a connection with? Anyone you idolize?

Bev: Sometimes I look at the people on Teen Mom and stuff like that and like I don't really look up to them but I can do… Something that I look at I'm like wow that was just a stupid idea and I kinda go against what they did.

[Learning from the media]

So you're saying you kind of identify with them because they went through the same thing you did?

Bev: Yeah.

[Identifying with TV teen moms]

(Interestingly, later in the interview, Bev said she formed her ideas of teen pregnancy as a result of 16 and Pregnant.)

Do you think shows like 16 and Pregnant and Teen Mom help people better understand teen pregnancy or do they glamorize it?

Bev: No they glamorize it for sure because I watched it before I was pregnant and thought ‘oh that be cool.’

Oh really?
Bev: I thought if I had a baby it be oh so easy like the way they make it seem.

[Glamorizing teen pregnancy]

(Finally, Bev said her mother had her deactivate her Facebook account because of the mean things she was encountering online such as being called a "ho". However, Bev said she did not keep her account deactivated for a long time.)

Linda

“Linda” was living with her mother, who Linda said “was on board” with her having a baby. While her mother taught her important lessons about life and values, Linda said she learned from her peers about media usage. Linda had over 1,000 social media connections over the platforms of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram but it came with a price.

Who if anyone has taught you about responsible use of the media? That could be anything like TV shows to watch to how to use Facebook...

Linda: I mean I learned from everybody else was telling me how things worked and how all of this stuff works so…

What were they telling you?

Linda: I mean when I first found out about Facebook I was 13 and then it was, you know what I'm saying, it was positive things on Facebook then. But now it's just like it's out-of-control.

How is it out-of-control?

Linda: Everybody put all types of problems like their problems and what they go through on Facebook, like I don't think that's what it's for but that's what they use it as.

[Critiquing social media]

I see.

Linda: It's a lot of… People do cyber bullying that way.
Have you been cyber bullied?

Linda: Once upon a time, yes. Once upon a time. Yes.

Now?

Linda: No. Before.

Okay. Was it like a close friend or something? A classmate?

Linda: Classmate.

Okay. Did it get resolved?

Linda: I mean not really. I just deleted the Facebook.

[Learning from others about social media]

[Deleting Facebook due to bullying]

Conni

“Conni” was the mother of a 1-year-old boy. Conni had over 3,000 friends on Facebook. She described her life before pregnancy as wild, having a lot of enemies, and a lot of drama. Conni was living with her mother and her baby. Her discussions about relationships and sex, like other participants, were much more substantial with her friends.

Before you were pregnant where did you learn about or who taught you the most about relationships?

Conni: My mom and… Just my mom.

Okay. Who taught you are where did you learn about being in love?

Conni: My mom.

[Learning from mom]

Alright. How often did you and your mom talk about sex, love and relationships as a result of something you saw in the media?

Conni: When I was 13 that's when I… We didn't really talk about it about sex but when I turned 12 we did because I lost my virginity when I was 13.
Okay. Alright. But you never talked about things that you saw on TV or in the movies?

Conni: Yeah I would but then I wouldn't. Because it's uncomfortable talking about it to your mom. It was kind of uncomfortable but I would ask her but then sometimes I wouldn't because I would be feeling awkward.

[Feeling awkward talking to mom about sex]

Okay. How often did you and your friends have that discussion about sex love and relationships as a result of something you maybe saw on the Internet or on movies or on TV?

Conni: We would talk about it yeah I like… I don't know.

What did you all talk about? Like can you recall any specific example of a discussion that you had with your friends? About something you saw online…

Conni: Yeah I, we always talked about relations like we would like we would put our relationships as if we was…Well we would put our relationships as if we were in like a movie. Really. I don't know, it's weird. Like you wish as if it was in the movies or… Yeah. Wish it was like the movies.

[Comparing life to the movies]

(Regarding sexual content in the media, Conni expressed a desire to be protective of her child from seeing anything could harm her baby.)

Okay. Can you describe your feelings about your reaction to sexual content in the media? Have you noticed, it has it been a big difference like before you got pregnant and had your baby until now?

Conni: What do you mean like?
Like if you saw something online like a sexy pose or if you saw a couple having sex on TV, and your feelings towards that. Has that changed? Now that you've had a kid?

Conni: Yeah.

How so?

Conni: It changed because like you don't want your kids watching that or learning that stuff. It's good to let them know about it but don't let them move on too fast.

[Changing views on sex in the media]

[Corrective parenting]

How did you feel about that before you had your baby?

Conni: I don't know. I don't get it. I don't get this question.

Like before you had your baby and you saw like a couple on TV or…

Conni: How did I feel that I feel, I don't know. Like it was normal.

(About social media, Conni shared the progress of her pregnancy and also disclosed the increase in drama with her relationship. Conni said the drama came from other women.)

So about social media, I'm going to ask you a few questions about that. Did you use it a lot before you had your baby?

Conni: Use what?

Facebook.

Conni: No, not really.

Alright. Did you use it while you were pregnant?

Conni: Yes.

What did you talk about on Facebook?
Conni: It was a lot of drama. Because a lot of girls was like who you messing with, my ex and all this… It was just a lot of drama. I don't know it kind of was the whole package because when you date somebody you never know as much as you think you know about the past. Until you finally get into relationship with them and settle down, that's when all the drama comes.

[Experiencing boy-related drama on Facebook]

Yeah.

Conni: With the different females and all that crap. But I was just putting stuff up like how many weeks I was and showing my ultrasounds on Facebook, my baby, taking pictures of and stuff.

[Sharing pregnancy progress]

Okay. Do you use it still now since you've already had your baby?

Conni: Yeah I post pictures on there. A lot of pictures. And talk about stuff.

Okay. Like what things do you talk about?

Conni: Me getting this job, lots of stuff, sometimes it be a little bit of drama. Not even drama, just tell this person how I feel.

(Also, during her pregnancy, Conni said she learned from watching Oprah to keep track of her diabetes.)

Like you mentioned Oprah and all of these other people, did you learn anything from them or online, good things to eat, to see a doctor…

Conni: Yeah I would watch Oprah and I was seeing a doctor because I have diabetes with my baby.

What did you learn from Oprah about that?
Conni: Like it's not what you want to eat it's what you should eat because I'm not much of a big healthy eater for real but I will. It's not about what you want because once you have your baby everything is about your baby.

[Getting health related information from TV-Oprah]

Lisa

Social media was a big part of “Lisa”’s life. She had a different view of social media regarding what to post and the carefree way that her friends acted on social media. Lisa was the only woman I interviewed who had over 4,000 connections spread out over five social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and Textplus).

Who, if anyone, has taught you about responsible use of the media and that could mean what good TV shows to watch…

Lisa: My brother.

What's he say?

Lisa: (Laughing) He said I should use social media in a good way I guess meaning I shouldn't post too many pictures up because people get a hold of them and you really don't want anything to happen to the pictures that you post on the Internet because anyone all over the world can see it.

[Being told to use social media in a positive way]

True.

Lisa: So he tells not to post pictures or say anything negative that could come back on me.

Did you have any lessons that you learned as a result of posting things?

Lisa: Yeah.

Really? Like what happened?
Lisa: Like I would post a picture and someone would get mad and take one of my pictures and say, “Oh she's ugly.”

**What kind of pictures did you post?**

Lisa: A regular picture, just being silly or something.

[Being silly on Facebook]

Like a selfie? And people were like “oh look at that?”

Yeah. And would repost it and all that.

(Later in the interview, Lisa said her generation has gotten out of control with sharing on social media.)

**Can you describe your feelings about or your reaction to sexual content in the media? Have you noticed if it's changed from the time before you had your two kids until now? Is it different?**

Lisa: Yeah, it's very different.

**How is it different?**

Lisa: Because, like, I don't know. The person that asked out on media and the person that gets exposed on social media… I don't know. It's just not good.

Like how is it before you had your two babies? Like what did you think when you saw like…

Lisa: I don't think it was as bad… I think people were being more smarter with using the social media but now in this generation they're not.

[Thinking this generation is out of control]

Okay. You're 18.

Lisa: I'm like, alright.

**What sexual content have you seen in the media?**
Lisa: Naked pictures of people, people doing stuff.

**Where have you seen that?**

Lisa: On Facebook. On Instagram.

(Lisa did have some positive things to say about social media as she was the only other participant to state she used an app to help with her pregnancy.)

**What have you learned from the media about issues that might come up during your pregnancy or health concerns? Like were you searching for stuff online or were you reading books about anything?**

Lisa: Oh yeah, I used to read books a lot before I got pregnant and when I got pregnant to help me throughout my life, you know….

[Reading pregnancy books]

Okay. Cool. Anything else?

Lisa: Not really.

Okay. **What have you learned from the media about things like good nutrition while being pregnant?**

Lisa: A lot.

**Like where did you learn that from?**

Lisa: Like on Facebook it has like these little pregnancy things that'll tell you the date of your pregnancy and all that and subtracting dates and all that. It'll tell you usually what to eat while you're pregnant that's healthy. I basically went by that.

[Using Facebook-social media pregnancy app...second participant]

[Getting health info from social media]
Ella

Another heavy media user, “Ella,” was the mother of two boys (3 years old and 1 year old). She was living with her kids. Ella supported her friends on social media as they went through their pregnancies.

How do you communicate with your friends?

Ella: Over Facebook.

Okay. What do you all talk about?

Ella: Pretty much like our grade school years was but my best friend her daughter was born last year so she went through, I was there for her during her pregnancy, I told her me having been pregnant myself I told her it was going to be hard. To me it seemed like she got a hang of it really fast like I did. It was her first baby so it gets frustrating for her and she would call and I would tell her if you need anything call. I mean I have two of them, I know exactly what's going on and there were times and I would call my granny because my granny is, it's a lot of us so my granny has been there for every one of us and my granny has 17 boys and nine girls. My granny has 26 kids.

[SUPPORTING FRIENDS HAVING BABIES]

Wow, okay. Who, if anyone, has taught you about responsible use of the media?

Ella: Nobody.

(Ella’s extensive social media usage was evident as she shared a lot of her high-risk pregnancy online.)

Did you use that (social media) a lot during your pregnancies?

Ella: Yeah.

What did you share? What did you tell people?
Ella: How hard it was being pregnant and still going to school and trying to do
everything on my own as far as like going baby shopping or anything without having a
job, it's very hard.

**So the hardest things were money, time, where there other things that were hard for
you? That you shared on Facebook? Like physically health-wise?**

Ella: Well me I was a high-risk pregnancy.

**Did you talk about that a lot?**

Ella: Yeah and being like high risk there's things you can do but as far as like traveling
or anything you can't do it because I wanted to go places but I wanted to go visit my
auntie but with me being high risk I was at the doctors every week.

[Sharing high-risk pregnancy details/pregnancy progress]

**So you are like posting about this?**

Ella: Yeah I had like a stress test machine they had to put these little straps on my
stomach and everything trying to run the test and they was a lot of things that I had to go
through being pregnant both times. There was another stress test I got at least every week
and they gave me ultrasound and sometimes they would do ultrasound to see how this is
doing because I had a lot of fluids that I had around my baby and I had to go to the
doctors at least three times a week and it was stressful. I hated it getting up early in the
morning. I hated it. And I would just say to myself like, Ella, if you would've waited and
not did what you did you wouldn't be going through this, but it was a decision that I did
not have to deal with that but my mom she was there and my Granny made sure I got my
doctor’s appointment every week. My grandma would call me at 6 o'clock in the morning
and I didn't have to be at the doctors until nine. She called and I say granny it is only 6
o'clock in the morning… I'm like granny I am tired, this baby won't stop moving. My
granny was at my house by 7:30 in the morning. By 8:45 I was out the door on my way to the doctor’s office. She took me to breakfast and she made sure I ate before I was at the doctors which is not a good thing because my baby slept the whole entire time and they needed my baby to be up and moving so they had like this little Taser machine thing like to that my son to make my baby move. My baby did not move. My baby slept through the whole test that they were running and take the test off me and they had to do an ultrasound and my baby was balled up sleeping. My baby did not want to move and the lady was like did you eat before you came? And I'm like yeah and she was like your son is sleeping. He doesn't want to move. Well, I was hungry and my stomach was growling and he was hungry; so and it never fails because I always ate before I went and he would not wake up and then I had to take this nasty glucose test I had to take, it was like a little sugary drink I had to drink that is disgusting. It's gross. It's a 2 1/2 hour test and if you threw it back up you would have to take another one. You have to keep it down. Man, no. That was never working out. It never failed that my baby did not want it. I threw it back up every time.

Wow.

(And again, like other participants, Ella was more comfortable having more intimate conversations about relationships with her friends than with her parents.)

**How often did you and your parents discuss sex, love and relationships as a result of something you've seen in the media?**

Ella: Not very often because I couldn't, well I can go to my mom, my mom talks to me about it more than my dad. I couldn't, just thought we are talking to my dad about it. But between my mom and my granny they taught me about it a whole lot. And me myself I figured out what it was the hard way instead of listening to them…
[Figuring out relationships by herself]

When you say the hard way you mean through like just doing it?

Ella: Yes. I figured it out the hard way and I mean I don't, I should've, I wish I would've waited but I didn't and my granny she tells me all the time because she knows my granny knows when I get frustrated sometimes and she's like I told you to wait and it just brightens my day, it puts a smile on my face.

GOTCHA. How often did you and your friends discuss sex, love and relationships as a result of something you seen in the media?

Ella: All the time.

Really? All the time?

Ella: It's random things that would like just come out of nowhere and we just sit on the phone and we just talk about it like my best friend she'd be on her phone talking about her boyfriend and like it's just random, things would just pop in our heads and we just talk about it.

[Having deeper relationship conversations with friends]

Jenny

Sharing pregnancy health details on social media was also important to Jenny. Jenny had a 1-year-old son and was living with her mother. Jenny spent a lot of time online sharing information with her 1,000-plus Facebook friends.

So you told me you got over 1,000 friends on Facebook. How much did you talk about anything related to your pregnancy, like, before, during and after?

Jenny: A lot, like during the pregnancy I took a lot of pictures, posted a lot...

[Sharing/posting a lot of pictures on Facebook]
So you shared your experience? Did you have any questions about your pregnancy that you would...ask?

Jenny: Um, like, I would ask, like, why my blood pressure's high and then in the end I'd end up have preeclampsia; that's why it's so high but in the end it was not till the end.

Okay. Was there anything else that you talked about, health concerns or nutrition?

Jenny: Um, nutrition like what I was supposed to eat and like then I had, like, tell me take my vitamins and stuff like that.

(Sharing her pregnancy experience and health concerns on social media might have saved Jenny's life.)

Before you were pregnant, where did you learn about or who taught you about pregnancy and taking care of a child?

Jenny: Nobody.

Nobody? Okay, what have you learned from the media about issues that may have come up about pregnancy or health concerns? You mentioned blood pressure, but that was at the end?

Jenny: Mm-hmm. It was all during my pregnancy but they finally diagnosed me at the end of preeclampsia.

How did you know that your blood pressure was running high?

Jenny: I would get headaches, I would get light-headed, and then every time I was to get up I'd get light-headed, and then every time I went to the hospital it was high. But they didn't never, it seemed like they never investigated it...they'd just tell me to...not to do so much.

So you were having symptoms, you weren't thinking that this was out there and you needed to go get checked out?
Jenny: I would go, at the end like, I would go like, every week. So every week I would tell them like, “My heads been hurting, I've been light-headed…”

So it was pretty serious.

Jenny: Yeah. They didn't never..

They never diagnosed it?

Jenny: Yeah!

Wow.

Jenny: Yeah, serious. Like, I about died from that.

Yeah. I mean, my curiosity is, people say...

Jenny: It'd be like 190/120

That's like, you'd almost have a stroke.

Jenny: Yeah! Almost had a seizure. Like a seizure out...they had padding around my bed, like I couldn't physically eat nothing, like I had an IV in, I couldn't get up, had a catheter in, it was terrible.

Wow. Oh my gosh.

Jenny: (laughs) And I was five days late....(whispers) it was terrible.

Hillary

One of the last heavy media users that I coded had an extremely troubling story. "Hillary" was sexually assaulted by a “random person” and had been bullied about it.

What effects, positive, has pregnancy had on your life?

Hillary: A lot. I was always called like a ho because I was young, I was 13 when I got pregnant. I got called every name in the book...just a lot of people still call me one now, because, I don't know why, they still call me that.

Was it face-to-face they were calling you this?
Hillary: Face-to-face, behind my back, over the media.

So on Facebook they were doing this?
Hillary: Mm-hmm. (Yes.)

So how did you respond to that?
Hillary: I just, I cried about it a lot because I was so young at the time. Now I really don't care for it.

Was there anyone that you went to or that you could talk to?
Hillary: I went to counseling for it.

[Seeking counseling for bullying]

(Like so many other women I interviewed, Hillary said no one taught her about important life lessons, sex, love, or relationships. It was through watching her older sister, the one who had three children by the age of 20, that she learned the most from.)

How often did you and your friends discuss sex, love, and relationships as a result of something you saw the media?
Hillary: A lot. We're always talking about it.

Really?
Hillary: Yeah.

What do you mean my always? Is it face-to-face?
Hillary: Yes. Face-to-face.

What are you guys talking about?
Hillary: I don't know. There like always asking questions like have you seen… Or have you ever… I don't know. I'm not gonna say exact things.

No, I gotcha. Like was there a specific, like was there a TV or a movie where they say, “did you see the way they…”
Hillary: Yeah.

Can you describe your feelings about a reaction to sexual content and media before and after being pregnant? Like did it, like did you have certain thoughts about it before having your child and then afterwards it's totally different?

Hillary: It's different.

How is it different?

Hillary: I don't mess around like that no more ever since I... I never had... Well I lost my virginity when it first happened to me and I've never, I never did that after that until now.

Okay.

Hillary: Because that's how I got pregnant. I was always scared to mess around.

Okay. Gotcha. Being how that happened that's how it changed you? What are you saying, that you'd be more cautious?

Hillary: Yeah.

(Being more cautious was something Hillary mentioned later in the interview and how it related to the media as well as how it related to her sexual assault.)

Did you discuss your pregnancy on social media? What did you talk about?

Hillary: I would just like take a picture of my belly and post how many months I was because my sister, she don't live with me no more. She lives so far away.

[Posting updates of pregnancy]

Alright. Were there any other areas of your pregnancy that you talked about?

Hillary: No.

Okay. Do you think shows like 16 and Pregnant, Teen Mom or movies about teen pregnancy help others better understand it or do they glamorize?
Hillary: I think it helps them understand.

How so?

Hillary: Because they… Different people go through different things. And I think seeing other people’s stories will help you.

[Teen pregnancy shows help cope]

Okay. Cool. Do you have any favorite artists, musicians, or celebrities that you look up to?

Hillary: No.

Okay. How do you believe that pop culture or the media has impacted your life?

Hillary: I don't know.

Okay. Have you changed your behavior, your attitude or the way you dress because of anything? A song, movie or TV show?

Hillary: No, I just like to be covered ever since… Ever since my situation happened.

Okay.

Hillary: I always have… My skin is never showing.

Before you were dressing totally differently?

Hillary: Yeah.

Okay. Was that maybe the way that you thought girls dress?

Hillary: Yeah.

[Wearing more clothing]

After Hillary's interview concluded, I shared the details of the interview with a school administrator; the administrator acknowledged she knew and was aware of the situation.
Summary of heavy media users

Having gone through the remaining heavy media users and assigning them similar codes to what I have described in the previous interviewees, the analysis moved on to the next phase. No new codes or patterns developed, which led me to conclude I had reached a saturation point. The biggest difference I noticed with the heavy media users was that the desertion of friends did not occur with this group as it did with the light and average media users. Very few heavy media users said their families were deeply involved throughout their pregnancies.

Focused coding

Focused coding is taking the “most significant” and “most frequent” codes in initial coding and using those to again sift through the data to make broader connections. Charmaz (2014) said it is “simply selecting and going forward with the codes that most interest you” (p. 140). Focused coding also means looking for those codes which help provide some direction or steering toward answering the research question, which will be my aim when weeding through my initial codes. Charmaz suggests using the following questions as a guide for determining focused codes:

- What do you find when you compare your initial codes with data?
- In which ways might your initial codes reveal patterns?
- Which of these codes best account for the data?
- Have you raised these codes to focused codes? (Meaning: can similar codes be generalized into broader codes?)
- What do your comparisons between codes indicate?
- Do your focused codes reveal gaps in the data?

In examining the codes between the light, average, and heavy media users, several patterns emerged. Family conflict and lack of parental supervision was a common theme, no
matter how much media was consumed. Three out of the five light media users said they were engaged in at-risk behaviors such as skipping school, always being over at the boyfriend’s house, and being sexually active. All eight average media users expressed being involved in some at-risk behavior, which included: being sexually active, being sexually active in grade school, going to parties, and not going home. Nine out of the seventeen heavy media users’ stated behaviors included: smoking, drinking, partying, not going home, not going to school, sneaking out of the house, fighting, being sexually active, and being sexually active in grade school. It is important to detail the behaviors these women were exhibiting to see how or if it impacted their pregnancy as well as how the media may or may not have been a factor.

For some participants in each media use category, the news of being pregnant was met with mixed reaction within the family, with most being supportive and positive. However, in most of the cases, the number of friends decreased because they did not want to spend time with friends shaming the pregnant teenager online or in-person about having sex and/or becoming pregnant.

Facebook or social media usage typically involved sharing baby bump pictures throughout the pregnancy with many participants. For some, social media use declined as a result of the previously mentioned shaming that I previously mentioned or what some called drama. “Bev” (starts on page 133 of this study) was an example of how she decreased her Facebook activity because she was called a “ho.”

A heavy majority of participants also discussed love and relationships with their parents or a family member but at the same time, they had deeper conversations with friends about sexual content they had seen in the media, either in television shows, movies, or online. In relation to discussions about media, love, sex, and relationships, several women in each category responded that they learned about those topics from other sources that were not a parental figure.
In Chart 4.6, I charted where light media users were taught about relationships, love/sex, pregnancy, and use of media.

Chart 4.6 Light media users’ (5) influences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where they learned about:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Mom (multiple)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Oprah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Dr. Phil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Friends (multiple)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average media users’ influences (Chart 4.7) differ in that several said “nobody” taught them about love/sex and use of media. The word “multiple” in parentheses means that occurred more than once. Each exclamation point denotes an individual who responded with that response.

Chart 4.7 Average media users’ (8) influences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where they learned about:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Mom and Dad (multiple)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Aunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Granny (multiple)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Friends (multiple)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Mom and sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Mom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart 4.8 illustrates the sources of influence for the heavy media users. Two things are apparent in the heavy media users’ table. There are multiple occurrences where “nobody” was listed as an influence and more media sources are listed as influences.

Chart 4.8 Heavy media users’ (17) influences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Love/Sex</th>
<th>Pregnancy</th>
<th>Use of Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Nobody (multiple!)</td>
<td>-Nobody (multiple!)</td>
<td>-Nobody (multiple!)</td>
<td>-School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Sister (multiple!)</td>
<td>-Boyfriend</td>
<td>-Sister who was a teen mom (multiple)</td>
<td>-Nobody (multiple!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Mom (multiple!!!!)</td>
<td>-Mom</td>
<td>-Pregnancy classes</td>
<td>-Mom (multiple!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Grandmother (multiple!!)</td>
<td>-Friends (multiple)</td>
<td>-Nurse Larson</td>
<td>-Dr. Phil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Friends</td>
<td>-Dad</td>
<td>-Mom (multiple!!)</td>
<td>-Oprah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Aunt (multiple)</td>
<td>-Friends (multiple!)</td>
<td>-Books, magazines</td>
<td>-Steve Harvey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Brother</td>
<td>-Sister</td>
<td>-Junior high health class</td>
<td>-Sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Stepdad</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Doctor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Parents</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Helped mom take care of/raise younger siblings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(multiple)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-WIC office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-School/parenting class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Theoretical coding*

There is a mystery to the process of theoretical coding. Glaser (1978) stated this is the stage where the “substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory” (p. 72). Glaser proposed this is where not only the theory takes shape, but also, the story emerges. There is no clear cut method to do theoretical coding. According to Charmaz, “The extent to which theoretical coding is an application or emergent process is somewhat ambiguous” (p. 150). Charmaz also insists theoretical coding emerges from the “empirical world and the analytical sense you (the researcher) make of it” (p. 151). Charmaz cites Glaser’s Six C’s
as one way to conduct theoretical coding. Glaser’s Six C’s are Causes, Contexts, Contingencies, Covariances, and Conditions. While Glaser's Six C's are helpful, Charmaz argues that Glaser did “not supply criteria for establishing what we should accept as a coding family or reasons why we should accept his depiction of them (theoretical coding family)” (p. 154). Charmaz's position is that there is no definitive limit on objectivity in terms of the coding. She urges using theoretical coding to help “clarify or sharpen your analysis but avoid imposing a forced framework on it with them” (p. 154). There is a fair amount of freedom on the part of the researcher in Charmaz's version of theoretical coding.

In looking over my interview questions as well as my data, I asked the young women about various aspects of their lives and how they changed before and after having a baby. Participants shared how their family relationships, academics, social media use, friendships, and thoughts on seeing sexual content in the media were impacted by the experience of having a child. The easiest way to analyze these views and how they progressed was to construct a timeline. Actually seeing any changes over the course of time helps to show causes and possible variables that might have come into play and might remain unnoticed.

Several media usage-related trends emerged among the three groups (light, average, and heavy) that showed that the women based their judgments about the level of reality of pregnancy movies and television shows in accordance to their own experiences. For many participants, their perceived level of reality of shows like *16 & Pregnant* depended on how closely they mirrored the events in their lives. Also, many women said they had learned lessons about family situations, sex, and pregnancy from seeing things in popular culture such as *Oprah* or *Steve Harvey*. The next several pages list the lessons learned from popular culture and the life comparisons made to pregnancy in the media that the light media users stated. For a majority of
the women, their feelings toward seeing sex in the media had changed as a result of their engaging in sex and having a child.
Chart 4.9 The five light media users' media-related lessons and comparisons. Items in parentheses at the ends of statements indicate where that lesson came from.

**Media-related lessons and comparisons:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thought relationships would be like the movies-romanticized</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not let disabilities get in the way of relationships (<em>Forrest Gump</em>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned about pregnancy issues like stillbirths from seeing a video on Facebook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned from <em>Juno</em> to keep baby, did not want to give it up for adoption</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life is not over if you have a child (like in the media)...was told this in real life and called a ‘ho</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be careful what you post on Facebook because it is forever (school)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex is constantly posted on Facebook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen moms in the media are on the edge, most likely to drop out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t use Facebook for bad things (talking badly about people) (Mom)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching sex in movies (with friends) during 8th grade year to see what it was really like</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looked up premature labor information because her pregnancy was early</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned good nutrition on Facebook while pregnant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looked up health concerns (nutrition).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing feelings on Facebook.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom banned social media due to stress that forced premature labor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Post-pregnancy specific statements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeing sex in the media disgusts me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay with sex now because of the pregnancy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not on social media. No time for it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deactivated Facebook-too much drama for a short time at pregnancy but now back on.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disgusted by seeing sex in movies because she doesn’t want to get pregnant again (has two kids).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t care about sex anymore due to the predicament I am in.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased social media usage.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sees too much sex on social media.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only posts positive things on social media about baby and life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moving to the average media users, Chart 4.10 (next page) shows that this group had more guidance from parental figures on media usage and also the average media users were more reactionary to drama on social media. Furthermore, there was an increase from the light media users in the ways that the pregnancy experience was shared online.
Chart 4.10 The eight average media users’ media-related lessons and comparisons.

**Media-related lessons and comparisons:**

- Teen pregnancy shows teach people how hard it is to have a baby.
- Not allowed to watch anything R-rated (Mom).
- Mom is monitoring Facebook posts.
- Mom: Don’t post no negative or disrespectful stuff.
- Pregnancy reality shows are realistic because they show the struggle of raising babies by themselves.
- Saw weight gain and appetite changes in other teen moms on Facebook and thought that was true to life (based on her experience).
- *Teen Mom* is realistic because it shows you what to expect (comparing it to self).
- Wants to fight people she sees on Facebook that make her angry.
- Learned about babies and how to take care of them on *16 and Pregnant* and Disney.
- Granny: Don’t put all your business on Facebook.
- Teen pregnancy reality shows are glamorized because we don’t get paid to be pregnant.
- Sometimes the teen pregnancy reality shows do get it right because I’m the mom of my baby and I’m the mom of me. (This meant that the teen mother had to take care of herself as much as she was taking care of her child.)
- Mom: Don’t post naked pictures on Facebook. Go tell a teacher or authorities if you get bullied.
- My pregnancy was like many situations on *16 and Pregnant* where it wasn’t planned.
- Media have gotten it right that once you have one baby, you want another (said teen mother of two children).
- Mom: Stay out of drama on Facebook.
- Used social media to share and discuss everything.
- Discussed weight gain and appetite with friends on Facebook.
- Shared a lot of feelings…sadness.
- Looked up nutrition (Google).
- Learned about miscarriages and diabetes-looked it up online (Google).
- Stayed off Facebook because she thought there would be “too much problems.”

**Post-pregnancy specific statements**

- Sees sex in a lot of movies.
- Not on social media so much anymore.
- Same thoughts about seeing sex in the media because mom has blocked sex content on television.
- Used social media to share and discuss everything.
- Posts baby pics.
- Not getting involved in social media because there is so much ‘stuff’ online.
- Trying not to put too much of my business out there.
In numbers alone, as I progressed into the heavy media users (Chart 4.11), the number of participants was higher but also, the number of references to television shows and comparisons to things in the media was dramatically higher. Considering that the number of heavy media users (17) was just two more than the light and average media users combined (13), the heavy media users were more resourceful than the light and average media users when it came to using the media to look up information regarding their pregnancy or pregnancy issues, and sharing their pregnancy progress on social media.
Chart 4.11 The seventeen heavy media users’ media-related lessons and comparisons. This chart starts on this page and the next page.

**Media-related lessons and comparisons:**

- Control what you post. Don’t show off your body (school).
- Saw on TV: clinics where I could go for pregnancy.
- Media have gotten it right that pregnancy is not fun and games. You can’t do it by yourself.
- Media have gotten it wrong that your life is over (multiple).
- Used Facebook app to track pregnancy progress.
- Media have gotten it right that you should wait to have kids.
- Media have gotten it wrong that ‘all teens are bad moms. Some teens are actually better parents than older women.’
- Mom: Had me deactivate my Facebook because there was a lot of negative and mean things on it. (“Calling me a ‘ho.")
- “Kinda go against what people do on *Teen Mom*. I look at them and think “that’s a stupid idea.”
- TV moms have it too easy. “It’s not easy. You have to give up your life for your child and change your lifestyle.”
- TV glorifies love and makes it seem like everything is supposed to be perfect. TV is very unrealistic.
- Teen pregnancy reality shows are realistic because they show it’s not easy “especially when you don’t have help and all the chaos and drama that comes along with it. And people, your parents, they be upset and they don’t like who the dad of your child is.”
- TV teen moms: they have their baby, everything is good and then like when the baby comes, the dad don’t do nothing. They constantly arguing, the parents are constantly arguing with the child’s dad and it’s like nobody understands what they’re going through but them.” (This is identical to the participant’s situation).
- Deleted Facebook account due to bullying.
- Learned from Oprah what to eat when having a baby.
- Got mad at television when watching Maury because two girls who had diseases wanted to get pregnant.
- Teen pregnancy reality shows have gotten it right that having a baby is hard and “that they life is over with.”
- Brother: Don’t post too much on social media “because anyone all over the world can see it.”
- People would see pics I post and say, “oh, she’s ugly.”
- Used pregnancy app on Facebook to track progress.
- Mom: Don’t put stuff on Facebook that you’ll regret later (multiple).
- Sisters: Be careful what you put on social media “because the whole world is going to see it and you can’t delete it so, you know, it’s going to affect you when you get your job, you know, when you get older, so just be careful whatever you do.
- Media have gotten it right that teens aren’t ready physically to have a baby…sometimes, mentally (ready).
- *Teen Mom* is real because it is similar to what I went through.
- Media have gotten it right about teen pregnancy that you usually have no one to talk to (identical to participant’s life).
- Don’t smoke or drink while pregnant. (from BET’s 106th and Park)
- Teen Mom shows make pregnancy seem hard when it’s not really that hard.
- Shared baby’s progress (multiple!!).
- Researched a lot (nutrition) on the internet due to my high risk pregnancy (Google) (multiple).
- Shared relationship issues and progress on social media.
- Posting pictures.
- Mom ordered Facebook to be deactivated because she was one of the last people to find out I was pregnant.
- Read lots of books and magazines about having a baby (breast-feeding).
- Used social media to vent about problems (no help). Used it more than talking with my family.
- Pregnancy was rough because I was alone. And I expressed those feelings on social media.
- Encountered a lot of drama on Facebook while pregnant about who you’re messing with (boyfriend).
- Read pregnancy books (multiple).
- Used pregnancy app on Facebook to track progress.
- Posting feelings, emotions, and physical symptoms (pains and cramping) (multiple).
- Shared a lot of pregnancy issues and asked questions about high blood pressure issues she was having.
- Used Facebook to tell people how hard it was being pregnant and going to school and trying to do everything on my own.
- Posted about her high-risk pregnancy on Facebook.

**Post-pregnancy specific statements**
- Seeing sex scenes in media when family is in the room: I…just stopped looking but now, I just be like…I’m grown so.
- Sees lots of sexual pictures on Instagram.
- Helping a friend along with her pregnancy through social media.
- Disgusted when she sees people who post sexual things on social media.
- Decreased social media usage (due to the baby).
- Seeing sex in the media is not a big deal.
- Researched a lot (nutrition) on the internet due to my high risk pregnancy (Google).
- Keeping posts to a minimum now. I don’t want problems.
- Don’t want kids seeing sex on television.
- Posting lots of baby pictures (multiple).
- Got mad at television when watching Maury because two girls who had diseases wanted to get pregnant.
- I post positive messages on social media to help others.
- Now totally understands what she sees when she sees sexual content posted on Facebook.
- Don’t care about seeing sex on Facebook.
Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling is the stage of the Grounded Theory study where the researcher is “seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories in your emerging theory” (Charmaz, p. 192). With this study focusing on the media engagement of teen mothers, I re-examined the participants' statements that dealt with media. From the tables labeled *Media-related lessons and comparisons* for each media group (light, average, and media users) from pages 168-173, statements were coded into 24 separate codes.

a) seeing sex normalized
b) sees lots of sex on social media
c) using social media to help pregnant friend
d) disliking sexual posts
e) decreased social media use
f) using social media for research
g) reducing social media posts
h) repulsed by TV content re: risque programming
i) sees Teen Mom reality show as real
j) Media/reality TV right about hardships
k) Media counseling accepted
l) Sharing relationship issues and pregnancy progress on social media
m) Mom deactivated social media
n) Reading hard copy publications for health info
o) Using social media to vent
p) Expressing feelings of loneliness on social media
q) Experiencing negative drama on social media
r) Movie romanticized relationships
s) Learning positive relationships from the media
t) Anxiety on media observed/perception of teen moms
u) Prohibition re: social media
v) Not caring about sex because of pregnancy problems
w) Parental prohibition

Some of the codes that are very similar could be combined to form more general codes to describe the phenomena. From analyzing the initial coding of the media-related comments, five new codes or categories were created. They are:

• Mediated relationship lessons
• Mediated pregnancy help
• Peer-to-peer sharing
• Social media usage variance
• Reactions to sexual content

Mediated relationship lessons. This category or code includes the following statements concerning how teenage mothers learned about either romantic relationships, family relationships, sexual/physical relationships, mother/daughter/son, relationships, and so on. This category had the most number of responses. Family relationship statements consisted of statements about fantasy-like responses about how relationships would be in the movies, or Teen Mom, Maury, or in the news. Dissimilarities between the real lives of the women I interviewed and the lives of people, especially teen mothers on television were also common. Statements such as, “Media have gotten it right about teen pregnancy that you usually have no one to talk to (identical to participant's life)” were also included in this category because living alone and
having no one to talk to is a relationship status. I also included statements such as “Sees sex in a lot of movies” because this is what some young women might come to define as a relationship if it is seen often enough. Also, “Sometimes teen pregnancy reality shows do get it right because I’m the mom of my baby and I’m the mom of me” was included because as this participant stated, reality shows helped her see that the relationship she has with her baby as well as herself is one that is agreeable with those she sees on television.

Mediated pregnancy help: This category relates to any specifically stated use of media to find information relating to pregnancy concerns. The information may have been sought out or unintentionally seen in the media and retained for later such as seeing a health tip on a sitcom or other show or online. Mediated sources included BET (Black Entertainment Television), Oprah, Google, Facebook pregnancy apps, pregnancy books, the movie Juno, the Disney channel, and 16 & Pregnant. Information sought included: solutions for various pains, vomiting, nutrition questions, high risk pregnancy questions (high blood pressure), breast feeding, still-births, and diabetes. I also included responses about comparisons between the teen pregnancy reality shows and the women's real life pregnancies because some participants mentioned that they believed their pregnancy would go a certain way or certain things relating to their labor were supposed to happen (such as it being very difficult or very easy) when it did not occur that way.

Peer-to-peer sharing: This category was included because of the number of connections the women had, and the frequency of content sharing on any social media platform. A majority of the comments in this category related to sharing the pregnancy and/or baby's growth. That was the most popular content that was shared. Many women reported using social media as an emotional outlet, to share feelings about their current situation or to help friends in a similar situation. Using social media to help cope when no one else was available, dealing with boyfriend issues, sharing concerns about physical ailments relating to the pregnancy were all
common. A very small number of comments emphasized using social media as a positive way to help others and to be uplifting.

Social media usage variance: This category encapsulates every statement related to changes in social media usage, either self-imposed or imposed by a family member. Statements that were included in this category included parental controls or restrictions on social media usage such as mom ordering the Facebook account to be deactivated, advice from various family members on what to post and what not to post, and keeping drama and naked photos or sexual posts off the internet because of their permanence and likelihood to cause harm. A heavy majority of the family members who suggested restricting social media usage were women (mothers, sisters, and grandmothers). A small number said their father or brother advised them about what not to share on social media.

Reaction to sex and sexual content: The statements that I placed in this category related to statements made about seeing sex in the media, no matter what form (television, internet, movies, and so on), after having a baby. Responses ranged from neutral or no effect to disgusted. The neutral responses were caused by women saying they felt mature as a result of having a baby and seeing sexual content did not affect them; sex had become normal. The negative responses to seeing sex in the media such as "disgusting" were due to the fact that the mother now had a child to care for and was looking out for the baby's interests and, as another teen mother said, she was disgusted because she did not want to be in the same predicament again.

As a result of the theoretical sampling and re-categorizing of the media-related statements, theoretical statements that can be made about the teen mothers in this study include:

- **Teen mothers are likely to engage with different sources of media for guidance with relationship issues and, as a result, will find varied relationship models.** This is likely due to the fact that many of these women had poor relationships with their parents or
parental figures and often did not list their immediate family as sources of information about relationships, love, and sex.

• *Due to the large amount of time spent online per day as self-reported by the women, different media served as information sources for questions relating to nutrition, pregnancy health concerns, as well as impressions on how life should be for a teen mother raising a child.* The frequency of media mentions for help was a surprise to the researcher because 25 out the 30 women in this study were children of teen mothers, where turning to the mother would seem like a natural choice for help and guidance. Despite variations in age, from 14 to early 20s, the media still remained a dominant source for information about relationships and pregnancy. Media were not the only source as school, the school nurse, and the WIC office were mentioned by some women. Only the light media users mentioned family members more frequently as sources of information.

• *The women in this study, with their large social networks of friends, typically share progress of their pregnancy and that includes health issues and concerns, nutritional information, and psychological and emotional issues.* Seventeen of the women in this study had over 1,000 connections each on social media. A couple of women expressed the desire to spread positivity to help others in similar situations.

• *Regarding reactions to seeing sexual content in the media post-pregnancy, women either maintained a neutral view because the experience of doing it in real life had made them mature or feel grown up, or they had an adverse reaction to it because seeing the sexual content reminded them of their current situation.* No woman in this study expressed an improved or more positive attitude toward seeing sex in the media after having their child.
The work of Arnett (1992, 1995a, 1995b, and 1995c) in the area of adolescence and uses and gratifications as well as the theory of narrow and broad socialization has significant relevance to what has been discovered in this population of teen mothers. I will first address Arnett’s (1995b) work on uses and gratifications. Arnett created a non-exhaustive list of five uses and gratifications that adolescents have for media that best explain their socialization. These five: entertainment, identity formation, high sensation, coping, and youth culture identification are what he calls “the most common uses of media by adolescents” (p. 521). The first use, entertainment, is self-explanatory as the media serve an entertainment function or something we use to pass our free time. Secondly, identity formation is what Arnett defines as, “the cultivation of one’s values, abilities, and hopes for the future” (p. 522). Arnett says gender roles, relationship and sexual expectations are also being explored at this point in adolescents’ lives and the media serves as an influence. In my study, it was clear some women sought the gratification of a romanticized idea of a relationship in movies, such as Jenny mentioning Forrest Gump, and how families appeared on Disney shows were cited as examples of identity formation. Third, high sensation-seeking relates to the adolescent desire to seek out high-sensation or titillating things such as action movies or sexually explicit movies or music. This was not relevant in my participants’ responses as no one said they sought out sexually explicit content; however some said they saw nudity and other sexually charged material online that popped up in their social media feeds as if it was unavoidable, much like hearing or seeing offensive content in an over-the-air broadcast on the radio or television. Although not sought out as a mediated gratification, seeing an abundance of sexual content resulted in some women reducing their social media usage because they said they were “weirded out” or “disgusted” by it. Evidence of coping, the fourth common adolescent use and gratification listed by Arnett, existed for some in social media as participants said they used social media to share emotions during the
pregnancy as well as relationship issues. Arnett says the coping usage is “to relieve and dispel negative emotions” (p. 523). Negative emotions were also found on social media in the form of shaming the young women who became pregnant and either decreased, deactivated, or deleted their Facebook accounts as a result. Several women in this study reduced their social media activity or deactivated their accounts due to being bullied. This in effect, is a reversal of a gratification sought and obtained by the women. Galloway and Meek (1981) reported that a negative experience in the process of a gratification sought, such as seeking support online after announcing a pregnancy, will result in a “modification of later expectations about the ability of a medium or content to gratify certain needs” (p. 436). After reducing or deactivating their social media activity, many women gradually shared information with a smaller group of social media connections, due to the harassment. The fifth most common adolescent use and gratification listed by Arnett is youth culture identification, which he states, “may give adolescents a sense of being connected to a larger peer network, which is united by certain youth-specific values and interests” (p. 524). One of the enrollment requirements for the participants in my study was that they had to have watched the teen pregnancy reality shows. I believed it was important for the women to share their thoughts on the perceived reality of the shows, which oftentimes meant the level of reality was based on the closeness or similarity to their own pregnancy experiences. Many participants, as has been shown, shared their pregnancy experiences on social media to stay in touch with their friends and some connected to other teen mothers to support them. One use that was cited by the teen mothers which was not listed by Arnett was information seeking, as some searched for information relating to particular issues concerning their pregnancy such as stress, birth defects, and high blood pressure. However, given that the population in my study is a unique subset of adolescents, the need to use media to research health-related information is understandable.
Integral to the discussion of uses and gratifications as well as teen pregnancy, it is important to understand the process of how these women evolved or were socialized to become who they are today. This is where Arnett’s theory of broad and narrow socialization comes into play. According to Arnett (1995b), the theory has “seven principles of socialization: family, peers, school, community, the media, the legal system, and the cultural belief system” (p. 525). Gender roles and relationships and societal norms are things that eventually adolescents and, in turn, adults, must learn to function as part of a particular culture. Broad socialization is defined by Arnett (1992) as

…a culture in which there is no guiding, commonly held belief system to serve as a moral basis for what behavior is acceptable and what is not; a culture in which the independence and self-expression of the individual is considered a higher value than conformity to the standards and expectations of the community; a culture in which punishments for deviating from the standards and expectations of the community are light (p. 393).

In reviewing these seven principles, starting with family, across all three media usage groups in my study, many participants did as they wished and lived without rules or guidance. See chart 4.12 for statements made by participants about their pre-pregnancy lifestyle.
Chart 4.12 Pre-pregnancy lifestyle statements made by light, average, and heavy media users. This chart continues onto the next page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Light media users’ pre-pregnancy lifestyle comments:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Living w/mom and dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lives with mom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Normal life/Hanging out (multiple)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• working jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• With boyfriend for a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Partied a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not going to school (multiple)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No rules at all with mom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Was spoiled by parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Got suspended a lot (multiple)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Was bullied a lot</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Average media users’ pre-pregnancy lifestyle comments:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• With dad trying to find a place to live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mom left when she was two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Before pregnancy-living with Mom/after pregnancy-living with dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seeing boyfriend for three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Was homeschooling on the computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Very active in school clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Partying a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dating boyfriend (multiple)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Getting suspended (fighting and arguing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not coming home to parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mom took care of us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mom is yelling at me and doesn’t let me go places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mom has me take care of my brother instead of using daycare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not feeling loved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inviting boyfriend over to the house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exciting life going out with friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mom is real strict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Never thought I would get pregnant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Heavy media users’ pre-pregnancy lifestyle comments:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Living a fast life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Partying (multiple)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Drinking and smoking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Arguing a lot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Arguing with mom
• Didn’t care about anything
• Was always out (multiple)
• Dad has always been in jail
• Living carefree (multiple!)
• School was a joke
• Dating boyfriend
• Sneaking out of the house (multiple)
• Was living in Childhood Services Bureau
• Fighting and drama
• Homeschooled by foster parents
• Going out with friends
• Hanging out with boyfriend
• Stayed in the house and just watched TV
• Stays at home for the most part—doesn’t go out with friends a whole lot
• Had a bad temper
• Just going to school
Many of the young women did as they pleased, without any repercussions. The only sanctions some of the women faced were from agencies such as school, from which they could be suspended. There is an important distinction to be made when Arnett (1992) says that “under broad socialization, adolescents are given a great deal of autonomy from the family and even encouraged (emphasis added) to be independent and to strive for self-sufficiency, while under narrow socialization the family exercises tight control over the adolescent, sometimes even tighter than prior to adolescence (p. 394). For many of the participants in my study, the word “encouraged” is not accurate as the women had no guidance as can be seen in Table 4.8. Only five out of the 30 young mothers I talked to were living in a two parent home, with only three living with their mother and father. Seven of the participants were not living with a parental figure at all.

Peers can have a strong influence on adolescent behavior as Arnett (1992) wrote that they often influence each other’s behavior; however it is important to remember that adolescents “choose their friends on the basis of characteristics they have in common. In particular...adolescents who have similar levels of sensation seeking are likely to be attracted to each other as friends” (p. 396). Sexual intercourse, as well as other behaviors such as partying, drinking, and smoking were common themes among the different media usage groups in my population sample.

Schools can socialize adolescents in a broad or narrow manner by the standards and expectations set upon the students, how rules are enforced (such as attendance and dress code), or the belief system in place (religious teachings). Arnett reported that compared to public schools, private and parochial schools have lower the number of incidents of fighting, vandalism, truancy, drug and alcohol abuse, and verbal abuse of teachers (p. 397).
Community can impact the socialization of an adolescent as has been previously discussed when looking at an individual’s microsystem of influences. Is the adolescent living in a high-crime area? What cultural factors are involved? For example, 25 out of the 30 participants I talked to were born from teen mothers. For the 25 women who came from teen mothers, having a teen baby could very well be seen as the norm. Thirteen out of the 30 women I interviewed had parents who were either middle school or high school dropouts with only four parents having attended college. Also, the setting where the adolescent resided could impact socialization as the lifestyle is different in the inner city, where problem behaviors are more frequent, as compared to a more rural landscape.

The legal system dimension of socialization refers to strictness or leniency placed on legislating crimes committed by adolescents. Earlier in this dissertation, I listed the 10 most common factors related to teen pregnancy as discovered by a task force in Lucas County, Ohio. Early initiation of problem behavior, which can include sexual activity, substance abuse, and delinquency, was listed as one of the most common factors. Also, substance abuse and delinquency were associated with the other most common factors linked to teen pregnancy. I did not ask my participants if they had a criminal record. As a researcher and, more importantly, as a compassionate person, I understood that the young women who are teen mothers are often stigmatized and looked down upon as it is. Asking them if they have been convicted of any crimes would cross the line in terms of decency and respect.

Arnett noticed that the last two socialization principles, cultural belief systems and media, have had opposite effects over the last few generations. While media have continued to grow and dominate the everyday lives of adolescents, the role of religion has significantly decreased. In a recent survey (Dallas, 2015) of 1,253 ninth graders conducted by the University of Florida, non-religious adolescents were more likely to have smoked tobacco and marijuana, and consumed
alcohol in the six months prior to the study than their peers who self-reported as being religious. With 25 out of the 30 teen mother participants in my study identifying themselves as using the media for at least eight hours a day, they were exposed to advertisements and other messages geared toward their age group, with these likely not being pro-social programming. As Arnett (1992) said, “…if the influence of religion declines and the influence of media increases, the result for socialization will be in the direction of the message that the media promote” (p. 401).

Arnett’s comments about the declining influence of religion on an adolescent’s belief system while the media’s influence increases, provide another possible point to investigate in future studies. My list of scripted questions and participant responses covered school, peers (and neighborhood play area), health services, and family, which are all located in Bronfenbrenner’s microsystem layer of his ecological systems model. The only area in the microsystem that I did not ask about, and participants did not mention, was church or religion. Religion is an interesting factor to consider; however, while those who practice it seem to have shown positive results, its impact on society has been declining. Regnerus’ (2005) meta-analysis of research done on the impact of religion on families showed that adolescents whose families practice religion tend to have more positive outcomes relating to physical, emotional, and family well-being. However, Regnerus noted that research done on religion and adolescents has had several limitations including: poor sampling, lack of examining racial and ethnic differences, failure to study the differences in religious salience between parents and their children, and the failure to see how religion has impacted various positive as well as negative outcomes. Smith and Faris’ (2002) nationally representative survey of 2,478 high school seniors found that those who participate in religious activities are less likely to be involved in delinquent behaviors such as substance abuse, crime and violence, take risks, or be disciplined for misbehavior at school. Most recently, the Pew Research Center (2015) conducted a nationally representative phone survey of 35,071 adults
in 2014 and found that religious affiliation to any form of Christianity is down among all ethnic
groups, while the number of those who do not identify with any religion is up. The report stated
that 36% of young millennials (ages 18-24) are not affiliated with any religion. Thirty-four
percent of Older Millennials (born between 1981 and 1989) said they do not belong to any
religion. That is an increase of 9% from that group’s response in 2007. So, religion’s impact on
the teen mom population may not be so strong or it possibly should not merit major
consideration, given its decline among the general population.

Arnett’s theory of broad and narrow socialization has not been utilized as the focal point
of any studies not conducted by Arnett himself. Arnett and Balle-Jensen’s (1993) survey on risk
behaviors of 1,053 Danish adolescents (12-20 years old) found that adolescents’ age was
strongly connected with reckless behaviors, including casual sex and sex without contraception,
meaning the older the adolescent was, the higher the likelihood of reckless behavior. The Danish
culture, as Arnett and Balle-Jensen wrote, is similar to many Western cultures in that it “tends
toward broad socialization” with parents being stringent on rules, minors given the liberty to buy
alcohol at 18, a pervasive media, and low religious involvement (p. 1843). However, Denmark
has a very large middle class with little poverty. Regarding sexual activity, more Danish
adolescents, as they got older, tended use engage in sexual intercourse without using
contraception. This, at the time, was similar to the U.S. numbers for sex without contraception
among adolescents. Also, 83% of the Danish adolescents in this study who said they had sex
without contraception also said they had also had sex with contraception; this led the authors to
speculate that this coincided with the 58% response of adolescents who said that they had had
sex with someone they had known casually or as an acquaintance. Because of the statistical
similarities between Denmark and the United States in adolescent sex research, Arnett et al.
suggested more studies be done on contraceptive usage and circumstances surrounding it. Also,
they suggested that a closer look into the other areas of the socialization system (school, community, legal system, the media, and cultural belief system) is needed to see how these entities interact with and influence one another. This was the same conclusion, among others, that was reached by a team of 45 researchers (Gelfand et al., 2011) who examined the tight and loose cultures of 33 nations in a study from 2000-2003. Over 6,800 respondents were asked to rate the “appropriateness of 12 behaviors (i.e. argue, eat, laugh, curse/swear, kiss, cry, sing talk, flirt, listen to music, read newspaper, bargain) across 15 situations (i.e. bank, doctor’s office, job interview, library, funeral, classroom, restaurant, public park, bus, bedroom, city sidewalk, party, elevator, workplace, movies) resulting in 180 behavior situation ratings” that would occur in their country (p. 1102). The respondents in the United States (Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia) rated the U.S. as being very loose in terms of appropriateness of behaviors. Australia and Belgium had the closest tightness ratings to the U.S. The researchers found that the tightness-looseness aspect of our culture is one that has been hardly researched; however, its study is important due to changes over time in and at different levels (governmental or family) and how any changes may have ripple effects over time. Future research was suggested to focus on causality and directionality of relationships within parts of the system which make up culture. Also, the researchers made a great point about perspective. When comparing one’s own culture to another, one might find a culture that’s different from theirs as “dysfunctional, unjust, and fundamentally immoral” (p. 1104). In much the same way, what one might think is immoral, might be acceptable to someone else. For example, in Arnett’s (1993) survey of Danish adolescents, they wrote that their results showed that socialization, whether broad or narrow, was not consistent and that if, for example, parents exhibited a narrow socialization style of parenting toward their children with strict rules, that would not necessarily carry over into other areas of socializations such as peers. This was evident in one of my teen mother interviews, as a
participant said her mother was very strict with her and the participant said she would try to sneak out of the house to meet up with her friends.
CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

Throughout the journey of interviewing the 43 teen mothers in Toledo over the past five years, my goal has been to get their perspective and the context of their situation as clearly as possible, while seeing what role the media played in their predicament before, during and after the pregnancy. Reviewing my research questions:

Research questions

RQ1: Before becoming pregnant, where did pregnant teens or teen moms learn about sex and relationships? What were their sources of information?

RQ2: During pregnancy, how and what do pregnant teens communicate through media and what media do they consume with regard to issues such as health concerns?

RQ3: Post-pregnancy, how are teen moms using and engaging the media? Are they communicating with other teen moms? What kinds of information are they seeking and sharing?

In the first question, the sources for sexual information varied (parents, extended family, friends, nobody, and the media). I had no expectations about where they might have discussed love and relationships. I thought it was important to ask where they learned about sex, love, relationships, and pregnancy in separate distinct questions due to any lack of consistency or agreement of definitions regarding what they might think those terms (sex, love, and relationships) meant.

As was mentioned before, it was apparent that the young women in my study had very superficial conversations (“use birth control” for example) about sex and relationships with their parents or parental figures but had more in-depth discussions with their friends about sex, love, relationships, and the sexual content that they had seen in the media. Frequently, when I asked as a follow-up question for specific examples of sexual content or other things in the media that the women discussed with their friends, they did not give an example, saying they could not think of
one. However, the prevalence of seeing sexual content on social media came up as a frequently mentioned topic, as in something that the women discussed among with friends. In terms of the usage of social media, only 8 eight out of the 30 women used more than one form of social media, but all 30 were social media users.

5.1 Table of social media accounts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social media platform</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook/Instagram</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook/Instagram/Snapchat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook/Instagram/Twitter</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook/Instagram/Twitter/Snapchat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second research question about how and what do pregnant teens communicate during their pregnancy drew fairly consistent responses across the media usage groups. When this study was conceptualized, I had kept it open to all forms of media, older and more traditional media such as television, newspaper, books, and magazines, as well as newer forms like the internet and social media. However, it became apparent that social media was the dominant way the pregnant teens/teen mothers in this study communicated and sought gratification.

The second half of research question number two dealt with what media do pregnant teens consume when it relates to health concerns. While the internet (Google) was a common search engine used to look up health information, the discovery of pregnancy apps on Facebook was a revelation that I found fascinating and, in hindsight, I should have asked the two girls who said they used such apps to track their pregnancies if they had seen a doctor or was the app used in place of a doctor. Other responses that were stated included various materials from school, the school nurse, parenting classes, the WIC office, books, and magazines. In terms of the
gratification sought of seeking health information relating to the baby as well as the teen mother, the gratification was definitively obtained through various sources.

A better and more valid way to track media consumption during pregnancy if this study were to be replicated, would be to have participants keep diaries of what they are watching on television or online, or what topics they are researching online. While I still believe that examining the teen pregnancy and media link from the angle of interviewing teen mothers is the best method to investigate the issue, expecting participants to recall all of the instances in which they used media during their pregnancy to aid them did not produce the most desirable results in my case. More so because I was talking to them months or, in some cases, years after their pregnancy.

The third research question about post-pregnancy media usage provided a variety of responses. Some mothers decreased or stopped social media usage due to what they described as “drama” or being shamed for having a baby. Others said their time on social media decreased due to spending time taking care of their child. Some women slowly increased their social media usage after giving birth to post pictures of their baby. One teen mother said she was in touch with other teen mothers on social media, offering them support as they were dealing with their pregnancies.

This study produced seven key findings, which resulted in a series of media gratifications sought and obtained. Due to media expectancy, meaning the teen mothers approached the media with certain anticipated outcomes such as support, especially social media, the unintended and un-sought negative responses such as bullying resulted in altering media usage during the pregnancy for many of the women. This, an altering of expectations in future gratifications sought from social media use, is a point worth exploring in future studies.
Seven key findings

1. **Teen mothers are likely to rely more on the media for nutrition information than they rely on their family for that information.** The women in this study also referenced media sources more than they referenced health care providers. Twenty-two out of the 30 women I interviewed used the media as a source for health information during their pregnancy and those sources varied (Oprah, *16 and Pregnant*, Steve Harvey), books, magazines, Facebook, apps, and Google.

2. **Teen mothers cited media as information sources for health and pregnancy concerns.** As with the first finding, the media sources varied from hard copy materials such as magazines and books to online sources such as Google and Facebook. Nineteen out of the 30 mothers in this study cited the media in some form or another as a source for a health or pregnancy concern.

3. **Teen mothers rely on various media for information on how life should be lived as a teenage mother and for relationship information.** This was shown in how some of the women compared their lives to the teen mothers on the reality shows or drew relationship ideas from movies like *Forrest Gump*. One light media user said she her friends watched sex in movies in 8th grade to see what it was really like.

4. **Pregnant teens and teen mothers share in-depth psychological and physical details of their pregnancy on their social networks.** Some of the details shared by the pregnant teens on their social networks included: feelings of isolation, needing help for pregnancy-related complications such as dangerously high blood pressure, and fears or concerns about potentially having a stillborn. The most commonly shared experience
mentioned was physical changes during the pregnancy and photos of baby bumps and post-delivery baby pictures.

5. *Evidence of pregnant teen to pregnant teen networking on social media.* Although not the most frequently mentioned, two teen mothers in the sample said they communicated with others in similar situations to offer them support.

6. *Pregnant teens and teen mothers were more likely to have either a neutral or an adverse reaction to sexual content in the media during and post pregnancy than they had prior to becoming pregnant.* Eleven out of the 30 women I talked to had a neutral reaction to seeing sexual content after having their child. In this case, “neutral” means they did not have a particularly positive or negative reaction to sexual content in media. However, 19 out of those 30 expressed having a negative reaction to seeing sexual content in the media after having their child. These mothers said they wanted to keep the baby away from sexual content; feeling disgust because of their predicament which was blamed on being sexually active.

7. *Pregnant teens had more substantive conversations about relationships and health issues with peers online and in-person than with their parents.* This was reflected in many of the women’s transcripts. Parental advice on love and relationships was often simplified to “wear a condom”. Or in several instances, the relationship with the parents or family member was so difficult that conversations about sex were avoided out of fear.

*Charting the process*

An important component of this research is to chart the communication process teen mothers experienced before, during, and after pregnancy according to the extent of their media use. From the constructivist grounded theory perspective, charting this process would allow to
follow through the experiences reported by these young mothers as they engage with others through social media or important interpersonal contexts from a theoretical perspective. In charting the pregnant teens’ social support before they became pregnant, during their pregnancy, and continuing through post-pregnancy motherhood, I observed that light, average, and heavy media users experienced different levels of social support and interaction. For example, in Chart 5.2 (page 190), the light media user had very weak family support. But after she became pregnant, the family support was more positive, while friends’ support waned or deserted, or the light media user to deactivate social media accounts to phase out interaction with friends. However, once the baby was born, friends were gradually re-introduced into the light media user’s life.

In Chart 5.3 (page 191), the average media user reported on average a significant number more social media connections than the light media user and even more connections than the average heavy media user. This seems to indicate an important media use difference between the light and average media user groups. Before becoming pregnant, half of the average media user group had a parental presence in their lives while a lack of a parental relationship characterized the lives of the other half of this group. And in terms of friendship, the average media use group experienced less friendship loss than the light media user group. Average media user group friends drifted in and out of contact with the group.

Chart 5.4 (page 192) illustrates a notable contrast in social support between the heavy media user group and the aforementioned other two groups. This is depicted by the density of “friends” arrow in the heavy media user chart. In the same chart, “family” was placed on the outer edge to reflect the marginal experience of the family in this group’s life. Interestingly, almost all of the heavy media users described having very strained relationships with their families. This estrangement continued throughout the pregnancy and extended to the post
pregnancy period. Finally, heavy media users were more prolific in their outreach and offering of advice and support to others in their social networks than were the two other groups.

Based on the social support processes described by the women, I argue that heavy media consumers in my sample (at least 16 hours a day of media use) and in this context, suggest new avenues of discovery in areas of disclosure theory due to the intimacy of some of the subjects exchanged and dependency theory in terms of the potential cognitive, affective, and behavioral meaning of these relationships. Media in this instance may be hypothesized as moving inward more deeply into Bronfenbrenner’s microsystem than is traditionally conceived. In the high affective and deeply personal experience of pregnancy shared through social media, one can clearly see a replacement of core elements of social relations including family ties by social media. Based on the responses received from heavy media users, I would also argue that the pregnancy experience itself provided an opportunity for disclosure, interaction and dependency, more profound than that experienced by light and average media users. Furthermore, as seen in Charts 4.6 (page 157), 4.7 (page 157) and 4.8 (page 158), the heavy media users relied more on mediated sources for health and pregnancy than their light or average media user counterparts.
Chart 5.2 Light media user social support process

Light media user
(0-6 hours a day)
800-900 social media connections

Friends

Before pregnancy: the light media user has a lot of social support from friends online. Family is often distant.

Becomes pregnant: this is the moment where light media users generally were shamed and bullied online and face-to-face. As the pregnancy progressed, friends left and/or the light media user deactivated their social media account. However, social support from the family tended to strengthen as the family rallied around the pregnant teen.

Has the baby: the family continues supporting the newborn and the mother. The light media user gradually re-enters the social media realm and reconnects with friends.

Black arrows indicate positive social support. Red arrows indicate negative social support. The thickness of the arrow signifies strength of support.

Typically, living with Mom or with her kids

Friends are firmly embedded in the light media user’s world while the family is almost an outsider.
Chart 5.3 Average media user social support process

**Average media user**

*(6-16 hours a day)*

3,220 social media connections

**Friends**

Typically lives with at least one biological parent.

Black arrows indicate positive social support. Red arrows indicate negative social support. The thickness of the arrow signifies strength of support.

Friends are firmly embedded in the light media user’s world while the family is almost an outsider.

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**Before pregnancy:** Some parents were very strict and that led to the adolescent sneaking out. Others had no guidelines or rules for their daughter. This was even in terms of a positive and negative support for the average media user sample in this study.

**Becomes pregnant:** average media users typically saw more parental and family involvement after the pregnancy. Some had more strict rules. Friends tended to drift in and out of touch, with most staying away due to not being able to do things with the soon-to-be mother.

**Has the baby:** family typically became a stronger presence in the life of the average media user. Friends, lower in number at this point, started to re-enter the average media user’s life.
Heavy media user
(16+ hours a day)

1,800 connections on

Friends

Black arrows indicate positive social support. Red arrows indicate negative social support. The thickness of the arrow signifies strength of support.

Typically, living with Mom or with her kids

Before pregnancy: the heavy media user has a very deep connection with her social network, while the family barely has a presence in the adolescent’s life. This held true for almost all of the heavy media users.

Becomes pregnant: with the exception of a couple of instances where bullying and shaming took place, many heavy media users kept up with their social networks, posting pics, sharing emotions and health concerns.

Has the baby: there were several comments about helping out other teen moms online, posting positive messages to help others, and posting baby photos.
Noteworthy responses

In Chapter One, the popularity of teen pregnancy reality shows and their alleged influence on causing teenage women to become pregnant to be famous was discussed. In terms of the population in this study, this was not the case. The participants in my research sample population did watch *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* and found themselves comparing what they had personally experienced during their pregnancies to those experiences portrayed by the television teen mothers. I was surprised at the depth of comparisons that included: income levels, financial struggles, physical difficulties during the pregnancy, support from the baby’s father, the family of the baby’s father, and support from the mother’s own family. Not one woman out of the 43 pregnant teens/teen mothers I interviewed said that they were motivated to get pregnant as a result of watching *16 and Pregnant* or *Teen Mom*.

When asked “how would they educate others about teen pregnancy,” all five light media users said they would talk to other teens in a face-to-face setting. Five average media users also said face-to-face, while another two average media users said they did not know what would be the best method. In the heavy media user category, 10 participants said speaking interpersonally with other teens would be the best way to educate them about teen pregnancy, while another six heavy media users said social media would be a more effective route. Preferring to speak face-to-face to their childless peers about pregnancy matters might speak to a larger concept of fidelity and social-cultural closeness to those in their age group.

Limitations and unique challenges in conducting this study

The first limitation is that this Grounded Theory study was my first. A novice researcher using *any* method could say that inexperience is a limitation. However, I believed the best way to erase any doubts on behalf of the reader of this study was to write the dissertation as I conducted the study. I did everything *en vivo* or live, as it happened, as much as possible. For example, after
each day that I conducted interviews, I typed up my fieldnotes, which can be found in the appendix of this dissertation. Also, I felt the best way to conduct my coding was to do it in this document, so that the readers could see the same items I saw and how I coded them. I also included my thoughts and speculation about possible emerging codes and categories as I progressed through the coding. I used Charmaz’s Constructing Grounded Theory second edition book as my road map and went chapter by chapter as I worked my way through the interviews and coding process. I hope I have provided the reader with clarity on how I worked through this investigation.

 Lessons learned

The sample population of pregnant teens/teen mothers in this study posed unique challenges. The recruiting and enrollment was handled lead teacher at the school. My instructions to her were to recruit women across a good cross-section of ages (early teens to older) and at different stages of motherhood (a couple months along to having a toddler). Conducting one-shot interviews of a cross-section of ages of pregnant teens/teen mothers was the most practical way to do this study, mostly because of attendance/stages of pregnancy circumstances with the participants. Because of the goals of this study in examining how pregnant teens/teen mothers use the media, it would be extremely difficult and cumbersome for a researcher to conduct a longitudinal study with multiple waves of interviews, starting with at-risk youth prior to becoming pregnant and follow them through to post-pregnancy. How could a researcher predict who would become pregnant? Also, the Human Subjects Review Board said I could not conduct these interviews in a focus-group setting out of privacy concerns for the individuals.

As I was reviewing the transcripts and coding the interviews, I realized that interviewing a vulnerable population such as teen mothers was more challenging than I anticipated. From an
ethical and methodological standpoint, one of the interview conditions that I was approved for by
the Human Subject Review Board was that I could not ask sexually explicit questions. That
condition stuck in my mind and I froze at times as an interviewer and did not probe deeper into
some topics out of fear that a question or topic might be too intrusive. Also, while most of the
women were very expressive and open about their life experiences, some were not as talkative.
The interviews averaged about 21 minutes but two were around 13 minutes. Interviewing under
such research restrictions was a new experience. However, with 43 interviews as experience,
there was a lot of positive outcomes in terms of data collected but it could be stronger. This
exploratory study has laid the groundwork for future work with the pregnant teen/teen mother
population.

The ages of the participants were spread out. Some were past their teen years. And some
started having sex and were pregnant before their teen years. Some were a few months pregnant
and some were raising two children. Pregnancy is a life-changing event and it was apparent that
some women were ready for it because of previous experience with other family members or
having a previous child while some did not know what to expect. Some expressed feelings of
uncertainty and fear. There were a couple instances during the interviews when the women
disclosed things that had happened to them that I had to immediately report to a school
administrator. Each day that I went in to interview the women, I had to keep in mind that at any
time, I might be told something that would require me to inform a staff member. The well-being
of the young women was most important. One such example of this was the woman I
interviewed who had a child as a result of a sexual assault. During the interview, I tried to stay
focused on the task at hand but could not help but think about informing a counselor about the
woman’s situation. I did inform a counselor and they had already known about the woman’s
situation.
Teen pregnancy programs and interventions

As mentioned throughout this dissertation, the importance of good parenting is crucial to a child’s upbringing and to their transition through adolescence into adulthood. When that guidance is not there as has been seen through many of the women I talked to, who will teach them important values? Thankfully, many programs were created in Lucas County to help fill the parenting gap. Many of those programs are targeted toward the high teen pregnancy rated communities in some of Toledo’s “central, north, and east-side neighborhoods” (McKinnon, 2008). In 2007, a program taught by the YWCA (Young Women’s Christian Association) called Reducing the Risk in all 8th and 10th grade health classes in Toledo Public Schools was introduced. Subjects taught include: sexually transmitted diseases, abstinence, birth control, teen parent situations, substance abuse, violence, delinquency, and other at-risk behaviors. Plain Talk, which began in 2006, came about from parent and teen surveys in north Toledo neighborhoods. Survey results said that half of the girls in these neighborhoods have children in their teen years. Members of the program go door to door and host community meetings to educate parents about resources available in terms of employment, birth control, preventing sexually transmitted diseases, health education, and other matters. One of the volunteers in the group is a former teen mother who has four kids and said, “If I don’t teach my kids right, someone out in the world is going to teach them the wrong way.” Positive Choices, yet another program devoted to educating others about risky behaviors, is run by Mercy Health Partners. Members of Positive Choices visit area schools to talk to parents about how to have discussions about sex with their children. The group also encourages abstinence.

Nationwide, programs exist that assist pregnant teens/teen mothers to stay in school. However, many of the programs are facing a battle for survival and for taxpayer dollars and other monies. In California, legislators killed funding for a program that provided teen mothers
with social services and helped them with class work and had a 73% graduation rate in 2010, which was near the state’s normal graduation rate. The program had helped over 100,000 teen parents. In 2009, Wisconsin lawmakers cut a requirement for schools to “give pregnant students who live within two miles of a school free rides” (Kennedy, 2012). In Toledo, Carrera, a teen pregnancy program for at-risk youth of East Toledo, was ended by Job and Family Services to maximize resources as a result of decreasing funding. The program had staffers work with students and their families from fifth grade up in the areas of school attendance, academics, access to health care, money management, and sex education. Carrera has a great track record in many states, decreasing pregnancy rates by as much as 50% in some areas (Ligato, 2013).

Cutting the program in Toledo saved Job and Family Services $500,000. The East Toledo kids were referred to the Young Women’s Christian Association’s (YWCA) Teen Outreach Program, which serves high school children citywide. Job and Family Services targets East Toledo for teen pregnancy due to the poverty, lack of parental guidance, inadequate health care, and the dramatically higher teen pregnancy rate.

There is a Catch 22 to cutting funding for teen pregnancy prevention programs geared toward youth as young as fifth grade. While cutting taxpayer dollars that support the programs saves budgets and seems like a great idea at the time, down the road, taxpayers are likely to incur the ever-growing expenses of a baby born to a teen mother. We may never be able to eradicate teen pregnancy and should not turn our backs on teen mothers. However, at the same time, we should do what we can to help those who are at-risk of becoming teen parents at such a young age due to circumstances beyond their control or understanding.

*What this study has accomplished*

With this being the first Uses and Gratifications media study conducted using a sample population entirely of pregnant teens and teen mothers, new ground has been broken. No
previous study had interviewed this population to examine their media usage. Arnett, Larson, and Offer (1995) wrote that looking at human development and consideration of developmental factors in media studies has been rare due to scholars with media or journalism backgrounds, meaning previous research has left out or under-examined “developmental factors” (p. 515). My study incorporated the developmental aspect through Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Model as well as the integration of Arnett’s broad and narrow socialization theory in an attempt to not only give some context to which pregnant teens and teen mothers live but also how they consume media. However, when incorporating different factors such as parents, peers, church, school, media, lawmakers, culture, and so on into the teen pregnancy equation, it is too difficult to quantify the influence of one particular item over another and also, the effects are not uniform on the individual. Nothing is generalizable because all of the items mentioned can have an impact in terms of the development and socialization of an adolescent.

I raised two important concepts that were relevant to the pregnant teen/teen mother—the contextual factors that were involved in their situations, and media usage. The first was Lewin’s equation B=f(PE) or a person’s (B) behavior is the (f) function of the interaction between the (P) person and the (E) environment. Several of the women in this study stated that their behaviors were reactions from items in their environment. Several women compared the situations in teen pregnancy reality programming to situations in their lives. Other women changed their social media usage based on reactions from peers about their pregnancy. I reason that pregnant teens/teen mothers react and interact with their environment much like we all do in accordance to our particular situations. The second concept I raised that was relevant to this study was symbolic interactionism. As previously stated, Blumer said that we act on things that are based on the meanings that those things have for us, and that we assign meaning to those things based
on the interaction that we have for them. Consider the following statements made by some of the participants and how they assigned meanings to their interactions with the media:

- Saw weight gain and appetite changes in other teen moms on Facebook and thought that was true to life (based on her experience).
- *Teen Mom* is realistic because it shows you what to expect (comparing it to self).
- Sometimes the teen pregnancy reality shows do get it right because I’m the mom of my baby and I’m the mom of me. (This meant that the teen mother had to take care of herself as much as she was taking care of her child.)
- Media have gotten it right about teen pregnancy that you usually have no one to talk to (identical to participant’s life).
- Researched a lot (nutrition) on the internet due to my high risk pregnancy (Google)

Whether it was interpreting the mothers on reality shows or using social media to discuss nutrition, the women in this study interacted with things in their environment that had meaning to them, either based on their situation (pregnancy) or their style of interacting with others (social media).

*Final thought*

I first become interested in the pregnant teen/teen mother population when I was a special education teacher’s assistant at a high school just east of Cleveland, Ohio. It was my first full-time job in education and I was getting paid a little over $19,000 in 2001-2002. I was sharing an apartment with a friend from college. One day, I saw a sign on the main office door that was advertising for a Reading, English, Math, and other subjects tutor. The position would pay over $20 an hour. I was excited because that would definitely help supplement my low salary. I went to the guidance office and asked the staff assistant there about the position. She asked me if I was certified in any of the posted subjects. I did not know certification was required to be a tutor.
Disappointed, I said I was not certified. However, I wondered why the need existed for so much help for one person. I asked the lady details about the situation. She told me that a student was four months pregnant and “we needed to get here out of here (high school) before she becomes a senior because she will count against our graduation rate”. Thinking nothing of it at the time, I simply said, “Oh, thank you.” However, later that day, something struck me. What if that young lady was my daughter? How would I feel if I knew that was how the district felt about me? As I found out through my interviews with the young women at Polly Fox, there could be a number of reasons why this young lady at Shaker Heights could be pregnant. I did not know her story. And in this particular educational situation, as well as in other areas, pregnant teens/teen mothers do not have a voice. I am happy this research project was able to offer them that and shed light on a relevant societal issue.

There is a lot of heuristic value to this method of studying the teen pregnancy and media link. I am looking to replicate this study in other areas of the country where there are different populations (more Hispanic than African-American or more white) to see how different demographics and cultures impact the teen pregnancy situation. This study shed light on a new area of teen pregnancy that was not examined in a qualitative manner in the past. One member of my dissertation committee suggested asking if the women were enrolled in a health care plan. Another wondered if the women intended in getting into a serious relationship at such a young age.

The stories by the women were meaningful to this study as they provided clarity to the reader’s understanding of how they came to be a mother. Lastly, a special note of gratitude to the women who participated in this study. They were pioneers in terms of opening their lives to academia and letting us see teen pregnancy from their perspective.
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Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on April 12, 2016. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration
Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsr@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board's records.