Published in final edited form as:

Hisp J Behav Sci. 2011 November 1; 33(4): . doi:10.1177/0739986311423368.

Effects of Adolescent Childbearing on Latino Siblings: Changes in Family Dynamics and Feelings Toward the Teen Mother

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Abstract

Latinos have had the highest teenage birthrate of any racial or ethnic group in the United States for the past 15 years, yet little is known about how Latino families are affected by a teenage daughter's childbearing. In-depth interviews were conducted with 32 Mexican American younger siblings of parenting teens to discern how their sister's childbearing had affected them and their families. The most commonly reported negative effects were increased family stress and conflict, more arguments with the parenting older sister, and less time spent with family members. Regarding benefits, all youth described a loving bond with their sister's baby, two thirds described their family becoming closer, and 81% felt closer to their older sister. The implications of these effects for Mexican American families are discussed.

Keywords

adolescent childbearing; family change; Mexican Americans; parent-child relationships; qualitative methods

Latinos have had the highest teenage birthrate of any racial or ethnic group in the United States for the past 15 years (Ventura, Matthews, Hamilton, Sutton, & Abma, 2011). Of the Latino subgroups, Mexican Americans have the highest teen birth rate (at 88.7 births per 1,000 15- to 19-year-old women), followed by U.S. Latina girls of Puerto Rican descent (67.1 births per 1,000) (Ventura et al., 2011). More than 138,000 Hispanic teenagers gave birth in 2009 (Hamilton, Martin, & Ventura, 2010), and most of these adolescents continue to live with their families of origin after their babies are born (Manlove, Mariner, & Papillo, 2000). Despite this high occurrence, very little is known about how Latino families are affected by an adolescent daughter's childbearing. The current study examines how Mexican American families change in response to a teenager's childbearing. A family systems perspective provides the conceptual framework, wherein the transition to parenthood is conceptualized as a transformation of the *family system*, not merely a change of the individual to parent (Cox & Paley, 1997). This is especially the case in adolescents' transition to parenthood because the family unit must adjust to the teenager's parenting and

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

adapt to incorporate her child into the family. As such, a Mexican American teenager's childbearing is believed to permeate change for her family at multiple levels, or at the overall family-unit level, within dyadic family relationships (i.e., mother-youth and sibling relationships), and for individual family members.

The literature on adults' transition to parenthood shows dramatic increases in marital dissatisfaction, spousal conflict, and stress and depression during the 1st year postpartum (Lawrence, Rothman, Cobb, Rothman, & Bradbury, 2008). Family stress and tension are likely to be greater within teenage childbearing households than among adult new parents, though, because the teenager is likely unmarried and the birth was likely unplanned (Finer & Henshaw, 2006). Moreover, family members may resent the disruption caused by the teen's baby, and family members might feel angry about having to financially support the teen's child. The absence of clearly defined caregiving roles within teenage childbearing families might also cause family conflict and dissension, with child care responsibilities expected to be shared across all family members (Contreras, Narang, Ikhlas, & Teichman, 2000).

At the dyadic-relationship level, the birth of a child requires an internal realignment of family relationships, as roles become redefined and the meaning and function of relationships change (Cox & Paley, 1997). A teenager's pregnancy and birth might provoke jealousy and competition between the parenting teenager and her siblings, for example, because the teenager has attained a more powerful and respected role within the family (that of mother) and has likely received much attention due to the birth of her baby. Siblings might also resent that family resources, such as money and family members' time and attention, are now directed toward the parenting sister and her child and are shifted away from them. Furstenberg (1980) noted anecdotally that a teenager's pregnancy provoked competitive feelings among sisters within African-American families, although other research on Latinos has shown that siblings feel happy for and proud of their parenting sister (East, 1996). There may also be shifts in sibling closeness, as the older sister adopts the role of mother and becomes preoccupied with caring for her child.

The mother-child relationships within the family also likely change in significant ways following a teenager's childbearing. Previous research shows that the mothers of Latina parenting teens are integral in caring for their teenage daughter's child (Contreras, Mangelsdorf, Rhodes, Diener, & Brunson, 1999). Yet, the time mothers spend caring for their grandchild likely detracts from the time they could spend with their own children. In addition, because caring for a young child can drain one's physical and emotional energy, mothers might have less inclination or emotional wherewithal to nurture a close and loving bond with their children. However, mothers might develop a deeper sense of closeness and intimacy with their children as they collaborate in raising the teenager's child together (Nadeem & Romo, 2008). Thus, it is conceivable that both costs and rewards might ensue for mothers' relationships with their children after a teenage daughter has a child.

Individual family members are also likely affected by a teenager's childbearing. Similar to the fatigue and sleep deprivation experienced by adult new parents (Perry-Jenkins, Goldberg, Pierce, & Sayer, 2007), the siblings of new teenage mothers might experience fatigue and exhaustion as a result of the middle-of-the-night wakings of the teen's infant. Declines in work productivity among adult new parents (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2007) might translate to declines in academic performance among siblings in the household as they are distracted by a small infant now living in the household. New parents are also known to experience significant stress, depression, and declines in leisure (Claxton & Perry-Jenkins, 2008). Such effects might also occur among the siblings of parenting teens given that they are exposed to the daily stresses and strains of living with a demanding infant and are likely involved in some way in the infant's care.

In examining the effects of a teenager's birth for Mexican American families, it is useful to appreciate the possible motivations a teenager has for becoming pregnant and having a child. Several social scientists have speculated that some adolescents become pregnant and have children to enhance themselves, their families, or their relations with kin (Rocca, Doherty, Padian, Hubbard, & Minnis, 2010). Furstenberg (1980) noted that adolescents often have children in attempts to unify their family in the face of conflict or to forge a bond with their mothers in creating something in which they both can share: the raising of a child and grandchild. However, does an adolescent's childbearing render such effects? That is, is family unity restored? Are family connections and cohesion strengthened? Understanding these family-level effects of an adolescent's childbearing can shed light on why some adolescents have repeated teenage pregnancies (Manlove et al., 2000) and why other children within the family also become pregnant. Is it to simulate the positive effects that a previous teenage childbearing incurred? Teenage pregnancies are known to occur within families (East, Reyes, & Horn, 2007) and among sisters (Cox, Emans, & Bithoney, 1993). If a teenager's childbearing restores cohesiveness and unity to the family system, then such within-family dynamics might contribute to this trend of multiple teenage pregnancies occurring within families.

The Current Study

The current study explores how Mexican American families are affected by an adolescent's childbearing from the perspective of the adolescent's younger teen siblings. The younger siblings of parenting teens were interviewed about the changes that occurred as a result of their sister's childbearing. Given that this topic is a new area of inquiry, such a qualitative approach is a particularly useful first step (LaRossa, 2005). Families were studied in which the teenage mother was unmarried, living with her family before and after she gave birth, and her childbearing was the first teenage birth to occur within her family (no siblings had given birth or fathered a child as a teen). Thus, all families had not been previously "exposed" to an adolescent's childbearing. Families were studied in the early postpartum months (typically at 8 months postpartum) to best capture how families change in response to a teenager's childbearing. The study focuses only on Mexican American families, who generally hold highly familistic beliefs and expectations, such as placing a high value on family unity, support, and mutual assistance (Vega, 1995). Accordingly, such families might experience lower levels of conflict and dissension following an adolescent's childbearing than other families. Thus, although the themes revealed in the current study may not be representative of all families, they are likely to be reflective of many present-day Mexican American families who have experienced a teenage daughter's pregnancy and parenting.

Method

Participants

Semistructured interviews were conducted with 32 Mexican American younger siblings of teenage mothers. This qualitative study was part of a larger questionnaire study that involved 122 younger siblings of parenting teens. Siblings were recruited into the overall study by first identifying eligible older sisters. Eligible older sisters were primigravida Mexican American teenagers who were between 15 and 19 years of age and for whom no other adolescent within their family had previously given birth or fathered a child. Older sisters were recruited from community clinics, high schools, and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program centers throughout southern California. The siblings of parenting teens were invited to participate in the overall study if they were between 12 and 18 years of age, were biologically related to the older (parenting) sister, and were living with her at the time of her pregnancy and planned to live with her after the baby was born. Ninety-five percent of all eligible siblings approached to participate did so. The first 75 siblings enrolled

into the overall study were invited to participate in the interview, of which 55% agreed to participate. The primary reason for refusal was “too busy.” Siblings were an average age of 15.2 years at the time of the interview and comprised 22 girls and 10 boys. Significantly more girls agreed to be interviewed than boys (69% versus 33%; chi-square = 9.2, $p < .01$). Most siblings were born in the United States (85%); the others were born in Mexico. The parenting older sisters were an average age of 16.9 years at the time of their child’s birth, and all of their infants were carried to term and healthy at birth and throughout the first postpartum year. Most youth were from economically disadvantaged families. The average total annual family income was US\$18,500 for an average household of 6 persons, and 63% of families were receiving some form of governmental financial assistance at enrollment.

Procedures

The interviews were conducted at youths’ homes in as private an area as possible. Interviews were conducted by a Spanish-speaking female researcher (coauthor EJH) who had conducted the questionnaire component of the larger study, and thus all youth were familiar with her. All siblings were highly fluent in English; thus, all interviews were conducted in English, were audio taped, and typically lasted about 1 hour. Youth were paid US\$20 and assured of the anonymity of the information they provided. The content and protocol of the interview were approved by the first author’s university Human Subjects Protection Review Board.

The interview included approximately 30 questions on the effects of the older sister’s childbearing, with several probes incorporated so that youth could expand their response and provide examples as appropriate. After asking about general background information (age, grade in school), the interviewer asked the participants to describe how their sister having a baby had affected the following areas of their life: (a) the relationship with their sister, (b) the relationship with their mother, (c) their family in general, and (d) themselves (e.g., their day-to-day life, their expectations for the future). The interview guide and protocol are available from the authors upon request.

Coding

A grounded theory approach was used to identify themes in the interviews (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). All interviews were transcribed into a WORD file. Initial cost and benefit coding categories were derived from reading the interviews. Four cost and four benefit codes were initially identified. After rereading the interviews, the codes were subsequently broken down into subcodes. For example, the code of “costs to youth-mother relationship” was divided into the following: (a) more arguments with mother, (b) less time with mother, and (c) feels less close to mother. Similarly, the code of “improved family relations” was specified as follows: (a) family is closer, (b) family spends more time together, (c) less fighting or arguing in family, and (d) less family stress. This method netted a total of 12 cost codes and 13 benefit codes. These codes did not generate more specific insights about the particular concept under study and, thus, were considered theoretically saturated (or final) codes (LaRossa, 2005). In some instance, the same text segment was assigned more than one code.

The interviews were then coded for themes of costs and benefits using NVIVO software. An undergraduate researcher (coauthor, AS), who was trained in NVIVO and carefully instructed about the various cost and benefit codes, initially coded five interviews. The principal investigator of the study (coauthor, PLE) also coded the same five interviews. The interviews yielded an average of 37 blocks of text that fit the study codes (range 30–50 blocks of text per interview). Intercooder reliability was calculated as the number of agreements divided by the total number of agreements and disagreements (Miles &

Huberman, 1994). Initial reliabilities ranged from 79% to 94% per interview and averaged 89%. The disagreements were discussed and code definitions were expanded, amended, or deleted. The five interviews were then recoded using the revised coding scheme, and there was 100% agreement at that time. The researcher (AS) then coded the remaining 27 interviews. Intercoder reliability was calculated on an additional five interviews approximately 1 month later with a third coder (EJH), who was also trained extensively on the study codes. This comparison yielded 94% reliability on approximately 80 blocks of text. NVIVO software was used to then count the number of times a code was mentioned. This form of content analysis combines both qualitative and quantitative methods and is thought to help reduce investigator bias by countering the tendency to overweight data that conform to researchers' expectations and by limiting the influences of idiosyncratic responses on the overall findings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Results

The frequency of the 12 cost codes and the 13 benefit codes associated with a teenager's childbearing is shown in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. Costs and benefits are denoted by levels of the family system, ranging from the family level, dyadic level, and the individual level. Differences in frequencies by sibling gender, age, and age of the older sister were few and are discussed at the end of this section. Below, we describe the costs and benefits revealed in the interviews, and then we examine whether particular costs co-occurred and whether certain benefits tended to occur within respondent.

Costs of a Teenager's Childbearing

The most frequently cited cost associated with a teenager's childbearing was increased family stress and arguments, cited by more than half of youth (59%). Increased family stress appeared to stem largely from lack of a clear primary parental figure for the teen's baby. Jackie,¹ age 13, described this as, "Yes, the stress level in our family is a lot higher now. Like when the baby is crying and nobody does anything. Then he keeps crying. It's pretty stressful." A few siblings also reported increased family financial stress (16%). Claudia, age 15, stated,

"The stress level in our house has gone way up 'cause my mom stresses, 'Oh all these bills!' Paying for it all is tough. Both my parents work, so they come home and they're like, 'Oh, I'm so tired and I have to do this?' So they get stressed."

Nadia, age 14, also stated, "Yeah, we all stress about money now 'cause my sister doesn't work. She stays home. So my mom has to work even harder. She has two jobs now."

Several youth described costs to the relationship with their older sister, citing spending less time with her (38%) and more frequent arguments with her (34%). Laura, age 13, stated, "I spend a lot less time with my sister now 'cause she mostly spends time with the baby and the dad more than us." Ana, age 16, confided,

"It's changed 'cause she is not the same no more. 'Cause she has the baby to take care of, so we got separated a bit. Like we lost trust for each other 'cause now she's focusing on other stuff, like her boyfriend and all that."

Several youth commented about a shift in family alliances that led to their mother and older sister becoming closer, leaving them feeling left out. Jessica, age 13, described this as follows: "Yeah, my relationship with my sister has changed a lot since last year. Probably

¹All names of study participants have been changed.

my mom and my sister are closer, but not with me. We don't talk a lot now, and we don't do anything together anymore."

Several youth cited more arguments with their older sister, many of which stemmed from criticism of the sister's lack of involvement in her baby. Lucia, age 14, explained this as follows: "Yeah, I do get more mad at her because she doesn't really watch him (her baby) that good." Letisha, age 16, stated, "Yeah, we argue a lot, like when she doesn't want to take care of him, like when he's crying and she's just like ... nothing. She just sits on the couch and the baby is all crying and it seems like she doesn't care."

Several youth described more frequent arguments with their mother (28%) and spending less time with her due to the mothers' new responsibilities as grandparent (13%). Lourdes, age 17, described this as follows: "Yeah, I feel mad 'cause she (her mother) is always taking care of him (the baby) and she ignores us." Sara, age 13, stated, "Yeah, we get into arguments all the time now 'cause she's all like, 'You don't ever help, you don't do this, you don't ever do that.' Like we argue about once a day now." Brenda, age 14, when asked if her relationship with her mother had changed since her older sister had a baby, replied, "Yes, because there is no more time. Like we get less time with her 'cause she likes to spend more time with the baby, and she has to work longer to make more money for the baby. So I don't really see her all that much."

Many youth discussed declines in their leisure and recreational activities (38%). When asked how his sister having a baby had affected him, Jesus, age 14, replied, "It's affected me a lot, mostly in that I can't do things that *I* (emphasis) want to do now." One third of youth described their school performance declining after their sister had her baby. Manuel, age 14, stated, "I don't want to do my homework anymore 'cause I just want to get home and just sleep!" Marco, age 15, also experienced problems at school stating,

"Well, because of the baby crying all the time, I haven't had time to do my homework 'cause I get annoyed by it. And, also, if I need something from my Mom and she's with the baby, I can't get help with my homework or nothing. So I started doing all this stuff at school, like getting detentions 'n all."

One-quarter of youth also described feeling more stressed and depressed. Jessica, age 12, stated, "I stress myself a little more now. Like when my sister is having problems with her boyfriend or her baby is sick, it worries me, scares me. I worry about the baby and my sister a lot now."

Although only five siblings described feeling tired and exhausted as a result of their sister's baby, it was a highly salient and distressing issue for them. Maria, age 15, explains,

"My niece really bothers me when she's crying, like at night, when she wants to go to sleep, and I'll be like, 'Just shut her up already!' 'Cause we sleep in the same bed and it's just me, the baby and my sister and I'll just tell my sister 'I'm tired and I'm trying to sleep!' "

Benefits of a Teenager's Childbearing

The most salient positive effect of a teenager's childbearing on the family was increased family closeness, discussed by two thirds of youth. Greater family closeness appeared to stem from both more time together as well as the shared experience of caring for the teen's baby. Angela, age 15, reflected, "We're just a lot more closer now 'cause it's been a long time since we had a baby in the family. We've always been together, but it's like we're more tight now. The baby brings a positive vibe." Christina, age 16, also reflected on an increased sense of family cohesion, stating,

“Yeah, we’re closer ‘cause now everyone wants to do everything with the baby. So we all go places together with the baby and just hang out at home together watching him. We all just want to be around the baby.”

Yesinia, age 15, stated, “We get along better now because when we see the baby and when he gets a smile, we just get along better. He actually helps us ‘cause we just like having him here, so he helps us.” Citing an increased sense of family unity, Mariela, age 13, noted, “We’re closer now ‘cause all my family likes to come and see the baby. They like him a lot, so everybody comes every day to see the baby. We have like little family reunions.”

Several youth also spoke of the baby’s presence suppressing family arguments (28%). Letisha, age 16, described it as,

“We all get along better now because of the baby. Like before, we used to kind of argue a lot, but not any more. Like, I guess the baby changes everybody’s attitude. We don’t want to yell in front of the baby.”

Manuel, age 14, stated, “We don’t want to yell in front of him ‘cause he’s living more (more aware) and we don’t want to mess him up.” Ana, 16 years, shares this sentiment, stating,

“It actually lowered the stress in our family because of the baby. We don’t want to yell in front of him ‘cause it has put everything in perspective. Like now there is a baby, you know, and no one should fight.”

More than four-fifths of youth described feeling closer to their older sister as a result of her childbearing. Yesinia, age 15, stated, “I feel happy that he (the baby) is here because he kinda made a change in my sister because she used to be so far away from the family, but now, she is like very close to us.” Gabriela, age 17, stated “It (her relationship with her older sister) has gotten much better. I just, like, feel closer to her because of the baby. We talk a lot about the baby now.” Marco, a 15-year-old brother, stated a newfound closeness with his sister as, “It (his relationship with his sister) has changed because it’s pretty good that we actually, like, have something in common ... that we both love our niece, her daughter.”

Close to two-thirds of youth also stated that they respected their older sister now that she had a baby (63%). For some youth, this increased respect was due to the older sister’s newly acquired role as mother, wherein she was now considered an adult. Laura, age 13, confided, “I respect her more now ‘cause she’s a mother. I think she’s more responsible and more caring and more loving.” Melissa, age 12, agreed, stating, “Yeah, I respect her more now cause like I see a lot that she is a grown up and more responsible. ‘Cause she can take care of the baby and still go to school.” Carlos, age 15, expressed this as, “I respect her more ‘cause she is acting more mature. She doesn’t act like a little kid anymore like she used to ... She’s a mom now.”

In contrast to 13% of youth who reported spending less time with their mothers, 44% of youth described spending more time with their mothers. Many youth described developing a special closeness with their mothers by jointly caring for their sister’s baby. Christina, age 16, said,

“Yeah, it (her sister’s childbearing) has brought us a lot closer. Over these last couple months, we’ve (her and her mother) been really close because me and her are the ones that usually watch him (the sister’s baby). So, we’re always together now.”

Youth were unanimous in describing a loving bond with their sister’s baby. Isaac, a 14-year-old younger brother, admits, “Sometimes I rush home from school just ‘cause I want to see him real bad.” Juan, age 15, confided, “I love her. She’s a cute baby and whenever I hold her, like whenever she sees me, she gets really happy and excited even though she was all

crying and stuff.” Several youth also described feeling happier after their sister had her child. This was mostly in the context of enjoying caring for their niece or nephew. Laura, age 13, said,

“I was so happy (when I found out my sister was going to have a baby) ‘cause I love babies and I just couldn’t wait to have a baby in the house and get her all dressed up and play around with her.”

Many siblings also discussed developing stronger school aspirations as a result of their sister’s childbearing (31%). Brenda, age 14, stated, “Because now I realize, you know, that having a baby takes away a lot from school and things you want to do. So, now I’m just trying to focus more on school and everything like that.” Christina, age 16, agreed, stating, “Now, I just want for me to not drop out of school. To get good grades, stay in school, and get a career.”

Differences by Gender, Age of Youth, and Age of Childbearing Sister

There were no gender differences in any of the cost or benefit frequencies or differences by whether the youth was born in the United States or Mexico. There was one significant correlation between youths’ age and the frequency of costs and benefits, with older youth more likely to report having more arguments with their (parenting) sister ($r = .40, p < .05$). None of the correlations between the cost and benefit frequencies and the age of the older sister at her child’s birth were statistically significant.

Presence of Patterns

From a programmatic standpoint, it would be important to know whether certain costs co-occur and whether certain benefits co-occur. Using chi-square tests, we examined whether particular categories tended to cluster together within respondent. Results for benefits indicated that “less family stress” co-occurred with “less arguing with older sister” ($\chi^2 = 8.85, p < .01$); “more time with family” co-occurred with “more time with older sister” ($\chi^2 = 7.07, p < .01$); and “family is closer” coincided with “closer with mother” ($\chi^2 = 10.47, p < .001$). For costs, “greater financial strain” co-occurred with “individual stress/depression” ($\chi^2 = 9.56, p < .01$); “more family stress” co-occurred with “school difficulties” ($\chi^2 = 6.73, p < .01$); “more tired” co-occurred with “more stressed and depressed” ($\chi^2 = 17.78, p < .001$); and “less close with older sister” co-occurred with “less close with mother” ($\chi^2 = 7.00, p < .01$).

Discussion

Examination of the narratives from sibling interviews revealed significant themes of both burdens and benefits associated with Mexican American adolescents’ childbearing. Like the adaptation to parenthood experienced by adult married couples (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003), a Latina teenager’s childbearing is associated with much tension and conflict as well as great joy and excitement. Youth spoke about several negative effects stemming from their teenage sister’s childbearing, including increased family stress, more frequent arguments with their mothers, and less time with their older sisters. Nevertheless, several positive effects also surfaced, such as forming a loving bond with their sister’s child, increased family cohesion, and a special closeness and respect for the older sister. Examination of the narratives revealed, in a general sense, how family systems change in response to a teenager’s childbearing, with effects apparent at all levels of the family system. Many themes emerged, a few of which we highlight below.

Increased Family Stress and Conflict

Childbearing by Mexican American adolescents appeared to bring about significant family stress and conflict, confirming that this is indeed a trying period of family adjustment. Some of the family strain seemed to emanate from family members resenting the teenager becoming pregnant and blaming her for the family disruption. Some youth were also highly critical of the teenager's parenting and appeared to condemn her for her parenting inadequacies. Many younger siblings criticized their sister for her parenting uninvolvedness and resented the fact that they had to help with the infant's care. As in the adjustment efforts of adult married couples (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2007), the need to reorganize around the caregiving of an infant can cause significant family discord and conflict. Professionals who counsel adolescent mothers and their families may wish to address the presence of family conflict and help families manage and anticipate areas of resentment and disagreement, particularly as related to the infant's care.

Shifted Alliances

Two common threads throughout many of the interview narratives were a repositioning of the older sister to accommodate her new status as mother and the shifted alliances among family members in reaction to the teenager's childbearing. In some cases, the mother and the parenting teenager became closer, leaving the younger sibling displaced and "ignored." In other cases, the parenting teenager more fully took on the responsibilities of mother and partner to the father of the baby, allowing the younger children in the household to develop a closer bond with their mothers. In all cases, though, family relationships appeared to realign to accommodate the teenager's baby into the family unit.

The Teen's Baby Acts as a Protective Shield Against Family Conflict

Perhaps the most adaptive and constructive benefit that derived from a Latina teenager's childbearing was increasing family unity and companionship, a theme found in other research on Latina adolescent mothers (Russell & Lee, 2006). A clear majority of youth spoke of their sister's baby as a unifying element, as in "now we have something in common that we all love" and as instigating "little family reunions." Similar to adult married couples who grow closer after having a baby (Cowan & Cowan, 2000), many families appear to experience greater cohesion and commitment to one another after an adolescent gives birth. Many youth also discussed spending more time together as a family and a decrease in family conflict. In fact, a significant protective function of the teenager's baby was suppressing family arguments. Several youth even referred to the baby as a kind of "protective shield" against arguing and fighting in the family, not wanting to shout or yell in front of the baby. Such a "don't argue in front of the children" approach has been incorporated in interventions designed to reduce marital conflict and control the spillover that marital stress has on adults' parenting and their children's development (Cummings, Faircloth, Mitchell, Cummings, & Schermerhorn, 2008). This tact of informing families of the potentially destructive effects that family arguments have on children, while promoting constructive disagreements, might be beneficial to the families of childbearing teenagers to help curb the emotional toll of family tensions on family members.

Limitations

We caution readers that a little more than half of siblings asked to be interviewed actually participated. Thus, the themes that emerged here may not be representative of all Latino siblings' experiences. The small numbers of boys who participated also likely precluded a reliable analysis of gender differences in youths' perceptions of effects. In addition, this study did not address family changes indirectly brought about by the teenager's childbearing, such as whether the father of the baby (the teen's boyfriend) moved into the

household or spent significant parts of the day in the family home. It is possible that the presence of the baby's father in the home was more disruptive to family dynamics than the baby alone. Certainly, in some cases, the baby's father becomes part of the new "post-baby" family dynamic, and his exclusion in the current study is a limitation. Finally, only younger siblings' views are presented here, which may not reflect those of the parenting teenager, youths' parents, or other family members.

Acknowledgments

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by grant R01-HD043221 from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and grant APR-006013 from the Office of Population Affairs, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to the first author.

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Table 1**Percentage of Siblings Citing Costs Associated With a Teenage Sister's Childbearing**

	(N = 32)
Costs to family	
More family stress, arguments	59% (19)
More family financial hardship	16% (5)
Costs to youth-older sister relationship	
Less time with older sister	38% (12)
More arguments with older sister	34% (11)
Less close with older sister	6% (2)
Costs to youth-mother relationship	
More arguments with mother	28% (9)
Less time with mother	13% (4)
Less close with mother	6% (2)
Individual costs	
Declines in leisure activities	38% (12)
Declines in academic performance	31% (10)
More stressed, depressed	25% (8)
More tired	16% (5)

Table 2

Percentage of Participants Citing Benefits Associated With a Teenage Sister's Childbearing

	(N = 32)
Benefits to family	
Family is closer	66% (21)
Family spends more time together	31% (10)
Less fighting, arguing in family	28% (9)
Less family stress	16% (5)
Benefits to youth-older sister relationship	
Closer with older sister	81% (26)
Respects, proud of older sister	63% (20)
More time with older sister	47% (15)
Less fighting with older sister	16% (5)
Benefits to youth-mother relationship	
More time with mother	44% (14)
Closer with mother	34% (11)
Individual benefits	
Loving bond with niece or nephew	100% (32)
Happier	38% (12)
Stronger school aspirations	31% (10)