



University of California
San Francisco

advancing health worldwide™

Pregnancy intendedness and decision-making among young Latinas: Findings from a qualitative study

American Public Health Association

Annual Meeting

October 27, 2008



**Bixby Center
for Global
Reproductive
Health**

Sarah Schwartz, MPH

Lauren Ralph, MPH

Abigail Arons, MPH

M. Antonia Biggs, PhD

Claire Brindis, DrPH

Philip R. Lee Institute for
Health Policy Studies

Presenter Disclosures



University of California
San Francisco

advancing health worldwide™

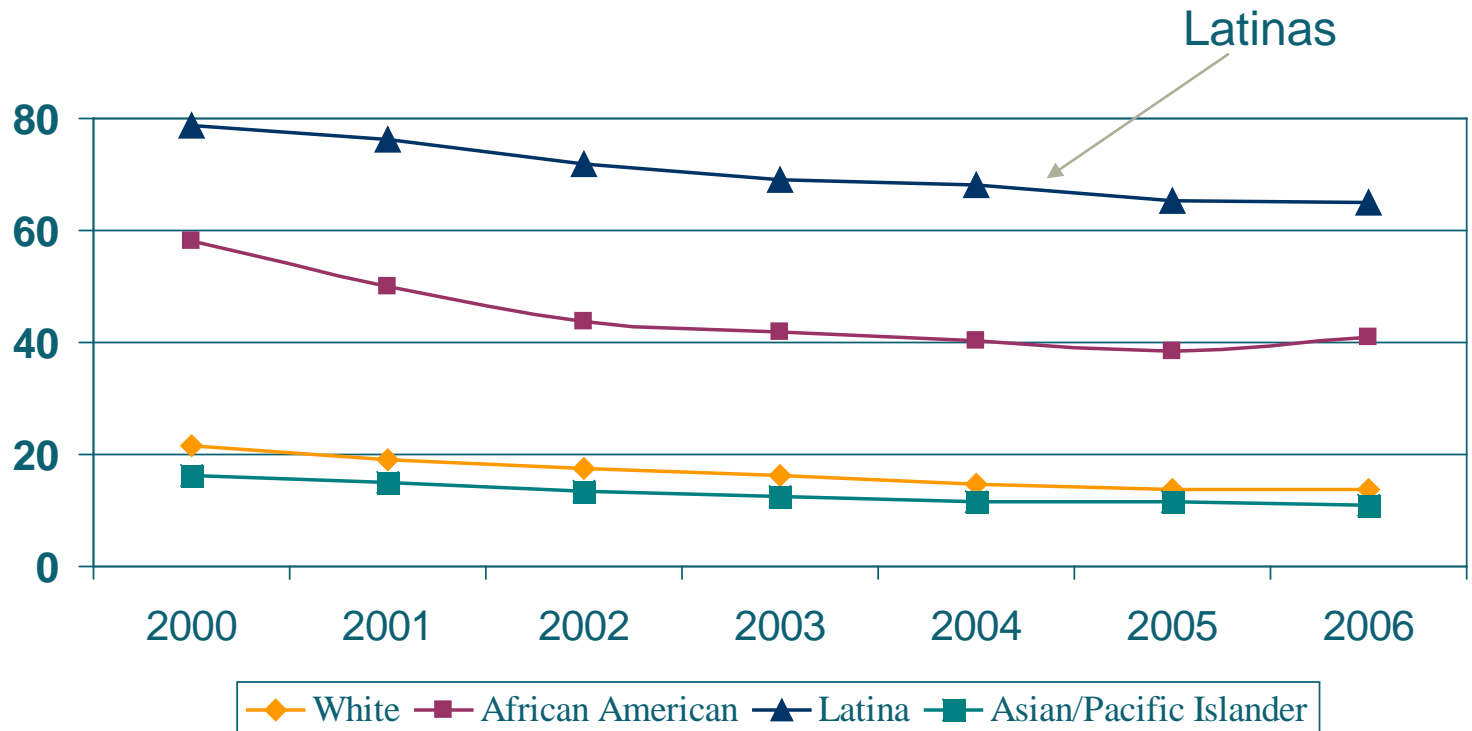
Lauren Ralph

- (1) The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:


No relationships to disclose

Background

Teen Birth Rates in California by Race/Ethnicity, 2000-2006



Background

- **Factors associated with teen pregnancy among Latinas:**
 - Lower levels of contraceptive use
 - Higher levels of pregnancy intendedness 
 - Ambivalence about the timing of childbearing
 - (Older) partner's desire for pregnancy
 - Cultural and social norms promoting an earlier age at marriage and motherhood
 - Exposure to teen pregnancy
 - Barriers to economic and educational opportunities

Research questions

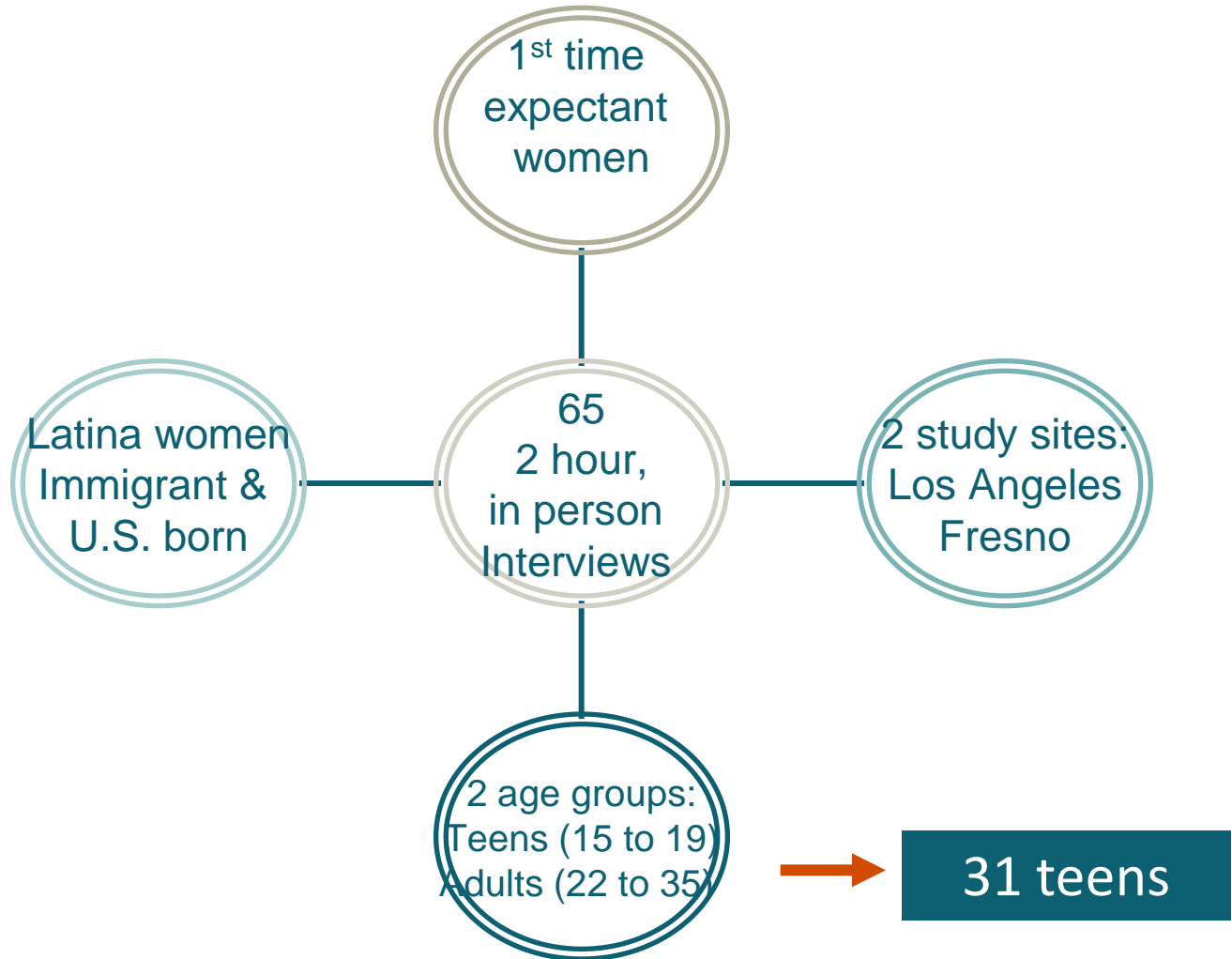
For Latina teens, what factors are associated:

(#1) pregnancy intention

(#2) pregnancy decision-making



Study Design



Descriptive data

Teens (N= 31)

- **Mean age – 17.4 years (range 15 to 19)**
- **Place of birth:**
 - 17 U.S. born
 - 14 immigrant
- **Most (27 of 31) had not completed high school and were not currently in school (19 of 31)**

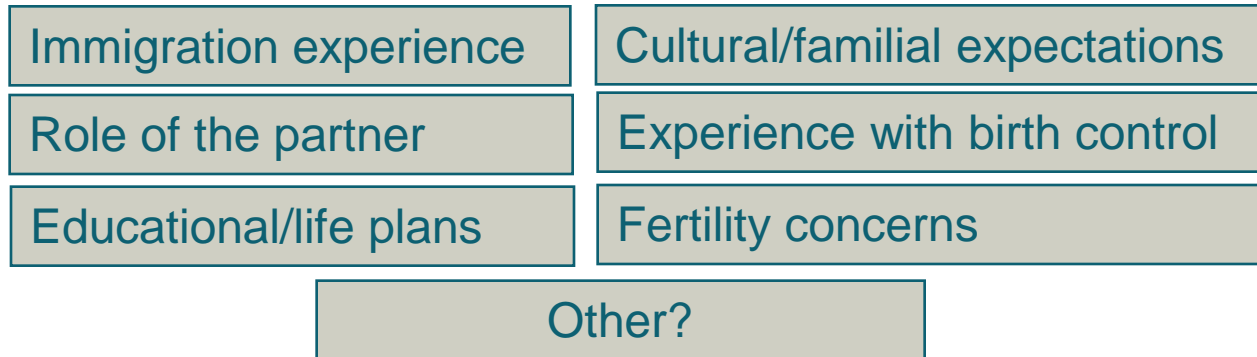
Their male partners

- **Mean age – 20.4**
- **Relationship status (at the time of the pregnancy)**
 - 3 married; 8 living together; 14 dating regularly; 4 dating sometimes; 2 not dating

Data analysis

- Categorize pregnancy intention
- Review transcripts by intention

#1 ➤ For emerging/defining themes regarding factors leading to pregnancy



- Discussion and consensus on 2-3 key themes
- Focus on unintended pregnancies:

#2

- Personal and partners feelings about pregnancy
- Key word search – “abortion”

Categorizing pregnancy intention

- **Intended**: described as planned and wanted prior to conception
- **Ambivalent**: prior to conception, had mixed feelings about having a baby or no particular desire to get pregnant or prevent pregnancy
- **Unintended**: did not want to get pregnant and may have felt that they didn't want a baby at this time

11

4

16

31 teens



Bixby Center
for Global
Reproductive
Health

Department of Obstetrics,
Gynecology and Reproductive
Sciences

School of Medicine

Source: Barrett G, Smith SC, Wellings K, Conceptualization, development, and evaluation of a measure of unplanned pregnancy. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 2004; 58: 426-433.

Descriptive data by pregnancy intention

- **Teens who described their pregnancy as intended were more likely to:**
 - Be living with the baby's father
 - Have a male partner who was older
- **Teens who described their pregnancy as intended were not more likely to be:**
 - Older



Intended pregnancies

n= 11

- **Partners & relationships**
 - Partner wanted a child
 - Relationship stability implies readiness for childbearing

“Well, I think....Obviously I’m not really mature because I’m only 16 years old, but I think I decided to do it because it was like a need that I felt all of the sudden, this desire to have a baby, to have my own child, and obviously because I was doing well with my partner. We had known each other for awhile and everything was going well.”

- 16 years old, foreign-born

Intended pregnancies

- **Childbearing & education/life goals are not mutually exclusive**

“I think I can do it – go to school if I want with me being pregnant and everything...I think it would be good cause I can raise my baby while I’m young.”

- 16 years old, U.S. born

- **Approval & acceptance of young childbearing**

“My dad always talks about....how fun it’ll be to have a baby running around the house and stuff like that.”

- 16 years old, foreign born

Unintended pregnancies

n= 16

- **Family and community turbulence**

“The block was [laughs] supposedly gang territory. So there were always shootings and people getting shot at.... And you just get used to it.”

- 17 years olds, U.S. born

- **Lack of family cohesion & involvement**

“.....my dad was always so busy so he couldn't be there....My sister – it was hard because we moved...it was just difficult. I didn't have anyone.”

- 16 years old, U.S. born

Unintended pregnancies

n= 16

- **Lack of and misinformation about birth control and fertility**

“I didn’t really ask for it [birth control] and I think that if I had done it, probably I wouldn’t be pregnant right now....I didn’t [think] I was going to come up pregnant so easily.”

- 15 years old, foreign-born

“I just didn’t want to [use birth control]....I don’t like taking medications and....using stuff like that, even though it’s supposed to protect you and stuff.”

- 19 years old, U.S. born

- **Partners less involved in childbearing decisions**

Decision making after pregnancy

What factors contributed to the decision to continue unintended and ambivalent pregnancies?

- **Partners and parents**

“Well, I talked to my partner about it and he didn’t want me to do it [have an abortion]. And he talked me into having it and I wanted to have it.”

- 19 years old, U.S. born

“I never believed in abortions, but then when I got pregnant, I thought it was the only thing I could do. And they [her parents] just like talked to me about how I thought it was wrong and like how they can help me through it.”

- 17 years old, U.S. born



Decision making after pregnancy

What factors contributed to the decision to continue unintended and ambivalent pregnancies?

- **Pregnancy as an opportunity**

“Because now I have something to push me and to – now there’s a reason for me to not mess up.”

- 16 year old, U.S. born

- **Personal/religious/cultural opposition to abortion**
 - Fueled by misinformation

Discussion

- **Role of nativity and acculturation**
 - Relationship to pregnancy intention
- **Importance of the family environment**
 - Especially when turbulent
- **Partners**
- **Lack of and misinformation about birth control/abortion**
- **Pregnancy as an opportunity**



Limitations

- **Relatively small sample**
- **Sample includes only women who chose to continue their pregnancies**
- **Retrospective description of pregnancy intention**

Future research

- **Role/perspective of male partners**
- **Understanding ambivalence towards childbearing**
- **Effective strategies for dispelling misinformation about birth control**



**For more information:
Lauren.Ralph@ucsf.edu**



**Philip R. Lee Institute for Health
Policy Studies**

This study was supported by contract #05-45122 from the State of California, Department of Public Health, Office of Family Planning. All analyses, interpretations, or conclusions reached are those of UCSF, not the State of California.

Thank you:

**Sarah Schwartz
Claire Brindis
Antonia Biggs
Abigail Arons
Paula Braveman
Kristen Marchi
Ali Minnis**



**University of California
San Francisco**

advancing health worldwide™