THE REPEAT PREGNANCY ENIGMA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING TEEN MOTHERS’ MOTIVATION AND PLANNING FOR A SECOND PREGNANCY

Background
• The Young Parents Program at Boston Children’s Hospital is a multidisciplinary medical and social service program serving low-income, urban teen mothers and their children.

• Despite Title X funding ensuring birth control availability, 100% social work referral, and comprehensive medical care for our teen mothers, our rate of rapid repeat pregnancies (defined as another pregnancy within 12 months of the index child) remains high at 17.76% (just below the national average of 20%).

Objective
To utilize qualitative interviews to explore low-income, urban teen mothers’ motivations, decision making, and planning for a second pregnancy in the year after the birth of their first child in order to inform future strategies for reducing rates of rapid repeat pregnancy in YPP.

Design/Methods
• We conducted semi­structured interviews with 31 adolescent mothers, age 16­21, within 3 years of the birth of their first child, recruited from the Young Parents Program.

• 15 subjects had experienced a repeat pregnancy within a year of the birth of their first child; 16 had not.

• Independent researchers used a grounded, inductive technique to develop a thematic­based coding scheme.

• Two additional independent researchers coded the interviews; inter­rater agreement was greater than 95%.

Results
• Many mothers who had not experienced a second pregnancy identified strong motivation to avoid a pregnancy.

• Some mothers also described a specific set of decisions and actions that help to prevent a pregnancy, often making independent choices around their birth control: “My only plan was my IUD and I hope that it works.”

• Similarly, some mothers who had experienced a rapid repeat pregnancy cited motivation for the pregnancy.

• Many mothers who had experienced a second pregnancy cited ambivalence about what they wanted and did not endorse feelings of control over reproductive outcomes.

Conclusions
• Some mothers in each group of our study described motivation to achieve or to prevent a second pregnancy, as well as the ability to make plans and follow through to their desired outcome.

• A sizable group of mothers who did experience a repeat pregnancy described ambivalence about a second pregnancy and a general sense that they were not in control of whether they became pregnant again.

• Future interventions to prevent RRP in the YPP program should focus on teens’ honest assessment of their goals and identification of interventions which might help teens perceive and gain control over their own reproductive outcomes.

“I wanted [them] to be close ages, so that they can play with each other and stuff...have the babies now so when I’m like 27... I can just go straight to my career.”

“I really didn’t care if I had another kid at the time.”

And just, kinda negligence. We kinda weren’t thinking when it happened and that was definitely on our part dumb.”

“My situation wouldn’t have benefited me to get pregnant again...Within a year of him being born, I had to leave my mom’s house, I got into a shelter, and I was in college.”

Experienced Repeat Pregnancy within First Year

No RRP 82.24%

RRP 17.76%