

**Appendix D - UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM
SENIOR PROJECT - APPROVAL**

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PROJECT TITLE: Foundations For Prevention:

Common Threads Between Women Who
Did Not Become Adolescent Mothers

I have reviewed this completed senior honors thesis with this student and certify that it is a project commensurate with honors level undergraduate research in this field.

Signed: Jacquelyn H. McInnis, Ph.D., Faculty Mentor

Date: 6 May 1997

Comments (Optional):

Amy has completed a qualitative study to explore a direction which other researchers in this general topic have more or less assumed but not researched. She has done an excellent job of pulling out the recurring events and themes from the interviews. From the conceptualization of her questions through to the conclusions, her approach has been thorough. This has been a meaningful learning experience for her and she has done an excellent job!

Foundations For Prevention:
Common Threads Between Women Who
Did Not Become Adolescent Mothers

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INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-1980s, the birth rates among adolescents have risen. In 1992, a slight decrease in the birth rate was recorded. However, the United States, with an adolescent birth rate of 60.7 in 1992 (United States 74), still "has the highest adolescent birth rate of all industrialized, democratic nations"(Scott-Jones 23). Why is the United States' adolescent birth rate remaining so high? There are several factors.

One major factor is the increase in the number of teenagers who are sexually active. "According to the National Survey of Family Growth. . . forty one percent of teens aged fifteen to seventeen and seventy-four percent of older teens were sexually experienced in 1990" (Ventura 14). This statistic has increased from thirty-two percent and sixty-four percent in 1982 (Ventura 14). With this increase in sexual activity, there has been some increase in contraceptive use among teens, however, the use remains inconsistent and may not begin until after the first few months of sexual interaction (Ventura 14).

Another factor is the delay of adulthood even as the average age of menarche is decreasing. The average age of menarche is 12.5 (Scott-Jones 22), but the median age for first marriages in 1990 was 23.9 (Caldas 403). This age has risen from 20.8 in 1970 (Caldas 403). The increase in the age of marriages reveals the delay of adulthood that has occurred in this country. Due to economic and social

factors, more years of education is required of young people. In order to attain adequate employment, education beyond the high school diploma is necessary (Scott-Jones 22). Society is forcing young people to remain young to achieve further educational goals, thus pushing the age of adult responsibility later than it has ever been before. This delaying of adulthood does not delay the biological clock. A child's body becomes an adult body with adult desires, but society fails to allow him adult responsibility and privilege.

An additional factor contributing to the increase in the adolescent birth rate is adolescent parenting as a lifestyle choice. Within the African American culture, adolescent parenting is considered a normal option or a career choice (Merrick 288). This so-called career provides the adolescent "self-expression and identity, through which they will assume the adult role and which might also provide a source of income from benefits of Aid to Families with Dependent Children" (Merrick 289). As this becomes more of an option for different segments of society, the birth rate will continue to rise.

A fourth factor influencing the rise of the adolescent birth rate is the involvement of adults. "The large majority of all 'teenage' pregnancies are caused by adults (Males 408). Because the prevention programs focus so heavily on teenage sexual activity, they fail to address the impact of the adult/teen relationship. By only dealing with

teenagers, the prevention programs "assign girls as young as junior high school age the responsibility of preventing pregnancy"(Males 408). How does a fourteen year old female deal with their adult sex partner about this responsibility? Most of the time she does nothing. This pressure on young girls will continue to be ineffective because of their relationship with adult males.

A final factor bolstering the increase in adolescent birth rates is the behavior of society. Images in the media surround American youth daily communicating a message that "sex and sexiness are highly prized American values"(Caldas 405). The behavior of adults around them also encourage this message. Though adults may preach abstinence or safe sex to their adolescent counterparts, in the 1980s, "there were 100 million cases of STD, 25 million unplanned pregnancies, 12 million abortions, and eight million births to unwed mothers" among Americans over the age of twenty (Males 408). Adults model the opposite behavior of what they want from children. "The problem is not that teenagers. . .reject the values of adults around them, but that they copy them only too well"(Males 408). As society continues to indulge itself in free sexual behavior, it should expect its children to as well. And the adolescent birth rate continues to rise.

Some researchers have asked why the increase in adolescent births is a problem; they remind others that adolescent childbirth is not a new event. In fact, the

adolescent birth rate was higher in the 1950s than it has been in the past few years (Scott-Jones 22). What the researchers fail to remember is many of these adolescents were married or became married soon after the pregnancy was discovered (Scott-Jones 23). This marriage enabled the teens to build stable families and become fairly financially secure. This situation is not the case for pregnant adolescents today.

Today, the majority of teen mothers are unmarried and have limited educations (Ventura 15). Those mothers who do achieve their high school diploma are less likely to attend college than women who delayed child-rearing (Caldas 403). These characteristics compromise an already shaky financial situation in which the father is unlikely to contribute a dime (Males 409). "Given that sixty percent of all teenage families live in poverty, . . .the average teenage family arrangement can probably best be described as 'at risk'"(Caldas 403). These dysfunctional adolescent families are far from the 1950s version described as "stable families" with "relatively prosperous lives"(Scott-Jones 23).

The baby's health and well-being are also compromised. Adolescent mothers have higher smoking rates during pregnancy and are less likely to gain appropriate amounts of weight during pregnancy (Ventura 15). Both contribute to the low birth weights of their infants. "Low birth weight is one of the most important factors implicated in infant

mortality”(Ventura 16). Pregnant teens are also unlikely to receive appropriate or timely prenatal care (Ventura 15) which compromises the health of their infants. Teenage parents are also more likely than older parents to abuse their children (Caldas 404). Because of this abuse, children of teenage mothers are at higher risk to need “foster care, child protection services, and special education services”(Caldas 404).

The economic future of the child is at risk as well. There is often “intergenerational transfer of poverty to the children of single-parent families”(Caldas 403). Because socioeconomic status is a predictor of academic achievement, children of teen mothers are unlikely to do well at school (Caldas 403) in order to pull themselves out of the cycle of poverty.

Health problems, cyclical poverty, abuse, and the economic cost of all of the above are reasons that adolescent parenting is a problem of today’s society. It must be addressed quickly and successfully. There are several ideas concerning what should be done.

Comprehensive sex education is a popular response to the question of how to deal with adolescent birth rates. The key to successful sex education is timing and quality. Often, “the sex education adolescents receive may be too little and too late” (Scott-Jones 24). According to a study of African American adolescent females, “one half to two thirds of the adolescents became sexually active before they

had a sex education program"(Scott-Jones 25). Unsure action on the part of local school systems contributes to poor quality sex education because the programs become "inaction or half-hearted approaches to dealing with the problem"(Caldas 405). Sex education programs should be allowed to provide adolescents with "the full array of options for responsible sexual behavior"(Males 409), but the programs should also incorporate discussions about interpersonal relationships and appropriate sexual expression within those relationships (Scott-Jones 25).

Education and career programs would indirectly impact the adolescent birth rate by providing adolescents options for their future. Instead of choosing "motherhood as a pathway to womanhood", adolescents may see "formal education as a viable route to adult success"(Scott-Jones 26) and delay child-rearing. These programs would provide opportunities for adolescents to connect school to future success in the workforce through apprenticeships, internships, and summer jobs. These education and career programs need to "emphasis the good things adolescents can do with their lives and not just the negatives we want to prevent"(Scott-Jones 26).

The primary problem with these programs is the mixed messages sent by society. Though schools should provide teenagers with options concerning sexuality and career choices, they cannot prevent the messages coming from the media and the behavior of adults around them. Until the

adults of society begin to act sexually responsible, it is impossible and irrational to expect the adolescents in society to act that way. Adolescents are simply mirroring what is acceptable in the adult world (Males 408). For a real change in the adolescent birth rate to occur, it must begin with a major overhaul in the sexual behavior of adults in the media and in the real world.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The phenomenon of teenage pregnancy and teenage parenting has gained the majority of attention from researchers interested in reducing adolescent birthrates while teenagers who have chosen to delay childbearing have been virtually ignored by studies. This researcher asserts that there is much to learn from those adolescents that may assist in increasing the success of preventative programs.

The primary objective of this study was to determine if there existed common factors among women who had not become adolescent mothers. These variables could include the women's background, demographic data, and influences on her sexual decisions that resulted in the delay of childbearing. The hope of this researcher was that this study might serve as a preliminary or pilot study for further research in this area. It is the opinion of this researcher that information gained from these women would be valuable in assessing the needs of young girls in order to prevent the onset of early sexual activity or adolescent childbearing.

Specifically, this research project sought to provide insight into the following questions regarding young women who did not become adolescent mothers.

- Are there common factors among women who had not become adolescent mothers?
- What are these common factors?
- Are there themes among these factors?
- What are these themes?

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The method selected for this qualitative study was the one-on-one interview. The interviews consisted of approximately nine open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were asked in order to identify influencing factors. The interviewer was provided latitude to probe further when more information was needed. Other questions were asked during the interview in order to establish some background of the participants. The interviews lasted approximately twenty minutes. The interviews were conducted in isolated locations and audio-taped for further review.

The twenty interview participants were female college students who had not become teenage mothers. All of the participants were volunteers and over the age of twenty. One of the participants was African-American; one was Indian-American, and the rest were Caucasian.

Each interview was transcribed, assigned a number to protect confidentiality, and initially divided into two categories: sexually active teenagers and abstaining teenagers. From this point, the researcher read and re-read the interviews identifying common categories of influences, themes, and background facts. The interviews were then studied again as a whole seeking categorization and repeat answers. Percentages were calculated according to category and as a total group.

DATA ANALYSIS

Participants' Backgrounds

Sexual Activity

Eight of the twenty participants were sexually active as teenagers. Twelve abstained. Of the eight categorized as sexually active, fifty percent reported they used a form of contraceptive consistently, and the other fifty percent claimed they used them irregularly. Their sexual partners were limited, as well. All of the sexually active teenagers mentioned only one partner or a short period of time (i.e. six months) in which they were having intercourse.

Family Structure

All twenty of the participants came from two parent homes. This result was unexpected considering the current divorce rate, and two parent families were not a requirement for participation in this study. Two participants mentioned that their parents were divorced after their teenage years. However, both of those participants were not sexually active as teenagers.

Mothers' Background

The question concerning whether or not their mother was a teen mother was posed in order to address the cyclical nature of teen parenting. Only two of the twenty participants had mothers who were teen mothers - one in each category.

Pressures

None of the participants reported feeling pressure to become a teen mother. However, thirty percent of them felt pressure from boyfriends or peers to become sexually active. Those who abstained from sex felt less pressure to be sexually active than those who had intercourse. Two of the twelve abstainers felt they were pressured about sexual activity, and four of the eight sexually active participants were pressured to have intercourse.

Sex Education

Sixty-five percent of the participants had some form of sex education in school. The extent of the education is unknown though some students voluntarily called it a "joke". Of the eight who were sexually active, seven had school-based sex education. Of the twelve who abstained, only half had school-based sex education.

Pregnant Teenagers

The participants were asked how many pregnant teenagers they knew when they were teens. The average for all of the participants was 6.65 known pregnant teens. The averages of the two groups differed greatly. Those who abstained knew on average 3.58 pregnant teens. Those who were sexually active knew an average of 11.25 pregnant teens.

Attitudes Toward Premarital Sex

Throughout the interviews, the researcher noticed the omission of the word "sin". None of the participants, whether sexually active or not, used the word "sin" in relation to premarital sex. When the researcher re-read the transcripts, she did notice some use of the words "wrong" and "shouldn't" when referring to premarital sexual activity. Only forty-five percent of those interviewed used the words "wrong" or "shouldn't" when discussing premarital sexual activity. Surprisingly, only twenty-five percent of those who abstained used those words about premarital sex, and seventy-five percent of the sexually active participants used "wrong" or "shouldn't" when referring to premarital sex.

Self Worth

Self worth was assessed by the researcher through her readings of the interviews. She looked for conscious decision-making or out right comments about worth. Some comments that were made included this quote from a sexually active participant:

" . . . I knew that I was better than spreading myself to every person on earth. I knew that I was better than that. I knew that I was worth more than that." (Interviewee Six)

The next quote is from a participant who abstained.

"Virginity is the only thing that belongs to you. And I just never met anybody that I felt like deserved it. Thank you." (Interviewee Ten)

This assessment was not difficult after reading and re-reading the interviews. All of the participants who abstained seemed to have a strong sense of self worth. However, only fifty percent of those who were sexually active seemed to have that sense of self worth. Some of them seemed more drawn to follow the leader and give in to a situation or pressure without considering their worth.

Influences on Sexual Decisions

The sexual decisions of the participants ultimately prevented them from becoming teenage mothers. The question this study asked was what influences those decisions. From study of these interviews the following common influences appeared:

- Future Goals
- Possibility of Pregnancy
- Family
- Opinions of Others
- Religion
- Responsibility
- Relationship
- Example.

These influences were found in both categories, however, to different extents. Also, the outcomes of the influences varied. In other words, family influenced one teen to abstain, but influenced another teen to use birth control. No generalizations were drawn about the impact of these influences due to their varying results.

Future Goals

The influence of having goals for the future was the number one influence for the total group, and shared the number one place with other influences in the specific participant categories. Ninety percent of the participants stated that their goals for the future influenced their sexual decisions. All of the participants who were sexually active as teenagers named goals as an influence to use contraceptives, and ten of the twelve who abstained said goals were an influence.

An awareness of the impact of sexual decisions on the future and the value placed on future goals influenced these participants' sexual decisions. Interviewee Three stated, "I knew that if I did get pregnant my goals would have to change." This and similar comments revealed the recognition of the impact of sexual decisions on the future. Some participants related goals to the use of contraceptives. "That's why I used condoms. Because I wanted to go to school and all those factors so greatly"(Interviewee

Fifteen). Comments such as this one highlights the recognition of the consequences of sexual decisions.

Many participants recited a list of "I wanteds" when asked about future goals. Because they recognized the impact sexual decisions had on goals, they seemed to take those decisions more seriously. They seemed more willing to take precautions to prevent interference with what they had planned for their lives. The participants valued their goals so much that they were willing to make decisions to protect those plans. Ten of the twenty chose not to have sex to prevent changes in their goals. Four chose to use contraceptives regularly. The other four who had sex and used contraceptive sporadically considered themselves lucky for not getting pregnant because "it would make everything a lot harder. I mean I could still probably have done it but it would have made it a lot harder"(Interviewee Seven). Even the inconsistent users of contraceptives recognized the affect their sexual decisions could have on their futures.

Possibility of Pregnancy

- Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in you decisions?
A: Pregnancy had a big role in me being on birth control. That was my number one big concern above all was that I could get pregnant. I did not want that to happen.
(Interviewee Nineteen)

This sentiment was one expressed over and over again throughout the interviews. Some expressed it as fear;

others as a concern, and others as an undesirable consequence. The possibility of pregnancy ranked second with family. Overall, eighty-five percent of the participants said that the possibility of pregnancy influenced their sexual decisions. For the participants who abstained, the possibility of pregnancy ranked second with another influence. Seventy-five percent stated that the risk of pregnancy impacted their sexual decisions. For the sexually active participants, the possibility shared first with future goals; one hundred percent of this category said the pregnancy risk influenced their sexual decisions, particularly concerning contraceptives.

The possibility of pregnancy registered with the participants in varying ways. Some saw pregnancy as inevitable. Interviewee Five stated a feeling expressed by other participants. "I knew it [pregnancy] would happen. If I tried it [sex] once, I knew it [pregnancy] would happen to me." This view of the possibility of pregnancy was exclusive to the participants who abstain from intercourse.

Another view of the possibility of pregnancy was fear. This view was prevalent in both categories. Some of the participants who expressed fear of becoming pregnant just did not want children. Others' fear of pregnancy stemmed from how that pregnancy would impact their lives. Their fear of pregnancy included fear of their parents' reactions, fear of the judgement of others, and fear of lifetime affects. Interviewee Seventeen stated these fears like

this, "It [pregnancy] was always a scary thought. . . Like if somebody's a teen mother, your youth is gone. You don't.. You have to dedicate your life to somebody else; it's not your own any more." These fears resulting from the possibility of pregnancy influenced many participants' sexual decisions including abstinence and contraceptive use.

Family

Eighty-five percent of the participants identified family as an influence in their sexual decisions ranking it second with the possibility of pregnancy. Of those who abstained, eighty-three percent named it as an influence making it the top influence along with goals. The influence of family rated second with eighty-eight percent of sexually active participants identifying it as an influence.

The influence of family varied greatly. For the women who abstained, its influence was identified in terms of open communication, moral examples, support, values, and fear of disappointment. For those who were sexually active, the influence was identified with slight differences. Values remained constant. The instance of the fear of disappointing parents increased slightly and fear of parental reaction or opinion of them surfaced. Interviewee Fifteen said her parents would have killed her, and Interviewee Twelve said her parents would literally die. Interviewee Six feared that her parents would view her as dirty or wrong. Guilt feelings also appeared. Interviewee

Nineteen felt guilty because her parents knew about her sexual activity. These fears and feelings influenced most of the sexually active participants to hide their sexual activity. Many never told their parents about their sexual activity. Interviewee Six stated, "I shielded my parents from everything." That method of avoiding parental reaction or judgement was not uncommon.

Opinions of Others

Eighty percent of the participants stated that the opinions of others, peers and parents, mattered to them and influenced their sexual decisions. Both categories ranked this influence second. Seven of the eight sexually active participants and nine of the twelve abstainers said that others' opinions influenced their decisions. However, it influenced the two categories differently.

The women who abstained valued their reputation and the reputation of their parents. Some chose not to have sex because they did not want to be viewed like the sexually active girls were viewed. Some did not want to disgrace their families with a pregnancy. Four of the nine were concerned about how others would treat their families because of their sexual activity or pregnancy. For this category of women, there seemed to be some stigma attached to being sexually active or pregnant as a teenager.

The women who were sexually active were primarily concerned with their parents' opinions. Five of the nine

stated that what their parents thought was important to them so they hid their sexual activity from them. Several stated that they told no one of their sexual activity because "I wanted to keep the appearance of being the good girl who you know did what was right and wasn't influenced by others when in fact I was"(Interviewee Thirteen). This covering up of the sexual activity probably contributed to the use of contraceptives.

Religion

Of all participants, sixty-five percent identified religion as an influencing factor. Sixty-seven percent of those who abstained and sixty-three percent of those who did not named it as a factor. Religion either had a direct influence on the individual or an indirect influence through family. For those who abstained, religion impacted their morals and values concerning sexual activity. Whether that impact was direct or indirect did not matter except for the degree in which it influenced the ultimate decision to abstain.

For those who were sexually active, the influence was more varied. Two of the participants said that religion stopped them from continuing to have sex. One said that she used contraceptives to hide her sexual activity because of her and her family's religious beliefs (Interviewee Thirteen). The opposite occurred for Interviewee Fifteen. She said that religion contributed to the lack of

contraceptive use because discussing it would be admitting that she was going against her beliefs. For Interviewee Nineteen, her religious beliefs just delayed the inevitable. The outcome of religion's influence on the sexual decisions of these females varied greater than any other factor.

Responsibility

Fifty-five percent of the women interviewed mentioned the responsibility of sex or parenting as an influencing factor. Of those who abstained, fifty eight percent identified it as a factor. Of those who had sex, half said responsibility was a factor. Only one of the twenty stated that she knew sex involved much responsibility (Interviewee Two) and she abstained. The other ten associated the responsibility with pregnancy and parenting. All of the ten felt incapable as teenagers to meet the needs of a child.

Relationship

Half of the participants stated that relationships were important to them when making sexual decisions. The same statistic stood true for both categories of participants. The women who abstained expressed a desire for a partner who they loved and felt comfortable with. Interview Ten said she never met anyone who deserved it. Two of the others wanted to wait for the man they would marry. The women who were sexually active and concerned with relationships also said love and comfort were important to them. They also

stated the seriousness and longevity of the relationship were factors.

Example

Half of the participants had some type of close example that influenced their sexual decisions. Of the eight who were sexually active, four mentioned examples during the interview. Three of them had friends who became teenage mothers. When talking of their mother-friends, they said the following things:

"I just didn't want to be in their situation." (Interviewee Twelve)

"I saw what would happen to me if I, the struggles that they had and I knew I didn't want that." (Interviewee Thirteen)

"...that kind did hit reality home, you know, that could happen to me." (Interviewee Seven)

The fourth person who talked of examples had friends who contracted sexually transmitted diseases. Of these four women, three used contraceptives consistently and the fourth said she used them most of the time (Interviewee Seven).

Five of the six abstaining women who had examples knew friends or relatives who were teenage mothers. All five talked of the struggles they saw their friends experience. The sixth person had an example of a positive relationship without sexual activity. She spoke of this relationship as respectful, not "cheap or tawdry" (Interviewee Ten).

DISCUSSION

As shown in the data analysis, this researcher identified many common factors among the twenty women she interviewed. These factors existed in both demographic data and influences on their sexual decisions. The demographic commonalties include:

- family structure
- mother's background
- pressure to become a teen mother.

Other demographic data was collected to assess its possible impact on sexual decisions. The common influences on sexual decisions are listed on page thirteen.

While assessing the common threads connecting these participants, two themes became readily apparent. Many of the influences dealt with a recognized connection between decisions and consequences. Also, many of the common factors involved the influence of others.

All of the participants seemed aware of the connection between their decisions and the consequences that may follow. This awareness was best seen in the relationship between goals and the possibility of pregnancy. The mere fact that goals was a factor in their sexual decision-making indicates that the consequence connection was present. Comments made by participants highlight this knowledge. Interviewee Four stated, "I wanted to have more for myself as I got older and knowing if I had a child I wouldn't be able to accomplish some of the things that I wanted to."

Interviewee Thirteen expressed something similar, "I had goals in life and I knew that that [pregnancy] would not work towards my goals." The recognition that goals would not be reached or would have to change depending on the results of their sexual decisions had a great impact on these choices.

The influencing factor of the possibility of pregnancy was that of realizing that pregnancy was a possible result of sexual activity and that pregnancy would impact their lives in various ways. The participants expected realistic consequences. The participants did not speak of the love from a child or the attention they would get because of the child; they spoke of the financial, emotional, and physical responsibility of raising a child. Interviewee Six expressed her concern as did many participants.

What if, you know, we become pregnant.
You know, what are we gonna do? You
know, are we going to be able to
continue going to school how are we
going to afford this, how are we going
to care for a baby, how is that going
to affect us?

Her realistic view of the possible consequences of her behavior influenced her sexual decisions. Many of the other participants shared this realism, and it impacted their choices in varying degrees.

Of the eight common factors mentioned in the study, four involved the influence of others. These four were family, opinions of others, relationships with partners, and

personal knowledge through examples. The importance of the influence of others cannot be denied, though the impact differed depending on circumstance and who the participants were surrounded by. If the participants were surrounded by extremely conservative or religious family members, they chose to abstain or hide their sexual activity. If they feared the judgement of their community, friends or family, the participants chose to abstain or keep their sexual activity secret. If the participant found a partner they loved and felt comfortable with, they were more likely to have sex. The impact of personal examples of teenage mothers or healthy "sexless" relationships was positive in that the participants who had those examples were more likely to abstain or use contraceptives consistently. Also, this close example contributed to the realistic view of the participants concerning the consequences of reckless sexual behavior.

What should be done with this new found knowledge? Two things: incorporation into school curricula and further study. In this researcher's opinion, decision making skills, goal setting and interpersonal skills must be emphasized in the classroom. As this study has shown, the participants had goals for their future, and they had realistic knowledge of how their decisions would influence those goals. This awareness needs to be taught to the general school population. It is not a revelation from above given to a few and kept from the masses. Children

need to realize from an early age that decisions have consequences and these consequences can impact the rest of their lives. Children can be taught how to make wise decisions by considering all of the possible consequences. This wisdom would assist them throughout their lives in every decision - not only sexual ones.

Goal setting must also be learned. Children need to feel a sense of control in their lives. If they feel that things just happen to them, it is the opinion of this researcher that they will be less likely to take responsibility for their actions. Instead of acting, they would be reacting to circumstances out of their control. Through goal setting and goal attaining, children are given the reins of their lives, and they will better understand that their future lies in their own hands.

Lastly, children need interpersonal skills. They need to know how to develop healthy relationships in order to make healthy decisions concerning those relationships. Because the impact of others is so great in sexual choices, children must be prepared to develop the kinds of relationships that would promote wise choices. They should also be prepared to stand on their own outside of relationships. This preparation would only contribute to the decision making and goal setting skills that will all positively contribute to the choices must make.

This study has left many opportunities for further investigation. This researcher suggests additional study into five areas:

1. It would be interesting to see if teen mothers have the same realistic view of consequences and their impact as did the participants in this study. This researcher believes the teenage mothers' view of the consequences would be far from realistic.

2. Another area for further research would be the shifting attitudes regarding sexual behavior and the sinfulness of premarital sex. Along those lines, a study on the changing attitudes regarding the shamefulness of teen pregnancy would be enlightening. It is the opinion of this researcher that the shift would be away from the shame of teen pregnancy and away from the belief that premarital sex is sinful.

3. Further study on the role of the family is necessary in this area. Though family was identified as an influencing factor, how family impacts sexual decision and whether there is a change in impact with a change in family structure would be an exciting study.

4. The locus of control of teenage mothers and those who are not would be an interesting contrast to research. This researcher feels that teenage mothers are more likely to have external locuses of control as opposed to their non-parenting counterparts.

5. Finally, a longitudinal study of teenage girls, their feelings, beliefs, and influences would be revealing particularly if some of the girls become teen mothers. Shifting attitudes or circumstances may better be identified in a long term study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Charts

	Background of Participants					
	Sex. Active	Percent*	Abstainers	Percent*	Total	Percent*
**Participants	8	40	12	60	20	100
Self Worth	4	50	12	100	16	80
Contraceptive Use						
Consistent	4	50	NA	NA	4	20
Inconsistent	4	50	NA	NA	4	20
None	0	0	NA	NA	0	0
Family Structure						
Two Parent Home	8	100	12	100	20	100
One Parent Homes	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mom Was Teen Mom	1	12.5	1	8.3	2	10
Pressures						
To Be Sexually Active	4	50	2	16.6	6	30
To Be Teen Mom	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sex Ed Class						
Yes	7	87.5	6	50	13	65
No	1	12.5	6	50	7	35
Avg. of Known Pregnant Teens	11.3	NA	3.6	NA	6.7	NA
*Percent calculated from total participants in preceding column's category.						
**Percents in this row are calculated from total number of participants.						

	Influences on Sexual Decisions					
	Sex. Active	Percent*	Abstainers	Percent*	Total	Percent*
**Participants	8	40	12	60	20	100
Future Goals	8	100	10	83.3	18	90
Possibility of Pregnancy	8	100	9	75	17	85
Family	7	87.5	10	83.3	17	85
Opinions of Others	7	87.5	9	75	16	80
Religion	5	62.5	8	66.7	13	65
Responsibility	4	50	7	58.3	11	55
Relationship with Partner	4	50	6	50	10	50
Example	4	50	6	50	10	50
"Premarital Sex is Wrong"	6	75	3	25	9	45
*Percent calculated from total participants in preceding column's category. **Percents in this row are calculated from total number of participants.						

Appendix B:
Interview Transcripts

Interview One

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: No.

Q: What influenced your decision not to have sex?

A: I think my religious background was the biggest influence. One thing I think that was really special about my mother was instead of trying to run from this issue she sat down and talked to me about it and she told me that it was natural for me to feel things and all that and ah...One thing that she said was that it was okay if I didn't do it and I don't think that that's ever, I mean cause you feel so much pressure to and you kinda feel like well if I don't there's something wrong with me. I'm weird cause I don't want to. She made a really big point of making sure I knew that if I decided not to that was fine. It was my choice.

Q: On the religious issue, how did that influence your decision? What kind of beliefs did you have, religiously, that would have influenced that?

A: That premarital sex was wrong. Um, that you should wait til you got married. Um, I am a baptist so...

Q: How did your future goals, did you have future goals that influenced your decision?

A: Right. Yes, I guess a big thing maybe. I hadn't really thought about it then but maybe it was back in the back of my mind you know that I didn't want to have children because my little brother, he has cerebral palsy and I knew that probably if he lived past my parents that I'd be the one taking care of him and I just, after I got married, you know, my husband and I talked about it I guess it was always there, it's just I never really thought about it. I've always wanted to have a career. I've always been, you know, more oriented towards having a career. And things like that.

Q: Would morals and values stem from your religion or would you say that they are different?

A: That's a hard one. I'd have to say that they are different because they do, some of them, base there. But, um, I don't feel that my religion made me feel the way I do about a lot of things so that's why I think there is a difference.

Q: Did your morals and values factor into your decision not to have sex?

A: Yes, um-hmm.

Interview One

Q: How did that factor in?

A: Well, I just felt that, um. I don't know. I guess the girls at my school that I did see do things like that, I don't know, they didn't have a good reputation. I don't know. I just didn't...because of thinking that it was wrong, I felt that, um, I didn't want to be viewed the same way they were viewed, um.

Q: So you would say that maybe appearance to others made a difference?

A: Probably. A little bit. Um. Yeah, it did.

Q: Others as your peers, or parents or both?

A: Well, my mother and I are really close. I've always thought of my mother as my best friend. So I'd say I didn't want to disappoint my mother.

Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision? A limited role? A big role?

A: Probably a big role. Because my best friend, last person in the world I ever expected to get pregnant as a teenager, did. And, um, I saw how it changed her, um, and well, like right now she's still not, I mean she finished high school. She got homebound to finish high school. But she's not done anything towards the goals that she has set for herself. Um, so I saw how pregnancy could affect you and your future.

Q: Were you ever tempted to change your decision?

A: Yeah, I dated somebody for five years so yeah.

Q: Why did you not?

A: He was a really nice guy. He had a lot of the same beliefs that I did and he didn't try to pressure me. And I think that was really lucky and might have made the difference.

Q: Okay, here are just some environment questions. Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two parent.

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: About how many people do you know, from like your school, became teen mothers?

A: Probably four.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Interview One

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: no.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: No.

Q: Do you think it would have helped, or changed your decision?

A: It wouldn't have changed my decision to but I think it would have helped me to understand probably why I decided what I did a little better.

Interview Two

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: What do you define as a teenager? Up til twenty?

Q: Up til nineteen. Through nineteen.

A: I guess I'd say not until up to nineteen, age nineteen.

Q: What influenced your decision to have sex?

A: Um, finding someone I was in love with and now I'm engaged to that person, so that was important to me.

Q: So, in high school, did you or did you not have sex?

A: I did not.

Q: What influenced your decision to wait, to delay that?

A: Um, same kind of reason. I knew that it came with a lot of responsibilities and that kind of thing, and I wasn't really willing to take that risk until I found someone who I knew I was going to spend the rest of my life with.

Q: When you say risk, what do you mean by risk?

A: All the things that are involved, you know. You always have the possibility of pregnancy whether you are using birth control or not, um. It changes a person's relationship, I think, you know and until I found someone I was ready to share that with you know I did not want to take that step I guess.

Q: So in high school, you had that knowledge of risk?

A: Right.

Q: When you did have sex what prevented you from becoming a teen mother? When you were nineteen.

A: Birth control.

Q: So you did use a form of birth control?

A: Yeah.

Q: What influenced your decision to use contraception at that age?

A: I think knowledge and education had a lot to do with it. You know, knowing about things that could happen. Becoming pregnant, that kind of thing. So, and being in a committed relationship, I thought it was a good step to take.

Q: When it came to um your decision to use contraception, and you have said the risks, were you at all concerned about if you did get pregnant how that would influence your life?

A: Yeah, well that was a concern that was one of the reasons why I decided to start using contraception. But I did know that since I was with the person who I was in love

Interview Two

and was planning to spend the rest of my life with that whatever happened we could handle it together.

Q: How did religion influence your decision to wait until that point, if it influenced at all?

A: Um. I guess it did a little bit. I am not a real religious person but I was raised Catholic and so my family background, I guess, is to wait til you get married and that's how I used to feel when I was younger that I would just wait til any way so I'm sure it had a little to do with the background.

Q: How did future goals influence your decision to wait, if at all?

A: Well, um there's no full proof that you know using birth control that nothing is going to happen so I knew I didn't wanna even face those possibilities in high school cause I was too young and you know wanted to go to college and that kind of thing. but once I got in to college and I got older and like I said found somebody I was in a committed relationship with to me it was worth then going ahead and taking that risk.

Q: Do you relate your morals and values to your religious beliefs or do you see them as separate?

A: Um, that's kind of a hard one. I think my parents were very moral people and not necessarily real religious. I just see them as good, moral people and that's how they brought me up and that's how I consider myself. So maybe some influence but not exactly the same.

Q: When you decided to delay, did the appearance to other people have any influence? How it would seem if you did decide to have sex and people found out?

A: Did that influence my decision?

Q: Yes, to wait.

A: How other people thought. Um, no I really don't think it did. Of course, I wouldn't want to be a pregnant girl in high school so maybe that's one of the reasons in the back of my head that I decided to wait. But I think it more had to do with my values, my personal values and my decision.

Q: What would you say you valued most in high school

A: What do you mean? What did I...

Q: When you think about your values, was there something that you valued to a point that you were able to put off sex?

A: I know this is going to sound like I keep saying the same things over and over.

Interview Two

Q: No that's fine.

A: I think it's just the value of finding someone the person that you think you're going to spend the rest of your life with and that you know is also ready to make that kind of important decision with you. And whatever happens when you make that decision, that you know will be able to deal with that together. And in high school, I didn't have that kind of relationship so I didn't take that step.

Q: So your value is of the relationship?

A: Right.

Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision to wait? And in your decision to use contraception? Big role? Small role? Or was disease a larger concern?

A: I really don't think that disease ever played much of a part because I am not promiscuous and I had no desire to have any kind of multiple partners and that kind of thing. Um. I am sure it [pregnancy] influenced a little bit my decision to wait because I was involved in a committed relationship for a while and you know that was always a possibility and I gave it some that. but I again didn't feel like the relationship was strong enough to handle something like that. SO it influenced a little bit but it more had to do with the relationship I think than the pregnancy itself.

Q: When you were waiting, were you tempted to change your decision?

A: Not in high school. When I got to college yeah a little bit. But it was the same relationship at the beginning of college that I had in high school and I never did feel like it was 100% strong enough to take that sort of step so I held my values strong and didn't.

Q: How do you think your parents relationship with you influenced your decisions about sexuality?

A: Oh I think I don't think about it directly but it probably did a lot in that They showed me a loving caring relationship and that's what I - I'm sure that's how I've come to my values and thinking that it should be with someone that you love and somebody that you want to spend your life with and that's kind of the impression that I've got that my parents did. So indirectly I think it had a lot to do with it but I don't, you know, think about it.

Q: Here are some environment questions. Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two parent.

Interview Two

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: About how many people do you know, from like your school, became teen mothers?

A: Um, I can only think of about one or two. I guess.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: Um. Maybe a little bit once I got to college.

Q: Not in high school?

A: Not in high school.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: No.

Q: If you had do you think it would have affected your decision?

A: Probably not. Because I think I made the right decision now so I don't think it would have changed much.

Interview Three

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: No.

Q: What influenced your decision not to have sex? Why did you not have sex?

A: The main thing was the fear of getting pregnant. I just didn't want to even have to worry about that.

Q: How did, if at all, religion influence your decision?

A: It didn't.

Q: How did your future goals influence your decision, if at all?

A: Well, I knew that if I did get pregnant my goals would have to change. I wouldn't be able to do what I wanted to. My life would change and all that so.

Q: How did your morals and values influence your decision if at all?

A: They didn't, not really. I didn't feel that it's really wrong to have premarital sex. It was just something I didn't want to do.

Q: How did your appearance to your peers and parents or the opinions of others influence your decision?

A: Um. I don't know if they really did. Other than like what my parents would think.

Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision?

A: That was the main role.

Q: Would you say that was the factor that influenced your decision the most?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you fear about pregnancy?

A: Everything. I guess having a baby while your a teenager, even now, I am just unprepared for it. I wouldn't know what to do. I wouldn't know if I'd be able to handle it.

Q: Were you ever tempted to change your decision?

A: No.

Q: Why?

A: Um. I guess I wasn't really comfortable enough with anyone I was with to have sex. So that was probably the reason.

Interview Three

Q: Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two parents.

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: About how many people do you know, from like your teen years, became teen mothers?

A: About three.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: No.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: I went to a Catholic school so I don't know how comprehensive that would be but we did have sex ed.

Q: Did it influence your decision?

A: No.

Q: Were your friends having sex?

A: Some were.

Q: Do you think that influenced your decision? Watching the ones that weren't and the ones that did?

A: Not really. I didn't really go by what other people were doing. It was more personal. Like, I really didn't care if whoever were having sex. It's just nothing that... It's not a risk I wanted to take.

Interview Four

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: Yes.

Q: What influenced your decision to have sex?

A: It wasn't really peer pressure. It was just kind of something I wanted to experience. And after I experienced it, I realized it wasn't something I really enjoyed.

Q: What prevented you from becoming a teen mother?

A: Basically, my parents and grandparents and the values they instilled in me. Well actually myself. I wanted to have more for myself as I got older and knowing if I had a child I wouldn't be able to accomplish some of the things that I wanted to.

Q: Did you use contraceptives?

A: Are you talking about condoms and all that stuff?

Q: Condoms and other birth control..

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Was it used regularly?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you ever become pregnant?

A: No.

Q: How did, if at all, religion influence your decision?

A: It wasn't an influence to have sex. If anything, it influenced not to have sex. But I just went outside of those boundaries and tried it for myself. And when I realized everything they were talking about from my religion, it changed my mind about doing it over and over and over again.

Q: You mentioned a little bit what you wanted to accomplish. How did your future goals influence your decision, if at all?

A: Well, just like now. I am in college and thinking about, thinking back, if I were to have a child then I don't think I would have made it this far. In college. Um, I wanted to be a teacher, open my own daycare and different things and if I had a child back then as a teenager, I wouldn't have accomplished a lot of the stuff I've already accomplished. Maybe even not graduating from high school.

Q: Is that something you thought about as a teenager?

A: Uh-huh. A whole lot.

Interview Four

Q: How did your morals and values influence your decision if at all?

A: Um, basically the way I was raised was in a church family. And there was not - nobody really got pregnant at a young age in my family. So it was kind of the values that my parents gave me and my grandparents. Just kind of made me follow in everybody else's footsteps.

Q: How did your appearance or the opinions of others, like your parents or peers, influence your decisions to have sex and use contraceptives?

A: Me and my parents never really sat down and talked about it, not having sex, but it was something that I knew that I wasn't supposed to do. Um, and hearing my other teenage friends talk about it and how they might have got this disease or that disease. When I did have sex that made me know that I was going to use protection cause I didn't want to go through all the hassle of getting STDs and AIDS and all that different kind of stuff. So, that's the influence that they had, to use protection when I did have sex.

Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision?

A: A very big role. I think I probably was even worried about that more than an STD.

Q: What factor that influenced your decision to use contraceptives the most?

A: Probably pregnancy. Because I knew, I mean not all STDs, but some STDs, I mean I worried about them. But you can get rid of an STD. But if I was to go home pregnant, no telling what would, I mean everything would have just broke out. If I would have had to go home and tell my parents I was pregnant. But anything like chlamydia and stuff like that, I could get treatment for that. But a pregnancy would just be there for life cause I would have never gotten an abortion or anything like that.

Q: Was it important to you that your parents not find out that you were having sex?

A: Yeah. Very much so.

Q: Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two parents.

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Interview Four

Q: About how many people do you know, from your teen experience - school, church- became teen mothers?

A: About twenty.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: No.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: Yes.

Q: Did it influence your decision?

A: Uh huh. I saw they had the different diseases and all that little stuff that you can catch. And they also had, they were talking about the teen pregnancy and how, uh, the percentage was going up and all that kind of stuff. So that influenced me not to want to do it.

Interview Five

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: No.

Q: What influenced your decision not to have sex?

A: Um, values I guess. Mostly, my friends, I saw what they went through.

Q: What did they go through?

A: Just them doing it and the hurt I saw them go through and I guess - you know what really really helped me? Is I had the first, I guess your first love. He treated me really bad, like he would date me and dump me and go out with somebody else and then come back to me. But he usually end up being with them or probably. I don't know for sure, but more than likely yeah. And then he'd come back to me, but he was always coming back to me. and the friends that I had that had boyfriends would be with them but they'd still leave 'em. And they'd come back to them, but then you know they'd dump them again. So I seen I was being treated the same way whether I gave in or I didn't. So I think that's really what - I saw you didn't get anything out of it either way, you know. And I was a real, I don't know, but I think that's a big reason why.

Q: How did, if at all, religion influence your decision?

A: Um, my mom, my sister and my dad - I've grown up in a very religious family where, you know, like I said my values and stuff like that that I've always just grown up with. I knew what was right or wrong. They never told me but just from their actions and they, the way they treated me and things that we experienced as a family pretty much showed me what was right and what was wrong.

Q: If at all, how did your future goals influence your decision? Was that even a consideration?

A: Uh-uh. I didn't have goals

Q: You mentioned your values. How did those influence your decision?

A: I wanted to be, I guess, respected by all persons. My grandparents, my sister, you know, because her friends were my friends too. You know, and just. I think relationships with others. I didn't want them looking at me as a certain type person.

Q: So would you say that your appearance to others like your family members was important to you?

A: Um-hmm. And the way people looked on my parents. yes.

Interview Five

Q: How about your appearance to your peers, was that important to you?

A: To an extent but it was like I had the attitude too - if you don't like me, don't like me. But if you do you do, you know. And I think myself, I was a very, I wasn't shy but as far as body-wise, I wasn't very open with that. What do you call that?

Q: Modest?

A: I was very modest. Yeah, I was very modest. So that probably had alot to do with it too.

Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision, if at all?

A: I knew it would happen. If I tried it once, I knew it would happen to me. You know. Just one of those things.

Q: Why didn't you want it to happen?

A: Cause I was too young. I was a kid myself there was no way that I could take care of another kid. But my mom had always told me if anything ever happened, you know, as far as like if a mistake was made, um, that there's no doubt that they would help me in every way. You know, no matter what the mistake was, they'd always be there. So that was there too, but not to influence me. But, um, I think that I just knew that I wasn't ready to have a kid. I wanted to have my parents to myself, you know. And I wanted to you know experience a childhood myself. As far as teenage years, and you know, with my friends and parties and cheering and you know stuff like that.

Q: So you realized at that time that that would be gone?

A: Oh, yeah. Yeah, cause I saw my friend go through it.

Q: So you had a friend that went through that situation?

A: Yeah.

Q: Name the factor that influenced your decision not to have sex the most.

A: Um, I really don't know. I think that I just saw that there was nothing to gain from it except after you got married. I think that is the extent of it. um, I don't really know what my thoughts were then, but I know now looking back, I think that's what it all.

Q: Were you ever tempted to change your decision?

A: Possibly yeah, but I don't think I ever considered it, you know. I think I always drew a line.

Q: Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two.

Interview Five

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: About how many people do you know, from your teenage years, became teen mothers?

A: I don't know. I know one close friend did. Um. Maybe um, maybe five but I'm sure there's more.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: No.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: No.

Q: If you had, do you think it would have influenced your decision making about sex?

A: To have sex or not to have?

Q: Would that have influenced it at all?

A: You know, it might have influenced me to because there, you know how they always had about protection and birth control and all the ways not to get - so maybe it would have. I don't know. I don't think it - my answer was always no so. I don't know.

Interview Six

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: Yes, yes I was.

Q: What influenced your decision to have sex? Why did you have sex?

A: Um, well, I've only had sex with one person and that one person. I don't know. I just felt it was right at that time. I was a junior in high school, which is still very young but I don't know, we both, we both thought it was right. We both felt like it was the right thing to do.

Q: What prevented you from becoming a teen mother?

A: Well, I think just luck, truly. Because, you know, we were both young and we didn't always take the safe, you know, way to go. So really it was luck. I mean that's hon.. being honest because, you know, like I said we didn't always use a condom. We didn't always use protection.

Q: Okay, so you used them sometimes?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you ever become pregnant?

A: No.

Q: When you did use contraceptives, what influenced that decision? Why did you use contraceptives?

A: Because, well, all through high school, all through my going to school, we've had sex ed in our classes and we were taught you know in order to prevent you know transmitting disease and pregnancy and all that this is what needs to be taken. Course, I did go to a Catholic school which didn't really like you know using any type of protection because you know it's against the religion and all that kind of stuff. But they did mention it. We did talk about it because it is important to talk about that kind of stuff with students, you know. So we were both informed, we knew this is what you have to do in order to prevent, you know.

Q: If you did not get pregnant due to luck, which you've said, um, why do you consider yourself lucky? Why is that lucky?

A: I, well, lucky to me because I was so young, we weren't married, you know, we were both in school, both had alot ahead of us, you know. We were lucky because we didn't have to disrupt our lives like that, you know. Because, because of my morals and the way I am, because I am Catholic, I am totally against abortion, I mean that's just me. I am not going to tell you or anyone else what to do, but that's just me. I'm not pro-abortion; I am totally pro-life and so if I

Interview Six

did become pregnant, you know, that - my whole life would have to be turned upside down. You know, I'd have this child, you know. I don't have a job. I don't have, you know, my education isn't complete. So, I feel that I am lucky that that didn't happen. But you're asking me how did I become lucky that I didn't get pregnant?

Q: No, that's exactly what you answered - my question.

A: Okay.

Q: When you had sex without protection, were you worried about pregnancy? Did that play any part in your decisions about sex?

A: Are you asking me then like?

Q: Then.

A: Okay, was I worried? Yes, I was worried. Because I knew what I had done was just wrong. You know, not, not really the sex part that was wrong but that I didn't use protection. You know, it worried me. What was the other part of your question?

Q: With your using of contraception, when you did use it, what role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision? Was it the main reason you used contraceptives, was it STDs or other?

A: It was both, it was both. Well, um, like I said I had never had sex with anyone else and so I wasn't worried that I was going to pass on anything because I didn't have anything to pass on. So I didn't, you know. And the person that I was having sex with he didn't have, you know, a long list of people that he had had sex with either and so I really wasn't worried that he was going to pass me any diseases. But there's always, you know, in the back of your mind, you know, what if. Um, mainly, I was worried about pregnancy but I don't know. A lot of times, I didn't even think about either one, you know.

Q: How did religion influence your decision to have sex, or to use contraceptives?

A: Okay, in the catholic faith, contraceptives are not, you know, not a part of our religion. That's not seen as, you know, what should be done. So I acted against that. But in the same, I just feel nervous having that thing on..

Q: I know. Just ignore it.

A: Well, I've always been raised to do you know what you have to do to protect yourself you know. That's just how I've been brought up - to protect yourself. To make sure that you're okay and you know that was just one of the ways to protect myself, you know. I wasn't afraid that my boyfriend was gonna hurt me in any way by giving me a

Interview Six

disease or anything but I guess pregnancy was a big deal, you know, I didn't want to become pregnant so we did use contraceptives so we didn't have to worry about that. My religion, well, I don't think it really did affect it.

Q: If at all did your future goals influence your decisions about sex?

A: Yes. A lot of times, I'd be all cautious and not want to have sex and not want to have anything to do with it because I knew that there was always that risk. What if I become pregnant. What if, you know, we become pregnant. You know, what are we gonna do? You know, are we going to be able to continue going to school, how are we going to afford this, how are we going to care for a baby, how is that going to affect us? You know, all that kind of stuff. So yes it did affect my decisions.

Q: How did your morals and values influence you decisions about sex?

A: Um, okay well, my morals and values kept me from being what's the word when you have sex with more than one

Q: Um....

A: Well, just my morals and my values, and I knew that I was better than spreading myself to every person on earth. I knew that I was better than that. I knew that I was worth more than that. You know, I waited and I really didn't wait that long, I was a junior in high school. But I found a person that I really felt comfortable with, that I trusted, that I felt that loved me and I loved him. So that's who I shared myself with, you know, I didn't have sex with everyone that came along because I had that respect for myself and I didn't want to be used or anything like that.

Q: How did your appearance to others, like your parents or peers, and their opinions of you influence your decisions about sex?

A: What do you mean?

Q: Like peoples opinions of you if they knew that you were having sex.

A: Yes, okay, at the time, I had one friend that I knew that was having sex at the time and I hate to compare myself to her because she was having sex with more than one person. She had multiple partners. But the majority of my friends were not having sex and they had never had sex and so at that time when they found out that I was having sex, they all signed these little cards that they were devoting themselves to stay abstaining from sex until marriage. You know they joined this little group and stuff and they were very against me even dating this guy because he lived across

Interview Six

town. You know, no one really knew him, he wasn't from our side of the town, he didn't go to our high school, he was older. So my friends all didn't really like him, you know, cause they didn't know all that much about him. And they didn't really approve of me having sex because we all knew you're not supposed to have sex until you're married and all that kind of stuff because it's against our religion and all. And so I did feel kinda bad about doing it, but at the same time, I was, I felt comfortable, you know, being with this person. I enjoyed being with him. I enjoyed our time together. I don't think it was really a sex issue because we didn't have sex every second of the day. I don't know. Their opinions of me, they didn't have lowered opinions of me or anything, they just didn't approve of what I was doing. So they didn't really influence me. Sometimes we would talk about it and we understood that it wasn't right but it didn't really influence me. I mean I still had sex.

Q: How about your parents opinion?

A: My parents didn't know about it at all.

Q: Was that important for them not to know?

A: Yes it was important. Because I was afraid that they would view me differently as being dirty or wrong. Just because we're all raised Catholic and that's just against everything. You're not supposed to have sex. And, even, they're set in their ways, you know. In the olden days, you just didn't have sex til you were married and so I didn't want them to think I'm not their little girl anymore. I mean anything. I shielded my parents from everything. They still to this day think that I'm their little girl - their perfect little girl and I'm not but.

Q: So how they saw you was important to you?

A: Right, it was.

Q: What factor influenced you decision to have sex the most?

A: Gosh, um, like the very first time or in general?

Q: In general.

A: Just the feeling of intimacy. I enjoyed that. I enjoyed being intimate with my boyfriend. I enjoyed the closeness and feeling comfortable with him.

Q: With the relationship?

A: The relationship, yeah. Not to say that our whole relationship was based on sex, but I enjoyed that aspect of it. Just being close.

Q: Here are some environment questions. Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two parent.

Interview Six

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: About how many people do you know, from like your teen experience, became teen mothers?

A: Um, teen mothers. That I knew of or knew closely?

Q: Knew of.

A: Four? Five.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: No.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex ed class?

A: Yes. Throughout high school.

Q: Did it influence your decision making?

A: Yes.

Q: How?

A: Because I was informed. I knew what was right, I knew what was wrong. I knew what to expect. I knew what the end results were going to be. Not just I could get pregnant or I could get some disease but what to do to protect myself and what it all meant. We had tests. We had whole semester of just sex ed. We had hundred point tests. We were tested on everything. I knew the life system. I knew what pregnancy involved, how exactly a person becomes pregnant. I knew what exactly happens if you get an STD, what are the results, if there is a cure, if there's not a cure. I was just well informed of what my decision was going to bring.

Interview Seven

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: Yes.

Q: What influenced your decision to have sex? Why did you have sex?

A: Just cause I wanted to. Nothing really. My boyfriend didn't pressure me to do it. We both wanted to do it, so we did.

Q: What prevented you from becoming a teen mother?

A: Luck and probably we used protection most of the time but there were times when we didn't so luck had a big thing to do with it too.

Q: Did you ever become pregnant?

A: No.

Q: When you did use contraceptives, what influenced that decision? Why did you use contraceptives?

A: So I wouldn't become pregnant. At the time, I wasn't even worried about, you know, STDs or anything. It was just pregnancy. So that is why we used them.

Q: The times you did not get pregnant due to luck, um, why do you consider yourself lucky?

A: Gosh, because if I would have gotten pregnant, I mean that would have been hard to finish school. I wouldn't of had the money. It just would have been hard. Decisions and stuff.

Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision to use contraceptives?

A: A big role. That's the only reason.

Q: How did religion influence your sexual decisions, if at all?

A: It didn't.

Q: If at all, how did your future goals influence your sexual decisions?

A: My decision to start having sex was, I didn't really think about the future. What I did think about when I was having sex was becoming pregnant would influence my decisions about my future and change those. So that's what. Does that make any since?

Q: Yes. Let me repeat it to you and make sure I got it clear. The possibility of pregnancy was what worried you in terms of your future goals.

Interview Seven

A: Right. It wasn't the act of having sex because I was okay with that. That's what I wanted to do. I chose to do it. It was just what could happen.

Q: How did you see pregnancy impacting your future goals?

A: Alot. I thought it would, it would make everything alot harder. I mean I could still probably have done it but it would have made it alot harder. My goals wouldn't be - It would be my child I would have to worry about more so than like what I wanted to do.

Q: How did your morals and values influence you decisions about sex, if at all?

A: Well, I knew that I was doing it at a young age. And my parents they weren't, they would have been very upset. They didn't know. So it's not like I was brought up that it was okay. I don't see it as being wrong, I see it as being irresponsible, but I think, personally, if you're all right with it and you're being safe about it, more so at our age now. If I could go back again I probably wouldn't have done it at such a young age. But I don't know really. I want to say I had good values and morals, but I guess some people say I wouldn't but I don't know

Q: How did your appearance or opinions of others influence your sexual decisions?

A: My parents, they don't know. They still do not know to this day that I've ever had sex. I mean I'm sure they might assume but we've never discussed. As far as my friends, I told the ones I wanted to know. There's nothing I talked about openly, because I knew alot of people would take it. You know, it does make a lot of girls look bad, it makes them. I don't know it wasn't really anything that I openly talked about with just anybody.

Q: Why was that?

A: Just because I didn't want to hear people's judgements put upon me, you know. That's why.

Q: What factor influenced you decision to use contraception the most.

A: Becoming pregnant. Just I was real scared of becoming pregnant.

Q: Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two parent.

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Interview Seven

Q: About how many people do you know, from like your teen experience, became teen mothers?

A: One of my really good friends did. I mean I'd say five probably, but not all were in high school.

Q: You said one was a good friend? Did that example let you know how much you didn't want to become a teen mom?

A: Oh, yeah, but, yeah. I mean I look at her now and if it could have happened to me that way, she was just... like it is awesome for her. She doesn't see it as a mistake, she doesn't see it as you know something she didn't want. That's just under her circumstances it wasn't mine. And I knew it wouldn't be so that kinda did hit reality home, you know, that could happen to me. But yeah I guess.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: No.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex ed class?

A: Yes.

Q: Did it influence your decision making?

A: No. It didn't really teach us anything. It was just real basic. The real facts or what you really need to know they kind of kept away from. I don't know. It didn't really help much. I guess my senior year they talked about STDs which is the first time they'd ever talked about it. They would just talk about becoming pregnant and the reproductive organs. They were talking about like AIDS and stuff. And that really made people think but before that they didn't really affect me you know.

Interview Eight

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: No.

Q: What influenced your decision not to have sex? Why did you not have sex?

A: Well, I was very shy in high school but I did - I always seemed to attract older guys and like we'd go to the beach or it was usually at the beach. I'd meet like an older guy or something and he'd want to kiss me or something and I would say no and it always ended up they would respect me. But I think alot of it had to do with my relationship with Christ even though I was not a very strong Christian or anything. I think that that's , I just deep inside felt that way.

Q: So religion played a pretty big part?

A: Yeah.

Q: How did your future goals influence your decision, if at all?

A: It didn't enter my mind. I wish I had future goals at that time.

Q: How did your morals and values influence your decision if at all?

A: Oh very much. That was kind of intertwined with religion. I don't know. I don't know if I can really describe it. But my morals were there.

Q: How did your appearance or the opinions of others like your peers and parents influence your decision?

A: I don't think that my parents influenced it a whole lot. I didn't have a real close relationship with them when I was a teen. My friends, the friends that I hung out with and actually from sixth to eighth grade I was friends with a girl that from that period she became wilder and the friends she hung out with. And when I was in eighth grade she told me that she had slept with someone. They all smoked. I tried it and I hated it. And I was just not somebody that was real swayed by peer pressure. And so I didn't. In fact they started smoking pot, and because I didn't like just the smoking anyway I never even desired to try it. But I ended up getting away from all those friends. And from ninth through twelfth grade, I had friends that were just, we never thought about anything like that. I remember hearing rumors in high school that somebody was sleeping with someone and we just couldn't believe it.

Interview Eight

Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision?

A: It didn't. I never thought that far of I might want to do it but I might get pregnant. I never thought that far down. I was never interested enough or tempted enough for that to be a factor.

Q: What was the factor that influenced your decision the most?

A: It's probably morals and values.

Q: Were you ever tempted to change your decision?

A: Well, yes actually yeah. I think I was. I think cause I mention those guys. Just two or three different guys that I liked that were older. And yeah, I think one in particular when I was working out at Court South and this guy, I was so stupid or naive but I went out with him. We were swimming at his apartments and all. And we went in the apartment and I went in behind him and I left the door open. And he wanted to know why and he closed the door. And I was like no I want the door open. I felt uncomfortable knowing, I don't know, I just felt uncomfortable. And he did try to put his arms around me and kiss me and I pushed away but then when he backed away. Yeah I did. I mean it was kinda like well I really like this guy but so I was.

Q: Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two parents.

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: About how many people do you know, from your school, church, etc experience, became teen mothers?

A: Outside of students here?

Q: Your age.

A: There's no one that I hung out with that did. I knew of two girls in high school but they weren't my friends.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: Only those couple of instances with the guys but not with my friends. I just hung out with a crowd that was pretty innocent.

Interview Eight

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: No.

Q: Do you think it would have influence your decision making had you had that class?

A: I don't know. It may have made it more of an issue because really it was not something I thought about much. And I don't know, it may. Maybe it would have pushed me the other way some.

Interview Nine

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: No.

Q: What influenced your decision not to have sex? Why did you not have sex?

A: One reason I think was because I lived in a small town. My parents were very influential people in town. We lived right on main street. It would have gotten back to them and I guess I didn't want to ruin their reputation or my reputation. Another reason, probably, would be I had a friend who got pregnant when she was in high school and saw what it was doing to her life and I didn't want to go down that road. I guess I had set goals by that time to of what I wanted to do. As far as going on to college.

Q: If at all, how did religion influence you decision?

A: I was very active in my church but I don't know that that was what really influenced my decision. I think it went more back to my family and my family values.

Q: How did your family values and your morals influence your decision?

A: The fact that they did bring me up in church, that my family would have looked down upon it. That you were supposed to wait til you knew this was the right person. Achieve your goals first and that would come later.

Q: You talked about how it was a small town and you didn't want to ruin your parents' reputation. So how much did your appearance or the opinions of others like your peers and parents influence your decision?

A: I think that played a great deal in it. That was very important to me. I didn't want to be looked down upon by anyone else in town or have my parents look down upon me.

Q: So your sexual activity, had you had sex, would have been negative?

A: Yes right.

Q: You mentioned your future goals. How did your future goals influence your decision?

A: I knew that I wanted to go to college. I wanted to get a college degree. I wanted to know that I could support myself. And having a friend who was having a child in high school seeing that she had started out wanting to go to college and she wasn't going to be able to obtain those goals or that she could obtain them but they were going to be harder for her. I think that was a strong indicator in not doing - not having sex.

Interview Nine

Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision?

A: I think it was a major part of it.

Q: So it was a fear of yours?

A: Yes.

Q: What was the factor that influenced your decision the most?

A: I would say probably the fear of pregnancy, not wanting to have a child. And my family. I think those were the things that probably influenced me the most.

Q: Were you ever tempted to change your decision?

A: Oh, sure. Who wouldn't? I mean you're a teenager

Q: Why didn't you?

A: I don't know for sure. I guess it was just my background maybe. Maybe what I believed in, what I wanted for the future.

Q: If you had to name one factor that kept you from becoming a teen mother, other than not having sex, what would it be?

A: Having set goals, I guess. Wanting to further my education.

Q: Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two.

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: About how many people do you know, from your school, church, etc experience, became teen mothers?

A: Only one. Now there were others that were pregnant but they chose not to keep the child.

Q: Keep the child as in abort or adoption?

A: They put the child up for adoption.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: As far as by other teens?

Q: In any way?

A: Maybe in the heat of the moment. But that was no.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

Interview Nine

A: Not in junior high, touch on it in a child development class. That was probably where the most education came in.

Q: Did the sex education that you did have influence your decision?

A: I don't think it affected my decision as far as abstaining. I think it broadened my knowledge of how if I chose to be active how not to get pregnant.

Interview Ten

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: No.

Q: What factors influenced your decision not to have sex?
Why did you not have sex?

A: Well, number one it was always something that was talked about in my family that you do not do because, just simply, for logical reasons. You don't have sex because you don't want to get pregnant and you don't want to get a disease. It was always presented in a very logical fashion. And I guess that was the biggest reason. Number two, I guess that I never, I was always more focused on school than a lot of the social things that some of my other friends were involved with. And I guess a little bit of it was that I thought of myself as a little bit better than that. That I didn't ah that I knew that I wasn't ready for that because I had to go to college, I had to get a good job, I had goals to get to. But that would stand a chance of interfering. And the last thing, I guess, every time I started dating somebody, when it would get close to that point, I was like what if somebody better comes along? What if this isn't the right person? And I guess I always had that in the back of my mind. So I guess I avoided the whole issue for those years.

Q: If at all, how did religion influence your decision?

A: Religion influenced my decision, I guess, mostly through my grandmother's influence. She was really, she and my sister were my biggest religious influences. They had always went to church and I would go to church with them. And not through anything my sister ever said, but the way she acted, that she had had the same boyfriend for many years and I don't know for a fact that they never had - that they didn't have sex at least before she got out of school, but I felt like they didn't, I felt that it was a very - they were not ah, openly affectionate in public. They weren't all over groping each other or whatever. They always had, it seemed like they had a very - it seemed respectful. It didn't seem cheap or tawdry or anything like that. It was respectful. And my grandmother, she had, she would talk to me quite a bit about how other people in the community had come face to face with teen pregnancy. Where a daughter or granddaughter had gotten pregnant and the thing that I remember most about all of that was that there was this one situation where the girl was kicked out of the home and my grandmother said, "You know, I would hope my grandkids would have enough sense not to get themselves in a situation like that, but if they ever did at least they would know that I would be there for them no matter what. And that the baby's life should not be

Interview Ten

put in jeopardy because of the decision that that girl made - the wrong decision that girl made." So I always felt like I wouldn't want - I would be disappointing her um, and her views, not only her religious views but also her moral views which I guess are really tied together.

Q: You mentioned your future goals some. How did your future goals influence your decision? Was that a major factor?

A: I think that it was. I think that really, even after getting married that has played a large part in it. As a teenager, that was just like - I didn't know what I would do if I didn't go to college. That was just it. And I think that, um, I think that was one of the biggest factors. Not only get pregnant but also get any type of STD, that was just like oh my gosh, that would just be horrible. So I guess the future goals was probably the biggest factor.

Q: How did your values and your morals influence your decision, if at all?

A: I would say quite a bit. I think that um, my values and my moral standing. I got those from my family and that um, in that it was a big factor and it does tie in with the goals. My parents had always - and my grandparents, my siblings and everyone else - had always put into me that you need to succeed, you can accomplish things, and that the value of putting yourself further and further ahead in life no matter what you do whether it's something in business or something to help other people. But that was always taught that should be something that I value. And I really took that to heart.

Q: You mentioned this alittle with your grandmother. How did your appearance or the opinions of others like your peers and parents and grandparents influence your decision?

A: How I appeared to my peers I don't think mattered as much as how I appeared to especially my grandmother, my sister and my father. I think those were the major players. I don't think that um, I cannot think of. I guess I can think of one friend who made it to the age of eighteen without having sex. So I don't think that that played that big of a factor. So I think more than anything it was my family, specifically my sister....

Q: So your appearance to your family was....

A: More important than my appearance to my peers.

Interview Ten

Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision?

A: Probably a really big role because I think that I've always had a high regard for parenthood and the importance of child rearing cause I think that I have seen so many families where it wasn't top priority, where children were neglected or even abused. Even as a young child I saw that, where parents weren't prepared to have those children. And I could not, I couldn't even fathom putting myself in a situation where I would have a baby. I knew that at that time I was not prepared. I was not prepared at all. So that was very important.

Q: What was the factor that influenced your decision the most?

A: The most. Well, I guess, the fear of pregnancy would come in a very close second to fear of disappointing my family.

Q: Were you ever tempted to change your decision?

A: As a teenager, that could have been a possibility had a different type of person had come along but with the people that I was around at that time. No.

Q: Why not?

A: Because I just didn't. I guess I felt like that was something that was very, very important. Something my grandmother had always said was that that was the only thing that belongs to you and you alone. Virginity is the only thing that belongs to you. And I just never met anybody that I felt like deserved it. Thank you. I guess that was the big thing.

Q: Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two parent.

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: Yes.

Q: About how many people do you know, from your school, church, etc experience, became teen mothers?

A: Um, that are my age?

Q: Approximately.

A: I'd say probably about five maybe seven at the most that I knew personally.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Interview Ten

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: Yes.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: Yes.

Q: Did it influence your decision making at all?

A: Unfortunately, no because I was already there. I wish I could say yes, but I had already made that decision and had already ah, by the time it was presented in school I had gathered alot of information from other resources like my parents or even friends.

Interview Eleven

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: No.

Q: What influenced your decision not to have sex?

A: Probably the biggest thing was just open communication with my parents and the fact that I am the granddaughter and the niece of Southern Baptist preachers. And so there's a strong religious tradition there. Especially my mom, my dad's not real big on. I wouldn't talk to him about it anyway but my mom just said that if I was going to be sexually active to let her know so I wouldn't get disease or whatever or pregnant. But I just didn't want to approach all that stuff so.

Q: You mentioned religion some. How did that influence your decision if at all?

A: I guess, my religion, more than my religion, my Christianity. I view it as something held inside of marriage. That's the way Southern Baptists' say. I think it can be supported in the Bible and so.

Q: If at all, how did your future goals influence your decision?

A: Probably a little bit. Not a lot. But just the fact that at twenty three I am not ready for kids and I can't imagine at fifteen, sixteen, nineteen, I mean having kids. I wanted to, my parents told me they would like me to graduate from college before I got married because they did not and they just said it was real rough to have a family and try to go to college so it was kind of agreed that I would not be married until I finished college. And to not be married, I guess I didn't date real seriously because you never know what happens once you start. You might just change all your plans so.

Q: How did your morals and your values influence your decision, if at all?

A: That's probably something else my parents really instilled in us. It was just - respect for your body, respect for yourself, respect for other people. I remember one church camp, Brett Lamb was our guest speaker, and he would do the music and give little devotions or a little whatever at night. One thing that really stood out in my mind for forever. I was fourteen or fifteen years old, I don't know why this has stuck in my head but he just said that remember when you're in the heat of passion that anything from the neck down is somebody else's husband or wife. And so you should stay from the neck up. I just thought that that was something that was a different way to say the same

Interview Eleven

thing that you hear over and over. So I guess that alot of what I do is based on morals and values. What I want for myself and what I want for other people.

Q: How did your appearance or the opinions of others like your peers and parents influence your decision?

A: I don't think it really did alot. I think, this is probably terrible to say, but I think if my - I probably wouldn't have said anything to my parents if there had been a way to get around it. I don't think their opinion of me - I never would have let them know about it but I don't think that would have affected my decision. I don't think peer relationships did either. I've never been, you know, everyone wants to be accepted and liked but something that's that big of a decision I think would be totally on my own.

Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision?

A: Probably not as big as just outside of marriage did. My, two of my aunts had children before they were married. One of them was fifteen when she got pregnant and the other was nineteen. And so my parents were just look at what they've done and look at how their life is. But the one that got pregnant when she was fifteen is still struggling at thirty-nine so.

Q: Do you think that example of what could happen has influenced your decision?

A: I think it has in a way just because, I mean, again she's really struggling at thirty-nine. Their both on their third marriage. I guess, I want marriage to last forever and I think that fewer problems, fewer complications you go in with the better chance you have to work it out. I think that having children before marriage or right after marriage is really difficult. It's not something I'm interested in. I want to wait a few years before I have children. I want to be sure I'm mature and ready not to be as selfish as I am right now.

Q: What was the factor that influenced your decision the most?

A: Probably my religion.

Q: Were you ever tempted to change your decision?

A: I guess I never really thought about. I didn't even see it as an option until I started dating this guy when I was in eighth grade and he was a sophomore in high school. He was different religious background, different value system. I was very naive, still think I'm pretty naive, and things

Interview Eleven

got really physically involved. He started talking about dreams he was having and all this stuff. That was the first time I started toying with it because that was the first time anybody had really, you know, brought up the subject. I remember telling him - we hadn't gone out three times - and I said, "Alright, look. You're not gonna touch me. We are gonna kiss and that's it." I said, "You're not touching me in any way. You're not gonna feel me up. You're gonna keep your hands to yourself. We are gonna kiss and that's it." But I think that took him by surprise too cause I mean it wasn't like. I don't know. I think he thought I was a little bit strange but we dated for a while so. Didn't scare him off that bad but I think I thought about it more then and I think if we hadn't stopped things when we did that things may have been different. My sister told me that she thought, that she was glad we broke up because she was afraid I would sleep with him and get pregnant and you know.

Q: Do you think that had you not had the strength to say that, things would have been different?

A: I don't know. We were I think my parents my dad especially was real strict about um. Still at the age of twenty-three it is no boys in your bedroom and they kind of gotten off the kick of nobody here when we're gone because after I moved back in after my freshman year of college, I just kinda started doing what I wanted to do. I don't know, I don't know if there would have been that opportunity. I guess if I had wanted to badly enough I could have found the opportunity. I don't even know if there would have been that opportunity.

Q: Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two parent.

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: About how many people do you know, from your school, church, etc experience, became teen mothers?

A: My sister's best friend had two kids before she turned twenty. Her step sister had two kids before she turned twenty. There was a girl in high school who was pregnant and nobody knew it. We all thought she was getting fat. A girl that lived up the hill got pregnant. The head cheerleader got pregnant. At least five that I can think of. There are probably more. A lot of people I went to high school with got married right out of high school, but I mean, two days after we graduated. So there could be even larger numbers.

Interview Eleven

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: This is going to sound really strange. I don't think then I did. I feel more not pressure but then it was just a fact and that was what it was going to be. But now I feel like I'm getting more, not pressure, but - somebody called me abnormal the other night.

Q: So not as a teen?

A: Not as a teen but I think now people think that it's weird but that's all right.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: It was not comprehensive. They could not tell you how to use a condom. I remember in seventh grade health she said, "I cannot tell in this class how to use one. I can't tell you anything about birth control methods, I can just tell you what's available. If you really want to know about it, see me after class." Then our health teacher in high school didn't really go into it. Then my home ec teacher said they weren't allowed to teach abstinence in the school. So instead of being able to teach abstinence, they taught little to nothing.

Q: Did it influence your decision making at all?

A: No.

Q: Do you think, had it been comprehensive, it would have?

A: Probably not. I think the more I learn about it the less interested I am. I was always twenty minutes late to human sexuality because that class scared me to death. So.

Interview Twelve

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: Like what age is considered...

Q: Nineteen and under.

A: Yes.

Q: What influenced your decision to have sex?

A: I had a really serious boyfriend. We waited like two years and we decided that we wanted to experience that together.

Q: What prevented you from becoming a teen mother?

A: We were very careful. We thought out things before we even thought about it - I mean months before.

Q: So you used contraceptives?

A: Yes.

Q: What influenced your decision to use contraceptives?

A: The fear of becoming a teen mother and also the fear of what my parents would think and what society would think. Just fear. Of diseases and commercials and everything else.

Q: When you say you had that fear of becoming pregnant, why was that a fear? What did you fear about becoming a teen mom?

A: Basically how my parents would react. I have a very close relationship with them and they would die, I mean, literally. And also, I mean, just the fear of the responsibility, I couldn't have handled it. I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to go to school. I wanted to have a career and that would completely get in the way. And I would have had the child I couldn't have given it up. It was that kind of fear.

Q: How did religion influence your decision, if it influenced at all?

A: Religion did in a way, but more through my parents, like their. It didn't influence me, I wasn't afraid of what the divine being would think of me. But more of what my parents, who believe fully in that would think. So it was more through their eyes.

Q: You mentioned earlier goals. How did future goals influence your decision, if at all?

A: It wasn't just mine either, it was his too. We both knew that we had something that we wanted to do. We didn't know if we would be together then. I mean it was so many years ago and we just didn't want to force something on ourselves where we would make a mistake. That was one of

Interview Twelve

the goals. I knew I wanted to have a career that would make it hard if we had a child that by the time that I got finished would be like six or seven.

Q: How did your morals and your values influence your decision, if at all?

A: Um alot because I had morals. I had waited a really long time and it was just something that I felt I wanted to do. I didn't want to just to.. I mean I don't know.. My personal morals did, but I don't feel like it was something that..I mean, I don't look down on other people because of their decisions but that was my personal goal, or not goal but, that was the way I perceived myself. I felt better of my self than to do it but not better than anybody else.

Q: How did your appearance or the opinions of others influence your decision? You mentioned earlier how your parents would react. How much of an influence was that?

A: Very big influence. I mean because they would, I know that they would have eventually accepted it and helped me take care of the baby but I wasn't going to do that to them.

Q: So how they see you is very important to you?

A: Very.

Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision to have sex and to use contraceptives?

A: A huge role. That was like ninety five percent of it. Because like I wasn't really scared of sexually transmitted diseases because I really didn't feel like he would have had any because it was his first experience too. So more just that fear.

Q: What factor influenced your decision to use contraceptives the most?

A: I guess they all combined in to one. All the different feelings. The fear of pregnancy. That was probably the biggest one. But just all the other measure, being safe, what you see on TV, what you hear. I have friends that had kids and how that affected them. I didn't think bad of them or anything but I just didn't want to be in their situation. I mean, they had a hard time and they had to grow up so fast, and I wasn't ready to do that.

Q: Do you think that example helped you make your decision?

A: Oh yeah, but I mean, it did, but I would have made that decision anyways.

Interview Twelve

Q: Name one factor that kept you from becoming a teen mother.

A: I don't really know. There wasn't just one. There were so many things combined into one. So many feelings that just gave me that decision. I didn't feel the need to feel the love of somebody else because I had it. I knew I had it from my parents. Also from my boyfriend. That was probably one of the major ones.

Q: Here are some environment questions. Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two.

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: Yes.

Q: About how many people do you know, from like your school and church and teen experience, became teen mothers?

A: Um probably about six or seven.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: No.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: Yes.

Q: Did it influence your decision making?

A: Not really.

Interview Thirteen

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: Yes.

Q: What influenced your decision to have sex?

A: Um, probably. My friends. You know, everybody was doing it and talking about it. So it makes you curious. And I was in a serious relationship at the time, so it was all through this span that you're talking about those years, it was the same guy so we so we had been seeing each other for a while and it just kinda seemed natural.

Q: What prevented you from becoming a teen mother?

A: Gosh, contraceptives and um, values. I mean I knew that I didn't want to. I had goals in life and I knew that that would not work towards my goals.

Q: So you did use contraceptives?

A: Yes.

Q: And you never became pregnant?

A: No.

Q: What influenced your decision to use contraceptives?

A: Um, well, because I knew that I didn't want to become pregnant and I wasn't as concerned about diseases because I was with the same person and thought that he was with only me too. I guess just, you know, I had been taught by friends and in class that - how easy it was to become pregnant and so I knew, friends had told me about Planned Parenthood and I learned about that in my classes too and that it was easy to go and get birth control there although you were underage maybe you could still do that. So that was a big influence.

Q: You talked a little about the goals that you had set.

How did that influence your decision to use contraceptives?

A: I guess I really didn't think about it then. I mean I knew I didn't want to become a mother at that point. I knew that. I guess it was actually. I knew that I had goals and I knew that I wanted to go to college and I knew that I wanted to have a career. I don't think that I clearly thought about it that way, but I do think that was always what kind of influenced me to use contraceptives. And also, I guess, in high school, I went to West High School. They had a program for teen mothers where they bring their children to the school. Well, alot of my friends were those teenage mothers. And so I saw what would happen to me if I, the struggles that they had and I knew I didn't want that.

Interview Thirteen

Q: How did religion influence your decision, if it influenced at all?

A: Actually, it's weird when I think back about it. I was Baptist. I grew up Southern Baptist in a good Christian home and everything I had been taught growing up was you should wait until you're married. And kinda always thought that I would wait until I was married. But then when I was in this relationship for a long time and he wanted to and all my friends were then I kinda ignored my religion. So I don't think that that.. I guess it didn't influence my decision. Well actually it might have because I knew that the way I had grown up and my family believed that you should wait until you were married to have sex so I guess I used contraceptives so they wouldn't know that I was having sex and that I was going against the belief that they had instilled in me.

Q: How did your appearance or the opinions of others influence your sexual decisions?

A: The appearance that I had. I don't know how to say this. These are tough questions. I guess the appearance that I always had was that I was - I was always the good girl in school. I was not the wild and crazy one. And I guess that I always wanted to keep that appearance even though I was kinda doing something that I knew was wrong. I didn't want people to know about it. And I didn't share it with, I mean, I didn't share it with my family at all, and I shared it with maybe one of my friends. But I didn't want people to know so I wanted to keep that appearance of being the good girl who you know did what was right and wasn't influenced by others when in fact I was pretty much.

Q: When you think about your decision to have sex, what factor influenced it the most?

A: The relationship. My boyfriend at the time. I mean he was definitely. Because if he hadn't of wanted to so much or hadn't of pressured me then I probably never would have. At that age, you're so weak. You're not strong enough to say I'm better off without you. It was like oh well I better do this because if I don't do this then he's gonna break up with me and I'm gonna be alone. So I'd say he was the biggest influence.

Q: What factor influenced your decision to use contraceptives the most?

A: I'd say pregnancy. That was the main reason that I used it. For myself and for my family. I didn't want to disappoint them.

Interview Thirteen

Q: Here are some environment questions. These are easier.

Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two parent.

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: About how many people do you know, from like your school and church and teen experience, became teen mothers?

A: Um, I'd say fifteen.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: Yes.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: Yes.

Q: Did it influence your decision making?

A: It was too late. We were not offered that course until we were seniors and by that time, I was already sexually active and most other people were too. A lot of the people had already become pregnant. A lot had dropped out of school because they had become pregnant. So I think it was too late to influence me or anybody else.

Interview Fourteen

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: Define sexually active.

Q: As in, had intercourse.

A: No.

Q: What influenced your decision not to have sex?

A: Religious values. I think, um.. My parents never, okay, here's parental comments, my parents never sat down and made the statement, "You better not have sex!" They never said that. They never said, uh, I guess I did hear several different times from my mother that she had never slept with a man until she got married and she commented that it took her a long time to get used to sleeping in a bed with a man. So that was a very strange thing to her when she got married, she said she couldn't sleep for weeks because she just wasn't used to a man or someone else being in bed with her and that was just a strange concept for her. So I think that was my clue that was my clue that that was just something that you don't do until you get married because my parents never sat down and talked with me about sex. So I never had a sex talk growing up. Um, let's see. As far as comments made at church, um, I think there I just knew that sex was a very special part of marriage and that's where it took place. Or it wasn't just sex, making love was something two married people did. So I never thought anything different, that's just where that happened and until I got to that point, I wasn't going to do that. And, um, at school, there was a friend of mine, and she was a friend of mine because of church. We grew up at church together. There was a girl that when she was a senior she got pregnant before she was married and somebody had told me that they thought she may have gotten pregnant so she could get married and that was something she wanted. And I saw all the repercussions of her getting herself into that situation or however that situation came about. Whether she got herself into it or not but it was a big stink at school and at church and how awful it was for the parents that this had happened and how awful this was going to be for her future that this had happened. And whispers behind everyone's back that this was going on. And so I knew that I didn't want that to happen with me and I didn't want people talking about my parents and talking about me and it just seemed like a big problem or trouble. So I knew that was something I didn't want. So I guess uh, and none of my friends were doing it so I didn't have any peer pressure on that. I mean, I knew people that did it but it wasn't any of my close friends so I didn't have people pressuring me to do that.

Interview Fourteen

Q: Okay, you talked already about how religion influenced your decision. How did your future goals influence your decision, if at all?

A: A future goal was maybe that - I can't believe now that I'm saying this was a goal of mine as a teenager - but I guess a goal of mine was to get married. I guess I knew that the kind of person I wanted to marry probably would not want someone who had already had sex with somebody else. And so I guess I wanted to keep myself pure, so to speak, for this important person that was out there. Another goal was that I knew that I was going to college and having a, well, I guess I always thought that if I had sex as a teenager I would get pregnant. I never thought that I wouldn't get pregnant. I just thought if I had sex, I would get pregnant. So going to college - there was no room for a baby in that picture and I knew I didn't want a baby. So I knew I didn't want to have sex because I didn't want a baby. Well, as a teenager that was my only thing - going to school and getting married so I figured going to school would come first, getting married would come second and children, if they were around, would come after that. So I just knew that I could not have sex, because I would be the one to get pregnant.

Q: Are your morals and values separate or connected to your religious beliefs?

A: I think they are very connected.

Q: Would you say they had a similar influence as religion did on your decision?

A: Yeah, I don't think I could separate. Cause I - I kinda think of all those going together. Seems like my religion influences everything to some degree.

Q: How did your appearance to your peers and parents or the opinions of others influence your decision?

A: I guess I wanted to.. I've always wanted to be somebody that did things the right way. I would be the one that did things right. I would be the one that did it the way you're supposed to do it. So the way you're supposed to do it is to get married and then have sex. So, I guess I wanted to I just wanted to go by the quote - rules. And um, pleasing my parents has always been very important to me. So, I guess I thought I wouldn't be able to stand the disappointment if I did that and especially if they found out.

Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision?

Interview Fourteen

A: An extremely big role. I just knew if I even thought about having sex, I would get pregnant. So that was an extremely big role. I mean, as a teenager, having sex was the wrong thing to do and if you did the wrong thing you'd wind up getting pregnant. I think that - and I don't know why that was almost scared into me because like I said, my parents never told me not to have sex. They never talked about it. Seems, I don't know if it was just the media and commercials and things that I saw on TV or I don't know. I've always been afraid that if I have sex I'm gonna get pregnant. So, I don't want that. That played an extremely big role. Extremely, that was probably the biggest reason I didn't have sex cause I knew I'd get pregnant.

Q: So, would you call that the factor that influenced your decision the most?

A: Yes. Well, I guess the biggest factor was that was something married people do. I guess that was the biggest factor.

Q: So, the religious belief that it was something married people do?

A: Yeah.

Q: Were you ever tempted to change your decision?

A: Never as a teenager. Never.

Q: Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two.

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: About how many people do you know, from like your teen years, became teen mothers?

A: One in eighth grade. Two, the girl I grew up in church with. I'm sure there were others at my high school, but right now I can't think of names or faces so I can only say two.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: Never.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: No.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: No. Not in our county system. There was not one at all.

Interview Fourteen

Q: Do you think it would have influenced your decision?

A: No. It probably would have given me more information. It probably - it might have taken away some of the fear of if I had sex, I'd become pregnant. It would have given me more information about protection when having sex because I didn't know anything about that til probably well into college, I'd say. I probably would have understood it more and I probably wouldn't have been as fearful of sex. It would have influenced that way but I don't think, at all, it would have influenced my decision to have sex.

Interview Fifteen

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: Yes.

Q: What influenced your decision to have sex? Why did you decide have sex?

A: I had a serious boyfriend for five years. I thought, figured, I would marry this guy and so after so long I did. Mistake now but that happen.

Q: So it was the relationship?

A: Yes the relationship.

Q: How long did you wait?

A: Three years.

Q: What prevented you from becoming a teen mother?

A: I do not know because we would use condoms but not all the time. It was really stupid. I don't really know how I didn't sometimes. I mean, now I know. I didn't think before that you could slip. But now I know. I really don't know. We used condoms as a form of birth control but..

Q: Not frequently?

A: Right.

Q: When you did use contraceptives, why did you use them? Was it just when you happened to have one with you?

A: I never had them; he did. So, when he did, I guess. I guess we'd go buy them.

Q: Was it something you were overly concerned about or did it not really matter?

A: I was concerned, but just I guess ignorance about the whole thing. I didn't know that, how the say that the guy can pull out and everything and it doesn't. Now I know that you can totally get pregnant from that, but I didn't know at the time. So that was the way that we also did it.

Q: What was your concern that made you use condoms?

A: I was so afraid that I would become pregnant. My parents would have absolutely died, you know. Yeah, I was very concerned. But I guess the reason that I didn't use them all the time was that I just, I was pretty ignorant about the whole subject. I didn't have a lot of .. My parents didn't like sit me down and talk to me about sex. It was not meant to happen anyway so they didn't want to educate me. They didn't think they had to so I really never found out anything about it.

Q: So you didn't have an open communication..

A: No because it was totally taboo. So they didn't even care to discuss it or explain anything about it.

Interview Fifteen

Q: Because you were an off and on user of condoms, do you consider yourself lucky because you didn't get pregnant?

A: I consider myself very lucky.

Q: Why would you say you were lucky?

A: First of all my parents would have killed me and I don't know what I would have done, being placed in that decision. I completely am against abortions but at the time with planning on college and parents' reactions and friends' reactions and my boyfriend's reaction, I don't know what I would have done. And I would have paid for that forever if I would've decided something like that. But just my mentality then there's no telling. The stress I would have been under and so.

Q: How did, if at all, religion influence your decision?

A: We're a Southern Baptist family. My parents are really really involved in church and it was always said that you know you weren't supposed to have sex before marriage and so I was constantly feeling guilty about that, first of all. And I think another reason maybe that contributed to the lack of condom use at times was we didn't really like to discuss it because we both knew it was wrong anyway and discussing just made it - pretty much admitting that you were going against what you believed anyway.

Q: How did your future goals influence your sexual decision, if at all?

A: No, not really. Just what would have happened. Just seeing what could have happened. That's why I used condoms because I wanted to go to school and all those factors so greatly.

Q: You mentioned how your parents would react and how your peers would react. How did your appearance to your peers and parents or the opinions of others influence your decision?

A: I didn't tell anyone. No one knew. My best friend knew and that was it. But I would never have told my parents. They would never ask me cause they wouldn't want to know. Yes, I was very worried about that.

Q: Would you say that was the factor that influenced your decision the most as far as using condoms?

A: Getting pregnant.

Q: So disease didn't play...

A: I did not ever think about that at the time and we started dating when we were both 15 so neither one had so no I didn't worry about that.

Q: So pregnancy was your top concern?

A: Yeah.

Interview Fifteen

Q: Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two parents.

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: About how many people do you know, from like your teen years, became teen mothers?

A: Probably ten but they were just acquaintances. They weren't good friends.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: Yes.

Q: Did that come from your boyfriend or your friends?

A: Boyfriend. Not friends.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: I think my freshman year in high school I had a home economics class I think we talked about it in there and I think in grammar school - junior high - we had a guest speaker one day. But never went into it alot.

Q: Did it influence your decision?

A: Yes I learned about condoms from there. No one went into detail about things. They just said what was there for you and that was it. But they never told you things that people really - like dumb, ignorant teenagers thought. Not really a good program so.

Q: What was the overriding reason why you did not want to become pregnant as a teenager?

A: My goals for the future. It would have totally sidetracked me. I would probably still be in small town probably. Going to a community college, maybe, which I don't know. Maybe even married. So that was the biggest factor. Probably more so than what people thought.

Interview Sixteen

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: Yes.

Q: What influenced your decision to have sex?

A: Probably peer pressure. Probably friends.

Q: What prevented you from becoming a teen mother?

A: Well, when I say I had sex then I did for a while but not long. It was maybe six months and I changed my mind. Church, parent just influenced me. I mean, I knew I shouldn't be.

Q: So during those six months, were you not using contraceptives?

A: Condoms probably, yeah.

Q: Were you using the condoms regularly?

A: Yeah.

Q: What made you want to use contraceptives?

A: I didn't want children or sexual diseases or anything.

Q: Why didn't you want the children? Why was that not a desire?

A: Not ready for it. Not ready for the responsibility. I'm still not ready and I'm twenty two. Just want to wait til I'm older and get out of school. Have a good job.

Q: You said get out of school. Was that something you thought about as a teenager?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: So school was a goal of yours?

A: Yes, definitely.

Q: Was the possibility of pregnancy a bigger concern than the possibility of disease?

A: Yes, yes, definitely.

Q: What influenced your decision to stop your sexual activity?

A: Um, I just wanted. I had been brought up, you know, to wait til you married, um. And make sure it's the person you want to be with and I just thought about it, and thought about it, and thought about it. That's just what I decided I wanted to do. I go to church. I'm a Baptist. I'm strong in church and I had a little time where I wasn't going to church for a while. I got back in church and it just wasn't right for me.

Q: Would you say religion influenced your decision?

A: And my parents, yes.

Interview Sixteen

Q: How did your future goals influence your sexual decision, if at all?

A: Yes it did. Like I said I wanted to go to college and finish school and I wanted to have that to look forward to when I got married. You know the first night and all that. I wanted that really bad so that really had an influence on me. My husband, the man I ended up marrying, we kinda discussed it and that's what we decided.

Q: How did your appearance to your peers and parents or the opinions of others influence your decision?

A: Well, some friend kinda thought it was weird not to be and others were saying that they would do the same if they were in my position. I don't know. My friends, we didn't really discuss it alot I don't guess. Most of my friends were.

Q: Did that influence your decision to start having sex when you did?

A: Yes because I was like the last one in our little you know group to have sex. So it was kinda - I don't know if that - I'm sure that had alot to do with it.

Q: After you decided to stop the sexual activity were you tempted to start it again?

A: Yes.

Q: Why do you think that was?

A: Well, my husband and I dated for like six years so during those six years we were very close and we were in alot of situations that it would have been easy. I'm sure that had alot to do with it. It made it really hard. Just specially the last year or two before we got married. The last year, mainly was just really really hard.

Q: What one factor kept you from becoming a teen mother what would that be?

A: My family, the way I was brought up. Brought up in a Christian home definitely.

Q: Your family and your religion?

A: Yes, I didn't want to disappoint them and I wasn't ready for it myself.

Q: Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two.

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: About how many people do you know, from like your teen years, became teen mothers?

Interview Sixteen

A: Several there was probably. There was over twenty in my graduating class.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: Yes.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: Not that I recall. I don't believe so.

Q: Had you had it, do you think it would have influenced your decisions?

A: Not really, probably. Because. It probably wouldn't have.

Interview Seventeen

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: No.

Q: What influenced your decision not to have sex? Why did you not have sex?

A: Didn't find the right person and my morals basically. I was waiting for love. Also, in my culture, it is totally not accepted.

Q: What part of your culture would influence that?

A: The social part.

Q: How did, if at all, religion influence your decision?

A: No, I don't think so. It was more of a society thing.

Q: How did your morals and values influence your decision if at all?

A: Respect for myself. If I didn't love somebody, I wouldn't give myself to them. I would feel like used or whatever.

Q: How did your future goals influence your decision, if at all?

A: Yeah, well, not really. Not my decision. But it would occur to me that if I suddenly got pregnant or whatever, my whole future would be on hold. That occurred to me but that wasn't the reason I didn't, you know. I wish I could think of a more clear answer.

Q: You said it wasn't accepted in your culture. How did your appearance to your peers and parents or the opinions of others influence your decision?

A: Yes. It would disgrace my whole family that and myself. I care about my parents and what people think. And in our Indian society, it really travels backward to the grandparents in India. It will go all the way back.

Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision?

A: It played a good part. It was always a scary thought. You hear about it so much in high school and the way people would talk about, you know. a certain girl that did get pregnant. That was scary and just thinking of no college of anything after that at least not for a while.

Q: What factor influenced your decision the most?

A: Finding the right person. I never loved anybody before.

Interview Seventeen

Q: So could I say that you have a value of the relationship?

A: Yeah. Totally.

Q: Were you tempted to change your decision?

A: No. I was never tempted. I was immature. I don't feel I was ready anyway.

Q: Name the main factor that kept you from becoming a teen mother.

A: Future. Like if somebody's a teen mother, your youth is gone. You don't. . you have to dedicate your life to somebody else; it's not your own anymore. And until you're ready for that you shouldn't do it.

Q: Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two parents.

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: About how many people do you know, from like your teen years, became teen mothers?

A: About three or four out of twenty five hundred.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: No.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did it influence your decision?

A: Yeah, I think so.

Q: How?

A: Just, I don't know. I guess how they were so. . what your life would be like if you did have a child.

Interview Eighteen

Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: No.

Q: What influenced your decision not to have sex? Why did you not have sex?

A: I guess it's just my religious background and stuff. That's just the way that I was brought up - not to have sex. So that was just one of the things I didn't do or even think about doing. Everybody else was doing it and everybody was like well why don't you do it? I don't want to. I have no desire to. It was just one of the decisions that wasn't debateable. Do I do it or do I not? It was just I don't do it. I didn't feel led to.

Q: So, it wasn't a question for you?

A: No it wasn't a question. I just had no desire to.

Q: You said religion. Was that the only influence or were there other things?

A: Well, I thought about other things, you know, like weighing the pros and cons. Do it: you could get pregnant, you could get diseases and those kinds of things and I just didn't want to risk my health for something that I could have just done once.

Q: How did your future goals influence your decision, if at all?

A: Well, not really. I don't guess it influenced anything too much but um. I knew what I was going to do. I knew that I was going to school and everything. I just knew that I wasn't going to do that because it would probably interfere with everything else. Just one of those things.

Q: How did your morals and values influence your decision if at all? Were those connected to religion?

A: I connect those more or less with my religious beliefs, you know. I still do have morals outside of that, but more or less it was influenced by religious beliefs.

Q: How did your appearance to your peers and parents or the opinions of others influence your decision?

A: Um. I don't think it would. Well, my mom, my parents wouldn't really be, I mean they'd be upset but nothing, I mean they would be like let's deal with it now it's here. My aunt with whom I lived for quite a while, she would've probably kicked me out of the house. She is a firm believer in you don't do this, you know, it doesn't just happen. My mom like when I did finally become sexually active right before I got married she was like okay now

Interview Eighteen

don't get pregnant. No big deal and my aunt was like you're going to hell for that, you know.

Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision?

A: I don't guess it was really that big of a consideration. It's just that's one possible reason but there's so many diseases and stuff. And lots of weird people they've had sex and may not tell you that and you end up with AIDS or an STD or anything.

Q: What factor influenced your decision the most?

A: I would say, future plans. You know I didn't want to have to bother with it and going to school. There's enough pressure at school without having the pressure of sex.

Q: Were you ever tempted to change your decision?

A: No.

Q: Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: I came from a two parent family but they eventually divorced. They married, they divorced, they got married again to each other, got divorced again, then they finally stayed divorced and both got remarried.

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: About how many people do you know, from like your teen years, became teen mothers?

A: About three and then a girl at church that got pregnant was a senior in high school.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: No. Everybody kept pushing for it, but I never felt any pressure to go out and do cause everybody else was doing it.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: No.

Q: If you had, do you think it would have influenced your decision?

A: It probably would have influenced it more toward the uh no side of it than the yes side of it. Because in a sex education class you would get more reasons why not to.

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Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: Yes I was.

Q: What influenced your decision to have sex?

A: Um, well, in the beginning of the relationship, I had a really, that really wasn't the objective or anything like that. I just, after we were together for a while, we just felt like well I guess this is the thing to do. I kinda just happened.

Q: What made it the "thing to do"?

A: Um, well, he kinda just instigated it and I didn't end up stopping.

Q: Did you feel pressure from him or?

A: Well, it's not that I didn't want to it was just I didn't. The way I was brought up, you know, I was raised to think that that wasn't what you're supposed to do but I kinda just gave into the moment, you know. I kinda forgot about everything else.

Q: After the initial...did you consider other factors?

A: Like what?

Q: Like risks that you were taking?

A: Oh definitely, oh yeah. I mean, I freaked out of course. You know, now, I could be pregnant or you know he's gonna expect it now because I've already done it once so it's gonna be an ongoing thing and you know afterward I felt like oh god. Like, I guess I shouldn't have done this. But I mean, I can't really say I felt real guilty or anything about it.

Q: What prevented you from becoming a teen mother?

A: I think it was just by pure luck. I mean, there could have been all kind of chance that I could have and there was alot of time that I was afraid that I might be. Just because um you know there were times we were stupid and didn't use any kind of protection or anything like that and it could have happened. And I got on birth control about a year after we started dating.

Q: Before you were on birth control, did you use any other kinds of contraceptives?

A: Yeah, we used condoms and we tried stuff like that but we weren't constant like we should have been

Q: What influenced your decision to get on the pill?

A: Well, my parents knew that I was sexually active and some of my extended family knew and one of my aunts said she

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would take me to get on the birth control. That's what I really wanted because I knew we were not constant in our use and I was like at least I control this and we don't want to get pregnant and so since she decided she would take me I was glad that I someone to support me.

Q: What about pregnancy was undesirable?

A: I knew that I wasn't ready. I knew that there was no way that I could handle it whatsoever. And there were girls in high school that were pregnant at the time. I would just look at them and there was like I could not do that ever. you know. They would drop out of school and I had goals that I wanted to do and go to college and everything and I knew that if I had a child that I wouldn't get to.

Q: You said you didn't get pregnant due to luck. Why do you consider yourself lucky?

A: Because there were so many chances but it didn't happen. You know, I mean, I really didn't want to at the time and that's the only way I can think of it is by luck. No doubt it could have happened.

Q: How did your future goals influence your decision, if at all?

A: I think it was very important. Cause I didn't want to be one of the girls that ended up dropping out of high school and you know marrying a man at 17 yr. old. I wanted to have my own career and you know have a family later that I could really enjoy.

Q: How did, if at all, religion influence your decision?

A: I think so. You know, I was brought up in the church. All my family went to the same church. That's where my parents met and that's where they got married so both sides of my family went to the same church and I've gone my whole life. My parents never like grounded it into me or anything but in the back of my mind it was always there. I knew about it and I was like well maybe I shouldn't but I finally gave in.

Q: How did your morals and values influence your decision if at all?

A: Um, I think my morals influenced it because in the beginning I really didn't want to and I had set my mind that I wasn't gonna have sex til I was married and I thought that way for a long time in high school til I met this guy and I don't know my morals just kinda faded alittle bit after we started going out. I don't know.

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Q: How did your appearance or the opinions of others, like your parents or peers, influence your decisions to have sex and use contraceptives?

A: I felt really bad because I knew that my parents knew. I mean, they never came right out and asked me but I knew that they knew. You know, it kinda made me feel guilty in one way because my parents kinda just - I knew that they looked at me differently because they knew that I had sex and I wasn't there little girl anymore, I was just different. So it kinda made me feel weird around my parents because I kinda didn't know how to act cause they knew.

Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision?

A: Pregnancy had a big role in me being on birth control pills. That was my number one big concern above all was that I could get pregnant. I did not want that to happen.

Q: What was the biggest factor that kept you from becoming a teen mother?

A: I would definitely say being on birth control and knowing that family members would be there for me if, like my aunt who took me to get it in the first place. She didn't look down on me.

Q: Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two parents.

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: About how many people do you know, from your teen experience - school, church- became teen mothers?

A: About seven or eight.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: Yes.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: Not really. It was kinda in our health class but not really.

Q: Did it influence your decision?

A: No because it was kinda a joke. The person who taught it was a coach on the football team and it was whatever.

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Q: Were you sexually active as a teenager?

A: No.

Q: What influenced your decision not to have sex? Why did you not have sex?

A: I think it was probably fear of getting sick or getting pregnant or something like that.

Q: How did, if at all, religion influence your decision?

A: I'm sure it did to an extent. I was raised in a Christian family but I don't know. It probably wasn't number one on the list.

Q: How did your future goals influence your decision, if at all?

A: Um, well, like I said, if you get pregnant or you get sick you wouldn't come to college, you couldn't have a career, and it wasn't so much my future goals, but I mean that would have been a real disappointment to my parents had I not at least come to college and at least tried it. And had I had a child I wouldn't have been able to do that.

Q: So when you say the fear of sickness and pregnancy it was also a fear of what that would do to you and your future?

A: Yes, more so that than the actual pregnancy.

Q: How did your morals and values influence your decision if at all?

A: Um, I think it's all intertwined, if that makes any sense, and so it's hard for me to think of them in separate things because all these things make up the person that I am but like you know I was raised in a very strong family who always tried to do the right thing. Like my grandmother, good little Southern woman that she is, that just wouldn't have been appropriate to have a granddaughter who was in that situation and I mean just the same way the fear of.. I don't guess I ever really thought about it in the sense of morals. They're there, I have em. It was just a thing that I didn't do. Nobody did it that I hung out with. It was just you know. It was just as much a positive peer pressure thing not to do it as it was. I am sure morals were in there but I don't know how to tell you how they affected it.

Q: You talked about positive peer pressure and you hung out with girls that didn't do it. How big of a factor do you think that was?

A: I think that was a very big factor. I dated a guy through over half of high school and I mean you know we had

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the same. I mean we started dating when we were young, I mean fourteen fifteen, and you know at that time to me, I'm sure this doesn't happen with everybody, but with me and I think most of the people because I come from a real small town, you don't start thinking about actually becoming sexually active until you're right around that age or a little older. So when we started dating it was just understood that we didn't and even though we dated for a long time, we didn't. And I'm sure, and we had that between each other. I mean you know like all my other friends.. People would have been disappointed in me had I had sex, not only my parents but my friends if they found out.

Q: So how your friends and parents saw you was also very important to you?

A: Yeah, yeah. And people in the community. My friends' mothers, other peoples' parents, and people in my church, I mean, were very important to me because I was very active in church and so in that since that positive peer pressure.

Q: What role did the possibility of pregnancy play in your decision?

A: At the time, I don't think it was as big of a thing as looking back on it and thinking oh my gosh what if I had and gotten pregnant. I mean, at the time it was just something I didn't do and when we would talk about it in class in discussion, or even with just friends, that was always the first thing that came up. If you did, what if you got pregnant. I think it was probably a very big thing with me. I wasn't ready for that responsibility; I knew I wasn't ready for that responsibility. I'm twenty and still not ready for that responsibility. And I don't even feel responsible enough to be married, right now. So it was a big part, it's still a big part of the reason why I don't.

Q: What factor influenced your decision the most?

A: Probably the thought of telling my daddy that I was pregnant or did have some sort of STD or something like that. The thought of telling my father.

Q: So your parents opinion was very important to you?

A: Not so much their opinion as his reaction. Yeah, to an extent my appearance to him, but like it's not so much I have to be daddy's little girl, every little thing has to be right. It's not that. I mean, I fight with my dad and we have confrontation and I do things he doesn't agree with but I guess that's something I don't agree with either and having to tell my dad I did something I knew wasn't right - that kind of disappointment. My dad's a high school teacher, and people have always told me he gives the hardest paddlings in the county and I don't know I've never had one

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by him. Not that, I've seen him angry but not angry at me and I think that would scare me.

Q: Were you ever tempted to change your decision?

A: No.

Q: Name the biggest factor that kept you from becoming a teen mother.

A: My family. My appearance to them. I come from a family with two parents. They both have college education's. My grandparents have college education's and you know it just wasn't something you did. My mom never had the sex talk with me or anything but I knew and she knew that I knew so it wasn't like it was necessarily necessary. I mean we talked about it some but she never sat down and said here's how it is. My family, I have a very supportive family and knew that if something did happen that I'm sure they would be there to support me but I didn't want to take that chance and I'm not.

Q: Did you come from a one or two parent home?

A: Two

Q: Was your mother a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: About how many people do you know, from like your teen years, became teen mothers?

A: Quite a few from school. I would say one that I knew very well, three or four that I knew. And there were more than that.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become a teen mother?

A: No.

Q: Did you ever feel pressure to become sexually active?

A: No.

Q: In junior high or high school did you receive a comprehensive sex education course?

A: Yeah

Q: Did it influence your decision?

A: No. It was kind of a joke.