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Teen Pregnancy Coalition of San Mateo County

Members of the Teen Pregnancy Coalition of San Mateo County visit area middle and high schools to share the realities of teen parenting with students.

ANR responds to Hispanic teenage pregnancy

Elizabeth Gong □ Stephen T. Russell

The teen birthrate for Latinos is nearly four times the birth rate for white teens in California (California Department of Health 1995; fig. 1). In response to this alarming statistic, the Latina Teen Pregnancy Prevention Project was designed by 4-H youth-development advisors and collaborators in the San Francisco Bay Area to develop "best practices" for professionals who work to prevent teen pregnancy among Latino teens. The project critically examines recommendations by the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) for effective teenage pregnancy prevention and parenting programs to determine if they are relevant for efforts to prevent Latina pregnancy in the Bay Area. NCLR is the largest constituency-based, non-profit organization in the country, encompassing 2 million Hispanics nationwide.

The nonadult Hispanic population in California is growing rapidly (see pages 11 and 48) Further, this population has the highest pregnancy rate, and thus is overrepresented among adolescent parents, while young Latina mothers have poor educational and employment pro-

files. It is important to identify effective pregnancy-prevention practices among this population to encourage Latino youth to postpone pregnancy until they are better prepared educationally, financially and emotionally to become parents.

This research compares strategies for working with adolescent Latinas gathered from the literature with reports from practitioners. Through audiotaped interviews, practitioners are asked if they agree or disagree with key recommendations in teen pregnancy prevention. Participants are given the opportunity to discuss their experiences and views on issues such as cultural sensitivity, comprehensive services, family and male involvement, education, work and gender roles.

Preliminary results of this ongoing study confirm that the "best practices" for teen-pregnancy prevention not only vary across cultural groups (Anglo and Latino), but among Latinos as well. These results will be shared with pregnancy-prevention practitioners through training and educational resource materials. By incorporating research-based, culturally

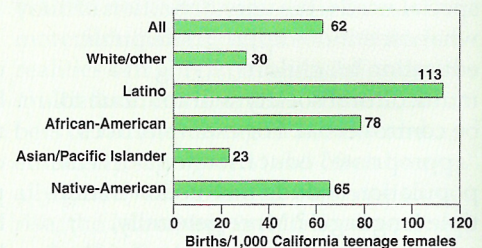


Fig. 1. Number of births to teenage females in California, 1996.

ANR Program Priorities/ Human Resources: Family and Individual Well-being

"Improve the status and well-being of families and youth living in high risk environments by reviewing and disseminating research in Human Development that leads to developing, modifying, testing and implementing educational programs and curricula that support families and youth such as developing parenting skills, building developmental assets in youth, and enhancing protective and resiliency factors in youth, families and communities (PPAC 1999)."

specific “best practices” with ongoing field research, ANR can work to strengthen the capacity of schools and community agencies in their pregnancy-prevention efforts.

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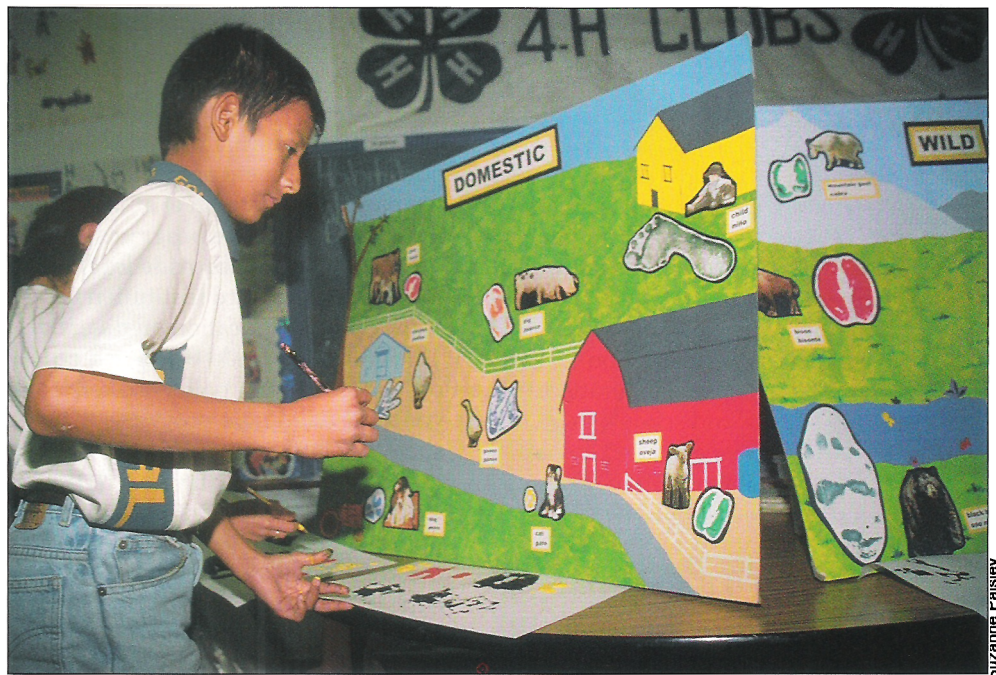
References

California Department of Health. 1995. Report of final natality statistics, Center for Health Statistics. Monthly Vital Statistics Report 45:11.

[PPAC] Program Planning Advisory Committee—Human Resources. 1999. University of California. p 23.

Program Recommendations, National Council of La Raza:

- Involve families, especially in cases where the teen mothers live with their families.
- Recognize and sensitively respond to cultural values regarding male-female roles.
- Have specific strategies for targeting young men, and have at least one male counselor.
- Conduct active outreach to involve the girl’s partner or baby’s father. Be prepared for resistance.
- Consider gender roles in relation to the importance of working. Some Latina teen mothers might not immediately see the importance of becoming self-sufficient.
- Emphasize education and support high aspirations since some Latinas may see becoming a mother as the end of their formal education. Encourage it in the context of providing a future for their children.



The Animal Ambassadors program, created by Veterinary Medicine Extension, is an example of how UC can better serve children by encouraging meaningful developmental activities.

be encouraged among groups that do not share a history or culture of participation?

Filling the gap

The two primary social institutions that exist in our society to provide caring and nurturing for youth — families and schools — have become less able to meet their full needs. It is simply no longer the case that a parent will be available to see a child off to school in the morning or be waiting when she returns home. Not surprisingly, the hours between the end of the school day and the time when parents return home from work are the ones during which many of the problems associated with teenagers are likely to occur (Belle 1999).

Current efforts to fill the gap between family and school time are broadly defined as “youth development.” Before- and after-school programs, whether operated in private homes or churches, or through public agencies such as schools or 4-H, generally attempt to provide structured activities outside of the formal educational environment of the school system. Research has begun to demonstrate that these types of nonformal education are essential for healthy youth development (Walker 1998).

Further, the adolescent problems that

we hear so much about are best solved through youth-development approaches (Kirby 1999). Nonformal education encourages youth to be active participants in their education and develop their own solutions to problems they face; it can also provide the most meaningful exposures to diverse cultures, ideas and experiences.

Innovative organizations and programs serving youth around the state include the California 4-H Youth Development Program, California Conservation Corps, Scouts, YMCA and the Boys and Girls Clubs. There are also numerous programs in California communities that work to involve youth in sports, religion and mentor relationships. In the past, many of these programs actively engaged youth in civic and community life *with their families*. In other words, family participation was central to much of the youth development that took place a generation ago. But much of the youth development that takes place today is designed to fill in the gap between parents and school, rather than augment it. Further, most existing youth-development efforts do not specifically focus on diversity and multicultural understanding in their programmatic efforts.

The most radical solution to the widening gap between home and