

The Educational Trajectories of Latina Teenage Mothers:
How Do Certain Stressors and Supports Influence the Ability to Juggle Family Building and
Educational Attainment?

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Charlotte A. Wright

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Abstract

Using data from [the evaluation of](#) a home-visiting evaluation program, the educational trajectories of first-time Latina mothers under the age of 21 will be examined and interpreted in this study. Why and how some of the Latina teenage mothers in the sample continue with their education while others discontinued will be explored by comparing the circumstances of fifteen young Latina mothers who stayed in school and on track, fifteen mothers whose education was interrupted and then resumed, and fourteen mothers who discontinued their education. An understanding of the common challenges that the Latina teenage mothers in the sample face and the kind of supports that may aid them in staying in school and "on track" is provided in this study through the examination of selected school and family-related stressors. Certain supports and stressors will be examined through a cultural lens in order to learn how the often, clashing cultural scripts of family building and educational attainment are successfully, or not successfully, juggled by participants in the present study. The objective of this study is to better understand the barriers that may challenge the graduation of Latina teenage mothers, and to recommend those supports that might facilitate overcoming of these barriers.

Introduction

Teenage pregnancy has historically been one of the most critical social issues facing the United States. In fact, in his 1995 State of the Union address, President Clinton declared teenage pregnancy the United States' "most serious social problem" (Hoffman & Maynard, 2008, p. 1). The extent of this issue is emphasized in the fact that the United States consistently has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy of all industrialized countries in the world (Hoffman & Maynard, 2008; *Teen Birth Rates*, n.d.). Although the teen pregnancy rate in the United States has been dropping across all ethnicities for the past few years, close to half of a million girls still become teenage mothers every year (Sadler et al., 2007; *Teen Birth Rates*, n.d.).

In the United States, there is a notable association between teenage motherhood and low educational attainment. For example, it is argued that having a child as a teenager increases the risk that the young mother will abandon her education (Holcombe, Petersen, & Manlove, 2009). This is supported by the fact that of the young mothers who will choose to keep their babies, approximately two-thirds will drop out of school, often because of various stressors experienced and the lack of supports that are presented to them (Brosh, Weigel, & Evans, 2007; Romo & Nadeem, 2009). These stressors not only include taking care of their newborn child, but often also include: peer isolation, stigmatization, and an overall lack of necessary support from their social networks (SEDL, 2011). The decision to discontinue their education often results in a future of poverty, unemployment, and welfare for teenage mothers in the United States ("Book Bags and Baby Bottles", 1995; SEDL, 2011).

An especially high rate of teenage pregnancy exists among young Latina women in the United States. In fact, in the United States the highest teenage pregnancy rate is among Latina mothers, who, in 2011, had over double the birthrate of Non-Hispanic White teenagers in the

United States (*About Teen Pregnancy*, 2012). This gap in pregnancy rates is even more notable in Massachusetts. In 2007, the pregnancy rate for Latina mothers was over five times that of their Non-Hispanic, White counterparts (MDPH, 2009). From the research, we know that the particularly high teenage pregnancy rates seen among Latino populations in the United States may be due to cultural views on adolescent pregnancy that contrast mainstream American views. For example, in some Latino communities, adolescent pregnancy is viewed as a constructive and adaptive behavior, whereas the mainstream American belief is that young motherhood is dysfunctional (García Coll & Vázquez García, 1996). As stated in the literature, Puerto Rican culture places a particularly high value on motherhood. For example, when polled, Puerto Rican mothers expressed the beliefs that the best time to start a family is during adolescence and teenage mothers have the ability to naturally become supportive mothers (García Coll & Vázquez García, 1996).

The value of early family building in Latino culture is frequently paired with the stereotype that Latina girls are “submissive underachievers” (Romo, 1998). This stereotype is reinforced in schools through tracking and at home when parents do not talk to their daughters about postsecondary and professional opportunities (Romo & Falbo, 1996; Romo, 1998). These circumstances that Latina girls may face in the United States can lead to a lack of educational hope and motivation (García Coll & Vázquez García, 1996). When faced with the pairing of a culturally ideology that values young motherhood and negative stereotyping that occurs in and outside of school, Latina girls may be more likely to drop out of school and pursue a family (Romo, 1998).

Although the possible cultural reasoning behind the early childbearing of Latina girls and how this may influence their educational decisions is addressed in the research literature, I

explore specifically why some young Latina mothers drop out of school while others do not in this study. Although there are many lenses that may be used to analyze the data in this study (e.g., SES, neighborhood/community context etc.), the process chosen to analyze the data in this study is unique in that I chose to apply a cultural lens. For example, how mothers are able to juggle the Latino family building script and mainstream American expectation of education attainment is considered. It seems that most studies on this topic tend to focus on the difficulty that a different culture and perspective can have on one's education, rather than analyze particular stressors that may exacerbate these difficulties and the supports that can help overcome them. Through this study, I aim to fill this void by exploring how both cultural values and certain school and family-related supports and stressors may contribute to the educational trajectories of the young Latina mothers in the study's sample. I explore supports that are experienced by the young mothers in our sample in both their homes and at school with the hope of determining what supports may aid in educational attainment. Therefore I focus on answering the following through this study:

- How do mothers in the sample juggle traditional Latino values discussed in the literature (such as family building) and the American value of educational attainment? Does this vary across trajectories?
- What stressors and supports seem to contribute to the educational decisions made by the Latina teenage mothers in our study?
- Lastly, what supports seem to aid these mothers in staying in school and staying "on track"?

The data for this study were previously collected as part of the Massachusetts Healthy Families Evaluation, Cohort 2 (MHFE2) a larger, comprehensive evaluation of Healthy Families

Massachusetts, [a](#) home-visiting program for teenage mothers in Massachusetts (Goldberg, Jacobs, Mistry, and Easterbrooks, 2010). The primary goal of this evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of the home-visiting services offered to teenage mothers by Healthy Families Massachusetts. First-time pregnant and parenting mothers under the age of 21 were recruited to voluntarily participate in the Tufts University evaluation project. As a part of the study, participants engaged in a semi-structured interview designed to elicit specific information, including family and education histories. For this study, qualitative data from such interviews was extracted for 44 Latina mothers in the program: fifteen mothers who stayed on track in secondary school, fifteen mothers whose secondary education was interrupted but later resumed, and fourteen mothers who dropped out of secondary school.

Literature Review

The literature emphasizes that family building or “starting a family” is a common Latino value, and may be one of the reasons for the high rate of teenage births among Latinas (e.g. Diez & Mistry, 2010, p. 700-707; Nadeem & Romo, 2008). This focus on family and familial involvement may suggest that teenage motherhood may be defined as a “positive experience” for some Latina teenage mothers and their children (Diez & Mistry, 2010, p.693; García-Coll & Vasquez-García, 1996). Despite this likelihood of experiencing similar levels of familial involvement, Latina mothers in the United States have differing educational trajectories. In hopes of discovering why there may be this variation, I will explore certain intervening conditions that may challenge or aid these teenage mothers in their ability to juggle the cultural expectation of family building and educational attainment. In this section, I use the literature to expand on the idea of family building by first defining and exploring familism as commonly seen in Latino culture. Next, I contrast the Latino construct of *educación* with education as defined in mainstream America. I analyze the clash of mainstream American values and Latino values, while noting the benefits and pitfalls of acculturation and biculturalism for Latinas in the United States. Lastly, I provide the rationale for the use of certain school and family context variables in this study through current literature.

Familism

Most Latino subgroups highly value familism, the prioritization of family interests over individual interests and goals (García Coll & Vázquez García, 1996). This value of familism is represented in Latino culture through the interdependence and strong support networks among both immediate and extended family members (Nadeem & Romo, 2008). This prioritization of

family can result in high levels of family support and reliance experienced by Latinos. For example, studies show that Latino adolescents receive more familial support during times of distress than those adolescents of other ethnic groups (Nadeem & Romo, 2008). Specifically, Contreras, Narand, Ikhlas, and Teichman (2002) report that Latina young mothers receive “higher levels of family support than African Americans” and report more support from the grandmother figure than Anglo teenage mothers (p. 167).

Latina mothers are often cited as having high levels of involvement in the lives of their daughters, particularly when their daughters are childrearing. A study done by Nadeem and Romo (2008) found that young Latina mothers “are more open to advice from their own mothers regarding childrearing issues and extended family involvement in child care” than young mothers of other ethnicities (p. 217). In this study, young Latina mothers were cited as having “more positive feelings” about being a teenage mother when they experienced family involvement and more specifically, grandmother support (p. 231). Grandmothers consistently play a significant role in the childrearing practices of young Latina mothers, acting as the primary caregiver if the mother is employed or attending school (Contreras et al., 2002; Diez & Mistry, 2010). The grandmother figure, often having experienced teenage motherhood herself, may see her daughter’s teenage pregnancy as her “first opportunity to fully parent a newborn” and is seen by her daughter as giving “expert advice” (Diez & Mistry, 2010, p.704).

“El Buen Camino”

The Latino ideal of familism is a vital component to how Latino cultures define morality. In Latino culture, “el buen camino” or the good path, is dichotomized with “el mal camino” or the bad path. The dichotomy of the good path vs. the bad path symbolizes what is considered adaptive and moral behavior and what is thought of as maladaptive and immoral behavior among

Latinos, particularly Latino adolescents. For example, “el buen camino” encompasses a devotion to morality and family responsibility. In a study by Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, Goldenberg (1995) the majority of the Latino parents in the sample believed that their main job as parents was to ensure that their children were on the good path “by instilling in them the values of respect, family unity, good manners and knowledge of right and wrong” (p. 76). Many Latino subgroups share the belief that in order to follow on the good path, the needs of family members and close friends should be placed ahead of personal needs. It is also widely accepted among Latino subgroups that marriage and starting a family are key components to being on “el buen camino” (Nadeem & Romo, 2009). Thus, in contrast with general American views, teenage childrearing is often not considered immoral, but rather an adaptive decision. In contrast, if one is “estranged from home” and lacks a family commitment, he/she is considered to be on “el mal camino” (Azmitia & Brown, 2002, p. 85). Thus, the literature portrays that commitment to family and family building are significant parts of what it means to be a moral person and on “el buen camino” in Latino culture.

Educación vs. Education

An aspect of “El buen camino” is the Latino ideal of “educación” which may differ from the mainstream American definition of education. In a study by Reese et al. (1995), Latino participants in the study sample did not distinguish between schooling (academics) and upbringing (morals) when asked to define education. Reese et al. (1995) argue that Latino parents often believe that both academic and moral competence contribute to what makes someone a successful, “educated” person. This argument is compounded by the fact that the direct translation of “educado” is well mannered. Reese et al. (1995) describe that Latino parents often accept sacrificing academic competencies for the sake of moral competencies when they

suspect that their child is at risk of becoming “mal educado” and following on the bad path. This exemplifies how the moral dimension of being well educated may be emphasized over schooling in Latino culture, even though formal, academic education is valued as well.

Often times, the Latino focus on morality results in the stereotype that Latino parents are not invested in their children’s individual and academic success. In fact, Reese et al. (1995) report that Mexican-American parents had “low aspirations and expectations for their children’s achievement” because they prioritize “family unity and obedience to authority” (p. 59). However, contrasting research shows that this is not necessarily the case (e.g. Azmitiz & Brown, 2002; Romo, Kouyoumdjian, Nadeem, & Sigman, 2006). As stated, *educación* does in fact include academic aspirations, but it extends beyond this into the realm of morality. Further, research illustrates that many Latino parents hope that their children will succeed academically, but may stress that they do not want school success to come at the “expense” of their child’s morality (Azmitia & Brown, 2002, p.101).

Acculturation and Biculturalism

As previously described, “el mal camino” is often associated with spending what is considered too much time outside the home. A study by Gonzales, Knight, Morgan-Lopez, Saenz, and Sirolo (2002) reports that Latino parents in the United States may have reason to be worried that too much time outside the home may lead their children down the wrong path. Gonzales et al. (2002) report that Latino teenagers who are highly acculturated into mainstream American society have higher rates of drug and alcohol use than those who maintain traditional values like familism. Further, this study also illustrates that risky behaviors (e.g. substance use and depression) is more common in Latino youth who were born in the United States, compared to those who are immigrants. In addition, risky behaviors were found to be more prevalent

among those who spoke English than among those who spoke Spanish. Not only may acculturation lead to risky behaviors, it also may lead to a total abandonment of Latino culture, consequently tarnishing familial relationships (Gonzales et al., 2002).

This being said, some Latino parents do value their child's ability to conform to mainstream values and believe that this is necessary to be successful in the United States. Those parents who are more acculturated are more likely to value "independence and creativity" and encourage the acculturation of their children than those who maintain traditional Latino values (Contreras et al., 2002, p. 36). All of this said, Gonzales et al. (2002) note that neither acculturation nor enculturation predicted one's feeling of self-worth, rather biculturalism appeared to be positively correlated with self-worth.

In relation to teenage pregnancy, a study done by Contreras et al. (2002) shows that young Latina mothers who are bi-culturally competent (i.e., have high levels of acculturation and enculturation) are more skilled parents and experience fewer mental health problems than those who are either solely enculturated or acculturated. This may be due to the fact that those mothers who have a bicultural orientation often reap the benefits of both consistent familial supports as well supports from supplementary services provided by American institutions. Mothers of a bi-cultural orientation will be able to "maximize the benefits [derived] from the support provided" by her family as well as navigate the complexities of American institutions (i.e., school) and utilize available support from organizations (Contreras et al., 2002, p.164).

Although literature supports the idea that a bicultural orientation may be most beneficial for Latina teenage mothers in the United States (rather than being fully acculturated or enculturated), it may be difficult to achieve for Latinos who are deeply rooted in traditional culture. This difficulty is emphasized by research done by Reese et al. (1995). Reese et al.

discuss the opposition between the agrarian model of human development, characteristic of Latino culture, and the academic occupational model of human development, characteristic of American culture. Reese et al. use this dichotomy to demonstrate the firm differences between Latino culture and mainstream American culture. The agrarian model is described as focusing on the “acquisition of manners and work skills without competitive evaluations, and concepts of the adult years as the prime period for significant cognitive development” (p. 58). A respect for elders and the interdependence of family for economic and emotional support and survival are stressed in this model. Although these values are traditionally rooted in rural Latin American cultures, the devotion to them often carries over to Latino culture in urban settings as well. For example, Latino immigrants in the United States often continue to rely on kinship networks in urban areas (Reese et al., 1995)

A Clash of Values

This agrarian model of development pervades the realm of childbearing and childrearing and can be contrasted with typical American parenting values. For instance, Puerto Rican mothers emphasize “proper demeanor” in their parenting, meaning that they strive to teach their children “appropriate intrapersonal behavior, the ability to get along with others and the fulfillment of role obligations, particularly within the family” (Contreras et al., 2002, p. 160). On the other hand, Anglo mothers focus on the “self-maximization” of their children such as the “fulfillment of personal potential, self-confidence, and self-reliance” (Contreras et al., 2002, p. 160). Consequently, young Latina mothers who were born in the United States often “engage in parenting practices that stress individualism to a greater extent than mothers who are more recent immigrants” (Nadeem & Romo, 2008, p. 218). Further, Latina mothers who speak English often promote messages of self-reliance over reliance on the family (Nadeem & Romo, 2008).

The clash of Latino and Anglo parenting values may result in difficulties in school for Latino children, as the values that they are taught in their home do not always align with the values that they are taught in school (Contreras et al., 2002). Specifically, it may put them at a disadvantage because American schools often seek to foster individualism and competition, values that contradict the focus on interdependence and cooperation that often characterizes the education that Latino children receive from their parents (Contreras et al, 2002; Reese et al., 1995). The clash of values between American and Latino culture is also apparent when considering early childrearing.

Although early childbearing is widely thought of as a maladaptive behavior in the United States, meaning that it was the cause of the young mother's irresponsibility and/or insecurity, García Coll and Vázquez García (1996) note that there are no universal definitions of competence in the area of female sexuality and reproduction. They argue that getting pregnant as an adolescent has varying causes and consequences and thus, in certain cultures, is considered adaptive or maladaptive depending on the context of the pregnancy. For example, in contrast with most American communities, Puerto Rican communities with a low socio-economic status, young pregnancy is considered an adaptive behavior, meaning that it was not a result of bad decision-making and is often widely accepted as the norm (García Coll & Vázquez García, 1996).

García Coll and Vázquez García (1996) report that when surveyed, Puerto Rican women agreed that the best time for a woman to start a family is early in her life. Further, these surveyed women were confident that young mothers are able to become effective parents on their own. A reason that early motherhood is seen as a logical decision in Puerto Rican culture may be because these young women often have highly supportive family systems present in their lives.

That being said immigration, discrimination, and poverty often put pressure on familial support structures and therefore may cause teenage childbearing to have negative consequences as the young mother may lack the support that often defines positivity of early childrearing in traditional Puerto Rican cultures (García Coll & Vázquez García, 1996).

When Latina adolescent women, in this case Puerto Rican women, immigrate to the United States they are often caught in the middle of two cultures that hold drastically different views on what is right, or competent, behavior in terms of starting a family. In the U.S., it is the norm to delay childbearing until education is complete and one is married. To have a child before marriage or before the successful completion of schooling is to deviate from this norm. In contrast, in many Latino sub-groups early pregnancy is not only accepted, but is also celebrated, even if the mother has yet to complete her secondary schooling. But, when coming to the United States, the Latino norms of early family building and familism are challenged, consequently straining familial support systems, “leading to generational conflicts, role-confusions, and feelings of not belonging to one place or another” (García Coll & Vázquez García, 1996, p. 300). The tension and confusion that is brought on by the clashing of Anglo and Latino values in terms of teen pregnancy often influences the educational trajectories of young Latina mothers in the United States. These mothers are faced with the challenge of juggling the traditional cultural value of family building with the American expectation of educational attainment (Diez & Mistry, 2010).

Despite this prevalent conflict, data from the Massachusetts Healthy Families Evaluation, Cohort 2 (MHFE2) illustrate that some Latina teenage mothers are able to successfully navigate the “borderlands” the space where American and Latina values intersect, completing their education while raising their child (Diez & Mistry, 2010). Others are unable or unwilling to

balance these two tasks and subsequently drop out of school. Certain supports and stressors that seem to influence Latina teenage mothers' ability to navigate the "borderlands" and ultimately their ability and desire to stay in school will be investigated in this study. As research shows that Latina teenage mothers are more likely to stay in school if they have support in and outside their homes (e.g. Romo & Falbo, 1996; Romo, 1998), family context and school context variables will be particularly examined in this study.

Family Context Variables

In terms of educational attainment, family support can be vital for teenage mothers, particularly for Latina teenage mothers. For example, Romo and Falbo (1996) suggest that teenage mothers do not tend to abandon their education if their families support them. More specifically in Latino culture, early childbearing is especially seen as adaptive when the "necessary support mechanisms" of "father involvement and grandmother support" are present (Diez & Mistry, 2010, p. 693). When these supports are in place "teenage childbearing could be a positive experience for mother and child" (p. 693).

Support from grandmother and father of the baby. Two of the family-building dimensions that the Puerto Rican teenage mother participants highlight in the 2010 Diez and Mistry study are "marital/non-marital union[s]" and "grandmother support" (p. 701). When these two variables were in place for the mothers in the study, their pregnancies were viewed as being more adaptive than when these variables were not in place. In this study, participants defined family as including "a strong partnership with the baby's father" (p.703). In fact, when participants were asked to illustrate their "support networks" through a map, participants consistently "put the baby's father at the center" of the map (p. 703). This example depicts the centrality of the father's role in a teenage mother's support system. More specifically, Diez and

Mistry (2010) emphasizes the idea that the father of the baby specifically has an “obligation to provide financial stability to mother and child” (p.703).

Whereas fathers are often expected to provide financial support in Latino families, the grandmother figure is oftentimes expected to provide physical support, such as child care, and emotional support, such as advice. Diez and Mistry note that although grandmother support was not “readily acknowledged” by participants in the study, it was frequently mentioned and “counted upon for family building” (p.704). They also report that it is typical of both maternal and paternal grandmothers to take care of the child while the young mother goes to school and/or work. This being said, this study recognizes that the involvement of the grandmother figure and the father of the baby may not necessarily be supportive for the mothers in our study; therefore this study considers the variables of grandmother involvement and commitment from the father of the baby as indicators of the family building script, not as supports.

Residential mobility. Another aspect of family context that is important to consider when analyzing the factors that contribute to the educational trajectories of young Latina mothers is their living arrangements, more specifically, whether or not they experienced residential mobility. This issue is significant as “Latinos change residence more often than any other ethnic/racial group in the U.S.” (Ream & Stanton-Salazar, 2007, p. 71). Furthermore, residential mobility can hinder one’s educational attainment, as it is “detrimental to students’ psychological, academic, and social well-being” (p. 73). Ream and Stanton-Salazar argue that residential mobility makes it particularly difficult for Latino students to maintain supportive school-related networks and relationships. Social support networks in school are especially important for Latino students as research states that compared to other racial/ethnic groups the educational achievement of Latino students especially depends on “resourceful relationships with non-

familial adults outside of the home” (Ream & Stanton-Salazar, 2007, p.75). Therefore when these supportive relationships are difficult to establish and maintain due to mobility, the students’ academic achievement is often challenged. Ream and Stanton-Salazar argue that the most substantial effect of mobility is on students’ probability of graduating secondary school.

Child abuse. Whether or not participants in our sample experienced child abuse will also be taken into consideration in this study. It is noted in the literature that many teenage mothers personally experience child abuse (e.g. Contreras et al., 2002; García Coll & Vázquez García, 1996). It is argued that a history of sexual abuse can be a “risk factor” for teenage mothers as it often causes a pregnancy that can be defined as “maladaptive” caused by poor decision-making (García Coll & Vázquez García, 1996, p. 299). In addition, history of child abuse may lead to “difficulties sustaining stable relationships” possibly contributing to a lack of consistent support that may be necessary to stay in school and on track (Contreras et al., 2002, p. 161).

School Context

Romo and Falbo (1996) argue that even when Latino students have supportive family members, a lack of school-based support can lead to school-related difficulties, academic disengagement and, eventually, school drop outs. Therefore even if the participants in the study have family-based support it is important that school-based support experienced by the teenage mothers in the sample is also examined and considered. According to Romo (1998) and Brosh et al. (2007) when young mothers lack the support to encourage academic aspirations they often choose to discontinue their education. This being said, Romo and Falbo (1996) report that if Latina young mothers have both a supportive family and access to programs that provide them with opportunities to more easily continue their education, they are often less likely to leave school.

Special programs. A study done by Romo (1998) highlighted school programs that “promote self-efficacy, self-confidence, and high expectations” (p. 3) She argued that such programs are as, if not more, effective as programs that focus on academic and postsecondary achievement. Such programs can lead Latina teenage mothers to challenge themselves and believe in their abilities, in and outside of school.

There is evidence in the research literature that school programs that specifically focus on pregnancy and parenting support are beneficial, if not necessary, to school completion for teenage mothers (e.g. Fink, 1995; McAnarney & Lawrence, 1993; Nadeem & Romo, 2007; Sadler et al., 2007; “Book Bags and Baby Bottles”, 1995). In particular, programs that offer child care support for these young mothers can enable them to stay in school and on track (McAnarney & Lawrence, 1993; Sadler et al., 2007). Without opportunities for child care, many young mothers have no other option than to drop out of school. Lack of affordable child care options may be a reason why only 59% of teenage mothers in the United States are able to receive their high school diploma compared to 90% of women who delay childbirth until after their teenage years (Hoffman & Maynard, 2008). In fact, Sadler et al. (2007) argue that child care is a key factor in school attendance and completion. Therefore a comprehensive program that offers teenage mothers the ability to return to school and develop their parenting skills is ideal for the mother and her child.

Child care that is based in one’s school particularly aids young mothers not only in school engagement and completion but also provides: “promising opportunities to help young mothers with parenting [and] avoid rapid subsequent pregnancies” (Sadler et al., 2007, p. 121). Such school-based care, that often provides parenting classes and allows the mothers to visit

their child throughout the day, can give the teenage mother the necessary support and guidance she needs in order to be a competent parent while still being engaged in school.

Ellen Galinsky (1992) speaks about the challenges all parents face when finding appropriate child care for their children. Galinsky focuses on the “lack of attention given to the ways in which child care can affect parents” (p. 159). She highlights the three stages that parents experience when searching for child care: “deciding whether to return to work, finding out about available child care, and judging the child care and making a decision” (p. 160).

Lastly, most child care programs begin at age three. If teenage mothers are going to remain in school they will need child care support from birth on and, unfortunately aside from Early Head Start, not many of these programs exist and the ones that do are not very accessible or affordable. Therefore as an alternative to center-based care, many teenage mothers rely on kin-based care. This type of care is not always reliable. Studies show that relying on kin-based care may leave young mothers with no caregiver, as schedules are more likely to change. Also oftentimes kin who act as caregivers feel burdened, which attributes to a poor developmental setting for the child (Sadler et al., 2007, p. 2). Thus, school-based child care and support is often seen as ideal for these young mothers. As some research suggests that Latinas are “less likely to find support at home or in school for high educational achievement than other young women” in the United States, it is especially important that they receive this in-school support (Romo, 1998, p. 2).

Studies report on the role of GED programs in the lives of teenage mothers (e.g. Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2004). Coley and Chase-Lansdale (1998) state that GED programs increased the educational attainment of the teenage mothers in their study more than any other program did. Entwisle et al. (2004) argue that GED programs are an

appropriate alternative to high school for students experiencing economic or familial stressors, as is the case with many teenage parents. Therefore, GED program use is considered in this study.

Poor quality of school. The danger of dropping out of school is especially notable when a student attends a school of poor quality. Oftentimes these poor quality schools “contribute to pessimistic attitudes toward education, lack of school engagement, and high dropout rates” (Romo et. al, 2006, p. 59). As research suggests that Latino youth are especially dependent on resourceful, in-school relationships, a school that lacks this support often fails in retaining Latino students (Ream & Stanton-Salazar, 2007). Whether poor school relationships and attending a poor quality school seems to influence school drop outs for the participants in our study will be explored in the results.

Conclusion

The literature discusses values that are common in Latino culture: familism, educación, and el buen camino. These values often clash with mainstream American values such as independence, academic achievement, and self-maximization. The literature tells us that this clash of values may result in disorientation for Latina youth whose parents stress traditional values while American institutions (i.e., school) often oppose them. More specifically, oftentimes the disorientation that may be felt by Latino youth results in a vulnerability to academic difficulties. Young Latina women in the United States are often especially affected by the clash of values, as their family may stress family building while society stresses the importance of delaying childbirth. Latina women who do not delay childbearing are faced with the challenge of continuing their education while simultaneously raising their child.

It is argued in the literature that certain supports and stressors may aid or impede educational achievement, for the general population and specifically for teenage mothers.

Findings present in the literature are expanded on in this study by the exploration of specific supports and stressors that may influence the educational trajectories of the Latina teenage mothers in the sample. For example, it is argued in the literature that supports such as pregnancy and parenting programs and GED programs, as well as family-based support, can aid young mothers in educational attainment. I explore whether or not this seems to be the case for the young Latina mothers in our sample. In addition, I explore if other school and family supportive factors that are not addressed in the literature seem to aid in educational attainment. The literature also suggests that stressors, such as child abuse, residential mobility, and attending a poor quality school, may lead to drop outs. I will examine these factors while also considering stressors that are not analyzed in the literature. School and family-related stressors are examined in this study in order to make conclusions as to whether these stressors seem to be impacting the educational decisions made by the Latina teenage mothers in our sample. When appropriate, results will be culturally contextualized according to the Latino values presented in the literature. Based on the findings of this study, policy implications are noted regarding the supports that our study finds that Latina teenage mothers may need to stay in school and on track.

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Methods

The data for this study were previously collected as part of the Massachusetts Healthy Families Evaluation, Cohort 2 (MHFE2) an evaluation of Healthy Families Massachusetts (HFM), a home-visiting program for teenage mothers in Massachusetts. MHFE2, a study being done by Tufts University, is being conducted over a six-year period with the aim of evaluating the effectiveness of the Healthy Families Massachusetts home visiting program. In order to evaluate HFM, this study compares certain outcomes of the program to those of control groups according to certain goals outlined by HFM. Such goals include: preventing/reducing rates of child abuse, enabling optimal child health and development, preventing repeat births, and facilitating educational and/or career success among the young parents in the program.

MHFE2 is comprised of two components: the Impact Study and the Integrative Study. The experimental, quantitative Impact Study intends to note the differences in net outcomes between HFM and control groups. The mixed methods Integrative Study aims to understand the reasons for such differences by considering influences such as: personal, school, and family circumstances and challenges, program use, community context, and so on. Qualitative data from the Integrative Study from the first year of data collection are used in this study.

Sample

This present study of 44 young Latina, or “Hispanic”, mothers involved in MHFE2 is situated in the larger MHFE2 study of 693 mothers under the age of 21. Why and how these 44 Latina mothers were chosen from the larger sample for this smaller study will be described in this section. Further, how the data for this study originally collected and qualitatively coded will be explained. The coding process as well as the coding categories specifically used for this study

will be described and justified. Lastly, the procedure for analyzing the collected data will be discussed in this section.

All participants who voluntarily enrolled in the Massachusetts Healthy Families Evaluation initially completed an intake telephone interview. In this interview they were asked to identify their race and ethnicity. The first criterion for selecting participants was their self-identification as “Hispanic” in their intake telephone interview.

The second criteria for selecting participants for this study was their educational trajectory: whether they were in or out of school at the time of their interview, whether they were in or out of school at the time of their pregnancy, and whether or not they experienced an interruption in their education. The third and last criteria was noting having experienced a certain number and nature of stressors in their interview.

For this study, participants who experienced a similar number of stressors were categorized into three groups according to their educational paths at the time of their first research interview. These three educational trajectories are defined as follows:

1. “Continuous Attenders”: Completed or on track to complete secondary school without interruption.
2. “Returners”: Experienced an interruption but subsequently resumed secondary education.
3. “Non-Returners”: Dropped out and did not return/have not yet returned to secondary school.

Since there was variation in the extent and nature of stress faced by the Latina teen mother participants, we selected participants from each trajectory who experienced relatively similar

extents of stress. First, Latina participants in the three trajectories of the greater sample were eliminated from being qualified for the smaller sample if they did not have at least three stress codes of any kind. Next, participants who had at least one stressor from each of the subgroups of stressors (“family”, “individual”, “peer”, “school”) were identified. Those participants who did not have at least one stressor from each of these subgroups were eliminated from the study sample. Then, participants who did not have at least one of the three school-related stressors (“conflict with personnel”, “bad school”, “transience”) were eliminated from the study sample. Subsequently, family stressors were subdivided into three categories:

1. Group 1: caregiver characteristics (“mental”, “physical”, “risky”).
2. Group 2: relationship between participant and parent (“death parent”, “poor relationship”, “separation”).
3. Group 3: stressors that likely affect family as a unit and do not fall into previous two categories (“dysfunction”, “economic”, “immigration”, “parental conflict”).

Five final subgroups of stressors were then created: family group 1, family group 2, family group 3, individual, and peer. To qualify for this study’s sample participants needed to have experienced stressors from at least three of these subgroups. Participants in each of the three trajectories were consequently divided into three groups according to the number of stressors experienced: 5 stressors, 4 stressors, and 3 stressors. From there, 15 Continuous Attenders and Returners were chosen randomly. There were only 14 qualifying Non-Returners and therefore all 14 participants were placed in the sample.

Data Sources

All data used in this study come from semi-structured interviews with participants done as a part of the Integrative Study of MHFE2. These interviews were conducted by Tufts University graduate students and took place as a part of a research visit at the location of the participant's choosing, in most instances at the participant's home. Participants were interviewed to elicit specific information on a number of topics including: social relationships and support networks (family/friend, father of baby, neighborhood/community); mothers' history of child abuse and care, and more recent history of partner violence; educational history; and personal functioning/well-being (e.g. depression, trauma history, stress, and coping). Combined, these themes are meant to construct a summarized life history of the participants' lives up until the time of the interview.

Coding Process and Categories

The participant interviews were qualitatively coded prior to this study using the qualitative research software, Atlas.ti. The codes used for this study are all part of a previously existing qualitative coding scheme that is [applied to](#) the larger [sample](#). Particular codes that address supports and stressors experienced by participants in the sample are focused on in this study. The constructs used are separated into two themes: school context and family context. Both the school and family context themes contain codes addressing certain aspects of stress and support experienced in that domain. The focus on school and family-related supports and stressors offer insight into what is influencing education-related decisions made by the young Latina mothers in our sample. When participants noted experiencing certain family and school-

related supports or stressors in their interviews, these experiences were coded using this study's specific coding scheme. Particular codes used in this study will be detailed in this section.

School Context

Special programs. One school context support this study analyzes is the participants' participation in special programs. The study's coding scheme defines a special program as something that the participant engages or was engaged in either in and/or outside of school while pursuing her secondary education. A total of twelve codes fall under the umbrella of special programs. The first of such codes notes whether or not the participant attended/attends a vocational/technical school, a school that caters to students with a special interest or takes part in a "co-op" or work-study program. There are three special program codes that offer assistance to students with particular needs. These three codes are: "special needs support", "academic support", and "mental health support". "Special needs support" is applied if the participant has a learning disability and/or is receiving an individual education program (IEP). "Academic support" differs from this as it is defined as tutoring, after-school help, and/or summer school. "Mental health support" is coded if the young mother mentions seeing a therapist or counselor at any time during her secondary education. While applying this code, it is noted whether the mental health support was affiliated with her school institution or not.

The next set of special program codes addresses nontraditional education tracks such as "GED", "night school", and "alternative/behavioral school". If a participant was at any time enrolled in a GED program, this code is applied. Similarly, if the young mother mentions being in night school at any point while pursuing her secondary education the "night school" code is applied. Lastly, if the participant attended/attends an alternative high school or a school for students with behavioral problems then the "alternative/behavioral school" code is applied. This

code is also used if the participant was in a public school but in a program designed specifically for students with behavioral problems.

A special code for pregnancy and/or parenting programs is applied if the participant details a program or assistance that she received due to the fact that she was a teenage mother or an expectant teenage mother. Examples of such a support include: in-school day care, a school geared toward teenage mothers, childrearing classes, and at-home tutoring.

The next code that falls under the umbrella of special programs is “agency” involvement. This is applied if the participant has at any time received services from, or had/has a social worker from, one of the following agencies: Juvenile Justice System/DYS, probation, DSS/DCF/foster care, Dept. of Mental Health, Early intervention, welfare/TANF/DTA, WIC, CHINS, Food stamps. If the participant has received or is receiving services from a program for substance abuse, the “risky behavior program” code is applied. Lastly, the code “extracurricular” is applied if the teenage mother mentions participating in any extracurricular activities, such as clubs, mentoring, athletics, arts and so on, in and/or outside of school. These special program codes are applied every time the participant notes involvement in these special programs.

School Support. The next construct focuses on support that is specifically given to the participant in school. For example “school support” is coded if the teenage mother details being given support from an individual from her school and/or from a program provided to her by her school. This school experienced support could be in the form of: “instrumental” support, “emotional” support, or “informational” support in the domain of “work”, “housing”, “health”, “child care”, “material” needs, “personal functioning”, “daily living”, “pregnant/parenting” support, or “education”. Next, the more specific domain of education support is an included

support construct. This is defined as help in the area of education, such as help with homework or advising regarding future educational goals or course.

School stress. School stress is also used as a construct in this study. Six different school stress codes were taken into consideration in this study. The first of these school stressors is “conflict with school personnel”. This is defined as any treatment by school personnel or authority figures that is perceived as unfair or hostile by the participant. The next school stress code is “bad school”, which is applied if the participant describes going to a school of poor quality, a school where there is teacher attrition and/or a school where there is an overall lack of a stimulating environment. The third code considered in the school stress construct is school “transience”, which is coded when the teenage mother details changing high schools at least twice. The last three codes related to school stress address stress that is particularly associated with peers. The first peer-related stressor considered in this is “peer relationship”. This is coded if the participant describes having experienced conflict with peers (verbal or physical fights), peer rejection, being ostracized or bullied by peers, and/or teasing, violence, or conflict in romantic relationships. Further, the “deviant” peers code is applied if the teenage mother describes being in an environment where she observed her peers engage in any one of the following: substance abuse, criminal/antisocial behavior, incarceration, gang involvement, participation in community violence, and/ or violent behavior. Lastly, “peer death” is applied if one or more of the participant’s friends or acquaintances from school died (homicide, suicide, accident, or death due to illness).

Family Context

Living arrangements. As previously mentioned, the theme of family context will also be explored. The first set of codes that are analyzed detail the living arrangements of the participant.

The participant's living arrangements from birth until the time of the interview are all previously coded. This details who the participant lived with and when as well as where they lived (if it was in foster care, shelter, detention facility, hospital, school, domestic violence or substance abuse home), and when they lived there. Whether or not participants experienced residential mobility of participants is specifically considered in this study. "Residential mobility" was coded if the participant and her family had experienced three or more moves or had lived in four different places by the time of the interview.

Kith and kin support. The next family context code that was included in this study was "kith and kin" support. This is defined as a source of support from one or more members of the participant's family or friendship group, including the father of the baby or boyfriend. One's foster family is also included in this category. This type of support may be in the form of: "instrumental" support, "emotional" support, or "informational" support in the domain of "work", "housing", "health", "child care", "material" needs, "personal functioning", "daily living", "pregnant/parenting" support, or "education". The participant's relationship with the father of her baby is also considered in this study. In this case, codes are applied to detail if the father of the baby and the participant are currently in a committed relationship or not. Whether the participant experienced support in any domain from her own mother and the father of her baby is specifically focused on in this study.

Family stress. The following set of codes encompass family stress experiences. The first of such codes convey if the participant experienced death of a parent or any other family member. Next, if the participant mentions conflict between her parental figures (e.g. divorce, separation, infidelity, fighting) this was coded. Similarly, if the participant describes that she has never met one or both of her biological parents or has not been in contact with one or both

parents for an extended period of time, the “separation” code is applied. It is also coded if the participant describes having a “very or intensely poor relationship” with members of her nuclear and/or extended family. Dysfunctional behavior by any members of the participants’ family (excluding parental figures) is coded. For example, if participants note that members of their family engaged/have engaged in substance abuse, criminal behavior, gangs or had mental health or serious physical health problems.

In addition, a series of caregiver codes are used in this study: “caregiver risk”, “caregiver mental”, and “caregiver physical”. “Caregiver risk” is applied if one or more parental figures can be characterized by substance abuse, criminal behavior, incarceration, and/or gang involvement. “Caregiver mental” is applied if the participant describes having a parental figure that has dealt with mental health issues. Lastly, “caregiver physical” is coded if at least one caregiver experienced a seriously illness or injury. Also important to note is if the participant’s family experienced economic stress at any point during the participant’s life. This is coded if any one of the following is true for the participant and her family: lived in a shelter, at least one caregiver lost employment, and/or had insufficient healthcare, housing, food, or transportation. Lastly, “immigration” is coded if the participant tells immigration stories involving themselves or family members, regardless if the participant deems the experience stressful or not. In order to compare supports and stressors to measureable school-related outcomes in addition to trajectory, school performance and engagement codes are also taken into consideration in this study.

School engagement. A participant is coded as engaged if she details having been in the past or currently being, engaged in high school. For example, if they note “liking” school” or being interested in something school-related. It is important to note that school engagement includes being socially and/or academically engaged. Participants are coded as “not engaged” if

they note not “liking” school” whether it be for social and/or academic reasons. As it is recognized that school circumstances can be altered, participants can be coded as both engaged and not engaged. Another engagement code is “attendance issues”. This is coded if a participant does not or at one point, did not attend school regularly no matter the reason.

School performance. School performance codes are based on participants’ self-assessment. For example, if the participant describes herself as having done academically well in high school, she will be coded as having a “good” performance. Similarly, if the participant describes having done poorly academically at any point during high school, she is coded as having a performance that is “not good”. It is also coded if a participant notes having academic difficulties in high school, such as a learning disability or a language barrier. If this is the case, “difficulties” is coded.

Analytic Procedures

This study uses charts as an analytic tool to analyze the qualitative data. The codes defined above were inductively generated from the data. The first step in the analysis process consisted of generating frequencies of the various school and family context coding categories.

Two charts were made in order to initially organize and reduce the qualitative data collected from participant interviews: one for family context codes and the other for school context codes. For each chart, every participant in each trajectory had her own row reporting on her respective experiences based on a pre-determined set of categories. If, in her interview, a participant mentions experiencing a certain code, this was noted in appropriate category. For the family context chart the following categories were used: living arrangements, family support codes, relationship with father of the baby, family stress codes, and history of child abuse. For the

school context chart the following categories were used: special programs, school support codes, school stress codes, school engagement, and school performance.

The next step of analysis consisted of tallying the number of both family-related stressors and school-related stressors for each participant and subsequently, dividing participants within their trajectories into categories of high, medium, and low stress for respective family-related and school related charts. In terms of family-related stressors, high stress was defined as experiencing 7-10 family stressors, medium stress was defined as 4-6 stressors, and low stress was defined as 1-3 stressors. For school-related stressors, high stress was defined as experiencing 3-4 stressors, medium stress was defined as 2 stressors, and low stress was defined as experiencing one or no stressors. Then, data reduced further through the construction of four specific charts: family-related stressors, family-related circumstances, school-related stressors, and school-related circumstances (see Appendix A). These charts were constructed in order to better note similarities and differences between educational trajectories, while taking into account stress level of each participant. The four charts include specific coding categories addressing both family and school-related “stressors” and “circumstances” (see Appendix A)

Conclusions and patterns were drawn from these charts and data was then organized in four final charts used in the results section of this study. In the first chart, circumstances that may influence participants’ ability to juggle family building and educational attainment are illustrated. In the next chart, family circumstances categories were reduced to whether the participant experienced: residential mobility, grandmother support, father of the baby support, a committed relationship with the father of the baby, and child abuse. Participants in each of the three trajectories (Continuous Attenders, Returners, Non-Returners) were divided into stress categories within their trajectory. For example, if they experienced 0-3 overall family stressors (according

to original family stress codes, not limited to aforementioned categories used in this chart) they were placed in the “low” stressors category. If they experienced 4 or more family stressors they were placed in the “medium-high” stressors category. From there, participants experiencing the selected family circumstances were tallied. The number of tallies for each category was placed in the appropriate row and column. In the next chart, family-related and school-related stressors are compared per trajectory. More specifically, participants were again divided by trajectory into low or medium-high family stress levels categories. Subsequently, participants were also divided into school stress level categories. If they experienced 2-4 school stressors, they were put in the medium-high school stress level category. If they experienced 1 or no school stressors they were placed in the low school stress level category. Similarly to the first chart, the number of participants in each category per trajectory were tallied and noted in the appropriate row and column. The final chart compares school-related stressors to school performance and engagement outcomes. This chart specifically looks at the school-related stressors “bad school” and “deviant peer behavior”. If a participant experienced a “bad school” it was noted if they also were “not engaged”, had a “not good” academic performance, and/or had “academic difficulties”. The same process occurred if a participant noted experiencing “deviant peer behavior”. Like the other charts, the number of participants who fell into each category was tallied per trajectory and noted.

Results

In this section, data gathered and organized on participant family and school-related circumstances, stressors, and supports presented and analyzed according to educational trajectories. Conditions relating to both the realm of family as well as that of school are considered in order to best address our research question of what may be contributing to the variation in the educational trajectories of the young Latina mothers in our sample. As previously mentioned, family building is a common Latino value. Therefore certain familial circumstances are examined in order to explore whether or not indicators of family building (i.e., grandmother involvement and commitment from the father of the baby) are present across all three trajectories in our sample. Romo and Falbo (1996) argue that even when Latino students have involved family members, a lack of school-based support “can pressure students into dropping out”. Therefore after a baseline of family building indicators is established across the three trajectories, school-based support and circumstances will be analyzed and compared across trajectories.

The results are organized in order to best interpret the objective of this study, which is to learn how the young Latina mothers in our sample navigate the scripts of family building and the pursuit of education, and specifically what stressors and supports may impact this navigation and thus, their educational attainment. Therefore, results related to participants’ ability to balance family building and educational attainment are first presented, followed by the examination of family-related stress and circumstances. Next, school-related stress and circumstances data are addressed and compared across all three trajectories. Conclusions are drawn about what the study data may tell us about potential contributors to the variation in educational trajectories of the Latina mothers in the sample.

Family Building and Educational Attainment

As evidenced in the literature, “childbearing activate[s] a family building script as the main task of motherhood” for Latina teenage mothers (Diez & Mistry, 2010, p. 690). Latina teenage mothers in the United States often face the challenge of balancing this family building script with the mainstream American script of educational attainment. In this study, this challenge is analyzed by considering codes that suggest family building (grandmother involvement and commitment from the father of the baby) as well as codes that may impact mothers’ ability to balance these competing scripts (school engagement, “bad school”, “deviant” peers, general school support, and in-school pregnancy and parenting support). In addition, personal accounts that portray mothers’ educational aspirations and motivation, or lack thereof, are presented to supplement and support outcomes presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1

Evidence of Family Building

	Grand-mother Involvement	FOB Commitment
Continuous Attenders	10	12
Returners	12	12
Non-Returners	7	9

Evidence of family building. Two key components of the Latino family building script are grandmother involvement and commitment from the father of the baby (Diez & Mistry,

2010). Thus, grandmother involvement and commitment from the father of the baby were specifically focused on when exploring the fulfillment of the Latino value of familism and interdependence in our sample.

Grandmother involvement and commitment from the father of the baby. As the literature would suggest, consistent family involvement was seen across all three trajectories in our study. We see that at least half of the participants in each trajectory note grandmother involvement, although it is important to note that Non-Returners do have the fewest mentions of grandmother involvement. The same is true for having a committed relationship with the father of the baby: twelve Continuous Attenders and Returners note being in a committed relationship with the father of their baby and nine Non-Returners state this to be the case. This being said, Non-Returners have the fewest number of participants that note commitment from the father of their baby, but this is still in good proportion. Therefore, we see that across all trajectories participants in our sample generally experience both grandmother involvement and commitment from the father of their baby, serving the basis for a family building script and illustrating the Latino value of familism.

It is important to note that overall, Continuous Attenders specifically mention academic involvement from their own mothers as well as from the father's of their babies. One Continuous Attender expresses how her mother reacted to her pregnancy: "I thought she was going to flip, but she supported me too. She just said, 'finish school and go to college.'" Another mother of a Continuous Attender advised her daughter: "You have to stay in school and keep working." Similarly, another young mother who stayed in school and on track notes that the father of her baby supports her educational goals and has educational goals of his own: "He is supportive about that. Me finishing up and him finishing up his college." Returners also mention

educational support from their families. For example, one participant states: “[My mom] helps me go to school. Motivates me.” Another Returner notes that she has an “excellent” relationship with her parents: “Because my parents, they raised me up to the point like I don’t even know. Like gave me so much education...I behaved with everybody, so that helped me a lot. That was really good.” It is important to note this participant’s connection between education and good behavior. This participant notes that the education her parents gave her was associated with her good behavior and therefore is illustrative of the Latino definition of *educación* (Azmitia & Brown, 2002).

Also in line with the literature are participant descriptions of young pregnancy as an adaptive behavior in their families, this is particularly noted by Continuous Attenders and Returners. One Continuous Attender explains that her family thought that she was “old” to have a baby. A Returner states: “My parents are coming from a really old school part of Puerto Rico. Pretty much you start, you get married when you’re really young. You start having kids really young... So they were like ‘finally’...” Another strong example of familism is seen in one participant’s skepticism of friends outside one’s family. This participant says, “Cherish your family members because blood is thicker than water. Never choose your friend over family.”

Table 2

Variables Influencing Educational Attainment

	Engaged in School	Not Engaged in School	“Bad School”	“Deviant” Peers	School Support (general)	In-school Pregnancy and Parenting Support
Continuous Attenders	13	7	3	5	14	8
Returners	11	5	6	5	13	5
Non-Returners	5	10	7	7	10	0

Educational attainment. Although family building variables (grandmother involvement and commitment from the father of the baby) are similar across educational trajectories, those variables that may support or impede educational attainment are not as parallel. As illustrated through Table 2, the Continuous Attenders and Returners groups in our sample have higher instances of variables that may support educational attainment (engaged in school, general school support, and in-school pregnancy/parenting support) than the Non-Returners group. The Non-Returners group has more cases of variables that may impede educational attainment (not engaged in school, “bad school”, and “deviant” peers).

This data is supported by participants’ personal accounts. From personal descriptions in their interviews, it seems that Continuous Attenders and Returners generally have more school-related supports and motivation than Non-Returners, which may aid in their ability to successfully juggle family building and educational attainment. Specifically, Continuous Attenders and Returners speak about their educational and career motivations, state clear goals

for their futures, and express their belief in the connection between being educated and being a good mother.

Continuous Attenders specifically communicate having been concerned with their ability to continue their education when they found out that they were pregnant. When asked what she was worried about when learned that she was pregnant, one Continuous Attender responds, “School. How was I gonna keep up with school and stuff.” When asked what they are planning to do after their child is born, many Continuous Attenders express their motivation to quickly return to school. One Continuous Attender in the sample states, “I think I will go back to school as soon as I can because I want to pass this year...” Similarly, another mother who stayed in school and on track says that she has already been accepted to college and will go to college “right after” she has the baby.

Mothers in the sample who returned to school after experiencing an interruption express similar motivation and educational planning. For example, when asked what she is going to do once her baby is born a Returner answers: “I’m still going to go to school. I don’t know what they’re going to tell me, I’ll probably take a couple weeks off or something. But I’m still going to go back to school.” When similarly prompted, another Returner states that she is going to “keep on going because she can do it [get GED]”. She expresses her specific education and career goals: “...after my GED I’m going to go to a community college and study criminal justice, I’m going to be a police, so study criminal justice, so by the time I get to 21 I can take the test and be a police, and have already that done...” Many Returners note not wanting “be like” other teenage mothers who dropped out of school, “A lot of pregnant girls are on welfare and I’m not gonna be one of those girls”. Another Returner discusses the difficulty of juggling family building and educational attainment, but notes her effort to do so:

With working now, with the baby, with the appointments it's hard for me to keep up and go to school... So I gotta find some way to be at both places at the same time. That's sometimes hard but I try.

Many Returners also discuss the connection between being a good mother and educational attainment. For example one Returner states that the best advice she's ever gotten was to "stay in school" because she thinks, "education is one of the best things you can give your kid". Similarly, when asked what she considered when she made the decision to raise her child, one Returner says that she thought: "I'm going to study, to give it a good life. And I'm going to be a good mom."

Returners also mention the support, specifically from the grandmother and the father of the baby, that they received that helped them to successfully juggle being a young mother and being a student. For example, when asked about her future goals one Returner mentions her own mother's encouragement: "I want to go to college. My mom wants me to do it full time. She's like 'get your education. You need it. You only [need] to think about the baby.' So a baby and a career." Additionally, another Returner explains how her mother and the father of her child help her handle changes in her life since she became pregnant:

Like I said, I used to go out a lot, before I got pregnant, I used to go out with friends. No, I go home, and I just do my homework. Every day you see me talking about her [baby] with my mom, and thinking about what we have to do with this, if there's anything of a problem, how we're gonna fix that. Me and [FOB], we talk about that, me and my mom, almost every day. Its hard, but we always try to make it better.

In their interviews, mothers in the sample from Non-Returners trajectory express personal accounts that generally contrast those of Continuous Attenders and Returners. Specifically, Non-Returners seem to express more school frustration, a lack of clear goals, and when talking about what it means to be a good mother, they do not mention education but rather stress the fact that they must physically be there for their children. When asked what advice she would give a teenage mother, one Non-Returner expresses the importance of prioritizing one's child's needs over one's own aspirations by responding, "To always give everything up for your child..." Similarly, when asked what her plans were for her education, one Non-Returner answers: "Right now, I wanna dedicated myself to my son." Another mother who discontinued her education expresses similar devotion to family building, as well as a lack of educational motivation: "I think after I have my child because I'm going to be too tired...I have to be there for the child. I'm breastfeeding so I'll definitely have to be there...I'd rather just sit here and take it easy." This prioritization of their child over their own aspirations is representative of the value of familism, which states that family goals should be prioritized over personal goals. Therefore, it may be argued that one reason Non-Returners leave school is because they prioritize family building over educational attainment.

Many mothers who stayed in or returned to school were able to continue with their education despite experiencing stressors, while Non-Returners were not. This disparity may be due to a lack of education and career motivation. For example, when discussing the poor quality of her educational experience, one Non-Returner states: "...I decided not to stay in school. Because why would I go to school? To do nothing? I wasn't going to stay there 2 more years." Similarly, another Non-Returner admits her difficulty juggling her studies and being pregnant: "Because at that time was when all these things happened to me and I was thinking more about

what would happen to me than my studies.” In addition, when addressing questions about plans for the future, many Non-Returners lack clear goals. For example, in contrast to many Continuous Attenders and Returners who stated clear career paths when asked about their futures, one Non-Returner answered, “whatever I come across” when asked what she wanted to do for a career. Further, a Non-Returner admits to lacking any aspirations for her education. When asked, “What kind of aspirations do you have for your education?” she responds, “For me? I don’t think I can do anything anymore.”

This lack of clear goals and educational motivation may be due to the fact that some of the support systems in Returners’ lives do not provide the necessary education support, at times even discouraging education. Many mothers express the fact that they “wish” their schools would have been more supportive. More specifically one mother details what would have helped her to stay in school: “Someone talking to me and telling me that everything was going to be okay. Convincing me.” One Non-Returner says that at fifteen, when she was contemplating returning to school, her mother didn’t “want her” to, her mother told her: “you’re so old, what do you want a boyfriend or something?” This suggests that perhaps having a boyfriend and possibly starting a family at a young age is prioritized over education in this grandmother’s mind.

When asked what it means to be a good mother, Non-Returners do not mention being educated, unlike the Continuous Attenders and Returners in the sample. Rather, for example, one mother states that to be a good mother one must “always be with” their children “above anything” else, again illustrating the prioritization of family over one’s personal needs and aspirations. Similarly, another Non-Returner stresses the child’s needs when asked the same question, she answers: “I think that it’s being devoted to whatever he needs.”

All of this said many teenage mothers in the sample who discontinued their education express their hope that their children will stay in school and go on to have successful careers. One Non-Returner expresses her belief that finishing school is “normal”: “I want her to finish, I want her to do what I didn’t do...I want her to finish school... I want her to have a normal life.” Considering this quote and similar thoughts expressed by Non-Returners for their children, one may conclude that these mothers do acknowledge the fact that teenage pregnancy and dropping out of school isn’t “normal” in the United States.

Family-Related Similarities Across Trajectories

Table 3 illustrates that overall, across trajectories and stress levels, a similar level of family circumstances were experienced. As previously discussed, all trajectories have a high number of participants who note experiencing grandmother support and commitment from the father of their child. Although relatively few young mothers across all three trajectories note receiving support from the father of the baby, it is noteworthy that nearly half of the Continuous Attenders report receiving such support. Also noteworthy, across all three trajectories the majority of participants who experienced medium-high overall levels of family stress note experiencing child abuse, while fewer of those who experienced an overall low level of family stress had report a history of child abuse.

Table 3
Family Circumstances

Educational Trajectory	Stressors	Res Mobility	GM Support	FOB Support	Committed Relationship with FOB	Experienced Child Abuse
Continuous Attenders	Med-Hi (n=8)	6	6	4	7	6
	Low (n=7)	4	4	3	5	2
Returns	Med-Hi (n=11)	11	8	2	9	7
	Low (n=4)	4	4	1	3	0
Non-Returns	Med-Hi (n=10)	8	5	2	6	7
	Low (n=4)	2	2	1	3	1

Residential mobility. Although all trajectories have a high number of participants who experienced residential mobility, it is especially notable that all fifteen Returns in our sample experienced residential mobility, meaning that these participants have lived in at least four different places. Thus, this supports the concept that residential mobility may inhibit Latino students’ ability to stay on track in school. As previously mentioned, the literature states that residential mobility can interfere with a student’s desire and ability to graduate on time. One way it interferes is by tarnishing important “support networks and relationships in school.” As Latino students depend on these relationships more than students from any other ethnic group, residential mobility can have a particularly damaging effect on them (Ream & Stanton-Salazar, 2007).

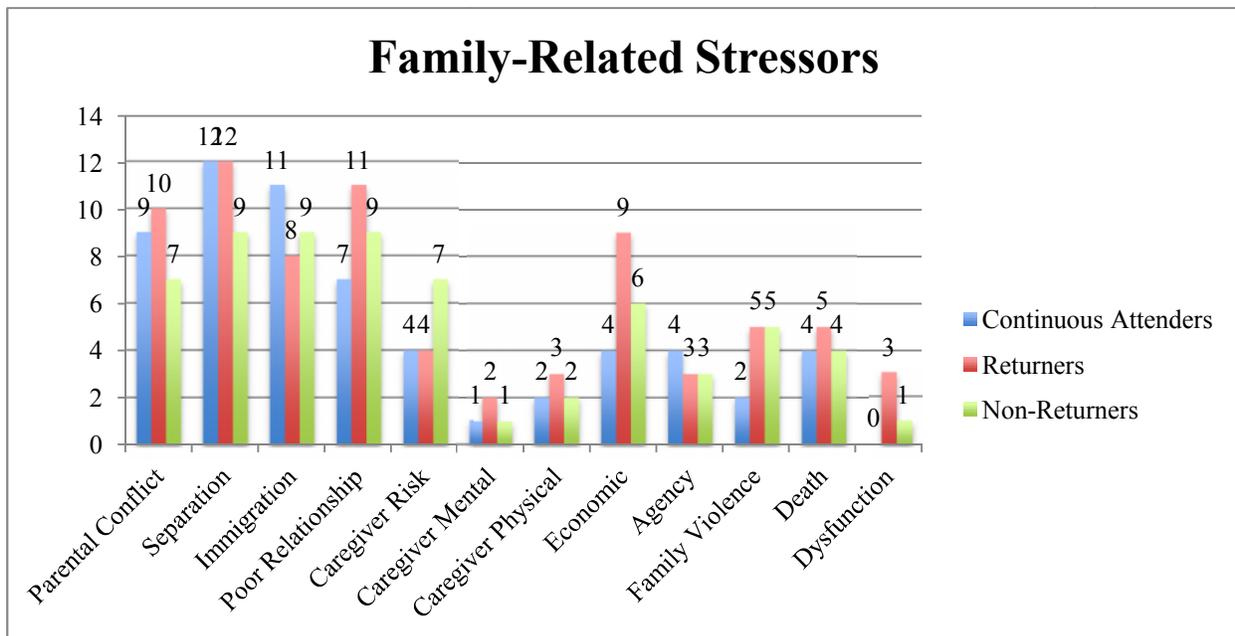
Child abuse. Both eight Continuous Attenders and eight Non-Returns, noted being abused as a child and seven Returns experienced child abuse. A Returner details the impact that her own experience with child abuse had on her schooling: “I had stayed back for the fact

that I didn't want to go to school because I had too many bruises and stuff.” The results show that all three trajectories share both consistent family building circumstances, as well as a history of child abuse. If these variables are consistent, what conditions are contributing to the variation in educational trajectories? In order to answer this question, we must consider other family and school-related stressors and circumstances.

Family-Related Stressors

As illustrated in Figure 1 below, it is shown in the results that participants also experienced relatively similar levels of family-related stress across all three trajectories. Although we see some differences according to trajectory for certain stressors, there are few stark differences.

Figure 1



Family-related stressors that were examined in this study were “parental conflict”, “separation”, “immigration”, “poor relationship”, mom’s “caregiver risk”, “caregiver mental”, “caregiver physical”, “economic” stress, “agency” involvement, “family violence”, “death”, and “dysfunction”. In terms of family violence, there was a greater number of Returners and Non-Returners than Continuous Attenders who cited experiencing this; both had five participants whereas there were only two Continuous Attenders who noted experiencing family violence. Similarly, in terms of caregiver risk, seven Non-Returners were coded as having parents who engaged in risky behaviors. This can be compared to four Continuous Attenders and four Returners. Non-Returners specifically mention having parents who struggled with alcoholism and addiction. One Non-Returner notes that her mother’s drug use affected her emotional ability to stay in school. Further, a greater number of participants in the Non-Returners group discuss having parents who were at one point incarcerated than those participants in the Continuous Attenders and Returners group. Also noteworthy, nine Returners experienced economic stress. Perhaps this economic stress was a factor in their decision to drop out of school.

There are greater instances of parental conflict and separation coded for Continuous Attenders and Returners than for Non-Returners. Similarly, eleven Continuous Attenders mention immigration stress whereas eight Returners do and nine Non-Returners do. These high rates of family-related stress for Continuous Attenders causes one to wonder how, despite high levels of family stress, were these mothers able to stay in school and on track? To answer this question, this study will next examine school-related circumstances and stressors.

School-Related Stressors and Circumstances

The relationship between family stress and school stress in each trajectory is illustrated in Table 4. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the majority of Continuous Attenders reported low levels school stress, even those who had medium-high levels of family stress. The opposite is true for Returners: more Returners reported medium-high levels of school stress than low levels of school stress, including those who reported low levels of family stress.

Table 4
Family Stress X School Stress

Educational Trajectory	Family Stressors	School Stressors Med-Hi (2-4)	School Stressors Lo (0-1)
Continuous Attenders	Med-Hi (n=8)	2	6
	Low (n=7)	2	5
Returners	Med-Hi (n=11)	6	5
	Low (n=4)	3	1
Non-Returners	Med-Hi (n=10)	5	5
	Low (n=4)	2	2

Overall, we see that Continuous Attenders noted experiencing the fewest number of school-related stressors and Non-Returners noted experiencing the greatest number of stressors, aside from transience (Figure B2). As shown in Table 5, Continuous Attenders had the least cases of “bad school” and “deviant peer behavior” and Non-Returners had the highest number of cases. Further, as illustrated in Table 5, most Non-Returners who experienced a “bad school” as well as those that experienced “deviant peer behavior” tended to also be “not engaged” and have a performance that was “not good”. Most participants in all three trajectories who experienced a “bad school” and “deviant peer behavior” tended to also be coded as “not engaged”, suggesting that these particular school-related stressors may be related to school engagement levels. Also

noteworthy, those Continuous Attenders who experienced a “bad school” and those that experienced “deviant peer behavior” were not coded as having a performance that was “not good”, despite these stressors.

Table 5
School Context Stressors X Participant’s School Engagement and Academic Performance

Educational Trajectory	School Stressors	Not Engaged	Academic Performance Not Good	Academic Difficulties
Continuous Attenders	‘Bad’ Schools (n=3)	2	0	2
	Deviant Peer Behavior (n=5)	3	0	2
Returners	‘Bad’ Schools (n=6)	4	4	2
	Deviant Peer Behavior (n=5)	3	1	3
Non-Returners	‘Bad’ Schools (n=7)	5	4	1
	Deviant Peer Behavior (n=7)	5	3	1

“Bad school”. Half of the Non-Returners in our sample experienced the stress of attending a “bad school”. For example, when asked what school was “like for her” one participant who discontinued her education describes her school as:

Poor, it had no books, the teachers most of them weren’t coming in, they weren’t present, and when there is a substitute the kids go crazy, no one is paying attention or doing work, it was no constraint. When I was in school it was just confusing because the teacher would come one day and not the other and everything would get crazy, there were no books, they were going to close the school down.

Another Non-Returner expresses her wish that “the teachers cared about the students more than just the pay.” Further, another young mother attributes her dropping out to the poor quality of her high school: “Was the school supportive? The high school? [High school]...no. That’s why I left.”

Peer relationships. A high number of participants in all three trajectories experienced poor relationships with peers: six Continuous Attenders and eight Returners and Non-Returners. A Returner explains that she had to transfer high schools because she “was having a lot of problems with the girls in [city] and they were always trying to jump [her] and stuff.” Another mother who dropped out of school explains her experience with peers: “People backstab[ed] me. They swear they’re your friends, they’re your friends for three years, you tell them secrets, they get mad for the littlest thing and they go and tell everybody your business. And I can’t even take that chance. So I’d just rather not have friends.” Another mother who discontinued her education describes being bullied:

I had problems in school ‘cause people were bullying me...it’s like I was so quiet and I never bother[ed] anybody and I guess like at that time we were living in [city]. so it’s like everybody in [city] attacks everybody. But since I didn’t do anything, I was the quiet one, I was the innocent one, they would always pick on me because of that.

“Deviant” peers. Both the Returner and Non-Returner trajectories have five participants that described dealing with “deviant” peers in high school. In many of the cases, these mothers attribute not staying in school or on track to deviant peers. Specifically, one Non-Returner describes leaving school for fear of getting involved in school violence:

It was hard because...there was a lot of fights and drugs going on in [high school], and then there was a lot of stabbing and stuff. So I was really scared of what might happen to me if I got into a fight and stuff, so I think that was mostly the thing why I quit school.

Another young mother who returned to school after dropping out experienced a similar situation:

It was a situation that happened there that scared me so I wanted to go back home. And just go to a regular GED program instead of being there...I had a friend there...I guess she had some problems with a guy there...they got into some kind of argument and the place that we ate out of was like glass, and he picked it up and he smashed it over her head. So she was bleeding a lot. She actually fainted and everything. I couldn't take it. I was really scared. She was hospitalized and that same weekend I just left.

These examples illustrate how poor relationships with peers and deviant peers do, at times, influence these young mother's decisions to drop out of school.

School transience. When compared to the other two trajectories, Returners have the most cases of school transience with four cases. There is only one Continuous Attender and one Non-Returner that note experiencing school transience. This does in fact seem to make sense, as research tells us that school transience makes it difficult to stay on track in school (Ream & Stanton-Salazar, 2007).

Conflict with school personnel. In terms of having had experienced conflict with school personnel, the Non-Returner group had the most (three) participants who experienced this school-related stressor. One Non-Returner explains that she was "kicked out" of school "cause of a teacher" and describes two altercations with teachers, one in which the teacher "cursed" at her and another in which the teacher picked on her and "got in her face" causing a fight. She says that this suspension caused her to "never go back" to school.

It is clear that all participants experienced some variety of school stress, even those participants who were able to stay in school and on track. We also see that these stressors did, at times, seem to affect the participant's school engagement and performance levels. Engagement

and performance levels are also important to consider when analyzing one's educational trajectory, as a lack of school engagement and low academic performance levels are often associated with higher dropout rates (Brosh, Weigel, & Evans, 2007).

School engagement. As it is recognized that school engagement can take different forms and be altered, engagement was coded in a way that participants could be coded as both engaged and not engaged, therefore it is important to keep in mind when looking at these results that participants may be coded as both engaged and not engaged. As may be expected, most Continuous Attenders were engaged (thirteen) (Table A4). Fewer Returners were coded as engaged (eleven) and much fewer in the Non-Returners group (five) (Table A4). Despite having the most participants who cited engagement, we see in Table A4 that the Continuous Attenders group also had a relatively high number of participants who were also coded as not engaged (seven). That being said, the highest number of participants who were not engaged was found in the Non-Returners group, which had ten young mothers who admitted in their interviews that they were not engaged in their schooling. As one participant's comment summarizes nicely, this lack of engagement may be cited as a cause for dropping out for many of the Non-Returners in our study: "Well school isn't fun for me...I messed up and I stopped going to school."

In addition to engagement levels, also important to note are mentions of "attendance issues." Continuous Attenders noted the fewest number of attendance issues. Both the Returners and the Non-Returners group had six participants who admitted to having attendance issues at some point during their secondary schooling. When asked about how life was the year before she found out she was pregnant one mother who discontinued her education acknowledges that things were "bad" and that she was "skipping, not going to school for a while, not doing...work." She admits that she was skipping because she felt like school was "boring", she

didn't "pay attention much" and "didn't like going". Therefore, we can conclude that school engagement and attendance rates may often be related. Similarly, school performance may also interact with engagement, playing a role in how engaged in school one is.

School performance. Performance coding was similar to engagement coding in this study: participants can be coded as having both a "good" and "not good" performance. Interestingly, all trajectories have about the same number of participants with "good" performance codes: there were seven Continuous Attenders, nine Returners, and seven Non-Returners. What differs between Continuous Attenders and both Returners and Non-Returners is the number of participants coded for having a performance that was "not good". For example, there was only one Continuous Attender coded for having a "not good" performance. Whereas there were seven Returners with a poor school performances and eight Non-Returners who were coded as having a performance that was "not good". Another noteworthy result of this study in terms of school performance is that the Continuous Attender group had the greatest number of participants who note performance difficulties and the Non-Returner group had the fewest. Many participants, particularly in Continuous Attenders, note that their difficulties in school can be attributed to the fact that English is not their first language. Other young mothers discuss having learning disabilities that contributed to difficulties experienced in school. For example, a Non-Returner participant describes how ADHD affected her school experience:

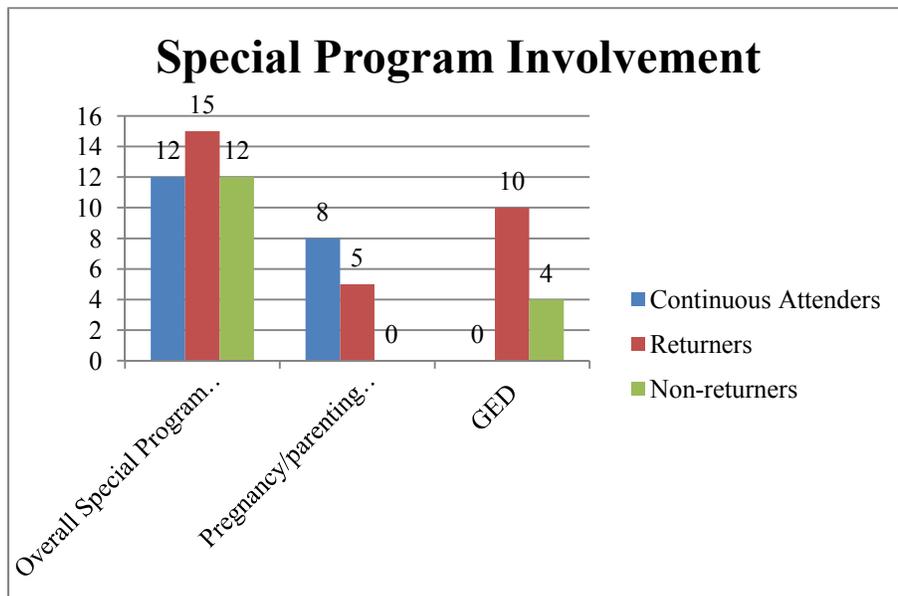
[School] was hard, because of my disorder. I can't focus right...It was just difficult, it was difficult. And I felt like I didn't know nothing, I felt like I needed to start from fifth grade again. That's basically it, it was hard, it wasn't easy...And that's when I dropped out cause I felt like, what's the point of being in school if I don't even know how to do the work.

The results of this study depict that for the most part, Continuous Attenders in our study note experiencing fewer school-related stress than Returners and Non-Returners generally note experiencing the most stress. That being said, participants in all trajectories, even Continuous Attenders, do experience quite a bit of stress, stress that one may think could impede educational attainment. Therefore, what are the supports experienced by these mothers that may aid them in staying or returning to school despite experiencing certain stressors and hardships?

Special Program Support

Oftentimes, special programs provide young mothers with the guidance and support they need to stay in or return to school (McAnarney & Lawrence, 1993; Romo 1998; Sadler et al., 2007). Although all three trajectories had a similar number of participants who experienced special program involvement, we see in Figure 2 that the Returners group had the highest, with all fifteen participants noting special program involvement.

Figure 2



Pregnancy and parenting programs. When we look more specifically at the instances of in-school pregnancy and parenting program support, the Continuous Attenders group had the greatest cases of this special program support. One Continuous Attender describes how her school has a “special nurse that deals with teen pregnancy” who “told her all the places where [she] could get help.” Another mother who stayed in school and on track details going to a school specifically for expecting teenage parents, this program will also provide her with daycare vouchers once her child is born. There are five Returners who experienced in-school pregnancy/parenting support, perhaps a contributing factor to their ability and/or desire to return to school. A Returner expresses concern over finding child care once her child was born: “I have to find a daycare; but daycares are also expensive. I am not sure how that is going to work.” This illustrates the need to, yet also difficulty in, finding child care. Interestingly, there are no mentions of pregnancy/parenting program involvement or support from any Non-Returner. This stark difference leads one to question whether the presence of such a support would have allowed these mothers to stay in school or return to school.

GED. Another special program specifically considered in this study is GED. As may be expected, the Returners group had the most cases of GED support. Perhaps the opportunity of getting a GED allowed some of these mothers to return to school. For example, one Returner dropped out because she was having panic attacks in school because English was her second language. A GED program that was taught in Spanish allowed her to return to school. Another Returner details leaving school and choosing not to go back to high school because she was pregnant and knew she wouldn't have child care during the day, thus a flexible GED program gave her the opportunity to return to school. According to these results special programs,

particularly pregnancy/parenting programs and GED programs may play a role in these young Latina mothers' decision and ability to stay in school and/or return to school.

Conclusion

According to the results of this study, the Latina teenage mothers in all three trajectories share both similarities and differences—differences that may contribute to the variation in their educational path and attainment. First, we see evidence of family building across all three trajectories; every trajectory has a high number of participants who noted grandmother involvement well as commitment from the fathers of their children. This said we also see that Continuous Attenders and Returners seem to have the educational support and motivation that is necessary to juggle family building and education, whereas Non-Returners seem to generally lack this support and motivation while also prioritizing the needs of their child over their own aspirations.

Factors across trajectories generally vary when school factors are examined. For example, we see that overall, Non-Returners has the greatest number of participants who noted experiencing school-related stressors. Conversely, we see that generally Continuous Attenders note experiencing the most school engagement and school-related support, specifically from pregnancy and parenting programs. In the next section, how the results of this study answer my research questions will be addressed, as will how the results add to the literature. Further, the limitations of this study will be noted and directions for future research on this topic will be recommended.

Discussion

As hypothesized, the mothers in the sample had to juggle the traditional Latino value of family building with the American expectation of educational attainment. Mothers in the sample who stayed in school and on track and those who returned to school were able to successfully balance these contrasting cultural scripts, the results would suggest that personal motivation and educational supports contributed to their ability to do this. In contrast, Non-Returners in the sample abandoned their education; the results of this study would suggest that their desire to uphold fulfilling the traditional family building script, prioritizing their child over themselves, might have been a factor in this decision.

In addition to the cultural influences on the educational trajectories of the participants in the sample, certain stressors and supports experienced by the teenage mothers in our sample seemed to be factors in their educational paths. Our results illustrate that supports and stressors that are related to teenage mothers' school context particularly seem to impact whether they stay in school, return to school, or drop out of school. For example, [in](#) this study many of the mothers who stayed in school and on track had experienced pregnancy and parenting support while none of those who dropped out of school noted this support. Also, the majority of mothers who were able to return to school noted GED program enrollment. In terms of stressors, mothers in the sample who stayed in school and on track experienced overall fewer stressors than those who dropped out of school. For example a greater number of "Non-Returners" were coded as attending a "bad school", having "deviant" peers, and having experienced conflict with school personnel than both "Continuous Attenders" and "Returners". Another notable finding is that "Returners" experienced the highest number of school "transience".

The findings of this study support the argument made in the literature that in Latino culture, teenage mothers often experience widespread familial involvement, particularly from the grandmother figure and commitment from the father of the baby. For example, in this study at least half of each trajectory group noted experiencing grandmother involvement. Even more mothers (almost two-thirds of each trajectory group) were coded as being in committed relationships with the father of their baby. Also similar across all three trajectories were instances of child abuse, with at least half of each group noting that they experienced abuse as a child. Overall family-related stressors were also at similar levels across the three trajectories. This being said, all fifteen mothers who were “Returners” in our sample, noted “residential mobility” although this code was high among all three trajectories. Other notable results concern participant school engagement and performance. For example “Continuous Returners” were coded as being engaged in school more than four times as much as “Non-Returners” were. Similarly, over half of the “Non-Returners” were coded as having a school performance that was “not good” while only one “Continuous Attender” was coded for this.

Many results of this present study are supported in the literature. Particularly, the results of this study suggest that special programs, specifically pregnancy and parenting programs and GED programs, influence Latina teenage mothers’ ability to stay in school and return to school if they experienced an interruption in their education. Therefore these results support research that suggests that if pregnancy and parenting support programs and GED programs were more available, the graduation rates of teenage mothers may increase. Further, this study finds that school transience and residential mobility may be related to the interruption of secondary education for teenage mothers. Therefore, programs and policies that particularly work with

students who have experienced transience and residential mobility in adjusting to a different school setting may be beneficial in the educational attainment of these students.

Limitations of the Present Study

Although this study resulted in conclusions that are in line with present literature it is necessary to note the limitations of this present study. For example, given the relatively small sample size these results are not necessarily reflective of the greater population of Latina teenage mothers in the United States. Also, the study sample consisted of mothers coming from a variety of Latino subgroups. This study did not account for any clustering among subgroups that may have occurred and thus, many generalizations are made about Latino culture. In addition, there is a possibility that coding error may have caused some of the variables used in this study to be miscoded. Further, since the data came from semi-structured interviews, there is a chance that mothers in the sample did experience certain stressors and supports that were used in this study but did not mention it in their interview.

As mentioned in the introduction, this study uses a cultural lens when analyzing results. The study did not consider other contexts that also most likely contribute to one's educational decisions, such as one's SES, neighborhood context, and personal functioning (e.g., motivation, resilience). It is important that future studies consider such contexts when making conclusions about what influences the educational trajectories of Latina teenage mothers.

Conclusion and Future Prospects

To expand on the findings in this study, future studies should examine the domains of family support experienced by Latina teenage mothers. For example, although this study concluded that many participants in the sample experienced grandmother support, the domain of

this support was not analyzed. Many Continuous Attenders and Returners mention the support they receive from their own mothers to be education support, but this was not measured by this study. It would be interesting to see if mothers who stayed in school and on track experienced more family support in the domain of education than those who discontinued their education. Further, this study examined participant school engagement and performance, but it did not look at how engagement and performance interacted with pregnancy. Future studies may investigate if school engagement and performance were noted being altered by a participant becoming pregnant/a parent. For example, studies may be interested in investigating if finding out that they are pregnant relates to teenage mothers' being more motivated to complete school and do well. To expand on this study's finding that pregnancy and parenting programs seem to aid in educational attainment for teenage mothers, it is important to study whether lack of involvement in a pregnancy and parenting program by mothers who drop out of school is due to personal choice or the lack of availability of such programs. Lastly, as mentioned the nation of origin of the Latina teenage mothers in our sample is not taken into consideration in this study. A future study may consider the role of Latina teenage mothers' nation of origin in their ability to juggle family building and educational attainment.

Lastly, as mentioned in the introduction, this study uses a cultural lens when analyzing results. The study did not consider other contexts that also most likely contribute to one's educational decisions, such as one's SES, neighborhood context, and personal functioning (e.g., motivation, resilience). It is important that future studies consider such contexts when making conclusions about what influences the educational trajectories of Latina teenage mothers.

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Prevention website: <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/dsTeenPregnancy/>

Appendix A

Table A1

Family-related stress

Continuous Attenders													
Type of Stress	Parental Conflict	Separation	Immigration	Poor Rel	Caregiver risk	Caregiver mental	Caregiver phys	Econ	Agency	Fam Viol	Death	Dysf	Totals
<i>High Stress</i> 7-10 stressors (1 participant)	1	1		1	1		1		1	1	1	0	8
<i>Medium Stress</i> 4-6 stressors (7 participants)	4	7	7	4	2	1		3	3	1	2	0	34
<i>Low Stress</i> 1-3 stressors (7 participants)	4	4	4	2	1		1	1			1	0	16
Totals	9	12	11	7	4	1	2	4	4	2	4	0	
Returners													
Type of Stress	Parental Conflict	Separation	Immigration	Poor rel	Caregiver risk	Caregiver mental	Caregiver phys	Econ	Agency	Fam viol	Death	Dysf	Totals
<i>High Stress</i> 7-10 (4 participants)	3	4	3	4	2	2	0	4	2	3	1	3	31
<i>Medium Stress</i> 4-6 (7 participants)	5	6	4	5	2	0	2	4	0	1	4	0	33
<i>Low Stress</i> 1-3 (4 participants)	2	2	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	11
Totals	10	12	8	11	4	2	3	9	3	5	5	3	
Non-Returners													
Type of Stress	Parental Conflict	Separation	Immigration	Poor rel	Caregiver risk	Caregiver mental	Caregiver phys	Econ	Agency	Fam viol	Death	Dysf	Totals
<i>High Stress</i> 7-10 (0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

participants)													
<i>Medium Stress</i> 4-6 (10 participants)	6	7	7	8	6	1	1	6	3	5	4	1	55
<i>Low Stress</i> 1-3 (4 participants)	1	2	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	8
Total	7	9	9	9	7	1	2	6	3	5	4	1	

Table A2

Family-related circumstances

Continuous Attenders Family Circumstances	Residential Mobility	Grandmother Support	FOB Support	Committed relationship with FOB	CAN (experienced child abuse)	Totals
<i>High Stress</i> 7-10 stressors (1 participant)	1		1	1	1	4
<i>Medium Stress</i> 4-6 stressors (7 participants)	5	6	3	6	5	25
<i>Low Stress</i> 1-3 stressors (7 participants)	4	4 <i>("I thought she was going to flip, but she supported me too. She just said, 'finish school and go to college.'")</i>	3 <i>"He is supportive about that. Me finishing up and him finishing up his college."</i>	5	2	18
Totals	10	10	7	12	8	
Returners Family Circumstances	Residential Mobility	Grandmother Support	FOB Support	Committed relationship with FOB	CAN (experienced child abuse)	Totals
<i>High Stress</i> 7-10 stressors (4 participants)	4	4 <i>line 271 "My parents are coming from a really old school part of Puerto Rico. Pretty much you start, you get married when you're really young. You start</i>	2	4	3	17

		<p><i>having kids really young... So they were like 'finally' ..."</i></p> <p><i>"My parents...gave me so much education that even to them. I behaved with everybody, so that helped me a lot."</i></p>				
<i>Medium Stress</i> 4-6 stressors (7 participants)	7	4 (<i>"...helps me go to school. Motivates me."</i>)	0	5	4	21
<i>Low Stress</i> 1-3 stressors(4 participants)	4	4	1	3	0	12
Totals	15	12	3	12	7	
Non-Returners Family Circumstances	Residential Mobility	Grandmother Support	FOB Support	Committed relationship with FOB	CAN (experienced child abuse)	Totals
<i>High Stress</i> 7-10 stressors (0 participant)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Medium Stress</i> 4-6 stressors (10 participants)	8	5	2	6	7	22
<i>Low Stress</i> 1-3 stressors (4 participants)	2	2	1	3	1	9
Totals	10	7	3	9	8	

Table A3

School-related stressors

Continuous Attenders Type of Stress (2 participants no mention of school-related stress)	Bad School	Poor relationship with peers	Deviant peers	School Transience	Conflict with personnel	Totals
<i>High Stress</i> 3-4 stressors (1 participant)	1 (<i>"If you stay in that school you're never gonna go nowhere"</i>)	0	1	1	1	4
<i>Medium Stress</i> 2 stressors (3 participants)	1	3	2	0	0	6
<i>Low Stress</i> 0-1 stressors (8 participants)	1	3	2	0	1	7
Totals	3	6	5	1	2	
Returners Type of Stress (4 participants no mention of school-related stress)	Bad School	Poor relationship with peers	Deviant peers	School Transience	Conflict with personnel	Totals
<i>High Stress</i> 3-4 stressors (5 participants)	4	4	3	2	2	15
<i>Medium Stress</i> 2 stressors (4 participants)	1	3	2	2	0	8

<i>Low Stress</i> 0-1 stressors (2 participants)	1	1	0	0	0	2
Totals	6	8	5	4	2	
Non-Returners Type of Stress (1 participants no mention of school-related stress)	Bad School	Poor relationship with peers	Deviant peers	School Transience	Conflict with personnel	Totals
<i>High Stress</i> 3-4 stressors (5 participants)	4 <i>“the principal only cared about the football team”, “I just wish the teachers cared about the students more than just the pay.” (“Was the school supportive? The high school? Keefe tech...no. That’s why I left.”)</i>	5	4	1	3	17
<i>Medium Stress</i> 2 stressors (2 participants)	2	1	1	0	0	4
<i>Low Stress</i> 0-1 stressors (6 participants)	1	2	2	1	0	6
Totals	7	8	7	2	3	

Table A4

School-related circumstances

Continuous Attenders	Special Program Support	In-school Pregnancy and Parenting support	GED	Engaged	Not Engaged	Attendance Issues	Performance: Good	Performance: Not Good	Performance: Difficulties	Totals
High Stress 3-4 Stressors (1 participant)	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
Medium Stress 2 Stressors (3 participants)	3	2	0	3	1	1	1	0	1	12
Low Stress 0-1 Stressors (11 participants)	8	6	0	9	5	2	6	1	4	41
Totals	12	8	0	13	7	3	7	1	5	
Returners	Special Program Support	In-school Pregnancy and Parenting support	GED	Engaged	Not Engaged	Attendance Issues	Performance: Good	Performance: Not Good	Performance: Difficulties	Totals
High Stress 3-4 Stressors (5 participants)	5	0	4	4	3	3	3	2	1	25
Medium Stress 2 Stressors (4 participants)	4	1	1	2	1	1	3	2	1	16
Low Stress 0-1 Stressors (6 participants)	6	4	5	5	1	2	3	3	1	31
Totals	15	5	10	11	5	6	9	7	3	
Non-Returners	Special Program Support	In-school Pregnancy and Parenting support	GED	Engaged	Not Engaged	Attendance Issues	Performance: Good	Performance: Not Good	Performance: Difficulties	Totals
High Stress	5	0	2	2	3	2	3	2	1	

3-4 Stressors (5 participants)										
Medium Stress 2 Stressors (2 participants)	2	0	0	1	2	2	1	1	0	
Low Stress 0-1 Stressors (7 participants)	5	0	2	2	5	2	3	5	1	
Totals	12	0	4	5	10	6	7	8	2	

Appendix B

Figure B1

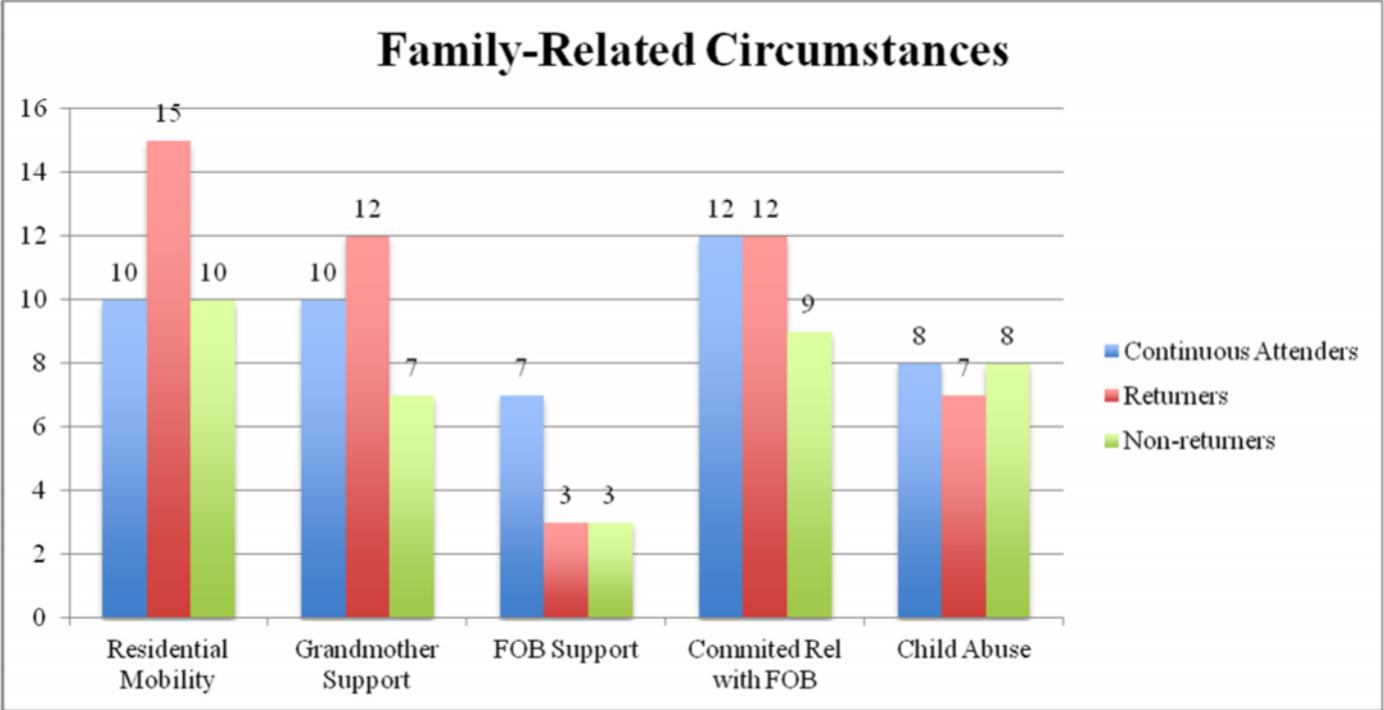


Figure B2

