

**Portrayal of Teenage Pregnancy in Hollywood  
Movies: Precious, the Pregnancy Project and Juno**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The visibility of teenage pregnancy has become a call for concern though it's not a new issue. Many more young girls are getting pregnant and the reaction to the phenomenon is gradually changing and the girls getting more support and encouragement to move on with their lives from family, friends and outsiders thereby killing stereotypes and exposing challenges.

The main aim of this research is to look at the portrayals of teenage pregnancy in Hollywood movies from 2007- 2015 with objectives to find out the challenges before, during and after pregnancy. Three movies (Juno, Precious and the Pregnancy Project) selected from 15 other Hollywood movies on teenage pregnancy will be the focus of the study. A feminist media approach is used for this study to explain reasons why some pregnant teens face problems which include patriarchy, oppression, choices, stereotypes and inequality.

Textual analysis was used to collect primary data to understand the content and better explain the messages contained in the three movies (Juno, Precious and the Pregnancy Project) used for the research. Secondary data was collected from books, e-books, online journals and magazines and newspapers to find previous literature related to the topic and to support findings found in the movies used for the study.

Stereotypes, patriarchy, oppression and choices are discovered to be issues that serve as both problems and solutions in all three movies (Juno, Precious and the Pregnancy Project). Precious, Juno and Gaby all face various stereotypes and only Juno of all

three girls freely makes her choices on her life and her baby easily with family support. Gaby (the Pregnancy Project) and Precious (Precious) live in patriarchal societies where they are oppressed and can hardly make decisions. Challenges that run across the movies include regret, frustration, emotions, labor pains, immaturity, stereotypes, disappointment and lack of confidence among others.

These findings will help in better understanding of portrayals of teenage pregnancy in movies and the challenges faced by young pregnant teenagers, before, during and after pregnancy. It will also help to find out the importance and consequences of the content of these movies on its audience and the impact it has on their lives.

**Keywords:** Teenage Pregnancy, challenges, portray, feminist ideologies, stereotypes, Hollywood movies

## ÖZ

Genç Hamileliğin, her ne kadar yeni bir konu olmasa da, görünürlülüğü endişe verici bir konu haline gelmiştir. Birçok genç kız hamile kalmakta ve bu duruma tepkiler gün geçtikçe değişmekte ve kızlar aile, arkadaş ve dış çevreden yaşamlarına bu şekilde devam etmek, basmakalıpları yıkmak ve maruz kaldıkları zorlukları ortadan kaldırmak adına daha fazla destek ve cesaret göstermektedirler.

Bu araştırmanın başat amacı 2007-2015 dönemindeki Hollywood filmlerindeki genç hamile temsillerine bakıp hamilelik öncesi, süresince ve sonrasında karşılaşılan zorlukları tespit etmektir. Genç hamileliği konu alan 15 Hollywood filmi arasından seçilen üç film, (Juno, Precious, ve The Pregnancy Project) çalışmanın odak noktası olacaktır. Neden hamile gençlerin içinde ataerkillik, baskı, tercihler, basmakalıplar ve eşitsizlik gibi sorunlarla karşılaştıkları bu çalışmada feminist medya çalışmaları yaklaşımında incelenecektir.

Juno, Precious ve The Pregnancy Project filmlerindeki içeriği daha iyi anlamak ve üç filmin içerdiği mesajları daha iyi açıklayabilmek için birincil derecede veri toplamada metin analizi kullanılmıştır. İkinci veriler kitaplardan, e-kitaplardan, önceki literatürü taramak, ilgili konulara ulaşip çalışmanın bulgularını desteklemekte çevrimiçi dergilerden, dergilerden ve gazetelerden kullanılmıştır.

Basmakalıp, ataerkillik, baskı ve seçeneklerin her üç film (Juno, Precious, The Pregnancy Project) ile ilgili hem sorun hem de çözüm olarak işlenen konular oldukları ortaya çıkmıştır. Precious, Juno ve Gaby, üçü de farklı basmakalıpla karşılaşmakta, üç kızdan sadece Juno aile desteğiyle kendi yaşamı ve bebeğiyle ilgili

seçimleri özgürce yapmaktadır. Gaby (The Pregnancy Project'deki) ve Precious (Precious'daki) baskı altındakilerin karar vermekte zorlandıkları ataerkil toplumlarda yaşamaktadırlar. Her üç filmde de ortak olan meydan okuma, aralarında başka diğerlerinininde olduğu hüsrana, duygular, doğum sancıları, toyluk, basmakalıplık, hayal kırıklığı ve güven yoksunluğudur.

Bu bulgular filmlerdeki genç hamileliğin tanımlamasına ve genç hamile kızların hamilelik öncesinde, süresince ve sonrasında ne yaşadıklarını anlamaya yardımcı olacaktır. İleriki araştırmada, film içeriklerinin izleyici üzerindeki önem ve sonuçlarını ve yaşamlarındaki etkilerini bulmaya yardım edecektir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Genç hamilelik, meydan okuma, feminist ideoloji, basmakalıp, Hollywood filmleri

## **DEDICATION**

To my lovely family and daughter Asaah Gloria Formbason who have been my inspiration throughout my studies. This work would not have been successful without you all. I forever remain grateful.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

WHO	World Health Organization
UNFPA	United Nations
CEDAW	Commission on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
RKO	Radio-Keith-Orpheum
MGM	Metro Goldwyn Mayer
VCD	Video Compact Disc
DVD	Digital Video Disk

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

The Hollywood movies involving teenage pregnancy from 2007-2015 glamorize, popularize and make it look sexy thereby giving much attention to the challenges faced before, during and after pregnancy by the teenagers involved. This chapter introduces the study as it brings a background history talking about what led the researcher to carry out the study and what problem the researcher discovered that she wanted to get a solution or an answer to. The chapter will also talk about the importance, motivation, research questions and the various limitations the researcher encountered while carrying out the study.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The public no longer considers teenage pregnancy to be something they don't know, it has always called for public attention (Coontz, 1992). Teenage pregnancy is considered to be a social problem and a taboo in most societies that is pointed at girls below the age of 20 who get pregnant. In order to prevent early pregnancy among these young girls, individuals, different organisations and even the governments of some countries are doing sensitization, facilitation, sex education among others. In the prevention process, the media is used as a means of disseminating information to the public and the media (television, radio, newspaper, movies and internet) serves as the medium through which this information is disseminated.

Movies being part of the mass media is used to get to a larger population of people and to target a particular group. The movies are used in giving out information while entertaining and educating the public at the same time, they also play their part in the prevention of teenage pregnancy. The focus of my study being with Hollywood movies is because this industry produces movies that promotes, glamorize, shows choices, difficulties and the kind of decisions the teens involved and their parents take when in such situations.

Hollywood is made of six traditional studios which include Warner Bros, Disney, Paramount, 20th Century Fox, Universal, and Columbia. According to Warren Buckland (2009, p. 25);

The prime objective of these studios is the production of franchise-spawning blockbusters budgeted in the \$100–\$250 million range that are targeted at the global entertainment marketplace and are designed to operate synergistically with the parent company’s other entertainment-related divisions.

Difficulties encountered by teen pregnant girls in some Hollywood movies are not given much attention because like any other industry Hollywood wants to make profit and for that reason has to sell their movies. They produce what they think their audience wants to see, thereby keeping what the audience has to know about real life in the background.

Hollywood being an entertainment industry has different strategies it uses to get its audience love their movies. According to Burrowes (Hollywood: A National Cinema?, 2011), “they are good at making movies and more importantly, they are really good at selling them. Hollywood’s success didn’t happen because they were



making movies for everyone – it happened because they could convince you that the movie was for you” (p. 9). Producers and directors of these movies make their audiences believe the movies are for them by taking out most stereotypes about pregnancy and pregnant girls and the consequences of their actions but sometimes it’s necessary to put into the movies so that others can learn from their mistakes.

Although D. W. Griffith produced a film in 1910 in the Hollywood village, ‘The Squaw Man’ directed by Cecil B. DeMille in 1914 is considered to be the first movie shot in Old California (The History of the Hollywood Movie Industry, 2014). When these movies are produced they carry messages some of which glamorize teen pregnancy and others which show the hardship faced when found in this situation. This shows why Sarah Brown, CEO of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, believes the message young girls will get from the movie “Juno” is unrealistic. “The movie paints a portrait of a pregnant teen who is not only extremely self-possessed but who also has a very supportive families” (Jayson, 2008, p. 10).

Teenage pregnancy is portrayed as dramatic, manageable, transformative, serious and as identity. In the TV show “The Secret Life of the American Teenager”, issues are riced including romance, emotions, life complications, social and financial support, lack of knowledge and humor which are found in teenage pregnancy shows. In the show negative consequences experienced by the Amy (main character) are not given much attention which is an issue with most teenage pregnancy movies (Lovell, 2011). “In The Secret Life, each time the main character is faced with a potentially difficult issue (e.g., abortion, lack of money, giving birth), she is helped immediately

by family or friends, happy music plays, and the problem is resolved” (Lovell, 2011, p. 80). Does it mean pregnant teens always have someone to support them?

The father of the baby is given so much credit in TV shows and fictional movies. It is believed he will take responsibility for his actions and agree to be part of the baby and girl’s life. These results from findings which are results of a study carried out by Hust et al. (2008) portray a positive outcome of teenage pregnancy which is difficult to find in real life. From my observations and what I have seen when teens get pregnant, most of the fathers abandon them and refuse getting the girls pregnant. These portrayals give the wrong idea and are unrealistic.

The movie ‘Juno’ shows a young girl whose pregnancy is accepted. Her parents are so calm and support her decision of getting the baby adopted. It might be unrealistic but the truth is we see strength as this young girl faces her challenges and trauma without a tear and she still thinks ahead about her future. It stands against the stereotype that young girls who give birth will not go to college and have no future. This are the kind of portrayals feminist look forward to so stereotypes against women are stopped.

Some Hollywood movies on teenage pregnancy like ‘the pregnancy pact’ and ‘sugar spice’ ignore the main issue and pull the attention of viewers to minor issues of excitement. Viewers are shown what they want to see or expect to see. They expect to see a young pregnant girl with a supportive family, friends and boyfriend which is exactly what the movies provide because they need to make profit and produce more. In these same movies are shown the teens going through emotional and mental

traumatic situations but these scenes are overshadowed by the preparing to welcome a baby home scenes. This shows that the challenging part of being pregnant especially as a teen, the mental health of the teen, raising a baby and moving on with life is pushed aside and the viewers made to see the happy family handling the situation with ease and sometimes allowing their children to get married. This is same with what Ron Green (2004) explains when he says “When children died, as in *Penny Serenade* (1941) or *Little Women* (1933, 1949, 1994), films focused directly on the sorrows of those left behind more than on the sorrows of the languishing child” (p. 242).

“To date there has been a lot of attention paid to the role played by the lead actor (star) cast in films” (Kerrigan, 2009, p. 82) . It is for this reason that Hollywood uses its stars to tell a story and create a sense of responsibility and also to help their viewers live decent lives and be an example to the society to make them watch and demand more of their movies. Sometimes in trying to do this, some characters mislead their fans unknowingly. “The established star (actor) system of the Hollywood studios is seen as one of the key elements of the competitive advantage which the Hollywood majors have over other film industries” (Kerrigan, 2009). The Hollywood movie industry uses its stars to promote their films and make the audience want more (McDonald, *The Star System: Hollywood's Production of Popular Identities*, 2013). With this system, Hollywood movies like those on teenage pregnancy are produced to send a message to viewers thereby using their liked characters to make remain tuned to their movies by using them to show what they believe is happening in their environments are how to handle the situation.

Every movie is made with the intention to leave viewers happy and fulfilled at the end but what will happiness bring if no lesson has been achieved and what is wrong or lacking has not been highlighted. It only means it's going to happen again. In her book *Knock Me Up, Knock Me Down: Images of Pregnancy in Hollywood Films*, Kelly Oliver as cited in (Clarke K. , 2015) explores the increasing representation of the pregnant body in popular culture, suggesting that "pregnant bodies have gone from shameful and hidden to sexy and spectacular" (p. 260).

I have identified three of fifteen movies from the year 2007-2015 to use for my research to find out how teenage pregnancy is portrayed in Hollywood movies and the challenges found in these movies which might be ignored. The three movies (*Juno*, *Precious* and *the Pregnancy Project*) will be analyzed with information from two other participants used for the study. I chose these years because it was after the release of the movie "Juno" in 2007 that teenage pregnancy became an issue in movies after it won an Academic Award and three Oscars when the main character a young pregnant girl made choices that helped her mature and prepare for motherhood. In 2009, the movie 'Precious' brought out a young traumatized overweight young girl deciding to be a good mother, continue with school and get a better future and the last movie 'the Pregnancy Project' (2012) was chosen because a young girl noticed how young teenage pregnant girls were treated and stereotyped and decided to create awareness as to the effects on the girls.

The movie *Juno* which is criticized by some writers and authors like (Lee, 2008) (Tarancón, 2011) is produced thinking of developed countries like America and Canada but what is shown and the support the child gets is not what will be easily

seen in the real world. In most developing countries most families are merely surviving and the rich ones consider it a disgrace to the family name and won't want to be associated with the child involved. When a young girl gets pregnant she becomes the talk of her town. No one is concerned about her personal feelings or the difficulties; everyone is concerned with running their mouths to say something. With this being reality when the movie industries in trying to make money show mostly the bright side it is an advantage to them but a disadvantage to the viewers who see and concentrate on just one part.

Teenage pregnancy has taken on celebrity status (16-year-old pop star, Jamie Lynn Spears) and political spectacle (17-year-old Bristol Palin, daughter of former Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin). This is seen as the media flurry surrounding these events featured warnings that 'celebrity culture' is endangering young women's minds, glamorizing teen pregnancy when it used to be stigmatizing says Wendy (Luttrell, 2011). Some Hollywood movies use celebrities to influence decisions of their viewers. By watching their preferred stars getting pregnant and everyone accepting the situation and celebrating, the audience especially the youths who know little or nothing about what's happening in the real world try to build their own world from these movies and sometimes even copy attitudes and behaviours among other things that they can easily fall prey to in real life.

"Hollywood movies seek to build a national image characterized by freedom, equality, prosperity and other positive aspects. Concepts such as "freedom" and "equality" are reinforced through storylines" (Yantao, 2012). The freedom Hollywood is selling here is one where young people are free to have sex when they

want and get pregnant if they want to because the stigma of pregnancy is slowly fading away since the media is giving more attention to teenage pregnancy. Hollywood uses its movies to show how loving and admirable teen pregnancy is and makes the young ones demand and expect the same treatment they see in movies from their parents. But that is not the real world, it might be the American culture they are trying to sell which can easily be adopted but won't stay long because other countries still have cultures they have to keep. The movies may glamorize teen pregnancy the way they want but in reality it is a whole new world filled with so many challenges as this study will discover.

## **1.2 Motivation for the Study**

I was motivated to conduct a study on the portrayal of teenage pregnancy in Hollywood Movies with a focus on the challenges seen in these movies. "Hollywood movies have been made for an international audience, and since the early 1920's, between a third and a half of Hollywood's earnings have come from audiences outside the United States" (Maltby R. &, 1995, p. 12). Hollywood movies are watched in most countries of the world making it a good pick in finding out how they present these challenges to their large audiences.

I decided to work with three movies, one that shows the difficulties a young girl faces (*Precious*), the second which shows a student who pretends to be pregnant to find out the difficulties young pregnant girls face especially the stereotypes they face (*The Pregnancy Project*). The last movie (*Juno*) shows a young girl taking responsibility of her pregnancy by making decisions on what happens to her baby and her life while preparing for motherhood at the right time. *Juno* is chosen because

it glamorizes pregnancy and shows that pregnancy is not a stopping point in a woman's life. If she is allowed to make choices for herself she will be able to contribute to the growth of her community as supported by feminist that women should have reproductive rights. I would like anyone who picks up my research to be able to learn one thing if not for the reader, at least something they can pass on to help another person. I would like them to start watching movies especially teenage pregnancy movies not only for the characters used and the popularity, shame, difficulties and glamour but to try to understand why those characters are used for each scene and the message each moving image and sound carries with it.

Secondly, every individual comes from a different home and there are rules in each home as well as each community. I would like to use this research to help the other young girls out there to be able to make the right decisions when they engage in relationships and to be able to advice the next generation coming after them on what's right and wrong.

Knowing the difficulties and the joy of young motherhood, as a student I would like people watching teenage pregnancy movies especially teenagers to know that these movies are produced according to the norms of America and that they all come from different countries. The reaction to them getting pregnant will not be the same everywhere and to know that it is as difficult as making them give up on life.

After reading write-ups on the movie 'Juno' and how so many people loved the movie I would like to know why a movie is given so much attention by viewers because it won an Oscar Award and why this particular movie encouraged other

producers to start talking more about teenage pregnancy in their movies and the media attention it captured. I want to know if it's because of how the movie was used to glamorize, the choices, the decisions and the difficulties faced by the young mothers that made it famous and if the other movies from this time followed the same part.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

In order to avoid teenage pregnancy, Hollywood movies should discuss the use of contraceptives, talk about sex education and show the challenges of teen motherhood during pregnancy and after that include the stereotypes they face.

Young people today are viewers of most teenage pregnancy movies produced by Hollywood. Of all these movies, the greatest number shows the glorification, glamorization, simple and how beautiful it is to have a baby at a young age that is, as a teen to be specific. If nothing is done about these movies that don't show the real happenings and sufferings of these young girls and also start talking more about sex education, contraception and even abstinence, the prevention of teenage pregnancy will be a waste of time with many more lives at risk.

Three movies (Juno, Precious and the Pregnancy Project) will be analyzed using textual analysis and feminist media studies to understand how people interpret their environment depending on their various cultures and their lives. The stereotypes the girls face and how to shun them will also be proposed. This will help to make viewers of these movies see the challenges which are presented to them though hidden which they ignore.



## **1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to find out how teenage pregnancy is portrayed in Hollywood movies from 2007-2015 with a focus on three movies that is, Precious, Juno and The Pregnancy Project also looking at the challenges faced by the youths involved.

The study seeks to explore:

- 1) The challenges faced by the teenagers before pregnancy;
- 2) The challenges faced by the teenagers during pregnancy;
- 3) The challenges the teenagers face after pregnancy.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

This study raises four research questions;

- 1) What are the different portrayals of teenage pregnancy in Precious, Juno and the Pregnancy Project, three movies produced in Hollywood between 2007 and 2015?
- 2) Why is sex education which plays a great part in the prevention of early pregnancy not given much attention?
- 3) What are the hidden challenges, problems and difficulties experienced by teenagers before, during pregnancy as discovered in these three movies?
- 4) What becomes of the children and the teenager's lives after pregnancy with respect to the three movies: Precious, Juno and the Pregnancy Project?

## **1.6 Assumptions**

The depiction of teenage pregnancy in Hollywood movies can change depending on market sales. If the audience purchases movies being glamorized more than movies that show the real challenges of teen pregnancy then it will take more time for the

portrayals to be changed and vice versa. The Hollywood movie industry like any other is out to make profit and will produce what sells more in the market.

Stereotypes are issues most teenage pregnant girls face and Hollywood movies in trying to keep their viewers tuned to their movies avoid putting scenes that will make teen moms remember their past or see their past experiences they have gone thereby bringing bad and painful memories.

Some viewers might not be comfortable with the fact that challenges faced by young girls are shown on television or movie characters are talking about sex to their children. They feel their children will be affected by this and such images will bring past memories to those trying to move ahead.

Some viewers will still watch these movies even if there is nothing special to show. They just watch because others watch, for entertainment and to wind away time. They don't care about the movie's message but are just interested to say I watched the movie too.

The Hollywood industry as well as the viewers are responsible for the way teenage pregnancy is portrayed in these movies. The industry wants to entertain and make profit and believe they know what the viewers want to watch but on the other hand not all the viewers are satisfied with what Hollywood gives them.

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This study is the first of its kind to be done on the portrayal of teenage pregnancy in Hollywood movies especially on the movies 'Juno', 'Precious' and 'the Pregnancy Project'.

It will help to point out issues on sex education and pregnancy that is found in teenage pregnancy movies that viewers see and ignore and the reasons why they should pay more attention to issues in movies that are put aside.

The study shows that though some of Hollywood movies on teenage pregnancy are fictitious, they still have lessons to teach which can help to shape a better view for its audience to understand various reactions to teenage pregnancy in their environments.

Every character used in a movie and every scene that is used has a meaning of its own and seeks to either entertain, give information or educate the viewer in one way or another so this will help to open the minds of viewers of this kind of movies or those who just happen to watch because others do, to know that although some of this movies are fictitious they have at least one message to transmit.

Most movies are watched because of love for a particular character, producer and even sometimes because people would like to copy one thing or another. This study will help the viewers to not only watch these movies for leisure but also to find out the importance and why the movies are produced for its particular target audience which are the youths. This is because they can easily find themselves in the same situation someday and the movies will help give them ideas of choices to make.

Parents will learn that sometimes children are not just obsessed watching a particular movie but they sometimes watch because they learn things that their parents didn't tell them about or were scared of asking. Children sometimes use a particular scene to ask a question from an elderly person or a parent they could not ask directly. This study will help children to understand why it is difficult for their parents to answer some of the questions they ask and to learn how to easily find answers.

This study will help to bring out the reasons why some parts of movies are given more attention than others. Depending on the message of the movie, some parts of movies are only used to support the main idea. This study discovers the difficulties of teenage pregnancy through the various portrayals in different societies.

### **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

Due to the period of time used for this research it is difficult to explore more than three movies to find out difficulties found in other movies and to compare with the others and also compare to reality. The Hollywood movies are limited from 2007-2015 with focus on three movies (Precious, Juno, the Pregnancy Project).

Finding previous and related articles on some of the movies was very difficult. The movie Precious had articles most of which focused on black women and how they are treated and white supremacist patriarchy and the portrayal of black men as rapists instead of focusing on teenage pregnancy and the traumatized girl. As for the movie the Pregnancy Project there was no article as websites focused more on the true life story that led to the production of this movie.

Being in a foreign country where there are people from different countries around the world who speak different languages it was difficult to get the public's opinion on what they think about teenage pregnancy movies produced by Hollywood and what they think should be given more attention. This was difficult because this was not an effect or impact study and so knowing whether or not the public watches these movies is unknown.

It was difficult finding movies on teenage pregnancy especially those that really show the challenges and difficulties of having a baby at a young age and those that pay attention on this difficult side of pregnancy.

## **1.9 Operational Definition of Terms**

**Hollywood:** Hollywood was the birthplace of movie studios, which were of great importance to America's public image in the movie industry (The History of the Hollywood Movie Industry, 2014).

**Movies:** A recording of moving images that tells a story and that people watch on a screen or television (Merriam Websters Incorporated).

**Stereotypes:** To believe unfairly that all people or things with a particular characteristic are the same (Merriam Websters Incorporated).

**Teenage Pregnancy:** Teenage pregnancy is defined as a teenage girl, usually within the ages of 13-19, becoming pregnant. The term in everyday speech usually refers to girls who have not reached legal adulthood, which varies across the world, who become pregnant (United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), 2008).

**Portrayal:** the act of showing or describing someone or something especially in a painting, book (Merriam Websters Incorporated).

**Challenges:** something that needs a lot of skill, energy, and determination to deal with or achieve, especially something you have never done before and will enjoy doing (Macmillan Publishers Limited).

**Taboo:** Something that is avoided or forbidden for religious or social reasons (Taboo).

**Storyline:** The main idea behind a movie, play or novel.

**Celebrity Culture:** The culture of popularizing certain people who have certain attributes that society deem exceptional (Celebrity Culture).

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter reviews the literature related to teenage pregnancy, how it is reflected in Hollywood films and the main media theories used in the study. To meet this end the information included in this chapter is divided into eight parts. The first seven parts are related to pregnancy, Hollywood and movies. They include teenage pregnancy as a problem, definition of teenage pregnancy, and teenage pregnancy statistics in the world, reasons why it is considered a social problem, Hollywood movies, Hollywood movie industry, and teenage pregnancy portrayal in Hollywood movies. The last part is related to the feminist media studies.

#### **2.1 Teenage Pregnancy as a Social Problem**

According to Chris (2004), “Teenage pregnancy might be conceptualized as a social problem because it is regarded as an outcome which is brought about by social forces, and which is harmful to the women and children concerned” (p. 256). Teen pregnancy is one of the most difficult experiences a young person might ever face when it interrupts school or other plans. It can create an emotional crisis resulting in feelings of shame and fear, and it may appear that you will crumble under pressures in your environment (DWK, 2012).

Teenage pregnancy is considered a problem because adults are the ones expected to conceive and be delivered of children and teach what to do and what not to do. When

children start conceiving and giving birth to children it becomes a big problem as to who is an adult and who is a child? According to Anne (2008) , “A girl's pregnancy is proof of her loss of innocence, and thereby raises doubts about her status as a child” (p. 8).

A child is considered to be innocent without knowing much about what happens in their environment not talking of getting involved in sexual pleasures, getting pregnant and giving birth. However the difference between an adult and a child is socially constructed as one only becomes what the society wants you to be or make of you. Mcnamee (2007) says “What gives a person a sense of meaning in life is socially constructed. I maintain that there are common sources that individuals draw upon to construct a sense of life meaning and that these sources are all ultimately social” (p. 1).

Teenage pregnancy might be looked at as a social problem but it is the same social norms and cultures that make it a problem. The rules and regulations of a society are what define members of the society so it is only a problem because they determine it so. The population and the government focus more on calculating the amount of money used on some of the girls who get pregnant which affects the country's economy.

The National Campaign to prevent teen and unplanned pregnancy (2015) believes that “teen pregnancy is closely linked to a host of other critical social issues—poverty and income, overall child well-being, out-of-wedlock births, responsible fatherhood, health issues, education, child welfare, and other risky behavior”.



Pregnancy is looked at as a problem because now these teenagers are considered too young to be parents but in the earlier days they were seen as less likely to be married if they had kids. Furstenberg (2007) concludes that “We are mainly telling teens to abstain from sex rather than preparing them to make responsible decisions about when, with whom, and why to engage in sex” (p. 5).

## **2.2 Teenage Pregnancy Statistics in the World**

Teenage pregnancy is defined as a teenage girl, usually within the ages of 13-19, becoming pregnant. The term in everyday speech usually refers to girls who have not reached legal adulthood, which varies across the world, who become pregnant (World Population Day: Plan Your Future, Plan Your Families, 2008). “Teenage mothers are imagined both as criminals, carrying unwanted babies that society must pay for, and as public enemies, spreading a disease that is spiraling out of control” (Crasnow, 2012).

According to the World Health Organization- WHO (2015), findings on adolescent pregnancy as of the year 2014;

About 16 million women 15–19 years old give birth each year, about 11% of all births worldwide. 95% of these births occur in low- and middle-income countries. The average adolescent birth rate in middle income countries is more than twice as high as that in high-income countries, with the rate in low-income countries being five times as high (World Health Organisation, pp. 1, 2).

In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of births during adolescence is 50%, in Latin America and the Caribbean 18% and 2% in China. At least half of these adolescent births take place in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Bangladesh, India, United States of America, Ethiopia and Brazil.

Teenage pregnancy is currently regarded by many policy-makers and researchers in the USA and UK as a major social problem (Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI), 1994). “Teenage pregnancy might be conceptualized as a social problem because it is regarded as an outcome which is brought about by social forces, and which is harmful to the women and children concerned” (Bonell, 2004, p. 256). The children are feared to be at risk because of the fact that adolescent girls are too young to give birth and there can be complications.

The society has made young pregnant girls a problem because they are considered to give birth too early which is not right especially when they are not married. Giving birth out of marriage is seen as having an unwanted baby and no one wants the baby to be called unwanted. Most young girls who give birth are abandoned by the baby’s fathers. In my country Cameroon the public is slowly accepting teenage pregnancy but still the girl is considered irresponsible and a bad example for others.

The high birth rate in developing countries is caused due to the fact that some people are still uneducated and also having a child is no longer considered a big problem by teenagers. Teenage moms now compare themselves to other moms who have succeeded to raise their own children with the help of financial and family support. It is considered that if the previous moms could get out of the situation successfully then it won’t be any different with the present pregnant teens. This doesn’t mean that it only developing countries have high birth rates because the U.S and UK which are already developed have higher teenage birth rates. This then raises the question what is the real cause of teenage birth rates if not poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and early marriage?

Although teen pregnancy rates have declined considerably over the past few decades in the United States and in most of the other 20 countries with complete statistics, the teen pregnancy rate is still highest in the United States (57 per 1,000 15–19-year-olds), followed by New Zealand (51) and England and Wales (47) (Wind, 2015, p. 1).

The United States of America still remains the country in the developed world with the highest rates of teenage pregnancy followed by England, Wales and Scotland. (Sedgh, 2015). “However, the UK rate has fallen by more than a quarter (26.8%) since 2004 compared with a fall of almost one-fifth (18.2%) in other EU countries over the same period” (Khomami, 2015, p. 11).

The highest rates of adolescent pregnancies recorded in low and middle income countries with 10% of their girls getting pregnant at the age of 16 are seen in south-eastern Asia, sub Saharan Africa and south central. An example can be seen from the rates in Rwanda which stand at 0.3% while Mozambique has a rate of 12.2% when looking at the number of girls who got pregnant before the age of 15 (World Health Organisation, 2015). This might occur because the inhabitants of these countries are not well educated on teenage pregnancy and its consequences. Early marriages and illiteracy are also contributing factors.

According to the 2014 World Health Statistics, the international birth rate among 15 to 19 year olds is 49 in every 1000 girls with country rates ranging from 1 to 299 deliveries in every 1000 girls. Sub - Saharan Africa is leading the list. Many young girls get married at very young ages due to social pressure and with these come early births. 14% of girls in low and middle income countries get married before the ages of 15 while 30% get married before the ages of 18 (World Health Organisation,

2014). These practices are slowly reducing in many countries now that there are conventions like the UN CEDAW (United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) that fight for equal rights for women to be allowed to do what they wish when they want.

There has been a reduction in the number of girls who have died due to early pregnancy with numbers reducing from 21-9 in South East Asia, for every 100000 girls since the year 2000. Some of these deaths which are 50-100% in younger moms of 10-19 are caused by unsafe abortions and complications during birth and babies born to girls below the ages of 20 are at a higher risk of being still born or dying (World Health Organisation, 2014).

Adolescents are responsible for 23% of diseases that require different ways of living especially because of pregnancy and the delivery process but it is note taking that young girls aged 10 to 19 are responsible for 11% of births all over the world and 2.5 million unsafe abortions too. 16year olds in Latin America are at a higher risk of getting pregnant than 20 year olds and risk dying during delivery (World Health Organisation, 2015).

The negative outcomes these adolescents face are HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, malaria, anemia, postpartum hemorrhage and mental disorders and about 65% of women developing obstetric fistula. Due to smoking habits by adolescents their children can also be affected but the good news is, in most countries the rates of early child bearing by youths has reduced and marriage age has increased. The public has been sensitized more about the use of contraceptives among married and unmarried

adolescents; many more girls now go to school and have brighter and better jobs (World Health Organisation, 2015).

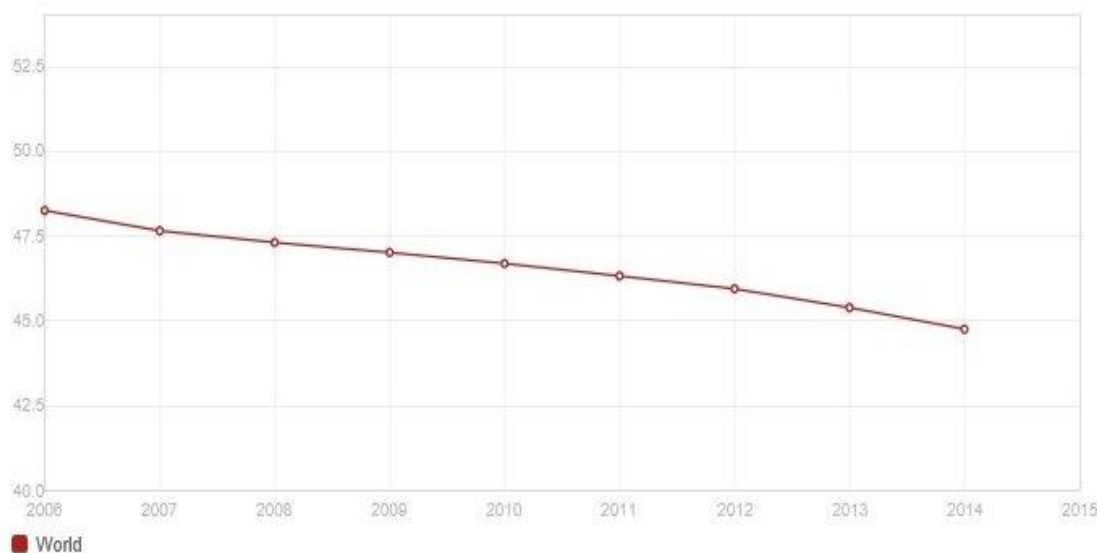


Figure 1: Adolescent Birth Rate in the World from 2006 to present

Girls of ages 15-19 contribute to every 1000 of all births in the world (World Bank Group, 2015). Looking at figure one as of the year 2006 – 2014 there has been a drop in the adolescent birth rate from 48.3% to 44.8%. This shows that more work has been done in this field in regards to sensitization, facilitation and sex education for youths and young girls to be specific.

### **2.3 Reasons Why Teenage Pregnancy Is Considered a Social Problem**

Teenage pregnancy occurs in different areas, nations and countries and some individuals, organisations and even governments of various countries are struggling hard to prevent it. Even with this struggle through sex education, facilitation and sensitization, and the creation of programs and films to talk about prevention of teen

pregnancy, many teens are still getting pregnant. The reasons why teenage pregnancy is seen as a problem can be seen in the social and cultural structures of various countries. The reasons include early marriages and even political reasons among others.

### **2.3.1 Different Geographies**

“Teen birth rates differ substantially by age, racial and ethnic group, and region of the country” (Office of Adolescent Health, 2015, p. 3). In various countries teenage pregnancy is looked at in different ways. In under developing countries, teenage pregnancy can easily be seen as the youths are not lucky to go to school and so know little or nothing. Many of these girls are given out for marriage at very young ages making them young mothers.

In the developed and under-developed countries, the young ones having in mind that they already know everything easily get pregnant. This is caused by peer pressure, sexual abuse and rape as well as teenage drinking as seen in the movie ‘Knocked Up’ (2007).

The United States has a higher rate of births by teenagers as compared to other developed countries even though rates are slowly declining. In different countries teen pregnancy is interpreted in various ways such that when a girl gets pregnant she has a choice to keep the baby as well as abort the baby depending on the country where they are. Abortion is legal on broad grounds in some five countries that is Canada, France, Great Britain and Sweden and in most U.S. states and reporting of all procedures is required (Darroch, 2001).

Having a child outside marriage is not uncommon in many countries. Latin America, the Caribbean, parts of sub-Saharan Africa and high-income countries have higher rates of adolescent pregnancy outside marriage than does Asia. Births to unmarried adolescent mothers are far more likely to be unintended and are more likely to end in induced abortion. What matters is what has been done to solve these problems. I think if these children receive sex education and are followed up and spoken to by their parents and the elderly on contraceptive use, it will help to prevent these early pregnancies.

### **2.3.2 Social and Cultural Structure**

Teenage pregnancy in most countries is not promoted and prevented but it is easily promoted when young girls are being forced into early marriages. These young people being given responsibilities that are not theirs to handle at that particular period find it very difficult. They still have a lot to learn. Furstenberg (2007) observes “the issue of early childbearing was initially identified as a problem that mostly occurred among black teens” (p. 13). He says this because early marriages have often been issues with some black countries like Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso among others where young girls are given out for marriage at young ages and also where young girls who get pregnant at young ages are forced to marry the baby’s father.

In most African countries men are considered the head of the house. The woman succumbs to everything the man says and respects his decisions. Napikoski (2014) says “A patriarchal society consists of a male-dominated power structure throughout organized society and in individual relationships” (p. 1). In these societies men have

power and have greater positions in the society. The women are vulnerable and have little or no say when decisions are made because women are always oppressed. Adolescent young girls are also part of these oppressed women and because the men have power the women are scared to riot as they believe no one will listen to them. Precious in the movie 'Precious' was raped twice by her father but her mother and grandmother did not retaliate. Black Africans give much respect to their men and respect them so much that they become scared of retaliating when anything goes wrong. Men can opt out when their ladies get pregnant because of the power they and have and no one can force them to take responsibility.

According to Berger and Luckmann (1968), "The reality of everyday life is organized around the "here" of my body and the "now" of my present" (p. 3). Reality is created from what happens in our everyday lives, meaning that if young girl's pregnancies are looked up as a problem many times and by many people then it is really a problem. They are used to their various cultures and practice them every day. The portrayals of some of these movies are contrary to what their cultures demand of them.

According to statistics from WHO (2015), "many girls who become pregnant have to leave school. This has long-term implications for them as individuals, their families and communities" (World Health Organisation, p. 19).

This might be right but not all these girls leave school because due to the choices they make, some of them grow to be great people seen as mentors for others. Their communities in particular become affected because it has not yet been accepted that



every individual and every gender has equal rights to everything they want to do in life as well as choices as to whether to get pregnant, give birth or have abortions which is one of the things feminists want to be recognized.

All societies have rules which are expected to be respected by members of particular communities in order to keep their cultures and traditions as transferred to them by those who lived before them. Wuthnow et al (1984) believe:

What is clean and dirty depends on a system of classification and the location of matter within that system". In system there are "do's" and "don'ts". "Do's" are the things that they are inside the boundaries that is accepted as a "clean" and "Don'ts" are the things that they are out of the boundaries which is accepted as a "dirty (pp. 85-86).

For this reason there are things that happen in societies that are not accepted. Of these issues is teenage pregnancy. Young girls who get pregnant are seen to be bad examples to their mates and to have lived careless lives. Their children are considered bastards especially those who don't have fathers and members of the society keeps comparing them to their parents. Stereotypes keep spreading about adolescent teens because their pregnancies are considered wrong by the society.

This world is socially constructed and it can change as well, but to make some changes, people have to be aware that there is a problem in their life. "According to Berger's perspective whole of the human's world is socially constructed, nothing is real" (Kaya, 2011, p. 23). Teenage pregnancy has been identified as a social problem because of the society which considers it so. Human beings live lives given to them by their various cultures, traditions and societies. They have lived such lives for a very longtime that it's difficult for them to discover anything is wrong.

Our various societies determine who does what and because one is a member of that society rules must be respected and followed. Teenage pregnancy is considered a taboo because the society has determined that adults and married people are the ones who are supposed to get married. Adolescents are considered to be children who have no right to get pregnant or give birth until they are matured enough to know the consequences of their actions or get married.

All humans have rights and are free to make decisions over their lives but the society places a restriction on them. Pregnant teens are considered irresponsible and a problem to their families, community and the government which has to intervene to help out financially. The young girls who get pregnant are discriminated upon and all the blame is out on them while the men are ignored and allowed to live freely. This is because of gender discrimination by the society where men are given power over the women due to social constructions of our everyday life.

Men are given power in the society because they are the more educated ones. The woman's place has always been considered to be in the kitchen and for this reason most of them don't go to school and are illiterates. Foucault believes power in the societies comes from knowledge of the society (Kaya, 2011). Education is very important as it gives an individual power and respect and so women are given the opportunity to be educated and they end up getting pregnant in the process they are considered irresponsible. Young teens that get pregnant are considered to have destroyed their lives and that they will have to drop out of school to take care of their children and live a miserable life. This is not real as portrayed in the three movies

Juno, Precious and the Pregnancy Project where all three girls go on with education while pregnant.

Delaying adolescent births could significantly lower population growth rates, potentially generating broad economic and social benefits, in addition to improving the health of adolescents (World Health Organisation, 2015). Teens who give birth easily have complications which are suspected can have an effect on them all through their lives. Bearing this in mind, teen's pregnancy is seen as a problem that has to be avoided so that the time used on teens with these complications can be given to adults who need it since they are the ones considered by the society as ready to deliver children.

Inequality among men and women has gone on for a very long time that members of the public don't consider it anything new. "Habermas perspective is so important because this perspective clearly reflects that, there is unbalanced distribution of wealth among men and women" (Kaya, 2011, p. 28). Men inherit properties while women are given out into marriage to collect money. This shows the low esteem given to women which extends down to unequal rights in the decisions they make. This explains why women are not given equal rights as the men since the men are considered more powerful and at a better place to make decisions. These are the kind of societal constructions that most women live in and teenage girls find themselves in this society. The public criticises them for their decisions and treat them bad because they decide to abort, give birth and even put their babies up for adoption so they can continue with their lives and participate in the betterment of their various societies.

“Teen pregnancy is one of the most difficult experiences a young person might ever face when it interrupts school or other plans” (DWK, 2012, p. 1). This is true because some girls get confused at this level and can’t concentrate. They are ashamed and can’t bear to hear the insults or gossips about them from members of their various communities. They also face very common stereotypes like they will not go to school again. In life everything an individual does has both advantages and disadvantages that is why Campbell (1968) asserts:

The girl who has an illegitimate child at the age of 16 suddenly has 90 percent of her life’s script written for her. She will probably drop out of school; even if someone else in her family helps to take care of the baby, she will probably not be able to find a steady job that pays enough to provide for herself and her child; she may feel impelled to marry someone she might not otherwise have chosen. Her life choices are few, and most of them are bad (p. 238).

With such stereotypes faced by these girls, how then can the problem of teenage pregnancy be solved when the girls don’t have a right to their own choices and how to live their lives? According to the World Health Organization 2014 factsheet N°:364 (World Health Organisation, 2014, p. 3), “Adolescent pregnancy remains a major contributor to maternal and child mortality, and to the cycle of ill-health and poverty”. For this reason young girls are advised and sensitized on the use of various forms of contraceptives to avoid getting pregnant and also to abstain from sexual relationships if they won’t be able to bear the consequences of their actions. Hollywood movies being a part of the media use their movies on teenage pregnancy to portray how various cultures react to teenage pregnancy so viewers can watch and compare.

### **2.3.3 Political Reasons**

In 1995, in his address to a joined session of the United States Congress, the then President Bill Clinton singled out teenage childbearing as “our most serious social problem” (Furstenberg, 2007, p. 1). Macvarish (2010) declares “the politicization of teenage pregnancy involves a return to explanations of poverty and inequality that begin from considering behaviour at an individual level” (p. 4). Taking into consideration that all human beings are not from the same class, do not share the same status, cultures and even traditions, it is normal that in various countries the reactions will be different especially at the level of individual homes . Policy makers see it more as a problem because of how it affects the lives of these young mothers making them lose opportunities in live and also in the amount of money and time used to help these poor single mothers. That notwithstanding some of these girls gets pregnant because they are forced into early marriages which should be looked into by these policy makers.

Looking at the UN CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women) which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 18, 1979 women are fighting discrimination. It is an international Bill of Rights for women and the committee is made up of 23 experts in the field of women issues around the world. The convention is made up of 30 articles and it talks about what discrimination against women is and how it can be stopped. This convention has an optional protocol which came into force on the 22 December 2000 and had has 80 signatories and 106 parties. (Human Rights Bodies: Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 2015). All states that sign the convention are to undertake some actions which include;

To incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women. To establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination and they have to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises (UN Women, 2007, p. 3).

Numerous young girls are forced into early marriages and when this happens I don't think teenage pregnancy is to be seen as a problem or a taboo. To some countries it is better for a girl to get married at a young age and give birth than to give birth when not married like India. This early marriages are caused by tradition, poverty and to keep her secured for fear of sexual assault and to reduce family expenses.

According to the United Nations Population Fund (Child Marriage, 2015, p. 1), "Child marriage is a human right violation. Despite laws against it, the practice remains widespread, in part because of persistent poverty and gender inequality. In developing countries, one in every three girls is married before reaching age 18". UNFPA (2015) fights for the end of child marriages and supports investments on the girl child that encourage them by providing information on how to remain healthy, education, skills and safety measures to take them through the process of became an adult. With this in mind I will find out how young girls get pregnant so early and whether they all run into marriage when they find themselves pregnant.

## **2.4 Hollywood Movies**

Hollywood movies have a very large international audience and the industry undoubtedly the most popular producer of films all over the world. The Hollywood

industry has also looked into teenage pregnancy. This section is sub divided into three parts and they include; Hollywood, Hollywood Movie Industry and Teenage Pregnancy in Hollywood Movies.

#### **2.4.1 Hollywood**

“Anyone who has visited Los Angeles will tell you, if you go looking for Hollywood, the sign won’t help you find it, because the place you’re looking for isn’t really there” (Maltby R. &, 1995, p. 1). In 1886, a ranch owned by Daeida Henderson Wilcox and Harvey Henderson was named Hollywood after meeting a lady who called her country house Hollywood which was a combination for the English holly and woods (HFO: Hollywood Film Office). According to Phillis and Robert (2002), they describe Hollywood saying:

It is roughly the part of Los Angeles that stretches from Hyperion Avenue (a half-dozen blocks east of Vermont Avenue) on the east to Doheny Drive on the west, and from Melrose Avenue on the south to the top of the Hollywood Hills, which rise just a few blocks north of Hollywood Boulevard” (p. 105).

Richard and Ian (1995) see Hollywood in a different way as they say:

Hollywood is a state of mind, not a geographical entity. You can visit it in the movies, and make it part of the soap opera of your own life. But as anyone who has walked down Hollywood Boulevard after the dark will tell you, you wouldn’t want to live there (p. 2).

Hollywood is considered to tell the story of Americans and how they live their lives. This therefore means that if one lets the movies get into their lives; they might end up changing their own cultures without even noticing. At the end all they discover is that Americanizing themselves has not changed their nationality but they are still citizens of the same country living in the same place. This means what is seen in the movies only happens in the movies. Hollywood and its movies are used by audiences

for relaxation and place to clear their minds for the busy schedules and problems they face in their daily lives thereby making dreams come true with a combination of moving images and voices.

In a nutshell, what is called Hollywood today was a small town around the Los Angeles River, filled with dirty roads, farms and orange groves. In the small town of Los Angeles was found prospect avenue which later became Hollywood Boulevard because of the arrival of the first movie studios which came with actors, cameramen and stunts men whose morals where doubted.

#### **2.4.2 Hollywood Movie Industry**

Moving images only came to Los Angeles when Thomas Edison and George Eastman changed static photographs to moving images in 1889 (White, 2002). After trying to proof in court to no avail that he was the owner of the new medium now used in the production of movies, he decided to partner with his greatest rival and together they formed “Motion Pictures Patent Company” which was at the top of production, distribution and performance in 1909. The population of Hollywood which was 700 in 1903 went up to 30000 in 1920 but after the second World War most of the great stars left for West LA, Malibu and Beverly Hills and only came back to work in the few studios available after the war some of which were Paramount and Warner Bros (White, 2002).

In Hollywood, the movie ‘The Squaw Man’ directed by Cecile B DeMille in 1914 is considered to be the first feature movie produced in Los Angeles. Even at this, it is noted that on March 10, 1910 D.W Griffith produced a 17 minute short movie titled “In Old California” in the old village of Hollywood (French, 2010). Cecil’s movie



was a great hit with a production cost of 15000\$ has a monument at 1713 Vine Street.

“Films were shown in nickelodeons and were rarely more than two reels (about twenty minutes) in length, usually shorter” (Braudy, 2011, p. 12) before the arrival of Cecile, Marion and Chaplin. Before Cecile’s movie, there was a one minute moving image of Anna Bell Sun dancing projected in 1896 at the Orpheum theatre in Broadway. Thomas Edison might have been the first movie maker in Los Angeles after his 60 second production of Spring Street (White, 2002).

D. W Griffith also has two other early movies that is, “The Birth of a Nation” in 1915 and “Intolerance” in 1916 that made him famous in American Cinema then followed by the comedies of Charlie Chaplin. This two producers in 1919 joined Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford to form the United Artists theatre they used to sell their movies and those of individual movie producers.

The Hollywood movie industry achieved maturity in the 1920’s when they had 8 studios and with more attention given to feature films and the contents of these films. This they saw to be their advantage over other industries (Lampel, 2003). Of this eight studios five of them which include Warner Bros, Paramount, 20 Century Fox, RKO and MGM produced, distributed their movies and also owned theatres while the other three (Columbia, United Artists and Universal) considered to be smaller studios don’t own theatres but create and circulate the best feature movies.

The Hollywood Studio System was created during the golden age (early 20's to late 60's) by the five major studios producing movies at that time led by MGM which was at its highest from 1931-1941 making it eleven years. The system is seen to have brought out well known stars by using a self- development method to select and sign system contracts with stars that had talent and this was later known as the star system (Hollywood Movie Memories, 2010).

The studio was a big part of the success of Classic Hollywood. It was a system that made sure that the biggest studios in Hollywood were in total control of the movies they made and that the movies would be distributed (Classical Hollywood Central, 2011, p. 1).

With the studio system which was used by the American Movie Industry the Director could choose to write or edit a movie and most at times only saw the movie script a few days to production. As for the writers, many writers were assigned to a particular movie but all working individually. Richard and Ian (1995) observed that “the studio system provided economically the most rational way to provide the regulated stability of production and the economies of scale required by any major manufacturing operation – the means by which Harry Cohn could spit out onto Gower Street every week” (p. 78).

“An important part of the studio system was a practice known as ‘block booking’. A studio would sell multiple films to theaters as a unit” (Classical Hollywood Central, 2011, p. 2). The studio system saw Hollywood delivering many movies to the public thereby meeting up demand but the highest authorities of most of the big companies considered the over demand and too much production as not profitable.

During this period out of every ten movies they produce, nine were expected to be successful and make a lot of profits. The profitability of these products did not only show how their entertainment pays but it also helped in the increase of salaries of the stars and scared away competitors. Studios that had many different producers coming and leaving like Paramount and RKO did not produce as well as studios that had single producers who stayed longer (Maltby R. &., 1995). The studio system began declining in 1948 thereby leading to the decline of classical Hollywood.

According to Smith (1998) “Classical, then connotes not only particular aesthetic qualities, but the historical role of Hollywood film making as a template for film making worldwide: classical films are classical in the sense that they are definitive” (p. 4). Classical Hollywood cinema lacks a happy ending (Maltby R. , 1998).

There was a focus in the Hollywood studios on the star system in the 1930’s and 1940’s. Hollywood considers it stars to be a risk saver and this stars are made not born. They use the stars to keep promoting their business and keeping their audiences. Hollywood uses stardom to get their audiences to buy tickets to the cinema and also to accept what the movie shows. McDonald (2012) says “Hollywood stardom is industrially produced fame, generated at numerous points across film development, principal photography, post-production, marketing, physical distribution, exhibition, reviewing and consumption” (p. 14). Macdonald also mentions:

Star status is contingent on the commercial performance of films, and as the market is a dynamic arena of transactions, stardom is never fixed. Saying any actor is a star is therefore always conditional on his or her standing in the market (p. 24).

During the period of the studio system, stars didn't really have much power when box office audiences were concerned as they worked with just one studio at a given time and under contracts that could be terminated at any time. For this reason they played roles given to them just as it was expected for fear of no pay as punishment. When the studio system declined, stars could now be in control as they were the ones who brought the audiences closer to buy their movies (Maltby R. &, 1995).

Michael (2010) discusses about Hollywood representations of different cultures and talks about the fact that two people can never have the same response to one question and for this reason it is difficult on the producers of movies. There is a difference in the way most producers who make movies of novels do their representations which put audiences at logger head and criticize the industry for its wrong portrayals. He suggests the use of the book *Orientalism* by Edward Said (1978) as the best way to look into representations. Like every other movie industry, Hollywood is just one among many trying to make representations of different cultures to be fair though everyone cannot be satisfied with what they call misrepresentations.

Hollywood has known of the problem of representation for a longtime since the production of D.W Griffith's 'The Birth of a Nation' but the more the work on the style of representations it only opens grounds for more critic as new styles bring new omissions of cultures and living styles. Michael Richardson (2010) also considers a representation can only favor someone if it is wrongly represented and for this reason says "It should also be remembered that in general people do not like being represented because the view that one has of oneself rarely accords with how other people see you" (p. 11).

Hollywood became well known since it was also an international industry. Most of Hollywood's earnings have come in from the international market since 1920's. They have always claimed to be the fourth biggest industry in America because of what it brings for the country's economy. Their movies go to the international market through VCD's, DVD's, cinema, cable channels and now on the internet at cheaper prices. During the First World War, Hollywood became well known since it was also an international industry. During the early years, a greater part of Hollywood's audience were women. For this reason their audiences keep changing and the movies also have to change for the various audiences as time goes on (Maltby R. &., 1995).

“The American film industry faced a bewildering array of problems in 1938, most of which were only resolved or, more accurately, postponed by the box-office miracle known as World War II” (Jurca, 2012, p. 1). During this time the movie audiences wanted to be sure the movies they used money to buy tickets for were worth it so they stayed away from the theatres. For this reason the production studios had to make a campaign to get back their audiences which was the motion pictures greatest year. The year 1939 saw the publication of novels such as “Ask The Dust” by John Fante and “The Day of the Locust” by Nathanael West.

#### **2.4.3 Teenage Pregnancy Portrayal in Hollywood Movies**

Presenting the difficulties faced by teens who get pregnant in movies and the consequences of their actions and decisions, helps teens learn about sexual health, problems faced by young moms and they also see how Hollywood movies glamorizes and popularizes these young moms thereby showing unrealistic images to its viewers. Watching some of these movies shows the advantages and disadvantages of the choices made in life and for this study the movies Juno (2007), Precious (2009) and

the Pregnancy Project (2010) are visited for general portrayals and challenges before, during and after pregnancy. The section that follows below will look at media portrayals of teen pregnancy and portrayals of these three films and some other Hollywood movies as seen by other authors.

Usually, teen pregnancy is represented in the media as a consequence of irresponsible behavior on the part of teen moms (Neiterman, 2012, p. 33). Young moms are represented as not ready to be a parent yet, are not responsible and are naïve. In the movie 'Juno' (2007), Juno says she has sex with Bleeker her friend because she was bored but Bleeker says it wasn't his decision but hers for them to make out the night she got pregnant. The girl is being accused for something they were both involved in.

Lynne (1999) names her article "When children have children: teens who become parents are in for the shock of their lives". These are stereotypes and how pregnancy changes how the public sees an individual the moment she gets pregnant. These young girls are shown as girls who decide to get pregnant making it no mistake. They are a problem to themselves, their children and their communities as a whole. This title sounds stereotypical and frightful too to someone who knows little or nothing about teen pregnancy, the challenges, consequences and what it brings with it.

Neiterman (2012) believes "The media images of teen pregnancy have direct consequences on the young mothers' experiences of pregnancy and motherhood" (p. 34). Stacy et al. (2008) in their study discovered the teen mom is seen to be responsible for the kids and also to have the duty of bringing the father closer to the kids.

For instance, in the movie *Save the Last Dance*, a complicated subplot depicted the life of two unmarried teenage parents. The teen mother struggled to make the father take part in the baby's life. Despite her complaints and his absence throughout the movie, the rather ambiguous ending suggested that the teenage couple would become a happy, intact family (p. 16).

When pregnancy is discussed, young women are portrayed as ultimately responsible since, unlike men, they cannot run away to avoid pregnancy (Clarke J. , 2009). The ladies in this case are facing new lives, changes most of them know nothing about and putting the blame on them makes it even harder for them to handle and this might push them to make wrong choices. The ladies are being blamed what of the men who put them in that situation; everyone has to be responsible for their actions. Motherhood and pregnancy are considered a sign of maturity but this maturity comes with age and definitely not a term to be used for adolescents who are still in the learning process.

The movie 'Precious' (2009) shows her abusive mother reminding her of taking all the men who come into her life without thinking of the trauma the girl faces after being raped twice by her own father and contracting AIDS too giving birth to two children. Here it is shown that patriarchy still has power because nothing is done to her father for the crime he commits on his own daughter, men are still in control. Clarke (2009) also found out that the media presents sexual relations as something to fear but watching movies on teenage pregnancy that doesn't seem to be the case because talking about it especially in relation to sex education is most at times avoided and only mentioned in passing when the teenager gets pregnant and at the end the teenager gives birth and raises the child or give the child up for adoption.

According to Langham (2015) the movie industry and the media contribute to teenage pregnancy by glamorizing teen pregnancy in the news stories and movies. Movies that depict teen pregnancy as something to be desired encourage teens to engage in reckless sexual activity, according to ABC's "Good Morning America. During adolescence, teens become more focused on their appearance and how their peers perceive them. They want to be seen as part of the group, so if teen pregnancy is viewed as acceptable in their school or amongst their friends, they may seek to become pregnant as a way to gain social acceptance.

“Rather than viewing teen pregnancy as wrong or shameful, Juno’s pregnant girl body offers a site for thinking through the complexity of intimate relationships and critiquing sex education” (Clarke K. , 2015, p. 258). Juno’s pregnancy is not prevented as she doesn’t know much about sexual education and is confused about the feelings she has for Bleeker (Juno’s best friend). Her pregnancy helps her to find the difficulties of handling a relationship and get to determine her feelings without giving much attention to the fact that she didn’t protect herself before having sex.

In the movie ‘Double Daddy’ when one of the main characters Connor (Cameron Palatas) is accused of getting pregnant what his mother says is “Weren’t you being safe?” (Friedlander, 2015). Not exactly what is expected of a mother whose son just got a girl pregnant. It even gets worst because at a certain point she is thinking of abortion. Again she says “Let’s not all get worked up about this, ok. There is a way to handle this, right” (Friedlander, 2015). First of all her son, a teenager had sex, got a girl pregnant and now she’s thinking of abortion. We have here teens who have found themselves in a whole new world that brings with it changes and already



without talking it out one parent is proposing abortion without thinking of consequences in the future. This sure happens in the real world but the best option to take at this point is what strikes the minds of most viewers.

Women are represented in the media as sexy and innocent but ignorant about many things happening around them. When representing them in the media, they are shown to use this power they have to manipulate men but end up losing it and getting pregnant causing them to be scared and afraid. When it comes to giving birth they are represented as out of control and like a beast because during the delivery process they are cursing, screaming and even violent as seen in movies like *Baby Mama*, *Knocked Up* and *Fools Rush In*. Teenage pregnancy is considered contagious as it moves from one teen to another as seen in the movie *the pregnancy pact* where some teens agree to all give birth at the same time and get disappointed when told they are not pregnant by the school nurse. Values of marriage are destroyed as shown in movies where teens have to marry for the wrong reasons and also their welfare cost affects the economy of the country (Crasnow, 2012).

Sarah Brown, CEO of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, is concerned about the message girls will get from *Juno*, which she believes is unrealistic. Motherhood is commercialized and used for political campaigns but some writers are trying to depoliticize these movies by trying to remove it from political influence and fighting more for the rights of women like the postfeminist. As quoted in (Hoerl, 2010) News commentator Michelle Bernard declared that attacks on Palin's character had energized Republican women who regarded Palin as a "perfect feminist" who "has made choices that the women's

movement fought for.’’ This statement was made because Sarah Palin Alaska Governor in 2008 went in for vice president position under the Republican Party and didn’t use her daughter’s unplanned pregnancy and family life for politics but as her personal decision

Teenage pregnancy has issues of its own. Not every mother can easily explain to a young pregnant daughter and this is one of those issues considered missing in some of these movies. In the movie ‘Juno’ (2007) the little girl Juno who is 15 years old gets pregnant over a one night stand with her best friend and all her parents do is concentrate on supporting the fact that she wants the baby adopted and they forget how her life will be after having a baby at such a young age and giving her up for adoption.

Her decisions here make her a feminist as she decides first to abort the child and then to give birth and put the baby up for adoption. Hollywood is using some of its movies to show a free world with kids making decisions over what happens in their lives with the support of their parents. Having a baby at an early age is a whole new world because everything changes beginning from the girl’s present life and the future. This is a period when parents need to guide the children so they don’t go astray and end up dropping out of school and not having finances to take care of the baby talk less of themselves.

According to Smith’s study (2011) on finding out how teenage pregnancy is portrayed on the Show ‘16 and Pregnant’ presented by MTV, he discovered when looking into the issue of contraception and or safe sex that there was something

lacking as he said “Maci was the only participant to state that her parents had not talked to her about sex before she became pregnant. Maci’s boyfriend Ryan’s parents, however, questioned how the pregnancy occurred since they had talked with Ryan” (p. 8). This shows that some parents are failing on their part to educate their children on the advantages and disadvantages of sexual activity.

Getting pregnant and making choices is a difficult situation faced by many young girls. When they find themselves in this situation if they don’t have support from friends, family, and others who can advise them on the right thing to do and also back them up in their decisions, they might become frustrated and make the wrong choices. In the films *Knocked Up*, *Juno* and *Waitress* all Hollywood 2007 films, the three adolescent mothers are not prepared for motherhood and do not show any interest in the men they pregnant for. That notwithstanding, the girls Allison in “*Knocked Up*” and Jenna in “*Waitress*” decide to keep their babies while Juno decides to give up her baby for adoption. It’s all a matter of choice and whether or not one is up to the task as presented by these films (Hoerl, 2010).

Motherhood is commercialized and used for political campaigns but some writers (Hoerl, 2010) are trying to depoliticize pregnancy in Hollywood movies by trying to remove it from political influence and fighting more for the rights of women like the postfeminist. An example given is related to the American elections in 2008 when Governor Sarah Palin caused a change in the debate after her daughter got pregnant and decided to keep the baby. Members of the public considered her “a vice-presidential nominee who would oppose women’s access to abortion, even in instances of rape or incest” (Hoerl, 2010, p. 2). On the other hand she is seen as a

real feminist who is fighting for the rights women so they can have freedom of reproduction or not.

As quoted by Hoerl et al (2010), Jenna in the movie *Waitress* is disappointed because she is pregnant but she chooses not to have an abortion but she makes it clear that she doesn't need the baby.

Before the doctor can finish his sentence explaining what service his office “does not perform,” Jenna interrupts to tell him, “No, I’m keeping it. I’m just telling you that I’m not so happy about it.” Then she adds, “so maybe you can be sensitive and not congratulate me and make a big deal every time you see me. I’m having a baby, and that’s that (Hoerl, 2010, p. 368).

The movie ‘*Juno*’ paints a portrait of a pregnant teen who is not only extremely self-possessed but who also has a very supportive family (Jayson, 2008). This might get young viewers feel that their parents will be as supportive as the parents in the movie which is not right as every family has its own way of receiving such information. Literature on the famous presentation of teenage pregnancy in the United States as declared by Oliver (2012) notes the tendency for the media to suggest Hollywood’s presentation of teenage pregnancy is convincing more young girls to attempt getting pregnant. This is done by trying to use *Juno*’s story to reflect the lives of young pregnant teens in real life.

“More recent movies have provided a more sympathetic portrayal of teen mothers as regular individuals faced with a challenging situation” (Weed, 2014, p. 50).

Examples can be seen in the movie Juno (2007) where a young girl has a one night stand with her boyfriend, gets pregnant and with the support of her family puts the child up for adoption. Also in the movie Precious (2009), she is raped by her father at the age of 13, has a baby and is sexually abused by her mother's boyfriend leading to a second pregnancy.

Hollywood movies show expecting young moms than being a mom is going to be an easy task with the help and support of friends and family members but it's not reality, it involves great decisions and responsibility which involve finances.

Hollywood movies and reality television shows do not provide a realistic picture of the struggles and outcomes of teen pregnancy. They give teens false hopes and dreams that most likely only happen in movies and on television shows about teen pregnancy (The Leonian, 2013).

"Hollywood seems to both promote and reflect conservative family values that insist on women becoming mothers in order to live valuable or happy lives" (Oliver, 2012, p. 11). An example can be seen in the Hollywood movie 'the pregnancy pact' (2010) where a group of girls agree to all get pregnant so they will raise their babies together and some of them even get disappointed when after taking the test at the school health center they are informed they are not pregnant.

Women's achievements no longer matter as far they can have babies as shown in representations of pregnancy in Hollywood movies. Having babies is been promoted as a good thing that brings joy, popularity, success, many friends and family support. The movies promote a new type of family that focuses on having a future with women having babies considered as the most important thing to achieve.

The movie *Precious* (2009) shows a high level of illiteracy and poverty faced by some African Americans and also passes the feeling that all children no matter the circumstances of their birth bring happiness and joy. The movie also tries to change stereotypes many people have about young pregnant African Americans because not only is she reunited with her two babies but she continues with education (Oliver, 2012).

According to Kelly Clarke (2015), “*Juno*’s depiction demonstrates the instability of assumptions of feminine girlhood” (p. 259). She dresses up like a guy and at the beginning of the movie she carries a jug of orange juice which she drinks along the road and while telling Bleeker of her pregnancy she sits on a chair in front of the house with a pipe in her mouth. These are all masculine characteristics but she is just a young teenage girl. The movie depicts young teenagers are not mature enough to become mothers as they still have a lot to learn. Here we see the comparison of being a white girl which makes her to be in a privileged position to raise a child as compared to an African American since both parents are working class and the middle class where a child is expected to gain maturity before she can raise a baby.

More focus is given to teen sex in movies than teenage pregnancy in movies. There are very few researches on teenage pregnancy in movies making it difficult to find articles and information. Teenage pregnancy has always been considered a taboo and the public is getting used to see adolescents in this state. Portraying these girls in the movies has gone on for a long time with no one giving much attention until the movies started portraying it as attractive and easy. There are very few articles on teenage pregnancy as most of the representations still glamorize teenage pregnancy

making it simply and sexy. There are very few movies that show the challenges of teenage pregnancy and the reality, difficulties and how difficult it will be to handle as a teenager.

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

The following study is based on feminist media studies which will help explain why teenage pregnancy is considered to be misrepresented in Hollywood movies. For this study focus will be put on feminist issues of patriarchy, stereotypes, choice, oppression and equality among others.

### **2.5.1 Feminist Media Studies**

Feminist media studies deals with issues of representation, social practices and reality and sometimes extends into pornography. I will use a method used by feminist scholars to understand the various portrayals of women in Hollywood movies. Van Zoonen (1994) a feminist media scholar says “It is argued that traditional science not only ignores women’s themes and experiences, it also denies the validity of women’s ways of knowing” (p. 14). Some of these experiences involve the challenges faced by teenage moms which in Hollywood movies are not given a lot of attention. Before looking at the feminist and their focus on media, a brief look into what feminism and its ideologies will be visited.

Hooks (2000) asserts “feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” (p. 1). This definition seeks to expand more on feminism especially because it doesn’t only have to do with fighting for equal rights between men and women but also to erase the wrong ideas they are getting about feminism especially from the mass media. Women are out to fight for equal representation as well as

rights. They want to get paid the same amount as men are being paid, to share house chores, are to do the same jobs as far as they are capable. With women fighting to have equal rights with the men and racism taking place at the same time it became difficult to tell the real struggle of the feminist as the white women once they got to be identified and given jobs left behind what they fought for.

The feminist theory as observed by Bell (2000) is “an analysis of sexism, strategies for challenging patriarchy, and new models of social interaction” (p. 18) The main focus of this theory is to explain to both sexes that is men and women how sexist idea functions and how the problem could be solved and changed. Feminists have five basic ideas they agree on. They believe that working towards getting equality for both gender is preferable than just talking about it. They also want both men and women to be allowed to make choices freely in whatever they want to do in live; particular jobs should not be for particular sex. They are against any culture or social structure that limits women earning same as men, going to school and getting same paid jobs and women should be allowed to reproduce when they want to and also to be in control of their sexuality (Moffit, 2015).

This explains the case of young teenage girls who get pregnant and are considered a social problem and also face very stereotypes because feminism has not been accepted yet. It is seen that because one girl in a community got pregnant the others will get pregnant too, after all they are girls. Every individual has the right to make choices and decisions as far as they are human beings. So why should young girls, who get pregnant be considered a problem and some of them being judged by the public without listening to their stories.



Bell (2000) believes “sexism as a system of domination is institutionalized, but it has never determined in an absolute way the fate of all women in this society”. Women are sometimes oppressed, face problems of class, race and even religion among other things but this doesn’t determine what will become of them. It is all about what an individual can do or want to do and the life they want to live. An example can be seen in the movie ‘Precious’ (2009) where a young overweight girl is raped by her own father, contracts AIDS, gives birth to two children while living with an abusive mother but at the end she is reunited with her children and begins a new life.

Due to the fact that making choices is limited especially for black women who are expected to be submissive and do what the men tell them to do, they sometimes have to react or do something to be recognized. It is possible that a young girl might decide to get pregnant just to seek attention because she is not getting any from friends and family. These choices are difficult to make and sometimes wrong choices are made, this is because these young girls don’t receive advice and are sometimes not ready to receive advice because they know their position in the society. The position determined by the society that women are the weaker sex and should do the weaker jobs and what men cannot do (Hooks, *Feminism is for Everbody*, 2000).

According to Erlich (1981, p. 130),

Women need to know (and are increasingly prevented from finding out) that feminism is not about dressing for success or becoming a corporate executive, or gaining elective office; it is not being able to share a two-career marriage and take skiing vacations and spend huge amounts of time with your husband and two lovely children because you have a domestic worker who makes all this possible for you, but who hasn’t the time or money to do it for herself; it is not opening a women’s Bank ,or spending a weekend in an expensive workshop that guarantees to teach you how to become assertive (but not aggressive); it is most emphatically not about becoming a police detective or CIA agent or marine corps general.

This was just one of the many reactions to white women forgetting feminist ideologies the moment they were given an opportunity to almost similar rights with the men. Women might be free and given equal rights like men but they are still being oppressed because they might be allowed to give birth and have right to reproduction but they are not allowed to make choices as to what happens to the baby.

In the feminist struggle to fight for equal rights for both genders, they deal with representations of various genders in the media especially women and wrong representations. The media has always been criticized by feminist critiques and feminist scholars have put their attention on issues like stereotypes and gender socialization and ideology in soap operas, romance movies and magazines on women (Van Zoonen, 1994).

Many earlier radical feminists believed that reproduction was at the root of women's oppression and that we would be emancipated if we could free ourselves from "the tyranny of reproduction" (Mandell, 1995, p. 33). Radical feminism doesn't mean women can do more than the men but simply thinks that because a woman can get pregnant is the cause of the lack of equality for both genders. They believe that getting pregnant and raising a baby has to be a duty for both sexes and this is the only solution to the problem of inequality. Social norms have named man the superior of women making them to use women and their bodies when and how they want to (Hessianwithteeth, 2015).

Radical libertarian feminist believe if women are not so involved in reproduction they will have time to take part in the society. This shows that they are not satisfied with women's representations in the media as well because the time taken to show whether or not this women's pregnancy is good or bad they would have been showing what this women have done to make their communities better.

“Radical-cultural feminists theorize that women's oppression is not caused by female biology and reproductive possibilities but rather by men's jealousy of women's reproductive abilities and their desire to control them through new reproductive technologies” (York University, 2015, p. 3) With this technology women choose when to get pregnant or not and so cannot be easily oppressed by men and this is seen as giving women freedom.

Radical feminists look at representations of teenage pregnancy as oppression just like men oppress women by getting to determine when they can give birth or not. The misrepresentation shown in movies on teenage pregnancy by Hollywood is considered another form of oppression by radical feminist. Van Zoonen (1994) declares that

When focusing on media output solely, the main task for feminist media research is to unravel both the dominant and alternative meanings of gender encoded in media texts, and their articulation with other discourses such as for instance, ethnicity, class and sexuality (p. 66).

Based on this information, I will be using feminist media theories to analyse media representations of teenage pregnancy thereby finding out how gender is encoded in Hollywood movies especially concerning the female gender.

Sexuality and reproductive rights have been a dominant issue for feminist since the 1960's with the second wave feminist. They have since the early days fought for equal rights with a focus on getting women to make choices of having the baby or not when they get pregnant and to choose what happens to the baby after delivery. Hollywood movies represent young ladies making right decisions, some of them to give birth and raise the babies with or without the father and some giving the baby up for adoption as seen in the movies 'Knocked UP' (2007) 'Waitress'(2007).

It should be noted that feminist also demand equal responsibility for both gender even if they find themselves in a case of pregnancy whether wanted or not. For example in the movie 'Juno' (2007), the pregnant girl Juno (Ellen Page) tells her best friend Bleeker (Michael Cera) she wants to abort their child and later on she decides to give the baby up for adoption when a classmate of hers meets her in front of the hospital on way to carry out the abortion and tells her "the baby already has finger nails" (Cody, 2007). All decisions she takes is accepted by her best friend Bleeker also the father of the child she is carrying.

Feminists demand equal rights for all meaning the right to make choices and decisions too. In this case of the movie 'Juno' (2007), she grows up without a mother who leaves her with her dad and gets into another family where she is happy. This shows a success in feminist's ideas of making choices that bring happiness but her choice can be considered a wrong one because her daughter gets pregnant at such a young age. Her mother can be blamed for the condition she finds herself in. "Juno's mother is also perhaps a feminist or at least a product of feminism, associated as she

is with second wave calls for no fault divorce, rejection of unhappy marriages, and sexual agency” (Thoma, 2009, p. 415).

Women don't want to be objectified but because they want equality with men as fought for by feminist, women now make themselves objects as seen in music videos where women expose their bodies in music sang by men. Women now want to do everything men do; they are using the freedom they have to their own disadvantage. In the movies 'Precious'(2009), the pregnant girl gives birth to her children without the consent of the father even though the conditions through which she conceived are not the best of all. She still continues with her education though stigmatized and facing various stereotypes.

The struggle by feminists to fight inequality, oppression, patriarchy, discourses and other feminist ideologies continues as the years go by. Feminist media studies continue to look into the various representations of women in the media and to argue and criticize those they think are not right. This research which is a content analysis of three movies (Juno, Precious and the pregnancy project) uses feminist media studies to look into wrong representations some of which are against feminist ideologies which give women an upper hand still and tries to find out how young girls pregnancy, the challenges lack of sex education, challenges including stereotypes they face during pregnancy and what happens after the baby is born.

“In feminist research, the exemplary conclusion is that media output fails to represent the actual numbers of women in the world (51 percent) and their contribution to the labor force” (Van Zoonen, 1994, p. 69).

It is note taking that this is the first research that has been done on teenage pregnancy in Hollywood movies and with a focus on three movies (Juno, Precious and the Pregnancy Project). Even with the reduction of the numbers of adolescents who get pregnant now, pregnancy is still an issue talked about by many. The various depictions in Hollywood movies might be unrealistic but they also show few things that happen in the lives of young girls especially the difficulties of becoming a mother. The three movies (Juno, Precious and the Pregnancy Project) selected for this study portray teenage mothers differently depending on their class, race, patriarchy, oppression and the various stereotypes they face. The challenges brought out in these movies have brought out reality of some of the few difficulties experienced by young pregnant girls. These movies will be looked in greater detail in chapter four where they will be analyzed depending on a general portrayal, challenges faced before, issues raised during and after pregnancy.

## **Chapter 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter seeks to present the research methodology used for the present study. To achieve this, firstly the research methodology is presented. This is followed by the data collection method, how textual analysis is done, how the population and sample is selected for the study, and reliability and validity of the present study follows.

#### **3.1 Research Methodology**

For the present study qualitative methodology is favored. With this method of research it is easy to get first-hand information. This research looks more into the images portrayed and what challenges and difficulties can be drawn out of the media texts presented like sex in relation to adolescents.

This research is designed to find out how teenage pregnancy is depicted in Hollywood movies with a look into the challenges faced before, during and after pregnancy by the young moms involved. 15 Hollywood movies from the year 2007-2015 were put together and three selected to be the focus of the study. From these three movies (Juno, Precious and the Pregnancy Project) data will be collected on representations of the three pregnant moms looking at feminist issues of oppression, Patriarchy, equality, choices and the various stereotypes they face in their various communities.

The movies will be analysed separately in order to find out the various representations in the movies and the challenges they face before, during and after the pregnancy as individuals and in their various communities and compare and contrast the various representations. The three movies picked out for the study are used because they both show three different representations of teenage pregnancy portrayals in three different communities.

### **3.2 Data Collection Method**

To collect data, for this study, textual analysis is preferred. “Textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world” (McKee, 2003, p. 1). The textual analysis is good for this study because its interest is not in the how the audience receives the message passed on by these movies but the media content and the messages it carries. By doing this it is used as a means of understanding reality and how various cultures are reflected especially their limitations in how they see the world around them. By watching Hollywood movies, some viewers make a sense of their world and as a researcher I am finding out how Hollywood movies on teenage pregnancy help their viewers make sense of reality with the messages their movies carry.

Due to the fact that not many researches have been done on the portrayal of teenage pregnancy in movies especially when challenges experienced by the young moms before, during and after this period is concerned, this study focusses on the content of the movies. Some researchers (Nauert, 2008) (Lovell, 2008) (Chandra, 2008) have focused on effect studies and on quantification with the use of interviews and surveys



but this study prefers to find out how the movie is shown on screen before seeking to know the opinions of the viewers and what they think about the movies.

According to Smith (2011) “A textual analysis looks beyond the text itself to the possible cultural and political implications of the representations found” (p. 165). Looking at the three movies (Juno, Precious and the Pregnancy Project) selected for this study different subject matters relating to teen pregnancy will be looked into especially those that see the movies to glamorize teen pregnancy and the results will be used to relate to teens present situation in reality, their sexual behaviour and sex education. The text examined in this study are; the portrayal of teen pregnancy in all three movies, challenges faced by the teen moms, the discussion of sex education and contraception and why there is no focus on the consequences of these teens actions.

For this analysis to be done, effectively all three movies are watched by the researcher and two other friends who sought to support points taken by the researcher on the various portrayals. The participants who are both boys were picked from different age groups and countries to find out how things are done in their various countries when young girls get pregnant. These two friends will be addressed as participant 1 and participant 2 in the discussion of common issues found in these movies. The participants were schooled on what to find out while watching these movies which included comparisons on what is shown in the movie as compared to reality, looking for what they feel is not normal about the lives the girls are living and how they deal with their families, finding out if the men in the movies are in control while the women do the listening, finding out if the women are allowed to

make choices freely and lastly to find out if these girls are treated differently because they are pregnant.

While watching, information sought out included the challenges encountered throughout the whole process of conceiving to giving birth, the choices made and the consequences, whether their pregnancies are glamorized or shamed, whether they receive family and friends support, did they get married, continue with education or give up on life and what happened to their babies.

Curtin (1995) x-rays that “Textual analysis methodology follows that the text is the means to the study in textual analysis, not the end, of interest is not the text itself but what the text signifies” (p. 12). The movies will be watched three times and more to see the message the movies want to pass and take a deeper look at what the text is not giving attention to.

Secondary data will be collected from online journals, websites, books and e-books and electronic sources to show previous and related findings on the topic. The information gotten from these sources will help to build the background of the study and as well lead the reader through the research so they understand how the research questions were raised and what step can be taken to get answers to these questions.

Numbers will be brought to discuss analysis of the other 15 movies on how teenage pregnancy is depicted but this will only serve to help the reader understand the changes in representations of teenage pregnancy as the years go by and not as a valid statistical analysis.

All three movies are available online to watch on the website <https://twomovies.net/>. From the beginning it was difficult to have access to all three movies but this website helped make for easy viewing, rewinding and forwarding and pause to jot down information collected. It was also easy to download and watch. All three movies had different settings; one in school, one at home and school and the other at home and different other scenes.

### **3.3 Population and Sample**

Population of a study means everything/everybody related. The sample deals with a particular part of the population used for the study and when the results are gotten it will be used for the general population. The sample for the study is selected purposively or judgmentally which is a form of non-random sampling. This sampling method which is selective is chosen because there are so many movies produced by Hollywood on teenage pregnancy and for this study which involves Hollywood movies from the year 2007-2015, 15 movies were found. Of these 15 movies, 3 were chosen (Juno, Precious and the pregnancy project) which are all genres of drama telling stories and emotions of three different young pregnant girls with 'Juno' the only comedy-drama film.

Black (2011) believes "in non-random sampling not every unit of the population has some probability of being selected into the sample" (p. 226). For this reason in this study the three movies selected which depict different portrayals of challenges and difficulties experienced by the young parents involved some of which include trauma, lack of family support, stereotypes, patriarchy and oppression. Table 3.1 below shows five feminist ideologies shown in the 15 movies from 2007-2015

showing the challenges the leading characters faced before, during and after pregnancy.

Table 3.1: Hollywood movies portraying five feminist concepts found in movies from 2007-2015

Name of Movies	Year	Director	Genre	Equality	Stereotypes	Patriarchy	Oppression
Juno	2007	Jason Reitman	Comedy Drama	√			
Knocked Up	2007	Jude Apatow	Comedy Drama	√			
Waitress	2007	Adrienne Sherley	Comedy Drama			√	√
Baby Mama	2008	Michael McCullers	Comedy	√			
Precious	2009	Lee Daniels	Drama			√	√
Pregnancy Pact	2010	Rosemary Rodriguez	Drama		√		
Freshman Father	2010	Michael Scott	Drama	√			
Expecting Mary	2010	Dan Gordon	Comedy Drama				√
17 Girls	2011	Delphin Coulin, Muriel Coulin	Drama		√		
Pregnancy Project	2012	Alexa Pena Vega	Drama	√	√	√	

Gimme Shelter	2013	Ron Krauss	Drama				√
Obvious Child	2014	Gillian Robespierre	Comedy, Drama	√			
Labor Pains	2015	Lara Shapiro	Comedy			√	√
Double Daddy	2015	Lee Friedlander	Thriller	√			
Unexpected	2015	Kris Swanberg	Comedy, Drama		√		

Looking at Table 3.1 above it shows that women especially teenage girls who become pregnant have unpleasant experiences when they encounter such situations. They live in patriarchal societies and most at times are being oppressed and lack the freedom of choice. As identified in the movies as shown on table 3.1 above, the lives of the pregnant girls change and they have to make very difficult choices some of which involve abortion, giving birth or adoption. Some of these girls might be given rights to make decisions freely but pregnant girls still face one particular issue which is stereotypes. Feminist are working hard towards these ideologies especially with representations in movies and the media.

The movies were all selected under the drama genre because they have three different stories to tell and show that even though earlier movies in this genre have shown some of the challenges teenage pregnant moms' face the problems still repeat themselves. The movies are 'Juno' (2007) directed by Jason Reitman the only movie

of the three which is a comedy and drama movie, 'Precious'(2009) based on the novel 'Push' by Sapphire directed by Lee Daniels and 'The Pregnancy Project' (2012) a lifetime movie directed by Norman Buckley all drama movies.

### **3.4 Reliability and Validity**

This particular research is based on qualitative research methodology. In order to ensure the fitness criteria, three movies (Juno, Precious and The Pregnancy Project) were selected. Triangulation is done by analyzing these three films which serve as text for data collection. The movies are watched and the challenges as feminist ideologies identified in the movies brought out and analysed looking at the teenage pregnancy experiences of teenage girls.

In order to strengthen the reliability of the findings inter rater reliability is used and the researcher is joined by two friends to watch the movies. The movies are watched three times and more to be sure the information taken out from the media text can bring out a portrayal that relates to how various cultures for which these movies copies see teenage pregnancy in reality. What is sought out from the movies is feminists ideologies which include race, class ,patriarchy, stereotypes, choices, oppression and equality as well as the challenges experienced before, during and after pregnancy through their portrayals in three Hollywood movies.

## **Chapter 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

This is the chapter where a deeper look into the three movies (Juno, Precious, and the Pregnancy Pact) to be used the study is presented. There is no right representation of a people of a particular community or a nation. This study just draws its own representation looking at what the movie content shows. Here the three movies will be carefully analyzed with the participants viewpoints quoted where necessary looking at the various portrayals of teenage pregnancy and the challenges all three girls come in contact with before, during and after pregnancy. Note should be taken that not all three movies depict all three challenges. The movie ‘Juno’ portrays only challenges before and during pregnancy, ‘Precious’ displays challenges during and after and ‘The Pregnancy Project’ depicts challenges before, during and after. In the process of looking at the representations and challenges of these movies, all four research questions raised for this study will be answered. The analysis will have subheadings under all four research questions to show which movie answers which question.

#### **4.1 Teenage Pregnancy Portrayals in Precious, Juno and the Pregnancy Project**

Every movie has a different writer, director and concept which mean the portrayals are going to vary depending on the message the producers of the movies had in mind

before production. This section answers research question one and will look into the various portrayals of teenage pregnancy in all three movies chosen for this study.

#### **4.1.1 Analysis of Juno (2007)**

The movie 'Juno' is a 2007 comedy/drama movie directed by Jason Reitman and has as main character Juno (Ellen Page). The young girl who is 16 years of age gets pregnant after having sex with her best friend during a one-night stand and decides to go for an abortion. Pregnancy is depicted to be an easy situation anyone can handle and freely make decisions too. Juno makes life very easy for a girl of her age who gets pregnant without thinking of what can be the consequence of her action and, in reality, there are situations of death when an abortion is done. Motherhood is not taken seriously and the baby is considered "it" and given up for adoption to a single mother without a complete family. The mother is considered capable giving her baby away to any stranger as far as she gains back her own freedom.

Pregnancy is glamorized and made to look admirable. The young lady Juno who was abandoned by her mom to get a new life with her new family accepts the fact that she is pregnant but that doesn't stop her from moving on with her life because she still goes to school and she has her family to support her as well as her friends and puts the baby up for adoption. She accepts that she is not ready to be a mother meaning it was a mistake, but she uses this as an opportunity to put a smile on the face of another young couple who has not been able to get a child.

Participant one considers Juno as "behaving too matured for her age" when she walks around in school and everyone is looking at her stomach she is not so worried about it because she knows the moment she gives birth everything will go back to



normal. This shows she doesn't care about the baby; she is not living in a patriarchal society where anyone will detect to her what needs to happen now that she is pregnant. These are all unrealistic representations because whether or not the baby grows up with her, her life has changed forever and nothing will ever be normal again.

Juno in the movie is seen as a feminist due to the decisions she makes. She has reproductive rights as shown in the way she takes care of her pregnancy by first of all taking many pregnancy tests to determine her pregnancy is real, deciding to take an abortion before informing the baby's father. There is a misinterpretation of gender roles as considered by the society. Juno makes all decisions and Bleeker (Juno's best friend) who is the father of the child has to accept. She doesn't ask for his permission before carrying out any of her actions.

According to the gender roles constructed by the society, the woman is supposed to support the man and the man makes all decisions. When she gives the news of her pregnancy to the baby's father who is her best friend Bleeker (Michael Cera) and he finds out what they will do concerning her situation she prefers to use "I was thinking I will just nip it in the bud before it gets worst" (Cody, 2007), a euphemism to tell him she will abort the baby.

A scene like this raises questions as to how a girl of 16 years old thinks of abortion at a very young age after having unprotected sex and getting pregnant. Audiences of this movie might have to question how Juno was raised and whether the absence of her mother in her life is the cause of her behaviour. Participant two declares such

actions cannot be taken in his community because once a girl gets pregnant she is considered a disgrace to her family and most at times has to drop out of school to take care of the child.

A girl of her age already knowing that she can get pregnant and get it aborted so she can continue with her life like nothing happened is definitely not what any parent will want the children watching. The issue of abortion in the movie gives the feeling that abortion is the best choice to an unwanted baby because even after she changes her mind and decides to give birth and put the baby up for adoption, she decides to tell her parents about her situation. What is strange about the whole situation is her step mother Bren (Allison Janney) asking her “Honey, have you considered, you know, the alternative” (Cody, 2007)? Does it mean the viewers should put abortion as a means of escape for any unwanted pregnancy?

“Cody toys with taking a stand, but does not actually go anywhere, deflating both liberal and conservative agendas inherent in the tale” (Heath, 2008, p. 4). The movie is too liberal giving adolescent’s rights to make decisions over their lives with the support of parents and friends. This is not the situation in real life because pregnancy is not anything that is received with open arms when it involves someone who is not married not to mention a young girl of 16 years. Just like a liberal feminist Juno makes decisions and choices as to what happens with her life and the baby she’s carrying. She tells her parents she is pregnant, but she has already decided to get the child adopted and has already chosen the family to adopt the child. When her dad Mac (J.K. Simmons) finds out who the father of the baby she’s expecting is and she tells him it’s her friend Bleeker, her dad replies “I didn’t think he had it in him”

(Cody, 2007). This is not the normal reaction or even a comment expected from a father whose 16-year-old is pregnant, feels more like he is encouraging her to have another baby with Bleeker (Juno's best friend).

After Juno's first visit to her baby's adoptive parents, Vanessa (Jennifer Gardner) the woman tells Juno to give them feedback on everything that happens until the child is born. There is a situation of class and status here as Juno chooses people of a higher class than hers to raise her baby. The upper class is considered to be at a better position to have children and be capable of taking care of them due to their financial situation. This tells the audience that Juno's family is of a lower class and even though both parents have a job they are not capable of raising her baby.

When Juno leaves her ultrasound the first place she heads to is to give the ultrasound photograph to the adoptive parents. Again when she has a quarrel with her best friend Bleeker she runs to the house of the adoptive parents and every time she goes there the person she meets is the man. Pregnancy here is shown to give the young lady power because she goes to the house of the adoptive parents anytime she wants or when she feels like relaxing a little. She only does this because of the baby she's carrying because that's how she got to know their house in the first place and that's the only reason she goes there too.

Juno is defended by Bren (Juno's Step mom) when she is taken to the hospital for her ultrasound. Juno refuses to know the sex of the baby saying she wants it to be a surprise for the adoptive parents Vanessa and Mark. Hearing this, the doctor says "Thank goodness for that" and when Bren (Juno's stepmom) tries to find out why the

doctor uses that statement she says “I just see a lot of teenage mothers come through here, it’s obviously a poisonous environment to raise a baby in” (Cody, 2007). Juno’s stepmom defends her meaning the fact that she is giving the baby up for adoption because she cannot be a good mother. This shows that though there are still stereotypes about teen pregnancy being poisonous that it spreads very easily, there are also people like the feminists fighting against these stereotypes to make a better life for the young pregnant girls. Young girls are still being stereotyped for being pregnant at young ages considering them irresponsible.

“Juno ends in a highly unrealistic manner leaving the viewer to adopt a naively romantic mindset that oversimplifies the problem of teen pregnancy” (Jones, 2011, p. 1). Teenage pregnancy is promoted in this movie simplifying it’s representation for viewership and giving the wrong message to the realities of adolescent pregnancy. After she gives birth, the baby is given to Vanessa (Jennifer Gardner) the adoptive mother and then Juno and Bleeker (Juno’s best friend) continue with their normal lives while learning to mature and fall in love the right way.

What is not seen is how she feels after carrying a baby for 9months, the pains of giving birth and then giving the baby up to a stranger for adoption and how this affects her life. The people in her environment will react to her situation in different ways and it will affect her, but that is not even an issue brought close to the representation of pregnancy in the movie which shows the purpose of the film is not her pregnancy, but issues surrounding her romance with Bleeker. No one really cares about the pregnancy.

The movie 'Juno' is out to fight stereotypes against young girls who get pregnant at very young ages to make the public know pregnancy doesn't mean their lives are over. Pregnant teens have a future ahead and should not leave anyone control or tell them what to do with their lives or not. Although it simplifies pregnancy it also shows that teen pregnancy is real and when a situation like this occurs decisions to be taken should be done reasonably. It is note taking that the movie doesn't show the consequences of Juno's actions after she gives her baby to the adoptive parents thereby leaving the public only with the simple and pleasurable experience of her pregnancy with friend and family support.

#### **4.1.2 Analysis of 'Precious' (2009)**

The movie 'Precious' is a 2009 Drama film produced by Lee Daniels and has as main character Claireece Precious Jones (Gabourey Sidibe). The movie is based on the novel 'Push' by Sapphire. Precious is a young black American overweight girl who is 16 years old and is expecting a second baby from her father who is not shown in the movie and only seen when he is raping the young girl. A patriarchal setting is shown where women are still being oppressed by men. How can a man accused of incest on his own daughter be allowed to rape her again and nothing done to the man? It is possible that men still have power over women and it will take a longer time for women to gain the same status as that of men whether at home, work and by their communities.

Precious mother (Mary) considers her a rival and uses her mother as an excuse "I did what my mother told me I was supposed to do with my child" (Fletcher, 2009). Does it mean her mum told her to allow the husband to sleep with the daughter if that will make him stay as her husband? The black race her is considered very rash as a

mother respects and prefers her husband to her daughter such that she can allow him to rape her as far as he will stay with her. With the black African race a woman's pride is her husband and so she will do anything so he doesn't leave her.

Participant two assessed the situation saying "Things like this don't happen nowadays because no man in his right senses will do that, how can he even think of having sex with his daughter getting her pregnant and still rape her again while her family just watches". Precious lives with Mary (Mo'Nique) her abusive mother who blames her for taking all the men in her life. When the movie begins, precious fantasizes of a having a white boyfriend with nice hair, be on the cover of a magazine and be in one of the BET (Black Entertainment Television) videos.

Precious goes to school but doesn't understand anything. When the teacher tells the students they will review the assignment he gave, she says "I wish I could tell him all the pages in my book look the same to me, but I can't..." (Fletcher, 2009). She takes the teacher for an imaginary husband she lives with and believes he likes her too. The kind of life she dreams of is that of the middle and Upper class where she doesn't belong but the whites do. Her illiteracy tells her class which is the lower class. She is from a poor family and people of such a status scarcely have what to feed on before thinking of going to school. Mary (precious mom) is not educated and this affects her daughter as well as other families in real life.

Bell hooks (1995) believe "Precious fantasies reveal her imagined escapism as a reconstitution of "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (p. 29). The white race given preference and Precious keeps dreaming of a life with a white guy which is

perfect. This makes the black race an inferior one to the whites. She keeps dreaming of being with a white guy; this shows that white people can help take the black people out of a bad situation or save them from their problems. White people in this movie are considered savior of the blacks when they are in trouble and so the blacks have to depend on them.

Precious is secretive and cannot share her problems with anyone because she is scared of what her mother will do to her. When Mrs. Lichenstein (Precious principal) ask her what happened she is pregnant again, Precious tells her principal “I had sex Mrs. Lichenstein” (Fletcher, 2009) and for this reason is suspended from school for getting pregnant. She is not considered a good example for other students in school because that is her second pregnancy and she is just 16 years old which means she is either reckless with her life or something is not right. The use of the word sex is played with here because she is still a teenager and she just uses the word like it’s something normal everyone does.

Mrs. Lichenstein (Precious principal) knows Precious is hiding something and decides to visit her home to talk to Mary (Precious mother) mother and find out what is happening but is not allowed into their home. She proposes an alternative school precious can attend but when she leaves precious mother becomes aggressive towards her for bringing a white woman to her doorsteps. With everything happening precious doesn’t thing of the pregnancy but things of how going to school can make her life better and decides to go find out about the alternative school the next day. There is a white superiority complex here where the African American woman always needs a white woman to be recognized or to receive help.

When health is concerned the movie doesn't really show a good picture of a pregnant woman. Precious is only seen in the hospital on the day she gives birth and when she goes to get an HIV/AIDS test. Participant one considers this as nothing normal for a pregnant woman not mentioning the fact that it's a fifteen year old who has given birth before and there are possibilities of complications for a second birth. Precious doesn't go in for checkups, she doesn't take any drugs and she is even forced by her mum to eat food that is not well prepared but her baby has no problem and she has no problem either. She even has to go to the restaurant, order food and steal the food without paying and no one chases after her.

At this scene she is ridiculed because she orders a big bowl of fried chicken and when the waitress asks if it should be accompanied with something she tells her "Ain't sure, still thinking'. Watching' the weight you know" (Fletcher, 2009). She is already fat and now pregnant so how can she watch the weight again? She is supposed to eat a balanced diet at this period so her baby's health and hers is ok but what is shown is totally different. She does all the house chores, cooks and still goes to school even with the maltreatment she receives from her mom.

Getting pregnant gives precious power as a woman because all through the movie she has been accepting her mother's maltreatment but after she gives birth to her son and her mom doesn't visit her in the hospital, she comes back home and her mother asks if she can carry the baby which she allows but when her mother drops her baby on the chair she decides to fight back. She doesn't want to be like her mom who couldn't take care of her and defend her from her father. She defends her son and herself from her mother and runs out with her baby into the cold to her school



because she feels safe there. This sends a message out the public that if they don't feel safe around the family there is always a helping hand ready and willing to support in difficult times

Pregnancy is not given much attention in this movie but the life of the young girl and how she wants to have a better life and be a good mother. By the end of the movie it is discovered that being a mother overshadows her personal dreams as she tells Mrs. Blue Rain (Paula Patton) "I want to be a good mother" (Fletcher, 2009) when she is told "Being a good mother might mean letting Abdul be raised by someone who is better able than you to meet his needs" (Fletcher, 2009). Precious shows young viewers like her who find themselves in her situation not to give up on their kids for whatever reason. She couldn't read and write but pushing herself and with help from friends and outsiders she can do both which means she can achieve the bright future she has been dreaming of and still be a good mother to her kids and a better one than her mother. According to Blankenship (2011), the movie is about;

A girl who has no reason to live keeps finding reasons to live. She gets stomped and stomped and stomped, but she still goes to an alternative school that will help her learn to read and write; she still does sweet things for her baby; and she still tries to make friends (p. 9).

#### **4.1.3 Analysis of 'The Pregnancy Project' (2012)**

The 'pregnancy project' is a drama movie also known as a lifetime movie directed by Norman Buckley with main character Gaby Rodriguez (Alexa Pena Vega) a young girl 17 years old from a family where her mom, brother and sisters gave birth at very young ages before marriage. She chooses to do her school project on the statistics of teenage pregnancy but in the process discovers that teen pregnancy is more surrounded by stereotypes. For this reason she pretends to be pregnant to find out

from teachers and students in her school and her community the various stereotypes pregnant teens face and how they are treated and then presents her findings to the whole school to make them find out how they hurt these teens that have a brighter future ahead of them. This is not an easy task to pretend to be what you are not just to get information concerning people one's age and the audience of such movies will consider this inspiring. It is not so easy to notice a problem and decide or even attempt to find a solution.

At the beginning of the movie a student tells Gaby "I still think it's cool you are going to graduate" and when she tries to find out why the student says so the girl replies "I don't know I just thought you might not care anymore" (Buckley, 2012). Interpreting this statement, all girls who get pregnant are expected to drop out of school and live a miserable life after that which is supported by participant one who has seen such situations before. Gaby is stereotyped here which is an issue faced by girls of her age who get pregnant in real life. But this is not true; there are different options some of which involve adoption and even abortion which feminists look at as a means of survival and preparation for a better tomorrow. With this women will have equal rights with the men. This falls under the fight for reproductive rights especially by the radical feminists who see no reason why women should not be allowed to make choices over their reproduction.

Gaby's status and class is used to determine whether or not she will get pregnant. Her family is not rich and from a low income class of people which is why Aaron (Gaby's friend) tells her "girls from your part of town always get knocked up" (Buckley, 2012)

This indicates teenage pregnancy being a problem and something noticed with people from not well to do families.



Figure 2: Gaby presenting her project to the school assembly

“It’s not just about becoming a statistic, it’s about stereotypes” (Buckley, 2012). This is Gaby’s reaction after she hears students talking in the toilet about Tyra and herself calling them “fat cows”. Being pregnant doesn’t just add a teen to the number of all other girls who have gotten pregnant or are still to become pregnant but makes the

public see them different. As a pregnant girl one is still a human being like any other, has rights to make decisions as to what happens to the baby and themselves. Nothing changes but the stomach that grows so why should people concentrate on the stomach instead of the person carrying the stomach.

The second wave of feminism saw women's organisations and feminists mobilizing around (amongst other important struggles for political and social equality) the right to abortion, access to safe contraceptives, better policies and laws to address rape, domestic violence and the eradication of female genital mutilation (Tallis, 2012, p. 1).

Sexual intercourse is encouraged by parents as far as their children use condoms. People use condoms and still get pregnant so how can Gaby's mom Juana (Judy Reyes) tell her daughter who is stepping out with her boyfriend Jorge (Walter Perez) to "be careful" (Buckley, 2012) and she reacts by telling him "Show her the condoms in your wallet" (Buckley, 2012). It is the reckless actions of some youths that get them pregnant, if they are encouraged to use contraception too much instead of being advised to stay away from sex until they know the consequences of their actions it will be better.

Intimacy between two young teens is not supported by Gaby's brother Javier (Michael Mando) who is not comfortable with her dating Jorge. He oppresses her and wants to take control of her private life. Javier (Gaby's brother) tells her that if she wants to go to college she has to stop dating Jorge (Gaby's boyfriend) because she cannot marry him with the death end job he has. He tells her "You are the one to do something to make mama proud. It's too late for the rest of us" (Buckley, 2012). The closeness between Gaby and Jorge only makes him feel she will get pregnant

and her life will be unsuccessful just like his own and that of her sisters and if Gaby gets pregnant the only option will be to marry Jorge.

When Gaby starts pretending to be pregnant, her friend Aaron (Richard Harmon) tells her “It was a dumb move getting pregnant, now Jorge is going to bail on you”. He tells her this because Tyra (Gaby’s classmate) is left by her boyfriend when he finds out that she is pregnant. Tyra is seen around school with no friends, she is always alone and she tells Gaby that her foster parents have told her that when she gives birth she should leave their house because there is no space for an extra kid. Most boys abandon their girlfriends when they get pregnant as they are not ready to be fathers and sometimes just because their only interest with the girls was sex related reacts participant one.

The conception that men have an upper hand when their girlfriends get pregnant is real because they can opt to be a father or not but also Tyra makes the choice of keeping her baby whom she considers her only family and still continues with school. Aubrey (2004) says, “Men view women as sex objects and value them primarily for their physical appearance” (p. 506). It is for this reason that men can opt out of being fathers when they impregnate a girl. After listening to Gaby present her project in front of the whole school, Tyra (Gaby’s classmate) now believes her dreams of getting a better life can be fulfilled. Everyone needs a little support; it must not come from family or friends it can be from anywhere.

Getting on the covers of magazines is not what makes young girls pregnant, most of them get pregnant without knowing and the excuse they always give is it was the first

time and they didn't expect anything to happen. Her friends mock at her telling her to go to one of the teen mom shows or be on the cover of one of the teen magazines but she defends herself telling them she's not interested. When she defends herself, Aaron tells her "You just want to be fat and broke all your life?" Making fun of pregnant teens only helps in pushing them backwards which is not what they need at a time when they are experiencing things above their maturity level.

Gaby is a very intelligent student and because of another student Tyra (Laci J. Mailey) who is pregnant in school one of her friends tells her that because her family has a history of getting pregnant at very young ages she sure will get pregnant too. Aaron (Gaby's friend) tells Gaby "All chicks from your side of town get knocked up early" (Buckley, 2012). The message here is that teen pregnancy is real and it is possible anyone can get pregnant so young but also your family or community doesn't define you. It doesn't mean if one member or members of your family are reckless you too must be reckless. It's all about making right choices and be allowed to make those choices without pressure.

Jorge's (Gaby's boyfriend) parent's reaction to Gaby's pregnancy is not very welcoming. His father tells him "You've messed up your life, now you have to stay with that girl" (Buckley, 2012). His parents are not happy with the fact that he has gotten his girlfriend pregnant and since he cannot take care of himself with what he earns, how can he take care of Gaby and the baby. Pregnancy comes with responsibilities which needs matured people who are ready to accept this new stage of life. Gaby's sister gets angry knowing she is pregnant declaring that "You got a kid and you don't get to be in control anymore, that kid is going to be in control and

there is nothing you can do about that” (Buckley, 2012). Life does not end with getting pregnant but if one allows people around them to tell them who they will become because they are pregnant or if they allow the pregnant bodies to determine their lives then it will only promote stereotypes and the way people see and think of them.

This movie seeks to make its viewers understand that the moment a young girl gets pregnant she is looked at as another irresponsible teen who just wasted her life. Pregnancy causes young girls to be stereotyped without looking at them for who they are but the babies they carry are used to determine what will become of their lives. Common stereotypes faced by young girls include they will drop out of school, their boyfriends will leave them, they will reduce the country’s economy, and there is a high possibility their children will have babies at young ages too among other things. The movie looks at feminist issues like equality, oppression, choice and stereotypes which is the main point raised by the main actress Gaby.

#### **4.2 Challenges Experienced before Pregnancy**

Pregnancy has been avoided by many but they still find themselves caught up in the situation they cannot explain. This section will focus on the challenges the teen parents in the movie ‘Juno’ and ‘The Pregnancy Project’ encountered before pregnancy. The movie ‘Precious’ will not be discussed at this level since the movie talks about her second pregnancy which is announced in the first scenes of the movie.

#### 4.2.1 'Juno' 2007

Juno is only 16 years old and it is normal that being pregnant frustrates her and changes her life for good. She takes many pregnancy tests to be sure she is pregnant because she didn't expect to get pregnant after having sex for the first time. She blames the chair for the problem she has and the problem she has here is being pregnant, something she never expected after having sex for the first time.



Figure 3: Juno checking results of her last pregnancy test

The look in her eyes when she discovers the last test result confirms she is really pregnant can tell her frustration and disappointment. Juno knows this one mistake will change her life. She carries a chair from her house to Bleeker's (Michael Cera) house and then at the end of the movie she says "It ended with a chair" (Cody, 2007) which matches her narration at the beginning "It all started with a chair" (Cody, 2007). She is more confident and is comfortable that she depends on a chair to support when she feels there is no one to lean on. Juno is from a middle class but her parents who both have jobs are not ready to raise another child. This means babies can easily be accepted into rich families but not poor or middle income families.



The use of the word 'Sexually active' in the movie is not accepted by Juno. She doesn't really like the word and responds to Leah (Juno's friend) who is scared her mom might hear Juno is pregnant and keeping the baby that her mum doesn't know she is sexually active. Juno replies her "what does that even mean" (Cody, 2007) Leah at this point is speechless and this helps to elaborate on their lack of knowledge on sexual education. Participant one looks at sexual education as nothing new but still they are adolescents who forget about this education and go on to have intercourse without the use of contraceptives and when they get pregnant it is blamed on lack of sex education from parents and teachers in school.

Juno tells her father "I don't know the kind of girl I am" (Cody, 2007) when her dad tells her "I thought you were the kind of girl who knew when to say when" (Cody, 2007) Juno is a confused girl who gets pregnant and because she is not sure of who to talk to her first option is to abort the baby until she gets scared and decides to carry the baby, give birth and put up for adoption. It is only at this point that she tells her parent. First of all she grew up without her mum and only remembers her through valentine day gifts she sends to her and she is not close to her step mother either. She is not confident enough and decides to have the chair to support all through the way till the end. "We really don't really know what kind of girl Juno is, as she is a more complicated, richly developed character over the course of this film than is Hollywood's norms" (Corrigan, 2012, p. 178).

Feminists fight for reproductive rights is to be able to give birth when they feel they are ready or get rid of the baby looking at a brighter future before having a baby. The example she is setting for other young girls is too get rid of any baby they carry and

feel they are not ready for such a responsibility but if they keep aborting the babies they might end up being infertile and will have only themselves to blame. This is why Sarah Brown, the CEO of National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy is not so confident about the message the movie gives to young girls as she sees the movie's depiction of teenage pregnancy to be unrealistic (Jayson, 2008).

When Juno discovers she is pregnant and decides to go for an abortion she is given a condom by a young girl of her age who attends to her at the abortion center. When she sits down to feel her form it is obvious that she gets scared when she sees other pregnant girls and babies because she remembers that her classmate Su-Chin (Valerie Tian) She meets outside before tells her the baby she is carrying already has fingernails. The look on her face at the clinic shows how scared she is and her frustration especially when she is given the condom. It is obvious that seeing the condom strikes her that if she had used a condom she would not be in the situation where she finds herself.

In the movie nothing about sexual education is seen and the condom only comes in when she is already pregnant which means Juno and Bleeker (Juno's boyfriend) did not even think of using a condom because they did not expect having sex the first time will get Juno pregnant. That lack of knowledge is what causes her put her frustrations on the chair and blame it for what happens thereby personifying it. This shows that lack of advice from both schools on sexual intercourse is a possible cause for many young girls getting pregnant. Parents should talk to their children about unprotected sex and its consequences which include contracting STD'S,

HIV/AIDS, getting pregnant among others and also contraceptives if their children must have sex.



Figure 4: Juno drinking from a jug of orange juice out of frustration

The movie 'Juno' focuses more on the period of pregnancy and so before pregnancy it's all surrounded with Juno blaming the chair for her problems and regretting her actions. Her frustration knowing she is pregnant is seen when she walks from home to the market drinking orange juice from a big jug so she has enough pee to take many more pregnancy tests to confirm she is pregnant.

#### **4.2.2 The Pregnancy Project (2012)**

Gaby Rodriguez (Alexa Vega) the main character of the movie lives in a society where she is a very intelligent student with a family where her mum, brother and sisters all got pregnant at very young ages. For this reason her brother controls her live such that at the beginning of the movie when she goes to visit her boyfriend her brother Xavier Rodriguez goes and picks her up with an excuse that her mother need

her home. She lives in a patriarchal society and is scared of her elder brother as her mum tells her that he is like her father now since her dad left when she was still a kid. She is worried as she expects her brother to be more brotherly and fatherly and instead of meddling with her private life ask her questions like “Hey how is school? You know school is very good. I am getting straight A’s this semester” (Buckley, 2012). She prefers Xavier (Gaby’s brother) should give her advice not make decisions for her. Every individual needs a little advice and education and then are to be left to make their own decisions. “ Like every elder brother I will also be very protective of my sister if I come from such a family, I might not even allow her date any guy until I’m sure I know him well”(participant two).

Sex education as shown in the movie has centered on the use of contraceptives meaning if kids are to have sex they can use contraceptives to keep them from getting pregnant. Gaby tells her Jorge (Gaby’s boyfriend) to show the condoms he has in his wallet to her mum so her mom knows she is safe from getting any unwanted babies. Gaby is just 18 years but the possibility of making choices is very difficult as everyone from her family to her friends in school believe she will get pregnant because her family has a history of young parents having babies.

Gaby expresses how frustrated she is to her mum about her brother controlling her life and her mum (Juana) tells her Xavier (Gaby’s brother) is only worried she might get pregnant. When Gaby tries arguing with Juana (Gaby’s mum) about being careful not to get pregnant, Juana tells her “Getting pregnant is the easiest thing in the world. Raising a baby is the hardest” (Buckley, 2012). Her frustrations of her private life being controlled is a problem as no one likes anyone meddling in their private live,

there is always the need for some privacy but Juana still used this discussion to pass a message to her daughter which she will never forget. Juana tells Gaby “You think it’s never going to happen to you, that’s when you get into trouble” (Buckley, 2012). The message here is very clear teenage pregnancy is real and no teen expects to get pregnant until it happens.

Gaby is hurt and disappointed that even her own family members don’t think she can grow up and go to college without getting pregnant. Her family’s history determines her own life as no one will be surprised at her getting pregnant. In life it’s all about individual decisions in live, Gaby may not have received sex education from school but she has been schooled by her mother which explains why her boyfriend always carries a condom around. Her classmate (Tyra) who is pregnant is always stereotyped but Gaby is not happy about it and because everyone expects her to be pregnant she decides to pretend to be pregnant in order to find out what will be the reactions of everyone around her. To her greatest dismay the moment she starts faking the pregnancy no one sees her as the intelligent student of the school anymore, all they see is her family history they had expected happening again. No one has the right over another’s life so no one should let their environment or where they come from determine their future.

### **4.3 Challenges Experienced During Pregnancy**

The difficulties of pregnancy can only be explained by the person carrying the baby. This section will discuss challenges experienced by young moms in the movies ‘Juno’, ‘Precious’ and ‘The Pregnancy Project’.

#### **4.3.1 'Juno' 2007**

Juno (Ellen Page) has lost so much confidence in herself because of the fact that when she gets pregnant Bleeker (Juno's best friend) continues with his life running, playing music and going to school while she grows fatter, goes for appointments at the hospital and has to give birth. She is emotionally hurt that she tells Bleeker "Are you ashamed that we had sex? Because you don't have to have the evidence under your sweater" (Cody, 2007). Her pregnancy puts her in an emotional state she just doesn't want Bleeker around as she considers he doesn't understand what she's going through. Juno calls her pregnant body "a fat suit I can't take off" (Cody, 2007). Mood swings caused by pregnancy comes up in most cases.

Leah (Olivia Thirlby) Juno's friend makes fun of her pregnancy. Leah makes fun of her situation telling her "It's probably just a food baby. Did you have a big lunch" (Cody, 2007)? Juno doesn't announce the news like good news which shows her emotional and confused state at the moment. At the moment she's talking to her friend she is seeking a solution to the problem she has and her friend is present with phone numbers for the abortion center like she knew someday she or Juno were going to get pregnant and will have to get rid of the baby. She makes the decision of getting an adoption without a second thought which shows she was not ready for the pregnancy and wants to get rid of this problem as soon as possible. Wrong decisions can easily be made at this point.

Maturity issues come up in different scenes of the movies. Juno visits the adoptive parents Vanessa and Mark whenever she likes and her mother calls her attention to the fact what she is doing is wrong. Again when she visits Vanessa and Mark and

Mark informs her he will be separating from Vanessa she has an emotional break and is stressed up that she drives recklessly along the road and to cry too. When she arrives home and Mac (Juno's dad) finds what her problem is she tells him "I'm just dealing with things beyond my maturity level" (Cody, 2007). This scene shows that she is an immature kid still trying to understand what's going on in her own life and now she discovers the perfect family she had chosen for kid too grow in is not so perfect after all. According to Emily Jones (2011), "The self-absorption and emotional immaturity of the me generation makes modern teens fully unprepared for the real life consequences of having a child, which includes a life that does not finish in ninety minutes like a film" (p. 2).

Juno gets annoyed when the doctor doing her ultra sound finds out whom Vanessa and Mark are when she says she wants the sex of the baby to be a surprise to them. The doctor is thankful Juno will not be the one raising the baby and defends her statement "I just sea lot of teenage mothers come through here, it's obviously a poisonous environment to raise a baby in" (Cody, 2007) which she replies to "How do you know I'm poisonous" (Cody, 2007)? Juno feels bad knowing that's what the doctor thinks of her. If the doctor sees her as such then what of the students in school who spend their time looking at her baby bump. As a girl who has the right to make choices of her own she feels she is doing the right thing by giving her baby to a family that can take care of him since she is not ready to be a mother.

The pains of labor also serve as a very serious challenge for Juno. She doesn't give birth the moment she is taken to the hospital and she keeps screaming and demands for a spinal block to relieve her from the pains.

Juno spends her pregnancy period questioning if a happily family exist anywhere. This is triggered by the fact that the happy and wealthy family to choose to raise her baby is getting a divorce before she even gives birth. This alone makes her remember the fact that her mum abandoned her and Mac (Juno's father) causing her to grow with a step mum and she too has problems accepting how she feels for Bleeker (Juno's best friend). That notwithstanding she still allows her baby to be raised in a broken home. No one who loves the baby will want the baby to grow like she did and she doesn't really care as she keeps addressing the child 'It'. Her feminist attitude of having the right to do what she wants regardless of the consequences makes her give less attention to what happens to the baby after birth.

#### **4.3.2 'Precious' (2009)**

Precious is a young overweight girl who lives in a patriarchal society where she finds herself among people with low income and the only thing she has living with her parents is incest, physical and emotional abuse. She is traumatized by the fact that because she is pregnant again she is suspended from school and is bad enough that her father is responsible again for this second pregnancy after the first. This puts her in a situation where she keeps hoping one day she will get married to this handsome white guy and she will have a better life. These thoughts are the only things that give her little freedom and help her escape from her real life. What makes it all bad is the fact that her mum Mary (Mo'Nique) did nothing to the father while he kept abusing her right from the age of 3. This shows that women in her society are oppressed by their so they cannot make choices freely. In precious situation her mother didn't fight back so her husband will not leave so the man is privileged than the child.



The fact that Precious is suspended makes her angry and disappointed but she is encouraged by the new school “Each One, Teach One” where she meets new people and makes friends. From the beginning she is timid and filled with shame she doesn’t want to talk about herself but she gets a new family and starts feeling at ease. Precious at her age needs directions and all the love she can get as she is pregnant at a young age and not only that, but for a second child but she gets none. She gets emotional that she believes no one loves her.

Labor pains are one of the most difficult challenges Precious has to face. She encounters this problem twice and tells Mrs. Rain (Precious’s teacher) how she gave birth to her first baby in her mother’s kitchen and her mom was kicking her head all though the process. Her second experience she keeps screaming to show her pain.

Precious is not able to feed regularly. She depends on her mother to eat and her other depends on welfare that helps precious to take care of her first child. She doesn’t have enough to eat neither can she have a balance diet as every pregnant woman needs. “At times, Precious turns to food for soothing and comfort” (Cravings, 2009, p. 3). It is normal that a pregnant woman needs care and her feeding is very important because she is feeding two mouths and not just hers. It is quite disappointing to find Precious lacking food sometimes, reacted participant two.

Being a teenager and one who is giving birth to a second child, precious needs enough care and has to go for regular checkups to make sure she and the baby are fine and there will be no complications during delivery. No scene is shown where she goes for medical checkups and because she has no food to eat when going to school

one morning, she goes into a restaurant, orders food and runs away with the food. At this point in time she only thinks of how to fill her hungry stomach without thinking of the consequences of her action which can send her to prison and considering her condition at the time it won't be good.

Precious undergoes physical and sexual abuse at home even at the point where she is pregnant and has to take care of herself. Mary (Precious's mum) spends time shooting objects at Precious that watching the movie will raise questions as to whether Precious's health is ok and even her senses. She is forced to eat food just because her mum considers the food not good enough for her to eat after which she will cook something for her mum to eat.

All the stress for a pregnant traumatized mum is too much to handle and still go to school. In one scene when Precious is about to go to school and notices there is no food in the house she demands for money from Mary (Precious's mum) but her mum who is in the room tells her "Come and take care of mama Precious" (Fletcher, 2009). Precious in a voiceover says "When will she stop this shit" (Fletcher, 2009) and footsteps of her climbing the stairs can be heard. This shows she's been abusing her own daughter thereby leaving her with no choices but to do what is demanded of her for survival.

Illiteracy is another problem Precious has and the fact that she is tormented by teens of her same age who push her down to the floor for not replying to their advances at her. She finds it difficult to read or write and at the beginning of the movie when her teacher talks of reviewing the assignment of the previous day she wishes she could

inform him she sees all the pages of the book same. Precious no matter her problems loves school and wants to be a great person someday and she loves math so much but understands nothing.

#### **4.3.3 Pregnancy Project (2012)**

Gaby's private life is invaded again at this period because Xavier (Gaby's brother) keeps attacking Jorge (Gaby's boyfriend) that he warned him to stay away from his sister and that he had already cautioned them she will get pregnant if they don't stop being too close to one another. Gaby pretending to be pregnant creates more distance between her boyfriend and her brother ever getting to be close. The unity she is trying to create keeps failing and even getting worst.

At this period in time Gaby gets to understand what her mum told her about pregnancy not being an easy thing because she is being stereotyped by her own teacher who says "What a waste of a live, that girl has such a good head on her shoulders. I don't know what she was thinking" (Buckley, 2012). After hearing this she is hurt considering how fast people get at judging others even without knowing their stories. She feels so hurt when she is just pretending to be pregnant and she imagines how difficult these words can be on Tyra (Gaby's classmate) who is really pregnant.

Gaby is shocked at the fact that a student feels she won't graduate because she is pregnant. As shown in the movie, a pregnant girl in school calls for attention and is an icon for gossip but it all gets worst because Gaby is a bright student with a family history of having babies at a young age. She gets mad at Aaron (Gaby's friend) for calling Tyra (Gaby's classmate) names telling him "You are just being a jerk"

(Buckley, 2012). Labelling names at Tyra can't change her situation but only make things worse for her now that her boyfriend has left her and she has no friend. Gaby here standing for the respect of women is a feminist demanding for equal rights and freedom from oppression.

Gaby's fake pregnancy gets a teacher labelling her not a good example for other students. When Gaby finishes with her project she demands to present it in front of a school general assembly where all teachers and students will be present so she can share her findings with the school and tell them just how bad their words can be on someone's life. In doing this, because of her pregnant body the bright student admired by every teacher and student is considered not a good example for other students. This shows that the moment an individual gets pregnant no one sees them same again. Instead everyone looks at their pregnant bodies to determine what will become of them and who they are at the moment.

Pretending to be pregnant made it even harder for Gaby because she has to tell lies to so many people especially here teacher Shawn Meyers (Peter Benson) who she knows will support her even if she is really pregnant. She finds it difficult to pull through with her plan because it is more difficult than she expects. She really gets hurt when she discovers her close friend DJ (Rowen Kahn) said "she has become an annoying bitch" (Buckley, 2012). It's so frustrating to discover that even your own close friends are saying nasty and bad things about you because they think you are pregnant. Pregnancy should not be allowed to determine who and what a person's life will become or is at the moment.

## 4.4 Challenges Experience after Giving Birth

This section talks about the various challenges faced by teen girls pregnant in the movie 'Precious' and 'The Pregnancy Project'. The movie Juno will not be discussed here as after her pregnancy her few joyful moment of re-uniting with her friend Bleeker to learn the various steps to a right relationships end the movie, leaving their audience with no challenges to see.

### 4.4.1 Precious (2009)

Precious is in tears as she is so traumatized that her dad did not only leave her uneducated with two children to take care of but also infected with HIV/AIDS. She explains the situation to Miss rain (precious teacher) who consoles her and encourages her to move on with life if not for her sake, for those who care and love her but precious tells her "Nobody don't love me, please don't lie to me Miss rain. Love beat me, raped me, called me an animal, made me feel worthless, made me feel sick" (Fletcher, 2009).



Figure 5: Precious crying out to Mrs. Rain that she lacks love and has AIDS

She is in an emotional state still thinking of what to do to become a good mother to her children and the news of her being sick makes it worst. Miss Rain supports and encourages her telling her “there are people in this room who love you. Your child loves you too” (Fletcher, 2009). Precious decides to be a good mom to her children and to stop breastfeeding her son so she doesn’t get him infected.

After having a fight with her mum when she gets back from the hospital precious finds it hard to find shelter for her baby. She has grown up in her mother’s house no matter the stress but at this moment for the safety of her child and herself she has to find a better home for her child. Her maternal instincts could not allow her watch her mum maltreat her son like she did with her. Precious cannot continue staying with Mary (Precious mum) knowing how she is been treated and for the fact the mu blames her for sending the men in her life away.

Precious takes her child out into the snow with all the pains, stands in the train, gets to her school and breaks into the school just to protect the child and is later taken by Miss Rain to her house to stay with her. Louis proyect (2009) x-rays “The moral of the story is that Black family life, especially in conditions of poverty, is dysfunctional to the core and in desperate need of outside intervention” (p. 4). The white lady is always needed to save the black women or make their voices heard and issues concerning them to be given consideration. Reacting to the movie, Rachel Griffin (2014) says

In addition to Whiteness being idealized as blissful and romantic reprieve, it is also positioned to protect and save Precious from the impoverished Black people who cause her pain. Indicative of the dominant gaze, everyone who comes to Precious’ aid can be read as light/White (p. 187).

#### **4.4.2 The Pregnancy (Project 2012)**

After Gaby presents her school project and shows everyone that she was not actually pregnant but pretending to find out how teen parents are treated, she is hated and despised by her friends and school mates who are angry she didn't share her plan with them and for using them as examples in her project. This is very difficult as her friendship is seriously affected but she is happy she has been able to share important information and make a difference.

Tyra (Gaby's classmate) gets mad at Gaby for lying to her as she believes Gaby was making a mockery of her trying to become her friend just so she can get publicity on the cover page of a magazine. If Gaby really was pregnant and put on the front page of a magazine I don't think she would have gotten so much hatred from friends but because she brought out stereotypes on teen moms by friends, students and teachers she is being seen as a liar who just wanted fame. Most at times it is difficult for an individual to accept they are wrong which explains the situation of misunderstandings at Gaby's school.

Facing her family, Jorge's (Gaby's boyfriend) family and all those she deceived was a big problem to Gaby as she knew it will be difficult for anyone to forgive her for keeping such a secret. "Your mum will never trust me again" was Gaby expression to Jorge (Gaby's boyfriend) after telling her brother her pregnancy was not real. Her fake pregnancy all ended well with Xavier (Gaby's brother) and Jorge (Gaby's boyfriend) being friends and her findings encouraging Tyra (Gaby's classmate) to look forward to the goals she has planned to achieve.

## 4.5 Discussion and Findings

Teen pregnancy is an issue that has raised various concerns especially the risks faced by the mom and baby which can lead to death and other complications. All three movies have three movies have different stories to tell. Some of the movies like Juno show feminists ideologies that have been adapted into the system as Juno makes decisions as to what happens to her and her baby when she gets pregnant. Bleeker (Juno's friend) is not even asked to sign adoption papers but instead Juno's family supports her decision and Mac (Juno's father) accompanies her to sign the adoption papers. Juno is a quite a feminist and is not being oppressed by her friend Bleeker, the father of her unborn child. Participant one sees Juno getting pregnant at a very young age as not proper because where he comes from the child is considered not to have a good upbringing.

Contrary to the movie 'Juno', Precious has fewer options and has to depend on welfare money given to her mother to feed and go to school and most at times she has no food to eat. She is oppressed and lives in a patriarchal community where she is raped twice by her father but no one does anything to him. On the contrary Mary (Precious mother) abuses her physically and emotional reminding her every time of how worthless she is and that no one cares about her. According to Evans and Davies (2013),

Whereas Juno can muse over what kind of girl she is, what kind of woman she will become, and plan her entry into motherhood, Precious is not afforded such possibilities. Precious must defend against every indication that she and the 'other' she carries are worthless; and this is what she must overcome to make her pregnancy her own (p. 37).



Unlike Juno which glamorizes teenage pregnancy and gives women rights to make choices over their lives and what happens to her baby, the pregnancy project encourages adolescents to be determined and still pursue their goals no matter the difficulties and problems they encounter. Gaby also shows that the use of contraceptives is very important especially for teens that are not yet ready to be parents.

Feminists ideologies are discussed in these movies to show the representation of teenage pregnancy in different communities and all three films really portray these ideologies as Gaby in 'the Pregnancy Project' finds out how young pregnant girls are being treated and the stereotypes they face. Gaby uses these opportunity to teach students and teachers that their words can really hurt and made young girls feel bad while 'Juno' shows the young girls Juno annoyed that her school mates watch her stomach in school and then pours her anger on Bleeker (Juno's best friend) instead.

Gaby in 'the Pregnancy Project' and Juno in 'Juno' both receive family support to a certain level while Precious receives very little support. Participant two looks at the two movies being great as the girls have someone to lean. He says "If this happens back in my country the girls will first of all receive the beating of her life and will have to drop out of school to take care of the trouble she caused herself". Even though she stays with her mom, all she receives is insults and is considered by her mother as a rival who has taken the men in her life.

Gaby is supported by her mom so she can be able to educate those who think she will join in her family history of young parents and also inform them about little painful

things they ignore. Juno on her part is taken by her stepmom to the hospital for her ultrasound and accompanied by Mac (Juno's dad) to sign papers for the adoption of her baby. Precious only family that helps her is her grand mom taking care of her first daughter but who didn't save her from all physical and emotional abuse she went through. Gaby and Juno both receive family love and support more than Precious does and this explains why Precious is always dreaming of a better life which can only be brought to her from out of her home.

Juno (Juno 2007) and Precious (Precious 2009) don't really have their mothers showing them what is right or wrong in life. "Their maternal role models, are either absent, and therefore invisible, or present and a monster" (Vizcaya, 2011, p. 118). Juno's mom leaves her when she is a child to form another family. Juno's mother is not around to watch her grow up and to teach her what she needs to know as young girl growing up and because she is not so close to her stepmom, her mom can be blamed for her early pregnancy. Precious on her part lives with her mom but cannot find answers to questions she has from her mother because she and her mother only communicate with insults. These two movies show that mothers are very important in the lives of their daughters and their absence can really be a great problem not only for their daughters but also for all their children.

Mothers should be a good example to their children so they don't have to regret their actions later. The interesting fact about all this is even though Precious doesn't receive any advice or love from her mother, it doesn't make her give away, maltreat or abandon her own children. Her maternal instincts are shown as she gets back her

first child and decides to raise both children considering the fact she's infected with HIV/AIDS.

The issue of "white supremacy concept" is only raised in the movie 'Precious' whereby Mary (Precious mom) is supported by welfare, Mrs. Lichenstein finds an alternative school for her study after her suspension from school, Mrs. Rain rescues her by taking her into her home when she leaves her mom's house and has no place to live and also helps her to learn how to read and write. Mary (Precious mom) gets mad at Precious for making her principal come to their house talking about school. "Precious comes under attack for typecasting all black women as pathetic and diseased and is thus dismissed for misrepresenting the majority of black women who have not succumbed to institutionalized white supremacy, poverty, black male abuse, and the like" (Ikard, 2013, p. 20). Both participants agree to have noticed whites always put ahead of the blacks and coming in to get the blacks out of a bad situation. The movie gives the impression that black women always need white women to intervene in their situations so their voices can be heard.

It is good to find teen moms who decide to take care of their babies and still continues schooling while thinking of the future ahead. Precious learns how to read and write in a new school after she is suspended for being pregnant in her school. Mrs. Rain (Precious teacher) advices her that the best thing to do for her child is to give the baby up for adoption but she decides to be a good mother to her children and this is same with Tyra (Gaby's classmate) in 'the pregnancy project' who decided to keep her own baby and continue schooling while hoping for a great future ahead. Not

all pregnant teen moms become miserable, drop out of school and suffer. The choices they make is what determines the plans they have.

Sex education is not addressed in the movie 'Precious' and 'Juno' but Juno is given a contraceptive where she goes to have an abortion and she drops it and it's never mentioned again, neither is it discussed in precious. Her ignorance gets her pregnant and when given a contraceptive to prevent any future unwanted pregnancies she ignores it but she is considered a great feminist who has everything under control because she already has a solution to her problems. Abortion is mentioned and used like the best escape for pregnancy after making mistakes. In 'Precious' it is never raised at all first of all because she lives in a patriarchal society and if her dad was using contraceptives all the time he raped her she wouldn't get pregnant.

Stereotypes are discussed in all three movies but the movie precious focusses its own stereotype on her living conditions and on the fact that black men are rapist which is not a focus for the study. Gaby in 'the Pregnancy Pact' finds out about stereotypes all through the movie and in Juno the doctor who does her ultrasound raises the stereotype of too many young girls in their community giving birth at young ages making it an unfavorable area to raise a baby. The treatment of young pregnant girls is not the best and needs to be stopped, the public has to be educated on the consequences of their actions towards this girls. These are reactions from both participants. Stereotypes have always been an issue when teenage pregnancy is concerned and it will forever remain an issue if teens do not start doing the right things by using contraceptives or better still abstain from sex until they are mature enough and prepared for the consequences of their actions.

Teenage pregnancy is not an easy thing to handle both emotionally and physically as represented in all three movies. Precious never eats good food or goes for checkup when she is pregnant and gives birth to her baby without any complications and he is not infected with AIDS either. This is not real and happens not very often. Gaby's situation on the movie is normal for any family with the history of her family becoming young parents. Controlling her life is the least that is done but in real life it can be worst. Juno's case might be seen in the developed world but in the underdeveloped and developing nations it's difficult to find a young pregnant girl with so much freedom, making choices and saying what happens in her life after getting what is considered an unwanted pregnancy. One thing is clear, teenage pregnancy is real and is not as easy as the screen portrays. It comes with responsibility and consequences that might be good or bad.

Both participants find all three movies very interesting as they get to narrate three different stories but help them to understand new things. They were both impressed with the training and challenges they could see in the movies which they never would have noticed if they were watching like a normal audience. These brought them to seeing issues of sex education, labour pains, stereotypes, emotional problems and trauma as main issues discussed in all three movies which need to be given more attention.

## **Chapter 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

This chapter summarises, interprets and gives suggestions what can be done next on issues identified in the research. The chapter readdresses the aim and research questions of this study and mentions possible conclusions. Here recommendations for further study are also included. The study focused on the portrayal of teenage pregnancy in Hollywood movies and objectives which included challenges faced before, during and after pregnancy with the use of textual analysis to collect data and a feminist media studies for analysis.

#### **5.1 Summary of Study**

The study explores the portrayal of teenage pregnancy in Hollywood movies from the year 2007-2015 with a focus on three movies (Juno, Precious and the Pregnancy Project). It also seeks to find out challenges encountered before, during and after pregnancy. Issues in relation to the difficulty of teenage pregnancy have been identified no matter how easy and simply they are presented. Even though teenage pregnancy comes with many difficulties it is still being displayed as very simple and easy to handle. The study has identified feminist ideologies of equality, patriarchy, oppression and stereotypes as main issues young teen moms have to deal with because they are not matured enough to understand what being pregnant means and the consequences it brings.

The main interest of this study is to understand why interesting portrayals making young pregnant girls are made by Hollywood instead of presenting the difficulties that pregnancy brings and the problems and emotions these girls encounter before and throughout the pregnancy period. Feminist ideologies (stereotypes, oppression, patriarchy) found in the Hollywood movies used for this study have come to explain the depiction of these beautiful images as showing that women have reproductive rights and should be allowed to make choices freely as seen in the movie 'Juno'. The representations are demanding for freedom for women who need it to prepare for a better future ahead.

A purposive non-random sample is used for this study and three Hollywood movies (Juno, Precious and the Pregnancy Project) from the year 2007-2015 selected from 15 others is used for analysis and better understanding. The movies were watched three times and more to jot down points on the various difficulties they pregnant moms had before pregnancy, during the pregnancy period and after giving birth and also on the feminist ideologies identified in the movies that showed women are now getting little freedom and areas that need improvement which are patriarchal societies where there is oppression and lack of freedom of choices.

Information for this study is collected with the use of textual analysis for primary data to understand how Hollywood's audience of teenage pregnancy movies makes sense of the environment they find themselves in. Secondary data which is used to support primary data and to see what others have discovered before concerning portrayals of teenage pregnancy and other related topics is collected from books, e-

books, online journals and peer reviewed articles and also from websites and also films. Triangulation is used to test for validity and reliability of the study.

The study was guided by some four research questions which rotate around general portrayals of teenage pregnancy, sexual education, experiences that led to pregnancy, difficulties of pregnancy and the consequences of giving birth as shown in the three movies used to carry out this research.

## **5.2 Conclusions Drawn from the Study**

The main idea of this research was to discover how teenage pregnancy is represented in Hollywood movies which have an international audience. The study then sought to identify the problems young teen mothers have which involves the lack of sex education which if known might have prevented them from getting pregnant. This is then followed by searching for the difficult experiences of teenage pregnancy that might be shown but not given much attention in the movies and last but not the least what becomes of the lives of the new born baby and their parents. All this information was gotten using feminist media studies which helped for easy explanation of the experiences of these young mothers (Juno, Precious and Gaby).

**RQ1.** ) What are the different portrayals of teenage pregnancy in Precious, Juno and the Pregnancy Project, three movies produced in Hollywood between 2007 and 2015?

The movie Juno represents teenage pregnancy as a simple, glamorous and interesting process that allows an individual to make decisions on the baby and the her own life without caring about what happens to baby after birth. What matters is



for her to continue with her life, learn how to love, be matured and get ready to be a mother someday. With the movie 'Precious' pregnancy takes a different dimension considering she gets pregnant twice being raped by her father. She lives in patriarchal environment where women succumb to men making the portrayal of pregnancy in the movie as difficult; it is filled with maltreatment, emotional and physical pain, lack of love and hatred. Precious pregnancy makes her a rival to her own mother.

Gaby in the movie 'the Pregnancy Project' helps for a better portrayal of teenage pregnancy which is identified as no longer a statistic but a stereotype that changes the way people around the pregnant girl see her. Gaby though pretending to be pregnant experiences stereotyped just like Tyra (Gaby's classmate) whose boyfriend leaves her and so Gaby's boyfriend is expected to leave her and she also has other school mates and teachers telling her life is over and she is no longer in control of her life.

**RQ2.** ) Why is sex education and the use of contraceptives which play a great part in the prevention of early pregnancy not given much attention?

The movie 'Juno' is not out to tell its audience that sexual education or the use of contraception can help in the prevention of teenage pregnancy. The movie's focus is on abortion as the best idea for getting rid of an unwanted pregnancy. This is easily explained because the moment Juno tells Leah (Juno's friend) she is pregnant and has decided to get rid of the baby, Leah already has suggestions as to where she can take an abortion and wants to help her call the agency and book an appointment.

These shows the young ladies already have everything in control and already suspected they might get pregnant someday and at the wrong time and will need a way so collected the names and numbers of agencies and kept while waiting. This is also explained when Juno throws away the condom given to her at the abortion center which means she has a better solution and also she acknowledges hating the word 'sexually active' as she doesn't even understand what it means. Juno has not been educated on sexual education by her stepmother or her school and so takes abortion as the first option to get rid of an unwanted pregnancy.

Sex education or the use of contraceptives is not mentioned at all in the movie 'Precious'. It can be explained that maybe it was ignored because she was raped by her father but this also helps to elaborate on the fact that she was not spoken to about any of this. First of all she never discussed with her mom and only receives insults and is abused both physically and emotionally. This is more explained when she gets pregnant twice for her dad because if her dad had used a contraceptive she will not get pregnant and might be not be infected with AIDS.

Precious illiteracy might also be used as a way for her not knowing about what to do to avoid pregnancy but it all boils down to the fact that none of her parents cared for her because if her mother did, she will have protected her daughter from her husband and broken the patriarchy of the society which puts the man ahead and in control of the woman. Women in precious society are oppressed; there is no equality and freedom of choice.

Contraceptives (condoms) are brought up in the movie 'the Pregnancy Project' which explains why Gaby is so confident she will never get pregnant at her young age just like other members of her family did. Gaby tells her boyfriend Jorge to show the condoms in his wallet to her mom to assure her that she is safe and even if they have intercourse she wouldn't get pregnant. Gaby receives sexual education from her mother at home and so knows she is ready to face real world. She is not scared of getting pregnant since she knows her mom has given all the advice she needs to have a baby at the right time. Of all three movies only 'the Pregnancy Project' takes sex education seriously.

**RQ3.** ) What are the hidden challenges, problems and difficulties experienced by teenagers during pregnancy as discovered in these three movies?

Juno gets involved with maturity issues as she tries to understand if a happy family exists. First of all her mom leaves her dad to marry another man and now the perfect family she has chosen for her child get a divorce. She finds it difficult to determine what she feels for Bleeker (Juno's best friend) and is not comfortable with students watching her stomach when she moves around in school. Juno experiences labor pains and demands for a spinal block to reduce the pains.

Precious on her part doesn't go for any check up in the hospital, has to deal with her abusive mom who spends time insulting and shooting objects at her and has no food to eat especially a balanced diet. All through her pregnancy Precious has various confrontations with her mother and is physically and emotionally abused by the same mother. She experiences labor pain twice but unlike Juno she has no pain killers to

help during birth but she remembers her mom kicking her head during her first delivery which made the pain she felt worst. Precious has little or no family support during her pregnancy.

Gaby who is not pregnant but fakes her pregnancy has to deal with too much control over her personal life, insults and comments from family members, students and teachers too. She is stereotyped like every other girl and considered irresponsible and even called a 'fat cow' by some students. She is disappointed by her teachers and friends who consider her to be annoying and that she will not go to college. Gaby gets to understand why her mother told her that being pregnant is not as easy as it seems because she gets to experience the treatment given to teens like her who get pregnant.

**RQ4.** What becomes of the children and the teenager's lives after pregnancy in the three movies: Juno, Precious and the Teenage Pregnancy?

Juno signed a contract to give her baby to a married couple but ends up allowing her baby to grow up with a single mom. She doesn't care about what happens to the baby, the only thing she cares about is giving birth and giving the baby away and she doesn't care that just like she grew without one of her parents, her baby growing with just one parent might not be a good option. This explains why she keeps calling the baby 'it' in the movie. Juno moves on with her life and has a love affair with Bleeker (Juno's best friend) which she believes will help her fall in love the right way, get matured and get ready to be a mother someday. The message the movie gives is, if

you are not ready to have a baby yet abort the child or give the baby up for adoption so you can have the life you have always wanted.

The movie 'Precious' suggest being a good mother after birth and to continue with studies and plan a better future. Precious takes her baby home but is not welcome by her mother. For this reason she has to find a safe shelter for her baby and herself and even denies giving her baby up for adoption when Mrs. Rain proposes. Precious knows she is infected with AIDS and this doesn't stop her from being a good mother. Instead she goes and collects her first child who is being taken care of by her mother and decides to raise them up like a better mother than the one she had. Precious continues with school and seeks to look for a job to support her children and herself.

Pregnancy doesn't determine what becomes of a young girls life. She can still continue with her studies, raise her baby and have and have a good life others can imitate. Gaby proves beyond doubt to her family, students and teachers of her school that being pregnant doesn't mean she will stop going to school or will have a miserable life. An example is seen with Tyra (Gaby's classmate) who is pregnant, has no friends, is left by her boyfriend but she continues with school and has plans of going to college when she gives birth to her baby.

The major conclusions that can be drawn from this research are that;

Teenage pregnancy is more difficult than imagined given the stress of carrying and taking care of the baby in the womb for nine months, labor pains and taking care of the baby. Stereotypes change the way pregnant teens are seen and reduces the chances of choices. These teens are easily oppressed as shown in the movies

especially in patriarchal societies. Pregnant teens are left alone without many friends to talk to, people making comments every time they pass by and are sometimes considered irresponsible. Various cultures have different reactions to teenage pregnancy as it is considered to bring shame, frustration, emotional problems, trauma and insults as depicted in the movies.

Teen pregnancy is considered contagious because when one teen gets pregnant there is a possibility that many others will get pregnant too. Hollywood presents teen pregnancy as glamorous, sexy, and spectacular but some show it is caused by irresponsible behaviour which is blamed on the girl. All that matters is what can be learned from this various experiences and portrayals.

### **5.3 Suggestions for Further Research**

Looking at the fact that when teenage pregnancy is concerned, most at times it is only directed to the girl and the boy who is involved is left out I suggest that many more studies should be done on teenage pregnancy in relation to the teen fathers, finding out the part they play after the mess they have caused and the challenges they face too.

A study should be done to find out how many people watch teenage pregnancy movies produced by Hollywood and what they think about the characters and the kind of life they have when pregnant and after they give birth. The viewers should be asked to give their point of view on whether they think these movies have an influence on them.

Teen moms should be interviewed to find out if in one way or another they watched any of these teen pregnancy movies and whether they movies pushed them to getting pregnant and also if they think that getting married will solve the issue like shown in some of these movies.

Findings should be done on stereotypes against young girls who get pregnant to find out why people believe that because these girls are pregnant they cannot continue with education no pursue any meaningful career.

The issue of a young pregnant girl (Juno 2007) being able to go to school and to make decisions freely with a supportive family might be a good idea as well as a bad idea. The consequences of her actions should be looked into and also a study should be carried out to find out the reactions of the audiences of these movies to the depictions of the role of the young girl and her actions.

Feminists ideologies presented in the three movie as well as other ideologies like class, race, patriarchy, oppression, choices and stereotypes should be explored in other movies especially recent movies to find out if after the issue of stereotypes raised in the movie 'the Pregnancy Project'(2012) is revisited and the impact on the public.

A similar research should be done on representation on teenage pregnancy in other movie industries like Bollywood, Nollywood, Callywood and others not mentioned to find out if the challenges of teenage pregnancy are shown.

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## **APPENDIX**

## **Appendix A: Filmography**

Juno, Jason Reitman, 2007

Knocked Up, Jude Apatow, 2007

Waitress, Adrienne Sherley, 2007

Baby Mama, Michael McCullers, 2008

Precious, Lee Daniels, 2009

The Pregnancy Pact, Rosemary Rodriguez, 2010

Freshman Father, Michael Scott, 2010

Expecting Mary, Dan Gordon, 2010

17 Girls, Delphin Coulin, Muriel Coulin, 2011

Pregnancy Project, Alexa Pena Vega, 2012

Gimme Shelter, Ron Krauss, 2013

Obvious Child, Gillian Robespierre, 2014

Labor Pains, Lara Shapiro, 2015

Double Daddy, Lee Friedlander, 2015

Unexpected, Kris Swanberg, 2015