



The Culture of Teenage Mothers

Joanna Gregson

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Explores teen mothers' perceptions of their situations and the social stigma that affects them.

Society stigmatizes teen pregnancy, but most teenage mothers keep their babies and many regard their pregnancies as the best thing that ever happened to them. In this book, Joanna Gregson explores teen mothers' shared culture: how they perceive their situations and how they experience stigma. Drawing from four years of participant-observation research in a school-based program for parenting teens, Gregson presents the stories and voices of a group of mostly, but not exclusively, white teen mothers, a group often overlooked in the literature. She reveals a world in which teenage mothers compete with each other to show competency as parents and proclaim the virtues of teen parenting over that of women in their twenties, thirties, and forties. Gregson discusses the teen mothers' conceptions of fatherhood and how they judge their own children's fathers, including the issue of older boyfriends impregnating teenage girls. The young women's thoughts on the stigma they experience and the transformations in their lives and relationships are illuminating and important to all who care about teenage girls as well as about teenage mothers and their children.

"...Gregson provides valuable description of choices, challenges, competitions, and rewards in the lives of ... teen moms." — CHOICE

"A rich analysis grounded in theory. Gregson's devotion to getting the story right is a proper reflection of the powerful dynamics teen mothers face." — Sandra Enos, author of Mothering from the Inside: Parenting in a Women's Prison

Joanna Gregson is Associate Professor of Sociology at Pacific Lutheran University.



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